

DOWN HOME BLUES

"Pilot"

by

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DOWN HOME BLUES

TEASER

FADE IN:

EXT. COUNTRYSCAPE - NIGHT

A clear skyline. Acres and acres of homes and farmland are separated by the rumbling Mississippi River. On one side, a sea of hills. On the other, the flat illuvial plane that is the Delta.

This is the city where blues music was born. The place where cotton became king. This is Yazoo City, Mississippi.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

We descend slowly upon a couple of meager homes surrounded by woods and shrubbery. A sign, GARBER STREET, dangles from a rusted, metal post.

A small light shines in the upstairs window of one of the homes. As we push closer, we can make out the bubbly glow of a pink LAVA LAMP sitting on a night stand.

INT. REDGRAVE HOME - DARK BEDROOM - NIGHT

The light from the lamp illuminates the room just enough for us to make out the plethora of Taylor Swift posters that adorn the wall.

It's the typical little girl's room, glittery and frilly things strewn about.

By the lamp, bundled in bed, under a bright, pink comforter is the very essence of innocence - a sleeping child.

Red-haired, freckle-faced **TESLA REDGRAVE**, 10, seems at peace, somewhere off in dreamland.

Suddenly, her peace is intercepted by the sound of loud gun shots.

BLAM! BLAM! BLAM!

Tesla's eyes flick open.

INT. REDGRAVE HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Tesla, now wide awake and visibly shaken, tip-toes down the stairs in her pajamas.

TESLA

Mom?

No answer.

She reaches the bottom of the stairs. The living room looks untouched. Everything is in place. The kitchen is visible from where she stands.

She glances.

TESLA

Mom, you okay?

Still... no answer.

Tesla gazes around the room, trying to make sense of things. Her eyes settle on a nearby door. She slowly moves towards it. The sound of silence so loud, you can hear the creak of the hardwood floors underneath her little feet.

INT. REDGRAVE HOME - DARK HALLWAY - NIGHT

She nears the door. Her hand trembles as she reaches for the knob, scared of what's to come.

INT. REDGRAVE HOME - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

The door groans open. Tesla flicks the light on.

Tears fill her face. Her eyes widen.

We move around to reveal the mutilated, lifeless body of Tesla's mother, **CLAIRE**, 30, lying in a pool of blood.

Tesla belts out a shrilling scream.

A leather gloved hand quickly covers her mouth.

A **MAN IN BLACK**, only seen from the waist down, drags little Tesla Redgrave off into the darkness.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

EXT. THE BOOGIE LOUNGE - NIGHT

It's an old-fashioned nightclub. The lot dotted with vehicles. Soulful sounds of Delta blues emanate from inside along with the small chatter of ex-lovers and best friends.

INT. THE BOOGIE LOUNGE - NIGHT

Fingers glide up and down a GUITAR. **SYLVESTER "SCOOTER" HIGGINS**, 50, African American, hard miles on his face, lounges on a stool on stage, surrounded by a backup band.

He's at the mic, crooning away. Some PATRONS swill beer and eat food, while others slow dance and sway to the music in their seats.

Scooter hits a riff on his guitar, addresses the patrons in the club.

SCOOTER

Anybody out there know what it
feels like to lose somethin'?

They cheer him on.

SCOOTER

I'm not talkin' about your keys or
your glasses or your credit card.
Naw, y'all, I'm talkin' about
losin' that one true love you let
slip away.

A bartender, **YVONNE**, 30's, zips by tables with ease, grabbing empty glasses and half-eaten plates of food. She's a pro at this and sass is her middle name.

SCOOTER

You see fellas, when you do a good
woman wrong, you always got to pay
up. Now, let me sing this song so
y'all can understand what I'm
talkin' about.

Scooter jams on the guitar and breaks into a song aptly titled "Pay Up".

Yvonne and the other BARTENDERS do their best to take care of the patrons in the club, quickly handing out drinks.

As Yvonne picks up tips from an empty booth, a PATRON at a nearby table smacks her on the butt.

He's an old fart, cocky, wetness dripping down his neck from a head full of Jheri curls.

She turns with attitude.

YVONNE

What's your problem, fool?

PATRON

Girl, I've been trying to get a drink for the last fifteen minutes.

YVONNE

... and you thought that puttin' your hand on my cakes would get my attention?

PATRON

Well, it worked, didn't it?

Yvonne rolls her eyes.

YVONNE

What you want to drink?

PATRON

Rum and Coke.

YVONNE

On the rocks?

PATRON

That sounds about right.

She clears the table.

PATRON

Let's work on that attitude, or I might have to think twice about a tip.

She gets right in his face.

YVONNE

I got a tip for you. I'm gonna bring you a drink, and you're gonna shut the hell up. If you put your hands on me again, my friend Scooter over there just might have to arrest you for sexual harassment, throw you in county.

She caresses his cheek.

YVONNE

I know some brothas up there who would love to get their hands on your cakes.

PATRON

I thought he was retired.

YVONNE

You need to retire that wack ass Jheri curl, lookin' like a life-sized Chia pet.

The patron and the guys at his table watch closely as Yvonne saunters off.

PATRON

Now, that's a woman!

They all laugh and chuckle.

YVONNE

Idiots.

Yvonne crosses by the stage, winks at Scooter. He just smiles, knowing all too well what just happened. A typical weekend at The Boogie Lounge.

CUT TO:

EXT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS

A little girl's feet. Scampers. Gasps for air.

From every direction, branches smack Tesla as she runs for her life. Her face, full of tears.

SCOOTER (O.S.)

(singing)

*I done did my woman wrong. Now, I
gots to pay up. I done did my woman
wrong. Now, I gots to pay up.*

Footsteps grow closer and closer. Still only seen from the waist down, the Man in Black chases after her.

SCOOTER (O.S.)

(singing)

*Only thing worse than bein' lonely,
is runnin', runnin' out of luck.*

Tesla glances back at the Man in Black as he gains on her. Her screams echo into the night.

CUT TO:

INT. THE BOOGIE LOUNGE - BAR - NIGHT

Yvonne fixes drinks. A bartender, **HEIDY**, young, cute, crosses by her.

HEIDY

Those drinks for table two ready?

Yvonne's not so much focused on drinks as she is on Scooter singing on stage.

HEIDY

Yvonne!

She snaps back to reality, mixes more drinks.

YVONNE

Um, yeah, almost done!

Yvonne glances up at Scooter, smiles.

HEIDY

Oh my God, you've got that look again.

YVONNE

What look?

HEIDY

You know what look. I thought that thing between you two was over a long time ago.

YVONNE

It ain't over till I say it's over.

HEIDY

Don't you think you've caused enough problems already? I don't get what you see in that old man anyway.

YVONNE

He's sweet.

(beat)

Besides, ain't nothin' sexier than a blues man with a badge.

Yvonne's eyes lock on Scooter. Heidy just shakes her head, grabs the drinks and walks away.

We push closer and closer to Scooter playing on stage. As he breaks into his guitar solo, the pain in his face tells a story, while the notes cry out every word.

CUT TO:

EXT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Tesla is still on the run. Through the branches and trees, street lights are visible up ahead.

Out of nowhere, the Man in Black appears. He grabs her. She tries to pull away, but his grip is too strong.

She knees him in the groin. The Man in Black falls to the ground. Tesla darts away.

EXT. THE BOOGIE LOUNGE - PARKING LOT - MOMENTS LATER

Tesla runs from across the street into the parking lot. She looks exhausted and out of breath.

The bass from the music blares from inside, Scooter's voice soulful and smooth.

Tesla's eyes dart left, then right, confused about her next move.

She runs and disappears into the sea of cars that are parked.

Moments later a car door SLAMS closed.

The Man in Black, still only seen from the waist down, appears from across the street. He limps up to the parking lot. Paces for a moment. His black boots, caked in mud and dirt.

Patrons exit the club. The Man in Black quickly turns and limps away unseen.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THE BOOGIE LOUNGE - LATER

There are only a few cars left in the parking lot. Scooter exits the building, GUITAR CASE in hand.

Yvonne runs out after him.

YVONNE
 Hey blues man, you gonna leave
 without saying goodbye?

SCOOTER
 Been a long day. I'm beat.

YVONNE
 Where you headed to?

SCOOTER
 Liquor store.

YVONNE
 I get off in about an hour. Why
 don't I come over. We can talk. I
 can stay the night, fix you
 pancakes in the morning.

Yvonne reaches to caress his face. Scooter pulls her hand
 down.

SCOOTER
 You really gonna act like you don't
 know what today is?

YVONNE
 I just wanted to make you feel
 better.

