

The Same Life Over

By

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THE SAME LIFE OVER

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THE SAME LIFE OVER

The world premiere production of *The Same Life Over* was presented in September 2004 by The Northeast Theatre (producing artistic director David Zarko) in La Plume, PA. The production was directed by David Zarko, fight choreography was by Craig McEldowney, set design was by Pete Rush, costume design was by Julia Larnard-Newbury and Colleen Close, lighting design was by James M. Langan, sound design was by Bart Fasbender, the properties master was Elizabeth Feller, the tattoo artist was Shannon O'Connor, and the stage manager was Hollie Hallet. The cast was as follows:

Detective Analise Franco ----- Ana Mercedes Torres
Daniel Hamblin ----- Duane Noch
Lee Cook ----- Craig McEldowney
Veronica Hamblin ----- Kristin Stewart Chase
Paul Andujar ----- Richard Falcon

Understudies ----- Michael Cuomo, Marta Reiman

The Same Life Over was presented as a staged reading at River Stage Playwrights' Festival of New Works in Sacramento, CA in summer 2003. It was directed by Frank Condon, stage manager was Irene Velasquez, the performers were as follows:

Richard Falcon
Rachel Gonzales
Richard Montoya
Loren Taylor
River Stage interns

THE SAME LIFE OVER

9-1-1.

Two people, isolated from one another.

SHERIFF'S DETECTIVE ANALISE FRANCO wears pants, old sport coat, cowboy boots, and on her belt a badge, sidearm, handcuffs, cellphone.

DANIEL HAMBLIN, dressed in casual winter "hiking" clothes.

At their home bases, VERONICA studies The Miracle Worker, in which she is about to star; she looks at the action occasionally. GREGORY watches the following. LEE COOK also watches as he cleans his hunting rifle.

Det. Franco and Daniel speak not to the other but into some inferno.

DET. FRANCO

Drown her. Drop her. Squash her. Suffocate her. Phone rings, turn my head, walk a couple of steps from the tub, sink, stairs, cupboards.

DANIEL

Fail to fasten her properly into her front pack, back pack, chair seat, high chair, car carrier, bike carrier, stroller, booster.

DET. FRANCO

Fail to fasten her properly into her front pack, back pack, chair seat, high chair, car carrier, bike carrier, stroller, booster.

DANIEL

Feed her bad formula, bad ideas, bad vibes, bad attitude, bad breath, bad air. Drunk driver, enraged driver, inattentive driver. Drive-by shooting. Hit and run. Run-by and hit. Leave her on a counter in a men's room, under a table, on the sidewalk looking for my keys. Condone the wrong acts, give too little credence to the right ones. Subvert her, ignore her, abandon her. Abuse her physically, verbally, emotionally, commercially, environmentally. Make life too easy, too hard. Too short. Gone. She was gone.

THE SAME LIFE OVER

DET. FRANCO

(to us)

The rule is to suspect the parent first. Distrust the parent. As an officer of the law, I'm bound by the notion suspects are innocent till proven guilty. But when the call came, my first thought was the father killed the child.

DISPATCHER (VERONICA ACTOR)

9-1-1. What's your emergency?

DANIEL

My daughter's missing!

(swings to Lee Cook)

Hey..!

MISSING.

LEE COOK sucks a beer, deer rifle
against his base. A wild Daniel
charges at him. Startled, inebriated,
Lee yanks the rifle around on Daniel.

LEE COOK

Don't mess with me, bud, I'll kill you, I am a manslayer!

DANIEL

My daughter's missing!

LEE COOK

Who?

DANIEL

My daughter...

LEE COOK

Okay.

DANIEL

...my daughter is gone!

LEE COOK

Uh-oh.

DANIEL

Can you help me find her?

LEE COOK

THE SAME LIFE OVER

Sure, bud. Where is she?

DANIEL

No, see, I don't know -- she's missing!

LEE COOK

Okay now, where's she missin' from?

DANIEL

My truck.

LEE COOK

Missin' from your --

DANIEL

I went off for a few minutes...

LEE COOK

You left.

DANIEL

I came back...

LEE COOK

Come back...

DANIEL

...and she was gone.

LEE COOK

Okay, budro, you go that way, I go this.

DANIEL

Okay, thank you.

LEE COOK

You bet'cha. We'll find her.

Lee takes a step or two but doesn't go searching.

DET. FRANCO

10-4, Dispatch, on my way.

Daniel, lost in place, whirls and sees...

SETTLE DOWN, SIR.

THE SAME LIFE OVER

Det. Franco arriving in his world.
Daniel charges her in a state of
extreme distress.

DANIEL

You're alone!

DET. FRANCO

Mr. Hamblin, I'm Detective Analise Franco with the Sheriff's
Department --

DANIEL

Why are you alone?

DET. FRANCO

Settle down, sir; tell me what --

DANIEL

We need a helicopter and a rescue unit!

DET. FRANCO

I have a Forest Service rescue unit on its --

Daniel grabs Det. Franco.

DANIEL

How soon will they --

DET. FRANCO

Don't touch me, Mr. Hamblin.

But he has her powerfully in his fists.

DANIEL

We have to saturate the area --

Lee Cook appears...

DET. FRANCO

Sir, I'm ordering you --

DANIEL

-- do a checkerboard sweep. She's out there somewhere.

DET. FRANCO

Mr. Hamblin, don't make me arrest you --

THE SAME LIFE OVER

DANIEL

I'm not going to hurt you!

Lee Cook thrusts his rifle to Daniel's head.

LEE COOK

I order you to cut that out in the name of the law!

In a move of blinding efficiency, Daniel grabs the muzzle, yanks Lee off balance, spins him around, and has the rifle across Lee's throat.

DANIEL

You think this is a game! My child's missing!

And Det. Franco has her service automatic at Daniel's temple.

DET. FRANCO

Mr. Hamblin! Set that rifle down!

DANIEL

Hell no!

DET. FRANCO

Set it down!

DANIEL

Right -- shoot me! My child's missing, so you shoot me!

Lee Cook pulls Daniel off balance.

Det. Franco kicks Daniel in the knee, grabs his thumb and immobilizes him with pain.

She's well trained. She takes Daniel down, sits on top of his back, grabs a wrist to handcuff.

In presuming to help, Lee Cook gets down with her, and manages to rub his elbow on her breast.

DET. FRANCO

Mr. Cook!

THE SAME LIFE OVER

Lee Cook backs off.

DET. FRANCO (cont'd)
(to Daniel)
Give me your other hand.

Daniel goes. She handcuffs his other
wrist. She turns to Lee Cook.

DET. FRANCO (CONT'D)
(cont'd)
What are you doing here, Mr. Cook?

