

# The Backslider's Club

by

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*A conflicted psychology professor leads a support group of former religious leaders who have lost their faith due to troubled pasts - but realizes that he must confront his buried past that includes a younger brother on Death Row and the parents who raised them.*

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FADE IN:

CLOSE-UP OF A CRUCIFIX

A white cross gleams in a dark sanctum. Christ, affixed to it, with his arms spread, nails in his feet and wrists, stares down with colorless eyes.

A TEEN BOY'S FACE

Pale white. Disheveled hair. Empty stare fixates on the large crucifix above a sanctuary stage. His mouth, slightly open, exposes the bottoms of his front two teeth.

INT. RIVER OF LIFE CHURCH - PINE CREEK, TEXAS - NOON

The teen, BRANDON (18), sits on a pew in the middle of the dark, empty sanctuary. He's thin. Looks young for his age.

Light shines through the stained glass making the crucifix and the white wooden pews appear to glow. On the pew cushions beside him are

TWO SEMI-AUTOMATIC HANDGUNS

laying slide to slide.

As he picks up the pistols, his mouth gapes and his moves seem robotic. He stands. Stuffs one in the back of his pants. Hides the other at his side - both under his hoodie.

He plods to the back. Exits. Disappearing into the daylight.

EXT. FRONT OF CHURCH

White fluffy clouds frame the sun on this beautiful Sunday. A towering white steeple with a cross atop decorates the roof of this red-bricked house of God.

Outside the church doors in a green field, sits a long banquet table draped with a red and white checkered tablecloth.

AT A PICNIC

a mix of black and white CHURCH MEMBERS, dressed in their Sunday best, line up around the table with plates in hand ready to enjoy the picnic fare.

As the boy exits the church, REVEREND CARTER BARNES (early 40s), a distinguished African American pastor in a dark suit with a bright smile, approaches.

REV. BARNES  
Hello, young man. I'm Pastor  
Barnes...How are ya today?

The church's pastor holds out his hand to shake. The boy briefly inspects it. He shakes, but doesn't speak.

REV. BARNES (CONT'D)  
That's a fine handshake, son.

Rev. Barnes motions to the table.

REV. BARNES (CONT'D)  
You coming to eat?

The boy looks at the table. No response. Beat.

Rev. Barnes pats his shoulder then heads for the church entrance. The boy stares a hole in his back. Reaches under his hoodie for his gun. Watches. Beat.

The pastor enters the church. The boy turns to the picnic.

He mills through the crowd as the sister churches fellowship.

An older, motherly LADY picks up a plate. Sets a couple chicken drumsticks on it. Smiles. Affably offers it to him.

LADY  
Here ya go, sweet thing. Dip you  
some mac and cheese.

He stares at it then at her. Holding the plate, she points...

LADY (CONT'D)  
And, we got the best potato salad.

He reaches for the gun on his side. Silence. Beat.

Her smile softens. She sets the plate down. He walks away.

He continues to wander through the people as they CONVERSE, LAUGH and pick off their plates. A couple PARISHIONERS glance at him as he accidentally bumps them while walking.

He gets to the outskirts of the crowd. Scans it. Grasps the handle of the handgun at his lower back. Dead eyes. Empty.

A WOMAN holding a plate strolls past him. Grins at him.

He watches her. Trails her. Starts breathing heavy. Beat.

Suddenly, something catches his eye off to his right.

## A PLAYGROUND

populated with CHILDREN. Eight or so, a mix of black and white kids. Little girls. Little boys. Climbing on an elaborate jungle gym, sliding down a playhouse slide, and swinging on a RED SWING SET.

Determined, he changes paths. Mouth closes tight. Seems angry as he charges toward the playground.

Closer. Breathing heavier.

Getting closer. Breathing faster.

He marches. Some of the smiling kids look at him. A little GIRL in pigtails and a pretty church dress smiles. Waves.

He gets closer. Stops breathing. Stops blinking. Beat.

Pulls out a pistol. Then, the other. Paces forward. Aims.

FADE OUT.

OVER BLACK:

Sounds of KIDS PLAYING. LAUGHING.

A loud, piercing GUNSHOT. Then, another GUNSHOT.

FLASH CUT TO:

The playground. Some kids are frozen still. Some are running.

Adults SCREAMING. Women. Men.

Repeating GUNSHOTS from the two handguns. Over and over.

FLASH CUT TO:

The playground. Bodies on the ground.

More SCREAMING. More GUNSHOTS.

The sounds of SCREAMING fade into echoes.

FADE IN:

INT. FELLOWSHIP HALL - SACRED CROSS CATHOLIC CHURCH - NIGHT

In a banquet-style hall with dingy reddish tiled carpeting, a GROUP sits in a circle on gray folding chairs. A table sits nearby with a coffee thermos and a crinkled donut box on top.

Rev. Barnes, the distinguished pastor, now in his late 50s, continues his heartbreaking story...

REV. BARNES

Eleven...Eleven died. A few more was hurt bad...Five kids among the ones killed. All of em' was little bitty...All of em' under six years old.

His face has aged from time and sadness born from that day.

OTHER GROUP MEMBERS

sit mesmerized. He appears distant. His gaze directed at the floor almost as if it were the playground grass.

REV. BARNES (CONT'D)

The adults who died--Six of em'. They was the ones who...the ones who didn't hesitate...who ran ...got to the playground first.

REID RAMSEY (mid 30s), leader of this band of messed-up's, sits frozen on the edge of his seat. Most regard him more smart than attractive, but he's both.

Leaned forward with his elbow on his knee and hand covering his mouth, he stares. Behind his spectacle's whiskey-colored frames, his eyes are teary, but none have escaped yet.

REV. BARNES (CONT'D)

I'd gone inside the church--Can't remember why. Ada, my wife, was one of the ones who got there first. You see, my little girl, Gabrielle-- Gabby--  
(brief smile)  
She was four. She--she was... playing at the playground when that ...monster...did what he did.

Rev. Barnes's eyes, outlined with redness, well up. He SIGHS.

REV. BARNES (CONT'D)

When I, uh, heard the shots, I-I didn't understand what it was. People was running inside. Hiding under pews. I ran outside. Saw plates and food on the ground. I heard more gunshots. I looked over at the playground and...  
(beat)  
Bodies, layin' on the ground.  
(MORE)

REV. BARNES (CONT'D)

My--my wife was wearing a beautiful lavender dress...That color--I-I'll never forget--that color...popping against the green grass. I seen her layin' there. On the ground. In--in a matter of seconds, I lost em'... Both of em'. I held them--I--

Tears falling and voice cracking, he mimics with his arms...

REV. BARNES (CONT'D)

I had both of em' in each arm. Only got to say goodbye to their broken bodies. I looked in my sweet wife's eyes. I could still see the terror. Frozen into em'.

Rev. Barnes shakes his head.

REV. BARNES (CONT'D)

No man should ever have to--I, I thought I was a good man. Was good to both of em'. Never laid a hand of rage on em'. Was a man of God. I mean--I, I know I wasn't perfect that's for damn sure. But, they was both sides of my heart...Now, it's broken in two and...I have no goddamn idea why.

He looks over at Reid. Reid locks eyes with him. Sits up.

EXT. PLAYGROUND - RIVER OF LIFE CHURCH - FLASHBACK

Rev. Barnes sits on the grass. His wife's body lies on one arm as he hugs the body of his four-year-old daughter. A row of body bags line the ground. He cries as he hugs her.

REV. BARNES (V.O.)

I just simply want to know why. I don't give a shit about His plan. If...if it means my wife and my daughter had to...suffer. I don't want nothin' to do with it and nothin' to do with Him.

He holds them. Sobs. Police cars and an ambulance, with a red cross on the side, flash their lights parked not far behind.

REV. BARNES (V.O.)

Fuck Him...and fuck His plan.

POLICEMEN approach him to take the bodies. They help him up.

END FLASHBACK

INT. FELLOWSHIP HALL - SACRED CROSS CATHOLIC CHURCH - CURRENT

Rev. Barnes, story finished, slumps in his chair. Shrunken. The group, still mesmerized, is silent. Some wipe tears.

INT. FELLOWSHIP HALL - SACRED CROSS CATHOLIC CHURCH - LATER

Session over. All's quiet except the fluorescent lights HUMMING overhead. Chairs sit empty except one. Religious drawings from the kids of Sacred Cross hang on the walls.

Reid sits alone drinking from a styrofoam coffee cup.

The counselor reaches in his side pocket. Pulls out a flask. POURS in his cup. Leans back. Drinks. Remembers.

INT. LUNCHROOM - PINE CREEK MIDDLE-SCHOOL - FLASHBACK

Hair sticking up in the back and glassy eyed, Brandon is in the lunch line at his school cafeteria.

He's younger now (12). Obvious low IQ, but kinda cute in a Leave it to Beaver way. Mouth still gapes a bit.

He slides his tray down the line. KIDS with trays line up behind him. On a stool, a LUNCH LADY says in monotone...

LUNCH LADY  
Spaghetti?

He just stares at her.

LUNCH LADY (CONT'D)  
Spaghetti?

A BROWN-HEADED BULLY (14) in line behind him leans over.

BULLY  
Hey, fucking retard!

The bully slaps him in the back of the head.

BULLY (CONT'D)  
Brandon! Spaghetti?

LUNCH LADY  
Stop. He's obviously not that bright.

(MORE)

LUNCH LADY (CONT'D)

(to boy)  
So, what do you want, kid?

BRANDON

(softly)  
Mac and cheese?

The lunch lady GRIMACES. Then, she EXHALES in frustration.

LUNCH LADY

Oh, all right.

She peels her ass off her stool. Steps away. Beat.

She reappears with a ladle of mac and cheese. Plops it on his tray. He grins. She smirks.

BULLY

Let me help you.

The bully licks all his fingers. Spreads the mac and cheese all over the boy's tray. The boy peers up. The bully LAUGHS. Kids behind GIGGLING. The lunch lady shakes her head.

The kids start CHANTING "Bran, Bran - the fryin' pan."

Brandon carries his tray away.

END FLASHBACK

INT. FELLOWSHIP HALL - SACRED CROSS CATHOLIC CHURCH - CURRENT

Reid crumples up the styrofoam cup. Tosses it toward the trash. Misses. Takes a couple swigs from his flask.

He leans forward. Head drops into his hands.

INT. PSYCHIATRIST'S OFFICE - AUSTIN MEDICAL COMPLEX - DAY

TWO GOLDFISH

swim in a bowl with a bed of small rocks and green plants. They dart through a shipwreck ornament resting on the bottom.

ON A BEIGE COUCH

Reid sits slightly sunken in. He's entranced by the fishbowl sitting on a side table.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Reid?



No answer. He keeps staring at the fish.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Reid?

REID

Huh?

He looks at DR. ESTHER PERLMAN (60s), a short psychiatrist whose picture could be by both those words in the dictionary.

Across from him in a leather armchair, she lightly taps her Mont-blanc on a leather-bound pad atop her crossed legs.

DR. PERLMAN

I asked how you felt about having to masturbate to pornography.

REID

I-I...Uh.

Gazing through her bifocals, she points the pen at him.

DR. PERLMAN

You brought it up...I think it's important for us to discuss.

She slyly looks up at a clock. Tilts her head. Listens.

REID

Right. Well, it makes me feel--I mean--during, I feel great if you know what I mean--Just, when I'm done, I feel down all over again.

He shifts around in his seat.

REID (CONT'D)

Depressed I guess? Like, I-I should be having sex with my wife, but I'm not. And it all comes rushing back.

DR. PERLMAN

Your drinking? Still under control?

REID

Uh...yeah, sure.

She scribbles on her notepad. Abruptly stands.

DR. PERLMAN

Time's up for this session. But, this was very important progress.

(MORE)

DR. PERLMAN (CONT'D)  
 Stick a pin here. Let's come back  
 to it next week?

A bit surprised, Reid purses his lips together. Nods.

EXT. CAMPUS - UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS - AUSTIN, TX - MORNING

The bright sun feeds the green grass and trees at the lively UT campus. STUDENTS dart across the lawn to and from classes.

Reid, backpack over his shoulder, ambles along the walkways toward his office. Pulls out his smartphone. Answers a call.

REID  
 This is Professor Ramsey.

Phone to his ear, he continues to walk. Listens.

REID (CONT'D)  
 Yeah, Reid Ramsey. Who is this?  
 (listens)  
 Uh huh. Yeah.

Reid stops. Continues to listen to the caller.

REID (CONT'D)  
 Yeah...I-I know who he is--I don't  
 know if that would be best for my  
 group--  
 (listens)  
 Yes--yeah, I saw the--I know what's  
 been going on--I saw the news.  
 (listens)  
 Let me--Let me think it over--talk  
 to someone and call you back.

INT. PSYCHOLOGY DEPARTMENT - UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS - MORNING

In a hallway, Reid approaches a long row of numbered office doors. Starts to unlock his office door.

ON HIS OFFICE DOOR NAMEPLATE

"Harold R. Ramsey Jr. Ph.D - Associate Professor - Department  
 of Psychology"

INT. REID'S OFFICE - PSYCHOLOGY DEPARTMENT

He opens it. His office is a mess inside. Unorganized.

He tosses his iPhone on top of the papers that litter his desk.

He closes the door. Plops into his SQUEAKY chair. Grabs his laptop from his backpack. Pushes aside some papers. Sets it on the desk and hits the power.

MACBOOK POWER SOUND.

From his desk, he retrieves a

PILL BOTTLE, 5-HOUR ENERGY, and TRAVEL SIZE BOTTLE OF VODKA

He pops their tops. Takes the pills. Downs the vodka and 5-hour energy at the same time. Tosses them into the trash.

He uses the laptop touchpad. TYPES. Stares at the screen.

EXT./INT. GRAY SUV - OUTSIDE TRAVEL MOTEL - NIGHT

In an adjacent lot, two JOURNALISTS sit in an SUV watching a travel motel. Passenger side, a tough-looking female photog peers through a

CAMERA TELEPHOTO LENS

In the crosshairs, a black luxury sedan with dark windows parks under the Travel Motel office awning.

Their TARGET MALE (40s) with slicked-back hair and a slight paunch gets out. Adjusts his crotch. Enters the office.

ON SCENE

The photog lowers her camera.

PHOTOG

Motherfucker. That's him.

DRIVER

Ha. Wow, just like they told us.

The driver YAWNS. STARTS the SUV - YACHT ROCK on the radio.

EXT. OUTSIDE MOTEL - MINUTES LATER

Parked in front of a long row of numbered motel room doors, the black sedan driver door opens, the target male gets out. Almost stumbles. He approaches his motel room door. Opens it.

The passenger door opens. A leggy BLONDE in a short red dress and heels steps out. She YELLS something to him.

He staggers to her. Wraps his arms around her. Leans her on the car. She SQUEALS with LAUGHTER as he kisses her neck.

EXT./INT. SEDAN - OUTSIDE TRAVEL MOTEL - CONTINUOUS

The photog starts SNAPPING photos.

PHOTOG  
Can you get closer?

Driver STARTS the car - more YACHT ROCK.

EXT. OUTSIDE MOTEL - MINUTES LATER

The target smooches on the blonde. Rear passenger door OPENS.

A BLACK WOMAN in a skimpy white dress gets out. Clutch in one hand, she SLAPS his ass as she heads to the room.

The rear driver door OPENS. An ASIAN GIRL with long, poofy hair puts on lipstick as she exits. Enters the room.

The blonde grabs the man's hand. Drags him into the room.

EXT./INT. GRAY SUV

Now parked in a closer spot, the photog SNAPS more photos. Lowers the camera. Smirks at the driver.

PHOTOG (CONT'D)  
Shit. I'll give it to him, he  
doesn't discriminate on pussy.

The driver starts the SUV.

DRIVER  
Well, it's a small world after all.

The photog CHUCKLES as she puts her cell phone to her ear.

PHOTOG  
(into phone)  
Room 108.

EXT. OUTSIDE MOTEL - MINUTES LATER

The SUV parks a couple spots from the black sedan. A police cruiser parks beside them. No one around. The photog, gripping her camera, gets out.

Without closing the SUV door, she jogs to the motel room door. Two POLICE OFFICERS behind. She turns room 108's knob.

INT. REID'S OFFICE - PSYCHOLOGY DEPARTMENT - RESUME

At his desk, Reid continues to stare at his laptop screen.

ON LAPTOP SCREEN

is a TMZ-like website with

A HEADLINE

"Global Missionary Outreach"

As the page scrolls, under the headline are

THREE PHOTOS

ONE a photo of the target male preaching on a stage.

SECOND is him and the three prostitutes on the motel room bed – all naked, privates blurred. A Gideon Bible embossed with a gold cross lays on the nightstand.

THIRD is the mugshot of the target male with messed up hair and lipstick smears on his face.

Under the photos...

A CAPTION

"Pastor of Houston Mega-church Planting Seeds of Hope in a Seedy Travel Motel"

ON SCENE

Reid shakes his head. Leans back in his chair. SIGHS.

