

CAPITAL OFFENSE

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD SIDEWALK - DAY

HALEY (8) marches at a determined pace with a handful of hearty winter blooms. Puffy coat. Matching pink cap. Gold curls spilling everywhere. Cute as a doll. Her eyes clear, blue and bright as the November sky.

--A man's HAND reaches over her mouth.

Haley GASPS.

Muffled TERROR.

She's swept away.

An empty sidewalk.

The ring of distant traffic.

INT. DISTRICT COURTHOUSE - HALLWAY - DAY

Rapid-fire clicking echoes down a marble corridor.

In heels and a pencil skirt, a YOUNG WOMAN hustles away.

INT. DISTRICT COURTHOUSE - JUDGE GRANGER'S CHAMBERS - DAY

Before a cabinet filled with blue-spined law books, defense attorney EDEN DAWES (70) sits. Head down. Calm as a pipe bomb ready to blow.

He's a snob with perfect diction. A mercenary in a bespoke suit. Dawes lifts his perfectly coiffed head...

DAWES

Your Honor, my client knows who took your granddaughter. We are willing to give you a name, a physical description, as well as the address where she's being held. In exchange, my client will go free.

SNAP TO BLACK

TITLE: "CAPITAL OFFENSE"

INT. THE GRANGER HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

A pair of eyes narrow.

Judge COLT GRANGER (62) is in charge of every room he enters. Plain-spoken without a hint of dialect or pretense. His world is clear. Settled. But this morning, his mind is elsewhere.

ADD TITLE: "6 HOURS EARLIER"

Colt's locked in. Scans a laptop at the kitchen table.

Official court documents.

Sips black coffee. Contemplates.

Taps the keyboard.

His high-school sweetheart and wife of umpteen years, ELIZABETH (60), stares into the mouth of the refrigerator.

ELIZABETH

You didn't get the milk.

That's about as long as she's gonna wait.

ELIZABETH

Guess I'm not baking a cake.

She's bright. Strong. In her day, a stunner. Her kitchen, large enough for the whole family to gather. It's spotless.

ELIZABETH

And don't forget you're dropping Haley on yer way to work.

COLT

(grunts while typing)
Hmm?

ELIZABETH

Haley.

COLT

Yeah.

Has no idea what he just agreed to do. Continues typing.

She arrives with two plates.

ELIZABETH

--Get that thing off my table.

He knows the drill. Pushes away the laptop.

ELIZABETH

I invited Rondo...

COLT

Uh-huh.

ELIZABETH

... And Annie.

He reaches for a napkin.

Elizabeth sets a plate in front of him.

Scrambled eggs. Bacon. Toast. A single ball of cantaloupe.

The world STOPS.

Colt looks at her. His plate. Her.

Elizabeth looks at him. His plate... and breaks.

A fork stabs the offending cantaloupe ball.

She drops it on her plate.

COLT

I love you.

ELIZABETH

(quietly threatening)
Don't start.

They eat.

COLT

It was orange.

ELIZABETH

What's that even mean?

An urgent thought bumps in his head. Colt drags the laptop close. Hammers a few more keys.

ELIZABETH

Colt.

COLT

(exasperated)
This case...

Finished typing, he returns to breakfast.

ELIZABETH

She's picking flowers for you, you know, in the backyard. Act surprised.

He nods, winks and smiles all in one face.

ELIZABETH
I bought you a suit.

His chewing slows.

ELIZABETH
You dress like a hobo.

Colt stands. Wipes his mouth. He's fit. Thin. His suit hangs nicely. But it's clearly beyond its expiration date.

COLT
And when I get home, I better not see
a single person jumping out from
behind the sofa. Or banners...

ELIZABETH
(mocking)
Banners?

He pockets the toast. Pecks the top of her head.

She touches his arm before he leaves.

COLT
I have court.

Elizabeth bites a cantaloupe ball.

The back door thumps closed.

In a vain attempt...

ELIZABETH
Don't forget Haley!

EXT. THE GRANGER HOME - CONTINUOUS

Colt surprises Haley on the back steps. --She sweeps a couple of ragged stems behind her back.

COLT
Whatcha got there, kiddo?

HALEY
Nothing. It's not ready.

Follows Colt through the backyard gate and to his SEDAN.

COLT
Oh, well, I don't wanna look until you
think it's ready--

HALEY
It'll be ready tonight.

COLT
I see.

Honestly, not understanding what Elizabeth said.

COLT
Did you catch what Grandma just said?

HALEY
She was yelling.

COLT
Yes, but she wasn't mad at us. She was yelling from the kitchen.

HALEY
(hearing it wrong)
Something...? I'll get Haley.

COLT
Yeah, that's what I thought. Your Grandma's taking you to school today.

HALEY
But you're supposed to.

COLT
I know, kiddo, but--

Her face wilts.

COLT
Look, say the word and I'll march right back in there and tell her no way.

HALEY
(sing-song)
But 'We always do what Grandma says.'

COLT
That's right. Now, be a good girl.

HALEY
(resigned)
Okay.

Solo, Colt climbs in the car.

HALEY
Don't forget about your surprise.

COLT
Wouldn't miss it for the world.

His sedan eases down the driveway.

HALEY
Bye, Grandpa.

Haley waves. The flowers still pinned behind her back.

Grandpa's car disappears into suburbia.

Across the street, an unmarked CHEVY VAN crawls to a stop.

INT. DISTRICT COURTHOUSE - UNDERGROUND GARAGE - DAY

Colt escorts his closest friend at the courthouse, JUDGE JEREMIAH TOBIN (45) to his office. African-American. Brilliant. Fearless in the face of a dessert tray.

COLT
What a waste of talent.

JEREMIAH
I could be shaping the mind of the next Thurgood Marshall--

COLT
You're abandoning me... to... wet-nurse a bunch of trust-fund babies.

JEREMIAH
It's a university, not a nursery.

Colt grumbles.

JEREMIAH
And the courtesy I believe you're grasping for is "congratulations." --
You fighting with Elizabeth again?

COLT
(disappointed)
It's my birthday.

JEREMIAH
Well, congratulations.

COLT
And I see a single balloon...

JEREMIAH
Perish the thought.

THE ELEVATOR

JEREMIAH

I'm not making a difference.

COLT

Of course we are... The Hatfields and McCoys: Leave it to the aggrieved or a mob, the daddy of a slain child? No. Twelve jurors say innocent or guilty. And it is settled.

Pushes his finger into Jeremiah's chest.

COLT

We are the difference.

JEREMIAH

The backlog gets bigger every year.

COLT

Jeremiah, you're better than anyone I could name on the bench. This world needs a mind like yours.

JEREMIAH

See, you can be charming when you try.

A SECURITY CHECKPOINT

Colt's next argument comes fast and furious.

COLT

Okay, here's another. A homeowner shoots a burglar -- home-invasion robbery gone deadly wrong.

JEREMIAH

--Colt.

COLT

The accomplice shoots the homeowner. He's already the trigger man for Murder One, so when two young boys come running out of their bedroom--

JEREMIAH

I don't wanna get into this.

COLT

Imagine that mother's last image of this wicked world before being dispatched by shotgun, watching each boy's head explode off his shoulders.

THE HALLWAY

COLT

The execution of the accused will
elevate his misspent life to something
of value to society.

JEREMIAH

Capital punishment--?

COLT

Far more valuable than it ever was in
life.

JEREMIAH

As a deterrent?

COLT

No. No. His life will finally have
value when the state demonstrates that
We The People uphold our written laws
and unspoken social covenants. At that
moment, the ugliness of that person's
life miraculously transforms into a
majestic symbol of moral order... a
proportionate reaction by society.

JEREMIAH

Life as allegory.

COLT

Their lives have meaning again--

JEREMIAH

By inducing ventricular fibrillation?

COLT

We balance the scales. We settle it.

JEREMIAH

I am going to miss our little chats.

COLT

Would you deny that mother justice?

JEREMIAH

We see justice differently.

COLT

It's not your fault. We see life
differently.

INT. DISTRICT COURTHOUSE - JUDGE TOBIN'S CHAMBERS - DAY

Framed diplomas. Dark wood paneling. Rows of green-spined law books. Jeremiah sits behind an immaculate desk.

JEREMIAH
Counsel?

COLT
Eden Dawes.

Jeremiah grunts a warning.

COLT
Like it matters.

JEREMIAH
The defense?

COLT
We unbox that turd today. Any chance of getting you to stay?

JEREMIAH
It is settled.

COLT
Okay, then before you leave, consider this. What if you're supposed to be the next Thurgood Marshall? Hmm?

His smile moves to Judge Tobin.

INT. DISTRICT COURTHOUSE - JUDGE GRANGER'S CHAMBERS - DAY

A mirror image of Judge Tobin's chambers, with one notable exception... Framed signatures of famous criminals.

Two people enter.

WYATT (30) is the senior clerk. He's amiable. Middling. Nebbish. And carries two cups of coffee.

DYLAN (25) is a freshly-minted clerk out of South Carolina who speaks without a hint of a Southern accent. She's the speedy Young Woman in heels and a pencil skirt. Blonde tousled hair. White blouse with the top button open.

They pause at the framed signature of FRANK & JESSE JAMES.

WYATT
I Googled it. It's worth more than I made last year.

Dylan points.

DYLAN

That?

Her sleeve hikes up her arm as she points. Reveals a TATTOO.

WYATT

Jesus, if he sees a tattoo...

DYLAN

But you're gonna be cool?

WYATT

What is it?

DYLAN

Whaddaya think it is?

WYATT

Twenty Questions?

DYLAN

Seven.

Wyatt realizes they're negotiating.

WYATT

Fifteen.

DYLAN

Ten.

WYATT

Done!

DYLAN

You're gonna make a terrible public defender. The game is literally called Twenty Questions. You gave me equity for nothing. Twenty bucks.

WYATT

Ten. I know whatcha make.

DYLAN

Smart counter for the reduced equity and salty shade to boot. Nice.

Every item on the judge's desk is perfectly aligned.

Wyatt places one of the coffee cups on a coaster.

Colt BLOWS into his chambers like a November squall...

Points to Dylan.

COLT

Button up. This isn't a brothel.

She grabs her top button. Works it tight.

Wyatt tails him to the closet...

WYATT

How are you this morning, sir?

COLT

Too busy for ass-kissing.

That one stung.

Colt switches his phone to silent. Doesn't catch "Elizabeth" flashed across the face of the phone before he pockets it.