LEE COOK
Just takin' the air, gettin' the stink off.

DET. FRANCO
With a deer rifle out of deer season?

LEE COOK
Shootin' some empties, Sheriff.

DET. FRANCO
Detective, Mr. Cook, Det. Franco.

LEE COOK
What'd I say?

DET. FRANCO
Where's your vehicle?

LEE COOK
'Bout a half mile over...
(...where?)
Wait a...That way -- over there.

DET. FRANCO
I'll hang onto this for a while. Stay right here.

She sniffs the rifle...hands it off to
Gregory, who puts it in his umbrella
stand.

LEE COOK
Sure, Sheriff-a-doodle-do.

DET. FRANCO

THE SAME LIFE OVER

And don't ever rub your elbow against my breast under the guise of helping me restrain someone.

LEE COOK

What!

DET. FRANCO

You heard me.

Daniel struggles, strains against the cuffs as his head clears.

DANIEL

Please take these cuffs off me.

SIRENS approaching in the distance.

"URDIE."

Veronica crosses front of stage, turns US at the high chair. Between the high chair and Lee Cook's home base, she sets down two crushed beer cans. She will keep going and US then across the back to Gregory's home base, where she will stand awhile, close to Gregory, an unspoken, unexplained alliance.

DET. FRANCO

(to us)

A rescue unit with two dogs is on the ground 36 minutes after Mr. Hamblin's 9-1-1 call, a chopper with heat sensors is in the air at 41 minutes. If Mr. Hamblin's telling anything like the truth, the child's been missing less than 90 minutes.

DANIEL

Please, let me go with them. Please.

DET. FRANCO

I'm not going to do that, sir.

DANIEL

Look, I'm calm now. I was upset, you, the guy with the rifle, you came at me, I reacted.

DET. FRANCO

If she's out there, sir, rescue folks and dogs will find her.

THE SAME LIFE OVER

Best way for you to help is tell me what happened.

She takes out a notepad and pen, takes notes.

DANIEL

She fell asleep. She sleeps for an hour in the afternoon. I walked off.

DET. FRANCO

How come?

DANIEL

Following some deer.

DET. FRANCO

How long were you gone?

DANIEL

Eleven minutes.

DET. FRANCO

I note your truck is parked on a slant. If your daughter managed to get the door even slightly ajar, gravity would have pulled it open.

DANIEL

Yes, sure, what's your point?

DET. FRANCO

Did you park on an incline on purpose?

DANIEL

Did I...I drove downhill as fast as I could until I got a signal. I called 9-1-1, I came back as fast as I could; I parked and swept the area.

DET. FRANCO

Where were you parked originally?

DANIEL

There -- I don't know; about the same place.

DET. FRANCO

You may have been on a slant initially then.

DANIEL

Yes, fine, sure.

THE SAME LIFE OVER

DET. FRANCO

Did you see anyone else up here besides Mr. Cook?

DANIEL

No.

DET. FRANCO

You're sure you locked your truck?

DANIEL

Yes.

DET. FRANCO

How can you be sure?

DANIEL

I used the key, not the remote, so the beeps wouldn't wake Natasha.

DET. FRANCO

Were you drinking?

DANIEL

No.

DET. FRANCO

Prescription medication, drugs?

DANIEL

No no no.

DET. FRANCO

Come up here often?

DANIEL

Every day we can escape.

DET. FRANCO

Up here is better than down there.

DANIEL

Of course up here is better!

DET. FRANCO

How come?

DANIEL

THE SAME LIFE OVER

How come? Because people down there are a pestilence.

DET. FRANCO

So you dislike people.

DANIEL

Dislike? I don't...Most I could do without, yes.

DET. FRANCO

What was it like when you got here today? Snow?

DANIEL

Patches. Melting. It was warm, turned the heat off in the truck.

DET. FRANCO

So pull up, maybe on a slant, turn the heater off. Then...

DANIEL

Then I saw a bird, I tracked a hawk.

DET. FRANCO

Your daughter sleeping yet?

DANIEL

No, we talked about the hawk.

DET. FRANCO

What did she say, for instance?

DANIEL

"Urdie."

DET. FRANCO

Don't get it.

DANIEL

She says, "Urdie" -- for birdie. I say "birdie," she pronounces it...

DET. FRANCO

"Urdie" -- I understand. She legal to ride in that forward facing car seat?

DANIEL

Yes, of course.

DET. FRANCO

THE SAME LIFE OVER

What else does she do?

DANIEL

Look, I'm asking nicely, how is this going to help you find --

DET. FRANCO

Please.

DANIEL

She follows simple commands. She opens cupboards, takes everything out.

Picks up her favorite stuffed bear, Mookie -- hugs him, kisses him, then throws him on the floor and scolds him.

DET. FRANCO

You ever scold her?

DANIEL

Yes, of course.

DET. FRANCO

Ever raise a hand?

DANIEL

No.

DET. FRANCO

Almost?

DANIEL

I've probably "almost" done everything I shouldn't.

DET. FRANCO

Yeah, me too.

DANIEL

I'll bet, yeah, wow, we're almost the same person.

DET. FRANCO

Think she could open a truck door?

DANIEL

I don't know.

DET. FRANCO

Where's the stuffed bear -- Mookie?

DANIEL

THE SAME LIFE OVER

She was holding him, sleeping. Mookie's not in the truck.
She must have taken him with her. You can take these
handcuffs off.

DET. FRANCO

Not just yet, Mr. Hamblin.

(turning to someone off-stage)

Deputy, keep Mr. Hamblin company, please.

SLIM JIM.

DET. FRANCO

(to us)

Mr. Cook leads me to his campsite.

Lee is a moving target, circling around
her until she stops him.

LEE COOK

Right here -- roasting marshmallows, burn the outside, can't
beat 'em, eat a bag of 'em, you get me goin'.

DET. FRANCO

Sure you weren't doing a little out of season hunting?

LEE COOK

Solid certain. And I didn't touch your boobie neither.

DET. FRANCO

Yeah, you did.

LEE COOK

I wouldn't touch your boobie if you handed it to me on a
platter.

DET. FRANCO

Boobie on a platter -- appealing. Take those sunglasses off,
please.

(he does)

Day off?

LEE COOK

What?

DET. FRANCO

You heard me.

LEE COOK

THE SAME LIFE OVER

Didn't neither.

DET. FRANCO

Excused absence from work today or lose your job?

LEE COOK

My own boss, do what I want.

DET. FRANCO

Work order in your truck says you're a carpenter for Paul Gregory Development.

LEE COOK

Gregory's an idiot.

DET. FRANCO

You explain that to him?

LEE COOK

I ain't wastin' my breath.

