CORALINE

Coraline

Screenplay
By
Henry Selick

Based on the book
By
Neil Gaiman



4TH DRAFT / 2ND POLISH
April 24, 2006

IMPORTANT NOTICE

CINEMA SCRIPT RESEARCH COPIES ARE MADE AVAILABLE FOR
PERSONAL USE ONLY.
THEY ARE **NOT** TO BE USED FOR ANY PURPOSE OTHER THAN PRIVATE STUDY, SCHOLARSHIP, OR RESEARCH WITHOUT THE WRITTEN CONSENT OF THE COPYRIGHT HOLDER.



4TH DRAFT 2ND POLISH
APRIL 24, 2006

CORALINE

an animated ghost story

screenplay by HENRY SELICK

based on the book by NEIL GAIMAN

©copyright 2006 LAIKA ENTERTAINMENT
registered W.G.A.

1 EXT. OLD ESTATE HOUSE, ASHLAND, OREGON - DAY 1

BACK YARD of a huge, pink WEATHER-WORN HOUSE. The sky is overcast, the light patchy on this wintery March afternoon.

We *look through the eyes* of SOMEONE UNSEEN, someone who moves smooth and silent as a steadycam.

WE WAIT behind a STONE FENCE of piled rocks, WATCHING a BIG BLACK CAT, our cat, stalk a small LIZARD doing push-ups on a rock. The cat moves closer, ready to pounce when a SCREEN DOOR SLAMS BEHIND US.

WE DUCK DOWN and the cat LEAPS from ground to fence then up into a GREAT LARCH TREE. IT CREEPS OUT through dense branches that reach over the yard, stops and look down.

It's HER -- the NEW GIRL, standing on the back porch of the old house. She's striking and tall for an eleven-year-old and wears a red hat, black jumper, and knapsack.

PEEKING OVER a stone fence, we see her grasp a homemade DOWSING ROD and aim it towards the old garden and beyond. She nods sharply, then MARCHES down the steps and into the yard. Two BURLY MEN unload a MOVING VAN in the B.G.

She passes by us, the forked stick pulling her along; and we DUCK BEHIND TREE. Cat climbs down into frame and together, we FOLLOW the girl through the back property, GLIDING along silently, not giving ourselves away.

2 MONTAGE VARIOUS EXT - SAME POV, SAME DAY 2

OLD ROSE GARDEN - SAME

She pokes through bug-eaten roses. She pauses, her stick pointing at a TURTLE SHELL. She picks it up to examine, puts it in her knapsack. Cat looks at us quizzically.

MOSSY ROCK GARDEN - SAME

New girl PRIES UP a piece of shale and finds a TIGER SALAMANDER. She's fascinated by its yellow and black pattern. WE TILT our head for a better view.

BROKEN-UP TENNIS COURT - DARKER SHADOWS

She drop-kicks PINECONES over a rotted net. PORCUPINE pokes his head from a mid-court burrow close to our viewing spot, then ducks down. WE RETREAT as she ambles over, finds a loose QUILL, touches its sharp point.

DRIED-UP GOLDFISH POND - SAME

She lifts a SNAKESKIN into frame on the end of her stick. There's a LARGE STONE FROG in the middle of the pond.

3 EXT. OVERGROWN ORCHARD - DAY'S END 3

Sky above is DARK with RAIN CLOUDS, SHAFTS of setting sun break through. WIND BLOWS.

Through a BRAMBLE on a bluff, we see the new girl step into a circle of TOADSTOOLS in front of a STUMP. The ground is strangely SPRINGY here. She jumps up and down, testing it. Our cat circles around her, unseen, then LEAPS onto the stump with a loud, warning *MEROW!* STARTLED, she falls back seat-first.

NEW GIRL
Yucko!

She stands, wiping smushed toadstools off her rear.

NEW GIRL (CONT'D)
(sarcastic)
Well *you're* a friendly kitty.

Cat GLARES at her with GREEN EYES, ready to run away.

NEW GIRL (CONT'D)
(gently)
I'm just looking for an old well, "dangerously deep" they said. Know it?

Cat BLINKS EYES slowly.

NEW GIRL
Not talking, huh?

She grasps the forks of her dowsing rod.

NEW GIRL (CONT'D)
The magic dowser says...

She closes her eyes, points it up, traces a figure eight. We move forward into the open, and BLAST AN AIR HORN. STARTLED, she SPINS around and SEES US for first time:

ANGLE ON A SPOOKY BACK-LIT BOY on an ELECTRIC BIKE; his black FIREMAN'S COAT flapping in wind.

BOY
GOOD JAM!

He SWOOPS DOWN from the bluff towards her--

NEW GIRL
Who are -- GET AWAY FROM M--

--and SNATCHES THE STICK from her hands. He side-skids to a stop and hops off his bike. Shoulders hunched, face angled down, he examines the stick, aiming it around.

BOY
(speaks quickly)
Let me guess - you're from Texas or Utah, someplace dried out and barren, right? I heard about water-witching before but it doesn't make sense; I mean, it's just an ordinary branch.

The girl, very angry, SNATCHES it back.

NEW GIRL
It's hazel-wood! And what kind of maniac sneaks up on people and scares them to death? You *and* your cat!

He CROUCHES to SCRATCH the cat behind his ears.

BOY
Not really *my* cat; he's kind of feral - you know, wild? Of course, I do feed 'im every night and sometimes he'll come in my window 'n bring me little dead things.

The cat PURRS like a diesel. Boy indicates bicycle.

BOY (CONT'D)
Sorry 'bout the horn; only thing that'll scare off Fang the farm poodle.

NEW GIRL
(skeptical)
Farm poodle?

He nods.

NEW GIRL (CONT'D)
(softens a little)
Look, I'm from Michigan. And if I'm a "water witch", then--
(points stick at him)
--where's the secret well?

BOY
You jump too hard and you'll fall in it!

Coraline gasps, hops quickly out of the springy circle. The boy, FLAT STONE in hand, scrapes at the ground, revealing a ROW OF WOODEN PLANKS. He lifts one up.

BOY (CONT'D)
See? Supposed to be so deep that if you fell to the bottom and looked up, you'd see a night sky full of stars in the middle of the day.

This is the first thing he's said that she likes. She SMILES and the black cat tilts his head, noticing.

BOY (CONT'D)
Surprised she let you move in...

Jerks his head toward the old pink house in distance.

BOY (CONT'D)
... my Gramma. She owns the joint -- doesn't like kids.

NEW GIRL
That include you, whoever you are?

He lifts a dirty hand to shake.

BOY
I'm Wybie, Wybie Lovat.

NEW GIRL
Wybie?

WYBIE
Short for Wybourne. Not my idea, of course. I would have picked Satchmo or maybe Einstein. What'd you get saddled with?

NEW GIRL
I wasn't *saddled* with anything. It's Coraline.

WYBIE
Caroline what?

CORALINE
*Cor*aline. Coraline Jones.

WYBIE
(confused, not hearing it)
Hmmm... It's not real scientific, but I heard an ordinary name, like Caroline,

Her face goes as DARK as the storm clouds above.

WYBIE (CONT'D)
... can lead people to have ordinary expectations about a per--

CORALINE
I think I heard someone calling you, Wybourne.

WYBIE
What? I didn't hear any--

CORALINE
Oh, I definitely heard someone, Why-were-you-born.

Wybie raises palms in surrender, gets on his bike.

WYBIE
Okay, I smell what you're steppin' in.

He wheels around to go, salutes her.

WYBIE (CONT'D)
Great to meet a Michigan water witch.

She GROWLS at him; he twists the throttle and quietly zooms off. Coraline fumes a bit, then reaches down to pet the cat. But he hops away, trots haughtily after Wybie.

CORALINE (CONT'D)
Well, there's a first: a loyal kitty.

She looks down at the opening to the well. Coraline finds some PEBBLES and drops one through. Ear at the knot-hole, she counts until there's a watery "plop" far below. FAT RAINDROPS start to fall around her.

4 INT. ESTATE HOUSE, JONES'S KITCHEN - NEXT MORNING 4

It's POURING out. Coraline, in rain gear and ragged garden gloves, stands at the window, MOVING BOXES stacked nearby. Her mother, KAREN, 40, bangs away at her laptop on the table. She looks tired - pretty but plain with short-chopped hair, no makeup and wears a NECK-BRACE.

CORALINE
I think it's perfect weather for gardening. Rain makes it easy to dig.

KAREN
No, Coraline. Rain makes mud. Mud makes a mess.

CORALINE
(turns to her)
But Mom, you promised. Isn't that why we moved here?

KAREN
We moved here for work, Coraline. After that smash-up in Fargo, we're barely going to make deadline.

CORALINE
(mutters)
I can't believe it -- you and Dad get paid to write about plants and you hate dirt...

Karen sighs, her concentration broken, looks over.

KAREN
If you're looking for something to do, there's loads of unpacking left.

CORALINE
That sounds exciting.

Karen remembers something.

KAREN (CONT'D)
Found this on the porch this morning.

Coraline walks over and is handed a NEWSPAPER-WRAPPED FIGURE. She rips it open and find a beautiful ANTIQUE DOLL with black button eyes. Attached note reads:

Hey C Girl, look what I found in Gramma's trunk. Look familiar? Wybie.

The doll LOOKS JUST LIKE CORALINE: same face, hair, same sceptical expression. She crumples the note, both annoyed and charmed. Karen musses Coraline's hair.

KAREN
I saw him leaving. What's his name?

CORALINE
Wybie. And I'm *way* too old for dolls.

But she takes it with her and leaves the room.

5 INT. STUDY - SAME 5

Barry Jones, 40, wireframes, balding, taps away at his computer, surrounded by boxes of GARDENING MAGAZINES. Coraline, with doll, opens the door. He doesn't turn.

BARRY
Hello, Coraline.

CORALINE
D'you know where the garden tools are?

BARRY
It's bucketing down, you know.

CORALINE
Humph, it's just raining.

BARRY
What'd the boss say?

CORALINE
(mocking)
"Don't even think about going out, Coraline Jones."

BARRY
Then you won't need the tools.

He taps harder on the keys. Pouting, she *humphs* again - loudly. With fake enthusiasm, Barry grabs a pen and pad and, turning around, offers them like great prizes.

BARRY (CONT'D)
Time to explore the apartment! Count up all the doors and windows; list everything blue! *And let me work.*
(spots doll)
New friend?

She rolls her eyes, takes the paper and pen and leaves.

6 INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME 6

The room is empty except for some half-empty boxes and a few pieces of FURNITURE. A PAINTING of fruit hangs on the wall, Mom's SNOW-GLOBE collection is lined up above the FIREPLACE.

Coraline enters and sets the doll on a LOW WOODEN TABLE with carved feet. She scribbles on her pad of paper, muttering aloud, as she scans the room.

CORALINE
One boring blue fruit in a painfully boring painting ... four incredibly boring windows ... and no more doors.

She goes to grab the doll off the table and leave but it's *gone*. Scanning the room, she spots its leg poking out behind a big box in the corner. Annoyed, she walks over and shoves the box aside.

There, in the wall behind the doll, is the outline of a SMALL DOOR that's been wallpapered over. She crosses out "no doors" on the pad and writes, muttering:

CORALINE (CONT'D)
One camouflaged door...

Intensely curious, she hollers to the kitchen.

CORALINE (CONT'D)
HEY MOM, WHERE DOES THIS DOOR GO?!

KAREN (O.S.)
Which door, dear?

Coraline tries to open it but there's no handle.

CORALINE
I THINK IT'S LOCKED.

KAREN (O.S.)
I'm really, really busy.

CORALINE
Pleeeeeeeeease!

7 INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS 7

Annoyed, Karen gets up from her computer and takes a STRING OF KEYS from a hook over the kitchen door.

8 INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME 8

She skeptically holds out a SMALL, SHARP KEY.

KAREN
It's going to make a mess, you know.

CORALINE
(pleading)
I'll fix it.

Karen makes a "yeah, right" look, then uses the key to cut around the door. She pierces the lock, turns the key and, holding the key's handle, pulls door open to reveal an UNBROKEN BRICK WALL. Coraline is very disappointed.

CORALINE (CONT'D)
I don't get it.

KAREN
Must have closed this off when they divided the house up.

CORALINE
But what's on the other side?

Karen shrugs "who knows"?, then reaches to close the door.

CORALINE (CONT'D)
Well, why is the door so *small*?

KAREN
People used to be shorter?

Coraline makes annoyed sound. Karen leaves...

9 INT. KITCHEN/LIVING ROOM - SAME 9

CU on her hand putting the string of keys on their hook. Coraline, in living room, calls out.

CORALINE
You didn't lock it.

KAREN
Why should I? It doesn't go anywhere.

10 EXT. ESTATE HOUSE - NIGHT 10

ANGLE ON JONES' KITCHEN WINDOW

The rain still falls, spattering the glass and blurring the images of Karen, Barry, and Coraline inside.

11 INT. KITCHEN - SAME 11

Barry serves improvised dinner from a WOK. Coraline is disgusted.

CORALINE
Yucko, stir-fry again? Where can I get some normal food around here?

He holds a steaming plate under her nose, sings off-key:

BARRY
Oh.... my twitchy witchy girl,
I think you are so nice,
I give you bowls of porridge
And I give you bowls of --

She pushes it away.

CORALINE
Why don't *you* ever cook, Mom?

KAREN
You kidding? This guy can make a feast from table scraps.

She holds her hand up.

KAREN (CONT'D)
I swear I'll go food shopping -- soon as we finish the catalog.
(to Coraline)
Until then, try some of the chard, you need a vegetable.

CORALINE
Looks more like slime to me.

BARRY
S'all we got, fusspot. If you can't stomach my cooking, then it's bed without supper.

Coraline rolls her eyes, looks up to the heavens and--

12 INT. CORALINE'S BEDROOM - SAME 12

--falls back, washed and dressed for bed, on her pillow. Still raining out. She looks over at her treasures set out on a box: the turtle shell, paper angels, a plastic dinosaur skull, a rusty toy tank. The button-eyed doll sits on a nearby chair. Coraline sighs, breathing slows and, soon, she begins to dream...

13 DREAMSCAPE - NIGHT 13

The DARK BRICKS from the small doorway start to shift and swim. From the mortar seep tendrils of PLAYFUL WHITE SMOKE to form PALE SILHOUETTES of TINY KANGAROOS. Little pink eyes open and little pink mouths **SING:**

PALE FORMS
We are watching, we are waiting,
We are many, we are small,
We will come, so mind your footfalls,
When we lead you to the door.

Their voices are high and whispery and sweet.

CLOSE ON Coraline's face; she smiles in her sleep.

The tiny eyes and mouths close and the pale creatures and dark brick patterns SWIRL together like marble cake batter and fade.

14 EXT. ESTATE HOUSE - MORNING 14

A WHITE FOG has lowered over the house and grounds. Coraline - in a hooded coat, scarf and boots - hops down the front steps, ragged garden gloves on her hands, holding SHEARS. (Note: family car, glimpsed to the side, is damaged in the rear.) From the fog comes the voice of MISS SPINK, one of the downstairs neighbors.

MISS SPINK (O.S.)
Hellooo there, lovely weather for the complexion today.

MISS SPINK - a retired English actress - emerges with THREE SCOTTISH TERRIERS, leashes attached to her walker. They BARK at Coraline.

MISS SPINK (CONT'D)
Belt up lads, it's just the new neighbor. Out for a walk, Caroline?

CORALINE
Hunting for roses, actually. And it's Coraline.

Miss Spink is bundled up in long fur coat which drags on the ground and looks like a large, fluffy egg.

MISS SPINK
Miss Forcible talks about her Ophelia, but it was my Portia they came to see. When we trod the boards.
(wistful)
They used to send *roses* to my dressing room. They <u>did</u>.

Coraline raises an eyebrow.

CORALINE
Who did?

Spink looks around, cautiously, for eavesdroppers.

MISS SPINK
(hissing)
Men.

She tugs on the leashes.

MISS SPINK (CONT'D)
Come along, lads.

The Scotties hop on Miss Spink's dragging coat and she waddles off into the fog, pulling them behind her.

Coraline shrugs and waves. She turns to go but before she takes a step, MISS FORCIBLE, Spink's flatmate and a retired English actress as well, calls up the stairs.

