

KIRKWOOD

written by

Eric Dickson

WGAE #1375636

EDixsn1@hotmail.com
8915 Silver Lake Drive
Apt. 8
Leesburg, FL 34788
352-901-1273

FADE IN:

INT. BOB'S COUNTRY CUPBOARD - DAY

A wide-eyed pair of BABY BLUES fill the frame. These are the EYES of a YOUNG CHILD. About to absorb the light and darkness of the world in equal measures.

THE ADULT VOICE OF BEN, a man in his thirties, sets the stage for a most complicated and incredible story. His life story. Beginning with the vivid and painful memory of an early childhood trauma.

BEN (V.O.)
Look at those eyes. So tired. So broken. By age nine, I'd experienced loss that would render most people catatonic.

Little by little, the fair skinned and tired, strained face of a SAD BOY is revealed.

BEN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Where do you go coming from a place that dark?

BENNY, nine, a chubby, mischievous brat, stands trance-like before an impressive display of chocolate bars. He's a pathetic sight. A mouth, face, clothes caked with three shades of ground in dirt.

BEN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I'm not looking for pity. Just a little bit of your time. Truth be told, it's taken a lot for me to open up. I figured thirty years was long enough.

SUPERIMPOSE: LAKE HARTLEY, FLORIDA 1995

Benny rifles through the bars, throws a curious glance over his shoulder and back at--

MR. JERGENS, sixties, owner and operator. He pops a squat on a bar stool behind the register, otherwise engaged in a tabloid magazine.

Benny's friend, NED BROWN, ten, freckle faced red head, all around bad seed, takes cover behind an endcap. He's the official look out man.

NED
Stop being a baby and just take it.

BENNY
He's watchin'.

NED
No, he ain't. I could've grabbed
twelve snickers and been halfway to
the park by now.

Benny checks the front end--

Mr. Jergins laughs it up---oblivious.

NED (CONT'D)
Do it.

Benny quickly loads his pockets like a candy lover gone mad.
He simply CANNOT STOP.

NED (CONT'D)
That's enough. Hurry up.

Benny fills up a bulky sweater, zips it to his chin.

Mission accomplished.

Ned grins. The two boys quietly scurry around a corner
shelf, make for the exit...

Meantime...

Candy bars slip from Benny's sweater. One by one.

Thump. Thump. Thump.

NED (CONT'D)
Come on. Pull yourself together.

Mr. Jergins attention piqued. With his eyes perked up and
peering over a pair of old-fashioned cheaters, he takes
inventory of his customers.

A commotion near aisle one.

His nerves fried, Benny clumsily picks up the bars, tries
pawning them off to a frazzled Ned.

BENNY
Here. Take some.

NED
No way. This was your idea.

Footsteps. They turn, gawk up at a livid...

Mr. Jergins, piercing stare, towering above them like a monster from their nightmares.

MR. JERGINs
Having some trouble, boys?

Ned bolts. He's out of there. Mr. Jergins hobbles for the door, pops his head out --

MR. JERGINs (CONT'D)
You better run, Ned Brown!

He turns, faces Benny-

MR. JERGINs (CONT'D)
Benny? Is that you under all that dirt? Why aren't you in school?

Defiantly, Benny hangs his head. But he's mostly embarrassed.

BENNY
To hell with school.

MR. JERGINs
I know your Mom and Daddy didn't teach you to be a trash mouth. What do you think they'd say if they knew you were skipping class?

Benny looks him in the eye. A sore subject.

BENNY
They can't say nuthin. They're dead.

Mr. Jergins clears his throat, regroupes, and with a more sympathetic tone...

MR. JERGINs
And what about your brother?

Benny is quiet, lost. Mr. Jergins takes in a deep sadness in his eyes. A truly hopeless expression as a single tear streaks his chubby face.

INT. MR. JERGINs PICK UP - MOVING - DAY

Traveling a private dirt road, as the roof is tickled by the long, hanging branches of hundred-year-old oak trees, Mr. Jergins and Benny spot the Kirkwood home hidden behind a secluded patch of woods.

EXT. KIRKWOOD HOME - DAY

A simple country home built on blue collar sweat. Accenting this redneck's mansion is a poorly constructed but hand-crafted front porch cut from cheap lumber.

From under some complicated, unmanicured tree limbs bursts Mr. Jergins' pick-up. It mows down a jungle-like lawn and slows to a stop near the porch.

INT. MR. JERGINS PICK UP - DAY

Mr. Jergins fixes his gaze on Benny...limp, lifeless and a truly vacant soul.

BEN (V.O.)

I'd been on my own for almost five weeks before Mister Jergins caught me filling my pockets. For a nine-year old, five weeks is a lifetime.

INT. KIRKWOOD HOME - LIVING ROOM - DUSK (FLASHBACK)

Benny squats on the edge of a love seat while a remorseful plain-clothes HOMICIDE COP kneels before him. He is super careful, sincere in his approach.

TWO UNIFORM COPS hover behind their superior. Both looking timid and awkward. Eyes on the carpet, unwilling to burn this painful memory into their rookie brains.

Benny is distracted by their off-putting vibe.

HOMICIDE COP

Benny. Your brother tells me you've been in bed sick most of the night. That you were watching TV and passed out around dinner time. Is this true? Did you miss supper tonight?

Benny nods.

HOMICIDE COP (CONT'D)

Did you maybe hear anything that sounded like a bang? Something loud that woke you up? Like, a show on TV?

BENNY

No.

HOMICIDE COP
You must've been a sleepy boy.
Momma give you some medicine?

Benny nods.

Homicide Cop glances back at his two cops--patiently awaiting instruction. A silent, unspoken exchange as all three look equally sick to their stomachs.

OTHER UNIFORM COPS enter and exit the front screen door as Benny watches with confusion. He shifts his focus to an exposed front window.

On the front lawn stands Benny's brother KEVIN KIRKWOOD, nineteen, faded Nirvana t-shirt. His eyes are red and puffy, swollen from non-stop weeping.

Through the front window, Kevin watches Benny closely. A concerned, protective eye.

BEN (V.O.)
After some begging and pleading,
Kevin convinced the cops it was
best to tell me they died in a car
accident.

EXT. TWO-LANE BRIDGE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

An early eighties BUICK RIVIERA is driving well over the limit as it hits a slick piece of asphalt...

SCREEEECH!

OVER BLACK

BEN (V.O.)
They told me Pop's car slid on the
road and took a nose-dive off the
Boden River Bridge.

ON THE ROCKS BELOW - LATER THAT DAY

An unrecognizable pile of twisted metal has been smashed and pummeled to oblivion. The windshield completely destroyed as glass peppers the rock formation.

Just below the rocks, a quiet, narrow river flows up stream. RANDOM CITIZENS, driving by in boats, fishing from various banks and backyards, observe the grisly scene.

PEOPLE ON THE BRIDGE peer down at the wreckage.

A PAIR OF CITY CORONERS carry off MISTER KIRKWOOD'S BODY in a black rubber bag. One of the ON SCENE OFFICERS notices something strange in the half-opened trunk, carefully tip toes over the uneven rubble for a closer look. He's absolutely floored by his discovery.

ON SCENE OFFICER
Over here!

INT. KIRKWOOD HOME - LIVING ROOM - DUSK

Benny stares over the homicide cop's shoulder and through the cracked open door of the master bedroom. A UNIFORM COP in yellow rubber gloves places a THIRTY-EIGHT REVOLVER into a plastic evidence bag.

BEN (V.O.)
Even though I knew better, I played along. It seemed easier for us to pretend their death was nothing more than an accident.

Benny stares back at Kevin, still on the lawn -- choking back tears, nervous, sick, angry. The Deputy rests a calming hand on his shoulder.

BEN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
God knows we tried. Things were okay for a while. But the pressure of it all started getting to Kevin. First it was just the drinking. Before too long, Kevin would completely crumble.

Slowly but surely, Kevin's image DISSOLVES.

BEN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Without an explanation or so much as a note, Kevin took off.

INT. KIRKWOOD HOME - LIVING ROOM - DUSK

Benny still staring out the window. As if Kevin was still on the lawn.

BEN (V.O.)
It would be another three years before I saw his face again. Just long enough for me to bury his memory.

(MORE)

BEN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
But not so long I couldn't still
harbor a burning resentment that
would stay with me for the next
thirty years.

INT. LAKE HARTLEY BAPTIST - CHAPEL - NIGHT

PASTOR DALE DAWSON, fifties, preaches a small and intimate sermon with a modest Wednesday night crowd. In the back of the chapel sits a strung-out Kevin. Thin and pale. Unshaven. A broken soul.

BEN (V.O.)
And then, there he was. No
warning. No phone call. Out of
nowhere, Kevin turns up at the
church, flat broke and strung out
on meth. Most of the congregation
didn't even recognize him. Not
until he came forward during the
invitation.

Kevin slowly rises from the pew, moves up the aisle. Members of the congregation turn and stare, whisper to one another, looks of snickering judgement.

INT. PASTOR DAWSON'S OFFICE - NIGHT

FOUR MEN, all church deacons, kneel in a tight circle, laying hands on a broken Kevin, praying out loud.

DEACON #1
...And Lord, we ask that you
cleanse brother Kevin from these
poisons that have taken over his
mind and body and you FILL that
void inside him with your love and
mercy...

BEN (V.O.)
Some of the head deacons took him
into Pastor's office and prayed for
his salvation. For over two hours
straight, so the story goes. He
ended up re-dedicating his life to
Jesus and made a deal with the
church. They agreed to put him
through rehab. In exchange, Kevin
would move into the shelter and
tell the other addicts about God.

INT. HOMELESS SHELTER - NIGHT

A small, intimate group of ADDICTS gather in a tight circle. Their daily meeting. Kevin is in the midst of sharing his life affirming experiences with the other men. He's all cleaned up now with short hair, trimmed beard, a special gleam in his eye. He is genuinely happy, filled with the spirit and with a brand-new zest for life.

BEN (V.O.)

It was here where Kevin let it all hang out. Purged his soul you could say. Telling his new circle about his experiences with drugs and alcohol. About losing Mom and Dad. But, most importantly, how the mercy of Christ saved his life and reunited him with his brother.

INT. LAKE HARTLEY BAPTIST - SANCTUARY - MORNING

Kevin, now wearing reading glasses, dressed in a modest but proper suit, stands at the pulpit. He opens his Bible... quotes some scripture.

BEN (V.O.)

By the time he was twenty-three, Kevin decided the church was his true calling. A place he would call home for the next twenty-five years. To the people of Lake Hartley, Kevin was a hero. Someone who beat the odds. Overcame adversity and tragedy.

CLOSE ON BENNY, lost amongst the center aisle of our congregation.

BEN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

You couldn't help but admire him. I knew first-hand what he'd been through. The responsibility that was dumped in his lap. The mental anguish of not knowing what happened. What he could have done to stop it. It was enough to break anyone. But Kevin just kept getting stronger. It was because of my brother I too found my calling. I decided it was my turn to make sense of this mess called my life.

Benny observes the congregation hanging on Kevin's every word with proud smiles on their faces.

BEN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Kevin once told me how God puts us through trials and tribulations in our life to make us stronger people. To get us where we need to be. So, I did my part in reaching the community. I became a public defender.

INT. COUNTY JAIL - DAY (PRESENT)

BEN KIRKWOOD, thirties, cheap suit, three-day beard, sprawls out on a metal bench. A forearm rested on his tired brow...hungover.

FOOTSTEPS in the outer halls of the cell.

CORRECTIONS OFFICER (O.S.)
Hey, Kirkwood! Rise and shine!

Ben doesn't flinch. He's sound asleep.

The brutish CORRECTIONS OFFICER pulls his nightstick and

WHAP! Swiftly swings it against the iron bars.

With as little effort as possible, Ben lifts his elbow, cracks open his eyes.

CORRECTIONS OFFICER (CONT'D)
Let's go, counselor.

Ben finally gets upright. Blinks incessantly as he attempts to bring some moisture to a pair of dry and bloodshot peepers. He rises from the bench, a bit wobbly as he dips through the gate. The two men stroll the interior corridor of county lock-up.

CORRECTIONS OFFICER (CONT'D)
Ya know, I hear the reason you get yourself tossed in the clink so much is on account of your losing.

BEN
Yeah?

CORRECTIONS OFFICER
Yeah. Like you're keeping all your clients you got locked up company.

BEN

Losing suggests it was ever a fair fight. And they're not clients. They're numbers on a roster.

CORRECTIONS OFFICER

Yikes. Remind me to never get in trouble with the law.

BEN

Don't say I didn't warn you.

They're BUZZED through a sliding gate. Corrections Officer looks disgusted, almost embarrassed for Ben.

INT. SCOTT'S LEXUS - MOVING - DAY

SCOTT LARSEN, thirties, ray bans, quaffed blonde hair slicked and combed to absolute perfection, lights up a smoke as he gawks back at a still hungover Ben, arm rested on the door, rubbing his nose.

SCOTT

You know, when I first told my old man I was going to law school you know what he tells me? Says he'd rather stand on a corner with a cup in his hand. Says at least it's an honest day's work.

BEN

It was Mom's birthday yesterday.

SCOTT

Yeah, I know. You told me that last year when I picked you up.

BEN

You wanna know how I celebrated my mother's birthday?

SCOTT

Got drunk and thrown in jail?

BEN

Besides that.

SCOTT

What?

BEN
I escorted this kid to three years
in prison. Some poor idiot trying
to feed his kid.

Scott sucks in a deep breath -- already exhausted. He's been
down this road a few dozen times.

BEN (CONT'D)
Gets laid off. Not a dime in the
bank. A new baby. High school
dropout girlfriend. Drug addict.
Stupid. Couldn't get a job even if
she didn't have a kid.

SCOTT
Whadd'ya say we get some breakfast?

BEN
This poor jerk tries to rob a
liquor store with an air gun.
Habib puts a magnum in his face.
He craps his pants. Trips
backwards, knocking over all these
displays. Glass flying everywhere.
(beat)
Did I mention he crapped himself?

SCOTT
Yes.

BEN
He's rolling around on the ground
trying to figure out what happened.
Ends up slicing open his forehead
on a busted bottle of bourbon or
whatever.

Scott cracks up.

BEN (CONT'D)
He's bleeding and screaming and
hollering. I'm gonna sue you. I'm
gonna own this place.

SCOTT
He's stupid and broke the law.
What else is new?

BEN
This poor slob tries to do right by
his kid and they throw him three
years like it's nothing. And for
what? An unloaded BB gun.

(MORE)

BEN (CONT'D)
Even if it were loaded, can't even
break the skin.

SCOTT
No, it could just take someone's
eye out.

BEN
The guy has a magnum under the
counter. It can take someone's
brain out.

SCOTT
Interesting point.

BEN
Greasy pig probably has half a
dozen babies with hookers and don't
take care of a single one of them.
But hey. He pays his taxes.

Ben huffs with exhaustion, gawks out his window. After a
moment, Scott breaks the silence.

SCOTT
I've got my eye on the western
omelet. Maybe some home fries.
Nice tall glass of juice.

Ben cracks a tired grin.

EXT. LAKE HARTLEY BAPTIST CHURCH - NIGHT

A big, white, old money church with stone pillars and an all-around impressive structure. The front steps of the sanctuary seem to go on forever.

INT. LAKE HARTLEY BAPTIST CHURCH - SANCTUARY - NIGHT

A SPRAWLING CONGREGATION that continues to grow in size and stature with every passing year. The crowd itself is an uneven mix of ELDERLY VETERANS and YOUNGER FAMILIES in their thirties and forties. Their YOUNG CHILDREN seated next to them or in their laps.

CONGREGATION
Praise God, From Whom All Blessings
Flow...
Praise Him, All Creatures Here
Below...

Most of the YOUTH DEPARTMENT reside in the first two to three rows of the center aisle. This includes the "Barbi Twins", TINA AND SHERRI HALBERT, seventeen, blonde, gorgeous, prom queen wannabes. Seated next to Tina is her jock boyfriend DEREK HALL, eighteen, dirty blonde, football star.

YOUTH

Praise Him, above Ye heav'nly
host...

It's fair to say that most of the congregation are true white Florida crackers, clean cut, southern rednecks. Lots of short sleeves and crew cuts. The women are beautiful southern belles dressed in their Sunday best.

CONGREGATION

Praise, Father, Son and Holy
Ghost...

Sitting near the front end is DEACON EARL HALBERT, fifties, Tina and Sherri's father. A balding, droopy eyed man with the features of a sleepy turtle.

INT. KEVIN KIRKWOOD'S HOME - NIGHT

The front door WIDE OPEN as the WIND blows a few fallen leaves into the hard wood foyer.

LIVING ROOM

A well-furnished and meticulously decorated home with faith-based artwork and bible scriptures hanging from every possible wall.

It's dark and strangely quiet. Nobody's home. The SOUND OF A PHONE OFF THE HOOK is faintly heard.

A lamp has been knocked clear off an end table and rests on the carpet below. The flimsy shade has been somehow bent backwards...causing the light to beam upward.

KITCHEN

A phone charger sits empty on a countertop.

On the floor, a cordless phone rests awkwardly in the center of a half empty fruit basket. An array of fresh red and green apples spilled across the tile.

A partially opened glass double door with oak wood trimming leads us back outside. Much of the glass has been smashed and shattered. Larger shards, smaller remnants pepper the kitchen floor.

INT. KYLE'S PICK-UP - MOVING - NIGHT

KYLE STOKER, twenty-one, sleeveless t-shirt, quiet, angry and focused, barrels down a back country road. Riding shotgun is JACLYN SANCHEZ, nineteen, Puerto Rican, a truly broken soul who's lived a short but hard life.

And someone's just beaten the absolute hell out of her.
Busted lip. Bruised face and neck.

INT. LAKE HARTLEY BAPTIST CHURCH - SANCTUARY - NIGHT

At the pulpit is Music Minister TOM HALL, forties, neatly trimmed beard, blue blazer. Derek's father. He leads the congregation through the remaining verse. Tom steals a glance at Kevin's empty chair.

EXT. PASTOR'S OFFICE - NIGHT

A church officer, DEACON ALVIN FRYE, sixties, gray hair and distinguished, quietly approaches a door marked PASTOR'S OFFICE, gives a quick knock. Waits a moment, then attempts to open himself. Locked.

INT. PASTOR'S OFFICE - NIGHT

PASTOR KEVIN KIRKWOOD, forties, salt and pepper hair, fitted pin striped suit, kneels on the carpet, elbows rested on the cushions of a leather couch. In mid prayer.

DEACON FRYE (V.O.)
Pastor? We've started service.
Are you okay?

Kevin pops open his teary eyes. He's a mess.

INT. KEVIN KIRKWOOD'S HOME - NIGHT

UNIFORMED PATROLMEN sweep the home, guns drawn, room to room as they search for intruders.

PATROLMAN #1 notices the fallen lamp on the carpet.

PATROLMAN #2 discovers the phone rested in the fruit basket.

PATROLMAN #3 stands at the rear door, stares through the hole of the shattered cubicle window and observes THELMA, seventies, Kevin's neighbor, speaking with PATROLMAN #4 on her lawn and aiming his direction.