DET. FRANCO

Your breath could use some freshening, Mr. Cook.

With her fingertips, Det. Franco holds up a slender METAL ROD.

DET. FRANCO (cont'd)

What do they call these?

LEE COOK

What is it?

DET. FRANCO

I'm asking you.

LEE COOK

"Slim Jim."

DET. FRANCO

Believe they're used to unlock locked vehicle doors.

LEE COOK

Some fool on my job always locks his keys in the car.

DET. FRANCO

You're the designated rescuer of them that's locked out.

THE SAME LIFE OVER

LEE COOK

If I was guilty of unlockin' the dude's truck, you think I'd leave that in my truck so's you could find it?

DET. FRANCO

I have met some chuckleheaded criminals, Mr. Cook. What'd you tell me -- 4 beers?

LEE COOK

Two! You see 'em right there. One, 2.

DET. FRANCO

You weren't drinking on the way up?

LEE COOK

Guess you don't know there's an open-container law in New Mexico.

DET. FRANCO

Stand still, Mr. Cook.

(he does)

You said you were "shootin' some empties." I see the 2 empties you say you drank, but where are the ones you shot?

He stares at her; blinks several times.

DET. FRANCO (cont'd)

You see, Mr. Cook, I know what a recently fired rifle smells like. Yours smells of gun oil but not cordite.

LEE COOK

Because I didn't shoot nothin'.

DET. FRANCO

Why say you did?

LEE COOK

Hell if I know.

DET. FRANCO

How many beers did you drink on the way up?

LEE COOK

None.

DET. FRANCO

Don't kid around.

THE SAME LIFE OVER

LEE COOK

One.

DET. FRANCO

Threw the can out the window?

LEE COOK

You gonna cite me for litterin' if I say, "Sφ, se±orita"?

DET. FRANCO

Mr. Cook, I'll let you sober up a bit while I look around, then we'll start from the beginning again.

LEE COOK

Come on, lady, you know I ain't killed no kid.

DET. FRANCO

What makes you think the child is dead, Mr. Cook?

LEE COOK

Aw, crap.

HOPE.

She returns to DANIEL.

DET. FRANCO

The helicopter is at work; dogs are on the job. I've asked the Rangers to run a checkerboard sweep with their volunteers, as you asked. If I uncuff you, do I have your word you'll stay put?

DANIEL

Thank you.

DET. FRANCO

Sure.

(uncuffs him)

What did you do this morning before you came up here.

Lee tosses Daniel a landline receiver.

DANIEL

(on phone)

Yes, ma'am, I dialed U.S. Customs at the Santa Teresa Port of Entry....The message said the number's out of service. Are we not bothering with Customs anymore?...Kind of kidding, yeah. Customs told me I needed to contact the Agriculture

THE SAME LIFE OVER

Department.àMy tests say the grain's contaminated.àWell, I'd like you to impound the corn and run your own tests....Let me ask you, has it occurred to you that the disdain Americans feel toward government agencies is earned through bureaucratic bullshit like this dispensed by lazy assholes like you? I'm sorry, I could have handled that better. Okay, sure, and who would that be?

GREGORY

(cell phone)

Skippy, it's Paul Gregory....Good....Listen, this Daniel Hamblin is una espina grande de mi culo. If he hasn't yet, he will. Stonewall him, amigo. Send him to FGIS.

Daniel clicks off, dials another number.

DANIEL

Yes, Dr. Skip Harrison?...It's Daniel Hamblin. The Animal and Plant Inspection Service agent said I had to speak with the area director -- you.àI think I've found some grain locally that's contaminated andàit's from Paul Gregory's farm.àGregory? What conflict of interest could there be if the grain is contaminated, doctor?àYou serve as Mr. Gregory's large animal doc. I see. I'm sorry to ask you to compromise your relationship with Mr. Gregory butàContact the Federal Grain Inspection Service. All right, do you have that number, doctor?

(to Det. Franco)

I got nowhere, as I often do. And a certain amount of getting nowhere sends me into the mountains. Where, it appears, I parked on a slant.

DET. FRANCO

(to us)

Rescue teams drag back in. There's a priest with one of the groups. Circles the troops for prayer, asks me if Mr. Hamblin can join them. You want to pray, Mr. Hamblin?

DANIEL

Yes, I'd like to join them.

Det. Franco uncuffs Daniel...

DET. FRANCO

A religious man, are you?

DANIEL

THE SAME LIFE OVER

In my own way. You?

DET. FRANCO

Nah, pretty much a heathen.

Daniel moves away from her.

DET. FRANCO (cont'd)

(to us)

The sun sets and the Priest beseeches Jesus and his virgin mother to bring Natasha Hamblin, presumably a virgin -- Christ, I hope a virgin -- home safely.

Dying sun. Daniel and Franco alone.

DET. FRANCO (cont'd)

We'll resume the search at first light. We're at 8,000 feet, Park Service expects it to freeze up here tonight.

DANIEL

8,230 feet.

DET. FRANCO

Okay. Why'd you lie to me about following deer? My folks have walked the area with eyes to the ground. No deer tracks. What's the difference why you left your daughter in the truck? Unless you were doing something you shouldn't have been doing.

DANIEL

I was following the man with the rifle.

DET. FRANCO

Mr. Cook -- how come?

DANIEL

He sped past me, drove off-road, cut an illegal path into the trees. I honked at him.

Lee Cook whistles through his teeth,
shoots Daniel the bird.

DET. FRANCO

And then what'd you do?

TIRE TRACKS.

In narrow evening light...

THE SAME LIFE OVER

DANIEL

I crack the windows, put Natasha's blanket over her, adjust her knit hat. Latch the door, key it; quiet click. Trot along the jagged trail Cook's truck made where none was before. Glance back. Sunlight through the trees. Still see my truck, maybe not her. Next valley: see Cook's truck but not him. Glance back. Can't see my truck. Look at my watch. Strange dread. I start to trot. Then run. From a hundred yards off, I see the passenger door of the truck is open. Baby seat's empty, Natasha's hat on the ground.

DET. FRANCO

And you were going to do what to Mr. Cook? Find him, then chastise him?

DANIEL

I guess, yeah. Yes.

DET. FRANCO

Give him a good smack.

DANIEL

I would have tried very hard not to get physical with him.

DET. FRANCO

So you're deceptive looking. Thin, wiry, but tough. Capable of overpowering a 2 year old. Even accidentally. Unaware of your own strength. My deputy will drive you home; I'm impounding your truck. I won't detain you, but don't leave your home. You'll be picked up at 4:30 tomorrow morning.

DANIEL

You don't have cause to take my truck or to order me to stay in my house.