MISS FORCIBLE
Yoo hoo! Caroline, right? Have you seen Miss Spink, dear?

Coraline points in the direction Miss Spink disappeared.

CORALINE
She thinks she's walking the dogs. I'm Coraline.

Miss Forcible peers out into the mist.

MISS FORCIBLE
Certainly have the fog machines running today, don't they.

CORALINE
(puzzled)
Who does?

MISS FORCIBLE
The stagehands, dear. You see, both myself and Miss Spink were world famous actresses in our time.
(fretting)
Only an explorer could find their way in this fog.

CORALINE
I'm an explorer.

MISS FORCIBLE
Of course you are, dear. Don't sail off the edge of the world, now.

She closes her door. Coraline again turns to go, but the upstairs neighbor, MR. BOBINSKI - an eccentric old Russian with a huge mustache, calls down from a balcony:

MR. BOBINSKI
Ahoy! Caroline! For sure you wonder where is *Famous* Jumping Mouse Circus? You come to new home, you wish to have circus. This is natural.

Coraline is tired of correcting her name.

CORALINE
Oh, hello, Mr. Bobinski.

She can just see him through the mist as he walks down his RICKETY STAIRWAY, dressed in a sleeveless T-shirt, speedo over boxers and sandals despite the chill.

MR. BOBINSKI
The problem - since you are asking - is the mist. The jumping mice do not like it. It makes their whiskers to droop and their tails to curl.

CORALINE
I guess I don't like it much, either.

The old man leans down, so close his moustache tickles her ear, and whispers.

MR. BOBINSKI
They ask-ed me to give you *message*.

CORALINE
The <u>mice</u>?

Mr. B nods gravely.

MR. BOBINSKI
They are saying: <u>do not go through door</u>. Do you know such a thing?

Coraline is startled.

CORALINE
But that doesn't make sense, I mean, it's ... all bricked up.

The old man shrugs.

MR. BOBINSKI (CONT'D)
Bah. So sorry, is nothing. Sometimes the mice are little ...

He points to his head and rotates his finger.

MR. BOBINSKI (CONT'D)
...mixed up? They even get your name wrong, you know. They call you <u>Cor</u>aline instead of Caroline, not Caroline at all. Maybe I work them too hard ...

He picks up his mail and starts back up the stairs. Coraline stares after him.

15 INT. KITCHEN - SAME 15

CU on laptop screen. A chapter heading appears: *Hardy Perennials: Foolproof Beauty This Year, Every Year.*

Coraline, dripping and dirty, wipes her feet at the screen door, a bunch of BUG-EATEN ROSES behind her back. Karen looks up from the table where she's working.

KAREN
Coraline, you're soaked; the fog must be awful out there.

She drops the roses on the table.

CORALINE (CONT'D)
What do you think, Mom? You could put them in the new catalog!

Karen squinches her face.

KAREN
Too late, we dropped "gardens of the living-dead".

Gestures for Coraline to remove the pile of roses. She takes them to the sink, Mom resumes typing.

KAREN
By the way, school starts next week. Uniforms only, I'm afraid.

CORALINE
Uniforms? Are you kidding me?

Coraline slumps at the table beside her, pretends to die.

KAREN
You still love to draw, don't you? Here.

She hands her paper and pen. Coraline spells out *M I S T* in wiggly letters then traces a spiral around them again and again and again. PULL OUT on drawing as it becomes--

16 INT. CORALINE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT 16

--SURREAL MIST SWIRLING out window. Lens and lighting suggest a DREAM. PAN to Coraline, lying in bed sleeping.

SOMETHING in the room goes t-t-t-t-t-t. She sits up, awake.

SOMETHING CHITTERS under her bed. She leans over her bedside, head first, peering underneath when a ghost-pale KANGAROO MOUSE JUMPS out and bounds out the door.

17 INT. HALL - SAME 17

She gives chase, down the upper hall, down the stairs, snaps on the lower hall light, sees it hop into the living room.

18 INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS 18

Coraline enters. The MOUSE edges out from beneath the sofa, then HOPS FRANTICALLY toward the SMALL, CAMOUFLAGED DOOR in the corner and disappears.

Coraline runs to the corner to find the door ever so slightly OPEN. Just a crack. She pulls it open.

THE BRICK WALL IS GONE; there's a DARK HALLWAY INSTEAD.

From the darkness, she hears her mother faintly SINGING.

CORALINE pulls the door wider and STEPS INTO THE HALLWAY.

19 INT. OTHER HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS 19

Coraline MOVES FORWARD, her senses tweaked. It grows less dark and strangely familiar. She sees that the carpet beneath her feet is the SAME CARPET as in her own hallway, but newer, cleaner. The WALLPAPER is also the SAME only fresher.

20 INT. OTHER KITCHEN - NIGHT 20

Coraline enters to see her mother bent over the stove, back to Coraline, making gravy in a pan. Flour is everywhere.

CORALINE
Mom?! What are you doing here in the middle of the n--?

Her mother turns from the stove to greet her and Coraline is DUMBSTRUCK: she's got BUTTONS FOR EYES! She beams with happiness at Coraline's arrival.

OTHER MOTHER
You're just in time for supper, dear!

She is a LIVING DOLL VERSION of her real mother. The button eyes are both comical and beautiful, glowing with life. And, *this* mother is actually cooking and has made a *huge mess* doing so.

CORALINE
You're not my mother. *My* mother... <u>hates</u> to cook.

She answers matter-of-factly.

OTHER MOTHER
I'm your *other* mother, silly. Now go tell your dad that supper's ready.

Opens the oven door and the intoxicating perfume of great cooking fills the air. Coraline is suddenly VERY HUNGRY.

OTHER MOTHER (CONT'D)
Well, go on. He's in his study.

21 INT. OTHER HALLWAY - SAME 21

Coraline goes down the hall to what should be her father's study and opens the door.

22 INT. OTHER STUDY - CONTINUOUS 22

She sees the back of a man like her father, with more hair. Instead of tapping away at his computer, though, he's picking a note on an old upright PIANO.

CORALINE
Hello?

He turns around. Like the Other Mother, he has friendly BUTTON EYES. He seems happier and a little more handsome than real Dad, and wears an IRIDESCENT ROBE over POLKA DOT PAJAMAS, with ORANGE MONKEY SLIPPERS on his feet. He smiles broadly.

OTHER FATHER
Hello, Coraline. Want to hear my new song?

CORALINE
You don't play piano.

OTHER FATHER
No need to, the piano plays me!

DR. SEUSS GLOVES - connected with rods and pulleys - POP OUT of the piano's front and ONTO HIS HANDS.

His hands RAISE UP - then DROP DOWN to play pounding STRIDE PIANO as Other Father SINGS out.

OTHER FATHER (CONT'D)
Making up a song about Coraline.
She's a Peach she's a doll she's a pal of mine.
She's as cute as a button
in the eyes of everyone
who ever laid their eyes on Coraline

Coraline is flattered and amazed as his hands fly.

OTHER FATHER (CONT'D)
When she comes around exploring
Mom and I will never ever make it boring
our eyes will be on Coraline.

Anxious, she taps his shoulder to stop him.

CORALINE
I, uh - sorry - but *she* said to tell you the food's ready.

OTHER FATHER
Mmmmm! Who's starving? Raise your hand.

He sticks his hand up, still in a glove, and his other gloved hand slaps his face. She laughs.

23 INT. OTHER DINING ROOM - SAME 23

Using ROOSTER-HEAD OVEN MITTS, Other Mother sets down a HUGE, GOLDEN-BROWN CHICKEN beside a LAZY SUSAN covered with dishes of ROAST POTATOES, SWEET GREEN PEAS, ROLLS, and a GRAVY BOAT. The Other Father makes prayer hands and a solemn face.

OTHER FATHER
Good bread, good meat, good *Mom*, let's eat!

A STARTING BELL rings and, laughing, he and Coraline CHOW DOWN. Other Mother looks on approvingly, not touching any food herself.

CORALINE
(with mouth full)
This is *awesome*. May I have more gr-

The gravy boat tips up and pours gravy on her potatoes by itself. Her Other Parents squeeze each other's hands warmly.

OTHER MOTHER
We've been waiting for you.

CORALINE
For me?

OTHER FATHER
Yep. Wasn't the same here without you, kiddo.

OTHER MOTHER
Would you like some more chicken?

Coraline nods and another drumstick spins her way.

CORALINE
I didn't know I had another mother.

OTHER MOTHER
Of course you do. Everyone does.

She smiles at Coraline, her button eyes gleaming.

OTHER MOTHER (CONT'D)
Soon as you're finished, I thought we'd go play in the rain.

Thunder and lightning and rain SUDDENLY STARTS outside window.

CORALINE
What about the mud?

OTHER FATHER
We love mud here!

CORALINE
I, I'd love to play, but...I'd better get home to my other mother.

OTHER MOTHER
But *I'm* your other mother.

CORALINE
(befuddled)
I mean my *other* other mother. Mom number one?
(yawns)
I think I should get to bed.

OTHER MOTHER
Of course, sweetheart, it's all made up.

CORALINE
(shakes head)
But...

OTHER FATHER
Come along, sleepyhead.

They take her hand and lead her from the table, the Other Mother's heels CLICKING on the floor.

24 INT. CORALINE'S OTHER BEDROOM - SAME 24

Coraline is *delighted*. Her Other Bedroom, clear of moving boxes and cracked plaster, is filled with COLOR and all her bedside treasures are now BROUGHT TO LIFE: PAPER ANGELS FLUTTER like sparrows; her DRAWINGS ANIMATE; TURTLE SHELL WALKS on clothes pin legs, DINOSAUR SKULLS CHATTER. And the little RUSTY TANK CIRCLES her feet like a happy puppy. Coraline, overwhelmed, suddenly feels exhausted.

She climbs into the oh-so-inviting bed with its black and white checkered quilt and all the little things in the room settle down to rest. The Other Parents stand in the doorway, smiling at her as she drifts off to sleep.

OTHER MOTHER
See you soon ...

OTHER FATHER
See you soon ...

FADE OUT.

25 INT. CORALINE'S REAL BEDROOM - MORNING 25

MORNING. Coraline awakens with a stretch and a yawn, looking around expecting bright colors, a flying angel. But it's just her NORMAL ROOM: moving boxes; cracks in the ceiling; nothing's changed.

She notices the BUTTON-EYED DOLL is lying beside her. Wasn't it on the chair when she went to sleep?

26 INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME 26

Coraline creeps into the living room and goes to the little door, still ajar. She peeks behind and finds the WALL OF SOLID BRICKS. Yes, it was only a dream. She shakes her head and pushes the door shut.

27 KITCHEN - DAY, GROUND FOG OUT WINDOWS 27

Breakfast. Karen and Barry finish their "Go Lean Breakfast Twigs" cereal and mugs of instant coffee. Preoccupied with their writing assignment, they half-listen as Coraline recounts her dream, her breakfast untouched. GROUND FOG lies outside the windows.

CORALINE
It was incredibly real, Mom! Only you weren't *really* you, you were my *other* mother.

KAREN
(disapproving)
Not hungry at all? But Coraline, you only *dreamed* you ate all that roast chicken. At least take your multi-vitamin.

CORALINE
You were in the dream too, Dad, you had wild-looking pajamas and orange monkey slippers.

CORALINE'S FATHER
(pretend offense)
My monkey slippers are blue.

He stands, put his dishes in the sink.

KAREN
If the real Barry Jones wants his pages edited, he'd better wrap them up ASAP.

He crisply salutes her, turns on his heel, and marches out the door. Karen gets up to clear the table with Coraline.

KAREN (CONT'D)
Why don't you go visit downstairs while I work? Those two characters might get a kick out of your stories.

Coraline sighs, exasperated, and nods.

28 EXT. MISSES SPINK & FORCIBLE'S FLAT - SAME 28

Coraline, half immersed in fog, pushes the buzzer. Immediately, the dogs start yapping and, in a moment, are at the door. A moment after, Miss Spink opens it and the Scotties shoot out and surround Coraline. Spink tries to quiet them down.

MISS SPINK
Belt up, belt up now!
(to Coraline)
How nice to see you, Caroline, would you like to come in? We're playing cards.

CORALINE
Still Coraline, Miss Spink.

MISS SPINK
(over shoulder)
Miriam, put the kettle on!

29 INT. MISSES SPINK & FORCIBLE'S FLAT - SAME 29

Miss Spink leads Coraline back into the living room, where Miss Forcible has already prepared tea and a DISH OF CANDY. Coraline scans the walls to see: PUBLICITY PHOTOS of their younger, prettier selves; HANDBILLS from shows they were in; framed THEATER PROGRAMS.

The ladies had been playing "Go Fish" with hands dealt to their dogs as well. Coraline takes the dogs' spot on the sofa while Miss Forcible pours UNFILTERED TEA into white china cups. Coraline looks up to the side and sees a BOOKCASE filled with STUFFED SCOTTY DOGS with knitted angel wings.

CORALINE
(clears throat, points)
Are those dogs .... real?

MISS SPINK
(sighs)
Our sweet, departed angels. Couldn't bear to part with them ... so we had them stuffed.
(continues)
There's Hamish the third, the fourth, the eighth, the ninth. Angus the second, the fifth, the..

Miss Forcible, urges Coraline to take a candy as Spink goes on and on.

MISS FORCIBLE
Go on, have one - hand-pulled taffy from Brighton - best in the world.

Coraline reaches for a pink and green one. But the taffy is so old and sticky, her hand gets stuck. Then her other hand gets stuck, trying to get the first hand out.

MISS SPINK
... the seventh, the third, the ninth, the fourth; and Jock Junior, Jock senior, Jock the third, fourth, and ...

Coraline, using her feet finally unsticks the candy bowl which flies up and sticks to the ceiling, her actions unnoticed by the old ladies.

MISS SPINK (CONT'D)
...of course, Jock's 3rd cousin, twice removed.

She turns to Coraline, just recovered from getting unstuck, and sipping her tea.

MISS SPINK (CONT'D)
I'll read your leaves, if you like.

CORALINE
My what?

MISS SPINK
Your tea leaves, dear. They'll tell me your future. Drink up then, go on.

Coraline gulps down the bitter brew.

MISS SPINK (CONT'D)
Not all of it. That's right, now hand it over.

Coraline passes her the cup. Spink puts a saucer on top and swirls it three times, removes the saucer and peers in, the leaf pattern on the sides of the cup abstract from our angle. She purses her lips.

MISS SPINK (CONT'D)
You know, Caroline, you are in terrible danger.

Miss Forcible snorts.

MISS FORCIBLE
Give me that cup, April, your eyes are going.

MISS SPINK
My eyes! You're blind as a bat!

Spink passes the cup to Forcible, who adjusts thick glasses and peers closely into it.

MISS FORCIBLE
Hmm ... not to worry, child, it's good news: there's a tall, handsome beast in your future.

CORALINE
A what?

MISS SPINK
Miriam, you're holding it wrong.

Spink forcibly rotates the cup.

MISS SPINK (CONT'D)
See? Danger!

Coraline wants more information.

CORALINE
What do you see?

The ladies, heads side by side, gaze into the cup. We see a claw shape formed from the leaves.

MISS SPINK
(ominous)
Hmmm, I see a very peculiar hand...

Forcible rotates the cup back again. Upside down, the claw hand looks like a giraffe.

MISS FORCIBLE
I see a giraffe.

MISS SPINK
Giraffes don't just fall from the sky, Miriam.

The stuck candy dish suddenly DROPS to the floor, startling everyone. Coraline asks in a practical voice:

CORALINE
Well, what should I do?

MISS SPINK
Never wear green in your dressing room.

MISS FORCIBLE
Befriend a large animal veterinarian.

MISS SPINK
And be very, very careful. Now, was there something you came to tell us?

Coraline thinks it over, then shakes her head.

CORALINE
No, I guess not. Thanks for the tea, though.

She gets up and leaves. The dogs immediately return to their sofa and the ladies resume their card game.

MISS SPINK
Hamish, lad, do you have any nice Queens for mummy?

Hamish tilts his head, uncomprehending. Miss Forcible peeks at the dog's hand of cards on the table.

MISS FORCIBLE
(Cheerfully)
Go fish, April.