INT. FELLOWSHIP HALL - SACRED CROSS CATHOLIC CHURCH - NIGHT

At a group session, the target male, PASTOR JOSHUA LANE, sits up straight with a Bible in his lap. He squints and nods as he speaks sermon-like with a southern accent...

PASTOR LANE

I've sinned...I've been humbled...  
Definitely. I know there's a lesson  
to be learned from all of this.  
So...each and every one of you pay  
close attention to my story--

Reid holds his hand up.

REID

Uh, let--let's do introductions.  
You haven't met everyone yet.

Reid points to EDGAR ABBOT (50s), a small frame man, slightly balding with sluggish shoulders in a Mr Roger's cardigan.

EDGAR

Oh, guess I'm first?

Reid nods.

EDGAR (CONT'D)

Ok...Well, I'm Edgar--Edgar Abbot. I served at Saint Mary's--Saint Mary's parish--here in a suburb of Austin. For, uh, I guess almost... twenty years...Wow, that makes me feel old. I moved to downtown a few years ago after...an incident at my parish. But, there was no evidence--

Reid holds his hand up to Edgar.

REID

Edgar, we don't have to get into that now. It's ok.

Edgar nods. Reid looks to Edgar's left. TRENTON PARKER (late 20s), dressed trendy in a poplin shirt with rolled cuffs, dark rinse jeans, and expensive leather shoes.

TRENTON

I'm Trenton. I've been coming to this little group for a few weeks now. Ummm--Well, I recently was a youth pastor at a Baptist church in New Orleans and...I loved my job... But, now, I work here as a guidance counselor. And...I like it too.

Pastor Lane recognizes Trenton's orientation. His mouth twists and eyes roll. He shoots Trenton a sour face.

Trenton's brow furrows. Rev. Barnes speaks.

REV. BARNES

I'm Reverend Carter L. Barnes. Former head minister at River of Life Family Church in Pine Creek Texas. Until the tragedy that happened over fifteen years ago--

REID

Pastor Lane, do you remember the shooting at River of Life--

Pastor Lane sits back. Fakes interest. Shakes his head.

PASTOR LANE

No, I don't recall that.

REID

Uh, Rev. Barnes's wife and daughter  
along with nine others lost their  
lives--

PASTOR LANE

Oh my, that is a tragedy.

Pastor Lane walks over to Rev. Barnes. Squats in front of  
him. Squints. Puts his hand on Rev. Barnes's knee.

PASTOR LANE (CONT'D)

Carter, I'm so sorry for your loss.  
I'm sure the Lord has a plan--

REV. BARNES

(shoves his hand off)  
Get your fucking hands off me.

Pastor Lane, eyes big, stands. The others SNICKER.

REID

Uh, Josh--

Pastor Lane shoots a sour glare at Reid.

PASTOR LANE

Pastor Lane--

REID

Pastor Lane...no one here is  
looking for sympathy.

PASTOR LANE

What in the hell is this group?

Crossing his arms, Pastor Lane sits.

REID

Like you, everyone here had some  
sort of incident or moment that  
tested the strength and surpassed  
the bounds of their faith.

PASTOR LANE

Ya'll are atheists now? Agnostic?

REID

No, no--

PASTOR LANE (CONT'D)

My attorney told me--

REID (CONT'D)

I think we're all searching for  
more. And...we...get together to  
share, discuss, talk about faith.

PASTOR LANE

How is this supposed to help me?

MARGARET BECKER (30s), a soccer mom sipping her Starbucks latte sits up in her chair. Points...

MARGARET

Maybe you should be the one telling us why you're here?

PASTOR LANE

Ah! Not just a boy's club, huh?. I was wonderin' if you actually spoke ...or if maybe you were just here to serve the coffee.

Margaret hops up. Takes a quick step toward him. Tosses her steaming latte onto him.

MARGARET

There's your coffee you big prick.

Pastor Lane SCREAMS. Falls back. Trenton quips...

TRENTON

I think you mean "Grande Prick."

Reid grabs paper towels. Pastor Lane snatches them. Reid smirks at Margaret, but shakes his head.

REID

Everyone in this room has been through a struggle. A fight with their faith in some way. Everyone in this room has deep scars from it. Some exposed. Some not.

Pastor Lane glares at Margaret as he wipes his shirt.

REID (CONT'D)

You wanna be a part of our group? Contribute. Everyone here will help in some way. If you're open to it, I promise you'll get more than just a signature for the judge.

Pastor Lane stands. Tosses the towels. Grabs his Bible and storms out.

Shaking his head, Reid grins as he scans the group.



INT. CONDO HALLWAY - DOWNTOWN AUSTIN HIGHRISE - NIGHT

In a carpeted hallway, Reid approaches a long row of numbered residence doors. Stops in front of one. KNOCKS.

MONICA (30s), a hispanic woman who looks ripped from a telenovela, answers with welcoming brown eyes and a big smile of infatuation. She has a slight accent.

MONICA

Come in. Abby's in the kitchen.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MONICA'S CONDO

Reid steps into the well-decorated condo with a nice living room view of Town Lake. Monica, gold necklace with a cross dangling, heads to the kitchen. He follows.

REID

As usual, I appreciate it--

MONICA

Stop...I love it. She's a dear.

INT. MONICA'S KITCHEN

ABBY (4), Reid's daughter, colors at the kitchen table. A couple crumpled pieces of paper sit by her coloring book.

MONICA (CONT'D)

Why don't you two stay for dinner?

REID

No, no. We need to get home--

MONICA

Are you sure? I-I--

REID

Yeah, yeah...We need--

MONICA

Ok--next time?

REID

Sure, next time...Come on, Sweetie.  
Let's giddy up and go.

ABBY

I wanna stay for dinner.

Reid throws away her crumpled papers. Abby, in pigtails and a plaid private school dress, grabs her drawings. Hops down.

REID  
 Not tonight, Abby. Daddy's tired.  
 Let's go home.

Abby puts on her backpack. Drags her feet. Monica smiles.

MONICA  
 Next time, mija. Nos vemos mañana?

ABBY  
 Si. Adios.

Abby exits. Eyes big, Reid grins. Monica proudly smiles back.

REID  
 Oh...I-I hate to ask. Can you--

MONICA  
 Of course, I can.

Reid smiles as he EXHALES.

REID  
 Thanks. I have a friend who wants  
 to have a drink after work tomorrow  
 ...a male friend.

MONICA  
 Sure, sure. I can get another  
 Spanish lesson in with her.

Monica rubs Reid's arm.

INT. SITTING AT BAR - COUNTRY NIGHTCLUB/BAR - NIGHT

On the jukebox, a country music troubadour serenades the small gathering at this Texas dive bar. Rev. Barnes and Reid drink Shiner longnecks while perched on bar stools.

REV. BARNES  
 You know this is the first honky  
 tonk I been to?

REID  
 I don't think they really call them  
 that? Officially.

REV. BARNES  
 No?

REID  
 Just...a bar.

Reid takes a drink. Rev. Barnes follows. Beat.

REV. BARNES

(sarcastic)

Thanks for picking this place...I think I'm the darkest complexion in here by at least a few shades.

Reid LAUGHS.

REID

Ah, you're fine. Hell, this is Austin, Texas. Not, Sundown Town, Mississippi.

REV. BARNES

Fuck you and your white world. I seen more racism here than I have anywhere--

REID

Alright. But, don't worry, you're fine here.

(scans)

Look. Over by the pool tables. You got a friend.

ON POOL TABLE

A lighter skinned African American MALE plays pool with some other PATRONS.

ON SCENE

REV. BARNES

Shit, that fool's almost as white as you. Think he was at the fucking Alamo.

Reid looks confused.

REID

The Alamo?

REV. BARNES

Yeah...Davey Cracker...He oughta be wearin' a coonskin cap.

Rev. Barnes bursts out LAUGHING. Reid's mouth twists. Not sure if he should laugh. He gives in and LAUGHS. Shakes his head. He mutters...

REID

Davey Cracker.

Rev. Barnes LAUGHTER subsides.

REV. BARNES  
Ah, shoulda seen your face. He he.

REID  
Bastard.

Rev. Barnes gets quiet. Sips his beer.

REV. BARNES  
Reid, reason I wanted to meet, I-I  
wanna talk to you about something.

Reid finishes his drink. Motions to BARTENDER for another.

REID  
Sure, what's up?

REV. BARNES  
Reid, I-I know--

REID  
You want another one?...On me.

REV. BARNES  
Nah, I'm good--Uh...Reid, I-I've  
enjoyed the group sessions--

REID  
Well, I've enjoyed you being there.  
And, the friendship we built.

REV. BARNES  
Me too.

Rev. Barnes hesitates. Bartender brings Reid a beer.

REV. BARNES (CONT'D)  
I-I found out that boy's death  
warrant was signed. He lost his  
appeals. The execution's gonna  
happen. Soon.

Reid focuses on Rev. Barnes. Beat.

REV. BARNES (CONT'D)  
A few weeks from now, the state of  
Texas is gonna shoot that boy up  
with poison. Take his life...And  
I'm gonna be there to watch.

Rev. Barnes takes a drink. Reid sits silent. Stares forward.

EXT. POLUNSKY UNIT - WEST LIVINGSTON, TX - DAY

The famed prison that houses Texas death row, Polunsky Unit, is surrounded by rows of fencing with barb wire at the top.

**TITLE OVER: Texas Death Row - Allan B. Polunsky Unit - West Livingston, TX**

INT. DEATH ROW - POLUNSKY UNIT

Along a white cement block wall is a long row of steel doors. Each prison cell door has a slender window with thick plexiglass and a black painted number.

A GUARD escorts Brandon (mid 30s) to his cell. Brandon stands waiting. Mouth gaping like when he was younger. Blank stare.

The guard unlocks and opens the door. Brandon glances at him. Enters the cell. The guard closes the door. Locking him in.

INT. BRANDON'S CELL

In his small cell, Brandon sits on his bed. He grabs up a young reader's book. Lies down. Flips through the pages.

INT. REID'S OFFICE - PSYCHOLOGY DEPARTMENT - DAY

Reid stands at his desk. Slides his laptop into his backpack. Opens his door. He answers his lit-up phone.

REID  
 (into phone)  
 Yeah?  
 (sighs)  
Seriously? Tonight?  
 (listens)  
 Of course, I'll take her tonight,  
 but I'll have to cancel--You...You  
 gotta give me a heads up next time--

INT. HALLWAY - PSYCHOLOGY DEPARTMENT

Reid paces down the hallway.

REID (CONT'D)  
 No--She--she's your fucking  
 daughter too.  
 (listens)  
 I--I--  
 (listens)  
 No shit--I don't care if he--  
 (listens)  
 (MORE)

REID (CONT'D)  
 I've never said that--I never said  
 you're a bad mom--Never...No--I--  
 no. This is bullsh--No--

Reid abruptly hangs up. Keeps walking. Loudly says...

REID (CONT'D)  
That bitch.

Rounding the corner, a silver-haired PROFESSOR in a suit and carrying a briefcase. Hears Reid's outburst. Slows his pace. He glares at Reid as he walks by him. Dryly says...

PROFESSOR  
 Reid.

Reid weakly smiles. Nods.

REID  
 Dean Miller.

As the Dean passes, Reid shuts his eyes and mumbles...

REID (CONT'D)  
 Shit.

INT. REID'S KITCHEN - DOWNTOWN AUSTIN HIGHRISE - NIGHT

Reid stands at the island of the kitchen preparing Abby's dinner. She's glued to an iPad at a small dinner table.

Reid steps over behind her. Kisses the top of her head.

REID  
 Almost done fixin' your dinner.  
 When it's ready, the iPad goes off.

Abby doesn't hear as the iPad SOUND of a YouTube video plays. Reid walks toward the stove smiling and shaking his head.

He puts fish sticks and carrots on a small plate. SQUIRTS ketchup on it. Sets it in front of her.

Reid pauses her video. Sits by her. She grabs a fish stick...

ABBY  
 Are you gonna eat, Daddy?

REID  
 Yeah, in a bit.

She dips a fish stick. Bites. Eyes the ceiling. Thinking.

ABBY  
Daddy...am I gonna lose my teeth?

REID  
What?

ABBY  
Am I gonna lose my teeth?

REID  
Uh...yeah--but, the tooth fairy--

ABBY  
(frowns)  
I don't wanna lose my teeth.

REID  
You'll--you'll lose em' one at a  
time. And...and you get money--

ABBY  
(near tears)  
I-I don't wanna lose them.

Reid slides his chair a little closer. Leans down.

REID  
Sweetie, you'll be ok. It doesn't,  
it doesn't...hurt. Those are baby  
teeth...and as you grow up, and get  
big, you get adult teeth--

ABBY  
But, I don't have baby teeth.

REID  
Well--

ABBY  
My teeth are this many.

Abby holds up six fingers (some have ketchup on them).

REID  
(to himself)  
Technically, you're four, but...  
(tilts his head)  
Abby, we just call them baby teeth.  
You're not a baby, your teeth are  
just...new like how a baby's new--

Abby's eyes get big. She looks scared. Thinking. Beat.

ABBY  
So my big teeth won't be new?

Reid freezes. With big eyes and gaping mouth, she stares.

REID  
 Oh, of--of course, they will. Uh.

Reid looks around. SIGHS. Raises a finger as he hops up.

REID (CONT'D)  
 Hold on. Eat your fish sticks.  
 Daddy's gonna get some...help to  
 explain it better.

Abby grabs another fish stick. Reid steps into the kitchen. Rifles through a drawer. Sets something on the counter.

He opens the fridge. Leans down. When he stands, he holds a bottle of wine. He grabs the corkscrew he set on the counter. Takes a DEEP BREATH. Starts uncorking the bottle.

INT. LIVING ROOM - REID'S DOWNTOWN AUSTIN CONDO - NIGHT

Lights are dim in Reid's condo as only the TV glows with a low VOLUME. Reid leans back on the couch asleep. Abby lies with her head in his lap snoozing.

A light KNOCK on the front door. Beat.

A little harder KNOCK.

Reid wakes. Lays Abby's head on the couch. Flips on a light. Answers the door. It's KATIE, Abby's mother, his ex-wife. The dirty-blonde executive, in a white high-collar dress shirt, charcoal pencil skirt, and posh stilettos, enters. Whispers.

KATIE  
 She ready?

Reid points at Abby. They look into each other's eyes. Beat.

KATIE (CONT'D)  
 Thanks for--

REID  
 Nah, don't worry about it--

KATIE  
 Look, I'm sorry for--

REID  
 No, no--I'm...I'm sorry for--



KATIE  
No, I shouldn't have--

REID  
Stop--You had to work. I-I should  
have been more understanding.

KATIE  
I get it. It's been rough for both  
of us lately. This case I'm on is  
eating me alive.

Reid smiles at her. She gives him a friendly hug. First since  
they divorced. He stiffens a bit. Wanted, but uncomfortable.

KATIE (CONT'D)  
Anyway, thanks. I do appreciate it.

REID  
I know you do.

Katie walks to Abby. Reid turns. Smile disappears. He stares  
at the door. Closes it. Shuts his eyes. Silently exhales.

INT. PSYCHIATRIST'S OFFICE - MEDICAL COMPLEX - DAY

Reid sunken into the couch as Dr. Perlman sits across.

REID  
I think I, uh, got so...caught up  
in my work and she got caught up in  
hers that we just...drifted apart.

DR. PERLMAN  
You believe that bupkis?

Reid's eyes dart side to side. Blinking. Thinking. Beat.

He shakes his head no.

DR. PERLMAN (CONT'D)  
Good man.

Dr. Perlman shifts in her seat. Leans toward him.

DR. PERLMAN (CONT'D)  
When people, as you said, get  
caught up in something, it's  
usually for a reason. Avoidance.  
(MORE)

DR. PERLMAN (CONT'D)

...If you were really number two behind her career, wouldn't a problem between you two still be important enough to try to resolve? Not just walk out of the marriage?

REID

She...had a really rough childhood--

DR. PERLMAN

(irritated)

Why do you do that?

REID

Why do I do what?

DR. PERLMAN

Defend her so much.

REID

Do I?

DR. PERLMAN

Yes. Why?

REID

I never really--

DR. PERLMAN

You do. I want to know why.

Reid squints, searching for the answer.

REID

Well, I-I think--I, I don't know--

DR. PERLMAN

Yes, you do. Tell me.

Reid exhales through his nose. Gives in...

REID

When she was growing up...everybody in her life disappointed her. I-I can't imagine being a child and having that kind of sadness inside.

(squints)

The kind of sadness in a kid that ...other parents whisper about. Kind that makes you feel alone. Haunts you in bed at night.

Reid looks over at the goldfish bowl. Beat.

