

"KIRKWOOD"

written by

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FADE IN:

INT. COUNTRY STORE - SNACK AISLE - DAY

A pair of innocent baby blues fill the frame. The eyes of a young child. About to take in the light and darkness of the world in equal measures. The VOICE of our protagonist BEN KIRKWOOD, thirties, walks us through it.

BEN (V.O.)

What defines a man? Is it his ideals? His patience and understanding? Or is it a sense of compassion and his ability to love and provide? Some might argue a man is truly defined by his accomplishments. Those worldly achievements that, quite frankly, don't mean all that much in the end.

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

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

If you were to ask me today, I'd say a man's choices define him. Not ideals. Not what comes out of his mouth. But his actions. What defines a man? I was about to find out.

BENJAMIN "BENNY" KIRKWOOD, nine, a chubby, blue eyed brat in a dirty t shirt, stands almost trance-like before a most impressive display of chocolate bars.

He's a pathetic sight. A mouth, face and clothes caked in three shades of ground in dirt.

SUPERIMPOSE: LAKE HARTLEY, FLORIDA 1995

Benny is a bit on edge, checks the front end:

MR. JERGENS, sixties, owner and operator, pops a squat on a bar stool behind the register. He's otherwise engaged in a tabloid magazine, oblivious to the delinquents wreaking havoc in his store.

MR. JERGENS

What will they think of next?

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

NED

Stop being a baby and just take it.
He ain't lookin.

BENNY

He's watchin.

NED

No he ain't. He's just a stupid old man. Probably don't even know where he is. I could've grabbed twelve snickers and been halfway to the park by now.

BENNY

Alright, dang. I said I'll get em, so I'll get em.

Benny checks the front end, one last time.

Mr. Jergins laughs it up, still oblivious.

Benny quickly loads his pockets like a candy lover gone mad. He's got enough to last him for weeks but, for the life of him, cannot stop his frenzy.

NED

That's enough. Hurry up.

Benny fills up his sweater, zips it all the way to his chin. The two boys scurry around a corner shelf and sneak for the front door.

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

Thump. Thump. Thump.

NED (CONT'D)

Come on, man. Pull yourself together.

Mr. Jergins attention drawn to a commotion near aisle one.

BENNY

I got too much.

Benny picks up the bars, desperately tries handing them off to a frazzled Ned.

BENNY (CONT'D)

Here. Take some.

NED

No way. This was your idea.

The two hear footsteps drawing closer. A SHADOW ECLIPSES THEM BOTH. They turn, stare up at a livid...

MR. JERGINs, angry eyes, nasty scowl, towering above them like something out of a bad movie.

MR. JERGINs

Having some trouble, boys?

Ned bolts for the door. He's out of there.

Mr. Jergins hobbles for the door, pops his head out --

MR. JERGINs (CONT'D)

That's right! You better run, Ned Brown! Get on home!

He turns, faces Benny. A bit confused.

MR. JERGINs (CONT'D)

Benny? Is that you under all that dirt?

Beat.

BENNY

Yes, sir.

MR. JERGINs

Why aren't you in school?

In an act of defiance, Benny hangs his head, shuffles his feet, gawks at the floor.

BENNY

To hell with school.

MR. JERGINs

I know your Mom and Daddy didn't teach you to be a trash mouth. What do you think they'd say if they knew you were skipping school and stealing candy bars with the likes of Ned Brown?

Benny looks him in the eye. A sore subject.

BENNY

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

A look of true sympathy comes over Mr. Jergins. His tone softens a bit...yet stands his ground.

MR. JERGINs

And what about your brother? He
know you're skipping class and
running all over town?

Benny once again gawks at the floor. Mr. Jergins takes in a deep sadness in his eyes. A lost, hopeless expression as a single tear streaks his chubby face.

Mr. Jergins is overcome with sincere worry. It's in this moment where his otherwise cantankerous demeanor turns wholly compassionate.

EXT. KIRKWOOD FARM - FRONT GATE - DAY

Mr. Jergins pick up truck stops before the front iron gate of the Kirkwood family's three acre farm. Behind the gate is a long stretch of white gravel that twists and turns through a small forest of old oak trees.

A quaint, off the beaten path, old style family farm house visible behind the thick brush.

Mr. Jergins steps out...unhooks the gate and shoves it back. He takes a moment to observe the tall uncut grass in the open field before him.

The property is an unkempt mess.

Mr. Jergins and Benny continue through the gate...headed for the Kirkwood family home. Hidden somewhere behind this forest full of oaks.

INT. MR. JERGINs PICK UP - DAY

Mr. Jergins and Benny spot the Kirwood home just behind some heavy shrubbery. It's an old style white and yellow country home with an oak wood porch, two-seat swing and matching love chairs.

EXT. KIRKWOOD HOME - DAY

Two long tire tracks cut through the white sand...leading a homemade driveway of sorts all the way to the front of the farm house.

A MANGY DOG runs in circles as his leash is tied to a rusted metal stake. From the looks of things, the front lawn and surrounding fields have been neglected for weeks.

THE WAVES OF GRASS AND WEEDS so tall that they hover above the brown picket fence surrounding the home.

Mr. Jergins fixes his gaze on Benny...still in a broken and almost catatonic state.

BEN (V.O.)

I'd been on my own for almost five weeks before Mister Jergins caught me filling my pockets. For a nine year old, five weeks is a lifetime. Little did I know, it was the day that would forever change the course of my life.

Benny observes his dog choking himself out on the leash as it runs frantically in circles.

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

I knew right then and there I'd never see Kevin or the house again. But I didn't cry. Truth was, I didn't have any tears left.

INT. KIRKWOOD HOME - LIVING ROOM - DUSK

Benny squats on the edge of a love seat while a remorseful plain-clothes HOMICIDE DETECTIVE kneels before him, gropes his little hands in a sincere gesture.

TWO UNIFORM COPS hover behind their superior while the detective has a private moment with Benny.

SUPER: THREE MONTHS EARLIER

OTHER UNIFORM COPS enter and exit the front screen door as Benny watches with confusion.

BEN (V.O.)

I wasted most of those the night we lost Mom and Dad.

Benny loses focus, stares through the front window and fixes his gaze on --

KEVIN KIRKWOOD, nineteen, long brown hair, Nirvana t shirt, -
- talking privately with another PLAIN-CLOTHES DETECTIVE.
His eyes are swollen from non stop weeping.

Kevin watches Benny closely. A concerned, protective eye.

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

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

EXT. TWO-LANE BRIDGE - DAY

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

BEN (V.O.)

They told me Pop's car slid on the
road and took a nose dive off the
Boden River Bridge.

ON THE ROCKS BELOW - LATER THAT DAY

The Buick's windshield has been pummeled with a giant, two
foot sized hole crashed through the driver's side.

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

A PAIR OF CITY CORONERS carry off MISTER KIRKWOOD'S BODY in a
black rubber bag.

One of the ON SCENE OFFICERS notices something strange in the
half opened trunk and hurries over. He is absolutely shocked
by his discovery.

ON SCENE OFFICER

Over here!

A crew of EMERGENCY RESPONSE TECHS and UNIFORM COPS swarm the
back of the car. In the trunk lies the body of MRS.
KIRKWOOD. Her once pretty blouse now a bloody mess.

BEN (V.O.)

They just left out the part where
they found Mom in the trunk with
two bullets in her chest.

INT. KIRKWOOD HOME - LIVING ROOM - DUSK

Benny still in the living room and Kevin still on the lawn with the detective. Their eyes lock. Until something grabs Benny's attention.

Benny stares over the detective's shoulder and through the cracked open door of the master bedroom.

A UNIFORM COP in yellow rubber gloves places a THIRTY EIGHT REVOLVER into a plastic evidence bag.

BEN (V.O.)

Even though I always knew better, I played along. It seemed easier for us to pretend their death was nothing more than an accident. If you thought about it for too long, you could spend the rest of your life pondering what happened. What went wrong? Who was really to blame? Or, you can pick up the pieces and move on.

Benny stares back at Kevin, still on the lawn -- choking back tears, nervous, sick, angry, confused. The detective attempts to calm him.

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

God knows we tried. Things were okay for awhile. But the pressure of it all started getting to Kevin.

Kevin presses his hands over his head, exhales deeply, feeling the full weight of it all.

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

The more responsibilities and challenges he faced, the more he'd escape. First it was just the drinking. Before too long, Kevin would fall straight into the abyss, and there was no coming back. Nothing else mattered but the next hit. Not me. Not working. Nothing.

Slowly but surely, Kevin's image dissolves.

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

And just like that...he was gone. No note. No explanation. Just gone.

INT. FOSTER HOME - LAUNDRY ROOM - DAY

MRS. COLBERTSON, fifties, pulls a fresh load from the dryer and loads them in a white laundry basket. She carries the basket down a long and thin hall.

On the other end of the hall sits a...

DINING ROOM

where EIGHT FOSTER CHILDREN, boys and girls, are eating a bowl of cereal before school. One of them knocks into Benny's chair, causing him to spill his milk.

Benny throws him a nasty stare.

BEN (V.O.)

The city ended up putting me in an orphanage run by this older couple, Mr. and Mrs. Colberston, who were supposedly responsible for bringing my parents into the church some twenty years earlier, or so the story goes. They were good people. Little did they know, I was about to be a handful they didn't bargain for.

INT. SCHOOL BUS - DAY

Benny keeps to himself in the very back of the bus. Most of the other KIDS sit near the front. All of them good friends and all in pairs.

Benny watches them laugh and play. A bit jealous. He just stares blankly out the window.

BEN (V.O.)

Because I never had any real close ties but my brother, I had a hard time making friends. I didn't know how. At that point, I didn't trust anybody. All I knew was life handed me a raw deal. I wasn't about to let anyone else in and make it worse. So I kept to myself. And I bucked authority at every possible moment that presented itself. What some might call problematic, I call self preservation. No one would ever hurt me like Mom and Dad again.

(MORE)

BEN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Or Kevin. I made up my mind. From
 then on, I was on my own.

INT. LAKE HARTLEY BAPTIST - CHAPEL - NIGHT

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

BEN (V.O.)
 And then, there he was. Like a ghost from the past. Kevin turns up at the church, flat broke and strung out on meth and heroin. Most of the congregation didn't even recognize him. Not until he came forward during the invitation.

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

INT. PASTOR DAWSON'S OFFICE - NIGHT

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

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

DEACON #2
 Yes. Thank you, Jesus.

BEN (V.O.)
 Some of the head deacons took him into Pastor's office and laid hands on him. He ended up re-dedicating his life to Jesus. The church agreed to put him through rehab. In exchange, Kevin would move into the shelter and tell the other addicts about God.

INT. HOMELESS SHELTER - NIGHT

Kevin is all cleaned up now. Short hair, clean shaven, nice shirt and slacks. He sits in a circle with a group of other addicts fresh from the street.

Kevin grips a bible in his hands, shares his experiences with the other men. He is happy, smiling, filled with the love of Jesus and a new zest for life.

BEN (V.O.)

It was here where Kevin let it all hang out. Purged his soul you could say. Telling his new circle about his experiences with drugs and alcohol. About losing Mom and Dad. His hatred for Dad for what he did to Mom. Not being able to come to grips with what happened. But, most importantly, how the mercy of Christ saved his life. Gave him a new purpose. How God sent him back to the church on a mission to bring people to Jesus and reunite with his long lost brother.

Benny, fourteen, stands just outside the room, watches the group through a window. He stares at Kevin with nothing but burning contempt.

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

It took awhile before we would move back in together. I would stay with The Colbertsons while he stayed at the shelter, trying his best to stay clean and keep his life straight. I wasn't quite as thrilled to see Kevin back as I should have been. No doubt about it. I was bitter. I knew no matter what he was going through, it was nothing compared to what I'd been through.

INT. SEMINARY GRADUATION - DAY

Kevin on a stage, waiting in line behind six other young men. Pastor Dawson stands behind a podium, presenting them all with a diploma and a special plaque, signifying their official entrance into the ministry.

A CROWD below takes snapshots and claps for each new graduate.

BEN (V.O.)

Not long after Kevin left the shelter, he went into the seminary. He decided the church was his true calling.

Kevin is next in line as he shakes Pastor Dawson's hand and takes his plaque. A FLASH BULB goes off. Pastor Dawson gives Kevin a special hug.

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

When he graduated, our church hired him as their full time youth director. They thought he'd be a good role model for the kids. And, in a strange way, it was like his second chance to give back the time he lost with his little brother. That was the idea, anyway.

INT. CHURCH SANCTUARY - MORNING

Kevin, now wearing reading glasses, dressed in a modest but proper suit, stands at the pulpit. He opens his bible and reads some scripture out loud.

We move away from Kevin and into the large congregation below. A full house. And all eyes fixed on him.

BEN (V.O.)

A couple weeks before Kevin's twenty fifth birthday, Pastor Dawson retired after thirty years of service. Kevin would fill in a few Sundays until they could hire someone full time. A few Sundays turned into a year. And before you know it, he was our new Pastor. He'd stay for another twenty three years. To the people of Lake Hartley, Kevin was a hero. Someone who beat the odds. Overcame tragedy.

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

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

I personally still hated Kevin for leaving like he did.

(MORE)

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

No matter how hard I tried to let go, that hatred followed me my whole life. At the same time, I couldn't help but admire him. While I hated him, I wanted to be him. I saw how he changed people's lives for the better. It was then I decided I wanted to help people like my big brother. To make sense of this mess called my life. To make sense of what happened to my parents. And how Kevin could have left like he did. I knew it all had to be for a reason. It had to be.

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

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

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

INT. JAIL CELL - DAY

BEN KIRKWOOD, thirties, cheap suit, no neck tie and a three day beard, sprawls out on a metal bench. A forearm rested across his tired brow...hungover.

The FOOTSTEPS of a CORRECTIONS OFFICER are heard entering the outer halls of the cell.

CORRECTIONS OFFICER (O.S.)

Hey, Kirkwood! Rise and shine!

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

The brutish Corrections Officer pulls out his nightstick and SLAMS IT against the iron bars.

WHAM!

THE METALLIC REVERB RATTLES THROUGH THE AIR LIKE A THUNDERCLAP.

Ben slowly lifts up his elbow, peeks up at the officer with true disdain.

CORRECTIONS OFFICER (CONT'D)
Your boyfriend's here.

BEN
Shhh. Keep it down. I wouldn't
wanna make anyone jealous.

Ben slowly sets his feet to the floor.

The Corrections Officer loses patience fast.

CORRECTIONS OFFICER
Let's go, counselor.

EXT. BODEN COUNTY CORRECTIONAL FACILITY - DAY

The front windows of this county jail are dark and tinted. The American Flag hangs from a tall pole, blows proudly in the morning wind.

Awaiting on an uncomfortable bench is SCOTT LARSEN, thirties, ray bans, fancy shirt, quaffed blonde hair slicked back and combed to absolute perfection. He sips on a black coffee. Another cup on the bench next to him.

Scott is the local community college criminal law professor and the center of his own universe. He's the poster child for an unrealized success story.

Out walks Ben.

With no real sense of urgency, Scott picks up Ben's coffee, meets him halfway.

Ben accepts his coffee. The two quietly walk off together. As if this is their regular routine.

INT. SCOTT'S LEXUS - DAY

Scott lights up a smoke as he gawks back and forth between Ben and the road. Still hungover, Ben leans his arm against the door, rubs the bridge of his nose.

SCOTT
You getting any sleep lately?

