

"I've read the first paragraph of that book," he said.
"Why do you suppose I haven't slept for a week?"
I said, "Well?" and he smiled a curious, twisted smile.
"It's a cookbook," he said.

Little Girl Lost

Richard Matheson

TELEPLAY BY RICHARD MATHESON

AIRD MARCH 16, 1962

STARRING CHARLES AIDMAN AND SARAH MARSHALL

TINA'S CRYING WOKE ME UP IN A SECOND. IT WAS pitch black, middle of the night. I heard Ruth stir beside me in bed. In the front room Tina caught her breath, then started in again, louder.

"Oh, gawd," I muttered groggily.

Ruth grunted and started to push back the covers.

"I'll get it," I said wearily, and she slumped back on the pillow. We take turns when Tina has her nights; has a cold or a stomachache or just takes a flop out of bed.

I lifted up my legs and dropped them over the edge of the blankets. Then I squirmed myself down to the foot of the bed and slung my legs over the edge. I winced as my feet touched the icy floor boards. The apartment was arctic; it usually is these winter nights, even in California.

I padded across the cold floor, threading my way between the chest, the bureau, the bookcase in the hall and then the edge of the TV set as I moved into the livingroom. Tina sleeps there because we could only get a one-bedroom apartment. She sleeps on a couch that breaks down into a bed. And, at

that moment, her crying was getting louder and she started calling for her mommy.

"All right, Tina. Daddy'll fix it all up," I told her.

She kept crying. Outside, on the balcony, I heard our collie Mack jump down from his bed on the camp chair.

I bent over the couch in the darkness. I could feel that the covers were lying flat. I backed away, squinting at the floor, but I didn't see any Tina moving around.

"Oh, my God," I chuckled to myself, in spite of irritation, "the poor kid's under the couch."

I got down on my knees and looked, still chuckling at the thought of little Tina falling out of bed and crawling under the couch.

"Tina, where are you?" I said, trying not to laugh.

Her crying got louder but I couldn't see her under the couch. It was too dark to see clearly.

"Hey, where are you, kiddo?" I asked. "Come to papa."

Like a man looking for a collar button under the bureau I felt under the couch for my daughter, who was still crying and begging for mommy, mommy.

Came the first twist of surprise. I couldn't reach her no matter how hard I stretched.

"Come on, Tina," I said, amused no longer, "stop playing games with your old man."

She cried louder. My outstretched hand jumped back as it touched the cold wall.

"Daddy!" Tina cried.

"Oh for . . . !"

I stumbled up and jolted irritably across the rug. I turned on the lamp beside the record player and turned to get her, and was stopped dead in my tracks, held there, a half-asleep mute, gaping at the couch, ice water plaiting down my back.

Then, in a leap, I was on my knees by the couch and my eyes were searching frantically, my throat getting tighter and tighter. I heard her crying under the couch, but I couldn't see her.

* * *

My stomach muscles jerked in as the truth of it struck me. I ran my hands around wildly under the bed but they didn't touch a thing. I heard her crying and, by God, she wasn't there!

"Ruth!" I yelled. "Come here."

I heard Ruth catch her breath in the bedroom and then there was a rustle of bedclothes and the sound of her feet rushing across the bedroom floor. Out of the side of my eyes I saw the light blue movement of her nightgown.

"What is it?" she gasped.

I backed to my feet, hardly able to breathe much less speak. I started to say something but the words choked up in my throat. My mouth hung open. All I could do was point a shaking finger at the couch.

"Where is she!" Ruth cried.

"I don't know!" I finally managed. "She . . ."

"What!"

Ruth dropped to her knees beside the couch and looked under.

"Tina!" she called.

"Mommy."

Ruth recoiled from the couch, color draining from her face. The eyes she turned to me were horrified. I suddenly heard the sound of Mack scratching wildly at the door.

"Where is she?" Ruth asked again, her voice hollow.

"I don't know," I said, feeling numb. I turned on the light and . . ."

"But she's crying," Ruth said as if she felt the same distrust of sight that I did. "I . . . Chris, listen."

The sound of our daughter crying and sobbing in fright.

"Tina!" I called loudly, pointlessly, "where are you, angel?"

She just cried. "Mommy!" she said. "Mommy, pick me up!"