INT. LAKE HARTLEY BAPTIST CHURCH - SANCTUARY - NIGHT

The congregation finishes up their final verse of "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" as Kevin enters stage left through a swinging side door. Tom spots him coming and signals the congregation to take their seats.

Kevin takes the pulpit. An almost blank, emotionless look about him. His eyes are tired.

KEVIN

Here we are. Once again. Singing
our usual hymns. Shaking all the
usual hands. Not shaking others.

Tom squints, confused, not following and a bit worried for Kevin's mental state.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

Most of us sitting in the same
seats from a week ago. The week
before that. For a lot of you,
it's become a routine. Like eating
breakfast and going to work.

Tom soaks up the nervous vibe of the crowd. Some of them staring back at one another with dumbfounded looks of equal confusion.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

You've lost sight of why you're
here. And you haven't prepared
your hearts. To be fully opened to
hearing God's word. We've become
part of a routine. I've allowed
this to continue. And for that I
am deeply sorry.

A hot mad Kyle enters the sanctuary, eyes unflinching and focused on Kevin, ready to take his head clear off his shoulders.

He walks slowly toward the pulpit...grabbing everyone's attention.

Kevin notices, a bit confused.

KYLE

What exactly are you sorry about?!

WHISPERING breaks out amongst the congregation. Kevin turns to Tom for guidance. Tom shakes his head. Acknowledging that he's just as confused.

With a confident stride, Kyle moves toward the pulpit.

Up the steps.

Kevin grows more and more anxious.

KEVIN

And what can we help you with?

Kyle now fueled with rage. His eyes bulge, chest heaves. And then, finally, charges Kevin head on, tackles him to the floor.

The congregation erupts.

Tom is off his chair, on Kyle's back, but soon catches a swift elbow to the gut. Down he goes.

SEVERAL MEN in the first two pews leap to their feet and rush the pulpit. They charge the steps, help to restrain the crazed maniac.

INT. LAKE HARTLEY BAPTIST CHURCH - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Most of the deacons committee await outside the cafeteria doors, quiet, patient. Shirts unbuttoned, ties loose and pacing the carpet. Adding to this already stressful situation, their WIVES and KIDS arrive in droves, barking questions, demanding answers.

INT. LAKE HARTLEY BAPTIST CHURCH - CAFETERIA - NIGHT

Kevin rests at a table near the kitchen with a bag of ice to his swollen eye. Deacon Frye quietly sits across from him. Enjoying a moment of peace. Hovering over Kevin is Earl, badgering him with non-stop questions.

EARL

And you're sure you've never seen this kid before?

KEVIN

I don't know. I don't think so.

EARL

Well, you better start remembering. The police will want answers. Thank the Good Lord this didn't happen this morning with the cameras rolling.

Growing tired of his ramblings, Deacon Frye looks over his shoulder, throws Earl a "zip it" look.

DEACON FRYE
(to Kevin)
How's the eye doing?

KEVIN
Fine, Alvin. Thank you for asking.

Earl continues to pace the carpet, shakes his head, huffs in frustration. Tom enters from a side door, away from the outside crowd.

TOM
Gentlemen, if you'll excuse Pastor
and me for a moment. I need to
have a quick word.

DEACON FRYE
Of course, Tom.
(to Earl)
Come on, Earl. Let's get some
coffee and some fresh air.

On his way out, Deacon Frye snags Earl by the arm. Tom waits until they're all the way gone, plops himself down--across from Kevin. He's whipped.

TOM
The police are here.

KEVIN
I told you not to call the police.

TOM
I didn't. But somebody did.

Kevin sighs with exhaustion, shuts his eyes, holds the ice bag to his face.

TOM (CONT'D)
This kid that hit you. His name's
Kyle Stoker. He's a friend of
Jaclyn Sanchez. She was curbside,
waiting in his truck the whole
time.

KEVIN
Sanchez. I don't understand.

TOM
She's made some allegations.
Against you.

Kevin isn't exactly shocked or surprised. His demeanor is surprisingly calm. Tom studies his eyes.

KEVIN

I see.

Tom stalls a bit. Then shifts the direction of the conversation.

TOM

I didn't see Chris at service tonight.

KEVIN

She's in Atlanta, visiting with family. I wouldn't even know what to say to her.

Tom nods.

TOM

They said if it made you more comfortable, an officer could meet us out back. Maybe go somewhere a little more private.

Kevin feels the severity of the situation. He nods understandably as a look of panic sets in.

INT. SLIPPERY'S BAR AND GRILL - DAY

Ben walks in, unshaven, bloodshot eyes, and sporting his usual wrinkled suit. Some of the bar's PATRONS turn and stare, whisper, gossip. As if the bad news has spread like wildfire.

Ben spots Scott bellied up at the bar with girlfriend GINNY CLAYBURN, twenties, a very studious, ambitious young woman ready to take on the world. Ginny is Scott's number one prize student and part time fling.

Scott spots him coming, pulls out a stool --

SCOTT

You made it. What did you, sleep in your clothes again?

Ben chooses to stand.

BEN

More like stared blankly at the ceiling, trying very thoughtfully not to throw up.

Scott pulls out a bottle of aspirin, rests it on the bar. Ben pours himself a generous handful and downs the white pills with Scott's soda.

The BARTENDER looks ashamed of him. But lets it go and finishes wiping down a glass.

SCOTT
Say hi to Ginny.

Ginny almost knocks Scott off his stool as she reaches out her hand to Ben.

GINNY
Been hearing a lot of great things
about you in class.

Ben cracks a flattered grin.

SCOTT
(to Ginny)
We talked about this already. We
literally just talked about this
for half an hour.

GINNY
Please. I think Ben's got a lot
more to worry about right now than
who you're sleeping with.

SCOTT
Why don't you just tweet it and be
done with it.

BEN
What is she talking about?

SCOTT
Nothing. It's nothing.

GINNY
(to Ben)
He's embarrassed. He's embarrassed
by me. Even though we're two
single consenting adults.
Supposedly, not having any
communication with our ex-wives and
mothers of our children.

SCOTT
(to Ben)
You missed part one of this
conversation.

(MORE)

SCOTT (CONT'D)

Where I explained in detail how it's much more complicated than that.

(to Ginny)

And now's not the time.

BEN

She's right. I don't care who you're sleeping with. I'm talking about the first part. That I have more to worry about.

Ginny tugs on Scott's sleeve and motions to a FLAT SCREEN TV hanging above the bar.

GINNY

Here it is. It's on again.

Scott and Ben both turn their attention to a FIELD REPORTER, standing live in front of the BODEN COUNTY CORRECTIONAL FACILITY.

FIELD REPORTER

In a bizarre twist to what was assumed to be an unprovoked attack on Kevin Kirkwood of Lake Hartley Baptist Church, a young woman has come forward with her own story, claiming that Pastor Kirkwood viciously assaulted her, which resulted in the loss of her unborn child...

BEN

What in the...?

SCOTT

Don't worry. It gets worse.

FIELD REPORTER

Nineteen-year-old Jaclyn Sanchez told police that she was, in fact, two months pregnant with Kirkwood's child, prior to last night's attack. According to Sanchez, after visiting Kirkwood's home early yesterday to break the news, she claims The Pastor quote "lost it", quickly turning on her, punching her in the stomach and violently beating her into unconsciousness...

Ben feels the eyes of most everyone in the bar and observes them watching him.

FIELD REPORTER (CONT'D)
Now police are saying Pastor
Kirkwood is facing a number of
charges, including first degree
assault and possibly murder...

Ginny watches Ben. He's sick to his gut.

FIELD REPORTER (CONT'D)
Kirkwood was arrested and taken
into custody around eight thirty-
five last night. Most notably
absent in all of this is Kirkwood's
own wife, Christine...

BEN
Gotta be kidding me.

SCOTT
Afraid not, buddy. She's a no
show.

FIELD REPORTER
Kirkwood did have a few visitors
since last night, including a few
close friends, some of the staff of
Lake Hartley Baptist and prominent
defense attorney Marlon Dale...

Ben switches gears to outright anger. Scott notices.

FIELD REPORTER (CONT'D)
Although he hasn't publicly stated
that he will be taking Kirkwood's
case, it appears he will more than
likely be handling the defense...

Ben looks away from the television. Disappointed. Hurt.
Confused. Scott observes.

SCOTT
I've seen that look before. This
is a project girl we're talking
about. Not the first one down
there to make up stories. The cops
will have this thing thrown out in
a couple days.

GINNY
He's right.

BEN
He never called.

SCOTT
What did you expect? You know that bunch of stiff shirts on the deacon's committee put the bug in his ear to stay clear of you.

BEN
I have to go see him.

SCOTT
Are you crazy? If Dale even suspects you're talking to his client behind his back, he'll have you disbarred.

GINNY
(to Scott)
He's family. They can't keep him from seeing his own brother.

SCOTT
Do me a favor. Just...drink your drink. You're talking about things you really don't know about.

GINNY
(to Ben)
Don't listen to him. He's waiting for you to go see him. So go see him.

Scott cracks a tired sigh. Ben nods in agreement.

INT. VISITOR'S HOLDING CELL - DAY

Kevin sits at a stainless-steel table in the center of this cold white cell. His eyes gaze down at nothing. In deep thought but strangely enough at peace. He is dressed in standard issue blue fatigues.

The iron bars slide open and in walks Ben. The two brothers stare back at one another. Both nervous, and both cracking an awkward grin.

The CORRECTIONS OFFICER slides the gate closed.

KEVIN
You made it.

BEN
Where else would I be?

Kevin stands, walks to Ben, arms open. They give each other a long, overdue hug. After a few moments, they take their respective seats.

KEVIN
I'm sorry I didn't call. I haven't exactly had much contact with the outside world.

BEN
Hey. I would've made the same call you did. Forget about it.

Kevin grins, nods.

BEN (CONT'D)
They treating you okay here?

KEVIN
Yeah. I know a lot of the staff here so...

An awkward silence.

BEN
So now that we've got that out of the way. Is there anything else on your mind?

KEVIN
I didn't want you involved in this, Ben.

BEN
Yeah, but I am. You know my job. Who I work with. Or did you think I was gonna just run and hide? I know I've missed a few Sundays but...

KEVIN
It's been six months, Ben. You're drinking. It's like you've cut me off completely. Along with the rest of the world.

BEN
So now I'm supposed to go back under my rock?

KEVIN
That's not what I'm saying.

BEN
And what about Chris? Everyone's saying she pulled a disappearing act. What's her involvement in this?

KEVIN
Who says she's involved?

BEN
Okay, so she's not. Where is she?

KEVIN
Yesterday afternoon, she left for Atlanta to visit her folks. She didn't say when she'd be back.

BEN
Sounds like she made a speedy exit. What did she have to say?

KEVIN
I haven't been able to get in touch with her.

Ben studies Kevin's eyes.

BEN
How hard have you been trying?

Kevin stalls.

KEVIN
Chris and I are having some problems. We decided it was best we spend a little time alone.

BEN
Problems?

KEVIN
It's a private matter.

BEN
Why don't you tell me anyways. Did she go off her meds again? She have another episode? What?

Kevin uncomfortably shifts in his seat. He quickly changes the subject.

KEVIN

The committee already took a vote.
They're going with Dale. The
church can afford it. Anyways,
it's their decision and I'm not
exactly in a place to argue.

Ben already looks defeated, leans back in his chair and
shakes his head with disappointment.

BEN

You know, I suddenly realized
something when I got up this
morning. You're the only constant
I've ever known. Dad didn't think
enough of me to stick around. I
let my marriage fall apart. My
career. All I got is you.

KEVIN

Look. Ben. I know you're still
holding onto a lot...

BEN

No, let me finish. If there were
ever a time we needed each other,
it's now. This moment. Because if
I fail again...well...I might as
well drive my car off a bridge like
Dad, because I got nothing left.
It's not just you I'm trying to
save here, big brother.

Kevin slowly comes around. After a few moments, he nods in
agreement, shakes Ben's hand.

INT. LAKE HARTLEY BAPTIST CHURCH - MAIN OFFICE - DAY

Ben, Deacon Frye, Earl Halbert, Tom Hall and a handful of
other church deacons, young and old, gather at a round
conference table. Most of them fuming mad. Staring back
at Ben with little patience.

DEACON WRIGHT, sixties, one of the elders, tears a blank
check from a large account book. He hands it to Ben.

DEACON WRIGHT

Just write down a number. If it's
reasonable and within our budget,
we can settle this thing. Mister
Dale can go public and begin
preparing your brother's case.

BEN
Gentlemen, your faith in me is
overwhelming.

DEACON BROWN, sixties, another one of the elders, chimes in.

DEACON BROWN
A substantial retainer has already
been paid to this man. Money that
can't be returned. If you push
this, we can have you removed.

BEN
And what about what Pastor wants?

Tom is strangely silent, a neutral stance. He turns to Earl,
awaits his response.

EARL
With all due respect, Benjamin, we
feel Pastor isn't in the right
mental state to be making those
decisions.

BEN
And I'm supposed to walk away
because I'm good at that.

EARL
This isn't just about you and your
brother. It's about securing the
dignity of this church and the
safety and security of its members.
If I may speak freely...?

BEN
Yes, sir. You don't seem to be
having any problems.

EARL
When the press gets wind of this,
they'll do a splatter campaign
against not only you but your
brother and the church. It's not
exactly the image we're hoping for.

DEACON BROWN
Mister Dale has close ties within
the police force as well as the
press. He may even go so far as
getting us favorable media
coverage.

(MORE)

DEACON BROWN (CONT'D)
Including a front-page story on
Pastor and the positive effects his
programs have had on the community.

BEN
And you don't need the drunk
brother drudging up the worst of
Pastor's checkered past.

DEACON BROWN
Ben, at this point, we need all the
help we can get. I know you're a
competent lawyer. But let's face
it. You don't have the track
record or the pull to spin this
thing in the direction we need.

DEACON WRIGHT
Ben. Loving your brother means
wanting the best for him. It also
means knowing when to walk away.
Are you sure you're doing what's
best for him? Or what's best for
you?

Ben gawks down at his blank check.

EXT. LAKE HARTLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE - HALLWAY - DAY

Scott, in a crisp shirt and tie, joins Ben on a sidewalk just
outside a crowded classroom of students. All staring through
the glass with anxious looks about them.

Ginny walks desk to desk, handing out test results. She also
observes their exchange.

SCOTT
You know, I heard through the
grapevine they offered you lead
investigator plus retainer, and now
I have to go work with you for
free?

BEN
I've got no investigators, no
paralegals. I'll need someone in
the field while I'm putting this
case together.

SCOTT
Well, you should've taken their
money. Then maybe you could've
paid me for my services.

Through the classroom window, we notice Ginny keeping a close eye on their conversation. She makes for the door, sneaks out of class.

BEN

Don't you see? They're not gonna let me touch this case. I cash that check and I'm out.

SCOTT

How's that work?

BEN

Come on. You think Marlon Dale's asking me for my expert opinion? I'll be sitting on the bench while his little hit squad figures out how to hang Sanchez from the nearest streetlamp?

SCOTT

Yeah, well. Maybe that's the best thing that can happen, Benny.

BEN

What?

SCOTT

I mean maybe you should let Dale's team go for the jugular and settle this thing. Worry about supporting your brother after he gets out of jail and comes home.

BEN

Dale's a scumbag. If he puts the bug in their ear about paying this girl off or discussing monetary damages, my brother's as good as toast. Not to mention the civil suit Sanchez will most likely file against the church.

SCOTT

That may be, but at least he'll stay out of prison. Isn't that what really matters?

Ben's eye twitches. A bit thrown off.

BEN

What's that mean?

SCOTT
Nothing. Forget it.

Ginny hidden behind a bush. Eavesdropping.

BEN
No, let's not forget it. What?

Ginny chimes in.

GINNY
Hey. Sorry to interrupt.

SCOTT
Now here we go with this.

GINNY
(to Ben)
I saw you on TV this morning. If
it means anything, I think you're
going to do a great job.

BEN
(to Ginny)
Thank you, Ginger.
(to Scott)
Ya see? Even Ginger thinks I'm the
guy.

SCOTT
(to Ginny)
Ginny, this is a private
conversation.

A STUDENT steps out with a dollar bill in hand and heads for
a nearby soda machine.

BEN
(to Ginny)
Janine, could you please explain
the meaning of the word loyalty to
your boyfriend here? It seems he's
suffering from a bad case of
selective amnesia.

The student eavesdrops from the soda machine and grins back
at Scott and Ginny. An embarrassed Scott wants to run and
hide in a dark corner.

SCOTT
Keep it down, please.

BEN

Okay, Scottie. If this is how you wanna play it. Fine. You ditch me now, not only will I go in there and tell your class you've been playing doctor with...with...

GINNY

Ginny.

BEN

With Jenny here. I'll tell them about your little mishap two years ago with the DA's office. Every dirty detail.

SCOTT

Okay. Now that's low.

BEN

I learn from the best.

Ginny grows suspicious.

GINNY

(to Scott)

What's he talking about?

(to Ben)

And it's Ginny. With a G. Or Geraldine. Please and thank you.

SCOTT

He doesn't know what he's talking about. He drinks. Heavily.

(beat)

Your name's Geraldine?

GINNY

Yeah? So?

SCOTT

Ginny and Geraldine. That doesn't make any sense. Like, at all.

Ben taps his watch.

BEN

Focus, Scottie. Focus. Clock's ticking. What's it gonna be?

Scott sighs, pouts like a kid. After a painful few moments of Ginny and Ben's laser sharp stares, he caves.

SCOTT
Alright alright. Pump the brakes.
You got me. Just chill.

Ginny smiles.

GINNY
Me too.

SCOTT
Excuse you?

GINNY
What? You're gonna be doing all
the investigating. Ben will be
talking to witnesses, putting the
case together. Even you told me I
was an excellent researcher.

SCOTT
That was a line.

Ginny now irritated.

GINNY
Ya know, maybe Ben's right. Maybe
it's time I shared our little
secret with the class.

Ginny turns for the door. Scott quickly snags her by the
arm, aggressively pulls her back.

SCOTT
Okay okay. You're on the team. If
it's okay with this guy.

Ginny checks with Ben.

Scott quietly signals him. No way. Ben grins.

BEN
(to Ginny)
Welcome aboard.

GINNY
For sure?

Ginny checks with Scott. And he's not the least bit
enthused. He grins. A real fake one.

SCOTT
Hey. Couldn't do it without you.

INT. DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE - WAITING AREA - DAY

A nervous and unsure Ben looks down-right sick as he waits on a hard and most uncomfortable corner chair. He's reminiscent of a child awaiting the principal.

Ben attempts to smooth out the wrinkles on his cheap off-the-rack suit pants. He brushes what's left of breakfast off his loose necktie.

From the comfort of her desk, A SECRETARY watches him fidget about with great amusement.

Ben spots her looking.

BEN
How are you?

The secretary grins, goes about her business.

Ben sucks in a deep breath. He spots a pair of strained but intimidating EYES gawk back at him through the cracks of floor to ceiling blinds. On the other side of a glass partition wall is the personal office of Boden County DA David Killroy.

