Little Father
by Clare Batty

April 17, 2002. San Francisco, California. Terrorists have just blown the Bay Bridge to pieces, causing mayhem in the Bay Area. Throughout San Francisco, people hear the constant echoing whine of sirens over the screaming and wailing people. Citizens are running around, trying to find a way back home and searching for loved ones. The camera zooms in a particular man who is running in the middle of a street. Dressed in a typical professional attire with dark slacks, white shirt and tie, he appears to be a fairly tall Caucasian male, lean but not muscular with receding dark brown hair. While running around the street, he stops every once in awhile to yell for his son, MARCUS. Each time he yells his son’s name, the shot zooms in closer and closer to his distraught face until it completely focuses on the mouth.

The scene changes suddenly and we find the man gasping as he sits straight up in bed, breathing heavily after a nightmare. He calms down when he finds his son and wife gathered around him. LILY is next to him, rubbing his back. MARCUS is standing by the bed.

LILY: It’s okay, honey. We’re here.

GEORGE: (shaking and holding his head in his hands) It was the same one. I guess I keep thinking that Marcus.... I mean, you’re really here, Marcus. (sighs with relief) You’re really here.

The camera focuses on MARCUS as he approaches the bed. He is a fairly tall and lanky 17-year-old with short light brown hair. He is slightly irritated with his dad, and is trying not to show it.

MARCUS: (slowly so as not to seem irritated) It’s been a couple of weeks now, Dad.

LILY sends him a disapproving glance.

GEORGE: I know, Marcus. I just, I assumed the worst when... I just wish these damn nightmares would stop.

GEORGE YALLOW has been having this same nightmare for weeks ever since his son MARCUS went missing after the attack on the bridge. He was originally devastated when MARCUS disappeared, but his mood has improved since his son returned. MARCUS did return safe and sound, however; he was just trying to find his way back home from Oakland--so he says. GEORGE is a typical family man, always prioritizing his family. Although he greatly cares and loves his family, he still aims to be the man of the house and refuses to show signs of weakness or emotion.

LILY: Give it time, George. Remember, we’re all here together now.

Camera zooms out as all three embrace each other, MARCUS joining somewhat reluctantly.
Scene ends.

The next morning, MARCUS and GEORGE are sitting at the kitchen table. GEORGE is reading the newspaper while MARCUS is diligently watching the local news program on the television on the counter. The camera shows the view of the whole kitchen, designed in a typical classical style with lots of white and tiled floors.

FEMALE NEWS-ANCHOR: The DHS announced that they just finished installing two additional road checkpoints yesterday outside of San Francisco. (camera focuses on television monitor) The new checkpoints will be in full effect starting tomorrow. Taking a look at traffic, there seems to be slow movement throughout the Bay Area, especially on I-5. If you’re on your way to work, give yourself enough time and plenty of patience when passing through those checkpoints. (camera shows Marcus and George looking at the television) When we come back, Steve will present some tips and advice on how to make your commute stress-free.

MARCUS: (clearly irritated and disgusted) More checkpoints? That’s ridiculous.

GEORGE appears slightly stunned by MARCUS’S reaction. He slightly lowers his paper.

GEORGE: They’re supposed to keep us safe, Marcus.

MARCUS: Dad, it’s not fair to treat everyone like a potential terrorist. They’re digging into our private lives, taking away our rights.

GEORGE fully sets down his paper.

GEORGE: Think about it, Marcus. Would you rather have convenience or terrorists?

MARCUS: Taking away our liberty doesn’t help catch terrorists.

GEORGE: The occasional checkpoint is a small price to pay to keep people safe.

MARCUS: (sarcastic) Oh, yeah definitely. It’s totally okay to be stopped, searched, and interrogated every once in awhile.

GEORGE: (confidently) I would feel proud to be pulled over.

MARCUS: (angrily stands up) Proud? Dad, are you even listening to yourself?

GEORGE: Marcus, we’re going to have to make some sacrifices now so that something like this doesn’t happen again.

MARCUS: (shakes his head while leaving, clearly agitated) I can’t believe you.
Camera pans out. George is now alone in the kitchen. He is staring in the direction of where Marcus left, clearly concerned.

Scene Ends.

The camera is slowly zooming in on a school building. It is the end of the day and students are just leaving. There is a cut to a school hallway, where some students are still milling about, gathering their things, and walking outside. The camera is moving slowly down the hallway towards two guys with their backs to the camera, conversing as they walk towards the doors. Camera cuts to an outside side view of the main school doors and we see the two boys exiting and finally hear their conversation. MARCUS is talking to his good friend JOLU, a very tall Hispanic boy who is a whiz with computer programming. Both are wearing backpacks.

MARCUS: And you know what else? He even said that he would enjoy being pulled over.

JOLU: That’s messed up, man.

Continuing to talk while walking down the sidewalk.

MARCUS: He’s being absolutely ridiculous.