"No, no, this is crazy," Ruth said, her voice tautly held as she rose to her feet, "she's in the kitchen."

"But . . ."

I stood there dumbly as Ruth turned on the kitchen light and went in. The sound of her agonized voice made me shudder.

"Chris! *She's not in here.*"

She came running in, her eyes stark with fear. She bit her teeth into her lip.

"But where is . . . ?" she started to say, then stopped.

Because we both heard Tina crying and the sound of it was coming from under the couch.

But there wasn't anything under the couch.

Still Ruth couldn't accept the crazy truth. She jerked open the hall closet and looked in it. She looked behind the TV set, even behind the record player, a space of maybe two inches.

"Honey, *help* me," she begged. "We can't just leave her this way."

I didn't move.

"Honey, she's under the couch," I said.

"But she's not!"

Once more, like the crazy, impossible dream it was, me on my knees on the cold floor, feeling under the couch. I got *under* the couch, I touched every inch of floor space there. But I couldn't touch her, even though I heard her crying—*right in my ear*.

I got up, shivering from the cold and something else. Ruth stood in the middle of the livingroom rug staring at me. Her voice was weak, almost inaudible.

"Chris," she said, "Chris, what is it?"

I shook my head. "Honey, I don't know," I said. "I don't know what it is."

Outside, Mack began to whine as he scratched. Ruth glanced at the balcony door, her face a white twist of fear. She was shivering now in her silk gown as she looked back at the couch. I stood there absolutely helpless, my mind racing a dozen different ways, none of them toward a solution, not even toward concrete thought.

"What are we going to do?" she asked, on the verge of a scream I knew was coming.

"Baby, I . . ."

I stopped short and suddenly we were both moving for the couch.

Tina's crying was fainter.

"Oh, no," Ruth whimpered. "No. *Tina.*"

"Mommy," said Tina, further away. I could feel the chills lacing over my flesh.

"Tina, come back here!" I heard myself shouting, the father yelling at his disobedient child, who can't be seen.

"TINA!" Ruth screamed.

Then the apartment was dead silent and Ruth and I were kneeling by the couch looking at the emptiness underneath. Listening.

To the sound of our child, peacefully snoring.

"Bill, can you come right over?" I said frantically.

"What?" Bill's voice was thick and fuzzy.

"Bill, this is Chris. Tina has disappeared!"

He woke up.

"She's been kidnaped?" he asked.

"No," I said, "she's here but . . . she's not here."

He made a confused sound. I grabbed in a breath.

"Bill, for God's sake get over here!"

A pause.

"I'll be right over," he said. I knew from the way he said it he didn't know why he was coming.

I dropped the receiver and went over to where Ruth was sitting on the couch shivering and clasping her hands tightly in her lap.

"Hon, get your robe," I said. "You'll catch cold."

"Chris, I . . ." Tears running down her cheeks. "Chris, where is she?"

"Honey."

It was all I could say, hopelessly, weakly. I went into the bedroom and got her robe. On the way back I stooped over and twisted hard on the wall heater.

"There," I said, putting the robe over her back, "put it on."

She put her arms through the sleeves of the robe, her eyes pleading with me to do something. Knowing very well I couldn't do it, she was asking me to bring her baby back.

I got on my knees again, just to be doing something. I knew it wouldn't help any. I remained there a long time just staring at the floor under the couch. Completely in the dark.

"Chris, she's s-sleeping on the floor," Ruth said, her words faltering from colorless lips. "Won't . . . she catch cold?"

"I . . ."

That was all I could say. What could I tell her? No, she's not on the floor? How did I know? I could hear Tina breathing and snoring gently on the floor but she wasn't there to touch. She was gone but she wasn't gone. My brain twisted back and forth on itself trying to figure out that one. Try adjusting to something like that sometime. It's a fast way to breakdown.

"Honey, she's . . . she's not here," I said. "I mean . . . not on the floor."

"But . . ."

"I know, I know . . ." I raised my hands and shrugged in defeat. "I don't think she's cold, honey," I said as gently and persuasively as I could.

She started to say something too but then she stopped. There was nothing to say. It defied words.

We sat in the quiet room waiting for Bill to come. I'd called him because he's an engineering man, CalTech, top man with Lockheed over in the valley. I don't know why I thought that would help but I called him. I'd have called anyone just to have another mind to help. Parents are useless beings when they're afraid for their children.