INT. DAVID KILLROY'S OFFICE - DAY

DETECTIVE RON HALVERSON, late forties, bloated stress machine and primary on the Sanchez case, stares into the outer room, watches Ben work himself into a frenzy.

DETECTIVE HALVERSON
He looks pretty anxious.

Pouring himself some black coffee is DA DAVID KILLROY, early sixties, skeleton-like frame, simple white shirt, boring necktie. He's all business...all the time.

KILLROY
He's out of his league.

Killroy has a seat at the end of a long conference table. Squatted in the chair next to his is ASSISTANT DA ROLAND MCRAE, late thirties, black, waistline as overfed and inflated as his giant ego.

Killroy presses a button on a landline.

KILLROY (CONT'D)
Maggie, could you send in Mister Kirkwood, please?

Detective Halverson walks around the table and takes a seat next to Killroy. In walks Ben, unsure of himself but puts his best game face on.

BEN
Wow. The gang's all here.

KILLROY
Won't you have a seat?

With all eyes on him, Ben moves to the very far end of the conference table. The direct opposite of Killroy.

KILLROY (CONT'D)
Ben, I know you remember Detective Halverson.

BEN
Of course.

KILLROY
The gentleman next to me is Roland McRae. He'll be handling the prosecution. I understand the two of you went to school around the same time.

BEN
Yeah. We were a couple years apart. I'm surprised he remembered.

ROLAND
Actually, I didn't.

KILLROY
Ben, it seems the evidence against the good Pastor is very incriminating.

Ben nods.

KILLROY (CONT'D)
First off. We're not out to crucify your brother or ruin his life. It is, however, my job to see that justice is served, based on the evidence presented before this office.

Detective Halverson defiantly folds his arms and shoots Ben a cold and all-knowing stare. Killroy sifts through some police reports presented before him.

KILLROY (CONT'D)

Now after careful review of the evidence, there are some facts that cannot be ignored. That is the life of this woman's child.

BEN

Yes, sir. It's a very serious allegation.

KILLROY

Yes. Very.

(sighs)

Ben, if this goes to trial, your brother burns. And he will go to prison for the next fifteen to twenty years. That simple.

Ben clears his throat. A bit caught off guard.

BEN

That's pretty straightforward. So, what are we looking at here?

KILLROY

Plead your brother out. Man One, ten years. He'll probably see five, maybe less. And he may actually have a chance at rebuilding his reputation and standing with the church. God willing, of course.

Ben leans forward, fumbles with his hands, processing all of this and still very unsure.

BEN

What's the other option?

KILLROY

We go all the way. Murder Two. Sanchez claims he was the father. And, prior to her attack, disclosed this information to your brother. It won't take very long for the state to prove intent.

BEN

I see. Now all you have to do is provide the hospital report that confirms she miscarried.

Detective Halverson checks with Roland--who conceals his grin and taps a pen on the table. Ben watches, confused.

KILLROY

Is this really a game you wanna
play with me, son?

ROLAND

No, it is not. Because Mister
Kirkwood knows better than to play
games he knows he can't win. I
think we should give him the
benefit of the doubt. And maybe
the remainder of the day to weigh
his options a little more
thoughtfully.

Ben clears his throat.

BEN

Well. I guess I'd be fairly
bullheaded and naive to think my
brother actually stands a chance
with the likes of little old me
representing him.

Roland smiles. Killroy doesn't. He's not amused.

BEN (CONT'D)

But I've never been accused of
making the most informed decisions
in my life. I figure...why start
now?

Roland checks with Killroy, still stone faced and no real
emotion behind his eyes.

KILLROY

Translation?

BEN

Let the games begin. We're going
to trial.

INT. KEVIN'S ARRAIGNMENT - COURT ROOM - DAY

Kevin sits calmly at the defense table. Covered in prayer
and a certain inner peace. Ben, on the other hand, seems
distraught and uncertain with both arms stretched before
him and palms pressed tightly together.

Kevin quietly observes.

KEVIN

You okay, little brother?

BEN
Of course. God's got this.

Ben sucks in a breath.

BEN (CONT'D)
Maybe one more quick prayer
couldn't hurt.

Across from them sits the prosecution. Roland leaned back in his chair, at total peace. And next to him is LUCAS GANT, late twenties, purposeful, earnest but a false arrogance screaming inexperience.

Scott and Ginny directly behind the defense. Ginny anxiously bounces her knee. Scott squeezes her leg.

GINNY
Thanks.

SCOTT
Welcome.

Into the courtroom walks an oafish BAILIFF.

BAILIFF
All rise as the Judge enters the
court!

From a side door walks JUDGE DONALD PIPER, sixties, ornery, by the book, short on patience. He takes a seat while the court remains standing.

BAILIFF (CONT'D)
Docket number 1475-38. In the
matter of The State versus Kevin
Kirkwood. The honorable Judge
Donald Piper presiding.

JUDGE PIPER
Take your seats.

The court complies.

JUDGE PIPER (CONT'D)
Mister Kirkwood?

Both Ben and Kevin stand in unison.

BEN
Yes, your honor?

Judge Piper grins.

JUDGE PIPER
The other Mister Kirkwood.

Judge Piper looks down, refers to his paperwork.

Meantime, Ben takes his seat.

KEVIN
Yes, your honor?

Judge Piper looks up, spots Ben on his butt.

JUDGE PIPER
(to Ben)
Stand up, Counselor.

Ben quickly stands.

BEN
Excuse me, your honor. Leg cramp.

Roland smirks with amusement. Gant shakes his head.

JUDGE PIPER
Mister Kirkwood, you are charged
with one count of assault in the
first degree and one count of
murder in the second degree. How
do you plead?

KEVIN
Not guilty. Your honor.

JUDGE PIPER
Very well. Let the record show
that the defense has entered a plea
of not guilty.

Judge Piper refers to some paperwork before him. He pencils
in a couple of things.

JUDGE PIPER (CONT'D)
A preliminary hearing will be
scheduled two weeks from today,
Saturday the tenth at Nine AM.
We'll be reconvening in courtroom
number thirty-seven. Until which
time, bail will be set at ten
thousand dollars.

Roland stands.

ROLAND

Excuse me, your honor. It is the state's theory that Mister Kirkwood will more than likely be leaving Florida in an attempt to contact his wife Christine. And the state would respectfully request that your honor deny bail until Christine Kirkwood is present and accounted for.

BEN

Your honor, if I knew where she was, I'd already be on a plane.

JUDGE PIPER

(to Kevin)

How about it, Pastor? You going anywhere?

KEVIN

No, your honor.

JUDGE PIPER

Let's hope not. Bail is set at ten thousand dollars.

Judge Piper raps his gavel and quickly moves into chambers.

Roland a bit disappointed. He whispers something into Gant's ear. Gant nods understandably.

Ben exhales a giant sigh of relief.

KEVIN

Good work, Benny.

BEN

I haven't done anything yet.

KEVIN

No. But you will. I know it. You're gonna do great, little brother.

Kevin smiles. Ben gives his brother a supportive hug just as Kevin is remanded back into custody by a new PAIR OF BAILIFFS.

Scott and Ginny stand, step into the aisle. Ben passes through the swinging door, joins them.

BEN
Find Christine. Only do it
quickly.

Scott about to speak...

But Ben's on his way to the door. No time for chit chat.

SCOTT
Yeah. Good talk.

BEN
I'm gonna arrange Kevin's bond and
get back with you guys in an hour
or two. Keep your phones charged.
(to Ginny)
And good job, Ginny.

GINNY
But I haven't done anything.

BEN
No. But you will. I'm counting on
you.

Ben dips out. Ginny is all grins.

SCOTT
You heard the man. He said don't
screw up.

Scott heads for the door. All the confidence wiped clean
from Ginny's face. She follows behind.

GINNY
Pretty sure that's not what he
said.

Ginny on Scott's heels as they head out.

INT. SCOTT'S APARTMENT - DAY

Scott squats on a kitchen stool with a bound address book on
the counter before him. One of the first listings is marked
Sheldon and Susan Adler, 1322 Salisbury Lane, Atlanta, Ga,
30338, (404)-326-7146.

Scott dials the number.

SCOTT
Hello? Mrs. Adler? My name is
Scott Larsen.
(MORE)

SCOTT (CONT'D)
 I'm working with Ben Kirkwood on
 your son in law's case...?
 (listens)
 No, I haven't. I was under the
 impression she was visiting with
 you and your husband.

INT. SKY BLU AIR - DEPARTURES - DAY

A RESERVATIONS CLERK finishes checking luggage for a family
 of four as Ginny is next in line. She impatiently rocks on
 her heels like a nervous kid boarding her first flight.

She holds an unfolded paper. Christine's personal bank
 statement and recent transactions.

RESERVATIONS CLERK
 Next in line please.

Ginny almost runs over a small child as she rushes to the
 ticket counter and carefully places the unfolded bank
 statement before her.

RESERVATIONS CLERK (CONT'D)
 Let's see. What do we have here?

The clerk picks up the paper. Without warning, Ginny
 snatches it from his hand. She sighs in complete and
 utter exhaustion.

GINNY
 I'm sorry. Bear with me a sec.
 I'm still catching my breath.

RESERVATIONS CLERK
 One of those days, huh?

GINNY
 Okay, so last Thursday the
 seventeenth, I went online and
 purchased...or I should
 say...attempted to purchase a one-
 way ticket to Atlanta. It was kind
 of last minute but was able to grab
 the red eye, flight four
 seventeen...

Ginny sucks in a breath, plays up the victim angle as she
 waves a cool breeze over her tired mug.

GINNY (CONT'D)
 Sorry. This whole ordeal has just
 been...well...an ordeal.

RESERVATIONS CLERK
No problem. Take your time.

GINNY
So. I get all the way to the end
to submit payment, and the airline
is saying my card was declined.
Over and over again. Declined.
But I happen to know it wasn't
declined because my bank cleared
the payment. I even have my
statement right here.

Ginny holds up the printed paper and points at a particular
transaction circled in red pen.

GINNY (CONT'D)
One hundred forty-four was debited
from my account the next morning.
Sky Blu Airlines. Now, obviously I
already missed my flight but what I
was wondering was...if you guys
could re book me on a flight either
today or maybe even possibly
tomorrow.

RESERVATIONS CLERK
Let me pull up your information and
find out what's going on. Give me
just a moment.

GINNY
Of course.

RESERVATIONS CLERK
What name did you book it under?

GINNY
Kirkwood. Christine Kirkwood.

The clerk types up her info.

RESERVATIONS CLERK
Kirkwood. Christine. Flight Four
Seventeen. Eleven forty-five PM.
Coach. No seating assignment and
you never checked any luggage.

Ginny slaps the counter.

GINNY
I knew it. So, they took my money?

RESERVATIONS CLERK
Apparently, yes. And you said you
purchased your ticket on the
seventeenth?

Ginny can't remember. She snaps out of it.

GINNY
Yes. The seventeenth. That's
correct.

RESERVATIONS CLERK
Well. Since there's no record of
you boarding a plane I don't see
why we can't re book you. Not sure
what happened there.

Ginny is confused as she leans in closer and tries to steal a
peak at the computer.

GINNY
So, you're saying I never boarded
the plane. You sure about that?

RESERVATIONS CLERK
I'm pretty sure. You're standing
right in front of me.

Ginny giggles nervously. A dumb look on her face.

GINNY
Yes. Of course. Like I said, it's
been an ordeal.

The clerk isn't buying her rap.

RESERVATIONS CLERK
You know what? I think I'm gonna
need some identification.

GINNY
You know what? I think I'll catch
a later flight, thanks.

Ginny collects her paper, rushes off.

SCOTT (V.O.)
Just found out someone didn't make
their flight to Atlanta.

INT. MCO AIRPORT PARKING GARAGE - SECOND LEVEL - DAY

Scott drags a cigarette, talks with Ben on the other line while Ginny sips an ice-cold macchiato.

BEN (V.O.)
I'm surprised the airline gives out
that kind of information.

SCOTT
Ginny did a number on the clerk.

GINNY
My idea. Tell him it was my idea.

Scott grows irritated with Ginny and steps away from the car for a moment alone with Ben.

BEN (V.O.)
She couldn't have gotten far. Not
without her phone.
Start checking any motels and
hotels in the area. The cheapest
and closest first. We have to find
her before they do.

SCOTT
Right. And if that doesn't work?

BEN (V.O.)
She's in town. Go find her.

INT. SCOTT'S LEXUS - MOVING - DAY

Leaving the airport terminal, en route to the expressway, Scott and Ginny fight through an influx of heavy traffic, merging from all directions.

Cars HONK. Pass one another. Almost colliding.

SCOTT
Ya know, it's just typical.
Kevin's fighting for his life
and she ups and splits. Making it
all about her. Her life's been
ripped apart. Not his. Not Ben's.

GINNY
Or maybe there's more to the story
than another selfish female.

SCOTT

Her husband's in trouble and she took off. What else do we need to know?

GINNY

I don't know. Just saying. Could be there's more to it. Like maybe he really was having an affair.

Scott sighs.

GINNY (CONT'D)

Ya know, just because someone isn't married doesn't make jumping from partner to partner any less morally objectionable.

Scott lowers his shades a bit, locks eyes with Ginny.

SCOTT

That statement directed at any one person in particular? Or just me?

GINNY

All I know about Christine Kirkwood is that she didn't exactly grow up in the best of conditions. And from the way you're coming off, that makes her somehow less than in your eyes.

SCOTT

What're you talking about?

GINNY

Like she should just...put up with whatever abuse she might be suffering in her marriage because she's in a better place than ten years ago.

SCOTT

I didn't say that.

GINNY

I think you're trying to justify what may or may not have happened between Kevin and this girl based on the sins of Christine's past and that's a very dangerous way of thinking.

SCOTT
I don't know what happened. Maybe
I don't wanna know. What I wanna
do is help Ben. Right now, that's
all that matters.

Ginny nods in agreement. But she's clearly not happy with her and Scott's relationship. Scott picks up on her vibe and clasps his hand around hers.

INT. KEVIN KIRKWOOD'S HOME - DAY

Ben stands dead center of Kevin's living room, hands rested on his hips, surveying the scene, taking it all in for the first time. He begins into the --

KITCHEN

And straight for the back door. He carefully examines the positioning of the GLASS FRAGMENTS spattered on the cubed tile floor.

EXT. KEVIN KIRKWOOD'S HOME - BACK DOOR - DAY

Ben steps outside and spots the remaining remnants of GLASS WINDOW SHARDS left on the pavement. He observes the mess as if something doesn't add up.

INT. KEVIN KIRKWOOD'S HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Ben opens a utility closet and finds a BROOM AND DUSTPAN just behind the door. He pulls out the broom, examines it.

On the back of the closet door hangs a single plastic WHITE HOOK attached to the frame by adhesive tape.

Ben places the broom back in the closet, shuts the door. As he begins off, he is stopped by the sight of a SECOND WHITE HOOK rested on the tile.

Ben picks it up. An exact match with the other.

EXT. KEVIN KIRKWOOD'S HOME - DAY

Ben sets the timer on his smart phone. He sets it at 00:00:00. He starts. And begins up a sidewalk.

EXT. QUICK SIP GAS STATION - DAY

Ben stops in front of the store and checks his phone. It reads 01:03:32.

EXT. QUICK SIP GAS STATION - BACK DOOR - DAY

Ben speaks privately with RUDY KINTANIS, one of the store's checkout clerks. An olive-skinned man, early twenties, goatee, wild black and purple hair. He has a cigarette tucked behind his ear and dumps a few garbage bags into a green dumpster.

RUDY

When she came in, she looked like she'd been crying. Her face was red. Puffy like. Then she said she didn't have her phone and would pay me cash if I'd call her an uber. So, I said yeah. No problem.

BEN

Where did she go after you made the call? She wait outside?

RUDY

No. She went to the bathroom first. Yeah. I remember cause she was in there a while. These girls were getting all mad. Kicking at the door, telling her to hurry it up.

EXT. QUICK SIP GAS STATION - FRONT LOT - DAY

As Ben leaves, his phone blows up. He sees Scott's name on the screen and answers.

BEN

Tell me you found her.

EXT. GATEWAY MOTOR LODGE - DAY (SAME)

A real fleabag toilet. Some local DREGS OF SOCIETY hang over the second-floor railing, smoking joints, drinking, or otherwise being loud, drunk and stupid.

Parked near the lobby, Scott leans on his opened car door as Ginny kicks a few chunks of broken asphalt across the lot. An AIRPLANE practically tickles the rooftop.

SCOTT

Yes and no. She checked into a motel alright. You could chuck a rock from the airport and hit the roof of this place. Looks like she's been doing some heavy drinking too from the looks of the mess. Nothing but empty bottles of airport booze and fast-food bags.

BEN (V.O.)

When did the clerk see her last?

SCOTT

A couple nights ago she bought a soda and some candy from the machines and never saw her again. So, who knows when she actually left. Just left a mess and split.

EXT. QUICK SIP GAS STATION - FRONT LOT - DAY (SAME)

Ben rubs his tired face and sore neck.

BEN

You find anything else interesting I should know about?

SCOTT (V.O.)

Like what?

BEN

I'll take that as a no. Do another sweep of the room. Maybe you missed something. I'm hanging up now.

Ben ends the call and crawls in an Uber. Waiting with the engine running.

EXT. GATEWAY MOTOR LODGE - DAY (SAME)

Ginny chucks a rock into an opened trash dumpster and scares the hell out of some vultures perched on the ledge.

She joins a defeated looking Scott by the Lexus.

GINNY

I've been to worse places. A lot worse.

SCOTT
Not sure I wanna hear that story.

GINNY
Just saying. So now what?

SCOTT
Get the AC cranked. I'll be back.

Scott heads for the lobby. Ginny distracted by a barrage of WHISTLING and CATCALLING coming from the second floor.

MOTEL GUEST
Hey, baby doll. I'm waiting.

EXT. HOLY GHOST BAPTIST CHURCH - AFTERNOON

Roland stands tall among a Wednesday evening crowd filing in and out of the front double doors. He's mid conversation with DEACON SNOW, seventies, Roland's childhood mentor and brilliant legal mind.

DEACON SNOW
We've all been praying that you find your voice, Roland. God placed this young woman in your path. Her expulsion from Lake Hartley Baptist is another prime example of what's wrong with our modern church. And what's wrong with our current legal system. The painful truth is...Jaclyn Sanchez never had a chance because she was never given one.

Roland nods politely.

DEACON SNOW (CONT'D)
Not by that man. Not by the people who were trusted with her care. What Pastor Kirkwood and these...

-softens his tone.

DEACON SNOW (CONT'D)
...big money TV churches never understood is that true compassion requires patience. Forgiveness. And most importantly...true sacrifice. We must be a mirror reflection of God's relentless mercy.

Roland is touched by his words.

DEACON SNOW (CONT'D)
They've become so involved in their
own self-image and public persona
that they've lost sight of this.
Lost sight of their calling to
serve.

Roland smiles, nods.

ROLAND
Well, sir, I hear you on that. And
I respect that. But I'd just like
to catch whoever did this and hold
them responsible.

