

STICKS AND STONES

written by

Eric Dickson

FADE IN:

EXT. CURLY'S REAL PIT BBQ - DAY

A quaint, old-fashioned type of joint. Somewhere lost in that sweet spot between the middle of nowhere and civilization.

Mounted on both sides of a spacious front deck and lounging area, a pair of old, barely functional radio horns blast COUNTRY-WESTERN love ballads.

But the tunes are mostly muffled by the persistent HIGH-PITCHED HISS of what sounds like a billion stridulating insects singing in unison.

EXT. OPEN PRAIRIE - DAY (SAME)

We're somewhere behind Curly's now. Somewhere close. Still the middle of nowhere. High-voltage lines tower above the flat green plains.

We reach the top of one of these towers. Just close enough to hear them emitting an ELECTRIC HUM as constant as the native bugs.

EXT. CURLY'S REAL PIT BBQ - FRONT LOT - DAY (SAME)

Parked in the dirt patch lot is a dusty SUV marked WALSH COUNTY DEPUTY SHERIFF. A few other cars parked with no real sense of direction.

One of them being a green late nineties PONTIAC BONNEVILLE.

INT. POLICE TRUCK - DAY

Behind the wheel is DEPUTY BILLY CORRIE--30s, wily-eyed loose cannon and part-time smartass. And riding shotgun is his partner DEPUTY JAKE DELPY--30s, neatly trimmed hair, square jawed ex-marine with a deeply focused gaze.

Something eating away at Jake as he gazes aimlessly out the windshield. Meanwhile, Billy chomps away at a foil wrapped burrito, drips bits of scrambled egg and bacon over his department issue polo.

BILLY

I swear. If Dunsboro ain't the
poster town for all things mundane,
I don't know what is.

JAKE
Mundane. Like driving fifteen
minutes out of the way for a
lukewarm breakfast burrito?

BILLY
You have someplace better to be?

JAKE
Nope. I'm a man without a home,
remember?

BILLY
We're not still doing that, are we?

JAKE
Doing what?

BILLY
That passive aggressive thing where
you start feeling sorry for
yourself and I tell you it's not
your fault.

JAKE
Yeah, well, maybe I'm not done
beating myself up.

BILLY
You could call her.

Jake contemplates.

JAKE
She asked for space. I'm giving
her space. It's only been a few
weeks. I'm still trying to get
settled in myself.

Billy studies Jake's eyes as he licks the rest of breakfast
from his teeth.

BILLY
Say, partner. You're not still
keeping girlfriend on the hook in
case things don't work out with you
and the old lady are you?

JAKE
She isn't my girlfriend, she was my
partner, and no I'm not. And my
wife's name is Jennifer.

BILLY

Good. Because, ya know, that would be really stupid if you were.

JAKE

Noted. Now shut up.

Billy still not buying it but nods just the same.

Jake peers through the front window of Curly's. His interest instantly piqued.

Browsing a sales rack is DAWN--19, skimpy top, disheveled and unkempt. She notices Jake. A frozen, almost panicked way about her. Immediately clasps the wrist of TREY--20s, pale, malnourished tweaker. Her boyfriend.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Well how 'bout that?

Jake watches as...

Dawn awkwardly faces away from the window, cups the side of her mouth, thwarting any possible lip readers from blowing her cover.

JAKE (CONT'D)

That girl inside. It's Dawn Wilkins. Busted her last year for passing bad checks. Looks like I'm not the only one with a change of address.

Jake and Billy watch Dawn and Trey take cover behind a rotating sales rack full of cheap sunglasses.

JAKE (CONT'D)

They're up to something.

INT. CURLY'S REAL PIT BBQ - DAY

Dawn steps to the register, unpaid bill in hand. She scopes the front lot. No more cops.

Dawn throws a glance back at--

Trey -- standing at a spinning sales rack and flipping through a cheap car trader magazine.

CURLY, sixties, bald as an egg, heads for the register, snatches Dawn's bill, rings it up.

CURLY
How was everything this mornin'?

DAWN
Yeah. Great. Thanks.

Dawn once again checks the lot. Trey follows her look.

The coast is clear.

Trey ditches the magazine, pulls A 380 ACP from under his loose shirt, steps behind Dawn.

CURLY
(to Dawn)
Cash or debit, sweet pea?

Trey puts the gun to Dawn's skull.

TREY
(to Curly)
Cash, sweet pea. And make it fast.

Curly snaps his gum.

CURLY
Sorry. We don't do refunds here.

TREY
Does it look like I'm playing games with you, asswipe? I'll plug this bitch.

CURLY
(amused)
Asswipe? That's some big talk for a shit stain.

DAWN
(playing scared)
Please, Mister, just do what he says!

CURLY
I got another idea. Y'all can leave...

Curly snags a pump action TWELVE GAUGE from under the counter, racks one and aims...

CURLY (CONT'D)
And I won't blow your nuts off and stick em in my tip jar.

TREY

Don't get nervous, old man. I'll do her.

CURLY

Yeah, you said that already. If you're gonna kill her, then kill her. I got customers waiting. I sure hate to keep my customers waiting.

With his gun still pressed to Dawn's head, Trey carefully but quickly makes for a rear exit.

CURLY (CONT'D)

Don't you go doin' nothin' stupid now, son.

Trey books it--

EXT. CURLY'S REAL PIT BBQ - REAR LOT - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

Trey jets out the back door. But a Deputy Sheriff's SUV blocks his path.

Dawn makes tracks. She's out of there.

As Trey watches her leave...

Billy puts a forty-five to the small of his back.

EXT. CURLY'S REAL PIT BBQ - DAY

A sweaty, out of breath Dawn charges around the front porch area, smashes her foot on a deck chair, almost face plants but recovers. Ouch.

Dawn winces, limps with a hurried assurance down the creaky steps and into the dirt lot, well on her way now. That is until--

JAKE (O.S.)

Dawn Wilkins! Long time!

Busted. Dawn gives up. She turns around, faces--

Jake on a rocking chair, twirling a toothpick. His gun rested on his lap.

JAKE (CONT'D)

So how was breakfast?

INT. WALSH COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE - INTERVIEW ROOM - DAY

At a cheap folding table rested against a white brick wall, a handcuffed Dawn sits before Jake. He's busy filling out his official arrest report.

Dawn stares through the long office window and spots a DEPUTY escorting A DRUNK down a chipped brick hallway. The drunk stumbles, collapses against the glass.

DEPUTY
(to Drunk)
Come on. Nap time's over.

The Deputy shoves him forward.

DAWN
Real exciting town you got here,
copper. About as exciting as
watching an old man clear his
throat.

JAKE
You should see us on a Friday
night.

Dawn's attention shifts to A COLLAGE OF FRAME PHOTOS hanging on the opposite wall. All featuring various cops, city officials, a high school baseball coach, and a local church pastor--all posing with the one and only SHERIFF WALTER FINDLAY--50s, a jolly giant with smiling eyes who wears his years of service with pride.

DAWN
Who's Superman? The guy in all the
pictures?

JAKE
Walter Findlay. Sheriff, Athletics
Director. Head Deacon at his
church, and an all-around pillar of
his community. He was everything
you're not.

DAWN
Was?

JAKE
Died in the line of duty. Some
punk who looks just like your
boyfriend shot him in the back.

Dawn is practically sitting on her hands as she shifts uncomfortably.

DAWN

Are the cuffs even necessary? I'm not gonna do anything.

JAKE

Yeah, that's what you said the last five times. I'm done. I'm never doing this again. I swear.

DAWN

Some of us don't got a choice.

JAKE

We all got choices.

DAWN

Where'd you hear that one? Reruns of Law and Order?

JAKE

You know, when I said you should get a fresh start, I didn't mean go find a new town to rip off.

DAWN

Hey I tried, okay. It's just this new guy...

JAKE

Yeah, yeah. Here you are on the straight and narrow. And before you know what's happening, some evil man swoops down from the sky and poisons your poor innocent body with prescription drugs.

Dawn pouts, bounces her knee in a mini tantrum. She shifts gears from angry to flirty.

DAWN

It is kind of funny, don't ya think? Us. Meeting like this again.

Dawn leans in close.

DAWN (CONT'D)

I was just thinking. Like maybe fate's trying to tell us something, Sarge. We're both young. Attractive. Recently single. We live life on the edge. Where the action is.

Dawn smiles.

DAWN (CONT'D)
 Maybe the problem is...I just
 haven't met the right guy.

JAKE
 Appreciate the offer, Dawn, but I
 think I'll pass.

DAWN
 (angry)
 In your wet dreams, cop. Probably
 be done before you got your zipper
 down.

Jake flags down a UNIFORM DEPUTY--20s, passing in the outside hallway. He dips his head in.

UNIFORM DEPUTY
 What's up, Sarge? Are you about
 wrapped up in here?

JAKE
 Deputy. Could you escort Miss
 Wilkins to ladies' detention,
 please?

UNIFORM DEPUTY
 (to Dawn)
 Alright. Miss. Wanna stand up for
 me, please?

With as little effort as possible, Dawn stands.

JAKE
 Might wanna watch your mouth up
 there. Judge Conroy can be a real
 hard case.

The Uniform Deputy walks Dawn to the door. She resists his firm grip, fights him all the way.

DAWN
 Thanks for nothing, cop! I won't
 forget this, Delpy! I thought you
 were my friend!

She's jerked out the door.

INT. WALSH COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE - SQUAD ROOM - DAY

A very sterile and unremarkable layout of glass partition walls and L-shaped workstation cubicles. The non-stop RINGING of dozens of phones.

Jake pokes his head in. He spots the usual morning pow wow gathered at Billy's cubicle. A good variety of young and spry to older beer bellies in department issue polos...
...badges dangling from their necks.

They scarf yesterday's Danish, chug coffees and exchange their latest war stories.

As Jake approaches, the crowd disperses.

Still in attendance are...

MYKA LINDELL--40s, grey crew cut, full sleeve tats, as hard and mean as any man in the house.

JP DONNINGER--50s, a pale, chubby clock watcher with a full beard and nothing left to prove. He's lost that special spark a while ago.

And last but not least...

CALE CASLIN--50s, black, grey hair, and an infectious smile as wide as his waistline. The one true veteran of this department.

CASLIN

(to Jake)

Delpy. Heard you guys pinched a couple of winners at breakfast this morning.

JAKE

Oh yeah. Me and Dawn go way back.

Billy pops his last piece of Danish, scrubs what's left of the icing from his hands.

BILLY

(to Jake)

Speaking of. I just got off the phone with impound. Your girl Dawn and her new squeeze have been cruising around in a stolen car for the last three days.

JAKE

Something else to add to her ever-expanding resume.

BILLY

It seems Dawn and her newfound friend broke down somewhere between Orange City and Deltona. Running low on cash, out of options, Dawn takes her show on the road. Spaghetti strap top, some tight shorts. Struts her goodies up and down I-4 trying to stir up some interested parties.

JAKE

And?

BILLY

She gets herself picked up by none other than Jimmy Cahill. Name sound familiar?

JAKE

Yeah. Cormac lumber yard. Orange City's a long way from home.

CASLIN

We thought so.

JAKE

Jimmy's still picking up hookers I see.

DONNINGER

(mouthful)

And still warming a stool at Mugshots seven nights a week. Picking up anything with a pair of lungs and halfway lucid.

MYKA

(to Donninger)

Yeah, you would know, wouldn't you, Donninger?

Snickers from all. Donninger grins, winks at Myka.

BILLY

So, after her and Cahill are back on the interstate she flips the script on him. Says her and boyfriend broke down and could use a quick jump. And not the kind he's looking for.

CASLIN

Boyfriend puts a gun to his head,
takes his wallet, phone and keys
and drops him at the nearest gas
station.

JAKE

That was awfully courteous.

GAIL--50s, our front desk officer, khaki skirt, a real
spitfire with big hair and a small body, interrupts
their convo.

GAIL

Look at this motley crew. Doesn't
anyone work around here?

DONNINGER

Not if we can help it.

BILLY

(to Gail)
What's up?

GAIL

Boss man expects anyone not working
in the AM to be at the dedication
dressed for success exactly thirty
minutes early.

BILLY

I swear in the name of Walter
Findlay I'll be there.

DONNINGER

(to Billy)
Hey. Don't blaspheme. Not in my
house.

GAIL

(to Jake)
You getting settled in okay?

JAKE

Like I never left.

GAIL

Yeah. I see that. Still standing
around doing nothing.

Jake laughs.

BILLY

Yeah, yeah, yeah. We're good here,
thanks.

Gail drops some papers in Billy's wire basket, makes the rounds at the other officers' desks.

JAKE

Anyways. Back to Cahill.

BILLY

So, Cahill's car. It was never reported stolen.

JAKE

He gets robbed at gunpoint and never called the cops? Why's that?

DONNINGER

Well, we figure maybe he's got something to hide. Something he don't particularly wanna share with the cops, or more importantly his better half.

BILLY

Been trying to reach him for the last fifteen minutes. Work hasn't seen him in three days and he's not picking up at home or his cell.

Billy reaches over his shoulder, tears down a simple post-it note from a pegboard. He offers it to Jake, who reluctantly accepts.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Figured since he's right in your backyard, maybe you can swing by his place on the way home. Break the good news.

Jake isn't exactly enthused.

EXT. PRIVATE DIRT ROAD - DAY

Jake cruises down the homemade road accented by two distinct tire trails and a grassy center median. He approaches a tin metal gate marked **Cahill**. Jimmy Cahill's home and property barely visible behind the trees.

The car comes to a halt. Out steps Jake who observes the half-way opened gate. A chain looped around the inside grooves of the fence hang loosely.

Jake looks at the ground. A severed padlock. Interesting.

He stares through the trees and spots the roof of Cahill's home and adjacent barn.

EXT. CAHILL'S HOME - DAY

Jake drives through a maze of trees as the sharp branches tickle his windshield. He arrives on the front lawn of Cahill's three-acre property.

A simple double-wide trailer decked out with a homemade front porch spotted with cheap furniture. To the left of the home sits a two-tiered barn. The door slid open.

Jake steps out, climbs the steps of the porch and stops at the front door. He's immediately drawn to a shattered bedroom window stained with blood.

The window is opened half-way. Jake tries the front door. Still locked. He draws his nine mil...sucks in a deep breath...lifts up the window.

He crawls through.

INT. CAHILL'S HOME - BEDROOM - DAY

Upon entering the home, Jake immediately notices Cahill's unmade bed and a box of thirty-eight shells dumped over the disheveled sheets.

He pockets one of the bullets and notices a leather zipper bag rested on a nightstand. It's in the shape of a small caliber weapon.

INT. CAHILL'S HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

All the lights in the home are off. Nothing but the strong rays of morning SUNLIGHT beaming through the slats of some cracked venetian blinds.

Jake pokes his head in, gun still drawn, spots the refrigerator door SWUNG OPEN.

He stares down a thin hallway covered in tacky wood paneling and spots what appears to be the sofa and a vinyl recliner with the footrest yanked open.

JAKE

Jimmy? Jimmy Cahill? Anyone home?

No answer.

Jake shuts the refrigerator door. A message written out in multicolored letter sticker magnets: *STICKS AND STONES MAY BREAK MY BONES*

INT. CAHILL'S BARN - DAY

Gun still drawn, Jake enters the barn and is swallowed up by the DARKNESS. He manages to find a chain and swinging bulb dangling from the ceiling.

Click! Jake observes...

A beat-up Ford pick-up. Riding lawn mower. Various tools hanging on the wall. A complicated wood working station. All the usual man cave collectibles.

Behind this workstation, a cramped staircase leads to the second floor.

INT. CAHILL'S BARN - STAIRCASE - DAY

Jake climbs the cob-webbed and saw dust covered steps, reaches the top, turns the corner...

INT. CAHILL'S BARN - SECOND STORY - DAY

As Jake steps inside, he's immediately stopped in his tracks. Mesmerized. Shocked. And truly horrified as he takes in the grisly scene before him.

JIMMY CAHILL--30s, pants around his ankles, squatted in a wooden kitchen chair. His brains have been blown out.

A clear exit wound on his left temple.

With trepidation, Jake moves toward the body. He takes in the scene in all its gory detail.

Most noticeably...

All four walls of the barn's second story have been converted to floor to ceiling mirrors.

JAKE

What in the...Hell?

The dusty floor around Cahill blanketed with what seem to be dozens of sexually explicit photographs: YOUNG WOMEN, bound and gagged, in various stages of undress.

Jake kneels down, gets a closer look. He rummages through a few, inspects them...

These women are all sad, broken, bruised, sickly, thin framed and forced to perform.

Propped against the left-side wall is a KING-SIZED MATTRESS-stained in various colors of BLOOD.

JAKE (CONT'D)

No way.

Jake is gob smacked as he observes all possible angles of Cahill's limp and lifeless body---reflected in virtually every corner of this homemade sex dungeon.

Lastly, Jake spots a THIRTY-EIGHT REVOLVER dropped somewhere amongst the blood-spattered pictures.

EXT. CAHILL'S PROPERTY - DAY

A whipped and worn Jake leans on his car, watches as A PAIR OF CORONERS load Cahill's body into a meat wagon.

A PAIR OF UNIFORM COPS carry out two full filing boxes loaded down with evidence. Not just any evidence. Hundreds of illicit photographs of abused girls.

They load the boxes into the backseat of an UNMARKED SEDAN.

Jake pays close attention.

SHERIFF BURT GREER--50s, a soft-spoken southern gentleman with a permanent dip in his mouth, pours out of the barn looking unaffected. He looks more put off by the angry morning sun blasting his eyes.

In little to no hurry, he moves through a crowd of CRIME SCENE TECHS, sashays his way across the sprawling green property, stops at Jake's car.

SHERIFF GREER

Well now. Guess we know why old Jimmy couldn't come to the phone.

JAKE

That's all you have to say?

SHERIFF GREER

Gee, Delpy. I'm sort of at a loss for words.

Sheriff Greer shoots a stream of dip-stained spit.

