

Tonya's Ghost

By

C.L. GREEN

Clinton Green
480.217.0764
gavjor2000@gmail.com
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INT. TRENT BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Blood-shot eyes with dark, puffy skin beneath.

These belong to COLE TRENT (20s), an exhausted black man lying on the bed, revealing his emaciated body.

A woman's arm rises from beneath the sheet, drapes over his sunken chest. Cole's eyes shut right as sunlight creeps through the blinds. Finally, peace in the form of sleep. The nightstand clock reads: 5:56 A.M.

INT. HOTEL SUITE BEDROOM -- NIGHT (COLE'S DREAM)

A teen-aged BLACK GIRL, dancing on the bed in panties and bra, singing with passion, but in total silence...

INT. TRENT BEDROOM -- DAY

Cole's eyes open. He looks at the clock: 6:02 A.M. He removes the woman's arm from his chest, sits up.

EXT. SUBURBAN PHOENIX NEIGHBORHOOD -- DAY

Exiting a two-story Mission Style house is MIKA TRENT (7), tons of cute and energy. She's wearing cartoon character sunglasses that match her book bag.

MIKA

Come on, Dad, before I miss the bus.

Cole drags himself out the house, clothes sagging on what's left of his fading body.

Mika takes his hand as they walk towards the school bus stop.

COLE

Mika, those sunglasses go back home with me. Right?

MIKA

Why do you keep getting skinnier?

COLE

I don't know, baby girl. Anyway, what do you want for your birthday?

MIKA

Just something small for now, until you get another job, then get me something really big.

Cole manages a tired smile.

Mika sees some GIRLS her age at the corner and stops.

MIKA (CONT'D)

Dad, can you just watch me the rest
of the way?

COLE

(seeing her friends)
Oh, yeah. Go. I love you.

Mika continues solo.

Cole watches his little girl...

INT. TRENT BEDROOM -- DAY

Cole is making the bed while a couple of deejays banter on
the nightstand radio.

HALLIE TRENT (30s), a fit spirited woman, enters from the
adjoining bathroom. She's professionally dressed as she
goes to the vanity mirror and puts on earrings.

A slow R&B song begins to play on the radio, mesmerizing
Cole. He goes completely still.

HALLIE

(to his reflection)
Hey, you okay over there?

Cole doesn't answer.

Hallie walks over to him, cups his face with her hands.

HALLIE (CONT'D)

We're going find a fix for whatever
this is. You hear me in there?

Hallie closes her eyes, kisses Cole on his lips. Cole's
eyes remain open. He backs away from her.

She gives a playful smirk, reaches for him again.

COLE

I can't do this!

Cole shoves her across the room. She falls backwards, strikes
her head on the dresser.

Stunned and confused, Hallie rubs the back of her head, looks
at the blood on her fingertips.

Cole begins to cry. He's clearly a man losing more than
just his weight. The song continues playing on the radio.

INT. PHOENIX CITY BUS -- DAY

A sign that reads: If you see something, say something.

Sitting alone beneath the sign is DEREK CARTER (50s), a scruffy Black man, skeletal in weight, pointing to his lack of appetite for food and life.

He's whispering to himself while wearing earphones attached to a Walkman cassette player from the 80s, blaring music from the same decade. A man shipwrecked in his past.

Two snickering TEEN BOYS are throwing sunflower seeds at the back of his head.

Derek ignores them. Instead, his attention is on a dark-skin TEEN GIRL, sitting across the aisle in a private school uniform. This is the same girl from Cole's dream. She turns her sad, hypnotic eyes on Derek. He looks away from her.

The girl presses a button for the next stop. She gathers her book bag, stands in the aisle, looks down at Derek.

He closes his eyes, continues whispering to himself.

The girl slowly walks towards the exit.

INT. DEREK'S APARTMENT -- LIVING ROOM -- DAY

The place is boarder line hoarder status, with boxes, junk mail, music cassettes on every surface.

Derek enters through the front, removes his earphones, stands looking at the congested madness in which he lives.

LATER

Derek is seated on his couch, holding a black box. He opens it, removes a 38 revolver and box of bullets. He loads the gun, fixates on the weapon. The home phone rings.

PHONE AUTOMATED MESSAGE: Hello, you've reached four-four-four, one-four, three-two, at the beep, leave your message.

COLE (O.S.)

Hello? Diamond, if you're there,
pick up, please...

Derek sets the gun on his coffee table, puzzled. His doorbell rings. He doesn't move.

COLE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Diamond, I'm in Phoenix, downtown in
the county jail. I can't take this
place. This is Cole.

Derek darts to the phone, picks up.

DEREK

Cole? Hello. Cole?

Too late. He sets the phone down. Someone is now desperately ringing the doorbell and pounding on the door.

Derek puts the gun and bullets back in the black box, hides it under the couch, goes to the door. He looks in the peephole, unlocks and opens the door.

JACKIE (50s), a stylish woman with a deep, old scar on her left cheek. She carries herself like a woman who has seen it all.

JACKIE

Damn it, Derek, you can't return my calls? You were supposed to be back at work today. I thought something --

DEREK

Cole's in jail. Drive me downtown.

JACKIE

Let's go.

INT. JACKIE'S MERCEDES -- DAY

Driving the freeway, Jackie ends her hands-free call.

DEREK

What they got him for?

JACKIE

Domestic violence. His wife.

DEREK

Cole? He gotta wife?

JACKIE

A little girl, too.

Derek looks at her.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

He asked me not to tell you he was back. I gave him your number, in case he changed his mind.

Jackie places her hand on top of Derek's. He looks at the big diamond ring on her finger, pulls his hand away.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

What about Luther? Did you go?

Derek doesn't answer.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

River said he's any day now... It might help you to see him.

Derek puts on his earphones.

INT. COUNTY JAIL LOBBY -- DAY

Jackie and Derek sitting. She's asleep with her head on his shoulder. He's fighting his sleep. Bad things happen there.

A DEPUTY escorts Cole into the lobby, gives him papers and instructions before leaving.

Derek removes his earphones, nudges Jackie awake, points to Cole. They stand, wave to him.

Cole walks over to them. Jackie hugs his gaunt frame.

JACKIE

You okay, Cole?

CLERK

I'm stable. Good to see you, Ms. Jackie.

Cole and Derek look each other over.

COLE

You look different, Diamond.

DEREK

Yeah, you look like shit, too. Don't call me Diamond. It's just Derek now.

COLE

Really? Okay, well thanks for getting me out. Derek.

Derek pulls Cole into a stiff, awkward hug. Affection is foreign to their relationship.

COLE (CONT'D)

Is that the same old Walkman?

DEREK

I don't trust that new tech shit.

JACKIE

Well, I'm starved, and you two could use some calories. I'm buying dinner.

INT. MEXICAN RESTAURANT -- DAY

Derek and Cole have barely touched their plates. Jackie is eating vigorously from her's.

COLE

(to Derek)

Hey, man, sorry I haven't called.
My wife accepted a position back
here, and I've been so busy you know,
it's just, well you know.

DEREK

Why'd you hit her?

JACKIE

Come on now, Derek. Young couples
have tiffs all the time?

COLE

It was assault, not a tiff.

Jackie discreetly spits her food into her napkin.

COLE (CONT'D)

Turned out like you after all,
Diamond.

DEREK

Boy, I said don't call me that.

Derek puts his earphones on, closes his eyes.

JACKIE

(to Cole)

I think you should stay with me
tonight. You can meet my husband.

COLE

I don't know, I need to talk to
Hallie.

JACKIE

Restraining order. Remember?

Cole hugs his shoulders, massaging them. This is his habit.

COLE

I need my car and a few things.

JACKIE

You better let me call her for you
first.

COLE

(staring at Derek)

What's wrong with him?

JACKIE

History...

EXT. TRENT HOUSE -- NIGHT

Jackie's black Mercedes pulls into the driveway.

INT. MERCEDES -- NIGHT

Jackie behind the wheel, Cole front passenger, Derek in back.

JACKIE

Okay, she said she'll have a suitcase ready. Please stay in the car, Cole.

Jackie gets out.

Cole drops his head, rubs his eyes.

EXT. TRENT PORCH -- NIGHT

Jackie straightens her clothes, rings the doorbell.

After a beat Hallie opens the door.

JACKIE

Hi Hallie, I'm Jackie.

HALLIE

I know exactly who and what you are. You tell him the car stays here, since I'm the one making the payments.

Jackie raises an eyebrow.

Hallie opens the screen door, hands her a suitcase.

Abruptly Mika, squeezes by Hallie, runs past Jackie.

INT. JACKIE'S MERCEDES -- NIGHT

Cole is looking down at his hands rubbing together.

Suddenly, the driver's side rear car door opens. Mika gets in behind Cole and next to Derek. She locks the door.

MIKA

Dad, I'm going with you.

COLE

You can't go, baby girl. I'm sorry for all this, but you can't go.

DEREK

(to Mika)
How you doin'?

Hallie pulls on the door handle, knocks on the window.

HALLIE

Out the car right now, Mika.

COLE

Mika, you can't go with me right now. Listen to your mother.

DEREK

(to Mika)

Oh shit. Your ass in trouble.

MIKA

Who the hell are you?

HALLIE

Get out the car Mika! Cole get her out!

COLE

Let's go, Mika.

Cole gets out the car, walks around to Derek's door.

COLE (CONT'D)

Derek get out the car, please.

DEREK

(whispers to Mika)

Run like hell when I get out.

Derek slides out the car. Mika gets out and wraps herself around Cole's waist.

HALLIE

Give her to me, Cole.

Hallie hurries around the car to them.

COLE

It's gonna be alright, Mika. Go to Mom now, baby girl.

Jackie walks over to action, sets Cole's suitcase down.

MIKA

Dad you need me. I'm going, too.

Cole and Hallie look at each other, both heartbroken.

HALLIE

Remember what I told you, Mika?

(looking at Cole)

Your Dad is sick and has to go away awhile to get better.

MIKA

You're making him sick! Why don't
you leave!

Hallie. Jowls clenching. Enough. She rips Mika from Cole,
starts carrying her towards the house.

Mika smacks her mother.

Hallie smacks the child back.

COLE

Stop! Stop!

HALLIE

(kissing Mika)

Oh, Sweetie, Mommy didn't, I'm sorry.

Mika breaks free, starts back to Cole.

HALLIE (CONT'D)

Mika!

Hallie wrestles her back up, carries her towards the house,
while Mika is kicking and swinging.

COLE

(following, consoling
Mika)

It's going to be alright, Baby Girl.

HALLIE

Leave Cole, or I'm making another
call.

Jackie tries to intercede.

JACKIE

Hallie, listen.

Hallie points a finger in her face. Jackie stops. Cole
follows Hallie and Mika to the porch.

COLE

Hallie, I'm sorry. It's going to be
alright, Mika. You hear me?

Hallie takes Mika inside the house. She looks back at Cole,
breaks into tears, slams the door closed.

Cole starts for front door. Jackie grabs his arm, stopping
him.

COLE (CONT'D)

(shouting)

I'm sorry, Hallie! I love you Mika!

DEREK

Let's bounce, nigga, 'fore the police
come and shoot our black asses dead!

Derek throws the suitcase in the back seat, gets in the car.

Jackie walks to her car door, waits.

JACKIE

Cole...

Cole slowly walks to the car, gets in.

Jackie shakes her head. What a mess.

INT. MERCEDES -- NIGHT

Jackie driving.

Cole aimlessly looking out the passenger window.

Derek in back, whispering to himself.

COLE

I hate to ask, but would either of
you get me a cheap motel room for
tonight?

JACKIE

Cole, you shouldn't be by yourself.

COLE

I'll stay with you tomorrow, but
tonight... Tonight I need to still
myself.

DEREK

I'll get the room.

Jackie shoots Derek a look via the rear view mirror.

EXT. CHEAP MOTEL -- NIGHT

Jackie's Mercedes pulls to a stop in front of the office.

INT. CHEAP MOTEL -- NIGHT

Lights turn on, Cole ambles in, indifferent, carrying his
suitcase.

Jackie follows, frowning at the room.

Derek enters, has trouble closing the door.

JACKIE
(watching Derek)
Cole let me get you someplace better.
The door doesn't even work.

COLE
The room's fine.

Cole sits on the bed, hugs his shoulders.

JACKIE
I'll use the bathroom and we'll leave
you for the night.

Jackie scowls her way into the bathroom.

Derek, gets the door closed, walks over to the window. He looks out, sees something, cups his hands on the glass.

DEREK'S POV

The mysterious girl from the bus and Cole's dream. She's walking towards a room, reaches the door. She slowly, turns her dead eyes around at Derek.

Derek yanks the drapes closed.

DEREK
You like it, bein' married?

Cole doesn't answer. His mind is a million miles away.

Jackie returns from the bathroom.

JACKIE
You're sure you're okay here?.

Cole walks to the door, signaling them to leave. Jackie walks over to him.

JACKIE (CONT'D)
It's gonna get better. I'll pick
you up at check out. Try and rest.

She reaches in her purse. Cole motions her to stop.

COLE
You've done enough.

She kisses his cheek, steps outside.

Derek moves over to Cole.

DEREK
You make up wit' your wife, so you
can go back home.

COLE
Take care, Derek.

They start to hug but abandon the attempt. Derek walks out.
Cole stands in the doorway. He turns the light off.

INT. JACKIE'S CAR -- NIGHT

Jackie driving, nervously tapping the steering wheel.
Derek is rewinding his Walkman, whispering to himself.

JACKIE
You're doing it again.

DEREK
What?

JACKIE
Talking to yourself again, Baby.
I'm getting complaints at work...
Derek, I think you want to hurt
yourself.

Jackie waits for his response.

DEREK
Turn the car around. Go back to the
motel.

JACKIE
What's wrong?

DEREK
Turn the fuckin' car around!

Jackie makes a U-turn.

EXT. MOTEL PARKING LOT -- NIGHT

Jackie's Mercedes races into the parking-lot. Before the
car can completely stop, Derek opens his door, falls to the
ground, gets up, runs to the room.

EXT/INT. CHEAP MOTEL ROOM -- NIGHT

Derek starts to knock but the door is ajar. He pushes it
open.

DEREK'S SILOUETTE in the doorway.

DEREK
Cole?

He turns the light on to --

COLE HANGING

From a ceiling vent, belt around neck, hands clawing at the noose, legs kicking, overturned chair beneath him.

COLE
Mutha fuck!

Derek runs over to Cole, supports his weight with his shoulder, quickly sets the chair upright.

Cole's feet find the chair.

Jackie runs in the room.

JACKIE
Jesus please!

Derek removes the belt from Cole's neck, tosses it.

Cole steps off the chair, drops to his knees, coughing fit.

Derek and Jackie kneel next to him, slapping his back.

JACKIE (CONT'D)
I'll call nine-one-one.

Cole grabs her arm, finds a breath.

COLE
(weak)
Don't.

Derek and Jackie help him sit up on the chair.

COLE (CONT'D)
(hoarse voice)
I'm okay.

Jackie places her hand on her heart, exhales.

Derek bends over, hands on knees, looks at Cole.

INT. JACKIE'S CAR -- NIGHT

Jackie driving, spying Cole through her rear view mirror.

