

CRY BABY CREEK

Written by

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INT. GAMBOA LIVING ROOM - DAY

WENDY GAMBOA is a deceptively pretty woman at fifteen feet, attractive at ten, mediocre at three. She peers out of the window into the light but more than drizzling rain. No thunder. No lightening. Just rain. Her eyes do not blink. She watches from the couch, leaning forward after having settled into a position of comfort. Her child stands at the edge of the couch, reaching for her mother. Wendy doesn't notice her.

EXT. EVENING

The rain has stopped but the dreariness remains. The day is darker. The CREEK is high. The BRIDGE is wet. The YARD is full of puddles.

INT. GAMBOA LIVING ROOM

Wendy has fallen asleep in the same position and is startled by the BANG sound of the closing door.

ALBERTO GAMBOA stands at the door, looking pitifully at Wendy. Alberto is Hispanic, handsome in a man's man way, polite eyes, and ten years younger than he looks.

Wendy's pride doesn't allow the pity offered by Alberto's face.

WENDY

It's been raining. They hate to drive in the rain. Mom wouldn't let daddy come without her and ain't no way mom is getting out in this rain. Ain't no way. She had a wreck one time in the rain. You remember when she had that wreck? I don't blame her at all if she's not up to driving in this mess. Don't blame her at all.

(pause)

And daddy'd be crazy to let 'er.

Alberto visibly supports her reasoning, trying to remove the lingering trace of pity.

The baby CRIES from another room. Nobody moves.

WENDY (CONT'D)

Haven's crying, Alberto. Can you get the baby? She's crying.

INT. BABY'S ROOM

Alberto attempts to comfort the baby. He leans back and we see-

-Wendy leaning against the doorway.

WENDY

The rain stopped so they'll probably come out later on. Daddy's gonna want coffee, Alberto, do we have coffee? It stopped raining. They're gonna want coffee. Not so much mamma but I know daddy's gonna be mighty disappointed if he gets all the way out here and we don't have coffee ready. Do we have coffee, Alberto?

ALBERTO

We have coffee.

WENDY

Can you make sure Daddy has coffee when he gets her? He likes coffee and I just want to make sure he has-

ALBERTO

I will have the coffee.

Wendy doesn't respond. She doesn't hear him. She's talking to be talking.

WENDY

We have coffee?

ALBERTO

We have coffee.

INT. GAMBOA LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Wendy is asleep. Alberto comes from behind to put a cover over her.

She awakens and pushes the cover away.

She gets off the couch and stumbles sleepily to the bed.

WENDY

Maybe it won't be raining tomorrow.

INT. GAMBOA BEDROOM

Wendy is asleep in the well lit room. We hear a BABY and Wendy's eyes open but she doesn't change her position.

The BABY giggles, Wendy rolls over to see-

-HAVEN playing on the bed. Wendy smiles and reaches out to touch her baby girl. Haven responds with laughter.

Wendy rolls her head back towards the window. Her smile fades. The RAIN DROPLETS trickle down the pane.

INT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

Wendy puts a can in her shopping cart after reading the label. As in direct contrast to her demeanor at home, Wendy walks with confidence and pride.

SUPERIMPOSE: South Carolina, 1952

WENDY

Hello, Mrs. Johnson.

Mrs. Johnson did not initiate the hello. Startled yet perplexed, she does not return it, either.

Wendy bumps into another buggy at the corner and relaxes into a pleasant stance.

WENDY (CONT'D)

Why Miss Clara, I was just talking
about you the other-

Miss Clara walks away.

Wendy brushes this off with a prideful smile and moves forward to the check out line.

A woman in front of her glances up and down over her shoulder.

Wendy smiles, again seemingly not noticing the condescending overtones.

A man in a store smock comes through the line.

MR. SELLERS

(smiling, greeting)

Excuse me. Hello. Pardon me.

Hello Mrs. Burr. Excuse me.

(reaching Wendy)

(MORE)

MR. SELLERS (CONT'D)

I thought we had talked about this,
Wendy.

WENDY

Hello daddy. I thought since I was
in town I could pick up a couple of
things and Haven could see her pa-
pa-

MR. SELLERS

(looking down at Haven,
then back to Wendy)
Wendy, please. I thought you
understood what I was saying.

WENDY

Tell Pa-pa hello Haven. She ain't
talkin' yet but she'll try to make
sounds for fish. Alberto says her
first word is gonna be fish and
we're just gonna have to keep
cookin' fish every night if we ask
her what she wants for dinner
'cause that'll be the only thing
she'll know how to say. Wish her
first words were steak and
potatoes, but fish ain't so bad-

Mr. Sellers takes the couple of items out of the buggy, lifts
the baby basket and

-- leads Wendy through the line and out the front door.

EXT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

Mr. Sellers opens the door.

MR. SELLERS

I love you, honey. But please. I
have to do business here. You do
what I told you and call me to let
me know what you need and I'll send
Shorty up with the truck. He'll
bring you whatever you need.

He puts Haven and the groceries in the back seat.

WENDY

It's okay, daddy. I was just gettin' a couple of things and I know how you'd love to see Haven 'cause you haven't seen her since a week after she was born. She'll be a year old next month daddy.

MR. SELLERS

(looking around)
Drive careful. I'll see you soon.

WENDY

Where were you yesterday? You said you would come out to the house. I waited all day. Haven waited all day.

MR. SELLERS

Out to the house? Out there? You only hear what you want to hear, Wendy. We talked about this. Call me and I'll send Shorty out with whatever you need.

Mr. Sellers walks back into the store briskly.

Wendy sits in the front seat, holds back a few tears, wipes her face and reaches out to pull the door shut.

The door shuts from the outside by the HANDS of Deputy GAGE THOMAS. He carries the uniform and attitude it takes to hold up a small town deputy badge. Even if we thought his face could muster a smile, we know it would never be sincere.

He looks at HAVEN for a few seconds.

He gives Wendy the same amount of time in staring silence.

DEPUTY GAGE THOMAS

Good morning, Wendy. What brings you back to town.

WENDY

Morning, Gage. I was just pickin' up a few things for the house.

DEPUTY GAGE THOMAS

House? That wetback moved you out of that shack and into a real house?

(looking back towards the store)

(MORE)

DEPUTY GAGE THOMAS (CONT'D)

Guess you mighth've come down at a bad time.

WENDY

Assholes. All of them assholes and my daddy has to do what he has to do but that don't make him any less an asshole than everybody else.

DEPUTY GAGE THOMAS

This town is full of good people who are protective of their own. You know your daddy is a smart man. You ought to listen to him. He only wants the best for you and your baby, but the best sure as hell ain't livin' up in those woods with that 'spic. You know that ain't the best. This ain't I Love Lucy. You ain't Lucy and that corn nigger sure as hell ain't Ricky Ricardo.

WENDY

Go to hell, Gage.

DEPUTY GAGE THOMAS

You don't listen, Wendy. Like your daddy said, you only hear what you want to hear. Maybe you should let somebody else do the listenin' for you.

Wendy car sputters once, then starts on the second try.

She doesn't acknowledge Gage as she drives away.

Deputy Gage watches as she leaves the parking lot.

EXT. GAMBOA HOUSE - LATE EVENING

Alberto looks up from fixing a tractor to see --

Wendy slide feverishly into the dirt area that serves as the driveway.

The house is sound at best, and looks like somewhere people would move out of as soon as they could. The main yard area is dirty with patches of crab grass leading to the edge of the woods.

Alberto watches as --

-- Wendy carries Haven in, slamming the screen door, and then
--

-- returns to get the handful of groceries from the back
seat.

She drops a something, reaches to get it and drops something
else.

She kicks the something in frustration.

ALBERTO
¿Necesita ayuda?

She doesn't hear him.

Wendy stomps back into the house.

Alberto goes back to what he was doing.

INT. GAMBOA KITCHEN - NIGHT

Alberto picks the glass up from the floor.

A child is SCREAMING as Wendy walks throughout the house (we
only see her legs) --

-- stepping over Alberto to --

-- get something out of the cabinets and drawers.

He continues to pick up the glass, seemingly oblivious to
Wendy's campaign to get out of the house as fast as she can.

The door SLAMS and he drops his head and stands. He places
the glass neatly on the table.

EXT. GAMBOA DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Wendy turns the key, pumps the gas and --

-- tries to calm herself and the crying baby. The car does
not start.

She tries again and begins to shake before --

-- putting her head against the wheel.

Alberto taps on the window.

Wendy rolls it down reluctantly. His English is passable,
but not great.

ALBERTO
(in conversational at best
English)
Stay. Please stay at me.

WENDY
You don't say it right, Alberto.
You don't know you don't say it
right but you don't. You can never
be something you ain't. You can
never say something you can't. It's
not about you, Alberto. It's about
us. Our family. Haven. There's
nothing you can do about who you
are. About what you are. About
what those people think we are.
Haven deserves better than what
we've given her. I know you know
that.

ALBERTO
Please.

Haven cries.

Alberto looks back to her.

ALBERTO (CONT'D)
Please, Wendy. You both are my
life. We have good life here. We
have our family here.

WENDY
(she puts her hand on
Alberto's face)
My life is not what I wanted it to
be, Alberto. It's not what I
wanted our daughter's life to be.
I'm sorry.

Wendy rubs her face and sobs quietly.

She rolls the window back up.

Alberto walks away from the window and we hear the HOOD
RAISE.

The hood SLAMS shut.

Alberto stands once again at the window, but this time Wendy
does not roll it down. They look at each other through the
rain running down the window.

She starts the car and drives away.

Alberto watches only briefly before --
 -- turning to go back in the house.

INT. WENDY'S CAR

The car's headlights light the road directly in front of Wendy. She drives through the low hanging trees down the small road. Haven's cries have subsided.

WENDY

We're gonna be fine baby girl.
 Fine. We're gonna go work for
 grandpa. You have a Papa that's
 gonna love you and me and we're
 gonna go work for him and everyone
 will love us again. Mommy will
 find a nice man from town from a
 good family. He'll be white and
 (she muffles a cry)
 And he'll love you like you're his
 own and we'll be happy again. You
 just wait we'll get you a pretty
 dress and go to church. You're
 gonna sit with your grandpa and
 he'll look around at all the people
 in the church and smile and say
 "that's my grand daughter and my
 baby girl."

The ROAD in front of her is hard to see. The rain is light but the trees cover whatever moonlight would be there to help and the headlights can't see much but the imposing tree branches.

There's a BRANCH in the road and she swerves to miss it.

She corrects the direction.

WENDY (CONT'D)

"She's married to the most handsome
 man in town. What's that? Why,
 yes, they are expecting again thank
 you very much."

She's almost convinced herself to believe it before she screams with denial.

The car jerks one more time and Haven begins to CRY again.

WENDY (CONT'D)

Don't cry baby. We'll be at Pa-
 pa's before you know it. Don't c-

The CURVE surprises Wendy.

She pulls the wheel hard to the right but the bulky car continues but then she is --

-- surprised by the quick glimpse of the metal of a car parked on the other side of the bridge.

The car crashes through the railing of the bridge and --

-- into the creek. The water reaches just below the top of the door.

NO SOUND DURING A SEQUENCE OF --

1) Alberto looks out the window.

2) Wendy cries as she pushes during the deliver of Haven.

3) Alberto holds her HAND tightly during delivery.

4)- Gage watched her car pull away from the grocery store.

Wendy wakes up, not yet having her mind to consider the water pouring into the car.

Haven is CRYING.

Wendy rubs her face, trying to wake herself up and let her mind take in her situation.

She turns to get Haven but --

-- Haven isn't there.

Wendy frantically slams her hands in the water and sloshes around.

Haven CRIES again, but from a slight distance.

Wendy looks at the BROKEN WINDOWS, then through them to the CREEK.

She scrambles out of the car.

She lumbers through the water and --

-- comes to stop waist deep towards the bank.

She closes her EYES as all the sound is sucked from around her.

WENDY (CONT'D)
 Cry baby. Please cry. Mommy needs
 to hear you. Mommy. Needs. Mommy
 needs to. Crycrycrycrycry.

A small CRY and Wendy lunges forward towards the bank.
 Her feet pound on the first and second ROCK, but they're wet.
 Wendy falls.

Her head hits the ROCK and she rolls towards the bank.
 She can still hear her baby CRYING as she begins to lose
 consciousness.

A shadow stands on the other side of the creek.

WENDY (CONT'D)
 (drowsy)
 Have you seen my baby? Help me
 find my baby.

DARKNESS

EXT. BRIDGE - NIGHT

DEPUTY GAGE THOMAS
 (voice only)
 Wendy. Wendy.

Wendy's EYES flicker open.

Deputy Gage Thomas is lit by the lights of the emergency
 vehicles already on the road before the bridge.

Wendy's face is caked with mud. She's soaked from the rain
 and the creek.

She leaps to her feet.

WENDY
 HAVEN! WHERE'S HAVEN?!

DEPUTY GAGE THOMAS
 Wendy. You need to sit down.
 Vernon's on his way and he told me
 to make sure you stay sitting down.

WENDY
 (frantically)
 WHERE'S MY BABY? MY BABY WAS IN
 THE CAR. HAVEN IS OUT HE-

DEPUTY GAGE THOMAS

The rain's made the creek run a little quicker and you know damn well this creek runs fast anyway. What the hell were you thinkin' drivin' like that in the middle of the night?

Wendy starts walking up the edge of the creek.

She rifles through brush and branches in and out of the water.

She stands to walk the other way.

DEPUTY GAGE THOMAS (CONT'D)

Wendy.

(grabbing her)

WENDY! Your baby is gone. You know that. We'll do our best but you know ain't nobody ever gonna find her out here.

(relaxing his grip on her arms, somber)

Maybe this is where you start again, Wendy. Start over, Wendy.

(leaning forward, putting his HAND on her STOMACH)

You're young enough, Wendy. Young enough to make something a little better than what you did.

Wendy pushes away and SLAPS Gage. He shows no sign of regret other than maybe picking the wrong time to say it.