COLT

Wyatt, you've gotta learn when I'm kidding. Good manners never go out of style. That's why you'll go far in this life.

WYATT

Thank you, sir.

The judge snatches a black robe. Quickly dresses.

DYLAN

Everything's ready.

COLT

Fine.

ZIPS.

Dylan stretches to hand him a file.

Slowly, Colt moves the file aside.

He bends over his desk. Inspects the coffee.

Someone's stepped in it. So says the judge's face.

He looks up at Wyatt.

Wyatt looks at Dylan.

Dylan looks at the judge.

COLT

It's brown.

WYATT
Yes, sir.

COLT
Light brown.

WYATT
Yes, sir.

COLT
As if in the presence of cream.

Wyatt deflates.

COLT
Young lady, do you understand the
concept of black coffee?

She shares a moment with Wyatt. Disaster.

DYLAN
Yes, Your Honor.

COLT
After careful reflection, you are
hereby promoted to coffee.

PRE-LAP AUDIO: The CLACK of a gavel hitting a striking block.

INT. DISTRICT COURTHOUSE - COURTROOM - DAY

Marble walls and dark wood. Stacks of case folders on a table
before the bench. A jury box filled with somber faces.

BAILIFF (O.S.)
You may be seated.

The courtroom settles in.

On the bench, Colt's phone lights up again. Without breaking
eye contact with the jury, he stuffs it into a drawer.

COLT
(to the jury)
When last we convened, the state
finished presenting its case.

Prosecuting attorney PEPPER SHAY (35) rises to a crouch. She
didn't graduate top of her class, but she could see it from
where she finished. Red hair. Black suit. All business.

SHAY
The People rest, Your Honor.

COLT
 (to the jury)
 And now we move to the part of the
 trial when we hear from the defense.
 (to Eden Dawes)
 Is the defense ready?

Attorney Eden Dawes stands.

DAWES
 Yes, Your Honor.

Seated next to him, THE DEFENDANT wears a borrowed suit and a fake smile. Nothing convincing hangs off his bones.

More on him later.

THE HALLWAY

Dylan SPRINTS around the corner and BURSTS into--

THE COURTROOM

--Colt SNAPS his head around.

She can't catch her breath.

DYLAN
 You have a call. Something's happened.

SNAP TO BLACK

ADD TITLE "MISSING: 3 HOURS"

INT. JUDGE GRANGER'S CHAMBERS - LATER

Colt SWEEPS his chair across the room. Rounds his desk.

COLT
 You... you're threatening me--

DAWES
 No one's threatening anyone--

COLT
 (slaps his palm on the desk)
 You kidnapped my granddaughter!

DAWES
 My client has been incarcerated the
 entire time.

COLT
Had her kidnapped.

DAWES

We had no connection to the abduction.

COLT

Don't you fuck with me.

DAWES

And if you go to the authorities, we will seal this information in amber... for all of time.

That only slows him down a tick.

COLT

This is a mistrial--

DAWES

No.

COLT

Oh, this is the textbook definition...

DAWES

All charges dropped or a full pardon.

COLT

You have to be convicted for a pardon.

DAWES

That seems inevitable.

COLT

Then it doesn't seem like the best position to be making demands.

Colt sits. Burns holes through Dawes with his eyes.

COLT

Let's say for a minute I believe the most corrupt litigator to ever darken a docket, which I sure as hell do not. This is a mistrial.

DAWES

Very well, we're making one demand. There will be no mistrial.

And then he reloads.

DAWES

And, Your Honor, I understand who I am and what I do. I provide a service to those with nowhere else to turn--

COLT
Because they're guilty as sin.

DAWES
And I am well compensated to do so.

COLT
I understand you've been disbarred in
two different states for ethics
violations.

DAWES
And still, I stand here before you.
That should say something.

COLT
Chills me to the bone.

DAWES
One call to Governor Delano--

COLT
No.

DAWES
One call from you--

COLT
I'd be disbarred.

DAWES
You put her in the governor's mansion.

COLT
Your client'll answer for his crimes!

Dawes waits him out.

DAWES
Take all the time you need. There are
other girls too. Well documented on
every newscast, twenty-four/seven.

COLT
Gimme proof. We'll talk.

INT. DETENTION CENTER - VISITING AREA - DAY

Folding money sucks inside a vending machine.

A FINGER punches the button B4.

Inside the vending machine, a microwavable cheeseburger
dances forward. Dangles in front of a row of cheeseburgers.

DAWES (O.S.)

The judge is asking for hard evidence.

The defendant from the courtroom, ANTOINE "FEVER" DUBOIS (26), rocks the vending machine back and forth. Frees his cheeseburger. Fishes it out. Raises it like a trophy.

FEVER

(a swampy drawl)

Got it.

They have the place to themselves.

He wears a county-issued orange jumpsuit. Hair slicked back. Complexion like a cinder block. Conniving. Charismatic. And rambles like someone's charging double for periods.

Dawes stops tapping notes on a laptop.

DAWES

Okay, let's back up. Step me through the night in question, one more time. And why that particular house?

Fever punches buttons on the microwave.

Studies his cheeseburger spinning inside a microwave.

FEVER

Boogie found the house. The guy was loaded and a big pussy. A big, rich pussy. No family. No cameras. The thing was all teed up.

A muted television mounted on the wall captures his attention. Non-stop news coverage of Haley

DAWES

Are you going to make me ask? Because I know you have more.

FEVER

Cleaned the place out. Easiest gig we ever did. He just sat there like a lump. And there ain't no fuckin' way he was ever gonna report it. Ever.

DAWES

You're certain.

FEVER

Well, see, we were leavin' and I caught these two beady eyes starin' back at me, from what I'd say was a basement or sumthin'.

(MORE)

FEVER (cont'd)
 Kinda freaked me out, 'cause I thought
 were alone. Didn't figure it 'til
 later.

The microwave DINGS.

Fever snaps his fingers. Points at Dawes.

FEVER
 Hold that thought.

Plates a steaming burger.

DAWES
 (calm)
 If you do it again...

FEVER
 Jesus H. Christ, how many times I
 gotta 'pologize?

Fever offers a sweeping bow. Almost genuflecting.

FEVER
 All apologies.

DAWES
 Apology accepted.

FEVER
 Besides, I wasn't snappin' at ya. I
 was snappin' in yer general direction.
 And finger-snappin' comes standard
 with this model -- an original
 manufacturer's defect.

Snaps his fingers repeatedly.

Rubs his wrist.

DAWES
 Are you injured?

FEVER
 It's what um sayin'. M-uh joints go
 every which way-- Whole family's got
 the syndrome. 'Why we all tend ta
 wiggle outta tight spaces, manacles,
 cuffs, straitjackets and such...
 (yells)
 A family of fuckin' Houdinis.

In the corridor, a GUARD scowls through the window.

FEVER

Right there in my file, if they'd ever bother to read it-- If they can read--

DAWES

Fever...

FEVER

I can pop my shoulder outta whack. Wanna see?

DAWES

No, thank you. Now, I'm going to ask you again, do you have any evidence of the girls other than your story?

FEVER

That's what I'm tryin' to tell ya.

Bites down. Burns his mouth--

FEVER

(muffled)

Fuck.

DAWES

Let it cool down.

FEVER

I got pictures.

Jackpot.

FEVER

Snagged his laptop. There're pictures of him, the girls, him with the girls, girls with girls...

DAWES

--I understand.

FEVER

Some of 'em were older. But they were still pretty young.

DAWES

And the whereabouts of the laptop now?

FEVER

We always planned on going back--

DAWES

Fever...

FEVER
I mean, hell. It was so easy.

DAWES
(overlapping)
Fever...

FEVER
But then he upgraded all his security
shit--

DAWES
Where's the computer now?!

Oozing confidence, Fever chews his burger. Swallows.

FEVER
I'm gettin' outta here, ain't I?

INT. DIM BASEMENT WITH NO WINDOWS - DAY

Gray concrete walls. Bare. Cobwebs stretch across exposed cross beams in the ceiling. Three young ladies on a cot. Groomed. Second-hand store T-shirts and sweatpants.

Haley sobs. To her right, CASSIDY (14), the leader. On her left, MADDIE (10). She grew up way too fast.

The entire conversation takes place in whispers.

CASSIDY
We don't look at him. We don't talk.
Don't let him hear you.

Cassidy rests her hand on Haley's lap.

CASSIDY
Now, when he comes for you--

Haley's petrified.

CASSIDY
Don't move. Just sit on the bed.

MADDIE
--And do whatever he says.

CASSIDY
Whatever he says. You understand?

Haley nods.

CASSIDY

We're your family now. We'll take care of you. Just make sure you always follow the rules, okay?

MADDIE

Or I'll fucking smother you in your sleep.

INT. GOVERNOR'S MANSION - STUDY - DAY

An oil painting of George Washington hangs over the fireplace. Fancy chandelier. A mural of the Puget Sound covers an entire wall.

COLT (O.S.)

Yes, Madam Governor.

DELANO (O.S.)

Oh, stop all that Madam Governor crap and ask me right.

With a glance, GOVERNOR MARGARET DELANO (50) dismisses a YOUNG LADY serving coffee. Delano is a career politician. Cynical. Transactional.

COLT

Margaret, I need a favor.

DELANO

There you are. Anything that's not illegal or keeps me from being re-elected.

She ekes out a smile. He doesn't.

COLT

I need you to commute the sentence of a young man who's about to be found guilty.

DELANO

Guilty of what?

COLT

Murder. Two children. Both parents.

Off a blank stare--

DELANO

Huh? I don't think I can do that. Are we convicting the wrong man?

COLT

No.

DELANO

Are we talking extenuating
circumstances?

COLT

It's complicated.

DELANO

Colt Granger, you're the most
honorable man alive, but if you can't
give me a single reason why...

Colt studies the ceiling. Recalculates his strategy.

COLT

It isn't an election year.

DELANO

Doesn't matter. We're constantly
running now.

COLT

No one's tougher on crime.

DELANO

I ran on law and order. I'm a woman,
for Christ's sake. They'll crucify me
as weak on crime or a hypocrite.

COLT

You'll look compassionate.

DELANO

You told me he did it!

COLT

He did.

DELANO

Colt, I'm sorry. The answer's no.

For an instant, he's naked. Drenched in desperation.

COLT

It's for my granddaughter.

Their eyes meet for an eternity...