Ben ignores him.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
That much, huh?

Not in the mood, Ben throws Scott the look.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

You know, when I first told my old man I was going to law school you know what he tells me?

Ben leans his head back.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

Tells me he'd rather stand on a corner with a cup in his hand. Says at least it's an honest day's work.

BEN

It was Mom's birthday yesterday.

SCOTT

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

BEN

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

SCOTT

Don't do this to yourself.

BEN

I helped personally escort a man to five years in prison. Some poor idiot trying to feed his kid. Who may or may not be his, by the way. But that's a whole other story.

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

BEN (CONT'D)

Gets laid off. Not a dime in the bank. A newborn baby. Sharing a studio with his high school drop out girlfriend. Drug addict. Stupid. Couldn't get a job even if she didn't have a kid.

SCOTT

What do you say we get some breakfast? I heard that new diner on forty-four is supposed to be good.

BEN

So this idiot goes and robs a liquor store with an air pistol. Gets pepper sprayed by the guy at the register. Meantime, he's rolling around on the floor like a wiggly worm. Knocking over displays, glass flying everywhere. And ends up slicing his forehead open by a bottle of Jack.

Scott cracks up.

BEN (CONT'D)

At this point, the kid's blind. He can't see. So he's thinking this guy just busted a bottle of jack over my head. So he's bleeding and screaming and hollering. I'm gonna sue you! I'm gonna own this place! This place is mine!

SCOTT

So he's stupid and he broke the law. So what else is new?

BEN

This poor, stupid, clueless redneck tries to do right by his kid and they throw him five years like it's nothing. And for what? An unloaded BB gun. Even if it were loaded, can't even break the skin.

SCOTT

No. It can just take someone's eye out.

Ben scoffs.

BEN

The guy has a magnum under the counter. It can take someone's brain out. This guy's already sent three people to the morgue. Has he spent a single day locked up? Noooo! What are we even doing anymore?!

SCOTT

Okay okay. Sorry.

Ben huffs with exhaustion, gawks out his window. Scott eventually breaks the silence.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

So are we gonna get some breakfast,
or what?

Ben cracks a smile, a simple nod.

EXT. LAKE HARTLEY BAPTIST CHURCH - NIGHT

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

INT. LAKE HARTLEY BAPTIST CHURCH - SANCTUARY - NIGHT

A sprawling congregation that's grown in size and stature with every passing year of its infancy. The crowd is an even mix of elderly veterans and newer, younger families in their thirties and forties. Their young children seated next to them or in their laps.

CONGREGATION

Praise God, From Whom All Blessings
Flow...

CONGREGATION (CONT'D)

Praise Him, All Creatures Here
Below...

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

YOUTH

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

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

CONGREGATION

Praise, Father, Son and Holy
Ghost...

We pay special attention to one particular man in the front end of the congregation. DEACON EARL HALBERT, fifties, Tina and Sherri's father. A balding, droopy eyed man with the features of a sleepy turtle.

EARL
 Praise God the Father who's the
 source...

EXT. LAKE HARTLEY BAPTIST CHURCH - NIGHT

We can barely make out the MUSIC being sung inside. Just HUNDREDS OF VOICES and a LOUD ORGAN continuing the end of "Praise Him, From Whom All Blessings Flow".

It's eerily quiet. Something not quite right in the air. The energy is off. And it's palpable.

EXT. KEVIN KIRKWOOD'S HOME - NIGHT

This modest middle class home is technically located on not one but two different streets, as it sits diagonally on a street corner.

Just across the way, on a neighboring street, stands THELMA MEREDITH (70s), holding a house phone to her ear. A look of sincere concern as she watches Kevin's home.

OPERATOR (O.S.)
 9-1-1. What's your emergency?

INT. KEVIN KIRKWOOD'S HOME - NIGHT

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

LIVING ROOM

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

It's dark and strangely quiet. Nobody's home. The SOUND OF A PHONE OFF THE HOOK can be faintly heard throughout the empty house.

A LAMP has been knocked clear off an end table and rests on the carpet below. The flimsy shade has been somehow bent backwards...causing the light to beam upward...casting a florescent glow on the side of the couch.

KITCHEN

A phone charger sits empty on a counter top.

ON THE FLOOR

A CORDLESS PHONE rests awkwardly in the center of a half empty fruit basket...just below the counter where the charger sits. An array of fresh red and green apples have spilled across the tile.

The SOUND OF THE PHONE OFF THE HOOK IS MUCH LOUDER NOW.

A partially opened GLASS DOUBLE DOOR WITH OAK WOOD TRIMMING leads us back outside. Much of the glass has been smashed and shattered.

Larger shards and smaller remnants pepper the kitchen floor.

THELMA, Kevin's neighbor, can be seen through the glass, still standing on her lawn, phone to her ear. She is particularly focused on this rear glass door.

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

KYLE STOKER, twenty one, local redneck, sleeveless t-shirt, long hair, quiet, angry and focused, barrels down a back country road. Riding shotgun is JACLYN SANCHEZ, nineteen, Puerto Rican, a truly broken soul who's lived a short but hard life. She is also angry and wearing a look of fierce determination.

INT. LAKE HARTLEY BAPTIST CHURCH - SANCTUARY - NIGHT

At the pulpit is Music Minister and Head Deacon TOM HALL, forties, neatly trimmed beard. A very prim and proper looking man in a blue blazer. Derek's father. He leads the congregation through the remaining versus of "Praise God, From Whom All Blessings Flow".

Tom turns back, stares at Kevin's empty chair. A look of growing concern on his face.

EXT. PASTOR'S OFFICE - NIGHT

A door is engraved with Kevin's name. PASTOR KEVIN KIRKWOOD. Another church officer, DEACON ALVIN FRYE, sixties, gray hair, distinguished, quietly approaches, gives a quick knock and attempts to open...but the door is locked.

DEACON FRYE

Pastor...? We've started service.
Is everything okay?

INT. PASTOR'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Kneeling on the floor, elbows rested on the cushions of a leather couch and in mid prayer is PASTOR KEVIN KIRKWOOD, forties, salt and pepper hair and beard and a fitted pin striped suit. A striking presence who's become a minor local celebrity of sorts.

DEACON FRYE (O.S.)
Kevin? Are you there? We've
started.

Kevin finishes his prayer, wipes a few tears with a handkerchief.

KEVIN
Yeah. Coming.

INT. KEVIN KIRKWOOD'S HOME - NIGHT

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

PATROLMAN #1 enters the living room and notices the fallen lamp on the carpet. PATROLMAN #2 discovers the telephone rested in the fruit basket. He's about to retrieve the phone until the other officer stops him --

PATROLMAN #1
Don't touch that!

PATROLMAN #2 backs away from the phone.

PATROLMAN #1 (CONT'D)
It's evidence.

PATROLMAN #3 discovers the broken glass all over the kitchen floor. He stares through the hole of the shattered glass door and observes THELMA, Kevin's neighbor, speaking with PATROLMAN #4 on her lawn. She aims at the door.

INT. LAKE HARTLEY BAPTIST CHURCH - SANCTUARY - NIGHT

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

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

KEVIN

Here we are. Once again. Singing our usual hymns. Shaking all the same hands we usually shake. Not shaking others. Exchanging empty platitudes...

Tom squints, confused, not following and a bit worried for Kevin's mental state. As does Deacon Frye and many of the onlooking congregation.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

Most of us sitting in the same seats. From a week ago. The week before that. And most likely, the week before that. For a lot of you, it's become a routine. Like eating breakfast or going to work. Letting out that tired groan just before brushing your teeth. It's just another day.

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

KEVIN (CONT'D)

You've lost sight of why you're here. For many of us, we haven't prepared our hearts. To be fully opened to hearing God's word. No matter how hard he's knocking, we just can't hear.

Kevin wipes a tear about to form.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

We've become part of this routine. Little by little, our hearts become shut off. Closed down. And we refuse to listen. I've allowed this to go on for far too long. And for that I am deeply saddened. And I am deeply sorry.

Kyle enters the sanctuary with all eyes on Kevin...ready to take his head off his shoulders. He walks slowly toward the pulpit...grabbing everyone's attention.

Kevin notices, a bit confused. Tom notices the awkward exchange between the two men.

KYLE

What exactly are you sorry about?!

Whispering breaks out amongst the congregation. Kevin turns to Tom for guidance.

With a confident stride, Kyle continues toward the pulpit, then onto the stage.

Kevin grows a bit paranoid, frightened.

KEVIN

And what can we help you with?

Kyle so fueled with rage, his eyes bulge from their sockets. His chest heaves. And then, finally, charges at Kevin like a wild animal, tackles him to the floor.

In a split second, Tom is off his seat and on Kyle's back, attempts to pull him away. As a medusa of arms and legs fly and kick, Kyle sneaks in a few shots, punches Kevin dead in the nose.

The congregation ERUPTS WITH CHATTER.

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

INT. LAKE HARTLEY BAPTIST CHURCH - BASEMENT HALLWAY - NIGHT

Most of the deacons committee await outside the cafeteria doors, quiet and patient. Shirts unbuttoned and ties loosened as some pace the carpeted floor.

Then, some of their WIVES arrive in droves, charging up the long and narrow hallway, barking questions, demanding answers.

INT. LAKE HARTLEY BAPTIST CHURCH - CAFETERIA - NIGHT

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

EARL

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

KEVIN

No. I mean I don't know. I don't think so.

EARL

Well you better start remembering.
The police will wanna know.
Believe me.

Growing tired of his ramblings, Deacon Frye looks over his shoulder and throws Earl a "lay off" look.

DEACON FRYE

(to Kevin)

How's the eye doing?

KEVIN

Fine, Alvin. Thank you for asking.

Earl continues to pace the carpet, shakes his head, huffs in frustration.

EARL

(to Kevin)

Your people are outside waiting,
Pastor. What are you prepared to
tell them? Or what about the next
time one of these animals comes
into our home and attacks one of
the staff? Or God forbid...one of
our kids? I mean, how much is
enough?

Tom enters from a side door, away from the outside crowd.

EARL (CONT'D)

Well, all I have to say is thank
The Good Lord this didn't happen
this morning with the cameras
rolling.

Tom approaches --

TOM

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

DEACON FRYE

Of course, Tom.

(to Earl)

Come on, Earl. Let's go get some
coffee. Give these gentlemen a
minute alone.

Deacon Frye snags Earl by the arm on his way to the door.
Earl reluctantly follows.

Tom waits until they are all the way gone. Then takes a seat across from Kevin.

TOM

The police are here. They wanna talk to you.

KEVIN

I told you specifically not to call the police. That we'd handle it.

TOM

I didn't.

KEVIN

Then who did?

TOM

Who do you think?

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

TOM (CONT'D)

This kid that hit you. His name's Kyle Stoker. He's a friend of Jaclyn Sanchez.

KEVIN

Jaclyn?

TOM

She rode here with Kyle. She was outside waiting in his truck the whole time. The police are with her now.

KEVIN

I don't understand.

TOM

She's made some allegations. Against you.

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

KEVIN

I see.

TOM

You think this has something to do with you getting her kicked out of the shelter?

KEVIN

I guess it depends on what I'm
being accused of.

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

TOM

Have you talked to Chris about
this? I didn't see her at service
tonight.

KEVIN

She's in Atlanta, visiting with her
family. I didn't wanna upset her.
Don't see what good it'll do. Lord
knows she's been through enough
already.

Tom nods. A bit unsure of his friend.

TOM

They said if it made you more
comfortable, an officer could meet
us out back. Away from the crowd.
Maybe go somewhere a little more
private. Like down to the station.

KEVIN

The station?

TOM

It's not what you think. Right now
they just wanna talk. But they are
saying, at this point, it is in
your best interest to cooperate.

KEVIN

What does that mean exactly?

TOM

It means these allegations are
pretty severe.

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

INT. SLIPPERY'S BAR AND GRILL - DAY

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

Ben spots Scott at the bar with JEANNIE FOXX, twenties, a strikingly attractive but studious and ambitious young woman ready to take on the world. Jeannie is also Scott's prize student and part time fling. They are splitting some appetizers and a couple sodas.

Scott spots him coming, pulls out a stool --

SCOTT

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

BEN

Who says I slept?

A BARTENDER approaches.

BARTENDER

Getting an early start, counselor?

BEN

Just give me a club soda with extra ice and a couple aspirins, please.

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

SCOTT

Say hi to Jeannie.

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

JEANNIE

Jeannie Foxx. I'm one of Scott's students. Heard a lot of great things about you.

SCOTT

You don't have to announce it to the world. We talked about this already.

JEANNIE

Ya know, I think Ben's got a lot more to worry about right now than who you're sleeping with. Get over yourself.

BEN

What is she talking about?

SCOTT
Nothing. It's nothing.

JEANNIE
He doesn't want anyone to know we're having an affair. He's embarrassed. He's embarrassed by me.

SCOTT
It's more complicated than that. And now's not the time.

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

SCOTT
I take it you haven't turned on the television since this morning?

BEN
No. I was up pretty late last night.

SCOTT
Yeah, I see that.

Jeannie tugs on Scott's sleeve and motions to a flat screen hanging above the bar.

JEANNIE
Here it is. It's on again.

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

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

BEN
What in the...?

FIELD REPORTER

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

BEN

Oh my God.

FIELD REPORTER

Now police are saying Pastor Kirkwood is facing a number of charges, including first degree assault and possibly even murder...

Ben and Scott both shocked.

FIELD REPORTER (CONT'D)

Kirkwood was arrested and taken into custody around eight thirty five last night. Most notably absent in all of this is Kirkwood's own wife, Christine. She was unavailable for questioning when her husband was first brought in and is even rumored that her whereabouts are unknown at this time...

BEN

This isn't happening.

SCOTT

Don't worry, bubba. It gets worse.

FIELD REPORTER

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

Ben's worried look turns angry. Scott takes notice.

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

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

SCOTT
 I've seen that look before.
 Overmeyer's on top of it. He'll
 have this thing thrown out in a
 couple days. Let them handle it.

BEN
 He never called.

SCOTT
 What did you expect? He probably
 thought you were in a gutter
 somewhere. Polishing off a bottle
 of Johnny Red.

BEN
 I have to go see him.

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

JEANNIE
 (to Scott)
 What're you talking about? He's
 family. They can't keep him from
 seeing his own brother.

Scott loses patience.

SCOTT
 Do me a favor. Just...drink your
 drink. Maybe stay out of this one.
 Just once. You're talking about
 things you really don't know about.

JEANNIE
 What don't I know? It's his
 brother. What's he supposed to do?
 Not talk to him? How's that gonna
 look?

SCOTT

Yes. That's exactly what he should do. Stay out of it and wait for a phone call.

JEANNIE

(to Ben)

Don't listen to him. He's your brother. He's waiting for you to go see him. So go see him.

Scott cracks a tired sigh. Ben nods in agreement.

BEN

Yeah.

INT. BODEN COUNTY CORRECTIONAL FACILITY - DAY

A CORRECTIONS OFFICER walks Ben through a blinding white brick corridor. Ben is all cleaned up now with a fresh shave, pressed suit and a sharp focus about him.

They stop near a small set of prison bars. Just to the left of these bars sits a second C.O. The first flashes his identification before unlocking the white gate and entering the next corridor.

INT. VISITOR'S HOLDING CELL - DAY

Kevin sits at a stainless steel table in the center of this cold white cell. He is dressed in standard issue blue fatigues.

