



Synopsis

Manson Family Ranch, Chatsworth, California. July 4, 1969

Free-spirited Zephyr introduces hitchhiking runaway Linda Kasabian to her "family" (Squeaky, Sadie Mae, Marioche, Big Patty and two guys named Tex and Bobby). The girls are paranoid that a new girl will steal Charlie's attention, and vie for control of her, but Zephyr claims Linda as her territory and introduces her to Charlie.

Charlie is not the mad sociopath we've seen on video; he's intense and hypnotic, yes, but he's gentle, caring, and kindly lays down the laws so Linda knows what she's getting in for. He explains that because society's on the verge of civil war; people are going to overthrow the government, and his Family needs to be prepared for the ensuing chaos. Essentially, they need to become an army, to protect themselves. He assures Linda no one will have to kill anyone, but they all need to be prepared for the coming days of helter-skelter.

Linda is grateful to be part of a Family at last; she's never experienced that. So she's very happy to go along with the girls, learn what they know, and do whatever they do, even letting them hold and raise her infant daughter, Tanya. Linda is scared but thrilled to join the girls' pranks called "creepy crawls," in which they sneak into people's houses and do some harmless mischief like rearrange the furniture or write something on a wall.

Things start to escalate for Linda, however, when Charlie asks them to steal. It's just a five dollar bill, but it crosses the line for Linda, and she has to choose compromising her own moral code of ethics or staying with the Family. She chooses the Family, trusting them, and taking a vow to do whatever Charlie asks of them.

Charlie has a pending recording contract with a record producer who is no longer returning his calls, so Charlie gathers his family to "visit" the record producer's home. When Charlie discovers the record producer isn't living there, but instead is renting the home to Roman Polanski and his wife Sharon Tate, he grows a little psychotic, threatening Sharon, perhaps even

intending to kill her; and it's only because Squeaky panics, distracting Charlie momentarily, that Sharon is able to escape back inside her home and call the cops.

Each of the other girls has her own emotional storyline (Zephyr actually refuses to steal, making her the target of suspicion and paranoia; Squeaky is so desperate for Charlie's love that she'll do anything ("anything!") for Charlie, including sleeping with the 82-year-old owner of the commune in exchange for rent; Patty Mae swoops in to become Tanya's surrogate mother; Sadie Mae ensures the girls' pecking order is maintained at Zephyr's great emotional expense; etc.), but it is Marioche's scheming with Bobby which affects everyone the most directly. Desperate to help Charlie's finances improve, Marioche concocts the idea for her and Bobby to intimidate a rich Topanga man into giving them money, but Bobby goes alone, botches the job, and ends up killing the man.

Bobby tries to cover his tracks by smearing blood on the walls and writing gang slogans on the door, hoping to throw blame on black hate-crime gangs. In a frightening evening around a campfire, Manson seizes this opportunity to incite the urban civil war, rallying Tex and the girls to go around the city committing dozens of copycat crimes. Manson's plan is not only to mislead the police away from Bobby, but to ignite a race war. He will shelter his Family in the desert until the wars are over. Then they can emerge and rule over the survivors. Manson instructs the girls to start the murders in the homes of the rich, randomly, say, in Sharon Tate's neighborhood.

Charlie puts a knife into Linda's hand, saying that they must all get their hands dirty, and he expects her to bring the knife back to him, used. She agrees. But when they reach the actual moment of killing Sharon Tate, Linda can't do it and refuses to take part.

The actual killings are not depicted with gore in this musical; they're stylized, and in silhouette/slow-motion. The musical concludes as each family member reflects on what happened to them since that awful night, and a stylized gathering at the feet of Manson, who thanks them for their love.