30 EXT. MISSES SPINK & FORCIBLE'S FLAT - SAME 30

Coraline climbs the stairs up to ground level, intrigued by her fortune. Mr. Bobinski, off-camera, is faintly heard counting jumping jacks from a top floor balcony.

CORALINE
(to herself)
Danger?

Behind her, a PERISCOPE RISES from the WAIST-DEEP FOG. Coraline turns quickly and GRABS it, PULLING UP WYBIE.

CORALINE (CONT'D)
Great, the village stalker. What are you doing, "Spy"-bie?

WYBIE (CONT'D)
Oh, uh -- hey; hey "C" girl.

WYBIE
(gestures)
This is what we call banana slug weather? Me and the black panther are huntin' up a slimy monster.

CORALINE
Black panther?

There's a soft meowing from under his coat. He opens it up and the BLACK CAT EMERGES from an INSIDE POUCH and climbs onto his shoulders.

WYBIE
Hates to get his feet wet, of course.

He takes some SALAD TONGS from a tool belt, snaps them.

WYBIE
There's a contest every year in the paper: fifty bucks and the front page.

Wybie starts poking under some nearby laurel bushes, adjusting his periscope.

CORALINE
(casual)
Great... You, uh, know anything about kangaroo mice?

WYBIE
Hmm... Well, one kind live in the desert, go airborne when a sidewinder strikes?

Hops hand along, cat swipes it with his paw.

WYBIE (CONT'D)
The other kind live in the head of Mr. B upstairs.

He rises up and gestures to the top-floor balcony where Mr. Bobinski is seen exercising.

WYBIE (CONT'D)
I'd like to believe they're real, of course. I mean, can you imagine? Little jumpy rodents that can play instruments?

Mr. B. stops exercising, reaches for something.

WYBIE (CONT'D)
But everyone knows Mr. B is ....

Wybie, his back to Bobinski, makes the crazy sign and Mr. B. suddenly THROWS SOMETHING. Cat JUMPS HIGH and a POTATO HITS WYBIE right in the HEAD. Hand to head, Wybie whirls around as Mr. B prepares to hurl more potatoes, yelling:

MR. BOBINSKI
Halyavshchik!

WYBIE
Incoming!

He pulls Coraline down in the fog as five more potatoes thunk around them. The cat has vanished. On hand and knees, he leads Coraline around the house and out of range.

WYBIE (CONT'D)
(indicates up)
Crazy beet-eater ... thinks I left a burning bag of poop by his door on Halloween.

CORALINE
Gross. What kind of creep'd do that?

WYBIE
(embarrassed)
Uh ... me? He didn't give out any candy.

They stand up from the fog. She returns to prior subject.

CORALINE
I saw one. A jumping mouse I mean.

He glances over, skeptical.

CORALINE (CONT'D)
It was a dream, I guess. But it seemed perfectly real, and I followed it to the other apartment. Did you know, everyone has an Other Mo--

WYBIE
(excited)
Dang, check out Slugzilla! This mother's some good jam, hunh?

Wybie stands up and presents a huge yellow-green slug to Coraline, held at tong's end. She's not impressed.

CORALINE
You're just like them.

WYBIE
I'm not big and slimy!

Wybie looks at his wet, muddy fireman's coat.

WYBIE (CONT'D)
Wait, yes I am.

CORALINE
I meant my *parents*; they don't want to listen to me either.

WYBIE
You mind?

Hands her his camera. She acts put-out, but frames shot.

WYBIE (CONT'D)
Here; let me get my head in to prove how big it is - the slug, of course. Ready!

She fires off one auto-flash shot after another as he strikes silly poses: horrified of the slug one moment; ready to eat it the next; pretending it's something from his nose in another. She can't help but giggle.

CORALINE
That old doll you left me is pretty "good jam." Spooky how it looks like me.

He smiles, nodding, places the slug on a bush. When he looks up at the house, he speaks in a mysterious tone.

WYBIE
My Gramma's got some crazy ideas about this place; told me never to go inside.

He climbs onto his bike, Coraline looking puzzled.

WYBIE (CONT'D)
You see, she and her sister were born here, twins.

CORALINE
Your grannie has a twin--?

WYBIE
Had.

He whistles and out of nowhere, the black cat appears, hops up into his arms and into his coat.

WYBIE (CONT'D)
Enjoy it while you can; main floor renter's never stay long.

He pulls away.

CORALINE
(calling)
Would you stop interrupting me for--

WYBIE
Bye, C Girl.

And he's gone. Coraline speaks to the banana slug.

CORALINE
Sure you want to be in the paper with *that* boy?

PUSH IN on her frustrated face, watching him go.

31 INT CORALINE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT 31

CU. ON DOLL FACE, button eyes exactly where Coraline's were in last shot.

Coraline pulls some CHEDDAR CHEESE from her nightshirt pocket and puts it by the door. Bait for the dream mouse. She lies down beside the doll in her bed, and her breathing slows...

32 INT CORALINE'S BEDROOM - SAME 32

Lensing and lighting suggest another DREAM SCENE. As before:

SOME *THINGS* go t-t-t-t-t-t. She sits up. Coraline looks to her door. The cheese is GONE.

33 INT. HALL - SAME 33

She enters the hall and spots *THREE* GHOSTLY KANGAROO MICE hopping away with the cheese. She gives chase.

34 INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME 34

Coraline enters to see the kangaroo mice go directly to the little door, opened a crack, and disappear.

She pulls it open. Bricks are gone; hallway revealed. She hears sweet, slow singing and steps through the door.

35 INT. OTHER KITCHEN - NIGHT 35

Coraline enters Other Kitchen. Other Mother looks DAZZLING tonight. Her black hair - LONGER NOW - is tied in a French braid; her robe patterned like a TIGER SALAMANDER. She's TALLER in high-heeled cowboy boots, her smile WHITER, lips REDDER. She stops singing and turns to Coraline, button eyes aglow.

OTHER MOTHER
Welcome back, darling.

Coraline's mouth waters at the sight of pancakes, sausage and fruit smoothies. The Other Mother crumbles cheese into a sizzling frittata.

OTHER MOTHER (CONT'D)
So thoughtful of you to send this nice cheddar, Coraline.

CORALINE
Cheddar? Oh, the mice bait...

OTHER MOTHER
Would you go fetch your father? I bet he's worked up quite an appetite.

CORALINE
You mean my Other Father?

OTHER MOTHER
Your *better* father, dear. He's in the garden.

36 EXT. OTHER GARDEN - SAME 36

Under a full moon, the Other Father is planting a FANTASTIC GARDEN, whistling the Coraline song, astride a MECHANICAL PRAYING MANTIS. The fruited and flowering plants include smiling GIANT PUMPKINS and WARPED SQUASH; SNAPDRAGONS that really SNAP; BLEEDING HEARTS that BEAT. Luminescent HUMMINGBIRDS go from plant to plant, LIGHTING THEM up. Coraline, at the gate, calls out.

CORALINE
Your garden is beautiful!

The Other Father turns, wipes his brow and beams.

OTHER FATHER
Our garden, Coraline.

He JUMPS his praying mantis over to her then bends down to snip off two huge LADY SLIPPERS. A nearby snapdragon NIPS the man's ear. He waggles his finger at it and gives Coraline the slippers. They fit perfectly.

OTHER FATHER (CONT'D)
Hop on, I want to show you something!

She does, and the mantis SPROUTS MECHANICAL WINGS and they RISE in the air. Looking down, she sees that the garden is a PORTRAIT OF CORALINE.

CORALINE
I can't believe you did this!

OTHER FATHER
Mother said you'd like it!

Coraline nods.

CORALINE
Well, she says it's time for dinner ... breakfast ... *food*.

OTHER FATHER
Mmmm! I *love* dinner-breakfast-food.

He pulls the controls and they ZOOM DOWN out of frame.

37 INT. OTHER KITCHEN - SAME 37

Coraline's even hungrier than her Other Father. She stacks sausage on frittata on top of pancakes, rolls it up and stuffs it in her mouth. The Other Mother feeds bits of sausage to freshly-cut snapdragons in a vase.

OTHER MOTHER
Coraline, Mr. Bobinski has invited you to come see his Jumping Mice perform after dinner.

CORALINE
Wow. That know-it-all Wybie said it was all in Mr. B's head; I knew he was wrong.

OTHER FATHER
Everything's right in *this* world, Coraline. Your mother made it so.

Coraline hurries to shovel in the rest of her meal, while her Other Parents smile at one another.

OTHER MOTHER
Your father and I will clean up, while you and your friend head upstairs.

CORALINE
My *friend*?

There's a KNOCK at the door to outside. Other Mother opens it to reveal the OTHER WYBIE. He's cleaner, with better posture, and cute button eyes.

CORALINE (CONT'D)
Great... Hello why-were-you-born.

The boy nods, button eyes shining like Other Parents'.

CORALINE (CONT'D)
Hello?

He just makes a shy smile, doesn't answer. She's confused.

OTHER MOTHER
Oh, I just thought you might like Wybie more if he was a better *listener*. So ...
(she shrugs, smiling)
... I fixed him.

CORALINE
So he can't talk at all?

She looks Other Wybie over appreciatively.

CORALINE (CONT'D)
I like it.

OTHER MOTHER
(proudly)
Now run along, you two, and have fun.

Coraline heads out the door with the mute boy.

38 EXT. OTHER ESTATE HOUSE - SAME 38

The Other House - lit by amber spotlights and holiday lights - looks MAGICAL with ornate GINGERBREAD TRIM; a TOPIARY SEA SERPENT in the yard; the stair rails SCULPTED NEON. Coraline and Other Wybie start to climb the stairs.

CORALINE
You're awful cheerful, considering you can't say anything.

The boy nods vigorously as they climb.

CORALINE (CONT'D)
It didn't hurt, did it, getting--
(points to her mouth)
-- "fixed", I mean?

Awkward second and then he points: a SMALL BLIMP PILOTED BY A KANGAROO MOUSE is flying towards Bobinski's door. They run up the stairs and watch it slip through an opening above his door. Coraline knocks on the apartment door which suddenly SPINS, THROWING THEM INSIDE.

39 INT. OTHER MR. BOBINSKI'S FLAT - SAME 39

They look up to see a MINIATURE CIRCUS. Wybie catches COTTON CANDY on cones SHOT from SMALL CANNONS. Coraline takes BAGS OF POPCORN from a SPINNING FERRIS WHEEL.

They spot a SMALL BLIMP heading towards the BIG TOP and follow. At the entrance, they stoop down to crawl inside.

40 INT. MINIATURE BIG TOP - SAME 40

Inside, the tent is LARGER than outside. They find a place RINGSIDE to sit.

The blimp ENTERS from the top of the tent, the PILOT MOUSE WAVING. But one of the PROPELLERS GETS TANGLED in a rope, stretching it like a rubber band. The PROP BREAKS OFF and the BLIMP FLIES WILDLY OUT OF CONTROL. The pilot mouse JUMPS OUT IN A PARACHUTE and the blimp crashes in the center of the ring.

It OPENS LIKE A FLOWER, and from inside, 50 JUMPING MICE flip up like Chinese acrobats to spell C O R A L I N E.

She's delighted.

The pilot LANDS in his parachute, the LIGHTS DIM and a BOOMING VOICE announces:

OTHER MR. B (O.S.)
Lady and gentleman! I introduce the smallest show on earth!

The pilot becomes a DRUM MAJOR, the jumping mice BRANDISH TINY INSTRUMENTS, and DRUMMERS START POUNDING.

OTHER MR. B (CONT'D)
The *AMAZING ... Bobinski Jumping Mouse Circus!*

Drum Major BLOWS WHISTLE and they launch into a THUNDEROUS RUSSIAN CIRCUS MARCH.

Coraline, grinning, turns to the Other Wybie:

CORALINE
It's wonderful, Wybie!

The boy nods to the beat of the bass drums.

The band hop-marches across and around the ring, forming PINWHEELS, then X's, then other GEOMETRIC PATTERNS.

They SPIRAL to the center of the flower pattern ring which RISES UP to form a six-foot Tower of Babel. The DRUM MAJOR balances on top on a COLORFUL CIRCUS BALL.

He RUNS the ball DOWN AND AROUND the spiral as the MICE HOP OFF, and when he hits the ground, the TOWER UNWRAPS to reveal the OTHER MISTER BOBINSKI. He CRACKS A WHIP.

Coraline and Other Wybie STAND and CLAP.

Other Bobinski - in a RINGMASTER'S OUTFIT, FULL LENGTH CAPE, TALL BLACK HAT - bows graciously. Moustache is waxed into huge HANDLEBARS, eyes gleaming black buttons.

OTHER MR. BOBINSKI
Very *very* thank you, lady and gentleman.

On cue, the jumping mice SCAMPER up the man's SLEEVES. The drum major SWINGS UP from Mr. B's MOUSTACHE and onto his head. He replaces his hat.

CORALINE
We loved it, Mr. B. It was ... *AMAZING*!

OTHER MR. BOBINSKI
So happy you say, Miss Coraline. You - and also your good friend there - are welcome anytime you like.

She happily turns to Other Wybie, beaming with joy.

41 INT. CORALINE'S OTHER BEDROOM - SAME 41

Other Mother tucks Coraline in bed, kisses her forehead. She and Other Father smile warmly, wave good-night. Other Wybie, at door, nods as Coraline's heavy lids close.

SHADOWS of kangaroo mice slide onto the bed's canopy. The shadows, dark and distorted, sing in high sweet voices.

SHADOWS
We are small but we are many,
We are many we are small,
We were here before you rose,
We will be here if you fall.

42 INT. CORALINE'S BEDROOM - DAY 42

EARLY MORNING. Coraline awakens, clutching the button-eyed doll. She races to her window to see the garden. There's nothing but bug-eaten roses and weeds under a grey sky. *How could a dream be so real?*

She checks by her door. The cheese is REALLY and TRULY GONE. This is <u>much</u> too confusing.

43 INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME 43

Coraline goes to the small door in the corner. It's locked. *What the heck?* The kitchen kettle starts to WHISTLE which becomes the sound of --.

44 EXT. SMALL OFFICE BUILDING IN TOWN - DAY 44

--SQUEALING brakes, as the Jones' JEEP pulls up in front of "Northwest Garden" headquarters. Coraline is sharing her latest dream:

CORALINE (V.O.)
... garden squash like balloon animals, wiggly red peppers and cartoon pumpkins and snapping snap dragons.

ON FAMILY: Coraline continues from back seat as her father climbs out front passenger side with a LAPTOP CASE and a PROJECTOR. He's keyed up, a bit anxious.

CORALINE (CONT'D)
And upstairs I saw a *real* mouse circus, not pretend like the crazy old man's in our house.

KAREN
He's just .... very eccentric, dear.

Barry leans down to Karen on the driver's side.

BARRY
Sure you won't come? The boss is dying to meet you.

KAREN
Not with this thing.

Indicates her neck brace.

KAREN (CONT'D)
But don't worry, Barry, they'll love the new catalog. At least, they'll love *my* chapters.

Gives her an "aren't you funny" look and a kiss, steps to Coraline's window.

BARRY
As for you, my dizzy dreamer,
Oh.... my twitchy witchy girl,
I think you are so nice,
I--

Coraline cuts him off, embarrassed out in public.

CORALINE
Da-ad! I'm not five anymore. And *you* can't sing; not like my Other Father.

BARRY
Ooookay. ... Wish me luck?

CORALINE
(sighs)
You need more than luck, Dad.

Holds out some BREATH MINTS. He flips one into his mouth and heads off, shaking his head.

45 INT. DEPARTMENT STORE - SAME 45

SCHOOL UNIFORMS AISLE. Karen piles gray blouses, a navy skirt, white socks onto the arms of a CLERK. Coraline holds up a pair of BRILLIANT GREEN GLOVES.

CORALINE
But Mom, the whole school's gonna wear boring gray clothes. No one will have these; I could be the only one.

KAREN
(to clerk)
She's kind of unclear on the whole "uniforms" concept.

Coraline mutters:

CORALINE
My *other* mother would get them.

KAREN
Maybe she could buy *all* your clothes. You've grown two whole sizes since you started eating there.

Coraline looks in a mirror, concerned.

CORALINE
Really?

KAREN
Gotcha! Now put them back.