Derek, front passenger seat, fixing his Walkman.

Cole, lying across the back seat, hands covering his face.

JACKIE
Why, Cole?

COLE
 (hoarse voice)
 When I close my eyes, I see her...
 Tonya.

Jackie and Derek glance at each other.

DEREK
 You got a good life, and you tryin'
 to kill yourself, again. Boy, you
 still weak.

JACKIE
 That's not helping, Derek.
 (to Cole)
 You need to be in a hospital.

COLE
 No hospital. I'll lose my daughter
 if Hallie hears about this.

Jackie taps on the steering wheel.

JACKIE
 My therapist will see you tomorrow,
 if I ask. In exchange for my silence,
 you'll go see him.

DEREK
 Black people don't go to therapist.

JACKIE
 Well "Black people" sure as hell
 need to. We have a deal, Cole?

Cole removes his hands from his face.

COLE
 If that's what it takes.

Derek puts on his earphones, turns the volume up.

EXT. TENEMENTS -- NIGHT

Jackie's Benz pulls in front of a shabby two-story apartment building.

INT. MERCEDES -- NIGHT

JACKIE
 Okay, Derek, I'll call you after I
 get Cole setup.

Cole gets out the back, stands waiting to take Derek's seat.

Derek opens the car door, sets one foot out, looks at Cole.

DEREK
Grab your suitcase. You're wit' me.

JACKIE
Come on now, Derek, you're not well
yourself.

DEREK
He's my son. He stays wit' me.

COLE
I'll be okay with Diamond, Ms. Jackie.
I mean Derek.

Jackie bites her lip, surrenders.

JACKIE
(to Cole)
I'll call you tomorrow with the
doctor's appointment. For tonight,
get through the now. Survive.
(to Derek)
You better take care of him.

EXT. TENEMENTS -- NIGHT

Jackie drives away.

Derek leads Cole past a few SHADY LOOKING MEN and up the
outside stairs of an apartment building.

INT. DEREK'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Derek enters, turns on the light. Cole steps in, looks at
all the clutter.

DEREK
(off his look)
You wanna go to Jackie's?

COLE
Oh no, it's fine. Just unexpected.

DEREK
Take the bedroom in back there. I
don't use it. Bathroom's back there,
too, you wanna wash the jail off.

Cole starts for the back, stops.

COLE
Hey, man, thanks for, you know,
everything today.

Derek nods. Cole leaves the room.

INT. DEREK'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Unlike the rest of the apartment, the room is uncluttered and neat.

Cole, wet from the shower, towel wrapped around his scrawny frame, standing before a tiny closet. He's looking at the contents: janitor uniforms, one collared shirt, pair of jeans, a hooded sweatshirt.

Cole touches a uniform with a fingertip. He turns, opens his suitcase on the bed, notices a small picture on the nightstand, picks it up.

PICTURE

A smiling, young black woman holding a boy toddler.

Derek barges in the room carrying a glass of water. He's taken aback by Cole's deteriorating body.

COLE

(holding up the picture)

Did you ever love her?

DEREK

I wasn't built that way... Got some pain pills for your neck.

Cole sets the picture down.

Derek hands him the pills and water. He watches Cole swallow both, takes the glass from his hand.

COLE

Don't worry, I won't try it again and make a mess for you to clean.

DEREK

Ain't the mess I'm worried about.

Derek walks out the room, starts to close the door, leaves it opens it. Suicide watch.

Cole picks up the picture again. He sits on the bed staring at it...

INT. DEREK'S LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

Derek, on the phone, pacing back and forth. He's shirtless, protruding rib cage, chest disfigured with a multitude of tiny burn scars.

DEREK

He needs to keep his mind busy...
How he gone be a man wit' no money
in his pockets?... You gonna give
him a job or not? ... Alright.

Derek ends the call, continues pacing back and forth.

INT. JACKIE AND MAURICE'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Jackie is lying in bed with her head on her husband's chest. MAURICE, (60'S) manicured nails, silk pajamas, is caressing the scar on her cheek.

MAURICE

I'll never understand how you can
still do for that man.

JACKIE

I wasn't the only victim in our
relationship, Maurice.

MAURICE

What did he say about Denver?

JACKIE

I haven't told him, yet.

MAURICE

Are you going to be able to keep
your promise?

JACKIE

I just need a little more time.

Maurice kisses the top of his wife's head.

INT. DEREK'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

The room is dark save for a street light glowing through the window blinds.

Cole, lying across the bed in basketball shorts and t-shirt, looking at the ceiling as the sound of a siren fades. He hears someone arguing, sits up.

INT. HALLWAY/LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

Cole eases towards the living room. He stops at the entrance and sees:

Derek pacing back and forth, earphones on, arguing with himself.

DEREK

A life for a life. A life for life.
Please, just shut the fuck up!

INT. DEREK'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Cole hurries into the room, closes the door, leans against it, mouths -- What the fuck?

LATER

Morning now. Cole recumbent on the bed, still awake, his neck badly bruised. The door handle rattles. He sits up.

COLE

Derek?

No response.

INT. DEREK'S LIVING ROOM -- DAY

The room is now completely void of clutter, showroom neat. Derek is still pacing from last night, no shirt or shoes.

Cole enters astonished by the room's transformation. His attention shifts to Derek's scarred, deformed chest.

COLE

(hoarse)

What happened to you?

Derek snaps from his trance, grabs his shirt off the sofa, puts it on.

DEREK

You better get dressed. Jackie's on her way to take you to the crazy doctor. You hungry?

COLE

No, I'm good. You clean all night?

DEREK

I got you a job wit' Jackie. You start tomorrow.

COLE

Tomorrow?

DEREK

You need to get back to work. Put your mind on somethin' besides killin' your damn self.

COLE

What kind of job?

DEREK

Kind that pays money and help a man get his wife back.

Cole massages his neck.

COLE

I heard you arguing with someone
last night?

DEREK

Get dressed. Jackie's on her way.

Cole walks away looking back at Derek.

INT. TRENT KITCHEN -- DAY

Mika. Sitting at the table, staring at a plate of pancakes
and bowl of mixed fruit.

Hallie sits across from her, sipping coffee.

MIKA

These don't look like my Dad's.

Hallie sets her coffee down, gets up from the table. She
calmly removes Mika's plate, tosses it in the trash.

HALLIE

Eat your fruit and get ready for
school.

MIKA

Are you having an affair?

HALLIE

Where'd you get... Do you know what
that word means?

MIKA

Means you don't love Dad anymore.
My friend's Lisa's father did an
affair and left her mother.

HALLIE

(relieved)

I still love your Dad. Now eat.

Hallie leaves the room. Mika looks at her fruit.

INT. HALLIE'S OFFICE -- DAY

Hallie is pouring bottled water into a desk plant.

ROBERT (30s), blue eyes, workout build, designer suit, walks
in, closes the door behind him.

ROBERT

You blocked my number?

Hallie turns to face him.

HALLIE

You wouldn't stop calling. We're in
the the workplace, Robert.

Robert moves within inches of her.

ROBERT

You missed the quarterly yesterday.
Is everything okay at home?

Hallie's lip quivers. She's about to fall apart. Robert
pulls her into an embrace. He's here for her.

INT. JACKIE'S CAR -- DAY

Jackie is parked in front of an office suite with Cole.

JACKIE

Want me to go in with you?

COLE

No, I'm alright.

JACKIE

He's unconventional and weird, but
good, helped me get my mind right.

Beat.

COLE

You ever think about Tonya?

JACKIE

I can't afford to do that.

Cole nods, exits the car.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE -- DAY

Various PATIENTS waiting. Cole is sitting, hiding his face
behind a magazine. He sets it down and starts for exit.

DOCTOR TRAUSS (40s), an informal man, enters the lobby. He
has a five o'clock shadow, untucked dress shirt. His gait
is slightly unbalanced, possibly intoxicated. He slips a
mint in his mouth.

DR. TRAUSS

(spots Cole leaving)
Cole Trent?

Cole stops. He walks over to the doctor. His eyes question
the physician's appearance.

DR. TRAUSS (CONT'D)

I'm Dr. Trauss.

COLE
 (nervous joke attempt)
 And I was about to sneak out the
 door.

The doctor gives him nothing.

DR. TRAUSS
 Come on back, please.

Cole follows him out the lobby.

INT. CITY BUS -- DAY

The bus driver, SEAN (30s), NFL big, pulls to a stop. He opens the doors and PASSENGERS board, swiping bus passes, paying fares.

Derek steps up, swipes his bus pass, removes his earphones.

DEREK
 A life for a life. She told me that.
 A life for a life.

SEAN
 (writing on a piece
 of paper)
 Bethany Baptist Church, November
 21st, 7 p.m. You need to be there.

Sean hands Derek the paper.

Derek looks at the paper. He moves on looking for a empty seat, spots one, but it comes with a cost. The mysterious girl is sitting next to it. He moves on.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE -- DAY

Dr. Trauss is sitting at his desk, entering information into his computer. Cole sits across from him, fidgeting.

DR. TRAUSS
 Well, now that I have your medical
 history, why don't you tell me why
 you're here today?

COLE
 I'm experiencing some insomnia, and
 I can't eat more than two bites of
 anything.

DR. TRAUSS
 Yes, I've read your questionnaire.
 You've had those symptoms for nearly
 six months. Was there a particular
 event that prompted you here today?

Cole shifts in his seat.

COLE

No. I guess I just decided to do something about my litte issues.

DR. TRAUSS

The way you're trying to hide those bruises on your neck, and your strained vocal cords, tells me those issues aren't so, " little".

Cole looks at the doctor. He's busted.

DR. TRAUSS (CONT'D)

I'm not one for bullshit.

Cole wraps his arms around his shoulders, holds himself.

COLE

My daughter'll be eight in three weeks. If I'm not here for her birthday, she'll be the one in this chair.

The doctor studies Cole a beat, writes a note.

EXT. OLD VICTORIAN NEIGHBORHOOD -- DAY

Three story houses, most in decline and need of repair.

Derek, earphones on, following the mysterious girl on the opposite side of the street.

She climbs the porch steps of an eerie, faded pink Victorian, enters the house.

Derek crosses the street, stands observing the dwelling.

A MUSCLED MAN steps out onto the porch, on his cell phone, drinking a bottle of beer. He spots Derek, goes back inside. A moment later, he returns with a huge leashed ROTTWEILER.

Derek takes a step back.

The man unleashes the dog.

MUSCLE MAN

Get his ass Romo!

Derek takes off running into the street, dodging traffic. Tires skid. Horns blow. He makes it across. Beer bottle shatters by his heel.

Romo hits the street, hot pursuit. A car slams on breaks. The giant dog runs across the hood.

NEIGHBORING YARD

Derek sees the monster gaining, cuts through a yard, makes it around back.

Romo charges the yard, hunting his prey.

BACKYARD

Derek runs to a wooden privacy fence, hoist himself up and over, dropping his Walkman. Instantly, he hops back over, retrieves the Walkman, mounts the fence again when --

ROMO'S FOAMING BITE

Tears into his leg.

Derek yells, kicks his leg free, drops in

ADJACENT YARD

He gets up, continues his escape, half limp, half run.

Romo is barking and banging against the old fence.

MUSCLED MAN (O.S.)

'Bet not bring yo' ass back here,
you fuckin' piece of trash!

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE -- DAY

Dr. Trauss and Cole are seated in plush session chairs.

DR. TRAUSS

I'd like to start with your trouble sleeping. What do you think about when you can't sleep? Where do your thoughts go?

COLE

Here, there, kind of everywhere.

DR TRAUSS

Do you think of people, places, past or future events?

COLE

Maybe my childhood, sometimes.

DR TRAUSS

Which part?

COLE

I guess my father mostly.

DR TRAUSS

Tell me about him.

COLE

(uneasy)

What I say in here is strictly doctor patient confidential?

DR. TRAUSS

As long as there's no immediate harm to yourself or others, and no a court order. Yes.

Cole thinks a beat, inhales, exhales.

INT. CADILLAC -- NIGHT (FLASHBACK SEQUENCE)

Parked and sitting in the driver's seat is DIAMOND (Early 20s), Jerry-Curled hair. He's snorting cocaine from a gold vial, smoking a joint, drinking from a flask.

COLE (V.O.)

Okay... My father was a pimp. Not like a rapper, but a "bitch better have my money" pimp.

EXT. HOSPITAL PARKING-LOT -- NIGHT

Diamond struts through the lot, wearing a silk track suit, gold chains, fresh pair of Jordan's. He's both fly and high.

INT. HOSPITAL BIRTHING SUITE -- NIGHT

Diamond sweating profusely, standing next to LISA TRENT (19), pretty but street-hard. She's lying with her legs spread apart, a DOCTOR between them. There's an adjacent NURSE, assisting with the imminent birth.

In pain, Lisa takes a deep breath, pushes with all her might. The doctor removes a BABY BOY from her body.

The nurse quickly cleans the crying baby before handing him to Lisa.

DR. TRAUSS (V.O.)

What about your mother?

COLE (V.O.)

She was one of his... many women.

Lisa. Smiling down at Baby Cole, instantly in love. She looks up at Diamond, hoping he feels the same.

Diamond. He attempts a smile, falls short.

DR. TRAUSS (V.O.)

Are you, or were you ever in this business?

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE -- DAY (PRESENT)

COLE
Never, no way.

The doctor walks over to a mini fridge.

DR. TRAUSS
You want something to drink? I have
healthy and unhealthy.

COLE
Unhealthy, please.

Doctor Trauss tosses Cole a can of soda. He sneaks a shooter
of bourbon from his pocket, downs it, takes his seat.

DR. TRAUSS
Tell me about your relationship with
your father.

COLE
What do you mean?

DR TRAUSS
Did he love you? Did he try and
teach you things?

COLE
If he loved me, he kept it top secret,
but he did teach me how to be a man.

DR TRAUSS
For example?

COLE
He taught me how stand up for myself,
about girls, stuff like that.

DR TRAUSS
You have many girlfriends growing up?

COLE
Dated here and there, but only one
real girlfriend before my wife.

DR TRAUSS
How long were you involved with her?

EXT. VICTORIAN NEIGHBORHOOD -- DAY (FLASHBACK SEQUENCE)

A quiet community, save for a white three-story with a
driveway full of flashy cars and PEOPLE. This is Diamond's
house. There's a colorful banner above the front door that
reads: HAPPY BIRTHDAY COLE.

INT. DIAMOND'S LIVING ROOM -- DAY

The room is filled with PEOPLE, laughing, drinking, playing cards.

Diamond (Mid-20s), high-top fade haircut, is dancing with three WOMEN to bass-thumping funk music, getting low, bumping and grinding.

INT. DIAMOND'S KITCHEN -- SAME

COLE (8) is seated at the kitchen table, joined by other KIDS, staring at his massive birthday cake. LISA (20s) is standing behind him.

LISA

Okay, Baby, close them eyes, make a wish, and blow out them candles.

Cole squeezes his eyes shut, makes a wish. He opens his eyes, blows out the candles. Everyone claps.

Lisa starts cutting the cake while, Jackie (late 20s) is putting scoops of ice cream on plates.

COLE

Mom, save the biggest piece for Tonya.

