

**The Ephesian**

by Mark Lyons

**[markielyons@yahoo.com](mailto:markielyons@yahoo.com)**

**OVER BLACK:**

'Even when we are dead in trespasses and sins,  
we can live and sit together.'

- ch. 2; v. 5-6

**FADE IN:**

**EXT. STREET - DUSK - (SLOW MOTION)**

MICHAEL has ANTWAN on his knees. He holds a glock against Antwan's temple.

Antwan Paul Ellis, early 20's, a thug covered in tats, squints his eyes in anticipation, ready to take the bullet.

Michael Bernard James, late-20's, in khaki's and a dress shirt, stands over him, anger in his eyes.

POLICE OFFICERS surround them from a distance. They yell at Michael not to do it.

Michael remains concentrated on Antwan.

Finally, Michael decocks the hammer and backs away, keeping the gun pointed in the air.

He sets the gun on the ground, out of Antwan's reach, turns, and walks away.

The officers rush and shove Antwan to the ground. They handcuff him.

Michael walks over to the sidewalk and stops near a stroller knocked over to the ground.

He huddles down and gathers a dead toddler in his arms. He cradles it and cries.

Blood leaks out the baby's ear.

The police tug Antwan to his feet and force him to their cruiser.

Antwan stares at Michael holding his dead baby. He's stone-faced. No emotion whatsoever.

Michael kisses the dead baby's forehead.

(END SLOW MOTION)

FADE TO:

**EXT. SOUTHERN OHIO CORRECTIONAL FACILITY - DAY**

Warden RUDY BAYER, 50's, sits outside the front of the prison, smoking a cigarette.

SUPER: 18 years later

Governor ALTON LATESSA, 50's, approaches him.

BAYER

Welcome back, Governor. Once again, I wish it was under different circumstances.

Latessa nods.

LATESSA

I just got off with State Penitentiary. Everything's on schedule and he's in transit now. He'll be here for dinner.

BAYER

We're ready.

Bayer motions way out in the far parking lot, where a REPORTER and a CAMERA MAN gather equipment out of a van.

BAYER

WKBN's been granted the rights to a tour of the facility. I'll have them gone by the time he gets here.

Latessa sees the reporter and camera man approach from the distance. He leans in close to Bayer.

LATESSA

Don't humanize him. Make them remember why he's here.

Bayer nods and stands to greet the members of the media.

Latessa walks inside the building.

#### **INT. VISITING CUBICLE - DAY**

Bayer shows the press the tight cubicle, sectioned off by perforated glass.

The camera man squeezes in and films the cramped space.

BAYER

The guilty's first visit with the immediate family will be here and will be a non-contact visit. All communications will be through the telephone.

Bayer lifts the receiver and sets it down to demonstrate.

BAYER

This visit will take place tonight. A second, minimal-contact only visit will be allowed to the guilty tomorrow morning, the day of the execution. This second visit will be heavily supervised in the room we had just walked from.

Bayer leads them out and takes a couple twists and turns down some hallways. He opens another door.

**INT. WITNESS ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

A few empty folding chairs are cramped together and look through heavy glass into another room; a small chamber with a gurney and straps dangling down.

BAYER

Select members of the press will witness the execution here.

The camera man squeezes in and focuses squarely on the gurney through the glass window.

BAYER

Members of the guilty's family will also be allowed to view the execution from here, though no one has come forward from that party.

Bayer taps on a far wall.

BAYER

On the other side here is another room where the family of Jeremy James, the infant victim, can view the execution. These rooms are sound-proof, so neither side can hear into the other and the only sound audible from the execution chamber will be received through speakers when the microphone is turned on.

Bayer motions into the chamber and the camera man zooms in on a microphone hanging on a far wall, next to a telephone.

BAYER

I don't think I need to address what the telephone is for.

The young reporter shakes the gruesome image of the gurney out of his head and comes to life.

REPORTER

There have been some hints, Mr. Bayer, that the execution may be stayed for one reason or another. Exactly how much of that is truth and how much of that is the NCADP's spin?

Bayer easily shrugs it off.

BAYER

I'm in no position to tell you one way or the other. I can only tell you what's going to happen here tomorrow night as of right now.

Bayer points towards the door they had entered.

BAYER

Now, if you'll follow me back this way, I can show you the chapel.

Bayer's walkie-talkie crackles alive and a female voice comes through.

PHYLLIS (FILTER)

Two-five.

Bayer backs away out of earshot of the reporter and camera man. He speaks low into the speaker.

BAYER

Copy.

PHYLLIS (FILTER)

There's a phone call here I think you're going to want to take.

BAYER

I'm just about done, here, Phyllis. I'll be right down.