DEPUTY GAGE THOMAS (CONT'D)

I know you're knee deep in stress right n-

She SLAPS him again. His regret turns to respectful restraint.

WENDY

Help me find my baby.

She walks away, leaving Gage standing on the bank.

He turns to watch --

-- Wendy search the edges of the creek.

DEPUTY ONE

Find anything, Gage?

DEPUTY GAGE THOMAS

We ain't gonna find nothin' out here. She ain't gonna find nothin'. Ain't nothin' to find.

MONTAGE

While the images of others drift away, Wendy's figure is constant and never loses position.

1) A search party of about 30 people searches the banks of the creek. Most are volunteers, some are policeman, one has a dog.

2) The party is about half the size. The dog is gone. No more policeman. Wendy is of course the most eager.

3) The party is only a handful of people. Wendy's eagerness is not diminished, even if the others are walking a little slower.

4) Wendy stands motionless in the creek. She puts her face in her hands and sobs.

EXT. THE WOODS - EVENING

Alberto's MUDDY BOOTS. The bottom's of his pant legs are caked with dried mud. He's kneeling beside a tree.

He rises and grabs the tree to help him down the incline but is startled by --

DEPUTY GAGE THOMAS

Don't do it, Alberto.

Alberto looks up to --

-- Gage standing a few feet behind him, look down at the creek.

DEPUTY GAGE THOMAS (CONT'D)

Don't you go down there. Keep doing what you do when she can't see you.

(steps forward)

But you know as well as I do that you ain't ever gonna find that baby. She ain't never gonna find that baby.

ALBERTO

Haven. Her name is Haven.

DEPUTY GAGE THOMAS

Doesn't matter anymore, does it?
 It's gonna look real pretty on a
 tombstone. Haven. You gonna buy
 that tombstone? No. They don't
 take pesos. Or chickens. Or goats.
 Wendy's white daddy is gonna get
 that tombstone. They might let you
 dig the hole.

(steps up very close to
 Alberto)

When you're digging that hole.
 When they lower that empty casket
 down to that cold earth. I want
 you to remember you did this. You
 did this to Wendy. You did this to
 that little girl. You don't ever
 forget that, *Alberto* [in mocking,
 disgusted Spanglish].

EXT. BRIDGE - NIGHT

Wendy's FEET step onto the RAILING of the bridge.

The ROPE slides with her movements.

Wendy's EYES are wide open as she listens in the night.

WENDY

Cry for mommy my baby. Please cry.

She listens. The reality weighs down her face like an iron
 hanging from the cord.

She jumps. She fights the ROPE, her HANDS grasping at it.

She shakes less. Even less. No shaking.

Her body swings side to side.

Her TOES barely touching the surface of the creek.

The sound of a baby CRYING causes Wendy's almost dead eyes to
 open as far as they can.

WENDY (CONT'D)

(whispering)

Haven.

She closes her EYES.

She swings so slightly back and forth. The sound of the woods - the RUSHING WATER, BIRDS, tree limbs BRUSHING TOGETHER.

The sound of a baby CRYING, and --

-- Wendy opens her eyes again.

ALL BLACK

EXT. GATE - NIGHT

The LIGHT from a flashlight jerks haphazardly around a rusted GATE designed to keep out cars from a weed covered road.

EMILY

They never found the baby?

CRAIG

No. She died looking for it. Just keeps crying. That's why they call it Cry Baby Creek. And sometimes they say you can see the mamma looking for it.

EMILY

Who's they?

CRAIG

(waving hand in the air)
They.

ALEXANDER

Raccoons probably ate it. Raccoons will eat anything you put in front of 'em. My grandpa and me saw a deer on the side of the road goin' to town one time and on the way back wat'n nothing left but the horns and hooves. They'd eat a baby in nothing flat.

ELAINE

Gross. Really gross. And I don't think raccoons eat deer meat.

CRAIG

My dad was down here 20 years ago and he said he heard the baby crying. He thought he saw something in the creek but couldn't make it out. She killed herself with a rope.

ALEXANDER

I thought her husband killed her.

CRAIG

Na, that's what they say. But they always say things like that. It's the sign of a good tragedy when somebody is supposed to have murdered somebody. Makes the story more interesting when somebody killed somebody, even if the didn't.

EMILY

Who's they?

CRAIG

I told you who they was. Answer ain't gonna be any different.

They walk a little further.

The girls hold to each other tighter while boys goof around.

Craig stops them all with an outstretched ARM and --

-- shines his light into the darkness of the WOODS. Nobody says anything right away.

EMILY

Craig, what are you doing?

CRAIG

I thought I heard something.

They all stand motionless.

The light shines out into the WOODS.

WOODS POV: The light dances around from the direction of the visitors. A figure moves back into the darkness.

ELAINE

(pushing Craig)

Dumbass. You're just trying to scare us.

They move forward.

Craig pushes forward with the flashlight.

CRAIG

Did it work?

EXT. BRIDGE

They all stand on the right side of the bridge, looking down to the CREEK. The tree covered walk to the bridge does not prepare one for the moonlit openness of the bridge and creek area. Besides the decrepit bridge, the clearing could almost pass as a camping site. It has beauty in the night that is lost in the day.

EMILY

This is where she killed her baby?

ALEXANDER

Yes. They said she drown her after wrecking her car.

CRAIG

She didn't. Goes back to the whole murder thing and how ghost stories need it. Nobody killed anybody.

ELAINE

What happened to her.

Craig has already started walking off to the other side of the bridge.

CRAIG

She hung herself. They say she hangs herself on some nights. Over and over. Just keeps hanging herself whenever she can't find her baby. Then she gets back up and tries it again.

ELAINE

Who says that?

CRAIG

Your mamma.

Craig shines his light down the INCLINE before --

-- half sliding and half climbing down. It's steep, and rocky, but not unmanageable.

One of his FEET hit the water and --

-- he pulls it out quickly.

He scans the UNDERBELLY of the bridge from the creek up.

RUBBLE. Big rock, little rock, medium sized rocks. Dirt. Twisted metal and concrete that's fallen from the bridge over time.

He reads the graffiti: Terry Loves Pudge. Class of 1990. Bubbles Was Here.

He eyeballs a few PIPES sticking out of the rubble and --
-- navigates (slides/climbs) over to them.

The wind catches the pipes like the sound of a jug.

Rubbing his HAND back and forth over the top interrupts the slight baby sounding howl.

He smiles, almost laughing to himself.

He notices the ROPE on the rocks.

He follows the rope with his flashlight to see that it leads into the dark underbelly where --

-- the bridge meets the dirt, but is too dark to see what's there.

He rearranges himself to attempt to move up to the dark area, but stops as the rope moves.

He watches the ROPE intently.

He follows the rope with the flashlight again, but it has moved. His light doesn't make it to the end of the rope before he --

-- the faint SPLASH of water.

He drops the flashlight and --

-- fumbles picking it up. He doesn't know where to point it, so he slows down.

About midway of his scan, the face of Wendy stands there looking perplexed.

WENDY

Have you seen my baby?

She has the body of a woman that's been dead for 44 years. A quick eye would give the impression of an old woman, but a closer look reminds you that she was a young woman when her body stopped aging. The age now is after blood has quit flowing and the heart has quit beating. This is the age of mold and mildew and gravity and mud.

She's frightening to look at, but quite human in appearance and not angry or exceptionally aggressive looking.

Craig turns and scrambles up the incline.

Wendy, almost anticipating his run, scrambles to follow behind him but running higher on the incline to try and head him off.

WENDY (CONT'D)

My baby was here. You must have seen her.

Craig turns to face her as if he'll need to defend himself as he --

-- continues climbing the incline backwards.

He slips, bangs his HEAD on a rock and goes unconscious.

Wendy positions herself over Craig, never touching him.

WENDY (CONT'D)

How far did you look? How far did you go up the creek? Did you get as far as the Beaver Pond? The creek flows fast so you probably didn't go far enough.

(looking around, as if to herself)

And the night can make sounds that you shouldn't hear but can.

(back to Craig)

How far did you go?

Wendy realizes Craig can offer no help.

She looks up to see others. She --

-- pounces over the lifeless body of Craig, scrambling --

-- up the incline. She arrives at the top.

She can barely make out the figures of the others running up the road.

She watches the road for what seems like minutes. Nobody comes back.

She looks back down at the body of Craig.

Wendy stands at the edge of the bridge.

She looks up the CREEK.

She looks down the CREEK.

She closes here eyes and tilts her head to listen to the sounds in the air.

Wendy jumps again.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

A man looks over papers taken from a manila folder lying open on his desk.

He picks up one paper, puts it down, rifles through to find another and does the same.

He leans back in his chair as he --

-- looks at BETHANY WALLACE. She's young, but something seems distant about the way she holds her face and body. She's not the prettiest girl in the room, but she would warrant at least a passing glance in the grocery store.

MR. KITTLE

This is where you're from. You asked for this because this is where you're from.

BETHANY

Yes, sir.

MR. KITTLE

Did you know this family?

BETHANY

I knew of them. I wouldn't say I know them. It's a small town, everybody knows everybody, even if it's just of. You run into everybody at one point or another at least once. I knew of them. Of.

He leans forward again. Working his fingers with each other. Looking at Bethany. Back down at the paperwork. Back up to Bethany.

MR. KITTLE

You're good at this. You've had two paperwork cases and you've done exceptionally well with both. We usually let our investigator's do a few of those before bumping them up. But you're showing potential and I like that.

BETHANY

Thank you. I may have taken too much time to come to the conclu-

MR. KITTLE

This is a death case, Bethany. A kid's death case. Your first case was a traffic accident for an ambulance chaser and your second was a work comp claim about a guy that got his hand caught in a meat cutter.

BETHANY

I'm aware that this is a death investigation, and I'm-

MR. KITTLE

And you're gonna have people you might know wanting answers you might not can give them. If they think you know them, and if they think you have some sort of town bond, they think they can get a different answer than what there is. These people will trust you to find what they want you to find.

He leans back in his chair and --

-- taps his pencil on the desk.

He studies her.

Bethany never looks away, but we can feel the awkwardness that begins to envelope here.

MR. KITTLE (CONT'D)

Are you sure it's not too soon? You still have a week left on your maternity-

BETHANY

-Medical-

MR. KITTLE

-Medical leave. I wasn't excited about you coming back early. In fact, I had hoped you would've accepted my offer of another week on the end of your regular leave.

BETHANY

I'm ready to get back to work, Mr. Kittle. I know it's early for a case like this but you know I can do it.

MR. KITTLE

I wasn't excited about you coming back this early.

BETHANY

I would really like this assignment. I really need this assignment.

MR. KITTLE

What does Mark think about this.

Bethany becomes visibly astute. Her face repositions.

BETHANY

I'm not sure how that's relevant.

MR. KITTLE

Don't make this something personal. Don't drag this family through a bloody creek bed to get closure on your personal and family issues. I like you, Bethany, it hurt me deeply when you had to go through what you went through.

BETHANY

I'm sorry for your pain.

MR. KITTLE

(calming himself)

I like you. In the end, this is a business. I'm not running on-the-job therapy here.

Bethany rises.

MR. KITTLE (CONT'D)

I was trying to be nice. It hurt me to watch you go through that. I was just saying I care about you and Mark.

(he leans forward, begins filling out paperwork)

Talk to him. Talk to Mark about it.

Bethany stops just as she's about to exit and looks half over her shoulder.

BETHANY

Thank you, Mr. Kittle.

She leaves the room.

INT. BETHANY'S APARTMENT

Bethany is packing.

She walks back and forth through the house from closet to chest of drawers back to closets.

She pulls a chair over to the refrigerator.

She stands on the chair to reach far back in the cabinet above it.

Her hands grope around until they find --

-- a PACK OF CIGARETTES.

She drops back down to the floor and --

-- leans against the refrigerator.

She rubs her fingers around the edges of the pack of cigarettes.

She shakes them so a couple drop down to the open hole as the DOORBELL RINGS.

The door opens.

MARK stands on the stoop. He's tall but not too tall. Black but not too black. Nicely dressed. Groomed. Professional, but wouldn't be caught playing golf.

Bethany is startled.

BETHANY

You scared me.

MARK

(distracted by the
cigarettes)

Sorry. JT told me you were heading out tomorrow so I thought I'd stop by and say hey.

BETHANY

Thanks, JT. Yea, I'm gonna go ahead and get on the road. Get started this afternoon if it's not too dark.

MARK

How long you gonna be gone?

BETHANY

It shouldn't take more than a few days. I might stay a day or two extra with mom if I can get it wrapped up. I haven't spent any time with her since Christmas before last.

Silence turns to slight shame as she remembers the cigarettes.

BETHANY (CONT'D)

I don't do it every day. I haven't started back. Just, you know, every now and then it helps smooth the edges. I didn't start back.

MARK

We do what we need to do.

Bethany puts her hand to her face to hold in a cry.

BETHANY

Yea, yea I guess we do.

It's awkward. Mark taps the railing of her steps.

MARK

You...you want me to come with-

BETHANY

No.

He looks down the street. Never looking back to Bethany.

MARK

I'm...I'm gonna get back over to the office. Call me if you need me. Call me.

Bethany nods that she will.

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - DAY

Emily is sitting a table being interviewed on video tape.
The date stamp on the video shows OCT. 14 1996 7:23:04 PM.

There's a moment of silence as the girl takes her time to
answer the last question.

EMILY

And then we-we heard a yell. A-a
scream.

BETHANY (O.C.)

Was it Craig that screamed?

BEGIN FLASHBACK

The flashback has only muffled sounds. The main audio is the
current conversation.

EXT. BRIDGE - NIGHT

Emily turns to look at --

-- where Craig had went down the incline at the bridge's
edge.

She walks slowly towards the other side of the bridge.

Looking over the railing, she can see --

-- the LIGHT of Craig's flashlight dancing around.

She can make out Craig scrambling up the incline. We hear
the desperate scream of Wendy.

BETHANY (O.C.)

You heard Craig scream?

Emily stands at the edge.