DET. FRANCO

Okay, may I borrow your truck and will you please stay in your house?

Daniel turns away from her and
whispers...

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Natasha.

Daniel remains, alone, isolated as...

THE SAME LIFE OVER

CAR SEAT.

Lee tosses Det. Franco A SEAT BELT.

She addresses "the MEDIA" while at the same time she fastens the coupler, uncouples it. Fastens, uncouples. Two-handed, one-handed... She's methodical and relentless.

DET. FRANCO

Yes, of course we're investigating the possibility the father did something to the child. Yes, it's conceivable the child was abducted by an unknown party. Yes, we are already interviewing registered sex offenders. No, this isn't my first homicide investigation because at this point it's a disappearance, not a kidnapping, not a homicide. No, there are no warrants because there's no cause. If it sounds like I believe Mr. Hamblin's guilty, I'm communicating badly.

VISIT WITH VERONICA.

Veronica exudes a sensuality she couldn't control if she wanted to. She has The Miracle Worker in hand.

VERONICA

What?

DET. FRANCO

I'm sorry, Mrs. Hamblin.

VERONICA

Are you going to find her?

DET. FRANCO

We're doing our best. Now, please, have a seat.

Veronica moves back to her home base, into a theater seat.

DET. FRANCO (cont'd)

Were you at the theater all day?

VERONICA

I went to the gym from 11:45 to one. Then I was in a production and design meeting.

THE SAME LIFE OVER

DET. FRANCO

Daytime drinker?

VERONICA

Who?

DET. FRANCO

You.

VERONICA

I told you, I was in a production and design meeting.

DET. FRANCO

Did that answer my question?

VERONICA

Goddamn it! Where is my child? That's what --

DET. FRANCO

Mrs. Hamblin, that's what I'm trying to find out.

VERONICA

Well, do it then, I don't see you doing --

DET. FRANCO

Mrs. Hamblin, I know this is difficult.

VERONICA

No, no, I know -- I'm sorry, go on, I'm...No, I don't drink during the day.

DET. FRANCO

Thank you. Did your husband ever strike Natasha?

VERONICA

Never that I saw.

DET. FRANCO

But you suspect he may have?

DANIEL

Now look what you did! What do you think I'm going to do now -- go milk a cow? Damn it, Tasha. Please, lamb,, Daddy didn't mean to. Look, here's your baby, here's Mookie. Mookie says, Pway with me, pwease, Tasha, I'm seepy and cwanky. Lamb, are you listening to Daddy? You have to sit down in the highchair. Sit, please.

THE SAME LIFE OVER

DET. FRANCO

But you never saw him strike her.

VERONICA

Daniel's an angry man. But no, I don't think he would hit her.

DET. FRANCO

Wow, yeah, what's he angry about?

VERONICA

He...I don't know how to put a name to it; it's not that he hates the human race, but it's not that...What's that word?

DET. FRANCO

Misanthrope?

No, he's not that either. I don't know -- a friend of mine thinks...

GREGORY

...he's nuts, he's got a screw loose.

DET. FRANCO

Are those technical terms?

VERONICA

Daniel sometimes reacts to the most --

DET. FRANCO

This friend, is he a physician?

VERONICA

What -- no, a...I mean, no, not a --

DET. FRANCO

So not a licensed clinician of any sort.

VERONICA

Let me finish a fucking sentence!

DET. FRANCO

Of course, go on.

VERONICA

No, he's not a licensed anything, but that doesn't mean he can't have an opinion on someone's mental homeostasis.

DET. FRANCO

THE SAME LIFE OVER

Point taken -- especially because you used the word "homeostasis." You ever strike Natasha?

VERONICA

Never.

(beat)

Once -- yeah -- spank.

DET. FRANCO

How come?

VERONICA

She wouldn't stop crying.

DET. FRANCO

The spanking shut her up?

VERONICA

No.

DET. FRANCO

Knock her unconscious?

VERONICA

Don't be ridiculous. I let her cry.

DET. FRANCO

Take her to the hospital?

VERONICA

I spanked her, I did not beat her up.

DET. FRANCO

How'd yawl meet -- you and Mr. Hamblin?

VERONICA

He saw me do Maria in Sound of Music.

DET. FRANCO

So you act in a community theater.

VERONICA

Semi-professional.

DET. FRANCO

What's the professional part?

VERONICA

THE SAME LIFE OVER

I'm paid to be the Managing Artistic Director of the theater. I do many things in the managerial and fund-raising realms for my salary. I also direct and act. Look, you come to my theater. I've seen you -- how 'bout let's cut the disingenuous, TV cop crap.

DET. FRANCO

Sure. Ever give New York or Hollywood a try?

VERONICA

Didn't suit me.

DET. FRANCO

So, you avidly pursued celebrity but somehow found others' interest uninteresting?

VERONICA

What do you want me say? That there were a hundred of me at every audition I went to. Fine: confirmed!

DET. FRANCO

You married Mr. Hamblin, had a child, divorced before the child was one. "Irreconcilable differences."

VERONICA

I read that in his petition for divorce.

DET. FRANCO

What were the differences that were irreconcilable?

VERONICA

He found out he didn't like me.

DET. FRANCO

You know, I don't think I understand why folks get married and procreate when they don't possess the attitude or character to stay together.

VERONICA

Do all cops make pronouncements on marriage and child care?

DET. FRANCO

Help me out. I'm educable.

VERONICA

You married?

DET. FRANCO

THE SAME LIFE OVER

No.

VERONICA

Yeah, well...

DET. FRANCO

Your child was taken away from you for being an inadequate parent.

VERONICA

Listen, you butch bitch, I made sure my daughter was breathing in her crib, that there was nothing on the floor she could choke on. But people are just human, they're imperfect and they screw up!

DET. FRANCO

Ever had an abortion?

VERONICA

You can kiss my ass! Whoa, you'd like that, wouldn't you?

DET. FRANCO

I'd kinda want to get a look at the thing before I --

VERONICA

You said I didn't have to be here, right?

DET. FRANCO

You're under no oblig --

VERONICA

I'm outta here.

She starts USR but Gregory puts a hand up like a stop sign. She stops.

DET. FRANCO

Please don't go yet, Mrs. Hamblin. I want to find your child.

Veronica turns back to Det. Franco.

DET. FRANCO (cont'd)

You see Mr. Hamblin earlier today, speak?

BREAKFAST.

Veronica turns to Daniel.

THE SAME LIFE OVER

VERONICA

Tasha, look who's here.

DANIEL

Veronica, I've asked you not to just walk in my door.

VERONICA

Change the locks. Give her to me.

DANIEL

No.

VERONICA

Tasha, want Mommy to hold-ee?

DANIEL

No.

