

THE MIDDLE
"The Book Club"
by
Marcus Baldwin

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

INT. HECK BEDROOM - DAY

FRANKIE (V.O.)

Out here, in the middle, only one
thing can wake you up from a Summer
slumber-

FRANKIE is sprawled across the bed - fast asleep - in an
awkward position, when-

BRICK bursts in the door - fully dressed and ready to start
the day.

BRICK

(excited)

Come on, let's go.

Brick grabs Frankie's hand and she swats him away.

BRICK (CONT'D)

It's out.

Brick lifts Frankie's eyelids open-

FRANKIE

(disoriented)

What?

BRICK

The author of Planet Nowhere is
releasing a new series today.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Frankie grabs MILK from the fridge and pours it in her
coffee.

BRICK

You promised we could go get it,
once it came out.

FRANKIE

When did I say that?

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT [DAYS EARLIER]

Frankie inhales popcorn on the couch and watches THE BACHELORETTE.

Brick waddles in.

BACHELORETTE (O.S.)
And for my final rose, I choose-

BRICK
Can we go to the book store on
Tuesday, there's a new series by-

Frankie waves Brick off.

FRANKIE
(mumbles with food in
mouth)
Yeah Brick, not now.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)
(yells at the Television)
Not him!

BACK TO-

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Mike walks down the hallway, opens Axl's bedroom door, and yells to Axl-

MIKE
Get up Axl! I told you, you were
going to work with me today.

Mike enters the kitchen, grabs the coffee pot, and pours out a thick tar of coffee.

Mike examines the coffee as Frankie notices-

FRANKIE
No Mike, you've got to run it
through another filter.

Frankie empties Mike's coffee-slusky into a coffee filter and squeezes it back into the coffee cup.

The coffee slowly drizzles out of the filter and a pile of soggy liquid drains out into Mike's coffee cup.

MIKE
 Uh huh. I'll just get some at
 work.

MIKE (CONT'D)
 (yells, to Axl)
 I said get up, Axl.

INT. AXL'S BEDROOM - DAY

Sun shines onto Axl's face, as he tosses, turns and grunts at
 the idea of walking up before noon.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

FRANKIE
 Really Mike? You're making your
 son go to work?

MIKE
 I told him he wasn't going to sleep
 his summer away.

FRANKIE
 It's his last summer home, cut him
 some slack.

MIKE
 The deal was I raise Axl, you raise
 Sue and Brick raises himself.

Frankie nods in agreement.

FRANKIE
 That reminds me the phone bill
 hasn't been paid, so make any
 important calls at work.

MIKE
 Frankie!

FRANKIE
 What?

Beat.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)
 It was either that or no TV.

MIKE
 Well, you made the right choice; if
 there's an emergency we can ask
 Judge Judy for help.

FRANKIE
 (sarcastic)
 Ha. Ha.

MIKE
 I'll call them from work and have
 it fixed.

INT. BOOK STORE - DAY

Frankie and Brick stand in the checkout line - Brick's face
 stuffed in the book absorbing every word - as Frankie plays
 with nick-knacks on the counter.

A LOCAL BOOK CLUB FLYER catches Frankie's attention- the next
 meeting is tomorrow.

Frankie picks up the flyer.

FRANKIE
 This is a great book, I had to read
 it when I was in high school.

Brick doesn't lift his face from his book-

BRICK
 Uh, huh.

FRANKIE
 I should do this, I'm always
 wanting to meet new people.

AT THE COUNTER-

Frankie throws her purse on top of the counter as a FEMALE
 CASHIER smiles-

Frankie digs through her large, disorganized purse.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)
 Oh shoot, I forgot my wallet at
 home.

Brick looks up-

BRICK
 (upset, frantic)
 What!

FRANKIE
 We're going to have to come back.
 Not today, but tomorrow I'll do
 this club and you can read it then.

BRICK

Mom!

FRANKIE

Sorry, Brick.

INT. HECK HOME, SUE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Sue stretches in her bed and wakes up.

SUE

Ahhh. What a great dream.

Sue steps out of bed and into-

INT. HECK HOME, HALLWAY - DAY

Sue looks around - but no one in sight.

SUE

Mom?

Beat.

SUE (CONT'D)

Dad?

Beat.

SUE (CONT'D)

Axl? Brick?

Sue raises his shoulders.

SUE (CONT'D)

Huh.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Sue sits down on the couch and turns on the TELEVISION.

"UNSOLVED MYSTERIES" comes on and a MALE HOST reports.