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

The Corrections Officer slides the gate closed, leaves the two brothers to it.

KEVIN

You made it.

BEN

Where else would I be?

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

KEVIN

Just want you to know I'm sorry I didn't call right away. I haven't exactly had much contact with the outside world.

BEN

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

Kevin grins, nods.

BEN (CONT'D)

They treating you okay here?

KEVIN

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

BEN

Yeah I guess that you do.

An awkward silence.

BEN (CONT'D)

So now that we've got that out of the way. Is there anything else on your mind? Anything you'd like to get off your chest?

KEVIN

I didn't wanna involve you in this, Ben.

BEN

Yeah but I am. You know my job. Who I work with. Or did you think I was gonna just run and hide?

(beat)

I know I've missed a few Sundays but...

KEVIN

It's been six months, Ben. A little more than a few Sundays.

BEN

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

KEVIN

That's not what I'm saying.

BEN

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

KEVIN

Who says she is involved?

BEN

Okay, so she's not. So where is she?

KEVIN

Last night, she left for Atlanta to visit her folks. She didn't didn't say when she'd be back.

BEN

Sounds like she made a speedy exit.

KEVIN

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

Ben studies Kevin's eyes.

BEN

How hard have you been trying?

Kevin stalls.

KEVIN

Chris and I are having some problems. We decided it was best we spend a little time alone. Maybe take a short break.

BEN

And does this problem have a name by any chance?

KEVIN

It's a private matter. Between me and Christine.

BEN

Why don't you tell me anyways. Did she go off her meds again? She have another episode? What? What's going on with you two?

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

KEVIN

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

BEN

What about you? You think he's the guy?

KEVIN

He's got a great record. And a long career with handling cases like this. At least that's what I'm told.

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

BEN

You know where I was when I got the call about you?

KEVIN

No.

BEN

At Mom and Dad's grave. I mean the timing couldn't have been better. As I was staring at their graves, I suddenly realized something.

KEVIN

What's that?

BEN

You're the only constant I've ever known. Dad didn't think enough of me to stick around. I let my marriage fall apart. My career's in the toilet. All I got is you. At some point, I need to quit hating you and you need to forgive yourself.

KEVIN

Look. Ben. I know you're still holding onto a lot as far as me and you are concerned but...

BEN

No, let me finish.

Kevin sighs in defeat.

BEN (CONT'D)

If there were ever a time we needed each other, it's now. This moment. Because if I fail again...well...I might as well drive my car off a bridge like Dad, cause I got nothing left. Let me do this. It's not just you I'm trying to save here, big brother.

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

KEVIN

Okay then. I need you little brother. Help me out of a jam?

BEN

Funny. I was about to ask you the same thing.

INT. LAKE HARTLEY BAPTIST CHURCH - MAIN OFFICE - DAY

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

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

DEACON WRIGHT

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

BEN

Gentlemen, your faith in me is overwhelming.

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

DEACON BROWN

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

BEN

And what about what Pastor wants?
Or does that even matter?

Tom is strangely silent, a neutral stance. He looks up and over at Earl, awaits his response.

EARL

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

BEN

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

EARL

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

BEN

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

EARL

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

Ben grins and nods.

DEACON BROWN

Mister Overmeyer has close ties within the police force as well as the press. He may even go so far as getting us favorable media coverage. Including a full, front page story on Pastor and the positive effects his programs have had on the community. We're talking hundreds of underprivileged teens just like this girl.

BEN

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

DEACON WRIGHT

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

BEN

Thank you, gentlemen. Seriously. You've given me a lot to think about. I'll be in touch.

Ben, along with his blank check, head for the door. The deacons committee all share worried looks.

EXT. LAKE HARTLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE - HALLWAY - DAY

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

Jeannie walks desk to desk, handing out test results. She also can't help but observe the exchange.

SCOTT

You want me?

BEN

What did you think? I was gonna get my brother off with my winning smile? I'm in a bit of a snag here.

SCOTT

Forget it. Call them and tell them you're sorry and you'd be more than happy to take their money.

BEN

You know there's no way I'm gonna do that. Even if I wanted to. So stop it.

SCOTT

You know, I had to hear through the grapevine they offered you lead investigator, all expenses paid plus retainer, and now I gotta drop what I'm doing and go work with you for free?

BEN

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

Jeannie sneaks out of class, joins them on the sidewalk.

JEANNIE

Hi.

SCOTT

Here we go with this.

Scott tosses his hands in the air.

JEANNIE

I saw you on TV this morning. If it means anything, I think you're gonna do a great job.

SCOTT

Do you mind? This is a private conversation.

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

BEN

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

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

SCOTT

Keep it down, please.

Another TWO STUDENTS step out, head for the soda machine. Scott grows more and more anxious.

JEANNIE

Will you get over yourself? We're sleeping together. So what? No one cares.

The two students can't help but overhear this juicy tea and have themselves a good chuckle.

SCOTT

Lord, just take me now.

BEN

You ditch me now, not only will I go in there and tell your class you've been playing doctor with Janice here, I'll tell them how it was you came to take this job.

SCOTT

You're out of line.

Jeannie grows suspicious.

JEANNIE

What's he talking about?

SCOTT

Nothing. He doesn't know what he's talking about. He drinks. Heavily.

BEN

Oh, Scottie hasn't shared that story with you? It's a good one.

Scott sighs.

SCOTT

Alright alright. You got me.

Jeannie smiles.

JEANNIE

Me too. If...that's okay with you of course.

SCOTT

Excuse me?

JEANNIE

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

SCOTT

I was trying to sleep with you.

Jeannie grows irritated.

JEANNIE

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

(to Ben)

Excuse me, Ben.

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

SCOTT

Okay okay. Just take it easy.
You're on the team.

JEANNIE

Seriously?

Ben smiles.

BEN

Seriously.

Jeannie bear hugs Scott, embarrassing him some more as
STUDENTS pass on the sidewalk.

SCOTT

(to students)

She got an A.

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

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

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

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

Ben spots her looking.

BEN

How are you?

The secretary just grins and goes about her business.

BEN (CONT'D)

Glad to hear it. I'm doing fine.
Just fine.

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

INT. DAVID KILLROY'S OFFICE - DAY

DETECTIVE RON GALVERSON, late forties, primary on the Sanchez case, stares into the outer room and watches Ben work himself into a nervous frenzy.

DETECTIVE GALVERSON
He looks pretty anxious.

Pouring himself some black coffee is DA DAVID KILLROY, early sixties, extremely thin, simple white t shirt and dark tie. His face is almost skeleton like and his skin red and blotchy.

KILLROY
He should be. He's way out of his league and about to ruin what's left of his brother's life and reputation.

DETECTIVE GALVERSON
No pressure.

Killroy has a seat at the end of a long conference table. Squatted in the chair next to his is ASSISTANT DA MALCOLM CROSS, late thirties, black, large and strong but about thirty pounds overweight.

Malcolm sports a pair of round reading glasses that sit awkwardly on his chubby face. But his appearance is the least of this man's concern. He's about winning. And nothing else.

Several other MEN IN DARK SUITS AND POWER TIES align both sides of this table. All young, smart, able. But it's all just for show.

Killroy presses a button on the landline rested before him.

KILLROY
Maggie, could you send in Mister Kirkwood, please?

MAGGIE (O.S.)
Certainly.

Detective Galverson walks around the table and takes a seat next to Killroy. In walks Ben, still unsure of himself. He spots the table of suits and stops in his tracks.

BEN

Wow. The gang's all here.

KILLROY

Won't you have a seat?

With all eyes on him, Ben moves to the very far end of the conference table. The direct opposite of Killroy and Detective Galverson. He takes a seat.

KILLROY (CONT'D)

Ben, I know you remember Detective Galverson. He's been heading up the Sanchez investigation.

BEN

Of course.

KILLROY

The gentleman next to me is Malcolm Cross. He'll be handling the prosecution. Malcolm here is one of your fellow alumni from UF. I understand the two of you went to school around the same time.

BEN

Yes. Actually Mister Cross was just graduating when I first entered law school. I'm surprised you remembered.

MALCOLM

Actually, I didn't.

Malcolm throws Ben a smug smile.

BEN

Yeah, well. It's good to see you.

KILLROY

Ben, my associates and I have been going over your brother's case. And as much as I respect your brother and his reputation, the facts are the evidence against him is very incriminating.

BEN

Yes, sir. From your point of view,
I suppose it would be.

KILLROY

We're not out to crucify your
brother or ruin his life. I know
he's not a bad man. Hell, half the
people we prosecute aren't bad
people. But sometimes, it's the
really good ones you least expect.

BEN

Don't I know, sir.

KILLROY

It's not my place to judge Kevin.
Only he and God know what's in his
heart. It is, however, my job to
see that justice is served, based
on the evidence presented before
this office.

Detective Galverson defiantly folds his arms and shoots Ben a
cold and all knowing stare.

BEN

I understand.

KILLROY

Good.

Killroy sifts through some of Detective Galverson's police
statements and reports presented before him.

KILLROY (CONT'D)

Now after careful review of the
evidence, there are some facts that
cannot be ignored. That is the
life of this woman's child. And
the last I checked, your typical
everyday citizen isn't exactly
sympathetic to men of the cloth
that touch young girls.

BEN

As they shouldn't be. Sir.

KILLROY

What I'm saying is this. If this
goes to trial, a jury will more
than likely see to it that he goes
down for this.

(MORE)

KILLROY (CONT'D)

And he will go to prison for the next fifteen to twenty years. That's about as simple as I can make that.

BEN

So what are we looking at here?

KILLROY

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

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

BEN

What's the other option?

KILLROY

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

BEN

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

Detective Galverson leans back in his chair, shares a quick but knowing glance with Malcolm. Ben observes their exchange.

KILLROY

Is this really a game you wanna play with me, son? You gotta room full of men who wanna go to court. That can't wait to be perfectly honest. I'm trying to spare you from that. I know you're thinking of your brother's welfare. But this, son, isn't the time for heroics.

Ben takes a moment to observe each man at the table. All hungry, trained dogs waiting to attack.

BEN

I'll have to talk this all over with my client. And get back to you. If that's okay with you gentlemen.

KILLROY

Of course. But don't take too long. I'm a generous man but not a very patient one. Once I make an offer, I don't look back. You just make sure when you leave here to remember that.

EXT. BODEN COUNTY COURTHOUSE - DAY

Ben loosens his tie, sweats like a plantation slave as he struggles to catch his breath. He throws a glance across the street at Slippery's Bar and Grill.

He looks back and forth between the bar and the adjacent five level municipal building parking garage.

Decisions.

Ben moves down the steps, checks for oncoming traffic before he darts across the road.

INT. SLIPPERY'S BAR AND GRILL - DAY

Ben slips through a crowded doorway. All eyes on him. Patrons turn and whisper.

Even THE BARTENDER surprised to see him.

Ben steps to the bar. Throws his usual wad of cash down and spots his own reflection in an old style beer mirror hanging between a myriad of liquor bottles.

He doesn't like what he sees.

The Bartender greets him.

BARTENDER

Another late night, counselor?

Ben doesn't respond. He's gone. Somewhere else. He snaps out of it.

BEN

Huh?

BARTENDER

How's your brother doing?

BEN

As expected. He's a mess.

BARTENDER

You don't look so hot either. You want your usual?

Ben rubs his weary face.

BEN

Can I just get a coffee and a couple aspirins, please?

BARTENDER

One black coffee coming up. From the looks of things, I better make you another to go.

As the Bartender turns his back, Ben grows tired of his own sad reflection judging him from behind the bar and makes for the men's room.

INT. SLIPPERY'S BAR AND GRILL - MEN'S ROOM - DAY

Ben enters, stumbles his way to the sink and splashes cold water over his face. He is overwhelmed with stress and pressure and suddenly grows nauseous. And without warning, he races into a stall and projectile vomits like a sick animal.

INT. KEVIN'S ARRAIGNMENT - COURT ROOM - DAY

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

Kevin quietly observes.

KEVIN

You okay, little brother?

BEN

Of course. God's got this. He's got both of us.

KEVIN

Just making sure.

Ben pauses.

BEN
 Maybe one more quick prayer
 couldn't hurt.

KEVIN
 You're covered. I promise.

Ben cracks a nervous grin.

Across from them sits the prosecution: Malcolm Cross leaned back in his chair, at total peace. And next to him is LUCAS GANT, late twenties, purposeful and earnest but with a false arrogance that screams inexperience. Gant is slim and fit with a chiseled body. However his rugged pockmarked face suggest a more troubled childhood.

Scott and Jeannie directly behind the defense. Jeannie anxiously bounces her knee. Scott notices and swiftly squeezes her leg.

JEANNIE
 Sorry.

SCOTT
 Shhhh.

JEANNIE
 (whispers)
 Sorry.

Into the courtroom walks an oafish BAILIFF.

BAILIFF
 All rise as the Judge enters the
 court!

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

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

JUDGE PIPER
 Take your seats.

The court complies.

JUDGE PIPER (CONT'D)
Mister Kirkwood?

Both Ben and Kevin stand in unison.

BEN
Yes, your honor?

Judge Piper grins.

JUDGE PIPER
The other Mister Kirkwood.

Ben nods and takes a seat. Kevin remains standing.

KEVIN
Yes, your honor?

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

KEVIN
Not guilty. Your honor.

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

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

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

Malcolm stands.

MALCOLM

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

Ben rises.

BEN

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

JUDGE PIPER

(to Kevin)

How about it, Pastor? You going anywhere?

KEVIN

No, your honor.

JUDGE PIPER

Very well. Bail will be set at ten thousand dollars.

Judge Piper raps his gavel and quickly moves into chambers.

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

Ben exhales a giant sigh of relief. He gives his brother a supportive hug as Kevin is remanded back into custody by a new PAIR OF BAILIFFS.

Scott and Jeannie also stand.

SCOTT

Well. He got through it without puking. That's a good sign.

Ben joins them.

BEN

First order of business.

SCOTT

Find Christine.

BEN

Not quite. Try again.

Scott thinks it over.

SCOTT
Find Christine...quickly?

BEN
Much better.

Ben gives Scott a pat on the shoulder on his way to the courtroom doors.

BEN (CONT'D)
I'm gonna arrange Kevin's bond and get back with you guys in an hour or two. Keep your phones charged.

SCOTT
Got it.

BEN
Hey, Jeannie, good job.

JEANNIE
But I haven't done anything.

BEN
No, but you will. You're on the case.

Ben dips out. Jeannie smiles.

INT. SCOTT'S APARTMENT - DAY

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

Scott dials the number.

SCOTT
Hello? Mrs. Adler? My name is Scott Larsen. I'm working with Ben Kirkwood on your son in law's case...?
(listens)
Yes, ma'am. The reason I'm calling is...
(listens)
He's doing well. Actually, not so well. Kind of why I'm calling. We heard that Christine was headed to Atlanta for a few days.
(MORE)

SCOTT (CONT'D)

And I was wondering if she's gotten around to visiting with you and your husband?

INT. SKY BLU AIR - DEPARTURES - DAY

A RESERVATIONS CLERK finishes checking luggage for a family of four as Jeannie is next in line. She impatiently rocks on her heels like a nervous kid boarding her first flight. She holds an unfolded paper. Christine's personal bank statement and recent transactions.

RESERVATIONS CLERK

Next in line please.

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

RESERVATIONS CLERK (CONT'D)

Let's see. What do we have here?

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

JEANNIE

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

RESERVATIONS CLERK

One of those days, huh?