DELANO

You're gonna have to explain that one.

COLT

I'm... I'm trying a case. The defendant knows who kidnapped my granddaughter, and in exchange--

DELANO

(rambling)

Go to the District Attorney. Cut a deal. --No, this is a mistrial. You have to recuse yourself. I can't be within a million miles of this.

COLT

There's photographic evidence. The information's reliable.

DELANO

If you ever speak a word of this--

COLT

I assume this entire conversation never took place.

DELANO

How long have you known?

COLT

A few hours.

DELANO

Who knows?

COLT

Just you.

DELANO

This is a mistrial.

COLT

Margaret.

DELANO

And if that animal goes free, I'll have the Attorney General pick your bones clean.

COLT

Governor...

DELANO

Don't give me that Madam Governor shit.

Colt collapses back into his chair.

DELANO
You'll have to find another way.

INT. COUNTY JAIL - SURVEILLANCE ROOM - NIGHT

Through the speakers, someone POUNDS on a heavy metal door.

A MALE VOICE (O.S.)
Open the door! Open the door!

OFFICER FAIN (25) launches his wheeled office chair over to a bank of monitors. Studies screens. Leans into a microphone.

FAIN
Can I help you?

On the monitor labeled "EMPLOYEE ENTRANCE"...

COLT
(to the surveillance camera)
I'm Judge Colt Granger, goddamnit.
Now, open this door.

EMPLOYEE ENTRANCE DOOR

The second the door cracks open-- Colt shoulders his way through. The edge of the door splits Fain's lip.

FAIN
The fuck...

COLT
Goddamnit son, I'm coming in. Don't stand in the door like that. Now, I need to see one of your prisoners. Who's in charge?

FAIN
As far as you're concerned, I'm in charge until I see some I.D.

COLT
I'm still Colt Granger, you vonce. And I have friends down here.

FAIN
Okay, sir, I'm gonna ask you to leave for now and take it through proper channels in the morning.

Colt looks past Fain for someone he recognizes.

FAIN
--Jonesy, Mick we got a problem!

COLT

Maybe you should get the Captain on Duty. Who is it tonight, Teasley?

Two no-nonsense guards JONESY and MICK appear.

COLT

You boys part of the show?

INTAKE AREA - MOMENTS LATER

Built like a glacier, CAPTAIN TEASLEY (55) is old-school. All chin under a military flattop. Walks to his office with Fain.

FAIN

I thought we were gonna have to cuff him.

TEASLEY

(almost amused)

That wouldn't have gone well for anyone. Was there a tussle?

FAIN

If you call it that.

TEASLEY

Then what happened to your lip?

FAIN

Caught the door as he came in.

TEASLEY

I'd stick with that story.

Gently, Fain touches his swollen lip.

TEASLEY

Granger's an institution around here, Fain. Served in 'Nam as a Marine. Decorated for shit in Cambodia. I'd say you got off light.

FAIN

Well, what do we do with him?

TEASLEY

What does he want?

CAPTAIN TEASLEY'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Two men sit in a cramped office. Very private.

TEASLEY

I can appreciate what you're saying,
Your Honor-- I really can. I'm a
grandfather myself.

COLT

Then you get it--

TEASLEY

But I can't have you running around
here raising hell. I think you realize
three of my men are filing reports on
you as we speak--

COLT

You can make those go away easy
enough.

TEASLEY

Yeah, but I also have footage placing
you here. And if you're planning on
doing... what I know I would do...

COLT

Footage disappears all the time.

TEASLEY

That's not how it's done around here.

COLT

Then you're gonna have to shoot me
because I'm going in.

TEASLEY

Colt!

Enough with the formalities.

TEASLEY

Here's the thing... I got three guys
inside, brothers. They'll get you what
you want. Pull your car around the
block and I'll bring you the address.
It should be less than an hour.

With a sharp nod, Colt duly stamps his agreement.

INT. COUNTY JAIL - CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Fever's on full alert. Two GUARDS shove him past a quiet cell
block and into a dark part of the building. Not a person, not
a camera in sight.

FEVER

I wanna know where y'all takin' me. I have rights, ya know.

GUARD

You're being transferred.

FEVER

Bullshit.

They approach...

A MECHANICAL ROOM

... The door's open. Lights on.

GUARD

We'll talk after.

FEVER

After what?

Inside, he meets the answer. Three hard cons. Albinos with dead blue eyes: LONG HAIR, MUSCLE HEAD and FACE SCAR.

Fever takes a deep breath. Turns to catch the Guards leaving.

FEVER

Well, fuck. Let's party.

The inmates rush him.

Wrestle to pin his arms behind his back.

Everyone swings wild. Hands everywhere.

Fever grabs Long Hair and knees him in the groin. Hard enough to put him out of the game.

Muscle Head lands a clean punch. Then another. Stuns Fever.

Fever spends his fury on Muscle Head before Face Scar grapples him into a full nelson. It's over in seconds.

FEVER

Come on, ladies. That yer best?

Muscle Head wipes his nose.

Sees his own blood.

Flames dance in his eyes.

Enraged, the inmate bull rushes Fever.

THE CORRIDOR

The Guards pull on cigarettes.

Keep watch at a comfortable distance down the corridor. The mechanical room leaking thumps, grunts and curses.

One last heavy THUMP. Then all goes quiet.

Suddenly alert, the Guards stomp out their smokes.

GUARD

Is he ready to talk?

Winded. A swollen cheek and busted lip. Fever staggers out.

FEVER

I could chat.

(points)

But that one ain't gonna piss right
fer a spell.

INT./EXT. COLT GRANGER'S SEDAN - NIGHT

Through a partially fogged windshield, we see the jailhouse employee parking lot across the street. Captain Teasley approaches. We widen to see Colt tracking his every step.

From a distance, we watch Teasley bend down. Speaks with Colt through the window.

The low rumble of distant freeway traffic.

An argument ignites between the men. We can't it make out.

TEASLEY

(barely audible)

Go home!

Teasley retreats. Colt springs out of his sedan. Stalks him. Teasley backs up. Opens his arms like a linebacker ready to pounce. Side-steps. Mirrors Colt's every move. Teasley won't let him pass. It's a stand-off. More muffled growling...

TEASLEY

(barely audible)

Go! Home!

INT./EXT. THE GRANGER HOME - NIGHT

A motionless American flag is mounted on the front porch. Snow begins to fall.

In the living room, framed signatures of famous outlaws on the walls. Birthday decorations. A store-bought sheet cake.

Two detectives sit with Colt and Elizabeth.

DETECTIVE ZANE (40) is nearly handsome. Built. A black leather jacket, too light to keep him warm but stylish.

And DETECTIVE GRADY (50). Dumpy. Bundled in a heavy winter coat. A mope in his gait.

ZANE

As you know, judge, the first forty-eight hours is everything with missing children.

ELIZABETH

You're talking to me.

GRADY

(to Elizabeth)

Leads dead-end, memories get fuzzy...

ZANE

And in most cases, the children are murdered within hours, but we believe he's keeping these girls alive. He has a type. He definitely has a type. She matches the profile.

ELIZABETH

How do ya know that? Do you have leads, theories, suspects?

ZANE

I'm sorry, ma'am.

ELIZABETH

(exasperated)

How many people are working this case?

GRADY

We've been on this for nearly six years, ma'am.

ELIZABETH

Two people? Colt, two people.

COLT

Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH

(to Zane and Grady)

And...?

ZANE

And I'm very sorry.

Grady's face carries the weight of the questionable progress.

ELIZABETH

(snaps)

Okay, we're done.

COLT

Hold on, you're sorry? Six years and you're sorry? We wanna know what the hell's going on!

Elizabeth stands. Everyone stands.

ELIZABETH

No, we're done talking now. Thank you, detectives.

Shoos them to the front door.

COLT

Detectives, I want you in my chambers first thing in the morning-- I want constant updates. Break whatever you have to. You get me?

GRADY

Copy that, Your Honor.

Grady notices a Happy Birthday banner.

GRADY

Oh, who's birthday?

Colt shoots Elizabeth a daggered look.

ELIZABETH

Good night, detectives.

The door closes...

ELIZABETH

Well, that was worthless. What'd the governor say?

COLT

Nothing. She didn't say anything.

ELIZABETH

And what was that other shit?

COLT

What other shit?

ELIZABETH
You took their side.

Guilty as charged.

ELIZABETH
What'd Margaret say?

COLT
I'm not bringing you into this. It
makes you a co-conspirator.

ELIZABETH
And how the hell do ya think yer gonna
keep me out of it?

Quietly, Colt processes...

COLT
A quadruple murderer knows where she's
being held.

ELIZABETH
And...?

COLT
And he wants a deal to go free.

She does the math. It's a simple equation.

ELIZABETH
Make the deal.

COLT
You didn't hear me.

ELIZABETH
I heard you, Colt Granger-- Make the
deal. Make the deal or so help me
god... --That's why ya went to see
Margaret. Well, fuck her if she isn't
gonna help.

COLT
Do not tell Annie. Do not tell Annie
any of this or Jacob. They can't know.
You can't know. No one can know.
Jesus, take the wheel.

Splashes a life-threatening pour of bourbon in a tumbler.

ELIZABETH
I see we're drinking again.

COLT

One drink. You think I deserve one drink?

ELIZABETH

Well, there goes ten years of sobriety.

Colt explodes his glass into the wall.

ELIZABETH

Annie needs her father.

COLT

Oh, do not throw Annie at me. Not now. That wasn't my fault. I was choosing my only child over... an unknown.

ELIZABETH

Katie is not an "unknown." She's your granddaughter. Haley and Katie--

COLT

You heard the doctor! She could have died in delivery. She knew the risk and--

ELIZABETH

Annie's my daughter too!

That slows them down a beat.

ELIZABETH

All three of us know what it's like to have our daughter's life threatened.

COLT

Tell her to call me.

ELIZABETH

I've been tellin' her that for years.

COLT

Well, she doesn't listen.

ELIZABETH

Neither one of you listen. You're both a couple of pigheaded... She's just like you.

And finally, the only question that really matters.

ELIZABETH

Why didn't you take Haley to school?

COLT

Because you said you were. You said,
"I'll get Haley."

ELIZABETH

I said, "Don't for-get Haley!" Why
would I say that?

Unsure of himself.

ELIZABETH

Oh, Colt. Colt.

Colt feels the weight of his error.