Once, before Bill came, Ruth slipped to her knees by the couch and started slapping her hands over the floor.

"Tina, wake up!" she cried in newborn terror, "wake up!"

"Honey, what good is that going to do?" I asked.

She looked up at me blankly and knew. It wasn't going to do any good.

I heard Bill on the steps and reached the door before he did. He came in quietly, looking around and giving Ruth a brief smile. I took his coat. He was still in pajamas.

"What is it, kid?" he asked hurriedly.

I told him as briefly and as clearly as I could. He got down on his knees and checked for himself. He felt around underneath the couch and I saw his brow knot into lines when he heard Tina's calm and peaceful breathing.

He straightened up.

"Well?" I asked.

He shook his head. "My God," he muttered.

We both stared at him. Outside Mack was still scratching and whining at the door.

"Where is she?" Ruth asked again. "Bill, I'm about to lose my mind."

"Take it easy," he said. I moved beside her and put my arm around her. She was trembling.

"You can hear her breathing," Bill said. "It's normal breathing. She must be all right."

"But where is she?" I asked. "You can't see her, you can't even touch her."

"I don't know," Bill said, and was on his knees by the bed again.

"Chris, you'd better let Mack in," Ruth said, worried about that for a moment. "He'll wake all the neighbors."

"All right, I will," I said, and kept watching Bill.

"Should we call the police?" I asked. "Do you . . . ?"

"No, no, that wouldn't do any good," Bill said, "this isn't . . ." He shook his head as if he were shaking away everything he'd ever accepted. "It's not a police job," he said.

"Chris, he'll wake up all the . . ."

I turned for the door to let Mack in.

"Wait a minute," Bill said, and I was turned back, my heart pounding again.

Bill was half under the couch, listening hard.

"Bill, what is . . . ?" I started.

"Shhh!"

We were both quiet. Bill stayed there a moment longer. Then he straightened up and his face was blank.

"I can't hear her," he said.

"Oh, no!"

Ruth fell forward before the couch.

"Tina! Oh God, where is she!"

Bill was up on his feet, moving quickly around the room. I watched him, then looked back at Ruth slumped over the couch, sick with fear.

"Listen," Bill said, "do you hear anything?"

Ruth looked up. "Hear . . . anything?"

"Move around, move around," Bill said. "See what you hear."

Like robots Ruth and I moved around the livingroom having no idea what we were doing. Everything was quiet except for the incessant whining and scratching of Mack. I gritted my teeth and muttered a terse—"Shut up!"—as I passed the balcony door. For a second the vague idea crossed my mind that Mack knew about Tina. He'd always worshiped her.

Then there was Bill standing in the corner where the closet was, stretching up on his toes and listening. He noticed us watching him and gestured quickly for us to come over. We moved hurriedly across the rug and stood beside him.

"Listen," he whispered. We did.

At first there was nothing. Then Ruth gasped and none of us were letting out the noise of breath.

Up in the corner, where the ceiling met the walls, we could hear the sound of Tina sleeping.

Ruth stared up there, her face white, totally lost.

Bill just shook his head slowly. Then suddenly he held up his hand and we all froze, jolted again.

The sound was gone.

Ruth started to sob helplessly. "Tina."

She started out of the corner.

"We have to find her," she said despairingly. "Please."

We ran around the room in unorganized circles, trying to hear Tina. Ruth's tear-streaked face was twisted into a mask of fright.

I was the one who found her this time.

Under the television set.

We all knelt there and listened. As we did we heard her murmur a little to herself and the sound of her stirring in sleep.

"Want my dolly," she muttered.

"Tina!"

I held Ruth's shaking body in my arms and tried to stop her sobbing. Without success. I couldn't keep my own throat from tightening, my heart from pounding slow and hard in my chest. My hands shook on her back, slick with sweat.

"For God's sake, *what is it?*" Ruth said, but she wasn't asking us.

Bill helped me take her to a chair by the record player. Then he stood restlessly on the rug, gnawing furiously on one knuckle, the way I'd seen him do so often when he was engrossed in a problem.

He looked up, started to say something then gave it up and turned for the door.

"I'll let the pooch in," he said. "He's making a hell of a racket."

