

BURIED SECRETS

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FADE IN:

INT. KLEIN HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A modest, upper middle-class home.

College baseball trophies and awards fill a bookshelf.

SUPER:

Greenville, Mississippi - 1968

A party in progress.

JAMES KLEIN, 30s, sits on a couch and holds hands with his wife, CLAIRE, 30s.

In a housekeeper's uniform, ELLA, 50s, Black, enters with a birthday cake, sets it on a coffee table in front of James.

MARJORIE, 60s, sings "Happy Birthday" with enthusiasm.

SENATOR QUINN, 60s, sits in a high-back chair and watches.

The song ends.

MARJORIE

Make a wish!

EXT. OPEN FIELD - NIGHT

A full moon.

Closed white blooms of a SOUTHERN MAGNOLIA contrast with the darkness of the tree and its leafy foliage.

The silhouette of a man walks toward the tree. He carries a bundle in his arms, a metal shovel in one hand.

INT. KLEIN HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

James closes his eyes and inhales. He suppresses a cough, and blows.

Half of the candles extinguish.

Claire leans in, blows those remaining.

EXT. OPEN FIELD - NIGHT

The figure stands under the tree's canopy. He thrusts the spade in the dirt, empties it onto a new mound. He removes a handkerchief from his back pocket, mops his forehead.

The bundle, wrapped in white linen, lays at his feet. He bends down, gingerly places it in the shallow grave.

FIGURE
(singing softly)
Hush little baby don't say a word.
Poppa's gonna buy you a mocking
bird.

He steps out of the grave and shovels dirt from the mound on the white linen.

INT. KLEIN HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Smoke rises from the extinguished candles.

Claire kisses James.

CLAIRE
Happy birthday.

MARJORIE
You're getting old!

EXT. MAGNOLIA HOUSE ORPHANAGE - NIGHT

The mysterious figure takes the shovel from the bed of his truck.

He softly whistles the tune to "Hush Little Baby".

He walks towards a shed, passes a large sign that reads:
MAGNOLIA HOUSE. A WONDERFUL LIFE BEGINS HERE.

EXT. KLEIN HOME - FRONT PORCH - NIGHT

James and Senator Quinn relax on the porch, finish their slice of cake.

Quinn takes his last bite.

Ella enters.

Quinn holds his plate out to Ella.

QUINN

Still the best Black Forest Cake in Mississippi, probably the world.

ELLA

Thank you, Senator. Glad you enjoyed it.

Ella picks up James' plate.

ELLA

Will there be anything else?

JAMES

No. Have a good evening.

ELLA

Good night, Senator. Good night Mr. Klein, and happy birthday.

Ella leaves.

QUINN

I miss her. You know, she's one of the good ones.

JAMES

We don't know what we'd do without her.

Quinn takes out a pack of FRIBOURG & TREYER cigarettes, offers one to James who waves it off.

JAMES

The older I get, the worse my allergies are.

Quinn lights the cigarette, takes a deep drag.

QUINN

It's that Kentucky tobacco. Never could get used to it.

Quinn admires his cigarette.

QUINN

Turkish. It's the way they cure it that makes the difference.

Quinn tosses a pack of the cigarettes onto the table next to James.

QUINN

It'll calm your cough. You can't get them around here; I've got an importer in Jackson.

James picks up the pack, examines it and puts it in his pocket.

QUINN

Mayor, governor, and when I retire, senator.

Quinn holds up his glass of bourbon in toast.

James picks up his glass, pauses.

JAMES

Not the mayor yet.

QUINN

Hell, you better win; you're the only one running!

James raises his glass. They toast and drink.

QUINN

It's about time you and Claire started a family. Voters love children.

JAMES

(flustered)
I..., we both...

QUINN

And, what good's a grandpa who's too old to enjoy his grandchildren?

He takes a drag from the cigarette.

QUINN

It'll be hard work - your practice, politics and a family. But, you'll do fine. Hell, you played college ball. You know it takes sacrifice to reach your goals.

James nods.

Claire enters. Quinn and James stand to greet her.

Claire walks up to Quinn. She places her hand on his lapel.

CLAIRE
Good night, Daddy.

She kisses Quinn on the cheek, pats his lapel.

CLAIRE
Your pin!

Quinn grasps his lapel. He pats his coat pocket.

CLAIRE
Oh, Daddy.

Claire searches the floor around her.

QUINN
Oh, don't worry about it. I'll get
another one.

CLAIRE
I know how much it means to you.
I'll tell Ella to keep an eye out
for it.

Claire walks to James. She kisses him on the cheek.

CLAIRE
Good night, my love. Happy
birthday.

She leaves. James sits. Quinn searches the floor around him
and sits.

QUINN
She looks a little tired.

JAMES
We're seeing Doctor Billings.

QUINN
You take care of my little girl.

INT. KLEIN HOME - DINING ROOM - DAY

James drinks coffee at the table while he glances the
newspaper.

Ella enters.

ELLA
Mrs. Claire will be down in a few
minutes.

James looks over the paper, continues to read.

ELLA
Mister Klein.

James puts the paper down.

ELLA
I know you're busy, and I hate to interrupt, but..

JAMES
Yes?

ELLA
My nephew, William... He just passed the bar and...

JAMES
Your nephew? A lawyer?

Ella beams with pride.

ELLA
Yes, sir! Just got notice that he passed the bar. And, he'd like to meet you, sir.

JAMES
Of course! Of course!

ELLA
He's outside, if you have the time.

EXT. KLEIN HOME - BACK PORCH - DAY

James opens the door and steps out on the porch.

WILLIAM JEFFERSON, 25, Black, tall, lanky, in a cheap but sharp suit. Far from the porch steps, he stands proud.

JAMES
William?

WILLIAM
Yes, sir! Good morning, sir.

JAMES
You pass the bar?

WILLIAM
Yes, sir. Notified by mail yesterday.

JAMES
Congratulations!. What school?

WILLIAM
(excited)
The University of Mississippi
School of Law.

JAMES
My alma mater.

WILLIAM
Yes, sir! I read your law review
article. The whole class did.

James smiles.

JAMES
What'd you think?

WILLIAM
Your argument on the Rules Against
Perpetuities got the whole class
discussing. I chose Estate Law
after that class.

JAMES
You got a business card?

William produces a card with a well practiced flourish, hands
it to James, steps back to where he stood.

JAMES
(reads the card)
William Franklin Jefferson,
Esquire. Wills, Trust and Estates
and all other legal matters.

William beams.

JAMES
William. You go by Bill?

WILLIAM
No, sir. William.

JAMES
Good, good.

James puts the business card in his pocket.

JAMES
It's a lot of work, but it's a good
calling.

James turns to head back into the kitchen. He stops, turns.

JAMES
Congratulations!

WILLIAM
Thank you, sir.

INT. KLEIN CAR (MOVING) - DAY

James and Claire drive through town. Claire points to a yard sign: JAMES B. KLEIN - MAYOR with a picture of James.

A Black couple, dressed sharply, walk past the sign.

CLAIRE
Seems like a lot of them moving
into town.

JAMES
Sure does.

Claire turns to James and smiles with childlike glee.

CLAIRE
I wonder what the governor's
mansion's like?

James lets out a small laugh.

JAMES
I'd guess it's a lot like our
house. Except a bigger dining room,
bigger kitchen, bigger bedroom.

CLAIRE
What about the bathroom?

JAMES
I heard there's a shower and a
separate tub.

CLAIRE
Well, lah - dee - dah.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - RECEPTION AREA - DAY

The receptionist, JOANNE, 40s, and Claire gossip.

James sits in the corner and fidgets.

JOANNE

Can you imagine what the Johnsons are going through? Less than a week away and she disappears.

CLAIRE

Maybe she got scared and ran away.

JOANNE

Oh, no. Angela was excited. She came in for her vaccinations and getting a new family was all she could talk about.

James coughs, clears his throat. Claire notices.

CLAIRE

Does Doctor Billings have an opening? James' allergies are acting up again and we were wondering if the doctor could give him something.

Joanne looks at the calendar on her desk.

DR. BILLINGS, late 60s, enters the reception area.

BILLINGS

Claire! Good to see you again.

JOANNE

Doctor, James wants something for his allergies. Could you fit him in?

James stands, approaches Billings who checks the wall clock.

BILLINGS

Yes. There's time.

Dr Billings leads the way to the exam room. James follows.

JOANNE

Can you imagine? Finally getting a little girl and having her taken from you.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - EXAM ROOM - DAY

Shirt off, James sits on the exam table, nervous.

BILLINGS

Nothing to be nervous about. I thought all you lawyers were cool as a cucumber arguing before the jury.

JAMES

I don't do trials. I do estate work. I drafted your will and trust.

BILLINGS

Right, right.

Dr. Billings places the stethoscope to James' chest.

BILLINGS

Breathe in.

James takes a deep breath. Coughs.

DOCTOR BILLINGS

Hmmm, another breath.

James breathes in again.

Dr. Billings takes notes. He checks James' throat.

JAMES

Claire and I want to start a family, and have for a while now.

The doctor checks James' blood pressure and other vitals.

JAMES

Can we have children? I mean...
can Claire?

Dr. Billings takes more notes.

BILLINGS

You know I can't discuss Claire's medical history.

JAMES

Yes, of course.

BILLINGS

If the two of you would like to schedule an appointment together, we can discuss your options.

Dr. Billings motions for James to get dressed. James puts his shirt back on, tucks it in his trousers.

BILLINGS

You have fluid in your lungs. It could be allergies but I'd like you to schedule a few tests with Joanne, just to be sure.

James heads for the door and exits, holds the door for Claire to enter.

Claire enters the exam room as the doctor washes and dries his hands.

Pallid, sheen of sweat on her forehead, Claire sits on the exam table.

BILLINGS

Claire, how have you been? Are you still having cramps and bleeding?

CLAIRE

Yes, it's been about the same.

Dr. Billings places a thermometer in her mouth.

BILLINGS

I'll want to take a few tests to rule out anything serious, but I'm sure you'll be fine.

He flips through the medical chart, removes the thermometer.

CLAIRE

Is it because...

BILLINGS

No, no. Cramping and bleeding is fairly common,.

CLAIRE

I just feel that...

Dr. Billings closes the file, puts his hand on her shoulder.

BILLINGS

They're not related.

On the verge of tears, Claire nods.

BILLINGS

Will you tell him?

She holds back tears.

CLAIRE

Yes.

BILLINGS

Of course, it's your choice. But, if he does find out and you're not the one to tell him, we'll both need lawyers.

EXT. DOWNTOWN GREENVILLE - DAY

FAMILIES of all races, dressed in their Sunday best, stroll through town.

INT. PROTESTANT CHURCH - DAY

A large White CONGREGATION.

James, Claire and Senator Quinn sit in the best seats, front and center.

The PASTOR, 30s, tall, gangly, stands at the pulpit.

PASTOR

And in closing, a prayer for our brother and sister, Brian and Janice Johnson.

The congregation hold hands.

PASTOR

Dear heavenly Father. We ask that you ease the pain and uncertainty for the Johnsons. In their darkness, may you be their beacon of light. We humbly ask for the safe return of Angela to her parents. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

A few parishioners cry. Claire's body shakes as she sobs. James places his arm around her shoulder.

EXT. PROTESTANT CHURCHYARD - DAY (LATER)

James and Claire approach BRIAN and JANICE JOHNSON, 40s. James shakes Brian's hand; Claire hugs Janice.

JAMES

If there's anything I can do for you, just ask. Claire and I are here for you.

Quinn sees James, waves him over. James excuses himself, walks to Senator.

QUINN

James, I'd like you to meet Ms. Gertrude Lafayette. She recently moved from Jackson.

Prim and proper, GERTRUDE LAFAYETTE, 70s, offers her hand to James. He kisses it.

JAMES

A true pleasure to meet you.