ELIZABETH

And I see what you've been doing.
You've been puttin' ideas in that
little girl's head--

COLT

Here we go--

ELIZABETH

In that little girl's head ever since
Annie stopped talking to you.

COLT

I wasn't the one watching her!

ELIZABETH

You can't turn her into another Annie
who's gonna talk to you.

That cuts a little too close to the bone.

COLT

I'm meeting in the morning.

ELIZABETH

You heard those idiots. She's been
abducted. We don't have time.

COLT

Then tell me what I'm supposed to do
Elizabeth, because there's only one
person in the world who knows where
she's at and I can't process him out
until morning. Don't you think I'd be
doing something right now, if I could?
I have a gavel, not a magic wand.

ELIZABETH

You pinned all our hopes on Margaret.

He stares into the bottle like it's whispering answers.

COLT
The next family he murders, that's on
me, you know.

ELIZABETH
Those are... What did you call 'em?
Unknowns.

Snatches her purse.

Heads for the door.

ELIZABETH
I'm sleeping at Annie's tonight.
That's a figure of speech. I'm sure no
one's sleeping tonight.

SLAMS the door so hard it rattles the studs.

Colt fires the bourbon bottle through the window.

THE PORCH

SMASH. The glass shatters.

Elizabeth flinches.

The bottle rolls to her feet. Unscathed.

She launches it back through a different window.

THE LIVING ROOM

Empty. Curtains snap in the breeze. The wind whistles.....

EXT. ANNIE'S HOUSE - BACK DECK - NIGHT

Hands clench a cup of coffee. They're JACOB's hands. Annie's husband. He stands alongside Elizabeth. Both are little more than silhouettes. Every frozen breath hangs in the air.

ELIZABETH
We got the same dog-and-pony show. I
told ya the police don't know shit.

JACOB
It's cold. I'm going back inside to
check on Annie.

ELIZABETH
Colt has an informant.

It's not as cold as he thought.

JACOB
What does he know?

ELIZABETH
We'll find out soon enough.

JACOB
Goodness Lord, I've been praying for a miracle and He's answered me.

ELIZABETH
Don't go all church on me, now, Jacob.

JACOB
I'm proud to say I'm a Christian and saved by my Lord, Jesus Christ. Praise, His name.

ELIZABETH
Jacob, if this guy knows something, we're not going to the police. The men of this family are gonna deal with it.

JACOB
Say again?

ELIZABETH
I'm gonna slice or saw off every last part of him that's touched her.

Light catches her resolute eyes.

ELIZABETH
That's not a metaphor.

JACOB
(after deep contemplation)
I'll do it.

ELIZABETH
You'll do what?

JACOB
I'll kill the son-of-a-bitch.

ELIZABETH
Jacob, you're the first one the police'll suspect.

JACOB
I'm her father goddamnit!

ELIZABETH
I need you to do something else.

JACOB

What else is there? I offered to damn my eternal soul.

ELIZABETH

You're the mayor's aid. No one's gonna question your word. So, for the family... if anyone comes scratchin' around, yer gonna testify under oath we were with you the whole time.

JACOB

Lie. Hand on the bible... you want me to bear false witness.

She nods. Unsure whether she's made the right decision.

ELIZABETH

You're not a killer, Jacob. We are.

JACOB

First off, it's been a long time since Colt's done anything like that.

ELIZABETH

--Cambodia.

JACOB

When he was drinking. I've heard the stories. But you're gonna need a helluva lot more than you and Colt.

ELIZABETH

Oh, and Rondo.

JACOB

Rondo's not family.

ELIZABETH

Since when?

SNAP TO BLACK

ADD TITLE "MISSING: 23 HOURS"

We hear china and silverware clatter. Quiet conversations.

INT. WORLD FAMOUS DONUTS - DAY

A pink-glazed donut with sprinkles. Plated with a napkin.

DAWES (O.S.)

A bit of a sweet tooth.

Colt and Dawes huddle in a private nook.

The judge looks like hell.

DAWES
Honestly, it's my only vice.

COLT
We might be working with different definitions of the word.

DAWES
Thus endeth the wooing.

COLT
I trust you're not recording this?

DAWES
No, Your Honor.

COLT
Should I search you?

DAWES
If you must.

COLT
No one can know about this deal.

DAWES
Before we get started, let us discuss the incident last night.

COLT
What incident?

DAWES
My client was attacked.

COLT
He didn't die, did he?

Dawes takes a measure of Colt.

COLT
Well, glad to see the little prick's making friends but there's a lot of sketchy shit that goes down in county.

DAWES
Your Honor...

COLT
Let's move along.

DAWES

If I find out you were involved...

COLT

Plead guilty, I'll take the death penalty off the table. I can do that on my own at sentencing. It's less exposure for both of us.

DAWES

Agreed. But for argument's sake, what if I'm unable to move him?

COLT

Sell him. You're a persuasive man.

The silence is excruciating.

Colt struggles to spit out the words.

COLT

And if not... you'll ask for a directed verdict.

DAWES

(delighted)

The prosecution did not bring the weight of evidence--

COLT

No, the prosecution has an ironclad case. They have your man on home surveillance doing the whole thing!

Catches his breath.

COLT

(rambling)

I'll grant bail, he skips and we never hear from him again.

DAWES

That's going to be tough.

COLT

How?

DAWES

For one, he's awfully entitled for a man who's about to be found guilty of a quadruple murder. And two, he's never going to forfeit the bond.

COLT

I can front bail. I'm not a rich man, but... But I want the information today-- Right now! And I only grant bail if it pans out.

DAWES

We can give you the exact address where they're being held.

Colt tries to remain calm. He's failing.

COLT

Then give it to me!

DAWES

You're in no position to negotiate.

COLT

The word is, drug cartels won't deal with you because even they have certain ethical standards.

Dawes really doesn't care.

COLT

You have an offer in our mutual best interest, counselor. Take it to your client. I'll give you an hour.

Dawes points to Colt's old-fashioned doughnut. Untouched.

DAWES

(matter-of-fact)

Would you like yours to go?

EXT. DISTRICT COURTHOUSE - DAY

A black TOWN CAR glides to a stop.

Dawes behind the wheel.

As Colt climbs out...

COLT

In the meantime, I'll try to come up with some reason for clemency that isn't laughable. Why, for the first time in my career, I'm keen on granting mercy to a child-killer.

Lingers in the open door...

DAWES

I'm sure you'll come up with something. You're a persuasive man.

COLT

Sell him.

The door SLAMS--

Turns Pepper Shay's head as she approached the courthouse.

Colt heads up the court steps alone.

The judge has a new friend. Pepper wasn't invited to play.

PRIVATE CHAMBERS - LATER

Zane and Grady spar with Colt. They're his first meal of the day. Storm clouds gather. It gets heated. Zane leans over the desk. Nose to nose with Colt.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD PARK - DAY

A search party scours a wooded area.

NOT FAR AWAY

Annie and Jacob approach a porch.

Ring the doorbell. Bow their heads. Flyer in hand.

Across the street, a different team starts the same process.

INT. JUDGE TOBIN'S CHAMBERS - LATER

Jeremiah hands Colt a cup of coffee.

JEREMIAH

What do the police think?

COLT

They're useless.

JEREMIAH

Elizabeth?

COLT

She's... You know.

JEREMIAH

Have you spoken with Annie?

Colt's face falls.

JEREMIAH

If there's anything I can do...

COLT

There is. Jeremiah, it's a tough one.

JEREMIAH

That seems to be our department.

COLT

How do you spare a man the needle when you know he's guilty?

JEREMIAH

Holy Moses, I never thought I'd live to hear those words pass your lips.

COLT

I'm serious now. I play by the rules. I follow the law. I avoid "this one should live and that one should die." If the law, the prosecution and twelve jurors say that is your fate, who am I to intercede?

JEREMIAH

I'm pretty sure that's in our job description.

COLT

Then how do you square a life incarcerated is equal to a life taken?

JEREMIAH

Compassion doesn't require a quadratic equation.

COLT

I'm standing on foreign soil here.

JEREMIAH

Because we've evolved beyond the Old Testament: An eye for an eye.

COLT

But we aren't so evolved. We do not see all lives as equal. In Washington state, juries are three times more likely to recommend capital punishment for a black man versus a white man.

JEREMIAH

(annoyed)
Foundation.

COLT

Overruled. Sit there and tell me it isn't true. Juries see a black man's life as less valuable and therefore unequal to the life they took.

JEREMIAH

You're going to lecture me -- a black man living in America -- about the fairness of the legal system?

COLT

Okay... Well, I dunno... maybe that's the wrong point.

JEREMIAH

That might be the stupidest thing I've ever heard you say.

Colt switches into high gear.

COLT

All right, how about compassion for an abhorrent, blood-thirsty murderer, convicted in the first degree--

JEREMIAH

Antoine Fever--

COLT

For example!

JEREMIAH

Okay, that's what this is really about. It's not some existential Darwinian crisis-- You're wavering in your convictions because of what might have happened to Haley--

COLT

No.

JEREMIAH

Then what are we doing here?

Jeremiah digests that thought.

JEREMIAH

Did the prosecution fuck this up?

Colt throws his hands in the air.

COLT

Aw, forget it. I just offered Fever life if he pleaded out.

JEREMIAH

There's evolution right there.

COLT

But I need a solid argument why.

JEREMIAH

No, you really don't. It's the right thing to do.

COLT

Something with a little more meat on the bone.

JEREMIAH

I'd love to get into it, but right now, I need you the hell out of my chambers. I'm late for court.

COLT

(realizes he's right)
Oh, shit.

Picks up the phone...

JEREMIAH

And for the record: A wise man once said, "The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice."

Before Colt walks out the door...

COLT

And for the record: That wasn't the stupidest thing I've said in the last twenty-four hours.

INT. OFFICES OF EDEN DAWES & ASSOCIATES - MAIL ROOM - DAY

A THUMB snaps a flash drive into a copy machine.

A FINGER presses an oversized "START" button.

A fresh-faced INTERN checks the tray.

We hear a handset scooped out of a landline cradle.

FEVER (V.O.)

So, where we at?

DAWES (V.O.)

He denied any involvement.

FEVER

I bet he did. A night them freaky fuckers won't long forget.

DAWES (V.O.)

He's offering life if you plead out.

The repetitious bang, clank and knock of a copy machine.

It relentlessly spits out the same photo, a RED-HAIRED GIRL (8) with pigtails and freckles.