JEANNIE

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

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

JEANNIE (CONT'D)

Sorry. This whole thing has just been an ordeal.

RESERVATIONS CLERK

No problem. Take your time.

JEANNIE

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

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

JEANNIE (CONT'D)

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

RESERVATIONS CLERK

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

JEANNIE

Of course.

RESERVATIONS CLERK

What name did you book it under?

JEANNIE

Kirkwood. Christine Kirkwood.

RESERVATIONS CLERK

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

Jeannie slaps the counter.

JEANNIE

I knew it. So they took my money?

RESERVATIONS CLERK

Apparently, yes. And you said you purchased your ticket on the twelfth?

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

JEANNIE

Yes. The twelfth. That's correct.

RESERVATIONS CLERK

Well. Since there's no record of you boarding a plane last Thursday I don't see why we can't re book you. Not sure what happened there but our sincere apologies.

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

JEANNIE

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

RESERVATIONS CLERK

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

Jeannie giggles nervously. A dumb look on her face.

JEANNIE

Yes. Of course. I'm sorry. I guess I'm just really out of it. Like I said, it's been an ordeal.

The clerk isn't buying her rap.

RESERVATIONS CLERK

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

JEANNIE

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

Jeannie collects her paper and rushes off.

SCOTT (V.O.)

Hey, good buddy. Just found out someone didn't make their flight to Atlanta.

INT. MCO AIRPORT PARKING GARAGE - SECOND LEVEL - DAY

Scott drags a cigarette and talks with Ben on the other line while Jeannie sips an ice cold macchiotto and leans on Scott's Lexus.

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

SCOTT
They don't. At least not on
purpose. Jeannie did a number on
the clerk.

JEANNIE
My idea. Be sure to tell him it
was my idea.

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

BEN (V.O.)
Tell her good job for me. And
thank you.

SCOTT
You kidding? She'll never shut up.
So what's the game plan?

BEN (V.O.)
She couldn't have gotten far. Not
without her phone.

SCOTT
So she's still here? But where?

Ben sighs.

BEN (V.O.)
Start checking any motels and
hotels in the area. The cheapest
and closest first. Then work your
way up from there. Only do it
quickly, please. We have to find
her before they do.

SCOTT
Right. And if that doesn't work?

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

Ben hangs up.

SCOTT
Got it. Will do, boss.

Scott shakes his head, heads back to the car. Jeannie still sipping her coffee.

JEANNIE

What's Ben have to say?

SCOTT

What? Nothing.

JEANNIE

Okay. So what's the plan?

SCOTT

The same as it was five minutes ago. Let's go.

Scott crawls in the driver's side. Jeannie ditches her coffee in a trash bin and follows behind.

JEANNIE

Yes, sir.

They quickly exit the garage.

INT. SCOTT'S LEXUS - MOVING - DAY

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

SCOTT

Ya know, it's just typical. Kevin's fighting for his life. The cards stacked against him. And she pulls another disappearing act. Making it all about her. Her life's been ripped apart. Not his. Not Ben's.

JEANNIE

Or maybe there's more to the story than another selfish female. Something you're not considering.

SCOTT

More to what story? Her husband's in trouble and she took off. What else do we need to know? From what Ben was saying, is an ongoing saga with this woman.

JEANNIE

Yeah maybe. Or maybe we're just not seeing the bigger picture.

SCOTT

What's that?

JEANNIE

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

Scott sighs.

JEANNIE (CONT'D)

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

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

SCOTT

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

JEANNIE

Just saying. Those in glass houses.

Scott grins.

SCOTT

Like I said. Typical female. She's made this all about her and you're making it all about us.

JEANNIE

All I know about Christine Kirkwood is that she didn't grow up in church and came from the wrong side of town. And from the way you're coming off, that makes her somehow less than in your eyes. Like she should just put up with whatever abuse she may be suffering in her marriage because she's in a better place than ten years ago.

SCOTT

So you do understand.

Jeannie scoffs out loud.

JEANNIE

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

SCOTT

I don't know what happened. That's kind of the problem. And, by the way, neither do you.

JEANNIE

Yeah. Or maybe you don't wanna know.

SCOTT

You're right. Maybe I don't. What I wanna do is help Ben. Right now, that's all that matters. Can we at least agree on that?

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

INT. KEVIN KIRKWOOD'S HOME - DAY

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

KITCHEN

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

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

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

INT. KEVIN KIRKWOOD'S HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Ben opens a utility closet and finds a BROOM AND DUST PAN just behind the door. He pulls out the broom and takes a closer look at it.

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

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

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

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

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

He moves a good distance down the street.

EXT. QUICK SIP GAS STATION - DAY

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

EXT. QUICK SIP GAS STATION - BACK DOOR - DAY

Ben speaks privately with RUDY KINTANIS, one of the store's checkout clerks. An olive skinned man, early twenties, goatee and wild black and purple hair.

RUDY

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

BEN

Where did she go after that? She wait outside?

RUDY

No. I think she went to the bathroom first. Yeah. I remember cause she was in there a while. This other girl was beating on the door, getting all upset.

BEN

Did she say anything else to you when she came out?

RUDY

Nah.

BEN

What about you? You say anything to her?

RUDY

Nah. She just gave me back my phone and said thanks.

BEN

And then she waited outside?

RUDY

Yeah. She went outside and waited on the bench. That was it.

BEN

This uber driver. Do you remember what kind of car he was driving?

EXT. QUICK SIP GAS STATION - FRONT LOT - DAY

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

BEN

Tell me you found her.

EXT. GATEWAY MOTOR LODGE - DAY

Scott leans on his opened car door as Jeannie kicks a few chunks of broken asphalt across the lot.

SCOTT

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

BEN (V.O.)

When did the clerk see her last?

SCOTT

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

EXT. QUICK SIP GAS STATION - FRONT LOT - DAY

Ben rubs his tired face and sore neck.

BEN

You find anything else interesting I should know about?

SCOTT (V.O.)

Like what?

BEN

I'll take that as a no. Do me a favor and go back in there. Do another sweep of the room. Maybe you missed something.

SCOTT (V.O.)

Like what?

BEN

I'm hanging up now.

Ben ends the call and heads out on foot. Back up the sidewalk and toward his brother's house.

EXT. GATEWAY MOTOR LODGE - DAY

Jeannie chucks a rock into an opened trash dumpster and scares the hell out of a couple of vultures perched on the outside ledge.

She joins a defeated looking Scott by the Lexus.

JEANNIE

Now what?

SCOTT

He wants us to comb the room one last time. In case we missed something.

JEANNIE

Missed something. Like what?

Scott sighs.

SCOTT

Get the AC cranked. I'll be there
in a few.

Scott heads for the lobby. Jeannie left confused.

JEANNIE

Okay.

EXT. GREENWOOD CEMETERY - DUSK

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

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

BEN

What are we doing here, big
brother? Don't know if anyone told
you but we don't have a lot of
time.

KEVIN

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

BEN

Things. Like what?

KEVIN

It just dawned on me this morning
that you never knew them. Not like
me. You were too young. You just
knew them as Mom and Dad. Picture
perfect and here on this earth for
one purpose only. To take care of
you and cater to your every need.
Even now as an adult, I can see
your view of them hasn't changed.
Because all you have are the
memories.

BEN

What're you talking about?

KEVIN

You never understood that they were just people. Fallible as the next. Just like you and me. Imperfect.

BEN

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

KEVIN

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

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

KEVIN (CONT'D)

I still see the resentment in your eyes and it's like a poison eating away at your soul. Tell me I'm wrong.

BEN

Prosecution is gonna throw Dad in our faces. Like father like son. The boozing. Your history with drugs. All of it's gonna come up in court.

KEVIN

I know that.

BEN

And this little moment we're sharing here won't be worth a thing in front of that jury.

KEVIN

No. Maybe not.

BEN

Great. So why are we here? Tell me something that's gonna keep you out of jail.

KEVIN

You are. And I need you firing on all cylinders. Not chained to the past and just waiting to lose because you've grown so used to blaming Mom and Dad for your own failures.

Ben smirks with disgust.

BEN

You got that last part wrong.

KEVIN

What part?

BEN

I don't just blame them. I blame you.

Kevin smiles, claps his hands, points back at Ben as if he's just cornered him into a moment of clarity.

KEVIN

Good! It's out! It's over with! You came to me and said you wanted this case. Now I need to know you're up to the task. If not, we can end this partnership and we can go back to not speaking for weeks and months at a time. What's it gonna be, Ben?

Ben sucks in a breath. He slowly comes around.

BEN

Point taken.

Ben steps closer to the gravestones. Kevin joins him.

KEVIN

Are you gonna let it go? Once and for all time? Because it's time, Benny. And I need an answer.

Ben nods.

BEN

Yeah. I'll let it go. And I didn't mean that, by the way. What I said.

KEVIN

Sure you did. Come on. We have a case to prepare. Enough of this standing around.

Kevin slaps him on the shoulder and heads to Ben's car. Ben cracks a grin.

EXT. FED EX STORE - DAY

Jeannie carries a filing box of court documents, depositions and official police records toward the small print and mailing shop. She has a determined look in her eye and moves with a purpose.

BEN (V.O.)

Problem number one. We got a witness who claims she saw Kevin standing near the back door just five minutes after Sanchez split. This across the street neighbor out walking her cats. Her name's Thelma.

Jeannie dips inside the store.

SCOTT (V.O.)

And what do we know about her?

INT. FED EX STORE - DAY

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

BEN (V.O.)

She's old. Really old and wears glasses. But can also testify she saw Sanchez run out of there panicked.

JEANNIE (V.O.)

But did she ever see Kevin?

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

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

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

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

...witness called 911 at approximately 4:05 PM...

...around 4:10 PM, MEREDITH spotted a man in a white dress shirt and dark neck tie standing inside the home...

Jeannie thinks it all over.

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

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

BEN

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

INT. FED EX STORE - DAY (PRESENT)

Jeannie snaps out of her stupor and uses a yellow high lighter to cross over the words "white dress shirt and dark neck tie".

SCOTT (V.O.)

I don't know, boss. If we play the hate card, the jury will think we're desperate.

Jeannie stops, bites the end of the yellow marker.

JEANNIE (V.O.)

What exactly do we know about this woman?

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

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

BEN

The old bird's a nut case. She used to knock on my brother's door, three to four times a week.

(MORE)

BEN (CONT'D)
Telling him to keep his dog off her lawn.

SCOTT
Yeah, so?

BEN
So he doesn't own a dog. This story of hers is bogus. I guarantee she just threw in the white shirt and tie for good measure.

JEANNIE
How do we prove that?

BEN
We gotta find a hole in her story quick. We got less than a week and we're up there.

INT. FED EX STORE - DAY (PRESENT)

Jeannie sits at a desktop computer station and types out "psychiatric hospitals, Boden County, Florida" into the search box. *Evergreen Mental Health Center* is the first and only result with a direct match.

Jeannie clicks a link that takes her to a modest but colorful web page as she double clicks the CONTACT link in the upper right corner of the screen.

INT. ELMERS-RIED MEDICAL CENTER - CAFETERIA - DAY

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

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

TRACI
That's right.

BEN
Why is that?

TRACI
I'd met her once in a singles class at the church.

(MORE)

TRACI (CONT'D)

I thought I recognized her so I walked up and introduced myself. Then I remembered I treated her a couple years back when she came in with a broken arm.

Ben jots down some notes on a legal pad.

TRACI (CONT'D)

You know, it's real strange.

BEN

What's that?

TRACI

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

BEN

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

Traci smirks.

TRACI

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

Ben gives up, drops his pen.

BEN

Okay. So what do you think happened?

TRACI

It's not for me to say.

BEN

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

TRACI

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

BEN

Of course. It's just that you seem a bit...uncomfortable. Like something's weighing on your mind. Maybe something you didn't tell the cops.

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

TRACI

All I can say about it is this. Your brother might be a man of God, but he's still just a man.

BEN

Sounds like she's got you convinced.

TRACI

I've worked in this hospital twenty five years, Mister Kirkwood. I've seen things you wouldn't believe. I believe that anything and everything is possible.

This hits home with Ben. A sick look about him.

EXT. LAKE HARTLEY BAPTIST CHURCH - BUILDING B - DAY

Ben walks briskly up a sidewalk and through a quaint country style courtyard accented by a small coin fountain. Painted on a brick wall is a mural of twelve children following behind Jesus.

Ben reaches a double door and yanks one open. A YOUNG MOTHER and her two three year old TWIN GIRLS in little pink dresses file out, one at a time.

YOUNG MOTHER

(to Ben)

Thank you.

BEN

Yes, ma'am.

YOUNG MOTHER

Tell your brother we're all praying for him.

BEN

Yes, ma'am. Will do.

Ben shakes his head.

BEN (CONT'D)
 (whispers)
 Say one for me while you're at it.

Ben dips inside.

INT. LAKE HARTLEY BAPTIST - DAY CARE CENTER - DAY

Ben turns a corner and follows the sound of young children playing, laughing, crying. About halfway down the narrow passage, he comes upon a front desk area with a flip counter top and a silver bell.

Ben gives it a ding.

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

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

Ben offers her a warm smile.

SUE ANN
 May I help you?

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

SUE ANN
 Oh. Ben. Of course.

Sue Ann smiles politely.

SUE ANN (CONT'D)
 Sue Ann.

She offers her hand to Ben. He accepts.

BEN
 Yeah. I knew that. It's been awhile.

SUE ANN
 So you must be looking for Christine.

BEN

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

Sue Ann scoffs.

SUE ANN

Funny. I was about to ask you the same thing.

BEN

I'm sorry?

SUE ANN

A few weeks back Christine leaves me a voice mail. Says she's gonna be taking some time off. Maybe even for good. She wasn't real sure. But needed to do some soul searching and some praying about it.

Ben nods.

BEN

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

SUE ANN

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

BEN

Why's that?

SUE ANN

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

BEN

On what?

SUE ANN

Oh I don't know. Life. Things like that.

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

SUE ANN (CONT'D)
 Look, I gotta get back to the kids.
 I wish I could be more help. I
 really don't know where she is.

BEN
 Well. Thanks anyways.

Ben hands her his card.

BEN (CONT'D)
 Just in case you hear something.

SUE ANN
 Of course.

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

SUE ANN (CONT'D)
 Hey Ben.

Ben stops, turns --

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

Ben nods.

BEN
 I will. Miss...?

SUE ANN
 Leary. Sue Ann.

BEN
 Right. I knew that.

Sue Ann waves goodbye, dips into the day care.

Ben seems distracted. As if there was something off about
 his conversation with Sue Ann.

He finally snaps out of it, continues on.

INT. SLIPPERY'S BAR AND GRILL - NIGHT

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

Through the front door struts a determined and overconfident Malcolm -- still in a tailored suit and always professional. He spots Ben and heads over.

Malcolm pops a squat across from Ben. He sets an orange prescription bottle on the table.

MALCOLM

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

Shocked, disappointed, Ben closes his eyes.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

If you ask me, he could use some brushing up on his investigative skills. Maybe spend more time worrying about this case and a little less on that sweet thing he's got on his hip.

BEN

Don't I know it.

MALCOLM

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

BEN

Why am I here, Malcolm?

MALCOLM

Oh I don't know, counselor. Suspect's mentally compromised, manic depressive wife is found hiding out in a motel near the airport. A hot mess. It kind of looks like someone put her there. Afraid she might do something stupid like run her mouth about her husband's affair.