Coraline scowls and stomps away to return the gloves. Karen adds a sweater on the pile in the clerk's arms.

46 INT. CAR - SAME 46

Coraline and Karen are driving home, packages in back.

CORALINE
So what do *you* think's in the other apartment?

KAREN
I don't know. Certainly not a family of Jones imposters.

CORALINE
Then why'd you lock the door?

KAREN
Oh, I found some mice poop and ... well, you're getting a little obsessed with these dreams of yours. I thought you'd feel safer.

CORALINE
The dreams aren't dangerous. They're the most fun I've had since we moved here.

KAREN
Your school could be fun.

CORALINE
With those stupid uniforms? Right, and dad's recipes are delicious and getting cavities drilled tickles.

KAREN
Had to give it a try.

They pull into their DRIVEWAY.

47 INT. KITCHEN - SAME 47

Karen pulls out salsa, mustard, catsup, stale tortillas.

Karen
Well... how do you feel about a mustard-ketchup-salsa wrap for lunch?

Coraline makes an *are you kidding* face.

KAREN (CONT'D)
I was going food shopping anyway -- we're hoping to celebrate tonight.

CORALINE
(sarcastic)
Let me guess ... the catalog.

KAREN
Fingers crossed. Your dad's planning something special.

Coraline squinches up her nose.

KAREN (CONT'D)
(sighing)
He tries. Want to come along? You can pick out something *you* like.

Coraline plops down in a chair.

CORALINE
Uh, no thanks.

KAREN
Then put your new clothes away, and while you're at it, clean up some of the moving boxes, okay?

Coraline scowls. Karen grabs her purse and exits.

48 INT. KITCHEN - HOUR LATER 48

Coraline sits at the table flipping forks into the air. One goes up, end over end, striking the STRING OF KEYS over the door. The keys fall with a CHINK.

CORALINE
Oh gosh. Didn't mean for that to happen.

She UNTIES the string, removes the SMALL SHARP KEY.

49 INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME 49

Coraline stoops in front of the small door and pushes the key into the keyhole and unlocks the door.

She listens for her mother. Nothing. Gripping the key handle, and, *closing her eyes*, she pulls it open.

ANGLE ON CORALINE: A SOFT BREEZE carrying the SMELL of delicious food reaches her nose, MOVES her hair. She knows before her eyes open that the BRICKS ARE GONE.

She smiles and WALKS THROUGH THE DOOR.

50 INT. OTHER KITCHEN - DAY 50

Lunch is ready and waiting for her: foot-long hotdogs with relish; grilled cheese sandwiches with gherkins;

curly-fries; piles of coleslaw and potato salad; five flavors of soda-pop. And a note:

Dearest Coraline,
Just go ahead and help yourself — we're taking a little nap right now. Miss Spink and Miss Forcible have a surprise for you when you've finished.
Love, Mother

Sounds good. Coraline piles food on a plate, digs in...

51 INT. OTHER HALLWAY - SAME 51

She enters, stomach full, wiping her mouth, and looks towards the front door. Instead of a dark passageway back home, she sees the OTHER FRONT DOOR, SUNLIGHT streaming through its glass panes.

52 EXT. OTHER ESTATE HOUSE - SAME 52

Coraline steps onto the FRONT PORCH. The OTHER DAY is SUNNY with BLUE SKIES, GREENER trees, PURPLE HILLS.

She stops at the stairwell to Spink and Forcible's flat. Blue and red CHASER LIGHTS FLASH on and off around their door spelling "A THEATRICAL TRIUMPH!!!"

SOMEONE clears their voice. Coraline turns and sees a BLACK CAT standing on a wall. He's IDENTICAL to the one back home with NORMAL EYES, *but he can speak.*

CAT
Good afternoon.

Coraline raises her brows, studies the animal a moment.

CORALINE
Wybie's got a cat just like you at home. Not the quiet Wybie; the one that talks too much. You must be the Other Cat.

The cat shakes his head.

CAT
No. I'm not the other anything. I'm me.

He tips his head on one side, green eyes glinting.

CAT (CONT'D)
You people are spread all over the place. Cats, on the other hand, keep ourselves together. If you see what I mean.

CORALINE
I can see you don't have button eyes. But if you're the same cat, how can you talk?

The cat shrugs from the tip of his tail to his whiskers.

CAT
I just can.

CORALINE
Cat's don't talk at home.

CAT
No?

CORALINE
No.

The cat leaps smoothly from the wall to the grass near Coraline's feet. He stares up at her.

CAT
(dryly)
Well, you're clearly the expert on these things. After all, what would I know? I'm only a cat.

Begins to walk away, head and tail held high and proud.

CORALINE
Come back. Please? I'm sorry, I really am.

The cat stops walking, sits, and starts to wash himself. Coraline forces herself to be polite.

CORALINE (CONT'D)
We could be friends, you know.

CAT
What would we talk about? *You* already know everything, and apparently *I* can't speak.

CORALINE
You could tell me where I am.

CAT
(glancing around)
You're *here*.

CORALINE
I can see that. Well, how did *you* get here?

CAT
Like this.

The cat crosses the lawn and slips behind a solitary tree. Coraline goes over to find him. He's DISAPPEARED. She hears the same throat clearing sound and spins around. Cat steps from behind a different tree.

CAT (CONT'D)
By the by, you *might* think this world is a dream come true. But you'd probably be mistaken. The Other Wybie told me.

CORALINE
But he can't talk.

CAT
Perhaps not to *you*. We cats, you know, can hear things people can't. We can also see, smell, know and do things you can't.

Suddenly, the cat drops into a sudden crouch and freezes, sensing something.

CAT (CONT'D)
(whispering)
For instance ...

Then he abruptly turns tail and dashes for the woods.

Coraline shrugs, then turns and walks down to Spink and Forcible's door. She knocks once and it SWINGS OPEN.

53 INT. MISS SPINK AND FORCIBLE'S OTHER APARTMENT - SAME 53

She pushes past elegant VELVET CURTAINS to discover an enormous, darkened THEATER with dim rows of seats and a high WOODEN STAGE.

A FLASHLIGHT comes towards her, carried by a black SCOTTIE DOG with button eyes. He looks up at her, sniffs, then leads her down front to a seat by the Other Wybie. She squeezes his arm hello, he looks back warmly. Her eyes adjust, she sees the ENTIRE AUDIENCE is SCOTTY DOGS.

A scratchy old RECORD starts and the curtains open on a SEASIDE SETTING with ROTATING WAVES, BOARDWALK, CARDBOARD SEAGULLS on wires. OTHER MISS SPINK enters stage left, in a MERMAID SUIT, large WIG, BUTTON EYES, and UKULELE. She rides a SCHOOL OF MECHANICAL PORPOISES pulled by a team of SCOTTY DOGS.

OTHER MISS SPINK
I'm known as the siren of all seven seas
The breaker of hearts by the bay.
So, if you go swimmin'
With bow-legged women,
I might steal your weak heart away.

She bows her head and the audience of dogs THUMP their tails.

Trapdoors open in the stage floor, and a huge SCALLOP SHELL rises, with OTHER MISS FORCIBLE inside, in a reenactment of Botticelli's BIRTH OF VENUS. COMPETING with Spink, she sings a 1/2 step higher:

OTHER MISS FORCIBLE
A big-bottomed sea witch may bob through the waves,
And hope to lead sailors astray,
But a true ocean goddess,
Must fill out her bodice,
(indicates her ample bosom)
To present an alluring display.

The dogs thump and woof, Wybie and Coraline clap. Spink, furious, pushes the fin on her dolphin, it's mouth opens revealing a harpoon. Sings a 1/2 step higher.

OTHER MISS SPINK
Beware of old oysters, too large in the chest,
Let's banish them from the buffet.

She fires harpoon at Venus; it opens into a grappling hook that snags the top of the big shell. Line is winched in and the shell starts to close on Forcible.

Forcible uses her cane to keep the shell propped open. Removes grappling hook and hooks it to a rotating wave which winds in the line and starts to pulls Spink's dolphins and Spink over. They trade barbs with extended couplets:

OTHER MISS SPINK (CONT'D)
I'm far more nutritious

OTHER MISS FORCIBLE
You smell like the fishes

OTHER MISS SPINK
Did I hear a banshee?

OTHER MISS FORCIBLE
You're sea-green with envy

OTHER MISS SPINK
<u>This</u> mermaid enchantress,

OTHER MISS FORCIBLE
No, I "birth of Venus!"

OTHER MISS FORCIBLE
Will send sailors swooning all d-- Oh no!

OTHER MISS SPINK
Will send sailors swooning all d-- Dear!

With a crash, the DOLPHINS FALL, the SHELL SNAPS SHUT, (eating Forcible's wig), and the old ladies TUMBLE DOWN IN A PILE.

The audience HOWLS with laughter as the two thespians face off, forehead to forehead.

OTHER MISS FORCIBLE
You clumsy clown! You've ruined my coiffure!

OTHER MISS SPINK
You've spoilt my finale, you candied ham!

OTHER MISS FORCIBLE
Why don't you take a flying leap?

OTHER MISS SPINK
Please, after you!

DRUM ROLL as the ancient ladies, on flip-down seats, RIDE UP two very tall LIFEGUARD STANDS on opposite sides of the large stage, higher and higher. A SCOTTY DOG in a lifeguard costume pushes a large BUCKET OF WATER, labeled "POOL", onto center stage.

Coraline, frightened for the old girls' safety, looks to Other Wybie. Palms up, he's not sure what will happen.

They reach the top and STEP OUT onto precarious DIVING BOARDS that face each other. Coraline can't stand it.

OTHER MISS SPINK (CONT'D)
Ready to break a leg, Miriam?

OTHER MISS FORCIBLE
Our lives for the theater, April!

They bounce the boards downwards, crouch low and in SLO-MO, the two troupers unzip *FAT SUIT DISGUISES* from which emerge their YOUNGER BEAUTIFUL SELVES which LEAP to catch matching TRAPEZE BARS that swing into place.

Coraline laughs with relief and amazement, Other Wybie pleased.

Dogs WOOF, MUSIC BEGINS and the TWO BEAUTIES - eyes BLUE BUTTONS, SEXY BATHING SUITS striped pink and green - SWING OUT over the stage, SINGING HAMLET.

YOUNG FORCIBLE
What a piece of work is man!
How noble in reason!

They FLY past each other on their trapezes, double up, catch one another hand to ankle. We notice a LARGE PEARL RING on Forcible's finger.

YOUNG SPINK
How infinite in faculty!
In form and moving how express and admirable!

In a SUDDEN change of direction, they SWING OUT over the audience, trapeze bar LOWERING and PULL CORALINE INTO THE AIR! She HOLLERS, terrified.

They expertly TOSS HER one to the other, FLIPPING AND SPINNING, as they continue their lines. Her SCREAMS become CRIES OF EXHILARATION.

YOUNG FORCIBLE
In action like an angel!

YOUNG SPINK
In apprehension how like a god!

YOUNG FORCIBLE
The beauty of the world!

YOUNG SPINK
The paragon of animals!

The acrobats TOSS CORALINE UP into the air and JACK-KNIFE DIVE into the large bucket below. They rise up, unhurt, just in time to catch Coraline. The THREE BOW to THUNDEROUS THUMPING APPLAUSE.

54 EXT. OTHER ESTATE HOUSE - DAY 54

A gorgeous pink SUNSET. Other Wybie escorts Coraline up the stone stairs from Spink and Forcible's apartment.

The Other Parents, silhouetted by the sinking sun, wait for them out front, smiling side by side.

OTHER MOTHER
How was the theater, dear?

Other Mother's hair, longer and loose, moves in a breeze. Coraline shakes with excitement, tries to answer.

CORALINE
They swooped down and pulled me right out of my seat - Spink and Forcible. Only they weren't old ladies, that was just a disguise. But then, I was flying through the air and ... it was the greatest feeling ever.

The Other Parents come forward and walk Coraline up the front steps to the house. Other Wybie stays behind.

OTHER MOTHER
You do like it here, don't you, Coraline?

CORALINE
(nods)
Oh yeah. It's *way* more interesting than at home.

They step inside, Coraline last. She glances back to Other Wybie, waves, goes in. Wybie's half-smile melts into sadness. He lowers his head, almost ashamed.

55 INT. OTHER HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS 55

OTHER MOTHER
Well, we'd like to think that *this* is your home. You *could* stay here forever ... if you want to.

CORALINE
Really?

OTHER FATHER
We'll sing and play games together, and dig in the garden, and Mother will cook your favorite meals every day.

Other Mother rests her hand on Coraline's shoulder.

OTHER MOTHER
There's one little thing we need to do.

CORALINE
What's that?

OTHER FATHER
It's a surprise.

56 INT. OTHER KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS 56

They sit at the table, Coraline on one side, Other Parents across from her.

The Other Mother holds out her hand to Coraline. Inside is a SMALL BOX with a bow. Coraline takes the box and, as she removes the lid, the Other Mother says:

OTHER MOTHER
For you ... our little doll.

Inside there's a spool of BLACK THREAD, a SILVER NEEDLE, and a pair of SHINY BLACK BUTTONS -- FOR HER EYES.

Coraline GASPS. She looks up at the Other Parents, hoping it's a bad joke.

OTHER MOTHER (CONT'D)
(smiling)
Black *is* traditional, but if you'd prefer pink or vermillion or--

CORALINE
NO WAY!

Her hands FLY to her face, COVER her eyes.

CORALINE (CONT'D)
YOU'RE NOT SEWING BUTTONS IN MY EYES!

OTHER MOTHER
Oh, but we need a *yes* ... if you want to stay here. And it's just a *little* thing.

Other Father takes the needle, tests it on his finger.

OTHER FATHER
(enthusiastic)
So sharp you won't feel a -- OH!

Other Mother kicks him under the table. Embarrassed, he puts the needle back in the box.

OTHER MOTHER
There now; it's *your* decision, darling. *We* only want what's best for you.

She reaches across the table, her arm STRETCHING a little, and puts her hand, now ICY COLD, on Coraline's shoulder. Coraline PUSHES it away and STANDS UP.

CORALINE
I'm going to bed! RIGHT NOW!

OTHER MOTHER
(wounded)
Bed?

OTHER FATHER
Before dinner?

Coraline fights to control her quaking voice.

CORALINE
I'm *really, really* tired.
(fakes huge yawn)
I ... I just need to sleep on things.

The Other Mother stands, masking disappointment.

OTHER MOTHER
Of course you do, darling. I'll be happy to tuck you in.

CORALINE
(palm up,forced smile)
No thanks, I'll tuck myself. Besides, you've done so much alread--

Quick as a snake, Other Mother GRABS Coraline's hand and stops her. Her heart pounds.

OTHER MOTHER
You're welcome. And I -
(smiles to Other Father)
we aren't worried at all, darling.
(softly)
Soon you'll see things *our* way.

She lets go. She and the Other Father wave gently, mouthing "good night" as Coraline backs into the hallway.

57 INT. CORALINE'S OTHER BEDROOM - TWILIGHT 57

Nodding and waving, Coraline closes the door, then, as quickly and quietly as she can, she DRAGS a DESK, TWO CHAIRS, and a BOOKSHELF against it.

The LIVING TOYS - the paper butterflies, windup angels, stuffed animals, little toy tank - FLUTTER AROUND her innocently, wondering what's wrong, making little sounds.

She quickly rounds them up - all but one fluttering angel she can't quite reach - and puts them in the toy chest.

CORALINE
Going home tonight, guys - if I can ever fall asleep - and I won't be back.

She stacks that by the door as well.

She falls back on the bed with a huge exhalation. Out the window, she sees a GORGEOUS FULL MOON rising in the PERFECT evening sky. She sighs wistfully, then shivers as, for a moment, the moon becomes ONE HUGE BUTTON-EYE.

She covers her face with pillows. Not good enough. She climbs under the covers, rolls FACEDOWN on her stomach, and pulls pillows over her head.

UP ANGLE ON CORALINE: mattress INVISIBLE to camera. She HUGS herself to stop shaking, knowing she must fall asleep in this bed to wake up in her real bed at home.

We PUSH IN on her face and hear what she hears: backward *mice-singing*, voice of Other Mother saying *"for you, our little doll"*; sweet toy noises slowed to molasses speed.