FEVER (V.O.)

Seriously? No. No way.

THE INTERN'S DESK

The Intern shovels printed materials into BROWN BUBBLE-CUSHION MAILERS.

DAWES (V.O.)

No lethal injection.

FEVER (V.O.)

No fuckin' way.

Dead air over the phone line.

FEVER (V.O.)

I think 'no fuckin' way' is fairly self-explanatory. What about a pardon?

DAWES (V.O.)

The governor is no longer an option.

FEVER (V.O.)

Wha' does that mean?

DAWES (V.O.)

There will be no pardon.

FEVER (V.O.)

Fuckin' cunt.

THE HALLWAY

DAWES (V.O.)

Life could easily become twenty years. The judge could write a sterling recommendation to the parole board.

The Intern walks the mailers to...

EDEN DAWES' OFFICE

Sets them on his desk.

Dawes nods as the Intern leaves.

FEVER (V.O.)

You two buckaroos gotta figure
sumthin' better 'n puttin' me in a box
for... what'd ya say? Twenty years?
Boy, I got me a "get out of jail free"
card and I expect him to honor it. Now
git on that shit.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET - DAY

We move down the road. Crowded by high trees, thick brush.

A large TWO-STORY HOUSE at the end of the road comes up fast.

INT. LARGE TWO-STORY HOME - DAY

We slowly move up carpeted stairs.

Light shines under a bedroom door at the end of the hall.

As we creep closer, the door opens...

Haley in a frilly frock and bonnet, ala Little Bo Peep, sits
motionless at the end of the bed. Panting. Fear. Never a
word. Never a tear.

Someone's in the bedroom with her. Her eyes follow him.

WESLEY (O.S.)

What a pretty dress. Come to the
mirror, Bo.

Composes herself. She obeys.

At first glance, WESLEY WATKINS (52) looks like your
neighbor. A tad shabby. Slightly overweight. Soft-spoken.
Average in almost every way. At first glance.

Gently, he cuddles Haley in front of a full-length mirror.
Proud of his new toy. Strokes her hair. Takes his time.

WESLEY

Raise your hand over your head.

She does.

WESLEY

Good. Put it down.

She does.

WESLEY
You're gonna be my favorite.

Her eyes meet his in the mirror.

WESLEY
(snarls)
No.

Terrified, Haley snaps her gaze forward.

WESLEY
(gently)
Now, I want you to sit on the edge of
the bed. I'm going to teach you a game
I like to play.

She makes her way back to the bed. Over her shoulder, Wesley whips off his belt in one motion.

SNAPS it once--

INT. DOWNTOWN PARKING GARAGE - DAY

From the pavement, we see one high heel, then another step out of a black sedan. The car door THUMPS closed.

EXT. DOWNTOWN CITY STREET - DAY

From behind, we follow a DETERMINED WOMAN in heels and a skirt as she walks out of a parking garage and down the sidewalk. We never quite catch her face.

The district courthouse in the distance.

EXT. DISTRICT COURTHOUSE - DAY

The Determined Woman hikes up marble stairs.

INT. DISTRICT COURTHOUSE - HALLWAY - DAY

The Determined Woman steps into an elevator. She spins.

The doors close before we see her face.

INT. COLT GRANGER'S CHAMBERS - OUTER OFFICE - DAY

On an office phone, a dark button lights up.

DETERMINED WOMAN (O.S.)
 ... No, he's not expecting me.

The Determined Woman, ANNIE (34), relieves Wyatt of the phone. She's confident. Strong. She's been crying. Rests the handset back into the cradle.

ANNIE
 (a crack in her voice)
 I'm his daughter.

PRIVATE CHAMBERS

Annie enters. Closes the door. Stares. Dignified.

Colt looks up. Immediately de-centered. An old wound.

She dips her head for a second. Chokes back a tear. Composes herself.

Businesslike, sets her purse on the floor. Sniffs once. Removes one high heel. Then the other.

Colt doesn't understand.

In a skirt, Annie struggle into a kneeling position on the floor. Lifts her head. Tears streaming.

A tear clouds Colt's eye.

She slowly walks on her knees toward him.

Colt hangs his head. A tear rolls down his cheek.

She folds her hands. Collapses face-down. Sobs.

Colt falls to his knees. Strokes her hair. Weeps.

SNAP TO BLACK

Time has passed.

PRE-LAP AUDIO: Hard soles lope across floorboards.

INT. COLT GRANGER'S CHAMBERS - OUTER OFFICE - DAY

Colt heads to his chambers without breaking stride.

Dylan and Wyatt try to slow him down with words.

COLT
 How fast can we get the jury back?

WYATT
 On it.

DYLAN
--Miss Shay came by.

COLT
And Dawes is gonna be here any minute.

Ducks in and out of his chambers. Lured by each argument.

COLT
We have until then to develop a compelling argument against lethal injection.

WYATT
Because it's wrong?

COLT
More compelling... that sounds like it would come from my lips.

DYLAN
Over a hundred and sixty people on Death Row have been exonerated.

COLT
Are you arguing the system works?

DYLAN
Don't be silly. The fact is the system's flawed.

COLT
This is a moral argument. I'm pretty sure facts are useless here.

PRIVATE CHAMBERS - LATER

Defense counsel, Eden Dawes sits across from Colt.

DAWES
So, we are agreed.

COLT
(resigned)
I don't really have a choice.

DAWES
I will ask for a directed verdict. You will set bail--

COLT
And I'll cover the deposit.

Colt collects framed signatures off the wall.

DAWES

And that's the last we ever see or hear of Antoine "Fever" Dubois.

COLT

Alright, gimme the address.

DAWES

The instant my client is released, I will personally hand over a complete dossier on the abductor.

COLT

That wasn't our deal.

DAWES

After that stunt last night...?

Exhausted, Colt collapses into his chair.

Swallows his last pretense of dignity.

COLT

She's my granddaughter, you son of a bitch.

DAWES

So you really don't have a choice.

COLT

Get out of my chambers.

We hold on Colt's face.

SHAY (O.S.)

Not until you answer my question.

It's later, though it appears no time has passed. The prosecuting attorney, Pepper Shay, sits in Eden's chair.

SHAY

I know you met with Dawes and I know what you two are up to.

She does? Colt holds it together. Barely.

COLT

And that's what exactly?

SHAY

Is there a deal? Because there is no deal.

COLT

Miss Shay. Pepper--

SHAY

I got DNA, motive, the guy on video doing it, seven female jurors in the box. There isn't gonna be any deal. Respectfully, I'd like an explanation.

COLT

I don't know what you think you know.

SHAY

The detectives said they could still smell cookie dough on their little fingers. They were baking cookies.

That takes a moment to recover from.

COLT

We're all looking for what's right--

SHAY

Fuck what's right. The People demand justice!

(contrite)

Excuse me, Your Honor. I apologize.

Both pause for a tick.

Worn to a nub, Colt's trapped inside the window frame.

SHAY

If you don't mind me asking, how are you doing, sir?

Words bubble from his mouth without thought to who's listening. And a thousand-yard stare.

COLT

You know I had a full ride to Harvard?

SHAY

No, I didn't.

COLT

When my father found out, he drove me straight to the recruiter's office. Last time anyone had me by the scruff of the neck. I came back from Vietnam and finished top of my class.

SHAY

I'm sorry. I don't understand.

COLT

I just spoke with Eden Dawes. He's... He's asking for a directed verdict.

SHAY

Why didn't you start with that? That's fantastic news. What'd you say to change his mind? Your Honor? Judge?

In a trance, Colt stares out the window.....

EXT. THE GRANGER HOME - PORCH - DAY

From a distance, we watch the fireworks: Elizabeth and Zane shouting. Windows boarded behind them. Elizabeth shoves Zane in the chest. Glares at Grady. Yells. Zane bites back. The detectives withdraw. No chance of them ever coming back. Elizabeth's phone rings. She moves inside.

INT. COLT GRANGER'S SEDAN - DAY

Into the hands-free, while he drives...

COLT

You told Annie, didn't you?

INT. THE GRANGER HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

ELIZABETH

Yer damn right, and I told her to do whatever she had to do to get through to ya. It wasn't a hard sell.

INTERCUT BETWEEN CALLS

COLT

She begged, Elizabeth. My own daughter got down on her hands and knees and begged me.

ELIZABETH

--Of course, she did--

COLT

And never uttered a single word.

ELIZABETH

She may never talk to you again. I may never talk to you again. Tell me we have a deal for Haley?

COLT

We had a deal for Haley.

That breaks her. Elizabeth heads for the bedroom.

ELIZABETH
What happened?

COLT (V.O.)
His damn attorney keeps changing the
goddamn deal. We had an agreement--

ELIZABETH
Stop talking.

She enters...

THE BEDROOM CLOSET

... Punches a code into a wall safe.

ELIZABETH
I'll take care of this myself. I've
spent the better part of my life
cleaning up your messes--

COLT (V.O.)
Take care of what?

ELIZABETH
Colt, you gotta stop looking at this
like a judge. You're still playing by
the rules. Stop playing by the rules.

Removes a .45 AUTOMATIC.

ELIZABETH
It's time to get dirty.

She ends the call.

Inspects the gun. Disassembles and reassembles it in seconds.

Snaps in a full mag. Stuffs one in the chamber.

INT. RONDO'S INDOOR GUN RANGE - FIRING LINE - DAY

To the rhythm of GUNSHOTS, three bullets RIP holes through a
paper silhouette of a man. Tightly grouped in the chest.

A square-jawed MARKSMAN wearing ear protection fires empty.
Reloads his SEMI-AUTOMATIC.

A handful of shooters fire assorted weapons in other lanes.

THE OFFICE

Barely audible gunfire from the range next door.

Bare walls. Spartan furnishings. Neat stacks of paper on the desk, floor... everywhere. No sign of a computer in sight.

RONDO's about the same age as Colt. Slightly over his varsity playing weight. Still strong as a bull. African-American. Quick with a smile.

Stands as Colt enters the room.

COLT
This doesn't leave the room.

RONDO
Copy that.

COLT
I mean it, Rondo.

RONDO
Hey, it's me.

Points at Rondo's chair. They sit.

COLT
I'm about to release a quadruple murderer, and he'll lead us to Haley.

RONDO
Yer sure--?

COLT
And a lot of other girls, too.

RONDO
And yer sure?

COLT
I'm sure.

RONDO
And the cops don't know?