QUINN

I wanted to introduce Ms. Lafayette to the best estate attorney in all of Mississippi.

GERTRUDE

I'm looking for a fine lawyer to ensure my affairs are in order, if you're not too busy.

JAMES

It would be my pleasure.

Holding the hand of NICOLE, 10, Claire approaches the threesome. Nicole carries a batch of daisies in her other hand.

JAMES

This is my wife, Claire.

CLAIRE

Pleased to meet you.

Nicole hands a daisy to James, Quinn, and Gertrude.

GERTRUDE

Thank you, dear.

She looks at Claire.

GERTRUDE

You have such a beautiful girl.

Claire hugs Nicole tighter.

JAMES
Nicole's the Clancy's daughter.

GERTRUDE
(to Claire)
Oh, pardon me. It's just you both
have such beautiful blue eyes.

Nicole skips to her PARENTS.

INT. KLEIN LAW OFFICE - DAY

Sitting behind his desk, James reads a file.

MARJORIE (O.S.)
It's getting late!

He checks his watch. He stands, picks up his briefcase from the floor, moves files on his desk to make room for it.

Marjorie appears at James' door holding a notepad and a pen.

MARJORIE
I heard Judge Pickett shot a man
for being late.

JAMES
That's just a rumor. And besides,
it wasn't in court.

James searches his desk.

Marjorie point to the shelf of books behind him.

James turns, picks up a book.

MARJORIE
A dollar says you get another drunk
and disorderly.

James opens the book, scans a page.

JAMES
You always pick drunk and
disorderly.

James puts the book in his briefcase, puts on his jacket.

Marjorie turns and walks to the reception area, James close behind.

She stops in her tracks.

James bumps into her, looks up.

VINCENT GRANGE, and his wife, FAITH, both 30s and Black, stand near the front door.

JAMES
May I help you?

VINCENT
Good morning, Mr. Klein. I'm Vincent Grange, and this is my wife Faith. We are looking for an attorney to help us with my father's will.

Marjorie starts towards Vincent and Faith.

MARJORIE
I'm sorry. Mr. Klein is extremely busy and doesn't have time for new clients.

The Granges' heads bow in defeat.

VINCENT
Thank you for your time.

Vincent and Faith turn to leave.

JAMES
Hold on a second.

James reaches into his pants pocket and takes out a business card. He hands it to Vincent.

JAMES
Give William a call. Graduated from a fine law school and sharp as a tack. He'll be able to help you.

Vincent holds the card in both hands and reads it.

VINCENT
Thank you, sir.

Vincent and Faith leave.

MARJORIE
What nerve! Imagine what our clients would think.

INT. COURT BUILDING - HALLWAY - DAY

A crowd of PEOPLE. James struggles to push his way through.

SHERIFF FRANK, 50s, rotund, stands near the door to the courtroom.

Sheriff nods at James.

SHERIFF

Outta the way! Let the counselor through.

Sheriff swats at a few people. The rest part; James walks past. As he comes even with the sheriff, he stops momentarily.

JAMES

What's going on?

Sheriff smiles.

SHERIFF

We got him.

JAMES

Got who?

The Bailiff calls the court to session.

BAILIFF (O.S.)

All rise!

SHERIFF

Don't wanna be late.

Sheriff opens the door and nudges James into the courtroom.

INT. COURT BUILDING - COURTROOM - DAY

The gallery filled with Caucasian men and women.

JUDGE PICKETT, 60s, in black robe, enters.

James rushes to the counsel table.

In the jury box sits, one black man in jail attire with hands cuffed. SILAS "HUSH" HAMILTON, 60s. Genial, mentally slow and enjoying the commotion.

James stares at Hush.

JUDGE
(to James)
Looks like you got a big one.

James looks back and forth between the Judge and Hush.

JUDGE
Your client, Silas Hamilton, is charged with one count of desecration of a body; one count of kidnapping and one count of murder of Angela Johnson, age ten. How does he plead?

JAMES
Your honor...I'm not sure what's going on.

Judge searches for, and finds, a piece of paper on his desk. He reads it.

JUDGE
Says here you're counsel for the indigents this month.

JAMES
Yes, but...

JUDGE
Silas here is indigent. How does he plead?

JAMES
Um, not guilty. But I'm...

JUDGE
Plea of not guilty on all charges is entered. Trial will commence in forty-five days. Defendant is remanded into custody until trial. Court is in recess.

Judge bangs his gavel and pushes his chair back.

James looks at Hush.

JAMES
Your honor!

Judge stops. Irritated.

JUDGE
Counselor?

JAMES

I request my client, I mean Mister
Hamilton, be segregated from
general population.

A broad smile crosses Judge's face.

JUDGE

Segregation, Counselor? By no
means will this court order
segregation.

The gallery laughs.

JAMES

Protective custody, your honor.
Given the charges against...

Judge holds up his hand, stops James.

JUDGE

Defendant will be held in
protective custody until trial. You
have forty-five days, counselor.

INT. JUDGE'S CHAMBERS - DAY

The Judge removes his robe, hangs it on a coat rack. He wears
a double shoulder holster with pearl handled revolvers.

A KNOCK on the door.

JUDGE

Come in!

James enters.

JUDGE

What now?

Judge removes the shoulder holster and hangs it with his
robe.

He moves behind his desk and sits.

JAMES

I can't take this case. My clients
will...

JUDGE

It ain't your choice. You're up in
the batting order.

Judge opens his desk drawer and removes one glass and a bottle of whiskey.

JAMES
I'm not a trial lawyer.

The Judge pours himself a drink.

JUDGE
This won't go to trial. He
confessed. It'll be over soon
enough.

He swallows the entire drink, pours himself another.

James holds out a thin folder. He opens it revealing two sheets of paper.

JAMES
This is all I've got.

JUDGE
I've been on the bench for twenty-
five years. Trust me. This case
won't go to trial.

INT. KLEIN HOME - BEDROOM - NIGHT

James and Claire lie in bed. Claire rolls on her side, faces him.

CLAIRE
It's only forty-five days.

JAMES
Yeah, forty-five days; not enough
time to prepare for trial, but
enough time to ruin my practice.

CLAIRE
Oh, you're so negative. You're a
lawyer doing your job.

Claire's hand strokes James' face.

CLAIRE
Mayor, governor, senator.

She kisses him.

CLAIRE
And then?

INT. COUNTY JAIL - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Calm, comfortable, Hush sits on a metal chair at a metal desk. His handcuffed hands rest on the table.

James enters with a GUARD, 30s, Caucasian. He points to Hush's hands.

JAMES

Those aren't necessary.

The Guard removes the cuff and leaves.

James takes a seat across from Hush who seems happy, almost giddy.

JAMES

Mr. Silas Hamilton...

HUSH

Oh, oh, oh... I'm so proud of you.

JAMES

Mr. Hamilton.

HUSH

A lawyer. I thought you'd be a ball player, with that sweet swing. But a lawyer's just as good.

Hush holds an imaginary bat on his shoulder, he points to a far off imaginary wall and calls his homerun.

James takes a file folder from his briefcase, lays it on the table.

JAMES

Mr. Hamilton, do you know where you are?

HUSH

Mr. Hamilton. Well, I'll be. Never thought I'd be called Mister by a white man.

Hush smiles. He leans back in his chair.

JAMES

Mr. Hamilton, this is very serious...

HUSH

Ah, you can call me Hush, like you used to.

JAMES

Hush, the charges against you are very serious. Do you understand?

HUSH

Yes, sir.

Hush smiles ear-to-ear.

HUSH

All them pretty girls and them strong boys coming and going through the House. I knew. I knew you'd do good.

James opens the thin file and pulls out a single sheet of papers and reads it.

JAMES

You confessed to the burying of Angela Johnson, a white female age ten.

HUSH

Yes, sir.

JAMES

You also confess to kidnapping Miss Johnson and murdering her on the night of...

Agitated, Hush slams his hands on the table. James jumps.

The Guard walks towards the conference room door. James puts his hand up and stops him.

HUSH

I ain't kilt, or kidnap nobody.

James spins the confession around so Hush can read it. He points to the signature.

JAMES

Is this your signature?

Hush looks at the scribble at the bottom of the page.

HUSH

Yes, sir.

James points to the body of the confession.

JAMES

And did you read this before you signed it?

Hush squints at the confession. He pushes the confession back to James.

HUSH

I ain't kilt, or kidnap nobody.

James reads from the confession.

JAMES

I killed Angela with my bare hands and buried her body.

HUSH

I buried her, but I ain't kilt her. Her dyin' weren't on purpose. I did what I was told to do.

JAMES

It was an accident?

Hush crosses his arms against his chest.

JAMES

Silas, I'm here to help you. This is serious.

Hush looks around the room avoiding James's gaze.

JAMES

I need you to tell me the truth. What happened? You can tell me. What you tell me is protected by the attorney client privilege. It's...it's a secret between you and me, and nobody else. By law, even after you're long gone, it's a secret that I'll take to my grave.

Hush looks James directly in his eyes.

HUSH

All my life, they say I talk too much. Hush, Silas, hush. And that's what everybody calls me. But I ain't never told on a secret. I promised I wouldn't tell, and I ain't tellin'.

JAMES

If it was an accident, if Angela died because of an accident, it's not murder.

Hush ignores James.

JAMES

This secret...keeping this secret could get you hung.

Hush puts his hands on James'.

HUSH

Do not fear or be dismayed. It'll be alright.

Hush sits back and crosses his arms.

INT. SENATOR QUINN'S HOME - OFFICE - NIGHT

Quinn sits behind his desk. James paces the floor.

QUINN

James, my boy, relax.

JAMES

My clients! What are they going to think? Campaigning's expensive.

QUINN

I agree. Some would find representing a man who confessed to killing a young girl offensive. But the community knows you. The hometown hero that batted four-fifteen and led the league in homeruns, three years in a row.

Quinn pours two drinks, hands a glass to James.

QUINN

You're looking at this all wrong. Greenville's just the start. You're going to need national appeal.

He lights a cigarette.

James downs his whiskey in one gulp.

JAMES

National appeal?

QUINN

With an opportunity this big, why
stop at senator? Look at J.F.K.

James stares off in the distance.

QUINN

A white, southern lawyer
representing a Negro who killed a
young, white girl.

James stares at Quinn.

QUINN

Why does he do it? Because he
believes in the law, the
Constitution. He believes in
America!

JAMES

This isn't a winning case.

QUINN

It not whether you win or lose.
It's what you stood for. Hell, the
tougher the odds, the better it
looks.

INT. MAGNOLIA HOUSE ORPHANAGE - SITTING ROOM - DAY

MISS PRITCHETT, 70s, prim and proper and dressed in modest
but well-kept clothes, sits across from James.

ANNIE, 30s, Black, attractive, sets tea on the coffee table.

PRITCHETT

It's been a while, James. I'm glad
you stopped by. Even under these
circumstances.

Annie finishes serving the tea.

Pritchett takes her cup of tea from the table. Her eyes
remain on James.

PRITCHETT

(to Annie)
That will be all.

Pritchett takes a sip and places the cup and saucer on the
table.

Annie slips away.

PRITCHETT

I'll tell you the same thing I told the Sheriff. Angela went missing. We called the sheriff. We don't know anything about Silas, or what he did.

(beat)

Allegedly did.

JAMES

He confessed to burying her.

PRITCHETT

Then he must have. Silas has worked here for the past thirty years. He's not quick witted, but he is a hard worker and honest. If he said he did it, he did.

JAMES

He said it was an accident.

Sweat glistens on Pritchett's brow.

She removes a handkerchief from her sleeve exposing a DIAMOND BRACELET.

She pats her brow.

PRITCHETT

A bit warm this spring.

JAMES

He insists he didn't kill her.

PRITCHETT

Well, I don't know anything about that.

(beat)

Did he say who did?

JAMES

Won't say. Says it's a secret.