EMILY

No. It was - somebody else. A
woman. I think it was a woman.
Yea, I'm pretty sure.

BETHANY

Not an animal?

EMILY

No. I don't think so.

Her friends run from the bridge.

END FLASHBACK

Emily covers her face with her hands and cries.

BETHANY

Thank-you, Emily. I think that'll
be enough for right now.

The camera wobbles slightly as Bethany turns it off and then goes black.

INT. HOME OFFICE

A PUZZLE PIECE slides effortlessly into place by fingers attached to weathered hand. We hear the occasional squawks and squelches of the police scanner in another room.

The FINGERS flip back and forth through the box until they find the puzzle piece they're looking for.

The PUZZLE PIECE goes in, again effortlessly.

The CB radio in the other room asks: "Gage. Sheriff Gage you there?"

We hover over a single piece in the box, moving closer in, feeling and barely noticing the fingers moving other pieces around, searching -

"Gage, you there?"

The fingers find the PUZZLE PIECE and attempt to slide it into the empty spot on the BOARD, but it doesn't fit. The fingers push harder, but it clearly doesn't fit.

The fingers slide around in the box looking for another piece and stop suddenly at -

"Gage, Bethany just picked up that paperwork."

EXT. CREEK - DAY

BETHANY WALLACE slides cautiously down the incline beside the bridge.

She stands at the edge and looks up --

-- and down the CREEK.

She turns her attention towards the BRIDGE.

The bridge is magnificent even in its current state. Stone and steel, the bridge was built to withstand time in an age where this road might have been a throughway to Kershaw County. The graffiti seems to honor the bridge instead of deface. The darkness of the concrete dims the brightly colored spray paint to, at best, dreary pastel.

Bethany takes a couple of pictures of the expanse of the bridge, until finally --

-- focusing on the rocks and debris below the belly.

She climbs up the moist rock under the bridge.

The ROPE leads into a small cubby.

She lifts it from the ground and prepares to pull.

SHERIFF GAGE THOMAS

The parents of that dead boy
apparently aren't satisfied by the
findings of the Chesterfield County
Sheriff's Department.

Bethany is startled.

Gage Thomas is 44 years older than the Deputy he once was. His face suffers from the inability to show emotion. His hair is mostly white. He's heavier with age, but not overweight. He startles Bethany, which was his intention.

SHERIFF GAGE THOMAS (CONT'D)

Seems they need a second opinion on
how a rock can crack a boy's head.
Didn't know it took a college
education to figure out how a rock
shaped hole could make it's way
into a boy's head, especially when
the hole was still in the boy's
head. Maybe I'd be a better
Sheriff I woulda got out and got me
one of those college educations
that teach things like that. They
teach classes on that you think?

She might have thought he was looking at her, but missed it slightly. He looks out over the creek.

BETHANY

(turning back to the rope)
Is that what you told them? "Sorry
Mrs. Oliver, but, duh, it was a
rock." Craig Oliver's parents lost
a child. Nothing can satisfy that.

(MORE)

BETHANY (CONT'D)

Not the great Chesterfield County PD or me. Even if they did teach it in a class, they couldn't teach that.

SHERIFF GAGE THOMAS

Goofing off. Horseplay. Bad shoes. The kids go traipsing around the woods and hills in Reeboks and Nikes [pronounced incorrectly with a silent E] looking for ghosts.

(looking back to Bethany)

You gonna tell them that Beth? You gonna tell them their boy died 'cause he had on fancy tennis shoes? You think that might satisfy them? Maybe they'll think all this coulda been avoided if they'd bought 'im some better shoes. You gonna tell 'em they put the rock in his brain as soon as they walked out of the shoe store? What kinduv shoe's ya think would have let that boy be alive today?

(pause)

They get you a copy of that report?

BETHANY

You know I picked it up this morning. That's how you knew I was here. And It doesn't matter what I think. I'm just doing what I was hired to do and trying to give these people closure they'll never have.

(pause)

Aren't you a little old to be in a uniform? Thought you would've retired by now instead of wrapping red tape round and round reports that I asked for a month ago.

She goes back to taking a pictures.

SHERIFF GAGE THOMAS

Takes a whole lot of tape to make the world go round. Blue. Black. Green.

(looks to Bethany)

Red. That paperwork holds the details of a boy that ain't alive no more and attempts to ascertain as to why that is.

(MORE)

SHERIFF GAGE THOMAS (CONT'D)

We wrap up birthday presents, makes sense that something as important as a boy's life should have equal opportunity for a little wrapping.

She ignores him.

He watches the creek.

SHERIFF GAGE THOMAS (CONT'D)

Your mom wanted to know what time you'd be at the house for dinner.

BETHANY

Around seven.

The Sheriff looks down, scuffs some --

-- rocks into the water, and

-- looks up the creek.

SHERIFF GAGE THOMAS

That black boy come with you?

BETHANY

You mean Mark? No, Mark the scary black man did not come. You can put out the good silverware tonight.

SHERIFF GAGE THOMAS

I'll tell 'er you'll be there around seven. I'm sure she's gonna be real happy to see ya.

He heads back up the incline.

CRY BABY CREEK ROAD

Gage walks towards his car parked just in front of the bridge.

His CB is already asking for him.

CB VOICE

Sheriff. Sheriff, you there?

Gage stands at the open door of his cruiser and --

-- looks out on the creek.

CB VOICE (CONT'D)

Gage?

Gage taps the roof and --
-- climbs into the driver's seat.
He takes the CB from the holder.

SHERIFF GAGE THOMAS
Yea.

CB VOICE
Where you at?

SHERIFF GAGE THOMAS
Nowhere. Middle of goddamn
nowhere.

Gage places the CB back in the holder and --
-- starts the cruiser.

INT. MOTEL ROOM

From above the bed, we look down on lots of PICTURES,
DOCUMENTS, VHS TAPE and a TAPE RECORDER.

Bethany looks over it, daunted.

She riles her spirits, straightens her shoulders and looks
at the pile again.

She picks up a photograph.

FLASHBULB and a quick memory shot of Craig being
photographed.

Another photograph.

FLASHBULB again, and another quick shot of Craig from another
angle.

Her eyes water a little and she rubs them.

BETHANY
Do your job, Bethany. Do your job.

Another picture and --

FLASHBULB and the ever so quick image of Wendy then --

KNOCK KNOCK BANG BANG KNOCK BANG startles Bethany.

MAN (O.C.)
 (in room next door)
 Lemme in! Yo, lemme in the room!

Bethany tosses the photographs back on the bed.

MAN (O.C.) (CONT'D)
 I just wanna get my stuff. I'll
 get my stuff and leave.

Bethany makes notes as she goes over a POLICE REPORT.

She scribbles, erases, and scribbles again after measuring a PHOTOGRAPH.

She rewinds the video taped interviews.

She flicks the ashes off a cigarette before --

-- making red marks on a photograph of the bridge.

She rubs her head and looks at the clock.

7:44 PM.

BETHANY
 Shit.

INT. BETHANY'S CAR - NIGHT

Bethany sits in her car with the radio playing Jennifer Daniels' *I Don't Have Enough*.

She turns the car off but leaves the radio on.

Her mind drifts to --

BEGIN FLASHBACK

INT. BETHANY'S BATHROOM

Bethany looks in the mirror, then back down to --

-- the positive PREGNANCY TEST she holds in both hands.

The door behind her opens and Mark stands in the doorway.

MARK
 Well?

BETHANY
 Guess I need to quit smoking.

INT. BETHANY'S LIVING ROOM

Mark sits in a chair. Bethany is lying down on the couch.

BETHANY

I'm not asking you for anything different, Mark. This doesn't change what we are. I'm a grown woman and you're a grown man and I didn't ask for this. You didn't ask for this. This doesn't change anything.

MARK

I'd say it changes things a little. Wouldn't you?

BETHANY

You know what I mean.

MARK

So what do we do now? Is this where we start picking out cribs and painting the extra bedroom pink.

BETHANY

Or blue.

MARK

Or blue.

BETHANY

We just do what we've been doing. I'll go to the doctor tomorrow or Tuesday and let you know from there. It'll be pretty much normal for a little while. Normal for you. I'll get shiny silver things poked in places I don't want shiny silver things to be. Normal.

MARK

What happens after normal?

BETHANY

It gets a little less normal. I'll get moody. I'll probably throw up in public a few times. I'll eat strange things. I'll be fatter-

Mark sighs, leans his head back.

MARK

That's it, I'm out. I don't like fat chicks.

Bethany laughs.

Mark smiles.

MARK (CONT'D)

What's your grand dad gonna think?

BETHANY

About me having a baby out of wedlock with a black guy?

MARK

No: what color we should paint the room.

BETHANY

He's quiet. He'll be quiet about this. We'll have some doctor-I mean-I'll have some doctor visits. We just do what we've been doing

MARK

I can go to some appointments with you. I don't mind. I don't. I mean. I. I would like to go.

BETHANY

You don't have-

MARK

I'd like to go.

BETHANY

Okay.

They both sit quietly for a moment. Neither saying anything.

MARK

How fat are we talking?

Bethany laughs.

END FLASHBACK

INT. THOMAS HOUSE FOYER - EVENING

GINNY WALLACE greets Bethany at the door with a smile and a hug. She's a warm woman with a genuine smile.

Her hair is died to close to the original black, but still doesn't cover up all the gray. She's what they would call a handsome woman. Not exactly pretty, but not ugly. Handsome. Attractive to those in her age group and beyond. She manages a slight limp that you'd probably not notice unless you watched her walk completely down the aisle at the grocery store.

GINNY WALLACE

Daddy said seven.

BETHANY

I got behind, sorry.

GINNY WALLACE

Supper's almost ready. Come sit with me while I finish.

Bethany enters and then looks over at Gage in front of the TV. He doesn't look up as he works on a puzzle on a stand in front of his chair. Bethany notices him a moment longer before following her mother into the kitchen.

INT. THOMAS KITCHEN

Ginny and Bethany sit at the table. Ginny has coffee while Bethany sips on a can of Diet Coke.

GINNY WALLACE

So how's Columbia? How's the job? I didn't know you were back at work already. You don't call me like you used to. You used to call me all the time and talk about this and that and these and those and now I only hear from you when you finally respond to whatever I put on your answering machine. And half of that is made up just to get you to call me back. Turns out your grandpa didn't really die, he was just sleeping in. Sorry.

BETHANY

I went back a week early. I can only dust and vacuum so many times in one day.

GINNY WALLACE

I was hoping you wouldn't come up here by yourself.

BETHANY

Why wouldn't I, mom?

GINNY doesn't know how to answer and it shows.

GINNY WALLACE

I worry about you, Beth. Maybe you and Mark could take some time off and-

BETHANY

Me and Mark aren't like that, mom. We're not like that. He's got his life and I have mine and we've both moved on from whatever it is you think we were. We were never that anyway.

GINNY WALLACE

I know better than that. You know better than that. I just worry about you.

Sheriff Gage walks into the kitchen to pour coffee.

SHERIFF GAGE THOMAS

Supper almost ready?

GINNY WALLACE

About 10 minutes, daddy. You can start making the gravy if you want.

SHERIFF GAGE THOMAS

You said that 10 minutes ago.

GINNY WALLACE

I like to be consistent. I've already got the pot on the stove and the flour is on the counter.

SHERIFF GAGE THOMAS

(doing a half glance in
Bethany's direction)

You going back up to that creek tonight? There's Mexicans up there.

BETHANY

I didn't know there were Mexicans. I'll roll up my windows and hide in the floorboard. How many Mexicans do you have in lock up right now versus rednecks?

SHERIFF GAGE THOMAS

You've been living in the city too long. Been hanging out with the people who want you to think the world should come together in some sort of vagina shaped heart container full of niggers, Mexicans and white people all rolled up into a Care Bear. It ain't like that, darlin'. Ain't like that at all.

GINNY WALLACE

I'll make the gravy, daddy. I'll call you when everything's ready.

SHERIFF GAGE THOMAS

(leaning back against
cabinets)

Not everybody knows you're my granddaughter and even if they did, not everybody appreciates people poking around in their business.

BETHANY

Who's business am I poking into?

SHERIFF GAGE THOMAS

People's.

Gage exits the room.

Ginny rises from the table and --

-- begins filling the pot with water.

GINNY WALLACE

He's just grumpy 'cause he doesn't like being checked up on. He says he's been doing this long enough to know that his people did what they were supposed to do.

BETHANY

I'm not checking up on him. My investigation has nothing to do with their findings or anything about that. It's a totally unrelated report that the parents requested. He's been in law enforcement since he was born, surely he's had to deal with insurance companies doing the same thing.

GINNY WALLACE

In his mind, insurance companies don't wear badges. And they most certainly are not his granddaughter.

BETHANY

You know it's more than that. He's still mad at his lily white granddaughter getting defiled by that colored boy. It made him the laughing stock of his buddies down at Red and White where all they do is drink coffee all day and talk about how the blacks and Mexicans are taking over.

GINNY WALLACE

He's not nearly as bad as you think. He worries. His whole life is about worrying about other people, especially you.

Gage takes his seat just barely in view and begins working on his puzzle again.

GINNY WALLACE (CONT'D)

(looking towards Gage)

He likes to think he helps people. Sometimes he does. Sometimes he doesn't.

EXT. THOMAS PORCH - NIGHT

GINNY WALLACE

Are you sure you won't stay here? Your room is pretty much the same as it was when you left.

BETHANY

No, mom. I've got to spread some papers out all over everything and watch some videos. Maybe after I'm done with the investigation.

GINNY WALLACE

Don't let your grandpa upset you. He's old and cranky. He doesn't want to retire but they're gonna make him next year. I'm afraid he'll not know what to do with himself if he doesn't have something to do.

(MORE)

GINNY WALLACE (CONT'D)

There's only so many times in a week a man can mow a lawn.

BETHANY

(hugging Ginny)

Love you mom. I'll talk to you tomorrow.

GINNY WALLACE

Love you, too, sweetie. And why don't you call Mark and tell him to come up if you're gonna be a few days?