UNSOLVED MYSTERIES HOST

Mark Baldwin, a telephone repair man, entered the homes of the unsuspecting individuals and suffocated them. Last seen driving a white van with Indiana license plates. If you've seen this man, call now.

Sue is mesmerized.

INT. MIKE'S OFFICE - LIMESTONE QUARRY - MORNING

Mike looks for inaccuracies in accounting books.

CREAK.

Axl leans forward in an office chair.

CREAK.

Axl moves back and forth creating rhythm with the chair.

Mike looks up-

MIKE

Axl, would you stop it.

Axl brushes his hair out of his face-

AXL

Gosh, if you didn't want me here,
then why did you make me come?

Mike grabs a stack of PAPERS and hands them to Axl.

MIKE

Here, shred these.

Axl sighs.

Axl moves toward the PAPER SHREDDER and feeds them through.

BUZZ. BUZZ. Each piece slices through the machine.

Axl is excited at the newfound wonder.

Axl looks around, grabs a piece of SCRAP CARDBOARD, and feeds it through the machine. SUCCESS.

Axl thinks.

AXL

Hey Dad, I'll bet you I can shred
anything with this.

MIKE

(upset)
It's not a toy.

Axl sighs.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Alright, whatdya got?

Axl pulls a PLASTIC LIBRARY CARD from his WALLET.

AXL

Won't be needing this anymore.

The machine annihilates it.

Mike pulls a CREDIT CARD from his WALLET.

MIKE

Can't decline now.

Again, the machine rips it apart.

Axl raises his finger in excitement and pulls a COIN from his pocket.

Axl feeds the coin into the machine-

BUZZ.

BOOM.

Smoke rises from the machine.

AXL

Oops.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. HECK HOME, KITCHEN - MORNING

FRANKIE (V.O.)
The next day, I decided to take
Brick back to the bookstore.

Frankie grabs her purse, as Mike enters the Kitchen.

MIKE
(shouts)
You almost ready, Axl?

IN THE HALLWAY-

Axl steps out of the bathroom with a toothbrush in his mouth-

AXL
(with toothpaste in mouth)
Yeah.

BACK IN THE KITCHEN-

Mike looks at Frankie-

MIKE
Where are you going?

FRANKIE
Back to the bookstore with Brick.

Beat.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)
Did you pay the telephone bill?

MIKE
I called yesterday.

Frankie picks up the phone-

FRANKIE
It's still not working.

MIKE
I'll see if they can have someone
come out to check the line.

Brick sits at the counter with a book open-

FRANKIE
(to Brick)
Come on Brick, let's go.

Frankie kisses Mike and sprints out the door.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

(shouts)

Bye Sue!

Frankie slams the door shut.

Mike and Axl follow suit.

INT. CHURCH VAN - DAY

Frankie puts on make-up while driving, and looks over to Brick-

FRANKIE

Hey Brick, so this featured book club today... What's this book about. I can't remember everything, and I want to have something intellectual to say.

Brick sighs.

BRICK

It's about a woman's attempt to regain her husband's trust after a steamy affair with their baby-sitter's father.

FRANKIE

(surprised)

Oh.

BRICK

It was one of Oprah's best-sellers.

FRANKIE

It's uh- been a while since I've read it.

BRICK

(unimpressed)

Uh-huh.

INT. MIKE'S OFFICE - LIMESTONE QUARRY - DAY

Axl crumbles a wrapper from a breakfast bar and tosses it in the trash.

He shoots. He misses.

Axl grabs the wrapper and shoots again.

AXL
(shouts)
SCORE!

Mike looks up-

MIKE
What?

AXL
Just made a sick basket.

Mike lifts up his head and nods-

MIKE
Uh-huh.

Axl grabs the wrapper from the trash, backs up, and shoots again-

SCORE.

AXL
(in announcer voice)
From downtown, the young Axl Heck scores from the free-throw line.

MIKE
Can you keep it down, Axl? I can't have you breaking something else.

AXL
You're just jealous of my mad-awesome shooting skills.

Mike thinks, then-

MIKE
Let me try.

Mike stands up behind his desk, and throws from further back then Axl-

He shoots. He scores.

AXL
Sick!

Axl grabs the wrapper, from inside the trash-can, and hands it to Mike.

Mike backs up behind desk and shoots-

The wrapper is mid-air, just as-

JIM HARPER (56) a short, stocky man who happens to be Mike's boss enters the trailer office.

POW.

The wrapper hits Jim right in the face.

Jim looks at Mike and Axl.

The party is over.

INT. HECK HOUSE, KITCHEN - DAY

Sue pours a bowl of cereal, as-

KNOCK, KNOCK.