BEN

Well, I'll leave that between you and her, counselor. But do me a favor before you put her on the stand.

(MORE)

BEN (CONT'D)

You might wanna ask her where she was between the hours of five and seven pm the night of the attacks.

Malcolm scoffs. A big grin.

MALCOLM

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

BEN

Yeah, you're right. That probably won't fly. But it's not really up to him. Now is it?

MALCOLM

Sounds like you already got this one figured.

BEN

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

MALCOLM

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

BEN

No. Why don't you educate me.

MALCOLM

We do a little...shall we say...persuading from our end. All it takes is her saying her husband was having an affair and the jury is ours. I think you know that. And if I find out you and your friends are hiding her, it's all over.

BEN

Well. I'll keep that in mind. Thanks for your time.

Malcolm throws him one more smug grin as he dips out and heads for the door.

Ben's poker face cracks as he exhales in relief.

INT. PRELIMINARY HEARING - COURT ROOM - DAY

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

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

MALCOLM

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

KARA

She came into Herman's once, about, I'd say, a little under two months ago. About mid September.

MALCOLM

A little under two months ago. And Herman's Hideaway is a bar a couple blocks from Lake Hartley Baptist.

KARA

Yes.

MALCOLM

And could you tell us about your first encounter with Jaclyn? How'd you two meet?

KARA

I was with my boyfriend, Steve. We were hanging out with some of his friends. Shooting pool. Darts. Drinking. I started feeling the drinks and decided to sit down. That's when I noticed Jaclyn walk in. She sat down at a table across from me. Kind of like right near where everyone was playing pool. So a waitress comes over and she orders a beer. No big deal. We were all drinking. But when the waitress came back is when she got weird.

MALCOLM

Weird. Like how do you mean?

KARA

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

MALCOLM

She ordered a beer...but didn't drink it?

KARA

Yes. That's correct.

MALCOLM

So she took the beer away and came back with the soda. Then what happened?

KARA

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

MALCOLM

And why did you feel the sudden need to go check on Jaclyn? Here you are with your boyfriend and your friends. Minding your business. What was it about Jaclyn that got you curious?

KARA

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

MALCOLM

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

KARA

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

MALCOLM

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

KARA

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

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

MALCOLM

A complicated situation indeed. And how did you end your conversation with Jaclyn?

KARA

I told her about the church. Lake Hartley Baptist. Said they might be able to help with the baby. Give you a place to stay while you get back on your feet. Being that I knew some of the girls that went through the shelter.

MALCOLM

And was Jaclyn very receptive to any of this?

KARA

No. When I mentioned the church is when she just about freaked. Started crying. She said 'whatever happens, she can never go back there. Not ever.

LATER

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

DETECTIVE GALVERSON

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

Detective Galverson points out the KITCHEN COUNTER TOP and END TABLE where the LAMP was knocked over.

DETECTIVE GALVERSON (CONT'D)

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

MALCOLM

Okay. Is that it?

DETECTIVE GALVERSON

No. We also found traces of Miss Sanchez's blood on the edge of this table and on the carpet. Near the table. We also found traces of blood in the glass fragments just outside the rear kitchen door.

MALCOLM

And did this blood also match with that of Miss Sanchez?

DETECTIVE GALVERSON

Yes it did. There was no doubt about it. The physical evidence at the scene strongly supported Miss Sanchez's statement that she'd been assaulted.

LATER

Malcolm questions "Quick Sip" cashier RUDY KINTANIS.

RUDY

When she came in, she kind of looked like she'd been crying. And she was holding her stomach. Kind of like she was sick or something.

MALCOLM

Upon entering the store...where did Jaclyn go first?

RUDY

She dipped into the ladies room.

MALCOLM

For how long would you say she was in there?

RUDY

Don't know exactly. But it was a while. Five, ten minutes maybe.

LATER

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

MARAPOVICH

When she got in the car she was real quiet. Didn't say nuthin. Just stared out the window. Had to ask her three times. Where are we headed? She just wouldn't snap out of it.

LATER

Malcolm has Nurse TRACI MARTIN on the stand.

TRACI

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

MALCOLM

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

TRACI

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

Traci grips both hands tightly into her biceps.

TRACI (CONT'D)

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

Ben seems worried by Traci's testimony.

LATER

Malcolm questions Kevin's neighbor, THELMA MEREDITH.

MALCOLM

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

THELMA

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

MALCOLM

A crash? Like what kind of crash?

THELMA

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

MALCOLM

Approximately how far was Miss Sanchez from the Kirkwood home?

THELMA

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

MALCOLM

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

Thelma points down at Kevin.

THELMA

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

MALCOLM

When you say staring through the door...you mean staring through the glass?

THELMA

Correct.

MALCOLM

And what happened after that?

THELMA

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

MALCOLM

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

THELMA

Yes. I'm very positive.

MALCOLM

Thank you.

(to Ben)

Your witness.

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

BEN

(to Thelma)

Good afternoon.

THELMA

Yes. Good afternoon.

BEN

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

THELMA

How do you mean?

BEN

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

THELMA

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

BEN

That's amazing. Really. No disrespect, but at your age, I'm surprised you can still see twenty feet in front of you without one big blur.

THELMA

As long as I have my glasses, I see just fine.

BEN

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

Beat.

BEN (CONT'D)

Ducked away from the door. That's truly amazing.

Malcolm grins, knowing where Ben is taking this one. He shakes his head slightly.

BEN (CONT'D)

So I'm just gonna ask you one more time. Then I promise we can move on.

Ben moves closer to the witness stand. Uncomfortably close to Thelma.

BEN (CONT'D)

Are you really positive that the man you saw through the glass was Kevin Kirkwood? Or did you just merely say it was because it was the defendant's house and you thought that's what the cops wanted you to say?

MALCOLM

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

JUDGE PIPER

Sustained.

BEN

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

Malcolm leaps from his chair --

MALCOLM
 Objection! Relevance?! Does
 Mister Kirkwood have a serious
 question for this witness or can we
 move on?!

Judge Piper reads Ben's eyes.

JUDGE PIPER
 Overruled.

MALCOLM
 Your honor --

JUDGE PIPER
 Your objection is noted. Sit down
 please.

Malcolm slowly slumps into his leather chair, gives Ben the
 stink eye. Ben returns with a smile.

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

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

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

Ben refers to his papers.

BEN (CONT'D)
 Excuse me. The Evergreen Mental
 Health and Rehabilitation Center?
 Have you ever visited there?

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

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

Malcolm jumps up.

MALCOLM
 Your honor, please...!

JUDGE PIPER

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

BEN

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

Thelma sighs.

THELMA

Yes.

BEN

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

Thelma stalls.

THELMA

I can explain that.

BEN

A simple yes or no, please.

THELMA

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

BEN

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

MALCOLM

Objection! Relevance?!

BEN

Oh, I have a point, your honor.

JUDGE PIPER

Then get to it. Quickly.

Thelma's nervous twitch turns to an angry scowl.

BEN

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

THELMA

According to my doctors...yes.

BEN

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

THELMA

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

BEN

Haldol and Thorazine. Those are antipsychotic medications, are they not?

THELMA

Yes.

BEN

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

JUDGE PIPER

Careful, counselor.

THELMA

As I stated before, I was dehydrated.

BEN

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

THELMA

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

BEN

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

MALCOLM

Objection! This is endless badgering!

JUDGE PIPER

Sustained. Let's move on.

BEN

Could it have been a shadow? The moonlight hitting the door at a certain angle?

JUDGE PIPER

Mister Kirkwood.

BEN

Or maybe it was another one of your hallucinations. Like your husband, Frank.

Judge Piper raps his gavel.

JUDGE PIPER

That's enough. I think you've made your point, counselor.

(to Thelma)

The witness is excused.

Thelma storms out of the witness box and heads straight for the courtroom doors.

Ben pops a squat next to Kevin, who looks almost ashamed of his brother's performance. Ben notices.

JUDGE PIPER (CONT'D)

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

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

JUDGE PIPER (CONT'D)

The official trial date will be set for two weeks from today, Friday morning at Nine AM and will reconvene in this courtroom. At which time counselors will present their opening statements. Until then, this court is adjourned.

Judge Piper raps his gavel. Malcolm stares blankly into nowhere. He's not pleased. Gant moves to whisper in his ear but Malcolm pushes his hand away.

INT. BEN'S APARTMENT - DINING ROOM - DAY

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

BEN

Okay. First order of business is what?

JEANNIE

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

BEN

Very good. And why is that?

JEANNIE

Because she's crazy?

BEN

Yes she is. But what's the real reason?

JEANNIE

She's the only one who can put Kevin at the scene.

BEN

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

SCOTT

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

BEN

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

SCOTT

According to Thelma, there was no car at the scene. She took off on foot.

BEN

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

JEANNIE

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

BEN

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

SCOTT

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

BEN

That's where our big show begins.

JEANNIE

And she didn't want a doctor examining her because they had nothing to find.

BEN

Correct. The state has one other witness who claims she knew that Jaclyn was pregnant. How can that be? Somebody else had to have known.

(MORE)

BEN (CONT'D)

And if that somebody can prove she miscarried before the night of the twentieth, we won this case.

JEANNIE

Okay. How do we do that?

BEN

I'm glad you asked. I'm gonna need you over at this bar. What's it called?

SCOTT'S

Herman's Hideaway.

BEN

Herman's. I want you asking around. See if Jaclyn ever hung out with any regulars. Got drunk, partied. Whatever. But one thing's for sure. Somebody out there knows something we don't know.

Jeannie nods in agreement, takes hers and Scott's empty plate and heads for the kitchen.

Ben picks up his phone...checks the time.

BEN (CONT'D)

Well. I got a game to catch.

Ben stands to leave, shoves in his chair.

SCOTT

Game? You gonna watch football with everything going on?

BEN

Softball. Lake Hartley Baptist versus First Alliance. Supposed to be a real bloodbath from what I hear.

SCOTT

A softball game. Your brother's fighting for his life and you're going to a church league softball game?

BEN

Yeah. Why not? Might do us some good to get some fresh air.

SCOTT

Us?

BEN

You got something else going
tonight?

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

SCOTT

No, I guess not.

BEN

Great. I'll see you down there.

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

JEANNIE

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

SCOTT

Yeah. He's got something up his
sleeve. I can tell.

EXT. SOFTBALL FIELD - DUSK

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

Derek, Tom's boy, is on deck as he takes some practice cuts.

He is caught off guard by the sudden presence of

BEN

...sticking out like a sore thumb as he cuts through a busy crowd behind the home side dugout.

Ben is super casual in some jeans and a worn, faded t shirt. He attempts to quietly blend in but still with a perpetual spotlight above his head.

Derek is visibly nervous. From inside the home side dugout, Tom notices his boy's change in demeanor. He attempts to follow Derek's line of sight and finds

SCOTT AND JEANNIE

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

JEANNIE

Can't believe you're hungry again after I buy fifty bucks worth of takeout.

SCOTT

I forgot to tell you I hate Chinese.

JEANNIE

Good to know. And what are we looking for again?

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

SCOTT

We're in prime territory. Just keep your eyes and ears peeled.

Scott takes a monster chomp of his hot dog.

Tina Halbert, Earl's daughter, knocks one down the third base line and right between the legs of another female third baseman.

The crowd all jump to their feet in riotous applause.

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

WOMAN IN CROWD

Come on, Derek!

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

Ben begins around the field in her direction.

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

SUE ANN

wraps her fingers around the chain link fence as Derek knocks one into shallow center field.

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

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

Ben quietly steps up behind her.

BEN

You know, you're on the wrong side of the field.

Sue Ann turns, finds Ben next to her.

SUE ANN

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

Ben grins.

BEN

Avoiding anyone in particular?

Sue Ann scoffs.

SUE ANN

Wow. You really haven't been to service for a while, have you, Mister Kirkwood?

BEN

No, I guess not. You wanna talk about it?

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

SUE ANN

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

BEN

Now why didn't I think of that?

SUE ANN

I know you and your team didn't come out tonight because you're bored and you have nothing else to do. So what's on your mind?

BEN

Like you said. I haven't been to service for a while.

(beat)

You think we could go for a walk?

Sue Ann, unsure. A simple nod.

SUE ANN

Yeah. Sure.

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

EXT. PUBLIC PARK AND PLAYGROUND - NIGHT

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

SUE ANN

Let me guess. You wanna know about my ongoing beef with your sister in law.

Ben grins.

SUE ANN (CONT'D)

Since you two don't ever talk, and you barely have any contact with your brother, I'm the next in line. Then maybe you can figure out what's going on in that crazy head of hers.

BEN

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

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

BEN (CONT'D)

Or you don't have to tell me. It's up to you.

SUE ANN

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

BEN

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

SUE ANN

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

BEN

Why's that?

SUE ANN

Here we are telling these kids to keep their clothes on until marriage. And there we were carrying on like sex starved teenagers while the ink on his divorce papers haven't dried.

BEN

Good point.

SUE ANN

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

BEN

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

SUE ANN

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

The two slow to a halt before a swing set. Sue Ann takes a seat and kicks her feet into the soft dirt.

BEN

Okay. You wanna tell me about it?

Ben takes a seat on the swing next to her.

SUE ANN

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

BEN

How did you find out about it?

SUE ANN

Because he told me. Called me up a few weeks ago, crying his eyes out. Confessed all of it. His latest victim being one Tina Halbert. Daughter of one Deacon Earl Halbert. I'm sure you've heard of him.

Ben scrunches his eyes -- a mixture of shocked and perplexed.

BEN

You're kidding me?

SUE ANN

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

BEN

Is she even legal?

SUE ANN

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

BEN

So what happened?

SUE ANN

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

BEN

And publicly humiliated Tina Halbert.

Sue Ann cracks a nervous grin, nods appropriately.

SUE ANN

Explains why I'm so popular, huh?

BEN

I'm sorry.

SUE ANN

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

Ben stares across the park's sprawling lawn and spots a nearby tennis and racket ball court spotlighted by a flickering street lamp.

BEN

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

Sue Ann follows his look to the racket ball court.

BEN (CONT'D)

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

SUE ANN
I totally get it.

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

BEN
I've been really wanting a drink here lately. But I know if I take that first sip, it's like I'm throwing away this whole case. Because deep down I know I don't have the will power to keep pushing forward. I'm just looking for the excuse to throw in the towel and get my brother a real lawyer.

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

BEN
Yeah, I know. But that's not proof, is it?

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

Ben locks eyes with her.

SUE ANN (CONT'D)
Have you heard from her?

BEN
Who?

SUE ANN
Christine. Who else?

BEN
No. I haven't.

SUE ANN
You know what you have to do, Ben Kirkwood. I'll be praying you find the courage to do it.

EXT. SOFTBALL FIELD - NIGHT

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

Jeannie takes notice.

JEANNIE
(to Scott)
Who's the girl?

SCOTT
What girl?

JEANNIE
The one with Ben.

Scott turns around.

Closing in on Ben and Sue Ann...

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

Ben notices.

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

SCOTT
(to Jeannie)
She's a lying whore, apparently?

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

TINA
Don't do this here! Just let it
go!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

TINA
 Stop it!

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

TOM
 Derek! Enough!

BEN
 Alright, cut it out. Both of you.
 Everyone's watching.

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

Blood spews. Sue Ann storms off. Tom forcefully grabs his son and physically removes him from the field.

TOM
 What're you doing? Go to the car!

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

Scott and Jeannie join Ben as he clamps his nose and blood continues to spill on the dirt and grass.