SCOOTER
 Ain't nothin' you can do that's
 gonna change the way I feel.

YVONNE
 You can't drink your problems away,
 Scooter.

SCOOTER
 What makes you think that's what
 I'm tryin' to do?

YVONNE
 Just what are you trying to do
 then?

Scooter walks away.

SCOOTER
 Pay up.

Yvonne just stands and stares at Scooter as he makes his way
 to his car. He throws his guitar in the trunk and zooms off.

EXT. LIQUOR STORE - NIGHT

Scooter pulls into the empty parking lot of the store. It's the first time we get a good look at his car. Clean, black, YAZOO CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT on the sides, CHIEF in big letters.

INT. SCOOTER'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Scooter stares down at his CELL PHONE, contemplating for a moment. He dials. The phone rings and rings. Finally, a long beep.

SCOOTER

(on the phone)

Hey, babygirl, it's your daddy. I know it's kinda late. I was hoping you would answer this time. Just wanted to say Happy Birthday.

(beat)

I went and saw your mama today. Brought her those flowers that she used to love. Sang Happy Birthday to her too.

Scooter fights back tears.

SCOOTER

(on the phone)

Look, I wish there was somethin' I could do to change what happened, but... I just want you to know how much I love you. How much I miss hearing the sound of your voice. I just... I'm sorry. I'm so sorry.

Scooter hangs up, takes a moment to collect himself, exits the car and walks inside.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. LIQUOR STORE - MINUTES LATER

Scooter exits the store with a bottle in a brown paper bag. He heads to his car, throws the bottle on the passenger seat. He's about to hop in, but something catches his attention.

Scooter whips out a gun from his waist. He slowly opens his back door. Points the gun at an old, grey blanket on the floor. Scooter lifts up the blanket.

Tesla is curled up in a ball on the floor, dirty, disheveled and shaken.

EXT. REDGRAVE HOME - NIGHT

A swarm of COP CARS line the street and driveway. Yellow tape. A Coroner Van. Nosy neighbors.

FANO (O.S.)
Take a look at this, chief.

INT. REDGRAVE HOME/CRIME SCENE - CONTINUOUS

DETECTIVE KYLE FANO, early thirties, Samoan, built like a linebacker, stands over the body of Claire Redgrave with Scooter. Det. Fano wears a SILVER CRUCIFIX around his neck.

FANO
One shot to the head. One to the chest.

Scooter bends down over the body, examines her. Claire's face is shattered.

SCOOTER
Somebody really wanted her dead.

A handful of POLICE OFFICERS and MEDICAL PERSONNEL move in and out of the crime scene. Scooter and Det. Fano case the room.

FANO
No sign of forced entry either.

SCOOTER
She probably opened the door and let him walk right in.

FANO
Anything from the girl yet?

SCOOTER
Not much. I'm workin' on that.

FANO
Wonder why she didn't just run in the club and ask for help?

SCOOTER
She was pretty terrified. If you coulda seen the look on her face when they came and got her... No little girl should have to see her mother dead like that.

Scooter blanks out for a moment. His mind, racing.

FANO
Chief, you okay?

Scooter snaps out of it. He storms out of the room.

SCOOTER
(to the medical personal)
Get this mess cleaned up!

EXT. REDGRAVE HOME - NIGHT

Det. Fano and Scooter make their way through the maze of yellow tape and commotion to their cars.

SCOOTER
See what you can find out about a next of kin.

FANO
I'm on it.

SCOOTER
I'll pay a visit to DCFS in the mornin', see if I can get her to talk.

FANO
Chief, you sure you're okay?

SCOOTER
I'm fine.

FANO
Why are you doing this?

SCOOTER
What?

FANO
Acting like this is just another day. Pretending like you're not hurting inside.

Scooter stops at his car.

SCOOTER
You ever listen to the songs I sing, Fano. I used to make a livin' off of pretendin' like things weren't as bad as they seemed. Ain't no use in changin' now.

FANO

If you want me to pray for you...

SCOOTER

I know.

Det. Fano and Scooter exchange glances, get into their cars.

INT. SCOOTER'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

A big, comfortable home. The sink is piled full of dishes. Stacks of folders and paperwork clutter the table. Scooter enters. He drops his guitar case by the door, grabs a small glass from the cupboard, shoves a manila folder under his arm.

INT. SCOOTER'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Scooter clicks the light on. The room is a mess. Dirty clothes at every turn. He sets the empty glass, folder and a bottle of whiskey on the night stand.

CLOSET

Scooter sifts through small boxes.

BEDROOM

He pops a disc in the DVD player, plops down on the edge of the bed. Scooter pours a drink of whisky, cracks open the folder. Paperwork with REQUEST FOR RETIREMENT in big black letters. Scooter peers down at it.

INT. SCOOTER'S BEDROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

The room is dark. On the night stand, an EMPTY bottle of whisky.

ON TV:

A hospital room draped with birthday decorations. The date on the video tells us it's 2010.

Scooter's wife, **CHARLENE**, late 40's, lays upright in a hospital bed. Although she is completely bald and looks sickly, there is an innate beauty about her.

Scooter is behind the camera.

SCOOTER (O.S.)

You ready, Sweetie?

MIRANDA (O.S.)
Ready as ever, daddy?

Scooter flicks the light off. The door opens. Scooter's daughter, **MIRANDA**, 16, walks in. It's pretty dark. The candle flames of a birthday cake guide her way as she heads over to her mother's hospital bed.

The light flicks on.

MIRANDA
Happy Birthday, Mama!

Charlene's eyes widen as she looks up at her daughter standing over her. Miranda is drop dead gorgeous... and also bald. Charlene is speechless.

CHARLENE
Your hair... Why did you...

Miranda grabs her hand.

MIRANDA
...so we can do it together. You're gonna beat this. I know it.

CHARLENE
What about prom?

MIRANDA
Dorian doesn't mind at all. He's not embarrassed. Besides, it'll grow back, right?

Charlene just smiles, hugs her daughter close.

CHARLENE
Right.

SCOOTER (O.S.)
Okay, enough with the mushy stuff. Why don't the two birthday girls blow out the candles!

Charlene looks at the camera, smiles. She mouths I LOVE YOU.

SCOOTER (O.S.)
I love you too, baby.

Scooter lays in bed. He glares at the TV like he's in some kind of trance. The flickering light from the video reflects off of his pensive eyes, as tears stream down his face.

EXT. DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES - DAY

A small, brown building in a drab office park. Scooter exits his car and heads inside.

INT. DCFS - LOBBY - DAY

Scooter lounges on a leather couch. He flips through magazine pages.

Department Supervisor **ELIZABETH SANDLIN** pokes her head through a nearby door.

ELIZABETH
(New York accent)
Chief Higgins, we're ready for you.

INT. DCFS - HALLWAY - DAY

Scooter and Elizabeth walk down the hallway. Elizabeth is the no nonsense type, mid-forties, business suit, spring in her step.

ELIZABETH
Right off the bat, I just want to say that I find it quite alarming that the Yazoo City Police Department thinks it's in the best interest of this child to interview her not even 24 hours after being chased into the night by some psychopath and finding her mother dead.

SCOOTER
Let me guess, Brooklyn?

ELIZABETH
Queens, actually.

SCOOTER
Damn, I was close.

ELIZABETH
Did you come here just to have a discussion about my place of birth, because if so, you can leave now?

SCOOTER
You know what I'm here for.

ELIZABETH

Chief Higgins, I don't quite think you understand just how broken the DCFS system has become in Yazoo County. I was brought here to be a voice. To speak for them when they can't speak for themselves. Given the circumstances, it is my professional opinion that this child needs time to grieve.

SCOOTER

With all do respect Mrs. Sandlin, I grew up in this system. Home after home. No place to call my own. I know first hand just how screwed up it can be.

They stop at a nearby door.

SCOOTER

I ain't no different than you. I'm just tryin' to do my job. That little girl is countin' on me to catch the person who did this to her mama, or at least find a next of kin so she can be around folks that she feels comfortable with.

Elizabeth gives chase.

ELIZABETH

She's right in here. Good luck getting her to talk. She hasn't uttered a word in hours.

SCOOTER

Are you kiddin'? Kids love me.

ELIZABETH

Really?

SCOOTER

Not so much.

ELIZABETH

I'll be watching from the two-way mirror the whole time.

Scooter opens the door and heads inside.

INT. DCFS - PLAYROOM - DAY

Scooter enters the room. It's filled with toys. Tesla sits alone at a large circle table. She stares at the ground.

Scooter walks over, sits down in front of her.

SCOOTER

Tesla, right? Remember me? I'm Chief Higgins. My friends call me Scooter.