LISA

(to Jackie)

Little girl's churchie grandmamma won't let her come near us heathens. Get Diamond for me.

Jackie goes to the kitchen entrance, looks into the living room.

INT. LIVING ROOM -- SAME

Diamond is addressing a group of PEOPLE, making them laugh. He sees Jackie, motions with a finger, be there in a minute.

INT. DIAMOND'S KITCHEN -- DAY

Diamond enters, drinking from a cognac bottle. Lisa looks at him, shakes her head. He sets the bottle on the counter, starts handing money to the kids.

LISA

(to Diamond)

It's your son's birthday. Can you spend some time with him, instead of them fools in there?

DIAMOND

Don't start wit' that shit.

JACKIE

Okay you two, kids party. Remember?

LISA

(to Diamond)

I'm missin' one of Cole's gifts.

DIAMOND

I told you not to buy him that shit.

MR. TRICKS, a man dressed as a magician enters the room.

MR. TRICKS

Hello boys and girls. I'm Mr. Tricks,
and who in here likes magic?

He makes a big red balloon appear from his sleeve. The kids go crazy.

LISA

It's the one thing he asked for. I
want him to have it.

DIAMOND

Well I DONT want him to have it.

Diamond turns, enjoying Mr. Tricks, like one of the kids.

Lisa pulls his arm.

LISA

You can't tell me what to give my
son.

In a flash, Diamond turns devil -- picks Lisa up by the throat -- slams her head against the wall.

Cole and the kids run out the room screaming.

JACKIE

Diamond! Stop!
(to the doorway)
Blue, y'all get in here!

Mr. Tricks grabs Diamond from behind.

Diamond drops Lisa, turns, flips the magician to the floor -- stomps and kicks him.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

Diamond you're gonna kill him! Stop!

Diamond, a complete animal now, picks up the cognac bottle, breaks it on the counter, raises the jagged edge, daring his next opponent.

BLUE (20's) runs into the kitchen with three other MEN and WOMEN. The men carefully circle Diamond.

BLUE
C'mon now, Diamond, put it down,
brother, and lets go back to partyin'.
No harm, now foul. Right?

Diamond wildly swings the bottle at the men. They duck and sidestep his attack when one of his strikes hits --

JACKIE

She places her hand on her left cheek. Blood gushes through her fingers.

The men charge and tackle Diamond, while he yells threats of death and destruction.

OPEN BIRTHDAY CARD ON THE FLOOR

Happy Birthday Cole, from Mommy and Diamond.

EXT. DIAMOND'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

The house is peaceful and dark, save for a light upstairs.

Little Cole eases out the front door in his pajamas, carrying a big piece of birthday cake on a paper plate.

EXT. TONYA'S GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

Cole hurries across the street to a pink Victorian house with only a porch light on. He goes to the side, taps on a bedroom window.

TONYA (8), dark skin, bright-eyed and pony-tailed, opens the window, sticks her head out.

TONYA
(low)
Happy birthday, Cole.

COLE
I brought you a piece of my birthday
cake.

He proudly hands her the cake. She takes a big bite.

TONYA
(mouth full of cake)
That's good cake. I got you
something.

She goes away a beat. Cole looks around, checking for detection. Tonya returns and hands him a costume jewelry diamond ring.

COLE

This looks like a lady's ring.

TONYA

It is. I got it so when you marry me, when we grow up, you won't have to spend all your hard-earned money.

Cole grins while Tonya takes another bite of cake.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE -- DAY (PRESENT)

COLE

I loved her from that moment on.

The doctor gives a slight smile, makes a note.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE HALLWAY -- DAY

Dr. Trauss opens his office door and leads Cole out.

COLE

Well, you think you can help me?

DR. TRAUSS

I'm confident I can, but only if you're honest with me. No more bullshit.

Cole nods his agreement.

DR. TRAUSS (CONT'D)

Don't forget your prescriptions. I'll see you Friday at five. You have my number if a crises occurs.

Cole walks away.

The doctor watches him while pulling a mini bourbon bottle from his pocket. He swallows the alcohol.

EXT. TRENT HOUSE -- NIGHT

Derek is in front of the house, limping back and forth, earphones on, smoking a cigarette.

In the foreground, Hallie is inside, moving about the living room. She spots Derek outside, closes the window blinds.

After a beat, Hallie steps out the front door, walks down into the driveway.

Derek sees Hallie waving her arms, calling out to him. He removes his earphones, starts walking towards her.

DEREK

What?

HALLIE

I said, what are you doing in front
of my house?

He stops.

DEREK

I was here last night. Cole's father,
Derek.

HALLIE

You're Diamond?

DEREK

He told you about that?

HALLIE

He told me enough.

DEREK

Well, I ain't that no more. Can I
talk to you?

Hallie looks him over, unsure. He's not what she expected.

HALLIE

I'll give you five minutes. Go to
the back gate.

EXT. TRENT BACKYARD -- NIGHT

Hallie opens the back gate. She's holding a taser.

Derek looks at her weapon.

HALLIE

Only way you're getting back here.

Hallie leads him over to patio furniture, motions for him to
take a seat. She sits across from him.

Derek starts to light a cigarette.

Hallie shakes her head, no.

DEREK

Where's that 'lil girl?

HALLIE

That "'lil girl" is in bed. She
cried herself to sleep again tonight.

Awkward silence.

DEREK

Cole don't know I'm here... He feels really bad for puttin' his hands on you.

Hallie tilts her head in disbelief.

HALLIE

He feels really bad? Seriously? I've put up with a lot from Cole. Walking away from his career, mood swings, but this...

Beat.

DEREK

You need to let him come back here.

Hallie runs her fingers through her hair.

HALLIE

I was always told, if a man hits you once... I love Cole with every ounce of my being but --

DEREK

He might not make it if you don't let him come back.

HALLIE

And I might not make it if I let him. He's mentally unstable, and from the looks of things, he's an apple that fell right next to the crazy-as-hell tree.

DEREK

What's it gone take for him to get back here?

Mika steps outside in her pajamas.

MIKA

Mom, who is that?

She starts towards the adults.

HALLIE

He's an old friend of Dad's, Sweetie. Go back to bed.

MIKA

(to Derek)

You were in the car with my Dad. Tell him I miss him not to miss my birthday, okay?

DEREK

Okay.

MIKA

You can come, too, but bring a gift or some cash.

HALLIE

Back to Bed, Mika. Now.

MIKA

Good night, sir.

Mika goes back inside.

HALLIE

I'm sorry. This was a mistake. You have to go.

Derek stands, hesitates, wanting to say more, but follows Hallie to the back gate.

DEREK

There was this girl, Tonya. She died years ago. She's causin' Cole's problems.

Derek walks out the gate.

Hallie locks it behind him, stands, trying to digest what she just heard. She double checks the lock.

INT. DEREK'S LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

Cole, sitting on the couch, half watching local news on an old model TV.

Derek enters through the front door, limping.

COLE

What happened to your leg?

DEREK

I fell.

COLE

(doubtful)

You need to be more careful. I opened one of your two cans of soup. Still warm if you want.

Derek walks over, flops down next to Cole on the couch.

DEREK

We can get groceries tomorrow. How was that crazy doctor?

COLE
I think I like him.

Derek takes his off his work boots.

DEREK
Don't go tellin' that white man all
of our business.

COLE
Barely said a word.

DEREK
We need to get your 'lil girl
somethin' for her birthday.

Cole, surprised, stops watching the news, turns to Derek.

COLE
Hallie withdrew all the money from
our account.

DEREK
I got money. Jackie pays me more
then I'm worth. You better rest.
We go to work in the mornin'.

Cole is looking at his father. Definitely not the man he
remembers.

INT. SPOT FREE CLEANING SERVICES -- LOBBY -- DAY

Derek, in his janitor uniform, enters followed by Cole.
They go to the receptionist, GWEN (40s), a round woman with
suspicious eyes.

GWEN
Hey Derek.

DEREK
Jackie's expectin' him.

GWEN
Who is him?

DEREK
My son, Cole.

GWEN
I didn't know you had a son. Hi
Cole, I'm Gwen.

COLE
Nice to meet you, Gwen.

DEREK
Come on, Cole.

Cole smiles at Gwen, follows Derek.

Gwen flips Derek the bird behind his back.

INT. JACKIE'S OFFICE -- DAY

Jackie is working on her laptop. Derek and Cole walk to her open door.

DEREK

Here's Cole,. Hook him up.

Derek leaves.

JACKIE

Come on, Cole. Have a seat. How you feeling?

COLE

(joking)
I'm hanging in there.

JACKIE

Oh, way too soon for jokes.

Cole takes a seat in front of Jackie's desk.

She hands him a set of car keys.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

I bought Derek a used Honda awhile back, said his mind is too noisy to drive. I had it parked in the visitors' lot for you.

COLE

I really appreciate this.

JACKIE

That's what family's for.

Cole looks around the office, impressed.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

Long way from how I used to make a living, huh?

COLE

Real long way. What about Diamond? Never thought I'd see him working a straight job, let alone for you.

JACKIE

After you left for school, and all that mess with Tonya, that Detective Hayes really started pressing Diamond.

(MORE)

JACKIE (CONT'D)

Looked up one day, poof. He was gone without word.

COLE

And he just came back?

JACKIE

Little over a year ago, I'm walking into a grocery store. I went to hand this panhandler a few dollars. It was Diamond. That's how he came back: dirty, damaged, and Derek...

INT. SUPPLY ROOM -- DAY

Derek is unloading a pallet of boxes.

Jackie and Cole, now in a janitor's uniform, walk over to him.

Derek sees Cole, stops working.

DEREK

(to Jackie)

My son ain't no janitor.

She looks to Cole for explanation.

COLE

Jackie offered me an accounting position, but numbers crowd my head right now, so I asked for this.

Derek slams a box on a storage shelf. Jackie and Cole look away from him.

INT. MEN'S ROOM -- DAY

Cole enters, pushing a cleaning cart. Derek follows, places a closed sign outside the door, walks over to a stall, pushes the door open.

Cole follows, looks in the stall. The toilet is splattered with shit. He vomits in the cleaning cart.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING -- LOBBY -- DAY

Cole is mopping up a spill while Derek is cleaning the glass lobby doors.

COLE

Jackie told me you left Phoenix a few years. Where'd you go?

Derek stares through the glass door and his thoughts.

INT. MENTAL INSTITUTION SWIMMING POOL -- DAY (FLASHBACK)

Diamond, in a hospital gown, head shaved bald, is tussling with THREE ORDERLIES, trying to drag him to the pool.

DEREK (V.O.)

I traveled a few places, met some people.

ORDERLY #1

Hold his ass!

The other two orderlies struggle before getting a hold on him.

Orderly # 1 unloads -- three deep punches -- in Diamond's stomach, disabling him.

The others drag him to the pool.

ORDERLY #1 (CONT'D)

Now what's your fucking name? I swear if you say Diamond again, you're gonna to drown in this fucking pool.

Diamond looks at the water. Piss runs down his leg.

ORDERLY #2

This retarded fuck needs a bath!

The men pick Diamond up, throw him into the pool.

HUGE SPLASH, Diamond goes under water, comes up thrashing in terror.

DIAMOND

Derek!

(gulping water)

My name is Derek Lamar Carter! !

He sinks under water. The men laugh.

EXT. OFFICE COMPLEX PARKING LOT -- DAY (PRESENT)

Derek and Cole, walking through the parking-lot.

DEREK

You did okay in there today. Don't get used to it. You didn't go to that college to clean up after people.

(pointing)

There's the car. See you later.

COLE

Where you going? I'll drive you.

DEREK

Nah, I got business to handle.

Derek puts on his earphones, walks away mumbling to himself.

Cole watches him, concerned.

EXT. TRENT HOUSE -- DAY

Cole is parked in a Honda Civic across the street.

Hallie pulls into the driveway in a white Volvo as the garage door opens. She parks next to a silver Malibu inside.

Cole gets out the Civic in his work uniform, trots across the street into the driveway.

Mika gets out the Volvo wearing her cartoon sunglasses. She spots Cole, runs and hugs his waist.

MIKA

Dad, you got a uniform job? Cool.
Now you can come home, right?

COLE

I need a little more time, Mika.

Cole kisses her, takes her hand, walks towards Hallie.

Hallie. Arms crossed, completely pissed.

HALLIE

You can't be here, Cole.

COLE

I just stopped by to --

HALLIE

You can't just stop by. Mika go
inside. Get a healthy snack.

MIKA

He's a got job, lady. Let him come
home.

HALLIE

Go inside, Mika.

COLE

I love you, Baby Girl, go on.

MIKA

I love you, too.

Mika tilts her sunglasses down, cuts her eyes at Hallie,
goes inside.

HALLIE

You put your hands on me.

COLE

I don't know where it came from. I can't find me anymore, you know?

HALLIE

I know I'll kill you if you even think of raising a hand to me again. Can't find me anymore. What the fuck does that mean?

COLE

I don't know, Hal. I'm just so TIRED.

HALLIE

You're going insane, Cole, and trying to take me with you. I'm not going. I'm filing for divorce.

COLE

No, Baby, wait. I'm working and I've started with a therapist. Give me more time. Please?

Hallie studies his uniform.

HALLIE

What are you supposed to be?

COLE

I'm a janitor, with my father. We work for Jackie's cleaning company.

HALLIE

Wow, a pimp working for his hoe. But you, an educated man, mopping floors?

Cole tugs at his uniform.

HALLIE (CONT'D)

This girl, Tonya, who was she, Cole?

COLE

Who?

Hallie gives him a look.

COLE (CONT'D)

A girl I grew up with. How did you know about her?

HALLIE

Besides you calling her in your sleep?
(MORE)

HALLIE (CONT'D)

Your father thinks she's haunting you.

COLE

You talked to Derek?

HALLIE

He stopped by the house. What happened to this girl, Cole?

COLE

She moved away. He stopped by?

HALLIE

What's her last name?

COLE

Sessions. When did Derek stop by?

A white BMW pulls into the driveway. Hallie and Cole turn their attention to it.

Robert gets out the car, carrying a laptop.

ROBERT

(nervous)

Everything okay here, Hallie?

Cole walks over to him. Hallie hurries behind Cole.

COLE

(extending a hand)

Cole Trent. Hallie's husband.

Robert gives Hallie a look as he shakes Cole's hand. He hands her the laptop.

ROBERT

You left it in the conference room. Joan gave me your address, so...

HALLIE

Thank you, Robert.

COLE

That cologne you're wearing too much of, Robert, my wife bought me the exact same. I don't care for it.

ROBERT

You okay, here, Hallie?

COLE

You already asked her that, Robert.

HALLIE
That's enough, Cole.

COLE
Is he part of your disappearing act?

Robert moves closer to Hallie, protective.

Cole pushes him away from Hallie.

Robert breaks into a fighting stance.

Hallie steps between them.

HALLIE
(to Cole)
You want Mika to see you in cuffs?

Cole takes a deep breath, collects himself.

COLE
Okay. Okay, I'm going, but I don't
want this fucking perfumed karate
punk around my daughter.

Cole walks away.

DR. TRAUSS (V.O.)
How did you feel, seeing him there?