COLT
No one knows.

Rondo stews in his own skin.

RONDO
Elizabeth called last night--

COLT
Goddammit, this is supposed to be a goddamn secret.

RONDO
Laid it on me pretty thick.

COLT
She does that.

RONDO
She has a plan, you know. It's not a great plan.

COLT
I got my own plan.

RONDO
Good. I hate her plan.

COLT
Did she tell you she blames me?

RONDO
How's this your fault?

COLT
I don't know. Maybe. I don't know.

RONDO
Whadda we need? I got some hard-case motherfuckers shooting right now. Just say the word.

COLT
Rondo...

Stares at the floor like it's whispering answers.

Pulls a breath--

COLT
This doesn't leave the room either.

The muffled gunfire gets louder...

PRE-LAP AUDIO: BANG. BANG. BANG.

INT. THE OFFICES OF DAWES & ASSOCIATES - DAY

The RECEPTIONIST peeks over the front desk. A bold, confident logo splashed across the wall behind her.

Elizabeth FIRES more rounds into ceiling tiles as she marches into a cubicle maze. Stops. Sweeps for a target.

ELIZABETH
I'm here to renegotiate the deal.

The staff scatters, cowers or freezes in place.

The Intern stabs his hands in the air.

ELIZABETH
Who's in charge?

INTERN
You are.

The Receptionist crawls toward them on her hands and knees.

RECEPTIONIST
(timid)
Ma'am? Everyone's in court all day.
Can we help you?

INT. DISTRICT COURTROOM - DAY

The gavel drops. BANG. The striking block hops.

BAILIFF (O.S.)
Please be seated.

The jury drops into their seats.

SNAP TO BLACK

ADD TITLE "MISSING: 27 HOURS"

COLT (O.S.)
My apologies to members of the jury. I
was attending to personal matters.

BACK IN THE COURTROOM

Jurors nod.

COLT
Today, we hear from the defense. Mr.
Dawes, is the defense ready?

He rises...

DAWES
We are, Your Honor.

Dawes waits.

Colt waits.

Shay waits.

Fever waits. Battle-scarred.

COLT

Well?

DAWES

May we begin, Your Honor?

Confused jurors.

A titter through the courtroom. Standing room only.

Frustrated. Stupefied. Colt checks left, then right.

COLT

I understand you'll be filing a motion. Is that correct?

Shay stands.

Colt waves her back into her seat.

Holding a folded piece of paper in his hand, Dawes waits...

DAWES

Yes, Your Honor.

Colt melts back into his chair.

SHAY

Approach, Your Honor?

COLT

(to Shay)

Hold your water. It's their turn.

(to Dawes)

Proceed.

DAWES

We ask for a directed verdict.

Shay spins to Fever--

SHAY

I know what you're thinking, but there is no deal. It's off the table.

FEVER

Fuck you, lady.

Colt GAVELS the room silent.

COLT

(to the jury)

The defense is asking to end the trial now and move directly to sentencing.

(MORE)

COLT (cont'd)
(to Dawes)
Is that correct?

DAWES
That is correct, Your Honor.

COLT
The state?

SHAY
The state has no objection.

COLT
Glad to see you've stopped throwing
your toys, Miss Shay.

Fever whispers to Dawes.

COLT
Very well. Sentencing one week from
today.

The gavel drops...

BANG!

... Colt turns to the jury.

COLT
And the jury is dismissed. Thank you
for your service.

The BAILIFF stands and proclaims...

BAILIFF
All rise.

The jury files out.

COLT
That'll give the prosecution time to
file an appeal if they so wish.

SHAY
No appeal, Your Honor.

The jurors gone...

BAILIFF
You may be seated.

DAWES
Your Honor, we ask that my client be
released on bail until--

Shay springs out of her chair. The word "pissed" seems inadequate.

SHAY

Absolutely not. Your Honor, approach.

The judge beckons Shay and Dawes to him.

SHAY

No bail. Hazard. He's an obvious flight risk, a grave threat to the community. He checks all the boxes. The state strongly recommends no bail at any amount.

Ventures a glance at Fever. Something's not right.

He's smirking.

COLT

I'll allow it. One million dollars.

Murmurs grow in the gallery.

SHAY

Your Honor!

Colt drops the gavel again...

BANG!

... The courtroom crackles to life.

SHAY

You've got to be kidding!

The courtroom BOILS OVER.

SHAY

Your Honor! Chambers?!

COLT

We're adjourned.

Once more with the gavel...

BANG!

Points to Fever.

COLT

I'll see the defendant in my chambers.

Colt rushes for the side door.

BAILIFF (O.S.)

All rise.

BEDLAM in the courtroom.

INT. COLT GRANGER'S CHAMBERS - OUTER OFFICE - DAY

Colt enters reeling. Unzips. Shay chases. Cuts into him.

SHAY

What the hell just happened?

COLT

That's a lot to unpack.

WYATT

--The governor on line one.

COLT

(steps out of his robe)
That didn't take long.

Dawes leads Fever into the office.

COLT

(to Dawes)
You got my file?

DAWES

I would never bring such sensitive
information--

COLT

I suspected as much.
(to Fever)
You, my chambers, now.
(to Dawes)
You, I want my file.

They both scatter without another word.

SHAY

Consider an ankle bracelet, take his
passport... uh, protective custody.

COLT

Protection from who? He murdered the
whole damn family.

SHAY

From me!

Colt stops her at his door--

COLT
I'm sorry, but I think the governor
wants to yell at me first.

SHAY
May I sit?--

COLT
Please don't.

DYLAN
(to Colt)
There's a very large man in there who
only speaks in grunts.

Colt slips inside. Closes the door.

SHAY
What the hell's going on?

PRIVATE CHAMBERS

Fever lounges in the judge's chair.

COLT
Get outta my chair.

RONDO
I told 'im not to sit there.

Fever doesn't budge.

Colt hangs up his robe.

FEVER
Like I give two shits. I'm free,
muther-fuckers. Sweet freedom.

RONDO
This is the guy?

COLT
That's the guy.

The judge pins Fever's hands to the armrests.

Fever glares.

--Rondo drops a clear plastic bag over Fever's head.

Duct tapes it tight.

Tapes down each arm.

The plastic over Fever's mouth bubbles in and out.

Colt roots through the desk.

 RONDO
We'll need a gun.

 COLT
 (digs out a pistol)
I have a gun.

Colt punches the hold button with the gun butt.

 COLT
Margaret, I have to call you back.

Hangs up.

Watches Fever slowly suffocating.

 RONDO
Colt...?

Fever's eyes flutter. Mouth open wide.

Colt rips an air hole between Fever's lips.

Greedy for air, he gasps.

 COLT
I don't have time for your fucking
attorney to jerk me around again.

Colt mugs up Fever. Stuffs his sidearm under Fever's chin.

 COLT
So you... You're going to tell us the
address where Haley is being held or
Rondo here is gonna put holes in
important places.

 FEVER
I... Now, I do believe... I could help
you fellas with that.

 COLT
Good choice.

Tosses Rondo a 9mm Colt Commander.

 RONDO
This thing still work?

 COLT
Worked on Viet Cong.

RONDO

Now I know what ta getcha for your
birthday.

FEVER

But Honest Injun... I may have
prevaricated a teensy little bit. See,
I don't really know the address to fer
certain.

Rondo cocks the Colt Commander.

FEVER

(grins)
But I could take y'all there.

EXT. WOODED AREA - DAY

Volunteers walk a Spartan line through thin undergrowth,
brambles and scrub. Jagged lines of dead vegetation
crisscross the white ground, powdered with snow.

The crunch of boots marching across twigs and frozen earth.

Faces glued to the ground. Searching. Scanning.

A pop of color pokes through the snow.

Haley's pink cap.

A VOLUNTEER stops. Stretches her hand into the air.

Twists and turns for the team leader.

INT./EXT. A LARGE TWO-STORY HOME - SAME

A fist knocks on the front door. RED with a MAIL SLOT.

THE BASEMENT

The girls stir at the sound.

Slowly, Haley angles her head to the ceiling.

THE PORCH

At the door... Annie.

A security camera mounted above.

The peephole darkens.

WESLEY
 (muffled)
 Who is it?

THE BASEMENT

From behind, Maddie covers Haley's mouth.

Cassidy shushes the girls.

POV THROUGH THE PEEP HOLE: Annie raises a flyer of Haley.

ANNIE
 I'm wondering if you've seen this
 girl. She's my little girl?

THE LIVING ROOM

Scrawled on a tattered yellow legal pad, Wesley works his way down a detailed decision tree. Notes tied to a brick have better penmanship.

Frustrated, he can't find the correct response.

ANNIE
 Hello?

Wesley flips to the next page. Then the next.

WESLEY
 No, I don't think so.

ANNIE (O.S.)
 Well, there's a playground around the
 corner. Maybe you saw her there?

Wesley's searches... --Finds the right answer.

WESLEY
 My dog is named Tiger. He bites, so I
 don't go near the playground.

Anxiously, waits for a response.

ANNIE (O.S.)
 Is there someone else home I can talk
 to? Your wife?

THE NOTE PAD

His finger traces down the decision tree.

WESLEY (O.S.)
 I live here alone.

The next box in the decision tree.

WESLEY (O.S.)
You have to leave.

THE BASEMENT STAIRWAY

Barefoot, Cassidy climbs the basement stairs.

A wooden step creaks. Loud.

THE LIVING ROOM

Panic etched in Wesley's face.

THE PORCH

Annie folds the flyer.

ANNIE
I'm gonna leave this... in case you
see her. Please. She's my little girl.

Stabs the flyer through the mail slot.

THE LIVING ROOM

Wesley jumps like it's a police badge.

THE PORCH

Annie lingers on the porch until all hope fades.

THE BASEMENT STAIRWAY

The BASEMENT DOOR flies open.

Brilliant light scalds the girls. Their eyes flutter and squint. Huddled halfway up the stairs, they slowly retreat.

THE PORCH

A submissive Pomeranian chases Annie to the edge of the porch. Flops on his back. Kicks, begging for rubs.

Is this Tiger?

Annie moves her attention back to the red door.

THE BASEMENT STAIRWAY

At the top of the stairs, Wesley isn't pleased.

A HARD KNOCK on the door snaps his head around.

The basement door slams closed.

DARKNESS

We hear measured footsteps across hardwood floors.

The sound of a DRAWER sliding open. Closed.