Pritchett stands.

PRITCHETT

That's Hush. If anything, he is a man of his word.

James stands.

PRITCHETT

It's getting late. The children
need to be fed.

JAMES

Was Angela injured?

PRITCHETT

It was a pleasure, James. Please,
don't wait so long to come and
visit.

Annie appears with James' coat.

PRITCHETT

Annie will see you out.

EXT. MAGNOLIA HOUSE ORPHANAGE - DAY

James walks toward his car.

BAYARD JONES, 30s, Black, handsome, fit, smartly dressed in a
suit, approaches James.

BAYARD

Mr. Klein! Mr. Klein!

James stops. Bayard extends his hand.

James does not shake it.

JAMES

Do I know you?

BAYARD

My apologies.

Bayard reaches into his coat pocket and removes a business
card. He hands it to James.

BAYARD

Bayard Jones.

James reads the card: "Federal Bureau of Investigations:
Bayard T. Jones, Special Agent, San Diego, California"

James eyes Bayard. Reads the card again.

JAMES

Is this real?

The smile on Bayard's face vanishes.

BAYARD

You don't think a Black man can be an FBI Agent?

JAMES

It isn't that. Says here, San Diego, California.

Bayard's smile returns.

BAYARD

They just moved me to the Jackson office.

Bayard points off in the distance.

BAYARD

Was born in Greenville. Lived here 'til I was ten. Moved all over.

James puts Bayard's card in his coat pocket.

JAMES

You here investigating my case?

BAYARD

Nah, seems like the local law's got everything handled. Jackson offered our help, but since the locals refused, we can't get involved. No jurisdiction. You understand. I'm here to see an old friend.

JAMES

What can I do for you?

BAYARD

Nothing. I just recognized your picture from the yard signs and wanted to introduce myself. You representing Silas Hamilton is a good thing.

JAMES

Wasn't my choice.

James moves toward his car. Bayard heads towards the orphanage.

Bayard turns to James.

BAYARD

Hey, Mr. Klein!

James turns.

BAYARD

For what it's worth, I don't think
Silas killed anyone.

James nods. Turns and walks to his car.

BAYARD

If you ever want to talk, give me a
call.

Still walking to his car, his back to Bayard.

JAMES

I don't think so.
(beat)
And it's not because you're Black.

INT. JUDGE'S CHAMBERS - DAY

Judge Pickett sits behind his desk reading.

A KNOCK on the door.

JUDGE

Yeah!

James enters holding a two-page document.

JAMES

Just a second of your time.

James hands the document to Judge. He reads it.

JUDGE

Just what the hell do you think
you're doing?

James takes a step backward.

JAMES

I was... I just...

Judge waves the subpoena.

JUDGE

You want to subpoena Dr. Billings
and the orphanage?

JAMES

Just the medical records and records of orphans coming in and those adopted.

Judge stands up.

James eyes the two pistols on the coat rack.

JUDGE

This is a god-damn open and shut case. Hush came in, confessed and this Court will take his confession.

JAMES

But, I...

Judge slides the subpoena back to James and calms down.

JUDGE

James, I've been on the bench for over twenty-five years. Never had a case this cut-and-dry.

James takes the subpoena.

JUDGE

This needs to be closed. It needs closure. The Johnsons, Ms. Pritchett needs closure. This town needs closure.

EXT. PROTESTANT CHURCHYARD - DAY

Groups of parishioners steal glances at James and Claire, whispers uttered under their breath.

Nicole holds the hand of her mother, sees Claire and stares. Nicole's mother notices and jerks on Nicole's hand to refocus her attention.

Quinn approaches James and Claire.

QUINN

James, Claire, good morning!

JAMES

We didn't see you this morning.

QUINN

Oh, I was held up at home. Didn't want to disrupt the service.

James and Claire walk toward their car; Quinn follows.

QUINN

I heard you upset Judge Pickett.

JAMES

That's putting it mildly. I asked for a subpoena and he denied it. Forcefully.

Quinn grabs James' arm, stops him. Claire continues to the car.

QUINN

He's just looking out for Miss Pritchett as I'm sure you are, too. I'm going to set up a hunting trip with all of us, you, me, the Judge; hopefully settle things down.

JAMES

I don't...

SENATOR

This is a big case for you. National attention! You'd rather have the judge on your side.

EXT. OPEN FIELD - DAY

Sheriff, DEPUTY WHITE, 20s, and BO, 20s, stand near the tailgate of a pickup truck and check their shotguns.

James approaches, dressed in slacks, a long sleeved shirt and galoshes.

SHERIFF

James!

Sheriff eyes James from head to toe.

SHERIFF

Nice boots.

James looks at the motely group.

SHERIFF

The Senator and Judge couldn't make it. You remember Deputy White.

James nods at White who nods back.

FRANK

And you know Bo, Jeramiah's kid.

James nods at Bo, who nods back.

BO

I got one.

Bo can barely control his laughter.

BO

There's these three Injuns... no, wait! There's these two Injuns.

Sheriff chuckles. Deputy White rolls his eyes.

BO

And they're lost in the woods. So the first Injun fires a shot in the air and waits. Nothing happens. So he fires a second shot in the air and waits. Nothing happens. The first Injun fires a third shot in the air and nothing happens.

James looks at the Sheriff.

Bo taps James on the arm.

BO

The second Injun says: "I hope someone comes soon, we're running out of arrows."

Bo laughs at his own joke.

DEPUTY WHITE

Every stupid time.

Bo pokes at James.

BO

You get it? You get it?

James shakes his head.

SHERIFF

It's a joke. If you're ever lost while hunting and need help, fire three times in the air. They'll come find ya'.

BO

And they were shootin' arrows!

Sheriff hands James a shotgun.

James hesitates.

JAMES
I don't like guns.

BO
'Cuz your daddy shot your mom?

Sheriff and Deputy give Bo the stink-eye.

James grabs the shotgun with a death grip.

BO
What? What?

SHERIFF
(to James)
Make sure your safety's on except
when you wanna shoot.

Sheriff looks at Bo.

SHERIFF
And make sure you only point that
thing at what you want to kill.
Don't need no accidents.

LATER

Sheriff walks next to James while Deputy and Bo follow twenty yards behind.

SHERIFF
How's the case going?

JAMES
Rather not discuss it.

SHERIFF
Sure thing, but I want you to know
that I was surprised as anyone when
Hush confessed to killing and
burying that little girl.

JAMES
Says he didn't kill her.

Sheriff stops, lowers the barrel of his shotgun, blocks James, faces him.

SHERIFF

You saying he didn't confess?

JAMES

He confessed to burying her, not murder.

SHERIFF

He confessed to me, and I wrote out his confession. Word for word. He read it and signed it.

JAMES

Just saying, Hush ain't the reading and writing type.

SHERIFF

You taking the word of a Nigger over me?

Deputy and Bo whisper behind James and Sheriff.

A BOBWHITE QUAIL flushes.

SHERIFF

James!

James freezes. His eyes follow the quail.

BANG!

James drops to the ground.

The quail drops from the sky.

James, breathes hard and coughs. He checks himself. No blood, only sweat.

BO

Ha! You thought I shot ya!

James stands and holds his shotgun in one hand while the other hand dusts himself off.

BO

Awww, don't worry, I wasn't aimin' for you.

Bo runs off to retrieve the quail.

Sheriff reaches out and takes James' shotgun.

SHERIFF

Startled ya.

James uses two hands to brush himself off.

JAMES

Wasn't expecting it, that's all.

SHERIFF

I mightn't be smart enough to be no lawyer, but I do know enough that this case ain't worth fightin'. He confessed.

James looks at the Sheriff. He reaches out for his shotgun.

INT. KLEIN HOME - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

James and Claire share a candlelit dinner.

JAMES

You did all this?

CLAIRE

Can't a wife make a meal for her husband?

JAMES

You're supposed to rest.

Claire slides both arms, palms up across the table. James places his hands on hers.

CLAIRE

I'm feeling much better, and I wanted to tell you, Hush couldn't have a better lawyer.

Claire leans over the table to kiss James.

SPLAT! SPLAT! SPLAT! Eggs splatter the living room window.

JAMES

Wait here.

As James opens the front door, several TEENS race away on bikes.

He glances at the door knob. A noose tied around the handle. He removes the noose, hides it behind his back and he steps back into his home.

Claire stands in the dining room doorway.

CLAIRE

What was that?

JAMES

Just some kids on bikes, egging
houses.

CLAIRE

Thank God. I thought it was about
Hush.

Claire returns to the dining room.

James looks at the noose he holds.

INT. KLEIN LAW OFFICE - NIGHT

James sits at his desk going through a stack of mail. A large envelope catches his attention.

He tears it open, removes a stack of papers. The cover letter typed on Dr. Billings' stationery.

James scans the letter and pauses at the test results:

"... the chest X-ray and follow up blood test indicate"...

Startled by a loud KNOCK on the front door, he puts the letter in the envelope and shoves it in the desk drawer.

James rummages beneath the stack of mail, picks up a letter opener and hides it against his forearm.

INT. JAMES' LAW OFFICE - RECEPTION AREA - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

Moonlight lights the otherwise dark room. James creeps to the front door. More KNOCKS.

James grasps the door knob, swings the door open. Bayard stands in front of him.

Bayard takes a step back and raises his hands.

BAYARD

Whoa! Whoa! Whoa!

JAMES

Bayard!

James looks behind Bayard. Bayard, hands still up, looks around, points at the letter opener in James' hand.

James follows Bayard's gaze.

JAMES

I was going through the mail.

James puts the letter opener in his pants pocket.

BAYARD

We good?

JAMES

Yes. Come in.

James steps aside, lets Bayard in.

JAMES

Just a little jumpy.

BAYARD

Hell, I don't blame you.

Bayard looks around the room.

BAYARD

Nice set-up you got here.

JAMES

You here to investigate the hate crime?

BAYARD

Hate crime? Last time I checked, White kids egging a White man's house is not a hate crime, even if a noose is involved.

JAMES

How do you know about the noose?

BAYARD

Ain't no secrets in a small town like this, especially among Black folk.

JAMES

What?

BAYARD

We see a lot more than you think. Always in the background, seeing things, hearing things.

JAMES

You're not here for my civil rights so why are you here?

BAYARD
Thought you could use a drink.

James looks back at his office.

JAMES
Yeah, I could use a drink.

James walks towards his office.

JAMES
Let me check in with Claire.

BAYARD
Checking in with the ol' ball-and-chain.

James spins around. Points his finger at Bayard.

JAMES
She is not a ball-and-chain.

INT. BAYARD'S CAR (MOVING) - NIGHT

Bayard drives. They both sit in silence.

BAYARD
I didn't mean nothing back there.

Bayard removes a pack of cigarettes from his coat. He shakes one loose, offers it to James.

James waves his offer off.

JAMES
It isn't what you said. I've been under a lot of stress.

Bayard takes a long drag, loosens his tie.

BAYARD
I can imagine. A White man, hell, a White lawyer, treated like a nigger.

JAMES
You married?

BAYARD
Me? No, no, no. Too busy with my career. But, I figured while I was here in Greenville, I'd give my first true love a visit.

JAMES

Wouldn't take you for the romantic type.

BAYARD

Well, you'd be surprised.

JAMES

Not sure if you're aware, but there isn't a bar around that'll serve you and me. Probably more me.

Bayard laughs.

BAYARD

I know a place.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - NIGHT

Dark, desolate, except for a large, well worn HOUSE OF BLUES decorated with half burnt out Christmas lights.

A half dozen cars on the lawn.

Bayard drives slowly past.

INT. BAYARD'S CAR - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

Bayard and James eye four Black men on the porch flirting with two Black women.

The men stare back at James. The two women make their way back inside.

Bayard backs his car on the lawn to park, faces the road.

He puts the car in park.

James stares through the window at the house.