INT. DR. TRAUSS' OFFICE -- DAY

Cole is leaning back on the sofa. Dr. Trauss is sitting
across from him, small note book and pen in hand.

COLE
I pictured him fixing my daughter
pancakes, helping with her home work.

Beat.

DR. TRAUSS
What about your wife? Seeing her
with the man you suspect her of having
an affair with?

COLE
After my blood pressure settled, in
a way, I was happy for Hallie. I
know it sounds crazy.

DR. TRAUSS
I don't really care for that word.

The doctor starts to write a note. His hand trembles. He
pockets the pen, hiding his disease.

DR. TRAUSS

Last time you were here, you didn't know why you shoved Hallie. Let's try that question again?

Cole picks lint from his pants.

COLE

It feels like she's suffocating me.

The doctor raises an eyebrow, removes his glasses.

COLE (CONT'D)

(standing)

Six o'clock. Our session is over, right?

INT. SUPER STORE -- DAY

A TEEN SALES CLERK is showing Cole and Derek bikes.

SALES CLERK

(pointing at a bike)

This is our best seller.

Cole flips the price tag.

COLE

(to the clerk)

Maybe something less expensive?

DEREK

Nah, we cool wit' this one. Have it put together. We're gonna shop some more.

LATER

Derek and Cole are perusing an aisle of toys. Cole slows to a stop, fixating on a black SHEILA SUNSHINE doll in a shiny turquoise dress.

INT. TOY STORE -- DAY (FLASHBACK)

Diamond (30s), sporting a "Gumby haircut" is walking with Cole (10) through a toy store aisle.

Strutting behind them is QUEENIE (20s), blonde wig, shapely. She's wearing a trench coat and carrying a large purse.

DIAMOND

(to Cole)

Point to what you want and Queenie'll snag it for you.

Cole, aware of the shop-lifting process, slyly points at two action figures, toy gun, hot-rod car.

Queenie swiftly slips the items in her purse.

Cole moves across the aisle to the girls section. He points at a black SHEILA SUNSHINE DOLL in a red, sequenced dress.

Queenie cringes, lowers her head. Here comes trouble.

Diamond looks at the doll, looks at Cole.

DIAMOND (CONT'D)
You'a fag, boy?

Cole shakes his head, no.

Diamond snatches him by his shirt collar.

DIAMOND (CONT'D)
Then what you want a damn doll for?

QUEENIE
C'mon, Diamond, leave the boy alone.

DIAMOND
Bitch, know your role.

Queenie turns her attention elsewhere.

DIAMOND (CONT'D)
(back to Cole)
Why you want it?

COLE
I wanna give it to my friend Tonya.

Diamond releases Cole.

DIAMOND
Boy, I thought you liked dick. Hell no. You come from a family of pimps. We don't buy a bitch shit unless it's for business. You hear me?

Cole nods.

Diamond's pager goes off. He looks at it.

Cole randomly points at a toy truck.

Queenie shakes her head, deftly hooks the toy inside her coat.

DR. TRAUSS (V.O.)
How long did your father abuse you?

INT. DR. TRAUSS' OFFICE -- DAY (PRESENT)

Dr. Trauss is twirling a pen between his fingers. Cole sits across from him in session.

COLE

Abuse? No it was more of a black father generational thing. He was hard on me from about six, until the time I left home.

The doctor studies Cole, writes a note.

INT. BETHANY BAPTIST CHURCH -- NIGHT

The church is full of energy as the CONGREGATION is up clapping and stomping to the CHOIR. The bus driver, Sean, is directing the musicians. He's intense, sweating as his arms and fingers swing instructions to the choir.

Derek. Sitting in a back pew. He's watching, more like stalking Sean. He looks across the aisle.

There she is, the mysterious girl, sitting and watching Sean. She turns, looks at Derek.

He nods his understanding.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING PARKING SHELTER -- DAY

A dead cat with a fancy collar and ID tag.

Cole and Derek are looking at it. Cole covers the cat with a towel.

DEREK

How long he say to get here?

COLE

Should be any minute.

DEREK

Good, he can bury his cat.

Beat.

COLE

You think Tonya was buried?

DEREK

We don't talk about her.

COLE

You talk to my wife about her. Derek I can't believe you went to my house.

DEREK

I told her that girl's causin' your trouble.

COLE

I don't believe in ghost.

DEREK

Well, boy, you better start.

A purple '67 GTO convertible with, FREE, on the license plate pulls to a stop in front of them.

Derek leaves.

BRAIN TOLBERT (30s), a neat, color-coordinated man, steps out the car. He looks at the covered carcass.

COLE

Brian?

BRIAN

Is that my, Silky?

COLE

I'm sorry.

Brian takes two steps, faints to the ground.

LATER

BRIAN'S POV

His eyes open to Cole looking down at him.

COLE (CONT'D)

Are you okay? You passed out.

BRIAN

I'm sorry. I have glucose issues.

Cole is holding Brian's head off the asphalt. He helps him to his feet, keeps a hold on him.

COLE

Careful.

Brian slowly walks over to his dead cat. He kneels, pulls the towel back, looks at his beloved Silky, hard swallow. He puts the towel back over his pet.

BRIAN

I appreciate your kindness... I don't know how she got out. I must look silly to you.

COLE
No, not at all.

Brian stands. His eyes begin to water.

BRIAN
Your name again?

COLE
Cole Trent.

Brian hands Cole a business card.

BRIAN
I'd like to thank you, Cole Trent.
Let me buy you a drink sometime or
coffee?

COLE
Oh no, you don't have to do that.

BRIAN
I want to do that. Just call me
when you're free.

Cole lowers his eyes.

INT. MICA'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Lightning illuminates the room as thunder rumbles. Hallie is in the small bed, lying next to Mika, watching her sleep. She eases out the bed, goes to the window, closes it. She spots Derek in front of the house, pacing back and forth in the rain, earphones on.

HALLIE
Shit.

EXT. TRENT HOUSE -- NIGHT

Derek, soaked, struggling to light a cigarette in the rain. He turns around and sees Hallie.

HALLIE
(beneath an umbrella)
What are you doing back here?

DEREK
Cole's doin' better. He's workin'
and takin' medicine, even sleeps
some now. I wanted to tell you that,
but I know I scare you, so I'm just
out here.

Hallie softens. The poor man is not a threat. She pockets her taser.

HALLIE

Put that cigarette out. You can
come in until the rain stops.

Derek drops the cigarette, stamps it out.

INT. TRENT KITCHEN -- NIGHT

Derek is sitting at the table in his t-shirt, towel wrapped
around his shoulders, drying himself.

Hallie standing, observing his frail body.

HALLIE

You like something to eat or drink?

DEREK

No, but thank you.

HALLIE

Last time you were here, you mentioned
a Tonya who died. Who was she?

DEREK

She was Cole's first girlfriend.
They talked about gettin' married
all the time when they was kids.

HALLIE

What happened to her?

DEREK

Car accident, drunk driver.

HALLIE

Oh God... Cole must of...

COLE

You thinkin' 'bout lettin' him come
back home?

HALLIE

I'm not sure, but you can tell him I
dropped the charges. No more court
dates... I better get your shirt.

She leaves the room.

Derek sits, looking at the refrigerator, which displays family
fun family pictures, Mica's school awards and artwork.

Hallie returns with Derek's shirt, hands it to him.

DEREK

You made Cole a good home here.
Don't give up. He needs you.

Hallie drops her head.

EXT. TRENT FRONT PORCH -- NIGHT

Derek steps outside. Hallie remains inside, looks out at the night.

HALLIE

You be careful. I don't think the rain is done tonight.

DEREK

Thanks for lettin' me in here. I see why Cole married you.

Hallie smiles.

Derek starts walking away.

HALLIE

Hey.

Derek stops, turns around.

HALLIE (CONT'D)

If you stop by here again, make it daytime, and bring an appetite.

Hallie closes the door.

Derek puts on his earphones, continues on his way.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING -- DAY

Cole completes the flight of stairs. He sees someone knocking on Derek's door.

DETECTIVE HAYES (40s), a pot-belly man, in an ill-fitting suit, spots Cole. They recognize each other.

INT. DEREK'S LIVING ROOM -- DAY

Cole steps inside the foyer.

COLE

(calling out)

Derek, you in here?

No response.

COLE (CONT'D)

(to Hayes, outside)

He's not here. You have a card?

DETECTIVE HAYES

Can I come in?

The cop starts to walk in. Cole blocks the door.

COLE

No.

The detective gives Cole a hard look.

DETECTIVE HAYES

Didn't I tell you to go off to college and stay away from here?

COLE

You did. Free country, though.

DETECTIVE HAYES

I remember wondering how you were going to live with yourself, knowing your father was behind that girl's... disappearance. Well, looking at you now, I got my answer.

Beat.

COLE

Anything else, Detective?

DETECTIVE HAYES

Yeah. Give your daddy a message.

COLE

What's that?

DETECTIVE HAYES

(Poking finger in
Cole's chest)

Tell him to be at Bethany Baptist Church on November 21st, 7 p.m.. Not one foot on that property until then. One more ting. Tell him to stay hell away from the bus driver, or we can pick up where we left off.

Cole swings the door closed in the cop's face. Listens for him to walk away.

DEREK

(low O.S)

You did good.

Cole turns around to Derek.

COLE

(startled)

Damn it, Derek! Sneaking up on me.

Derek holds a finger to his lips for silence, goes to the window, peeks out the blinds.

COLE (CONT'D)

What's he talking about, you going to church and a bus driver?

Derek turns from the window.

DEREK

That bus driver was the last one wit' that girl.

COLE

Tonya? You never told me that.

DEREK

I never told you a lot of shit.

COLE

Derek, you need to tell that detective this.

DEREK

I did, but his dick was hard for me.

COLE

Then we go to the police.

DEREK

I'm handlin' it! Not that dectective!
Not the police! Not a doctor! Me!

Cole looks at him. The man is truly unstable.

Derek takes a seat.

COLE

What are you going to do?

DEREK

You know what I'm gonna do.

Beat.

COLE

I wanna be there when you do.

Derek looks at Cole.

DEREK

I'm gonna do more then hurt him.

COLE

I know...

EXT. SEAN'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

A simple house in middle-class neighborhood. Sean drives his pickup truck into the driveway, parks.

He remains in the vehicle, talking into the vehicle Bluetooth.

HEDGES ON SIDE OF THE HOUSE

Derek and Cole, hunched over, behind a tall bush, spying Sean. They speak in whispers.

COLE

Is that him?

DEREK

Yeah, that's the mutha-fucka.

EXT. SEAN'S HOUSE -- NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Sean leaves his house, gets in a beat up old Volkswagon. He backs out the driveway when a --

BLACK CADILLAC

T-bones the Volkswagon.

Sean gets out the car, dazed.

Diamond, hair in an afro, runs out the Cadillac, gun in hand, he beats Sean to the ground with it.

DIAMOND

Where the fuck is she?! What did you do to her?!

SEAN

(covering himself)

I didn't touch her! I swear! I gave her the money, but I didn't touch her!

Diamond stops his assault, backs away.

DIAMOND

If you lyin', I'ma come back here and dump bullets in your fuckin' head.

EXT. FRONT YARD -- HEDGES -- NIGHT (PRESENT)

Derek sees the truck door open. He removes the gun from his hind waistband.

Cole looks around for witnesses, sees the gun in Derek's hand. He reaches his hand out for the gun.

Derek stares at his hand.

EXT. PICKUP TRUCK -- NIGHT

Sean laughing and speaking into the Bluetooth.

EXT. SEAN'S HOUSE -- BEHIND THE HEDGES -- NIGHT

Cole is still waiting for Derek to hand him the gun.

DEREK

You don't know 'bout killin', boy.

COLE

Dreamt of killing your ass a thousand times.

Cole takes the gun from Derek's hand.

EXT. SEAN'S FRONT YARD -- NIGHT

Sean gets out the van, gathers a couple shopping bags.

BEHIND THE HEDGES

Cole moves branches aside, takes aim with the gun.

DEREK

Let him get closer.

COLE

(whispering)

Shut up. Shit.

FRONT YARD

Sean walks towards his house, nears the hedges.

ROLL OF HEDGES

There's movement in the bushes. A motion light turns on. The shrub goes still.

SEAN

Hears something, sets his bags down, walks over to the hedges. He makes a fist with his keys, jumps between the hedges to --

NO ONE THERE.

Sean squeezes back through the shrubbery.

WOMAN (O.S.)

What took you so long, Mr. Jackson?

SEAN

I stopped to pick up some gifts for wife, Mrs. Jackson.

INT. HONDA CIVIC -- NIGHT

Cole driving. Derek scowling in the passenger seat.

COLE

I can't believe I almost shot that man, fucking with you! I am crazy.

DEREK

I knew you wouldn't man-up.

COLE

His wife is blind!

DEREK

Then we kill her blind ass, too, nigga!

COLE

Listen, the two of us don't make one right now. We need to think this through. We can't be out here, running around killing people.

DEREK

Give me back my gun. I'll handle it. You go put on some panties.

COLE

I tossed it when the motion light came on. What if someone saw us? You stay the fuck away from that man, or I'll call that Detective Hayes myself.

Derek puts his earphones on.

INT. DEREK'S LIVING ROOM / EXT. PARKING LOT -- NIGHT

Derek is standing in the dark, looking down out the window at Cole walking to the Civic. He opens the car door, reaches under the driver seat, retrieves the gun. He pops open the trunk, places the gun in the spare tire well.

Derek. Watching Cole, now he can get his gun back.

INT. ELEVATOR -- DAY

Cole, in his work uniform, standing next to his cleaning cart.

The elevator doors open to a YOUNG COUPLE, kissing. They step inside.

The man is movie-star handsome with hazel eyes. Cole looks at him, quickly turns around, checking items in his cart.

The woman presses a floor button. The man's eyes remain on Cole until she whispers in his ear. They kiss again. The floor chime sounds. The Couple exits, hugging.

Cole watches the doors close.

INT. DIAMOND'S LIVING ROOM -- DAY (FLASHBACK)

KEITH (14), hazel eyes, in a Kobe Bryant jersey, sitting, feet on coffee table, watching a Lakers game on TV.

Cole (14), in a Shaquille O'Neal jersey, enters from the kitchen carrying a sandwich on a plate and a can of soda.

In the background, Diamond is walking downstairs with a doo-rag on his head.

Cole hands Keith the food and drink, sits next to him.

KEITH

You see that Kobe pass?!

They high-five each other. Keith keeps hold of Cole's hand. Their eyes lock. Keith leans in when --

DIAMOND

Nigga, get your fuckin' feet off my table.

Keith quickly removes his feet from the table, sits up straight.

Diamond walks over and stands in front of the boys. He picks up the remote, shuts the TV off.

DIAMOND (CONT'D)

(to Keith)

Name?

KEITH

Keith Johnson.

DIAMOND

You some kind'a king?

Keith looks to Cole.

DIAMOND (CONT'D)

Don't look at him. You'a king, boy?

KEITH

No, sir.

DIAMOND

Then you must be a pimp like me, got your feet on my table, my son servin' you like he your bitch.

COLE

Let's go Keith.

Cole stands. Keith begins to, but Diamond shoves him back down.

Keith's lips quiver. He looks to Cole for help.