An awkward moment of silence.

SCOOTER

I just came to visit you today, because I wanted to ask you some questions. Is it okay if I ask you some questions?

She doesn't utter a word. Scooter looks up at the two-way mirror.

INT. DCFS - VIEWING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Elizabeth sits and watches.

INTERCUT BETWEEN PLAYROOM AND VIEWING ROOM

SCOOTER

Is there someone we can call? I know your family is probably really worried about you.

Tesla turns around in her chair with her back to him.

SCOOTER

(under his breath)

This kid doesn't even know me and she won't talk to me either.

Elizabeth watches. Scooter reaches in his pocket, pulls out a small note pad and pen. A HARMONICA falls out of his pocket to the floor.

SCOOTER

Sweetie, I know you're scared, but...

He peers down at the harmonica for a moment, then picks it up. Scooter puts it to his mouth. He blows out a tune, sings.

SCOOTER (CONT'D)

(singing)

*I know this little girl named
Tesla. She's cute as can be. She's
got pretty red hair and she just
won't talk to me.*

Tesla slowly turns around. She watches with amazement as Scooter plays and sings. Elizabeth looks on, shocked.

SCOOTER

(singing)

*I've got the Tesla. I've got the
Tesla Redgrave blues.*

Tesla claps. Finally, a smile.

TESLA

My Grandpa Larry used to play the harmonica. Not as good as you. He's dead, just like my mom.

Scooter sets the harmonica on the table.

SCOOTER

You like to listen to music?

Tesla nods.

SCOOTER

Who's your favorite singer?

TESLA

Taylor Swift.

SCOOTER

Country girl? Plays the guitar?

She nods. Elizabeth scribbles down notes in a folder.

SCOOTER

I think I've heard of her.

TESLA

You know how to play the guitar?

SCOOTER

Do I know how to play? I've been playin' since I was six years old.

TESLA

You think you could teach me how to play?

SCOOTER

I don't see why not. Mrs. Sandlin has my information. Anytime you're ready, you just come on over and I'll teach you how to play.

Scooter grabs the harmonica, hands it to her.

SCOOTER

Why don't you hold on to this for me too. It's yours if you want it.

Tesla takes the harmonica, examines it. Then...

TESLA

His face felt funny.

Scooter quickly grabs the pad and pen.

SCOOTER

What did you say, Sweetie?

TESLA

It was dark. He grabbed me. I was really scared, so I just closed my eyes and started punching and screaming.

Scooter jots down notes.

TESLA

His face had a hole where the eye was supposed to be.

Scooter glares at the window, finally a breakthrough. His phone RINGS. He whips it out, answers.

SCOOTER

What you got, Fano?

FANO (O.S.)

(on the phone)

Information came back on a next of kin, Chief. Claire Redgrave was the last surviving family member, other than the girl's father. We're at a place of employment for a William Sterling.

Scooter pops up.

SCOOTER

Don't let him out of your sight. I wanna talk to him.

EXT. YAZOO HIGH FOOTBALL FIELD - CONTINUOUS

A crowd of MARCHING BAND STUDENTS surround the body of Tesla's father, WILLIAM. His lifeless body, baking in the Mississippi sun. YHS BAND spread across his dirty sweater. A bullet hole in his chest. Blood seeping onto the grass.

A handful of POLICE OFFICERS clear out the crowd. Det. Fano walks up. He kneels down over the body.

FANO

(on the phone)

You can talk to him. I don't know
if he's gonna listen.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

EXT. YAZOO HIGH FOOTBALL FIELD/CRIME SCENE - DAY

A BLACK BODY BAG is lifted onto a gurney and loaded into a CORONER'S VAN parked on the thirty yard line. CRIME SCENE CLEAN UP clears the area.

MR. KOISTRA (O.S.)

How many times do I have to say it?
I don't know.

INT. YAZOO HIGH BAND ROOM - OFFICE - DAY

Scooter and Det. Fano take NOTES from distraught band director **MR. KOISTRA**, as he paces the floor. He's late forties, balding, saxophone printed neck tie. Through his window we see students bunched together in groups. Some chatting. Some in tears.

SCOOTER

Mr. Koistra, I know that it must be really difficult to think clearly right now, given what just happened, but it's very important that you try as hard as you can to remember the events leadin' up to William Sterling's death.

Mr. Koistra takes a seat at his desk. He tries to keep calm.

MR. KOISTRA

It all happened so fast. I've been working really hard for the last couple of weeks, trying to prepare the students for state band competition. We were right in the middle of our second number. Some of the students had suggested going a little retro, so we decided on Bell Biv Devoe's Poison.

FANO

That was my jam back in the day.

MR. KOISTRA

Saucy little number, isn't it?

Scooter glares at Det. Fano.

SCOOTER

Go ahead, Mr. Koistra.

MR. KOISTRA

The students weren't following my instructions as usual, probably because of Zachary and his antics. I swear that kid will be the death of me.

Through the window, we see **ZACHARY GREEN**, 18, tall, lanky, emo-looking, walk up to a group of kids.

MR. KOISTRA

All of a sudden I heard screaming and the music stopped. William came stumbling out of the locker room onto the field. He just fell to the ground. After that, just more screams. The students were in such a panic I didn't know what to do.

FANO

Do you have any idea who would want to kill Mr. Sterling?

MR. KOISTRA

William was a very troubled man. On and off of drugs. In and out of jail. Who knows what kind of people he was involved with. I was the one who got him a job here. He told me he was trying to turn his life around. I gave him the benefit of the doubt.

Zack glances in the office window. He looks nervous.

SCOOTER

Mr. Koistra, did William ever mention anything about a young woman by the name of Claire Redgrave?

MR. KOISTRA

Claire? She was a student of mine about fourteen years ago. An amazing clarinet player.

FANO

Claire was murdered in her home last night.

MR. KOISTRA

Oh my God, and you think William had something to do with this?

SCOOTER
We don't know.

MR. KOISTRA
Those two were so in love.

SCOOTER
Was William one of your students?

MR. KOISTRA
Yes. They were in concert band together.

Scooter and Det. Fano glance at each other.

MR. KOISTRA
William was a decent student. Loads of potential. Then, one day, he just changed.

SCOOTER
Why?

Fano catches a glimpse of Zack as he frantically grabs his BACKPACK and TRUMPET CASE.

MR. KOISTRA
Rumor has it that they had a big falling out over some boy, but that could just be high school chitter chatter, if you ask me.

Fano opens the door.

FANO
Hey, kid!

Zack heads towards the door. Mr. Koistra looks out the window.

FANO
(to Mr. Koistra)
Who is that kid?

MR. KOISTRA
Zachary.

Zack makes a run for the door. Fano dashes out of the office after him, followed by Scooter.

MR. KOISTRA
Oh, Zachary! What have you done this time?

EXT. YAZOO HIGH - CONTINUOUS

Zack bolts out the back door and hightails it down the street. Fano runs out moments later, tries to catch up with him.

FANO
Zack, stop!

Scooter scurries out the door. He hops in his car.

INT. SCOOTER'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Scooter peels out and zooms down the street.

SCOOTER
(into radio)
Thirteen hundred block of King.
Suspect, white male, black shirt,
black jeans. Officer in foot
pursuit.

EXT. ALLEY - CONTINUOUS

Fano chases Zack.

FANO
(into radio)
Westbound in the alley behind
Miller's Pawn Shop.

Zack ditches his backpack. He throws the trumpet case over a METAL GATE. Zack hops the gate, grabs the case, zips away. Fano hops the gate after him.

EXT. STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Fano is closing in on him. Zack cuts through the back of a house.

FANO
(into the radio)
Southbound into the houses...

EXT. HOUSE - FRONT YARD - CONTINUOUS

Zack hops over the fence and falls to the ground. He gets up and bolts off again. Fano hops the fence right after him.

FANO
(to himself)
Okay, kid!
(MORE)

FANO (CONT'D)

Time to show you why they used to
call me baby Ray Lewis back in
college.

Fano catches up to him and tackles him to the ground like
it's game time.

FANO

Don't move!

Scooter and a few other POLICE OFFICERS pull up in their cars
surrounding him. Zack throws his hands up, surrenders.

INT. YAZOO CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT (HOMICIDE DIVISION) - DAY

It's a small, quaint office area. A handful of DETECTIVES and
UNIFORMED OFFICERS go about their daily business at their
CUBICLES. Scooter and Det. Fano enter with Zack handcuffed.
They lead him through the maze of cubicles and cross by the
desk of fellow detective **ANDREW SNELLINGS**. Snellings is mid-
thirties, smug, handsome, too confident for his own good. He
watches as they walk by.