JAKE
What's ME have to say?

SHERIFF GREER
He's been dead three, maybe four
days.

--thinks back.

SHERIFF GREER (CONT'D)
When did you say his car got jacked
again?

JAKE
I didn't. I never got an exact
answer. Was hoping to have a word
with Cahill about that.

Sheriff Greer puts in a new dip.

SHERIFF GREER
Don't think that's gonna happen.

Both cops are distracted by a circling HELICOPTER. The PILOT
and CAMERAMAN pay special attention to the on-call HOMICIDE
TEAM entering and exiting the barn.

JAKE
Who called the press?

SHERIFF GREER
Someone ran their mouth. Could've
been the neighbors.

NEWS VANS arrive. One after the next. They all park in a
soft patch of dirt near the woods. Keeping a respectful
distance from the crime scene.

SHERIFF GREER (CONT'D)
Here we go.

Jake fixes his attention on the barn. A PAIR OF CRIME SCENE
TECHS haul out Cahill's bloody mattress.

JAKE
Perfect timing.

Sheriff Greer follows his look. The pair of techs clumsily
drop the wobbly mattress in a pile of leaves.

SHERIFF GREER
Kidding me?
(at his crew)
Get that damn thing outta here!

Sheriff Greer spits another nasty stream near Jake's foot. Barely missing his boot. Jake recoils, not amused, mostly disgusted.

SHERIFF GREER (CONT'D)
One thing's for sure. Your friend Dawn Wilkins and company have some explaining to do.

Meantime, KERRI FARMER--20s, rookie forensic analyst, ponytail, popped collar, joins the convo.

KERRI
Sheriff.

SHERIFF GREER
Come on, girl. Give me something. Enlighten me.

KERRI
Got a trash can full of empty liquor bottles. A shit ton of antidepressants dumped on a coffee table and a box of thirty-eight shells spilled all over the bed sheets. From first glance, I'd say our guy was definitely not in a good place.

Sheriff Greer checks with Jake, who doesn't buy a word of this and it shows.

SHERIFF GREER
(to Kerri)
Okay. Thank you. I think we're good here.

Kerri nods, heads off.

A SLIDING CAR DOOR piques Jake's attention. He turns around, spots a FIELD REPORTER and her CAMERAMAN step out of their transport and get prepped for a shot.

JAKE
So, what do we tell the press?

SHERIFF GREER
We? Ain't telling them nothin'.

Without warning, Sheriff Greer moves for Cahill's front porch. Jake follows behind.

SHERIFF GREER (CONT'D)
 Meantime, I'm pulling your girl
 from county lock up. Gonna find
 out where they ditched Jimmy.
 Could be he found himself another
 ride home.

JAKE
 Kind of doubt he humped it all the
 way back here on foot. We're
 talking over seventy miles.

SHERIFF GREER
 Well maybe he got himself an Uber.
 Who knows?

Sheriff Greer turns, faces Jake. He's done with his pushing.

SHERIFF GREER (CONT'D)
 I can already see the wheels
 turning, so here's the deal. We're
 gonna do what we always do. We
 wait for the official coroner's
 report before we rule this a
 homicide, suicide or anything in
 between.

Jake watches the press set up.

SHERIFF GREER (CONT'D)
 That means everyone, including you,
especially you, keeping quiet about
 our friend's little playroom
 upstairs. No guessing. No
 pontificating. No grandstanding.
 Just old-fashioned, boring police
 work. Okay with you, big city?

Jake halfheartedly nods.

SHERIFF GREER (CONT'D)
 Wonderful.

Sheriff Greer heads up the creaky front steps. Jake looks
 deflated, tired, defeated.

EXT. INTERSTATE 75 HILLSIDE - DAY

An out of breath GIRL--19, scantily dressed, hands cuffed
 behind her back, maneuvers through a maze of woods that
 border the whizzing traffic of a busy interstate.

Cars HONK. Diesel engines ROAR.

The Girl climbs higher and higher, escapes someone gaining traction, closing in on her.

SOMEONE IN DARK CLOTHING moves with a quickness through a dense thicket of trees. And they know this particular terrain like the back of their hand.

Our Girl reaches the top of the canyon wall, peers over the steep and sloping side--

GIRL'S POV:

spots her car at the bottom of a ravine. Behind her car is A FLORIDA HIGHWAY PATROL UNIT with LIGHTS still spinning bright.

BACK TO SCENE

Before the Girl knows what's happening...

A rapid succession of BULLETS pummels the trees around her. ZIP ZIP ZIP ZIP! Through the leaves, taking down branches, lodging into tree trunks.

MORE BULLETS strike the ground, spinning her like a top.

Before she can find her bearings, she trips over a fallen tree branch and face plants hard. Her nose and mouth bloodied.

Dizzy, losing consciousness, she can't get upright.

A MAN BACKLIT BY THE SHADOWS AND SILHOUETTE of an unwavering morning SUNLIGHT closes in. He dons a BLACK FHP JACKET. Those typically worn by state troopers.

Grabbing her cuffed arms, FHP jerks the girl to her feet as she SCREAMS in outright agony.

GIRL
Stop it, please!

With his hand firmly clasped around her throat, he walks her back. And further back. And then some more, as they come upon a particular tree with an extremely LONG, THIN and SHARPENED BRANCH. Not just any branch. This one's been personally hand-carved by our killer.

GIRL (CONT'D)
Why are you doing this?

FHP firmly presses both hands on either side of her head as he violently, gleefully thrusts the girl's throat into the sharp wooden spike.

Straight through.

FHP watches as BLOOD spits out of her lifeless neck like a leaky faucet. With a calm, collected ease, he pulls his smartphone and takes a quick snapshot.

EXT. WALTER J. FINDLAY JUNIOR ATHLETICS CENTER - DAY

It's the ribbon cutting, grand opening ceremony of Dunsboro's latest addition to the community: **The Walter J. Findlay Junior Athletics Center**. It's the who's who of City Hall's most prominent PUBLIC OFFICIALS, SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS, ATHLETIC DIRECTORS and COMMUNITY ORGANIZERS.

A MIDDLE SCHOOL MARCHING BAND performs before A LARGE CROWD of folding chairs. All placed comfortably under the protective shade of gargantuan oak trees.

A trio of pig-tailed BATON-TWIRLIERS are in perfect sync, all grins and braces. One of them being SARAH DELPY--12, Jake's estranged daughter.

JENN (O.S.)

Go, Sarah!

Watching from the front row is Sarah's mother and Jake's soon to be ex-wife JENN DELPY--30s, donning a Dunsboro Middle School Band boosters t shirt and jeans.

Seated before an onlooking crowd, at a slightly elevated podium are Sheriff Greer, MAYOR THOM ADLER--60s, and Walter Findlay's son TERRY FINDLAY--20s, blonde quaff, crooked smile, boyishly handsome.

Most of the WALSH COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT are in attendance and in full dress uniform.

Somewhere in the mix are Billy and Jake.

BILLY

Have you talked to her yet?

JAKE

Talked to who?

BILLY

I'll take that as a no. She's looking pretty good, Jake.

Jake quickly changes the subject.

JAKE

I talked to my girl in forensics.
Heard that busted glass from
Cahill's window never made it into
evidence.

Billy stares at him cross-eyed.

BILLY

What did you do, run to the lab
first thing this morning while I
was in the john squeezing out last
night's dinner?

JAKE

I asked if they tested those glass
fragments against Cahill's blood.
She says no one's been to the lab
in days.

(beat)

Something going on I need to know
about?

BILLY

Yeah. Your girl Dawn's story
checked out. Dropped Jimmy at The
Pit Stop Gas and Sip around Eleven
Forty-Five PM last Tuesday night.
About ten miles outside Deltona and
about quarter mile off Exit Ninety-
One.

Caslin and Myka turn around, give them a "zip it" look.
Caslin puts a finger to his mouth.

JAKE

(confused)

You already talked to her?

BILLY

Greer had her sprung from lock up
an hour after they left Cahill's
place. You were counting sheep.

JAKE

I should've been in on that.

BILLY

Yeah, I know. Sheriff Burt's doing
the low-profile thing on this one
so just go with it.

The crowd APPLAUDS as Sarah and her two twirling girlfriends
do a dazzling spin move.

JAKE

What do we know about Jimmy?

BILLY

A little after One Thirty AM,
security cameras at the gas station
showed our Jimmy Cahill getting in
a red F One Fifty with plates
matching his nephew Bobby.

JAKE

His nephew?

BILLY

Yeah. And, yes, Bobby confirmed
Uncle Jimmy used a bolt cutter on
his front gate and busted out his
window to get in.

Some SHOOSHES from the crowd.

Jake looks disappointed.

The band raps up their performance as the crowd erupts with
RIOTOUS APPLAUSE. Sheriff Greer waddles his way to the
podium as the crowd quiets down.

SHERIFF GREER

Another big hand for our little
ladies. Let's hear it.

Jake cracks a proud grin as his daughter blushes and waves
hello to her audience.

SHERIFF GREER (CONT'D)

Thank y'all for coming out. And
thank you for that wonderful music.
Walter loved his music. Almost as
much as he loved his sports. But
what he loved more than anything in
this world was giving back. His
knowledge. His generosity. His
time.

WOMAN IN CROWD (O.S.)

Yes!

SHERIFF GREER

And that's why we're here today.
We're making time to say thank you.
Thank you, Walter for all you've
done for Dunsboro. For our kids.
Not just the kids, but for all of
us.

(MORE)

SHERIFF GREER (CONT'D)

(beat)

One more round of applause for
Walter. C'mon now.

The applause is almost deafening. Lots of proud smiles and love in this crowd. Especially from Walter's fellow crime stoppers in uniform.

SHERIFF GREER (CONT'D)

No one knew Walter Findlay better than his boy Terry. I say boy because he was a boy about the last time I saw him. He's been gone awhile but he's back now. Hopefully he'll be sticking around. Here to say a few things about his old man is Terry Findlay.

(to Terry)

Welcome, Terry.

The crowd offer him a warm welcome as Terry makes his way to the microphone.

TERRY

There were some words that just weren't in my father's vocabulary. I can't. I won't. It's too hard. Or I'm trying my best. For Walter Findlay, your best was never good enough.

(smiles)

At least that was usually the case with me.

Some LAUGHTER.

TERRY (CONT'D)

You know, for years I thought I wasn't good enough. But what I didn't understand then...and what I understand now...is that what he saw in me...was greater than anything I could ever envision for myself. That's what he saw in people. Untapped potential. The true greatness that lies inside all of us.

Jake sneaks a peek at Jenn in the front row. A true sadness in his eyes.

AFTER THE CEREMONY

The once full chairs sit empty.

People gather in groups, chit chat, shake hands, share stories, have some grins.

Jenn mills around, keeps to herself. She spots Jake hugging Sarah under an oak tree. His love for her is evident. And without question.

Jenn smiles. She's about to go interrupt, but is caught off guard by Terry, who seemingly comes out of nowhere with the big dumb grin of a schoolboy crush.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Jenn. I was hoping to catch you guys before you left. Just wanted to tell you again how much fun I had the other day, catching up and all.

Jenn grins, flips her hair.

JENN

Yeah. Me too. Just like old times.

Terry spots both Jake and Sarah watching him. He's a bit uncomfortable.

TERRY

I feel like the timing's sort of off here. And it's probably a really bad idea to ask you this again so soon.

JENN

It was just a lunch, Terry. And yeah. It probably is. Bad timing, that is. At least for now.

Jenn checks with --

Jake, who meets her gaze and smiles awkwardly. He pinches Sarah's cheek as she rushes off...joins her friends.

Billy watches them all. A real careful eye.

Terry observes Jenn's preoccupation with Jake and grows a bit irritated. But he hides it well, musters up a friendly smile of support.

TERRY

Well. When the timing is right, I'd love to hear from you.

Jenn's eyes light up. As if she's contemplating a bad decision with this handsome young man.

JENN

I guess that gives us something to look forward to.

Terry cracks a halfhearted grin of disappointment. With a slight hesitation in his step, he moves on.

Jenn spots Jake heading her direction. She meets him halfway.

JENN (CONT'D)

That was nice, huh?

JAKE

Yeah. Good to see Terry again. All grown up. Pretty crazy.

JENN

I know. Crazy.

JAKE

He sure seems happy to see you.

JENN

Yeah. A little.

JAKE

I bet.

An awkward silence.

JENN

Well. I suppose this was inevitable, wasn't it?

JAKE

Yeah, well. I guess I was trying to keep a low profile. Giving you a chance to settle in.

JENN

I didn't tell you to stop calling your daughter. It's been weeks. You thought she was confused before? How do you think she feels now?

Jake hears GIGGLING. He turns, spots Sarah cutting up with her GIRLFRIENDS and having an absolute blast.

JAKE

I don't know. She looks like she's handling everything okay.

JENN

Yeah. Kids are resilient. She's making friends. It's good she's close to her grandma and grandpa. Her cousins.

JAKE

It's almost like we should've never left.

Jenn fights the urge to return his serve.

JENN

But we did. For you. For your job. Because we thought it was the right thing. It was a group decision. So don't think I'm here to make you feel guilty about leaving.

JAKE

You still need some time. I get it. And I won't try to force you into anything.

Jenn nervously clears her throat.

JENN

No, actually my mind is fairly clear on where we stand.

Jake doesn't follow.

JENN (CONT'D)

I'm at peace at where I am. And not ready to make any more giant life decisions anytime soon. Not now. It's too hard.

JAKE

What does that mean?

Jenn sighs.

JENN

Ya know, we don't need to live in the same house for you to be a father to your daughter.

Jake's wind sucked from his body. Didn't see that one coming. He takes a moment.

JAKE

I see. Well. I guess I'll give Sarah a call later on tonight to check in. Get caught up.

JENN

Probably a good idea. I'll make sure she picks up.

Jenn cracks a lukewarm smile, excuses herself. On her way out, she snags Sarah by the arm as they leave the park together. Sarah turns, waves goodbye to a most pitiful looking Jake.

INT. WALSH COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE - BRIEFING ROOM - NIGHT

The room consists of four very cheap but connected folding tables and an empty center space meant for on-the-job instructors.

At the helm stands a mobile blackboard.

Jake enters the room carrying a large cardboard box marked with an evidence label. He removes the lid, sorts through the photos of young women found on Cahill's property.

They are all women of various ages, shapes and sizes, colors, but all sharing certain traits. They are badly bruised, beaten, and truly scared.

Jake sucks in a deep breath. Here we go.

One photo at a time, Jake reviews the evidence. He's careful as he observes every intimate detail in a slow and almost deliberate fashion.

LATER

Each of these images are placed on the blackboard.

Jake takes a step back, gives them all a more careful look.

JAKE

(whispers)
Talk to me, girls.

Jake's eyes squint as he spots something potentially important on the board.

He pulls down the image of a white haired, almost toe headed teenager on her knees...pouty faced, hands bound with silver duct tape and sporting a black eye.

In the background, the back of her head and rear torso is reflected in a large MIRROR.

Jake pulls the picture from the board, but it slips out of his hand, drops upside down on the carpet.

It says --

You found me

He bends down, picks it up, mouth agape.

INT. DIGITAL FORENSICS LAB - LATE NIGHT

Jake sits before a most complicated and impressive computer console. He watches as the images of hundreds of missing women are digitally searched against the scanned and uploaded image of our mystery blonde.

Jake begins to dip off, unable to keep his tired eyes open. He's been at this all night. Just as he's almost all the way out...

The computer gets a direct match: OLIVIA MAE GARDNER, 17. A green check mark above her image.

Jake cracks open his peepers to find Olivia's image on both sides of the screen. He quickly leans forward.

JAKE

Olivia Mae Gardner. Mae.

INT. SHERIFF GREER'S OFFICE - DAY

Decorating the wall are framed pictures of Walter Findlay and Sheriff Greer enjoying various activities: At the golf course. At the football game. On the squad room floor. At a special banquet honoring Walter.

Sheriff Greer stirs powdered creamer into his oversized coffee mug as a wired Jake stands before him. No sleep at all and fired up.

SHERIFF GREER

Who?

JAKE

Olivia Mae Gardner. She's the only girl on Cahill's floor that ever saw the inside of that barn.

Jake holds up the image of Olivia Gardner found on Cahill's floor. Sheriff Greer takes it, has a closer look for himself.

JAKE (CONT'D)

You can see her reflection in the mirror behind her. The rest of the girls were just thrown in to see if we were paying attention.

SHERIFF GREER

And you know that how?

JAKE

Turn over the photo.

Sheriff Greer notices the message on the back.

JAKE (CONT'D)

This is the only one with a handwritten message. We're talking over ten dozen images.

SHERIFF GREER

Is that all?

Sheriff Greer slurps his coffee.

JAKE

No. Notice the little details. The furniture. The paint on the walls. Every one of those pictures were taken at a different location.

SHERIFF GREER

And this all is supposed to make some kind of difference at this point?

Jake is shocked.

SHERIFF GREER (CONT'D)

The man's dead. If...and that's a big if...he actually hurt some of these girls, he ain't hurtin nobody no more. So where are we taking this?

Sheriff Greer rubs his sore neck, uninterested.

JAKE

There's a girl out there who's been missing for fourteen years. Whether it was Cahill or someone else...he's giving us an official heads up.

SHERIFF GREER

Okay. So what do we do now? Call those reporters back up? Make the official announcement that Jimmy Cahill may or may not be responsible for a series of unsolved abductions?

An already tired Jake slumps in defeat, rests his hands flat on Sheriff Greer's desk. It's the only thing holding him up at this point.

SHERIFF GREER (CONT'D)

Hell, I'll have every grieving mother in a two-hundred-mile radius lining up outside my office, demanding answers. Answers we don't have. Right now, all we have are pictures.

Fed up at this point, Jake snags the photo from Sheriff's hand, holds it right in his face.

JAKE

This girl has a family that's been waiting. Hoping for some kind of miracle. And we have evidence that puts her at the scene and you'd rather bury it?

SHERIFF GREER

Is that what I said?