COLE (CONT'D)

Diamond, don't. We're sorry, okay?

Diamond pulls a small gun from his back pocket. Places it on the coffee table.

KEITH

I just want to go home.

DIAMOND

Pick it up. Point it at me.

.KEITH

I just --

DIAMOND

Pick up the goddamn gun!

Cole shakes his head. Don't do it.

Keith picks up the gun.

DIAMOND (CONT'D)

Point it at me. Between the eyes.

Both boys begin to weep. Keith takes aim.

DIAMOND (CONT'D)

Shoot. Go on, king pimp. Pull the fuckin' trigga, nigga.

Keith shakes his head no.

Diamond back hand slaps him.

DIAMOND (CONT'D)

Put it back on the fuckin' table.

Keith puts the gun down.

DIAMOND (CONT'D)

You understand what I'm sayin'?

KEITH

Yes, sir.

DIAMOND

Get the fuck out my house.

Keith runs out the door.

Diamond picks up Keith's sandwich, takes a huge bite.

Cole. Angry, staring at the gun.

DIAMOND (CONT'D)
 (mouth full of food)
 Don't bring no more boys in my house.
 Only bitches. Now take yo' ass up
 to your room.

Cole's eyes remain on the gun. Diamond senses his thoughts.

DIAMOND (CONT'D)
 I'm not gonna say it again.

Cole's shoulders slump. He walks upstairs.

Diamond picks up the gun, rubs his chin.

INT. ELEVATOR -- DAY (PRESENT)

The floor bell sounds. Doors open. Cole pushes his cleaning cart out. The elevator doors close.

INT. DEREK'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Cole is half watching TV. There's a knock on the door.

DEREK (O.S.)
 I need you to drive me to Flagstaff.

Cole looks at the nightstand clock: 3:11 a.m.

COLE
 Now?

DEREK (O.S.)
 My father's got cancer. He's dyin'.

COLE
 You told me he died in a gunfight?

DEREK (O.S.)
 Yeah, that was a lie.

Cole mouths -- what the fuck?

DEREK (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 It's Saturday. Come on, it'll be
 like one of those road trips you
 used to take wit your momma.

Cole powers off the TV, shakes his head.

INT. COLE'S TEEN BEDROOM -- NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Cole (16), asleep in bed, TV still on.

Lisa (30's) walks in the room, removes her coat, powers the TV off. She sits on the bed, looks down at Cole.

LISA

Cole.

Cole awakens, sits up, rubs his eyes.

COLE

What's wrong, Mom?

Lisa laughs. She's obviously high on something.

LISA

Why somethin' gotta be wrong for me
to talk to my son?

Cole looks at her, waiting.

She lights a cigarette, picks up a soda can from the nightstand, flicks an ash in it.

COLE

How were your dates? Was the money
good? Was there any drama?

This hurts Lisa. She closes her eyes a moment. No child should ever ask his mother this.

LISA

I didn't work today. I had some
other business. How'd your history
test go?

COLE

Aced it, like always. Wait, you had
a doctor's appointment.

Lisa hits her cigarette, exhales.

LISA

Damn fool come talkin' about me havin'
AIDS. Just tryin' to get some money.
Everybody pimpin'.

Cole begins to cry.

LISA (CONT'D)

Stop that. I ain't goin' nowhere.

She pulls Cole into a hug.

LISA (CONT'D)

Let's drive up in the mountains
tomorrow. Just us. Fuck Diamond.

COLE

He's gonna make me like him if you're not here.

LISA

Hey, hey. You your own person. Hear me? ... I didn't want to tell you this, but... Fuck it. Diamond ain't real your father.

Cole looks at her.

LISA (CONT'D)

I slept wit a lot of tricks, some really good, smart men. I think you came from one of them. One of the good ones. You got intelligence and a big heart. You ain't nothin' like Diamond, and never will be.

Cole sobs deeply now.

Lisa holds him tighter.

EXT. I-17 HIGHWAY -- DAWN (PRESENT)

The Civic moving up the highway into the mountains and sunrise.

EXT. ARIZONA HIGHWAY -- DAY

The Civic cruising through the catus filled desert.

EXT. GAS STATION / MIN-MART -- DAY

Cole pumping gas. He observes an ELDERLY GAY COUPLE walking towards the mart's entrance, holding hands.

INT. HONDA CIVIC -- DAY

Cole is driving, sipping coffee, listening to political talk radio.

Derek is looking out his window at the rock formations of the Arizona desert.

COLE

I've been talking to Dr. Trauss about Tonya. I think it's helping me. Maybe you could try him.

Derek attempts to put on his earphones. Cole grabs his hand. Derek pulls his hand away. Again, tries to put on his earphones. Cole knocks the earphones out his hands.

DEREK

Pull this fuckin' car over.

Cole turns on the hazard lights, slows to a stop off the road.

Derek gets out the car, slams the door.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL CAMPUS -- DAY (FLASHBACK SEQUENCE)

School has just ended and rowdy TEENS are rushing out the building in school uniforms.

Diamond, hair in dreadlocks, is in front of the school, sitting on the hood of a new 2007 black Charger, blowing kisses at giggling GIRLS. He spots COLE (16) and TONYA (16) walking towards a school bus. This is the mysterious girl Derek sees throughout the story.

DIAMOND
(shouting to Cole)
Hey 'lil pimp, over here!

Cole and Tonya look, both crushed by embarrassment. They walk over to him, STUDENTS and TEACHERS watching.

COLE
Hey, Diamond. What are you doing here?

DIAMOND
(eyeing Tonya's legs)
What, I can't come see my son in this fancy white school I'm payin' for?
(turns to Cole)
You like the car?

COLE
Yeah, it's nice.

DIAMOND
Nice Hell. This car's a pussy magnet. It's yours. Drive us home.

COLE
Really?

Diamond tosses Cole the keys.

Beaming, Cole opens the passenger door for Tonya. She starts to get in.

DIAMOND
Get in back, girl. Pimps in front.

Cole pretends not to hear this.

Tonya gives Diamond a nasty look, gets in the back seat.

INT. CHARGER -- DAY

Cole driving while Diamond is hand dancing to the radio.

TONYA

Hey, Diamond, Cole needs to ask you something.

DIAMOND

What you got to ask me that your girl gotta ask for you?

Cole takes a deep breath.

TONYA

Modern Dance. I need you to sign a permission slip for it.

Diamond looks back at Tonya. Must be her idea.

DIAMOND

You give him any, yet?

COLE

Diamond!

DIAMOND

Y'all fuckin' or not?

TONYA

If we are, it's none of your business.

DIAMOND

You better open them legs, 'fore I put one of my hoes on his virgin ass.

Tonya looks to Cole to defend her. He doesn't.

TONYA

Let me out this car, Cole.

COLE

We're almost home.

DIAMOND

Bitch want out, let her ass out.

Cole pulls the car curbside.

COLE

I'll call you later.

TONYA

Please don't.

Tonya squeezes out the back seat, slams the car door closed.

DIAMOND
Crazy little bitch. Let's go.

Cole is watching Tonya walking away.

Diamond punches Cole in his chest.

DIAMOND (CONT'D)
Boy, I said let's go.

Cole drives away.

DIAMOND (CONT'D)
And fuck no on that modern dance fag
shit.

EXT. HIGHWAY -- DAY (PRESENT)

Derek is walking on the side of the vacant highway. Cole
cruises the Civic slowly alongside him.

COLE
(Through passenger
window)
Get back in the car before die out
here in the desert.

DEREK
I'll walk.

COLE
Flagstaff is twenty-seven miles away,
you're wearing work boots.

DEREK
That girl come to my door. If you
done what you was supposed to, she'd
be alive today.

Cole pulls the car off the road, storms out the vehicle. He
picks up a big rock, throws it at Derek's backside, misses.

COLE
You mother-fucker!

He runs at Derek.

Derek turns around right as Cole tackles him. The men tussle,
roll off the road, tumble down the grade.

At the bottom of the hill, Cole straddles Derek. Commences
to pummel his face, knocking Derek unconscious. Cole stops
his assault.

COLE (CONT'D)
(breathing heavy)
Derek?... Derek?

Terrified, he puts fingers on Derek's carotid artery, checks for a pulse.

Derek's eyes open.

DEREK

When'd learn how to fight, nigga?

Cole drops on his back next to Derek. Both men exhausted, looking up at the clear blue sky. Derek straightens his earphones, puts them on.

EXT. PINEDALE SENIOR LIVING COMMUNITY -- DAY

A gated community with rolls of cottages, surrounded by pine trees and mountains. The Civic pulls into a unit's driveway.

INT. HONDA CIVIC -- DAY

Cole turns off the ignition. He flips down the visor mirror, dabs at his busted lip with a napkin.

DEREK

What about me? How I look?

COLE

Like your son just whooped your ass.

Derek chuckles, winces from pain.

COLE (CONT'D)

You think you could leave the Walkman in the car?

INT. PEEPHOLE POV -- DAY

Derek and Cole waiting, brushing off their clothes.

EXT. COTTAGE FRONT DOOR -- DAY

The door opens to, RIVER (60s), a calm Native American woman. She looks at Derek.

RIVER

Diamond, you look terrible. Come in here.

Derek and Cole enter.

INT. COTTAGE LIVING ROOM -- DAY

River gives Derek a hug.

DEREK

You remember my son, Cole?

RIVER
 (to Cole)
 You were boy when I saw you last.
 I'm River.

COLE
 Hello Ms. River.

She gives Cole a hug, too.

RIVER
 Your father's sleep now, Diamond.
 Can you wait a bit? I got a pot of
 chili and some cornbread?

DEREK
 Okay, but call me Derek, not Diamond.

River looks at Cole. He shrugs.

INT. COTTAGE KITCHEN -- DAY

Derek and Cole are seated at the table. Cole is eating his chili and cornbread while Derek dabbles at his. River is drying dishes.

RIVER
 More chili if you want, Cole?

COLE
 I'm fine, thank you. .

RIVER
 (to Derek)
 Diamond, I mean Derek, Luther said
 you had some kind of nervous breakdown
 and had to be hospitalized?

Cole looks at Derek. He hasn't heard this.

Derek reaches for his earphones, which aren't there. He plays with his spoon instead.

RIVER (CONT'D)
 Well, even though you look a mess,
 this is as sane as I've ever seen
 you... I'll go wake your father.

INT. COTTAGE HALLWAY -- DAY

River leads Derek and Cole towards the master bedroom.

RIVER
 The hospice nurse'll be back soon.
 She thinks no more then a day or two
 at best. Find whatever peace you
 can in there.

River opens the bedroom door.

INT. LUTHER'S BEDROOM -- DAY

LUTHER COLLINS (70s), unlike Derek, he's a white man, lying on the bed, corpse-like, with long silver dread-locks.

RIVER

(to Luther)

Hey you lazy bastard, look who came to visit you.

(low to Derek)

He still don't like sweet talk.

River leaves the men alone.

Derek moves closer, looking at his dying father.

It takes Luther a moment to recognize him.

LUTHER

(weak and raspy)

You dyin', too, Negro? You look like shit.

DEREK

Yeah, everyone reminds me of that. I came to say goodbye.

LUTHER

Last I heard, you was in the crazy house. You break out?

DEREK

I got better.

LUTHER

Better? Shit, hate to see you before. Who's that wit' you?

DEREK

My son, Cole. Your grandson, I guess.

LUTHER

He look like Po-Po.

COLE

Hello.

LUTHER

(to Cole)

Heard you married some uppity flat-ass woman. You ain't get that from me. I like big asses. Y'all sit down.

Derek takes a seat at the foot of the bed. Cole takes a chair.

LUTHER (CONT'D)
You got kids, Po-Po?

COLE
I have a daughter.

Luther looks at Derek. Nods.

LUTHER
Well, don't let her be no hoe.

COLE
I'll be sure and make note.

LUTHER
Boy, your mother was a good one.
Hated to see her rot and die the way
she did. She kept money in Diamond's
pockets. Don't make 'em like that
no more. No, sir. Not like that.

COLE
(to Diamond)
I see why the gunfight story. Too
bad it wasn't true.
(to Luther)
I better leave you two old pimps
alone. I'm sure you have a lot to
talk about. You know, before you
both go straight to Hell.

Cole walks out the room.

LUTHER
Damn, Diamond, he's a prissy little
bastard. You sure he ain't a soap-
dropper?

Luther laughs before going into a coughing fit. He struggles but manages to administer pain medicine through his IV.

Derek observes this action.

INT. COTTAGE KITCHEN -- DAY

River is standing over the sink, looking out the window at the mountains. Cole enters. She doesn't turn to face him.

RIVER
I'm surprised you lasted that long.
He was always a foul man, even worse
with death in his bed. Coffee?

COLE

Please. Black, thank you.

Cole takes a seat at the table while River pours two cups of coffee. She hands him one.

RIVER

I wanna show you something.

She sets her cup on the table, leaves the room.

Cole sips his coffee, massages his neck.

River returns with a photo album, sits next to Cole, opens the book.

NEWSPAPER ARTICLE: Nation's top rated receiver chooses Ohio State.

Under the heading, a picture of a spectacular one-hand catch being made by a high school football player.

RIVER (CONT'D)

Luther followed all your games.
Wouldn't shut up about you.

Cole looks at her, surprised.

RIVER (CONT'D)

Old bastard had nerve to be proud of
you. Wish he had shone Diamond some
of that. He was hard on that boy.

INT. LUTHER'S BEDROOM -- DAY

Luther. His mouth wide open as the secretions in his throat make a rattling sound.

Derek. Sitting on the chair, watching what meager life left in Luther, seep from his body.

Luther moans, struggles sucking oxygen. His breathing stops.

Derek stands.

Luther gasps for air, catches a breath.

DEREK

Your life ain't worth fightin' for
old man. And don't you be worrin'
bout that Heaven Hell shit. Go on
to sleep. It'll be better there.

Derek goes to the door, closes and locks it. He moves over to Luther. He administers a lethal dose of pain medicine into the IV.

Luther looks up at him, grunts his final breath. His eyes roll up into his head.

Derek reaches down, closes the dead man's eyes, sits on the bed next to his father.

INT. DEREK'S TEEN BEDROOM -- DAY (FLASHBACK)

DEREK (17) is sitting on a twin size bed in a suit and tie, sobbing.

LUTHER (50s) struts in, wearing a fancy suit, long pony-tail beneath his fedora. He's holding a Walkman Cassette Player and a red shoe box.

Behind him is JACKIE (19), skinny in a skimpy dress.

Luther stands in front of Derek. Jackie sits next to him on the bed.

LUTHER

Your Momma loved this thing. A box of her favorite music, too.

Luther places the items on Derek's lap.

LUTHER (CONT'D)

I gotta a flight to Detroit... Your Momma's dead, so that mean that little boy in you dead, too.

Luther pulls a wad of cash from his pocket.

LUTHER (CONT'D)

This here Jackie. She'll keep food in your mouth, money in your pockets.

Jackie takes the money from Luther's hand, places it in Derek's.

Derek looks at Luther, shakes his head. No.

Jackie turns Derek's face towards hers, shakes her head. Yes.

INT. COTTAGE KITCHEN -- DAY (PRESENT)

River is sitting next to Cole, pointing to pictures in the photo album.

