

As The Sparrow

written by
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FADE IN:

EXT. BUSINESS DISTRICT BUILDING - COURTYARD - DAY

Sunlight dapples through camphor trees and bathes a criss-cross of PASSERSBY in its golden glow. Blurry faces and murmurs as this quota of daily commuters goes about their business.

During a pause in the intertwining procession, a figure emerges in the background - MICHAEL STROCK (40), hands stuffed inside the chest pocket of his pullover, looks a bit worse for wear; disheveled hair, a few days worth of stubble.

Michael focuses on something in front of him, beyond the bustle of foot traffic--

AT A BENCH IN THE COURTYARD QUAD AREA

JACOB STROCK (11) - sits alone; a slacking, defeated posture as he fixates blankly on the concrete path in front of him.

Michael approaches gingerly, pauses at the end of the bench.

MICHAEL

Hi, Jakey.

Jacob's eyes drift slightly toward Michael's voice, but he does not look up.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

I'm not quite sure what to say beyond that. I suppose "I'm sorry" is a good start.

Jacob inhales deeply, lets out a long breath of air.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Jakey, I'm a mess. And I know I always told you-

JACOB

You always told me... Always... that if you did nothing else in this world for me...

MICHAEL

(completes the thought)
That if I did nothing else in this world for you, that I would always be there for you. That was my promise.

JACOB

You told me "there's a word for a man who doesn't keep his promises - and that word is 'liar'."

Michael ruminates.

MICHAEL

I guess it's fair to say that's what I am...at least for now.

Jacob's jaw clenches as he staunches tears.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

But son, I promise you that-

JACOB

(finally looking up)
You can't make any more promises!
You can't! You made me a promise
and you broke it.

MICHAEL

Jakey, buddy, I would never-

JACOB

But you did!

MICHAEL

Just listen to me, son, I'm gonna-

JACOB

It's not good enough now! I can't
trust anything you say anymore.

Michael swallows the lump in his throat.

JACOB (CONT'D)

(through quavers)
Why weren't you there for me like
you said you'd be?

Michael exhales, a determined look on his face. He steps toward Jacob, kneels near the end of the bench.

MICHAEL

Son, I'm here now. And I'm
telling you I'm going to do
whatever it takes to prove I'm the
man you need me to be. Whatever it
takes.

Jacob studies Michael, sees the sincerity in his eyes, but proceeds with caution.

JACOB
(softly)
How do I know I can trust you?

MICHAEL
(softly, steel eyes)
Because I'll show you.

The two lock eyes. Michael is unshakeable.

JACOB
(softly, challenging)
Then show me.

Michael fixes on Jacob, encouraged.

JACOB (CONT'D)
(softer still)
But you'll have to show me now...
Because they're coming.

Michael's eyes widen, his resolve solidifies. He slips his sweatshirt hood over his head.

OFFSCREEN - murmurs and footsteps, as--

IN THE COURTYARD QUAD AREA - IN FRONT OF A COURTHOUSE

A MALE SHERIFF'S DEPUTY - khaki and olive green Class A uniform, holstered gun on his belt - escorts REED SHIPLEY (25), handcuffed and donning an orange prison jumpsuit, down the concrete path toward the steps of the building.

A sharp-suited LAWYER trails behind them.

Clacks from PHOTOGRAPHER cameras and foot shuffles as Two NEWS CREWS - CAMERA OPERATORS, one MALE REPORTER, one FEMALE REPORTER - scurry toward the men and jostle for an angle.

FEMALE REPORTER
Mr. Shipley, can we get a statement?

MALE REPORTER
How do you intend to plea, Mr. Shipley?

LAWYER
No comment. No comment.

The reporters continue to fish for information as the group walks calmly toward the courthouse.

Just as they approach the bench near Michael, he rises from his hunched position, pulls out a handgun from his pullover chest pocket, pivots toward Reed, aims at Reed's temple, and fires.

The loud gun blast is followed by a spray of brain matter. Reed drops to the pavement.

Shrieks and screams as PASSERSBY scramble.

The Sheriff's Deputy grimaces but reacts immediately, grasps Michael's arm. A SECOND SHERIFF'S DEPUTY runs to the scene, snatches the handgun from Michael, who does not resist. The Lawyer cowers into the background.

A stunned CROWD begins to gather as a compliant Michael is wrestled under control and then handcuffed.

MICHAEL
(yells)
That's for you, Jakey! I did this
for you!

Through the scuffle, Michael's look shifts toward--

THE QUAD BENCH

which is now empty.

MICHAEL

is secured by the Sheriff's Deputy, who talks into a shoulder-mounted radio.

MICHAEL
(yells)
This is for you, Jakey! I kept my
promise! I kept my promise,
Jakey!

News cameras roll on the scene, photo cameras clack, the gawking crowd murmurs their judgments.

MICHAEL
(yells)
I love you, son! I love you!

The Sheriff's Deputies yank Michael away and through the parting crowd. The news crews pursue.

Over these images--

FEMALE REPORTER (V.O.)

A stunning development today just outside the steps of the county courthouse as accused child molester and murderer Reed Shipley was gunned down by the father of Jacob Strock, Shipley's eleven-year-old victim. Cameras rolled as Michael Strock - shrouded in a hoodie and secretly awaiting Shipley's arrival - fired a single shot into the temple of the man he once trusted as his son Jacob's music teacher, but who then allegedly kidnapped the boy and drove out of state where he sexually assaulted and molested young Jacob before murdering him. At the time of the shooting, Shipley had been extradited and was awaiting a hearing...

The report continues over--

MICHAEL

handcuffed, being led through onlookers. A hint of content in his far away look.

MICHAEL

(softly)

I'm here for you, Jakey. I always will be. I promise.

Michael is pulled toward an awaiting patrol car.

FADE OUT