She fidgets and turns but sleep finally wraps her and takes her to oblivion.

FADE-OUT:

58 INT. OTHER BEDROOM - MORNING 58

CU. of her sleeping face, hands-on-eyes. DAYLIGHT slides diagonally on screen, touching her. She wakens, sliding her hands from her eyes, a hopeful look on her face.

Then a fluttery shadow crosses: THE ANGEL - *she's still in the other world*. She throws her pillow and knocks the angel down.

CORALINE
Cripes!

She stands and HUGS HERSELF, her slept-in clothes feel WET and COLD and WRINKLED. She opens the closet and finds a rack of perfectly-made HALLOWEEN COSTUMES for her. She shoves them aside and spots a pair of bright blue boots.

CORALINE (CONT'D)
Blue's a good color for running away.

She opens a chest of drawers and grabs a pair of black jeans and a smoke-grey sweater with stars.

59 INT. OTHER FATHER'S STUDY - SAME 59

Coraline, in new clothes, opens the door and finds the Other Father sitting at the piano, his back to her, hitting one note over and over. In her most brave-sounding voice, she says:

CORALINE
I want to go home!

He turns around. Coraline WINCES. His smiling face is PUFFY like rising bread dough, glasses crooked, button eyes askew.

CORALINE (CONT'D)
You're looking kinda...marshmallowy.

He answers, a little robotic-sounding.

OTHER FATHER
All will be swell, soon as Mother is refreshed. Her strength is our strength.

He TWITCHES, like he's getting an electric SHOCK. It stops. He looks embarrassed

OTHER FATHER (CONT'D)
Mustn't talk when Mother's not here.

He closes his mouth and folds his hands in his lap.

CORALINE
So what should I do now?

The Other Father points to his lips. Silence.

CORALINE (CONT'D)
If you won't even talk to me, I'm gonna find the Other Wybie. He'll help me.

She turns to go.

OTHER FATHER
No point. He's in for repairs.

CORALINE
(turning back)
What do you mean?

OTHER FATHER
He pulled a long face...

He PULLS DOWN the corners of his mouth impossibly far, lets go.

OTHER FATHER (CONT'D)
...and Mother didn't like it.

He gets shocked again.

CORALINE
Uh, thanks. I'll find my own way out.

60 EXT. OTHER ESTATE HOUSE - SAME 60

She exits the house to another beautiful day, past the flashing-lights stairwell of Spink and Forcible, past the fantastic garden.

Coraline is surprised there's no tennis court or fish pond or orchard out back, only trees. And the further she goes, the LESS TREE-LIKE they become. Soon they're just BRUSH STROKE trees: smears of brown and green.

The brush stroke trees give way to a PALE, EMPTY NOTHINGNESS. No sky or horizon, no ground or shadows. She continues walking when she hears the CAT speak.

CAT (O.C.)
And what do you think you're doing?

She looks over. The cat, padding beside her, looks BIG AS A LION. She blinks and he's SMALL AS A MOUSE. She blinks once more and sees him ACTUAL-SIZED.

CORALINE
Well, I'm exploring. Looking for Other Wybie...and maybe a way back home.

CAT
Nothing out here, it's the empty part of this world. She only made what she knew would impress you.

CORALINE
By why? Why does she want me?

CAT (cont'd)
She wants something to love, I think. Something that isn't her. Or maybe she'd just love something to eat.

CORALINE
Eat? That's ridiculous, mothers don't eat daughters!

CAT
I don't know. How do you taste?

A SHAPE begins to appear in front of them, looming out of the whiteness, something high and towering and dark.

CORALINE
Look! There *is* something out here!

The shape becomes the OTHER HOUSE, with it's front yard, driveway and shrubs. Coraline is perplexed?

CORALINE (CONT'D)
But how can you walk away from something and still come back to it?

The cat curls its tail into a question mark, and tips its head to one side.

CAT
Easy, walk around the world.

CORALINE
Small world.

CAT
A spider's web need only be large enough to catch flies.

Coraline shivers. They are standing under some realistic trees, beside the house.

CAT (CONT'D)
Hang on--

He suddenly pounces and, before she can blink, he's pinned down a CUTE KANGAROO MOUSE in uniform with a TINY TRUMPET.

CAT (CONT'D)
(silky smooth)
Some have suggested that the tendency of a cat to play with its prey is a merciful one.

CORALINE
What are you doing?

He lets the mouse go. It HOPS several feet and starts to blow the trumpet. With ONE BOUND, the cat is on it again, the trumpet note MUFFLED into a pathetic squeak.

CAT
After all, it permits the occasional snack to escape from time to time.
(tilts head to her)
Would *you* care to pounce on him?

CORALINE
No! You're torturing the little thing.

CAT
Not *so* little. Besides, how often does your dinner get to escape?

He lets it go again. The mouse STUMBLES, dazed, for a few steps, raising its trumpet again to blow.

With a SWIFT BLOW of its paw, the cat KNOCKS the mouse into the air, and catches it in his mouth.

CORALINE
STOP IT!

He gives a QUICK BITE and drops the mouse between his front paws. It TRANSFORMS into a BIG DEAD RAT. Coraline's jaw drops.

CAT
I don't like rats at the best of times, but these rats are her spies, no matter how cute their disguises. This one was sounding an alarm.

Coraline, with new respect, asks his advice.

CORALINE
What do you think I should do?

The cat flicks his whiskers and answers:

CAT
Challenge her to a contest, a battle of wits. She may not play fair, but she won't refuse. Her kind of thing loves games and challenges.

CORALINE
What kind of thing *is* she?

Without answering, the cat picks the rat up and heads off.

CORALINE () (CONT'D)
Good kitty.

61 INT. OTHER HALLWAY - SAME 61

Coraline, alone, approaches the mirror at the end, her growing reflection looking braver than she feels.

A HAND touches her shoulder, STARTLING her and she turns. The OTHER MOTHER looks down at Coraline, all smiles, button eyes shining. She's holding a magnifying glass.

OTHER MOTHER
Hello, Coraline!

She puts the lens in front of her button eye.

OTHER MOTHER (CONT'D)
I spy with my little eye, something that begins with ... "B."

She pretends to search the ceiling. Coraline is defiant.

CORALINE
What happened to Wybie?

OTHER MOTHER
Oh, he's all better now. Happy as a clam, and twice as quiet.

She pretends to search the walls.

OTHER MOTHER (CONT'D)
Now ... where is it? ... starts with a "B" ... something small ...

Coraline glances at a small table, and notices the PINK BUTTON EYES lying there beside the NEEDLE AND THREAD. She KICKS OVER the table.

CORALINE
I want to be with my *real* parents. I want you to <u>let me go</u>.

The Other Mother lowers the glass and, tilting her head, looks into Coraline's face.

OTHER MOTHER
(disappointed)
I spy a little girl who is rude, ungrateful, and selfish.

She turns and walks into the living room, heels CLICKING, finger beckoning Coraline. She reluctantly follows.

62 INT. OTHER LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS 62

The room is filled with EXPLORER'S BOOTY -- mounted specimens, maps, artifacts; stuff that Coraline really loves. ANIMATED SEA-LIFE swims on the ceiling and walls. The staid bird wallpaper from the real house is now animated with huge birds of prey that fly around the room on the walls.

OTHER MOTHER
Your very own explorer's club. What do you think, Coraline?

They sit down on the big sofa. Coraline is pretty impressed.

OTHER MOTHER (CONT'D)
They say even the proudest spirit can be broken, with love.
(reaches for dish)
(MORE)

OTHER MOTHER (CONT'D)
Of course, chocolates never hurt. Like one?

She extends a CANDY DISH filled with chocolates to Coraline. Distracted, Coraline takes one, opens her mouth. The chocolate suddenly UNFOLDS into a LIVING CHOCOLATE BEETLE. She drops it.

CORALINE
Ugh, gross; I don't eat *bugs*.

Other Mother takes back the dish and POPS A BIG ONE INTO HER MOUTH. MUNCHING it happily, she says:

OTHER MOTHER
Hardly bugs; they're Coco Beetles from Zanzibar. Oh, look at me.
(glances at Coraline)
I'll spoil my dinner.

She eats another and another. Holding her queasy stomach, Coraline blurts out:

CORALINE
Jamie Mellish ate bugs for a quarter, but that was in second grade. You're way more disgusting!

The Other Mother FROWNS, swallows. There's a FRIGHTENING STEELINESS in her voice that Coraline's never heard.

OTHER MOTHER
Is that any way to talk to your mother?

Coraline is mad, and feeling mad makes her brave.

CORALINE
You aren't my mother.

The Other Mother STRAIGHTENS. Her button eyes, now DEAD AS A GREAT WHITE'S, stare into Coraline's. Her black hair starts to TWINE AND TWIST.

OTHER MOTHER
Apologize this instant, Coraline!

Coraline stares right back, not blinking.

CORALINE
No.

OTHER MOTHER
(tensely)
I'll give you to the count of three.
One... two...

Then she stands up, TALLER THAN BEFORE.

OTHER MOTHER
...three!

She GRABS Coraline by her HAIR and DRAGS her to the hallway.

CORALINE
Ow, that hurts!

63 INT. OTHER HOUSE HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS 63

She PULLS Coraline down the hallway to the mirror at the end. Coraline flails at the Other Mother with her fists.

CORALINE
Let go of me, let go!

Other Mother SHOVES Coraline RIGHT THROUGH THE MIRROR as if it was water. She pulls out her hand then THRUSTS HER HEAD THROUGH and--

64 INT. CLOSET-PRISON BEHIND THE MIRROR - CONTINUOUS 64

--stares down, her face glowing, at Coraline. Her button eyes DILATE AND CONTRACT with her angry heartbeats.

OTHER MOTHER
You may come out when you've learned some manners. And when you're ready to be a *loving* daughter!

She PULLS HER HEAD OUT and leaves Coraline in DARKNESS.

She pounds on the mirror-door, kicks it with her blue boots, but it's hard as steel from this side. A SOB wells up in her throat.

And then we hear a SOFT GHOSTLY VOICE.

SWEET GIRL GHOST (O.S.)
Art thou alive?

She turns.

CORALINE
(frightened)
Who's there?

TALL GIRL GHOST (O.S.)
(whispers)
Hush! And shush! For the Beldam might be listening!

CORALINE
(whispers)
You ... you mean the Other Mother? ... Who are you?

The GHOSTS of THREE CHILDREN, GLOWING, button eyes, APPEAR: a SWEET GIRL GHOST, Coraline's size; a TALL GIRL GHOST, emotional; a young BOY GHOST, very sad.

BOY GHOST
(wistful)
Don't 'member our names. But I 'member my true mama ...

The boy, in pioneer clothes, CONJURES up ghost flowers.

BOY GHOST (CONT'D)
She'd grow the purtiest flowers; tulips they wuz - all yeller-and-red like fireplace sparkers...

The strange-looking flowers wither and fade. He's so sad that Coraline takes his cold hand and squeezes it.

CORALINE
Why are you all here?

GHOST SONG BEGINS. The SWEET GIRL GHOST - clothes 1930's - conjures up the BUTTON-EYED DOLL. But it's a copy of *her*, not Coraline.

SWEET GIRL GHOST
Into each one of our lives
Came the doll with button eyes

The doll TRANSFORMS to resemble the TALL GIRL GHOST - her clothes 1870's - then it TRANSFORMS to resemble the boy.

TALL GIRL GHOST
And the shiny button eyes
Were the spying eyes of the Beldam

The conjured doll GROWS into Other Mother.

TALL GIRL GHOST (CONT'D)
And they told her we weren't happy

Image fades. Coraline is chilled by the story.

SWEET GIRL GHOST
Oh, but we *were* happy... happy as birds!

The three ghosts flap their arms and fly around the room once, float back to the ground.

TALL GIRL GHOST
One by one she caught us all
We were tricked and trapped and spoiled

SWEET GIRL GHOST
By the things we asked her for

BOY GHOST
Even still we wanted more.
So we said we'd wear the buttons

He points to his button eyes.

TALL GIRL GHOST
And then we were hers forever.

All ghosts quieter, sadder now.

BOY GHOST
We had to pay back all the love she said she gave

TALL GIRL GHOST
So she swallowed up our lives

SWEET GIRL GHOST
Then when we were nothing but these pale, empty shells

The all MORPH into ghostly sea shells.

TALL GIRL GHOST
She locked us all away
And forgot we were ever here at all

The tall girl is suddenly desperate:

TALL GIRL GHOST (CONT'D)
Flee, miss, while you're still alive!

Other ghosts hug her tightly to calm her down. Coraline thinks a little and says.

CORALINE
She won't keep me in the dark forever; not if she wants to play a game. Beating her is my only chance.

A beat. Then the Sweet Girl asks:

SWEET GIRL GHOST
Perhaps, if you do win your escape, you could find our eyes?

CORALINE
Has she taken those, too?

TALL GIRL GHOST
Yes, miss. And hidden them, one each.

SWEET GIRL GHOST
That is why we could not leave here, when we died. Find where she's hidden our eyes, young mistress.

CORALINE
I ... I'll try.

The ghosts PULSE with hope. Coraline sits down against the mirror door, bounces her head against it. She's not hopeless, not yet.

Without warning, HANDS REACH THROUGH THE MIRROR DOOR and PULL HER OUT OF THE CLOSET!

65 INT. OTHER HALLWAY - DAY 65

C.U. of Coraline's FACE, eyes wild, as she TEARS at the hands that hold her. She PULLS OFF the one on her mouth and in a burst of adrenaline FLIPS her attacker onto the ground. It's the OTHER WYBIE.

CORALINE
(panting)
Oh Wybie, what happened to your face?

His mouth is stitched into a PAINFUL, EAR TO EAR SMILE. Coraline sits him up ...

CORALINE (CONT'D)
Did she do this to you?

... and unstitches his painfully-huge grin. His face snaps back to neutral.

CORALINE (CONT'D)
Hope that feels--

He stops her with a finger to her lips. He taps his wristwatch, pantomimes they must hurry before Other Mother awakens. She helps him to his feet.

CORALINE (CONT'D)
You know a way out of this world?

He nods sharply and takes her hand. She resists, looking back to the mirror.

CORALINE (CONT'D)
They asked me to find their eyes; the ghost children.

Frantic, he PULLS her away, and down the hall.

66 INT. OTHER LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS 66

He hurries her toward the corner hutch. Together they SHOVE it aside to reveal the SMALL DOOR.

CORALINE
The secret door. Is this the way home?

He nods and they pull it open. A COLD WIND blows from the SCARY, DARK PASSAGEWAY, filled with SPIDER'S WEBS.

CORALINE
Is this the only way home?

Upstairs, a door hinge SQUEALS, HIGH HEELS CLICK: the OTHER MOTHER! Other Wybie urges Coraline to enter.

CORALINE
Aren't you coming?

He shakes his head no.

CORALINE (CONT'D)
But she'll hurt you again!

He pulls off his glove to reveal a hand MADE OF SAWDUST. He blows his fingers away. Coraline understands.

HIGH HEELS CLICK in the hallway; she's ALMOST THERE!

Coraline takes a quick breath, looks at Other Wybie.

CORALINE (CONT'D)
Thank you.

She kisses his cheek and, for the first time, he smiles broadly on his own. She spins, sets her jaw and...

67 INT. OTHER HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS 67

...STEPS THROUGH THE DOOR. It shuts. She quickly moves forward in near-darkness. *This* passageway SMELLS HORRIBLE; it is WET and SLIMY; STICKY with COBWEBS.

Her heart BEATS FAST, she moves FASTER. SPIDERWEB STRANDS brush her face, she closes her eyes, hands up.

She's past the webs. Feeling DIZZY, she reaches her arms out for balance. She BUMPS into something and opens her eyes with a STARTLED GASP.

68 INT. REAL LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS 68

It's an ARMCHAIR, in her REAL LIVING ROOM. SHE IS HOME. Behind her, the doorway is FILLED IN with bricks again. Coraline SLAMS the door shut and turns the sharp little key, still in keyhole, to LOCK IT, and pockets the key.

She calls out, with relief:

CORALINE
I'M HOME!

69 INT. HALLWAY - SAME 69

She walks from one end to the other, pushing shut doors open, calling upstairs, into rooms:

CORALINE
Hello, hello, hello! Real Mom ... Real Dad! Anybody here?