BAYARD

Hope you like the Blues.

EXT. BLUES HOUSE - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

Blues permeate the air.

Bayard walks toward the house. James, two steps behind.

Bayard puts a foot on the first step of the porch.

BAYARD
How you gentlemen doing?

The two men stare.

BAYARD
Do me a favor and tell Tiny a G-man
is here to see him.

One of the men spits, turns and walks into the house.

James looks back at the car.

A group of large BLACK MEN led by an even bigger, muscled,
HUGE BLACK MAN steps onto the porch.

HUGE BLACK MAN
I'm Tiny.

James eyes the group and sizes up the Huge Black Man.

BAYARD
You definitely ain't Tiny.

James takes a few steps backward toward the car.

TINY, a diminutive Black male, 50s, pushes his way to the
front of the pack.

TINY
Hell must've froze over. A black
G-man in Mississippi.

Bayard walks up the steps and stands in front of Tiny, inches
away.

Both break into smiles and hug.

TINY
Took you long enough to come visit.

BAYARD
Had to visit kin I like first.

They both laugh.

TINY
Come on in. Music's better on the
inside.

Bayard motions James to follow.

INT. BLUES HOUSE - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

PARTRONS sit at tables and the bar. In the far corner, a BAND plays the Blues.

James, the only white person in the establishment, and Bayard sit at a corner table, each with a bottle of beer.

The patrons steal glances at Bayard and James. James catches the eye of a patron. The patron nods and averts his gaze.

JAMES

I don't think they like me.

Bayard takes a drink.

BAYARD

They like you. I'm the Uncle Tom.

A WAITRESS brings another round of beers with shots of liquor and sets it on the table.

JAMES

Thank you.

WAITRESS

You're welcome, Mister Klein.

She ignores Bayard.

Bayard, beer in his hand, points at James.

BAYARD

Rebels Baseball. Nineteen-Fifty-Two, Fifty-Three, Fifty-Four, homerun leader for the S.E.C.

James puts his beer on the table.

JAMES

You followed Rebels baseball?

BAYARD

Pops got drafted in the Army for the Second World War, hated it, but stayed in for the family. Moved us out to California, but his heart never left Greenville and Rebels baseball.

James smiles. He picks up his bottle and raises it in toast.

JAMES

Here's to your pops, and his love
of baseball.

James and Bayard toast, and drink.

James leans in toward Bayard.

JAMES

I don't think Silas killed her
either.

Bayard places his beer on the table. He surveys the room.

BAYARD

Just between you and me, we've been
hearing rumors about the orphanage.
Kids unaccounted for. Thought
Angela's disappearance would give
us another look but the locals
don't want our help so...

Bayard shrugs his shoulders.

JAMES

Don't know about missing kids, but
Silas insists he didn't kill her,
says it was an accident.

Bayard takes a long pull of his beer.

BAYARD

The House Mother...

JAMES

Pritchett.

BAYARD

Yeah, Pritchett. She ever
discipline you kids?

James rubs his legs, laughs.

JAMES

Let's just say she wasn't shy with
the switch.

BAYARD

Intense, huh?

JAMES

Where'd you think I learned my
swing?

LATER

A dozen bottles and several shot glasses fill the table along with several empty plates strewn with grease stained parchment paper.

BAYARD

I told you Tiny's was the best.

James nods in agreement.

JAMES

I've had hot tamales all over Mississippi and these are definitely the best.

Tie loosened, James sways with the music.

Bayard looks across the bar and watches Annie walk towards the exit.

BAYARD

Enjoy the music.

Bayard follows Annie outside.

James gets more in the groove, sways his whole body.

Tiny approaches.

TINY

Mr. Klein, are you having a good time? Anything I can get you?

James reaches into his pants pocket.

JAMES

No, I'm good. We're good.

James removes his wallet.

JAMES

I'd like to...

Tiny waves him off.

TINY

No, no, no. You're money ain't no good here. But, I'ma chargin' your friend triple.

EXT. BLUES BAR - PORCH - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

Bayard leans against a post. Annie, eyes averted down, sways to the soft music.

BAYARD
Then what about lunch?

Eyes still down, she smiles.

ANNIE
No, I can't...

Annie leans closer to Bayard.

BAYARD
I understand. But you like ice
cream, don'tcha?

Annie looks up at Bayard with a big smile.

ANNIE
Of course. Everyone likes ice
cream.

BAYARD
Well then, let's you and me go get
some ice cream.

Annie, close to Bayard, looks up and smiles.

A truck with its lights out drives slowly past the Blues House. Deputy White and Bo sit in the bed of a pickup with another WHITE MALE.

Bayard stares at the truck and eyes its occupants.

Annie turns to hide her face and scurries back inside.

Bayard's gaze follows the truck. His left leg settles on a lower step, the hem of his right leg rides up revealing an ankle holster.

Passing, the truck accelerates and kicks up dirt.

INT. BAYARD'S CAR (MOVING) - NIGHT

Blues plays on the radio.

Bayard smokes a cigarette. James, drunk, taps fingers on his knees to the beat.

JAMES

That girl back there, she's the friend you're visiting?

Bayard nods and smiles.

BAYARD

Annie Thompson. Proposed to her when I was ten. She never said yes.

JAMES

Did she say no?

BAYARD

No. No, she did not.

A broad smile crosses Bayard's face.

Headlights and police lights turn on behind them.

BAYARD

Ah, shit!

Window down, Bayard throws his cigarette out.

James sits up.

Bayard pulls over and the cop car pulls behind.

The Sheriff's silhouette fills the rear-view mirror.

BAYARD

Be cool.

Hand on his pistol, the sheriff stands at Bayard's window and shines his flashlight into the interior.

SHERIFF

Well, well, well! What do we have here?

The light shines in James' eyes.

SHERIFF

James Klein, attorney-at-law.

Sheriff shines the light in Bayard's eyes, just inches away.

Bayard swipes at the flashlight.

Sheriff steps back and unclips his holster.

SHERIFF

Don't do nothing stupid. You ain't
shit out here.

Bayard raises his hands.

SHERIFF

You ain't no F.B.I., no government
agent. You're just a tourist
driving on a dark country road. Now
put your hands on the wheel, Boy.

Bayard grips the wheel, his knuckles strained.

The Sheriff keeps the light on Bayard and leans on the car. A
large, expensive watch adorns his wrist.

SHERIFF

(to Bayard)

I hear ya' went visiting at the
House.

JAMES

That was for...

Sheriff shines the beam of light in James' eyes.

SHERIFF

I ain't talkin' to you.

Sheriff shines the light back on Bayard.

SHERIFF

Best keep your visitin' where
you're welcome.

(beat)

The way I see it, I got two
assholes driving drunk just waiting
to get into an accident. That'd be
unfortunate.

Sheriff looks at James.

SHERIFF

James, we should go hunting again
soon.

Sheriff steps back from the car.

SHERIFF

You two drive home safe.

Sheriff walks back to his car.

BAYARD

They must pay them sheriffs a hell
of a lot more than they pay us.

The Sheriff's vehicle drives past Bayard's car.

INT. COUNTY JAIL - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Hush sits with his unshackled hands in his lap, calm.

Across the table sweat beads on James' forehead as he pleads
with Hush.

JAMES

They're going try you for murder.

HUSH

I ain't kilt nobody.

JAMES

I believe you. It was an accident.
I believe that.

Hush nods.

JAMES

What happened? Did she fall?

Hush stares through James at the far wall, catatonic.

JAMES

Was it Miss Pritchett?

Hush's eyes dart to James for a brief moment. He returns his
stare to the far wall.

James stands up, frustrated.

JAMES

I'm the one. I'm the one trying to
keep you alive. This secret's gonna
kill you.

James paces in the small space.

Hush remains calm, indifferent.

JAMES

Tell me who made you do it.

Hush shakes his head.

HUSH
Can't do that. That's a secret.

JAMES
And I'm your lawyer. You tell me a
secret, and by law, it's my secret,
too.

Hush leans back in his chair and crosses his arms.

HUSH
That's somebody else's secret.

Hush leans forward.

James leans forward.

HUSH
But I can tell you my secret.

Hush whispers into James' ear.

Hush leans back in his chair, a big smile on his face. He
raises his hands up high.

James remains motionless. His face pale.

HUSH
You and me! My lawyer.

Hush stands and motions to the guard. He holds out his
wrists.

The guard enters the conference room. He looks at James who
hasn't moved.

The guard cuffs Hush and leads him out of the room.

HUSH
(to the Guard)
Feels good! Me and my lawyer.

INT. QUINN'S HOME - OFFICE - NIGHT

Quinn sits behind his desk enjoying a cigarette and glass of
Scotch.

James sits across from him, a glass of Scotch in hand.

JAMES

It still doesn't add up. Hush is adamant that it was an accident, and from what he says, I don't think he did it.

QUINN

I'm sure Hush is well intentioned, but mistaken. He's a good, reliable man but not the sharpest.

JAMES

Feels like this is a small piece to a much larger puzzle.

QUINN

Now, James. Let's not make this simple case into a major conspiracy.

(beat)

Take it for what it is. A way for you to advance your career beyond Greenville, beyond Mississippi.

JAMES

Hasn't helped my popularity here.

QUINN

This is the minor league. Play this right and it'll get you to the big show.

James swallows the rest of his drink.

JAMES

He told me where Angela is buried.

Quinn crushes his cigarette in the ashtray and sits up.

QUINN

He did?

James nods.

JAMES

Wouldn't tell me who told him to do it. It wasn't his secret to tell. But he told me that.

Quinn lights another cigarette and pours himself another drink.

QUINN

What are you going to do about that?

JAMES

Nothing. It's privileged and even if we did find Angela's body, that would hurt his case.

Quinn picks up the decanter and motions to James.

James offers his glass and the Senator fills the glass.

QUINN

Right. A confession and a body would prove the case.

Becoming inebriated, James takes another swallow.

JAMES

Right now, I can argue he made the whole thing up. Heard Angela went missing, wanted to get involved. Wanted to be important.

QUINN

Think the jury will buy it?

JAMES

No. But it'll be an interesting trial.

QUINN

Still think this'll go to trial?

James nods.

JAMES

Unless he's willing to allocute to murder, kidnapping and desecration.

INT. KLEIN HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

On the telephone, James paces in circles.

JAMES

Joanne, Joanne! You told me that the last two times I called.

JAMES

She needs an appointment now!
Either the doctor sees her, or we
need her records and we'll find
another doctor!

At the kitchen doorway, Ella observes James.

James looks up, returns his attention to the call.

Ella exits.

JAMES

No! I will not hold...Hello?
Damn it! (beat) Yes. Is that the
earliest? (beat) We'll be there.

James slams the phone on the receiver.

INT. KLEIN' LAW OFFICE - DAY

James sits behind his desk, littered with open law books.

Marjorie enters.

MARJORIE

James.

He looks up.

MARJORIE

The Smiths would like their file
returned.

JAMES

Sure, fine. Pack up their file and
they can pick it up.

James goes back to his books.

MARJORIE

And the Taylors, and Miss
Lafayette. She also mentioned a
retainer.

James does not look up and rummages around his desk.

JAMES

Pack up their files. Please.

Marjorie turns and leaves.

James coughs, rests his head on his palms, catches his breath.

EXT. PROTESTANT CHURCH - DAY

James and Claire walk to their car. Parishioners avoid them.

NICOLE (O.S.)
Miss Claire! Miss Claire!

James and Claire stop, turn. Nicole runs to them, jumps in Claire's arms.

NICOLE
Miss Clair. I missed you.

Claire looks at Nicole's parents. They avoid her gaze.

CLAIRE
I missed you, too.

Claire hugs Nicole.

Nicole looks at James. She looks at her parents, back to James.

NICOLE
Where's Angela? She needs a
Christian burial.

James' smile vanishes.

Nicole jumps from Claire's arms and runs to her parents.