BETHANY

Night, mother dear.

Bethany walks to her car.

The fingers try to push the PUZZLE PIECE down into the empty space. It doesn't fit.

Ginny stops in the foyer and looks over to Gage.

GINNY WALLACE

You could try to be less of an ass sometimes, daddy.

GAGE THOMAS

(not looking up)

It suits me.

Ginny continues to the next room.

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - DAY

Alexander takes a drink of water while sitting at the video taped interview table. The date stamp on the video displays OCT. 15 1996 9:15:05 AM.

He places the glass on the table.

ALEXANDER

Thank you. I got really nervous the last time I talked to the cops and drank about four gallons of water.

BETHANY (O.C.)

You're welcome. I'm not associated with law enforcement, Alexander. This is an independent study requested by Craig's parents.

(MORE)

BETHANY (O.C.) (CONT'D)

You don't have anything to be nervous about. I'm just trying to get a better understanding of the night of the accident. You were saying you heard something.

ALEXANDER

Yes ma'am. Saw something. I tend to see things better than hear 'em. My daddy says he'd do better getting me to do chores if he showed me pictures.

BETHANY (O.C.)

An animal?

ALEXANDER

No ma'am.

(visibly nervous)

I never shoulda run. I should just jumped down and helped Craig. Worst thing that coulda happened was I got bit by a fox or dog or something.

BETHANY (O.C.)

You were frightened. The mind and body work differently when frightened. It's self preservation. You didn't do anything wrong, Alexander.

BEGIN FLASHBACK

The flashback has no audio of its own. We listen to Alexander's narration and the minimal sounds from within the interview room.

EXT. BRIDGE - NIGHT

ALEXANDER (V.O.)

Emily kinda screamed without screaming if you know how I'm saying it. I mean, she didn't but she did.

Alexander grabs the arm of Emily to encourage her to run.

He glances down the incline to see --

-- Craig. Jerking once then lifeless.

ALEXANDER (V.O.)

I could tell something was wrong
with Craig 'cause he just laid
there. I saw him jerk once like
you do when you're asleep and dream
you're falling. His flashlight was
laying below his feet pointing
towards the water.

Wendy's shape moves through the light quickly, then --
-- over Craig's body like the darkness of an eclipse.

END FLASHBACK

Alexander takes another drink of water.

BETHANY (O.S.)

Craig died at the moment of impact.
Sometimes the nervous system fires
off latent signals that cause the
body to twitch. There's nothing
you could have done.

ALEXANDER

Yes ma'am. That's what they say.

BEGIN FLASHBACK

INT. LAMAZE CLASS

Mark and Bethany are in the middle of a class filled with
Lamaze couples. Bethany leans back against Mark.

LAMAZE TEACHER

This method embraces the idea that
childbirth is a natural process and
that, with the right preparation,
most women can avoid pain
medication and routine
interventions during labor and
birth. It's named after American
obstetrician Robert Bradley, who
developed the method in the late
1940s.

MARK

So how 'bout it Mizzus Wallace. No
drugs? Can I have the drugs if you
don't want 'em. I mean if we're
paying for them anyway-

Bethany slaps Mark quiet.

LAMAZE TEACHER

86% of Bradley trained couples have had spontaneous, un-medicated vaginal births.

MARK

Spontaneous is always good with no medication. I try to do spontaneous whenever I'm feeling vaginal. You know there's nothing that rhymes with vagina.

BETHANY

Mark! This is important. If we're gonna do this then we have to do it. You said you'd do it with me.

Mark returns focus to the instructor.

MARK

I'm glad you're the one with the vagina. This doesn't sound pleasant at all.

EXT. LAMAZE CLASS PARKING LOT

Mark and Bethany walk to the car.

MARK

You hungry? My treat.

BETHANY

Yes. Yes, that sounds good.

Mark opens the door for her.

She gets in and turns to the back seat where --

-- a bow is wrapped around a baby car seat.

Bethany smiles at Mark he gets in.

BETHANY (CONT'D)

Thank you.

MARK

Well, it's not like I can strap the kid to the hood.

BETHANY

We're gonna be okay, don't you think?

(MORE)

BETHANY (CONT'D)

I mean, even though we're not,
well, even though we're not what
we're not, I think we're gonna be
okay.

Mark leans over and kisses her on the cheek.

MARK

We're going to be fine.

BETHANY

Carolina. Carolina rhymes with
vagina.

END FLASHBACK

EXT. GATE - NIGHT

Bethany's headlights pour onto the GATE at the front of the
road to Cry Baby Creek.

She runs her FINGERS over the gate. Pulls it. Pushes it.

She takes a couple of pictures of the gate before looking
down

the blackness of the road through the woods.

The walk is dark. Her flashlight does little except see in
the direction it's pointing.

The TREES are thick and hang low.

The one lane road is old and the tree line begins at the
shoulder. Occasionally she'll come across

a beer can or some other remnant of the countless teenage
Halloween parties the bridge area has been host to.

Bethany stands at bridge. This is the first time she's seen
it in the dark.

The bridge and creek are beautiful ruins of a simpler time in
the daylight. The creek flows through a scenic valley in the
forest. At night, however, the eclecticism and ruin feel
gives way to ominous and foreboding creepiness. Unlike the
old road, the area around the creek is not as densely treed
and the moonlight sprinkles in. The bridge remains dark.

Bethany inches down the incline.

She finds her footing carefully. The incline is steep, but
can be managed quite easily if done without haste.

She once again snaps pictures, illuminating the --
-- underbelly of the bridge with each flash.

FLASH - the creek edge.

FLASH - the rocks and debris under bridge that take the place of a dirt edge.

FLASH - the pipes and metal sticking out of the debris.

FLASH - the dark area where the bridge meets the incline - but this time there was something there. The outline of something that does not like the light. It wasn't as noticeable through the viewfinder so it becomes a furrowed eyebrow and tilt of the head instead of fear.

Bethany lowers her camera around her neck and --

-- shines the flashlight around the debris.

Ah, the rope. She remembers the rope from the morning. She reaches down to pull it.

Hung. She pulls it hard again and

It comes easily this time. Too easy.

She looks down at her hand and notices the slackness of the rope is proactive.

She drops the rope and --

-- it slides to the left and

SPLASH! Something is in the water below her. She trembles quietly for a moment before she --

-- scans the underbelly with her flashlight.

She follows it around to her left, scanning --

-- the edge of the water, then back --

-- up the incline behind her.

Just as she reaches the triangle shape of where the incline contrasts the straightness of the bridge, she sees --

-- the leg's of Wendy up to the calves, stepping up towards the surface off the bridge.

She trembles as she turns the flashlight off.

The rope starts to drag across the debris as Wendy pulls it up.

Bethany covers her mouth and shakes violently in fear.

The rope is pulled hard and makes a sound on the metal debris. The rope is hung.

It's jerked harder and makes a louder sound, but it's still hung.

Bethany reaches out and releases the rope from it's obstacle and then --

-- scurries into the darkness of the incline/bridge meeting.

The rope becomes slack and we hear feet hit the dirt to the side of the bridge.

Wendy's feet walk slowly down the incline from the bridge. She doesn't have to search for footing. She knows where the right spots are.

Bethany scrambles through the dirt and debris to get to --

-- the other side of the bridge.

She stops and presses herself to the ground as --

-- Wendy kneels down on the other side to look under the bridge.

Bethany tries not to shake. She tries not to make a sound.

Wendy is patient. She watches. She listens. She doesn't move.

She rises to go back up the incline to the bridge.

Bethany begins to cry as she scrambles on her belly again.

We can see the rope drooping across the other side of the bridge.

Bethany makes it to the incline of this other side of the bridge, just in time to where we can see --

-- Wendy jump and dangle in the distance. Bethany does not look back.

Wendy's FEET swing back and forth. Her TOES drag the water at each pass.

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - DAY

Sheriff Gage Thomas sits at his desk.

Deputy Tony Douglas stops in the doorway and remains silent until finally recognized by Gage.

SHERIFF GAGE THOMAS
What can I help you with, Tony?

TONY
I saw Beth over at IGA. Said she's
in town for a few days. She looks
really good. She staying with you?

No response from Gage.

TONY (CONT'D)
She looking into that Oliver thing?
I thought we closed that up? She
looked really goo-

SHERIFF GAGE THOMAS
I've got a lot going on right now,
Tony. You got something more to
say than how good my granddaughter
looks?

Tony continues to stand in the door.

SHERIFF GAGE THOMAS (CONT'D)
That was code for get the hell out
of my office.

Tony gets the point and reluctantly leaves the doorway.

Gage goes back to his paperwork, but can't concentrate.

He turns his chair to look out the window.

An older Hispanic MAN is walking down the street with a case of glass bottles.

Gage watches the man walk briskly, but can see the weight of the bottles on his body.

Gage watches.

He turns back to his paperwork, but the concentration still isn't there.

He stands at his desk, then --

-- reaches over to grab his keys.

SHERIFF GAGE THOMAS (CONT'D)

Tony, I'm gonna run out for a few minutes.

TONY

Yes, sir.

EXT. TOWN STREET - DAY

Alberto carries the bottles on the sidewalk. The crate is heavy.

Gage pulls up beside him in his patrol car.

SHERIFF GAGE THOMAS

You coming or going?

Alberto glances over at Gage but doesn't stop walking.

He faces back towards his walking direction, ignoring Gage.

Gage continues to creep alongside.

Alberto keeps walking.

SHERIFF GAGE THOMAS (CONT'D)

Alberto! Get in the damn car.
You're too old to carry all those bottles and I'm too old to argue with you.

Alberto takes a few more steps before coming to a stop.

Gage gets out of the cruiser and opens the driver's side passenger door.

Gage doesn't look at Alberto, but across the street notices --

Bethany exits her car and --

-- gets her bag out of the back seat.

She walks up the sidewalk toward the courthouse.

Gage keeps watching her.

We can hear Alberto putting the case of bottles in the back seat and the door closing.

Bethany enters the courthouse.

Gage looks down, inward.

He gives the roof of the car a slight slap before --
-- getting back in.

INSIDE THE CAR

Gage drives for a moment without saying a word.

He looks in the REAR-VIEW MIRROR to Alberto.

He turns his mirror down to see the BOTTLES in the seat.

The corner bottle is cheap vodka.

Alberto is looking out the window.

SHERIFF GAGE THOMAS
You really should think about
getting a car one of these days.

Alberto says nothing.

SHERIFF GAGE THOMAS (CONT'D)
Mr. Pusser didn't need the bottles?

ALBERTO
No.

They sit in silence. Not tension. Just silence.

The patrol car pulls over to the side of a rural road.

Alberto gets out and walks to the other side of the car.

He opens the door to get the bottles.

SHERIFF GAGE THOMAS
If you need to come into town again
soon just call the station. I can
send somebody out if nobody's busy.

ALBERTO
Thank you, Mr. Thomas.

SHERIFF GAGE THOMAS
Gage. You can call me-

Alberto closes the door.

SHERIFF GAGE THOMAS (CONT'D)
- call me Gage.

Alberto and heads up a path beside the road.

Gage puts his car in drive and moves on.

INT. COURTHOUSE - DAY

Bethany sits in the dark in front of a microfilm reader.

She scans the newspapers of 1950.

She stops on PAGELAND PROGRESSIVE JOURNAL, AUGUST 15TH, 1950
to view the headline --

-- "INFANT DEATH IN LOCAL CAR ACCIDENT."

She scans the article, noticing several key words:

"...WENDY GAMBOA..."

"...BRIDGE..."

"...HAVEN GAMBOA STILL MISSING..."

Bethany scribbles some notes and --

-- scans through the microfilm to a much later date.

"LOCAL BRIDGE INCLUDED IN SOUTHERN GHOST STORY BOOK"

She scans the article:

"...LEGENDS OF SOUNDS OF BABY CRYING..."

"...LOCAL LEGEND SAYS..."

"...GHOST OF MOM WALKS THE CREEK AT NIGHT..."

Bethany turns off the reader and --

-- leaves the room.

COURTHOUSE RECORDS ROOM

Bethany pulls out a large book of land records and --

-- slams it on the community room table.

She opens the book, flipping through pages of maps and plot markings.

A CHAIR is pulled out in front of her.

Bethany looks up, disappointment and lack of surprise sits firmly on her face.

Gage takes a seat.

SHERIFF GAGE THOMAS

They tell me they're gonna have all this on computer monitors pretty soon. People starving to death not more than two miles down the road and they want to put paper on computers. Seems to me seein' is seein', regardless of whether you're tiltin' your head up or down. Paper is cheap. Computers cost money that could be spent on somethin' else.

BETHANY

It makes things easier to find. It saves trees. It saves space. Can I help you?

SHERIFF GAGE THOMAS

Can you help me? This is the courthouse, Beth. I'm the sheriff. I've spent more hours in this place than you've spent living your whole life. I should ask you.

He leans back in his chair, never breaking eye contact.

SHERIFF GAGE THOMAS (CONT'D)

Can I help you?

BETHANY

Who owns the area around Cry Baby Creek?

SHERIFF GAGE THOMAS

That would be the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources.

BETHANY

It's a state park?

SHERIFF GAGE THOMAS

More like a nature preserve.
(leaning forward, brushing off conversation)

Listen, Beth. Have you even read the official report on that boy's death? It seems to me that you're wasting a lot of time and running up the light bill of our good county by re-answering questions that have already been answered.

(MORE)

SHERIFF GAGE THOMAS (CONT'D)

You're puttin' too much time into making a label for a blue crayon. You don't need a label for a blue crayon. It's blue. Now, if there's something you need help with or some question you got that-

BETHANY

Who owned it in 1950? Was it part of Chesterfield County?

Gage doesn't answer.

BETHANY (CONT'D)

(leaning back in the chair)

Is there some reason you don't want me to do my job, grandpa? Nobody is second guessing anything, it's just a supplemental report for-

SHERIFF GAGE THOMAS

Did they give you this or did you ask for it?

BETHANY

Does that really matter?