70 INT. KITCHEN - SAME 70

There are bags of groceries on the table, as if her mother had just gotten in. She hops down to take a peek and FRUIT FLIES shoot out. The food is spoiled. Euww.

CORALINE
(puzzled)
Well, that's disgusting.

She dumps the bags in the garbage. Door bell rings.

71 INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS 71

She runs excitedly to the door, calling to her parents, and flings it open:

CORALINE
I missed you guys *so much*, you'll never know--

72 INT./EXT. FRONT DOOR - CONTINUOUS 72

But it's just Wybie, the one that talks too much.

CORALINE
Oh, it's you.

He seems anxious.

WYBIE
I'm worried, C Girl. He could be injured or trapped or maybe ate something rotten.

CORALINE
(confused)
Uh, that does sound like my Dad, at least the food part, but--

WYBIE
(shakes head)
No, no, I'm talking 'bout the cat, of course. You seen him around?

Coraline takes a deep breath and nods.

CORALINE
Yes, but you won't believe me.

73 INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS 73

She points to the locked little door in the corner. He goes to open it.

WYBIE
It's, uh, locked. Think you could you open it?

CORALINE
Not in a million years. But don't worry, he said there's cat-ways in and out of the other place.

WYBIE
The *cat* said?

Coraline nods hard; Wybie decides she's joking. He looks around, curious to be in his grandmother's old house.

WYBIE (CONT'D)
(awkward)
Gran, uh ... she's pretty mad at me; said I gotta get that doll back?

Coraline tenses.

WYBIE (CONT'D)
It's dangerous or something. Wouldn't tell me *how*, like it's radioactive or got some kind of flesh-eating bacteria or --

CORALINE
You stole it from her, didn't you.

Wybie tries to explain.

WYBIE
Well I ... I thought *you* should have it, since it looked just like you.
(sheepish)
...figured she'd never miss it.

Coraline's got a bad feeling.

CORALINE
But it wasn't Grannie's doll you took, was it. It was her sister's, the one she lost. Right?

Wybie nods, surprised. Coraline grabs his hand.

CORALINE (CONT'D)
I think I just met her. Come on!

74 INT. CORALINE'S BEDROOM - SAME 74

The doll's not on the bed, not on the chairs or moving boxes.

CORALINE
Where are you hiding, you little spy!

Wybie nervously watches Coraline pull out her dresser drawers, yank cushions off the window seat.

WYBIE
You and Gran been talking or --?

CORALINE
The doll is kid bait; she reels you in, says she loves you, then sucks the life out of you. Like Granny's sister.

WYBIE
Who reels you in?

CORALINE
The Other Mother. She's got this whole other world with great meals and magic and everything's perfect -- but it's all a trap.

Wybie backs towards the door.

WYBIE
Look, I'll just tell Gran you couldn't find-- OW!

A sneaker has struck his arm.

CORALINE
YOU'RE NOT LISTENING TO ME!

WYBIE
That's ... cause ... you're *crazy!*

He flees. Coraline GROWLS and grabs an arm-load of shoes.

75 EXT. FRONT DOOR/DRIVEWAY - CONTINUOUS 75

Door flies open and Wybie runs out - Coraline close behind - hops on his electric bike and tears off. Coraline HEAVES SHOES at him till they're gone. She turns away and notices her PARENTS' JEEP parked to the side.

76 INT. JONES' JEEP - SAME 76

Coraline rummages in the empty car, finds her mom's CELL PHONE. Punches in numbers and listens while it rings.

CORALINE
Pick it up, Dad, pick it up.

BARRY (V.O.)
Hi!

CORALINE
Dad! Where--

BARRY (V.O.)
I'm digging in my garden right now, but leave a message and I'll get right back to you.

She's glad to hear his voice, even a recording.

CORALINE
Dad, I'm home now, so if you and Mom are looking for me you can come back. Okay?
(MORE)

CORALINE (CONT'D)
And I promise I'll never leave, ever, without totally telling you.

MISS SPINK SUDDENLY TAPS at the car window, and B.G. dissolves around her as she KNITS an ANGEL WING--.

77 INT. SPINK AND FORCIBLE'S LIVING ROOM - EVENING 77

--onto a SWEATER worn by one of her living dogs. Coraline anxiously sips tea, the DOGS more worried about Coraline than their masters.

MISS SPINK
So, will they be home soon, your parents?

CORALINE
That's just it, they've disappeared.

She comments on the angel outfit on Angus the dog.

CORALINE (CONT'D)
Uh... don't you only make wings for the dead ones?

MISS SPINK
Just looking ahead dear... Angus hasn't been feeling well as of late.

MISS FORCIBLE (O.S.)
April? Aren't you getting ready?

MISS SPINK
(looks off camera)
We've lost our ride, Miriam. Caroline says her parents have vanished, quite completely.

On Miss Forcible, seen in silhouette, struggles to secure her large chest in place behind a screen.

MISS FORCIBLE
What?! We've waited months for those tickets. We simply cannot...
(heaves up one side)
...miss...
(heaves again other side)
...the show!

Final heave of her bosom in place, comes out from behind screen on her cane.

MISS SPINK
I suppose we could walk!

MISS FORCIBLE
With your game legs? It's nearly two miles to the theater!

Coraline clears her throat loudly, frustrated.

MISS SPINK
Oh yes ... your missing parents. We know just what you need. Miriam, get the ... that's right.

Miss Forcible brings over the dish of old stuck-together candy and puts it in front of Coraline.

CORALINE
How is hundred-year-old candy going to h--

Miss Spink suddenly RAISES her KNITTING NEEDLES as if to STAB CORALINE. Coraline yelps, hands up in defense. But it's CANDIES she attacks, sends sticky chips flying.

She pulls a STONE WITH A HOLE IN IT from the rubble and passes it to Coraline.

MISS SPINK
There you go, sweety.

Thinking it's a big life-saver candy, she tries to bite it and almost breaks a tooth.

CORALINE
Ow, it's hard as a rock!

MISS SPINK
That's because it *is* a rock. Or, more precisely, a stone with a hole in it.

MISS FORCIBLE
Straight from Stonehenge.

CORALINE
What's it for?

MISS SPINK
It might help. They're good for *bad* things, sometimes.

MISS FORCIBLE
No, they're good for lost things.

MISS SPINK
It's bad things, Miriam.

MISS FORCIBLE
Lost things, *April*.

MISS SPINK
Bad things.

MISS FORCIBLE
Lost!

MISS SPINK
Bad!

Coraline can't take anymore. She gets up, takes the stone.

CORALINE
Well, uh...
(brandishes stone)
Thanks...

The ladies notice her leaving and stop arguing.

MISS FORCIBLE
You haven't got a driver's license, have you dear?

78 INT. PARENT'S BEDROOM - NIGHT 78

Coraline, dressed for bed in a long T-shirt and pajama bottoms, walks into her parent's room.

She pulls down the bed covers and builds two adult-size DUMMIES out of pillows, using round ones for the heads. She climbs between them, and pulls up the covers.

CORALINE
Good-night, Mom. Good-night, Dad.

She kisses them both and BEGINS TO CRY, the only sound in the house. It DISSOLVES into the sound of her sleeping.

79 INT. PARENT'S BEDROOM - NIGHT, LATER 79

Coraline is woken by small paws batting her face. Opens her eyes and GREEN EYES stare back. It's the BLACK CAT.

CORALINE
Hello. How did you get in?

The cat yawns, his eyes flash green.

CORALINE (CONT'D)
Do *you* know where Mom and Dad are?

The cat blinks at her, slowly.

CORALINE (CONT'D)
(excited)
That's a yes, right? Will you take me to them?

The cat blinks again. Then he walks out the door.

80 INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS 80

She follows, in slippers and gown, to the back of the dark corridor and turns on the light.

HER PARENTS ARE TRAPPED IN THE MIRROR. She gasps.

CORALINE
MOM! DAD!!

Karen and Barry - looking sad and cold - seem to FLOAT UNDERWATER, blurry snowflakes falling around them. They WAVE TO HER, slowly.

Her mother BREATHES on the inside of the mirror-glass and - her fingertip squeaking softly - writes *H E L P U S*. The sound is like the chirping of a SMALL, SAD BIRD.

Coraline STRIKES AT THE MIRROR as hard as she can, trying to get to them. GLASS SHATTERS, and her parents are gone.

CORALINE (CONT'D)
(shaky, to cat)
How did this happen?

81 INT. PARENT'S BEDROOM - SAME 81

From under the bed, the cat drags out the BUTTON-EYED DOLL, TRANSFORMED. On the front side - with one button eye - it RESEMBLES HER MOTHER; on the back side - with the other button eye - it RESEMBLES HER FATHER.

Coraline, enraged, grabs the doll.

82 INT. LIVING ROOM, FRONT OF FIREPLACE - SAME 82

CLOSE ON DOLL: BURNING. Coraline and cat watch.

CORALINE
They're not coming back, are they - Mom and Dad. Not on their own.

The cat blinks, agreeing. She looks at the locked little door by the corner. It WARPS, ever so slightly.

CORALINE (CONT'D)
Only one thing to do.

83 INT. CORALINE'S BEDROOM - SAME 83

Coraline puts on WORK BOOTS, buckles a THICK BELT around her nightshirt, a RED BERET on her head. She grabs her SLINGSHOT, rubber band attached, sticks it through the back of her belt. She studies the STONE-WITH-THE-HOLE, then puts it in her pocket with the SMALL, SHARP, KEY.

84 INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME 84

Coraline stands in front of the little door, a LIT CANDLE in her left hand, the key in her right. She sticks the key in the lock but doesn't turn it yet. She takes a breath as a MEMORY STIRS.

CORALINE
When I was little, we lived by the dump. I wasn't allowed to go there, but one day, I just did.

Cat lays down, yawns - *this could take a while.*

CORALINE (CONT'D)
Right away, I found this cool little car, just my size - the kind with pedals? I climbed in, pushed my feet hard as I could to make it go. Something crunched down there, and the car started moving.

Impatient, the cat briskly washes his face and whiskers.

CORALINE (CONT'D)
I heard a terrible buzzing then a bunch of hornets shot out and started stinging me. I screamed.

She remembers the moment, the fear on her face.

CORALINE (CONT'D)
Out of nowhere, there was my Mom, pulling me from the car, then Dad threw his shirt around me and they carried me up the hill. Ran til their hearts almost burst.

She looks down at the cat.

CORALINE
On the way to the hospital, I told them how brave they were. To get stung all over so I wouldn't have to.

Coraline unlocks the door, leaves key in the lock.

CORALINE (CONT'D)
But Mom said that it wasn't brave.

85 INT. OTHER HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS 85

She steps into the corridor. The cat pads along beside her, fur bristling, on high alert, and SPEAKS.

CAT
And why was that?

CORALINE
Because they weren't afraid. They loved me and it was their only choice.

The candle casts huge, flickering shadows along the wall.

CAT
So you'll walk right into a trap because they saved you from wasps?

CORALINE
Don't be silly. I *have* to go back--
they're my parents.
(noticing)
You're *talking* again.

CAT
How fortunate I am, in having such an observant traveling companion.

The candle SUDDENLY BLOWS OUT. Spooked, the cat races away. A light CLICKS ON at the end of the hall where Coraline's REAL MOTHER, hair short, plain clothes, stands and calls out with a joy-filled voice.

MOTHER
Coraline? CORALINE?

CORALINE
(relieved)
MOM?!

She runs forward eagerly.

MOTHER
Darling! Why did you run away from me?

Coraline is too close to stop as the woman MORPHS INTO THE OTHER MOTHER - button-eyed, wearing black and red - and wraps COLD ARMS around her. Coraline goes rigid.

CORALINE
Where are my parents?

OTHER MOTHER
We're right here, ready to love you and feed you and make your life *so* very interesting.

Coraline SQUEEZES the stone-with-hole in her pocket. Her Other Mother's HANDS SCUTTLE OFF Coraline.

Other Father stands from a chair, a FOOT SHORTER than before, and smiles, his sagging face pale PUMPKIN color.

Coraline ignores him and turns to the mirror at hall's end, leans close and whispers:

CORALINE
Mom, Dad, you in there?

No reply, nothing to see but her own reflection, eyes puffy from crying. She turns around, speaks firmly.

CORALINE (CONT'D)
I want my parents back.

Button eyes GLITTER at her, long white teeth GLEAM.

OTHER MOTHER
Goodness, I have no idea where your "old" parents might be. Perhaps they've grown bored of you and run away to France?

Her hair DRIFTS around her head like sleepy sea-snakes.

CORALINE
They weren't bored of me. You stole them.

OTHER MOTHER
Now, don't be difficult, Coraline.

She smiles at Other Father.

OTHER MOTHER (CONT'D)
Bring her.

Other Father raises his puffy arms and, gurgling happily, herds Coraline along.

86 INT. OTHER LIVING ROOM - PRE-DAWN 86

He backs her down on the sofa. The Other Mother CLAPS her hands and an UGLY BLACK RAT appears, sits at her feet.

OTHER MOTHER
Bring me the key.

The rat chitters, then runs through the OTHER SMALL DOOR that leads back to Coraline's real apartment.

Moments later, it returns with the SMALL, SHARP KEY, and drops it in the Other Mother's hand. She LOCKS the little door, drops the key INTO HER MOUTH, and SWALLOWS IT.

CORALINE
(offhand)
Why don't you have your own key?

OTHER FATHER
Only ***one*** key-lee.

The Other Mother turns angrily to him and POKES his side with her sharp-nailed finger.

OTHER MOTHER
Hush!

He collapses a little more, the HOLE IN HIS SIDE whistling as he deflates. She sweetens her tone.

OTHER MOTHER (CONT'D)
You mustn't bother Coraline with such trivialities.

Through a window, the sky has lightened to a LUMINOUS GREY. She places her hands on Other Father's shoulders.

OTHER MOTHER (CONT'D)
The garden squash need tending, don't you think?

She turns him around, her hands under his arms and ...

OTHER MOTHER
(sigh)
Poor dear's gone soft in the head.

... drags him out.

Coraline waits two beats, then jumps to her feet, looking around the room for a sign of her real parents. She scans the new EXPLORER BOOTY and the COPIES of the old things: the FRUIT BOWL PAINTING, the LOW TABLE with lion's feet.

CORALINE
Mom, Dad, where are you?

NEW ANGLE on Coraline's back through distorted glass, soft-focus WHITE DOTS floating.

She rotates to profile and then almost to camera. We LEAN IN, hopeful, when a muffled screen door *slams*. She turns away and leaves frame. A *SIGH*, and MIST fills the frame.

87 INT. OTHER KITCHEN - SAME 87

EARLY MORNING. Coraline sits at the table as the Other Mother, humming happily, prepares an omelette and bacon. Fragrant cinnamon buns bake in the oven.

At the center of the table, Coraline sees the small box that holds her PINK BUTTON EYES. As casually as she can, she asks:

CORALINE
Why don't we play ... a game? I know you like them.

The Other Mother's button eyes FLASH.

OTHER MOTHER
Everybody likes games.

CORALINE
(nods)
Uh huh.

Bacon sizzles and spits on the stove. It smells wonderful.

OTHER MOTHER
What kind of game would it be? A riddle game? A test of knowledge? Or of skill?

CORALINE
An exploring game. A finding things game.

Other Mother tries to act disinterested, but her fingers drum with excitement.

OTHER MOTHER
And what is it you'd be finding in this hide-and-go-seek game, Coraline?

Coraline hesitates.

CORALINE
My parents.

OTHER MOTHER
Too easy.

The Other Mother drops cooked bacon strips in perfect parallels on Coraline's plate beside warm cinnamon buns and a mug of frothy hot chocolate. She flips the omelette up into the air --

CORALINE
(quickly)
And the eyes of the ghost children.

-- instead of landing on the plate, the omelette STOPS ONE FOOT ABOVE IT, AND HOVERS IN THE AIR.

Coraline tries to ignores it.

OTHER MOTHER
What exactly are you offering?

Coraline grips her knees to stop them from shaking.

CORALINE
If I lose, I'll stay here with you forever and let you love me. And...
(indicates button box)
I'll let you sew buttons into my eyes.