Sheriff Greer angrily snags the photo from Jake's fingers.

SHERIFF GREER (CONT'D)

It's not what I said. But there's ways of doing things, and right now, we need to handle this thing quietly.

Jake gives up, heads for the door.

SHERIFF GREER (CONT'D)

I don't wanna hear about this in the press, Delpy.

(MORE)

SHERIFF GREER (CONT'D)
 We're handling this. Go see your
 wife and kid and leave us to it.

Jake shuts the door behind him.

SHERIFF GREER (CONT'D)
 Damn it.
 (to Jake)
 Jake! Come on back here!

Jake cracks open the door, dips back in. He's quiet and respectful. Like a good marine, he rests his hands in his lap and stands fast.

SHERIFF GREER (CONT'D)
 Keep me posted on Cahill. Let me
 know what you find out.

Sheriff Greer plants himself in his chair, finishes slurping his giant mug of coffee. Jake cracks a grin. He nods and dips out.

INT. PANCAKE HOUSE - DAY

Seated at the lunch counter, Donninger, now in plain clothes, pours a generous amount of cream in his coffee. He spots Jake heading his way. A real spring in his step and a healthy stack of files in hand.

JAKE
 JP. Thanks for coming.

Jake takes a seat, sets his files on the countertop. Donninger's interest piqued.

DONNINGER
 Well, I don't think we've ever
 shared a beer let alone had
 breakfast. I figure this must be
 important. So, what's up, Delpy?

JAKE
 Well. I've been looking through
 Olivia Gardner's case files.

Donninger already losing interest. He throws a glance at the television hanging above them.

JAKE (CONT'D)
 Turns out the night she disappeared
 she was at a birthday party. A
 bunch of her girlfriends from
 school. Their boyfriends.
 (MORE)

JAKE (CONT'D)

A pretty good turnout from what I hear.

DONNINGER

And?

JAKE

So over twelve witnesses claim to have seen Olivia leave the party with one very drunken Jimmy Cahill. But not only was Cahill never a prime suspect, he was never even questioned. Is that right?

DONNINGER

You've got her file, Delpy. I'm sure it's all there.

JAKE

So just so I have this straight. It was your testimony that cleared Cahill.

Jake refers to his paperwork. He opens the box, grabs the first file on top, flips it open.

JAKE (CONT'D)

A DUI stop. About a mile from Gardner's home. Jimmy was driving. Gardner's riding shotgun. And you were the officer at the scene.

DONNINGER

That's right. Cahill was all over the road. I lit him up and pulled him over.

JAKE

So, the rumors were true. He was drunk as hell.

Donninger nods.

DONNINGER

Extremely.

JAKE

And what kind of shape was Gardner in? Pretty rough?

DONNINGER

She had a few.

JAKE

Yet, you busted Cahill and left her at the scene with the car keys.

DONNINGER

No no. That's not what happened.

JAKE

No?

DONNINGER

Howell Branch was less than a mile from Gardner's house. After reading Jimmy his rights and putting him in the car, I took the keys and sent Olivia on her way.

JAKE

On foot?

DONNINGER

That's right.

JAKE

By herself? Alone on a dark road in the middle of the night?

DONNINGER

Like I said, she'd had a few herself. I made a decision. Maybe not the best one. But I made one.

JAKE

You could've driven her home. Less than a mile up the road. Why didn't you?

Donninger cracks a suspicious grin.

DONNINGER

Where is this going?

Jake also cracks a smile. He reads Donninger's gaze.

JAKE

Just one last question. You placed Cahill under arrest. Why is there no record of this arrest on Cahill's sheet?

DONNINGER

Well, Delpy, I didn't process him.

JAKE

Why not?

DONNINGER

Because we never made it that far.
I dropped him at his place and told
him to sleep it off.

JAKE

Awfully nice of you.

A WAITRESS greets Donninger.

WAITRESS

Good morning, JP. Get you the
usual?

He ignores her.

DONNINGER

Anything else?

JAKE

No. You've been very helpful.
Enjoy your breakfast.

Jake collects his files, boxes them up. Halfway to the door,
he throws a knowing grin at Donninger.

INT. CAHILL'S BARN - SECOND STORY - DAY

Cahill's kinky playroom has all been collected for evidence.
No more mattress. No more dirty pictures. Just a hardwood
floor and wall to wall mirrors.

Jake stands near the center of the room. He observes his own
image, reflected back, over and over and at different angles.
Just like a carnival fun house.

JAKE

You liked to watch.

Staring at each mirror, Jake admires his own frame. His
front, sides and back.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Not just them. But what you're
doing to them. And how you look
doing it.

Jake smirks.

JAKE (CONT'D)

It's better than porn. And you're the star and director.

Jake has random VISIONS of a shirtless JIMMY CAHILL standing over a helpless, bound at the wrists OLIVIA, kneeling on the mattress, staring up at him.

Jimmy turns around, observes himself in the mirror nearest the staircase. He slowly, methodically walks toward it, liking what he sees.

Jimmy's image suddenly MORPHS INTO JAKE. Snapping out of his daydream, Jake stares at himself.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Bondage is your favorite. Because you get off on the power. A power you've never had before.

(beat)

Your wife was difficult. How long were you keeping this from her? Was that part of the kink? Doing it right under her nose?

Jake turns around--

--ENVISIONS the mattress still on the floor. Olivia staring up at him. A desperate plea in her blackened eyes.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Talk to me. What did he do to you?

Her image slowly DISSOLVES.

EXT. CAHILL'S BARN - DAY

Jake steps out, sucks in some fresh air. He looks as if he's just broken out of Hell. And he needs a minute to reflect on his arduous journey.

Meanwhile--

On the outskirts of Cahill's property, A STRONG GUST OF WIND blows around some tree limbs, brings life to an otherwise dead patch of woods.

Jake takes notice. His attention drawn to a clearing in the branching trees. Somewhere on the other side is an unidentified object of sorts. And it's shaped like A LARGE CROSS.

Jake squints his eyes. He thinks he's found something. But still unsure. He moves for the trees. Getting closer and closer now.

But it's getting dark. And getting there quickly.

Jake looks to the sky. As the sun falls, the rain clouds grow thicker and thicker.

Thunderclaps.

EXT. CAHILL'S PROPERTY - WOODS - LATER THAT NIGHT

It's a down pouring of rain. A WOODEN CROSS made from cheap lumber marks a burial site. A crackling lightning strike paints a bullseye on the name MAE...scribbled long ways on the vertical plank.

Jake digs a deep hole. And he's just about there.

Wearing rain slickers and getting drenched are Billy, Caslin, Myka and Sheriff Greer. None too interested, growing more and more impatient.

Next to the burial plot, a PILE OF ROCKS has been pushed and shoveled to the side.

Jake is well into the ground now. Filthy and tired. He finally hits something solid.

JAKE

I got something.

Sheriff Greer couldn't care less and puts in a new dip.

BILLY

What do you got?

Jake scrapes the dirt off a driftwood box. A moment of sudden realization hits him.

CASLIN

What's wrong?

Jake stares at the box.

JAKE

I don't think I'm ready for this.

Jake looks to Billy for help.

BILLY

Climb out of there.

Jake crawls out and in jumps Billy, who attempts to pry open the box with a shovel.

BILLY (CONT'D)
 It's like it's nailed shut.
 (to Jake)
 Get that other shovel.

Jake snags a second shovel from under the mud, crawls back in the shallow grave. He and Billy attempt to pry open the box together.

Myka folds her arms, bites her lip, visibly anxious.

Caslin and Sheriff Greer are very neutral. As if they know something the others don't.

Billy and Jake finally pop off the lid.

BILLY (CONT'D)
 Cas. Get the flashlight over here.
 I can't see shit.

Jake exhales, nervous.

Caslin hovers over the grave with his Maglite.

Billy watches Jake. And he's not doing good.

BILLY (CONT'D)
 You okay, partner?

JAKE
 Just do it.

Billy tosses the mud-soaked cover into the woods as Caslin shines his light in the hole.

Something we don't see.

BILLY
 What is it?

Jake already knows, crawls out of the hole. Disappointed and embarrassed. Caslin leans in closer.

CASLIN
 It's like a dog or something.

Jake collapses in the mud. All the life energy sucked from his body. Sheriff Greer watches with pity.

Caslin thinks he spots something.

CASLIN (CONT'D)

Wait a minute. What is that?

Jake perks up.

Pulling out the contents of the grave, Billy holds up what appears to be a CHAINED LEASH with a personalized dog tag attached.

BILLY

Would you look at that. May.

He hands the leash to Caslin.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Woof woof.

Now squatted in the mud, Jake hangs his head.

SHERIFF GREER

Alright, Delpy. Show's over.

Sheriff Greer is on his way. Billy, Caslin and Myka all left looking sorry and embarrassed for Jake as they file out of the woods. One by one.

INT. MUGSHOTS BAR - NIGHT

Billy snags a couple mugs of beer from the bar and meets an exhausted Jake at a corner table. This place is a cesspool of cigarette smoke and body odor.

The rain abuses the cheap tin roof.

JAKE

He's playing with us.

BILLY

Who's that?

JAKE

Sticks and stones may break my bones. I should've caught it before but didn't until tonight.

Jake stares at his beer, nudges it aside.

BILLY

Sorry. I guess I forgot.

JAKE

Yeah.

BILLY

Sticks and stones. I don't get it.
What're you talking about?

JAKE

This message on Cahill's fridge.
Sticks and stones may break my
bones. It was spelled out with
these refrigerator magnets. The
kind like kids use.

BILLY

Is that what this was about? Some
stupid school yard rhyme? That's
why you had boss man standing out
in the rain?

JAKE

Come on, Billy. Names may never
hurt me. As in Olivia Mae Gardner.
He knew we would find that grave.
Just like he knew I'd find Olivia's
picture.

BILLY

Come on. Think about what you're
saying for a second. You think he
picked that girl up because of her
name? Or was it her bra size?

JAKE

No. He didn't know her name. Not
at first. Not until he saw her
picture hanging up in a post office
somewhere. All that means is he's
paying attention.

BILLY

To what?

JAKE

To us. To the cops. Anyone
looking for those girls.

BILLY

Let's say Cahill was this pervert
Casanova type. How long's this
been going on? His old lady had to
have known something.

JAKE

What if it's not him?

BILLY

What if who's not what? You're losing me again, buddy.

JAKE

I'm saying someone out there must be getting a real kick out of spinning our wheels. And that someone is still breathing.

This strikes a chord with Billy. He studies the room for prospective suspects. Just a few feet away, a couple of GREASY LOCALS shoot a game of pool.

From first glance, either one of them could have killed some folks in their youth. The meaner one locks eyes with Billy as he chalks his cue.

A staring contest ensues. Billy caves.

As the eight ball is shot into a corner pocket, one of the local's quickly re racks.

BILLY

(quieter)

Okay. Let's say you're right. And this guy's still out there. So, what do we do about it?

JAKE

We wait.

BILLY

For what?

One of our pool shark's breaks: WHAP!

A nervous Jake throws a glance over his shoulder as the balls travel the green felt table, sink into various pockets.

Jake re focuses.

JAKE

It's his move.

INT. JAKE'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jake is in bed, half drunk, out like a light. All is quiet and peaceful. Until...

His smart phone BUZZES on a nightstand. It crawls its way toward the edge. Almost there.

Jake jerks awake, his nerves frazzled. He watches as his phone hits the carpet. He reaches down, snags it up. Answers.

JAKE

Yeah. I'm here. What time is it?

A gruff, older MAN'S VOICE on the other line.

MAN'S VOICE (V.O.)

It's barely eight thirty. In bed kind of early, kid.

Jake sits up, rubs his eyes.

MAN'S VOICE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Don't tell me you've given up. Already taking a knee and it's not even the second quarter.

JAKE

Okay, so you know me. But do I know you?

MAN'S VOICE (V.O.)

You know the airfield off of Grey's Airport Road?

JAKE

Yeah, of course.

MAN'S VOICE (V.O.)

Nine AM. Just give me a buzz at the front gate when you get here. We have a lot to talk about. Try to get some rest.

The Caller hangs up. Jake drops his phone.

JAKE

Nine AM it is. Good talking to you.

INT. WALSH COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE - SQUAD ROOM - LATE NIGHT

Still in his t shirt and sweats, a restless Jake stares into a decorative glass encasing. Plaques, awards, photos of various law enforcement personnel--receiving commendations for service and bravery in the line of duty. One of them is a true standout.

CHARLIE FERRIS, a real American tough guy, and Walter Findlay standing next to a Sheriff's Department Helo. They are the best of pals, two pees in a pod.

Carrying a stack of manila files, Gail pops her head in, notices Jake intently studying Charlie's likeness.

GAIL

Heck are you doing here so late?
Got nothing better to do but stare
at old pictures?

JAKE

Say, Gail. What do you remember
about Charlie Ferris?

Gail raises a brow.

GAIL

A lot of different stories. None
of them good. Honestly, I'm
surprised they haven't taken that
picture down by now.

JAKE

What do you mean?

GAIL

That's right. I forgot you were
MIA for almost ten years.
(beat)
Ferris was popping Walter Findlay's
wife for almost two years. But you
didn't hear it from me.

JAKE

You're kidding.

Jake takes another look at the photo. They are smiling, best of friends. Or so it seems.

GAIL

Kind of a long, ongoing story that
goes back to the three of them in
high school.

JAKE

Oh yeah?

GAIL

Chelsea was Charlie's sweetheart.
Even talked about getting engaged
at one point.

(MORE)

GAIL (CONT'D)

Up until Walter came into the picture and swept old Chelsea off her feet. At least that's the version I heard.

JAKE

But they remained friends.

GAIL

For a while, at least. Until Charlie decided he'd take advantage of Chelsea and Walt's marital problems by offering to lick her tears.

(beat)

If you know what I mean.

JAKE

Yikes.

GAIL

This went on for almost two years. Up until Chelsea Findlay gets behind the wheel drunk and runs her and Charlie straight into a light pole doing about sixty-five. Killed her on impact.

Gail shakes her head as this dark memory returns.

GAIL (CONT'D)

Charlie walks away with a broken collar bone and, next thing you know, he's taking early retirement. Afraid no one in the department would ever have his back again for what happened to Findlay's wife.

JAKE

(confused)

Wait a minute. I thought she skipped town over some woman Findlay was seeing.

GAIL

Funny how that story's changed over the years. It's not something the folks in Dunsboro like to mention in mixed company.

(beat)

So why the sudden interest in Charlie Ferris?

Jake stalls.

JAKE

Oh no reason.

GAIL

Yeah. I just bet. Look. Do yourself a favor and don't mention Ferris's name around here again. Kind of a bad idea.

Gail heads for the squad room, starts dumping her files in small metal baskets on the edge of the various cubicles and workstations.

Jake heads out.

EXT. HOME OF CHARLIE FERRIS - DAY

The middle of nowhere.

On the sprawling property sits a large warehouse and wood working shop. Displayed on the lawn are various shapes, sizes, styles of homemade furniture cut from the very finest of woods.

A dining table. Picnic bench. A children's swing set. Lawn chairs of all sizes.

BACK YARD

Behind this warehouse is Charlie's simple country home and an AIRPLANE HANGAR with the doors pulled open. Parked in the hangar is a Cessna Skyhawk. It's as old as Charlie himself but well maintained.

On the other side of a long, white picket fence is a private airfield dotted with landing markers. Posted in the ground at regular intervals.

INT. CHARLIE'S WOOD SHOP - DAY

The inside of this warehouse is actually a private furniture store featuring Charlie's personally hand-carved and handcrafted items.

Armoires, desks, chairs, tables. All featuring star shaped sale signs made from store bought poster board.

Jake admires this impressive body of work as he walks side by side with the owner, operator himself...

CHARLIE FERRIS--60s, a graying, world weary man in a Walsh County Deputy Sheriff t shirt stained with various paints and thinners. He's broad shouldered, strong as an ox and never ever sedentary.

JAKE

How long has this place been here?

CHARLIE

The wood shop? Since I was a kid. Dad used to do it for fun, mostly. Just like flying his planes. A few years back I came up with the idea of doing them both full time. Work in the shop during the week and do flight lessons on the weekends.

JAKE

I guess there's only so many car accidents and blood and guts a person can take.

Charlie grins.

CHARLIE

Dad put a lot of work into this place. Something he could leave behind for his family and future grandkids. Never gave him those grandkids but figured I shouldn't let this place go to waste.

Jake and Charlie stroll by the front counter and register. Jake's attention immediately drawn to a full row of meticulously detailed model planes parked in the confines of a protective glass encasement.

Jake bends down to grab a closer look. He's impressed.

JAKE

Yeah. I get it. It's nice and peaceful out here. And you get to spend your time doing what you love. We should all be so lucky.

Jake re-joins Charlie as they continue to stroll the spacious warehouse.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Swing sets, model planes. Anything you can't build?

CHARLIE

No, not really. Come on out back.
I wanna show you something.

Charlie heads for a rear door. Jake follows.

EXT. AIRFIELD - DAY

Jake and Charlie stand behind the white fence that stretches the length of the airfield.

Jake uses a radio control to fly an impressive looking model airplane that could easily pass as the real thing. A Cessna Skyhawk replica.

CHARLIE

Walter Findlay's boy, Terry. Him and Jimmy Cahill used to work weekends out here, learning the trade. Putting together all kinds of stuff. Planes mostly. They'd spend hours out here sharing six packs, flying their planes and cutting up. Telling lies about women. Girls at Terry's school.

JAKE

Cahill, huh? Not exactly the best influence on a kid.

CHARLIE

Guess you could say this was Terry's home away from home. Any excuse to get away from his old man.

Jake raises a brow.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Old Terry didn't exactly have the picture-perfect home life everyone thinks.

JAKE

Really?

CHARLIE

Walter was too busy raising everyone else's kids to bother with his own. Or to be a husband to his wife.

JAKE

Yeah, I heard she took off when Terry was just a kid. Left in the middle of the night or something.