SHERIFF GAGE THOMAS

Why'd you ask for it? You ain't got enough going on in your life that you need to come up here and dig up bones? You ain't even buried the bones you got.

BETHANY

My personal life is none of-

SHERIFF GAGE THOMAS

This closure you think you're giving these people: this is their closure, not yours. You asked to come up here on a job that'll prolong this family's bereavement just so you can get over yours. You don't have the right to rub the salt of your tears into their eyes. Nobody gave you that right.

Gage doesn't bat an eye when an older woman walks up to the end of the table.

COURTHOUSE CLERK
I'm sorry, but the records room is
closing.

BETHANY
It's eleven in the morning.

Bethany looks to Gage, who --

-- picks at his fingernails as he stares directly at her. He
waits quietly.

The courthouse clerk looks at Gage and then back to Bethany.

She states again, with trepidation

COURTHOUSE CLERK
There's some routine maintenance
for a couple of rooms in the
courthouse.

Bethany stands, gathers her personal items.

BETHANY
Lemme guess: one of those rooms is
also the microfilm room. You've
made your point, grandpa. What I'm
looking for isn't here anyway.

Bethany walks heavily out of the room.

Gage does not turn.

SHERIFF GAGE THOMAS
See ya at home sugar bear. Your
mamma's expecting you for dinner
tonight.

Gage manages a victorious smile, but continues to pick his
fingernails.

His smile disintegrates into a sneer, then a grimace. He is
displeased.

SHERIFF GAGE THOMAS (CONT'D)
Thank you, Miss Lear.

COURTHOUSE CLERK
Shame one you, Gage. Shame on you.

The courthouse clerk leaves the room.

Gage is frustrated.

SHERIFF GAGE THOMAS
Shame on me.

INT. OLIVER LIVING ROOM - DAY

Bethany sits in a chair in a living room. She doesn't fidget, but she is nervous and --

-- looks down at the coffee table in front of her.

MR. AND MRS. OLIVER read a report.

Mrs. Oliver wipes tears from her eyes.

BETHANY
The findings of my report were concurrent with the report filed by the Chesterfield County Sheriff's Department. Your son-

MR. OLIVER
-Craig-

BETHANY
(refocusing)
-Craig died by blunt force trauma to the head due to a fall while navigating rocks without the foot gear. The area is treacherous and not maintained. His shoes were not adequate to keep a good hold on the wet rocks.

They continue to read.

They pick up a picture and put it back down.

Back to the report.

MR. OLIVER
The other kids - Emily, Alexander, uh -

MRS. OLIVER
-Elaine-

MR. OLIVER
Elaine. They-they didn't see anything? They...they said they heard
(he tears up and can't continue)
Heard and saw -

MRS. OLIVER

On the video they talked about hearing someone. Alexander said he might have seen something.

BETHANY

The bridge is home to a local ghost story. I think the others-

MR. OLIVER

I grew up here, Bethany. I know the ghost stories. Don't tell me a 50 year old ghost story killed our son. Don't tell us that.

BETHANY

-I think the others applied some of the ghost stories they grew up hearing with some of the ghost stories they were looking for. They were scared. It's not uncommon to apply exaggeration to memories of a traumatic event to make it something more grandiose. If we interview them again in 10 years, those sights and sounds might be different or not even present.

MRS. OLIVER

Why didn't Elaine give an interview? Emily and Alexander gave an interview. Why didn't Elaine?

BETHANY

(choosing her words
carefully)

Elaine chose not to talk about the night. She was respectful and sincerely sorry for what happened, but in the end she didn't want to talk about it.

MRS. OLIVER

(pointing to a picture)

What are these abrasions? These abrasions on the ground.

BETHANY

The bridge has been neglected for nearly 50 years.

(MORE)

BETHANY (CONT'D)

There are numerous inflictions on the rocks and dirt around the area due to the ill kept nature of the bridge. I documented everything, regardless of the triviality. The abrasions were trivial.

(taking a closing breathe)

I wish I had more Mr. and Mrs. Oliver. I wish there was something more I could tell you. I am very sorry for your loss and hope that any questions you may have had have been answered.

MRS. OLIVER

Did you know Craig hated wearing shoes as a child? He would ask if he could go outside to play. I would watch him from the window. He wouldn't get more than 10 feet before he came out of those shoes and jet off into the field or the woods. He was such a bright child. He would bring home worms in his pockets to raise as pets but he wouldn't tell me. I'd wash them. I wouldn't tell him I washed them. It would have broken his heart.

BEGIN FLASHBACK

INT. HOSPITAL DELIVERY ROOM

(Silent memory) Bethany screams as she tries to push. Her legs are pulled back.

Doctors and nurses fly around.

She leans up to look at the delivering doctor and notices --

-- his EYES are fixed on --

-- the fetal heart MONITOR.

Bethany turns to the monitor just as the --

-- line goes from arches to STRAIGHT.

END FLASHBACK

MRS. OLIVER

Do you have any children, Bethany?

BETHANY

(surprised at the
question, but respectful)

No ma'am. I do not.

(refocusing)

I am sorry for your loss. If you
have any more questions, please
contact me. I'll be sending you
the official report in its entirety
along with any documents and
materials as soon as I file it with
my office. I am truly sorry for
your loss.

The silent FLAT LINE on the monitor flashes again.

EXT. THOMAS PORCH - NIGHT

Ginny and Bethany sit on the porch swing.

Gage rocks in the chair.

GINNY WALLACE

Are you going back to Columbia?

BETHANY

What do you know about Cry Baby
Creek?

GINNY WALLACE

(laughing)

The stories of this town! Gregory
Graveyard. Antioch Church. Cry
Baby Creek. On Halloween all the
kids would go out to drink and
whatever it is kids do in dark
places with beer.

BETHANY

So you've been to Cry Baby Creek.

GINNY WALLACE

No. Never. All my friends went.
Your grandfather was a bit adamant
about keeping us away from there.
You grew up here. You know the
stories as well as I do. Probably
even better.

SHERIFF GAGE THOMAS

It's dangerous. Damn kids drinking
and trying to get things wet that
shouldn't be wet.

(MORE)

SHERIFF GAGE THOMAS (CONT'D)

Somebody was liable to wind up drowned. Just liked that Oliver kid. Kids and beer and stupid ass ghost stories don't do anything but cause trouble.

BETHANY

(turning her attention
back to her mom)

I remember the story about the woman that threw her baby off the bridge and about how her ghost keeps looking for it.

SHERIFF GAGE THOMAS

Wendy didn't kill nobody.

Bethany drops her interest in her mother and --
-- turns to Gage.

BETHANY

Wendy?

SHERIFF GAGE THOMAS

Wendy didn't hurt anybody. All these damn kids and their stories. Doesn't help that the Mexicans figure into all of it. They got their own way of telling it and it's probably still just as wrong. Wendy didn't kill her baby. That spic didn't do it either. Mexicans gotta have their own story and that's theirs. Just as wrong. I never understand why there's gotta be a story to a truth as if the truth just ain't enough. A woman wrecked her car and baby drowns in a creek but that ain't good enough.

BETHANY

Wendy's husband is still alive? I thought it wasn't used anymore.

SHERIFF GAGE THOMAS

He's a wetback that ain't done anybody any good other than raise chickens, milk goats and ruin a good woman's life. What the hell does it matter to you? Your job is over. You did what you got paid to do and now you can skedaddle back down to the city if you want.

(MORE)

SHERIFF GAGE THOMAS (CONT'D)

I'm sure Betty and Johnny are all fine now about what happened to their boy. One little report and you think they should pat you on the back and thank you for their son dying so they could get a chance to touch the gold that obviously comes out of your asshole. Aren't you tired of dead kids yet? You think solving the mystery of how one hit his head will all of sudden make that'n you got dig its way back out of the ground?

Bethany looks away from Gage and focuses everything she can to the porch in front of her. She looks through it. Tears push to the surface.

GINNY WALLACE

DADDY!

Wendy puts her shaking hand to her lips.

Gage looks in Ginny's direction without looking at her.

He looks back out over the yard.

The shame in his face is edged out by pride. He realizes what he said was wrong, but his ego will not allow him to retract.

SHERIFF GAGE THOMAS

Chasing dead kids ain't good for nobody's soul. No matter what you find or don't find, they're still gonna be dead. Wendy couldn't figure that out. Guess you ain't, either.

Gage leaves his chair.

Ginny puts a hand on Bethany's shoulder and we hear the SCREEN DOOR BOUNCING on the door frame.

INT. MOTEL ROOM

Bethany lies on the bed talking on the phone.

MARK

(on phone)

You want me to come up?

BETHANY

No. It'd just make things worse.
He's mad. He's gonna stay mad.
It's just hard being here. I
thought it would help get my mind
off things.

MARK

*You don't have to get your mind off
things. It doesn't hurt to think
about everything.*

BETHANY

I know. I just needed something
different for a little while.

MARK

*I can come up. I can be there
tonight if you want me to.*

BETHANY

No. I'm fine. Thank you.

MARK

Okay. I'll talk to you later.

BETHANY

Okay. Mark?

MARK

Yea?

She bites her lip a little, not knowing what to say.

BETHANY

Nothing. Bye.

MARK

Bye, Bethany.

Bethany walks to the vanity area of the motel room.

She stands in front of the mirror.

Bethany turns sideways and raises her shirt above her
stomach.

She rubs her STOMACH. Presses it in. Touches it lightly
with her FINGERS.

She turns out the light and climbs into bed.

The phone rings.

She reaches to turn on the bedside lamp. The light comes on and --

-- WENDY is inches from the bed.

WENDY
He took my baby.

Bethany screams and wakes up from the minor dream. The phone is ringing.

She turns the bedside light on and --

-- looks to the area where Wendy had been. Where she at least thought Wendy had been.

Nothing.

She answers the phone.

BETHANY
Hello?

GINNY WALLACE
(on phone)
Hi honey. I was thinking since you're in town maybe we could go to church in the morning?

BETHANY
That's fine. I'll, uh, I'll just come to your house in the morning.

GINNY WALLACE
Have you been sleeping? Did I wake you up?

BETHANY
No. Mom. I'll see you in the morning.

GINNY WALLACE
Love you, night.

Bethany rubs her face and glances at her watch.

She rises from the bed and walks to the door to --

EXT. OUTSIDE THE ROOM - NIGHT

Bethany steps out under the cheap fluorescent light of the small town motel.

She pulls out a cigarette and rubs her face.

She takes a couple of calming puffs before --

-- flicking the cigarette about 20 feet in to the parking lot.

From the POV of just behind the cigarette we see the motel room door shut.

We pull up a little to see WET FOOTPRINTS on the pavement.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Bethany scans the people of the congregation. The sanctuary is magnificent for such a small town. Bigger than it needs to be. The pews are filled sparsely and could easily hold twice as many people.

A wave from an older woman who might have known her when she was younger.

A smile from a younger man who's wife --

-- glances to her to see what he's smiling at. A quick jab to remind him to pay attention forces him --

-- back towards the preacher.

Pastor VERNON TAYLOR removes his glasses. He's an older man with an older face, but he doesn't have the hardness that most of the faces his age have in this town. His face doesn't show the cynicism and anger of Gage's face. He seems to have a smile that remains slightly below the surface, even if not in use.

VERNON TAYLOR

When I started the Taylor
Children's Home 50 years ago, I did
not expect it to last. A few kids
here and there. Some come. All
go, eventually. I see children
that came to my home so many years
ago around town. Some seem to have
left a bad situation for worse.
Some you look at and wonder if you
made any difference in their lives
other than give them somewhere to
sleep between hell's.

(pauses to reflect on
untold stories)

And some help you carry your
groceries to the car.

(MORE)

VERNON TAYLOR (CONT'D)

Some you never see again, but you
get a postcard every now and then
with pictures of children.
Grandchildren. Nieces and nephews.
You thank God for those. You thank
God for the others, but not with
the same fervor.

(he manages a slight smile
as the congregation gives
a low laugh)

Thank you for this. Thank you all
for this wonderful anniversary.
Let us pray.

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

Bethany greets Pastor Taylor in the exit line of the church.

BETHANY

Very nice sermon, Dr. Taylor.

VERNON TAYLOR

(ignoring her hand and
going for the hug)

Ah those beautiful eyes. I
remember handing you to your mom
for the first time and telling her
you had the most beautiful eyes
that I had ever seen. And today is
Sunday my dear; I am Pastor Vernon.
Dr. Taylor will not be around until
the morning. Who's hungry?

INT. CHURCH FELLOWSHIP HALL - TABLE

The table laughs at a joke that Vernon has just finished.

No one speaks immediately, giving the Pastor the respect of
steering the conversation.

Vernon leans back in his chair and places his tie directly in
the middle of his shirt before --

-- looking towards Bethany.

VERNON TAYLOR

I understand you've been in town
investigating-

(glances towards Gage)

-confirming the findings of the
investigation of the Oliver boy.

BETHANY

Craig. Yes.

VERNON TAYLOR

(leaning forward)

When I came back from medical school, I had resolved to help every man, woman and child in this town be a more healthy body. I would not turn anyone away. I would not let an insurance company tell me what a patient needed. With my hands and my education, I would hold together the health of the single most important commodity of any community: the family. Jobs, proprietorship, fellowship - all of these things are powerful important, and all of these things are the gears of a community, but the family is the engine. Family is important. The health of a community can flower or be destroyed by the success or failure of the family.

(considering his thought process)

Unnatural death in a small town creates its own romance and rumor. When that death is surrounded by ghost stories, the rumors can quickly become legend. And in a small town, legend is just as good as if it is written in the encyclopedia. You may not know it, but you are tasked with what goes into the encyclopedia of this community. If your investigation includes mysterious noises in the night, then it becomes real to these people. If your investigation talks of ghosts and half century old stories, it gives credibility. But if you present the facts, well, then the family honor is preserved. The town can relax. There are two families in this situation: the Oliver family, of course. And the family of a woman who's been dead for many years. Both deserve respect.

BETHANY

The investigation is over.
Yesterday I presented my report to
the family and it'll be made
official as soon as I get back to
Columbia.