INT. KLEIN CAR (MOVING) - DAY

James drives; Claire in the passenger seat. Silence.

JAMES
How do they know? I only told...

CLAIRE
There are no secrets in a town like
this. The walls have eyes and ears.

They pass James' Mayoral sign. It catches both their attention.

Another sign next to James' - "ARNOLD WHITMAN - MAYOR"

INT. COUNTY JAIL - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

James stands next to the table.

Hush enters, a smile on his face. He sits at the table.

HUSH
Good morning, Mister Klein!

JAMES
Damn you.

Hush's smile vanishes. He pulls away.

HUSH
Mister Klein?

James sits in his seat. He opens a thin file and spins it so Hush can see.

James pokes the file, hard.

JAMES
This is all we got. Three weeks to trial and all we have is your confession.

Hush's smile returns.

HUSH
Don't worry, Mister James.
Everything'll be alright.

JAMES
It will be a one day trial. You will lose, and they will ask for the death penalty.

Hush shakes his head.

HUSH
He promised it'll be alright.

James sits up.

JAMES
He? He?

Hush crosses his arms.

JAMES
The same he that told you to bury Angela? He killed Angela?

Hush shakes his head.

HUSH
That's a secret.

James pounds the table.

JAMES
That's a secret? What about you
telling me where Angela is? Isn't
that a secret?

Hush shakes his head.

HUSH
No. That's...that's privilege.

Hush nods his head and smiles.

James bows his head. Defeated.

JAMES
We go to trial in three weeks.
They have your confession. It'll be
a one day trial. You will be
convicted. You will be sentenced to
death. Do you understand?

Hush nods.

JAMES
I need to hear you say it.

Hush nods again.

HUSH
I understand, and I will be
alright.

James stands up and paces.

He stops, places his hands on the desk and leans into Hush.

JAMES
You willing to give up your life to
keep this secret?

HUSH
I promised not to tell.

JAMES
Then tell the Johnsons where
Angela's buried.

Hush slowly shakes his head.

JAMES

It won't matter to your case.
They're going to try you, then hang
you. But it matters to the
Johnsons. Let them give Angela a
good, Christian burial.

Hush closes his eyes and bows his head.

He nods.

HUSH

A good Christian one?

James nods.

HUSH

Okay. But I'll tell them. I want to
tell them.

INT. QUINN'S HOME - OFFICE - DAY

Quinn hands James a glass of whiskey.

QUINN

That's fine news!

James lifts his glass in toast.

JAMES

Hush agreed. Marjorie's setting up
a hearing date. I'll be talking to
the Johnsons tomorrow.

QUINN

Congratulations.

JAMES

Now that it's over, I can get back
to my practice.

James chuckles.

JAMES

Whatever's left of it.

Quinn walks behind his desk, sits and takes out a checkbook.

QUINN

Speaking of your practice, I need
my estate reviewed.

JAMES

Of course.

QUINN

I'm purchasing property in Missouri through my Trust and I'd like you to handle it for me.

Quinn holds out a check to James.

JAMES

No. I can't take that. The case is almost done...

QUINN

I insist.

JAMES

We're going to be fine. The clients will come back.

QUINN

Don't think this is charity. I tell everyone you're the best estate attorney in Mississippi, would be hypocritical if you weren't mine.

James takes the check and reads it: "five-thousand-dollars". He looks up.

Quinn waves away any comment.

QUINN

Have Marjorie send me over a retainer agreement.

JAMES

Of course.

Quinn leads James towards the door.

QUINN

Go take care of my little girl, I hear she's not feeling too good.

JAMES

I'll always take care of her. And, thank you.

QUINN

You'll be fine. Just give it some time to blow over. Do not fear or be dismayed.

James stops and looks at the Senator.

JAMES

Do not fear or be dismayed?

Quinn looks surprised.

QUINN

Do not fear or be dismayed.
Deuteronomy 33:27. The eternal God
is your refuge, and underneath are
the everlasting arms.

Quinn slaps James on the shoulder.

QUINN

I thought you paid attention on
Sundays.

INT. KLEIN HOME - BEDROOM - NIGHT

James and Claire lie in bed.

JAMES

It's finally over.

Claire rolls over and holds James' arm.

CLAIRE

You did the right thing. I'm proud
of you.

James kisses Claire's arm. She kisses him. The lovemaking
becomes passionate. She winces. He stops, pulls his hands
back.

Claire grabs James' hand, places it where it was.

CLAIRE

It's okay. I'm okay.

James pulls her closer.

EXT. JOHNSON HOME - DAY

James stands on the doorstep of the modest, but well kept
home. He knocks.

Brian opens the door. They speak. Brian steps aside, invites
James in.

INT. JAIL - DAY

A man's well tailored slacks and polished, expensive shoes stride across the tiled floor, not stopping at the guard posts where he's waived through.

INTERCUT - JAIL/JOHNSON LIVING ROOM - DAY

Brian and Janice sit close together on the sofa. James in a chair opposite.

Janice clasps her hands in prayer and lifts it to the heavens.

Janice and Brian embrace; both cry.

INT. JAIL - ADMINISTRATION WING - DAY

The slacks and shoes opens the door to the WARDEN's office.

WARDEN'S OFFICE

Slacks and Shoes enter the office, close the door behind.

The WARDEN, 50s, kicks his feet off his desk and gets to his feet.

JOHNSON LIVING ROOM

Everyone stands. Janice hugs James. Brian shakes his hand, hugs him.

INT. JAIL CELLS - DAY

Inmates, separated by race, loiter near their cells.

Hush walks in with his belongings. He smiles and nods as he walks past the White group.

The White inmates turn their back to Hush and enter their cells, close the gate behind them.

The White SHOT CALLER looks over to the Black SHOT CALLER. They share a knowing glance.

Hush walks to a group of Black inmates. They surround him. Arms flail and fists rain down on Hush.

INT. KLEIN LAW OFFICE - RECEPTION AREA - DAY

James walks into the office in a great mood.

MARJORIE

How did it go? I bet they were so happy.

James walks to his office.

JAMES

More relieved. Did you set up the hearing?

MARJORIE

Judge is out tomorrow, but I got the first hearing on Monday.

The phone on Marjorie's desk rings.

Marjorie holds up a finger, turns and walks to her desk.

JAMES

I'll see Hush tomorrow and walk him through what's going to happen.

James hangs his coat on the coat rack.

Marjorie enters.

MARJORIE

The Warden is on the phone for you.

JAMES

The Warden?

Marjorie nods.

James picks up the phone.

JAMES

(on phone)

Glad you called, I need to set up a meeting with Hush, tomorrow.

INTERCUT. LAW OFFICE/WARDEN'S OFFICE

INT. WARDEN'S OFFICE

The Warden sits at his desk eating a sandwich, phone cradled on his shoulder.

WARDEN

That's why I'm calling. Hush is dead.

Warden takes another bite of his sandwich.

KLEIN LAW OFFICE

Shocked, James stares at the receiver.

JAMES

He can't be. He's in protective custody.

WARDEN

Must've been a mix-up. His own people got him. He ain't got no kin, and you're his lawyer, what you gonna do about the body?

James hangs up the phone.

INT. KLEIN CAR (MOVING)- DAY

James and Claire drive in silence through town.

Claire stares out the window. They pass the location where James' election sign stood, replaced with one: "Arnold Whitman for Mayor."

Claire looks at James. James avoids her gaze, stares straight ahead.

EXT. GROCERY STORE - PARKING LOT - DAY

James holds Claire's door open for her to get out.

Brian and Janice Johnson exit the store, pushing a cart of groceries.

James looks toward the Johnsons. He holds his hand in front of Claire, encouraging her to get back in the car.

Janice stops, stares at James. Brian places his arm around her waist to keep her moving. Janice stays, shouts at James.

JANICE

You promised!

Brian grabs Janice's arm and pulls at her. She jerks her arm away.

JANICE
Where's my daughter? Where's
Angela?

A small crowd gathers.

Claire stands in shock, unable to move. James steps in front of Claire, a barrier between her and the Johnsons.

JANICE
You, you lying son-of-a-bitch!

Claire's trance broken, she gets in the car.

James ignores Janice and walks around the car to the driver's side.

JANICE
I pray one day, you lose a child
and feel my pain!

James stops and stares at Janice. He holds his head up high and continues to the driver's door.

INT. KLEIN CAR - DAY

Tears cascade down Claire's cheeks. She shields her face from the crowd.

James starts the car, backs out of the parking space, drives off. He looks in his rear-view mirror at Janice raving.

INT. KLEIN HOME - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

James and Claire, at opposite ends of the table, have dinner.

Ella waits on the couple, passing between the kitchen and dining room without being noticed.

CLAIRE
I don't see why you can't tell the
Johnsons yourself. Hush wanted them
to know. You'd be fulfilling his
wishes.

James focuses on his meal.

CLAIRE
Seems to me to be the right thing
to do. That's what Hush wanted,
it'll give the Johnsons closure.
It's the Christian thing to do.

JAMES

I can't. It's not my secret to tell. It's his privilege, even after death.

CLAIRE

By telling you, it's like he wrote you a letter he was excited to read to the world. Even though he's passed, he'd still want you to read the letter.

James bangs his hand on the table.

Claire jumps and drops her fork.

JAMES

My God! I am so sorry.

Claire sobs.

JAMES

Honey, I'm sorry. I...

CLAIRE

What are you sorry for?

Anger empowers her voice.

CLAIRE

Are you sorry that all your clients are leaving? Are you sorry that the town treats us like lepers?

James sits stoic.

Her crying increases.

CLAIRE

Are you sorry that every morning when you leave, I pray to God you come home safe. I'm scared for you, James.

EXT. ISOLATED FIELD - NIGHT

Bayard stands next to his car, headlights out.

No headlights on, James' car pulls up next to Bayard. He gets out of the vehicle.

BAYARD

Thanks for coming. How's Claire?

JAMES

She's good. She's went to bed early... Why they hell are we here?

BAYARD

I got no one else to talk to.

James shrugs his shoulders.

JAMES

Not the greatest endorsement, but I'll take it.

BAYARD

I'm about to beat down the sheriff and his deputy and I'm looking for a reason not to.

James leans against his car.

JAMES

I'd do the same.

BAYARD

That's your advice?

JAMES

Not advice, but what'd I'd do. What's your beef with the sheriff?

BAYARD

They got to Annie.

JAMES

Did they...?

BAYARD

No, no. Sheriff and his lackey talked to Miss Pritchett, saying Annie shouldn't be talking to me.

JAMES

Because you're Black?

BAYARD

Screw you!

They both laugh.

JAMES

It's the orphanage. Everyone's protecting it.

BAYARD
Ain't the case over?

JAMES
Hush didn't kill Angela, and that
means whoever did is still walking
around free. That's not right.

Bayard removes a pack of cigarettes from his pocket, offers one to James who declines.

BAYARD
Right, your allergies.

Bayard lights up.

JAMES
What are we going to do?

BAYARD
We ain't got much, but so far,
everything revolves around the
orphanage.

Bayard reaches into the back seat of his car and produces a bottle.

He uncaps it and offers it to James.

JAMES
That, I'll take.

He takes the bottle, tips it and swallows.

BAYARD
Saving your lungs, but killing your
liver.

James wipes his lips with his sleeve.

JAMES
Sounds like we're about to do
something stupid, and I'll like to
be prepared.

He passes the bottle back to Bayard.

BAYARD
As I was saying, it's the
orphanage.

JAMES

So what? It isn't much. A missing girl from an orphanage, and the caretaker confesses to hiding her body.

Bayard passes the bottle to James.

BAYARD

Right, but that's on the outside. What about you not getting your subpoena, Hush saying there's kids disappearing. And what about Annie being threatened for talking to me?

James pauses before taking a drink.

JAMES

How'd you know about the subpoena?

BAYARD

Just a rumor I heard.