The Other Mother sits down across from her, her button eyes somehow hungry-looking.

OTHER MOTHER
And if you do not lose?

CORALINE
Then you let me go. You let everyone go - my real father and mother, the dead children, everyone you've trapped here.

OTHER MOTHER
Deal! You'll have until time's up to do your best.

Coraline hadn't counted on this.

CORALINE
Well, how long is that?

OTHER MOTHER
When your omelette falls, when the web unwinds, when the world goes flat, you've no more time.

Coraline studies her breakfast, wondering how long it will take the floating omelette to fall. She looks up.

CORALINE
How do I know you'll keep your word?

OTHER MOTHER
(exaggerated innocence.)
Don't you trust your own mother?

Coraline does not. The Other Mother shrugs.

OTHER MOTHER (CONT'D)
Very well. I swear it. I swear it by my right hand.

She holds it up and waggles the long fingers slowly.

CORALINE
(shrugs)
Okay. It's a deal.

Coraline stands and starts looking around the kitchen.

CORALINE (CONT'D)
So, how big are ghosts' eyes anyway?

The Other Mother leans back, raises a long FINGERNAIL to her BUTTON EYE, and begins to tap against it, the sound like the steady drip of a faucet into a metal sink.

CORALINE (CONT'D)
Fine. Don't tell me.

Coraline crouches to look under the table.

CORALINE (CONT'D)
Everyone knows they're the size of a beach --

Stands up.

CORALINE (CONT'D)
ball...

Coraline is ALONE and the tapping now *is* the faucet dripping in the sink. She reaches in her pocket and pulls out the stone-with-hole for protection. Holding it tightly, she walks out to the empty hall.

88 INT. OTHER HALLWAY - SAME 88

In the hallway mirror she sees a frightened girl with an impossible job to do. She squeezes the stone tighter. LITTLE GREEN FLAMES start to rise through her fingers.

Coraline looks down, surprised, at the plain PEBBLE in her hand, then back at the mirror.

She squeezes the stone harder and harder until A TRAIL OF GREEN FIRE blows from the mirrored stone and DRIFTS UPSTAIRS to her BEDROOM. (NOTE - MAY DRIFT OUT WINDOW TO OTHER GARDEN.)

CORALINE
(positive)
Okay, I'll take that as a sign.

89 CORALINE'S OTHER BEDROOM (MAY BE OTHER GARDEN) - SAME 89

The room looks worn, colors faded. She looks around, in the closets and the drawers, not sure what to look for.

She tips the TOY BOX over: balls and marbles roll all over while the little living toys - disoriented, tired, SHABBY-LOOKING - try to get their bearings. She asks the RUSTY LITTLE TANK, going in circles on its side:

CORALINE
You know where to find the ghost eyes? Fire a rocket if you do.

She asks a fluttering angel, wings torn; a chattering cracked dinosaur skull; the turtle shell, headless now:

CORALINE (CONT'D)
Do you know?... Do you?

Unnoticed, a DULL GREY MARBLE rolls under the bed.

CORALINE (CONT'D)
(getting anxious)
Uh! How can I find it when I don't know where to look!

An idea flickers in her eyes. She takes out the stone-with-a-hole, holds it up, and LOOKS THROUGH IT.

EVERYTHING IS GREY like a pencil drawing. She scans the room, but nothing stands out. Then she lies on her stomach and looks under the bed. *There it is*: a BURNING EMBER, A GHOST'S EYE! She reaches for it.

Her fingers close about SOMETHING SMOOTH AND COOL. She snatches it up, and lowers the stone from her eye. It's the DULL GREY MARBLE from the toy box. She raises the viewing stone again. The marble BURNS AND FLICKERS and the BOY GHOST'S FACE APPEARS AROUND IT.

BOY GHOST
Bless you, miss, you've freed me! Oh, but you dasn't tarry. There's two of our eyes still lost, and the Beldam's not happy.

CORALINE
(relieved)
Don't worry, I'm getting the hang of it!

She puts the marble in her pocket and leaves.

90 EXT. OTHER ESTATE HOUSE - SAME 90

This Other Day is FADED and BLURRY. The TRAIL OF GREEN FIRE leads Coraline down to Spink and Forcible's. The chaser lights FLICKER randomly, their message illegible. The door is stuck; she gives it a shove, goes in.

91 INT. SPINK AND FORCIBLE'S THEATER - SAME 91

Coraline moves past the entry curtain, now TORN and MOTH-EATEN. Her feet knock into something, she picks up a flashlight, clicks it on, sweeps the light beam around.

The theater is FILTHY with BROKEN SEATS, PUDDLES. Something rustles above. Coraline aims her flashlight to the ceiling and startles a nest of BAT-DOGS: creatures with the HEADS OF SCOTTIE DOGS on the bodies of BIG BATS. She shivers, holds up a protective hand over her head.

CORALINE
(under breath)
Hope you mutants are housebroken.

She spots a huge PAPER CANDY SACK, twice Coraline's size, STUCK on the back wall behind the ruined stage.

She cautiously climbs up to investigate. In the cocoon-like bag, translucent, she can make out the shape of SOMETHING that looks faintly HUMAN, colored and striped and twisted together like SALTWATER TAFFY. A TOO-SWEET SMELL fills her nostrils.

She holds the STONE-WITH-THE-HOLE to her eye. There is a BROWN GLOW, as RICH as polished CHERRY WOOD, coming from inside the sack, held by the TAFFY THING.

CORALINE (CONT'D)
(quietly to self)
Be strong, Coraline. It's just a sack of God-knows-what.

Coraline clenches her teeth, rolls up her right sleeve and PUSHES AN ARM through the paper. Her other hand holds the stone to her eye, guiding her toward the BROWN GLOW, until she touches a COLD TAFFY FIST. Her heart thumps.

She carefully tugs the fist out of the sack, then, one by one, she PRIES the STRIPED TAFFY FINGERS open until a RING WITH A HUGE PEARL falls into her hand. She picks up her flashlight.

Without warning, the HAND COMES TO LIFE and GRABS HER ARM! She SCREAMS. Two more TAFFY HANDS tear through the sack and FOUR BLACK BUTTON EYES pop open to stare at her. Coraline SHINES the flashlight right at them. It's YOUNG SPINK and FORCIBLE, MELTED into ONE TAFFY MONSTER!

BLINDED, they recoil, and Coraline PULLS AWAY, STRETCHING and STRETCHING the candy arm until IT SNAPS.

FORCIBLE/SPINK
(in unison)
Thief! Give it back! Stop! Thief!

The air COMES ALIVE with BAT-DOGS. They FLAP AND DIVE at her, woofing. Coraline FLAILS at them with the broken taffy arm, gets an idea.

CORALINE
Fetch!

She tosses the arm high up into the balcony and the Bat-dogs instinctively chase after it.

Behind her, the taffy monster fights to break out of its paper cocoon. The PEARL on the stolen ring PULSES, and the TALL GHOST GIRL'S FACE APPEARS AROUND IT:

TALL GIRL GHOST
Flee, Miss, flee now! Yonder's the door!

Coraline JUMPS down from the stage, sticks the ring in her pocket, and runs to the exit.

92 EXT. OTHER ESTATE HOUSE, DISTORTED - DAY. 92

Outside, the world has become a FORMLESS, SWIRLING MIST with no shapes or shadows. Only the estate house remains, no longer grand but LEANING FORWARD and staring down at her with grey, slanted windows. Coraline rubs BITS OF TAFFY off her arm and looks up to the UPSTAIRS APARTMENT. The trail of green fire leads there.

She CLIMBS the rickety outside stairs, stops with a SHUDDER at the top. Tacked there on the door hangs a lifeless SCARECROW - all that's left of OTHER WYBIE.

She takes him down and sits him in a rocking chair on the balcony, places her RED HAT on his head.

CORALINE
More comfortable, now?

She takes a deep breath, closes her eyes and shouts.

CORALINE (CONT'D)
EVIL WITCH ... I'M NOT SCARED!

The green-painted door CREAKS open, and she walks in. It SLAMS SHUT behind her.

93 INT. OTHER MR. B'S FRONT ROOM - CONTINUOUS 93

There's no sign of the miniature circus. Then a dozen not-so-small voices whine from the shadows.

BLACK RATS
We have eyes and we have nerveses
We have tails, we have teeth,
You'll all get what you deserveses
When we rise from underneath.

RED EYES stare at her.

CORALINE
I said, I'm ... not ... SCARED!

She JUMPS at them, sending SHARP-NAILED PAWS scurrying through the shadows.

A RUSTLING VOICE, barely like the Other Mr. Bobinski's, calls to her from the back.

OTHER MR. B (O.S.)
Little girl.

CORALINE
Yes.

OTHER MR. B (O.S.)
Come here, little girl. I know what you want, little girl.

The voice is scratchy and dry like a cicada.

CORALINE
I'm coming.

94 INT. OTHER B'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS 94

Coraline enters, nose pinched against a funky smell.

OTHER MR. B sits at the far end of the room, in broken shadows, bundled in his great cape and hat, collar up, a muffler covers his face. He takes a raspy breath, speaks.

OTHER MR. B
And what if you do win, little girl? You'll just go home and be bored and neglected, same as always.

His voice circles the room, disembodied.

OTHER MR. B (CONT'D)
Stay here with us! *We* will listen to you and play with you and laugh with you.

CORALINE
Uh huh. Will there ever be nasty wet days where I don't know what to do and there's nowhere to go and it drags on forever?

OTHER MR. B
Never.

CORALINE
And will there be awful meals, with food made from recipes, with garlic and tarragon and blue beans in it?

OTHER MR. B
(whispers)
Every meal will be a thing of joy.

CORALINE
And could I have dayglow green gloves to wear, and snakeskin cowboy boots?

OTHER MR. B
If you stay here, you can have whatever you want.

Coraline sighs.

CORALINE
You don't get it, do you? Where's the *fun* if I just get everything I want, whenever I want, just like that -
(snaps fingers)
It wouldn't mean anything, would it?

OTHER MR. B
(more whispery)
I don't understand.

She raises the stone to her eye. There's a BLUE-WHITE GLOW coming from inside the coat of the man, about chest height. It twinkles like a star.

CORALINE
Of *course* you don't understand. You're just a copy she made of the real Mr. B.

OTHER MR. B
(last breath)
Not even that any more.

Coraline takes a step closer to him, and he starts to COLLAPSE. SQUEAKING RATS leap from COAT SLEEVES and PANT LEGS, out the COLLAR and the HAT. The clothes flutter and fall to the floor, EMPTY.

Coraline GRABS the coat, shakes it. No sign of the GHOST EYE. She SCANS the room, spots the BLUE-WHITE GLOW: it's the CIRCUS BALL from the Mouse Circus and the LARGEST RAT is ROLLING IT out the door! She GIVES CHASE.

95 INT. OTHER B'S FLAT - CONTINUOUS 95

The OTHER RATS go to work, crisscrossing her path to SLOW HER UP. She jumps and skips, while ahead, she sees that the BIG RAT on the BALL is almost to the CLOSED FRONT DOOR. A SECRET PET DOOR at the bottom OPENS.

The support rats dump a BOX OF MARBLES in her path. Coraline JUMPS, tries to clear them, but comes down in the thick of them, starts LOSING HER BALANCE.

The rat thief's GOING OUT THE PET DOOR! She manages to whip out her SLINGSHOT, loads the STONE-WITH-A-HOLE in it and, slipping and sliding, FIRES.

The WHISTLING STONE FLIES out the door and right towards the RAT'S HEAD. At the last split second, the rat-on-ball DROPS DOWN THE STAIRS, and the stone FLIES PAST, whistling out into MISTY NOTHINGNESS.

Coraline HOLLERS WITH ANGER--

CORALINE
NOOOO!

-- and CRASHES INTO the front door. It SHATTERS like Styrofoam.

96 EXT. OTHER OLD HOUSE, FLATTENING - CONTINUOUS 96

She TUMBLES ass-over-teakettle DOWN the SPRINGY STAIRWAY, finally HITTING THE GROUND with a cry and a WUMP.

Wheezing for breath, Coraline pushes up on hands and knees and looks around for the rat thief. It's GONE, and the SOUL with it. Her SCRAPED HAND stings, BLOOD trickles from her knee. She feels nothing but COLD LOSS.

CORALINE
(devastated)
I really, really blew it.

She sits, hugging knees to chest, squeezing her eyes shut and lowers her forehead.

There's a familiar THROAT-CLEARING SOUND.

Her eyes blink open, then widen. On the path in front of her is the RAT THIEF with a look of surprise: ITS NECK IS BROKEN.

Beside the dead rat, is the BLACK CAT. It rests one paw on the little CIRCUS BALL.

CAT
I think I mentioned that I don't like rats at the best of times. It looked like you needed this one, however.

She smiles at him.

CORALINE
I think ... I think you might have said something like that.

The cat bats the ball to Coraline. She picks it up, hears the voice of the SWEET GHOST GIRL:

SWEET GHOST GIRL (V.O.)
Hurry Miss, time's nearly gone and if the Beldam wins, she will never give you up, not you, nor any of us!

Coraline nods sharply, sticks the ball in her pocket, and tells the cat.

CORALINE
Thanks for helping me. Now go off into the mist or wherever you go; *I've* got to find my parents!

CAT
Hullo... Behind you.

She turns. The house has FLATTENED into a TAPESTRY OF ITSELF, it's EDGES UNRAVELING into nothingness.

The cat suddenly SPINS left, then right, freezes. He is VERY FRIGHTENED.

CAT (CONT'D)
They're gone - the cat ways in and out of this place.

The cat lowers his tail and pushes up against her leg, his small heart BEATING with fear. She picks up the trembling animal, drapes him over her shoulder.

CORALINE
Come on, cat, I'll take you home.

Grabbing on with hands and feet, she climbs up the FLAT PORCH STEPS to the front door. The unraveling house is ALMOST GONE. The door OPENS, and Coraline and cat GO IN.

97 INT. OTHER HOUSE HALLWAY - SAME 97

The inside has changed little in depth and shadows, and SOMEONE hidden in them, waiting for Coraline.

OTHER MOTHER (O.S.)
So you're back.

She doesn't sound pleased.

OTHER MOTHER (O.S.)
(CONT'D)
And you brought vermin with you.

CORALINE
No, I brought a friend.

She feels the cat stiffen under her hands.

OTHER MOTHER (O.S.)
(flatly)
You know I love you.

CORALINE
You have a very funny way of showing it.

Coraline walks down the hallway, step by steady step, glances in kitchen. The FLOATING OMELETTE is just a HALF-INCH from touching down. She turns into the living room.

98 INT. OTHER LIVING ROOM - SAME 98

The fruit HAS BEEN EATEN in the painting on the wall. The lion-pawed table RAKES THE CARPET impatiently. In the corner, the small locked door BREATHES HEAVILY.

This is it, thinks Coraline: the moment of truth.

The Other Mother shows herself, stepping between Coraline and the mantelpiece. She's much TALLER now, dressed all in BLACK, as pale as GLASS NOODLES. Her hair WRITHES AND TWINES and her TEETH and FINGERNAILS are LONGER, THINNER, SHARPER. She doesn't look anything like Coraline's real mother now; she is truly a Beldam -- a WITCH.

OTHER MOTHER
Well? Where are the ghosts' eyes?

Coraline pulls them out. The Other Mother tries to GRAB THEM, but Coraline is QUICKER, shoving them back in her pocket again. She looks up and juts her jaw.

CORALINE
Hold on. We aren't finished yet, are we?

The Other Mother looks daggers, then smiles sweetly.

OTHER MOTHER
No, I suppose not. After all, you still need to find your old *parents*, don't you?

CORALINE
Yes.

OTHER MOTHER
Well? Produce them.

Coraline stalls for time.

CORALINE
I ... I already know where you've hidden them.

The cat is heavy in her arms. She moves it forward a little, UNHOOKING its claws from her shoulder.

OTHER MOTHER
Where?

Coraline has a plan, if *only she can find her parents!*

CORALINE
They're ... behind that door.

She nods toward the SMALL BREATHING DOOR in the corner. The Other Mother stands perfectly still; even her hair STOPS MOVING.

OTHER MOTHER
Oh, they are, are they?

CORALINE
(very sincere)
Go on, open it. They'll be there, all right.