"Don't you have any idea what might have happened to her?" I asked.

"Bill . . . ?" Ruth begged.

Bill said, "I think she's in another dimension," and he opened the door.

What happened next came so fast we couldn't do a thing to stop it.

Mack came bounding in with a yelp and headed straight for the couch.

"He *knows!*" Bill yelled, and dived for the dog.

Then happened the crazy part. One second Mack was slid-

ing under the couch in a flurry of ears, paws and tail. Then he was gone—*just like that*. Blotted up. The three of us gaped.

Then I heard Bill say, "Yes. Yes."

"Yes, *what?*" I didn't know where *I* was by then.

"The kid's in another dimension."

"What are you talking about?" I said in worried, near-angry tones. You don't hear talk like that every day.

"Sit down," he said.

"Sit down? Isn't there anything we can *do?*"

Bill looked hurriedly at Ruth. She seemed to know what he was going to say.

"I don't know if there is," was what he said.

I slumped back on the couch.

"Bill," I said. Just speaking his name.

He gestured helplessly.

"Kid," he said, "this has caught me as wide open as you. I don't even know if I'm right or not but I can't think of anything else. I think that in some way, she's gotten herself into another dimension, probably the fourth. Mack, sensing it, followed her there. But how did they get there?—I don't know. I was under that couch; so were you. Did *you* see anything?"

I looked at him and he knew the answer.

"Another . . . *dimension?*" Ruth said in a tight voice. The voice of a mother who has just been told her child is lost forever.

Bill started pacing, punching his right fist into his palm.

"Damn, damn," he muttered. "How do things like this happen?"

Then while we sat there numbly, half listening to him, half for the sound of our child, he spoke. Not to us really. To himself, to try and place the problem in the proper perspective.

"One-dimensional space a line," he threw out the words quickly. "Two-dimensional space an infinite number of lines—an infinite number of one-dimensional spaces. Three-dimensional space an infinite number of planes—an infinite

number of two-dimensional spaces. Now the basic factor . . . the *basic* factor . . ."

He slammed his palm and looked up at the ceiling. Then he started again, more slowly now.

"Every point in each dimension a *section* of a line in the next higher dimension. All points in line are *sections* of the perpendicular lines that make the line a plane. All points in plane are sections of perpendicular lines that make the plane a solid.

"That means that in the third dimension . . ."

"Bill, for God's sake!" Ruth burst out. "Can't we *do* something? My *baby* is in . . . in *there*."

Bill lost his train of thought. He shook his head.

"Ruth, I don't . . ."

I got up then and was down on the floor again, climbing under the couch. I *had* to find it! I felt, I searched. I listened until the silence rang. Nothing.

Then I jerked up suddenly and hit my head as Mack barked loudly in my ear.

Bill rushed over and slid in beside me, his breath labored and quick.

"God's sake," he muttered, almost furiously. "Of all the damn places in the world . . ."

"If the . . . the *entrance* is here," I muttered, "why did we hear her voice and breathing all over the room?"

"Well, if she moved beyond the effect of the third dimension and was entirely in the fourth—then her movement, for *us*, would seem to spread over all space. Actually she'd be in one spot in the fourth dimension but to us . . ."

He stopped.

Mack was whining. But more importantly Tina started in again. Right by our ears.

"He brought her back!" Bill said excitedly. "Man, what a mutt!"

He started twisting around, looking, touching, slapping at empty air.

"We've got to find it!" he said. "We've got to reach in and pull them out. God knows how long this dimension pocket will last."

"What?" I heard Ruth gasp, then suddenly cry, "Tina, where are you? This is mommy."

I was about to say something about it being no use but then Tina answered.

"Mommy, mommy! Where are you, mommy?"

Then the sound of Mack growling and Tina crying angrily.

"She's trying to run around and find Ruth," Bill said.

"But Mack won't let her. I don't know *how* but he seems to know where the joining place is."

"Where *are* they for God's sake!" I said in a nervous fury.

And backed right into the damn thing.

To my dying day I'll never really be able to describe what it was like. But here goes.

It was black, yes—to *me*. And yet there seemed to be a million lights. But as soon as I looked at one it disappeared and was gone. I saw them out of the sides of my eyes.

"Tina," I said, "where are you? Answer me! Please!"