Their female friend VAN runs up alongside of them. She is a petite, cute Asian girl, dressed in a typical school skirt and white shirt.

VAN: (sarcastically) Thanks for waiting, guys.

MARCUS: Sorry, our bad.

JOLU: So what are you going to do about it?

VAN: About what?

JOLU: (turns to VAN) His Dad.

MARCUS: I dunno. I just wish he would see how unfair this is for normal people.

(pause)

VAN: Well, what if we changed the definition of normal?

MARCUS: What?

VAN: Think about it.

MARCUS: (catching on) Make normal people look not so normal...
JOLU: You know, we could even use indienet and crypto to mess up the system.

MARCUS: (suddenly excited and quickens his pace) Guys, that's brilliant!

JOLU: What would you do without me?

VAN: (punches him on the arm) Whatever! It was my idea.

JOLU and VAN keep up with MARCUS. Camera cuts to show them walking from behind. Camera stays put behind them and as they walk away, continuing down the sidewalk. Busy music is playing as camera then shows the three of them working together at a computer late at night. Scene cuts, showing GEORGE reading the newspaper in a lounge chair in the living room. Behind him, we see MARCUS sneak into the room. He quietly walks over to GEORGE's briefcase where he swaps his dad's ID card for the one he encrypted with false information. GEORGE turns the page of the paper while MARCUS sneaks back out.

New scene opens to show a roadside checkpoint. It is late afternoon. The next car rolls up to the two on-duty police officers. The two officers are young and inexperienced. After being out there all day, their tone towards citizens has become terse. The camera is next to the officers and we can see that GEORGE is the driver. His window is rolled down and he smiles politely at the officers.

GEORGE: (passing them his ID card) Good afternoon.

OFFICER 1 silently takes his ID card and checks it with a handheld device. The device reports GEORGE'S basic info: birthday, occupation, address, and even his recent whereabouts, which the officers begin questioning him about.

OFFICER 1: Sir, your FastTrak billing says that you drove the San Mateo bridge three times today. What for?

GEORGE: (apparently confused) No, that's not right. I've been consulting with clients in Mountain View all day.

OFFICER 1: Not according to this. What were you doing in Berkeley yesterday and today?

GEORGE: I teach there.

OFFICER 2: But you said you were with clients all day.

GEORGE: (starting to get nervous and stressed out) I had to pick up some materials. Look, I can prove that.
Camera is angled above car and officers, and begins to pan out.

OFFICER 1: We’re going to have to search your vehicle.

OFFICER 2: Sir, how many clients did you see today?

GEORGE: Well, I...

Voices begin to fade as camera continues panning out.
Scene ends.

Scene begins with GEORGE walking in through the front door of the Yallow household, obviously exhausted. He walks over to his usual comfy chair in the living room, sets down his briefcase, and collapses into his chair. LILY enters and approaches him.

LILY: (concerned) George, what took you so long?

MARCUS enters as GEORGE is speaking. He watches from the doorway behind GEORGE.

GEORGE: (really irritated) Those stupid checkpoints.

LILY: But you’ve never had a problem with them before.

GEORGE: I know. The officers were incompetent fools and the info they had on me was completely false.

LILY: But how--?

GEORGE: (getting hysterical) And you wanna know the best part? It happened again. Twice!

LILY: That’s awful....

Camera shows view from doorway where MARCUS is. He smiles as he walks away and GEORGE speaks.

GEORGE: It’s just so frustrating....

Scene ends.

Scene begins showing MARCUS in his room, working at his computer. LILY enters the room and MARCUS looks up.

MARCUS: How’s Dad doing?

LILY takes a seat in a nearby chair.
LILY: He’s calmed down. *(pauses)* He says he understands now.

MARCUS: Understands?

LILY: The fact that taking away people’s privacy is unfair.

MARCUS: Definitely creates a hassle doesn’t it?

LILY: Yeah, he sees that now. He says he really hopes that this city can be safe again for your generation’s sake.

MARCUS: Me too.

LILY: *(stands up)* He cares about you a lot, Marcus. Try to go easy on him.

MARCUS: I will, Mom.

*LILY rubs him on the shoulders and camera cuts to show her walking out of the room. MARCUS reaches for his phone, dials a number, and presses it to his ear. He swivels around in his chair as he speaks.*

MARCUS: Jolu, it worked. *(Pauses)* Yeah, man. He was so pissed off. But he totally gets it now. *(Pauses)* Yeah, so where you wanna go from here?

*Camera begins to pan out, leaving room through door.*
*Scene ends.*

*Scene opens in a living room with VAN and JOLU glued to the television. The camera cuts to the television screen as the same female news-anchor speaks.*

FEMALE NEWS-ANCHOR: Breaking News. We have just discovered the identities of those responsible for creating the Xnet system. Their names are George and Marcus Yallow, a father and son team, who constructed the network to rally people to support their rights...

*Camera shows VAN and JOLU fondly smiling as the scene and voice begins to fade out.*
*Scene ends.*