Deacon Snow takes a step back...glances back at Roland, head
to toe, as if to properly examine him. And not particularly
liking what he sees.

DEACON SNOW
With all due respect, you don't
sound very convincing. I think for
the overall reputation of the
District Attorney's Office, as well
as their relationship with the
underprivileged minority community
at large, this young woman's voice
not only deserves to be heard, but
respected. Don't you agree?

Roland processes the weight of these words. A new sense of
responsibility upon him.

EXT. GREENWOOD CEMETERY - DUSK

A peaceful, flat landscape of headstones.

Ben's car slowly cruises a thin gravel path and stops before
the double burial plot of parents HENRY MICHAEL AND GLORIA
FRANCIS KIRKWOOD.

Out steps Ben and a recently bonded out Kevin, back in the
same suit worn the night of his arrest. A look of God's
peace and protection on his face.

Ben's face, on the other hand, is full of tension and
crippling anxiety.

BEN

What are we doing here, big brother? We have a lot of work to do. We need to get started.

KEVIN

I haven't been out here for a minute. Thought it might do us some good. Maybe get some things out of our systems so you can think about the case.

BEN

Things. Like what?

KEVIN

It just dawned on me this morning that you never knew them. Not like me. To you, they were Mom and Dad. Picture perfect and here on this earth for one purpose only. To take care of you and cater to your every need.

Ben grins.

BEN

What're you talking about?

KEVIN

You never understood that they were just people. Fallible as the next.

BEN

Is that why you brought me here? To tell me Dad was a drunk and Mom was a cheat. I got the memo. A long time ago.

KEVIN

I know you think Dad gave up on you. But what happened on that bridge could very well have been an accident. And their marriage was over long before Mom's affair. It's time you forgave them.

Ben sighs, uninterested. He fixes his gaze on a bird perched on a nearby tombstone. Kevin walks into his line of sight and demands his full attention.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

I still see the resentment in your eyes, Benny. Tell me I'm wrong.

BEN
Prosecution will throw Dad in our
faces. Like father like son. The
boozing. The drugs.

KEVIN
Yeah, I know.

BEN
So, tell me something that will
keep you out of jail.

KEVIN
You are. And I need you firing on
all cylinders. Not still chained
to the past.

Ben grows irritated.

KEVIN (CONT'D)
If you let it, it will completely
consume you. Until you've got
nothing left. Is that really what
you want? Is that how you wanna
live, Ben?

BEN
I'm fine. Really.

KEVIN
But you're not. You've adopted
this idea of failure as some sort
of lifestyle. A predetermined
destiny that you continue to lay at
the foot of Mom and Dad's grave.
You have to let it go or you'll
never have a life.

Ben sucks in a breath. He slowly comes around.

BEN
I haven't been out here in forever.
Whenever I do, I just...get
angrier. Even more confused.
Wondering how life would've been if
they were still here. Maybe I'd
see life a little differently.
Work. Relationships. All of it.

KEVIN
You haven't forgiven them. And you
should. For good this time. Not
for me. Or for this case.

(MORE)

KEVIN (CONT'D)
But for you. And your mental
health. It's important, Benny.

BEN
Yeah.

KEVIN
I'll give you a minute alone.

Kevin pats Ben on the shoulder, excuses himself back to the car while Ben takes a moment.

EXT. FED EX STORE - DAY

Ginny carries a filing box of court documents, depositions and official police records toward the small print and mailing shop. With determination in her eye, Ginny dips inside the store.

BEN (V.O.)
Problem number one. We got a
witness who claims she saw Kevin
standing near the back door just
five minutes after Sanchez split.

SCOTT (V.O.)
And what do we know about her?

INT. FED EX STORE - DAY

Ginny stands patiently by a copy machine as papers shoot out...one after the next. She carefully separates the documents into three file folders. All different colors. One for her and the others for Scott and Ben.

BEN (V.O.)
She's old and wears glasses. But
can also testify she saw Sanchez
run out of there panicked.

As the last of the papers shoot out, Ginny staples the three sets of documents and files them separately.

Ginny opens one of the files and reads some of the highlighted content.

...witness heard a loud crash, which she described as the breaking of glass...

...just minutes later, witness spotted SANCHEZ running from the home, near the rear exit...

...witness called 911 at approximately 5:45 PM...

...5:50 PM, MEREDITH spotted a man in a white dress shirt and dark necktie standing inside the home...

INT. BEN'S APARTMENT - DINING ROOM - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Scott and Ginny sit before a medusa of opened files and court documents as Ben paces back and forth.

BEN

The cops had her finger Kevin from
a set of still photos. But what
the cops don't know is she's a
known atheist and hates the church.

INT. FED EX STORE - DAY (PRESENT)

Ginny snaps out of her stupor, uses a yellow high lighter to mark over *white dress shirt and dark necktie*.

INT. BEN'S APARTMENT - DINING ROOM - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Ben lays both palms flat on the dining room table. As if the full weight of this case is pressing down on his shoulders like a sack of bricks.

BEN

She used to knock on my brother's
door at least twice a week, telling
him to keep his dog off her lawn.

GINNY

So?

BEN

He doesn't own a dog. We need to
find a hole in her story. We got
less than a week.

INT. FED EX STORE - DAY (PRESENT)

Ginny sits at a desktop computer workstation and observes the colorful home webpage of *Evergreen Mental Health Center*---a local psychiatric facility. She double clicks the CONTACT link in the upper right corner.

She pulls her phone and dials the business line:

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.)
 Evergreen. This is Linda. How may
 I direct your call?

GINNY
 Linda. No kidding. This is Deputy
 Sheriff Linda Jeffries, Boden
 County Sheriff's Office.
 (listens)
 Yes. Good morning to you too.
 Linda, I'm trying to reach the next
 of kin on a Thelma Meredith.
 That's Meredith with an M.
 (listens)
 Yes, I'm afraid it is bad news.

INT. ELMERS-RIED MEDICAL CENTER - CAFETERIA - DAY

Ben and ER NURSE TRACI JENSEN, forties, crow's feet, bad
 hair, sit in a private corner table, away from the other
 hospital staff and guests eating their lunch.

BEN
 Let me get this straight. When
 Jaclyn came to the ER that night,
 she asked for you personally?

TRACI
 That's right.

BEN
 Why is that?

TRACI
 I'd met her once in a singles class
 at the church. I thought I
 recognized her, so I walked up and
 introduced myself. Then I
 remembered I treated her a couple
 years back when she came in with a
 broken arm.

Ben jots down some notes on a legal pad.

TRACI (CONT'D)
 You know, it's real strange.

BEN
 What's that?

TRACI

I'd only been to a few classes and didn't really know her all that well. But it seemed she was doing fairly well. A lot better than I remembered. Like she was finally getting her life together.

BEN

Would you say, at that time, the church seemed to be having a more positive than negative affect on Jaclyn?

Traci smirks.

TRACI

At that time. Maybe. But that's obviously not the case. Now is it, Mister Kirkwood?

Ben gives up, drops his pen.

BEN

Okay. So, what do you think happened?

TRACI

It's not for me to say.

BEN

You were her nurse. You'd know better than anyone. Call me curious. She tell you about it? What happened that night?

TRACI

I told the police everything I know. I assume you've read the report.

BEN

Of course. It's just that you seem a bit...uncomfortable. Like something you didn't share with the cops.

Traci is reluctant. She just stares into Ben's eyes. As if she's holding a secret.

TRACI

I've worked in this hospital twenty-five years, Mister Kirkwood.

(MORE)

TRACI (CONT'D)
I've seen things you wouldn't
believe. I believe that anything
and everything is possible.

INT. LAKE HARTLEY BAPTIST - DAY CARE CENTER - DAY

Coming up a hallway, Ben turns a corner and follows the sound of YOUNG CHILDREN PLAYING, LAUGHING, CRYING. About halfway down the narrow passage, he comes upon a front desk area with a flip countertop and a silver bell.

Ben gives it a DING.

Out of a back room steps the day care's program director and chief operator SUE ANN LEARY, thirties, weathered, worn by life, but a down-home way about her. She sports some baggy overalls covered in various colors of finger paint.

She opens the second half of a double door. The kind used for keeping young kids safely indoors.

SUE ANN
May I help you?

BEN
I think we've met before. I'm Ben
Kirkwood. Pastor's brother.

SUE ANN
Oh. Ben. Of course.

Sue Ann smiles politely.

SUE ANN (CONT'D)
Sue Ann.

She offers her hand to Ben. He accepts.

BEN
Yeah. I knew that. It's been a
while.

SUE ANN
So, you must be looking for
Christine.

BEN
Yes, as a matter of fact, I am. I
was wondering if you've heard from
her.

Sue Ann scoffs.

SUE ANN

Not really. A few weeks back
Christine leaves me a voice mail.
Says she's gonna be taking some
time off. Maybe even for good.
She wasn't really sure. But needed
to pray about it.

BEN

I see. So let me get this
straight. No one's heard from
Christine in weeks.

SUE ANN

I know that I haven't. But then
again, Chris and I haven't had that
many conversations lately. At
least civil ones.

BEN

Why's that?

SUE ANN

I guess you could say we had a
difference of opinion.

BEN

On what?

SUE ANN

Life. Things like that.

Sue Ann is distracted by the loud giggling of children
playing just behind the door.

SUE ANN (CONT'D)

Look, I gotta get back to the kids.
I wish I could be more help. I
really don't know where she is.

Ben hands her his card.

BEN

Just in case you hear something.

SUE ANN

Of course.

Ben offers her one last smile and dips back up the hallway.
Sue Ann leans over the counter.

SUE ANN (CONT'D)

Hey Ben.

Ben stops, turns --

SUE ANN (CONT'D)
Give Kevin my love. Tell him I'm
praying for him.

BEN
I will.

Sue Ann waves goodbye, dips into the day care.

Ben seems distracted. As if there was something off about his conversation with Sue Ann. He finally snaps out of it, continues out.

INT. SLIPPERY'S BAR AND GRILL - NIGHT

Sitting alone in a corner booth, Ben sips a club soda and lime and wipes the cheese stick grease from his hands. He tosses the dirty napkin in an empty basket.

Through the front door struts Roland. A tailored suit. Always a professional. He spots Ben and heads over.

BEN
Here we go.

Roland pops a squat across from Ben. He places an orange prescription bottle on the table. The white label facing Ben's direction.

ROLAND
See that? It's Depakote. Your
friend Mister Larsen left it in
your sister in law's motel room.

Shocked, disappointed, Ben closes his eyes.

ROLAND (CONT'D)
If you ask me, he could use some
brushing up on his investigative
skills.

BEN
Don't I know it.

ROLAND
Two years clean and sober. All
that hard work and bam. She falls
off the wagon. Now what pray tell
could have set her down such a dark
path?

BEN
Why am I here, Roe?

ROLAND
Oh, I don't know, counselor.
Suspect's mentally compromised,
manic-depressive wife is found
hiding out in a motel near the
airport. A hot mess. It kind of
looks like someone put her there.

BEN
Well, I'll leave that between you
and her, counselor. But do me a
favor. Before you do something
crazy like put her on the stand.
You might wanna ask her where she
was between the hours of Five and
Seven the night of the attacks.

Roland scoffs. A big grin.

ROLAND
You telling me the good pastor's
gonna let his own wife take the
fall? No dice.

BEN
It's not up to him.

ROLAND
Sounds like you got this figured.

BEN
That's not my job, counselor. The
whole beyond a reasonable doubt
thing. That's your baby. No pun
intended.

ROLAND
Ya know, the last I checked a woman
in your sister in law's condition
can be pretty vulnerable. Not
thinking real straight, if you get
my feeling.

BEN
No. Why don't you educate me.

ROLAND
We do a little...shall we
say...persuading from our end.
(MORE)

ROLAND (CONT'D)
All it takes is her saying her
husband was having an affair, and
the jury is ours.

BEN
Well. I'll keep that in mind.

ROLAND
Do that. See you in court.

Roland throws him one more smug grin as he slides out and
heads for the door. Ben slowly exhales.

INT. PRELIMINARY HEARING - COURT ROOM - DAY

Ben sits with Kevin at the defense. Scott and Ginny in their
usual spots behind them. Gant at the prosecution desk in
another trim and perfectly cut suit.

Roland stands before the witness box and questions KARA
TOWNSEND, twenties, local townie with a rough childhood
and an impressive juvenile record.

ROLAND
Miss Townsend, could you tell the
court when and where you first met
Jaclyn Sanchez?

KARA
She came into Herman's once. I'd
say, a little over a month ago.

ROLAND
A little over a month ago. And
Herman's Hideaway is a bar a couple
blocks from Lake Hartley Baptist.

KARA
Yes.

ROLAND
And could you tell us about your
first encounter with Jaclyn?

KARA
I was with my boyfriend, Steve. We
were hanging out with some of his
friends. Shooting pool. Darts.
Drinking. I started feeling the
drinks and decided to sit down.
That's when I noticed Jaclyn walk
in. She sat down at a table across
from me.

(MORE)

KARA (CONT'D)

Kind of like right near where everyone was playing pool. So, a waitress comes over and she orders a beer. No big deal. We were all drinking. But when the waitress came back is when she got weird.

ROLAND

Weird. Like how do you mean?

KARA

Well, it was like she got angry. Like not angry at the waitress but like more at herself. She just pushed the glass away and told her to bring her a soda instead.

ROLAND

Then what happened?

KARA

Well. You could tell she was real upset about something. Like distraught in a way. So, I went over to say hello. Maybe see what was bothering her.

ROLAND

And why did you feel the sudden need to go check on Jaclyn?

KARA

That look in her eye. I'd seen it before. Being that I was an unplanned mother myself. I guess you could say I put two and two together.

ROLAND

Besides her pregnancy. What else did you and Jaclyn talk about?

KARA

I asked about the father. And if he knew yet. She said 'not yet'. Then I told her about when I got pregnant. And how when I found out I didn't tell my folks for weeks and almost dropped out of school. I was a bit younger than her.

ROLAND

And how did she react when you told her about your pregnancy?

KARA

That's when she got even madder.
Telling me 'You don't know what
suffering is. You have a family.
You have a man. I don't even have
a home'. That's when I asked her
how do you know he wants this baby
or not unless you tell him? She
says 'It's not that simple. It's
complicated'.

Ben secretly watches Kevin, who is doing his best to stay
calm and composed.

LATER

Roland listens passively as Detective Halverson explains the
crime scene walk through. He has a special color chart,
perfectly designed after Kevin's home. Illustrating the
finer details of the crime itself.

DETECTIVE HALVERSON

Our forensic team was able to lift
a few latent prints which later
matched with Miss Sanchez.

Detective Halverson points out the KITCHEN COUNTERTOP and END
TABLE where the LAMP was knocked over.

DETECTIVE HALVERSON (CONT'D)

One, on the countertop near the
phone. The second, on the rear
left leg of the end table where the
lamp was knocked onto the floor.

ROLAND

Okay. Is that it?

DETECTIVE HALVERSON

No. We also found traces of blood
on the edge of this table and on
the carpet. Near the table. We
also found traces of blood in the
glass fragments just outside the
rear kitchen door. Both sets were
A negative. Matching that of Miss
Sanchez.

LATER

Roland questions "Quick Sip" cashier RUDY KINTANIS.

RUDY

When she came in, she kind of looked like she'd been crying. And she was holding her stomach. Kind of like she was sick or something. Then dipped into the ladies room. She's in there a while. Five. Ten minutes maybe.

LATER

Roland questions JOHN MARAPOVICH, thirties, Polish, thick bearded and slovenly dressed Uber Driver.

MARAPOVICH

When she got in, she was real quiet. Just stared out the window. Ask three times. Where we headed? She won't snap out of it.

LATER

Roland has Nurse TRACI MARTIN on the stand.

TRACI

I would say she acted like a typical victim of rape. Very still. Quiet. Withdrawn.

ROLAND

And when you tried to communicate with Jaclyn. How did she respond?

TRACI

She didn't. The closer I got to her, the more she would pull away. Stare at the wall. What really concerned me was how she was clenching her arms together. Like this.

Traci grips both hands tightly into her biceps.

TRACI (CONT'D)

Like she was trying to cover up. It was very apparent to me that she had just been through something very personal and very traumatic.

Ben seems worried by Traci's testimony.

LATER

Roland questions Kevin's neighbor, THELMA MEREDITH.

ROLAND

Could you tell the court what you saw on the night of September Twentieth, around Five Forty-Five PM?

THELMA

I was out walking my cats when I heard a loud crash coming from down the street. Not too far behind me.

ROLAND

A crash? Like what kind of crash?

THELMA

Like glass breaking. A bunch of glass shattering all at once. So, I headed back. That's when I saw Miss Sanchez running from Mister Kirkwood's home.

ROLAND

Approximately how far was Miss Sanchez from the Kirkwood home?

THELMA

Oh...I'd say about ten feet or so.

ROLAND

And when you witnessed Miss Sanchez leave, was anyone else present at the Kirkwood property?

Thelma points down at Kevin.

THELMA

I saw the defendant, Mister Kirkwood, standing inside the house and staring through the broken glass.

ROLAND

And what happened after that?

THELMA

That's when he looked up, noticed me staring and quickly ducked away from the door. Out of my view.

ROLAND

Are you entirely positive that the man you saw staring through the glass window of Mister Kirkwood's rear door was, in fact, Pastor Kevin Kirkwood?

THELMA

Yes. I'm very positive.

ROLAND

Thank you.

(to Ben)

Your witness.

Roland takes his seat. Ben approaches. He stares back at Ginny, gives her a sly wink. She smiles, winks back. Scott also grins.

BEN

(to Thelma)

Good afternoon.

THELMA

Yes. Good afternoon.

BEN

Miss Meredith. When you picked out Pastor's photo and made a positive identification to the police, you didn't stop there, did you?

THELMA

How do you mean?

BEN

In the police report, you claim that not only did you see Mister Kirkwood, but you were able to make out what color shirt and tie he was wearing. Is this true?

THELMA

Yes, that's correct. He was wearing a white dress shirt and dark necktie.

BEN

That's amazing. Really. At your age, I'm surprised you can still see twenty feet in front of you without one big blur.

ROLAND
Your honor, is there a question in there?

JUDGE PIPER
(to Ben)
Counselor.

BEN
Excuse me, your honor. My apologies to the court.

Thelma is distracted. She refocuses.

THELMA
I see just fine with my glasses.

BEN
I'm sorry. I just find it hard to believe. That you were able to see that far and not only make a positive ID but see what color shirt and tie my brother was wearing. All in a matter of a second or two. Before Pastor...how did you say? Ducked away from the door. That's truly amazing.

Roland grins, knowing where Ben's taking this one. He ever so carefully shakes his head.

BEN (CONT'D)
I'll ask you one more time. Then I promise we can move on.

Ben moves closer to the witness stand.

BEN (CONT'D)
Are you positive that the man you saw through the glass was Kevin Kirkwood? Or did you just merely say it was because it was the defendant's house?

ROLAND
Objection. Badgering. This question has been asked and answered twice now.

JUDGE PIPER
Sustained.

BEN
Miss Meredith. Could you tell the
court if you've ever seen a ghost
before?