More footsteps.

Heavy breathing from one of the girls. Soon they all are.

THE PORCH

Tiger barks. Jumps out of Annie's arms.

The door whips open an inch-- BUMP! The chain lock catches.

Wesley's face pressed into the crack.

WESLEY

Go. Away.

Spooked, Annie backs up.

THE BASEMENT

Under a faint shaft of light, Haley's losing control. Starts to cry-- Her mouth and face are smothered by a half-dozen little hands.

And Haley's pulled back into darkness.

Dead silence.....

SNAP TO BLACK

ADD TITLE "MISSING: 30 HOURS"

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET - DAY

A light dusting of snow covers lawns and houses.

FEVER (O.S.)

Y'all hungry?

INT. RONDO'S SUV - DAY

Rondo drives. Colt beside him. Armed.

FEVER (O.S.)

I could eat.

In the backseat, Fever cuffs himself to the armrest without complaint.

FEVER

Can't expect me ta do m-uh finest work
on an empty stomach, now? Can ya?

RONDO

Gawd, I'm sick of this guy already.

COLT

How much farther?

Loosely palms the 9mm. He's casual with it.

Fever studies every move Colt makes.

FEVER

Oh, we got a spell before we even
turn. So is that a thumbs-up on the
drive-thru, gentlemen?

RONDO

No.

COLT

Don't engage. It only encourages him.

Fever studies the window.

FEVER

Actually, I'm pretty impressed with
what y'all got goin'. Right bossed-up
shit... or plain old stupid. I can't
figure it. I mean do you two have any
idea what yer walkin' into? This guy's
definitely gotta busted antenna. Ain't
no tellin' what incantation of mayhem
he's capable of sorcerin'.

Rondo side-eyes Colt.

FEVER

Must have one helluva plan though. Or
ya just gonna go in there ugly --
gunning it out with yer peashooter?

RONDO

Oh, we're bringing the smoke.

Rondo brandishes a .50 DESERT EAGLE.

COLT

(cautioning)
Rondo.

RONDO

So what is the plan, Colt?

Claps back.

RONDO

Colt?

COLT

I have a plan.

FEVER

He ain't got shit, Ron-dough. He's looking for you to captain this turd boat. Yer nuthin' but cannon fodder.

COLT

You see what he's doing.

FEVER

Lookie-here, I don't wanna be no sitting duck whilst you two cluster-fuck this suicide mission beyond recognition. So here's the sitch.

Folds his wrist tight. Can't slip out of the cuff.

FEVER

Lord knows how many Tide pods this clown's eaten, but one thing's for positive, he's dangerous. He rapes little girls. That means he's cautious, takes his time, he's a good planner. I'd suspect booby traps, trap doors, all manner of skulduggery.

Rondo turns that over in his mind.

FEVER

He's got good tech 'cuz I've seen it, but what would scare the piss outta me... Prisons ain't all that welcoming to perv-os, so if he gets spooked -- sees his predicament as dire... Well, ain't nothing more dangerous than an animal 'bout ta be caged.

COLT

Done banging on your high chair?

FEVER

Don't auger well fer you two and yer big plan.

COLT

(overlapping)
I said, shut up.

FEVER

I'd fear 'em like fire. Take a left at the next light.

Folds his wrist tight. Can't slip out of the cuff.

RONDO

(while turning)

It makes sense.

FEVER

That blood-thirsty sum-bitch got all the compassion of a Tijuana prison -- don't care a lick about you or me. Been wantin' ta kill me ever since we locked eyes.

COLT

You murdered an entire family in cold blood. And children. Am I right?

Fever slips free. Hides the bracelet under his thigh.

FEVER

Well now, guess we'll never know.

INT. COLT GRANGER'S CHAMBERS - OUTER OFFICE - DAY

DYLAN

This is literally my third day-- Is it always like this around here?

WYATT

It's never like this.

SHAY

So you two don't know where the judge is and no idea what's happening?

WYATT

(turns to the wall)

Sumthin's up.

A sun-bleached wall of framed autographs. Rectangular shapes of darker paint tell which ones are missing.

SHAY

I think he's gotten himself mixed up in something shady.

WYATT

You're taking down the judge?

SHAY

My advice is to keep your heads down
and your mouths shut.

Shay starts away--

DYLAN

That doesn't sound right.

SHAY

What part?

DYLAN

Well, I've only known him for -- like
I said -- three days. And I might not
agree with him on a lotta stuff...

She checks Wyatt. Shay.

Breaks into a South Carolina lilt.

DYLAN

But he is a good man. And y'all don't
give up on a good man 'cuz things get
thorny. M-uh daddy was as prickly as
they come but I always loved 'im, even
when I hated 'im. But I never gave up
on 'im.

SHAY

This is different.

DYLAN

No, it ain't. You gotta see all the
way through to the man. That's whatcha
hold on to.

SHAY

I don't understand.

DYLAN

When m-uh daddy was in the Navy, he
taught all us kids Morse code. 'Was
our secret way of communicating; he
gave us that. Now, when he was alive,
there weren't no chance, no way, he'd
let any of us ever get a tattoo.

Dylan rolls up her sleeve. Tattoo in full view.

DYLAN

But when he passed, me and m-uh
brothers all got this one...

A series of dots and dashes -... .- ... on her arm.

WYATT
What's it say?

DYLAN
Dad.

Wyatt nods.

Shay swoons a little.

SHAY
I think he would've liked your tattoo.

DYLAN
(to Wyatt)
We're gonna need more help.

INT. RONDO'S SUV - DAY

COLT
You know why capital punishment
doesn't work as a deterrent?

FEVER
Do tell...

COLT
Because we do it wrong.

FEVER
... And pretend I'm listening.

COLT
Have you been to an execution?

Fever feigns disinterest. Adjusts in his seat.

COLT
An execution is a well-orchestrated
procession. Steeped in clinical
precision. And we do it all wrong.

Colt waves his gun around.

Fever notices how easy it would be to take it.

COLT
It should be done live, in public, for
everyone to see. That would be a
deterrent. Let you see your mother
crying; the shame on your face would
be more powerful than the execution.

FEVER

Well, now, since y'all brought my
mamma into this, why don't we just put
your family in play too.

COLT

What about my family?

Calmly, Fever looks out the window. Studies cookie-cutter
houses pass by. All dusted white.

Colt squares the gun at Fever's kneecap.

COLT

Whaddaya mean put my family in play?

Fever edges between the gun and the window.

The three hang on that tension for a beat.

FEVER

Ya know, fellas... with all this snow,
these houses all sure look alike.

He knows exactly where they are. But he's trying to sell it.

Colt drops back in his seat.

COLT

You keep my business out of your
mouth.

Rondo's expression urges him to let it go.

FEVER

(eyes wide)

Hold on there, Rondo. Slow her down. I
recollect we're closing in on it.

PRE-LAP AUDIO: The CRASH of a ceramic lamp breaking.

INT. DIM BASEMENT WITH NO WINDOWS - DAY

The broken pieces of a shattered lamp on the floor.

The girls tip their heads from the lamp to the ceiling.

Haley scoops up a shard.

Tucks it under her pillow.

Maddie grabs a jagged piece for herself.

Girls argue over large chunks and crumbs.

Panicked, Cassidy sweeps the ceiling with her eyes.
The sound of footsteps. He's on the move again.

CASSIDY
(a loud whisper)
Quiet!

They all freeze.

THE LIVING ROOM

Wesley's dolls are misbehaving again. SLAMS the basement door out of frustration. The door drifts back open.

Slams it again.

And again.

And again.

THE STAIRWAY

At the top of the stairs, a silhouette of Wesley slamming the door. As it opens and closes, the stairway flashes light, then dark.

Light, then dark.

Light, then dark.

THE DIM BASEMENT

Terrified, the girls huddle in small groups.

Wait for the door storm to pass.

It doesn't.

CASSIDY
What's happening?

Haley curls on her cot. Fetal.

A sob crack from her chest. Then ceaseless blubbering.

MADDIE
(to Haley)
Shut up. Shut up!

The slamming stops.

So what comes next? That's even more terrifying.

LIVING ROOM

A splintered trench in the door jamb -- carved out by the throw bolt.

Wesley pants. Winded.

Crosses to the front window. Peeks outside.

FEVER (V.O.)
Whoa, whoa, whoa!

INT. RONDO'S SUV - DAY

They crawl to a stop.

FEVER
I do believe we have a winner.

COLT
That's it?

They all peer...

THROUGH THE WINDOW

A two-story house. Big porch. Red door with a mail slot.

FEVER (O.S.)
Sweet as a peach. More beautiful than
Jesus, ain't it?

BACK INSIDE THE SUV

FEVER
Vengeance.

COLT
Pull around the corner.

THE DIM BASEMENT

Wesley roughs together pieces of the lamp.

Reveals a big section missing.

He surveys the room.

Innocent faces shine back at him. Except one.

Maddie charges him with a deadly shard.

MADDIE
Aaaaaaah!

Wesley doesn't move.

--Cassidy snatches Maddie's arm.
 Wrenches the shank from her hand.
 The face of betrayal.
 The face of rage.
 Haley walks her shard to Wesley.
 The face of surrender.

INT. RONDO'S SUV - DAY

COLT
 You're sure?

RONDO
 He said he's sure.

COLT
 But is he sure?

FEVER
 Hold on, now. The time is nigh. No
 spot to go all knock-kneed.

RONDO
 --Lemme shoot 'em, Colt.

FEVER
 If ya buy the ticket, y'all should
 take the ride.

Colt and Rondo trade a moment. Instantly forget all about
 Fever. Prep.

COLT
 Should we ring the bell?

RONDO
 Hell, no.

Snags an extra mag out of the glove box.

RONDO
 I'll just knock it down.

COLT
 We're not twenty anymore.

RONDO
 I got a battering ram. Been looking
 forward ta this all mornin'.

The judge mumbles a quick prayer. Crosses himself.

FEVER

Wouldn't count on the Almighty
steppin' anywhere near this shit.

Colt double checks his gun.

RONDO

Want somethin' more powerful? I got
plenty of shit in back.

COLT

I'm good.

Rondo puts on his game face. Nods at Colt.

Colt hyperventilates.

COLT

Okay.

RONDO

Don't go anywhere.

Coldcocks Fever.

They climb out.

Fever slumps to one side. His nose bleeds. He's out.