SCOTT
You alright, bubba?

BEN
Not really.

SCOTT
What's that all about?

Jeannie spots a small circle of females and deacon's wives going on and on about the incident.

JEANNIE
I'm on the case.

Jeannie passively joins their conversation.

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

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

Scott and Ben walk to a concessions stand.

INT. CONVENIENCE STORE - NIGHT

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

JEANNIE
Does it hurt still?

BEN
I'm fine.

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

SCOTT
Gimme that thing.

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

Takes a seat across from Ben.

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

BEN

I'm glad you enjoyed yourself.

SCOTT

We're there all of two minutes, I look up and you're wandering off with the day care lady. You wanna tell me about it?

BEN

She works with Chris. Figured she might show tonight. I feel like she's still hiding something from me.

Jeannie, now with her iced machiatto, joins them as Scott slides further into the booth.

JEANNIE

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

BEN

What?

JEANNIE

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

SCOTT

Came onto him. Like came onto him how?

JEANNIE

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

SCOTT

Yikes.

BEN

Where did this happen?

JEANNIE

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

Scott chuckles.

SCOTT

No wonder Chris can't stand her.

BEN

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

JEANNIE

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

SCOTT

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

JEANNIE

Why do you think?

BEN

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

JEANNIE

Exactly.

Ben kicks up his feet and relaxes as he holds the ice bag to his face.

BEN

How embarrassing. This poor woman.

SCOTT

Poor woman? Are you forgetting about Christine?

Ben snaps out of it.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

Even if your brother was being honest, and that's a big if, who's to say she's buying any of it? Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned, Benny. This is potentially bad for us.

Ben ponders this.

JEANNIE

He's right. We need to find her before they do.

SCOTT

God help us if they put her on the stand first.

INT. HOSPITAL FLOOR - DAY

Detective Galverson, in a simple polo shirt and khakis, quietly approaches an open door with the name "Kirkwood, Christine" posted on the wall.

Gant is squatted in a chair just outside. As he spots Detective Galverson, he quickly rises. The two men shake hands.

GANT

Hey old partner. Thanks for getting here so quick. I stalled as long as possible.

DETECTIVE GALVERSON

She talking at all?

GANT

She's been sleeping it off. When she wakes up, she's gonna be asking for you know who. You better get what you can now.

DETECTIVE GALVERSON

Right.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

CHRISTINE KIRKWOOD, thirties, no makeup, matted hair, blotchy skin, begins to drift out of a deep sleep. Her glassed over eyes pop open to find Gant standing near the bathroom door and Detective Galverson planted in a chair near her left bed side.

DETECTIVE GALVERSON

Christine. You're in a hospital.
Try not to talk. You're still a
bit dehydrated but you're gonna be
fine.

Christine's eyes read scared and confused as they dance
between Detective Galverson and Gant.

CHRISTINE

I...I don't understand.

DETECTIVE GALVERSON

You were found in your motel room,
unconscious. About four miles from
here.

Christine can't keep her eyes off of Gant's imposing posture
and steely glare. He's making her visibly uncomfortable and
it's fairly obvious.

Gant clears his throat and takes a few steps toward the door.
As if to give Detective Galverson the floor.

DETECTIVE GALVERSON (CONT'D)

I'm not sure if you know who I am
but my name is Detective Galverson.
I'm the lead investigator in your
husband's case.

CHRISTINE

Where is he?

DETECTIVE GALVERSON

We're having some issues reaching
Mister Kirkwood. But we're working
on it. In the meantime, I thought
you and me could get caught up.
Talk a little bit more about the
night you left home.

This triggers Christine. She rubs her temples, shakes her
head in defiance. Her steady breaths turn rapid and
nervous as she feels the weight of the room.

CHRISTINE

I...I'm not sure. I'm so tired.

Christine shuts her eyes. Detective Galverson and Gant share
a quick exchange. Gant shakes his head -- not buying her
forgetful act.

DETECTIVE GALVERSON

I know, after the last few days, your memory may be a bit foggy. So I thought I'd help you try to put the pieces together. Get our facts straight. The quicker we do that, the better. For your husband's sake.

CHRISTINE

Who is he?

DETECTIVE GALVERSON

This is Mister Gant. He's the one who found you in your room and called the ambulance.

CHRISTINE

Could you ask him to step out, please.

Detective Galverson gives Gant the nod. Gant excuses himself into the outer hallway.

DETECTIVE GALVERSON

Look. I know you don't wanna hurt your husband. But the longer you keep things to yourself, the worse it's gonna be for both of you in the long run. Do you understand? I'm gonna need you to nod your head if you understand.

Christine nods.

DETECTIVE GALVERSON (CONT'D)

Good. Let's get started.

INT. COURTROOM - TRIAL DAY ONE - DAY

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

MALCOLM

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

(MORE)

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

Before his congregation. Before God. That he had just done the unspeakable.

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

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

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

LATER

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

BEN

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

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

BEN (CONT'D)

It's not the facts of the case that matter. It's the presentation of the evidence. Who can gain the most sympathy.

(MORE)

BEN (CONT'D)

Who can play on our innermost feelings of guilt...and use that guilt as a weapon against us. We see it every day, don't we?

Ben slowly moves up and down the jury box.

BEN (CONT'D)

On the news. On social media. Everywhere we turn. And the worse the crime, the more apt we are to put a name and a face on that crime and wrap it all up in a nice little package. And then claim it to be the truth.

Ben points back at the prosecution's desk.

BEN (CONT'D)

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

LATER

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

MALCOLM

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

TRACI

She did.

MALCOLM

And why is that? Have you treated Jaclyn before?

TRACI

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

MALCOLM

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

TRACI

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

MALCOLM

Employed?

TRACI

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

MALCOLM

And did you find that a bit strange?

Ben remains seated.

BEN

Objection. Relevance.

Judge Piper about to rule...

MALCOLM

I'll withdraw the question, your honor.

JUDGE PIPER

Let's stay on point, counselor.

MALCOLM

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

TRACI

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

MALCOLM

Could you describe to the court her condition?

TRACI

She had face and neck lacerations. Both arms were badly bruised. As well as her chest and abdomen. Parts of her right shoulder were also badly bruised as well as scraped.

MALCOLM

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

Ben shifts in his seat, about to object but refrains. Scott grabs him by the shoulder.

TRACI

Yes. It was apparent that she had just been very recently assaulted. Some of her wounds were still fairly fresh.

MALCOLM

So did you ask her what happened and who did this to her?

TRACI

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

MALCOLM

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

Ben losing patience fast.

TRACI

No. Not right away. He was receptive at first. Until he found out that she told his wife. That's when he snapped.

Ben quickly stands.

BEN

Objection, your honor. This sure sounds like a lot of hearsay. Is Miss Martin actually testifying as to the exact moment Jaclyn's attacker quote "snapped"?

JUDGE PIPER

Overruled. The witness may continue.

Ben huffs in defeat -- pops a squat.

MALCOLM

Again. How did Pastor take the news of Jaclyn's pregnancy?

BEN

Objection!

MALCOLM

Excuse me, your honor.
(to Traci)
How did the father of Jaclyn's child receive the news that she was pregnant?

TRACI

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

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

MALCOLM

Left home unexpectedly. After she was made aware of her husband's affair with Jaclyn.

Malcolm returns to the witness box.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
And what happened next?

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

MALCOLM
Things turned violent. Thank you, Nurse Martin. We appreciate your time.

Malcolm heads to his chair.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
Your witness.

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

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

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

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

TRACI
I don't understand your question.

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

TRACI

I don't know. I suppose. I'm not sure what you mean by the right thing.

BEN

I mean you're from the church. You know Pastor Kirkwood's reputation. You respect him and his work. You are a member of his congregation. Did you think, maybe, perhaps, Jaclyn was a bit concerned, possibly a bit ashamed by the idea of exposing Pastor's dark secret? Exposing this affair with Jaclyn?

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

TRACI

I have no idea, Mister Kirkwood. That wasn't my concern at the time. My concern was for Miss Sanchez. For her physical and mental well being. It was obvious to me that she had just been through a very traumatic experience and needed someone familiar to discuss what happened. She's not from here. Perhaps she felt I was the only option at that time.

BEN

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

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

TRACI

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

BEN

For Jaclyn.

Ben stands before the jury.

TRACI

That's correct.

As Ben locks eyes with each of them.

BEN

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

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

TRACI

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

BEN

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

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

BEN (CONT'D)

Nurse Martin. Did she? Ever mention my brother by name?

Traci huffs.

TRACI

No she did not.

BEN

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

TRACI

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

BEN

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

TRACI

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

BEN

Yes. We know she was. But did you perform an examination on Jaclyn?

TRACI

No. I never had the chance.

BEN

Why not?

TRACI

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

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

BEN

She left?

TRACI

Yes.

BEN

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

Traci is left speechless.

Malcolm slumps in defeat.

TRACI

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

BEN

She left the hospital. Correct.

Ben studies the jury.

BEN (CONT'D)

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

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

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

TRACI
I have not.

BEN
No follow up? How's the kid doing?
Everything okay down there?

Malcolm jumps to his feet.

MALCOLM
Objection! Asked and answered! Is
Mister Kirkwood done badgering this
witness?!

JUDGE PIPER
He is.

BEN
No more questions, your honor.

Ben returns to his seat.

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

MALCOLM
I do, your honor.

Ben rolls his eyes. Kevin pats him on the arm.

Malcolm approaches the witness box.

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

TRACI
I'm not sure. A few hundred I
suppose.

MALCOLM

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

TRACI

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

MALCOLM

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

TRACI

Shame. Fear. Confusion.

MALCOLM

Fear of what exactly?

TRACI

Fear of going public. Turning on a partner. Involving the police in a private matter that could result in a loved one going to jail. Or possibly having serious charges brought against them.

MALCOLM

What about going up against a powerful figure like Pastor Kirkwood? Someone who took you in off the streets. Helped you clean up your life. It seems like a decision like that could give a girl pause.

TRACI

Yes. It probably would.

BEN

Objection!

JUDGE PIPER

Sustained.

MALCOLM

No more questions, your honor.

Malcolm returns to his seat.

JUDGE PIPER

The witness is excused. Would prosecution like to break for lunch or call their next witness?

MALCOLM

If it's okay with your honor, the state would like to call their next witness.

A shocked Ben turns to Scott who tosses up his hands with equal confusion.

JUDGE PIPER

Go ahead.

MALCOLM

The state would like to call Christine Kirkwood to the stand.

Kevin's heart sinks. He stares over his right shoulder as Christine, now dressed in a nice pants suit and her hair in a tight bun, comes through the doors and into the courtroom. She shoots her husband a half second glance that spells instant regret and shame.

SCOTT

What in the...

Kevin looks sick to his stomach. Ben notices.

LATER

Malcolm and Christine mid testimony.

MALCOLM

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

CHRISTINE

I did.

MALCOLM

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

CHRISTINE

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

MALCOLM

How so?

CHRISTINE

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

MALCOLM

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

CHRISTINE

I'd say it was more of a group decision.

MALCOLM

But when it comes down to it. Your husband does have the final say about who goes and who stays. Does he not?

CHRISTINE

I suppose he does. Yes.

MALCOLM

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

CHRISTINE

I suspected it may be her. It sounded like her.

MALCOLM

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

CHRISTINE

Yes I did.

MALCOLM

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

CHRISTINE

Not exactly.

MALCOLM

You didn't address her by name? Then how did you address her exactly?

CHRISTINE

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

MALCOLM

And how did Jaclyn respond to that?

CHRISTINE

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

MALCOLM

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

BEN

Objection. Leading.

JUDGE PIPER

Sustained.

MALCOLM

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

CHRISTINE

Yes.

MALCOLM

What else did Jaclyn have to say?

CHRISTINE

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

MALCOLM

And what was that?

CHRISTINE

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

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

JUDGE PIPER

Let's calm down and have some order in here.

MALCOLM

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

CHRISTINE

No she did not.

MALCOLM

Why's that?

CHRISTINE

Because I left.

MALCOLM

You left? But she had proof. Undeniable proof that she was with child. Naming your husband as the father. And you decided to pick up and leave. Why?

CHRISTINE

Because I was hurt. Afraid. Afraid of the truth. And what might come out of my husband's mouth. I guess I just wasn't prepared for that. So I packed a bag and left.

MALCOLM

One more question, Mrs. Kirkwood. Did you assault Jaclyn Sanchez?

CHRISTINE

No.

MALCOLM

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

CHRISTINE

No.

MALCOLM

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

CHRISTINE

No.

MALCOLM

(to Ben)

Your witness.

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

JUDGE PIPER

Mister Kirkwood. Are you ready to proceed?

BEN

Yes, your honor. Excuse me.

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

The jury notices her change in demeanor.

BEN (CONT'D)

It's good to see you, Chris. How they been treating you? Okay, I hope.

CHRISTINE

I'm fine, Ben. Thank you.

BEN

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

CHRISTINE

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

Ben nods as he passes by the jury box. He stops in his tracks, rubs his face and chin as he ponders all of it. Piecing it all together.

BEN

Here's my dilemma. You were already booked on a flight to Atlanta the morning after Jaclyn's attack. A flight that you booked exactly two days prior.

The jurors look to Christine. All the color drops from her face. Ben steps closer.

BEN (CONT'D)

The truth is...you were already planning on leaving town the next morning. Even before this shocking phone call from Jaclyn. Isn't this correct?

CHRISTINE

I was.

BEN

Let me see if I understand correctly. It was getting late in the day. And you hadn't packed any bags for this early morning flight to Atlanta. And it wasn't until Jaclyn's phone call that you decided to pack this bag?

CHRISTINE

I was back and forth on whether I was actually going. Kevin and I were having some trouble. Things that have nothing to do with Jaclyn. Personal things between me and him.

Christine sucks in a deep breath. Shielding the tears about to well in her eyes. Kevin is sad for her. The jurors observe the love in his eyes and his overall spirit.

CHRISTINE (CONT'D)

I thought it was a good idea I got away for a few days. Visit with my family. Sort some things out.

BEN

I see. And did you ever make it onto that flight?

Christine pauses.

BEN (CONT'D)

Chris?

CHRISTINE

You know that I didn't.

BEN

So you didn't make your flight. So where did you go? You obviously never made it home.

Christine wipes a single tear. She takes a moment as she gazes at the floor.

CHRISTINE

I went to a motel. I thought I'd take a few hours. Maybe a night or two to think things through. I thought the peace and quiet would do me some good.

BEN

From the looks of things in that room, there wasn't much peace or quiet. In fact, the night manager said you left quite the mess.

MALCOLM

Objection. Is there a question anywhere in our future?

BEN

I'm getting there, I promise.

JUDGE PIPER

Then get there, counselor. Only do it quicker.

BEN

It was obvious to my associates, who discovered the destructive aftermath of your motel visit, that you fell off the wagon and did so in a very big way.

Christine on the verge of bursting into tears. Kevin shakes his head, guilt ridden, protective of his troubled wife.

BEN (CONT'D)

What I don't understand is why?

Christine locks eyes with Kevin. Ben purposely blocks her path and line of sight.

BEN (CONT'D)

You didn't stick around. To hear the truth from Jaclyn or to get your husband's side of things. You just left. Skipped your flight to Atlanta and proceeded to drink and pill yourself into a stupor after fourteen months of sobriety.

Malcolm stands.

MALCOLM

Objection. This is endless badgering.