REID (CONT'D)

When we got married, I told myself that...I...wouldn't disappoint her. I'd finally be the one she could count on. And be there at night when that sadness crept in...But, I disappointed her. Just like everyone else in her life. I don't know how I did it, but I did. I failed her. In doing that, I failed my daughter... In the most elemental job a father has... Keeping his family together.

Dr. Perlman points her pen at Reid.

DR. PERLMAN

But, this wasn't about you, Reid. You need to start telling yourself. You can't fix everyone's problems. Only your own. Unfortunately, some people live with sadness.  
(waves her hand)  
Oy. Terrible...What can you do? Try to be happy. Try to help them be happy.

She smiles. Speaking with her hands, almost in one breathe...

DR. PERLMAN (CONT'D)

Look, I get it. You're a man. You fix things. You're just like my Frank. Wants to fix every fakakta thing. I tell him, Frank, you can't fix everything. What does he do? He never listens.

Dr. Perlman tilts her head. Looks him in the eye.

DR. PERLMAN (CONT'D)

Forgive yourself...Your daughter needs a father who understands he can't fix all of her problems... But...a father who'll be there to hold her hand, fight for her and fight with her whenever he can.

Reid's eyes glisten.

DR. PERLMAN (CONT'D)

Reid, teach her how to fix her problems...for herself. You do that and be the best father you can.

(MORE)

DR. PERLMAN (CONT'D)  
I promise, you won't disappoint  
your precious little girl.

Dr. Perlman's smile widens. Through his tears, Reid matches it.

INT. LOCKERROOM - BATHHOUSE - NEW ORLEANS, LA - FLASHBACK

Trenton stands in front of a row of numbered lockers. Slides his shirt off. Tan. Tatted. Some religious. One of a large gothic cross. He tosses his shirt in an open locker.

Beat.

Now naked, he wraps his waist in a white towel. Exits.

INT. LOUNGE - BATHHOUSE

DANCE MUSIC THUMPS as he exits the lockerroom. It's fluorescent lighting fades into dim nightclub-like lights as he struts through the lounge.

MEN in the same white towels wander about. OTHERS lean on the walls. Eyes wandering, mouths watering for their next prey.

Trenton locks eyes with multiple men as he walks toward a dark hallway. Up and down, they eye his toned physique.

INT. HALLWAY

DANCE MUSIC CONTINUES

through a dark hallway lined with numbered doors on both sides. As he trolls through, MEN pass. Look him up and down.

When he walks past one of the open doors, MOANING can be heard. He slows. Peers inside then keeps walking.

INT. FELLOWSHIP HALL - SACRED CROSS CATHOLIC CHURCH - NIGHT

Trenton tells his story to the group.

TRENTON  
I was fooling myself. Living a  
double life--What gay man didn't at  
some point? Right? I had a fiancee--  
Obviously, she didn't know.

## INT. CHURCH SANCTUARY - BAPTIST CHURCH - FLASHBACK

In a dark, empty sanctuary, an ASSOCIATE PASTOR (late 20s) walks toward his office. Trenton watches from an entry way.

TRENTON (V.O.)

I-I thought I was in love with--  
with the associate pastor...He sent  
all the signs.

Trenton approaches. Passes him. They flirtatiously smile.

TRENTON (V.O.)

His name was Robert--Rob...Every  
chance we'd get. We'd smile at each  
other--Wave.

## INT. FELLOWSHIP HALL - TRENTON'S BAPTIST CHURCH

Trenton sits with a group of fifteen YOUTH BOYS and GIRLS. He has a cross embossed Bible on his lap.

Rob walks through the back of the fellowship hall with his WIFE (20s) in front of him. He smiles at Trenton again.

TRENTON (V.O.)

Even though he had a wife. I-I just  
...knew. No doubt.

A BLONDE-HEADED TEEN BOY in the group, notices. Smirks. Elbows his FRIEND seated next to him.

## INT. LOUNGE - BATHHOUSE - NEW ORLEANS, LA - LATER

Trenton, in white towel, enters the lounge from the lockerroom. He stops. Scans the lounge inspecting each MAN.

TRENTON (V.O.)

I was so...frustrated. Confused. I  
was making...really bad choices.  
Dangerous ones.

He strolls through the lounge. Past a bucket of condoms. He spots a YOUNG HISPANIC MAN. They lock eyes. Trenton smiles. He half smiles back. Heads into the sauna. Trenton follows.

## INT. SAUNA AREA

In the corner, a couple MEN shower as Trenton enters the dark and steamy sauna. His shadow follows.

INT. STEAM ROOM

Through the steam, Trenton passes outlines of FIGURES. He finds a seat on a bench. The young man sits beside him. Beat.

It's dark, steamy, hard to make out exactly what's happening. In the shadows, Trenton and the young man stand. Towels drop. They converge. KISS. KISSING. Beat.

Other MEN join. KISSING. Beat.

INT. SAUNA AREA

The young man, Trenton and two OTHERS who joined them exit the steam room. Trenton is last of them to exit. The door closes. Naked, they walk toward the showers.

Out of the dark, Trenton recognizes one of the men who joined them. It's the blonde-head teen boy from his youth group.

He hasn't seen Trenton's face yet. Trenton's eyes grow. He turns quickly. Grabs his towel.

The boy looks Trenton's direction. He sees Trenton. His eye's squint. He gulps. Turns around.

INT. LOCKERROOM

Trenton speeds to his locker. Grabs his things. Hurriedly puts on his clothes. He exits with his T-shirt inside out.

END FLASHBACK

INT. FELLOWSHIP HALL - SACRED CROSS CATHOLIC CHURCH - NIGHT

Trenton sits, crossed arms and legs, telling his story.

TRENTON

It was a...a nightmare. He wasn't even eighteen. Barely sixteen.

Tears roll down his cheeks. He wipes them.

TRENTON (CONT'D)

What had I done? I took advantage of this boy--

MARGARET

But, you didn't know--

PASTOR LANE

Pfffft. Doesn't matter. Still raped a kid--

Margaret flashes a glare at Pastor Lane.

REID

Stop. It's obviously not that black and white.

Margaret kneels next to Trenton. Puts her arm around him. Pastor Lane crosses his arms. Leans back. Rolls his eyes.

TRENTON

I felt trapped. After that, he'd leave me gifts. Making--uh-making little things--sweet things for me. He was so sweet. I liked him--not like that--just...I liked him.

Trenton sits up straight. His shoulder's slouch. He SIGHS.

TRENTON (CONT'D)

His parents found out. They found a, a note--he made for me. And...it described the sex in the sauna.

Pastor Lane holds in a SNICKER. Trenton shuts his eyes. Beat.

TRENTON (CONT'D)

His dad--I'm surprised he didn't beat the shit out of me--told me that he wouldn't press charges if I'd leave. I-I think they didn't want it to get out. So...I left.

MARGARET

What happened to Rob?

Trenton shrugs. Wipes a tear from his eye.

TRENTON

Never saw him again.

Margaret leans over. Side hugs Trenton. Rubs his back.

INT. FELLOWSHIP HALL - SACRED CROSS CATHOLIC CHURCH - LATER

Session over. Everyone makes their way out. Reid tosses cups and the donut box in the trash.

As Trenton leaves, Reid taps him on the shoulder. He turns.

REID

Why were you there?

TRENTON  
What?

REID  
Sauna.

Trenton slyly grins.

TRENTON  
Come on--

REID  
No, I want to know.

TRENTON  
I think that's pretty obvious.

Reid points to the chair. They both sit.

REID  
I-I don't think it is. Why were you there?

TRENTON  
Sex?...Get off?

REID  
Bullshit. You're a handsome guy.

TRENTON  
What are you getting at?

REID  
Why were you there?

TRENTON  
I-I--

REID  
You know you could go meet someone online, dating site, go to a bar, or if its just sex, a hookup app.

TRENTON  
I don't know. Maybe--Just easier?

REID  
Is it--or is it maybe something in you that--

Trenton breaks eye contact. Mouth starts to quiver.

REID (CONT'D)  
That maybe feels like you aren't--



TRENTON

(tears)

Who would want me? Right?

Reid leans over. Puts his hand on Trenton's knee. Pats it. Squeezes his shoulder.

TRENTON (CONT'D)

I guess it--it felt good to strut around there. Having people look at me. I felt wanted. Desired. I could see it in their eyes. Addicting--

REID

Trenton...I'm always excited when I see you walk through that door. Every session. I think you're a shining star. You light up the room with your quick wit, your stories--

Trenton LAUGHS through his tears. Reid smiles at him.

REID (CONT'D)

You are special and some lucky guy out there's just waiting to find that out...Stop hiding.

Trenton puts his face in his hands as he CRIES.

REID (CONT'D)

I won't even try to suggest that I know what it was like to grow up gay...I'm sure hiding was a, a natural state of being.

Trenton slowly nods.

REID (CONT'D)

Stop hiding. I bet when you'd leave that place, you felt low? Right?

Trenton nods again. Looks off to the side.

REID (CONT'D)

It didn't satisfy whatever you were looking for. Did it?...Take pride in yourself. Spend time in places and doing things that'll fertilize your confidence. Help you grow.

Reid stands. Trenton stands up too. They hug tight. Beat. Reid smiles as he pats Trenton's back. Trenton's smile grows.

EXT. PARKING LOT - SACRED CROSS CATHOLIC CHURCH - NIGHT

Reid and Trenton separate in the parking lot. Reid walks to his SUV. Rev. Barnes, smoking a cigarette, leans on it.

REID  
Carter?

REV. BARNES  
Thought you'd never come out of there.

REID  
Was following up with Trenton--

Rev. Barnes nods while he smokes.

REV. BARNES  
Seemed to be more to that story.

Reid grins as he nods. Rev Barnes takes a final drag.

REID  
What's up?

Rev. Barnes drops the cigarette. Steps on it.

REV. BARNES  
Hungry? We need to talk.

INT. DINING AREA - BBQ RESTAURANT - MINUTES LATER

Reid and Rev. Barnes sit in a booth at a BBQ joint. Trays of brisket and white bread on the table along with draft beers.

REV. BARNES  
You know, I told you that kid's death warrant was signed and--

Reid SIGHS. Sits back in the seat.

REID  
Carter, I-I haven't been completely honest--

Rev. Barnes waves his hand.

REV. BARNES  
Stop.

REID  
I really need to--

Rev. Barnes raises his hand. Interrupts by talking over him.

REV. BARNES

I wanna tell you about my wife. She was...a perfect soul. Cared about every livin' thing. She volunteered at soup kitchens. Did every fucking charity drive, bought toys for poor kids at Christmas, bake sales--She was a helluva fuckin' cook...I miss her...Every goddamn day...She'd want me to be like her...I know it.

Reid focuses on Rev. Barnes. Beat.

REV. BARNES (CONT'D)

Reid?...I know your secret.

Reid stops blinking. Perks up. Freezes.

REV. BARNES (CONT'D)

You see, my wife, she'd want me to do some good...I hate him...Like I never felt hate before. Powerful... What I'm doing's against everything I feel. But, I know my wife would want me to do some good, even for the boy who killed her and our daughter. So...

Rev. Barnes focuses on Reid. Looks him in the eye.

REV. BARNES (CONT'D)

...right now, I'm reaching out to her killer's estranged brother. Who's running from his past. His family.

REID

Carter, I--

REV. BARNES

Before I watch that boy die, I want to do one good thing for him. For her...I want that boy's family to be there when he dies. To give him the comfort he won't get from me. More importantly, comfort he didn't give my wife and daughter.

REID

How did you know he was my brother?

REV. BARNES

It's why I came to your group a couple months ago. I was gonna tell you at the bar the other night... but I just couldn't. His time's running out so, I'm doing it here, tonight...Reid, I want you to be at your brother's execution.

REID

I-I...I don't know--

REV. BARNES

And...I want you to get your momma and daddy to be there too.

REID

I, I just don't know if I can do that, Carter.

REV. BARNES

Do it for my wife, for my little Gabby, who was your daughter's age when she died...Hell, their names even rhyme...Do it for them.

REID

I'll have to think about it. I-I haven't seen him in over a decade. Barely seen my parents in that time...I can't promise anything.

REV. BARNES

It's a big decision. In your heart, you know it's the right thing. And, that you'll regret it if you don't.

Reid stares down at the table. His jaw sets. He SIGHS.

INT. APARTMENT - AUSTIN SUBURBS - LATER

Rev. Barnes enters his modest size apartment. Inside, it seems darker than the moonlight he just eluded. It's small. Dark. A couple cats greet him at the door.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

He flips on the kitchen lights illuminating it's cleanliness, but exposing the loneliness. He opens a cabinet.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Rev. Barnes sets two bowls of wet cat food on the floor. His two cats run to it. Start feasting.

He slowly raises up. Holds his back. Age is getting to him. He smiles at the cats.

REV. BARNES  
Hell, you two act like I never  
fuckin'--

He quickly looks toward the living room. Covers his mouth.

REV. BARNES (CONT'D)  
Sorry, sorry--I know.

He dismissively waves toward the living room.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Rev. Barnes sits in his Lazy Boy. On a side table next to him, he positions a framed picture to face him.

It's a smiling picture of his wife with a small wallet-size picture of his daughter stuck to the lower corner.

Looks routine as he rocks in his recliner. Grabs the remote. Turns on the TV.

His face glows from the light of the screen as he watches it. He sets his hand on the side table in front of the frame as he channel surfs with the other. Beat.

He sets the remote down. Watches the TV. Heavy eyelids.

INT. CAMPUS CAFETERIA - UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS - MORNING

Reid walks to a table with his breakfast. Sits alone. Beat.

He observes the checkout line. A row of STUDENTS line up with their trays. He stares. Recalls.

INT. LUNCHROOM - SMALL TOWN MIDDLE-SCHOOL - FLASHBACK

Back in the school cafeteria, the brown-headed bully slaps Reid's brother, Brandon, in the back of the head.

BULLY  
Spaghetti, fucker?

Reid (13), at a table with his lunch tray, observes his brother being bullied. He watches.

REID'S POV

LUNCH LADY

Stop. He's obviously not bright.  
 (to boy)  
 What do you want, kid?

BRANDON

Mac and cheese?

Young Reid sits. Grits his teeth, but does nothing.

BULLY

Let me help you.

He sits and watches as the bully spreads out Brandon's mac and cheese with his licked fingers.

The bully LAUGHS. The kids behind GIGGLE. Then, CHANT.

Without even a blink, Reid stares. GULPS. Still does nothing.

Brandon slowly walks with his tray toward Reid. The bully and some KIDS behind him walk faster. Pass him. Sit with Reid.

Brandon, holding his tray, watches his brother sit with the bully. Reid makes eye contact with Brandon. Beat.

Brandon turns. Finds a seat alone. Sits.

Reid watches as Brandon eats by himself and drinks from a juice box.

The brown-headed bully turns in his chair. Tosses one of his meatballs at Brandon. It hits Brandon's cheek. Leaves sauce on it as the meatball falls to the ground.

Brandon doesn't look. Reid SIGHS. Scared to do something as the kids LAUGH. Beat.

The LAUGHING fades to echoes.

END FLASHBACK

INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME

Morning light sneaks in as Rev. Barnes, still reclined in his chair, sleeps. Sawing logs. One cat lays in his lap - the other on top of the recliner. The framed picture lies face down on his chest as his arm loosely holds it.

FADE OUT.

OVER BLACK:

REID (V.O.)  
I think I do believe in God.

Beat.

FADE IN:

INT. PSYCHIATRIST'S OFFICE - AUSTIN MEDICAL COMPLEX - DAY

Reid on the couch. Dr. Perlman listens.

DR. PERLMAN  
Is...is that a problem?

REID  
No...just saying I believe in God.

DR. PERLMAN  
Eighty-something percent of America believes in some sort of a higher power. You aren't sitting on that couch for that. Why bring it up?

REID  
I don't, uh, believe in most of the Bible-thumping shit, but there's a reason for all of this. I mean...

Reid points around the room.

REID (CONT'D)  
I see design in it all. A purpose ...We drive around in SUVs, lie on chaise lounges at the beach, drink from drinks with umbrellas in them, plant flags on the moon...A cat... or a, a dog doesn't do any of that.

Reid's mouth curls as he INHALES.

REID (CONT'D)  
But...I feel like it's all a...soap opera to Him--to God. One that he can manipulate. Every person's life is a channel he can flip to...How can I fuck up Reid's life for this episode? Bored with someone? Boom, their kid has cancer. Instant episodes for Him to binge watch--

DR. PERLMAN  
You done kvetching?

Reid stares at the wall. Beat.

REID

Evil I don't understand--

DR. PERLMAN

World's gray. Not black and white.

REID

There is black though.

DR. PERLMAN

What's all this really about, Reid?

REID

I've been holding something back from you...from everyone...My--my brother--Brandon.

Reid stops talking. Beat.

DR. PERLMAN

What about him? Why tell me now?

REID

He's a...monster.

DR. PERLMAN

Oy gevalt. That's a bit harsh. Don't you think?