Roland leaps from his chair --

ROLAND
Objection! Mister Kirkwood can't
be serious!

Judge Piper reads Ben's eyes.

JUDGE PIPER
Overruled.

ROLAND
Your honor --

JUDGE PIPER
Your objection is noted.

Roland slowly slumps into his leather chair, gives Ben the
stink eye. Scott and Ginny are all grins.

BEN
Tell you what. We'll come back to
that ghost thing in a sec.

Ben shuffles back to the defense desk. Ginny hands him a
manila file. He flips it open, reads.

BEN (CONT'D)
Miss Meredith, have you ever been a
guest at Evergreen Psychiatric
Ward?

Ben refers to his papers.

BEN (CONT'D)
Excuse me. The Evergreen Mental
Health and Rehabilitation Center?

THELMA
I...I don't...

BEN
It's okay if you don't remember.
You were fairly out of it when they
checked you in.

Roland jumps up.

ROLAND
Your honor, please!

JUDGE PIPER
For the last time, your objection
is noted. I'd like to hear this.

BEN
Your children, Matthew and Lindsey,
came to visit you around late July,
about two years ago. After not
hearing a word from you in over
three months. Do you remember a
little more vividly now?

THELMA
Yes.

BEN
Do you also remember your two
children committing you to
Evergreen after you claimed to have
had visions of your late husband,
Frank?

Thelma stalls.

THELMA
I had a simple case of dehydration
and was released the next morning.

BEN
I'll take that as a yes. And are
you or are you not currently
suffering from clinical depression?

ROLAND
Objection! Relevance?!

BEN
Oh, I have a point, your honor.

JUDGE PIPER
Then get to it. Quickly.

Thelma's nervous twitch turns to an angry scowl.

BEN
Miss Meredith. I'll ask you one
more time. Are you or are you not
currently suffering from clinical
depression?

THELMA

According to my doctors...yes.

BEN

And what kind of medication are you presently taking to battle this depression?

THELMA

I've been on and off Haldol and Thorazine for the last eighteen years.

BEN

Haldol and Thorazine. Those are antipsychotic medications?

THELMA

Yes.

BEN

And is it also true that when your children found you, you had been bed-ridden for the last four days, nursing a bottle of scotch, talking out loud to your dead husband and loaded with enough Thorazine to kill three small children?

JUDGE PIPER

Careful, counselor.

THELMA

As I stated before, I was dehydrated.

BEN

I bet you were. You hadn't drunk any water, eaten, or put anything in your body other than scotch in a span of four days.

THELMA

I told the police what I saw! I'm not lying, Mister Kirkwood!

BEN

Really. Is it not possible that the figure you saw in the defendant's home wasn't the defendant and could have been someone else or something else entirely?

(MORE)

BEN (CONT'D)

Like a shadow or the moonlight
hitting the door at an angle? Who
knows? Maybe it was another one of
your hallucinations. Like your
husband Frank.

ROLAND

Objection! This is endless
badgering!

BEN

No more questions, your honor.

JUDGE PIPER

The witness is excused.

With an attitude, Thelma crawls out of the witness box and
heads straight for the doors. Ben pops a squat next to
Kevin, who looks almost ashamed of his brother's bombastic
performance. Ben notices.

JUDGE PIPER (CONT'D)

After careful review of the police
evidence obtained and recorded by
Detective Halverson, as well as the
other witness testimony given
today, this court finds that there
is more than sufficient evidence to
move forward to trial.

Judge Piper pencils in a couple of dates on his notepad.

JUDGE PIPER (CONT'D)

The official trial date will be set
for five weeks from today, Friday
morning at Nine AM and will
reconvene in this courtroom. At
which time counselors will present
their opening statements. All pre-
trial motions will be submitted no
later than two weeks prior to
trial. Until then, this court is
adjourned.

Judge Piper raps his gavel. Roland shakes Gant's hand on his
way to the door. Kevin stares at Ben as he collects and
files his paperwork. As if observing him in his workspace
for the first time.

KEVIN

Wow. Who are you and what have you
done with my brother?

BEN
Put on the full armor of God so
that you may take your stand
against the Devil's schemes. I
believe I read that somewhere.

Kevin grins.

INT. BEN'S APARTMENT - DINING ROOM - DAY

Ben, Scott and Ginny devour some Chinese takeout and go over the finer details of their case. There is paperwork scattered everywhere. So much, in fact, that they eat away from the table, trying not to spill their saucy noodles on the documents.

BEN
Okay. First order of business?

GINNY
We file a motion to strike Thelma
Meredith's testimony.

BEN
Very good. And why is that?

GINNY
Because she's the only one who can
put Kevin at the scene.

BEN
Excellent. Second. That little
walk to the Quick Sip took me over
an hour and ten minutes. According
to the time this Kintanis kid
called the Uber, Sanchez did it in
forty-five flat. Why is that?

SCOTT
Jaclyn lied about walking and
hitched a ride to the gas station.

BEN
Right. But why did she lie? And
who did she ride with?

GINNY
Had to be Stoker.

SCOTT
According to Thelma, there was no
car at the scene.

BEN

As far as we know, her ride was waiting out front. Anyways. Our mystery driver drops her at the gas station. She goes inside, uses the bathroom and doesn't come out for about ten minutes. Why's that?

GINNY

She claims to have had a miscarriage that night. She needs a witness to say that she was sick.

BEN

Right. So, she puts on a real good show for our buddy Mister Kintanis, then takes the uber to the hospital. But she doesn't stick around. She's got other things on her mind other than getting examined.

SCOTT

Like getting back to the church in time for Sunday service.

BEN

That's where our big show begins. Meantime, see if Jaclyn ever hung out with any regulars. Got drunk, partied. Whatever. If she was sneaking out and making impromptu trips to the bar, someone down at the shelter knows about it.

Ginny nods in agreement, takes hers and Scott's empty plate and heads for the kitchen. Ben picks up his phone...checks the time.

BEN (CONT'D)

It's later than I thought. I got a game to catch.

Ben stands to leave, shoves in his chair.

SCOTT

Game? You gonna watch football with everything going on?

BEN

Softball. Lake Hartley Baptist versus First Alliance.

(MORE)

BEN (CONT'D)
Supposed to be a real bloodbath
from what I hear. Might do us some
good to get some fresh air.

SCOTT
Us?

BEN
You got other plans?

Ginny rinses off her plate and checks with Scott, who, with a
hopeless look about him, surveys their endless mounds of
paperwork and slumps in defeat.

SCOTT
No, I guess not.

BEN
Great. I'll see you down there.

Ben collects his keys and heads for the door. Scott left
confused. Ginny returns from the kitchen, steps up behind
Scott, rubs his neck and back.

GINNY
Surprised they haven't cancelled
the game. Figured it's the last
place on earth Ben would wanna be
right now. All those people
badgering him with questions.

EXT. SOFTBALL FIELD - DUSK

A modest crowd on both sides of the baseball diamond. Mostly
female spectators, including DEACON'S WIVES, PROUD MOTHERS
and some YOUNGER LADIES of the church's sizeable youth
department, cheering on their respective teams: First
Alliance Church versus Lake Hartley Baptist.

Derek, Tom's boy, is on deck as he takes some practice cuts.
He is caught off guard by the sudden presence of

BEN

...cutting through a busy crowd milling around behind the
home side dugout. He is super casual in some jeans and a
worn, faded t shirt. He attempts to quietly blend in but
still with a perpetual spotlight above his head.

Derek is visibly nervous. From inside the home side dugout,
Tom notices his boy's change in demeanor.

Scott and Ginny climb the nearby bleachers, finding a couple empty spots near the top. Ginny with a bottle of water and Scott with a soda and loaded hot dog.

GINNY
Can't believe you're hungry again.

SCOTT
Forgot to tell you. I hate Chinese food.

GINNY
You took me to a Chinese restaurant on our first date.

SCOTT
I had other things on my mind besides egg rolls.

Scott observes the mostly FEMALE ATTENDEES filling the bleachers beneath them. They are more focused on bending each other's ear than the game.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
We're in prime territory.

Scott takes a monster chomp of his hot dog.

CRACK! Tina Halbert, Earl's daughter, knocks one down the third base line, right between the legs of another FEMALE THIRD BASEMAN.

The crowd all jump to their feet in riotous applause.

Ben steps up to the fence near the home side dugout. He exchanges a quick glance with Derek...stepping up to the batter's box.

WOMAN IN CROWD
Come on, Derek!

Ben looks over Tina's shoulder and spots an attractive young woman in a baseball jersey, ball cap and some worn jeans leaning on the fence near the visitor's side dugout. It's Sue Ann Leary and she's very incognito.

Ben walks around the field.

Derek takes the first pitch, watches Ben circle the field behind home plate.

Sue Ann wraps her fingers around the chain link fence as Derek KNOCKS ONE into shallow center field.

She's strangely quiet as the Lake Hartley crowd all jump to their feet and cheer.

THE SHORT STOP and CENTER FIELDER fail to make a catch and barely avoid a head on collision.

BEN (O.S.)
You know, you're on the wrong side
of the field.

Sue Ann turns, finds Ben next to her.

SUE ANN
Oh, I don't know. I kind of like
it over here actually. It's
peaceful. Very judgement free.

BEN
Avoiding anyone in particular?

SUE ANN
Wow. You really haven't been to
service in a while, have you?

BEN
Guess not. Wanna talk about it?

Sue Ann keeps her eyes on the field. A growing smile and no real answer for Ben. A sore subject.

SUE ANN
So, what are you doing here?
Checking up on us? Getting all the
latest tea?

BEN
Now why didn't I think of that?

SUE ANN
I know you and your team didn't
come out tonight because you don't
have better things to do. What's
on your mind?

BEN
Like you said. I haven't been to
service for a while. You think we
could go for a walk?

Sue Ann, unsure. A simple nod.

Ben and Sue Ann quietly duck away. From second base, Derek watches them walk further into the park, away from the tall lights and into the darkness.

EXT. PUBLIC PARK AND PLAYGROUND - NIGHT

Ben and Sue Ann are a good fifty yards from the ball field as they stroll a children's play area. Jungle gym, monkey bars, swing sets, etc. The APPLAUSE from the ball game ECHOES the otherwise quiet night air.

SUE ANN

Let me guess. You wanna know about my ongoing beef with your sister-in-law. Then maybe you can figure out what's going on in that crazy head of hers.

BEN

I figured if there was any important tea to spill, you would have spilled already. What was all that about back there?

Sue Ann ponders entering a difficult discussion. A long and most tired groan.

BEN (CONT'D)

Paint me curious.

SUE ANN

I'm sure you heard about our youth director's accident earlier this month.

BEN

Yeah, I heard a little something about it. Gregg Hainey. A head on collision. Tough break.

SUE ANN

Well, Gregg and I were involved. Almost until the end. Until I broke it off. We kept it quiet, mostly. Being that we both work closely with the youth department. We thought it best to keep our business private.

BEN

Why's that?

SUE ANN

Here we are telling these kids to keep their clothes on until marriage.

(MORE)

SUE ANN (CONT'D)

And there we were carrying on like sex starved teenagers while the ink on his divorce papers haven't dried.

BEN

Good point.

SUE ANN

The truth was, neither of us were ready for a commitment. I'm barely two years out of the shelter and one year clean and he's still dealing with the aftermath of his wife's affair. It didn't take a mastermind to see that I was just his way of getting even.

BEN

So eventually, yours and Gregg's secret got out and now everyone's looking at you like some kind of jezebel that ruined his marriage.

SUE ANN

No. I wish it were that cut and dry. It's actually much worse.

The two slow to a halt before a swing set. Sue Ann takes a seat, kicks her feet into the soft dirt. Ben takes a seat on the swing next to hers.

SUE ANN (CONT'D)

Well. Let's just say I wasn't the only pawn in Gregg's master plan. I was just one of many young women he used and tossed aside in an attempt to heal his broken ego.

BEN

How did you find out about it?

SUE ANN

Because he told me. Called me up a few weeks ago, crying his eyes out. Confessed all of it. His latest victim being one Tina Halbert. Daughter of one Deacon Halbert.

Ben scrunches his eyes -- shocked and perplexed.

BEN

You're kidding me?

SUE ANN

No, I am not. I think Gregg was thinking he'd just call me up like his own personal confessional and he could move on. Like nothing happened. But what would that say about me if I just let it go?

BEN

Is she even legal?

SUE ANN

She's still a couple months away from eighteen. So, no. She wasn't. And there lies my dilemma. Do I ruin this man's life, or do I do the Christian thing and come forward?

BEN

So, what happened?

SUE ANN

After a few days of serious praying and soul searching, I made my decision.

BEN

Publicly humiliating Tina Halbert.

Sue Ann nods appropriately.

SUE ANN

Explains why I'm so popular, huh?

BEN

I'm sorry.

SUE ANN

Before Gregg even had a chance to finish packing up his things, he's killed. So now I have to live with that. Meanwhile fighting the urge to use. Every...single...day.

Ben stares across the park's sprawling lawn, spots a nearby tennis and racquetball court spotlighted by a FLICKERING STREETLAMP.

BEN

When I was little, I used to cut class and come out to these courts. I was small enough I could hide myself behind those walls.

Sue Ann follows his look--

BEN (CONT'D)

And for hours, I'd just sit there and bounce a tennis ball back and forth. Just me and my thoughts. Back then, it was the only peace I had. That short time to myself where the outside world couldn't touch me. No one telling me when to eat, sleep, get up, go to service. Just me and my ball. Something about the simple act of bouncing that thing off a brick wall over and over again that gave me some sort of mental focus.

SUE ANN

I totally get it.

Ben leans forward in his swing, nervously rubs his hands together as Sue Ann watches him change.

BEN

I've been really wanting a drink here lately. But I know if I take that first sip, it's like I'm throwing away this whole case. Like I'm just looking for the excuse to throw in the towel and get my brother a real lawyer.

SUE ANN

He's got a real lawyer. The best. Because you're blood. You know your brother better than anyone. And you know he's not capable of doing what they say he did.

BEN

But that's not proof, is it?

SUE ANN

I think you already know what happened in that house. It's just a matter of proving it.

(beat)

Have you heard from Christine?

Ben locks eyes with Sue Ann. It suddenly hits him.

EXT. SOFTBALL FIELD - NIGHT

Ben and Sue Ann return to the game still in progress. As they pass behind the home side bleachers...

Ginny takes notice.

GINNY
(to Scott)
Who's the girl with Ben?

Scott turns around. Closing in on Ben and Sue Ann...

An enraged Derek, still in uniform, stares down Sue Ann with a most ugly glare of contempt. Tina gropes his right arm in hopes of restraining him.

Ben notices.

DEREK
She's a lying whore, Ben! Don't
listen to her!

Derek is practically in Sue Ann's face as Tina yanks back on his arm with force.

TINA
Don't do this here! Let it go!

DEREK
(to Ben)
Don't trust her! Don't trust
nothin that comes out of her mouth!

Sue Ann notices the entire home side bleachers and church congregation stop what they're doing, stare her down with glares of equal contempt.

BEN
(to Derek)
Maybe we can go talk about this
somewhere quiet.

Tom leaves the dugout, on his way to confront his son and break up a potentially ugly scene.

TOM
Derek! That's enough of that!
(to Ben)
Ben, get her out of here, please.

As Tina restrains Derek with all the strength and might she can muster, Derek continues to resist.

DEREK
 (to Tina)
 I just wanna talk to him! Get off
 of me!

TINA
 Stop it!

Derek fights to break free of her grip. It's quickly turning violent as people GASP and GOSSIP amongst each other. Ben's clearly had enough.

TOM
 Derek! Enough!

Ben attempts to break them up. As he's closing in on the bickering couple, Derek breaks his arm free, and Ben is quickly caught with a LEFT ELBOW.

WHAP!

Blood spews. Sue Ann splits. Tom forcefully grabs Derek, physically removes him from the field.

TOM (CONT'D)
 What're you doing? Go to the car!

Tom shoves him forward like a child. So hard, in fact, that Derek almost trips and face plants. Tina left feeling the weight of the crowd's judgement. She also storms off the property.

Scott and Ginny join Ben as he clamps his nose and blood spills on the dirt and grass.

SCOTT
 What's that all about?

Ginny spots a small circle of FEMALES and DEACON'S WIVES going on and on about the incident.

GINNY
 I'm on the case.

Ginny passively joins their conversation.

Scott and Ben observe the crowd. Including BALL PLAYERS on both teams with their noses pressed against the fence. All watching them like hawks.

SCOTT
 Come on. Let's get you some ice.

They head for concessions.

INT. CONVENIENCE STORE - NIGHT

Ben sits with a very melted bag of ice to his nose and face as WATER spills over a corner table. Ginny winces at the sight as she makes herself an iced coffee.

GINNY
Does it hurt still?

BEN
I'm fine.

Standing at the soda fountain, Scott fills a large Ziploc bag with fresh ice. He joins Ben at the table.

SCOTT
Gimme that thing.

Scott trades out bags with Ben. He tosses the soaked bag into a garbage bin.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
Well. I didn't know church league softball could be so exciting.

BEN
I'm glad you enjoyed yourself.

SCOTT
We're there all of two minutes, I look up and you're wandering off with the day care lady.

BEN
She works with Chris. I feel like she's hiding something.

Ginny, now with her iced macchiato, joins them as Scott slides further into the booth.

GINNY
It's because she is. According to the good ladies of Lake Hartley, your friend Miss Leary came on to your brother. Big time.

BEN
What?

GINNY

That's right. Apparently after she found out her boyfriend was playing doctor with half the females in Lake Hartley, she went to Pastor for some quote "counseling". And he wasn't having it.

SCOTT

Like came onto him how?

GINNY

Like the kind where you sob uncontrollably and end up kissing him on the mouth.

BEN

Where did this happen?

GINNY

Well. Rumor has it...it happened in Pastor's office with the door cracked open. Who actually saw the kissing first is still up to interpretation. But apparently someone did, in fact, witness your brother shooting her down and shooting her down very quickly.

SCOTT

No wonder Chris can't stand her.

BEN

Now wait a minute. How did Chris even find out about this?

GINNY

Nobody had to tell her anything. Because your brother beat them to it. Confessed to the whole thing and promised he'd never be alone in a room with Sue Ann Leary again.

SCOTT

Why would he go and do something stupid like tell the truth?

BEN

Because he knows his butt's grass if he didn't.

GINNY

Exactly.

Ben kicks up his feet, relaxes, holds the bag to his face.

BEN

How embarrassing. This poor woman.

SCOTT

Poor woman? What about Christine?
Even if your brother was being
honest, and that's a big if, who's
to say she's buying any of it?
Hell hath no fury like a woman
scorned, Benny.

Ben leans back his head, places the ice on his eye.

EXT. SUE ANN'S APARTMENT - BALCONY - NIGHT

With her porch light shining bright, a defeated Sue Ann leans on her balcony rail, drags a cigarette. Her cell in the other hand. She stares down at her call list. Kevin's name is a standout. Her thumb about to dial.

After contemplating this phone call, she grows frustrated with herself and pockets her cell. Takes nervous little puffs of her smoke...growing more and more agitated.

Sue Ann gives up, heads inside.