CHARLIE

She left. But didn't stray too far. Found solace in the arms of another man. Then gets herself killed in a car accident before a chance at reconciliation.

Jake's plane is all over the place. He's having a hard time concentrating.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

She wasn't as crazy so much as she was unhappy. Truth is, Walter was never home. When he was, he didn't have any interest in her. If you knew the real Walter, you knew she wasn't really his type.

JAKE

His type?

CHARLIE

Walter liked them young. Sixteen. Seventeen. On the verge of womanhood. Vulnerable. Impressionable. It made them that much easier to control.

Jake takes his eyes off the plane. Charlie takes the controller out of his hands.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Do I have your attention now?

Jake is stunned.

JAKE

A little bit, yeah.

CHARLIE

How'd you like to take a ride in the real thing?

Jake spots the Cessna parked in the hangar.

INT. CESSNA SKYHAWK - MOVING - DAY

Jake sits next to Charlie as they coast smoothly over the small but peaceful burg of Dunsboro. It's all green and blue from up here. Mostly trees, ponds and lakes. Lots of farmland. A ton of mobile homes.

CHARLIE

I'll tell you the nicest thing about coming up here.

JAKE

What's that?

CHARLIE

The quiet. It's a place where you can get lost. No phones. No traffic. Nothing but you and nature.

JAKE

We really are in the middle of nowhere. I haven't seen a single person in five minutes. Haven't seen a single anything in five minutes.

CHARLIE

Dunsboro. Always said if you were gonna get rid of a body, this was the place to do it.

This piques Jake's interest.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

From up here, you can see all kinds of hiding spots. Places no one even knew existed, let alone think to look.

JAKE

Interesting perspective. Guess I never thought of that.

CHARLIE

Yeah. Most people haven't. It's funny some of the things you think about when you're up here.

JAKE

What else do you think about?

CHARLIE

Tell me what you see down there,
Sergeant. What's the first thing
you notice?

Jake stares down at the forever expanse of lakes, ponds and
jungle swamps.

JAKE

Water. And a shitload of trees.

CHARLIE

Correct. Trees and water. As far
as the eye can see. And guess
what's in those trees.

JAKE

I give up.

CHARLIE

Lots and lots of dirt. And guess
what's in all that water.

JAKE

Gators. Snakes.

CHARLIE

Gators. That's correct. You know,
we got more water per square mile
in Walsh County than anywhere else
in the state of Florida. More
water means more gators.

Jake quietly clicks his seat belt.

JAKE

No kidding.

INT. CHARLIE'S HOME - MAN CAVE - DAY

Charlie cracks a couple of beers, hands one to Jake who sits
on the opposite side of a wet bar. One that Charlie built
himself. The inside of this place is an impressive display
of handcrafted furniture and woodwork.

Hanging on virtually every possible inch of these walls are
memories of Charlie's impressive career as a police
helicopter pilot and part time coach of city league
athletics.

A good portion of these photographs predominantly feature
Charlie and Walter Findlay.

CHARLIE

I guess you're starting to wonder why it is you're here.

JAKE

A little.

CHARLIE

You've been with County long enough to have heard all the stories you're gonna hear about Walter Findlay.

(beat)

You do know his shooter was never caught.

JAKE

I heard they had a couple suspects. But nothing ever stuck.

CHARLIE

With most of Walter's family either dead or gone, Terry was the only blood relative at his bedside after the shooting. So, on top of Walter being an all-around lousy father, he sticks Terry with the arduous task of pulling the plug.

JAKE

He signed a DNR?

CHARLIE

The bullet struck Walter's lumbar spine. Paralyzed him from the waist down. He could've pulled through, but Walter's pride got in the way. He chose to leave this world.

JAKE

How did he do it? Terry.

CHARLIE

Had Terry go home and get into his mother's old medicine cabinet. Grabbed a full bottle of sleeping pills. Terry was in and out of there before the doctors even knew what happened.

Jake shuts his eyes to this.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

So his mother splits. He's left with a father who couldn't handle the responsibility of raising him. And then he's pretty much blamed by the entire town of Dunsboro for killing his own father. All that before his fifteenth birthday.

JAKE

I can't even imagine.

Jake takes a pull off his beer.

CHARLIE

Imagine this. All that resentment he must've felt. That kind of sickness in your belly, if left unchecked, can last a lifetime. As it has with young Terry.

Charlie walks to a large pane glass window that overlooks a sprawling backyard. He pays particular attention to a storage shed locked and chained shut.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

A hatred for women, a burning desire to get back at his father. And then add a bad seed like Jimmy Cahill into the mix.

Jake joins him at the window.

JAKE

Cahill?

CHARLIE

They became a real pair, you see. Jimmy saw a young, handsome kid who could play his loyal and trusty partner in crime and Terry saw his chance to finally lash out at the world.

Jake grows tired and weary.

JAKE

I've been here over an hour now. Whatever you're trying to tell me, I wish you'd get to it. No offense.

Charlie pauses.

CHARLIE

Before he died, Walter entrusted me with Terry's future. His boy. To say I let him down would be putting it mildly.

JAKE

Terry still involved with Cahill?

Charlie stares at Jake, very serious.

CHARLIE

You still haven't asked me about those girls found in Jimmy's play room.

JAKE

You heard about that?

CHARLIE

(smiles)
Who hasn't?

JAKE

Okay, Charlie. Who were they?

CHARLIE

Drifters mostly. Hookers. Pan handlers. It started off...somewhat innocently. Some rough sex in exchange for some of Jimmy and Terry's hard-earned cash. Then things took a turn.

Jake nods.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Come on. I wanna show you something.

Charlie heads for the back door. Jake follows.

EXT. CHARLIE'S STORAGE SHED - DAY

Charlie unlocks a double padlocked and heavily chained storage unit located in his backyard.

Jake seems a bit worried. As a precaution, he looks over his shoulder, no room for surprises. He rests his right hand over his sidearm, tucked in the rear of his pants.

Charlie swings open the door.

CHARLIE

You wanna know what's really going on, Sergeant?

Jake stares into a black void of darkness.

Charlie enters the storage area. Jake follows. But slow and with caution.

INT. CHARLIE'S STORAGE SHED - DAY

Charlie flicks on a side light switch. Pop! The overhead florescent bulbs flicker an eerie blue.

Most of the items in this room are hidden under the protection of a bed sheet or cloth.

Charlie removes one of the sheets to reveal...

A small wood working station and homemade table saw stained with what appears to be blood.

JAKE

What the hell is this, Charlie?

Charlie ignores the table saw and walks to a second object hidden under a large cloth. He removes it to reveal an old-style metal chest freezer.

He opens the heavy lid.

CHARLIE

This is where we hid Terry's first victim. He was only fourteen years old. He was just a freshman. She was a senior. To say he was obsessed with this young lady would be putting it mildly. But no one could've guessed he'd be capable of such a thing.

Jake reaches for his gun, backs up, edges toward the door.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

One night Terry followed her and her troubled on again, off again older boyfriend to this private lake. He watched as they undressed and eventually jumped in the water. Things got a little hot. Our girl takes it back to the beach. And she's drunk. Real drunk.

(MORE)

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

And high out of her mind. And
boyfriend isn't taking no for an
answer.

JAKE

Jimmy.

Charlie nods.

CHARLIE

That's right.

(beat)

Meanwhile, Terry secretly watches
from the trees. He watches as his
secret obsession and first serious
crush is brutally raped as she lay
half unconscious. Raped by the one
guy he considered a brother.

JAKE

Olivia.

CHARLIE

When Jimmy's finished, he looks up
to see this pair of eyes watching
him from deep in the woods. When
he sees who it is...well...he gets
nervous at first. But then he
invites Terry down. Offers to
share this girl like some kind of
party favor. Jimmy sets the bait.
And in a blink of an eye...he buys
Terry's loyalty forever.

JAKE

(disgusted)

He raped her.

CHARLIE

When Terry was finished, Olivia
went into convulsions. An overdose
of ecstasy, alcohol and whatever
else junk was in her system.
Before Terry even knew what was
happening, she died right there.
And leaving inside of her the
evidence of her assault by Terry
and Jimmy.

Jake pieces it all together.

JAKE

They came to you for help. And you
buried it. Along with her.

CHARLIE

It was the beginning of Terry's inevitable corruption. And all the rage and resentment that had built inside him only grew stronger from there.

Jake checks over his shoulder.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

There's no one here but us, Jake. I'm not planning on shooting you. If that's what you think.

JAKE

Keep those hands out of that freezer. Where I can see them.

CHARLIE

You know I had no choice. I wasn't ready to destroy his future over a mistake. And that's all it was that first time. A mistake. But that mistake soon became a lifestyle. A life he had all been forced into by Jimmy Cahill.

Jake slowly pulls out his gun, hides it behind his back.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

I had one of two choices. I could put him away, forever tarnish his father's name...or I could protect him.

Jake takes another look at the table saw.

JAKE

What's with the saw, Charlie?

Charlie observes the table saw.

CHARLIE

You know. Because I already told you. In the plane.

Jake squints, thinks back, a sour grimace.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

It took weeks before it finally came to me. A much full proof way of disposing of the bodies. A way no one could ever identify them.

Jake aims his gun, grips with both hands.

JAKE
 Alright, Ferris! Let me see your
 hands! On your head! Now!

Charlie isn't bothered by the sight of Jake's gun. He is calm, collected and in control.

JAKE (CONT'D)
 You can save the rest for the
 station.

Charlie shuts the lid on the freezer, attempts to turn around...face Jake.

JAKE (CONT'D)
 Hands...on your head!

Charlie calmly places his hands over his head.

CHARLIE
 You know I won't live long enough
 to make my statement, Jake. And
 you won't live long enough to
 record it.

JAKE
 Shut up. Sick piece of...

CHARLIE
 What're you gonna do now, Sergeant?
 Bring in the son of Walter Findlay?
 Forever stain the legacy?
 (beat)
 Why do you think your friends in
 the department have been keeping
 you at arm's length this whole
 time?

Jake backs away.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
 I came to you for a reason. If you
 bring in Terry, he dies. We all
 do. You starting to get the
 picture?

JAKE
 Bullshit.
 (angry)
 This is bullshit! Where is she?!

CHARLIE

She? Which one, Jake? I'm afraid there's too many to count.

Jake loses his temper, shoves Charlie into a corner, spins him around, hands flat on the wall.

He does a quick pat down.

JAKE

I should just kill you right now.

CHARLIE

He killed Jimmy because he was getting sloppy. Getting a reputation around town for getting a bit rough. He could no longer afford to be associated with someone like that. Terry was always smarter. More careful. Just like a cop's kid.

Jake quickly cuffs him.

JAKE

Turn around.

A handcuffed Charlie faces Jake, rests on the wall.

CHARLIE

Who do you think Jimmy called that night, Delpy? When he was left stranded on the interstate.

JAKE

I know who he called. He called his nephew.

CHARLIE

Is that what your cop friends told you? He called who he always calls when he's in a jam. Terry. And he brought him back home and killed him.

Jake ponders this.

JAKE

The car. Jimmy's car. What was in it?

CHARLIE

Don't you get it? It doesn't matter now.

(MORE)

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Whatever it was, I'm sure it's long gone. Along with the rest of the evidence. The cops have always been great about protecting Terry.

Jake takes another look at the blood-stained table saw and physically recoils.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

If you don't believe me, you can call him. My cell's in my right pocket.

Jake is reluctant.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

It's been almost fifteen years, Jake. And they still haven't found Olivia Gardner. All you did was mentioned her name and you were practically thrown off this case. Think about it.

After a few tense moments, Jake finally retrieves the phone from Charlie's pocket. He searches the contacts...

TERRY. He speed dials. A few seconds pass...

TERRY (V.O.)

Yeah, what's up?

Jake stalls.

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

Hello? Charlie, are you there?

Jake hangs up.

JAKE

Why are you doing this?

CHARLIE

Because I'm not a killer. Because it was my job to protect him and I failed. The way I see it, we got only one play here.

JAKE

What's that?

CHARLIE

We can't take him in. We already know that. So we give him a real simple choice.

JAKE
What choice?

CHARLIE
He can stop. Or we can stop him.

Jake takes another look at the bloody workstation. He slowly lowers his sidearm.

EXT. PIT STOP GAS AND SIP - LATE NIGHT

With an impatient sense of urgency, Jake's patrol cruiser storms into the lot and comes to a swift halt near the front door.

INT. PIT STOP GAS AND SIP - LATE NIGHT

Jake stands at the ass end of a long, congested line while customers navigate a busy cigarette rack.

Another CASHIER slurps a big gulp, no rush at all while he watches a TRASHY LOCAL uses his own car keys on a stack of five-dollar scratch offs.

Jake finally loses it, fights his way to the front, flashes his badge to an aloof SHIFT MANAGER, dipping in and out of a front cash office with little care or concern.

JAKE
Are you in charge?

Shift Manager sighs.

SHIFT MANAGER
Yes. What's this about?

INT. PIT STOP GAS AND SIP - FRONT OFFICE - LATE NIGHT

The Shift Manger sits at a multi-camera, all angle video surveillance console featuring shoddy black and white security feed of the store's interior layout, as well as exterior lots--front and back.

Jake hovers behind him. Observes the parking lot footage the night Jimmy Cahill was left abandoned at the door by his abductors, Dawn and Trey.

A digital clock at the top right-hand corner of the video feed reads 11:37 PM.

JAKE

Is that the right time?

SHIFT MANAGER

Yeah, we're getting close. I remember that jacked up truck at the pump.

The Shift Manager points to Cahill's car: a mid-to-late nineties Pontiac Bonneville, pulling into the lot and drifting into an air pump and vacuum station.

SHIFT MANAGER (CONT'D)

There. I think that's them.

Jimmy Cahill crawls out.

And the Bonneville pulls a hot u turn, barely avoids running over Jimmy and colliding head on with another car.

Jimmy watches as--

The Bonneville bolts from the lot. They're out of there.

JAKE

That's him. That's Cahill.

Jake watches as Cahill dips inside, heads for the front-end and register area.

JAKE (CONT'D)

So, he comes inside and then what?

SHIFT MANAGER

He uses the restroom. A couple minutes later, he comes out and asks to use the phone.

JAKE

About quarter to midnight. Just like Dawn said.

SHIFT MANAGER

Who?

JAKE

Nothing. He uses the phone and waits for his ride to show.

(beat)

About what time did Cahill finally leave?

SHIFT MANAGER
 (confused)
 Cahill?

JAKE
 The guy, the guy. Stay with me.

SHIFT MANAGER
 I'd say...a little after one
 thirty, close to two in the
 morning.

Jake fights to keep his eyes open.

SHIFT MANAGER (CONT'D)
 Would you like a coffee or
 something? Energy drink for the
 road? You seem a bit cranky.

JAKE
 Never mind me.

Jake slaps down a photo of Jimmy's nephew BOBBY.

JAKE (CONT'D)
 Is this the guy that picked him up?

SHIFT MANAGER
 No. This dude was blonde.

Jake sighs, slaps down a second photo. A recent picture of
 Terry Findlay.

JAKE
 Like this guy?

Shift Manager nods.

SHIFT MANAGER
 Yeah, that's the guy. Just like I
 told that other cop.
 (beat)
 And why am I doing this again?

JAKE
 This cop. What'd he look like?

EXT. BILLY'S FRONT PORCH - LATE NIGHT

Billy, in an open bathrobe, undershirt and boxers, stands
 before a restless, hot mad Jake. It's the middle of the
 night and the crickets are loud and out.

BILLY

Okay, so I lied. But it was for good reason.

JAKE

Yeah? Why's that?

BILLY

Everybody sees Findlay cozying up to your wife. Even you said they were close back in the day. Now she's back here, starting over. He's sniffing around like a dog in heat. I know you're not stupid.

JAKE

No. I'm not stupid or blind. I get it. What does that have to do with you burying evidence?

BILLY

We didn't bury anything. We brushed it aside. That's all we did, Jake. We simply brushed it aside. Just because Findlay isn't in custody doesn't mean we're not keeping an eye on him.

JAKE

What's that mean? That he's a suspect? What?

BILLY

It means the last thing we need is the jealous husband making a mess and compromising an investigation. Get my drift?

JAKE

All that crap about Cahill's nephew watching Jimmy take the bolt cutters to his front gate. It was all bullshit.

ANGRY NEIGHBOR (O.S.)

Shut up over there! It's three thirty in the morning!

Billy and Jake navigate the darkness. Billy spots the culprit a few houses down.

BILLY

Hey, shut up! Get back in your house!

ANGRY NEIGHBOR (O.S.)
I'm calling the cops!

BILLY
We are the cops, genius! You're
obstructing justice! Go back
inside!

Angry Neighbor SLAMS his door shut.

DOGS and CATS go berserk. Billy groans.

Up and down the street, PORCHLIGHTS are flipped ON. More complaints. More swearing.

BILLY (CONT'D)
Listen to me, Jake. Take a look at
what we have. Jimmy Cahill's brains
all over the wall and a picture of
some girl who disappeared fifteen
years ago. If that's not a
deathbed confession, I don't know
what is.

Jake cracks a grin, laughs under his breath as he walks to the edge of the porch. He stares into the quiet night as crickets continue to chirp.

JAKE
Partner, you don't know the half of
it. You're completely lost.

Billy joins him.

BILLY
Okay, so I'm lost. Tell me why I'm
lost and I'll listen.

Jake faces him.

JAKE
You better put some coffee on. We
got a lot to talk about.

INT. AUTO REPAIR SHOP - LATE NIGHT

Darkness.

A flick of a switch and a series of overhead fluorescent bulbs slowly spark to life. Jimmy Cahill's dark green Pontiac Bonneville sits alone.

In walks Jake and Billy.

JAKE

How'd you get this out of impound
without any questions asked?

BILLY

I forged the requisition order.

JAKE

And where'd you get the keys to
this place?

BILLY

A friend of mine who owes me a
favor left me a spare key.

JAKE

Did he ask you why you needed the
garage?