James drinks.

JAMES

If it was an accident, why not report it?

BAYARD

Angela was adopted already. Too many questions would be asked.

JAMES

Then why not report her missing? Why bury her and have Hush confess?

BAYARD

A young girl goes missing, we get called. But, if the locals caught the murderer and the case is open and shut, we got no jurisdiction.

JAMES

Hush said He. He told him to bury her.

Both men stare at the ground.

Bayard looks up.

BAYARD

Guess all we gotta do is figure out how many kids went in, how many were adopted and if any one of them ever got injured.

James holds out his hands as if to catch a line drive.

Bayard tosses the bottle to James and he catches it with soft hands.

BAYARD

You can't subpoena the records, I can't get within a hundred yards.

James tosses the bottle to Bayard.

JAMES

Billings.

BAYARD

Who?

JAMES

Doctor Billings. He'd treat the orphans and I overheard his receptionist saying he does all the vaccinations. If a kid went through the orphanage, Doctor Billings would have a record.

BAYARD

You going to ask him? I'm sure he'd be more than happy to show you patient information.

JAMES

I know where the files are.

BAYARD

What we gonna do? Break in and steal the files? What are you gonna say? Your Honor, I'd like to submit evidence I stole from a country doctor who spends his time inoculating orphans?

JAMES

Not steal them, just take a look. See if we're barking up the right tree.

EXT. DOCTOR BILLING'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Crouching in the shrubs, Bayard boosts James through the window. James makes an ungraceful entrance.

INT. DOCTOR BILLING'S OFFICE - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

Picking himself off the floor, James turns on a small flashlight, shines it around. File cabinets. On a hook nearby, cabinet keys.

He grabs the keys, opens the filing cabinets.

Shining the flashlight on the files, he stops at the "MAGNOLIA HOUSE" tab. Flips through the thick file until he comes to "VACCINATION" section. He stops at a page:

INSERT: Sheet with four columns. The first column shows the date the child entered the orphanage, the second column numbers identifying each child.

The third column shows the date of vaccination. The fourth shows the surname of the adoptive parents.

James' finger follows the fourth column. About a third vacant with two big "XX". He double checks the file.

He puts the file back in the cabinet, closes and locks it. He reaches toward the hook on the wall. Stops. Unlocks the cabinet.

He opens the "K" drawer, searches. A file for Claire. He opens it, leaves the cabinet drawer open and key in the lock.

He thumbs through a few pages, stops at "PREGNANCY"

James reads the report.

INSERT: "Probable date of conception." "Termination.",
"Probable date of conception. Miscarriage."
"Probable date of conception. " "Termination."

The door to the reception area opens. James stops.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - RECEPTION - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

Two figures in silhouette enter.

DOCTOR'S OFFICE

James crouches next to the Doctor's desk and hides.

JOANNE (O.S.)
I told you we didn't have to go
back to yo' mama's house.

RECEPTION

Moonlight filters through the large window.

Joanne and her par amour, a MIDDLE-AGED MALE, become
passionate.

DOCTOR'S OFFICE

James cowers by the desk.

In the reception area, screams of passion.

Quiet.

JOANNE (O.S.)
Oh, that was quick.

James, hands clasped, prays.

JOANNE (O.S.)
Good, idea. We still have time to
grab another drink.

RECEPTION

The couple get dressed.

JOANNE
Doc left his light on again. I'll
meet you in the car.

Joanne heads to Doctor's office.

DOCTOR'S OFFICE

Joanne opens the door. She walks in and sees the open filing
cabinet with the key in the lock.

She closes and locks the filing cabinet and takes the keys
with her. She turns off the desk lamp.

Mere feet from Joanne, James holds his breath.

She leaves the office.

James lets out his breath. He looks at the locked cabinet and Claire's file in his hand. He puts the file in his coat.

INT. BAYARD'S CAR (MOVING) - NIGHT

Bayard drives with James in the passenger seat.

BAYARD
You look like you saw a ghost.

James gazes through the windshield with the thousand-yard stare.

BAYARD
What was I supposed to do? I'm helping you through the window, and the next thing I know, there's a White woman and her boyfriend.

JAMES
You're right. There's at least a dozen un-named children going through there every year that are unaccounted for.

BAYARD
Anything else?

James shakes his head, continues to stare out the windshield.

Bayard pulls up to the James' Law Office parking lot.

James gets out, heads to his office.

BAYARD
Hey!

James turns around.

BAYARD
At least we got an answer tonight.

James turns around and walks to his office.

EXT. DESERTED DIRT ROAD - NIGHT

Bayard drives past Sheriff's car hiding in the shadows, lights out.

Lights off, the Sheriff's vehicle pulls out.

INT. BAYARD'S CAR (MOVING) - NIGHT

Bayard looks up at the rearview mirror and sees the unilluminated car behind him.

He checks his side view mirror.

Sheriff lights up his headlights and emergency lights.

Bayard pulls over to the side. He parks, grips the steering wheel with both hands.

Sheriff's lights illuminate the interior of Bayard's car. He sees Bayard's hands on the steering wheel.

Sheriff approaches Bayard's rolled-down window.

SHERIFF

Well, well, well, what have...

Sheriff leans down, rests his elbow on the door.

Before Sheriff can finish his sentence, Bayard grabs Sheriff's head and pulls him off balance and pins his head against the window frame.

Bayard's right hand holds a revolver, pressed against the Sheriff's forehead.

BAYARD

Yeah? What do you have here?

Sheriff shows his hands.

SHERIFF

Take it easy, Agent Jones. Thought I saw your tail light out and wanted to let ya' know.

Bayard pulls back the hammer. CLICK.

BAYARD

The way I see it, I'm an agent of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, defending myself against a racist cop in the Mississippi Delta.

SHERIFF

I ain't done nothing.

BAYARD

Reach for your gun.

SHERIFF

What?

Bayard presses the barrel of the pistol harder into Sheriff's forehead.

BAYARD

Slowly.

Sheriff's hand moves towards his holster.

CLICK the holster is unbuttoned. Sheriff hesitates.

BAYARD

Go on.

Sheriff removes his gun from his holster.

BAYARD

Good. Now toss it into the bushes.

Bayard nods to the bushes on the side of the road.

SHERIFF

What?

BAYARD

You heard me.

Sheriff swings his arm over the roof of Bayard's car, throws his sidearm in the bushes.

Bayard uncocks his revolver but keeps the barrel pressed against Sheriff's forehead.

BAYARD

Didn't even see where this one came from, did ya'?

Sheriff slowly shakes his head.

BAYARD

I like guns. Hell, I love guns. Every morning, I get out of the shower a hundred-eighty-five pounds, and I leave the house weighing one-ninety-five. You get me?

SHERIFF

Yeah, yeah, I get you.

Bayard releases Sheriff who steps back.

BAYARD

You have a good evening now, you hear?

Bayard kicks dirt and gravel on the Sheriff as he accelerates onto the road.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE- RECEPTION - DAY

Joanne sits at her desk reading.

Billings enters.

BILLINGS

Morning.

Joanne stands and walks towards Billings.

JOANNE

Good morning, Doctor.

She extends her clenched fist to Billings.

JOANNE

You forgot to lock up last night.

Joanne opens her hand and shows Billings the cabinet key.

Billings stares at the key.

BILLINGS

That's impossible. I'm sure I...

Billings takes the keys.

BILLINGS

Maybe you're right. Thank you.

Billings enters his office.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Billings closes the door and approaches the filing cabinets. He inserts the key and opens the "M" drawer.

All the files are in perfect order, except Magnolia House. He removes the file and flips through the pages. He turns pale.

Keeping the Magnolia House file, he slams the drawer shut and locks the cabinet. He takes the keys and places it in his pocket.

INT. KLEIN'S LAW OFFICE - DAY

James sits at his desk surrounded by boxed up client files. He reads Claire's medical file.

Marjorie enters.

MARJORIE

James?

James pretends to look for something on his desk, hiding Claire's file under papers.

JAMES

Box up their file and tell them they can pick it up or I can have them delivered.

MARJORIE

It's not that.

James turns his attention to Marjorie.

MARJORIE

I think I should work elsewhere.

JAMES

What? No, it'll be okay. We've got the Senator's file and we'll work on that. This will blow over, we'll be fine.

Marjorie fidgets.

MARJORIE

It's not the money. It's just that...

James raises his hand, stopping her.

JAMES

I understand.

James removes his checkbook from the drawer. He writes out a check.

JAMES

I'll pay you through next month. Tide you over until you find something.

He reaches out the check to Marjorie. She steps forward and takes it.

MARJORIE

Thank you, James.

(beat)

I'm sorry.

INT. MAGNOLIA HOUSE ORPHANAGE - PRITCHETT'S OFFICE - DAY

Pritchett sits behind her desk writing in a ledger. Next to the ledger, a cash box and a stack of cash.

Billings storms in.

PRITCHETT

Doctor Billings! What a pleasant,
un-announced visit.

Pritchett scoops the cash into the cash box and closes the ledger. She puts both in the desk drawer.

BILLINGS

You said this was over.

PRITCHETT

Over?

Billings puts the Magnolia file on Pritchett's desk. He pokes it with his finger.

BILLINGS

Someone broke into my office and
found this file.

Pritchett eyes the file.

PRITCHETT

You must be imagining it.

BILLINGS

Don't patronize me. Someone is
poking around where they don't
belong.

PRITCHETT

Well, if it's that colored F.B.I.
agent, he won't be poking around
much longer.

BILLINGS

I'm done. It wasn't supposed to be
like this. No one was supposed to
die.

PRITCHETT

Oh? All of a sudden you find your conscience? At least she made it to ten.

Shock grips Billings.

PRITCHETT

Don't act surprised. I know that vaccinating the children off the books is not your only side business.

BILLINGS

(flustered)

You don't know what you're talking about.

PRITCHETT

Rumors stay rumors, until proven true. Your secret's safe with me.

(beat)

If I were you, I'd be more concerned with James finding out about your other side business.

BILLINGS

You assured me, you promised me that no one would know.

PRITCHETT

And I'm assuring you now, that things will blow over.

INT. KLEIN HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

James sits across from Claire, reading. Claire sits on the couch crocheting.

CLAIRE

You've been quiet lately. Is everything okay?

James' eyes remain on the book.

JAMES

Everything's fine.

CLAIRE

It's been hard, but maybe the town's ready to move on.

James put down his book, opens his mouth to say something.

A loud WHOOMP outside. A large fire on the yard.

Through a window, flames erupt outside. James runs to the front door.

EXT. KLEIN'S HOME - FRONT PORCH - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

A BLAZING CROSS roars on the front lawn. Several trucks race away.

James runs, grabs the garden hose, sprays the cross.

Claire steps onto the porch, eyes wide, she stares.

JAMES

Call the fire department!

Claire stands frozen.

JAMES

Claire! Fire department!

Claire looks at James and nods, runs back into the house.

NEIGHBORS watch from their lawns and porches.

JAMES

(shouts)

Call the fire department!

LATER:

James, soaked to the bone, stands alone next to the smoldering cross.

Neighbors back in their homes. No firetruck in sight.

James looks toward the porch, around the yard.

JAMES

Claire!

James drops the hose and runs to the house.

INT. KLEIN HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

Claire sits on the floor, shaking, sobbing. The phone handset next to her.

James enters the kitchen.

JAMES

Claire.

James kneels next to Claire. He hugs her.

Claire pushes him away.

CLAIRE

They're going to kill us.

JAMES

No, they're just...

CLAIRE

They're not kids. They hate us.
They hate you keeping this, this
secret.

Claire's fear turns to anger.

CLAIRE

This secret that will ruin us. Get
us killed. You've got to tell it.

JAMES

I can't.

CLAIRE

It must kill you, every day it sits
in your chest. This cancer.

Claire breaks down. She embraces James.