INT. COURTROOM - TRIAL DAY ONE - DAY

Roland roams the jury box - a cool and possibly overconfident stride as he locks eyes with each of the jurors.

ROLAND

Just moments prior to the attack on
the defendant by Kyle Stoker,
Pastor Kevin Kirkwood's own
congregation sat before him. And
bore witness to the overburdened
soul of a man dealing with the
weight of the world on his
shoulders. It was his confession.
Before his congregation. Before
God. That he had just done the
unspeakable.

Kevin's eyes are welled with tears. He quickly bats his eye lids in attempt to conceal them.

ROLAND (CONT'D)

He admitted before his own people...that he had lost his faith. And his position had become nothing more than a bad routine. You see, in the hour following the attack on Jaclyn Sanchez, whatever message he had prepared was lost. It was gone. Tossed out because he had just lost faith in himself. Shaken to the core. Completely empty. And physically and mentally unable to deliver his sermon. One has to wonder. Why the sudden change? Somewhere between Sunday morning and evening service something happened. And that's why we're here. To explore that. To put the pieces together...

LATER

Ben stands awkwardly before the jury -- still and unsure of himself. As if he's still finding the words. He finally snaps out of it.

BEN

And so it begins. That same old cliché. Another man of God in a big money church on trial for his life. He must be guilty. He must be guilty because that is how it has to be. Because we're living in a time of victim hood. A time of he said she said. And in the victim hood playbook, it's she said that matters. Regardless of the actual truth.

Ben grows enough courage to approach the jury box. He rubs his hands across the wooden bar.

BEN (CONT'D)

It's not the facts of the case that matter. It's the presentation of the evidence. Who can gain the most sympathy. Who can play on our innermost feelings of guilt...and use that guilt as a weapon against us.

Ben slowly moves up and down the jury box.

BEN (CONT'D)

We can feel sorry for Jaclyn Sanchez. And the cards she's been dealt in life. The people of Lake Hartley Baptist felt that pain. When they invited her into their home with open arms. But she began to abuse the privilege. She decided she wasn't interested in changing. But keeping down that same dark path. Until she was eventually asked to leave. We can feel sorry for this young woman. But the prosecution cannot be allowed to use our guilt as a weapon against us. I ask that you bury that guilt. And open your minds and hearts to hearing the actual truth of this case.

LATER

Roland questions his first witness, TRACI, the ER nurse who saw Jaclyn the night of her attack.

ROLAND

Nurse Martin, when Jaclyn came into the ER that night following her assault, did she ask for you specifically?

TRACI

She did.

ROLAND

And why is that? Have you treated Jaclyn before?

TRACI

Once. Several years ago, Jaclyn came into the ER with a broken arm. We recently became reacquainted when we met at a singles class at the church.

ROLAND

Could you tell the court a little bit about that first meeting with Jaclyn? What did you two talk about exactly?

TRACI

Mostly about her transition into the church.

(MORE)

TRACI (CONT'D)

And how Pastors Hainey and specifically Pastor Kirkwood have really helped her acclimate in what could have been a very difficult process. She said she felt grateful. And excited about the prospect of becoming gainfully employed by the church.

ROLAND

Employed?

TRACI

That's correct. She even mentioned that Pastor Kirkwood has been taking an active role in finding a position for her within the church. Something small scale. A janitorial role. Or something to that effect.

ROLAND

And did you find that a bit strange?

BEN

Objection. Relevance.

ROLAND

I'll withdraw the question, your honor.

JUDGE PIPER

Let's stay on point, counselor.

ROLAND

So, Jaclyn arrives at the ER. Asks for you personally. Then what?

TRACI

I immediately took Jaclyn into an examination room. Exam Three. Without asking, it was apparent to me that she had just been assaulted.

ROLAND

Could you describe to the court her condition?

TRACI

She had face and neck lacerations. Both arms were badly bruised. As well as her chest and abdomen.

(MORE)

TRACI (CONT'D)
Parts of her right shoulder were
also bruised as well as scraped.

ROLAND
In other words, like she'd just
taken a pretty horrible beating.

Ben shifts in his seat, about to object, refrains.

TRACI
Yes. It was apparent that she had
just been very recently assaulted.
Her wounds were still fresh.

ROLAND
Did you ask her what happened and
who did this to her?

TRACI
She said her kid's father did it.
She went to see him. To tell him
about the baby and he lost it.

ROLAND
But he didn't lose it right away,
did he? Something had to put him
over the edge.

BEN
Objection.

JUDGE PIPER
Sustained.

Ben losing patience fast.

ROLAND
I'll rephrase, your honor.
(to Traci)
According to Jaclyn, at what point
did the child's father begin to
grow agitated?

TRACI
Not right away. He was receptive
at first. Until he found out that
Jaclyn told his wife.

Ben quickly stands.

BEN
Objection, your honor. This is
pure hearsay.
(MORE)

BEN (CONT'D)
Is Miss Martin actually testifying
as to the exact moment Jaclyn's
attacker quote "snapped"?

JUDGE PIPER
Sustained.

Ben huffs out loud -- pops a squat.

ROLAND
Just one more question, your honor.

Ben about to explode. He smirks in disgust. Scott stands,
rubs his shoulders.

JUDGE PIPER
(to Scott)
Young man, take your seat.

SCOTT
Pardon.

Scott quickly sits. Ginny left embarrassed.

ROLAND
(to Traci)
According to Jaclyn, how did the
father of her child receive the
news that she was pregnant?

TRACI
Jaclyn made it very clear to me
during our conversation that the
child's father remained calm at
first. Almost in a state of shock.
But became increasingly agitated
after learning that his wife was
not only made aware of their affair
but had left home unexpectedly.

Roland approaches the jury -- locks eyes with each of them as
he continues his questioning.

ROLAND
Left home unexpectedly. After she
was made aware of her husband's
affair with Jaclyn. And what
happened next?

TRACI
After asking Jaclyn repeatedly to
leave and she refused, that's when
things turned violent.

ROLAND
(to Ben)
Your witness.

Roland returns to his chair. Ben is fairly worked up but refrains from lashing out as he makes his way to the witness stand.

BEN
Nurse Martin. With you being so close with Jaclyn Sanchez and all. I'm sure during this long and very detailed conversation you asked about the kid's father.

TRACI
I didn't have to. Miss Sanchez was very open and honest about what she'd just been through and who was responsible.

BEN
Okay fine. Her kid's father beat the heck out of her. That's her story and she made that crystal clear upon entering the examination room. After asking for you personally. Why do you think that was, Nurse Martin?

TRACI
I don't understand your question.

BEN
Why do you think Jaclyn requested you specifically? Was it because she felt some level of trust with you? That she knew you'd do the right thing?

TRACI
I'm not sure what you mean by the right thing.

BEN
I mean you're from the church. You know Pastor's reputation. Did you think, maybe, perhaps, Jaclyn was a bit concerned, possibly a bit ashamed by the idea of exposing Pastor's dark secret? Exposing this affair with Jaclyn?

Traci grows irritated. She leans forward in her chair as Ben paces before the witness box.

TRACI

I have no idea. That wasn't my concern at the time. It was obvious to me that she had just been through a very traumatic experience and needed someone familiar to discuss what happened.

BEN

Well, an affair with the Pastor would definitely be a cause for concern, would it not?

Roland shifts in his seat. A deep breath. He knows where this is going.

TRACI

Mister Kirkwood, the fact that she was having an affair with a married man, or the boy next door was not my concern at that time. My concern was solely for --

BEN

For Jaclyn.

Ben stands before the jury.

TRACI

That's correct.

As Ben locks eyes with each of them.

BEN

So, you never bothered asking her specifics about the kid's father? Is that what you're telling me?

Roland grins. He very softly shakes his head. The state's just been busted, and he knows it.

TRACI

Like I said. She was very open and honest that the child's father was responsible for her assault.

BEN

The child's father. So, she never mentioned the father's name?

Traci is at a loss for words. Ben leaves the jury box and heads back to the witness stand.

BEN (CONT'D)
Nurse Martin. Did she? Ever
mention my brother by name?

Traci huffs.

TRACI
No, she did not.

BEN
And what about her child? She
mentioned concern for her child's
well-being. She must have.

TRACI
Of course. It's why she was there.
She was afraid she had miscarried
about an hour earlier.

BEN
Yes. At the Quick Sip convenience
store. We know that already. But
what we don't know is if this had
ever been confirmed by the
hospital. So now I'm asking. Did
you ever get around to performing
an examination on Jaclyn Sanchez?
Or did that slip your mind?

TRACI
Of course it didn't. With victims
of assault, it's standard procedure
to perform a rape examination. She
had obviously been assaulted.

BEN
But did you perform an examination
on Jaclyn?

Traci checks with Roland.

TRACI
No. I never had the chance.

BEN
Why not?

TRACI
By the time I returned with the
rape kit, Jaclyn had left the
hospital.

Ben turns to the jury -- reads their surprised reactions. He turns back to Traci.

BEN
She fled?

TRACI
Yes.

BEN
So much for the rape exam. How about the ultrasound? What did that determine?

Traci is left speechless. Roland slumps in defeat.

TRACI
I didn't perform an ultrasound. As I stated before, she had --

BEN
She left the hospital. Correct.

Ben studies the jury.

BEN (CONT'D)
She fled the hospital. Before you could perform a rape examination. Or do so much as an ultrasound. To determine the health of Jaclyn's unborn child.

Ben stands before Traci -- leaning on the witness box.

BEN (CONT'D)
And since she fled the hospital, have you had any contact with Jaclyn Sanchez?

TRACI
I have not.

BEN
No follow up? How's the kid doing?

ROLAND
Objection. Asked and answered. Is Mister Kirkwood done badgering this witness?

BEN
No more questions, your honor.

Ben returns to his seat.

JUDGE PIPER
Mister McRae, do you have any more
questions for this witness before
she's excused?

ROLAND
I do, your honor.

Ben rolls his eyes. Kevin pats him on the arm. Roland
approaches the witness box.

ROLAND (CONT'D)
Nurse Martin, about how many
victims of rape and assault have
you cared for in your career as an
Emergency Room nurse?

TRACI
A few hundred I suppose.

ROLAND
And out of those few hundred, how
many other victims of equally
violent rapes and assault have fled
the hospital before examination was
possible?

Ben laughs. Judge Piper throws him a stern look.

TRACI
Too many. I couldn't give you an
exact number. But it was a lot.

ROLAND
And what is it, in your
professional opinion, that would
cause a young woman in this
position to flee before examination
is possible?

TRACI
Shame. Fear. Confusion.

ROLAND
Fear of what exactly?

TRACI
Fear of going public. Turning on a
partner. Involving the police in a
private matter that could result in
a loved one going to jail.

ROLAND

What about going up against a powerful figure like Pastor Kirkwood? It seems like a decision like that could give a girl pause.

BEN

Objection!

JUDGE PIPER

Sustained.

ROLAND

Withdrawn. No more questions, your honor.

Roland returns to his seat. Ben, Scott and Ginny all look frazzled and a bit worried. But not Kevin. He's still at total peace with himself.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

CHRISTINE KIRKWOOD, thirties, leather skin, real hard living type, slowly awakens from a deep rest. Everything in her path is one big blur. As her vision slowly returns, she discovers Gant hovering over her right side. And to her left sits Detective Halverson.

DETECTIVE HALVERSON

Mrs. Kirkwood. Welcome back. You had us all pretty worried. Do you know who I am?

CHRISTINE

No.

DETECTIVE HALVERSON

I'm Detective Halverson. Boden County Sheriff's Office. And this is Mister Gant. He found you about three miles south of here in a motel room. You were unresponsive.

Christine stares up at Gant, a bit suspicious of him and confused by his presence.

DETECTIVE HALVERSON (CONT'D)

Apparently, you took some pills. A lot of pills. Do you remember any of this?

Christine stalls.

CHRISTINE

No. What do you want?

DETECTIVE HALVERSON

We've got some unanswered questions regarding your husband's case. Thought you might be able to fill in some blanks for us. If you're up to it, of course.

Christine feels Gant's eyes on her. She is visibly uncomfortable.

DETECTIVE HALVERSON (CONT'D)

You've been through it. I can see that. So, I'll make this as clear as I can. Frankly, running off like this doesn't look good. For you or your husband. At this point in time, it's imperative you cooperate. If you choose not to cooperate, we'll have no choice but to draw our own conclusions. And that will require more digging. They'll be more questions about that night. More trouble for you and your husband. I know you don't want that.

(beat)

Nod if you understand me.

A defeated and exhausted Christine processes it all and eventually nods in agreement.

Gant smiles.

INT. JUDGE'S CHAMBERS - DAY

Ben and Roland stand before Judge Piper--seated behind his desk and enjoying a bowl of soup. His robe hanging on a nearby rack.

ROLAND

Your honor, we have over an hour of recorded testimony from Miss Sanchez describing, in explicit detail, her ongoing telephone communications with Christine Kirkwood.

(MORE)

ROLAND (CONT'D)

The state is requesting that Mrs. Kirkwood simply be allowed the opportunity to corroborate not only the existence of these calls but their legitimacy.

BEN

In other words, he wants her to testify against her own husband.

Judge Piper slurps his piping hot soup, stays neutral and simply lets these two go at it.

ROLAND

The state also feels that given the expediency of which Mrs. Kirkwood fled the scene on the night in question, as well as the suspicious manner in which she was discovered, the court, and especially your honor, deserves and demands an explanation.

BEN

Suspicious manner? What a load of sh--

JUDGE PIPER

Watch yourself, counselor.

BEN

Your honor, my sister-in-law is a severe manic depressive. Someone in her obviously compromised mental state is easily susceptible to suggestion, coercion and intimidation.

Roland plays offended, turns to Ben --

ROLAND

Such as?

Ben locks eyes with him.

BEN

Such as the threat of being charged with obstruction. Or even worse, an accessory after the fact.

JUDGE PIPER

(to Roland)

How about it, Mister McRae.

(MORE)

JUDGE PIPER (CONT'D)

Does the state have dirt on Mrs. Kirkwood in which defense was not made privy?

ROLAND

As I stated before, Mrs. Kirkwood will be called only as a corroborating witness. In no way, shape or form has she been coerced or threatened into presenting damning evidence against her husband. All we're asking for is her side of things. If we're to move forward in this case, I feel it's imperative for the jury, as well as your honor, to hear it straight from the horse's mouth.

Judge Piper wipes his hands with a linen napkin as he ponders his decision.

JUDGE PIPER

Agreed.

BEN

Your honor. You must be kidding.

JUDGE PIPER

Counselor, I don't like what I'm hearing regarding your sister-in-law's little impromptu motel visit.
(to both)

Frankly, I don't know which one of you I should start grilling with questions first.

BEN

Your honor --

JUDGE PIPER

No, counselor. I'm giving the state some leeway on this since Mister McRae was the first to come forward. If you feel she's in any way concealing evidence or giving misleading testimony, you'll have more than adequate time to prove your case.

Completely whipped, Ben nods in agreement.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

Roland and Christine mid testimony.

ROLAND

Mrs. Kirkwood. In the days leading up to your husband's arrest. And approximately eight days prior to the attack on Jaclyn Sanchez, did you receive a series of phone calls from a woman claiming to have had an affair with your husband?

CHRISTINE

I did.

ROLAND

And at any time during these phone calls, did this woman identify herself by name?

CHRISTINE

No. She did not. At least not at first. But I really didn't give her the chance.

ROLAND

How so?

CHRISTINE

This wasn't the first time a young woman called our home in an attempt to make trouble for my husband. I just assumed it was another troubled girl expelled from the care center. So, I hung up. With every subsequent call, I listened just a little bit less before hanging up.

ROLAND

Just to refresh the court's memory. Miss Sanchez was, in fact, expelled from the women's care facility. By your husband. Was she not?

CHRISTINE

I'd say it was a group decision.

ROLAND

But when it comes down to it, your husband does have the final say about who goes and who stays.

CHRISTINE

I suppose he does. Yes.

ROLAND

With Jaclyn Sanchez's expulsion being fairly new, did you put the pieces together that it was Jaclyn on the other line?

CHRISTINE

I suspected. It sounded like her.

ROLAND

And did you ask Jaclyn to stop calling your home and making trouble for you and your husband?

CHRISTINE

Yes, I did.

ROLAND

And when you asked her to stop harassing you and your husband, did you eventually address her by name?

CHRISTINE

Not exactly.

ROLAND

You didn't address her by name?

CHRISTINE

I told her that I knew who this was. And that if she didn't stop, I'd have no choice but to call the police.

ROLAND

And how did Jaclyn respond to that?

CHRISTINE

She said she wish I would. While I'm at it, to put them on the phone so she can tell them about her and the good pastor's baby. The mere mention of the police just made her angrier. So, I decided I'd listen. Get her side.

ROLAND

Were you afraid this story of hers actually held some weight?

BEN
Objection. Leading.

JUDGE PIPER
Sustained.

ROLAND
Instead of hanging up like you
usually do, you decided to hear
Jaclyn out?

CHRISTINE
Yes.

ROLAND
What else did Jaclyn have to say?

CHRISTINE
She said she had something she
wanted to share with Kevin. With
both of us. And she wanted to make
sure I was here when she did.

ROLAND
And what was that?

CHRISTINE
A sonogram. A picture of her and
Kevin's unborn child.

A GASP from the courtroom. Judge Piper raps his gavel.

JUDGE PIPER
Let's calm down.

ROLAND
And did Jaclyn ever get the chance
to share this image with you and
your husband?

CHRISTINE
No, she did not.

ROLAND
Why's that?

CHRISTINE
Because I left.

ROLAND
You left? But she had proof.
Undeniable proof that she was with
child.

(MORE)

ROLAND (CONT'D)

Naming your husband as the father.
And you decided to pick up and
leave. Why?

CHRISTINE

Because I was afraid. Afraid of
the truth. I guess I just wasn't
prepared for that.

ROLAND

Did you assault Jaclyn Sanchez?

CHRISTINE

No.

ROLAND

Did you have any kind of physical
altercation with Miss Sanchez?

CHRISTINE

No.

ROLAND

Have you ever so much as laid a
finger on Miss Sanchez?

CHRISTINE

No.

ROLAND

(to Ben)

Your witness.

Roland heads to his chair. Ben takes a moment. He's not
quite ready to address Christine.

JUDGE PIPER

Mister Kirkwood?

Ben rises and takes his time to the witness box. He turns
and locks eyes with Kevin. Christine follows his look and
also locks eyes with her husband. She's embarrassed and
looks away. The jury notices.

BEN

It's good to see you, Chris. I'm
glad you're doing okay.

CHRISTINE

I'm fine, Ben. Thank you.

BEN

You just testified that you left home after Jaclyn threatened to show up with picture proof of hers and Kevin's baby. That you packed a quick bag first. Is this correct?

CHRISTINE

Yes. I packed a bag and left as quickly as possible.

Ben nods as he passes by the jury box. He stops in his tracks, rubs his face as he ponders this, pieces it all together.

BEN

Here's my dilemma. You were already booked on a flight to Atlanta the morning after Jaclyn's attack.

The jurors look to Christine. All the color drops from her face. Ben steps closer.