JUDGE PIPER

Sustained. Get to the point, counselor or I'm dismissing this witness.

BEN

My apologies to your honor. And to the court

Ben gets right in Christine's face. A come to Jesus moment if there ever was one.

BEN (CONT'D)

I'm going to ask you...one time and one time only. Before the court. Before your husband. Before God. Did you, at any time, get into a physical altercation with Jaclyn Sanchez? In or outside your residence? Yes or no?

And it's on the tip of her tongue. She's about to spill but Malcolm quickly puts a stop to this charade.

MALCOLM

Objection! Asked and answered! Defense is deliberately using the witness's own guilt and devotion to her husband to alter her prior testimony! We ask that she be excused immediately with the court's apologies!

JUDGE PIPER

Sustained. The witness is excused.
And I think this is a good place to
stop for today. This court will
reconvene at Nine AM tomorrow.

Judge Piper raps his gavel. Ben watches Christine with disdain as she quickly exits the witness stand and makes for the courtroom doors.

Kevin sinks his head in shame. Jeannie rubs his shoulder in support as Ben heads back and collects his papers.

KEVIN

You didn't have to do that.
Humiliate her like that.

BEN

I didn't do anything. She did it
to herself.

KEVIN

There could have been another way.
I'm trying to save what's left of
my marriage.

BEN

And I'm trying to keep you out of
prison and save your life. If she
loves you, she'll come clean.

JEANNIE

You can't ask her to purger
herself. Not if she didn't do it.

BEN

Stay out of this.

Jeannie, about to throw a tantrum, but Scott intervenes and quietly clasps her wrist. She lets it go.

SCOTT

She's right, Benny. We can't tip
our hand to the jury like that.
Now it looks like we're desperate.

BEN

We are. And they got to her.
Because she's still fuming mad at
Kevin and they know it.

SCOTT

That's besides the point. You don't think if she did this to Sanchez she'd wanna help Kevin? You're not thinking straight, Benny.

BEN

I don't wanna burst everyone's bubble but if Chris wasn't there, it sort of narrows down their list of suspects.

Kevin ponders this. He is strangely quiet. He looks over his shoulder and spots Kyle Stoker following a small crowd out the back double doors. He and Kyle share a brief exchange. An overwhelming guilt practically written on Kyle's forehead.

SCOTT

Okay. Let's just all take a breath.

BEN

Yeah. I got an idea. Maybe we should all just pray about it. Because that's been working out so well for us.

KEVIN

Yes. Maybe we should.

Ben locks up his briefcase and heads out.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

Let him go. Let him cool down.

SCOTT

Pardon me, Pastor, but I could use a drink.

Scott also heads for the door. Jeannie follows. Kevin left at the table with his own thoughts. He seems strangely at peace as a calm spirit comes over him.

INT. SLIPPERY'S BAR - NIGHT

Scott climbs some thin and crickety steps and onto the second floor billiards area where he finds Ben tossing some darts in the corner and nursing a shot and beer.

SCOTT

You take your first sip yet?

BEN

No. You're welcome to it.

Ben tosses his last two darts before collecting them from the tournament board.

SCOTT

Been looking for you. Figured you might be in here.

BEN

Oh. Gee. How'd you track me down, Detective? To think the DA's Office let a sharp eye like you walk out the door.

Ben begins his second round of darts.

SCOTT

We found some new dirt on Sanchez if you care to hear.

BEN

Not particularly.

SCOTT

I talked to my guy in the Sheriff's Office. He said that, before her stint at the women's care center, Jaclyn's been cribbing with a guy named Logan Caswell. Aka The Covid Casanova. Got that nickname during the pandemic by turning out a whole stable of single, out of work moms in his trailer park. All looking to keep the lights on.

BEN

Is that so?

SCOTT

That is so. Guess who was Caswell's across the way neighbor? I'll give you two guesses.

BEN

No idea.

SCOTT

That's right. One Kyle Stoker.

Ben, with dart in hand, stops, checks with Scott.

BEN

Okay. You got my attention.

He releases his dart.

SCOTT

I've been out there. You can practically spit on Stoker's trailer from Caswell's place. So it got me thinking...

Ben pays him little mind as he tosses his darts. Scott moves into Ben's line of sight.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

Jaclyn starts messing with Stoker while Caswell's back is turned. Stoker starts getting jealous of Jaclyn turning tricks and insists she leaves the life. Insists that she gets clean. So she ends up at the church.

BEN

What's your point?

SCOTT

What if Stoker was the father? Caswell finds out his prize girl gets knocked up and can't work the streets. So he beats the living crap out of her. Fresh out of options and nowhere to turn, she talks this Stoker kid into making up a story about your brother.

Ben groans, not buying any of this.

BEN

Why would he do that?

SCOTT

Because he's just as scared as she is. This Caswell was a bad boy. No one to mess with. So he's thinking he's gotta leave the park in one piece. Bam. They concoct this story about Kevin to take the church for every dime they got. Only then can they leave town for good.

BEN

Good story but it doesn't matter.

SCOTT

Of course it matters.

BEN

I mean it doesn't matter! I know all about Sanchez. Nothing on her sheet but brawling, public intoxication and a few possession charges.

Ben aggressively tosses the rest of his darts. Growing angrier and quickly losing patience.

SCOTT

My cop says this Caswell's operation was an open secret. That they knew about it but didn't make any busts during the pandemic. It leads to her history of promiscuity and opens up a whole pandora's box of baby daddies a mile long.

BEN

Don't you get it? They put Chris on the stand. She all but admitted Kevin's guilt. His own wife.

Scott grows tired and takes a chug of Ben's beer.

BEN (CONT'D)

It doesn't matter what story we try to sell the jury now. They've already made up their mind. They made up their mind before this trial even started. The Kirkwood family strikes again. Like we knew they would.

Ben tears his darts free and gets back in position. Scott simply watches as Ben tosses the darts and gives up on his brother's case completely.

SCOTT

They made up their mind or did you?

BEN

What's that mean?

SCOTT

You think he did it?

Ben takes a moment. Thinks it over.

BEN

Yeah. Maybe he did. He's his father's son. Why not?

Ben chucks another dart.

SCOTT

Or maybe you want it to be him?

Ben throws Scott a hard stare. A real back off look.

BEN

What's that?

Scott slowly walks into Ben's space -- never breaking eye contact and dead serious.

SCOTT

You hate him so much you're willing to throw this case, Ben? I know you've been waiting for him to stub his toe. Now's your chance.

Ben's lip quivers with pent up rage. He takes the mug of beer from Scott's hand and takes a generous chug. He crashes the mug down on a high top.

BEN

I think you better get going. Before you go and say something stupid.

SCOTT

Yeah. I guess so. It's been a couple weeks. You have some drinking to catch up on.

Scott nods and heads for the stairs. Ben retrieves the mug of beer from the high top -- chugs the rest.

EXT. BEN'S APARTMENT - LATE NIGHT

A very drunken, very tired and broken Ben stumbles his way up a flight of stairs...headed home for the night. His shirt undone and his tie loosened.

As he digs out his keys, he's surprised to find...

SUE ANN

...waiting on the top step. In tears.

SUE ANN

Jeannie gave me your address. I hope it's okay.

Ben rests against the hallway wall, quiet and tired, studies a deep sadness in Sue Ann's eyes.

BEN

So. You wanna tell me what's really going on with my brother? The clock is ticking.

Sitting on her hands, Sue Ann sucks in a long, deep breath, exhales as she nervously rocks back and forth.

SUE ANN

Can we go inside?

After a moment, Ben nods.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

A guilt-ridden Sue Ann, donning a thrift store church dress, sits at the witness stand with a look of sincere regret that cuts through her heavy makeup.

BEN

Miss Leary. What is your position at Lake Hartley Baptist?

SUE ANN

I'm Assistant Director of Children's Ministries.

BEN

And what is that exactly?

SUE ANN

It's more of a fancy title than anything. I mostly run the day care at the church. In some instances, I'll assist the Youth Director with other various activities.

BEN

Such as?

SUE ANN

Fundraisers. Cookouts. Field trips. I help with Wednesday Night Youth gatherings.

(MORE)

SUE ANN (CONT'D)

I've served in the young adults prayer group as a counselor. Things like this.

BEN

You assist the Youth Director. So who is the Youth Director at Lake Hartley Baptist?

SUE ANN

We're, sort of, in between youth pastors at the moment. As you may have heard, Pastor Gregg Hainey died in an auto accident.

BEN

Yes, of course. So going back a month. Before Pastor Hainey's accident...he was the Youth Director at Lake Hartley. Is this correct?

SUE ANN

About two weeks prior to the accident, Pastor Hainey was relieved of his position.

BEN

He was fired.

SUE ANN

That's correct.

BEN

And is it true that you were involved in a love relationship with Pastor Hainey?

SUE ANN

Yes I was. For about four months.

BEN

At any point before Pastor's death did you terminate the relationship?

SUE ANN

I did.

BEN

And could you tell the court why Pastor Gregg Hainey was terminated from Lake Hartley Baptist?

Sue Ann takes one last breath before getting into it. The jury notices her trepidation.

SUE ANN

Around early September, I received a phone call from Gregg. Pastor Hainey. It was very late. Later than usual. I could tell he was very upset. When I asked what was wrong...he told me he'd been having a really hard time since his divorce. And that he was still very much hurt by his wife's infidelity. And because of this...he'd been having a series of sexual encounters with other women.

BEN

While he was seeing you?

SUE ANN

Yes.

BEN

And with whom was Pastor Hainey having these relations? Did he name anyone specifically?

SUE ANN

Yes he did.

BEN

And could you tell the court the name of the young woman whom Gregg Hainey was seeing?

Sue Ann reads the eyes of everyone present in the court room. Some familiar faces from church. Most notably Earl, aka "Deacon Halbert".

SUE ANN

Jaclyn Sanchez.

Earl's jaw hits the floor. His face flushed red as he barely refrains from bursting into a rage.

BEN

After this phone call with your then boyfriend Gregg Hainey...did you tell anyone about his sexual relationship with Miss Sanchez?

SUE ANN

I did not.

BEN

You must've told someone. You had to be upset. Mad even. This man that you'd been seeing. A man that you trusted. A man of God. He just admitted to betraying you. And you didn't tell anyone?

SUE ANN

I requested an emergency meeting with Pastor Kirkwood. And with Deacon Halbert. And I told them that Gregg had been seeing Halbert's daughter Tina.

Earl's face is tense and tight as he defiantly clenches his arms together.

BEN

Tina Halbert. But no mention of Jaclyn?

SUE ANN

No.

BEN

Why not?

SUE ANN

Because I was mad. I was upset. Because I wanted to hurt Gregg. Miss Halbert happens to be a very popular young lady. With a very overprotective father. And I wanted him gone.

BEN

But a relationship with Jaclyn Sanchez would have been equally inappropriate. Would it not?

SUE ANN

Jaclyn is nineteen. No laws were broken. I all but expected Deacon Halbert to bring charges against Gregg. But they never had the chance. Gregg died before any charges were filed.

BEN

Miss Leary. Thank you for coming forward today. And for your honesty.

(MORE)

BEN (CONT'D)

I know, given Gregg's recent passing, this must've been extremely difficult for you.
 (to Judge Piper)
 No more questions, your honor.

Ben heads back.

JUDGE PIPER

Mister Cross. Do you have anything for this witness?

MALCOLM

You bet I do, your honor.

Malcolm almost falls out of his chair and knocks shoulders with Ben as he approaches the stand.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

Miss Leary, this certainly is a very interesting and shocking turn of events. Not to demean the importance of your testimony. As the defense has already pointed out, I'm sure this has all been very difficult for you. But I do have to ask. During Gregg's telephone confession...did he happen to mention any concerns over Jaclyn's pregnancy?

SUE ANN

No. It didn't come up.

MALCOLM

So at no point during your conversation did Gregg Hainey mention that Jaclyn was pregnant or that he could be the father of her child?

SUE ANN

No. Not directly.

MALCOLM

He either did or he didn't. There is no directly or indirectly. Yes or no? Did he mention that Jaclyn was pregnant?

Sue Ann's mouth open...about to answer...but refrains. She grows frustrated.

SUE ANN

No.

MALCOLM

No more questions, your honor.

Ben cracks a grin, shakes his head. Kevin taps his arm in support. The vibe at the defense table is still positive as Ben gives Sue Ann a "well done" nod on her way out of the courtroom.

LATER

SUMMATIONS:

Malcolm strolls the jury box. His hand slides across the wooden beam -- all confidence.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

Since the beginning of this trial, the defense became obsessed with one subject and one subject only. Was she or was she not pregnant? So obsessed with this subject that they simply pushed aside the rest of the evidence. As if none of that mattered. The cuts on Jaclyn Sanchez's face. Her shoulder. Her neck. The bruises on both her arms. And on her stomach. And as the medical report claims was caused by the repeated blows of her assailant. The destruction left behind at the home of Pastor Kevin Kirkwood. Eyewitness testimony from Mister Kirkwood's neighbor. Putting him at the scene. You heard the testimony from his wife Christine. When she said that she wasn't home. But somebody had to be home. Whether or not Jaclyn Sanchez brought a sonogram of her and Pastor's baby, or she showed empty handed. It really doesn't matter. What matters is that she showed up. And pushed the good pastor's buttons. And pushed. And pushed some more. Then refused to leave. So he helps her to the door. But she's not budging. Then tries to move her again. Again, she ain't moving. And like a light switch, Pastor Kevin Kirkwood went dark.

(MORE)

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

He switched off and let his basic animal instincts take over. But for Jaclyn Sanchez, this isn't her first rodeo. She's been in a scrap or two in her time. She's not the one to just lay down without a fight. And in an attempt to defend herself...that's when things got really ugly. Call it an accident. Call it a momentary lapse. Call it whatever you want. But as Jaclyn's medical reports show...her assailant willfully, specifically and repeatedly struck her in the abdomen. Targeting her unborn child. Proof of life wasn't necessary. Not yet. In Pastor Kirkwood's mind, he still had a chance to hide the evidence. And he took it. I believe that Pastor Kirkwood had grown tired of a loveless marriage with a very troubled woman he could no longer control. And at her lowest points, an unfaithful woman. An ungrateful woman. And he went fishing for his next pet project. Someone he could control. Satisfying that need for respect. For attention. For recognition that he believed he deserved. Until this relationship spiraled out of control. And then he himself lost control. Pastor Kirkwood may be a man of God. But he's still just a man...

LATER

Ben delivers his summation:

BEN

Mister Cross was right about one thing. And that's my obsession with Jaclyn's baby. I can't really get past it to be honest. The fact that the state could not produce a single witness. A single medical report. Sonogram. Doctor's note. Nothing that can corroborate Jaclyn's so called pregnancy. According to Pastor's wife, Jaclyn threatened to deliver a still image of her unborn child as proof of life. But it didn't happen.

(MORE)

BEN (CONT'D)
 Even after her so called attack.
 They still can't produce it.

Ben saunters past the prosecution's table. He throws his hands in the air.

BEN (CONT'D)
 Where is it?

Ben makes his way back to the jury.

BEN (CONT'D)
 All we're really left with is her word. But what is that worth really? When you take a long and hard look at Jaclyn Sanchez's life over the last several years, you'll find very quickly that her word isn't worth much.

Some of the jurors check with Malcolm. He remains cool and collected, avoids eye contact.