PHYLLIS (FILTER)

It's Michael James, sir.

Bayer swallows and watches the camera man try to get as many shots of the gurney as he can.

Bayer takes his finger off the walkie-talkie. It crackles.

DISSOLVE TO:

**EXT. SOUTHERN OHIO CORRECTIONAL FACILITY - DAY**

A media circus now.

'Justice for All', a pro-death penalty advocate group, camps on one side outside the prison gates.

The 'National Coalition Against the Death Penalty', an anti-death penalty group, camps on the other side.

They're separated by security and police.

Dozens of posters with Antwan's face are held high in the air in both camps.

On the Justice for All's signs, though, Antwan's eyes are blotched with a big black X, like he's already dead.

Another sign reads 'It's your time, boy.'

A car pulls up close to the gates, and reporters start to gather around it.

Michael James, now older in his early 40's, gets out of the passenger's side and is immediately ushered towards the facility by prison staff.

The same reporter from the tour crowds around the car Michael stepped out of. The camera man gets the shot ready.

REPORTER

An unexpected turn in Lucasville,  
Ohio, today.

Other reporters get in position for the same shot.

REPORTER

Michael Bernard James, the father of the young child murdered in a grisly shooting almost nineteen years ago, has already arrived and is being ushered into the prison several hours earlier and before any of the other witnesses scheduled to arrive tonight for the execution of Antwan Paul Ellis.

Prison staff opens the doors to the prison for Michael and escort him in.

REPORTER

No one from the press has been told why he's been allowed access into the prison before anybody else, but we will keep our ear to the ground for any information.

The camera man pans his lens to the people on the Justice for All side. They cheer Michael on.

**INT. CORRECTIONAL FACILITY - CONTINUOUS**

Michael turns his keys, wallet, and phone in. A metal detector scans him.

Staff removes a pen out of his shirt pocket and throws it in a box with his keys.

A GUARD frisks Michael thoroughly, especially around his crotch and buttocks region.

**INT. BAYER'S OFFICE - DAY**

Warden Bayer sits behind his desk, Governor Latessa in a corner behind him.

Michael sits in a lone chair across from them.

BAYER

Antwan is in a very calm state right now, Mr. James, and we will take the steps to assure he remains calm throughout the night. Which is why we're a little nervous about the intentions of your visit here.

Michael nods and clears his throat.

MICHAEL

I don't want my son's name soiled by having it associated as the cause of death for another human being, whether that person was guilty or not. I'm asking if it'd be possible to strike Jeremy's name from the official records?

Bayer looks over for Latessa to field this one. Latessa thinks carefully before responding.

LATESSA

We can certainly do that. It would take some time, of course, for any paperwork to go through. And you do realize we wouldn't be able to erase Jeremy's name from the files already accessed by the public? In other words, we wouldn't be able to strike his name from any newspaper articles or any records they've already printed.

MICHAEL

I understand.

Latessa carefully approaches Michael about the next order of business.

LATESSA

You also understand this may not stall Antwan's execution? The paperwork for the name change doesn't have to be approved by the courts first. He can still be executed accordingly. Jeremy's name, if used tonight, will just be replaced by 'an innocent child', or something of the like.

MICHAEL

I'm not trying to force anything. I know you won't be swayed by anybody to make a heavy decision like that.

LATESSA

Your timing's just a little questionable, Mr. James. I'm not saying it's bad, but your change of heart recently is a little awkward, to say the least.

Michael only nods.

LATESSA

You've come a long way from the man who showed up at Antwan's trial with a picture of your child on your shirt, lobbying for his death.

MICHAEL

I've come a long way from pointing a gun at Antwan's temple. That night, the police told me not to do it, that it wouldn't be worth it.

Michael takes a deep breath and looks him in the eye.

MICHAEL

I'd like to tell you the same thing right now, governor. His death won't be worth it. Antwan will do more good behind bars than he will in the ground.

Michael looks back to the warden and Bayer listens closely.

MICHAEL

Antwan's been sending me letters for a very long time, since just after his sentencing.

MICHAEL

He said he wanted to send them during the trial, but he didn't want me to think he was just saying



MICHAEL  
sorry for a lighter sentence. He  
waited until after, to make sure I  
took his apology seriously.

Michael swallows.

MICHAEL  
I think it's time I tell him that  
I've been listening to everything  
he's been saying.

Bayer looks over to Latessa, who takes a deep breath.

**INT. VISITING CUBICLE - NIGHT**

No windows.

Michael sits on one side of the perforated glass, waiting.

A heavy buzz sounds and the door in the corner of the room  
clicks open.

Antwan Ellis, now in his late 30's, already graying, is led  
into the room in chains by a GUARD.