VERNON TAYLOR

(pleased, glancing towards
Gage)

Very well done. Very well done.

Vernon picks up his plastic utensils and begins to eat again.

BETHANY

Do you believe in the ghost
stories, Dr. Taylor? Do you
believe there's something in that
creek?

Vernon Taylor is a calm man, but the question riles something
in his eyes. He does not like the question, but he is much
too resolute to not answer. He looks to Gage, then to Ginny,
then back to Bethany.

VERNON TAYLOR

"I look for ghosts; but none will
force their way to me. 'Tiz
falsely said that there were ever
intercourse between the living and
the dead."

BETHANY

"And Samuel sayeth to Paul, Why
hast thou troubled me, to bring me
up?"

VERNON TAYLOR

(giving respect to a
clever retort with a
smile and nod)

I have heard that Miss Snipes
brought some of her famous potato
salad to the dinner. I think I'll
have a spoonful or two and hope my
fate isn't the same as Mr. Snipes'.
Or so says the rumor.

Everyone laughs as Vernon rises from the table.

Gage follows, as do a couple others.

Bethany remains.

BEGIN FLASHBACK

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Bethany sits on the exam table staring straight ahead. Her face is used and tired from crying.

We see the baby pictures on the wall.

The medical images.

The children's books in the book basket.

The advertisement featuring a happy family with a new baby.

DOCTOR PARKER enters the room, but we never focus on him. We stay with Bethany.

DOCTOR PARK

The nurse will give you a resource document with more information. Your baby is currently growing and we expect a normal delivery. But it's important to understand that even if your baby goes full term, and even if she survives delivery, there will still be complications after birth. Severe complications.

BETHANY

That's a lot of ifs.

DOCTOR PARKER

At this stage of the pregnancy, there are other options that I have to tell you about.

BETHANY

(dismissing other options)

Thank you. No.

(trying to be upbeat)

The only sure way to lose is to not play, right?

Bethany puts her face in her hands and sobs.

The doctor stands in support, but offers no words or touch.

DOCTOR PARKER

Are you okay to drive? Is there anyone you would like the receptionist to call?

Bethany wipes her face and looks forward into nothing.

INT. DINER - DAY

Mark leans back with his arm across the booth to his left.

Bethany's arms are crossed over her chest.

Mark reaches forward to stir his coffee arbitrarily.

MARK

There's a chance. Whenever a doctor brings up statistics and percentages, what he's really saying is there's a chance-

BETHANY

-statistics are never given for good things. They don't give you percentages of how healthy your baby will be.

MARK

A chance that it could go either way.

He shakes the stirrer before he places it back on the table.

MARK (CONT'D)

I'm assuming he told you there's other things you can do.

BETHANY

Is that what you want me to do?

MARK

No. God no.

BETHANY

You didn't expect this. I didn't either but you didn't expect this and I never told you that you have to do anything. Even if-

MARK

I told you before that-

BETHANY

-even if she's born, she'll never be-

MARK

She'll be our daughter.

Bethany cries.

She composes herself, gathers her purse and leaves the table.

Mark stirs his coffee again.

END FLASHBACK

EXT. PARKING LOT - GAS STATION

A man BANGS on Bethany's rain soaked car window and startles her from her memory.

She rolls down the window.

CLINT EDWARDS

Bethany?

She doesn't say anything.

CLINT EDWARDS (CONT'D)

You're doing that kid's accident thing aren't you? At Cry Baby Creek? That kid that got his brains poured out all over them rocks?

BETHANY

You've got information on the Craig Oliver accident?

CLINT EDWARDS

No. I've got information on the woman that killed him.

Bethany looks down at the papers in her passenger seat.

The statement has taken her off guard.

CLINT EDWARDS (CONT'D)

It's raining.

INT. DINING BOOTH - GAS STATION

Bethany sits alone at the table.

She checks her watch.

She pulls out a cigarette.

She runs it back and forth through her fingers from edge to edge as --

-- Clint seats himself in the booth with a canned soda and bag of chips.

Bethany puts the cigarette back in the pack.

CLINT EDWARDS

You can smoke in here. Miss Ina would run you out during the day but at nighttime they don't care. They'll also make you tater wedges even though the food counter's shut down. They'll warm 'em up in the microwave, but warmed up tater wedges are always better than no tater wedges at all. You can smoke.

BETHANY

No. I don't think I want to right now.

CLINT EDWARDS

Just saying is all. Best thing you can say about one horse towns is that you can still smoke while you're eatin' your tater wedges.

Clint opens his bag of chips.

Bethany waits patiently while he opens his can of soda and --
-- takes a long swallow.

BETHANY

Craig Oliver wasn't murdered. He hit his head on a rock.

CLINT EDWARDS

If I chase you through the woods and you think I might be putting your life in danger and you fall and hit a rock, that's murder. You can't tell me that. I watched enough Perry Mason growing up that I know the difference. You don't have to put a gun to anybody's head to make it come out a murder.

BETHANY

It would depend on the circumstances.

CLINT EDWARDS

I don't know anything about Craig's accident other'n what I read in the papers, but I do know that he didn't slip on no rock. Those rocks are slippery but you know as well as anybody else that every kid within 20 miles of the bridge has been up and down those rocks a hundred times in the daylight and dark and ain't nobody ever slipped on one hard enough to get 'emselves killed.

BETHANY

Are you insinuating he was killed by a woman that's been dead for 50 years?

CLINT EDWARDS

I'm insinuating that she ain't no more dead than you and me. She's only dead when she wants to be, and sometimes she ain't wantin' to be.

Clint eats a handful of chips without regard for table manners or the amount of mouth he has.

CLINT EDWARDS (CONT'D)

Wonder if Miss Simpson would microwave me up some tater wedges.

He takes another long swallow from the can.

BETHANY

Mr. Edwards-

CLINT EDWARDS

Clint. Sorry, you just got me thinkin' 'bout them tater wedges. I knew you when you was little and I used to work with your daddy before he died. You knew me, or at least did. Clint.

BETHANY

Okay, Clint-

Clint gets up from the booth.

Bethany leans back, frustrated until a few moments later when --

-- he returns with another can of soda.

CLINT EDWARDS

Miss Simpson said she ain't gonna worry about tater wedges this late at night. Goes against everything I was sayin' about small towns and tater wedges. Oh well, at least I can still smoke.

She waits while he opens the can and --

-- takes another long swallow. He lights another cigarette before he begins speaking.

CLINT EDWARDS (CONT'D)

I ain't sayin' she set out to kill Craig. She ain't mean. Or at least she don't know to be mean or ain't tryin'. She's just a little...intense.

BETHANY

How do you know this?

Clint crams another handful of chips into his mouth.

He takes another long swallow.

CLINT EDWARDS

I seen 'er.

BEGIN FLASBACK

EXT. POND - NIGHT

Clint Edwards sits in a boat in the at the mouth of the creek where it empties into a pond.

He opens his tackle box and --

-- cuts a line and --

-- threads a weight and --

-- a BOBBER and --

-- hook.

He reaches into a box of worms and --

-- puts the worm on the hook but --

He hears a SPLASH from up the CREEK.

The view of the creek is dark.

He peers to see where the splash came from, but ultimately goes back to --

-- baiting his hook.

Satisfied, he casts the line into a nook of the pond.

He glances around at WATER NOISES. Not splashes really, but movement.

He lays the rod down and grabs his flashlight and turns it on, just as --

-- the BOBBER bounces a little.

He lays his flashlight down in the boat where the beam is pointing directly on him.

Clint takes the rod back into his hands.

CLINT EDWARDS

(whispering)

There you go baby. Get on it. Get on it. Get on it.

The BOBBER bounces one more time then --

-- goes under.

CLINT EDWARDS (CONT'D)

GET ON IT BABY!

Clint jerks the line.

He pulls back and leans back a little.

CLINT EDWARDS (CONT'D)

I got you fishy fish. I got you.

The fish fights and pulls and --

-- Clint pulls back more and we see --

-- Wendy, barely visible (partially illuminated by the flashlight) standing in the water behind him.

Clint senses her and stops. He doesn't move.

His eyes dart back and forth to try and see what's behind him but he doesn't dare turn around.

The fish fights his line at times, but generally calms down.

He leans forward to lay down his rod but --

-- Wendy's arms embrace him and --

-- pull him backwards into the water.

There are brief moments we can see Wendy through the surface as she drags Clint through the shallow water.

He struggles.

Clint is being dragged onto the bank of the creek.

He grabs for branches or stick or roots or anything to stop himself.

He eventually succeeds and takes a moment, gasping for his breath.

Half in the water, half on the bank, Clint slides back and sits up.

He rubs the dirt and water from his face and looks up to see -
-

-- Wendy is 6 feet in front of him in the middle of the creek. She stares at him. No emotion.

He trembles as he tries to remain motionless.

Wendy moves slowly (very slowly) towards him.

He gets to his feet and --

-- runs through the woods.

END FLASHBACK

INT. DINING BOOTH - GAS STATION

Clint takes a long swallow. The can is empty.

CLINT EDWARDS

She won't tryin' to hurt me. But that didn't stop her from doin' it real good. I don't know what happened to Craig. But I do know she ain't as gentle as she could be. And she's mad at somebody. She's awful mad at somebody.

BETHANY

Why do you think she wanted you.

CLINT EDWARDS

She didn't. She had me right there in her hands. Na, she didn't want me. She wants her baby. That's what all the stories say. They never found that baby.

Clint crams more chips.

He turns the bag up to empty the rest into his mouth.

He looks around. He's bored without his chips and soda.

CLINT EDWARDS (CONT'D)

You don't reckon I could get a couple of them smokes off of ya do ya? You seem like you frettin' about using them yourself.

BETHANY

(putting one cigarette in front of him)

I've been trying to quit.

CLINT EDWARDS

I did the next best thing: I just quit buyin' 'em. Seems like there's enough people out there that would rather you smoke with 'em than to smoke by themselves. I just always keep my eye out for them people.

He looks down at the single cigarette and then back up to Bethany.

She puts another cigarette in front of him.

He leans forward and waits for --

-- Bethany to respond by doing the same (she does so awkwardly).

CLINT EDWARDS (CONT'D)

There's 2500 people in this town give or take. Do the math going back 50 years and that's an awful lot of people. I can't be the only one to've seen 'er. Somebody knows damn well she's out there, and somebody know's damn well why she can't find what she's lookin' for.

EXT. GATE - EVENING

The sun has nearly set, but the gate enjoys the comfort of the remaining evening light.

EXT. CREEK - EVENING

Bethany stands on the road just above the bridge.

The evening shade dampens the brightness of the creek.

Bethany walks slowly over the bridge.

She runs her hand across the intact concrete railing at first, and then --

-- the broken and jagged area that's been missing for 44 years.

She looks out to the creek where the car would have landed.

Bethany looks up the road that fades with a sharp turn to the left into the woods beyond the bridge.

She notices the smoke in the hills just up the road, rising from an unseen chimney.

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - DAY

The girl on the camera is visibly shaken.

She is handed a tissue box by Bethany, who remains off camera. The date stamp of the video shows OCT. 15 1996 3:03:15 PM.

BETHANY (O.C.)

Do you need to stop?

ELAINE

No ma'am. I'm okay.

(blowing her nose)

It was a woman. She looked old.

BETHANY

Was she near Craig?

ELAINE

No. I mean, I didn't see Craig, but I know he was down the hill and she wasn't.

BETHANY
Where was she?

ELAINE
Standing on the bridge.

BEGIN FLASHBACK

EXT. CREEK - NIGHT

From Elaine's point of view we can see the bridge.

She's already ran to the tunnel of the road tree cover, and she's --

-- running faster than Emily who is behind her and to the left.

From the small distance we can see Wendy standing on the bridge.

Wendy jumps.

EXT. CREEK ROAD - LATE EVENING

Bethany walks up the road that leads beyond the bridge.

It's up a hill and is not covered like the road leading to the bridge.

Here the trees are tall and the light comes through easily.

She looks down into the valley to the creek that runs parallel to the road.

She can no longer see the bridge, but the creek is clear and clean.

It gets darker by the minute.

Bethany picks up her pace, not wanting to have to cross the bridge at night.

She steps over a fallen branch and continues to walk briskly.

She hears a CRACK of a branch and she stops.

She listens, but doesn't hear anything else.

Wendy's feet step over the same fallen branch.

Another SNAP, CRACK and Bethany --

-- turns to look down the road. The frightening part of what she sees is what she doesn't see.

The air is dark and viewing the road 20 yards away is difficult, but there's a VAGUE HUMAN FIGURE covering up what should be there. Like noticing the black nothing in a sky full of stars.

Bethany turns quickly and --

-- runs into Alberto Gamboa.

Alberto is older now, but looks even older. His face is long and bruised without bruises. Scratched and scarred without scratches or scars.

INT. GAMBOA KITCHEN - NIGHT

BETHANY

Your daughter's name was Haven.

ALBERTO

(smiling)

Haven. Haven. I would call her cielo - Espanola word for heaven. She was like cielo. Wendy tell me not call her that because our baby needed ingles.

(smiles; smile turns to pain)

Married to Latino is hard for women around here. Wendy did best she could for as long as she could. I could not be white no matter how hard I tried. She would have come back I think she would have come back. It would have been better. I told her that. I wanted to hold cielo but I knew they would be back. If I known they not, I would have tried harder. I did not try. That was the last time I saw cielo.

BETHANY

Did you ever see Wendy again?

ALBERTO

(he scrapes at something on the table and remembers before speaking)

No. Not really. Not the Wendy I had.

(MORE)

ALBERTO (CONT'D)

(pause)

They would not let me help search while Wendy was there. I think she blamed it on me. I would search at night by myself. If Wendy was there I would just watch her. She looked in same places over and over and a hundred times. Her feet barely touch the water. She had taken off her shoes. I tried to untie her but I'm not a big man. I could not pull her up.

(looking up to Bethany
with gravity)

They thought I took our baby. Not so much killed Wendy, but they asked me about Haven. The Deputy Thomas told them he knew me and that I did not take the baby.