INT. HALLWAY LEADING TO INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Scooter and Det. Fano walk Zack down the hall. Zack looks
terrified. They are just about to reach the door, when
Snellings comes strolling down the hallway cheeing up a
storm.

SCOOTER

Oh, my God! What does he want?

FANO

Probably his dignity, or some sense
of manhood.

Fano opens the door to the interrogation room.

FANO

(to Zack)

Have a seat, Speedy Gonzalez.

ZACK

Who?

FANO

Just go!

Zack goes in the room. Fano closes the door behind him.
Snellings walks up.

SNELLINGS
(to Scooter)
Captain wants to see you.

SCOOTER
What for?

Snellings doesn't say a word. He shoots a conniving smirk and disappears into a nearby bathroom. Scooter rolls his eyes and walks off.

FANO
Good luck!

INT. PILLARD'S OFFICE - DAY

CAPTAIN LEE PILLARD, late-fifties, glasses, military bearing, sifts through paperwork at his desk. Scooter walks in.

SCOOTER
You wanted to see me?

Pillard doesn't look up from his paperwork. He motions his hand towards the chair. Scooter sits.

PILLARD
Fill out those forms yet?

SCOOTER
Not quite, Captain. I've been meanin' to, really I have, but lately--

PILLARD
I know. Things have just been getting in the way, right? Do you know how many times I've heard that from you, Scooter, about things just getting in the way?

Pillard takes his glasses off, looks up at Scooter.

PILLARD
How long has it been now, two years?

SCOOTER
Three, sir.

PILLARD
Charlene sure was a good woman.

SCOOTER
Yes, she was.

PILLARD

If I recall, four months ago, you walked in my office and said you were done. You made this big to-do about taking an early retirement. Focusing more on your music. Getting your life together.

SCOOTER

That's correct, Sir.

PILLARD

I got it. Hell, I've been getting it every since you walked into this police department. Years ago, when you asked to take a sabbatical to go on tour off to God knows where, I got it.

SCOOTER

I know, Captain.

PILLARD

Some time after that, I got it when you said you needed an extended leave to mend the relationship between you and your daughter.

SCOOTER

...and I appreciate that.

PILLARD

Time and time again, I got it.

SCOOTER

Captain, could you just--

PILLARD

I'm not finished yet.

(beat)

I'm not going to pretend like I know what it feels like to lose a spouse. When your wife passed and you couldn't be here, believe me I really got it, but now, I don't get it anymore. The only thing that's been getting in the way is you, Scooter.

SCOOTER

What are you sayin' Captain? You tryin' to force me to retire?

PILLARD

Scooter, we've worked together for what, fifteen years?

SCOOTER

Sixteen, actually.

PILLARD

I've always shot straight with you. Everybody in this department can't sing like you. They can't write those songs that make the women drop their panties with the snap of a finger, but I do have some good men and women who have dedicated their lives to this department. They want to grow, advance.

Frustration rides Scooter's face.

SCOOTER

By they, you mean Snellings.

PILLARD

Yes, but not just him, others too. He's earned the right, Scooter.

SCOOTER

What? To replace me?

Through Pillard's window, we see Snellings walk by. He glances into Pillard's office and saunters off with a smile.

SCOOTER

Captain, I got a possible lead on a murder suspect that I need to tend to. Can we talk about this another time?

Pillard nods. Scooter heads for the door.

PILLARD

Scooter.

He turns.

PILLARD

I'm not trying to force you out. I'm just trying to get you to do the one thing that everybody's always wanted from you.

SCOOTER

What's that?

PILLARD

Choose.

Scooter takes it all in for a moment. He's fuming mad. He walks out, SLAMS the door shut.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - LATER

Zack is seated at a table. Scooter sits in front of him. He still looks pissed. Det. Fano lounges by the wall.

ZACK

Like I told you on the ride over here, dude. I just ran, because I thought you were gonna bust me for the pills in my backpack.

SCOOTER

I could give a frog's fat behind about some stupid pills. I'm talkin' about the murder. How well did you know William Sterling?

ZACK

Who?

Scooter lunges towards Zack. He grabs him by the shirt and drives him up against the wall.

SCOOTER

I told you don't lie to me!

Det. Fano intervenes.

FANO

Chief, why don't I take it from here?

SCOOTER

Back up off me, man!

Det. Fano backs away. Scooter lets him go. Zack sits.

SCOOTER

Alright, Zack. I been doin' this for a long time. Regardless of what some folk may think around here, I'm good at what I do. Let me tell you what usually happens. I ask questions. They lie.

(MORE)

SCOOTER (CONT'D)

Then I gots to get real ghetto to get the answers I need. Don't make me get ghetto on yo' narrow behind.

Zack bursts into tears.

ZACK

Mr. Sterling had me runnin' ecstasy for him to some of the kids in school. Said he was trying to raise enough money to hire a lawyer so he could finally see his daughter. Said his ex was a total bitch.

SCOOTER

Who do you think might have wanted him dead?

ZACK

I don't know. A couple weeks ago I stopped by his apartment to get more pills. When I knocked on the door, I heard a lot of yelling and fighting. Some creepy dude walked out. Mr. Sterling's place looked totally trashed.

FANO

What did this guy look like?

ZACK

I don't remember dude, I was totally high. About six feet, I guess. White. Oh, and he had a patch over his eye.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. COPY ROOM - LATER

Scooter stands in front of a COPY MACHINE. He keeps mashing buttons. No luck. Det. Fano walks up behind him.

FANO

What was that all about?

SCOOTER

Don't you have work to do, Fano?

FANO

Chief, you spazzed out. He's just a kid.

SCOOTER

If I need an opinion on how to do my job, I'll ask for one.

FANO

Look, I know you've been having a ruff couple of weeks. Why don't you let me and the guys take care of this one, so you can have time to sort things out.

Scooter turns, fuming.

SCOOTER

What is it with you people in tryin' to kick me out of this place? You want me gone too? You want my job, don't you?

FANO

No, sir.

SCOOTER

Do me a favor, Fano. Stay out of my personal business. Do your job for once and help solve a murder.

Det. Fano is taken aback. He storms off. Scooter tries the copier again. No luck. Frustrated, he mashes buttons, bangs the side of it with his hand.

SCOOTER

Dammit!

INT. SCOOTER'S OFFICE - LATER THAT DAY

Scooter sits in front of a clutter of paperwork. Also on his desk, two gruesome MURDER PHOTOS of William and Claire. A vintage GIBSON J-45 ACOUSTIC GUITAR is perched up against the wall behind him.

A KNOCK at the door.

Det. Fano walks in carrying a large BROWN BOX. He plops it down on Scooter's desk.

FANO

Yazoo High yearbooks for the last fifteen years.

There is an uneasy tension between the both of them. Scooter grabs the box and sits it on the floor beside him. Det. Fano walks away.

SCOOTER
Fano, wait!

He SLAMS the door closed without uttering a word.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SCOOTER'S OFFICE - NIGHT

A couple of YHS YEARBOOKS are spread across Scooter's desk. He's got his guitar in his lap. He's in the middle of tuning it.

Scooter's phone BUZZES. He glances at it. It's a text from Yvonne: CAN I COME OVER TONIGHT? Scooter quickly texts her back, tosses the phone on the desk.

He examines the yearbook closely. Pages show the class of 2000. Homecoming, parades, chess club. Your typical photographic high school memories.

After glossing over a couple of pages, Scooter stumbles across a photo of the POETRY CLUB.

PHOTO: A COUPLE OF TEENS POSE UNDER A TREE WITH POETRY BOOKS.

Scooter stares at it for a moment, suddenly struck by something he sees.

Two of the students hold hands. The caption underneath gives their names. One of them is a young Claire Redgrave. The other is a teenage boy with a patch over his eye.

SCOOTER
(reading)
Jessico.

Scooter sifts through the clutter on his desk and pulls out the two murder photos. He examines them, smiles.

SCOOTER
Gotcha!

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SCOOTER'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Scooter pulls into the driveway. He exits the car. Yvonne is on his front porch. She leans up against the post, smokes a cigarette.

YVONNE
What took you so long, blues man?

SCOOTER
I thought I told you not to come.

YVONNE
Guess I didn't listen.

Scooter makes his way up the porch steps. Yvonne flicks her cigarette butt.

SCOOTER
I can't do this no more.

Yvonne walks up to him, they lock eyes.

YVONNE
So, don't.