The guard walks him over to the empty chair, helps him sit  
down, and takes post in the corner of the room.

Antwan makes eye contact with Michael, and begins to break  
down crying.

The guard stirs and looks up at a camera in the corner of  
the room, waiting for a cue to end the visit.

Michael just looks at Antwan sad, almost crying himself.

Finally, Antwan snuffles and composes himself. He picks up  
the phone so he doesn't have to yell through the glass.

On the other side, Michael picks up his end.

ANTWAN  
I'm not crying for my life. Or  
what's going to happen in the next  
few hours. I'm crying for you, and  
who I took away from you.

Michael nods. Antwan has to choke the words out.

ANTWAN  
I'm sorry.

Michael closes his eyes. He half-smiles and grimaces at the  
same time. He takes a deep breath.

MICHAEL

I tore up some of the earlier letters you sent me because I was still too angry at the time, so I don't have your first few.

Antwan nods.

MICHAEL

Thank you for not giving up and still writing me. The other letters, the ones I didn't tear up, I bundled all together. I still read through them.

A tiny smile twitches, then disappears from Antwan's lips.

ANTWAN

I'm not just sorry for hitting your baby. I'm sorry for shooting at who I was trying to kill. I was so deep into it at the time, and lost. I can't believe what I was caught up in. I'm ready for my medicine.

Michael slides his chair closer and leans in towards the glass, closer to Antwan's face.

ANTWAN

Before they brought me here, they let me do programs and speeches for kids and adults who were on the wrong path, the same path I was on before everything. I've gotten six letters these last couple months. They were thank you letters from some who actually changed their ways. It makes me feel good that I helped them.

Antwan looks at Michael.

ANTWAN

But mainly it makes me feel good because I know I helped some future victims out there that aren't going to be victims anymore. People like you, who won't have to go through any of that. And people like Jeremy, who'll get the chances he never had.

Antwan starts to cry again.

ANTWAN

The chances that I took away from him.

Michael sniffles.

MICHAEL

I filed a motion today to take Jeremy's name off the records. It might not effect anything about tonight. It's up to the governor's discretion on whether he wants to wait for the paperwork to go through or not.

ANTWAN

I'm ready, if it is tonight. Being this close to whatever's on the other side and what's in store for me there, man's world gets kind of drowned out. But I know what I took away from you, and that's what hurts most. No matter what happens after, I won't hurt more than what I feel for you.

Michael takes a couple deep breaths.

MICHAEL

I don't know what the governor's going to do, and I don't know what God's going to do, but I see the sorrow in you. I can see the good in you now.

Michael reaches a hand out and presses it against the glass.

MICHAEL

No matter what happens here, or after, you deserve to stay strong.

Antwan nods and cries. He reaches up awkwardly because of the chains and presses his hand over Michael's.

ANTWAN

I will.

Michael bows his head and takes a moment of silence with Antwan.

Finally, after Antwan is more settled, Michael stands.

ANTWAN

Are you going to watch with them?

MICHAEL

No. No matter how polite and humane they claim to be, a lynch mob's still a lynch mob.

Michael looks to the guard behind Antwan, who looks away.

MICHAEL

Murder's still murder. I'm not going to be part of it.

Antwan nods and lowers his head.

Michael keeps his hand against the glass, over Antwan's lowered head.

He closes his eyes.

FADE TO:

**EXT. CORRECTIONAL FACILITY - NIGHT**

The throngs of people remain divided, and get antsy.

Hate and arguments between the two sides of camps get louder as the time approaches.

The James family sits in the Justice for All camp, pictures of Jeremy on their shirts again.

The Ellis family sits quietly in the NCADP camp. Antwan's MOTHER, 60's, sits up front closest to the gates.

The comments back and forth are a lot ruder and angrier from the Justice for All camp.

Michael is escorted out of the prison and all attention turns to him.

Reporters surround and pelt him with a barrage of questions.

Michael ignores them all and approaches his mother and father and Jeremy's mother on the Justice for All side.

Michael gets emotional looking at his son's face on their shirts, but nods and still speaks brisk and firm.

MICHAEL

I have to look past the hurt.

He embraces his family.

MICHAEL

I have to do what I feel is right.

He gives Jeremy's mother a kiss on the cheek, turns, and walks away from the Justice for All side.

He approaches Antwan Ellis' mother on the NCADP side of camp. She stands when she sees him approaching.

They look at each other for a couple quiet moments. Everybody's attention is on them.

Michael reaches his hand out.

After a moment, Antwan's mother accepts it, and Michael sits down with the Ellis family.

Reactions stir up from the Justice for All side, both regret and sympathy for some, and anger for others.