Reid looks her in the eye.

REID

He's on death row at Polunsky.

Dr. Perlman adjusts herself in her seat.

DR. PERLMAN

Why did you hold this back?

REID

He murdered children. Little children. He killed eleven people--

Dr. Perlman sets her pen down on her notebook. Eyes big.

DR. PERLMAN

Reid? What happened?

REID

Th-the shooting at River of Life-- fifteen years ago?



DR. PERLMAN  
(nodding)  
I remember that...The shooter? He's  
your brother?

Reid stops. Doesn't nod yet. Looks at the fishbowl. Beat.

He begrudgingly nods.

DR. PERLMAN (CONT'D)  
Reid...why bring this up now?

He SIGHS. Looks at her.

REID  
A judge signed his execution  
order...He has a few weeks left.

DR. PERLMAN  
How do you feel about that?

REID  
I-I feel like he should burn in  
hell for what he did...Some of  
those kids were Abby's age.

DR. PERLMAN  
Is that how you really feel?

REID  
Yes. He's getting what he deserves.

Reid's mouth shrinks as he shakes his head. Beat.

REID (CONT'D)  
No?...I don't know...I feel like  
there are two. Two of him. This  
monster, who did this terrible,  
unforgivable thing. Who I don't  
know. And, my little brother. My  
little brother who needed--needs--  
me to protect him.

DR. PERLMAN  
Like I said, Reid. The world is  
gray. What your brother did was  
horrible...but he's still your  
little brother. Nothing will ever  
change that fact.

Reid's eyes are frozen to the floor. A couple tears drop.

REID  
I'm tired...Let's put a pin here.

Dr. Perlman nods. Picks up her pen.

DR. PERLMAN  
Let's talk when you're ready.

INT. BIG RETAIL BOOKSTORE - AUSTIN, TX - DAY

Books on modern, natural wood shelves, end-cap displays of the latest best-sellers and a hipster populated coffee bar decorate this posh retail establishment.

Edgar, wearing a green logo'd apron, bursts through the stockroom door carrying a heavy box of books.

A LAZY CUSTOMER bothers him...

LAZY CUSTOMER  
Hey, uh, you? Where's that new book about the teen vampires who fall in love...You know...but the chick vampire gets cancer and goes bald after she goes out in the sunlight?

Edgar struggling to hold the box, motions with his head.

EDGAR  
Oh, uh, "Bella-noma". Right--right there. Next to you.

Edgar starts to walk again.

LAZY CUSTOMER  
Where? I don't see it?

Edgar stops. Puts the box down and walks over. He grabs the book right next to the customer where it was in plain site. Hands it to them.

LAZY CUSTOMER (CONT'D)  
Oh, yeah. You need to make these... displays easier--

Edgar bolts to his box. Picks it up. Walks away. The customer frowns. A FEMALE CO-WORKER (40s), who's arranging the kid's books, SNICKERS at the scene. Edgar notices. Smirks.

INT. KID'S BOOKS SECTION

Edgar approaches her.

EDGAR  
Like that, Ginny?

GINNY

Very much so.

Ginny grins. Keeps setting out books. She eyes Edgar as her flirtatious smile grows.

Edgar tilts his head. Smiles. He pushes a pile of books off a shelf. His eyes get big and mouth opens at his prank as he walks away. She shakes her head. Playfully points at him.

INT. CHECKOUT REGISTERS - BIG RETAIL BOOKSTORE - LATER

Edgar finishes ringing up a CUSTOMER. Puts her books in a bag. Hands it to her.

EDGAR

Thank you. Come again.

Ginny is at the cash register next to him. They both finish at the same time. Ginny jokes...

GINNY

You want this one? Or me?

EDGAR

(fake yawn)

I'm taking a break. You get this one. I'll get the next one.

Ginny frowns at him and motions to the next customer. Beat.

A MAN approaches her register. Edgar motions to the next one.

A LADY and her SON approaches Edgar's register. She freezes. Edgar stares at her briefly.

EDGAR (CONT'D)

Can I help you? Are you ready to check out?

Frantic, the lady leans down.

LADY

Bobby, wait in the car.

She hands her son the car keys. She sets her books on the counter. Bobby leaves. She looks pale white. Nervous.

Edgar starts scanning the books. She starts breathing heavy.

LADY (CONT'D)

You...you have some nerve. You have some...f-f-fucking nerve.

Edgar stops. He looks at her. He stops blinking. His eyes lock onto her. He GULPS. Her voice shakes...

LADY (CONT'D)

Y-you ruined my oldest son's life.

Edgar whispers. Tries not to cause a scene.

EDGAR

Ma'am, I-I didn't do anything--

LADY

No! No! You don't say anything--

Ginny steps next to Edgar. Watches the events.

EDGAR

I-I--But, I--

LADY

You piece--I-I hate you--I hope you burn in hell.

As other customers watch, PAUL, with a store manager name badge, steps next to Edgar and Ginny. Puts his hand up.

PAUL

Ma'am, can I help you?

LADY

Yes, you can fire this pedophile!

PAUL

I-I'm not sure what you mean?

EDGAR

Paul, she--she--

LADY

He--he abused my son when he was a priest at our church--Just check on it. He did--Yes--Just--Just check.

Edgar's eyes well up. He clutches his hands together. Whispers to Paul.

EDGAR

No, I-I didn't, Paul. She-she doesn't know what she's saying.

PAUL

Edgar, why don't you go in the back. I'll handle this.

Edgar looks at Paul then at Ginny. Shakes his head in fear.

EDGAR  
 But, Paul. I-I.  
 (to Ginny)  
 I didn't do anything.

LADY  
 Yes, just go you pedophile!

PAUL  
 Edgar, do what I say. Go. Now.

If a look were a plea, Edgar pleads with the lady once more then walks away toward the stockroom. His head sinks as he notices Ginny eyeing him with shock and other customers gawking as he retreats.

INT. BACK STOREROOM - BIG RETAIL BOOKSTORE - LATER

Edgar sits in the break room drinking a soda. His hand shakes. The TV is on, but he isn't watching it. Another EMPLOYEE, finished with their lunch, tosses away the trash. Notices Edgar's shaking. Exits the break room.

His manager, Paul, steps in. CLEARS HIS THROATS. Edgar glances up at him. Paul sits across from him. Beat.

PAUL  
 Is it true--

EDGAR  
 Of course not--

PAUL  
 What she said--Is there any truth to it at all?

EDGAR  
 No.

Paul SIGHS.

PAUL  
 Edgar, she knew your name. First and last. Were you ever a priest?

EDGAR  
 Paul--I--This isn't fair.  
 (beat)  
 I-I can't believe this. Nothing happened. How can--

PAUL  
You never told us about this.

EDGAR  
Because nothing ever happened.  
There was no evidence of--

Paul SIGHS again and shakes his head.

PAUL  
Edgar, it's the same as lying.

EDGAR  
These kids--I caught them drinking.  
One of them got angry--made all of  
this up--

PAUL  
It doesn't matter. You can't--

EDGAR  
He made it all up! Accused me--It  
ruined my life. His parent's--  
wealthy, uh, uh, connected. They  
have made my life a living hell.

Paul stands up and starts backing to the exit.

PAUL  
Today's your last day. I'm sorry.

Paul turns and exits. Edgar is frozen in shock.

INT. FELLOWSHIP HALL - SACRED CROSS CATHOLIC CHURCH - NIGHT

In the group session, Edgar continues telling his story.

EDGAR  
I couldn't get away from it. I  
probably never will--

MARGARET  
Have you seen Ginny since?

EDGAR  
No. And, I-I really liked her. I  
haven't had a relationship since  
before my parish--

MARGARET  
Why don't you try to talk to her?

EDGAR  
I don't know if--

PASTOR LANE  
Why don't you just move?

EDGAR  
Well...I did. After my parish. I mean...I-I moved to downtown from the suburbs. My mother's here. She's sick. And...I'm the only family she has to, to take care of her. It would be so selfish of me to up and leave her just because I couldn't put up with this.

Edgar wipes the burgeoning tears away.

EDGAR (CONT'D)  
Once she passes, I'll go and start a new life somewhere.

REID  
Edgar, there's no question you love your mother, but don't you think maybe you're using her as--

EDGAR  
Reid, that's not fair--

REID  
Edgar--let me finish--You must be able to continue with your own life. You must want a family? A wife? Maybe kids? You're not a spring chicken--

EDGAR  
But, she--

REID  
Without thinking about her for a minute, wouldn't you be better off somewhere--

EDGAR  
But--

Reid presses him.

REID  
Edgar, finish your story.

Edgar stares at Reid. He tilts his head. Looks at the floor.

EXT. PARKING LOT - BIG RETAIL BOOKSTORE - NIGHT

The parking lot is almost empty. With the book store behind, Edgar carries his things to his car. Depressed, he opens his trunk. Tosses them in it.

Suddenly, headlights shine behind him, but he doesn't see them yet. Getting closer. Faster.

Edgar spins around as a black Mercedes SUV speeds up, brakes abruptly and parks behind his car. The DARK-HEADED DRIVER, a well-built man, gets out. Approaches Edgar. The woman from the earlier incident peers out the passenger window.

DARK-HEADED DRIVER

Asshole!

Edgar starts backing up to his driver door. The man runs after him. Edgar reaches for his door handle. The man shoves a taser into Edgar's lower back. Shocks him. Edgar's back bows. He SCREAMS as he shakes then falls.

DARK-HEADED DRIVER (CONT'D)

You sick bastard.

The man punches Edgar in the stomach. Over and over. Edgar GROANS with each punch. He tases Edgar's neck.

DARK-HEADED DRIVER (CONT'D)

This is for my son. And--and everything you put my family through you piece of shit.

He slugs Edgar in the face. Edgar CRIES. The woman in the SUV watches as a smile curls her mouth.

INT. FELLOWSHIP HALL - SACRED CROSS CATHOLIC CHURCH - NIGHT

Edgar's foot taps on the floor. Slightly embarrassed. Irritated. He shakes his head.

EDGAR

Is that what you wanted, Reid?

REID

Edgar, it's important to be honest. We're all your friends here--

EDGAR

I know...But, this is something that I want to forget.



MARGARET

Why did you leave the parish?

EDGAR

I already told you. I was accused--

MARGARET

I know, but there wasn't proof.

PASTOR LANE

Where there's smoke, there's fire--

MARGARET

(to Pastor Lane)

You're one to talk. Asshole.

(to Edgar)

Did the church make you leave?

EDGAR

No, I was just...embarrassed. And, I didn't know why God would allow that to happen to me. I hadn't done anything wrong...I started to drink. A lot...I was angry.

MARGARET

Is that when you started to doubt--

EDGAR

I don't know if doubt's the right word. I was mad. I-I dedicated my life to Him, how could He let that happen? I think I felt that I deserved...protection.

REID

I think that's a common feeling. But, no one's righteous. Everyone--

EDGAR

It's bullshit--

REID

How so?

Edgar stalls. Eyes dart around.

EDGAR

It's just that...whenever something good happens we're supposed to praise him for the blessing. But... when something terrible happens, it's our fault?

(MORE)

EDGAR (CONT'D)

We're told either we were walking outside his path or we weren't close to Him. So, bad things can happen.

REID

But, bad things happen to good people all the time. Not an oddity.

EDGAR

I know. I think I started to think it was all shit. Shepherding the flock is a good analogy. All sheep. You stray from his path, you get slaughtered. But, it seems even if you don't, you can still get slaughtered...I couldn't lead anymore. I couldn't stand up there in that pulpit telling people they needed to stay on His path.

Reid nods.

REV. BARNES

(to Reid)

You seriously need to make these sessions BYOB.

Margaret leans over and hands Rev. Barnes her flask. He sips.

INT. LIVING ROOM - REID'S DOWNTOWN AUSTIN CONDO - NIGHT

Lights out, but the TV glows. Low TV VOLUME. Both dressed comfortable, Reid sits on his couch with Monica. Her legs are curled up on the couch as they eat some pizza for dinner.

MONICA

So, how do you think you'll feel if you don't go?

REID

I-I don't know if I want to see him...Or my parents.

MONICA

If you do go, I can keep Abby for you.

REID

No, she would need to be there.

MONICA

I think an execution is--

REID

No, to my parent's. I won't take her to that.

MONICA

Well, I'm here to help. Whatever you decide.

Reid reaches over. Grabs her hand. No smile.

REID

I know.

Monica leans closer to him. Wraps her arm around his.

From the other room, a quiet voice CRIES. Calls to him...

ABBY

Daddy?

Abby softly SOBS. Monica lets go of Reid's arm.

ABBY (CONT'D)

Daddy?

INT. ABBY'S BEDROOM

Reid walks into Abby's bedroom. A nightlight partially illuminates the dark. He lies next to her. Rubs her hair.

REID

It's ok. Daddy's here. What's the matter, sweet pea?

Abby continues to CRY. Groggy...

ABBY

Am I gonna die?

REID

No, honey. No.

ABBY

But, everybody dies. Right?

Reid thinks of what to say. Beat.

REID

One day, when you get really old maybe. But, don't think about these things. You should--

ABBY

Are you going to die?

REID

Sweet pea, I'm staying right here  
to take care of you. I'm not going  
anywhere.

Abby's nose SNIFFLES as she continues to softly SOB. Reid caresses her forehead gently with his thumb.

ABBY

I don't want you to die. I don't  
want Mommy to die--

REID

Both of us love you very much. We  
aren't going anywhere.

ABBY

At school, they talked about  
heaven. That's where I go when I  
die. Right?

Reid lightly SIGHS. Thinks.

REID

Yes, honey. But, that's a long,  
long time from now--

ABBY

Will we all be together there?

REID

Of course. Everything you love will  
be there with you. But, Sweetie,  
think about other things right now--

ABBY

But, I-I can't. My head--all I  
think about is dying. And you  
dying. And Mommy dying.

Abby's CRYING intensifies. Reid picks up a teddy bear. Gives it to Abby. She hugs it tight.

REID

Think about your ballet class  
tomorrow. Playing at school in the  
park. Think about--

ABBY

Who will take care of my stuffed  
animals when I die?

REID

Sweet pea, Sweetie, please stop.  
Think about good things.

ABBY

Will they go to heaven?--

REID

Of course. Everyone and every thing  
you love will be there.

ABBY

So, if I believe in Jesus then I'll  
go to heaven?

Reid freezes. Rubs her forehead some more.

REID

Yes. Of course. Of course you will.

Her CRYING subsides. Reid kisses her on the head. Her eyes slowly close. His eyes tear up as he caresses her forehead.

INT. FELLOWSHIP HALL - SACRED CROSS CATHOLIC CHURCH - NIGHT

Reid sits in his folding chair among the group.

REID

It's hard to...assuage the fears of  
a little girl....What do I say when  
she's afraid of dying? When I don't  
even understand it. I feel like I'm  
lying...And, when...she cries to me  
because she's afraid of monsters--  
Under her bed--In her closet--I lie  
and tell her monsters aren't real.  
They only exist on TV and movies.  
All the while, knowing there are  
worse monsters in this world than  
any she'll ever see on a screen.

Margaret tears up.

MARGARET

When...uh, my little boy was  
afraid, I had the same feelings.  
Nothing...nothing prepares you for  
having to tell your ten year old  
that...that they have cancer.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - AUSTIN MEDICAL CENTER - FLASHBACK

Margaret and her HUSBAND, are seated in front of a desk. Their son's DOCTOR sits behind it. He's talking to them.

MARGARET (V.O.)

It's--It's a horrific moment when you hear your child won't make it to their next birthday.

Margaret, listening to the doctor, covers her mouth. Her eyes squint and tears fall. Her husband puts his arm around her. His eyes well up. She buries her face into his chest.

MARGARET (V.O.)

I was lost, but I had to remain strong for my family--my son. But, inside, I-I was dying...with him.

INT. EXAMINATION ROOM - DELL CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL - DAY

Margaret's son, STEPHEN (10), bald head and arm IV, sits in a chair with his feet dangling above the floor. Behind him, cartoonish clouds, a smiling sun and some smiling animals decorate the otherwise sterile walls.

MARGARET (V.O.)

As a parent, you--you'd do anything for your kids. Anything to take away their pain. What I don't understand--what's confusing to me is that if we're all God's children then how can he let that kind of pain and suffering exist? For such innocent little children?

Margaret sits next to her son. Holds his hand.

INT. STEPHEN'S BEDROOM - MARGARET'S HOUSE - DAY

Margaret, crying and bags under her eyes, rummages Stephen's closet. Pulls out his Easter church suit. Sets it on the bed.

MARGARET (V.O.)

Each day I'm hanging by a thread.

She opens the dresser. Digs through it. She finds a small super-hero t-shirt. She caresses her face with it. Cries.

MARGARET

The people who say that it gets  
better over time, they--they...  
obviously never lost their child.

Margaret pulls a maroon tie out of the drawer. Sets it on top of the suit that lays on the bed. She covers her mouth. Cries.