INT. SCOOTER'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Scooter and Yvonne burst into the dark room. They are all over each other, knocking over everything in their way, ripping clothes off. They kiss and fall back onto the bed.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SCOOTER'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Scooter's eyes pry open. He is sprawled out on the bed alone, only the sheets covering his naked body. Scooter's nose twitches. Something smells good. He reaches on the floor for his pants.

INT. SCOOTER'S KITCHEN - MORNING

Yvonne is at the stove cooking pancakes. Scooter saunters in and takes a seat at the table. Yvonne takes a seat in front Scooter, serves him pancakes. She grabs syrup from the table, drenches her pancakes. She tears into her food, doesn't notice Scooter staring at her. Yvonne looks up.

YVONNE
What?

SCOOTER
Why me? I'm an old man. You're still young. You got your whole life ahead of you. You should be gettin' married. Startin' a family.

YVONNE

Scooter, how many times do I have to tell you. I ain't the marrying type. Guess that's why things didn't work out between me and Snellings.

SCOOTER

Things didn't work out between you and Snellings because he's an ass.

YVONNE

That too.

Yvonne stares at him.

YVONNE

I remember back in the day, watching you on TV, on those award shows. The way you made folks eyes light up when you was on stage, singing about hard times, doin' wrong and everything else under the sun. You made me feel like it was okay not to be perfect, because I was far from perfect. Still am.

(beat)

When we met... I don't know. There's something about you that makes people feel safe. I felt safe.

SCOOTER

Why can't I get that from her?

YVONNE

She's just hurt is all. Scooter, when I was a little girl, I would've married my father if I could have. He was perfect in my eyes, like a superhero. When I got older, as much as you made me feel like it was okay not to be perfect, I was devastated when I found out that he wasn't. She'll come around.

SCOOTER

I'm a horrible father.

YVONNE

Look, I'm as much to blame as you are. I knew you were married. You knew I was in a relationship. We both made mistakes.

(MORE)

YVONNE (CONT'D)

The only true way to move on is by
forgiving yourself. Right?

SCOOTER

I guess.

A moment of silence. She looks down at his plate.

YVONNE

Hey, I didn't slave over a hot
stove for nothing. Eat up, blues
man. I broke a nail fixin' those
damn pancakes.

Scooter and Yvonne share a laugh and chow down.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SCOOTER'S BATHROOM - DAY

Scooter sings in the shower. His cell phone RINGS. He grabs
it off of the counter, answers.

SCOOTER

(on the phone)

...and a good morning to you, Mrs.
Sandlin! What? Missing?

INT. SCOOTER'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

The fridge is open. Yvonne chunks spoiled food into the
garbage can.

She opens the kitchen door to air the room out. Moments
later, footfalls echo. Yvonne turns. Startled, she drops a
gallon of milk to the floor.

SCOOTER (O.S.)

(on the phone)

I can't think of any reason why she
would want to run away.

Scooter saunters into the kitchen. His eyes widen. We move
around to find Tesla standing by the door.

TESLA

Can I have a guitar lesson now?

Yvonne and Scooter stare at each other, dumfounded.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. SCOOTER'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - DAY

Yvonne walks with Tesla down a long, wide hallway. The walls are covered with various AWARDS and PHOTOGRAPHIC MEMORABILIA. SCOOTER WITH DIFFERENT BLUES MUSICIANS, SCOOTER IN STUDIO SESSIONS, An old, FRAMED ARTICLE from the eighties: YAZOO'S HOMETOWN SUCCESS STORY - SCOOTER HIGGINS, GRAMMY AWARD NOMINATION PLAQUES, and other pastime events in his life.

Tesla's eyes light up as she scans the wall.

TESLA

Holy Cannoli! Who are all these people?

YVONNE

Some of Scooter's old friends from the music business.

TESLA

Wow, he's famous!

YVONNE

Well, kinda. He used to be anyway.

SCOOTER (O.S.)

(on the phone)

My fault?

LIVING ROOM

Scooter paces the floor. He's still on the phone with Mrs. Sandlin.

SCOOTER

(on the phone)

You got some nerve, lady!

HALLWAY

YVONNE

Back in the eighties, Scooter was one of the most popular blues singers around.

TESLA

My mom grew up in the eighties. She said it was all about big hair and bright colors.

YVONNE
...and some totally bodacious teen
movies.

TESLA
Huh?

YVONNE
Just a little Bill and... never
mind.

TESLA
How come Chief Higgins doesn't do
music anymore?

YVONNE
He still does every once in a
while. After his career slowed
down, he decided to try somethin'
different.

TESLA
...and that's when he became a cop?

YVONNE
You got it dude!

TESLA
What?

YVONNE
Oh my God, she's clueless. This
generation. I tell ya!

TESLA
Chief Higgins is gonna teach me how
to play the guitar.

YVONNE
Is that right?

TESLA
I might even go on tour with Taylor
Swift someday.

YVONNE
Tesla, how did you get Scooter's
address?

TESLA
(nonchalantly)
I Googled it!

Yvonne throws her arm around Tesla as they walk down the hall.

LIVING ROOM

SCOOTER
(on the phone)
Look, calm down! What's the address?

Scooter grabs a PEN and PAD. He scribbles down information.

SCOOTER
Give me an hour.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SCOOTER'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Scooter sits with Tesla on the sofa. She's got an ACOUSTIC GUITAR on her lap. He positions her fingers on the frets, teaches her how to strum a chord.

We push closer to Yvonne, who stands by the hallway leading to the living room. Her face lights up as she watches Scooter and Tesla bond together on the couch. All she can do is smile.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SCOOTER'S CAR - DAY

Scooter drives. Tesla's in the front passenger seat. He glances over at her as she stares out the window, taking in the scenery while they ride.

SCOOTER
Sweetie, Mrs. Sandlin told me that they found a foster home for you yesterday. I know it's just temporary, but why did you run away? They're probably really nice people.

TESLA
They don't like me.

SCOOTER
How do you know that?

TESLA
I can tell. I can always tell.

SCOOTER

Ridin' on a big scary bus all by yourself. That can be really dangerous.

TESLA

I do it all the time. I like to ride by the cotton fields. They look like puffy snow clouds. It helps me think.

SCOOTER

You have to promise me that you're not gonna wander off again. There's a lot of bad folks out there.

TESLA

Kay, I promise. My mom, she used to get really mad when I rode the bus by myself. After a while, she just let me. She'd follow behind in our car. Make sure I was safe.

SCOOTER

Sweetie, I ain't heard you mention much about your daddy. Don't you think he might be worried about where you are?

TESLA

You ever heard of somebody dying of a broken heart, Chief Higgins?

SCOOTER

Can't say that I have.

TESLA

My mom said that's what my dad died of, right after I was born.

SCOOTER

If you ever need someone to talk to about how you're feelin' inside, you can always talk to me, or Mrs. Sandlin, or--

TESLA

Last night I talked to God. My mom said that's what you're supposed to do when you feel sad inside.

SCOOTER

Your mama sounds like she was a real good woman.

TESLA
 Yeah, I guess.
 (beat)
 Can I turn on the radio?

SCOOTER
 Sure, Sweetie.

Tesla cranks the RADIO. She bobs to the music.

SCOOTER
 What about me?

TESLA
 Huh?

SCOOTER
 You said you can always tell when
 people like you. What about me?

She thinks for a moment.

TESLA
 You like me a lot. I can tell.

SCOOTER
 You're right. I do. You remind me
 of a little girl I used to know.
 Boy did she love her mama.

TESLA
 I like you too.

Tesla stares out the window again. Scooter watches her. What
 an adorable little girl.

EXT. EARL HOME - DAY

Scooter and Tesla stand at the front door of her foster
 parents' home.

Scooter KNOCKS. **JUDY EARL**, a plump woman in her thirties,
 answers the door.

SCOOTER
 Mrs. Sandlin asked me to bring her
 back to you, ma'am.

Judy is relieved to see Tesla. She hugs her close.

TESLA
 (to Judy)
 Sorry I ran away.

JUDY

Oh, honey, I'm just glad you're safe is all.

Tesla turns to Scooter. He kneels down. She hugs him.

SCOOTER

E major. Three fingers, remember. We'll learn a new one next time.

JUDY

(to Tesla)

Let's get you inside. I bet you're starvin'.

Just as she takes Tesla in, Judy's husband, **MICHAEL**, appears at the front door. He's a tall cowboy, mid-thirties, got a BEER in his hand.

MICHAEL

Can I talk to you for a minute, fella?

They walk to Scooter's car.

SCOOTER

What's on your mind?

MICHAEL

When my ole' lady and I signed up for this fosterin' thing, they mentioned somethin' about some monetary compensation.

(beat)

I just want to be clear on when that compensation starts. A week? A month?