BEN (CONT'D)

The truth is...you were already planning on leaving town the next morning. Even before this shocking phone call from Jaclyn. Isn't this correct?

CHRISTINE

I was.

BEN

Let me see if I understand correctly. It was getting late in the day. And you hadn't packed any bags for this early morning flight to Atlanta. And it wasn't until Jaclyn's phone call that you decided to pack this bag?

CHRISTINE

I was back and forth on whether I was actually going. Kevin and I were having some trouble. Things that have nothing to do with Jaclyn.

Christine sucks in a deep breath. Shielding the tears about to well in her eyes. Kevin is sad for her. The jurors observe the love in his eyes and his overall spirit.

CHRISTINE (CONT'D)

I thought it was a good idea I got away for a few days. Visit with my family. Sort some things out.

BEN

And did you make that flight?

CHRISTINE

You know that I didn't.

BEN

So, you didn't make your flight. Where did you go? You obviously never made it home.

Christine wipes a single tear. She takes a moment as she gazes at the floor.

CHRISTINE

I went to a motel. I thought I'd take a few hours. Maybe a night or two to think things through. I thought the peace and quiet would do me some good.

BEN

From the looks of things in that room, there wasn't much peace or quiet.

ROLAND

Objection. Is there a question anywhere in our future?

JUDGE PIPER

Let's get there, counselor.

BEN

It was obvious to my associates, who discovered the destructive aftermath of your motel visit, that you fell off the wagon and did so in a very big way.

Christine on the verge of bursting into tears. Kevin shakes his head, guilt ridden, protective of his troubled wife.

BEN (CONT'D)

What I don't get is why?

Christine locks eyes with Kevin. Ben purposely blocks her path and line of sight.

BEN (CONT'D)

You didn't stick around. To hear the truth from Jaclyn or to get your husband's side of things. You just left. Skipped your flight to Atlanta and proceeded to drink and pill yourself into a stupor after fourteen months of sobriety.

ROLAND

Objection. This is endless badgering.

JUDGE PIPER

Sustained.

Ben gets right in Christine's face. A come to Jesus moment if there ever was one.

BEN

I'm going to ask you...one time and one time only. Before God. Did you, at any time, get into a physical altercation with Jaclyn Sanchez? Yes or no?

And it's on the tip of her tongue. She's about to spill but Roland quickly puts a stop to this charade.

ROLAND

Objection! Asked and answered! Defense is deliberately using the witness's own guilt and devotion to her husband to alter her prior testimony! We ask that she be excused immediately with the court's apologies!

JUDGE PIPER

Sustained. The witness is excused. And I think this is a good place to stop for today. This court will reconvene at Nine AM tomorrow.

Judge Piper raps his gavel. Ben watches Christine with disdain as she quickly exits the witness stand and makes for the courtroom doors.

Kevin looks over his shoulder, spots both Kyle and girlfriend Jaclyn following a small crowd out the back. Kevin and Kyle lock eyes. An overwhelming guilt practically written on Kyle's forehead as he tucks tail and leaves.

Jaclyn notices their exchange. Kevin faces Ben, angrily collecting his things. He's coming apart.

KEVIN
Something you'd like to ask me?

BEN
Like what?

KEVIN
She never touched her, Benny.

BEN
How you know that? I thought you weren't there, Kev.

Scott and Ginny observe the tense stand-off.

SCOTT
(whispers to Ginny)
Come on. Let's go.

Scott and Ginny dip out, file out with the others.

KEVIN
That was your whole case in a nutshell, wasn't it, Ben? Getting her to admit to something she didn't do.

BEN
I don't know what she did. Other than run and hide. That's exactly what I should've done.

KEVIN
So that's it? I'm getting the famous Ben's giving up speech. Is that what this is?

BEN
Hey. God's got this. Remember? Who cares what I think.

Ben shuts his briefcase and storms out. Kevin shuts his eyes a moment. Collects himself.

INT. PARKING GARAGE - AFTERNOON

Roland is calm and confident as he struts his way toward a ragtop Mercedes AMG C Class. His eyes glued to his cell. A click of his key unlocks his car. CHIRP!

Out of nowhere, Scott confronts him. Roland's sly smirk speaks volumes.

ROLAND
Larsen. Whatever this is, I'll
have to take a raincheck.

SCOTT
Nice car. Good to see all those
church fundraisers are finally
paying off.

ROLAND
That's funny.

SCOTT
Pastor's wife. You threaten her
with jail time? Or did you keep
her so loaded and pissed off she
forgot which end is up?

Roland laughs. But in a smug way. He steps closer. As if
to physically intimidate Scott.

ROLAND
You should soften your tone a bit.

SCOTT
You know, a year from now after you
and your cronies from DC are done
bleeding that church for every cent
they got, what happens then?

ROLAND
What're you talking about?

SCOTT
Are you gonna be in that girl's
life? Making sure she gets clean
and stays off the street?

Bothered by Scott's words, Roland loses his cocky swagger.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
Or will you be too busy hobnobbing
with your new friends in the ACLU
chasing down your next charity
case?

ROLAND
You got us all figured, huh?

SCOTT

I know what I see. That girl trusts you. Because you're telling her everything she wants to hear. And what's really sad is...she won't realize until after it's too late that you were just another guy on a long list of guys that used her, chewed her up and spit her out. No amount of money you squeeze out of that church is gonna change that.

ROLAND

Yeah, well. It's not my job to hold that girl's hand or fix her life. That was your boy's job. And he fumbled the ball.

Scott simply nods. Defenseless. Unfortunately, there's a kernel of truth to this.

ROLAND (CONT'D)

Ya know, baby or no baby. Guilty or not guilty don't matter. I know your Pastor messed with that girl's head. Messed it up good. Or we wouldn't be here, would we?

Scott cracks a dumb grin. At a loss for words.

ROLAND (CONT'D)

Now. Would you mind stepping aside? I'm late for dinner.

Roland nudges past Scott, heads for his car. Scott stands trancelike. As if pondering Kevin's guilt. He snaps out of it, heads for the garage stairwell.

INT. SLIPPERY'S BAR - NIGHT

It's a mostly empty bar.

Scott climbs some narrow, creaky steps to find Ben tossing darts in the corner, nursing a shot and beer.

Ben tosses his last two darts before collecting them from the tournament board.

SCOTT

Figured you might be in here.

BEN

To think the DA's Office let a sharp eye like you walk out the door.

Ben begins his second round of darts.

SCOTT

We found some new dirt on Sanchez if you care to hear.

BEN

Not particularly.

SCOTT

I talked to my guy in the Sheriff's Office. He said that, before her stint at the women's care center, Jaclyn's been cribbing with a guy named Logan Caswell. Aka The Covid Casanova. Got that nickname during the pandemic by turning out a whole stable of single, out of work moms in his trailer park.

BEN

Is that so?

SCOTT

That is so. Guess who was Caswell's across the way neighbor? That's right. Kyle Stoker.

Ben, with dart in hand, stops, checks with Scott.

BEN

Okay. You got my attention.

He releases his dart.

SCOTT

I've been out there. You can practically spit on Stoker's trailer from Caswell's place.

Ben pays him little mind as he tosses his darts. Scott moves into Ben's line of sight.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

What if Jaclyn starts messing with Stoker while Caswell's back is turned. Stoker starts getting jealous of Jaclyn turning tricks and insists she leaves the life.

(MORE)

SCOTT (CONT'D)
Insists that she gets clean. So,
she ends up at the church.

BEN
What's your point?

SCOTT
What if Stoker was the father?
Caswell finds out his prize girl
gets knocked up and can't work the
streets. So, he beats the living
crap out of her. Fresh out of
options and nowhere to turn, she
talks this Stoker kid into making
up a story about your brother.

BEN
Why would he do that?

SCOTT
Because he's just as scared as she
is. This Caswell was a bad boy.
So maybe he's thinking he's gotta
leave the park in one piece. Bam.
They concoct this story about Kevin
to cover their tracks.

BEN
Good story but it doesn't matter.

SCOTT
Of course it matters.

BEN
I know all about Sanchez. Nothing
on her sheet but brawling, public
intoxication and a few possession
charges.

Ben aggressively tosses the rest of his darts. Growing
angrier and quickly losing patience.

SCOTT
My cop says this Caswell's
operation was an open secret. That
they knew about it but didn't make
any busts during the pandemic. It
leads to her history of promiscuity
and opens up a whole pandora's box
of baby daddies a mile long.

BEN
Don't you get it? They put Chris
on the stand. She all but admitted
Kevin's guilt. His own wife.

Scott grows tired and takes a chug of Ben's beer.

BEN (CONT'D)
It doesn't matter what story we try
to sell the jury now. They've
already made up their minds. The
Kirkwoods strike again.

Ben tears his darts free and gets back in position. Scott
simply watches on as Ben tosses the darts and gives up on
his brother's case.

SCOTT
They made up their minds or did
you?

BEN
What's that mean?

SCOTT
You think he did it?

BEN
He's his father's son. Why not?

SCOTT
Or maybe you want it to be him?

Ben throws Scott a hard stare. A real back off look.

Scott slowly walks into Ben's space -- never breaking eye
contact and dead serious.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
You hate him so much you're willing
to throw this case, Ben? I know
you've been waiting for him to stub
his toe. Now's your chance.

Ben's lip quivers with pent up rage. He takes the mug of
beer from Scott's hand and takes a generous chug. With an
attitude, he SLAMS the mug on a high top.

BEN
I think you better get going.
Before you say something stupid.

SCOTT
Yeah. I guess so. It's been a
couple weeks. You have some
drinking to catch up on.

Scott heads for the stairs. Ben slumps in his chair and
stares at his half full mug. Ashamed.

EXT. BEN'S APARTMENT - LATE NIGHT

A very drunken, very tired and broken Ben stumbles his way up
a flight of stairs...headed home for the night. His shirt
undone and his tie loosened.

As he digs out his keys, he's surprised to find...

SUE ANN

...waiting on the top step. In tears.

Ben rests against the hallway wall, quiet and tired, studies
a deep sadness in Sue Ann's eyes.

BEN
So. You ready to tell me what's
going on with my brother?

Sitting on her hands, Sue Ann sucks in a long, deep breath,
exhales and reluctantly nods.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

A guilt-ridden Sue Ann, donning a thrift store church dress,
sits at the witness stand with a look of sincere regret
that cuts through her heavy makeup.

BEN
Miss Leary. What is your position
at Lake Hartley Baptist?

SUE ANN
I'm Assistant Director of
Children's Ministries.

BEN
And what is that exactly?

SUE ANN
It's more of a fancy title than
anything. I mostly run the day
care at the church.

(MORE)

SUE ANN (CONT'D)

In some instances, I'll assist the Youth Director with other various activities.

BEN

Such as?

SUE ANN

Fundraisers. Cookouts. Field trips. Wednesday Night Youth gatherings. I've also served in the young adults' prayer group as a counselor. Things like this.

BEN

You assist the Youth Director. So who is the Youth Director at Lake Hartley Baptist?

SUE ANN

We're, sort of, in between youth pastors at the moment. As you may have heard, Pastor Gregg Hainey died in an auto accident.

BEN

Yes, of course. So going back a month. Before Pastor Hainey's accident...he was the Youth Director at Lake Hartley. Is this correct?

SUE ANN

About two weeks prior to the accident, Pastor Hainey was relieved of his position.

BEN

He was fired.

SUE ANN

That's correct.

BEN

And is it true that you were involved in a love relationship with Pastor Hainey?

SUE ANN

Yes, I was. For about four months.

BEN

At any point before Pastor's death did you terminate the relationship?

SUE ANN

I did.

BEN

And could you tell the court why
Pastor Gregg Hainey was terminated
from Lake Hartley Baptist?

Sue Ann takes one last breath before getting into it. The jury notices her trepidation.

SUE ANN

Around early September, I received
a phone call from Gregg. Pastor
Hainey. It was very late. Later
than usual. I could tell he was
very upset. When I asked what was
wrong...he told me he'd been having
a really hard time since his
divorce. And that he was still
very much hurt by his wife's
infidelity. And because of
this...he'd been having a series of
sexual encounters with other women.

BEN

While he was seeing you?

SUE ANN

Yes.

BEN

And with whom was Pastor Hainey
having these relations? Did he
name anyone specifically?

SUE ANN

Yes he did.

BEN

And could you tell the court the
name of the young woman whom Gregg
Hainey was seeing?

Sue Ann reads the eyes of everyone present in the court room. Some familiar faces from church. Most notably Earl, aka "Deacon Halbert".

SUE ANN

Jaclyn Sanchez.

Earl's jaw hits the floor. His face flushed red as he barely refrains from bursting into a rage.

He turns, gawks back at an equally shocked and dismayed Jaclyn and Kyle sitting in the last row by the doors.

Jaclyn holds her composure. All eyes on her.

BEN

After this phone call with your then boyfriend Gregg Hainey...did you tell anyone about his sexual relationship with Miss Sanchez?

SUE ANN

I did not.

BEN

You must've told someone. You had to be upset. Mad even. This man that you'd been seeing. A man that you trusted. A man of God. He just admitted to betraying you. And you didn't tell anyone?

SUE ANN

I requested an emergency meeting with Pastor Kirkwood. And with Deacon Halbert. And I told them that Gregg had been seeing Halbert's daughter Tina.

Earl's face is tense and tight as he defiantly clenches his arms together.

BEN

Tina Halbert. But no mention of Jaclyn?

SUE ANN

No.

BEN

Why not?

SUE ANN

Because I was mad. I was upset. Because I wanted to hurt Gregg. Miss Halbert happens to be a very popular young lady. With a very overprotective father. And I wanted him gone.

BEN

But a relationship with Jaclyn Sanchez would have been equally inappropriate. Would it not?

SUE ANN

Jaclyn is nineteen. No laws were broken. I all but expected Deacon Halbert to bring charges against Gregg. But they never had the chance. Gregg died before any charges were filed.

BEN

Miss Leary. Thank you for coming forward today. And for your honesty. I know, given Gregg's recent passing, this must've been extremely difficult for you.

(to Judge Piper)

No more questions, your honor.

Ben heads back.

JUDGE PIPER

(to Roland)

Mister McRae. Do you have anything for this witness?

ROLAND

You bet I do, your honor.

Roland almost falls out of his chair and knocks shoulders with Ben as he approaches the stand.

ROLAND (CONT'D)

Miss Leary, this certainly is a very interesting and shocking turn of events. Not to demean the importance of your testimony. As the defense has already pointed out, I'm sure this has all been very difficult for you. But I do have to ask. During Gregg's telephone confession...did he happen to mention any concerns over Jaclyn's pregnancy?

SUE ANN

No. It didn't come up.

ROLAND

So, at no point during your conversation did Gregg Hainey mention that Jaclyn was pregnant or that he could be the father of her child?

SUE ANN
No. Not directly.

ROLAND
Yes or no? Did he mention Jaclyn
was pregnant?

Sue Ann's mouth open...about to answer...refrains. She grows frustrated.

SUE ANN
No.

ROLAND
No more questions, your honor.

Sue Ann begrudgingly steps down.

Ben cracks a grin, shakes his head. Kevin taps his arm in support. The vibe at the defense table is still positive as Ben gives Sue Ann a quick nod on her way out of the courtroom.

LATER

SUMMATIONS:

Roland strolls the jury box. His hand slides across the wooden beam -- all confidence.

ROLAND (CONT'D)
Since the beginning of this trial,
the defense became obsessed with
one subject and one subject only.
Was she or was she not pregnant?
So obsessed with this subject that
they simply pushed aside the rest
of the evidence. As if none of
that mattered. The cuts on Jaclyn
Sanchez's face. Her shoulder. Her
neck.

For a brief moment, Kevin's face reads guilt.

ROLAND (CONT'D)
The bruises on both her arms. And
on her stomach. And as the medical
report claims was caused by the
repeated blows of her assailant.
The destruction left behind at the
home of Pastor Kevin Kirkwood. You
heard the testimony from his wife
Christine. When she said that she
wasn't home.

(MORE)

ROLAND (CONT'D)

But somebody had to be home.
Whether or not Jaclyn Sanchez
brought a sonogram of her and
Pastor's baby, or she showed empty
handed. It really doesn't matter.
What matters is that she showed up.
And pushed the good pastor's
buttons.

Several of the jurors very carefully study Kevin's
expressions.

ROLAND (CONT'D)

And pushed. And pushed some more.
Then refused to leave. So, he
helps her to the door. But she's
not budging. Then tries to move
her again. Again, she ain't
moving. And like a light switch,
Pastor Kevin Kirkwood went dark.
He switched off and let his basic
animal instincts take over. And in
an attempt to defend
herself...that's when things got
really ugly. Call it an accident.
Call it a momentary lapse. Call it
whatever you want. But as Jaclyn's
medical reports show...her
assailant willfully and repeatedly
struck her in the abdomen.
Targeting her unborn child.

A FEMALE JUROR shuts her eyes at the mere thought.

ROLAND (CONT'D)

Proof of life wasn't necessary.
Not yet. In Pastor Kirkwood's
mind, he still had a chance to hide
the evidence. And he took it. I
believe that Pastor Kirkwood had
grown tired of a loveless marriage
with a very troubled woman he could
no longer control. And at her
lowest points, an unfaithful woman.
An ungrateful woman. And he went
fishing for his next pet project.
Someone he could control.
Satisfying that need for respect.
For attention. For recognition
that he believed he deserved.

LATER

Ben delivers his summation:

BEN

Mister McRae was right about one thing. And that's my obsession with Jaclyn's baby. I can't really get past it to be honest. The fact that the state could not produce a single witness. A single medical report. Sonogram. Doctor's note. Nothing that can corroborate Jaclyn's so-called pregnancy. According to Pastor's wife, Jaclyn threatened to deliver a still image of her unborn child as proof of life. But it didn't happen. Even after her so called attack. They still can't produce it.

Ben saunters past the prosecution's table. He throws his hands in the air.

BEN (CONT'D)

Where is it?

Ben makes his way back to the jury.

BEN (CONT'D)

All we're really left with is her word. But what is that worth really? When you take a long and hard look at Jaclyn Sanchez's life over the last several years, you'll find very quickly that her word isn't worth much.

Some of the jurors check with Roland. He remains cool and collected, avoids eye contact.

BEN (CONT'D)

My brother, along with the good folks at Lake Hartley Baptist brought her in when she had nothing. Tried their best to build her back up. To encourage her. For all intents and purposes, to fix her life. But she fought and refused that help at every possible turn. And chose to rebel. Because that's what she does best.

On Scott and Ginny. A pair of proud grins.

BEN (CONT'D)

You heard the testimony of Sue Ann Leary.

(MORE)

BEN (CONT'D)

What do we know about Pastor Hainey? We knew he was looking for some cheap thrills to get one over on his cheating wife. Cheap thrills coming in the form of several young ladies whom he'd had casual sexual encounters. And he quickly set his sights on Jaclyn Sanchez.

Kyle Stoker sits quietly in the very back row and near the double doors. He is in a ball cap and incognito.