BILLY

Nope. And I didn't ask him why his
little girl was doing seventy-five
in a school zone.

Billy opens the passenger side door, steps aside to allow
Jake some room to examine.

JAKE

Okay, so what am I looking for?

BILLY

Get in.

Jake crawls in. The seat is loose. Very loose as it slides
back and forth with little effort.

JAKE

What the hell's the matter with
this seat?

BILLY

I'll show you.

Jake crawls out. Billy reaches in, easily pops the seat out
of place, rests it on the oil-stained floor.

JAKE

I don't get it.

BILLY

I didn't either. Not at first.
Take another look.

Jake pops his head back in. He notices the rear seats are covered top to bottom in a pair of decorative Harley Davidson blankets.

JAKE

I haven't slept in two days, Billy.
Just tell me what I'm looking for?

BILLY

Check under the blanket.

Jake kneels down, crawls further into the car and removes the blanket from the rear seats.

There is a giant HOLE cut through the seat that stretches all the way into the trunk. And hanging from this hole is a WHITE BUNGEE CORD tied in a slip knot.

Jake pulls on the cord, stretches it forward, stops about halfway to the front seat.

JAKE

It's a restraint.

BILLY

Come on. There's more.

Jake crawls out. He follows Billy to the trunk. Billy pops it open to reveal a smooth cloth lining.

Billy removes the lining cover and exposes a large metal spike bolted into the floor. Around this spike, a white bungee cord is tied in a most complicated knot.

Jake pokes his head in, stares through THE HOLE IN THE TRUNK, through the rear passenger seat, observes the front dashboard.

JAKE

Kinky. Anything else?

BILLY

Oh, nothing much. Just some recreational lubricants, along with three vials of GHB and a hypodermic needle kit in the glove box.

Billy shuts the trunk.

BILLY (CONT'D)

At least now we know why Jimmy never reported his car stolen.

EXT. BILLY'S HOUSE - REAR PORCH - DAY

Dawn is breaking. Jake sips his morning coffee at a round breakfast table. He looks a wreck -- still no sleep. But his eyes reflect an all too busy mind.

From inside the house, Billy steps out, lays down a folded map on the table. He takes a seat.

BILLY

So, Charlie Ferris told you that Cahill and Findlay took turns raping Olivia Gardner just minutes before her death, right?

JAKE

That's right.

BILLY

Just humor me a sec.

Billy unfolds a huge, extremely creased table sized map of the state of Florida. He uses a black sharpie to mark THREE POINTS near the center area of the map.

BILLY (CONT'D)

The last six recorded abductions and or missing persons cases were reported here in Orange City, Sanford and Deltona...

Billy marks three more spots near the west coast.

BILLY (CONT'D)

And over here in Ocala, Dunnellon and Wesley Chapel.

JAKE

How far apart?

BILLY

We're talking less than a year. And you know what else these girls have in common?

Jake awaits his answer.

BILLY (CONT'D)

None of them were local. They were all either out of state or from out of town passing through.

Jake takes a closer look at the map.

JAKE

And all cities bordering major
interstates. Transients.

BILLY

They're targeting women who could
easily disappear without anyone
asking questions.

JAKE

They? You said they.

BILLY

Your boy Ferris says that Findlay
was never anything but a victim.
Let around by the nose by Jimmy
Cahill. Well, I'm not buying it.

JAKE

Talk to me.

BILLY

What I'm saying is this. After the
experience of sharing Olivia
Gardner and watching the life drain
from her eyes, maybe Jimmy and
Terry decided to take their act on
the road full time.

JAKE

Wow. For an open and shut suicide,
you seem to have done your
homework, partner.

BILLY

What can I say? You inspired me.

Jake leans back in his chair, takes it all in. Processing
this new information as his mind goes in a hundred
directions.

INT. DUNSBORO HIGH SCHOOL - PHYS ED BUILDING - DAY

Terry, now dressed in a Dunsboro High Football Coach polo
tucked neatly into his khakis, strolls the empty halls,
casually reviews a play chart.

A trio of CHEERLEADERS in full uniform file out of a girl's
restroom. All with goofy grins. All looking like they've
been up to no good.

One of them, CARLA--17, spots Terry headed their direction. She whispers something to the others as they collectively giggle and snicker. Carla quickly leaves them behind, now hot on Terry's heels.

CHEERLEADER
Good luck with that.

The other two laugh, dip out a door.

Terry hears them carrying on, turns back. He spots Carla almost catching up to him.

CARLA
Hi, Coach. Got a minute?

She joins him.

TERRY
What are you girls doing back there? You practicing your cheers in the bathroom?

Terry gets a whiff of something nasty. He pulls out a pack of Dentyne.

TERRY (CONT'D)
Gum?

Carla grins, accepts.

CARLA
Thank you.

As she chews her gum, she sighs.

TERRY
Something bothering you, Miss Bailey?

CARLA
This whole thing with Nick.

TERRY
Yeah? What about it?

CARLA
Is he really, like, off the team, or is it more like a suspension type of thing?

TERRY
Yes, he's really off the team.

Carla follows Terry through a pair of heavy gymnasium style doors and into--

THE GYMNASIUM

--as they stroll past some STUDENTS shooting hoops, playing dodgeball. Rubber kickballs flying everywhere as students jump and dive for cover.

Terry catches one, chucks it back.

CARLA

It's just that...you're all about seize the day, be your best self, never accept defeat. Don't let anyone decide your path for you and all that happy horse...stuff.

TERRY

Yeah? And?

CARLA

Well. It's like you're telling him to accept defeat by quitting. To accept failure. Well he doesn't accept that. At all.

Some BOYS WHISTLE and CAT CALL the hot young cheerleader in her skimpy skirt. Carla rolls her eyes.

CARLA (CONT'D)

You and your hand go get a room somewhere.

Students LAUGH and carry on. Terry smiles.

CARLA (CONT'D)

So anyways. About Nick.

TERRY

Nick already quit. The moment he decided to start smoking dope and drinking instead of practicing his guts out.

CARLA

Yeah. And he's learned his lesson. I just think it's time you gave him another chance. He still has another year. Another chance at getting a scholarship.

TERRY

The school has a strict policy for a reason, Miss Bailey. So the students follow it.

CARLA

Okay, so what if I told you it wasn't his fault. It was all my fault. And I promise on Walter Findlay to never be a bad influence again?

Terry smiles.

TERRY

You put up a good fight. If only Nick had that kind of fight in him, then maybe we could talk.

Terry and Carla reach the other end of the gym, dip out a heavy pair of double doors.

EXT. DUNSBORO HIGH SCHOOL - GYMNASIUM - DAY

Terry and Carla head up a sidewalk---away from the gym as Terry looks ahead, spots Carla's two doped up cheerleader friends giggling, loitering around.

Terry stops in his tracks.

TERRY

Ladies. What's happening out here?

CARLA

Never mind them.
(to friends)
Shoo. Go away.

The two cheerleaders burst into hysterics as they rush off, back to practicing their cheers.

CARLA (CONT'D)

Look. I know you can't make any promises. But maybe we can work something out. You know? Just you and me. Like our own private kind of deal.

Carla plays up the flirty part. But she's awkward, nervous. Out of her league.

CARLA (CONT'D)

What do you think?

Terry grins, shakes his head.

TERRY

I think you're a pretty young lady
and Nick's a very lucky young man.
I also think you should head back
to class.

Carla loses her flirty grin. Now offended.

JAKE (O.S.)

Coach Findlay.

Terry turns around, faces Jake and Billy, watching them from
the other end of the sidewalk.

JAKE (CONT'D)

We're gonna need a few minutes of
your time, sir. When your finished
here, of course.

CARLA

See you later, Coach.

Carla gets spooked and books. Terry watches her jet down a
short set of stairs.

INT. DUNSBORO HIGH SCHOOL - CAFETERIA - DAY

A couple LUNCH LADIES prep food and set some foiled hot trays
into place as lunch time draws nearer. As soon as the next
bell rings.

But the rest of the room sits empty.

If not for Billy and Jake, hovering above Terry as he parks
his butt at a corner round table. And this table just
happens to be in full view of the students outside.

TERRY

We could have done this in my
office, fellas.

BILLY

No need. We're all friends here.
Just wanted to ask you a few
questions is all.

TERRY

Yeah, I bet.

JAKE

Why didn't you inform us you were with Jimmy Cahill the night he died?

Terry grins, checks with Billy. His usual wise-cracking persona flipped dead serious.

TERRY

Well, fellas. Given the unusual circumstances, I didn't feel it necessary to tell Jimmy's wife he'd just been carjacked by a prostitute.

JAKE

No one said she was a hooker. Why'd you assume that? Jimmy tell you what happened out there?

Terry avoids answering.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Is that like a regular thing for him, trolling for prostitutes?

Terry spots a lunch lady scoping him out. He leans forward, blocks her line of sight.

TERRY

Why are you here? Jimmy blew his head off. Are you looking for some kind of reason?

Jake slaps down the photo of Olivia Gardner. Terry left speechless. His eyes glazed over.

JAKE

Awfully quiet, Terry.

BILLY

Who is she?

TERRY

A girl from high school. Where did you get this?

JAKE

She wasn't just any girl, Terry. She was your object of obsession. Ask anyone.

TERRY

I asked where you got this picture from. You want anything else from me, you better tell me.

BILLY

Found it with Jimmy. At the crime scene. Do you happen to know of any reason Cahill would be holding onto a fifteen-year-old picture of Olivia Gardner?

TERRY

Why are you asking me?

JAKE

Because we're asking. Now answer the question.

Terry scoffs.

TERRY

I think we're done here, fellas.

JAKE

How many, Terry? How many did you do since Olivia?

BILLY

Hey, partner.

JAKE

What happened? You start blaming Gardner for what went down with your old man? Every time you choke the life out these poor kids you get to re live that moment. Over and over again.

BILLY

Come on, Delpy. We're leaving.

JAKE

Look at the picture, Terry. You can't, can you? Right now, it's taking everything in you from flipping this table upside down.

Terry defiantly looks away from Olivia's image, away from Jake's piercing stare. He stares up at Billy, as if he's waiting to be saved.

Losing patience fast, Jake snags up the photo, holds it in Terry's face now. Terry barely holding it together. An anger growing inside.

JAKE (CONT'D)

I said look at the picture!

Terry boils over with rage, *jerks out of his seat and SHOVES Jake about five feet back.*

Jake pulls his sidearm, holds Terry at gunpoint. Billy about to intervene but refrains.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Hands on your head. Do it now.

Terry smiles, slowly raises them.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Turn around.

Billy spots a RESOURCE OFFICER making his way across the outside courtyard. This is OFFICER WELLS.

BILLY

Let's go, partner. We got company.

Terry faces the wall.

Jake violently shoves him into the brick, kicks out his legs and presses the gun to his head.

JAKE

You just assaulted a police officer, Terry. What would old man Walter think?

TERRY

You mention his name again, I'll kill you.

Jake flips Terry around, facing him. With an all too eager smile on his face and gleam in his eye, Jake tucks his gun under Terry's chin.

JAKE

Go ahead, Findlay. Show me what you can do. Show us what you did to her.

A school bell RINGS. STUDENTS burst through the senior wing doors and fill the outside courts. Many headed for the cafeteria.

OFFICER WELLS (O.S.)
Drop the gun and step away from
him, Delpy!

Officer Wells, gun drawn, Jake in his sights.

A panicked Billy draws his weapon on Officer Wells. It's a full-blown stand-off.

BILLY
Okay now. Everybody take it easy.
Just too much testosterone and a
few too many cups of coffee.

OFFICER WELLS
Tell your partner to put up his
sidearm! And do it very carefully!

JAKE
I hear you. Don't get nervous.

Jake cautiously steps away from a grinning, and now very cocky Terry, savoring this moment.

Jake holsters his gun.

Officer Wells still not satisfied as Billy still has him in his sights. The two stubborn cops won't concede or drop their weapons.

STUDENTS enter through various doors, entry points. Stopped dead in their tracks, witnessing the stand-off.

OFFICER WELLS
(to students)
You kids get out of here! Everyone
out!

The students all book for the doors.

OFFICER WELLS (CONT'D)
(to Billy)
Drop the gun.

BILLY
It's okay. We're all cops here.

Billy holsters his gun.

BILLY (CONT'D)
All done. Our apologies.

OFFICER WELLS
 (to Jake)
 Hands behind your back.

Jake complies as Terry smiles.

BILLY
 (to Officer Wells)
 Is that really necessary?

OFFICER WELLS
 Turn and grab the rails. Do it.

Billy turns, wraps his hands around a steel pole that forms the outside rail of a lunch line.

Officer Wells cuffs Jake's hands.

TERRY
 Sorry I couldn't be more help,
 Delpy. Be sure to tell Jenn I said
 hello. Or maybe I'll just do it
 myself. Seeing that you two aren't
 really talking these days.

Jake's eyes full of hate. He's ready to explode.

Billy notices.

TERRY (CONT'D)
 See you around.

Terry adjusts his shirt, tucks it back into place and makes his way to the cafeteria doors...

WHAP! A hard LEFT HOOK sends him straight to the tile with the grin knocked clear off his face.

Billy hovers over him.

BILLY
 You mention her again and I'll put
 you in the dirt myself, Findlay.

A new gathering of STUDENTS file into the lunch lines as they witness a bloody Coach Findlay flat on his back and with a busted nose.

INT. WALSH COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE - SQUAD ROOM - DAY

A crapped out Jake, now on his third day of no sleep, squats on his swivel chair. Billy at the desk adjacent to his. He's also quiet, beat down.

Caslin pokes his head out of Sheriff Greer's office.

CASLIN
 (to both)
 Yo. Let's get this over with.

Caslin dips back in. Jake and Billy sigh in unison as they pull themselves upright. Both dragging their feet as they know what fate awaits them.

Donninger steps in, sipping a mug of coffee. A somewhat worried look about him. After a moment, he continues to his desk.

INT. SHERIFF GREER'S OFFICE - DAY

Jake and Billy enter. Sheriff Greer plopped behind his desk, shifting left and right, unable to sit still. He's busy fidgeting with a rubber band.

Caslin stands with his foot kicked up on a chair. His fat belly rolled over his belt. He's reviewing a police file of some sort.

SHERIFF GREER
 Fellas. If you don't mind, I'll let Cas do the talking. I'm so hot mad right now, I don't think I can speak.

JAKE
 You want my badge?

CASLIN
 I think you should shut up and listen.
 (to Billy)
 You too.

BILLY
 Hey, yeah. No problem.

Caslin refers to his paperwork.

CASLIN
 We got a list of witnesses here. Students that claim you pulled your gun on Terry Findlay.

Jake clears his throat. Billy embarrassed.

CASLIN (CONT'D)

We have statements from those same witnesses claiming Corrie here knocked him clean on his ass in front of another police officer. After failing to comply with Officer Wells and otherwise obstructing his investigation.

BILLY

There's a real good explanation for all of this.

SHERIFF GREER

Really? And what's that, smartass?

Billy thinks.

BILLY

Ask Delpy.

Sheriff Greer shifts his focus on Jake.

SHERIFF GREER

Well? We're waiting.

Jake is quiet, unsure. He snaps out of it.

JAKE

You specifically kept Findlay's name out of this. Obstructing my investigation and spinning my wheels, boss. I sure would like to know why.

BILLY

I already told you why.

JAKE

I wanna hear it from him. Maybe this time I'll get the truth.

SHERIFF GREER

Let's get this straight. I don't have to give you shit if I don't feel it's pertinent.

Jake keeps a careful eye on Caslin. But he's somewhat aloof and uninterested.

SHERIFF GREER (CONT'D)

That kid's been through the ringer about five times over.

(MORE)

SHERIFF GREER (CONT'D)

I don't want his name drug through
the mud because some pervert
hillbilly blew his own porch light.

JAKE

Okay, fair enough. All I wanted
was an explanation, Chief.

SHERIFF GREER

Well now you've got one. You're
suspended for thirty days. Now
give me your badge and your gun.
You know the drill.

(to Billy)

You too, Rocky.

Jake and Billy relinquish their guns and badges to Caslin.
No real surprise here. No fight left in them.

JAKE

So that's it? You don't wanna know
why we were there? No questions?

CASLIN

The fact that he's balling your
wife have anything to do with it?

JAKE

You piece of--

SHERIFF GREER

Ya see, Delpy. That's why you're
going home for thirty days. Now
get out. Both of you.

Jake wilts in defeat. He and Billy dip out.

EXT. WALSH COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE - PARKING LOT - DAY

Jake and Billy head for their respective cars. They're out
of there for the next thirty. Billy far more collected and
at ease with their suspension.

On the other hand, Jake has officially worked himself into a
full-blown frenzy of paranoid obsession. His eyes black and
without rest. Billy looks concerned.

BILLY

Jake, you need sleep. You're gonna
run your car off the road, buddy.
Let me drive you home. We can come
back later.

JAKE

Why didn't you say anything about Charlie Ferris?

BILLY

Probably the same reasons you didn't. Something don't smell right.

JAKE

Yeah, you bet it doesn't. And you were a big part of what stinks, old buddy.

Billy stops in his tracks. Jake notices, stops.

BILLY

You still don't trust me? Are we still doing this?

JAKE

That depends. You got a plan?

BILLY

Maybe. The way I see it, boss man just gave us thirty days to clear this case. Are we gonna finish this thing or what?

Jake ponders this.

JAKE

My place. An hour. Bring food.

Billy grins.

INT. BILLY'S CAR - MOVING - DAY

Billy behind the wheel. Jake rides shotgun, going over our missing girls' files. They are somewhere deep in the brush and off the beaten path.

BILLY

Dunnellon. The ass end of nowhere.

Jake's eyes study the files. Deeply focused.

JAKE

Barbie Kesser, twenty-one years of age. College student on route to the University of Miami by way of Charleston.

(MORE)

JAKE (CONT'D)

Checked into the Blue Bird Motel on County Road 484 on July fifteen at Six Thirty PM. Approximately one hour and five minutes later, making an ATM withdrawal at a strip mall about a mile and a half east of the motel.