VERONICA

Damn it, Danny, I'm her mother.

DANIEL

You delivered a baby.

VERONICA

I'm as fit a parent as you are.

DANIEL

No, you're not.

VERONICA

I've got a new lawyer. I'm going back to court for custody.

DANIEL

Who's paying for the lawyer?

VERONICA

The financial arrangement is none --

DANIEL

We gotta go.

VERONICA

Go where? Do what? Fondle your tomatoes? Hey, heard about Town Council last night -- nice work. People laugh at you. Please let me hold her.

THE SAME LIFE OVER

DANIEL

I need to be insulted a few more times.

VERONICA

Pretty please.

Daniel gives the baby up. She holds
the baby through the next scene.

DET. FRANCO

Were you at the Village Council when he spoke? I didn't see
you there.

VERONICA

No, I had a rehearsal.

DET. FRANCO

Right. I was -- yep, I was there.

VERONICA

Yes -- and..?

SHOWDOWN AT VILLAGE COUNCIL.

First, Gregory addresses the council.

GREGORY

Mis compas, what can I say? My family has farmed this valley
for six generations. We've employed a lot folks. I am
exercising my right to alter my land to provide for my needs
and the needs of my family. I respectfully request the
approval the variance at this time.

(to someone on the council;
making a golf swing...)

Miguel, 10:30 ma±ana.

He lifts a hand politely, giving Daniel
the floor.

DANIEL

(to the council)

I know some of you call me Daniel Quixote despite the
diminished number of working windmills in our valley.
It was Quixote's creator who said, "All that glitters isn't
gold." So I take issue with Mr. Gregory's claim that turning
under 300 acres of farmland in favor of erecting 400 new
houses will improve our community.

THE SAME LIFE OVER

GREGORY

Homes, not houses.

DANIEL

Mr. Gregory says the new houses will improve land values in the area, will spur the economy and generate commercial ventures. The 16 laborers who live on his property will be evicted with their families into the colonias where there's no electricity or running water, if you sanction his request for a zoning variance. The overall economic benefit from building houses on that land will be less than a renewable crop like chile.

GREGORY

You got no clue what farmers today face trying to --

DANIEL

You spoke, Mr. Gregory, and I was quiet.

GREGORY

But you are ignorant of --

DANIEL

Knock it off!

GREGORY

Don't talk to me in that tone of voice.

DANIEL

I am speaking here -- you stop!

(to the Town Council)

Our Judeo-Christian tradition says we're images of God. So don't we have a responsibility to care for the ecosystem and the poor people who keep it fruitful? You gentlemen of the Council are charged with protecting the best interests of the village, but you change zoning to accommodate anyone who wants to sell anything to anyone who wants to build anything.

GREGORY

They're not here to defend themselves, anymore than I am!

DANIEL

To the contrary, they are, and their actions make for a lousy defense.

GREGORY

Are you suggesting these men can be swayed by --

THE SAME LIFE OVER

DANIEL

Yeah. I come to you because of my passenger -- this child. I want a world for her where everything natural doesn't become concrete and stucco, where green doesn't only come from a paint can, where at least a few people act from conscience and not greed. How much is that to ask? Thanks for the opportunity to speak to you.

He turns away. Gregory blocks his way.

GREGORY

You can't compete with me, chico.

DET. FRANCO

Play nice now, boys.

DANIEL

Excuse me.

GREGORY

Analise.

Gregory touches Det. Franco's upper lip. He moves away.

DET. FRANCO

Sir.

(calling after Daniel)

Mr. Hamblin. You didn't exactly woo them to your point of view.

DANIEL

Yeah.

DET. FRANCO

I wonder why.

DANIEL

Maybe you can tell me.

DET. FRANCO

Just a thought: Someone needs to work with you on editing your text.

DANIEL

Should probably start by not insulting the people I'm trying to charm.

THE SAME LIFE OVER

DET. FRANCO

As far as "in the image of God," I don't know anyone who fits that image.

DANIEL

Z-Z Top?

DET. FRANCO

And Cervantes actually said, "All is not gold that glisters."

DANIEL

Wow, I was way off.

DET. FRANCO

I tell you that so you understand it's possible to be thoroughly informed on a subject, just in case someone calls you on the superficiality of your perspective.

DANIEL

I have been so lonely before you came into my life. Who are you?

DET. FRANCO

You left out that the laborers on his farm will have no health benefits and that there's a disproportionate incidence of liver cancer among the field workers in this valley and no one knows why, maybe because no one cares enough to find out. See, if you're going to be a benevolent Gringo, get the facts. You were just up there whackin' off.

DANIEL

You were sitting here. Why didn't you open your mouth?

DET. FRANCO

Because the poor and destitute are going to have to rise up in righteous wrath and take what they want.

DANIEL

You should lead them. Let me know when to get my armor out of mothballs. Gotta take my kid home.

DET. FRANCO

You have a good evening.

Resume Veronica and Franco.

DET. FRANCO (cont'd)

Last question, Mrs. Hamblin: Any chance he could be hiding

THE SAME LIFE OVER

the child from you?

VERONICA

I thought about that.

DET. FRANCO

And if he might hide her from you, why wouldn't the opposite be possible? You hide her from him?

VERONICA

By the way: abortions are legal in this state. You're gonna represent the law -- learn it. You're just up here whackin' off. Find my child.

Veronica walks away.

TRUCK DOOR.

DET. FRANCO

(a dream)

She squeezes out of the car seat, slides to the floor, grasps the door handle with two chubby hands. She's a pioneer, facing uncharted land. Door pops open; she steps down onto the running board, then backward, the way she goes down stairs, climbs to the ground. She sets off in search of the most important person in her life. I hear her laughing and babbling. Chase her down through trees and sunlight before she can find trouble, scoop her into my arms. She howls with glee: Mommy! You're safe. I made you safe. No, no, I'm not your mommy.

INTERROGATION 2.

DET. FRANCO

I go to collect Mr. Hamblin. He isn't there. My first thought is that he has run. I put out an APB. A ranger up mountain responds that he has a 10-20 on Mr. Hamblin.

Lee hits the button and an umbrella snaps open. He hands it to Det. Franco who holds it over her head.

DET. FRANCO (cont'd)

I asked you to stay in your house.

DANIEL

I defied you.

THE SAME LIFE OVER

DET. FRANCO

I trusted you.

DANIEL

You didn't trust me, you had a deputy watching my house.

DET. FRANCO

I have your truck -- how'd you get up here?

DANIEL

Bicycle.

DET. FRANCO

(to us)

Rain obscures the moon. Deputies pen the media at a distance.

MEDIA 1 (LEE ACTOR)

Detective!