CLAIRE

Don't you want to just scream it
out loud, come what may?

JAMES

I can't.

CLAIRE

I know.

INT. KLEIN HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

James talks on the phone. Ella enters, gets his attention.

JAMES

(on phone)
Hold on a second.

James covers the mouthpiece.

ELLA

Sorry to bother you, Mister Klein.
Miss Claire isn't feeling too good.
She's soaking in the tub, says she
won't be needing anything
further...

JAMES

Thank you, Ella. Have a good
evening.

(on the phone)

You're back in Jackson?

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

Bayard, in boxers and an undershirt smokes a cigarette and
talks on the phone.

BAYARD

(on the phone)

Called me back to the main office.
Seem like there's been a complaint
filed against me.

INTERCUT - JAMES' KITCHEN/MOTEL ROOM

JAMES

A complaint?

BAYARD

Yeah, apparently a black F.B.I
agent's been threatening local law
enforcement.

JAMES

Apparently?

BAYARD

Hey, you're the one who told me to
do it.

(beat)

They'll probably move me out East
in a couple weeks. Maybe Boston or
New York. Seems like I'm not
welcome here no more.

JAMES

Because you're black?

Bayard laughs.

BAYARD

Screw you, man.

(beat)

Wanted to let you know, and to tell
you that no matter what happens,
don't let this change who you are.

JAMES

Thanks. Hey, good luck to you.

BAYARD

You ever need anything, you got my
card.

James hangs up the phone and stares out the window into the
darkness.

He checks his watch, heads upstairs.

UPSTAIRS HALLWAY

James stands at the closed bathroom door. He knocks.

JAMES

Claire?

James knocks again. He opens the door and peers into the
candle lit bathroom.

BATHROOM

Claire's naked body lies on the floor, her back towards the
door. A trail of blood starting from her waist and leading to
the tub visible in the darkened room.

JAMES

Claire! Claire!

James rushes to her side and kneels next to her.

JAMES

God! No!

He reaches up and grabs a towel from the rack. He covers
Claire and rolls her over.

Claire's unmarked arm flops to her side as James rolls her to
her back.

His eyes follow the blood trail from her waist to the tub.

James cradles Claire in his arms, rocks her.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Pastor reads from the Bible as James, Quinn, Ella and half dozen white individuals stand, heads bowed at Claire's coffin.

The pastor closes the Bible, the coffin lowered.

James raises his head and looks off in the distance. On the other side of the cemetery gate, Bayard, Tiny and other Blacks, solemn, watch.

Bayard nods at James.

Quinn, Ella and the others disperse.

James kneels at Claire's grave.

INT. KLEIN HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Ella washes dishes.

James peeks his head into the kitchen.

JAMES

Ella? May I have a word with you?

DINING ROOM

James sits at the head of the table.

Timid, Ella enters.

JAMES

Please, have a seat.

Ella sits, back straight, hands in her lap.

JAMES

You've been very good to us, Ella. Claire and I may not have told you this enough, but you've been like family.

ELLA

Thank you, Mister Klein.

James clears his throat.

JAMES

I'm sorry, Ella. But with Claire gone and my practice no longer taking most of my time, your services are no longer necessary.

Ella bows her head and struggles to hold back tears. She nods.

ELLA

I understand, Mister Klein.

INT. KLEIN HOME - BEDROOM - NIGHT

James sits on the edge of the bed and surveys the room. Pictures of Claire and happier times catch his eye.

James sees Claire's camisole draped over a chair. He stands and picks it up.

Standing at the chest-of-drawer, he pauses and looks at their wedding photo.

He folds the camisole and opens the top drawer. Tops and shorts. He closes the drawer.

He cracks open the second drawer. Claire's undergarments. He pulls the drawer further and something catches his eye. He reaches for the object and takes it out.

INFANT SHOES. Tears stream down his cheek. He puts the shoes back in the corner of the drawer, places the camisole on the others, pats it down.

James feels something beneath the camisoles. He reaches beneath the camisoles and pulls out a REVOLVER.

His hands tremble. He falls to his knees and sobs.

EXT. KLEIN HOME - FRONT PORCH - DAY (MORNING)

Dressed casually and wearing a baseball cap, James carries an arm load of groceries. He walks to the front door.

James opens the front door and steps in.

Noises come from the kitchen.

INT. JAMES'S HOUSE - FOYER - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

He quietly closes the door, places the bag on the floor.

LIVING ROOM

His pillow and unfolded blanket on the sofa.

He grabs a baseball bat from a shelf, walks to the kitchen.

KITCHEN

Bat raised for a home-run swing, James steps in.

Ella stands at the sink.

James hides the bat behind his back.

JAMES

Ella?

Ella turns.

ELLA

Good morning, Mister Klein. I just made coffee. Why don't you have a seat? Breakfast will be ready soon.

Dumbfounded, he stares.

JAMES

I...didn't we...

Ella wipes her hands on her apron.

ELLA

We did, and I'm not working. Just straightening up a bit.

James nods.

JAMES

It's only temporary.

ELLA

I'm in no rush. First vacation I've had in thirty years. I'm enjoying myself.

DINING ROOM

James reads the paper, an empty breakfast plate in front of him.

Ella approaches. James puts his paper down.

ELLA
Mister Klein, Mister Watson was
wondering if he could have a moment
of your time.

JAMES
Watson?

ELLA
Yes, uh, Tiny.

JAMES
Yes, of course.

James gets up from the dining room table.

EXT. KLEIN HOME - FRONT PORCH - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

James steps out on the front porch and looks around. He walks
to the far end of the porch.

JAMES
Tiny?

TINY (O.S.)
Mister Klein!

Tiny walks around the corner from the back of the house
carrying a large, covered plate.

TINY
Good morning, Mister Klein.

JAMES
Good morning.

Tiny approaches James and holds out the plate.

TINY
Brought you some hot tamales,
remembered you liked them.

James takes the plate.

TINY
Made them this morning.

Tiny takes a few steps back.

TINY
I won't take up any more of your
time. You have a good day.

Tiny walks away.

JAMES

Tiny!

Tiny turns around.

JAMES

Thank you.

Tiny waves and nods.

INT. KLEIN HOME - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

James sits at the head of the table, a plate of hot tamales in front of him.

Ella enters, places a glass of water next to the plate.

JAMES

Why don't you head home for the evening.

ELLA

I'll take care of the dishes first.

James smiles a serene smile.

JAMES

I'll take care of it. You go ahead.

Ella leaves.

James cuts the hot tamale with his knife, spears a piece with his fork and takes a bite. Looks at Claire's empty seat.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET - NIGHT

Ella walks down the sidewalk, she pauses and pats her coat pocket.

Ella rummages through her purse. She pats her pockets again.

Ella turns around and heads back to the house.

EXT. KLEIN HOME - BACK PORCH - NIGHT

Ella walks to the back porch steps. Her keys on the top step.

Reaching down to grab her keys, she hears SOBBING coming from the house.

Ella reaches for the doorknob but stops. She turns to leave and stops. She turns around and opens the door and steps into the kitchen.

INT. KLEIN HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

Ella peeks her head into the kitchen.

ELLA
Mister Klein?

Ella enters the kitchen and heads towards the dining room.

ELLA
Mr. Klein?

The sobbing continues.

DINING ROOM

James sobs over his half-eaten plate of hot tamales.

ELLA
Mr. Klein, is everything alright?

James' head in his hands.

JAMES
I've lost my entire family. Again.

Ella picks up the plate.

JAMES
My wife. My children.

Ella stops clearing the table.

ELLA
Mister Klein?

JAMES
I know about the abortions.

Ella covers her mouth in shock.

ELLA
Mister Klein, I'm so sorry, I
should have...

JAMES

It's okay. It was Claire's secret.
She was fortunate to have you to
confide in.

James looks up at Ella, eyes wet with tears.

JAMES

Why? I just want to know why.

Ella places the plate back on the table.

ELLA

That's a secret Claire did not make
me promise to keep.

LIVING ROOM

James sits on the couch next to his pillow and folded
blanket.

Ella sits on the reading chair, close to James. She wrings
her hands searching for words.

ELLA

Ever since she was a toddler, the
Senator had un-natural relations
with her.

James perks up, fueled by mounting anger.

ELLA

It only stopped when Miss Claire
became a woman.

James listens, his fist clenched. Rage percolating.

ELLA

Miss Claire was so afraid that the
Senator would take an interest in
your children. She couldn't bear
that.

James looks past Ella at the baseball bat on the shelf.

JAMES

Some secrets need to be told.

INT. QUINN'S OFFICE - NIGHT

James, dressed in disheveled casual clothes bursts through
the door, startling Quinn.

QUINN

James! I didn't know you were stopping by.

JAMES

You knew, eventually, I'd be stopping by.

Quinn walks around James and closes the door.

QUINN

You're still my son-in-law. You're always welcome.

JAMES

Cut the bullshit.

QUINN

I knew you'd figure it out. Thought it would be sooner, to be honest.

JAMES

How? How could you?

QUINN

Some say it's a sickness. I, and many others, think it's just a unique personality trait.

JAMES

You sick son-of-a-bitch.

QUINN

You might want to sit for this.

James remains standing.

QUINN

I killed Angela Johnson, from the orphanage, age ten. It was an unfortunate accident. I only meant to teach her how to be a proper woman. But, nonetheless, she died. I also instructed Silas Hamilton, also known as Hush, to dispose of the body.

James' world spins.

JAMES

Angela? It was you?

Quinn takes a drink.

QUINN
Isn't that why you're here?

JAMES
Claire.

QUINN
Claire? I don't understand.

JAMES
You abused her. You raped her. She was afraid you'd do the same to our children. She died because of what you did.

James squares off with Quinn.

QUINN
Hold on now, Jimmy.

Quinn exhales a thick plume of smoke towards James. With his cigarette between his fingers, he points at James.

SENATOR
Don't be making allegations you can't prove. What Claire and I had was a special...relationship.

Quinn walks behind his desk and takes a seat. He opens the top side drawer, leaves it open. A revolver lays inside.

James eyes the open drawer, takes a step back.

Quinn takes a big drag from his cigarette. He exhales, again towards James.

QUINN
Feels good to confess.

Quinn takes a drink.

QUINN
I know how relieved Hush must have felt.

He grinds the butt of his cigarette into the ashtray, looks at James.

QUINN
Attorney client privilege and all.

He holds up his hand as if taking an oath.

QUINN

And I solemnly swear never to have inappropriate relations with Claire ever again; or anyone else of inappropriate age.

James stares. Confused.

QUINN

Crime-Fraud exemption to the attorney-client privilege. You know, breaking the privilege to prevent an ongoing or future crime. Should have paid more attention in Criminal Procedure, Jimmy.

JAMES

Conspiracy to commit desecration of Angela's body, destruction of evidence.

QUINN

Last time I checked, and it's been a while, conspiracy requires two or more participants. I'm positive any alleged co-conspirators are no longer able to testify.

(beat)

This wasn't supposed to go past arraignment, but you putting him in protective custody, that was a smart legal move, but only prolonged the inevitable. Child killers, I mean alleged child killers, don't last long on the inside.

JAMES

You killed him.

QUINN

No. I just sent him back to general population. From what I heard, other prisoners, his own kind, mind you, beat him to death.

James stalks toward Quinn who rests his arm on the edge of the open drawer.

JAMES

You think I give a damn about my bar? You don't think I'd give up my license to have you rot in jail?

QUINN

Jimmy, even you must know there isn't a court in the entire nation that would entertain evidence violating the attorney-client-privilege, which, of course, is sacrosanct.

James stands tall.

JAMES

You've got this all figured out.

QUINN

No, but a hell of a lot more than you.

James walks to the door.

QUINN

Jimmy, I guess I over-estimated you. I'm kind of glad I didn't have you killed.

James turns back to Quinn.

QUINN

Didn't. Past tense. No threat of imminent death or bodily injury. No crime.