BEN (CONT'D)

But then tragedy struck. Gregg is killed. And after one too many infractions, Jaclyn is kicked out of the care center for good. Nowhere left to go. And with no solid proof of this affair with Gregg Hainey. Because with proof...she could get even. She could bring that church to their knees. And with Gregg gone, her master plan is ruined. So she moves on to plan b. And calls up her buddy Kyle Stoker from the old trailer park.

Ginny stares over her shoulder, spots Kyle in the back row looking pitiful and full of regret.

BEN (CONT'D)

Then make a big show of it during Sunday evening service. When Kyle Stoker tackled my brother to the ground for all of the congregation to see.

Ben points to Roland.

BEN (CONT'D)

Mister McRae would lead you all to believe that Jaclyn was carrying on not one but two sexual relationships inside the halls of this church, with not one, but two head pastors and no one noticed.

Ben steps closer, leans on the jury box.

BEN (CONT'D)

I say that you all know better than that.

(MORE)

BEN (CONT'D)

If she were pregnant, and that's a big if...we now have a pretty good idea now who the father was.

One of the juror's grins and nods.

BEN (CONT'D)

Maybe, just maybe that's why he confessed his affair to Sue Ann Leary. Because of Jaclyn's impending pregnancy. With his child. But we don't know. There is no baby. And Gregg Hainey isn't here to answer for himself. But the burden of proof doesn't fall on the defense. It falls on the prosecution. And they haven't proved beyond a shadow of a doubt that my brother laid a finger on Jaclyn Sanchez.

Beat.

BEN (CONT'D)

I know that you feel sorry for her. For everything she's been through. But allowing her to continue down this destructive path isn't the answer. You really want to help Jaclyn Sanchez? To help fix her life? Be the first ones in her life to hold her accountable.

INT. LAKE HARTLEY BAPTIST - FELLOWSHIP HALL - NIGHT

A WELCOME HOME PASTOR banner posted proudly on the wall above the open cafeteria window. Inside the kitchen itself are several TEEN BOYS AND GIRLS from the youth department pouring refills of iced tea and lemonade and walking them to their assigned and respective tables.

And it's a full house.

A smorgasbord of homemade casseroles and sweet desserts are open to the congregation as they all take turns standing in line with their dishes.

Sitting near the back of the room, alone, are Scott and Ginny. The odd ones out. Scott whispers something inappropriate in Ginny's ear. She playfully pushes him away and shakes her head.

On Scott and Ginny:

SCOTT
Look at them. One big happy
family. Like nothing ever
happened.

GINNY
What do you mean?

SCOTT
I mean...apparently a lot's
happened under this roof lately.
Stuff they don't post in the
morning bulletin. Just wondered if
anyone was interested in finding
the root cause or if it's business
as usual.

GINNY
I just think they're happy it's
over and their Pastor came home.
Aren't you?

SCOTT
If Ben's happy, I'm happy.

Scott rests his elbows on the table, not in the mood for
celebrating.

GINNY
You don't look happy.

Scott hesitates.

SCOTT
This whole mess at Pastor's house.
I mean, what was that? Are you
telling me Sanchez and her idiot
boyfriend staged that whole thing?

Ginny thinks back. She holds Scott's hand.

GINNY
Remember in the car? When you said
maybe we'd be better off not
knowing the truth?

SCOTT
Yeah?

GINNY
Well, I just think sometimes the
truth isn't always so black and
white. Or right versus wrong.

(MORE)

GINNY (CONT'D)

I think between Kevin and Christine and Jaclyn...they've created quite the mess of things. Things that the court can't fix. And I think those things are best left between them and God.

SCOTT

Something doesn't feel right.

GINNY

Yeah, I get that. The big question is... are you gonna talk to Ben about this? You have to ask yourself, is it really worth the damage it could do to him? This case really brought him and Kevin back together. At this point, is the truth worth breaking them apart?

Scott is caught off guard by the sight of Roland. His large frame is a standout as he moves through the sizeable crowd and heads their way. Roland offers his hand.

ROLAND

Mister Larsen.

Scott grins, stands and shakes his hand.

SCOTT

Roe McRae. This is an unexpected surprise.

ROLAND

Yeah, well. Just passing by and thought I'd poke my head in. Offer my congratulations.

Roland smiles down at Ginny. She's super flattered.

ROLAND (CONT'D)

To you and your lady friend.

GINNY

Thank you. Really.

SCOTT

Okay. So, why'd you really come down here?

ROLAND

Turns out you were right about your boy Logan Caswell.

(MORE)

ROLAND (CONT'D)
He just burnt down Kyle Stoker's trailer and has officially pulled a disappearing act. We got PD and the Sheriff's Office out right now looking for this dirtbag.

GINNY
(to Scott)
Wow. You were right.

ROLAND
Yeah. Surprise, surprise.

Scott grins, gloats a bit.

SCOTT
I guess word's out about Jaclyn's baby daddy.

ROLAND
As much I don't like admitting when I'm wrong, I thought you'd wanna hear it from me first instead of second hand.

SCOTT
I appreciate the thought.

GINNY
Yes. Thank you.

ROLAND
Look, I don't like this Caswell character on the street acting like he's got nothing to lose. He's gonna be looking to square things with Jaclyn and her friend Mister Stoker.

SCOTT
Sure looks that way.

ROLAND
I was hoping the good Pastor would let me question the girls down at the care center. Tell them to keep their eyes and ears open. Maybe put the bug in Jaclyn's ear in case they hear anything around the way about Caswell.

SCOTT
Yeah, for sure. Do what you got to do.

(MORE)

SCOTT (CONT'D)
 We'll definitely pass along the message. Let Pastor know what's going on.

ROLAND
 Anyways. Give Kirkwood my best and tell Pastor welcome home and no hard feelings for me, alright?

SCOTT
 You got it.

ROLAND
 (to Ginny)
 So. He gonna put a ring on it or what? What's the story here?

Ginny laughs. Scott rolls his eyes.

GINNY
 (to Roland)
 I'll keep you updated.

Roland smiles.

ROLAND
 Y'all be good. See you around campus.

Roland pats Scott in the belly and gets lost in the crowd. He smiles, turns back.

ROLAND (CONT'D)
 Yo, Larsen! When are you coming back to work?!

Scott smiles, takes his seat. Roland grins and dips out a side door. Meanwhile, Ben opens a rear door, quietly observes the celebration. His eyes immediately drawn to...

SUE ANN

...entering from the opposite rear door. She fails to notice Ben staring back at her. Her mind preoccupied. Her demeanor anxious and flustered.

Kevin, in mid conversation with a small group, spots her waiting near the back and excuses himself.

Ben watches closely.

Kevin greets Sue Ann with a harmless, one-armed hug, but Sue Ann fully embraces him.

Ben observes the ENTIRE CONGREGATION watching with judgmental stares and quiet whispers.

Kevin and Sue Ann step into the outer hall. Watching from across the room, Scott nonverbally advises Ben to let it go and pulls out a chair for him.

Ben ducks out the back.

GINNY

I better go check on Ben.

Ginny pushes away from the table, ready to chase down Ben, but Scott quickly clasps her wrist.

SCOTT

No. I got it.

Scott excuses himself from the table. After a few moments, Ginny does the same.

EXT. LAKE HARTLEY BAPTIST - FELLOWSHIP HALL - NIGHT

Ginny steps outside in time to find Sue Ann placing her hand on Kevin's chest. One last gesture before turning away and unlocking her car door.

Kevin bids her well. Dips back inside. Ginny quickly hides herself behind a tall pillar.

As the door closes behind Kevin...

Ginny comes out, into the open, heads across the lot. In a hurry now. In pursuit.

Sue Ann's car door open...about to crawl in. But Sue Ann hears Ginny coming...turns...faces her.

SUE ANN

Yes? Can I help you?

Ginny stops in her tracks. A bit worked up, staring at Sue Ann with judgement.

GINNY

Yeah. I'm sorry. This might sound rude but...what do you think you're doing here?

Sue Ann grins.

SUE ANN
You're right. That was extremely
rude. You're Mister Larsen's
friend?

GINNY
That's right.

SUE ANN
Well. Not that it's your business
but I was saying goodbye to Kevin.
I'm leaving this place. For good.

GINNY
Oh?

SUE ANN
Yeah. Starting over somewhere I'm
not the constant subject of
conversation. Someplace where no
one knows my past. Or cares.
Anyways. Given recent
circumstances, I figured no better
time than the present.

GINNY
I totally get it.

SUE ANN
Well. I won't keep you any longer.
You and your friends have some
celebrating to do. Just do me a
favor and tell Ben thank you.

GINNY
For what?

SUE ANN
For helping Kevin. But mostly for
listening. He's a really good
listener. Just like his brother.
Anyways. You and your friend keep
an eye on him, okay? Tell him to
keep fighting the good fight.

Ginny nods, smiles. Sue Ann crawls in her car, cranks up the
engine. Ginny left ultimately confused and emotionally
conflicted. She smiles, heads back inside.

INT. LAKE HARTLEY BAPTIST - CHAPEL - NIGHT

In an empty pew closest to the pulpit, Ben sits alone in the dark, with only the DIM GLOW OF SOME WALL MOUNTED LIGHTS to keep him company.

Kevin stands IN SILHOUETTE near the outer double door entry way and, after a moment, moves inside with a slight hesitation in his step.

Ben throws a glance over his shoulder. Kevin is about halfway to the pulpit.

KEVIN

I remember when you were little.
And you'd hide under the podium
over and over again. Acting like
you'd just discovered the ultimate
hiding spot. You could practically
hear your snickering from the door.

Ben faces forward, takes a quick belt of booze. Kevin pretends not to notice.

With a furrowed brow and a protective posture, Kevin takes a few more steps forward, feeling the full weight of his brother's negative energy.

BEN

And what other secrets is my big
brother keeping from me these days?

Kevin stops just before the pulpit, faces Ben who is pickled drunk and mentally broken.

KEVIN

Am I to take it since you're
sitting alone in the dark that
something's gnawing at your belly?
Besides that poison you've just
ingested.

BEN

Nah. We won. Let's forget it.

Kevin carefully takes a step forward, closer to Ben, but allows him his space.

KEVIN

Now I have to know. So, tell me.

BEN

Just something Sue Ann told me.

KEVIN

Oh? What's that?

BEN

She said she owed you her life.
That she'd either be dead or back
on the street if it weren't for
your guidance. Then I hear around
the way that she's paying visits to
your office and making passes.

Kevin cracks a nervous grin, shakes his head, sighs as he
paces the front of the chapel.

KEVIN

Look. Before you get any more
weird ideas, nothing happened.

BEN

Really? It's not what I heard.

KEVIN

Well, whatever you're thinking,
it's not that either. I promise
you.

Kevin grows annoyed and heads for the door. Ben stands,
about to chase him down. He steps into the aisle...
fresh out of patience.

BEN

She's in love with you. Tell me
I'm wrong. Tell me she didn't get
on that stand and perjure herself
for ten minutes straight.

KEVIN

You don't believe her?

BEN

No, Kevin. That's what perjure
means. It means she lied.

KEVIN

My congregation is waiting. You
might think about sobering up
before coming back.

Kevin continues on. Ben heads after him.

BEN

Don't do that. Don't walk away.
Not again. You owe me this.

Kevin sighs, turns back.

KEVIN

What exactly do I owe you now?

BEN

The truth. There seems to be a lot of stories floating around this place. I can't seem to keep them straight.

KEVIN

Look at yourself. You've won and you're still not happy. Are you really that cynical? So full of hate --

BEN

Don't do that. Your girlfriend covered for you because she knew we were losing this case.

KEVIN

Let it go.

BEN

I was losing, Kev. And had to be saved. Why did it have to be you?!

Ben turns his back on Kevin...hopping mad and not knowing what direction to project his anger. And now it's Kevin chasing after Ben.

KEVIN

You think I set this whole thing up? Is that it?

BEN

Cut it out! It was either you or Chris! Which one of you did it?! And don't you lie to me! I swear if you lie to me again...!

KEVIN

I never lied to you, Benny.

BEN

Then what happened, Kev?! She didn't do this to herself!

KEVIN

Yes! It's exactly what she did!

HALLWAY

Scott leans against the wall near the chapel doors and eavesdrops on their conversation.

INT. LAKE HARTLEY BAPTIST - CHAPEL - NIGHT

Ben is speechless. He snaps out of it.

BEN
Run that by me again.

KEVIN
The Stoker kid came to me bawling his eyes out. Told me he put Jaclyn up to it. Confessed the whole thing. There it is. The truth.

Scott very carefully pokes his head around the corner to get a closer look at things. He goes unnoticed.

Ben in a state of shock. Kevin takes a moment -- working up the energy to tell his story all over again.

KEVIN (CONT'D)
About a week before the attack, Jaclyn broke the news that she was expecting. And that Stoker was the father. Knowing her pimp would most likely kill this kid if he knew the truth, Stoker lost it. Beat her senseless. Afterwards they were still left with a major problem. So, they came up with a plan. To take care of it all. In one big swoop.

HALLWAY

Scott looks sick for Ben. He quietly walks off...giving the two brothers their privacy.

INT. LAKE HARTLEY BAPTIST - CHAPEL - NIGHT

Ben anxiously paces, letting it all sink in. Kevin simply watches his reaction. Ben stops...as pieces of the truth finally come to him.

BEN
The phone calls to the house. Telling Chris about the baby. It was a cover up.

KEVIN

They were planting the seeds in Chris's mind. They knew she needed convincing if this plan of theirs would work.

BEN

What happened at your place, Kev? Was that part of their master plan? Because I don't get it.

KEVIN

Alright. Here it is.

(beat)

Jaclyn showed at the house, as promised. Made a big scene of it. Stoker must've been circling the neighborhood...waiting it out.

Kevin sighs.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

Her and Chris got into it. She refused to leave. So, she called me. Told me I needed to come home and deal with my mistake like a man.

BEN

Did you?

Kevin reluctantly nods. Ben scoffs with disgust.

KEVIN

I tried to reason with her. With both of them. Things got really intense. Out of control. And before I knew what was happening, Jaclyn came at me with a knife.

(beat)

It was self-defense, Benny. That simple.

Ben shuts his eyes. The truth is WAY too much.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

What happened in that house was my fault, Ben. But before that night, I never once touched that girl. And I didn't do half the damage that Kyle Stoker inflicted. On her and her baby. That part wasn't a lie.

BEN

You're telling me that Stoker
just...confessed all of this? And
you just...kept it to yourself?
Kept it from your own brother?
Your lawyer.

KEVIN

The guilt of what he did. It ate
away at him like a cancer. Every
second of every day. Until he
couldn't take it. He came to me.
Begged for forgiveness. And in the
purest and most rewarding moment
I've had in the last five years, I
led this young man to the Lord.

As the real truth sets in, Ben is overwhelmed, takes a seat.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

You're not the only one having
issues of faith, Benny. This kid
gave me hope again. That it all
wasn't just a lie. My life. My
calling with the church.

Ben gazes at the pulpit, in a state of shock and disbelief.
Kevin walks into his line of sight, tears welled in his
eyes but staying strong.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

I couldn't turn him in. Either one
of them. And that's...the best
thing I ever did with my life.
Right or wrong. It was my choice.

BEN

And what about Sue Ann? Was she in
on this plan too, Kev?

Kevin takes a seat in the pew before Ben.

KEVIN

Sue Ann had some things she needed
to get off her chest. Purge
herself of her sins. A terrible
rumor she let grow out of control.
Give Tina back her dignity.

Ben smiles, shakes his head. This is all too much.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

The truth is...I don't know what
happened between Gregg and Jaclyn.

(MORE)

KEVIN (CONT'D)
I don't know the truth. But Sue
Ann was hurting. Now she's not.
I'm okay with that.

Kevin stands to leave.

KEVIN (CONT'D)
What you pulled off in that
courtroom...was nothing short of a
miracle, Benny. Because you found
your purpose. You can't lose it
now. It's God's gift to you.
Don't ever take it for granted
again.

Still in a state of shock, Ben nods politely.

KEVIN (CONT'D)
I'll see you back inside.

Ben looks up at Kevin, unconvinced and all the wind sucked from his body and soul. Kevin pats him on the shoulder on his way to the door.

After a few moments, Ben stands up, steps into the aisle. In the outer hall, he is shocked to find Kyle and a teary-eyed Jaclyn standing before Kevin.

Ben shakes his head. Half disgusted. Half in a state of sheer disbelief.

Jaclyn notices Ben. She very awkwardly waves hello. Ben politely waves back.

Jaclyn and Kyle follow Kevin down the hall. Somewhere quiet. Somewhere private. But they're not alone. A whole slew of DAMAGED YOUNG WOMEN follows behind the couple. Friends of Jaclyn. Girls from the street. From the trailer park.

As the beauty of this moment sinks in, Ben's cynical scowl turns to an ear-to-ear grin. He slowly steps closer and eventually into the

HALLWAY

Where he witnesses at least A DOZEN YOUNG WOMEN step further down the hall and into a private room. Kevin holds open the door for the ladies.

Ben's eyes welled with tears. He's truly in awe.

EXT. LAKE HARTLEY BAPTIST CHURCH - NIGHT

Ben makes his way down the steep front steps of this big money church, a bit buzzed, tired and with an all too busy mind as he shares his final thoughts with the viewing audience.

BEN (V.O.)
And there you have it. This case was over, but I was still left with questions on which to ponder for the remainder of my days. Did Kevin really stick his neck out for Stoker because it was what he was called to do? Or were there other more personal reasons?

Ben stops halfway down, stares back at the sanctuary doors and stone pillars that stand tall and proud.

BEN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
And did I ever have a chance of actually winning this case? I could ponder these questions for the rest of my life, or I can choose to live again.

Ben continues down.

BEN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
My brother helped remind me that we all have a choice. We can continue to chase the darkness or choose to see the light. And have faith in knowing the man upstairs is in charge. Kyle Stoker helped my brother reclaim his faith. And, after thirty years, I've finally discovered mine.

Ben reaches the bottom and onto a sidewalk. He stops a moment, digs into his coat pocket.

BEN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Through God's grace and relentless mercy, Kevin and I found our calling. That thing that was missing inside. That part that was broken.

Ben pulls out a fifth of bourbon. Unscrews the cap and pours it into the cracks of the pavement. He dumps the empty glass into a nearby trash bin and checks for oncoming traffic. A few cars pass by.

BEN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Whether you're Pastor Kirkwood, Sue
Ann Leary or a Jaclyn Sanchez,
we're all just chasing the same
thing, aren't we? Love. Safety.
Security. And that unrealized
promise from God we all think we
deserve but refuse to accept.

Ben crosses the thin two-lane highway and into the main
congregation parking lot, stuffed with cars and CHURCH
MEMBERS, laughing, happy, relieved, making their way to
Kevin's welcome home celebration.

BEN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Even when it's practically slapping
us dead in the face.

Ben faintly laughs.

BEN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
When we finally accept this promise
with open arms, it will shine
brighter than any hatred or
resentment still burning inside.
It took me a while to get here.
But like the saying goes...better
late than never.

As the bright cover of STREETLAMPS towering over the packed
lot grows DIMMER and DIMMER...Ben slowly but surely
disappears into the night. As if his job on this planet has
finally been completed.

FADE OUT.

THE END