MEDIA 2 (VERONICA ACTOR)

Detective!

MEDIA 1

Detective!

DET. FRANCO

Got ten volunteers plus cops plus the Forest Service Rescue Unit. Chopper's been flying all night. The Priest calls to Mr. Hamblin: "We'll find her, Danny," but others keep clear, their suppositions of his guilt twitching in the distance between them and him.

DANIEL

Let me go with them.

DET. FRANCO

I can't have you out there.

DANIEL

I was out there all night. I could have moved her, buried her.

DET. FRANCO

Did you move or bury her?

Daniel moves away from Det. Franco.

THE SAME LIFE OVER

DET. FRANCO (cont'd)

(to us)

Rain becomes snow. Earth turns, inexorably.

DANIEL

What about sex offenders hereabouts?

DET. FRANCO

Interviewed, alibis checked. Zip, nada.

(to us)

I am afraid I'm not in charge of my investigation.

She hands the umbrella to Gregory, who
furls it, puts it in his umbrella
stand.

DET. FRANCO (cont'd)

Can you think of anyone who might so resent your
environmental activism, he or she would take that resentment
out on your child?

DANIEL

No.

DET. FRANCO

Do you think your wife's screwy enough to kidnap your child?

DANIEL

Veronica is untamed, not crazy. If she had Natasha, she
would have tried to make a custody deal with me last night.

DET. FRANCO

Why last night? Why not this morning? This afternoon.

DANIEL

Veronica is not a patient person.

DET. FRANCO

So, this marriage...

DANIEL

I figure you solicited expert testimony overnight from our
acquaintances.

DET. FRANCO

Rebuttal?

DANIEL

THE SAME LIFE OVER

Was it all bad?

DET. FRANCO

Actually, I didn't have time to talk to anyone. You tell me what you're willing to tell.

DANIEL

I wanted a child. I had no success with women in long term relationships. I don't think I really got that marriage meant sharing a domicile with someone.

DET. FRANCO

What was the worst of that?

DANIEL

She didn't refold the hand towel after she washed her hands.

DET. FRANCO

The judge has issued an impound order on your truck and search warrants for your home and Mrs. Hamblin's. Do not hop on that bike and leave the scene until I tell you.

DANIEL

As I could have moved or buried her last night, I could have gotten rid of things in my home.

DET. FRANCO

Did you dispose of anything last night in your home?

DANIEL

You know I didn't knowingly harm my child.

DET. FRANCO

I don't know that. College, you almost killed a man over a cigarette and a beer can.

DANIEL

I see.

DET. FRANCO

Do you?

DANIEL

Okay. He threw a beer bottle out his car window at a traffic light; it shattered in a crosswalk.

DET. FRANCO

And you attacked him.

THE SAME LIFE OVER

DANIEL

I asked him to clean up his mess. His answer was to flick his cigarette at me.

DET. FRANCO

Wow, yeah. Probation for the cigarette incident. Didn't keep you out of the intelligence branch of the Army. What'd you do exactly?

DANIEL

Lied, cheated, deceived people.

DET. FRANCO

Did you enjoy that?

DANIEL

At the time, yeah.

DET. FRANCO

After the Army, you worked security for the Saudis. How were they?

DANIEL

The worst among us.

DET. FRANCO

You're on permanent disability from that job.

DANIEL

I was shot in the head.

DET. FRANCO

Defending a Saudi oil prince?

DANIEL

Defending a car I rented at Reagan Airport. Washington. Attempted car jacking.

DET. FRANCO

That's not in your file.

DANIEL

I didn't compile it.

DET. FRANCO

Is that your only income?

THE SAME LIFE OVER

DANIEL

I have a small grant to develop hybrid tomatoes.

DET. FRANCO

I'm sorry, you...

DANIEL

I grow tomatoes.

DET. FRANCO

Hydroponics?

DANIEL

No, soil based.

DET. FRANCO

Do you believe God or Jesus will have a hand in the resolution of this matter, Mr. Hamblin?

DANIEL

I believe Jesus is the Son of God; as He chose, so do we. Even the heathens.

DET. FRANCO

Actually, I'm one of those believe Jesus was a completely mortal gentleman whose efforts to tame the savage met with failure.

DANIEL

I'm really tired, I'm not going to talk to you anymore now.

Det. Franco turns to us.

DET. FRANCO

Rescue searchers return as the light fails. The Priest doesn't invite Mr. Hamblin to join the prayer circle this evening.

(to Daniel)

Put your bike in my trunk, I'll give you a ride home.

DANIEL

I'd rather ride down.

DET. FRANCO

We'll be waiting outside your house.

SERVING THE WARRANT.

THE SAME LIFE OVER

Daniel's "home." Det. Franco looks around as Daniel "arrives."

DET. FRANCO

(to us)

Forensics works its way around his house, yard, green house.

(to Daniel)

Lotta children's books.

DANIEL

I read to Natasha every night. I hope she'll be a reader -- unlike her dad.

DET. FRANCO

Problems reading or were you a TV kid?

DANIEL

Sports, TV, dyslexia.

Lee tosses her a small cannister. She holds it up.

DET. FRANCO

Can you identify the substance in this cannister? Oregano?

DANIEL

Marijuana. I smoke it at night to sleep.

DET. FRANCO

What if your child awakens in the night and needs you?

DANIEL

My child has never cried for help in my home and been ignored. I only smoke when Veronica has Natasha on home visitation.

DET. FRANCO

You can control your habit that way?

DANIEL

Yep.

DET. FRANCO

I asked you yesterday if you used drugs or took prescription medication and you said, no.

DANIEL

I lied.

THE SAME LIFE OVER

Det. Franco hands the cannister off to Lee.

DET. FRANCO

Now these tomatoes. What's the deal with them?

DANIEL

Let's not.

DET. FRANCO

Please, I'm interested.

DANIEL

They're genetically engineered to ripen slowly. No fertilizers or pesticides. Because they stay on the vine longer, they have more flavor and nutritional value. Standard tomatoes are picked while they're green and treated with ethylene gas to turn them red. The early picking diminishes the taste.

DET. FRANCO

May I pick one?

DANIEL

Do we have to do this?

DET. FRANCO

No.

DANIEL

Let me pick it for you.

Veronica tosses a tomato to Daniel who hands it Det. Franco, who studies it.

DET. FRANCO

(to the tomato)

"Men must endure/Their going hence, even as their coming hither./Ripeness is all."

DANIEL

Why not just say life's tough, but a good tomato can perk you up?

DET. FRANCO

Sorry -- King Lear. Not original.

THE SAME LIFE OVER

She bites, catches the explosion of
juice, meat, seeds. Chews.

DET. FRANCO (cont'd)
Wonderful flavor.