BETHANY

You were friends with Deputy Thomas?

ALBERTO

No. He did not know me then. He knew Wendy but never knew me. I think he said I was a good man because of Wendy. I don't know why he would say that.

Alberto stands and --

-- walks to the sink.

He looks out the window to the --

-- smashed, rusted car sitting in the woods directly behind his house.

ALBERTO (CONT'D)

I would take you back to the road but I do not have a car.

BETHANY (O.C.)

When is the last time you saw Wendy, Mr. Gamboa?

Alberto's stare loses it's focal point.

He drops his eyes.

Alberto turns towards Bethany.

ALBERTO

I watch her sometimes. In the night. I would never let her know I was there. But I watch her. She does the same thing when she comes.

BEGIN FLASHBACK

Alberto's narration is the only audio.

Alberto kneels down in the woods. He looks down on --
-- the creek. The bridge. It's twilight. Blueish gray. Wendy wanders the edges of the creek.

ALBERTO (CONT'D)

She looks mostly down the creek. She remembers the things the searchers told her: that downstream is where Haven would be so she does that mostly. Sometimes she...she just stands on the bank and listens. Sometimes she seems to hear something and she runs towards it. I don't know what she hears.

END FLASHBACK

Alberto remembers within. His face shows the pain.

ALBERTO (CONT'D)

The bridge and the creek and the trees makes noises. I think she makes up what those noises are.

BETHANY

How long has she been coming to the creek? Since the accident?

Alberto walks back over to the table and --

-- takes a seat.

He talks to Bethany with a lifted weight.

ALBERTO

She doesn't know how long it's been. She doesn't see the nights like we see days. She can be there one night and be there again three years later. To her, it's just the next night. She doesn't know how much time passes between them.

(MORE)

ALBERTO (CONT'D)

Time does not mean the same thing
to her as it does to us. I didn't
see her all at once.

BEGIN FLASHBACK

EXT. ALBERTO'S YARD - DUSK

Alberto stands up from a lawn mower.

He turns slowly to a noise in the distance.

Just like most things, the first
time I saw her was me thinking I
saw her. A shadow. A memory
playing tricks on my eyes. A few
months later the same thing. A few
weeks. There is no pattern to her.
She searches so frantically on some
nights, but others she just sits
there. She stands in one spot or
walks slowly around in the creek
with her arms on top of the water.
Sometimes she stands in one place
the entire night and doesn't move
at all.

BETHANY

Does she ever come here? To your
house?

ALBERTO

No.

EXT. BRIDGE - NIGHT

Bethany stands at the edge of the bridge that she knows she
has to cross.

She shakes herself off and walks deliberately across the
bridge as if she's walking to her car in a parking lot.
Don't think about it she tells herself.

THE SOUND OF BABY CRYING.

Bethany stops. She thinks she heard something just as much
as she thinks she didn't.

THE SOUND OF A BABY CRYING.

Bethany slides hastily down the incline, trusting the first
footholds she finds.

She shines her light around the --

-- underbelly of the bridge. The sound comes and goes, stronger at times and then seconds later, weaker.

Her flashlight finds the pipes jutting out of the debris. She follows them up.

Fingers glide back and forth over the pipes.

A hand.

An arm.

The face of Wendy as she watches her fingers glide back and forth, causing the sound to come and go. She ignores the light and Bethany for a moment until

WENDY

On some nights I close my eyes and pretend this is my baby.

Wendy rubs the sound as if it were her baby. She smiles, closing her eyes, remembering her Haven.

Bethany once again puts her light on the pipes and the fingers.

They pull out of the circle of light quickly.

Bethany snaps it back to where Wendy was, but nothing is there and then

Wendy scrambles up to the face of Bethany. The light is shining between their faces. Bethany trembles as Wendy looks all around her face and neck.

Wendy's face goes through anger, joy, pain, then back to anger.

WENDY (CONT'D)

He took her. I saw him. He took her from me. Bring him to me. Bring him to me and I find out what he did with her.

Wendy pulls back a little and points to the creek. Her fingers make a grasping motion for something that only she can see. She looks back at Bethany. The anger becomes fury.

WENDY (CONT'D)

HE TOOK MY BABY!

Bethany scrambles back up the incline.

She gets to the top and runs.

Wendy walks up the incline slowly.

The rope drags behind her. The rope is as tired as the body and mind of Wendy. It knows the rocks and glides easily over them.

She stands on the edge of the bridge and closes her eyes to hear her baby.

She smiles and --

-- looks down at the water.

She cries.

She slips the rope around her neck and --

-- closes her eyes again.

Wendy stands. Silent. Weary.

We pull in closer and her EYES open.

INT. HOSPITAL DELIVERY ROOM

No sound. The fetal HEART MONITOR is a dead line.

The doctor watches and doesn't move.

Bethany watches the monitor.

No sound.

Closer. The line is straight.

The doctor looks back to Bethany.

Bethany looks back to the doctor.

She winces in pain and she pushes her head back.

The sound rushes in. She screams. The beep of the monitor and --

-- the flat line is active again.

The doctor orders the nurse to action.

DOCTOR

PUSH!

Bethany pushes, and screams. The action and sounds of a delivery room.

Mark holds her hand tight.

She turns her face into his shoulder. The pain is immense.

A newborn CRIES and --

-- the doctor hands the baby to the nurse and she --

-- rushes it to --

-- an examining table. One nurse suctions the airways, another wipes the baby's face

Mark delicately comforts Bethany as she starts looking around.

BETHANY

Where's my baby? Where's she at?

MARK

They took her to-

BETHANY

Is she okay?
 (looking to Mark)
 Is she okay?

MARK

(unable to comfort)
 I don't know.

Bethany buries her head into Mark and cries.

The doctor comes back to the delivery bed.

DOCTOR

There are a few complications.
 She's breathing. Your daughter is
 breathing.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM

The FEET of a purple elephant doll.

The CONGRATULATIONS ribbon of a floral arrangement.

IT'S A GIRL on a floating balloon that floats briskly due to a local air vent.

The BUTTONS AND LED READ-OUTS of an incubator.

Bethany stands above the incubator. Her hand is through the side wall hole so she can touch her baby.

Mark dozes in an uncomfortable chair. He's startled when --
-- the door opens.

The doctor holds a chart, but doesn't use it. He doesn't need to.

Mark attempts to rise but the doctor motions for him to be still, and quiet.

Bethany caresses her daughter.

The doctor stands beside her.

BETHANY

Do you get used to this Doctor Parker? The bad ones? Do the bouncing baby boys and girls make up for the people like us?

DOCTOR PARKER

Beauty is in all parts of what I do. There's beauty in the smiling faces. There's beauty in this little girl. You can't let the good or the bad define the beauty. You can't let yourself get used to any of it. You just sit back and watch the wheels.

Silence. The doctor is respectful of these moments.

DOCTOR PARKER (CONT'D)

Have you decided when-

BETHANY

I'm taking her home.

DOCTOR PARKER

(sigh)

Bethany. This machine is the only reason her chest continues to go up and down.

BETHANY

You said she might can live a little while.

DOCTOR PARKER

A day maybe. An hour. A few minutes. You have no idea-

BETHANY
I'm taking her home.

Bethany stays at the side of the incubator.

The doctor walks back out of the room.

Mark comes up behind Bethany and puts his arms around her.

Bethany leans her head back on Mark's chest.

BETHANY (CONT'D)
I have to take her home, Mark. I
can't let the only thing she ever
see's be the inside of a hospital.

MARK
Then we'll take her home.

INT. BETHANY'S APARTMENT

Mark and Bethany lie on the bed facing each other with their
daughter in the middle. They all seem to be asleep.

Mark opens his eyes.

He smiles as he brushes the hair out of Bethany's face.

The baby catches his attention. He places his hand on her
face, then on her chest. The baby is dead. He fights to
constrain his emotions.

Mark sits up on the side of the bed.

His elbows are on his legs, his face is in his hands.

He doesn't want to wake Bethany yet. He sits up straight and
rubs his face.

Mark walks to the

BATHROOM

He washes his face in the sink.

He stares in the mirror before walking back into the

BEDROOM

Bethany sits on the edge of the bed sobbing, holding their
daughter.

Mark doesn't know what to say.

EXT. VERNON TAYLOR'S HOME - NIGHT

Bethany knocks on the door. She waits a moment and rings the doorbell for added measure.

INT. VERNON TAYLOR'S HOME

Vernon mixes a drink for himself and motions to Bethany.

BETHANY

Water'll be fine.

VERNON TAYLOR

Considering I'm much too old to get an ego about why a young woman like yourself would visit me late at night, might I ask if you came to call on the Pastor Taylor or the Doctor Taylor?

BETHANY

Both.

VERNON TAYLOR

(handing a glass of water to Bethany)

You have my attention.

BETHANY

You knew Alberto and Wendy Gamboa.

VERNON TAYLOR

(a little surprised at the names, but he's game)

Ah, yes. And still do. Alberto is quiet and keeps to himself, but he's a good person. One of the best in town if our town were more receptive of his heritage.

BETHANY

You treated Wendy after the accident.

VERNON TAYLOR

Your grandfather brought her to me in his patrol car. She wouldn't ride in the ambulance, which considering the state of emergency services in that time, the ambulance amounted to Grover Crowley's converted pick-up truck. She was bruised up a little.

(MORE)

VERNON TAYLOR (CONT'D)

A few scrapes and scratches, but nothing major. The man of God should say that it was a miracle that she survived at all, much less without major injury. But the man of medicine in me understands that it was simply a matter of her body responding this way or that to an accident much as anyone else's does. Sometimes the situation is worse, sometimes better. Like a marble rolling along a tree branch. Luck plays its part.

BETHANY

What about her attitude? What mental state was she in?

VERNON TAYLOR

She had just lost her baby in a creek, or as I say a small river if anything. We tend to call any form of rushing water a creek here in the south. She had to be forced to come here the next morning. She would not leave the creek so as to find her daughter. She was distraught. You of all people should understand the pain associated with losing a child. She was devastated.

BETHANY

Did you examine her when she killed herself?

VERNON TAYLOR

(pausing to form his thoughts)

Your grandfather is like a brother to me, Bethany. We were raised together, he and I. His own father having been killed at his job and his mother, despite the best intentions of the human soul, could not deal with the loss. Seeing her dead husband in the face of her son was too much for her to bear. She left. Gage was taken in by the Good Doctor Taylor, Sr. - my father. Gage was, and still is, my brother.

BETHANY

Are you saying my grandfather had something to do with the investigation of-

VERNON TAYLOR

(interrupting)

I started the children's home as soon as I came back from medical school. I had not yet been called by God to serve the community in a spiritual manner. Your grandfather was faced with obstacles of his own doing and I, bound by my love for your grandfather and the Hippocratic oath that a new doctor wears proudly on his sleeve, smoothed these obstacle for him.

(rises to make himself another drink)

Reluctantly mind you, but reluctance is just an idle notion to make ourselves feel better about what we've done. Humans, despite our many advances-

BETHANY

-an hour ago I saw Wendy Gamboa under that bridge. And she certainly wasn't dead.

Vernon's somewhat pleasant demeanor and storytelling drops from his face like water running off a car.

He looks forward and takes a drink, never closing his eyes.

Bethany's revelation does not surprise him.

VERNON TAYLOR

And yet, not alive.

He turns to face her.

VERNON TAYLOR (CONT'D)

Man's ignorance, and his cockiness, has concluded that the body is the strongest link in the chain of a being. That if the body dies, everything else goes with it. The body, so we claim, can't survive when introduced to these circumstances. We think we know what causes a body to die. What causes the mind to die.

(MORE)

VERNON TAYLOR (CONT'D)

What stops the heart from beating and even in what order those things are demanded by nature. We think the soul is not strong enough to carry a body that's already dead. Wendy's soul is determined to find her baby, and she will not let something as simple as her own dead body stop her from doing so.

BETHANY

So her soul is not bound by anything that you believe in?

VERNON TAYLOR

I teach comfort, Bethany. People need comfort in spiritual matters just as they do in medicinal situation. If they come to me with a stomach ache and I tell them I don't know what's wrong, then confidence is broken and the situation will never heal itself. But if I tell them take a Tums and lie down and all will be well in the morning, then they return home, take a Tums, lie down. In the morning they feel better. Their discomfort is alleviated by hearing something that makes them comfortable. Something they can understand. It doesn't matter that I didn't know what was wrong with their stomach, it only matters that they'll be better, at least tomorrow. It doesn't matter if I have the answers, it only matters if they think I do. Just as it is with medicine, a good deal of faith is placebo. And no matter how much I prescribe Tums and sleep, the truth is what it is. Tums heals. Prayer heals. Even if neither are real.

EXT. GAMBOA HOUSE - NIGHT

We follow Wendy's feet as they step slowly up each of the three cracked, wooden steps to the porch.

She walks across the creaky porch to the door.

She stands motionless in front of the door and closes her eyes.

The sounds of the BREAKING GLASS inside. The yelling. Haven crying. The sound of feet on the floor moving throughout the house. Cabinet doors slamming.

The door --

Flings open and Wendy storms out with Haven in her arms. She passes through --

-- Wendy and she has to take a deep breath as if she's just been touched by her daughter again.

She smiles.

INT. GAMBOA HOUSE

Alberto sits in his chair at the table.

He pours himself another glass of liquor.

He takes a sip and --

-- hears the CREAK of the porch.

He takes another sip and lowers his head.

Alberto rises from the table.

He walks to the door slowly.

He hovers in front of the door.

He leans in closer.

Wendy steps closer.

Alberto leans in and places his palms flat against the door.

Wendy rubs the door with her fingers, as if caressing a person.

Wendy closes her eyes.

Alberto opens his.

INT. THOMAS HOUSE - KITCHEN

Gage walks through the kitchen to the refrigerator, unbuttoning the top buttons of his uniform.

He opens the door and takes a drink from a bottle of orange juice.