COLE

I scored three touchdowns and had two interceptions that game.

RIVER

Why'd you quit? Anyone can see you still love the foolish game.

Derek enters.

DEREK
Luther's gone.

River sets her coffee down.

EXT. COTTAGE -- DAY

Two MEN from a mortuary are wheeling Luther's corpse on a stretcher to a van.

River walks the HOSPICE NURSE out the front door. They hug. The nurse walks to her car while River stands watching the men slide Luther into the hearse.

Derek and Cole step out, both somber. River turns to them.

DEREK
We're gonna get goin'. You need me
back for the funeral?

RIVER
He didn't want one. Said to just
burn or flush his body. That was
Luther. Not one sentimental bone in
his body.

Neither Derek nor Cole know how to respond to this.

RIVER (CONT'D)
Wait a minute. He left you something.

She goes inside. Derek and Cole watch the van ease out the driveway and cruise away.

River returns carrying a medium size box, hands it to Derek.

RIVER (CONT'D)
A few things he wanted you to have.

She waits for Derek to open it.

DEREK
We gotta get goin'.

RIVER
Oh, don't let me keep you.

COLE
Will you be okay up here by yourself,
Ms. River?

RIVER
(starting to cry)
I'll be just fine, now that I don't
have that evil bastard around.

The men look at each other, again not knowing how to comfort.

INT. HONDA CIVIC -- DAY

Driving the highway, Cole slows the car to a stop on the side of the road. Derek removes his earphones.

DEREK

Whassup?

COLE

I've got to know what a man like
that leaves his son...

Derek retrieves the box from the back seat, hands it to Cole.

Cole removes the lid.

INSIDE THE BOX

A manilla legal size envelope on top of a stack of cash.

Cole's eyes widened. He shows Derek the money.

Derek is unimpressed. He picks up the envelope, tears it open, pours out a bevy of jewelry into the box. A red, letter-sized envelope is the last item to drop from the sheath. He picks it up. It's addressed to Diamond.

Cole is sifting through the jewelry and money. He notices Derek frozen on the envelope.

COLE (CONT'D)

There's a lot of money in here.

Derek's eyes remain on the envelope.

COLE (CONT'D)

Well, you gonna open it?

DEREK

You keep that money and jewelry.

Derek pockets the envelope, puts on his earphones.

Cole watches him in disbelief.

COLE (V.O.)

There's seventy-three thousand, six-
hundred dollars cash in that box,
plus some expensive jewelry.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE -- DAY

Cole, in session, relaxed on the sofa. Dr. Trauss sits across from him, twirling his pen.

DR. TRAUSS

And he gave it all to you?

COLE

Everything except the red envelope.

DR. TRAUSS

Why do you think he gave it to you?

COLE

Dunno...Guilt maybe.

INT. HALLIE'S OFFICE -- DAY

Hallie seated at her desk, Google searching: missing teen Tonya Sessions in Phoenix, AZ.

RELATED ARTICLE

Foul play suspected in teen girl's disappearance.

PHOTO

School year book picture of Tonya smiling.

Hallie scrolls down.

PHOTO

Diamond leaving the police station, hounded by a reporter.

Hallie. She closes her eyes, shakes her head.

INT. TRENT STUDY ROOM -- DAY

Hallie is helping Mika with homework. The doorbell rings.

MIKA

I'll get it.

HALLIE

Nice try. Keep working.

EXT. TRENT FRONT PORCH -- DAY

Derek standing, holding two yellow roses.

Hallie opens the door. She checks for Mika, eases out onto the porch, gently closes the door behind her.

HALLIE

I don't want you here, Derek, ever.

DEREK

I do somethin'? I thought we were almost friends?

HALLIE

Tonya didn't die in some car accident.
Did you hurt her?

Derek lowers the roses.

DEREK

I did, but I didn't kill her.

HALLIE

Did Cole?

DEREK

No. If you don't believe nothin'
else, believe that.

HALLIE

Get off my porch -- Diamond.

Hallie goes back in the house, closes the door.

Derek stands there, alone with his roses.

EXT. CITY AVENUE -- NIGHT

Derek, walking on the sidewalk, earphones on, still holding
a yellow rose in each hand. He stops, throws the roses in
the street. A truck runs over them.

Derek lights a cigarette, unbuttons his shirt, rubs the
cigarette out on his bare chest, holds in his pain.

INT. DEREK'S LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

Derek enters. Cole is standing in the center of the room.

COLE

Hallie called me. She knows I lied
about Tonya. Thank you for that.

DEREK

I gotta piss.

Derek walks past Cole.

COLE

Fuck.

DR. TRAUSS (V.O.)

So you think Hallie believes you're
involved in Tonya's disappearance?

COLE (V.O.)

Since I shoved her to the floor, she
thinks I'm capable of anything, maybe
even murder.

DR. TRAUSS (V.O.)
Are you keeping any other secrets
from her?

COLE (V.O.)
No.

EXT. SCHOOL BUS STOP -- DAY

Hallie is standing and talking on her phone, waiting. A school bus pulls to a stop across the street.

Young KIDS begin to mill out the bus. Mika exits, waves to her mother.

Hallie waves back, still on her phone.

Mika hugs her GIRLFRIEND and trots over to the CROSSING GUARD.

The guard raises her stop sign. Traffic halts. She leads the CHILDREN across the street. Kids across, the guard lowers her sign. Traffic resumes.

MIKA'S FRIEND
(across the street)
Mika, you forgot your sunglasses!

In an instant, Mika dashes towards the street.

SPEEDING MUSTANG

Tearing through the 15 mph school zone.

MIKA

Running, on path to collide with the car and imminent death.

CROSSING GUARD

Sees Mika and the Mustang, frantically starts waving her sign, blowing her whistle.

HALLIE

Screams, drops her phone, runs after Mika when --

DEREK

Runs past her -- snatches Mika out the street -- within inches of impact.

PEOPLE yell at the car zooming away.

Mika is crying and clinging to Derek. He pats her head, guides her to Hallie, starts to walk away.

Hallie grabs his arm, pulls him into a group hug. The crossing guard and people surround them, concerned.

INT. DEREK'S LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

Derek enters the apartment. He flops down on the sofa, removes his work boots.

Cole walks in from the hallway.

COLE
Hallie told me what you did. I'm grateful.

Derek leans his head back on the sofa and closes his eyes.

Cole stands watching him.

INT. PIZZERIA / GAME PARLOR -- DAY

Cole is setting up decorations at a reserved table.

DR. TRAUSS (V.O.)
How's it going with Hallie? Is she allowing you to attend your daughter's birthday party?

COLE (V.O.)
No, but she's "allowing me" a supervised hour to celebrate with Mika.

DR. TRAUSS (V.O.)
Can you tell Mika you love her in that hour?

COLE (V.O.)
Point taken, smart-ass.

Derek walks over to the table with a cup of tokens.

Cole sees Mika, sunglasses on, accompanied by NORMA (50s), a conservative woman, in dress and manner. He waves them over.

Mika runs over to Cole, they hug and kiss.

COLE (CONT'D)
Happy birthay, baby girl. Love you.

MIKA
Wow, good job decorating old man.

Norma walks over, stern look on her face.

COLE
You must be Norma.

NORMA
And you must be Cole.

Norma looks at Derek.

COLE
My father, Derek.

NORMA
Hallie didn't say anything about him
being here.

She takes out her phone, makes a call.

COLE
Is that necessary?

Norma holds a finger up for silence.

NORMA
(into phone)
Hi Hallie. Yes, we're fine. There's
a man here with him, says he's the
grandfather? I guess... Yes. I
will. If you say so. Bye.

Norma puts her phone away.

LATER

BUMPING CARS

-- Mika laughing as she crashes into Derek's car.

-- Cole attacked by KIDS, ramming him from all sides.

-- Derek, Cole and Mika taking on other KIDS and ADULTS.

LATER

Cole, Derek and Mika seated in front of a partially eaten
pizza.

Norma is watching them from an adjacent table.

MIKA
(to Derek)
Why do you talk to yourself?

Derek looks away from her, ashamed.

COLE
You ready to open your presents?

MIKA
Does a bear go in the woods?

Mika digs into a large shopping bag, pulls out a gift.

COLE
That's from your Grandpa. He wouldn't
even tell me what it is.

Derek leans in as Mika rips off the wrapping paper, revealing
a boxed Sheila Sunshine doll.

Derek and Cole look at each other.

MIKA
(dissapointed)
Who's Sheila Sunshine?

The gift is a dud.

Derek pulls some bills from his wallet, hands them to Mika.

DEREK
Buy somethin' you want.

Mika gives the money back, kisses Derek's cheek.

MIKA
I like my gift.

Cole quickly pulls another present from the bag.

COLE
This is from Derek, too.

Cole winks at Derek.

Mika tears the wrapping paper, less enthusiasm this time,
until she sees a pink sequin purse.

MIKA
A Pinky Purse!

She pulls the purse out the box, hugs Derek.

MIKA (CONT'D)
Do you mind if I call you Grandpa?

Derek looks at Cole.

Cole nods his approval.

DEREK
If you want to.

MIKA
Thank you, Grandpa.

Derek stiffens, with a far off look on his face.

Norma walks by pointing at her watch.

EXT. PIZZERIA / GAME PARLOR -- PARKING LOT -- DAY

Derek is placing the bag of gifts in the trunk of Norma's Buick. Mika is next to him, Pinky Purse draped over her shoulder.

Cole pulls along side of them in the Civic. The trunk opens as he gets out the car.

COLE

One more gift.

Mika runs and looks inside. She screams. Cole pulls the bike out. Mika hands him her purse, jumps on the bike.

MIKA

Dad, take me riding?

NORMA

You have a party and friends waiting at your mother's, Mika.

MIKA

I wasn't talking to you, nosey.

Cole looks at Norma, kneels next to Mika.

COLE

Hey, Mika, we can go riding later. Let's be fair to your Mom and friends. They're waiting to celebrate your birthday.

Mika gets off the bike, rolls her eyes at Norma, puts on her sunglasses.

INT. HONDA CIVIC -- DAY

Cole and Derek sit watching Norma drive Mika away...

EXT. TRENT BACKYARD -- NIGHT

Derek and Hallie sitting on patio furniture near a fire pit.

HALLIE

Can I ask you a question?

DEREK

Alright.

HALLIE

How did you do it, selling women, pimping? I mean, even Cole's mother? You just don't seem the type.

Derek plays with his earphones a moment.

DEREK

I was never the type. I just didn't have a choice.

Hallie studies him, accepts his answer.

DEREK (CONT'D)

My turn?

HALLIE

Go on.

DEREK

You got someone else? Another man?

Hallie swipes her hair back.

HALLIE

Not anymore.

DEREK

You gonna let Cole come back?

HALLIE

Cole has to decide if he wants be here. Not just for Mika, but for me, too. You tell him that.

DR. TRAUSS (V.O.)

Whose idea was the date?

INT. DR. TRAUSS' OFFICE -- DAY

Cole and Dr. Trauss are sitting across from each other in session.

COLE

My father's. Hallie really Likes him. He likes her, too, even eats her cooking.

DR. TRAUSS

So you think it's good idea?

COLE

Why? You don't?

DR. TRAUSS

These sessions aren't about me, Cole.

COLE

Well, I think it's a good idea. I want my wife back. Maybe you should stop drinking before our sessions.

The doctor looks over his glasses at Cole.

COLE (CONT'D)

I'm not one for bullshit either.

DR. TRAUSS

I'm an alcoholic. True. Relapsed on my three years sobriety four weeks ago. I have three days sobriety returned. I can refer you to another doctor.

COLE

No. I'll stay with your drunk ass.

The doctor removes his glasses, rubs his eyes.

INT. MOVIE THEATER -- NIGHT

An ALIEN is killing a MAN on the IMAX screen.

Hallie is clinging to Cole, horrified by the by the creature, but still eating popcorn.

Cole is watching her, not the movie.

INT. NIGHT CLUB -- NIGHT

Cole and Hallie in the middle of the crowded dance floor, dancing and sweating to the music.

Cole breaks out his Michael Jackson moves, challenging his wife.

Hallie hits him with her own Michael imitation, leg kick and all. It's been forever since they had this much fun.

INT. SOUL FOOD RESTAURANT -- NIGHT

PEOPLE eating, enjoying themselves.

Hallie and Cole occupy a back booth. She's a bit tipsy.

HALLIE

(laughing)

You remember? She fell down the stairs with that short dress on, showing all her secrets!

COLE

(cracking up)

Yeah, then she pretended to be unconscious!

They both laugh harder. Suddenly, Hallie is crying. Cole stops. He wipes her tears with a napkin.

HALLIE

I'm sorry, but you're eating food,
laughing, dancing. That's the man I
fell in love with.

COLE

I love you, Hallie.

HALLIE

Did I mention Mika is staying the
night with her friend Kaley?

COLE

(smiling)
Only seven times.

EXT. TRENT DRIVEWAY -- NIGHT

The garage door opens. Hallie's Volvo pulls into the
driveway, eases into the garage.

Cole's Civic turns in the driveway and parks.

INT. HONDA CIVIC -- NIGHT

Cole slips a mint in his mouth.

INT. VOLVO -- NIGHT

Hallie touches up her lipstick in the visor mirror.

EXT. TRENT DRIVEWAY -- NIGHT

Cole gets out the car, starts toward Hallie standing in the
garage, waiting for her man.

Loud music coming from a car catches Cole's attention. He
turns, sees Robert's white BMW cruising by.

Cole stops, looks at Hallie.

Hallie opens her arms for Cole. Keep coming. Please.

DR. TRAUSS (V.O.)

What did you do?

INT. DR. TRAUSS' OFFICE -- DAY

Dr. Trauss is jotting down notes, sitting across from Cole.

COLE

I got back in the car and drove away.

The doctor finishes his note, looks at Cole.

DR. TRAUSS

Do you still find her attractive?

COLE

Like day one.

DR. TRAUSS

Scale of one to ten, where would you rate your sex life, before your depression?

Cole thinks a beat.

COLE

Five, maybe six.

DR. TRAUSS

Does she not please you?

COLE

I don't think I please her.

The doctor studies Cole.

DR. TRAUSS

Why do you blame yourself for Tonya?

COLE

Never said I did.

The doctor gives Cole a look.

COLE (CONT'D)

I could've been a better boyfriend.

DR. TRAUSS

Better how?

Cole hugs, massages his shoulders.

COLE

I don't know. Maybe paid more attention, been more understanding, typical male boyfriend lacking in emotional intelligence shit.

Beat.

DR. TRAUSS

Did Jackie tell you how we first met?

COLE

Not that I remember.

DR. TRAUSS

We met while I was in college. I was one of her, "customers."

COLE
You were a trick?

DR. TRAUSS
I prefer customer.

COLE
Wow.

DR. TRAUSS
There weren't a lot of women lining up to sleep with a man with a severe speech impediment. I stuttered my every word. It can be extremely painful being a misfit.

COLE
You think I'm misfit?

DR. TRAUSS
Of course not, but I think you do.

The doctor is on to something.

EXT. CITY BUS STOP -- DAY

A city bus comes to a stop. PEOPLE get on and off. Derek boards last.