DANIEL
Good.

DET. FRANCO
What got you into tomatoes?

DANIEL
Apples had a bad reputation in our house.

DET. FRANCO
Right, your father was a minister -- that's very clever.

DANIEL
Appreciate it.

DET. FRANCO
Grow your own marijuana, under the same natural conditions?

DANIEL
One crop a year, yeah.

DET. FRANCO
Your father preach the Ten Commandments?

DANIEL
Has a familiar ring.

DET. FRANCO
You ever kill in the Army?

DANIEL
Not with my own hands.

DET. FRANCO
Whose did you use?

DANIEL
I was involved in planning operations in which people died.

DET. FRANCO
In which people were killed, you mean.

THE SAME LIFE OVER

DANIEL

There's evil in the world, Detective.

DET. FRANCO

Why didn't you flush the marijuana?

DANIEL

You gonna give me a ticket?

DET. FRANCO

We'll continue the mountain search one more day.

VERONICA AND ANALISE 2.

In transit from Daniel to Veronica, she gets a folder from Lee...as well as a pill, which he shakes out of a plastic bottle for her.

DET. FRANCO

(to us)

Knew a doctor a few years ago. She said age 32, we start to fall apart. Day I hit that number, I swear my jaw started to disintegrate. Stress of the job goes right down my teeth where guys start using sledgehammers on the back of my head.

She pops the pill, turns to Veronica, who has The Miracle Worker script in hand.

DET. FRANCO (cont'd)

Mrs. Hamblin...

VERONICA

What -- tell me. Did you...Is she --

DET. FRANCO

No, we haven't found her.

VERONICA

Oh, my god, how do people stand...Is there a chance she...

She can't let herself be weak in front of Det. Franco. She pretends to study her script.

VERONICA (cont'd)

Why are you here?

THE SAME LIFE OVER

DET. FRANCO

There are four domestic disputes on record. Each case, Mr. Hamblin called and you were removed from the home.

VERONICA

His expectations were too high.

DET. FRANCO

How's that?

VERONICA

He expected me to be more than I was.

DET. FRANCO

When you divorced, he was granted custody.

VERONICA

In Child Welfare's view, he's a terrific parent. I'm...well, you get it.

DET. FRANCO

Promiscuous?

VERONICA

Highly selective.

DET. FRANCO

According to them, you select often.

VERONICA

I am a serial monogamist.

DET. FRANCO

I believe the word they used in reference to your mates was "transient."

VERONICA

By golly, I believe you're right.

DET. FRANCO

What play you rehearsing?

VERONICA

The Miracle Worker.

DET. FRANCO

(reading)

THE SAME LIFE OVER

"Mrs. Hamblin is consumed by a desire for fame and gives greater credence to her 'artistic needs' than her maternal and spousal obligations."

VERONICA

If some post-menopausal, barren social worker divined that, it must be true.

DET. FRANCO

You ever wield a weapon against Mr. Hamblin in any of those disputes?

VERONICA

A knife, a floor lamp, a shepherd's staff from a nativity play.

DET. FRANCO

Christmas spirit.

VERONICA

That's it.

DET. FRANCO

He ever strike you back -- in self-defense?

VERONICA

He neutralized me until the cops came.

DET. FRANCO

Neutralized. Taser? Or some of that secret Army pressure point stuff?

VERONICA

I think technically you'd call it a firm hug. He's a great...was...a great hugger.

DET. FRANCO

One of Mr. Hamblin's neighbors reported screaming outside his house last night.

She descends on Daniel.

VERONICA

Where the hell have you been?

DANIEL

I have something terrible to --

THE SAME LIFE OVER

VERONICA

Jesus, Daniel, don't you think I know! Are you hiding her from me? Because if you're not...Did you...

DANIEL

Open the door so she could wander off?

VERONICA

You can get diverted.

DANIEL

I got diverted.

VERONICA

She's just a baby.

DANIEL

You think I purposely hurt my daughter?

VERONICA

You lamented a 100 times during my pregnancy the world going to hell she was going to enter!

DANIEL

And I told you a thousand times I was going to try to improve it.

VERONICA

Where is she, Daniel?

DANIEL

You figure I made it look like she opened the door and wandered off?

VERONICA

I didn't mean --

DANIEL

Why wouldn't I have killed her as painlessly as possible?

VERONICA

That's not --

DANIEL

Why would I have cursed her with cold, pain, and aloneness? Think! Think!

VERONICA

THE SAME LIFE OVER

If you'd been thinking, she'd be asleep in her crib.

DANIEL

I gotta get supplies, go back up and look for her.

VERONICA

I'm going with you.

DANIEL

No, I'll move faster without you.

VERONICA

You exclude me from everything!

DANIEL

Yeah, let's debate that now.

VERONICA

I am living my life, Danny, even as you live yours!

DANIEL

Who were you living it with this morning?

VERONICA

What?

DANIEL

Your life?

VERONICA

What?

DANIEL

Where were you when my child disappeared?

VERONICA

Are you crazy?

DANIEL

Maybe.

VERONICA

You are, you're crazy! You want someone else to blame! She was with you!

DANIEL

Where were you this morning?

THE SAME LIFE OVER

VERONICA

I was at the theater -- working.

DANIEL

If I find out you had anything to do with this and that child is hurt in any way...

VERONICA

That is such a mean thing to say. That is so mean.

Gregory hands Daniel a flashlight, which he runs slowly across the back of the set, as if he searches all night.

VERONICA (cont'd)

Get Pedialyte! Get formula! Take them with you!

DANIEL

All right, all right, I will.

Gregory ambles over to Lee's home base with a cut glass tumbler and some whiskey from a decanter on his side table.

DET. FRANCO

So he didn't strike you.

VERONICA

No, he didn't.

DET. FRANCO

You use marijuana?

VERONICA

That would be against the law.

DET. FRANCO

Your ex-husband a user?

VERONICA

Ask him.

DET. FRANCO

If we found marijuana in his house, whose would it be?

VERONICA

My first thought would be you planted it.

THE SAME LIFE OVER

DET. FRANCO

Mr. Hamblin said it was his.

VERONICA

Then why ask me about it? You didn't find any in my house.

DET. FRANCO

What we found in your house were prescriptions for sleeping aids, tranquilizers, anti-depressants, and for Ritalin, which calms hyper-active children but acts like speed in adults.

VERONICA

Prescriptions from a doctor.

DET. FRANCO

A doctor who died over a year ago.

VERONICA

I had nothing to do with his passing.

DET. FRANCO

The prescriptions have expired, yet you have a plentiful supply. Where do you get your medications now?