Sue carries the cereal to the door, leaves the chain on, and slowly opens the door a crack.

A TELEPHONE REPAIR MAN has his back to the door and slowly turns around-

Sue examines the man, and notices a name-tag on his shirt - "MARK."

Sue screams, drops her bowl of cereal, slams the door shut, and runs down the hallway to her bedroom.

INT. SUE'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Sue slams her door shut, and hides in her closet.

EXT. HECK HOME - DAY

Mark stands at the door and knocks again.

MARK
Hello? I'm here to fix your
telephone.

Mark looks around outside-

INT. SUE'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Sue peaks out of her closet doors, when-

Mark taps on Sue's window and waves at her.

MARK

Hi. I'm here to repair your
telephone.

Sue screams and runs out of her bedroom.

INT. BOOK STORE - DAY

TEN BOOK CLUB READERS sit in a circle, quietly debating this
weeks featured book, as-

BOOM.

Frankie slams the front door.

FRANKIE

(to group)
Sorry I'm late.

The group nods.

Frankie approaches the circle, takes off her jacket, and
plops down into an empty chair.

Brick trots off in search of his new book.

The group leader, PAM MITCHELL (47) an old lady - who sports
a cat sweater - greets Frankie.

PAM

(friendly)
Hi. Who are you?

FRANKIE

(points to self)
Me?

Pam nods.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

I'm Frankie Heck.

Frankie waves; the group smiles and waves back.

PAM

Well Frankie, what did you think of
the book?

Frankie nods-

FRANKIE

I thought it was steamy.

PAM
Oh?

FRANKIE
Well, just the fact that you never
know who you can trust.

PAM
Right.

FRANKIE
I mean, if you can't trust your
baby-sitter who can you trust?

The group looks confused at Frankie-

PAM
(confident, snarky)
What do you mean, Frankie?

FRANKIE
Oh, well nowadays, with nanny-cams,
you never can be too sure.

PAM
Well, the baby-sitter wasn't
cheating on anyone, though.

Pam thinks.

PAM (CONT'D)
What did you think of the next-door
neighbor?

FRANKIE
(hesitates)
I thought they could've done more
to help ease the situation.

Pam silently judges Frankie, then-

PAM
(sarcastic)
You didn't read the book, did you
Frankie?

Frankie gulps.

PAM (CONT'D)
That's what I thought.

Frankie grabs her belongings and slinks out of the BOOK CLUB
CIRCLE.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. HECK BEDROOM - LATER

NEAR THE BEDROOM WINDOW-

Sue lays down hundreds of hairbrushes, face-up, across the floor; a homemade alarm system.

SUE

(to self)

If he steps on these he'll be
crying for mercy.

INT. HECK ATTIC - DAY

Sue crawls through the attic with a flashlight, and hangs BELLS. Another homemade alarm contraption.

INT. HECK HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The Heck house is more messy than usual; Sue has setup booby traps EVERYWHERE.

EVERY WINDOW has something in front of it consisting of hair ties, an art project, or garbage. They're alarm triggers incase Mark tries to break in.

IN THE KITCHEN- The dining table lays on its side, pushed up against the patio doors.

Sue's hair is frazzled and out of control as she pushes the couch against the front door.

Sue's safe. For now.

INT. MIKE'S OFFICE - LIMESTONE QUARRY - DAY

Mike and Axl stand still before Jim.

JIM

(angry)

What's your son doing here, Mike?

Mike hesitates.

MIKE

I just wanted to spend a few days
with him before he's off to
college.

Jim sets down his briefcase and picks up the wrapper and crumbles it.

JIM
(stern, to Mike)
Gather up all the men outside.

INT. BOOK STORE - DAY

Frankie searches the aisles of the book store - unable to locate Brick, when-

BRICK (O.S.)
I thought Lucille was just as responsible for the demise of the relationship as much as Dan.

Frankie rounds the corner to find-

Brick in the middle of the book club meeting.

The BOOK CLUB MEMBERS all nod at the new profound meaning on a classic book.

GARY SILVERMAN (46) a bald man, speaks up-

GARY
But what could Lucille have done?

BRICK
She could have immediately told an adult the situation at hand.

GARY
But she's only a teenager.

BRICK
I'd have to disagree with you on that one Gary; anyone you trust to watch over your children should be responsible enough to do the right thing.

Gary nods and realizes the truth in Brick's statement.

PAM
Well done, Brick. You've gotten us to accept a truth we never realized in one of our favorite books.

BRICK
(to self, whispers)
And Oprah's.