Slowly, Michael's family crosses the lines and sits with him and the Ellis family in mourning.

Eventually, realizing what's going on, others join the NCADP side and make peace also.

A lot of people still remain headstrong, though, and raise their capital punishment signs even higher than before.

A lot of people just stand idle, confused what to decide.

FADE TO:

**INT. CELL - NIGHT**

Antwan lays on a cot, his hands folded behind his head.

A loud click echoes and the guard opens the door and walks in. He carries a tray of food and sets it on a tiny desk.

GUARD

Ellis. Meal.

Antwan sits up.

ANTWAN

I thought I get what I want to eat.

GUARD

We don't do that anymore. It's a liability. You choose something that slows your blood down, it'll slow the drugs down. We don't want to burn your insides.

Antwan sits at the desk.

GUARD

It's the good chicken patty, though. It's the one they trade their Ramen for.

Antwan has to give a small smile.

GUARD

When you're done, father's here.

Antwan looks at him and nods.

**INT. CHAPEL - NIGHT**

Antwan bows his head while a PRIEST recites a prayer over and over.

**INT. BAYER'S OFFICE - NIGHT**

Governor Latessa sits behind the desk alone.

He taps a pen and looks at the clock. It's just after eleven-thirty.

Latessa takes a deep breath, closes his eyes, and rubs a temple.

**INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT**

Antwan is led by a few guards. The priest stays right behind him, reading from the Bible.

They lead him to a door and the guard opens it.

**INT. CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS**

Antwan looks around attentively as he's led in.

Bayer stands next to the gurney and nods at Antwan.

The priest continues to recite the Bible, standing as close to Antwan as he can get.

Antwan looks into the first witness room.

A few members of the media, minus their cameras, sit. They just hold notepads and pens.

They look more nervous than Antwan.

Antwan looks in the other witness room. It's empty.

Antwan puts up no resistance and the guards strap him into the gurney.

Bayer waits a couple seconds and pulls out the microphone hanging on the wall.

BAYER

Mr. Ellis, you have been sentenced  
to die by lethal injection. Have  
you any last words?

The priest stops reciting from the Bible to let Antwan speak.

Bayer holds the microphone close to Antwan's mouth, who can't move because of how tight he's strapped in.

Antwan, breathing heavily, calms down and his eyes dart around the room.

ANTWAN

Either this wallpaper goes... Or I  
do.

Bayer swallows to keep from reacting, and a chuckle rumbles from the witness room.

Then it's quiet again.

Antwan relaxes his head back and breathes calmly.

ANTWAN  
(to himself)  
I love you Mom.

Antwan closes his eyes.

Bayer hangs the microphone back up.

The priest begins reading outloud from the Bible again.

An MD slides close to Antwan and swabs a spot on his arm, trying to find a vein.

Bayer looks at the clock hanging on a far wall.

The MD rolls his tray of needles and syringes closer to him and he begins to pick one up.

Bayer taps the MD on the shoulder, signaling for him to wait a moment.

Everybody waits in silence.

Antwan keeps his eyes shut, waiting patiently.

Bayer looks at the phone hanging on the wall.

FADE TO:

**EXT. CORRECTIONAL FACILITY - NIGHT**

The main door to the prison opens and Warden Bayer steps out with prison staff surrounding him.

They escort him to a make-shift podium to address the large crowd.

Straight-faced and stoic, Bayer doesn't give away anything.

He clears his throat and looks out to the two groups, split almost equally down the middle.

He gives a quick glance around and finds Michael sitting on the NCADP side with the Ellis family.

Antwan's mother bows her head and prays.

Michael reaches over, takes her hand, and holds it.

Together, they wait for the warden's announcement.

BAYER

This morning, at 12:07 A.M., the state of Ohio saw that justice was carried out upon Antwan Paul Ellis for the crime of murder.

MOURNER

(in disbelief)

No.

Cries of sadness and sorrow rise through the crowd, especially in the Ellis family.

Antwan's mother collapses to the ground and Michael can't hold back a sad grimace.

He cries and kneels down to Antwan's mother.

Bayer has to wait until the crowd quiets down to continue.

BAYER

This marks the final chapter in the case of the State of Ohio vs. Antwan Ellis, and now our thoughts and prayers are with the surviving members of the victim's family and that they can move on after this terrible tragedy.

Michael shakes his head and helps hold Antwan's mother along with other members of her family.

Michael leans and whispers into her ears, his eyes clenched closed.

MICHAEL

I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry.

She convulses in tears and Michael cries with her.

The people on the Justice for All side pack up their signs and disperse.

Some pat each other on the back for a job well done.

Candles are lit on the NCADP side and their long vigil begins.

FADE TO BLACK.