

"Mahalia"

EXT. RURAL STATE ROAD – DAY

A light snow has dusted the dead fields. Dead rural winter.

Sound of truck tires grows from the silence. An older grey truck drives from left to right, through the dead, grey, foggy landscape.

INT. GREY TRUCK – DAY

Driver's POV, we travel down a state road, seeing the driver's hands on the wheel, a polaroid of a girl on his dash, a pink hair tie and worn homemade bead bracelet on his wrist. He nervously taps his fingers.

Cut amongst various kid's items in the truck. Soft music plays over FM radio. Quiet car ride. Warm truck.

DRIVER'S POV LOOKING OUT OF FRONT WINDSHIELD

Snap to a black Dodge Challenger police car, traveling on the state road running perpendicular to ours. Stay fixed on this car as we drive past, it stops at the crossroad.

INT. GREY TRUCK – DAY

Snap to rearview mirror as black Challenger pulls out, behind us.

Snap to paper-wrapped package, bundled in a plastic grocery bag, tucked under the glove box.

Snap to rearview mirror as black Challenger continues to follow.

Snap back to package.

Snap to rearview mirror as black Challenger continues to follow. Gaining ground.

A CELL PHONE BUZZES

Snap to phone

💰💰💰 (TEXT)

*You're gonna die either way.*

Snap to driver's POV. His hands are tense. White knuckles.

Snap to rearview mirror as black Challenger is now right on the truck's ass.

Snap to driver's POV. Careful driving.

Snap to rearview. The car is gaining rapidly. It comes dangerously close to the truck, and flies around, passing by.

FATHER

Fuck.

A CELL PHONE BUZZES

MAHALIA ❤️ (TEXT)

*Money can't buy you peace.*

The father's hand picks up the phone, and flicks his thumb to unlock it. The whole message thread can be read.

FATHER (TEXT)

*Everyone is gone. They killed everyone. If we start to run we're never gonna be able to stop running. They'll kill me & they'll kill her too.*

MAHALIA ❤️ (TEXT)  
*So what are you gonna do?*

FATHER (TEXT)  
*I could keep the money, and run.*

FATHER (TEXT)  
*Or I could give them the money. They'll kill me but if they have the money they won't go after her.*

MAHALIA ❤️ (TEXT)  
*Money can't buy you peace.*

He sets the phone down.

Driver's POV. We ride along state roads, endless fields. The nervous tapping returns.

A CELL PHONE BUZZES

He navigates to his message thread with the mystery antagonist.

💰💰💰 (TEXT)  
*And now, it's down to just us & you.*

💰💰💰 (TEXT)  
*Got one chance to save your daughter. Bring us the money. Right now. We don't wanna kill her. But we will.*

💰💰💰 (TEXT)  
*We're in the woods.*

💰💰💰 (TEXT)  
*You're gonna die either way.*

💰💰💰 (TEXT)

*Walk here. Don't tell nobody  
where you're going.*

He sets the phone down, shaken.

A LITTLE GIRL SPEAKS

LITTLE GIRL

Daddy? I woked up.

FATHER

Hey baby.

FATHER

Are you hungry?

LITTLE GIRL

No.

The father drives through winding roads along creeks, and through wide, dead fields. The little girl plays with toys that make various sound effects. She sings her ABC's and talks to herself.

The father comes to an intersection. One way is more rural state roads, the other is a highway. He freezes for a long time.

The father takes a deep breath and turns toward the more rural state roads.

He navigates the truck to a hidden place in the dead, snow covered woods.

He unlocks his phone. Navigates to message thread with Mahalia. Copies & pastes a message.

FATHER (TEXT)

*(Coordinates)*

*Trucks hidden here. She's in  
it. Little money, too. No one  
is gonna be lookin. Go now.*

He types messages.

FATHER (TEXT)

*Be patient with her.*

FATHER (TEXT)

*Faking like you're asleep is  
the fastest way to get her to  
sleep.*

He grabs the package from below the glove compartment, exits the truck.

The rear door opens.

FATHER

You know how much I love you?

LITTLE GIRL

Too much.

FATHER

I'll be seeing you, okay? I  
gotta go for a little.

LITTLE GIRL

HURRY!

The father moves through the trees with the money tucked under his arm. Eventually disappearing into the grey.

As "A Satisfied Mind" by Mahalia Jackson plays, a car comes and parks close to the truck. A woman hops out and removes the little girl, playing with her and laughing as she takes her away in her car.

MAHALIA JACKSON

How many times have you heard  
someone say

"If I had his money, I could  
do things my way"

But little they know that it's  
so hard to find

One rich man in ten with a  
satisfied mind

Money can't buy back your  
youth when you're old  
Or a friend when you're  
lonesome or a peace to your  
soul

The wealthiest person is a  
pauper at times  
Compared to the man with a  
satisfied mind

When my life has ended, my  
time has run out  
My friends and my loved ones,  
I'll leave there's no doubt  
But one thing's for certain  
when it comes my time  
I'll leave this old world with  
a satisfied mind

FADE TO BLACK

FADE IN – EXT – WOODS FROM TRUCK POV – DURING  
SUNSET

From the woods, beaten, exhausted, covered in  
blood, still carrying the money, the father  
emerges slowly from the woods. His demeanor  
indicates a mix of exhaustion and pure  
relief. He throws his cigarette onto the  
snow and climbs into the truck.

FADE OUT

SUPER  
"MAHALIA"