END FLASHBACK

INT. FELLOWSHIP HALL - SACRED CROSS CATHOLIC CHURCH - CURRENT

Margaret stares down at her latte cup. Beat. Takes a sip.

MARGARET

Most marriages survive after a  
child's death. Brings them closer  
together...We didn't. We separated  
a few weeks after the funeral. I  
haven't seen him since or stepped  
foot into a church. It's been over  
two years now.

Rev. Barnes, sits next to her, puts his hand on her knee.  
Pats it. She puts her hand on top of his. Glances at him.

Pastor Lane, sitting across from them, YAWNS. Looks  
uninterested while checking the texts on his phone.

INT. FELLOWSHIP HALL - SACRED CROSS CATHOLIC CHURCH - LATER

Session is over. Reid approaches Margaret. Puts his arm  
around her. Gives her a friendly side hug.

MARGARET

Thank you.

Reid nods. She stirs some coffee. Pours into it from her  
flask. Others start exiting.

MARGARET (CONT'D)

Spiking your coffee helps. Want  
some?

Reid holds out his coffee cup. She pours a shot into it.

REID

Thanks...If you need anything--

MARGARET

I know. And, I'm always here for  
you with an open flask.

They CHUCKLE.

REID

I know I can always count on you.  
Speaking of...on a different note.  
Can you do me a big favor?

Reid picks up a day-old donut. Takes a bite.

MARGARET

Sure, anything. What's up?

Margaret sips her coffee.

REID

I know through your firm, you have  
a connection with the DA's office?

Her eyebrow raises as she grins.

MARGARET

Uh oh. This is gonna be a big ask.

REID

Kinda...Can you get me the case  
documents for Edgar's incident?

Margaret squints. Drinks some more coffee. Beat.

MARGARET

Umm, yeah, I think I can do  
that...Do you not believe him?

REID

No, it's not that. I just want to  
review them. For personal reasons--  
Helps me in the session with him.

MARGARET

Ok, yeah, I'll see if I can get  
them and send them to you.

REID

Thanks.

Margaret walks away. Pastor Lane, who was hovering, watches her exit as he approaches Reid.

PASTOR LANE

What's her status?

REID

Uh, I think she's doing ok--



PASTOR LANE  
No, no--her status.

Sipping coffee, Pastor Lane continues ogling Margaret as she walks out the door. Reid frowns. EXHALES. Shakes his head.

EXT. EDGAR'S MOMMAS HOUSE - AUSTIN SUBURB - MORNING

Edgar walks up to his mother's house. Opens the front door.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Carrying flowers, Edgar enters through the creaky screen door into her small living room. He finds his mother, BEATRICE (80s), rocking in her lime green recliner watching TV.

EDGAR  
Momma? Momma?

Struggling with dementia, She looks up with an empty gaze.

BEATRICE  
I know you, but I don't remember  
your name.

EDGAR  
Hello. It's Eddie? I brought you  
some flowers for your vase.

Edgar takes her vase of wilting flowers to the kitchen.

EDGAR (CONT'D)  
I found these stargazer lilies. I  
know you like them.

From the kitchen, Edgar continues the conversation.

EDGAR (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
These are going to be so beautiful  
when fully bloomed, Momma. And,  
they already smell so good.

BEATRICE  
Where's my Edgar? Do you know?

He takes the vase back into the living room then sits on the plastic-covered couch next to his momma's chair.

EDGAR  
Well, Momma, I'm here right now. I  
brought you some flowers. Don't  
they make the room smell nice?

Beatrice just stares at the TV and doesn't answer.

EDGAR (CONT'D)

Momma?

BEATRICE

Sure. Nice.

She picks up the remote. Looks at it. Hits a button.

EDGAR

Would, uh, would you want me to bring you lunch tomorrow?...I could stop and pick up your favorite? Catfish, hush puppies, and slaw from the Austin diner?...You know, you used to go there all the time. And, have a slice of lemon ice box pie for dessert? I'll get you a slice if you want?

She looks at the remote and then looks at the TV.

EDGAR (CONT'D)

Momma? Can, can you hear me?

He reaches over and holds her hand.

BEATRICE

Why, I can hear you just fine. I guess you can bring me lunch. Day after tomorrow would be fine. My Eddie's coming by tomorrow.

Tearfully, he pats her hand lovingly.

EDGAR

Ok, sure, sure. I'll come day after tomorrow then.

Edgar starts to walk out. She stares at the TV. He turns. Watches her for a beat. She struggles to operate the remote.

He opens the door. She hears it and spins to look at him.

BEATRICE

Eddie? There you are! Just in time.

She frantically points at the TV.

BEATRICE (CONT'D)

Judge Judy's on. Sit down and watch it. Watch her with me.

Edgar, tearful, smiles at her.

EDGAR

Sure. Of course, I will.

He sits back down on the couch. Grabs her hand as they watch.

BEATRICE

It smells so good in here. Did you have that man bring me lilies?

EDGAR

Ha, ha. Yes, yes I did, Momma.

BEATRICE

They're my favorite.

EXT. UPPER CLASS NEIGHBORHOOD - AUSTIN SUBURB - NIGHT

A few street lights overhead and the residence windows of some neighborhood night owls provide the only light on this upscale suburban street.

Reid, without his glasses, jogs along the sidewalk through the neighborhood. Beat. He slides the hood of his hoodie up as he approaches one of the houses.

He stops. Looks down at the street number on the curb. Parked in the driveway, a black Mercedes SUV adorns the domicile.

Reid slinks along the driveway to the SUV. He approaches the hood. Pulls a flathead screwdriver from his hoodie. JAMS it under the hood latch. SLAMS down. BREAKING THE HOOD OPEN.

The CAR ALARM BLARES.

With the hood open, he quickly detaches the Mercedes hood emblem from underneath. Pockets it.

LIGHTS ON THE PORCH

turn on. Reid hides behind the vehicle as the dark-headed man who attacked Edgar steps onto the lawn. Scans his driveway. Spots the open hood. Stops the alarm with his fob.

DARK-HEADED MAN

Hello? Someone there?

He moves toward the open hood. He tries to close it. With the latch bent, it won't close. It pops back up. He notices the missing emblem.

DARK-HEADED DRIVER

Goddamn it!

He starts to walk around. Up against the side of the SUV, Reid moves out of view. Hides.

The dark-headed man scans his yard. MUMBLES. Heads to the front porch. Reid leans his back on the SUV.

The dark-headed man turns to scan the area one more time. Reid pops out from the rear of the vehicle.

REID

Hey...Over here motherfucker.

The man turns to Reid. Points at him.

DARK-HEADED DRIVER

Did you do this you piece of shit?

Reid confidently holds up the emblem.

DARK-HEADED MAN

You son-of-a-bitch. I'm gonna rip your fucking balls--

As he approaches, Reid retrieves a black subcompact pistol from under his hoodie. Aims it. A red dot shines in the middle of the man's chest. He freezes. Raises his arms.

DARK-HEADED DRIVER

Dude, t-t-take it. I-It's yours.

Hoodie hiding his face. Reid steps closer. Extends his arm.

FIRES.

Out of the front of the pistol, two probes eject and latch onto the dark-headed man's chest. He immediately starts shaking from the electricity flowing through his body. He grits his teeth and GROANS. Falls to the ground.

Reid holds the trigger down. Approaches him. The man HIGH PITCH SQUEALS as he convulses in the grass. Beat.

Reid releases the trigger. Ejects the cartridge from the front of the Pulse taser gun. As the man lies there, Reid leans. Pulls off the probes. Notices the piss stains on the man's pants. Picks up the cartridge pieces that fell.

REID

How'd that feel, fucker?

Reid glances up at the house. The woman from Edgar's attack is at the window with a horrified face and phone to her ear.

Reid aims the pistol at her. She dives below the window sill. Then, peeks over it. He flips her off as he walks away.

INT. FELLOWSHIP HALL - SACRED CROSS CATHOLIC CHURCH - NIGHT

After a session, Reid throws away a box of cookies. Margaret approaches him.

MARGARET

Hey, I meant to ask you. Did you find that info I sent you about Edgar's case useful?

REID

Very useful. I found some of the details rather...shocking.

MARGARET

Yeah, it was interesting. After reading it, I think that kid was lying, but--

Rev. Barnes steps over to them. Margaret glances at Rev. Barnes. Notices he wants to talk to Reid. She nods.

MARGARET (CONT'D)

Gentlemen.

Rev. Barnes smiles. Nods. Reid waves as she leaves.

REV. BARNES

So, have you thought anymore about--

REID

Of course. I, I'm still processing it. Just been distracted lately.

REV. BARNES

Well, since his appeals didn't go through--

Reid's mouth opens. His eyes dart around.

REID

He never had a good lawyer.

REV. BARNES

Hell, he never had anything for them to defend--

REID

Come on...had he been just a year younger he'd never have gotten the death penalty...And, you know mentally he's--

REV. BARNES

You're a shrink. You know that don't mean shit in Texas.

REID

Carter, back the fuck off. You had fifteen years to deal with this. I--

REV. BARNES

--haven't dealt with it. You had your head up ya ass for fifteen years--Hiding from all this shit or feeling sorry for yourself or both.

REID

Leave me the fuck alone, Carter.

REV. BARNES

Why'd you start this group? Seems you try to help everyone else, but you're just as fucked up as we are.

Reid looks away. Continues throwing away the trash. Silence.

REV. BARNES (CONT'D)

Fine. But, don't take too long. He only got a couple weeks left.

Rev. Barnes walks toward the exit. Tapping his watch...

REV. BARNES (CONT'D)

Clock's ticking doc.

Rev. Barnes exits. Alone now, Reid picks up a bottle of vodka. Pours in a cup. Downs it.

INT. MONICA'S CONDO - DOWNTOWN AUSTIN HIGHRISE - NIGHT

KNOCK on the front door. Monica answers it. It's Reid.

MONICA

Hey, come on in.

Reid follows her in. He's disheveled. Stagger slightly.

MONICA (CONT'D)

What's...what's up?

REID

Nothing. Abby's with her mom  
tonight. Got a lot on my mind.  
Wanted to see a friendly face.

Monica's smile widens as she steps closer to him.

MONICA

You...want something to eat?

Reid steps closer. Really close. Breathing on her.

MONICA (CONT'D)

I-I can make something...or, we...

Reid leans in closer.

MONICA (CONT'D)

...can...order out.

He puts his hand on her cheek. Kisses her.

She falls into the kiss. It gets more heated. As they kiss,  
she pulls him by his shirt to the couch.

She slides her t-shirt off. Starts unbuttoning his pants.

He pulls her black leggings down. She steps out of them. They  
fall to the couch. Reid on top. They passionately continue.

INT. CLASSROOM - PSYCHOLOGY DEPARTMENT - DAY

Reid writes on a white board at the front of the class.  
STUDENTS sit behind tables. Open text books. Taking notes.

REID

So, there are three types of  
personality disorders in cluster A.  
Paranoid--I am sure many of you can  
relate to that. Schizoid--

Suddenly, there's YELLING in the hallway.

VOICE (O.S.)

I'm gonna kill every one of you!

The students jump up. Push their books off the table. They  
lay the tables on their side in the corner. Hide behind them.  
Reid, confused, walks toward the door. Mutters...

REID

What the fuck?

Just as he approaches the door, it BURSTS open. A MAN IN A BLACK PLASTIC MASK rushes in. He points a pistol at Reid.

Reid swings and knocks the pistol out of his hand. Shoves the man to the wall. The man hits the wall hard and slides down to the floor. Throws his mask off.

MASKED MAN

What the hell, Reid?

Reid stands over him.

REID

Jerry? What the fuck are you doing?

JERRY

It's 1:25! The-the active shooter drill--

REID

What?

JERRY

The active shooter--You didn't get the emails or the school text?

REID

No, I-I've been a bit preoccupied.  
(helps Jerry up)  
Why are we doing this?

JERRY

Well, why do you think? Preparation for if there's a gunman on campus.

REID

Ah, ok. Makes sense I guess.

JERRY

Damn right. We're one of the only schools that actually experienced--

REID

That was mid-Sixties, Jer. Over fifty years ago--

Another FACULTY MEMBER in a mask sticks his head in the door.

FACULTY MEMBER

(muffled by the mask)

What's going on here? Jerry, you're supposed to be wandering the halls killing kids.



Jerry swipes up his pistol and mask. SCOFFS as he exits.

REID  
Sorry, Jerry.

Wide-eyed, Reid grits his teeth at his students. They LAUGH.

INT. REID'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Reid opens his front door and Katie enters.

REID  
She's asleep on the couch.

Katie walks toward the living room, but pauses in the living room doorway. Looks at Abby asleep on the couch.

KATIE  
She looks so sweet. Thanks for watching her.

Reid seems annoyed. Upset.

REID  
(flippant)  
Yeah, sure.

KATIE  
Everything all right?

REID  
It's fine.

KATIE  
What? Seriously? Did I do something.

Reid SIGHS.

REID  
I just get tired of batting her around like a tennis ball...My daughter is the most--

KATIE  
Our daughter.

Reid EXHALES.

REID  
She's the most important--

KATIE

Of course she is. What's your point?

Reid's mouth flattens. He pauses.

REID

A father never wants his daughter to see a flaw in him--ever--at least not while she's a child. But...she wasn't even a year old before you showed her my biggest flaw...That I couldn't even keep her family together.

KATIE

Stop...Reid, your flaws are your own.

Reid looks away. His jaw locks.

KATIE (CONT'D)

Yes...I am to blame for how the marriage ended, but I am not solely to blame for the marriage ending.

REID

I needed you--

KATIE

You needed me? Seriously?

Reid stares.

KATIE (CONT'D)

We needed each other for years. At first, it worked. We were a great team, but--

REID

But, you gave up on us.

Katie looks down. Shakes her head.

KATIE

You can't give up on something that isn't there...It was gone a long time ago...You just didn't know it.

Reid looks shocked.

KATIE (CONT'D)

Reid...

(sighs)

...look, you're a great dad--

Reid perks up. He stops her.

REID

I know I'm a great dad...I sure as hell don't need you to fucking tell me that.

Katie smiles. Exasperated. Shakes her head.

KATIE

(a bit louder)

What's gotten into you?

REID

Nothing...I--

Abby wakes up.

ABBY

(groggy)

Mommy?

Katie approaches her sleeping daughter. Picks her up.

Reid just watches from the doorway. SIGHS.

EXT. TOWN LAKE WALKWAY - DOWNTOWN AUSTIN - DUSK

As the sun starts to set, Reid and Monica walk along the path around the river reservoir that flows through downtown, Town Lake. Reid seems preoccupied. Distracted.

As they approach the Congress Avenue bridge that overpasses Town Lake, Reid stops.

REID

This is a good spot.

With a view of the bridge's underside over the water, They both sit on the grassy hillside next to the walkway.

REID (CONT'D)

Ever seen the bats before?

Monica gets a brown bag out of her large purse. Opens it.

MONICA

I've lived in Austin for a few years. Haven't come down here.

She hands Reid a foil-wrapped taco. Gets one for herself.

REID

I heard there's almost two million. I wonder who counts em'?

Monica GIGGLES. Reid opens his taco.

MONICA

Well, we could do that now?

REID

Do I win something if I guess the right number?

Monica smiles flirtatiously as she opens her food.

MONICA

Hmm, I don't know. I guess you'll have to just see what happens.

Reid squints his eyes at her and grins.

REID

Challenge accepted.

They sit silent. Eating. Beat.

MONICA

Have you thought any more about going to see your family?

Reid SIGHS.

REID

Oh, no, you're getting serious now?

MONICA

I'm sorry--Just worried about you.

She puts her arm around his. He EXHALES. Beat.

REID

Have we reached that point where worry's a requirement?

Boats in the water are parked in front of the bridge. With a smile, Monica stares at Reid.

MONICA

I've got enough worry to cover us  
both--Er--All three of us.

She GIGGLES. Reid grins uncomfortably as he eats. Holding something back. Beat.

The bats trickle out from under the bridge. Finished, Reid wads up the wrapper.

REID

Look...I don't need you to do that.

Confusion crosses her face. She stops eating.

MONICA

What?

REID

Worry...That's not your  
responsibility--

MONICA

Reid--

REID

No, no. Abby's my responsibility--  
Well...and her mom's--

MONICA

I'm not trying to--

REID

I know, I know. Just--

MONICA

What's the matter with you? I-I  
didn't mean--

REID

I have a lot--

He EXHALES. Now, thousands of bats fly out from under the bridge and fly east.

REID (CONT'D)

My life right now is...complicated.

Monica's eyes well up. She shakes her head.

MONICA

Why are you doing this?

REID

Don't take it the wrong--

MONICA

Don't take it the wrong way? I take care of your daughter multiple afternoons a week until you get home from class. Sometimes nights. Whether you like it or not, I love her. And, I love...I love every moment I get to spend with her.