SCOOTER

I'm sure Mrs. Sandlin can answer any questions you have about the foster parent program.

MICHAEL

This was my ole' lady's idea, you know. Ain't my problem she can't have kids.

SCOOTER

That little girl's been through a lot in the last couple of days. She needs somebody who's gonna be there for her.

They reach Scooter's car.

SCOOTER
You up for that?

MICHAEL
I guess. Gotta pay the bills some
kinda way, right?

Scooter glares at him, disgusted, as he gets into his car.
Michael chugs his beer, throws it on the ground.

INT. YAZOO CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT (HOMICIDE DIVISION) - DAY

Det. Fano sits at his desk. His phone RINGS. He answers.

SCOOTER (O.S.)
(on the phone)
I found him.

FANO
(on the phone)
What's the motive?

CUT TO:

INT. SCOOTER'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Scooter drives.

SCOOTER
Revenge.

INTERCUT BETWEEN YAZOO CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT & SCOOTER'S CAR

SCOOTER
We know that Claire Redgrave and
William Sterling dated back in high
school, but he wasn't the only one
she was in love with. There was
another boy. A boy with one eye.
His name is Jessico Chambers.

FANO
The same one eyed man who Zack saw
leave William's apartment that
night?

SCOOTER
Yeah, he was also the same one eyed
man who Tesla fought off after
findin' her dead mother two nights
ago.

FANO

Does she know about her father?

SCOOTER

I just dropped her off at her new foster parents' home. Tesla Redgrave said that her mama told her that her daddy died of a broken heart.

FANO

Poor girl. What next?

SCOOTER

Get everybody together. Let's go find this sick son of a bitch.

CUT TO:

INT. UPSCALE CONDO - AFTERNOON

It's the epitome of elegance. A dimly lit open space with a romantic, yet foreboding feeling. Soft shadows. Trendy FURNITURE. STONE-TILED FLOORING. Everything is precisely set and tidy, almost too perfect. An open LAPTOP sits on a COFFEE TABLE. A HAND comes into frame, clicks the mouse.

CULTURE CLUB'S "KARMA CHAMELEON" rumbles in.

KITCHEN

A TEA KETTLE whistles on the stove.

BATHROOM

We push close to the silhouette of a MAN taking a steamy shower behind a glass door.

BEDROOM

His clothes are laying on the bed ever so neatly.

BATHROOM

The MAN stands in front of a mirror, in his boxers, brushing his teeth. He's got a TOWEL wrapped around his head. We only see him from behind.

KITCHEN

BARE FEET make their way into the kitchen leaving small trails of water behind. We move up to find the man standing at the stove, now dressed.

He's still got the towel around his head. Still only seen from behind. The man pours a cup of tea. He's about to take a sip when...

Scooter, Det. Fano and FOUR other DETECTIVES burst through the door with their guns drawn.

The man turns. We see his face for the first time. This is JESSICO CHAMBERS. He's young, deliciously handsome and sports a sleek, black PATCH around his right eye.

JESSICO

Ah, I have guests!

(raising his cup)

Who wants tea?

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

INT. HALLWAY LEADING TO INTERROGATION ROOM - AFTERNOON

Scooter and Det. Fano walk down the hallway together. Scooter looks focused.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - AFTERNOON

Jessico sits in the chair with his arms folded. He's dressed in designer clothes, very metro-sexual.

Scooter walks in the room with a BIG BOX. He SLAMS it down on the table. Scooter sits opposite Jessico.

INT. VIDEO ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Det. Fano and a COUPLE OF DETECTIVES observe the interview on a MONITOR.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - AFTERNOON

Scooter's eyes are locked on Jessico. He just stares. Silent.

JESSICO

I feel like I've seen you before.
Do I know you from somewhere?

SCOOTER

That's a possibility.

JESSICO

It's very rude not to offer a guest something to drink when they enter your establishment. I extended the olive branch to you earlier. Don't you think you should do the same?

SCOOTER

Would you like somethin' to drink?

JESSICO

I would love to have a cup of Honeybush tea with a splash of ginger and sea lettuce, but my guess is that's not going to happen, so I'll settle for water.

Scooter pulls a MANILA FOLDER out of the box. He cracks it open. MURDER PHOTOS of Claire and William. Scooter passes them across the table to Jessico.

SCOOTER

What do those photos mean to you?

Jessico looks at them. He cups his hand over his mouth.

JESSICO

Oh, my God. They're utterly disgusting. I think I just threw up in my mouth.

Scooter pulls a YEARBOOK out of the box, opens it up, shoves it in front of Jessico.

SCOOTER

(pointing to the photo)
Okay, then. That's you right there standin' next to Claire Redgrave, isn't it? Black eye patch and all.

JESSICO

Ah, high school. I do miss those times.

Jessico glances at the yearbook photo. Scooter pulls out a stack of phone records from the box.

SCOOTER

I've got upwards of fifty text messages from as early as two weeks ago, sent from your phone to Claire Redgrave's.

(reading)

I miss you. I love you. I don't want to hurt you. Why can't we be a family? That's not who I really am.

JESSICO

Okay, what's that supposed to mean?

SCOOTER

What it means is I think you were still upset about the way you and Claire broke up in high school. Fourteen years later, and she moved on. You didn't. So you killed her.

JESSICO

Let's get one thing straight, okay. Claire and I never dated in high school. She was too wrapped up into that loser she called a boyfriend.

SCOOTER

...and you hated him for that.

Jessico shifts in his seat. He's getting agitated.

JESSICO

I hated William because he was a low-life, controlling, cheating, piece of crap, who wouldn't know a good woman if she was staring him right in the face.

(beat)

Every time those two got into a fight, who do you think was there to pick up the pieces? Every time he cheated on her or hit her, I was the shoulder she cried on. William didn't deserve her.

SCOOTER

...but you did.

JESSICO

Yes, I did!

As Jessico talks, tears stream down his face.

JESSICO

Do you know what it feels like to want something so bad, but you can't have it? Even when you try everything, your everything just isn't good enough?

SCOOTER

As a matter of fact, I do. More than you know.

JESSICO

I loved Claire more than anything. I wanted us to be together. She didn't. Claire said she didn't love me the same way I loved her. She said she only saw me as a friend.

Scooter ponders for a moment.

SCOOTER

Do you mind if I ask you a question? Please don't take this the wrong way.

JESSICO

Go ahead.

SCOOTER

Are you gay?

Jessico is taken aback.

JESSICO

Gay? I'm far from gay, okay! You ask any woman I've ever been with and they'll tell you that I'm an excellent lover! In my bedroom, I bring the thunder...and the rain!

Scooter smiles.

SCOOTER

It all makes sense now. Jessico, maybe the reason why Claire didn't want to be with you is because she new you were hidin' a very big secret.

Jessico's face is beat red.

JESSICO

I told you! I'm not gay!

SCOOTER

Doesn't really matter at this point whether you are or not. All that matters is that I got a little girl that says a one-eyed man grabbed her and chased her into the woods. I also have a witness that heard you assault William Redgrave in his apartment two weeks ago. I got text messages. I got photos. Most importantly, I got a motive.

Jessico pulls himself together, wipes his eyes.

JESSICO

You know I've really enjoyed this trip down memory lane, but I do think it's time for me to skedaddle out of here. You see, I've watched like a kabillion cop shows on tv, and I find it quite sad how they always seem to coax the suspect into confessing to the murder so easily, but there's one thing that they usually have that you don't.

SCOOTER

What's that?

JESSICO

Right now, the people in your department are probably tearing my condo apart looking for a murder weapon which they will not find. What they will find, besides a couple of new Cartier sweaters that are to die for, no pun intended... is a plane ticket to Baltimore. I left a week ago to visit with my grandparents. I just got back this morning.

INT. VIDEO ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Det. Fano and the other detectives exchange glances.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Scooter pulls a stack of PHOTOS out of the box, puts them in front of Jessico.

SCOOTER

Have a look at these. See if anything jogs your memory. I'll be right back with that water.

Scooter storms out of the room. Jessico sifts through the photos. A small PICTURE falls to the floor. He picks it up.

INT. VIDEO ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Scooter bursts through the door. Pissed. He shoves a stack of videos off the table. Scooter pace the floor.

SCOOTER

He had an alibi the whole time and never said a word about it!

FANO

Maybe we got the wrong guy, Chief.

SCOOTER

No. He killed her. He killed both of them. He knows I can't prove it. Call Snellings! Tell him to get in touch with Jackson-Evers International. I want flight records, surveillance videos, car rental statements, the whole nine.

Scooter bolts out of the room.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Scooter walks into the room, closes the door. He sits a BOTTLE OF WATER in front of Jessico, takes a seat.