INT. KLEIN HOME - BEDROOM - NIGHT

James stands in front of the closed bedroom door. He forces himself to turn the knob and he pushes the door open.

James stands at the precipice, surveying the darkened room. Everything in the room untouched since Claire's passing.

James walks over to Claire's dresser and turns on a small lamp. He opens the top drawer. Reaching under the clothes, he retrieves the revolver.

With unsteady hands, James fumbles with the ejector rod and opens the cylinder. Six bullets in the chambers.

James dumps the bullets into his hand, clenches his fist. Tears stream from his eyes.

James lines the six bullets, bottom-side on the dresser, takes the first bullet, loads the chamber.

He takes the second bullet and loads the chamber.

He loads the third bullet, closes the cylinder and puts the revolver on the dresser.

BATHROOM

James showers. Shaves.

BEDROOM

Impeccable. James stands in front of the full-length mirror and straightens his tie.

He grabs the revolver, puts it in his pocket leaving three bullets lined up on the dresser.

INT. KLEIN LAW OFFICE - NIGHT

James opens the office safe. He removes a pack of Fribourg & Treyer cigarettes. He takes a cigarette out, places it between his lips and puts the pack in his coat pocket.

James removes two files: Claire's medical file and his medical results. Taking a lighter from his pocket, he lights the files.

The flames grow.

He lights his cigarette from the flame.

The two files engulfed in flames. James drops them in the waste basket.

He watches the files burn, takes a long drag from the cigarette and coughs.

James reaches into the safe and removes a third file. In the top left hand corner of the envelope it reads: "William Jefferson, Esq.." The return address section reads: "James Klein, Esq., 1100 Heron Lane, Greenville, Mississippi 38701."

James throws it on the middle of his bare desk.

INT. KLEIN CAR (MOVING) - NIGHT

In the distance the Benjamin G. Humphreys Bridge looms.

James drives over it. A Sign reads: WELCOME TO ARKANSAS.

Headlights off, James parks his car near a large mansion. He kills the engine, checks his watch. 4:30 a.m.

EXT. MANSION - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

James crouches low, darts to the front door, reaches in his pocket, places something small on the welcome mat. He retrieves a nearby rock, puts it on top of the item.

He makes his way to a luxury car parked in the driveway, opens the driver's side, slips in.

INT. LUXURY CAR - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

He searches the interior, finds keys tucked under the sun visor. Turns the ignition.

The car roars to life. He revs the engine, blows the horn several times.

A light goes on in an upper window of the mansion.

James reverses down the driveway at high speed. He does a J-turn onto the street and races away.

EXT. MANSION - DOORWAY - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

The porch light turns on. The door opens and a disheveled OLDER GENTLEMAN steps onto the porch, stubs his toe on the rock.

He moves the rock, picks up Bayard's business card, rushes back in the house.

INT. LUXURY CAR(MOVING) - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

Nervous. Agitated. James finishes a cigarette, tosses the butt on the floor of the passenger side.

Over the Benjamin G. Humphreys bridge.

James removes the revolver from his pocket, lays it on the seat next to him.

INT. F.B.I BUILDING - SWITCHBOARD ROOM - NIGHT

The SWITCHBOARD OPERATOR unplugs and reconnects cables.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

The phone on the night stand RINGS.

Bayard startles awake, turns on the lamp, answers the phone.

He jumps out of bed. Phone to his ear, he juggles putting on his clothes with taking notes.

EXT. MAGNOLIA HOUSE ORPHANAGE - NIGHT

James drives by the orphanage slow. A dim, solitary light on the top floor. He drives past.

EXT. DR. BILLINGS HOME - NIGHT

A large, ornate plantation house.

James slows the car, eyes the dark home, drives past.

EXT. QUINN'S HOME - NIGHT

Headlights off, James drives up the long driveway, stops halfway. Hand resting on the revolver, he stares at the darkened house.

James checks his watch. 5:15.

Sun breaks the horizon.

James reverses, backs down the driveway.

EXT. OPEN FIELD - DAY (MORNING)

The luxury car sets on a hill overlooking the southern magnolia.

INT. LUXURY CAR - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

James watches the sunrise. He smiles, takes a puff of his cigarette. Coughs.

The clock shows 6:30. The revolver lays on the front seat. Cigarette butts litter the passenger floor.

EXT. OPEN FIELD - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

Sleeves rolled up, jacket over his shoulder, James walks through tall grass toward the magnolia. Behind him the luxury car - trunk and hood open.

At the magnolia, with bloodshot eyes and cigarette between his lips, James stands next to Angela's grave.

Church bells ring in the distance.

James checks his watch. 7:00. He paces.

INT. BAYARD'S CAR (MOVING) - DAY (MORNING)

Bayard speeds down a dirt road with potholes.

INT. ELLA'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

In a sparsely decorated room, Ella and her FAMILY make last minute touches to their Sunday dress.

INT. SHERIFF FRANK'S HOME - BEDROOM - DAY

In a mirror, the Sheriff adjusts his tie. He grabs his pistol from a night stand, holsters it, puts on an expensive watch.

EXT. OPEN FIELD - DAY

James checks his watch, unrolls his sleeves, slips into his jacket.

Reaching into his back pants pocket he produces a comb and combs his disheveled hair. Straightens his tie. Brushes his suit.

EXT. TOWN - DAY

Holding hands, Tiny and his FAMILY stroll through town.

EXT. OPEN FIELD - DAY

James pulls a pack of Freiburg & Treyer from his pocket. He puts the last cigarette in the package between his lips, crumples the container, stoops and places it on the mound.

He stands, takes a long, deep drag, tilts his head to catch the morning rays of sunshine. Smiles. Takes one last drag, flicks the cigarette toward the magnolia base. It lands with other butts.

Reaching in his coat pocket, he takes out the pistol. Studies it.

James raises the pistol high. He grimaces. Fires. BANG!

EXT. SOUTHERN BAPTIST CHURCH - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

Hearing the shot, PARISHIONERS milling around the church look towards the open field.

EXT. OPEN FIELD - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

James tosses the car keys to the ground. With his hand raised above his head, he fires another shot. BANG!

EXT. PROTESTANT CHURCH - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

PARISHIONERS point toward the open field.

EXT. OPEN FIELD - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

James lowers his hand, closes his eyes.

In one swift motion, James places the barrel of the revolver under his chin.

BANG!

EXT. SOUTHERN BAPTIST CHURCH/PROTESTANT CHURCH - DAY
(CONTINUOUS)

Men run toward the open field.

INT. BAYARD'S CAR (MOVING) - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

Bayard tailgates a sheriff deputy's vehicle, its lights flashing.

EXT. OPEN FIELD - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

Townsfolk, both Black and White, crowd around the base of the magnolia.

Sheriff, dressed in his Sunday best, bursts through the crowd.

SHERIFF
Alright! Alright! Now, everybody
back the hell up!

Bayard pushes through the crowd, holds his badge high.

BAYARD
(breathless)
Special Agent with the F.B.I. Now
everyone, please take a step back.

The crowd steps back.

Sheriff takes a step towards Bayard his hand reaching towards his waist.

SHERIFF
What the hell do you think you're
doing?

Two uniformed deputies position themselves behind Bayard.

Bayard eyes the deputies and moves to a better defensive position. He places his hand on the firearm strapped to his hip.

He raises his hand to calm the situation down.

BAYARD
Everyone calm down. This is a
federal investigation.

SHERIFF
What the ...?

Bayard points to the luxury vehicle at the far end of the field.

BAYARD
Stolen car from Arkansas, driven
over state lines.

Bayard points at the body.

BAYARD
A body. Dead from a single shot.

SHERIFF
This is a suicide.

Bayard points his finger at Sheriff.

BAYARD
You don't know that, and neither do
I.

Sheriff steps back.

Three men all dressed in identical suits, G-men, break through the crowd.

Bayard kneels next to James' body, his hands trace the outline of the fresh grave.

BAYARD
(to the G-men)
Call Jackson, get a forensic team.
Nothing local.

Bayard stands and faces Sheriff.

BAYARD
Didn't think you'd be seeing me so soon, did ya'?

SHERIFF
Screw you.

Bayard walks up to Sheriff, stands inches from him.

BAYARD
(whispers)
We can do this two ways. One, you resist, we shoot it out and hell, you might even win. But, if I don't kill you, you'll have the whole federal government down here, on you like your cheap suit.

Bayard flicks Sheriff's lapel.

BAYARD
Or, you can step back, respect our federal jurisdiction and I note how you assisted in the investigation.

The sheriff thinks for a moment, steps back.

More federal agents arrive.

BAYARD
(to the crowd)
Everyone! We are going to need to interview you. All of you.

The crowd mummurs their disapproval.

BAYARD
White, Black. Doesn't matter. An agent will be taking your statement.

Bayard looks to the crowd. He sees Annie. She smiles at him.

Bayard walks up to her, notebook out. They both stare at Sheriff who smirks.

EXT. MAGNOLIA HOUSE ORPHANAGE - DAY

Bayard knocks on the front door.

Annie opens the door.

ANNIE

Good morning, Mister Jones.

PRITCHETT (O.S.)

Who's at the door.

Annie steps to the side. Pritchett appears.

PRITCHETT

I thought I told you, you aren't welcome to visit. Should I call the sheriff?

Bayard removes his badge, holds it out to her.

BAYARD

Not visiting. Official business. And don't worry about the sheriff, we'll be speaking with him soon.

Head bowed, Pritchett steps aside.

BAYARD (V.O.)

James Klein. Lawyer, husband, friend. His sacrifice made things easy. While investigating a dead body connected to a stolen car crossing from Arkansas to Mississippi, we uncovered a lot more.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Sheriff sits at the metal table, his hands resting on the table. Sweat glistens on his forehead; his armpits stained.

Bayard sits across from him. Two ominous AGENTS stand in the corner of the room.

Bayard looks at Sheriff's expensive watch. He points at it.

BAYARD

Nice watch.

Sheriff pulls his hand back. He runs his fingers through his hair. With elbows on the desk, he covers his face. His shoulders shake. He sobs.

BAYARD (V.O.)
Child trafficking. They turned
against each other, blaming one
another. It wasn't difficult for
them to rat out the Senator, but he
was a tough one.

INT. MORGUE - HALLWAY - DAY

FLUORESCENT LIGHTS flicker above a long, tiled, antiseptic hallway.

Bayard walks down the hallway towards swinging doors. A MORGUE sign hangs above the door.

BAYARD (V.O.)
Testimony in exchange for leniency
is good, but tainted with the
stench of desperation. We needed
something solid, something
physical.

MORGUE

Bayard walks up to the MEDICAL EXAMINER. The Medical Examiner holds out a steel tray.

BAYARD (V.O.)
And that's when Angela gave us what
we needed.

Bayard looks into the tray. Senator Quinn's pin.

Bayard looks at the exam table and the small, covered body.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Beautiful late summer day.

Dozens of White folk stand solemn, heads bowed as Pastor reads from the Bible.

An elaborate casket ready to be lowered.

Off in the distance, but not too far, dozens of Black folk stand with heads bowed.

BAYARD (V.O.)
A man's legacy is not determined by
his past, nor the fruits of his
loins.

EXT. ELLA'S HOUSE - DAY

William, dressed in a sharp suit, hands Ella a large envelope.

Ella opens the envelope.

BAYARD (V.O.)
A man's legacy is determined by the
good he's done with the life he
has. The secrets he protected, the
lies he exposed.

Ella pulls out papers from the envelope; it reads: LAND DEED.

Ella covers her mouth in shock.

BAYARD (V.O.)
But, more importantly, the lives he
made better.

Bayard stands beneath the shade of the southern magnolia. He has two cigarettes in his mouth. He lights both.

Bayard takes one cigarette from his mouth, kneels down and places it on the ground.

FADE OUT

THE END