

FIELD OF VIEW

Ed Hicks

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Matt goes to make amends when a tennis student under his supervision accidentally breaks a window.

Upon first inspection, the house appears to be deserted, but just because you can't see someone, it doesn't mean that no one's there.

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FADE IN:

EXT. RECREATION GROUNDS - DAY

CAMERA CTS-2

Through the unsympathetic eye of a CCTV camera, the June sun bounces harshly off the clay on a row of tennis courts. Roughly a dozen children, ages 7-11, knock tennis balls inexpertly back and forth behind a timestamp counter overlay and the block letters "CTS-2".

CAMERA CTS-1

A second surveillance camera frames a missing person notice attached to the gate of the tennis court's chain link fence. CTS-1 PANS to the middle of the court, where a young man supervises some of the children.

MATT COHEN (early 20s) is a friendly giant. He radiates a kind of limitless positivity that shines from his generous smile and constant readiness to do the right thing.

He holds four tennis balls in one hand like they're grapes. Four kids with rackets by their feet stand at the ready.

In a rapid series of unpredictable flicks of the wrist, he tosses three balls towards three kids. The final ball he throws in a trick shot, reaching behind his back and releasing from the other side, straight to the last child.

BACK TO SCENE

While it is a test of reactions, Matt makes sure they're easy to catch, and none of the kids drop their ball.

MATT

Yeah! Great reflexes. I can tell you're keeping your eye on the ball and that's crucial! Alright everyone, rackets up, get into pairs. Let's do some controlled volleys. Don't let the ball hit the ground. This isn't about strength, just keeping control. Light touches. Wrists firm but loose, OK?

One of the younger kids, CONNOR, walks up to Matt.

CONNOR

Matt, can you teach me to do serves?

MATT

But I've seen you serve.

CONNOR

I wanna do proper serves.

MATT

Overarm?

CONNOR

Shelly can already do them.

MATT

Sure I can buddy. Now, I'm gonna warn you, it's tricky at first, and it gets easier the taller you are, because of the angle. But! The technique doesn't change, so I'll show you now and you can practice.

Connor nods, determined to accomplish this rite of passage.

CAMERA CTS-2

Pairs of kids volley tennis balls back and forth over the nets with varying degrees of success, while Matt demonstrates proper stance to Connor at the service line.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY

CAMERA LOC-1

An angle of the recreation grounds locker room. From one of the more prominent lockers a padlock dangles uselessly, cut open somehow. On the locker next to it hangs a copy of the missing person poster.

EXT. RECREATION GROUNDS - DAY

CAMERA CTS-1

Matt and Connor are practicing the toss, releasing and catching the ball without a follow through swing.

BACK TO SCENE

MATT

OK Con, give it a try.

Connor squints at the far side of the court. Wordlessly, he goes through the steps, placing his feet correctly, turning his body, holding his left arm out, "scratching" his back with the racket. He lifts the ball into the air, swings --

No good. The ball smacks the middle of the net. Nearby, SHELLY and ED snicker.

SHELLY  
Nice serve.

ED  
Connor you suck.

MATT  
Keep it up, Con. You'll get there.

Matt gives the other kids a stern look.

MATT (CONT'D)  
Ed, Shelly, come on, none of that.

Ed jogs off, playing keepy-uppy with his ball, while Shelly looks at the ground.

Matt tosses Connor a spare ball from the depths of a tracksuit pocket and walks over to Shelly.

MATT (CONT'D)  
What's up Shell. It's not like you to give the youngsters a hard time. You remember what starting out felt like, don't you?

Shelly nods.

MATT (CONT'D)  
Is something the matter?

She doesn't respond.

MATT (CONT'D)  
It's about Ben, isn't it? It's OK to be worried. I'm worried about him too. But there are posters up all over, everyone's looking for--

Shelly hurls her ball straight at the ground. She's furious.

MATT (CONT'D)  
It's OK to be angry too.

Matt hands her another ball.

MATT (CONT'D)  
Hit it as hard as you like, OK?

He gives her a pat and a smile, then turns back to Connor.

MATT (CONT'D)  
 Alright Connor, let's try it again.

Connor takes position, winds up, swings --

This time the ball goes high -- too high. It sails over the fence, past a yard and through the glass of an upper storey window of a large detached house.

Matt winces. Connor looks mortified. Ed doesn't even bother to stifle his laughter.

MATT (CONT'D)  
 Oh, that's gonna be a killer serve when you get the angle.

CONNOR  
 Oh crud.

MATT  
 Don't worry, you're not in trouble. Accidents happen. I'll go talk to them.

Matt looks at his bare wrist where a watch might be.

MATT (CONT'D)  
 Well that's about all the time we have today. Go on and get changed, I'll see you all next week.

CAMERA CTS-1

The kids file out of the courts and head towards the changing rooms. Matt leaves last, and heads off towards the house to speak to the owner.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Matt approaches the house. It's more imposing up close somehow. White paint peels in strips off the wooden frames of dark windows. In the overgrown yard a distribution of variously aged tennis balls lie undisturbed.