REID

I know you do. And, I...appreciate--

MONICA

Oh my God. I'm not asking for appreciation. At this point, I like to think I'm more than a babysitter that you occasionally fuck.

REID

What do you want from me?

Monica's tears start to fall. She looks up at the bats.

MONICA

Nothing. I don't want anything.

Reid, mouth gaping, shakes his head.

REID

I...can change my office hours.  
Start coming home earlier.

Monica stares at the bats. Still swarming by the thousands. A stream of them flying in the sky. Tears roll down her cheeks.

MONICA

I lost count.

REID

What?

MONICA

The bats...Take me home.

INT. BAR - AUSTIN - NIGHT

In the country honky tonk, Reid sits at the bar with Edgar. Both drinking beer.

EDGAR

I'm not really a beer guy, but these aren't bad.

REID

Yeah...Can't see a six-pack of these being tossed in your Whole Foods cart.

EDGAR

I don't know. It's a nice change from the Pinots.

Reid LAUGHS.

EDGAR (CONT'D)

Am I that transparent?

REID

Let's call it predictable.

Edgar grins as he shakes his head.

REID (CONT'D)

Got something for you.

Edgar looks shocked. Jokes...

EDGAR

Oh, honey, and I didn't get you anything.

Reid takes out the Mercedes emblem. Slides it over to Edgar.

EDGAR (CONT'D)

What...what is this?

Edgar picks it up. Inspects it.

EDGAR (CONT'D)

I don't--Oh. Is this?--

Edgar's eyes grow. He looks at Reid. Reid stares forward. Smiling, he takes a drink.

EDGAR (CONT'D)

Oh my God.

Edgar CHUCKLES. Puts it in his pocket. His smile fades as he gets serious. Beat.

EDGAR (CONT'D)

You've never told me what you think.

REID

About?

EDGAR

If you believe me.

REID

Edgar--

EDGAR

Either way. I want to know?

Reid sips his beer. Edgar sips his after.

REID

You want my assurance. I-I can't give you that because I don't know. I want to believe you, but you're asking the perennial skeptic.

EDGAR

I'm getting the indication you don't.

REID

No, no that's not right...It's like believing in God. I do. But, I struggle. I've known you a long time now. I know you're a good person. A good friend. I know that because I've seen it.

Edgar takes a drink. Stares forward.

REID (CONT'D)

If you're looking for a Vegas odds type of answer. Ninety-nine to one. You didn't do it.

EDGAR

That's better. I understand.

(beat)

How's, uh, how's Abby doing?

REID

Fine...Lately though, I worry the skepticism I was talking about will color her worldview. I want her to make her decisions about life and religion based on her own experiences. Not mine.



EDGAR

Reid, I know you're a good parent.  
Because I've seen it.  
(pats Reid on the back)  
How's it going with the ex?

Edgar takes a drink. Reid starts peeling his beer's label.

REID

I-I don't know. Guess it's fine.

EDGAR

As a former priest, I never give  
Vegas odds, but I bet you aren't  
over her. Is it holding you back?

REID

Well, I'm not necessarily hiding  
that fact. It is. And...I honestly  
don't know what to do about it.

EDGAR

Have you started dating again?

REID

Uh, yeah, I've started seeing  
someone recently--

EDGAR

How's that going?

REID

I don't know. Not sure yet.

EDGAR

You just haven't met the right girl  
yet--

REID

Stop. Don't condescend--

EDGAR

Ok, ok. Wrong thing to say.

REID

I was thinking the other day, the  
analogy of Adam and Eve is perfect  
for the relationship between men  
and women...Made for each other.  
Living in perfection.

(grins)

Naked all the time. No kids.  
Probably fucking like rabbits all  
over that goddamn garden.

EDGAR

Huh? Guess I never thought of it like that.

REID

Then, problems start popping up--

EDGAR

Hide the apples.

REID

Sometimes I think...the tragedy of eden wasn't a world full of sin, but the wall...that formed between men and women.

The corners of Edgar's mouth turn down as he nods.

EDGAR

There's someone out there for you.

REID

I've resigned to the fact...some people will live their life having the love of their life...never love them.

(beat)

I-I don't remember when...some point along the way, I became ok with that.

Silence before Edgar excitedly says...

EDGAR

I-I'm gonna go see Ginny.

Reid perks up. Looks at him.

EDGAR (CONT'D)

I drove past there the other day. Saw her car so she still works there...Heck, what's the worst that could happen? Right?...I gotta try.

Reid smiles as he squeezes Edgar's shoulder. Beat..

They see a reflection in the mirror behind the bar of an attractive WOMAN walking past. They simultaneously drink.

REID

(watching the woman)

Maybe I just haven't met the right girl yet.

As she passes, she smiles. Reid grins. Edgar CHUCKLES.

EXT./INT. CARPOOL - ABBY'S PRIVATE SCHOOL - DAY

Reid drives his SUV in the carpool lane at Abby's private church school. He approaches the front. A TEACHER and Abby approach with the school chapel behind them. A cross and the chapel name adorn the wall.

The teacher opens the door. Sets Abby's backpack down then Abby hops in the car. She doesn't sit in her seat.

REID  
Hey, sweet pea.

She lingers a bit. Not sitting in her car seat.

REID (CONT'D)  
Come on, Abby. Sit down. Strap in.  
Let's giddy up and go.

She sits down. Buckles her seat belt. As they drive away...

REID (CONT'D)  
What did you learn in school today?

ABBY  
I don't remember.

Reid squints at her in the rearview mirror. Beat.

ABBY (CONT'D)  
Daddy, look...I can wink with both  
eyes at the same time.

Reid watches in the rearview mirror as Abby quickly closes both eyes tight then opens them again. He smiles. CHUCKLES.

REID  
Sweet pea, that's just called  
blinking--

ABBY  
Well, I can do it.

REID  
And, Daddy's proud of you, Sweetie.

ABBY  
Are we eating dinner with Miss  
Monica?

REID  
Uh, maybe. Hopefully.

ABBY  
Can I bring Marshmallow?

REID  
I-I don't think she needs any  
marshmallows, Sweetie.

ABBY  
No! My bear. Marshmallow.

REID  
Oh, uh, sure.

Abby peers out the side window.

ABBY  
Gracias.

Reid proudly smiles.

REID  
De nada.

INT. MONICA'S CONDO - DOWNTOWN CONDO HIGHRISE - EVENING

Reid cooks dinner in the kitchen. Abby helps. Reid picks up  
his cell phone. Starts typing. Sending a text. Beat.

He sets the phone down on the counter. Keeps cooking.

REID  
Ok, stir it really carefully.

Abby stands on a chair and stirs the pot on the stove. Beat.

ABBY  
Ok, Daddy.

The phone on the counter vibrates. He picks it up. Looks.

INT. FRONT DOOR - REID'S CONDO - LATER

Reid, with Abby standing beside him, OPENS his front door.  
Monica stands there. She looks at Reid. Smiles at Abby.

REID  
Thanks...Uh, come in.

INT. REID'S KITCHEN

Monica and Abby hold hands as they follow Reid into the kitchen. Dinner is set out on the table for three.

Monica tilts her head. The corner of her mouth curls up.

REID (CONT'D)  
Hope you're hungry.

ABBY  
I helped!

They all sit at the table.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

Reid exits the hallway into the living room. Monica sits on the couch.

REID  
Ok, little bit's finally asleep.

MONICA  
I have school papers to grade. I really should--

Reid steps closer. Puts his hand up.

REID  
No, please--please stay.

Monica stays seated. Crosses her arms.

REID (CONT'D)  
I'm not very good at apologies--

MONICA  
That's how you're gonna start this?

REID  
No, I'm sorry. I-I am.

MONICA  
Apologies are easy. Explanations are hard.

Reid SIGHS as he sits next to her.

REID  
I wore my wedding ring for six months after she left.  
(MORE)

REID (CONT'D)

Abby was only a year old. There's a part of me that...won't let go. Not yet.

Monica's head drops a bit.

REID (CONT'D)

But, I want to try. I know that's a lot to ask of you.

Monica sits silent. Looks at the floor.

REID (CONT'D)

You're not just Abby's babysitter that I occasionally--You mean a lot to me. Give me a chance. Patience. I understand if you say no.

Monica nods. She takes his hand. Slight hesitation, but Reid leans and kisses her. She kisses back. Gives him a smile.

Reid turns the TV on. Flips channels on the remote. He stops. Leans forward. Focuses on the TV.

ON TV SCREEN

a news channel carrying Pastor Lane's sermon. On stage, he stands behind the pulpit. The caption at the bottom reads:

"Pastor Lane - Heaven's Lane Ministries, Houston TX"

PASTOR LANE

First, I want to address those I've sinned against. My--my wife. What a precious soul God has given me. The Lord has never given a man a better help-mate and companion as her.

TV camera briefly shows his WIFE, who is seated in the congregation. No tears. Stone-faced.

PASTOR LANE (CONT'D)

I'm blessed beyond comprehension with two beautiful children. To them, I am sorry.

(beat)

To the...millions and millions of people around the globe. Everyone who hears me preach, whether in this auditorium, on the radio, reading my books or watching on TV or on the internet, I'm sorry.

TV camera briefly shows the congregation. SOME are crying. Some dabbing their eyes with handkerchiefs.

PASTOR LANE (CONT'D)

But...most of all, to my Redeemer,  
my Savior, my God,

(looks up)

I'm sorry. I've sinned against you.  
I pray that your blood covers me.  
Wash away all the sin from my life.

The news program cuts away to an ANCHOR at a studio.

ANCHOR

That is...Pastor Lane apologizing  
to his congregation. He's plead  
guilty to embezzlement of the  
church's funds. And, was also  
recently caught with prostitutes.  
He'll serve seven years in prison--

ON SCENE

Reid changes the channel. Shakes his head. Smirks a bit.

MONICA

What a prick.

REID

"Grande Prick."

She looks confused, but LAUGHS. Reid looks at her. CHUCKLES.

INT. PSYCHIATRIST'S OFFICE - AUSTIN MEDICAL COMPLEX - DAY

Reid sits on the couch. Watching the goldfish. Dr. Perlman approaches. Sits in her chair.

DR. PERLMAN

How has your week been, Reid?

REID

Uh, it's...it's been a good week.

DR. PERLMAN

Are you ready to discuss your  
brother's execution?

Reid takes a DEEP BREATH.

REID

It's been tough to decide, but I'm  
gonna go. It's--It's time.

(MORE)

REID (CONT'D)

Time for me to take responsibility  
for my family, my actions,  
relationships--

DR. PERLMAN

Wow, that's wonderful, Reid. How do  
you feel about it?

REID

Uh, relieved I guess--

DR. PERLMAN

No, no...Going to the execution.  
How do you feel about that?

REID

Oh...I--uh--nervous.

(nods)

Nervous is the best word.

DR. PERLMAN

Do you still feel the same about  
him? Being a monster?

Reid squints. Thinking. Beat.

REID

I have to separate that part of  
him. Away from my brother. At least  
when I'm there. Because...watching  
a monster be slain would bring some  
joy to me. I genuinely empathize  
with those families--victims.

DR. PERLMAN

Do you think your family has been a  
victim in all this? You. Your  
parents--

REID

No.

DR. PERLMAN

You don't think your family was  
affected at all?

REID

Affected, yes. Victims, no.

DR. PERLMAN

Really? I would absolutely say that  
your family was victimized by your  
brother's actions. I don't think  
there's any question about that.



Reid looks her in the eyes. Beat.

REID

Well...you don't know our history.  
And...you don't know our parents.

ON FISHBOWL

The goldfish swim around the bowl.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

EXT./INT. FARM ROAD - SMALL TOWN, EAST TEXAS - AFTERNOON

TALL WOODEN TELEPHONE POLES

hover over the flat land like crosses lined up in a row. Wooden fences and green pastures border either side of the beaten up two-lane road as Reid drives.

His left arm rests on the open window as Monica sits passenger side and Abby sleeps in the backseat. Beat.

He slows down. Turns off the road onto a ranch driveway through a gate adorned with a huge "R" on it's front.

EXT./INT. RAMSEY RANCH

He drives toward the house. Horses graze behind the fence.

ON HORSES

In a straw cowboy hat, MIRIAM, his mother, brushes one of the horses. She smiles. Waves at the car. Reid waves back.

HAROLD SR., his father, walks around the horses. Glances at the car from under his brown Stetson. Doesn't wave.

ON SCENE

REID

He hasn't changed a goddamn bit.

MONICA

Oh, Reid. Try to get along for this trip. Set a good example for Abby.

Reid gives her an eye as his lips press together.

INT. RANCH HOUSE - RAMSEY RANCH - MINUTES LATER

Reid holds the front door open. Monica, carrying a day bag, leads Abby through the front door holding her hand.

A rugged, but maternal cowgirl, Miriam, in her rancher shirt and Wranglers, enters from the kitchen with her long salt and pepper ponytail swinging as she strides.

MIRIAM

Ohhhh...it's so good to see ya'll.

Miriam leans down. Hugs Abby. Stands and hugs Reid.

REID

Hey, Mom.

She turns to Monica. Touches her arm.

MIRIAM

And, this must be--

REID

Mom, this is Monica--

MIRIAM

Monica, that's right...It's a pleasure to meet you and have you here with us.

She gives Monica a polite, guest hug.

MONICA

Thank you for having me. It's so nice to meet you as well.

REID

Mom, where's Dad?

Miriam, mouth open, looks at Abby.

MIRIAM

He'll be just a few minutes. Wanted to finish up with the horses.

REID

Sure...It's been years since he's seen his granddaughter and son. What's a few more minutes?

Her mouth goes flat as she shakes her head at Reid...

MIRIAM

Don't start. Ya'll just got here...  
I want to spend some time with my  
beautiful grand-baby.

ABBY

I'm not a baby.

MIRIAM

Well, you're my baby...Why don't we  
start a batch of cookies.

Abby smiles. Miriam grabs her hand. Leads her to the kitchen.

Reid glances at Monica. She gives him a half smile. Steps  
close to him. Wipes the side of his mouth with her thumb.

MONICA

This visit's already gonna be a  
tough one. Maybe try to focus on  
that...not old wounds. Otherwise,  
you'll be even more miserable.

Reid grabs her shoulders. Nods. Hugs her. The front door  
behind them opens. MARTY, the Ramsey's ranch hand, walks in  
smiling ear to ear.

MARTY

Bout' time you brought your scrawny  
ass back here.

Reid spins around. Smiles at the gruff cowboy. Marty, with  
his sweaty cowboy hat cocked back, a half-opened plaid shirt,  
and dusty jeans, gives him a big manly hug. Embraced by  
Marty, Reid sniffs...

REID

You haven't changed a bit. Still  
smell like peppermints, tobacco,  
and horse shit.

Marty LAUGHS and slaps him on the back a couple times.

MARTY

Well, it smells better'n whatever  
bottled up faggot'y shit you're  
wearin'.

Marty looks over at Monica.

MARTY (CONT'D)

Whose this purty lady you obviously  
brainwashed?

Marty holds out his hand to Monica.

REID  
Marty this is Monica.

Monica shakes his hand. Reaches for a hug. Marty hugs her.

REID (CONT'D)  
This son-of-a-bitch has known me  
since I was in diapers--

MARTY  
Shit, boy, I known you longer'n  
that. I known you when you was just  
a six-pack and a stagger.

Marty's smile widens. Monica grins. Miriam enters with Abby.

MARTY (CONT'D)  
Oh my Lord, she looks just like her  
Mee-maw. Cuuuute as a button.

Marty gives Abby a big crooked tooth grin. Abby shyly smiles.  
Walks over to her dad. Grabs his hand. Hides behind his leg.

SLAM. The door back in the kitchen closes. Harold, Reid's  
dad, enters the kitchen through the back door. Loudly says...

HAROLD (O.S.)  
Mira, you start a pot of coffee?

Miriam retreats to the kitchen. Marty leans down to Abby.

MARTY  
Abby, how'd ya like to go see a  
baby horse?

Abby grins wide and nods. Marty looks up at Monica.

MARTY (CONT'D)  
I bet Monica, you and me can go  
take a gander at that new foal  
while your Mee-maw and Daddy catch  
up for a spell. How'd ya like that?

Abby nods again. Reid smiles.

INT. KITCHEN - RAMSEY RANCH HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Reid walks into the kitchen. Harold's back faces him. Miriam  
finishes pouring Harold's cup of coffee and slides it over to  
him. He sips it.

With a leathery tan neck, messed up silver hair, and pale bald spot, he turns. Stands in front of Reid testing his coffee. Sits at the kitchen table. Greets Reid with a dry...

HAROLD

Reid.

Reid walks to the table. Sits in a chair.

REID

Nice to see you too, Dad.

Miriam turns and glances at both of them.

MIRIAM

We're glad you're here, Reid. Want some coffee?

REID

Uh, sure. Just a tad of cream and a half teaspoon of sugar.