BILLY

Why the cash withdrawal? She run into problems with her credit card or something?

JAKE

I don't know. If she were here, I'd ask.

Billy squirms in his seat, uncomfortable.

BILLY

You know, I just thought of something.

JAKE

What?

BILLY

What if old man Ferris is just spinning all our wheels with this thing?

JAKE

Why would he do that?

BILLY

I have no idea. But take a look at this picture of Gardner. This was supposedly fifteen years ago, right?

JAKE

Yeah.

BILLY

Are you telling me Cahill had his little house of mirrors up and running all the way back in high school? I mean, that was his old man's property back then. Something don't add up.

JAKE

I thought of that. But the photo could've been doctored.

(MORE)

JAKE (CONT'D)

Photoshopped. Whatever. Some other girl with Gardner's face. The message is still the same. A missing girl with Gardner somehow at the center.

Jake stares out at the dense thicket of woods. Nothing but trees and a thin two-lane stretch of black asphalt as far as the eye can see.

INT. BLUE BIRD MOTEL - FRONT LOBBY - DAY

Jake and Billy question the front DESK CLERK--20s, a shaggy young local with greasy hair and tired eyes. He looks like he lives and breathes this motel.

DESK CLERK

Look. How many times I gotta tell you dudes the same story? You guys are like the third set of cops I talked to in the last nine months.

BILLY

Yeah, well. We like to be thorough. So, what did you guys talk about?

DESK CLERK

Not much. She just wanted to know where she could get something decent to eat. She wasn't exactly thrilled with our local culinary delicacies. She asked if I knew a place.

JAKE

Where?

DESK CLERK

I told her there was a killer little Mexican joint about nine miles south of Seventy-Five. Best margaritas and chimis around. She said cool. And that was it.

JAKE

You guys didn't talk about anything else? Like where she was headed? Nothing like that?

DESK CLERK

Nothing I can remember.

BILLY

And what's the name of this joint?

EXT. BILLY'S CAR - INTERSTATE 75 - MOVING - DAY

Billy back behind the wheel. Jake keeps a close eye on the passing exit signs and restaurant billboards.

JAKE

Mojito Cantina. Keep an eye out.

BILLY

It's not for another three exits.

Jake grows impatient, huffs, shakes his head.

BILLY (CONT'D)

What is it? You gonna piss yourself? We need to stop?

JAKE

Ferris said Terry and Jimmy targeted panhandlers, drifters and streetwalkers. Just like the girls on Jimmy's floor.

BILLY

Yeah, but you said those pictures were fake. Thrown in to distract you from finding Olivia. Who wasn't a hooker or a drifter. She was a high school student with a family.

JAKE

These girls just don't fit the pattern.

BILLY

What about Dawn Wilkins? She fits the pattern. Jimmy picked her up off the side of the road.

JAKE

I don't know. I think you were right the first time. Something don't feel right.

Billy spots an upcoming REST STOP AREA and merges right as they drift off the interstate.

BILLY

Hold that thought. I gotta take a leak.

Billy pulls into the rest stop, finds a spot near the restrooms and parks.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Nature calls. You better go too.

JAKE

I'm good. I went at the motel.

BILLY

Okay, piss yourself then.

The two partners step out.

EXT. REST STOP - DAY

Billy heads for the restrooms. Jake stretches his legs and back, goes for a short walk. He heads for the chain-link fence that separates them from I-75.

A large grassy field on the other side.

Jake's attention immediately drawn to a LARGE WOODEN CROSS MEMORIAL with a white stone base. So close you could reach through the fence and touch it.

The word SEPTEMBER etched onto the vertical beam, and FIFTEEN etched onto the horizontal. The two words meet each other at the center T.

A fresh bouquet of flowers around the base. Billy joins him at the fence.

JAKE

That look familiar?

BILLY

The fifteenth. Two days ago.

JAKE

A fresh kill.

BILLY

Or maybe it's just a car accident victim. It is the interstate.

JAKE

Oh, yeah? Where's the name?

Billy thinks it over.

BILLY

He couldn't have taken her here.
There's too big a crowd. Too many
witnesses.

Jake turns, eyes up a row of cars parked near the restrooms
and refreshments area.

JAKE

Could be she had car trouble. Just
like our friend Dawn.

Billy doesn't follow.

JAKE (CONT'D)

She pulls in here to pop the hood,
check her tire. Whatever. And
here comes our good samaritan Terry
to offer a hand.

BILLY

He's not gonna take her in front of
fifty witnesses. I think you're
going off topic here, partner.
It's just a cross. There's
hundreds of them.

JAKE

Yeah, hundreds of them with little
white rocks at the base. I don't
think so.

BILLY

Okay, sorry.

JAKE

Maybe he didn't take her. Could be
she just got in the car
voluntarily.

BILLY

To go where? She's not just gonna
leave her car and ride off with a
complete stranger.

JAKE

Not just any stranger. Someone
good with their hands. Good with
machines. With cars. Terry and
Jimmy used to do a lot of
restorations.

(MORE)

JAKE (CONT'D)

Could be they made a trip to the auto parts store. A garage somewhere, maybe.

BILLY

The bigger question now is...who was she? Or was it even a she?

JAKE

There's got to be more crosses.

Billy cracks a tired groan.

BILLY

Only one way to find out I guess.

JAKE

I'm driving.

EXT. DAIRY FARM RESTAURANT - DAY

A roadside burger stand shaped like a soft serve ice cream cone with glorious puffs of charcoal smoke pouring from the rooftop.

Jake and Billy stand over Billy's old friend and former partner OFFICER DANNY BURKE, F.H.P., as he devours a cheeseburger and a shake.

BILLY

Thanks for meeting us, old partner.

DANNY

Anything for you, Bill. Within reason of course.

On the table before Danny, Jake lays down still images of various roadside memorial crosses.

JAKE

These crosses were posted within a quarter mile of every abduction site or sites of last known whereabouts reported near I-75 in the last two years.

Danny sighs, and with little interest, rummages through the stack of glossy stills.

JAKE (CONT'D)

These girls were all transients. Passing through.

(MORE)

JAKE (CONT'D)

We know before they disappeared that over half of these victims were booked in motels close to the interstate.

Danny drops the photos, sips his milkshake.

JAKE (CONT'D)

We think this guy's MO is that he's targeting these motels. Selecting his victims based on the fact that they're traveling alone.

BILLY

We also have reason to believe he's good with cars. Good enough to pop our victim's hood while her back is turned. Do some tampering. From the looks of things, he's doing it while still on motel grounds.

Danny takes a monster chomp from his loaded burger. Jake winces. Billy too.

BILLY (CONT'D)

What's the matter, Danny? Are we boring you?

DANNY

Honestly? I'm a little shocked that you guys are just know learning about this. I guess you boys in Dunsboro didn't get the memo.

(beat)

Why am I not surprised?

BILLY

What memo?

DANNY

Three months ago, FHP issued a statewide memo regarding reports of crosses being found at recent abduction sites.

Jake and Billy look embarrassed.

DANNY (CONT'D)

For our eyes and ears only kind of stuff. Hoping maybe the next girl that gets snatched, we could actually catch this guy in the act posting a cross into the ground.

Disappointed, Jake and Billy hang their heads.

DANNY (CONT'D)

I take it you guys were left out in the cold on this one.

BILLY

Yeah. I'd say.

DANNY

You wanna know the funny part? Since we got wind of these crosses...not one girl has disappeared. No reported abductions. No more crosses.

JAKE

What do you know about the cross near the exit fifty-one rest stop?

Danny squints--

DANNY

The rest stop?

JAKE

Dated exactly two days ago. September Fifteen. You didn't know about this?

Danny thinks back.

DANNY

You're talking about the Wallace girl. Disappeared same time last year. The fifteenth.

BILLY

Last year?

DANNY

You know, it's a little weird how these girls just stopped disappearing. A little too convenient. We used to joke that maybe this guy was a badge.

Danny slurps the bottom of his milkshake. Jake and Billy share a look that suggests there's some possible truth to this crazy rumor.

Jake heads for the car. He's not happy.

BILLY
Thanks, old partner. Appreciate
your time.

Billy follows after Jake.

DANNY
Why don't you come back and visit
more often, Billy. Quit being such
a stranger.

Billy turns, grins, continues to his car.

INT. BILLY'S CAR - MOVING - DAY

And Jake and Billy are halfway home now. Somewhere off the interstate and on a back country road. Jake behind the wheel. Billy is halfway passed out. A long day finally coming to an end.

BILLY
I can't believe you're still awake.

JAKE
The sonofabitch was there. He put
flowers on her memorial. Like he's
celebrating some kind of
anniversary.

BILLY
Maybe.

JAKE
No maybe. He was there.

BILLY
Or maybe they're just crosses on
the side of the road and the cops
are grasping at straws. Could be,
and most likely, they don't have
shit else.

JAKE
Yeah. Could be.

BILLY
Look. In either case, if there's
any connection between Cahill's
girls and these missing persons
cases, we'll have to take it
through the department.

(MORE)

BILLY (CONT'D)

They're the only ones with access to those pictures. And that's gonna be an issue, partner.

JAKE

Yeah, I know that. Tell me something I don't know besides the obvious.

BILLY

There's one other option. You can come clean and tell The Chief about your little play date with Charlie Ferris.

Jake ignores him.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Yeah. Just a thought.

EXT. RURAL COUNTRY ROAD - BUS STOP - DUSK

A school bus comes to a swift halt before a private clay road that penetrates a sea of laurel oak trees. Jenn stands next to her rusted tin mailbox. She smiles just as--

Sarah bounces off the bus with schoolbooks in tow.

JENN

Hey. That's a lot of books. That mean you got a lot of homework.

SARAH

Always. I'm hungry. Can we get McDonald's?

JENN

Maybe.

SARAH

And can we maybe meet Dad there?

JENN

Not tonight.

SARAH

But you said that...

JENN

I know.

Sarah pouts.

SARAH
I'm calling Dad.

JENN
Yeah. Good luck with that.

The bus door slams shut. And it's out of there. As it passes, we soon discover--

TERRY

standing, waiting on the other side. He's close to his car, parked on the opposite shoulder.

Jenn feels his look, turns around. An almost shocked look about her. But she musters a polite smile.

INT. JENN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DUSK

With a glass of red wine in hand, Jenn hands Terry a bottle of beer and pops a squat at a cozy breakfast nook. Terry takes the seat across from her.

TERRY
Thank you. I needed this.

JENN
Yeah. I can tell something's up. I have a feeling it has to do with Jake. I swear you can't keep any secrets in this town. It's a wonder I ever came back.

TERRY
I'm afraid it's a little more complicated than that.

Jenn doesn't follow.

Sarah runs in, hopped up and excited.

SARAH
Mom. Can I go to Jamie's for dinner? They're getting pizza and watching a movie.

JENN
You know I don't like you walking down the side of the road by yourself.

SARAH
I know. You can drive me.

JENN

No. You have homework. And I have a guest.

SARAH

It's Friday.

JENN

Yeah, that's what you said last Friday. Then waited until Sunday to start that paper.

SARAH

Well, how about if Jamie's Mom picks me up? Can I go then?

Jenn gives up.

JENN

Back by Ten.

Sarah smiles, hugs her neck, races back to her room.

JENN (CONT'D)

I have a hard time saying no to her since...

Terry waits.

JENN (CONT'D)

Well. The big move.

TERRY

Jake's coming back here was a bit of a shock for you?

JENN

No. I knew he'd come. Eventually. Just not this soon.

Terry quietly sips his beer. Jenn grows suspicious.

JENN (CONT'D)

What's going on with my husband? I know it's something. Or you wouldn't just show up here unannounced.

TERRY

Well. I won't beat around the bush any longer than I have to. Jake's accused me of doing something pretty serious.

JENN

Like what?

Terry laughs nervously.

TERRY

Nothing much. Just kidnapping and sexually assaulting a series of women who've disappeared over the last several months. Possibly even years.

Jenn almost spills her wine. In total shock.

JENN

Excuse me?

TERRY

Him and Billy came to see me. Down at the school. Showing me all these pictures. They think I killed Jimmy too.

Jenn is left stunned.

JENN

I should check on Sarah.

--stands to leave.

TERRY

I didn't mean to scare you.

Headed for the hallway, a frazzled Jenn changes direction, walks to the sink to pour out her wine.

Terry rises from the table, steps up behind her, not giving her any real space to breathe.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Believe me. What you're feeling now is sort of how I felt yesterday. Alone. Confused. Scared.

Jenn faces him.

JENN

I'm sorry. All the sudden, this feels inappropriate.

TERRY

I got a call from Burt Greer a few days ago.

(MORE)

TERRY (CONT'D)

He told me Jake's been doing some sniffing around with regard to Jimmy's suicide.

Terry nods to the table.

TERRY (CONT'D)

You should come sit down. You need to hear this.

Jenn pulls her wine glass out of the sink, snags the whole bottle from the center counter, takes her seat back at the breakfast nook.

Terry remains standing.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Jake's been...how do you say... connecting some dots that, in his mind, lead directly back to me. He's being pretty pushy about it. I was just thinking that maybe he got wind that you and I were...

JENN

You and I were what?

Terry stalls.

TERRY

Nothing. Forget it.

JENN

Well. All I can say with regard to Jake and his work is that I'm sure he had his reasons for reaching out to you.

TERRY

Burt Greer's not the only one who's reached out to me regarding Jake.

JENN

Oh?

TERRY

Cale Caslin. Myka Lindell. Billy Corrie. They're all concerned that maybe Jake's a bit stressed.

JENN

I don't understand.

TERRY

You know. With moving back home. With the separation. Finding Jimmy's body. All those pictures of those girls. It's all taken a toll.

JENN

Girls? What are you telling me?

TERRY

The bottom line is that Jake is drinking again. A lot. We're all just a little concerned for his mental health.

Jenn isn't buying it.

JENN

Jake hasn't had a drink in six months. Believe me, I know. I would've heard about it.

TERRY

Look. Jenn. Whatever happened between you two, it's tearing him up inside. He's burying himself in his work. You should seriously have a talk with him. Before he loses his job on top of his family.

Jenn nods in agreement.

JENN

Thank you for stopping by. I'll do that. And I'll keep you posted.

Terry offers her a truly fake smile with all the false concern he can muster.

TERRY

I'll let myself out.

Terry heads for the door. Jenn left flattened by this news. She pours herself a tall one.

EXT. JENN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Day finally gives way to night. And when it's dark in these woods, it's as dark as it gets. Crickets chirp. Insects sing their usual chorus.

An exterior PORCHLIGHT comes on.

INT. JENN'S HOUSE - GARAGE - NIGHT

Jenn enters with a full basket of dirty laundry. She drops on an oil-stained garage floor. She flips the lid on a washing machine, navigates a line of half empty bottles of detergent. She makes her choice.

She starts the water, adds the soap. And in goes the first full load of laundry.

She drops the lid, turns, faces a large window on the side of this two-car garage. The cheap drapes yanked open. But Jenn is too busy pulling a cigarette from her pack. Oblivious to what's happening outside.

Walking past the window, headed for the door is---

A MAN dressed head to toe in what appears to be several BLACK LAWN BAGS cut to fit his frame. With only his eyes and mouth exposed, another bag is fitted OVER HIS HEAD.

Jenn looks up, SHRIEKS in horror.

The Masked Intruder spots her, picks up a CHAIR and SMASHES out the front WINDOW.

Jenn yanks the drapes closed.

She turns, faces the half-opened door that leads back into the house. She rushes toward it, attempts to close but is firmly HALTED by the intruder.

He reaches his arm through the door, grabs Jenn by the hair as she fights to slam the door shut. With all her weight behind her, she gives it a good shove--

BAM! The intruder's arm CRUSHED. He pulls his wounded limb through the cracked open door.

Jenn quickly shuts and locks.

She looks to her left. A garage door button. She smashes it with her open palm.

The door slowly CRAWLS OPEN.

But Jenn has no time to waste as she ducks down, slides her thin frame under the crack.

EXT. JENN'S HOUSE - GARAGE - NIGHT

Jenn rolls out of the garage. Using her hands, she pushes herself off the pavement.

Now getting upright, she almost trips but manages to stay on her feet as she books it into the pitch-dark woods.

EXT. PRIVATE LAKE - NIGHT

Jenn makes her way to the water. Without making too big of a splash, she tip-toes into the shallow end...drifts under the protective enclosure of a boat dock.

Jenn wraps her arm around one of the slimy underwater posts and waits in silence. Her lips quiver with fear. But she fights her teeth from chattering.

After a few nerve-wracking moments of pure silence--

FOOTSTEPS on the dock above her.

EXT. BOAT DOCK - NIGHT

The intruder searches the immediate area. No sign of Jenn. He makes his way off the pier, runs back into the dark belly of the open woods.

After a good few moments--

Jenn floats out, into the open. No sign of the intruder. She very quietly floats toward the beach, quietly swims toward freedom, walks out of the lake.

On the beach now. Still no sign of her intruder. But it's too dark to tell. He could be anywhere.

Jenn rushes back to her house as the leaves crunch beneath her shoeless feet.

INT. JENN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Jenn peers through her shattered front window, moves for the open front door, quietly moves inside. Takes inventory of her immediate surroundings, moves across the floor and straight to a corner bedroom.

INT. JENN'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jenn tip toes into her room, stops at the door. Her sliding glass bedroom door exposed. The Venetian blind slats turned sideways. Her rear porch on full display. She stares into the darkness of her back yard, searches for any signs of life lurking about outside.

The coast is clear. Jenn moves into her room, opens a closet door, reaches for a shoe box on a top shelf, pulls it down and grips a Kimber nine mil.

Holding the weapon with both hands, she moves out of her room and back into--

THE LIVING ROOM

Where she spots some busted glass fragments on her carpet. She follows the long trail to a shattered picture frame. Inside is a family portrait--**Jenn, Sarah and Jake**. The picture itself appears to have been smashed with a closed fist or on the end of something sharp.