A HINT of a smile creeps onto the Other Mother's face. She reaches very long fingers DOWN HER THROAT and pulls out the SMALL SHARP KEY. She starts towards the door.

The cat STIRS uncomfortably in Coraline's arms. His EARS TWITCH, hearing something. Then Coraline hears it, too: the faintest of chirps, like a sad bird, like a *fingertip on wet glass*.

The Other Mother, oblivious, is almost to the door.

And now, Coraline SEES what she missed before: on the tall mantle above the fireplace, in one of the SNOW-GLOBES there, are TWO TINY STIFF FIGURES: HER PARENTS!

The Other Mother reaches the door, stooping to push the key into the lock. The breathing door RELAXES.

Coraline, as quietly as she can, MOVES SIDEWAYS toward the mantelpiece.

The Other Mother TURNS the key and opens the door, revealing the DARK EMPTY CORRIDOR behind it. Her delighted expression is GROTESQUE.

OTHER MOTHER (CONT'D)
You're <u>wrong,</u> Coraline! You don't know where your parents are, do you? They aren't there.

She opens her hands: in one are the PINK BUTTON EYES, in the other the SHARP NEEDLE AND THREAD.

OTHER MOTHER (CONT'D)
Now you're going to stay here <u>forever</u>.

Coraline, raising the cat above one shoulder, answers:

CORALINE
No ... I'm ... **NOT**!

On "not", Coraline *THROWS THE CAT* with all her might. The YOWLING ANIMAL sails through the air and lands RIGHT ON THE ASTONISHED WOMAN'S HEAD. FIERCE AND ANGRY, he DIGS in his CLAWS. The Other Mother SHRIEKS, STAGGERS away from the DOOR.

Coraline GRABS the SNOW GLOBE with the TINY FIGURES.

The Other Mother FLAILS WILDLY at the cat. The cat, HOWLING LIKE A BANSHEE, BITES into her CHEEK, SMOKE seeping from the wound.

Coraline, at the door, pulls THE KEY out of the lock. She shouts to the cat:

CORALINE (CONT'D)
Come on!

The cat RAKES the Other Mother's NOSE then SPRINGS DOWN.

CORALINE (CONT'D)
Quickly!

Other Mother, seeping smoke, weakened, STRUGGLES to get her bearings.

99 INT. DARK CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS 99

The cat shoots behind Coraline's legs. She grabs the handle, nearly shutting the door when SHARP-NAILED FINGERS REACH AROUND and PULL AGAINST HER.

CORALINE
Come on, please shut!

VOICES MURMUR from her pocket - THE GHOST CHILDREN

TALL GIRL GHOST
Never give up, Miss!

BOY AND SWEET GIRL GHOSTS
Pull, girl, pull!

Then the ghost children's FLUTTERY HANDS APPEAR, REACH INSIDE CORALINE'S HANDS and her STRENGTH IS DOUBLED.

The door STARTS TO SHUT. The Other Mother SNATCHES DESPERATELY at Coraline, reaching through the closing gap. She SCREECHES like a metal rake on pavement.

OTHER MOTHER
NOOOOO!

The door SLOWS, STOPS, and begins to OPEN ONCE MORE.

CORALINE
(struggling)
WE'RE GOING TO GO HOME. WE ARE. HELP ME PLEASE, ALL OF YOU!

The CLAWED FINGERS SNATCH CLOSER.

And then she hears the voice of her REAL MOTHER - her own, wonderful, maddening, glorious mother:

KAREN (V.O.)
Good job, Coraline!

And that's all she needs. There's a final moment of resistance, SOMETHING CAUGHT in the door, and then, with a CRUNCH AND A CRASH, the DOOR SHUTS and she TURNS THE LOCK. IT'S PITCH BLACK. SOMETHING INJURED drops to the ground.

CAT
(both angry and fearful)
Come on! This is not a good place to be. Quickly.

Coraline BEGINS TO RUN, slides her hand along SLIMY WALLS to keep steady. A RUMBLING MOAN rises in the FRIGID WINDS and the corridor SLOWLY UNDULATES, somehow ALIVE.

She can HALF-SEE the three ghost children, faintly GLOWING PATCHES, moving ahead of her. She can JUST HEAR the cat, too, PADDING in the dark.

The INJURED THING scuttles between her feet. She stumbles, doesn't fall.

Then DAYLIGHT APPEARS, and Coraline runs toward it.

CORALINE
ALMOST THERE!

The GLOWING PATCHES, FADE AWAY. She DIVES THROUGH THE DOOR ...

100 INT. REAL LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS 100

... recovers, turns, and PULLS THE DOOR shut with a LOUD, SATISFYING BANG.

Coraline WHIPS OUT THE KEY and LOCKS IT. Cat is gone.

Three beats later, her WONDERFULLY REAL MOTHER calls to her.

KAREN (O.S.)
Coraline? We're home, dear.

Her true parents walk into the room, a room filled with bright sun from a blue, clear sky. There's a *dusting of snow on their shoulders and hair.*

FATHER
You know that cat? Shot out the front door like a bullet.

Coraline throws her arms around her parents and hugs them so tightly her arms ache.

CORALINE (CONT'D)
Mom, Dad, I missed you so much!

KAREN
Whoa... you'd think we'd been gone for days...

CORALINE
But you *have* been.

Mom steps back to look at her, spots her bloody knee.

KAREN
What happened to your poor knee?

CORALINE
It's nothing, I, uh...

Her father tweaks her nose. Don't they remember?

BARRY
Another "exploring" injury, huh? From now on, young lady, you don't leave the house without knee pads and a helmet!

KAREN
Honey, let's go *out* to dinner - Coraline's choice - to celebrate this wonderful day!

BARRY
Hear, hear!

CORALINE
So you *do* remember!

BARRY
(not hearing)
They *loved* it!

Coraline, confused, takes a stab.

CORALINE
You're talking about... your garden catalog?

KAREN
Of course! What else?

CORALINE
But look at the snow on your...?

But the snow has melted without a trace.

101 CORALINE'S ROOM - SAME 101

The curtains are closed against bright sun. Coraline shakes the EMPTY SNOW GLOBE and puts it on her dresser, watching the swirling snow fall, covering the place where the little couple stood. Beside the globe are the PEARL, the CIRCUS BALL, and the GREY MARBLE, CRACKED OPEN like empty shells in a bird's nest.

OUTSIDE, one of the Scotties begins to BARK furiously at something. Then it YELPS in pain, whimpers.

Puzzled, Coraline goes to her window, the sharp key in her hand. She pulls open the curtains and GASPS. There on the window ledge - bone-white, red-nailed, leaking black smoke - is the BELDAM'S RIGHT HAND.

It POINTS at what it wants: THE KEY!

She pounds the window with her fists. The HAND LEAPS onto a GUTTER and scuttles down A DOWNSPOUT.

PUSH IN on Coraline, head shaking in disbelief, wide eyes staring out the window. What is she going to do?

She takes some string off a box and TIES the key around her neck, HIDES it under her shirt. She notices that her old RUSSIAN NESTING DOLLS are in the box. She takes them out, lines them up, and an IDEA flickers in her eyes. She whispers to the dolls:

CORALINE
I've gotta plan. You guys in?

102 EXT. ESTATE HOUSE ORCHARD - SAME 102

Glancing around, Coraline LIFTS the heavy planks off the OLD WELL, one by one, grunting and sweating, and drags them behind some trees.

She pulls up the last plank and looks down into the damp, DEEP HOLE in the ground, the bricks green with moss. A RUSTLING SOUND snaps her head around. Just a SCRUB JAY.

Coraline takes a CHECKED TABLECLOTH from a bag and spreads it carefully over the well. She puts a CUP AND SAUCER every foot or so at the edges, weighting each one with JUICE from a container. She puts a NESTING DOLL beside each cup, wipes her brow, and takes a last look at her HAND-TRAP.

CORALINE
(to dolls)
Remember, everyone. Not a word when our special guest arrives.

103 EXT. OLD ESTATE HOUSE - SAME 103

POV looking up to copper downspout where Other Mother's hand disappeared, follow it down to horizontal pipe, follow left, then down another pipe that ends by the entrance to Spink and Forcible's apartment.

REVERSE ON Coraline. *Good*, she nods. Wearing an old PARTY DRESS, key strung around her neck, she knocks on the door. Miss Spink opens it, holding a freshly bandaged dog.

MISS SPINK
My, what a ... *lovely* dress, Caroline.

MISS FORCIBLE (O.S.)
Who is it, April?

CORALINE
(calls back)
Still Coraline.
(RE: dog)
How's your dog, Miss Spink?

MISS SPINK
(sighs)
Angus will recover. Luckily, the wound's not as deep as it first appeared.

MISS FORCIBLE comes to the door, with a badminton racket.

MISS FORCIBLE
Weasels did it! An infestation! Bobinski's sure of it.

MISS SPINK
He said *perhaps a* weasel, Miriam.

Coraline - remembering her mission - kneels down and speaks LOUDLY by the DOWNSPOUT OPENING.

CORALINE
Well, I'm going to go play with my dolls now, in the old orchard out back.

MISS FORCIBLE
(leans down)
You'd better take this!

Miss Forcible offers her the badminton racket, but Miss Spink grabs it away.

MISS SPINK
Miriam, you're being *phobic*.
(to Coraline)
But do keep an eye out for that old well, dear, the--

Alarmed, Coraline INTERRUPTS, speaking even louder.

CORALINE
THIS KEY? OH, IT'S GOOD LUCK.

She taps it against the downspout.

CORALINE (CONT'D)
IT COMES WITH ME WHEREVER I GO. WELL, GOODBYE NOW.

She puts her ear to the spout. The HAND, clacking and scraping inside the pipes, HAS HEARD HER! She stands up, turns and SCAMPERS up the steps.

They watch her leave and Angus gives a little whine.

MISS SPINK
What an ... extraordinary child.

MISS FORCIBLE
That's putting it mildly.

104 EXT. ESTATE HOUSE GROUNDS - SAME 104

Coraline ambles past the old tennis courts, DANGLING AND SWINGING the key, holding the string in her hand.

She glimpses something SPIDER-CREEPING to her left and shudders. It's the HAND -- darting behind rocks and bushes, keeping pace with her. She sings her father's nonsense song, her voice hardly trembling.

CORALINE
Oh.... my twitchy witchy girl,
I think you are so nice,
I give you bowls of porridge
And I give you bowls of ice ...Cream.
I give you lots of kisses,
And I give you lots of hugs,
But I never give you sandwiches
With grease and worms and mung ... Beans.

POV ON HER, from opposite side as the hand. *SOMEONE ELSE is also keeping pace, WATCHING HER* through foliage.

105 EXT. ESTATE HOUSE ORCHARD - SAME 105

The tea-party trap is just as she left it, the tablecloth TAUT over the hidden well. Now comes the tough part.

CORALINE
(loud and bright)
Hello dolls. It's tea-time! And to make sure we have a great picnic, I brought the "lucky key."

Holds it up for pretend applause. She reaches out over the table cloth and drops the key RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE, turns to the dolls.

CORALINE (CONT'D)
Who'd like a piece of delicious chocolate cake? Bella? Jules? Dimitri?

She serves each doll a slice of cake. Past the BIG STUMP, she spots the WHITE HAND SCAMPERING behind one tree trunk to another, coming closer and closer.

CORALINE (CONT'D)
Jules! What a klutz! You dropped your cake! Now I'll have to go and get you a new slice!

POV ON HER through berry brambles. The *SOMEONE ELSE*, still hidden, watches Coraline walk around the picnic spread, serve another slice of cake, forcing herself not to look towards the hand.

And then it comes: the HAND SCRABBLES through the grass, HOPS onto the big stump, and makes one TRIUMPHANT, NAIL-CLACKING LEAP onto the table-cloth to snatch the key. TIME SHIFTS TO SLO-MO as trap is sprung: HAND and CLOTH SINK DOWN in the center, down into the well, dragging plates, tipping doll cups. Just as it's all about to fall in, the unimaginable happens: IT STOPS!

Coraline is STUNNED, unable to move. The HAND REGAINS ITS BALANCE, and clutching the key, CRAWLS CAREFULLY UP the slope TOWARDS CORALINE. At the well's edge, still on the cloth, it CROUCHES to SPRING AT HER. She covers her EYES.

Out of nowhere, WYBIE LOVAT ZOOMS IN on his electric bike! He GUNS the throttle, JUMPS the well, and SLAMS A BRICK STRAIGHT DOWN ON THE HAND, KNOCKING IT BACK!

DOLLS' CUPS FLY, and the TABLECLOTH and the KEY and the HAND go tumbling down with the brick into the DARK, DEEP, HOLE IN THE GROUND!

UP ANGLE, TRACKING HAND, as it falls down a well so deep, we see STARS COME OUT in the daytime sky.

BACK ON TOP. A distant, muffled SPLASH is heard. After a beat, Coraline looks up to Wybie, the "hidden someone" who'd been following her. He rolls slowly towards her.

He takes a creased old photo from his pocket and shows it to her. There are TWO YOUNG GIRLS, TWINS, dressed in old-fashioned clothing. One holds a DOLL WITH BUTTON EYES which looks just like her. And *she* looks just like the SWEET GHOST GIRL from behind the mirror. Coraline nods and Wybie speaks.

WYBIE
Gran showed me this, after I called you crazy? She told me I was a fool, and knuckled my skull till my mind expanded.

He rubs his head.

WYBIE (CONT'D)
When the cat showed up, I mentioned you were in a bad way. It was like he understood me exactly 'cause the next thing he did was head over to your place.

Coraline nods.

WYBIE (CONT'D)
Since then, I, uh, just been lying low, keeping an eye on things, you know?
(drops gaze, ashamed)
I'm really sorry I didn't believe you... Coraline.

Finally, he said her real name! She smiles.

WYBIE (CONT'D)
Of course, when I saw that--
(jerks chin to well)
(MORE)

WYBIE (CONT'D)
--nasty, bad-sick, creepy crawler, I knew it was all tru--

She clamps a hand over his mouth.

CORALINE
Wybie, you're good jam times a million...

She HUGS HIM, his face REDDENS, bad posture STRAIGHTENS.

106 INT. CORALINE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT 106

Coraline lies in bed -- bathed, wounds-dressed, hair shining. Warm fresh air fills the room through her wide-open window and curtains, the real moon shines in sky. Her mother and father discuss tomorrow with her.

CORALINE
Remember to wake me?

KAREN
Crack of dawn. And I loved your idea of planting nothing but red and orange tulips.

BARRY
Bought every stinkin' bulb I could find.

They bend down and kiss her smiling face good-night. At the door, her mother leaves a slim box on a chair.

KAREN
Something for the rose thorns, dear. Good-night.

They close the door. She springs to the chair, opens the box. It's a pair of DAYGLOW GREEN GARDENING GLOVES. She pulls one on to admire when the BLACK CAT appears on the windowsill.

CORALINE
Oh, hello again.

She walks over to the window.

CORALINE (CONT'D)
You still mad?

The rich moonlight brushes the cat's face, turns his whiskers silver. She slowly reaches out to him.

CORALINE (CONT'D)
I'm sorry, but I *had* to throw you at her - it was the only way.
(MORE)

CORALINE (CONT'D)
She was a witch and she'd never have kept her word, would she?

The cat looks up at her, BLINKS in agreement. He rests his head on her hand, licking her fingers with his sand-papery tongue and *purrs*.

She picks him up and takes him to her bed. She rests her head on her pillow, the cat by her side, and stares up with a smile.

And on the ceiling, Coraline sees the GHOST CHILDREN, eyes and color restored, PLAYING in a deep green meadow, running and shouting and tossing a GLITTERING BALL. They come to a small wooden bridge over a stream. Beyond the bridge, a TWILIGHT SKY shines with VAN GOGH STARS. They turn and wave to her, and Coraline waves back. They cross the bridge and the image on the ceiling fades.

Coraline yawns, her lids growing heavy. We PULL AWAY from her and the cat, OUT HER WINDOW and UP past Mr. Bobinski's apartment, where SWEET, DELICATE MUSIC - the kind that can only be played on the tiniest silver instruments by the pink little fingers of *real* jumping mice - spills out onto the warm evening air, telling the world that spring is here.

Henry Selick April 24, 2006