Frankie steps forward and grabs Brick by the hand-

FRANKIE
Come on, let's go.

PAM
Didn't we tell you to leave,
Frankie?

Frankie's face turns bright red.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

INT. BOOK STORE - AFTERNOON

Frankie hovers, humiliated, in front of the Book Club Group.

FRANKIE

I was just getting my son.

PAM

This is your son?

Pam is in shock.

PAM (CONT'D)

But, but... How could you produce *this* offspring?

FRANKIE

You know what lady, I've had enough of your smart comments today.

Frankie grabs Brick and they head for the door when-

Pam stands up and sprints toward them.

PAM

(sincere)

Frankie, please.

Frankie stops.

PAM (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. We were just so enthralled with Brick, we wouldn't have possibly guessed you were his mother.

Frankie angrily squints.

PAM (CONT'D)

Please, come back. We'd love to hear more of what he has to say.

Pam looks toward a TABLE setup with SNACKS and DRINKS.

PAM (CONT'D)

And feel free to help yourself to some refreshments. I recommend the pecan cookies, they're homemade.

FRANKIE (V.O.)

Well, if there's one thing Pam knew could win me over -- it was cookies.

Frankie looks to Pam and nods.

FRANKIE

Hey Brick, give me that book you want, I'll pay for it while you finish up.

BRICK

Oh, I don't need it now, I finished it already.

Frankie eats a cookie and stares at Brick's newfound success of friends.

Frankie looks down to a nearby FEATURED BOOKCASE and picks up a "DANCING WITH THE STARS: TELLS ALL" book.

FRANKIE

(to self)

Oh! I'll have to get this.

EXT. LIMESTONE QUARRY - DUSK

Mike, Axl, Jim and FIFTEEN LIMESTONE WORKERS hover in a circle as Jim speaks-

JIM

Listen up everyone.

The workers calm down.

JIM (CONT'D)

Mike thought it would be a good idea to bring his son to work this week. Wanted some quality time with him before he goes off to college.

Jim reaches under Mike's office trailer and pulls out a BASKETBALL.

JIM (CONT'D)

So, we're going to show him the Orson Limestone way. Half of you over there, and the other half over here.

Jim throws the Ball to Axl.

JIM (CONT'D)

Check.

IN THE BACKGROUND- two basketball hoops appear as if they've been there the entire time.

Axl looks at Mike and heads toward the basket. It's on.

Axl dribbles the ball, dives past Jim, and tosses it to Mike.

Mike shoots, he SCORES.

Axl and Mike high-five.

EXT. HECK HOUSE - NIGHT

Frankie, Brick, Mike and Axl simultaneously arrive at the house.

Frankie leads the pack and unlocks the front door-

INT. HECK HOUSE - NIGHT

The front door barely opens-

A COUCH blocks the entrance.

Frankie squeezes her head through the crack.

FRANKIE

(concerned)

Sue?

Sue pops up from the couch, half asleep, and hits Frankie over the head with her Tennis racket.

Frankie grinds her teeth-

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

Ow!

SUE

Thank god.

Sue pulls back the couch and the remaining Heck family enters.

Frankie rubs her head and examines Sue.

FRANKIE

Are you okay?

SUE
Yeah, someone tried to break in.

AXL
At least your tennis racket is
useful for something-

FRANKIE
Axl, not now.

Beat.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)
Why didn't you call the police?

SUE
I tried; did you know the phone
isn't working.

BRICK
What about your cell phone?

SUE
It's out of minutes.

MIKE
(to Frankie)
I guess Bob Barker was too busy
with plinko.

FRANKIE
Ha, ha.

Frankie rubs Sue's back and surveys the house- it's
destroyed.

INT. HECK BEDROOM - NIGHT

Frankie fluffs her pillow as Mike brushes his teeth.

FRANKIE
(whiny)
Mike, I thought you called them.

MIKE
I did, but you know how those
repairmen are; they only show up
when they want to.

Mike heads to bed-

MIKE (CONT'D)
OW!

Mike looks down, he stepped on Sue's hairbrush trap.

MIKE (CONT'D)

What are these doing here?

INT. HECK HOUSE - NIGHT

The house is a disaster zone in each and every room-

FRANKIE (V.O.)

If there's one lesson to be learned
it's not to skimp out on the phone
bill; otherwise your daughter will
protect herself making homemade
traps that we're yet to find.

IN THE KITCHEN-

A piece of the ceiling drywall falls down into the kitchen;
followed by Sue's homemade hanging bells alarm.

FADE OUT.

END OF SHOW