Jenn bends down to pick it up. Before she knows what's happening--

The intruder grabs her around the waist...

Jenn kicks and screams--

--tosses her stomach first onto the dining room table.

Before she's able to push herself off, the intruder grabs her by the back of the hair, shoves her face first onto the table ...places the family portrait before her eyes. As if to say...look what you've done to us.

JENN

Please. Jake. Terry.

After a few agonizing moments, the intruder releases his grip ...chases out the front door. Jenn bawls her eyes out.

EXT. JENN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The front lawn is covered in police cars. All with their lights flashing bright.

Wrapped in a beach towel, Jenn rests on a chair near the front door while Sheriff Greer gets hers and Jake's statements on record.

SHERIFF GREER

Findlay was here. You said maybe an hour before our guy busted through the door?

JENN

At least. Maybe a little less. He told me all these crazy things about Jake. About him drinking.

(MORE)

JENN (CONT'D)

Having these paranoid delusions.
I didn't believe a word of it.

(beat)

So, I asked him where he got these
weird ideas about my husband.

SHERIFF GREER

And what did he say?

Jenn locks eyes with Sheriff Greer. An all-knowing kind of
stare that speaks volumes.

JENN

He said he got them from you.

Jake stares at Sheriff Greer with contempt. With real
accusation in his eyes.

Sheriff Greer feeling the pressure.

SHERIFF GREER

I'm gonna steal Jake for a minute
or two. If you'll excuse us.

Sheriff Greer nods to Jake as the two step away for a quiet
moment alone. A fed-up Jenn never letting either of them
out of her sight.

SHERIFF GREER (CONT'D)

I want you to listen to me. We're
gonna look in on Terry. We're
gonna do this right. I need your
word you won't do nothin stupid in
the meantime.

JAKE

Like what? Blow his brains out?

SHERIFF GREER

Yeah, something like that.

JAKE

I can't make any promises.

Sheriff Greer checks with Jenn, still staring him down and
looking fed up.

SHERIFF GREER

Alright. We bring him in.
Officially. But I ask the
questions. Deal?

Jake walks off. End of discussion. Sheriff Greer grins as he watches Jake join his wife on the porch. He strokes her wet hair, super sincere, worried.

OVER BLACK

SUPERIMPOSE: THREE WEEKS LATER

INT. WALSH COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE - HALLWAY - DAY

Jake and Billy wait patiently on a bench, just outside the official briefing room. Jake now clean shaven, more awake and alert.

Out of the briefing room door, adjacent to Billy, walks a set of grieving PARENTS--50s, eyes red and swollen. Fighting a new round of tears, barely holding it together.

BILLY

That's not good.

Donninger pops his head out--

DONNINGER

Okay, you two. Boss man's ready.

INT. WALSH COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE - BRIEFING ROOM - DAY

Jake and Billy enter. Sheriff Greer, Myka and Caslin all in attendance. All standing near the mobile blackboard featuring Jimmy Cahill's supposed victims.

All photos still intact but now carefully separated by hair and skin color and common physical characteristics.

The conference tables have also been removed. All but one. And just a few chairs remaining.

Sheriff Greer hands Jake and Billy their badges. The two partners clip them to their belts.

SHERIFF GREER

Okay, you two. You're back on the clock. I'm sure by now you've heard we've officially opened an investigation linking Jimmy Cahill to the interstate abductions.

JAKE

Yeah. Heard something through the grapevine. Surprised you were able to keep the press out of this.

MYKA

This has been hard enough as it is. Watching these poor people have to go through it all over again.

Billy studies the board full of girls.

MYKA (CONT'D)

Be thankful you weren't a part of it.

SHERIFF GREER

Thanks, Myka. Why don't you head on home. We'll call you if we need you.

Myka nods.

MYKA

No argument there.
(to Jake and Billy)
Welcome back.

BILLY

Good to see you.

Myka grabs a stack of files from the conference table and heads for the door.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Who were those people that just left?

SHERIFF GREER

Jack and Penny Martindale. Their little girl Anna disappeared last April. We've officially made contact with all but one of our girl's next of kin.

JAKE

That's good. That you were able to pull the right strings and make it happen.

SHERIFF GREER

Yeah. So, anyways. We brought them all in.

(MORE)

SHERIFF GREER (CONT'D)
A few at a time, to take a look at
Jimmy's private collection.

JAKE
And?

SHERIFF GREER
You wanna know what the final tally
was on these parents making any
kind of positive identification?

BILLY
How many?

Sheriff Greer makes them wait. Jake and Billy chomping at
the bit for his response.

SHERIFF GREER
Zero. Nothing. Not one.

Jake doesn't buy it.

JAKE
Not one parent could identify a
single one of these girls?

CASLIN
I'm sorry, Delpy. For both of you.

BILLY
Yeah, me too.

SHERIFF GREER
Listen to me very closely. This
case is officially closed.

Jake paces the carpet, containing his rage. Billy stands
still, quiet, swallows his words. He's just as upset and
disappointed.

SHERIFF GREER (CONT'D)
I don't know what happened between
Cahill and this Olivia Gardner and
frankly, I no longer care. We
don't have shit. We never did.

JAKE
We have Charlie Ferris. He all but
confessed to covering these
murders.

DONNINGER
Oh, really?

Jake and Billy turn around, facing Donninger who's quietly hovering behind them.

DONNINGER (CONT'D)

Who's murder is that, Jake? You have names? Dates?

Jake sighs.

SHERIFF GREER

He's right, Jake. It isn't proof.

JAKE

And what about Findlay? And what happened with my wife? Or doesn't that matter?

CASLIN

As soon as he turns up, we'll know something. If he's wrong, he's bound to stub his toe. But we don't have shit. No prints. No hairs. Nothing that ties him to what happened with your wife.

JAKE

In other words, you've decided to stop looking.

CASLIN

It's over, Jake. Let it go.

Jake books it out the door.

BILLY

Hey, partner.

SHERIFF GREER

Let him go. Hell, he's been through it. We all have.

Sheriff Greer faces the blackboard. All patience gone, he flips the board around. A flat, clean surface. No more photos of abused girls.

Billy stares at the blank board. As if it's the official period at the end of their case. He ducks out.

INT. JAKE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Jenn rests on her couch. While Jake stares aimlessly out the window, watching a heavy rain fall. He's been standing guard since the attack.

JAKE

What a homecoming. Starting to wonder if I should've ever come back here.

Jenn digs at her nails, fidgety, still nervous and upset over that almost fateful night.

JENN

I still can't believe he could be capable of...doing what he almost did.

Jake turns to her, matter-of-factly.

JAKE

It wouldn't be the first time. He's a sick guy, Jenn. I wouldn't put it past him to try and come back here. After all the smoke clears. Try to plead his case with you.

JENN

You actually worried about that?

JAKE

A little. I guess.

Jenn looks offended but swallows her words, lets it go. She changes the subject.

JENN

For a split second there, something really bad crossed my mind. After what happened with us last year...

Jenn can't spit it out. Jake nods. As if he knows.

JENN (CONT'D)

I've been scared to be around you, Jake. I didn't think we'd ever be able to fix that. But you being here this last few weeks is the only thing that's given me any comfort.

Jake offers her a warm, supportive smile. Jenn smiles back. A moment of possible reconciliation.

Jake's CELL RINGS. He answers.

JAKE

Talk to me, partner.

CHARLIE (V.O.)
 It's been a while. I haven't heard
 from you, Sergeant. I was
 beginning to get worried.

Jake checks with Jenn, who watches curiously. Jake paces the
 foyer as anxiety sets in.

JAKE
 Where is he? Where's Findlay?

CHARLIE (V.O.)
 That is the million dollar
 question, isn't it? Did he or
 didn't he? And how many? It's
 like I've been holding this big
 secret inside, just busting at the
 seams to get it out of me. But
 Terry made his choice to run. To
 hide. He'll be running in one way
 or another for the rest of his life
 until he's truly honest with
 himself. That's the funny thing
 about the truth. You can never run
 from it. I made his sins my
 burden. But it's out of my hands.

Jenn gets curious, crawls off the couch, walks closer to Jake
 with concern in her eyes, eavesdrops.

CHARLIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Now it's up to you, Sergeant. You
 can run and hide like Terry. Let
 your friends in the department try
 to scare you off of this case by
 coming after your family. By
 scaring and upsetting Jenn. Or you
 can hold strong. Let the truth be
 your guiding light.

JAKE
 Where were you that night, Charlie?

Silence.

JAKE (CONT'D)
 I'm sorry. Did I speak out of
 turn?

Charlie hangs up.

JENN
 What was that all about?

A KNOCK at the door almost gives Jenn a heart attack.

JENN (CONT'D)

Shit!

JAKE

Stay put.

Jake pulls his sidearm, peers out the window, spots Billy on the other side and quickly answers.

BILLY

Turn on Channel Nine.

JAKE

What the hell are you talking about?

Billy invites himself in. Heads straight for the television, grabs the remote from an entertainment center, flips it on and surfs the eleven o'clock news. A breaking story already in progress.

JENN

What is it?

BILLY

Just watch.

NEWS ANCHOR

A cryptic YouTube video posted less than twenty-four hours ago is blowing up the internet. Sitting at over a hundred thousand views as it features what appears to be a frightened young woman, bound and tied at the hands and feet. Who appears to be the same woman reported to have been abducted three days ago from a motel just outside of Sanford...

The news broadcast continues but is muffled by Jake and Billy's conversation.

JAKE

What girl? What the hell's he talking about? We didn't hear anything.

BILLY

Shhh. It's coming. Just wait.

Back to the broadcast.

NEWS ANCHOR

Due to the graphic nature of this video, please be advised this is not for younger children. Let's take a look...

CRYPTIC VIDEO: A secluded lake in the open woods of Central Florida is smooth and still on a hot day. A police car parked on the beach. A girl, DAWN WILKINS, dressed in a green tank top and cut off jean shorts pushes the empty squad car into the deep end as it quickly sinks...

JAKE

Is that...

BILLY

Yes. Yes it is.

CRYPTIC VIDEO: DAWN dances like a flower child, carefree, her hair running down her back. She's on a lone dirt road in the middle of nowhere. About twenty yards out stands TREY, Dawn's boyfriend, dressed in a simple white t shirt and jeans. His hair cut short. Looking a lot like Terry when he was that age.

JAKE

Trey.

CRYPTIC VIDEO: On the other end of the road is a second man. But this man is dressed in the same BLACK TRASH BAG outfit worn by Jenn's attacker.

Jenn gasps at the sight. Jake notices.

CRYPTIC VIDEO: Dawn lay in the forest, on top of a pile of leaves, very out of it. As if she's been drugged. Trey on one side of her. TRASH BAG on the other. Trash Bag stares back at Trey, points to Dawn. Trey steps closer and closer to the camera...blocking it. The screen goes BLACK.

Jake squints, fights to understand. Billy watches him.

CRYPTIC VIDEO: We're back at Jimmy Cahill's barn. His dead, limp body in the chair. TRASH BAG stares into the camera as he dumps loads and loads of dirty pictures over the body and around the floor beneath him.

BILLY

That look familiar?

JAKE

Charlie.

Jenn doesn't follow.

JENN

Charlie? Charlie who?

CRYPTIC VIDEO: Dawn, now tied hands and feet, on her knees, staring up at the camera. Her reflection in a mirror behind her exposes a pair of restrained legs.

JAKE

Dawn.

CRYPTIC VIDEO: Trey hovers over Dawn, (aka Olivia), with a clothesline gripped between his hands, about to strangle the life out of her. Instead, wraps the noose around his neck, climbs atop a chair, hangs himself from the ceiling. Dawn watches in horror.

BILLY

It's like a whole production.

CRYPTIC VIDEO: Someone in a car records the green street sign HOWELL BRANCH ROAD. Cut to Dawn walking out of the lake, onto the beach. She faces the camera.

Cut to black.

Jake spots Jenn's laptop rested on a nightstand. He rushes over, jerks out the cord, snags it up and heads for the dining room table.

JENN

Someone wanna tell me what any of this means?

Jake flips open the laptop, heads to YouTube and searches for the infamous video. He finds it almost immediately and presses play.

Billy joins him.

BILLY

What are you doing?

JAKE

I wanna make sure.

Jake fast forwards the footage until he reaches the part where Dawn is on her knees, on Jimmy's floor. He stops and freezes the image.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Tell me where you've seen that before.

Billy is mouth agape, shocked. Jake walks to his box of case files on the other side of the table. The Cahill case files to be exact. He opens a file folder, quickly retrieves the still image of OLIVIA GARDNER.

Billy snags it from his hands, takes a closer look. Refers to the image of Dawn, frozen on the laptop. An exact match. Same pose, clothes, reflection in the mirror.

BILLY

Dawn posed for this picture. We were right. It was a fake. Photoshopped. I wonder how many other pictures she posed for. If not all of them.

JAKE

Guess what tomorrow is?

Billy faces Jake--

JAKE (CONT'D)

Fifteen-year anniversary of Olivia Gardner's death.

EXT. HOWEL BRANCH ROAD - DAWN

Terry pulls his car to the soft shoulder, gets out. He stares up at the green street sign: Howell Branch Road. As seen in the video.

A car passes on the highway.

He is cautious of his surroundings as he tucks a small caliber pistol into the rear of his pants.

He abandons his car, humps it down a thin dirt road on foot. It could pass as a bike trail. But there are no clear road signs or directions.

EXT. RAILROAD - DAWN

Terry uses a flashlight to navigate his way across a railroad track, down a hill flooded with WHITE ROCKS. He enters another patch of woods.

EXT. WOODS - DAWN

As Terry walks these woods, memories of a fateful night come back to haunt him.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

These same woods. Fifteen years earlier.

A drunken, drugged, blasted out of her mind Olivia Gardner lay sprawled out on a blanket. Wrapped in a beach towel, she's otherwise nude and wet from her midnight swim.

A younger Jimmy Cahill and Terry watch her. Jimmy whispers in Terry's ear, egging him on.

JIMMY

She was a no good whore, Terry.
She was screwin everybody. You saw
what she did...

EXT. PRIVATE LAKE - WOODS - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

A SQUAD CAR is parked near this small and quaint little lake and private beach. Inside, WALTER FINDLAY sits in the passenger seat while OLIVIA GARDNER slowly grinds his lap.

A very angry and sad Terry watches from across the lake.

JIMMY (V.O.)

You saw with your own eyes. She
ripped your family apart...

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Jimmy and Terry stare down at a half nude Olivia. Still struggling to remain conscious.

JIMMY

Can't let her get away with that.

Terry stares at Olivia, shakes his head, unsure.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

What's the matter with you? I did
this for you, man. For us.

Terry gives Jimmy a nasty stare.

TERRY

You didn't do this for me. You did
it for you. I'm out of here.

Terry turns to walk away--

Jimmy grabs him, shoves him back.

TERRY (CONT'D)
Get your hands off!

Terry balls up his fists.

JIMMY
You gonna hit me, buddy? I'm the only family you got left. You're too stupid to understand that.

Terry once again stares down at Olivia.

JIMMY (CONT'D)
Who you gonna tell? It's your word against mine. Turns out I got my own story. About your old man and Olivia. Right here at the lake.

Terry cries.

TERRY
You lousy bastard.

JIMMY
What's it gonna be, Terry? You gonna handle business? The clock's ticking.

Terry checks with Olivia.

JIMMY (CONT'D)
Look at her. She don't give a damn about nothing. About me. About you. Your old man. Your parents are dead and she's out here partying like nothing happened.

Terry grows angrier and angrier.

EXT. WOODS - MORNING (PRESENT)

Terry's eyes fill with tears as he ventures further into the trees and comes upon a clearing.

EXT. PRIVATE LAKE - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Terry is on top of Olivia. Jimmy is loud and obnoxious as his friend pumps away. All of the sudden, Olivia comes around, grows a bit sick.

Terry climaxes. At the very same time, Olivia violently slaps and kicks him away...rolls, vomits into the leaves beside her.

JIMMY
(panicked)
Shit.

Olivia goes into convulsions.

TERRY
What's wrong with her, man?

Olivia has a seizure, chokes on her own vomit.

JIMMY
Shit, man!

EXT. WOODS - MORNING (PRESENT)

Terry finds a familiar spot in these woods and stops. His eyes full of tears and regret.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Terry runs like a wild animal through the woods, out of the woods and finally...

Onto a two-lane blacktop. A street sign reads HOWELL BRANCH ROAD. He flags down a pair of BRIGHT HEADBEAMS heading his direction.

A SQUAD CAR comes to a swift halt. Out steps a younger, clean-shaven JP DONNINGER.

DONNINGER
Terry!

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Donninger watches with regret as Charlie finishes covering Olivia's grave with dirt.

A shameful Jimmy watches.

Terry in a fetal position, a sobbing mess with his back against a tree trunk.

Charlie watches Jimmy, heartbroken. Jimmy so full of shame, he can only stare at the dirt.

Charlie kneels before Terry. Before we can witness their discussion--

EXT. PRIVATE LAKE - MORNING (PRESENT)

Terry snaps out of it as he spots Charlie stepping out of the trees and holding a scared Dawn hostage. Her hands tied together with a simple clothesline.

CHARLIE

You made it. I was ready to give up on you.

TERRY

What are we doing back here, Uncle Charlie?

CHARLIE

I was thinking it's time we absolved ourselves of our sins. I thought you'd like to join me.

Terry has a good look around.

TERRY

What does she have to do with it?

CHARLIE

A little insurance. In case you were getting any weird ideas about running again.

TERRY

I don't understand.

CHARLIE

Come on. Come take a look.

Over Charlie's shoulder, Terry observes a deep, wide hole dug into the ground. A homemade grave of sorts.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

She can't hurt you anymore, son.

Terry moves closer to the grave, stares into the hole to find the skeletal remains of Olivia Gardner.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

What happened here should've never happened. Just like what happened to your mother.