SCOOTER

Any of those photos jog your memory?

JESSICO

One in particular.

(beat)

I remember where I know you from. You're that washed up blues musician, aren't you? I've heard them talk about you on all those news stations.

Scooter just stares at him.

JESSICO

I never quite understood blues music anyway. I lost my house. I lost my dog. I killed my wife. Blah, blah, snore. All sounds the same to me.

SCOOTER

What you're doin' right now... It won't work. This ain't about me. It's about you.

JESSICO

Oh, quite the contrary. This whole time you've been questioning me about my integrity, and you are no better.

SCOOTER

I'm not a murderer.

JESSICO

Oh, but you are.

Jessico pulls out the picture that dropped on the floor. It is a PORTRAIT of SCOOTER, CHARLENE and MIRANDA in happier times.

JESSICO (CONT'D)

Have you heard the things TMZ has said about you? Tell me, just how did your daughter feel when she found out that you were having an affair, while her mother was lying in a hospital bed dying of cancer?

(MORE)

JESSICO (CONT'D)

Did you really have to pull the
plug?

Scooter is shaking, he so pissed.

SCOOTER

Okay, we're done now! Give me back
the picture!

JESSICO

You know, this whole time you've
never even asked me out right if I
killed them.

SCOOTER

Okay, then... Did you kill Tesla
Redgrave's parents?

Jessico leans forward. A sadistic smile.

JESSICO

No.

(beat)

Now, I get to ask a question, but
you have to be very honest with
yourself.

Jessico leans back, folds his arms.

SCOOTER

Did you kill your wife, Chief
Higgins?

Scooter's eyes are filled with rage. He attacks Jessico like
a caged animal. Scooter punches him in the face, knocking him
to the ground. He kicks and stomps him repeatedly. Moments
later Det. Fano rushes in. He rips Scooter off of Jessico,
who is beaten and bloody.

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

INT. PILLARD'S OFFICE - THE NEXT MORNING

Scooter sits, while Captain Pillard paces the floor.

PILLARD

Do you realize you put this whole department in jeopardy? You'd better hope to God that young man doesn't file a lawsuit.

A KNOCK at the door. Snellings walks in.

PILLARD

Not now, Snellings.

Snellings walks up to Captain Pillard, whispers in his ear.

INT. VIDEO ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Snellings, Captain Pillard and Scooter file into the small room. Det. Fano is already seated, he plays a VIDEO.

FANO

Snellings and I contacted Jackson-Evers International and BWI in Baltimore. They both emailed us copies of surveillance video.

SNELLINGS

There he is right there. Guess he wasn't lying.

The video shows Jessico leaving and exiting the airport, luggage in hand. It also shows him boarding the plane.

SNELLINGS

Flight itinerary, car rental, etcetera, etcetera. Everything checks out. There's no way he could of murdered Claire or William. Not when he was a thousand miles away.

SCOOTER

Did you speak to the grandparents?

FANO

Jessico's grandparents died years ago. When he said that he went to go visit them, he was probably talking about their graves.

(MORE)

FANO (CONT'D)

(beat)

Sorry, Chief.

Scooter shakes his head in disbelief. Disgusted, Captain Pillard just gets up and storms out.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SCOOTER'S CAR - DAY

Scooter drives. His eyes stay straight ahead, like he's in deep thought. Moments later he looks out the window. He spots a couple of KIDS playing in a sea of COTTON FIELDS. A smile comes over his face.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CEMETARY - DAY

Establishing - We see Scooter as he kneels down over a grave plot. After a moment, he stands, walks to his car.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SCOOTER'S KICHEN - NIGHT

Scooter sits at the table. He peers down at his RETIREMENT PAPERS. Yvonne walks up behind him. She rubs his shoulders, kisses his cheek.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. PILLARD'S OFFICE - THE NEXT DAY

Pillard sits at his desk and reviews paperwork.

A KNOCK at the door.

Scooter walks in with filled out retirement papers. He lays them on Pillard's desk. Pillard looks them over.

PILLARD

You sure this is what you want,
Scooter?

SCOOTER

I don't know, Captain. Do I really
have a choice?

Scooter turns and walks out.

INT. EARL HOME - TESLA'S ROOM - AFTERNOON

CHYRON: A MONTH LATER

It's a room with nothing but a BED, a DRESSER, and a TV. Tesla lounges on her bed. She's got a small, pink ACOUSTIC GUITAR on her lap. She puts stickers on it while she talks on the phone.

TESLA
(on the phone)
I love it!

CUT TO:

INT. SCOOTER'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Scooter is in the front passenger's seat on the phone. Through the window, we see Det. Fano standing by a parked car, writing a ticket.

SCOOTER
You gotta keep practicin' though.
How many chords have we learned so far?

TESLA (O.S.)
(on the phone)
Four.

SCOOTER
You should be able to play a whole song by now.

INTERCUT BETWEEN SCOOTER'S CAR AND TESLA'S ROOM

TESLA
When are you gonna come see me again?

SCOOTER
I was thinkin' maybe next week. We can take a bus trip. Spend the whole day watchin' the cotton fields go by.

TESLA
...and I can bring my guitar!

SCOOTER
Sounds like a plan.

TESLA

Mr. Higgins, you mind if I call you
Scooter from now on?

SCOOTER

Of course. Whatever you want,
Sweetie. Why'd you ask me that?

TESLA

The one day you came and saw me at
that place. You said your friends
call you Scooter. We're friends
now, right?

Scooter thinks for a moment, smiles.

SCOOTER

Yeah, we're friends now.

Scooter hangs up. He's visibly moved. The car that was
stopped for a ticket zooms off. Det. Fano walks up, leans in
the window.

FANO

What time is it?

Scooter looks at the clock.

SCOOTER

Five forty seven, why?

Det. Fano jumps in the car.

FANO

We're gonna be late!

SCOOTER

Late for what?

INT. THE BOOGIE LOUNGE - NIGHT

Det. Fano has Scooter's eyes covered as they shuffle through
the front door. Det. Fano takes his hand away.

EVERYBODY

Surprise!

We move around to find A HANDFUL OF SCOOTER'S COWORKERS,
SNELLINGS, CAPTAIN PILLARD, YVONNE AND HEIDY standing with a
bar full of PATRONS. BALLOONS and A big colorful SIGN, WE
WILL MISS YOU SCOOTER, hangs from the ceiling.

SCOOTER

A retirement party?

FANO

It was Yvonne's idea.

Yvonne walks up to Scooter. She kisses him on the lips.

SCOOTER

You didn't have to do this.

YVONNE

My turn to pay up, blues man.

Yvonne grabs his hand and pulls him away into the crowd.

SERIES OF SHOTS

Scooter and Yvonne dance close, as well as other COUPLES, while a BLUES BAND plays on stage.

Scooter sulks at a table, while Det. Fano, Snellings, Capt. Pillard and other COWORKERS laugh and mingle. He tries to push out a smile.

Yvonne, Heidy and other BARTENDERS serve drinks to the crowd.

Snellings dances on top of one of the tables while music plays in the background. He's a little tipsy. Captain Pillard pulls him down. Everybody laughs, but Scooter.

LATER

Scooter exits the bathroom. He runs into Yvonne.

YVONNE

Hey, when are you gonna get up and do a number?

SCOOTER

I think I'm gonna get out of here.

YVONNE

Come on! You haven't sang all night!

SCOOTER

All of this is a little too much for me.

YVONNE

Scooter Higgins, if you think I'm gonna let you walk out of here without gettin' on that stage, you done lost your mind.

Yvonne grabs his hand.

SCOOTER
Not tonight.

YVONNE
Come on.

Yvonne drags him through the crowd and up on stage. She steps to the mic.

YVONNE
Okay, quiet it down. My friend
Scooter here is gonna sing y'all a
song.

She grabs a nearby GUITAR. Hands it to him. A BACK UP BAND is already on stage. Scooter walks up to the mic.

SCOOTER
Mind if I take up a little bit of
your time?

Everybody cheers him on. Yvonne takes her seat. Scooter puts the guitar strap around his neck.

SCOOTER
I wanna dedicate this tune to my
daughter, Miranda. I done sung a
lot of good songs in my day. This
one was always her favorite, even
though I didn't write it. Much love
to the late, great Z.Z. Hill. The
name of this song is called Down
Home Blues, y'all.

Scooter breaks into the song. The back up band rumbles in.

SCOOTER
(singing)
*She said your party's jumpin' and
everybody's havin' a good time.
Now you know what's goin' through
my mind. Do you mind if I get
comfortable and kick off these
shoes? While you're fixin' me a
drink, play me some of them down
home blues.*

Everybody in the club stands to their feet and grooves to it.