INT. CITY BUS -- DAY

Derek steps up into the crowded bus, hesitates, seeing the FEMALE BUS DRIVER.

DEREK
Where's the real driver?

FEMALE DRIVER
I am a real driver. Sean took a few days off. You riding or what?

DEREK
Ridin'.

Derek swipes his bus pass.

LATER

The bus is nearly empty now. Derek is asleep in a seat.

INT. DIAMOND'S HOTEL SUITE -- NIGHT (FLASHBACK/DREAM)

Diamond walks to the door, full glass of cognac in hand. He opens it to Tonya with her suitcase, tears in her eyes. She says something. Diamond drops his head, then looks up at her, scowling. He pulls her inside, slams the door closed.

FEMALE BUS DRIVER (O.S.)
 Connecting stop for the sixteen
 southbound.

INT. CITY BUS -- DAY (PRESENT)

Derek startles awake, wipes his mouth. He turns and sees --

TONYA

Sitting naked, crying and covering her breast.

He begins to mumble to himself.

Two ELDERLY WOMEN are watching Derek and whispering.

INT. SPOT FREE OFFICE LOBBY -- DAY

Derek finishes vacuuming with a cordless sweeper.

Gwen is frowning and watching him from the reception desk.

GWEN

Don't forget to empty my wastebasket.

Derek goes behind the reception desk, removes her trash bag.

GWEN (CONT'D)

While you're here, sign Jackie's
 goodbye card.

DEREK

What goodbye?

GWEN

She's moving to Denver next week.
 You didn't know?

Derek puts a bag in the trash can.

GWEN (CONT'D)

Doug Martin is going to run the
 Phoenix operations for her.

Gwen sticks the card in Derek's face to sign.

He walks past her.

Gwen smiles. Got him.

INT. CAFETERIA -- DAY

The room is near empty. Derek and Cole are wiping down tables
 in separate areas.

Jackie walks in and over to Derek, waves to Cole.

Derek doesn't look at her, he continues working.

JACKIE

(to Derek)

Maurice saw you outside our house last night. What's wrong?

DEREK

You movin' to Denver?

JACKIE

I just couldn't find a way to...
Derek please stop working.

Derek stops, but doesn't look at her.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

Derek, listen, I know you --

DEREK

You know what? You know I ain't got nobody. Who wants be around my crazy ass? I'm old and nothin', Jackie. Old and nothin'! Go on and take your ass to Denver wit' that rich trick you married.

JACKIE

I'm sorry.

Derek kicks a chair across the room, walks away.

Cole looks on in the background.

INT. DEREK'S LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

Derek is pacing back and forth, smoking a cigarette, mumbling to himself.

Cole enters through the front door, stands watching Derek.

COLE

Derek.

Derek snaps out his trance.

COLE (CONT'D)

I finished your areas at work...
Jackie told me about Denver. You okay?

DEREK

Why wouldn't I be?

COLE

I don't know. I just thought maybe,
well, you know.

DEREK

Boy, I'm a man. I don't cry if some
bitch wanna go off to damn Denver.

Beat.

COLE

Well, I stink. I'ma get in the
shower.

Derek continues his pacing.

COLE (CONT'D)

Maybe you could see --

DEREK

I'm not goin' to no damn doctor.

Cole leaves the room.

INT. SHOWER -- NIGHT

Cole scrubbing his soapy body.

INT. DEREK'S LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

Derek is no longer in the room.

COLE (O.S.)

(calling out)

I'm feeling like, pizza. Think you
could stomach a slice or two? ...

Cole walks in the room in basketball shorts, drying himself.
No Derek.

INT. HONDA CIVIC -- NIGHT

Cole gets in the car, starts the engine. He thinks a moment,
something's not right.

INT. CAR TRUNK -- NIGHT

The trunk opens to Cole looking down inside. He fumbles
around, stops.

COLE

Awww, Derek, come on, man.

Cole makes a call.

COLE (CONT'D)

(into phone)

We got trouble.

He shuts the trunk.

EXT. SEAN'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

Cole's Civic pulls to a stop across the street. The headlights shut off.

INT. HONDA CIVIC -- NIGHT

Cole spying Sean's house. The driveway is empty and the place is mostly dark. He gets out the car, looks around, trots across the street near Sean's yard. He looks behind the hedges where they hid earlier. No Derek.

Cole starts back towards the car. He makes a call.

COLE

(into phone)

He's not here. Anything on your end?... I'm going to check the old neighborhood. If he's not there, I have to call the police... Alright, be careful.

EXT. OLD VICTORIAN NEIGHBORHOOD -- NIGHT

The Civic pulls in front of Diamond's decaying house, tall weeds in the yard, boards on windows.

Cole gets out the car, looks at the house.

LISA (V.O.)

Stop hittin' him Diamond! He's a boy! What he do wrong?!

His gaze travels across the street to the old, pink Victorian.

EXT. TONYA'S GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE -- DAY (FLASHBACK SEQUENCE)

Cole (18) in hip-hop gear, on the porch, ringing the doorbell. He looks at his watch.

A black Cadillac pulls into Diamond's driveway across the street.

Tonya (18) gets out the passenger side. She's in a short skirt and wearing heavy makeup.

Diamond gets out the driver's side in an elegant suit and tapered afro haircut, a sign his business and taste have improved.

DIAMOND

(to Tonya)

Get cleaned up and be at my door in two hours.

TONYA

I need to visit my Grandma in the hospital.

DIAMOND

Tomorrow. We got some advertisin' to do tonight. Hey, put on your school uniform. Niggas gone love that shit.

Tonya starts towards her house, sees Cole.

Diamond sees Cole. He grabs his crotch, mocking him, chuckles, goes inside.

Tonya reaches her house, walks up the porch steps.

COLE

That's were you been? Three days? Tonya, please tell me you didn't?

TONYA

Fuck him? Go home, Cole.

Cole puts his hands on his head, turns completely around.

Tonya puts her key in the door, opens it.

COLE

We leave for school next week. Stay the fuck away from him.

TONYA

You leave for school next week.

Cole grabs her arm.

COLE

I'm not going to just sit and watch you kill your future.

Tonya looks at his hand on her arm. He removes it. She reaches in her purse, hands him something, goes inside.

TONYA

I go on at nine-fifteen.

She closes the door.

Cole looks at what she gave him.

BOOK OF MATCHES

The Dollhouse Gentlemen's Club

Cole tries the door handle. It's locked. He knocks.

COLE

Tonya... Tonya open the door.

Loud music turns on inside. Cole starts pounding.

COLE (CONT'D)

Tonya, open the fucking door! Tonya!
I'll take care of this shit!

Cole walks away, murder in his eyes.

INT. TONYA'S GRANDMOTHER'S LIVING ROOM -- DAY

Tonya is sitting on sofa, staring at a stereo speaker.

EXT. DIAMOND'S HOUSE -- DAY

Cole runs into the house, leaves the front door open. After a beat, the sounds of: Shouting, physical struggle, items breaking, and then -- Cole shrieking in pain.

INT. GENTLEMENS CLUB -- NIGHT

The place is high-class. The men are mature and suited. The women are detailed and polished.

Diamond and Jackie are seated in the VIP section on a mezzanine, drinking with a group of PEOPLE.

Cole enters, black eye, bruised face. A BOUNCER stops him. Cole says something and points at Diamond. The bouncer moves aside. Cole continues through the crowd towards the stage.

A DANCER in a nurse's hat and thong is finishing her act.

DEEJAY (O.S.)

Show some love for the beautiful
Nurse Carrie everybody. Give it up!

Nurse Carrie bows, blows kisses to her fans.

DEEJAY (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Now let's welcome the talented
newcomer, goes by the name BLOSSOM.

Slow, sexy music begins to float through the crowd. Tonya appears on stage in what's left of her school uniform. She begins to dance, stiff, afraid. Moans can be heard from the crowd.

Cole squeezes through the crowd, reaches the stage.

COLE

(shouting)
Tonya! ... Tonya!

Tonya spots Cole, locks eyes with him. Suddenly angry, her dancing becomes fluid and sexy. Cheers and whistles are now coming from the crowd.

Cole. Saddened, eyes pleading for her to stop.

Tonya snatches off her top, tears off her skirt. The crowd goes crazy.

Cole can't take anymore, he turns, rushes through the craving mass towards the exit.

Tonya, now in complete control, leaps on the pole, twirls around it, slides upside down, legs spread. She drops to the floor, writhes around, rolls into a crawl towards her thirsty audience.

Diamond is looking down from the mezzanine at Sean watching Tonya near the stage.

Sean looks up at Diamond, raises his glass in approval.

Jackie. Watching Tonya, grieved by the loss of innocence.

EXT. DIAMOND'S OLD HOUSE -- NIGHT (PRESENT)

Cole walks back to the Civic. He takes another look at both houses, gets in the car and drives away.

INT. HONDA CIVIC -- NIGHT

Cole driving, eyes scanning the city streets. He stops at a red light. A billboard for Bethany Baptist Church is lighting up the block.

He powers his window down, focusing on the sign. The traffic light turns green. A horn blows for him to move. Cole's foot remains on the brake. Bethany Baptist, where has he heard that? ... He remembers.

TIRES

Spinning, burning rubber.

INT. BAPTIST CHURCH -- NIGHT

The place is packed with an animated congregation, captivated by the fiery PASTOR, a huge man in a tailored suit.

Cole enters, eyes searching. An USHER approaches him.

USHER

Welcome to New Birth Ministry,
Brother.

COLE

I'm looking for my father. About six feet, frail build, janitor's uniform?

USHER

No, I don't think I've seen him, but the house is packed tonight.

COLE

Can I walk around, check for myself?

USHER

You can't just walk around, Brother, for security reasons.

COLE

It's important. My father suffers from mental illness.

USHER

Follow me. I'll get a guard to escort you.

Cole follows the usher a few rolls down, stops. He sees --

DEREK

Seated near the front of the church.

DEREK'S POV

He's watching Tonya's ghost, now with decayed, horrifying flesh, seated in the front pew, next to Sean and his wife. Tonya mocks a gun with her fingers, points at Sean's head. She smiles at Derek with rotted teeth.

Derek gets out his seat. Time to kill. He moves towards the aisle, stepping on toes, gathering looks.

COLE

Sees Derek moving towards Sean. It's going down. Cole runs past the usher towards Derek.

USHER

Alarmed, chases after Cole.

JACKIE

Enters. An USHER greets her. She eyes Cole running and pushes past the usher, sprinting towards the action.

PASTOR

Notices Cole running towards the front, stops preaching.

PASTOR
 (to a SECURITY GUARD)
 Stop him! Stop that man!

PEOPLE PANICKING

Standing, moving, unsure of the threat. Plenty of commotion.

SECURITY GUARD

Jumps off the stage to intercept Cole.

SEAN

Sees Derek coming for him, stands up.

DEREK

Walking fast, reaching in his hind waistband for the gun.

SEAN

Moves in front of his wife, shielding her.

DETECTIVE HAYES

Steps in front of Derek, reaches in his breast pocket for his gun when --

COLE

Tackles Derek from behind, lands ontop of his back. He quickly and slyly, removes the gun from Derek's waistband, tucks it in his own, covers the weapon with his shirt before --

SECURITY GUARD AND USHER #1

Snatch Cole up, restrain him.

COLE
 He's my father! He suffers from
 mental illness! Don't hurt him!

USHERS 2 AND 3

Pick Derek up, lock his arms behind his back.

DEREK
 (trying to break free)
 A life for a life! A life for a
 life!

USHER #2
 Brother, don't make lose my religion!

WOMAN (O.S.)
 Stop! Everybody! Please stop!

A WOMAN IN RED emerges from the crowd, stands next to the pastor. The whole room halts.

WOMAN (CONT'D)
 (to the Pastor)
 They're friends of mine. Please.

The Pastor looks Cole and Derek over.

PASTOR
 (to the ushers and
 guard)
 Alright.

The men release them.

Detective Hayes pats Derek's chest and waist, checking for a gun. Nothing.

Cole and Derek look at the woman in red. They recognize her. She is TONYA SESSIONS (late 20s), heavier, different color hair, but still those deep, dark eyes. Behind her, the man who chased Derek with the Rottweiler.

Jackie emerges from the crowd, joins Cole and Derek. She follows their gaze to Tonya. Her mouth drops open.

Maurice wedges through the crowd over to Jackie. He looks at Derek, takes Jackie's hand.

Tonya approaches them.

TONYA
 Hello Cole.

COLE
 All this time...

Cole's breathing quickens. Tonya hugs, more like holds him.

TONYA
 I'm sorry. I'm here now.

Derek reaches over and touches Tonya's back. She's real.

PASTOR
 (to the congregation)
 Everyone, please be seated. Just
 some overexcited fans of Mrs.
 Jordan's.
 (to the ushers)
 Place them in reserved seating.

Tonya releases Cole. Looks at Derek.

TONYA
 Diamond.

DEREK
I'm not that anymore.

TONYA
I can see that.

JACKIE
(to Tonya)
Girl, come here.

Jackie and Tonya hug.

Derek touches her back again. She's real alright.

DETECTIVE HAYES
(to Derek)
Maybe you can relax now.

The dectective and the congregation start back to their seats.

Cole, Derek and Jackie are still staring at Tonya.

EXT. CHURCH COURTYARD -- NIGHT

Tonya and Cole are seated on a bench, looking up at the stars.

TONYA
Looks like we could just reach up
and touch them.

Cole gives her nothing.

TONYA (CONT'D)
I don't know where to start.

COLE
We thought you were dead. Murdered.
Start there.

Tonya reaches for his hand. He moves it away.

TONYA
After I spent those horrible days
with Diamond, I had to get away from
everything. Detective Hayes was a
friend of my grandmother's. He found
me in Denver. Grandma begged him to
quietly close my case, fearing what
Diamond might do, so he did. I wanted
to hurt you, Cole.

COLE
Mission accomplished.

Tonya stands with her back to Cole.

DR. TRAUSS (V.O.)
Why did Tonya want to hurt you?

COLE (V.O.)
I wasn't what I was supposed to be.

INT. HOTEL SUITE -- NIGHT (FLASHBACK SEQUENCE)

A BELLMAN enters carrying two small suitcases and a portable stereo. He sets the items down.

Cole (18) carries Tonya (18) into the room, mocking newlyweds, laughing. He sets Tonya on her feet and hands the bellman a few bills.

BELLMAN
Thank you, sir. Congratulations to you both on your graduation.

COLE/TONYA
Thank you.

The bellman exits. Amazed, Cole and Tonya look at the room and its view of the city.

TONYA
Wow. Now this is class. Diamond hooked you up.

Tonya sees a bucket of champagne and glasses. She reads the card attached.

TONYA (CONT'D)
Enjoy the suite, and get some ass.

Cole shakes his head.

TONYA (CONT'D)
Well, let's drink up.

COLE
We don't drink.

TONYA
We do now. Set the music up.

Tonya pops the bottle open. Champagne oozes out. She quickly pours two glasses.

Cole setups the portable stereo. There's a knock at the door. They look at each other. He goes to the door, opens it. Diamond strolls in.

DIAMOND
Wanted to make sure you got checked in okay.