Harold suppresses one LAUGH then he SIPS his black coffee. He grabs up the newspaper. SPREADS it open. Reid, looking at the front page of the paper, spots his brother's picture on it. It's an article about the execution.

Miriam sets the cup of coffee in front of Reid. Reid stands up. Walks over to his dad. RIPS the first page of the paper. Wads it up. Tosses it in the trash.

Harold, confused look, stares at Reid through his bifocals. SIGHS. Realizes why he did it. Continues reading the paper...

HAROLD

Saw that earlier. Person who wrote it was an idiot.

Miriam grabs a pill bottle from the cabinet and glass of water. Takes a valium. Drinks the water. Sits at the table.

Harold keeps reading. Miriam sits silent. Looks back and forth at each of them. Reid SIPS. Beat.

Harold FLIPS pages in the paper. Reid SIPS more coffee.

MIRIAM

How's Abby doing in school?

Reid SLAMS his coffee cup down on the table. Coffee spills out. Miriam's eyes get big. Harold casually looks over the top of the paper.

REID

Either of you going to Polunsky to see him?

Reid looks at each of them. Both Harold and Miriam break eye contact with him. Sit silent.

REID (CONT'D)

They're shooting him up with that shit in a few days. So, the time to get your fucking heads out of your fucking asses is now.

Miriam, sad eyes, leans over. Puts her hand on Reid's. Beat.

MIRIAM

Sweetie...do you need me to refill your coffee?

HAROLD

(still reading)

Son, no excuse for that kind of language.

Reid slides his hand out from under hers. Looks toward his dad. Grits his teeth and shakes his head. Under his breath...

REID

No excuse? Got to be fucking kidding.

Miriam gets up. Grabs a cloth. Starts wiping up the coffee.

HAROLD

(to Miriam)

They got feed on sale at Diller's. Let's go by tomorrow after church.

Reid stands. Almost in shock, slowly walks out the back door.

EXT. BARN - RAMSEY RANCH - MINUTES LATER

With the ranch house behind him, Reid approaches the barn. Marty, Monica, and Abby are at the fence watching the horses graze on a bale of hay and drink from a water trough.

Reid slows his walk. He stops...

EXT. BARN - RAMSEY RANCH - FLASHBACK

Same barn, but dark of night and Reid's a boy (12). He approaches the barn. Hears YELLING. Marty and his dad argue.

They stand by a mare that's given birth. The foal lies on the ground. Reid leans around the corner of the wall to watch.

MARTY

Might be fine. I'll help it--

HAROLD

No, them legs are crooked as sin.  
No way that horse'll ever walk  
right.

Harold lifts his Winchester rifle. Marty pushes it down.

MARTY

Harold, please! Let me--

Harold pushes him out of the way.

HAROLD

Marty, get your fucking ass out of  
my way. This is my ranch. My horse.

Reid leans back around to the back. Stops watching.

BOOM! The rifle fires. Startled by the sound, the mother horse NEIGHS.

MARTY

You stubborn son-of-a-bitch.

Marty storms out of the barn toward the house. He passes Reid, but doesn't see him. Reid peeks around the corner. Rifle on his shoulder, his dad drags the foal away by a leg.

END FLASHBACK

EXT. BARN - RAMSEY RANCH - CURRENT

Reid stands next to Abby and Monica as Marty brings the foal over to the fence. Abby looks up at Reid with a huge grin. He smiles as she pets it through the fence. He leans on the fence. Smiles at Monica and Marty.

INT. KITCHEN - RAMSEY RANCH HOUSE - DAWN

Miriam stands at the stove scrambling eggs while Monica and Abby sit at the breakfast table. Reid enters the kitchen.

MIRIAM

(to Reid)

How do you want your eggs? Monica  
and Abby are having--

REID  
Scrambled's fine.

MIRIAM  
Biscuits and gravy's on the table.

Reid sits next to Abby. She looks up at Reid and grins.

ABBY  
Good morning, Daddy. Can we go see  
the baby pony?

REID  
Uh...sure, maybe later after  
breakfast--

MIRIAM  
Are you three going to church with  
us this morning?

Reid glares up at his mother.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)  
We'd really like it if--

REID  
Monica and Abby can go with you.

MIRIAM  
Well, why don't you come--

REID  
I have things to do before I go see  
Brandon tomorrow.

Miriam, holding the skillet, steps over to the table. She  
scoops eggs onto each of their plates.

MIRIAM  
Well, you'd be welcome if you  
change your mind.

Miriam takes the skillet to the stove. Drinks her coffee.

INT. CHURCH SERVICE - PINE CREEK BAPTIST CHURCH - MORNING

In a small country church, a CONGREGATION of about a hundred  
SING the hymn "Leaning on the Everlasting Arms". Beat.

The HYMN CONTINUES over...



INT. LIVING ROOM - RAMSEY RANCH HOUSE - SAME TIME

Reid walks through the living room. The only light comes from the sun through the windows. He stops at an oak gun cabinet. Eight rifles (shotguns and rifles) stand behind a glass door.

INTERCUT BETWEEN REID AND THE CHURCH SERVICE

The church CHOIR continues...

CHOIR

"...leaning, leaning, leaning on  
the everlasting arms..."

Reid squats. At the bottom, he easily slides open a drawer that contains two HANDGUNS and multiple boxes of bullets and shotgun shells. He looks them over. Shuts it.

CHOIR (CONT'D)

"...safe and secure from all  
alarm...leaning..."

He feels around atop the gun cabinet. Finds the key. Locks both doors which had been left unlocked.

When the song concludes, PASTOR SIMMONS (50s) approaches the church pulpit to begins his sermon.

PASTOR SIMMONS

Our dear Laura Dutton lost her battle with cancer last week. "To be absent from the body, is to be present with the Lord." Please, keep her family in your thoughts and prayers this week.

Miriam, Monica, Abby, and Harold sit on a pew and listen.

PASTOR SIMMONS (CONT'D)

We...also need to keep our dear friends, the Ramsey's, in our prayers as well. They have a difficult day to endure this week.

Reid approaches the staircase to his room. Stops. Looks up.

At the church, pastor looks at the Ramsey's. Others in the congregation glance at them. Visibly uncomfortable, Harold, cowboy hat in his lap, grits his teeth. Turns blood red.

Miriam mouths "Thank You". Harold fumes. Stares at the floor.

INT. STAIRCASE - RAMSEY RANCH HOUSE - FLASHBACK

Bedtime, but can't sleep. 12 year old Reid makes his way down the staircase. He hears his mother and father talking in the living room. He stops midway. Out of their view. Listens.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Harold sits in a lazy boy reading the paper while Miriam sits on the couch reading a book.

HAROLD

That boy ain't right is all I'm saying.

MIRIAM

Rollie, stop. Let me finish--

HAROLD

When we conceived him, had we just painted the bedroom or something?

Miriam closes her book. Frowns at Harold.

MIRIAM

You listen to me. God loves all his children the same--

HAROLD

(flippantly)  
Good to know somebody does.

Miriam quickly stands, throws her book on the couch, and storms up the steps. Reid sees her coming, stands and starts to go back to his room.

INT. STAIRCASE

Miriam, at the bottom of the staircase, spots Reid.

MIRIAM

You should be in bed.

Harold walks over to the steps. Miriam glares at Harold with a locked jaw. He looks up the staircase at a frozen Reid, who stares down at them. He realizes that Reid was listening.

Harold SIGHS. Pats Miriam on the back. Strides up the steps.

INT. REID AND BRANDON'S BEDROOM

With his hand on his back, Harold directs Reid toward his bed. Harold rubs Reid's head, messes up his hair.

HAROLD  
Night, son.

Harold turns to the door. Stops. Steps to the other twin bed in the corner. Brandon is asleep on it. He lightly rubs Brandon's head. Walks to the door. Turns one last time.

HAROLD (CONT'D)  
All right. Good night.

Harold exits, closing the door behind him.

END FLASHBACK

EXT. REAR ENTRANCE - PINE CREEK BAPTIST CHURCH - LATER

As the church MEMBERS exit the sanctuary, Pastor Simmons stands outside the rear entrance greeting them. Miriam, Abby, and Monica approach as they exit. He shakes Monica's hand.

PASTOR SIMMONS  
Thank you for coming. It's a  
pleasure to meet you. God bless.

He squats down to Abby. Shakes her hand.

PASTOR SIMMONS (CONT'D)  
And, it's wonderful to meet you.  
Please come back and see us.

As he stands, Miriam approaches. He takes Miriam's hand. Putting on his cowboy hat, Harold hovers behind.

PASTOR SIMMONS (CONT'D)  
Miriam, Harold, you're in my  
prayers this week.

Harold glares at the pastor. Miriam shakes the pastor's hand.

MIRIAM  
Thank you, Pastor.

Harold SCOFFS as he storms out the exit. Avoids the pastor.

PASTOR SIMMONS  
God bless you and your family.

HAROLD  
Let's go, Mira. I have work to do  
around the ranch.

Harold heads for the parking lot. Miriam nods to the pastor then, with Monica and Abby, follows Harold.

INT. KITCHEN - RAMSEY RANCH - NIGHT

From the dark living room, Reid enters the kitchen. He's in a t-shirt and pajama pants. Miriam reads her old family Bible at the table by the light of the open fridge.

REID

Saw the light on. Getting late--

MIRIAM

I had a nap earlier--Kept me from sleeping. Plus, your Dad's snoring has gotten worse over the years. I'd probably sleep better in the barn with those old snortin' hogs.

Miriam CHUCKLES. Reid does as well.

REID

That's an interesting way to read.

MIRIAM

For some reason, I-I find this light peaceful...Plus if I get hungry, I can just reach in...

She grins at her joke. He smiles. Sits down.

REID

What are you reading?

MIRIAM

Oh, I'm just flippin' through.

They sit silent. She flips pages. Closes the family Bible. There's a large embossed cross on the leather cover. Beat.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)

Wanna slice of yellow cake?--

REID

I want you to go, Mom.

She stares at the Bible. Can't look up at him.

REID (CONT'D)

You need to be there--

MIRIAM

I, I can't. I-I just can't.

Miriam's eyes well up. She stands.

REID

I don't understand you--I've never understood you. He's your son.

Miriam looks at Reid. Sits back down.

REID (CONT'D)

You know, with Dad...I kind of understand it--He doesn't get a pass, but I see why--

MIRIAM

He grew up in a terrible--

REID

I know, I know. Grandpa beat him. Drank. Burned cigarettes on him. That's why he's fucked up.

MIRIAM

Reid.

REID

I'm tired of the excuses, Mom.

MIRIAM

It's not an excuse, it's a reason.

REID

But, why won't you? How many times have you seen Brandon since he's been at Polunsky?

MIRIAM

I don't know. Couple times.

REID

When?

Miriam SIGHS.

REID (CONT'D)

A while?...Years?

Her mouth flattens as she slowly nods.

REID (CONT'D)

Even before--When we were kids, you never treated him like me.

MIRIAM

I was good to both of you--

REID

Treating someone good and showing them love are two separate things.

MIRIAM

I do love you boys. Both of you.

REID

You never showed it to him--

MIRIAM

I did. That's not fair--

REID

He didn't know it. He grew up with a cold-hearted bastard for a father, who thought he was broken-- a mistake--and with a mother who never corrected that thought.

MIRIAM

He wasn't a mistake--He...

REID

A burden?

MIRIAM

No--Not a burden...It was hard. It wasn't like when I had you. We-we didn't have that bond like you and me. I don't know if it--maybe it was my fault it never happened...

Miriam closes her mouth tight. Shakes her head.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)

All of those little children at that playground...

(beat)

How could I have created such a...such a monster?

Reid leans back.

REID

He wasn't--I don't know. He did a monstrous act. I don't believe my brother, your son is a monster...I think we all had a part in his evolution.

Miriam gets up and walks to the door. Turns back to Reid.

MIRIAM

If you're right, that we created  
that, then we are all monsters.

Miriam exits. Reid watches her leave. Stares at the floor.

EXT. POLUNSKY UNIT - WEST LIVINGSTON, TX - DAY

Rows and rows of fencing with barb wire at the top surround Polunsky Unit.

**TITLE OVER: Texas Death Row - Allan B. Polunsky Unit - West Livingston, TX**

INT. WAITING ROOM - POLUNSKY UNIT - DAY

Reid, arms outstretched, is frisked by the guards.

**TITLE OVER: 48 Hours Before Execution**

After, he enters the waiting area. A row of windows with chairs line up as a barrier between the real world and hell. Telephones connect to each side for communication with the damned.

Reid sits in front of plexiglass waiting for his brother. Nerves show on his face and in his movements as he waits.

Brandon (now mid-30s) emerges in a white correctional outfit. Brandon's face lights up when he sees Reid. Almost childlike. A GUARD closes the door behind him. Locking Brandon into the booth.

They speak at the same time. Interrupting each other.

	REID		BRANDON
How--		You--	

They both kinda LAUGH.

REID (CONT'D)  
You go first.

BRANDON  
No...is ok.

Reid smiles at him. His eyes tear up. Lips barely quiver.

REID  
I'm sorry, Brandon.

Brandon, not fully understanding, watches.

REID (CONT'D)

I-I...

BRANDON

Do you...have a, a big house?

Reid smiles at the notion.

REID

No, I-I live in an apartment.  
Probably not a whole lot bigger  
than your...well...

Reid CHUCKLES. Brandon doesn't fully get the joke. He has developed a light stutter that affects some hard consonants.

BRANDON

Do--you have kids.

REID

Yeah, little girl. Abby. Named  
after grandmother, Abigail.

BRANDON

I bet--she's sweet.

Brandon has an innocent smile for a monster.

REID

She...she is, but she--

BRANDON

(stutters it)  
Do--you love her?

Reid's eyes well up again. He leans forward. A couple tears roll down. Not for Abby, but that he would have to ask that.

REID

With all my heart.

Reid pulls out a picture. Puts it up to the glass. Brandon smiles again. Wider this time.

BRANDON

Well, I-I love her too.

Reid, red eyes, nods.

REID

I'm sure you do...How, how are you  
doing?



BRANDON

We play checkers. Somebody told me how to play. I-I remember playing it with you when we was little.

REID

I remember that...Eating ok?

Brandon's eyes squint as he thinks.

BRANDON

I-I buy stuff at the...commissary. Oatmeal creme pies. Food they give us ain't that good. Cold sometimes.

REID

I'll try to help get you some pies before I leave.

Silence. Beat.

REID (CONT'D)

Why'd you do it?

Brandon stares at Reid, but he understands the question. His eyes move with his thoughts.

BRANDON

I-I don't know. I really don't remember very much. I-I just remember feeling mad. But, I-I wish I didn't--hadn't done it.

(crying)

I-I'm so sorry.

In shame, Brandon looks down. Not at Reid. Silence. Beat.

REID

I-I wasn't there for you. Before. I'm sorry for that. I let you down.

BRANDON

You--didn't. I-I know you been busy. I'm really, really happy to see you...Where's Momma?

REID

Uh, she--she--

BRANDON

It's ok. I know she's busy too. I'm just super happy you came.

REID

I am too, Brandon. It's good to see you. I miss you a lot. I miss... being your brother--

BRANDON

Well, you're still my brother.

REID

I do love you, Brandon--

BRANDON

I-I love you too.

REID

But...what you did--you hurt a lot of people.

Brandon's head drops again.

BRANDON

I-I wish I could go back and help them. And, stop what I did.

REID

I'm sure you do, Brandon...Are you scared?

Brandon licks his lips. Takes a deep breath.

BRANDON

Do--do you think I'll go to heaven?

Reid freezes. Thinks. Beat.

REID

Brandon...I believe people who murder little children go to hell. Burn in hell...But...if you truly are sorry for your actions. Truly sorry. You've asked God to forgive you. I-I think you'll be debt free once you give up your life.

Brandon nods.

BRANDON

I-I truly am. I am.

REID

As for heaven...nobody deserves it. Nobody earns it. So, I don't know. I hope you'll be there. It'd be a better place with you in it.

BRANDON  
I am sc-sc-scared.

REID  
We all are.

Brandon looks above Reid's head. His face tightens up. Mouth quivering, he starts sobbing. Puts his hand on the glass.

Reid turns around. Behind him, Miriam stands. Red face. Crying tears that only stream down a mother's cheeks.

Brandon changes eye contact back to Reid. Red faced and tears falling, he stutters to Reid....

BRANDON  
Thank you.

Reid, lips pressed, nods. Stands up. Takes his mother's arm. Guides her into the seat. She sits. Rubs Reids arm. Lets go.

As Miriam and Brandon CRY, Reid watches briefly. Walks away.

EXT. INSIDE POLUNSKY GROUNDS - POLUNSKY UNIT - EVENING

Brandon, handcuffs, and chains on his arms and legs, shuffles toward a white van with a GUARD walking along side. Three more GUARDS stand by the van with the side door open wide.