And heard my voice echoing a million times, the words echoing endlessly, never ceasing but moving off as if they were alive and traveling. And when I moved my hand the motion made a whistling sound that echoed and re-echoed and moved away like a swarm of insects flowing into the night.

"Tina!"

The sound of the echoing hurt my ears.

"Chris, can you hear her?" I heard a voice. But was it a voice—or more like a thought?

Then something wet touched my hand and I jumped. Mack.

I reached around furiously for them, every motion making whistling echoes in vibrating blackness until I felt as if I were surrounded by a multitude of birds flocking and beating in-

sane wings around my head. The pressure pounded and heaved in my brain.

Then I felt Tina. I say I felt her but I think if she wasn't my daughter and if I didn't *know* somehow it was her, I would have thought I'd touched something else. Not a shape in the sense of third-dimension shape. Let it go at that; I don't want to go into it.

"Tina," I whispered. "Tina, baby."

"Daddy, I'm scared of dark," she said in a thin voice, and Mack whined.

Then I was scared of dark too, because a thought scared my mind.

How did I get us all out?

Then the other thought came—Chris, have you got them?

"I've got them!" I called.

And Bill grabbed my legs (which, I later learned, were still sticking out in the third dimension) and jerked me back to reality with an armful of daughter and dog and memories of something I'd prefer having no memories about.

We all came piling out under the couch and I hit my head on it and almost knocked myself out. Then I was being alternately hugged by Ruth, kissed by the dog and helped to my feet by Bill. Mack was leaping on all of us, yelping and drooling.

When I was in talking shape again I noticed that Bill had blocked off the bottom of the couch with two card tables.

"Just to be safe," he said.

I nodded weakly. Ruth came in from the bedroom.

"Where's Tina?" I asked automatically, uneasy left-overs of memory still cooking in my brain.

"She's in our bed," she said. "I don't think we'll mind for one night."

I shook my head.

"I don't think so," I said.

Then I turned to Bill.

"Look," I said. "What the hell happened?"

"Well," he said, with a wry grin, "I told you. The third dimension is just a step below the fourth. In particular, every point in our space is a section of a perpendicular line in the fourth dimension."

"So?" I said.

"So, although the lines forming the fourth dimension would be perpendicular to every point in the third dimension, they wouldn't be parallel—to *us*. But if enough of them in one area happened to be parallel in *both* dimensions—it might form a connecting corridor."

"You mean . . . ?"

"That's the crazy part," he said. "Of all the places in the world—under the couch—there's an area of points that are sections of parallel lines—parallel in both dimensions. They make a corridor into the next space."

"Or a hole," I said.

Bill looked disgusted.

"Hell of a lot of good my reasoning did," he said. "It took a *dog* to get her out."

"What about the sound?"

"You're asking me?" he said.

That's about it. Oh, naturally, Bill told his friends at CalTech, and the apartment was overrun with research physicists for a month. But they didn't find anything. They said the thing was gone. Some said worse things.

But, just the same, when we got back from my mother's house where we stayed during the scientific siege—we moved the couch across the room and stuck the television where the couch was.

So some night we may look up and hear Arthur Godfrey chuckling from another dimension. Maybe he belongs there.

Four O'Clock

Price Day

TELEPLAY BY ROD SERLING

AIRD APRIL 6, 1962

STARRING THEODORE BIKEL

THE HANDS OF THE ALARM CLOCK ON THE TABLE IN front of Mr. Crangle stood at 3:47, on a summer afternoon.

"You're wrong about that, you know," he said, not taking his eyes from the face of the clock. "You're quite wrong, Pet, as I have explained to you often enough before. The moral angle presents no difficulties at all."

The parrot, in the cage hanging above him, cocked her head and looked down with a hard, cold, reptilian eye, an ancient eye, an eye older by age upon age than the human race.

She said, "Nut."

Mr. Crangle, his eye still on the clock, took a peanut from a cracker bowl at his elbow and held it above his head, to the bars of the cage. Pet clutched it in a leathery claw. The spring-steel muscles opened the horny beak. She clinched the peanut and crushed it, the sound mingling in the furnished room with the big-city sounds coming through the open window—cars honking, feet on the sidewalk, children calling to each other, a plane overhead like a contented, industrious bee.