SCOOTER
(singing)
*She say I don't get out much on the
town. And you know I done cut out a
lot of that runnin' around.*
(MORE)

SCOOTER (CONT'D)

All week long I've been keepin' my cool, but tonight I'm gonna let my hair down and get down with these down home blues.

When he breaks into the chorus, everybody in the club sings along. Scooter is like a king on stage. He's got them in the palm of his hands. Yvonne stands and watches, proud.

LATER

Scooter is at the BAR with Det. Fano. Heidy walks up.

HEIDY

What do you want to drink, church boy? Water?

FANO

Sounds good.

HEIDY

What about you Scooter?

SCOOTER

I'll have the same.

Heidy grabs drinks.

SCOOTER

Look, I just want to say thanks.

FANO

For what?

SCOOTER

For puttin' up with me for all these years. I know I was a pain sometimes, but--

FANO

Listen Chief, when I tore my quad, I thought my life was over. You made me believe that I was good at something else other than playing ball. You taught me everything I know. Don't worry about it.

SCOOTER

I just want you to know that I told Captain Pillard that you should be the one to take over not Snellings.

FANO

I don't want your job, Chief. I've still got a lot to learn.

SCOOTER

You're a good cop, Fano. Most importantly, you're a decent man. Never forget that.

FANO

I won't.

Scooter's cell phone RINGS. He whips it out.

SCOOTER

Guess I'll take this outside.

EXT. THE BOOGIE LOUNGE - MOMENTS LATER

Scooter steps outside.

SCOOTER

(on the phone)

Hello.

JESSICO (O.S.)

(on the phone)

Hello, Sylvester!

Scooter's eyes widen.

SCOOTER

What do you want?

JESSICO (O.S.)

You know as well as I do how fast word travels around Yazoo County. I was just calling to extend my congrats on your early retirement.

SCOOTER

Let's get one thing clear. I don't care what those videos show. I know you killed that little girl's parents.

JESSICO (O.S.)

Oh, do we have to go through this again, Sylvester? You're going to drive me mad, make me pluck my other eye out.

SCOOTER

How did you lose your eye?

JESSICO (O.S.)

Cancer.

(beat)

Now, back to our little tit for tat. You win. I give in. I'll play your little game if you want to, but first I have to ask one more question.

SCOOTER

What's that?

JESSICO (O.S.)

Just how can a man be in two places at one time?

SCOOTER

He can't.

JESSICO (O.S.)

Oh, but he can! Good day, Chief Higgins. Send my love to Tesla Redgrave. Claire always said she was a wonderful little girl. Hope I get a chance to meet her one day.

Scooter is shocked, speechless.

INT. THE BOOGIE LOUNGE - MOMENTS LATER

Scooter walks in. He looks pissed. Snellings is on stage. He's a little drunk.

SNELLINGS

(to the crowd)

There he is! There's the man of the hour. Come on up here! These folks wanna here a good bye speech. Don't you folks wanna here a goodbye speech?

Snellings eggs the crowd on. They cheer as Scooter hesitantly walks up on stage. Snellings takes a seat.

STAGE

Scooter walks up to the mic. He tries to hold it together. Tries to find the right words to say.

SCOOTER

My mama, God rest her soul, was a heroin addict for most of her life. I didn't know my daddy at all.

(MORE)

SCOOTER (CONT'D)

The one thing that I knew about him was that he was a cop. A damn good one. When I was a little boy, I would close my eyes and imagine what he would be like as a father. Somehow, the picture in my head always came out perfect. A friend of mine once said that I have a way about me that makes people feel safe. I make them feel like they don't have to be perfect. I wasn't much good at bein' a husband. Wasn't much of a father either, but the two things I was always good at was playin' the blues and wearin' this badge. At the end of the day, why should a man have to suffer, because he refuses to choose between the two things he loves the most, even if that makes me imperfect? You know what? I don't wanna choose no more.

Scooter walks off stage to a round of applause.

CAPTAIN PILLARD'S TABLE

Scooter approaches Captain Pillard. Det. Fano, Snellings and a COUPLE OF COWORKERS are seated.

SCOOTER (CONT'D)

Captain, I'm not ready to retire yet.

SNELLINGS

What?

PILLARD

You sure about this, Scooter?

SCOOTER

A little girl is countin' on me to find the person who murdered her folks, and that's what I intend to do.

Pillard studies Scooter's eyes. He knows he's serious.

PILLARD

Scooter, I get it. Come by my office next week. We'll figure it all out.

Scooter walks away.

SNELLINGS

...but Captain, you promised!

PILLARD

Oh, shut up and drink your beer,
Snellings.

Snellings slams his beer down on the table and storms off,
disappearing into the crowd of people.

EXT. THE BOOGIE LOUNGE - MOMENTS LATER

Scooter bolts out the door. Yvonne runs out after him.

YVONNE

Hey, blues man, where you goin'?

SCOOTER

To visit a friend.

Scooter heads to his car.

EXT. EARL HOME - NIGHT

Scooter KNOCKS on the front door. Judy answers.

JUDY

Chief Higgins, what a surprise! Is
somethin' wrong?

SCOOTER

No ma'am. Is Tesla still awake?

JUDY

I think so. Come on in.

INT. EARL HOME - TESLA'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Tesla sits on her bed and colors in a COLORING BOOK.

A KNOCK AT THE DOOR

Scooter and Judy walk in.

JUDY

Look who I found!

TESLA

Scooter!

She runs over to him, hugs him close.

JUDY

I'll leave you two alone.

Judy walks out and shuts the door. Scooter and Tesla sit on the bed next to each other.

TESLA

It's kinda late for a guitar lesson, don't you think?

SCOOTER

That's what I came to talk to you about. You see, I was thinkin' that you're gonna have to do a lot of practicin' in order to get good enough to go on tour with Taylor Swift.

TESLA

I'll practice everyday, I promise.

SCOOTER

Yeah, Sweetie, but I was thinkin' we could get a little extra practicin' time in.

TESLA

How?

SCOOTER

What would you say if I made it where you could come live with me?

TESLA

You mean you'd be my new foster dad?

SCOOTER

Well, yeah. Just until you found some place permanent.

TESLA

Could I have my own room with lots of pink stuff?

SCOOTER

Every shade of pink you could imagine!

TESLA

Do I have to eat carrots? Judy and Mike make me eat carrots every day. I mean, do I look like a rabbit?

Scooter smiles.

SCOOTER

Got it! No carrots.

Tesla thinks for a moments, shrugs.

TESLA
(nonchalantly)
I guess so.

SCOOTER
I'll call Mrs. Sandlin first thing
tomorrow mornin'.

Scooter wraps his arms around her, hugs her close.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SCOOTER'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

CHYRON: A COUPLE WEEKS LATER

Scooter's on the sofa. He peers down at his CELL PHONE, scrolls through contacts, stopping on Miranda's number.

He ponders for a moment. Should he call? Finally, he musters up the courage, calls. Moments later-- THIS NUMBER HAS BEEN DISCONNECTED. Scooter tosses his phone on the sofa, discouraged.

INT. TESLA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Scooter peeks in. Tesla is sprawled out on the bed sound asleep. The room is covered in PINK.

The TV plays in the background. Scooter walks up to her, notices a DVD case in her hand. He grabs it.

SCOOTER
(reading)
Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure?
Way to go Yvonne.

Scooter carefully covers her little body with the pink bedspread, kisses her on the forehead. He sets the DVD case on the night stand, tip-toes out quietly.

INT. GARAGE - MOMENTS LATER

Scooter hits the lights. He's got an ELECTRIC GUITAR in one hand and a BOTTLE OF WHISKY in the other.

He takes a seat in a chair next to an old, dusty AMP. He flicks it on, plugs the guitar in.

He slips a GUITAR SLIDE TUBE on his finger, takes a swig of whiskey.

Scooter plays. He takes his time with it. Every moment, slow and melodious. The vibrating of the strings as he skips from note to note echo all around him.

Scooter closes his eyes, lets the music overtake his fingers.

His face seems at peace. This is where he feels home.

Just him and his guitar. Blues at its finest.

CUT TO:

INT. TESLA'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Tesla lays asleep in bed. She seems at peace once again, her chest rising and falling with each breath.

Scooter's guitar emanates softly in the background.

As we push closer to Tesla, we stop on her BEDROOM WINDOW. The silhouette of a MAN standing outside watching her as she sleeps.

It is The Man in Black. We slowly move up revealing him to be Jessico Chambers.

FADE TO BLACK