He closes the door and is startled by --

-- Alberto stands sheepishly in the kitchen. He doesn't make eye contact.

GAGE THOMAS
 JESUS CHRIST!
 (composes himself)
 Dammit, Alberto. What the hell are you doing here? What are you doing in my kitchen?

Alberto still doesn't make eye contact.

Gage glances down to waist level to see --

-- a small rifle in Alberto's right hand.

GAGE THOMAS (CONT'D)
 Can I ask you what you're doing with that gun?

Alberto doesn't answer.

GAGE THOMAS (CONT'D)
 Have you been drinking, Alberto?
 What am I saying...of course you've been drinking.

Alberto stays silent.

GAGE THOMAS (CONT'D)
 ALBERTO!

Alberto snaps to attention and points the gun directly at Gage. Gage doesn't move.

The light comes on and --

-- Ginny shrieks.

GAGE THOMAS (CONT'D)
 Calm down, Ginny. Alberto has something on his mind and we're gonna find out what it is. He's not gonna do anything with that gun anymore than I'm gonna do anything with this'n.
 (he touches his finger to his sidearm)
 (MORE)

GAGE THOMAS (CONT'D)

I'm gonna go with Mr. Gonzalez to wherever he wants me to go-I'm assuming you want me to go somewhere with you? Alberto? Is that right? You want me to go somewhere with you?

Alberto reluctantly nods.

GINNY WALLACE

Daddy, no. Please.

Silence as Alberto continues to point the gun at Gage.

GAGE THOMAS

Don't call anybody, Ginny. I'm gonna be fine. Do you understand me? Do not call anyone. I'll be back.

Alberto nervously looks to Ginny for confirmation. The shame shows on his face.

Ginny nods with a tremor.

INT. VERNON TAYLOR'S HOME

Vernon answers the ringing phone.

VERNON TAYLOR

I understand. Please stay calm, Ginny. I'm sure everything will work itself out.

Vernon calmly places the receiver on the hook.

He pauses slightly before --

-- turning to Bethany.

INT. PATROL CAR

Gage drives.

Alberto sits in the back seat.

GAGE THOMAS

I'm not sure what you think is gonna happen out here, Alberto. Too many years of living in those woods and too many bottles of vodka have messed up your mind.

ALBERTO

Please just drive Mr. Thomas.

GAGE THOMAS

How long you think you can go on
hiding from a dead woman?

ALBERTO

(snapping to attention)

And a dead daughter. Right Mr.
Thomas? My dead daughter. You
remember her.

GAGE THOMAS

Whatever you watch in that creek at
night has nothing to do with your
daughter. And it's certainly not
your dead wife.

EXT. CRY BABY CREEK GATE

The lights of the patrol car pull into the entrance and flood
the gate.

Gage steps out of the car.

He stops at the gate, looks down the road into a memory.

He looks back at the car.

Alberto sits patiently in the back seat, illuminated by the
dome light.

Gage swings the gate open.

EXT. CRY BABY CREEK ROAD

The patrol car creeps along the road and --

-- flashes to the OLD PATROL CAR and --

-- flashed back to the NEW PATROL CAR.

The patrol car comes to a stop.

INT. PATROL CAR

Gage puts the car in park. He remains silent.

ALBERTO

Please get out of the car Mr.
Thomas.

Gage opens the door and exits as we cut to --

EXT. CREEK - NIGHT

The young Deputy Gage Thomas stands and leans against his patrol car.

He's patiently agitated as he looks from the ground to the road leading up to the home of Alberto and Wendy Gamboa.

He's parked just a few feet in front of the bridge.

The muffled sound of glass SHATTERING.

YELLING.

Gage takes a step forward to listen more closely.

CB VOICE

Deputy Thomas.

(squelch)

Deputy Thomas.

(pause)

Gage.

GAGE THOMAS

Yea.

CB VOICE

Where you at?

GAGE THOMAS

Nowhere.

CB VOICE

Leave it alone, Gage. Leave 'er
alone. Sheriff's asking about you.
We need the car.

Gage drops the CB beside him and considers what he's doing.

Gage tosses the corded CB into the seat of the car.

PATROL CAR

Gage keeps the light off of his patrol car as he inches up the road, coming to a stop on the bridge.

He exits the car.

BRIDGE

Gage stands on the bridge. He walks forward, standing just off the side of the road, listening to the

House door slamming, and then the car starting and racing off.

Gage watches the car lights come down the incline, showing slight concern at the speed of the vehicle.

He looks back to his patrol car parked on the bridge and begins to run to move it back.

Wendy's car slides through the curve and avoids the patrol car by slamming through the side of the bridge.

CREEK

The car is in the water. Gage is sliding down the incline from behind and pushes through the waist high water.

Gage pulls open the back door. Haven is crying. Wendy is unconsciousness.

GAGE THOMAS
WENDY! WENDY WAKE UP!
(turning attention to
Haven)
Shhhh...shhhh...it's gonna be
alright. It's gonna be ok.

Gage pulls Haven out of the car and holds her, trying to comfort her crying. He holds her as if she were his own, or at least should have been her own.

He looks back to --

-- the direction of the house in the woods, then --

-- to the bridge, then --

-- back to Wendy who's head is lolling from side to side as she regains consciousness.

His mind is running a million miles per minute. He holds Haven tighter.

Her foot is hurt. Mangled.

CAR - FRONT SEAT

Wendy wakes and turns immediately to get Haven.

Haven is not there. Wendy scrambles around the back seat, checking the floorboards, then back to the front seat. She panics and then hears

Haven CRYING from outside the car.

EMBANKMENT

Gage carries Haven up the embankment, the incline, and ultimately to the patrol car.

CAR - CREEK

Wendy falls helplessly out of the car.

WENDY
HAVEN! HAVEN I HEAR YOU!

She fights the light but steady current of the creek and the thickness of the water to follow the sound of tears.

PATROL CAR

Gage lays Haven in the front seat of the patrol car.

He quietly closes the door and --

-- looks back down the to the creek.

CREEK

Wendy is running down stream.

WENDY (CONT'D)
HAVEN! Cry baby so mommy can hear
you. Cry! Please cry. HAVEN!

She stumbles. The trauma of the crash finally catches up to her.

She rises to her feet.

The sound of Haven crying creeps on the thick air of the night.

BRIDGE

Gage watches Wendy. He looks back to the patrol car and drops his eyes in a moment of rational thinking.

He slides down the incline.

CREEK

Wendy collapses on the bank of the creek.

Her EYES close.

Her EYES open.

She can just make out the shadow of a man on the other side of the creek.

WENDY (CONT'D)

Have you seen my baby?

The youthful face of Wendy fades away, the view rotates and becomes

-- the face of the 44 years dead Wendy.

EXT. BRIDGE

Gage stands beside his car. Alberto has already exited the back seat.

GAGE THOMAS

What now?

Alberto moves his eyes towards the bridge.

Gage looks towards the bridge with trepidation.

The bridge is long. And dark. The sounds of the creek are only the subtext.

Gage walks slowly towards the bridge.

He turns to see --

-- Alberto standing in front of the parking lights of the patrol car.

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. VERNON TAYLOR'S HOME - NIGHT

Deputy Gage Thomas stands on the door stoop in the light rain holding Haven in his arms. She's asleep from exhaustion.

Vernon stands to the side and holds the door so --

-- Gage can bring Haven in. Vernon glances down to notice --

-- the RIGHT FOOT twisted, her footsie dripping with blood and rain.

Vernon glances around the NEIGHBORHOOD and --

-- closes the door.

END FLASHBACK

Gage enters the surface of the bridge.

He turns to see --

-- the patrol car. Alberto is no longer there.

The ROPE moves.

Gage walks.

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. OUTDOOR FUNERAL

Gage watches Wendy's CASKET being lowered into the ground.

Wendy's FAMILY is lined grave side.

Alberto is off to the side.

His HANDS are dirty.

Gage looks up and --

-- Alberto is looking directly at him with indignation.

END FLASHBACK

Gage walks the bridge. He can't see --

-- Wendy's HAND grab the top railing of the bridge.

He continues to walk and can't see --

-- Wendy's OTHER HAND grab the railing.

Wendy effortlessly pulls herself over the railing of the bridge.

Gage stops.

Wendy steps forward, dripping with the water of the creek.

Gage closes his eyes.

Wendy stops.

Gage turns to face her.

WENDY
Have you seen my baby?

Gage loses his breath at the sight of Wendy.

GAGE THOMAS
Wendy. I-

She darts towards him.

Gage turns to leap over the bridge.

He lands in the shallow edge of the water just in front of the bank.

Gage is reminded of his age with the impact of the leap. He rolls for a minute and --

-- climbs towards the dirt bank.

As he digs his hands into the dirt and pulls himself to by grasping for limbs and roots --

-- a SPLASH in the creek behind him.

He turns to see the empty ripple of the water where Wendy landed before --

-- pulling himself up into a standing position.

He turns to face the creek and --

-- WENDY is standing directly in front of him.

EXT. BRIDGE - NIGHT

Gages's feet teeter on the edge of the bridge railing. He doesn't fight.

Wendy embraces him from behind.

She kisses him on the neck and

WENDY
Is this was you wanted?

GAGE THOMAS
Wendy. Wendy I-

WENDY

(kissing him on the neck
gently)
Is this what you had in mind? Is
it Gage? When you took my baby?
When you left me to die?

GAGE THOMAS

I knew you were okay. I checked to
make sure you were okay. The baby
was okay you were okay EVERYBODY
WAS OKAY!

WENDY

Shhhhh.

Wendy pushes him forward off the bridge.

We see his body from behind.

It jerks with the tension of the rope.

FLASHBACK TO:

VERNON TAYLOR

You should not have done this,
Gage. This is a bad thing.

Gage's eyes do not divert from Vernon's.

VERNON TAYLOR (CONT'D)

The bones in her foot are crushed.
I will do what I can but she will
not heal. Not all the way. You
should not have done this. This is
wrong. This is a selfish act that
will cause pain to everyone but
you. Damn you for putting me in
this position, Gage.

Vernon leans down to begin work on the girl's foot.

He doesn't even look up to say-

VERNON TAYLOR (CONT'D)

(with angst)
You can leave as you came in.

Gage turns to leave but is stopped by-

VERNON TAYLOR (CONT'D)

Gage.

Gage turns back around to face Vernon.

GAGE THOMAS

This will hurt you as well. It will come back to you. This pain you are causing. Pain begets pain, Gage. Hurt feeds hurt. You can't take an act such as this and make it beautiful. The grease from the frying pan has to be thrown out. The puss from a wound must flow somewhere. This will return to you one day. I hope you will be ready for it.

END FLASHBACK

Gage is taller, so his feet swish back and forth in the water as he sways on the rope.

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. VERNON TAYLOR'S CHILDREN'S HOME YARD - DAY

Vernon stands in the yard, holding the hand of Ginny/Haven. She's five years old now.

Gage steps out of his car and walks up to them.

VERNON TAYLOR

(apathetically)

Ginny. This is your new father.

Gage kneels down in front of YOUNG GINNY. He hands her a doll and glances down at -

- her leg. The brace is bulky as was the technology of the time.

GAGE THOMAS

I've waited a long time to meet you, Ginny. A long time.

YOUNG GINNY

Are you my daddy?

GAGE THOMAS

I am now. Is that okay? If I'm your new daddy?

YOUNG GINNY

I've never had a daddy.

GAGE THOMAS
I've never had a daughter before.

Gage glances up to Vernon.

Vernon doesn't look at him.

GAGE THOMAS (CONT'D)
Maybe we can do that for each
other. I can be your daddy.

Gage's hand reaches out.

Ginny puts her hand in his.

END FLASHBACK

Gage's feet slice through the water of the creek.

They slow until finally coming to a stop.

ARMS wrap around Gage's legs and lift him up.

His feet slide out of the water as we realize -

- Alberto is using all his strength to loosen the tension of
the rope.

INT. THOMAS HOME - DAY

Bethany watches Alberto and Ginny from inside the window.

Alberto and Ginny talk and laugh occasionally. Alberto sits
a very safe straight while Ginny is turned towards him. They
seem like old friends more than a reunited father and
daughter.

GAGE THOMAS (O.C.)
So what now?

Bethany refocuses her efforts on her packing. Gage stands in
the doorway of her room.

BETHANY
What do you mean "what now"?

GAGE THOMAS
I'm a career County Sheriff elected
by the people to uphold the law and
I kidnapped a little girl then
watched her mom hang herself from a
bridge. What now?

BETHANY

That's up to you. I'm going home.

GAGE THOMAS

This is the ending, Beth. I'm
where you want me.

Gage walks forward while Bethany continues to pack. He stops
at the window and gazes out for a moment.

GAGE THOMAS (CONT'D)

Isn't this where you want me?

BETHANY

I don't want anything for you.
Good or bad. I would like to think
you've learned your lesson or that
all of this has made you a better
person, but I doubt it has. You're
too old. And I think you're still
the same person you were when you
were young. I can't change
anything that's happened and I
can't change you. I don't want
anything for you. You already have
it.

GAGE THOMAS

I did what I thought was best for
somebody I thought I could help.
You call me arrogant. You think I
did the wrong thing. Somebody else
might think something different.
In the end all that matters is the
end. Your ideas on right or wrong
don't change right and wrong. You
think of me what you will. I can't
be held responsible for doing what
I thought was good.

(he pauses, then talks
back to her without
turning around)

Feels like I should have more than
that to say.

BETHANY

You don't get to say anything else.

Bethany rubs her fingers of the ULTRASOUND PICTURES in her
hand.

She places it on TOP OF HER CLOTHES and closes the SUITCASE.

The front door opens.

A car pulls into the driveway and comes to a stop.

Mark steps out, keeping between the open door and the driver's seat.

Bethany smiles. Mark smiles.

Gage watches Ginny and Alberto out the window for a few moments more before leaving the room. We watch through the doorway as he takes his seat in front of his puzzle.

FINGERS shuffle through a box of puzzle pieces as we begin to focus in on one piece. The fingers pick up the piece and --

-- BLACK.

END