Terry shuts his eyes, full of shame and regret.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

It's a crazy thing losing every person in your life that ever meant anything. Then realizing it was completely your fault. Carrying that around while you try to move on. Not telling anyone the truth.

Terry completely turns his back on the grave, unable to face it, sickened by the sight.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

You know, when I put the pressure on Delpy, I thought you'd crack. Tell Greer everything. About what happened here. About me and your father.

TERRY

That wasn't very smart.

CHARLIE

I did it for you. I gave you every opportunity to release that burden that you've been carrying around inside of you and you didn't bite.

Terry slowly breaks down in tears.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

It's been a cancer to your soul, son. And deep down you know I was to blame. All those years, fighting that urge to show up on my doorstep with a shotgun. Do away with Uncle Charlie once and for all.

TERRY

You're only making this worse.

CHARLIE

What you did to Olivia Gardner. That was meant for me. Because I lied to you. I lied because I couldn't bare tell you the truth about what happened between me and your mother.

TERRY

Don't do this. Not now.

CHARLIE

That I was the real reason for your parents split. Not Olivia. Not all those girls your father found solace in after your Mom left the two of you.

Terry fights the urge to slug Charlie.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

After your father died, I thought the truth would only drive a wedge between us. Now I know I've only made it worse. But now I'm gonna fix it.

TERRY

How's that?

CHARLIE

You've gotten a raw deal in life. With your father. With this place. People turning their back on you for letting him die. Now's your chance to be the hero. Save the girl.

Terry is utterly confused. Charlie pulls a gun from his pants, tosses it to the ground.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

A scuffle ensued. A gun was dropped. Before I could get to it, you pick it up. But not before I could come at you with a knife.

TERRY

You've lost it, Charlie. You know that?

CHARLIE

Yeah I know. A long time ago. And if you don't do this, I'll go to Burt Greer myself. Tell him the whole story. The way I see it, you got one of two choices.

Terry gazes down at the Glock forty, still in the dirt.

TERRY

I'm not picking up that gun. And you're not telling them anything. I know you're not that crazy.

Charlie forcefully grips Dawn by the arm, walks her back into the woods, on their way out of there.

Terry left conflicted.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Don't do it!

CHARLIE

Call your lawyer, Terry. We're gonna need a good one.

Terry picks up the Glock, draws down on him.

TERRY

Stop it!

Jake steps out of the trees, shotgun in tow.

JAKE

(to Terry)

We heard everything, Terry. No more secrets here. What we're gonna do now is go back to the station and talk this thing over. All of us.

Billy also steps from the trees, grips his firearm.

BILLY

Come on, Findlay. You're not a killer. I know that even if you don't, buddy. Let's talk this out.

Terry is confused as he stares back and forth between the cops and Charlie and Dawn. And Dawn is visibly shaken by this gun-fueled showdown.

JAKE

(to Dawn)

You can quit playing scared now. Show's over.

DAWN

Who's playing?

CHARLIE

They're gonna bury it, Terry. All of it. And then they're gonna let me go. Because they have to. Because there were no victims.

Jake can hardly believe it.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

There never was.

Charlie nods to Olivia's grave.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Well. Just the one. And we know what happened to her, don't we?

Terry grows angry, firmly grips his gun, steps closer to Charlie.

TERRY

Shut up. Shut your mouth.

JAKE

Don't play into it, Terry. That's what he wants. Just back off.

CHARLIE

What the hell. I guess some secrets are better left buried.

Terry grows more and more conflicted. His tears now shooting down his face.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

You can make it quick. I promise I'll go fast. Just like your mother.

Terry takes aim. POW POW! Two shots center mass and down goes Charlie. Dawn SHRIEKS, bolts out of there, tucks and rolls onto the dirt.

Charlie squirms, chokes on his own blood.

Terry hovers over him. Unloads most of his magazine as Charlie's face and body are sprayed with shots.

Jake lowers his gun. Billy watches in awe. He holsters his gun and observes Terry standing over Charlie's body with no real sign of life inside him.

JAKE

Put the gun down, Terry. It's over. It's finally over.

Terry grins.

TERRY

Is it? I don't see it that way.

JAKE

We know you had your reasons. It was a long time ago. No one has to know.

Terry's eyes full of tears.

TERRY

Yeah, I know, Delpy. No one ever has to know.

Without hesitation, Terry turns his gun on Jake--

BILLY

Hey!

Billy draws down, empties half a clip of shells as Terry is practically flung backwards. Thump. On the dirt. A dead, limp body balled up and bloodied.

Jake almost in tears. Billy slowly lowers his weapon.

INT. SHERIFF GREER'S OFFICE - DAY

Sheriff Greer is having some eggs and toast as Jake dips in uninvited and, without hesitation, dumps his badge on his cherry oak desk.

Sheriff Greer just stares at it. Speechless. He rolls his chair backward, huffs out loud. A simple shake of his head spells exhaustion.

SHERIFF GREER

Alright, Delpy. You want me to come clean? I'll come clean. Right here. Right now. Under God. And we don't speak of it again.

JAKE

I'm waiting.

Sheriff Greer reaches into his bottom drawer, comes out with two high ball glasses and a bottle of scotch. He pours them both a good belt, offers one to Jake.

Jake gives it a look, unsure.

JAKE (CONT'D)

No thanks.

SHERIFF GREER

That's right. Sorry. Forgot.

Sheriff Greer pours the second glass into his, stands and roams the room with his booze.

SHERIFF GREER (CONT'D)
 After you came forward with that picture of Gardner, JP came to me crying like a baby. Admitted what he did that night. What he'd been living with for fourteen years.

Sheriff Greer stares into his glass, hesitates.

SHERIFF GREER (CONT'D)
 About how he panicked. How he had felt obligated in protecting Walter's kid.

JAKE
 (confused)
 Obligated?

SHERIFF GREER
 You never heard the real story about what happened to Walter. Most people haven't. That's because we covered it up.

Sheriff Greer gulps down his double shot.

SHERIFF GREER (CONT'D)
 He wasn't just shot in the back by some random punk.

JAKE
 Tell me about it.

SHERIFF GREER
 It happened the night he found out about his wife and Charlie Ferris. He got his load on real good. Stumbling drunk and ready to take Ferris's head off....

INT. CHARLIE'S HOUSE - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

A shirtless Charlie lay on the couch in some lounging pants with a half nude CHELSEA FINDLAY--40s, wearing only a shirt and her hair still wet from a shower.

SHERIFF GREER (V.O.)
 He kicks in the door, catches them on the couch together. Both half dressed...

The front door CRASHES OPEN. In walks a hopping mad WALTER FINDLAY. His eyes red and full of rage.

SHERIFF GREER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Walter goes berserk.

Walter charges the couch as Charlie attempts to stand and defend him and Chelsea. But he's too slow...

Walter decks him. Charlie falls. Walter continues to kick and kick...full shots to Charlie's stomach...his face. Anywhere and everywhere.

Chelsea dials 911 from a cordless phone.

SHERIFF GREER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
After knocking Ferris completely unconscious, he starts in on his wife...

Walter meets Chelsea's gaze. She's next.

SHERIFF GREER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
But not before she could call 911.
And he throws her a beating he'd never given her before...

Walter moves in on her. But before we can witness this violent attack...

INT. SHERIFF GREER'S OFFICE - DAY (PRESENT DAY)

Sheriff Greer stands before Jake.

SHERIFF GREER
In a moment of stupid, blind rage he reaches for a letter opener. But by that time, the cops arrive. JP runs in, spots old Walter just moments before driving that old blade into his old lady. And he did what thousands of cops are faced with every day. A split second decision.

Jake nods. It's all coming together now.

SHERIFF GREER (CONT'D)
JP took Terry's father from him. Over a stupid, one-time mistake. Just like what happened between Terry and that girl.
(beat)
(MORE)

SHERIFF GREER (CONT'D)
 You of all people should understand
 that, Delpy.

Jake stares down at his untouched, now empty glass.

INT. JAKE AND JENN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

An out-of-control Jake slaps the hell out of Jenn as she
 cowers in a corner like a scared child.

An almost empty bottle of vodka and a jug of orange juice on
 a nearby counter. Jake's eyes are red, his face flushed.
 Jenn cries.

JAKE
 Shut up! Just shut up!

INT. SHERIFF GREER'S OFFICE - DAY (PRESENT DAY)

Jake finally snaps out of it. His eyes full of shame.

SHERIFF GREER
 Suicide or not, the way I see it,
 Jimmy Cahill got what he deserved.
 But Terry was just a victim of
 circumstance. And that's all it
 was. In the wrong place at the
 wrong time and face to face with
 the young woman he believed
 destroyed his family.

JAKE
 And we just keep it quiet. Like
 what he did didn't matter.

SHERIFF GREER
 That girl was gonna die, no matter
 what Terry did or didn't do to her.
 Cahill saw to that when he filled
 her full of pills.

Jake shakes his head. He's just plain disgusted.

SHERIFF GREER (CONT'D)
 We all live with something, Jake.

He steps closer to Jake, more personal.

SHERIFF GREER (CONT'D)
 Ferris was right. Terry got a raw deal in this life and we gave him a second chance. Just like the one we gave you, Delpy.

Jake stares down at his badge, unsure of his decision.

SHERIFF GREER (CONT'D)
 You may not get a third. Given recent circumstances with your wife and everything that's happened, I'd strongly reconsider.

Jake stares back and forth between the badge and Sheriff Greer's unwavering stare. He heads for the door.

SHERIFF GREER (CONT'D)
 Tell you what, Jake. I'll just keep it handy in case you change your mind.

But Jake is long gone.

INT. WALSH COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE - SQUAD ROOM - DAY

Jake stands at his desk, boxes up his things. Various stationary items, personal photos of family, framed commendations from the department.

Billy drops by.

BILLY
 The rumors are true.

JAKE
 Yeah, I guess so.

BILLY
 So. You just don't trust us anymore, is that it, buddy?

JAKE
 We just killed the son of Walter Findlay. I think the writing's on the wall for me, old buddy.

BILLY
 No, I killed him. Because he was gonna kill you. Both of us. That's all anyone needs to know.

Jake isn't convinced.

JAKE

Yeah.

Jake almost mopes as he finishes tossing his crap into a filing box. Billy notices.

BILLY

Don't tell me you feel guilty. The guy was a rapist. And his old man, as it turns out, was an asshole. Findlay was no God. He was just another cop. Another hump with a drinking problem and PTSD.

JAKE

Yeah, maybe.

BILLY

So he coached a few sports and has a building named after him. Big deal. Who cares?

Jake smiles, laughs.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Where are you going?

JAKE

I gotta go do something. And I can't really do it from here. That's about all I can tell you.

Billy grins.

BILLY

Oh. That something happen to be female and wear a uniform?

JAKE

I'll keep you updated.

Jake extends his hand. Billy accepts. The two share a sincere look of true friendship.

JAKE (CONT'D)

See you around, cool breeze.

Jake heads out. Billy watches.

EXT. BACK COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

An extremely fit, attractive YOUNG WOMAN--20s, short shorts, tank top, has her car hood popped as WHITE SMOKE spills from the radiator. The Young Woman grows irritated, walks to the edge of the road.

A familiar dusty Sheriff's SUV pulls to the soft shoulder. Out steps Billy, no partner. All alone now.

BILLY

Uh oh. That don't look good.

YOUNG WOMAN

No. It smells even worse.

BILLY

You call for a tow?

YOUNG WOMAN

Yeah, but I keep getting the run around. First it was twenty minutes. Now dispatch is saying the driver got rerouted and it'll be another hour to two hours.

Billy dips his head under the hood but almost chokes on the hot white smoke.

BILLY

Yeah, you're not going anywhere.

YOUNG WOMAN

Yeah, I noticed.

BILLY

Meantime, you have any luck getting a ride?

YOUNG WOMAN

If I could get a ride, I wouldn't be standing out here sweating my ass off. Sorry. Just saying.

The Young Woman wipes her wet brow. Billy gets himself a good eyeful.

BILLY

That would be a real waste. Sweating your ass off, that is.

And she grows visibly uncomfortable.

BILLY (CONT'D)

I got the AC good and cranked back in the truck. Could give you a lift down to the shop. Get a truck out here so you don't have to wait.

YOUNG WOMAN

Thanks. But I have a feeling the tow guy might show. I should put some water in this thing before it blows up.

The Young Woman picks up a gallon jug of water from the asphalt, unscrews it, bends over, stares under the hood, about to pour the jug into the radiator.

She sneaks a peak behind her just as Billy is wrapping a WHITE CLOTHESLINE around his two fists.

Before Billy knows what's up, the Young Woman bolts into the woods--

--a real jack rabbit. She's gone.

Billy sighs and gives chase.

INT. WOODS - DAY

Billy maneuvers his way through the stubborn branches that slap his face and ass. He chases his way over the fallen logs and other natural debris like he's done this a few dozen times over.

The Young Woman in his sights. Billy pulls his sidearm, takes aim--

But the Young Woman dips down, out of sight.

Billy gives up, continues the chase. He follows the clearest and most unobstructed path to the spot he believes she's hiding. All of the sudden--

He's out of these woods. And standing before an open grave with a WOODEN CROSS staked into the ground and a pound of WHITE ROCKS shoveled to the side.

The name BILLY carved into the vertical plank. Billy is white as a ghost. He's a dead man.

JAKE (O.S.)

Hey, partner.

Billy turns, faces--

Jake, gun drawn. He is focused, alert. A dead serious and angry look in his eye.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Drop the gun. I'm only gonna ask you once.

Billy drops his piece. He hears footsteps. He turns, faces--

The Young Woman. She also has a gun drawn, aimed and ready.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Meet Detective Milly Kesser. Barbi's sister. You remember her. You and your friend Officer Burke took turns raping and murdering her back in July.

Billy notices that, adjacent to his own grave, a second grave has been shoveled over. Another WOODEN CROSS with the name DANNY etched onto the vertical plank.

BILLY

Oh, yeah. Her. So what took you so long, partner?

JAKE

They say every serial killer wants to get caught. It got me thinking. You handed me this whole thing on a platter. But I was too focused on Terry. So focused that you started getting anxious. Worried old Terry was gonna steal your thunder.

Billy smiles as Jake puts it together.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Charlie's little movie must've put you right over the edge. Turning all your masterpieces into one big joke on us. Taking credit for your work. Throwing us off with all those pictures.

BILLY

Pretty smart, old buddy. You cracked the case. Just like I knew you would. Gave you enough clues, anyway. Now whadd'ya say you cut me loose for my troubles. Say I got away. Whatever. I figure it's the least you could do, considering.

JAKE
Considering?

BILLY
Considering I put Findlay in the dirt. No chance of him and your wife every happening again. I handed you the biggest case of your career. Made you a cop again. Made you a man.

JAKE
(to Kesser)
Get out of here.

Kesser lowers her gun, takes off.

BILLY
(to Kesser)
Don't leave. This crazy guy's gonna shoot me.

JAKE
Nah. I'm not gonna shoot you. But you know what I'm gonna do?

Jake bends down, snags Billy's gun. He tosses it in the dirt before Billy.

JAKE (CONT'D)
Go on. Take it.

BILLY
What's this, buddy? You gonna put one in my back, old partner?

Jake cocks the hammer.

JACK
Consider it my last favor. Take it or leave it. Your choice.

Billy stares at the gun. He slowly and cautiously retrieves it from the dirt. He stands at the edge of the open grave and raises the pistol to his head.

BILLY
We had some times, didn't we, old partner?

Jack moves directly behind Billy, lowers his gun.

JACK
That we did, partner. That we did.

BILLY

I just realized something. It would be pretty stupid of me if I just blew my brains out without even trying. But that would mean killing my own partner. Not sure I have it in me. What about you, buddy? You have it in you?

Jake ponders this.

JAKE

I guess there's only one way to find out.

Billy laughs. A nervous, about to die laughter. He spins around, gun drawn and aimed--

POW!

Jake puts ONE IN HIS HEAD as Billy FALLS LIMP into the deep and open grave. He's all done.

Jake lowers his gun, observes the two graves, side by side as the sun cuts through the trees, strikes his face. A moment of peace as this whole ordeal comes to a conclusion.

JAKE (V.O.)

I used to believe in the basic idea of good versus bad. And that sometimes good people do bad things. Things they carry around inside forever. That's how you know they're good people.

We slowly pull away from Jake, and the burial site, and further into the woods.

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

Charlie Ferris carried the burden of Olivia Gardner's death on his shoulders all the way to the end. Terry too.

EXT. PRIVATE LAKE - DAY

Olivia Gardner's skeleton lay exposed in the open grave. A shovel rests on the edge of the hole.

JAKE (V.O.)

It was no mistake him turning his gun on me. He chose death over life. Over his own freedom.

(MORE)

JAKE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Truth was, he was dying just a
 little bit more every day. Terry
 and I had that in common.

EXT. RURAL COUNTRY ROAD - BUS STOP - DAY

Jenn waits at the end of her road, next to her mailbox, as Sarah's bus comes to a swift stop. Sarah finally finds her way off the bus, chucks across the road...

...meets Jenn. Their usual after school banter.

JAKE (V.O.)
 I never thought I'd forgive myself
 for what I did to Jenn. For
 allowing myself to sink that low.
 I figured I'd end up just like
 Findlay. Begging for God's
 forgiveness and never getting it.
 But now I realize that there's such
 a thing as true evil in this world.

Jenn smiles, snags Sarah's bookbag as they begin down the long clay road. Jenn feels someone watching her. She turns around, faces--

THE SCHOOL BUS as it shuts its doors, drives off and reveals none other than Jake. He is happy, smiling, ready for a fresh start.

JAKE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 And evil's no accident. It's
 deliberate. Methodical.
 Unwavering. Unapologetic.

Sarah stops, turns, spots her father. A big dumb grin.

Jake waves hello to his little girl.

JAKE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 As long as it's out there, I still
 have purpose in this life. I'll
 never squander it again.

Jenn is unsure at first but eventually cracks a grin. And then a great big smile.

FADE OUT.

THE END