BEN (CONT'D)
 My brother, along with the good folks at Lake Hartley Baptist brought her in when she had nothing. Tried their best to build her back up. To encourage her. For all intents and purposes, to fix her life. But she fought and refused that help at every possible turn. And chose to rebel. Because that's what she does best.

On Scott and Jeannie.

SCOTT
 (whispers)
 That's the whole case in a nutshell.

JEANNIE
 (whispers)
 No kidding.

On Ben.

BEN
 For Pastor Gregg Hainey, she sort of stuck out like a sore thumb, didn't she? You heard the testimony of Sue Ann Leary. What do we know about Pastor Hainey?
 (MORE)

BEN (CONT'D)

We knew he was looking for some cheap thrills to get one over on his cheating wife. Cheap thrills coming in the form of several young ladies whom he'd had casual sexual encounters. And he quickly set his sights on Jaclyn Sanchez.

Kyle Stoker sits quietly in the very back row and near the double doors. He is in a ball cap and incognito.

BEN (CONT'D)

But then tragedy struck. Gregg is killed. And after one too many infractions, Jaclyn is kicked out of the care center for good. Nowhere left to go. And with no solid proof of this affair with Gregg Hainey. Because with proof...she could get even, couldn't she? She could bring that church to their knees. And with Gregg gone, her master plan is ruined. So she moves on to plan b. And calls up her buddy Kyle Stoker from the old trailer park.

Jeannie stares over her shoulder, spots Kyle in the back row looking pitiful and full of regret.

BEN (CONT'D)

First they wait until Christine is on the road and long gone. And then they very carefully and meticulously set the stage. Furniture knocked over. Broken window panes. The whole nine yards. Then make a big show of it during Sunday evening service. When Kyle Stoker tackled my brother to the ground for all of the congregation to see.

Ben points to Malcolm.

BEN (CONT'D)

Mister Cross would lead you all to believe that Jaclyn was carrying on not one but two sexual relationships inside the halls of this church, with not one, but two head pastors and no one noticed. I say that's nonsense.

Ben steps closer, leans on the jury box.

BEN (CONT'D)

I say that you all know better than that. If she were pregnant, and that's a big if...we have a pretty good idea now who the father was. Don't we?

One of the jurors grins and nods.

BEN (CONT'D)

Maybe, just maybe that's why he confessed his affair to Sue Ann Leary. Because of Jaclyn's impending pregnancy. With his child. But we don't know. There is no baby. And Gregg Hainey isn't here to answer for himself. But the burden of proof doesn't fall on the defense. It falls on the prosecution. And they haven't proved beyond a shadow of a doubt that my brother laid a finger on Jaclyn Sanchez.

SCOTT

(whispers)
Good stuff.

JEANNIE

We're gonna win.

SCOTT

Shhh.

On Ben.

BEN

I know that you feel sorry for her. For everything she's been through in her life. But allowing her to continue down this destructive path isn't the answer. You really wanna help Jaclyn Sanchez? You wanna help fix her life? Be the first ones in her life to hold her accountable.

CUT TO:

INT. LAKE HARTLEY BAPTIST - FELLOWSHIP HALL - NIGHT

A Welcome Home Pastor banner posted proudly on the wall above the open cafeteria window. Inside the kitchen itself are several TEEN BOYS AND GIRLS from the youth department pouring refills of iced tea and lemonade and walking them to their assigned and respective tables.

And it's a full house.

A smorgasbord of homemade casseroles and sweet desserts are open to the congregation as tables take turn standing in line with their dishes.

Everyone is in good spirits.

Sitting near the back of the room, alone, are Scott and Jeannie. The odd ones out. He is whispering something inappropriate in her ear as she playfully pushes him away and shakes her head.

JEANNIE

Church. We're in church.

SCOTT

Look at them. One big happy family. Like nothing ever happened. But what if we lost?

JEANNIE

What do you mean?

SCOTT

I mean...apparently a lots happened under this roof lately. Stuff they don't post in the morning bulletin. Just wondered if anyone was interested in finding the root cause or if it's just business as usual.

JEANNIE

I mean, they're church people but just people. No different than us. I think maybe Ben helped reminded them of that. Maybe even a few of those people on the jury.

SCOTT

How's that?

JEANNIE

Just because Kevin's this big time preacher in a big church doesn't mean he's automatically hiding all these deep dark secrets. I think, at the end of the day, we all have our secrets. Things about ourselves we need to work on. Sometimes it's easier to project and blame than it is to accept reality. The truth is none of us are perfect.

SCOTT

Sounds like you had a change of heart about the good pastor.

JEANNIE

Maybe. But don't tell Benny, okay?

Ben opens a rear door and quietly observes the celebration. His eyes almost immediately drawn to...

SUE ANN

...entering from the opposite rear door. She fails to notice Ben staring back at her. Her mind preoccupied. Her demeanor anxious and flustered.

Kevin, in mid conversation with a small group, spots her waiting near the back and excuses himself.

Ben watches closely.

Kevin greets Sue Ann with a harmless, one armed hug, but Sue Ann fully embraces him.

Ben observes the congregation watching with judgemental stares and quiet whispers.

Kevin and Sue Ann step into the outer hall.

Ben turns to Scott and Jeannie watching him from their corner table as Scott non verbally advises him to let it go and pop a squat in a chair pulled out for him.

Ben chooses to duck out the back, not in the mood for celebrating his big win.

SCOTT

I don't think I wanna know what that's about.

JEANNIE

I should go check on him.

SCOTT

No. I'll do it.

Scott tosses his napkin on the table and ducks out the back door in pursuit of Ben.

INT. LAKE HARTLEY BAPTIST - CHAPEL - NIGHT

In an empty pew closest to the pulpit, Ben sits alone in the dark, with only the dim glow of some wall mounted lights to keep him company.

Kevin stands in silhouette near the outer double door entry way and, after a moment, moves inside with a slight hesitation in his step.

KEVIN

Some things never change.

Ben throws a glance over his shoulder, spots Kevin stop about halfway to the pulpit.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

I remember when you were little playing hide and seek. And you'd hide under the podium over and over again. Acting like you'd just discovered the ultimate hiding spot. You could practically hear your snickering from the door.

Ben faces forward, takes a quick belt from his flask. Kevin pretends not to notice.

BEN

And you never said anything? Wow.

With a furrowed brow and a protective posture, Kevin takes a few more steps forward, feeling the full weight of his brother's negative energy.

BEN (CONT'D)

And what other secrets is my big brother keeping from me these days? Care to enlighten me?

Kevin stops just before the pulpit, faces Ben who is pickled drunk and mentally broken.

KEVIN

Am I to take it since you're sitting alone in the dark instead of downstairs with the others that something's gnawing away at your belly?

Kevin waves a hand through the polluted air.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

Other than that poison you've just ingested. I can smell you from here.

BEN

Nah. This case is over. We won. Why don't we forget about it?

Kevin carefully takes a step forward, closer to Ben, but allows him his space.

KEVIN

Now I have to know. So why don't you tell me. We can have it out. Right here. Right now. What's on your mind, little brother?

BEN

Just something Sue Ann told me a couple weeks back. I haven't been able to shake it since.

KEVIN

Oh? What's that?

BEN

She said she owed you her life. That she'd either be dead or back on the street like Jaclyn if it weren't for your guidance. Then I hear around the way that she's paying visits to the pastor's office and making passes at you.

Kevin cracks a nervous grin, shakes his head, sighs as he paces the front of the chapel.

KEVIN

Look. Before you get any more weird ideas --

BEN

On top of that, Chris is taking impromptu last minute flights to Atlanta just to get away from you. All very interesting material.

KEVIN

Nothing happened, Benny.

BEN

Really? It's not what I heard.

KEVIN

Well whatever you're thinking, it's not that either. I promise you.

Kevin grows annoyed and heads for the door. Ben stands, about to chase him down. He steps into the aisle... fresh out of patience.

BEN

You know what I'm thinking? I'm thinking Sue Ann Leary is in love with you. I'm also thinking she got up on that stand and perjured herself for ten minutes straight.

KEVIN

You don't believe her?

BEN

No, Kevin. That's what perjure means. It means she lied.

KEVIN

This all sounds like a conversation you should be having with her. My congregation is waiting. You might wanna think about sobering up before you come back in there.

Kevin continues on. Ben heads after him.

BEN

Don't do that. Don't walk away. Not again. You owe me this.

Kevin sighs, turns back.

KEVIN

What exactly do I owe you now, Benny?

BEN

The truth. There seems to be a lot of stories floating around this place. I can't seem to keep them straight.

KEVIN

Look at yourself. You've won and you're still not happy. For me or yourself. For your friends that gave their time and hearts to help you. To help me. Are you really that cynical? What else is it gonna take for you to snap out of this permanent funk you seem to find yourself in?

BEN

Don't do that.

KEVIN

Do what?

BEN

Your girlfriend covered for you because she knew we were gonna lose this case and you were going to jail. Not to mention a million dollar civil suit Sanchez and her new pals were most likely bringing against the church. We still have that to look forward to.

KEVIN

Let it go.

BEN

I was losing, Kev. And had to be saved. Again. Dammit, why did it have to be you?!

Ben turns his back on Kevin...hopping mad and not knowing what direction to project his anger. And now it's Kevin chasing after Ben.

KEVIN

You think I set this up? That I sent Sue Ann to perjure herself on the stand? With her hand on the bible?

BEN

Cut it out! It was either you or your wife that kicked the crap out of Sanchez! Now which one was it?! And don't you lie to me!

KEVIN

I never lied to you about anything, Benny.

BEN

Not telling me the truth is the same as lying, Kev. She didn't do this to herself! Knock it off!

KEVIN

Yes! It's exactly what she did!

IN THE OUTER HALLWAY

Scott leans against the wall near the chapel doors and eavesdrops on their conversation.

INT. LAKE HARTLEY BAPTIST - CHAPEL - NIGHT

Ben is speechless. And a bit thrown off.

BEN

What're you talking about?

KEVIN

The Stoker kid came to me balling his eyes out about a week after. Told me Jaclyn put him up to it. Confessed the whole thing. You wanted the truth. There it is.

Scott very carefully pokes his head around the corner to get a closer look at things. He goes unnoticed.

Ben is still lost.

BEN

Put him up to what? You're scaring me right now, Kev.

Kevin takes a moment -- working up the nerve and energy to tell this story all over again.

KEVIN

Staging the scene back at the house. Making it look all too real. Broken glass.

(MORE)

KEVIN (CONT'D)

Chairs flipped upside down. A little bit of her blood. It happened exactly how you described it to the jury, Benny. Exactly.

Ben paces in a circle, frustrated, hurt, confused.

BEN

I don't understand.

KEVIN

The night of the attack, Jaclyn broke the news that she was expecting. And that Stoker was the father. Knowing her pimp friend would most likely kill this kid if he knew the truth, they came up with a plan. To hide the fact he was the father. To take care of it all. In one big swoop. Maybe set themselves up financially in the process.

BEN

Scottie was right. He did this to her. And she let him. And I didn't listen.

Scott looks sick for Ben. He quietly walks off...giving the two brothers their privacy.

KEVIN

The guilt of what he did. To his baby. It ate away at him like a cancer. Every second of every day. Until he could no longer take it. He came to the house. Begged for forgiveness. Weeping. Just sobbing and crying out to God. And in the most pure, beautiful and rewarding moment I've had in the last five years of preaching, I led this young man to the Lord. Right there in my living room.

Ben takes a seat.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

You're not the only one having issues of faith, Benny. This kid gave me hope again. That it all wasn't just a lie. My life. My calling with the church. That it was all still for a reason.

Ben gazes at the pulpit, in a state of shock and disbelief. Kevin walks into his line of sight, tears welled in his eyes but staying strong.

BEN

I can't believe this.

KEVIN

I couldn't do it, Benny. I couldn't turn him in. So I encouraged him to keep quiet. Let God sort it out. That was our deal. Every day I prayed that God stay with you. That he'd show you the way. For both of us.

Ben grins as an all too shocking realization hits him straight in the guts.

BEN

She did perjure herself. And you let her.

Kevin takes a seat in the pew before Ben.

KEVIN

No. I let God take the wheel, Benny. Because that's all any of us can do at the end of the day. He was always in control. Even from the beginning. And he was with you, whether you believe that or not.

BEN

We could have lost. And she could have gotten in a lot of trouble. And you didn't consider any of that?

KEVIN

Sue Ann had some things she needed to get off her chest. Most notably this thing with Halbert's little girl. She finally got the chance to set things straight. Purge herself of her sins. This terrible rumor she let grow out of control. Give Tina back her reputation. Her dignity. In a strange way, it all made sense and was the best for everyone.

BEN

All I wanted to do was save my big brother. And I couldn't do it. You knew I couldn't. You may have had faith in God. But you lost faith in me. I don't really know what to say to that.

Kevin stands to leave. He walks up next to Ben on his way to the chapel doors.

KEVIN

What you pulled off in that courtroom...was nothing short of a miracle, Benny. That jury was with you every step of the way. You connected with them. You would have found a way, with or without Sue Ann's help. Because you found your purpose. You had a glow in your eyes I've not seen since you were a kid. You can't lose it now, Benny. You gotta keep pushing.

Ben looks up at Kevin -- unconvinced and all the wind sucked from his body and soul.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

I better get back.

Kevin pats him on the shoulder on his way out. Ben stands up, steps into the aisle.

BEN

Hey big brother.

Kevin turns back...

BEN (CONT'D)

Welcome home.

KEVIN

That's funny. I was about to say the same thing to you.

Ben ponders Kevin's words. A reassured grin and overall change in his demeanor. Kevin continues out.

Ben takes a long look around him and lastly at a backlit cross hanging on the front chapel wall. He's overcome with emotion as tears well in his eyes.

EXT. LAKE HARTLEY BAPTIST CHURCH - NIGHT

Ben makes his way down the steep front steps of this big money church, a bit buzzed, tired and with an all too busy mind as he shares his final thoughts with the viewing audience.

BEN (V.O.)

And there you have it. This case was over but I was still left with questions on which to ponder for the remainder of my days. For instance. Did Kevin really stick his neck out for Kyle Stoker because it was what he was called to do? Or were there other more personal reasons? Like maybe he was finally purging this burden he'd been carrying in his heart for all those years. The guilt over abandoning his little brother. The effect it's had on me and his relationship. Not to mention his marriage.

Ben stops halfway down, stares back at the sanctuary doors and stone pillars that stand tall and proud.

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

And did I ever have a chance of actually winning this case? Or was that just another lie I kept telling myself? If I listened to Scottie, we could've flipped Kyle Stoker and possibly got his confession on record. We could've clinched this thing. But I didn't listen.

Ben chuckles under his breath, continues down the steps.

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

I gave up on this case and on myself. But here I am left with one of two choices. I could ponder these questions for the rest of my days, letting it eat away at my soul, or I could choose to push on.

Ben reaches the bottom and onto the sidewalks as he checks the passing traffic coming from both directions.

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

If there's one thing I learned in this case, it's that we're all sinners under God. No matter what our financial status. Or on what part of the tracks we reside. We're all the same. Imperfect souls trying to make our way in a big bad world.

Ben crosses the two lane country road and enters the church's main congregation parking lot. As he steps further into the darkness, we hear his final words...

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

My brother helped remind me that we all have a choice. We can continue to chase the darkness or choose to see the light. And have faith in knowing the man upstairs is in charge. At the end of the day, that's all any of us can do. Keep the faith alive. Spread as much love as possible. Be good to each other. And just keep pushing forward.

FADE OUT.

THE END