CAMERA YRD-4

Matt is partially obscured by foliage as he's framed approaching the front of the house from a tree-mounted camera.

CAMERA YRD-6

From above and to the side of the porch, another camera watches Matt look for a buzzer, and find a knocker. The door isn't locked, and when he tries to knock, it creeps open.

CUT TO:

INT. HOUSE - DAY

Matt cautiously pushes into the HALLWAY.

MATT

Hello? Anyone home? Hello?

In stark contrast to the outside of the house, the HALLWAY is bright, clean, and well kept. No one answers.

Matt continues, finding a LIVING ROOM with soft furnishings, a modest collection of sporting trophies, and old framed team photos on the walls.

MATT (CONT'D)

Hello? I'm here about the window.

The only sound is a muffled mechanical humming.

Matt decides he has intruded enough already, and that he should just leave a note and go.

He looks around and finds a sheet of printer paper, and a sharpie poking out of a glazed bowl full of broken padlocks. The locks strike Matt as odd, but he only pays it a moment's thought. He begins to write.

CAMERA LAR-7

Almost directly above, a ceiling mounted camera watches him write.

MATT (CONT'D)

Sorry -- about -- your -- window.  
Ball -- went -- through. Accident.  
Call -- me -- at-

Matt looks up from the note.

BACK TO SCENE

He turns towards the humming. It's coming from a room at the end of a CORRIDOR. Matt heads to it -- perhaps the owner is inside, and didn't hear the glass break, or his voice?

MATT (CONT'D)

Hello? Is anyone home?

He knocks. No answer. After a moment's pause, he turns the handle and opens it.

HOWLING fans of an industrial aircon unit cool racks upon racks of cabinet mounted servers and digital storage devices. They're all networked by hundreds of neatly bundled and routed data cables. The din is unbearable. He backs out and shuts the door.

Matt notices a thick bundle of cables snaking out of a hole in the door frame and down to the ground. He follows the bundle along the corridor, to another door, where the cables disappear through an identical portal in the frame. The two rooms are connected. Matt opens the door.

The windowless room is bright with the glow of monitors, each displaying the feed from a different surveillance camera.

Cameras in the yard, cameras in the house. Cameras pointing at the courts. Cameras in the locker room.

Cameras in the showers.

Matt covers his mouth. The kids he tutors -- his kids -- are chatting, changing, washing, completely unaware of the intrusion.

Matt has to go, now.

He runs from the room, down the corridor, towards the lounge, to the lobby, the entrance, out the door --

INT/EXT. HOUSE - DAY

BOY

Help!

-- Matt stops.

Yelling and banging, coming from inside the house. Matt's right on the threshold. He closes his eyes.

MATT

(whispering)

C'mon Matty. Gotta get 'em. C'mon.  
In, grab, out. Easy peasy.

CAMERA YRD-6

Matt stands framed in the door, immobile.

He turns back.

CUT TO:

INT. HOUSE - DAY

The voice continues to plead. Matt follows it to its source, down a set of stairs into a BASEMENT.

CAMERA IRCAM-1

An infra red camera watches Matt descending a dimly lit staircase. The low light sensor gives Matt's eyes an otherworldly glow.

BACK TO SCENE

There's a door at the bottom of the staircase. The yelling and banging is coming from behind it.

He pushes through.

A trunk stands on the cracked concrete floor, dead centre of the room. It's easily big enough to fit a boy inside.

BOY

Get me out of here! Please, help me!

MATT

Hold on Ben! I'm gonna get you out!

Matt scrambles to open the trunk.

Children's clothes arranged neatly on wire coat hangers dangle from hooks embedded in the bare brick walls.

After some fumbling, Matt manages to unlatch the lid. He heaves it open.

CAMERA LAB-1

A ceiling mounted camera peers down into the open trunk. There's nothing inside but a loudspeaker, from which the recorded voice of a boy screams and begs.

CAMERA LAB-2

A second camera watches from behind Matt as he stares into the trunk in disbelief.

Behind him, out of frame, the basement door SHUTS and LOCKS.



MATT (CONT'D)

Hey!

Matt runs to the door, tries the handle. It doesn't budge. He barges it, and beats it with his fists. It's no good.

CAMERA LAR-7

An empty living room. A bowl of locks next to an unfinished note. The faint sound of pounding and the hum of aircon.

CAMERA YRD-4

Tennis balls abandoned in grass. Birds chirping.

CAMERA IRCAM-1

Basement stairs. Banging and shouting from the other side of a door.

CAMERA CTS-2

Tennis courts on a sunny June afternoon. A gentle breeze.

CAMERA LOC-1

Two kids in the recreation ground locker room.

SHELLY

Well if it wasn't you then who?

She points the broken padlock towards Ed. He shrugs emphatically.

SHELLY (CONT'D)

It's not funny. Someone's taken my clean clothes.

Ed shoulders his backpack and walks out.

ED

Sucks to be you.

Shelly SLAMS the locker and follows. The locker door comes to a rest slightly ajar. The camera slowly ZOOMS to the adjacent locker, where a missing person poster hangs in silence.

CUT TO BLACK.