**TITLE OVER: 6:00pm - 24 Hours Until Execution**

Brandon steps up on a milk crate. He's guided into the van. A guard sits beside him. LOCKS his restraints to the interior bars. Another guard sits behind. They SLIDE the door shut.

EXT. WALLS UNIT - HUNTSVILLE, TX - LATER

Beneath forbidding clouds, Walls Unit stands like an old red brick castle. The van is silent. Brandon peers out the window as they approach. Taking in the outdoors for the last time.

**TITLE OVER: Location of Death House - Huntsville Unit - Huntsville, TX**

Moments later, Brandon shuffles from the van toward the red bricked, infamous home of the Texas execution chamber.

**TITLE OVER: 7:00pm - 23 Hours Until Execution**

EXT. DRIVEWAY - RAMSEY RANCH - MORNING

The sun peeks over the horizon as Miriam and Reid walk from the house toward Reid's SUV.

Reid helps Miriam into the front seat, then gets in the driver seat. Closes the door.

**TITLE OVER: 7:50am - Almost 10 Hours Until Execution**

EXT. WALLS UNIT - HUNTSVILLE, TX - DAY

Outside the gates of the prison, NEWS MEDIA with cameras and ONLOOKERS with handmade posters stand waiting. Looking down on them, ARMED GUARDS patrol the parapets.

EXT. INSIDE GROUNDS - HUNTSVILLE UNIT - DAY

Inside the grounds, the Death House sits in the corner of the courtyard, not much bigger than a garden shed. Reid wanders around the grounds before going in.

**TITLE OVER: 5:10pm - 50 Minutes Until Execution**

He takes a deep breath when he sees Rev. Barnes approaching. Looks the other way.

REV. BARNES

They, uh, didn't want me to come out here ta see you. Guess they trying to keep the families separated...How you doing?

Rev. Barnes takes out a cigarettes. He cups the flame as he lights it. Takes a long first drag. Reid glances at him.

REID

You should be happy.

REV. BARNES

It's an important day, Reid. But, not a good day.

REID

Well, he'll be gone soon...Fuck, I know he deserves it. But, he's still my brother...When we were kids, we shared a bedroom. And... when strong storms rolled through, I was afraid...He'd climb in bed with me. Put his arm around me even though he was scared too.

REV. BARNES

You have to understand me, Reid--

REID

But, I do. You don't--if anyone  
took my Abby away--

(shakes head)

Y-you don't have to explain.

Rev. Barnes takes a last drag as he scans the courtyard.

REV. BARNES

I-I know motherfuckers say it won't  
bring em' back. Talking like they  
know how it fucking feels...Hell,  
after all these years, I'm trying  
to bring myself back.

He drops the cigarette. Steps on it.

REV. BARNES (CONT'D)

I dealt with my bride and my baby  
being gone. I'll never be over  
that, but right now, I need to know  
that boy, your brother, who took my  
life away has had his taken too.  
That'll help me grab the knob of  
that door I need to slam  
shut...It's not a good day, but it  
is a necessary one.

Reid nods. Rev. Barnes pats Reid on the shoulder.

REV. BARNES (CONT'D)

I'll leave you with your thoughts.  
They have us in a different room.  
So...just wanted to see you before.

Reid nods. As OTHERS begin to walk by toward the Death House,  
Rev. Barnes turns. Joins them.

EXT. DEATH HOUSE - HUNTSVILLE UNIT - MINUTES LATER

The waiting room is a walk-in closet-sized room with one  
large shaded window. No chairs. Reid, Miriam, and a few other  
WITNESSES stand tightly in rows waiting for it to begin.  
Miriam SOBS. Reid puts his arm around her. Beat.

**TITLE OVER: 5:58pm - 2 Minutes Until Execution Begins**

The shade opens. The turquoise walled execution chamber looks  
about the size of a doctor's examination room. Brandon lies  
on the gurney.

Arms outstretched with IV's connected to his wrists. Strapped down with leather straps, he lies still. Eyes darting about.

The WARDEN in a suit and tie stands against the wall close to Brandon's head. The PRISON CHAPLAIN, in a black suit with a gold cross pinned to his lapel, stands on the other side of Brandon by his feet holding a tabbed Bible.

On the back wall is a mirrored window to a small room where the injection is being performed. The IV tubes run from his wrists and up under that room's door.

Miriam CRIES harder as Brandon looks into their window.

WARDEN  
(thick southern accent)  
Time for your last words, son.

Brandon turns his head toward the victim's window. Reid sees the reflection of the victim's FAMILIES in the back mirrored window. Rev. Barnes stands alone. OTHERS stand stone faced.

BRANDON  
I-I'm sorry. I-I...am.

Brandon turns his head. Looks toward his family.

BRANDON (CONT'D)  
I-I love my family. M-m-momma.  
Reid.

Miriam mouths "I love you". The warden nods to the mirrored window. After a few seconds, liquid flows through the tubes. Brandon's body starts moving. Eyes closed, he stutters...

BRANDON (CONT'D)  
B-b-bright.

He lightly GRUNTS as his body quivers for a few seconds. Then, it stops. Frozen. Multiple beats.

ON CLOCK

A wall clock reads 6:17pm.

ON SCENE

Reid, arms around his mother, closes his eyes. Beat.

ON CLOCK

The clock now reads 6:23pm.

ON SCENE

A medical STAFF MEMBER slowly enters from the injection room. Listens to Brandon's heart with a stethoscope. Nods to the warden. The warden looks up at the clock on the wall.

WARDEN

Time of death...6:24pm.

CLICK! A GUARD unlocks and then OPENS the door behind Reid. Reid steps to the glass. Stares at his brother one last time.

Brandon lies on the gurney. Arms outstretched to his side like a cross. Strapped down. Connected at the wrist to the IVs. His closed eyes mimic the colorless eyes of crucifix he once gazed upon.

Last to leave, Reid lowers his head. Exits the room.

INT. KITCHEN - RAMSEY RANCH - DAY

The dining room table is set. Fried chicken, mashed potatoes, green beans, mac n' cheese, and biscuits sit in the middle of the table. Monica, Reid, Abby, Marty, and Harold wait for Miriam to join them.

Miriam brings in a pitcher of iced tea. Sets it on the table. Then sits with the rest of the family. They all hold hands for a prayer.

HAROLD

Lord, thank you for this food you have blessed upon us. Thank you for the hands that prepared it. In your precious name. Amen.

Reid glares at his father. Shakes his head in disbelief. Harold starts dipping mac n' cheese on his plate.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

Mira, pass me the chicken.

REID

You're a fu---

Reid bites his lip as he looks at Abby whose gleefully gnawing on a drumstick. Monica puts her hand on Reid's arm.

MIRIAM

Reid, come with me.

Miriam gets up and walks into the kitchen. Reid follows.

INT. KITCHEN - RAMSEY RANCH HOUSE

Miriam picks up her family Bible. Opens it. Slides out some photos that were inside it. Hands them to Reid.

ON PHOTOS

Reid flips through the photos that are of him and his brother when they were little. Riding horses. Playing outside.

ON SCENE

MIRIAM (CONT'D)  
Blame me. It's my fault.

REID  
Mom--

MIRIAM  
Reid, blame me.

Reid stands looking through the pictures.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)  
I picked the wrong man. That was my first mistake. I let him control how I treated you boys. That was my second...And, the worst.

REID  
That's no excuse--

MIRIAM  
Not an excuse...a reason. I loved you boys so much. I-I--

REID  
You loved us? Then--

MIRIAM  
Fiercely...I just didn't know how to show it. I'm gonna try to do better now.

REID  
Little late--

Miriam steps closer to Reid.

MIRIAM  
I'm leaving your father. I-I can't be who I want to be if I stay.

Reid looks into her eyes. She puts her hand on his cheek.



REID  
I'll help you--

MIRIAM  
I know you will. I know the kind of  
father you are. I see how you look  
at your daughter. I wish I'd looked  
at Brandon like that more often.

Reid's head drops. He puts his arms around her.

INT. KITCHEN - RAMSEY RANCH HOUSE - LATER

Reid steps into the kitchen as his dad sits at the table  
alone, drinking coffee and reading the paper.

REID  
Dad, we're taking off. Uh, thanks  
for...having us?

Harold nods. Keeps reading the paper. Reid turns to leave.

HAROLD  
Contempt. All you got for me ain't  
it?

Reid spins around. Fire in his eyes. Flames ready to spew.  
Harold sees it in Reid's eyes. Squints as he stares.

HAROLD (CONT'D)  
There it is.

Reid stops himself from saying something. SIGHS.

HAROLD (CONT'D)  
You ever...consider the guilt? The--  
the guilt that I have?--

Reid points as he bursts...

REID  
Fuck you and fuck your guilt.

Harold looks at his paper. Turns a page of it. Smiles.

HAROLD  
Fuck me, huh? Fuck the man who put  
a roof over both of your heads -  
food in your gullets--

REID

You want a fucking medal for feeding your kids. Providing us a home? That'd be an awfully common fucking medal. Want another for not burnin' us with cigarettes?

HAROLD

Jesus, what in the hell do you want from me? I can't change the past.

Harold drops the paper. Snaps his fingers a few times. Throws his arms up.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

Nothing! Didn't work. All them kids are still fucking dead.

(points at Reid)

And, your monster of a brother fucking did it.

INT. LIVING ROOM DOOR

Miriam walks through the front door.

REID (O.S.)

Sure, just keep sticking your head in the mud, Dad.

She stands. Listens.

INT. KITCHEN

HAROLD

Get the hell out of my house.

Reid turns to leave. Stops. Faces him again.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Miriam, crying, leaves them to fight. Slowly exits the house.

INT. KITCHEN

REID

You know, father's don't have to love their kids. At the very least, they have to make them feel like they do--

HAROLD

That in the Bible somewhere?

(points)

(MORE)

HAROLD (CONT'D)

There's your Momma's over there.  
Show me.

Reid stares. Slowly shakes his head. Like chewing an old piece of leather. Nothing. Getting no where. Calmly says...

REID

I'll be back soon. One more time.  
To help Mom get her shit out--

HAROLD

She ain't goin' nowhere--

REID

She is. You saw it in her eyes. I  
know I did.

Harold SCOFFS. Picks the paper back up. OPENS it. SHAKES it.

REID (CONT'D)

Dad...even after everything you've  
done, I still love you. Fucking  
crazy, but I do...That's the last  
time you'll ever hear me say it.

Reid starts to exit. Stops. Turns around one more time.

REID (CONT'D)

Congratulations...You have two dead  
sons.

Reid leaves. Harold stares at the doorway. Grits his teeth.  
SHAKES the paper. Then, continues reading.

INT. REID'S CONDO - DOWNTOWN AUSTIN HIGHRISE - NIGHT

The front door opens. Monica steps into the dark apartment.  
Reid is right behind her. Abby is asleep on his shoulder.

Reid takes Abby to her bedroom. Monica turns on some lights.

INT. ABBY'S BEDROOM

Reid takes Abby into her dark bedroom. Softly lays her on the  
bed. Takes off her shoes. Pulls the covers over her. Brushes  
her hair behind her ear with his fingers. Kisses her head.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Reid walks into the living room. Monica watches TV. He plops  
down on the couch. She slides over by him. Leans on his  
shoulder.

REID  
Thanks, uh, for...everything.

She kisses him on the cheek.

REID (CONT'D)  
I mean it. You...

MONICA  
I love you, Reid.

Reid smiles. Doesn't say it back.

REID  
Even after seeing how fucked up my  
family is?

MONICA  
You haven't met mine.

Monica smirks. Grabs his hand.

REID  
Monica, I, I love--

MONICA  
Stop...I didn't say that for  
reciprocation.

REID  
But, I do...fiercely.  
(beat)  
Took me some time to realize it.

He brushes her hair back. Leans over. Kisses her. They sit  
back on the couch. She leans her head on his shoulder.

EXT. RIVER OF LIFE CHURCH - PINE CREEK, TX - MORNING

On this Sunday morning, Reid, Abby, and Monica walk up to the  
church entrance of River of Life. CHURCH MEMBERS file in  
before the service begins.

Rev. Barnes, clean shaven, in the same suit he wore on the  
day he lost his family, approaches.

REID  
Mornin'. Good to see you.

Rev. Barnes nods. Shakes Reid's hand. Stares up.

ON CROSS ATOP STEEPLE

REV. BARNES (O.S.)  
I don't know why I'm here.

ON SCENE

REID  
(looking up)  
It's not a commitment--

REV. BARNES  
Monica. I've heard a lot about you.

He shakes her hand.

MONICA  
Was it all sunshine and rainbows?

REV. BARNES  
Of course. He's a lucky man. He  
must have you brainwashed.

MONICA  
You know? I keep hearing that.

Monica smiles. Rev. Barnes squats down in front of Abby.

REV. BARNES  
You must be Abby--

Abby nods.

REV. BARNES (CONT'D)  
Your Daddy's a good man. You don't  
understand what he does for you now  
but...maybe one day you will.

As Abby holds her daddy's hand, Rev. Barnes takes her other  
hand. Kisses it. Pats it with his other hand. Stands up.

REV. BARNES (CONT'D)  
Go on in. I have a stop to make.

REID  
We'll save you a seat.

Rev. Barnes walks toward the playground. Monica and Abby  
enter the church, but Reid freezes as he looks over at the  
playground. He spots the bright RED SWING SET. Stares.

EXT. PLAYGROUND - MIDDLE SCHOOL - FLASHBACK

Reid, about 15, swings on a bright RED SWING SET at his school's playground. AMANDA, a cute girl about his age, swings with him. Side by side. They smile at each other. Chatting...

REID

So, you're in Mrs. Coleman's class?

AMANDA

I can't stand it. She's tough.

REID

I heard she's a major witch.

AMANDA

Witch with a "B" maybe.

As they LAUGH, she spots Brandon meandering not far away.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

That kid is so freaking weird.  
Almost creepy. I tried to say hi to  
him yesterday and he froze.

Reid looks at Brandon. Brandon waves.

REID

He's, uh--

AMANDA

Do you know him? So creepy.

Reid glances at Brandon, then at Amanda. Nervous.

REID

Yeah, that's, uh, Brandon.  
He's...he's not that bad.

Brandon starts walking toward them. Smiling. Reid gets up. Walks toward him to intercept.

REID (CONT'D)

Hi...Brandon. Just--leave us alone  
for now. Go on.

He waves Brandon away. Brandon stops. Stares.

REID (CONT'D)

And...and stop being a creeper.

Reid tries to lighten the mood. CHUCKLES. Amanda LAUGHS. Brandon's smile disappears. He slinks away. Reid walks back.

AMANDA

Oh my God, that was too funny.

Reid smirks as he approaches the swing set.

REID

Want me to push?

Reid starts pushing her on the swing. He looks over at Brandon who slowly keeps walking and glancing back at them.

END FLASHBACK

EXT. CHURCH ENTRANCE - RIVER OF LIFE - CURRENT

Still standing in front of the church entrance, he watches as Rev. Barnes approaches the empty playground. Reid's head drops a bit as he enters the church sanctuary.

EXT. PLAYGROUND - RIVER OF LIFE - CONTINUOUS

As Rev. Barnes steps onto the playground, he scans it: the slide, swings, jungle gym. He takes a few more steps. Looks at the ground. Walks a little more to a specific spot. Sits.

His eyes glisten with forming tears as he looks around on this familiar sunny morning.

His jaw locks as tears roll down his cheeks. He digs down into the dirt. Picks up a handful. Rubs it in his hands.

He hears the SOUND OF CHILDREN. Beat.

Suddenly, ten or so CHILDREN, boys and girls (4-6), dart past him toward the playground toys with their TEACHER in tow.

He half-smiles as he watches them. A LITTLE GIRL (5) in a pretty lavender dress stops in front of him. She smiles and waves. He smiles at her. Waves back with his dirt-covered hand. She runs to join the other kids. Her dress seems to pop against the green of the grass as she runs.

He watches the kids for multiple beats.

EXT. CHURCH ENTRANCE - RIVER OF LIFE - MINUTES LATER

Rev. Barnes approaches the rear doors. Spots a memorial plaque next to them. A few CHURCH MEMBERS enter past him.

He stares at the door, then at the plaque. Can't get himself to go in. He slowly walks the other direction to the parking lot. Never looking back.

INT. SANCTUARY - RIVER OF LIFE - MINUTES LATER

In the lively, modernized sanctuary, MEMBERS stand at their pews singing the hymn "Just as I am". The darkness of that tragic day has left though the crucifix remains. It hangs above the stage the same as when Brandon looked upon it.

Reid holds Abby on his hip and stands next to Monica at their pew. They save an empty spot next to them. They're not far from where Brandon sat over 15 years ago.

Monica sings the hymn. Reid does not. Instead, he looks at Monica. As she sings, she smiles at him. Reid focuses on Abby as she tries to sing the words.

He can't help but smile.

FADE TO BLACK.