(MORE)

DIAMOND (CONT'D)

This suite is sweet ain't it? I'm
down the hall in 606 handlin' business
tonight, if y'all need me.

Diamond picks up a glass of champagne, downs it.

Tonya motions Cole to get rid of him.

DIAMOND (CONT'D)

(to Tonya)

He leaves this room a man, right?

Tonya nods.

Cole drops his head.

Diamond slaps Cole on the back, throws up a peace sign,
strides out the door.

Cole and Tonya roll their eyes.

LATER

Tonya is drunk, in panties and bra, dancing on top of the
bed to the music.

Cole is sitting on a chair in his boxers, laughing at her
and sipping champagne.

The music changes to a slow jam. This is the song that
mesmerized Cole in the story's beginning.

TONYA

Oh, I love this song.

Tonya starts singing with a strong, soulful voice. She steps
down from the bed, moves over to Cole, takes the glass from
his hand, sets it aside.

TONYA (CONT'D)

You ready for this?

Cole forces a nervous smile.

Tonya removes her bra and panties, goes to the bed, pulls
the covers back, lies on the bed.

Cole stands, slowly approaches the bed, stands looking at
her. He removes his boxers.

TONYA (CONT'D)

You need me to do something to make
it hard?

Cole lies down next to her. He's, stiff, tense.

COLE
I don't know how, Tonya.

She mounts him, kisses his neck, chest, stomach, continues down under the covers.

Cole squeezes his eyes shut.

COLE (CONT'D)
Stop Tonya.

Tonya emerges from beneath the covers.

TONYA
Did I hurt you?

COLE
I can't do this.

TONYA
I don't have to use my mouth.

COLE
I can't have sex with you.

Tonya looks at him, her heart breaking into a thousand pieces.

COLE (CONT'D)
I don't mean with you... I don't think any girl.

Tonya gets out the bed, starts dressing.

Cole sits up.

TONYA
You like boys, Cole?

COLE
I don't know.

TONYA
But you know you don't like me, girls?

Cole doesn't answer.

Tonya finishes dressing, throws some items in her suitcase.

Cole wraps himself in the sheet, gets out the bed.

COLE
Tonya.

She walks out the room with her suitcase.

The sheet drops from Cole's body. He stands naked.

INT. HOTEL CORRIDOR -- NIGHT

Tonya marching down the hallway, carrying her suitcase. She stops at room 606, knocks on the door. Music and laughter can be heard inside. After a moment, Diamond opens the door, full cognac glass in hand.

TONYA

Your son can't do it.

Diamond drops his head, then looks up at Tonya, scowling. He pulls her inside and slams the door closed.

INT. HOTEL SUITE -- BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Diamond and Tonya are standing, looking at each other. He rips her blouse open, turns her around, yanks down her skirt and panties. He picks up an empty beer bottle, sticks it inside her vagina, twist it, punishment for her failure.

Tonya. Staring at a painting as her spirit leaves her body.

INT. COLE'S TEEN BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Diamond walks in carrying a prescription and cognac bottle. He takes a gulp from the liquor bottle, sets it down on the night stand. He removes the medicine lid, places the container next to the liquor bottle, walks out room.

OXYCONTIN PRESCRIPTION AND COGNAC BOTTLE

COLE (V.O.)

That was the first time I tried to...
hurt myself.

DR TRAUSS (V.O.)

How did you survive that night?

COLE (V.O.)

Ms. Jackie found me on the floor.
She pumped my stomach until the
ambulance arrived.

EXT. CHURCH COURTYARD -- NIGHT (PRESENT)

Tonya standing, still looking up at the stars. She turns to Cole, sits next to him on the bench, takes his hand.

COLE

The choir director, bus driver, Derek
thought he killed you.

INT. SEAN'S HOUSE -- NIGHT (FLASHBACK SEQUENCE)

A simple home with cheap furniture. Sean (bearded) places a bottle of wine and glasses on the coffee table. He studies the items, shifts them around. Perfect.

There's a faint knock at the door. Sean tucks his shirt in, goes to answer. He opens the door to -- Tonya (18) in a tight skirt and blouse, abundance of cleavage.

TONYA (V.O.)

He was more nervous than me.

Sean looks at her.

SEAN

Are you old enough to be here?

TONYA

I'm eighteen.

He winces a bit, moves aside. Tonya enters.

INT. SEAN'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Sean walks in, followed by Tonya, both swallowing their wine, numbing themselves. Sean sets his glass on the dresser.

TONYA

You give me the money first. Three hundred.

Sean pulls cash from his wallet, hands it to her.

Tonya studies the money, weighing the trade for her body. She places the cash in her purse, sets it aside.

TONYA (CONT'D)

What do you wanna do?

SEAN

Could I, uh, maybe try oral? I mean on you. I'm gettin' married and I don't wanna embarrass myself. If that's alright?

Tonya downs her wine and sets her glass on the dresser. She moves to the bed, undresses, nervous and shaking, but manages her naked body onto the bed.

Sean gets down on his knees. He stares, between her legs, slowly moves his face inward.

Tonya. She looks up at the ceiling, holds her breath, waiting for contact... Nothing. She closes her eyes... Still nothing.

SEAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Would you pray with me?

Tonya raises her head, looks at Sean between her legs.

TONYA

What's wrong?

SEAN

I want to, real bad, but it's the after that what's scarin' me. You keep the money. But would you pray with me?

TONYA (V.O.)

I'm glad Diamond sent me to him first. The men after him, they did things to me that... Anyway, Sean and I stayed in touch and became friends.

Tonya slides her naked body out the bed. She gets on her knees next to Sean. He takes her hand. Their heads bow.

EXT. CHURCH COURTYARD -- NIGHT (PRESENT)

Tonya and Cole seated on the bench, looking at each other.

TONYA

He told me Diamond was back and not doing so good, so I asked Sean to invite him here tonight. I didn't know you were back, and not doing so --

COLE

I see you married.

TONYA

Blessed with a husband and son that love me.

COLE

I have a wife and daughter. I guess things worked out for both of us.

Tonya looks at him.

COLE (CONT'D)

What?

TONYA

You, with a woman?

COLE

Yeah, me with a woman. I love my wife.

TONYA

Who are you talking to, Cole? Diamond, or that little girl who ask you to marry her?

Cole hugs his shoulders.

TONYA (CONT'D)
 You're the only person I know who's
 going to die without being born.

Beat.

COLE
 I'm lost, Tonya.

TONYA
 Well time to be found, Cole.

She touches his face. He closes his eyes, soaks in her warmth.

TONYA (CONT'D)
 You don't owe me, Diamond, or this
 world a thing. You owe you...

An usher signals to Tonya from the exit.

TONYA (CONT'D)
 I have to go back inside. Please
 stay for my performance. I promise
 to keep my clothes on this time.

Cole opens his eyes, grins at her joke.

INT. CHURCH -- NIGHT

Maurice, Jackie, Derek, Cole, seated and applauding.

Tonya walks across the stage to a microphone.

TONYA
 God is good. Amen?

CONGREGATION
 Amen. God is good. Praise Jesus.

TONYA
 I'd like to dedicate this first song
 to a very special quest. It's
 secular, but I hope you don't mind.

MAN IN AUDIENCE
 We don't mind. Sing your song, Sista.

The music begins.

Tonya opens her mouth and releases her power, instantly placing the building under her spell.

Jackie and Maurice. Both are mesmerized.

Derek. Removes his earphones, transfixed.

Cole. He forms a smile we didn't think he was capable of.

Tonya's singing continues over the following scene.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL ARTS CENTER -- NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Cole is standing alone outside the building, in his football uniform, looking through the window at Tonya performing a solo dance. She's lovely. She's free. If only he could be...

EXT. CHURCH -- NIGHT (PRESENT)

Cole and Tonya are next to a limo with a DRIVER waiting, rear cab door open. They hug, both smiling and forgiving. She gets in the limo.

The driver closes her door, tips his hat to Cole, gets in the driver's seat.

Tonya lowers her tinted window.

TONYA

Time for you to choose, Cole. Choose happiness. You've certainly earned it. Oh, and I want my ring back.

She smiles and blows him a kiss goodbye.

The limo drives away. Cole waves goodbye...

ACROSS THE PARKING LOT

Jackie and Maurice are standing by his SUV.

JACKIE

I'll be home later. I need to say goodbye to Derek.

Maurice starts to object, stops.

MAURICE

Do what you need to do. I'll be home waiting.

He kisses her, gets in his vehicle.

INT. JACKIE'S CAR -- NIGHT

Jackie is driving while Derek rides, holding his Walkman.

DEREK

You passed my exit.

JACKIE

I need to take care of something.

INT. UNOCCUPIED HOUSE -- LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

White sheets cover the furniture in the lifeless room. The front door opens, Jackie leads Derek inside.

DEREK
Whose house is this?

JACKIE
My friend Lynn's from Chicago. It's her winter home. Snowbird.

DEREK
Why we here?

Jackie moves within inches of Derek.

JACKIE
(unbuttoning her blouse)
To say goodbye.

INT. BEDROOM -- NIGHT

White sheets cover the bedroom furniture. Jackie walks in, and then Derek.

Jackie goes to the bed, pulls off the white sheet. She disrobes, stands naked before Derek.

JACKIE
What are you gonna do about it?

She pulls back the covers, gets on the bed, spreads her legs wide open.

Derek takes his clothes off, gingerly slides next to Jackie on the bed.

She pulls him close, kisses him, slow and deep. Derek doesn't budge. Jackie puts her hand between his legs, begins a motion. Nothing. She stops, looks him in the eyes.

DEREK
You cool wit' me just holdin' you?

Jackie places her head on his chest.

JACKIE
That's fine, Baby. I know you weren't meant for me that way. I just needed to remind you of that before I leave.

INT. GREYHOUND BUS STATION -- DAY (FLASHBACK)

Derek (15) and Jackie (17) are dressed in flashy clothing, on a bench, observing a runaway TEEN-AGED GIRL, sitting alone. The girl is Lisa, Cole's future mother.

JACKIE

See, she been there more than an hour. She ain't got nobody. You ready?

Derek stands, starts towards Lisa, stops. He turns to Jackie.

DEREK

What if I don't really like girls?

Confused, Jackie looks at him a beat. She understands now, lights a cigarette.

JACKIE

Well don't matter. You're a pimp, and pimps don't love hoes noway. Like we practiced. You're Diamond now, not Derek.

Derek transforms into Diamond, his walk cool and confident as he glides over to Lisa, takes a seat next to her. He crosses his legs, introduces himself, extends his hand. Lisa shakes it, giggles.

Jackie is watching her creation. She blows out a long stream of cigarette smoke.

INT. BEDROOM -- NIGHT (PRESENT)

Jackie lying with her head on Derek's chest.

JACKIE

This is the last time we'll see each other, Derek.

DEREK (O.S.)

Yeah, I know.

EXT. DEREK'S APARTMENT COMPLEX -- NIGHT

TEENS running from something, while OLD MEN sit playing cards and drinking.

Jackie's car pulls into the parking-lot.

Derek gets out and walks in front of the car. He stands in the headlights, watching Jackie back out of his life.

The car stops. Jackie gets out, runs into the lighting with Derek. Their silhouettes engage in long embrace.

Jackie pulls away, hurries back into her car. She reverses out the lot, leaving Derek standing alone in the dark...

INT. DISCO TECH -- NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

A crowded 70s disco club with people dressed in big collars and bell-bottoms.

Jackie and Diamond, in their teens, underaged in the club, dressed in white, dancing and spinning the night away.

EXT. DEREK'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT (PRESENT)

Cole walks over to Derek, standing where Jackie left him. He wraps his arm around his father's shoulder.

INT. DEREK'S LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

Derek is seated on the couch, holding the small red envelope Luther left him. He tears it open, removes a note.

LUTHER (V.O.)

Hey Boy, I hope the money and jewelry help with your hard times. I just wanna let you know that maybe if I had spent more time wit' you, maybe be you wouldn've been ah fag. But I'm dead if you readin' this, so now I ain't gotta worry 'bout you bein' funny or havin' sex with no man... Now, I'm worryin 'bout you not havin' one good memory of me. I've always been a cripple wit' words, so I hope you get what I'm sayin', even though I can't fully say it... You take care of yourself, boy.

Derek folds the note.

INT. TRENT BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Hallie is in bed working on her laptop. The doorbell rings.

INT. TRENT LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

Hallie goes to the door in her robe, looks through the peephole, opens it, and steps aside.

Cole walks in. They stand searching each other's eyes. He drops to his knees, hugs her torso.

INT. TRENT BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Cole walks in the room, looks around, sits on the bed.

Hallie tips in the room, gently closes the door.

HALLIE

She's still asleep.

(MORE)

HALLIE (CONT'D)

It'll be like Christmas when she
sees you in the morning.

Cole is quiet and tense. Hallie walks over to him, starts unbuttoning his work shirt.

LATER

Hallie. Biting a pillow in ecstasy. Cole's head is under the covers, pleasing her. She mounts Cole, reaches down between his legs, searching his face for connection.

HALLIE'S POV

Cole looking away from her, void of passion, but still obligated.

She stops. This is rape.

COLE

I can't no more, Hallie.

She moves off him, sits arms around knees, pondering.

HALLIE

I knew. I just didn't want to know.

INT. MICA'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Cole eases into the room, gently walks over to Mica, asleep in bed. He stands watching her, tears rolling down his face. He notices the Sheila Sunshine doll on her dresser.

Hallie enters in the background, stands beside him.

HALLIE

(Softly)

You coming back in the morning, fix
her pancakes?

Cole turns to Hallie, relieved, nods he will.

INT. TRENT FOYER -- NIGHT

Hallie opens the door for Cole. They stand a moment, wipe each others tears.

Cole takes a deep breath, walks out the door.

Hallie closes the door. Her hand remains on the doorknob.

EXT. TRENT FRONT PORCH -- SAME

Cole takes a couple of steps. Stops. He goes back to the door, starts to press the doorbell. His finger lingers.

INT. TRENT FOYER -- SAME

Hallie's hand is on the doorknob. She's stuck between trying to stop herself and hoping Cole will come back.

EXT. TRENT FRONT PORCH -- SAME

Cole drops his finger from the doorbell, turns, looks out at the great beyond... He walks away to his beginning.

INT. DOCTOR TRAUSS'S OFFICE LOBBY -- DAY

Cole is sitting amongst PATIENTS.

Dr. Trauss steps in the lobby.

DR. TRAUSS
(to the room)
Derek Carter?

Cole points to the restroom door.

Derek exits the restroom. Walks over to the doctor.

DEREK
I'm here.

Doctor Trauss extends his hand, waits for Derek's.

Derek looks across the room at Tonya's ghost, standing near the exit. She gives him one last stare before walking out the door, leaving him be.

Derek shakes the doctor's hand.

DR. TRAUSS
I'm Dr. Trauss. It's nice to meet
you, Derek. Please follow me back.

Dr. Trauss opens the hallway door.

Derek walks to the door, looks back at Cole.

Cole gives him a nod.

Derek walks through the door.

Dr. Trauss gives Cole a thumbs-up and follows Derek, allowing the door to close slowly behind them.

Cole pulls out his wallet, removes Brian Tolbert's business card, starts pressing numbers into his phone.

THE END