VERONICA

Screw you, lady! I am a work in progress! I'm guilty of all I'm guilty of, but not kidnapping or, God help me, murdering my own child. Find my daughter -- and stop harassing me.

DET. FRANCO

If somebody'll tell me where to find her, I'll stop troubling everybody. Now, how 'bout you give a listen: I'm dealing with an unstable mother who for a living pretends to be people she isn't; and a father who had a career, according to him, "lying, cheating, and deceiving people." Can you help me out here?

VERONICA

If I could, don't you think I would?

DET. FRANCO

What does she say at the end, Helen Keller, her first word.

VERONICA

"Water" -- why?

DET. FRANCO

THE SAME LIFE OVER

Actually, I think she says, "Wah-wah," short for water, but very much, in her rebirth, like a baby's cry.

Veronica goes.

DET. FRANCO (cont'd)

(to us)

They hate me -- the people I suspect of being guilty of what I am trying to prove them guilty of.

VISION OF THE WORLD.

Night. Moonlight. Paul Gregory's farm. Alone, Det. Franco stares over the land on which she grew up.

DET. FRANCO

"...I dipt into the future, far as human eye could see,/Saw the Vision of the world, and the wonder that would be."

GREGORY

Lord Tennyson -- nice. After the fourth surgery, I gave you that anthology of poetry. I made you memorize how many lines each night?

DET. FRANCO

Four, sir.

GREGORY

Toughest word?

DET. FRANCO

Tintinnabulation, sir.

GREGORY

"...that so musically wells from the bells, bells, bells..."
Terrible poem. I told you you could defy your destiny. I've still got your trailer. Those lights right through there.
Official visit?

DET. FRANCO

Yes, sir.

GREGORY

Problem with good intentions, people like Hamblin, is everybody supposes they got some.

DET. FRANCO

THE SAME LIFE OVER

I was there the other night, sir -- you dislike Mr. Hamblin.

GREGORY

Me cai mal. Can't stand him. But if I wanted to have it out with him, I sure as hell wouldn't do anything to his kid.

DET. FRANCO

Two years ago, you were investigated for unfair labor practices, based on a complaint by Mr. Hamblin.

GREGORY

I remedied those problems immediately and you know it.

DET. FRANCO

I don't know it, sir -- I should, probably, but I don't. I need to go back and check.

GREGORY

You do that. I'll bid you good night.

DET. FRANCO

I don't disagree with your right to do whatever's legal with your own land.

GREGORY

I'm grateful.

DET. FRANCO

That didn't come out right.

GREGORY

But it came out and I understood every syllable.

DET. FRANCO

What happens when it's gone? That land out there, houses built.

GREGORY

I retire. And, please, don't tell me how you remember the valley when you were a little girl.

DET. FRANCO

I remember most being grateful my mom had a decent job and I could go to school so I could grow up and stand here with you today as an equal.

His cellphone rings. He looks at the I.D. Answers.

THE SAME LIFE OVER

GREGORY

Hi there. Can I call you back?

VERONICA

Am I such a rotten, stinky, shitty person that people would think I did something to my baby?

GREGORY

I understand you...

VERONICA

No matter how crappy I am, she's my baby.

GREGORY

I'm going to have to get back to you on that in a few minutes.

VERONICA

How could a little baby open a hundred pound door? Who would do such a thing? What person is that?

GREGORY

Gotta go.

He hangs up.

DET. FRANCO

Who lives in our trailer now?

He gives her a hug.

GREGORY

Some lazy Mexicans. Come for supper some night; Mrs. Gregory would love to see you.

DET. FRANCO

Thank you, sir, I appreciate that.

Gregory goes back to his home base.

WHAT HAPPENED TO ANALISE?

DET. FRANCO

Helicopter out there somewhere above the trees. Snow falls as the rescuers go out at first light.

(to Daniel)

Mr. Hamblin. I'd like you to take a polygraph.

THE SAME LIFE OVER

DANIEL

Why -- it's not admissible?

DET. FRANCO

I think it might help you ventilate some of your feelings.

DANIEL

So you'd be doing me a favor?

DET. FRANCO

I might be able to focus my investigation else --

DANIEL

I won't let you ask me if I ever abused my child.

DET. FRANCO

All you have to do is answer truthfully --

DANIEL

What happened to you? Huh?

DET. FRANCO

We're not talking about --

DANIEL

Were you abused...

DET. FRANCO

You think something...

DANIEL

...molested...

DET. FRANCO

...had to "happen" to me for me...

DANIEL

...raped?

DET. FRANCO

...to distrust the nature of men?

DANIEL

Then what the hell is your problem, lady?

DET. FRANCO

This isn't about me!

THE SAME LIFE OVER

DANIEL

It's about you because I have to depend on you to find my child!

DET. FRANCO

It's about you! And, sadly, you're not the first parent to suffer a lapse in judgment! You're just one of the unlucky ones who may see a bad choice end with deadly consequences.

DANIEL

I'm a trained liar. I can beat your polygraph. Bring it on.
(as Det. Franco starts away)

Hey.

DET. FRANCO

What?

DANIEL

She'll put anything in her mouth.

DET. FRANCO

What?

DANIEL

Much of what's out there is edible. She has teeth. A mouthful of them. She's alive.

CALLING OFF THE SEARCH.

DET. FRANCO

(to us)

Late afternoon, the rescuers straggle in. The Priest offers no prayers today.

DET. FRANCO (cont'd)

I'm calling off the search, Mr. Hamblin. I'm sorry.

DANIEL

I need my truck back, or arrest me.

DET. FRANCO

I'll have a deputy take you to the impound yard to get your truck.

FRONT PACK.

DET. FRANCO

THE SAME LIFE OVER

(to us)

Dirty dishes in my sink. Garbage needs to go out. Microwave dings. Dish is hot; I fumble it. Food spills. Scrape it back into the dish. Burn my tongue.

DANIEL

"This is Daniel and Natasha. We're out saving the world. Leave a message."

DET. FRANCO

Hello, it's Det. Franco. Hello? I was a kid, Mama wanted me to stand in the front seat right next to her. Moved to America -- mandatory seat belts. She railed against government regulation or her rights as an American citizen.

DANIEL

Why are you calling me?

DET. FRANCO

I think she wanted back the right to let me go through the windshield. My mom could just as easily been you.

(to us)

I don't turn on TV, I can't stand to see my gooney face on the news. I slap an icepack on either side of my aching jaw. I fall asleep in my Lazy Boy. Search in my sleep for that little girl calling for me, to find her, save her, but hear only Daniel Hamblin's voice.

THE PLAY IS NOT OVER!! TO FIND OUT HOW IT ENDS, ORDER A HARD COPY AT WWW.NEXTSTAGEPRESS.NET