EXT. LARGE TWO-STORY HOME - PORCH - DAY

Colt and Rondo creep into position on either side of the red door. Backs against the house. Scan their surroundings.

THE DIM BASEMENT

Each girl sits frozen on their cot. Feet on the floor. Hands at their side. Emotionless. Silent. Staring straight ahead.

THE PORCH

COLT

(whispering)

That shit he was saying back there--

RONDO

(whispering)

Fuck him.

They fist bump.

Rondo lifts the battering ram.

With a blind hand, she frantically searches for a weapon on the countertop.

COLT
We're not here to hurt you.

Creeps closer.

She grips a butcher knife. Slashes. The blade sings.

Backs him up a step.

TEENAGE GIRL
(crying)
Grandma!

RONDO (O.S.)
(cautioning)
Colt.

COLT
(to the Teenage Girl)
Where are the other girls?

RONDO
Colt!

Gestures to a framed family photo on the wall.

It doesn't immediately register for Colt.

Eden Dawes and Mrs. Dawes, along with their extended family -- including their granddaughter, the Teenage Girl.

Realizing they've been duped by Fever...

COLT
Oh, shit.

... They scramble for the SUV.

The backstairs door BURSTS open. Out steps MRS. DAWES with a STREET SWEEPER SHOTGUN.

BOOM!

Just misses Colt and Rondo. But sprays holes in her cabinets.

She storms into...

THE LIVING ROOM

BOOM!

Finishes off her front door. Blowing it out of its frame.

THE PORCH

Defiant, Mrs. Dawes waves her rifle.

MRS. DAWES
Better run, you chicken-shits.

The Teenage Girl steps behind Grandma to watch.

Colt and Rondo disappear around the corner.

BACKSEAT OF THE SUV

The door whips open.

Handcuffs swing from the armrest.

Written in blood on the window "FAMILY."

In a driveway next door, a HOUSEWIFE throws up her hands.

HOUSEWIFE
Where's my goddam car?

INT./EXT. RONDO'S SUV - MOMENTS LATER

Rondo drives like a madman.

The SUV sweeps wide around a corner.

Colt finishes dialing his phone.

INT. CATHOLIC CHURCH - PEW - SAME

From her knees, Elizabeth thumbs a rosary. Prays.

Her other granddaughter, KATIE (3) sits behind her.

Peeking out of her purse, Elizabeth's phone lights up.

It's on silent but catches Katie's attention.

INT./EXT. RONDO'S SUV - DAY

Elizabeth's voicemail. --Beep!

COLT
Elizabeth, get out of the house, now!
Do not go home. Stay away from the
house. Call me.

RONDO
How does he know where you live?

COLT
Would you take that chance?

Rondo drops the accelerator to the floorboard.

They roar through a quiet neighborhood.

INT. CATHOLIC CHURCH - DAY

Elizabeth buttons Katie for the cold.

She boasts about what a big girl she was for Grandma.

They exit, hand in hand.

EXT. RONDO'S SUV - DAY

They race past slower cars. Lights flashing. Horn barking.

INT. COLT GRANGER'S SEDAN - DAY

With a blank stare into traffic, Elizabeth waits.

A RED stoplight.

She checks Katie. Frowns.

Katie pokes random colors on Elizabeth's phone.

Grandma relieves Katie of her new toy.

The number "1" appears over her PHONE ICON--

The traffic light sparks GREEN.

She tucks the phone into her coat pocket.

Rolls forward.

INT. THE GRANGER HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Colt clears the living room while Rondo covers him. Quietly.

With a REMINGTON RIFLE tucked under his chin, Colt side-steps behind the sofa.

Nothing.

Rondo's senses on full alert, he sweeps the doorways and windows.

The judge points to the kitchen.

The barrel of his WINCHESTER RIFLE leading the way, Rondo quietly steps into...

THE KITCHEN

... Tiptoes around the island. Jerking his rifle left, then right, searching for a target.

The judge enters. Points to the ceiling.

Rondo nods.

Colt leaves.

Rondo steps into the pantry and out of view.....

Steps out of the pantry. Stops.

Fixes on something.

THE STAIRWAY

Cautiously, Colt moves up carpeted stairs.

THE KITCHEN

The basement door is ajar.

Slowly, Rondo guides it open with the muzzle of his Winchester. The door hinges MOAN.

He freezes.

THE UPSTAIRS HALLWAY

Colt freezes too.

His eyes dart left and right, anticipating Fever popping out a closed bedroom door.

Nothing.

THE KITCHEN

The basement door is wide open. It's dark down there.

Slowly, Rondo disappears into the void.

A SERIES OF TIME CUTS UPSTAIRS

Colt enters or exits each door in the hallway.

Hustles down the stairs.

THE KITCHEN

Striding into the kitchen...

COLT
Clear upstairs.

Rustling below his feet. Low talking. A mumble.

COLT
Rondo?

The judge studies the floor. Looks up.

The basement door is wide open.

Colt senses danger. Moves toward it.

Sweeps his six. Checks the window.

Finds a defensive position.

The sound of footsteps race up the stairs.

Colt steadies. Presses the rifle under his chin.

Squints. Ready to unleash hell.

Out of the darkness, appears **Rondo**--

RONDO
Oh, shit.

COLT
Jesus Christ.

RONDO
What're ya doin'?

COLT
I almost shot you.

RONDO
I know.

COLT
Nearly gave me a heart attack.

RONDO
I called all clear.

COLT
Well, I didn't hear you.

RONDO
Well, shit.

The adrenaline slowing...

 RONDO
You think he's gone?

 COLT
I think so.

 RONDO
I think he's long gone, Colt.

 COLT
You don't believe that, do you?

 RONDO
Not a chance.

 COLT
God help me, I've set him free.

We hold on Colt's face.

 ELIZABETH (O.S.)
Then how we gonna find Haley?

It's later, though it appears no time has passed. Rondo is gone. Elizabeth is home.

 COLT
His attorney's on his way--

 ELIZABETH
Thank God.

 COLT
--With the information.

 ELIZABETH
You're sure this time?

 COLT
We may have to pay for his door.

 ELIZABETH
Then it's almost over.

They embrace.

 COLT
I thought I was gonna lose you,
Elizabeth.

 ELIZABETH
You don't think I can take care of
myself?

COLT
Dearest, he is an honest-to-goodness
shotgun murderer.

ELIZABETH
I'm glad no one got hurt.

Katie doesn't understand what's happening, but we're hugging,
so she hugs Grandma's leg.

Surprises Elizabeth. In a good way.

ELIZABETH
You're not a very good kidnapper.

COLT
It got complicated.

KATIE
Where's Haley?

ELIZABETH
Don't worry, baby. Haley's coming home
soon.

COLT
You should call Annie.

ELIZABETH
So this is really happening.

SNAP TO BLACK

ADD TITLE "MISSING: 34 HOURS"

INT. FBI FIELD OFFICE - DAY

--A **brown bubble-cushion mailer** lands on the desk.

A burly FBI AGENT inspects the package.

The return address: Dawes & Associates.

He removes multiple pictures of Wesley Watkins.

Teeters between curious and puzzled.

SERIES OF SHOTS: EVERYONE GETS THE NEWS

-- Detectives Zane and Grady sprint through a police station.

-- A men's locker room. FBI agents don BULLETPROOF VESTS.

-- A SWAT van loaded with hard-looking men inspect their rifles. The rear door SLAMS closed.

-- Resting on an end table, Delano's cellphone vibrates.

-- Outside the courthouse, Shay climbs steps to the main entrance with a phone pinned to her ear. Pauses.

SHAY

This is she...

INT. SUPER SAVER MOTEL - ROOM 127 - DAY

Tacky wood paneling. Cheap furniture. High-stakes poker on the TV. A burger wrapper on the table. A SEMI-AUTOMATIC next to half-eaten waffle fries on the nightstand.

DAWES (O.S.)

I didn't expect to hear from you again.

FEVER (O.S.)

Still have bidness, you and me.

Chain-smoking, Fever reclines on the bed like it's a throne. A fresh shiner. A tight sleeveless T-shirt under a crisp, white, untucked dress shirt. Collar popped. Unbuttoned.

DAWES

I've been received some odd phone calls.

FEVER

From the creep?

DAWES

You were extorting him.

FEVER

Maybe. How ya think I'm affordin' you?

Dawes peeks out the window.

FEVER

Say, how much ya think a judge makes?

DAWES

I've already sent the file to the authorities-- You're free. That was the plan.

FEVER

Bet a mil would be an easy grab. Ya think?

DAWES

All of law enforcement is looking for you--

FEVER

M-uh point exactly. Gonna need me a spot uh running money if I expect ta stay one step ahead of the Hell Hounds and old Johnny Law.

DAWES

Be smart. Keep out of sight.

FEVER

(clocks his gun)

Oh, I can handle myself. Hey, one more thing... Y'all can't never say anything about this. Right?

DAWES

Of course not.

FEVER

Or the judge, neither?

DAWES

I'm sure he wants to forget this ever happened.

FEVER

But don'tcha think that's a powerful card to play?

DAWES

I don't understand.

FEVER

I mean for y'all. I'm sayonara forever, played out. But you, I know you. You'll have that judge wrapped around yer little finger the rest of his days. Figure that's worth something.

The silence between the notes rings louder and louder.

DAWES

(chortles)

My professional advice is to get out of town as quickly and quietly as possible, and never look back.

FEVER

We can make it an installment situation.

They trade dead-fish stares...

Dawes fights to hide his grimace. Wheels turning.

The loaded .45 on the nightstand appears awfully tempting.

FEVER

I got plenty on both of y'all. Certain
recorded phone conversations.

Meanders toward Fever.

Closer.

Too close--

Fever stretches for the gun.

FEVER

Nuh-uh.

Dawes steals a waffle fry.

Chews.

DAWES

Fever, you're an easy man to dislike.

FEVER

Okay! I'se just thinkin' out loud.
Sometimes my mouth gets ahead of m-uh
brain. But y'all owe me. Definitely,
owe me-- You remember that.

Fever pulls a confident drag off his cigarette.

He isn't going away. Dawes makes a business decision.

DAWES

You know my favorite sonnet by John
Milton?

FEVER

Can't say we've walked that tract.

DAWES

"When I Consider How My Light is
Spent," a man reflecting on his
remaining days. I'm not a man to stand
and wait.

No standing. No waiting. Dawes heads for the door before
another thought pops into Fever's head.

Too late--

FEVER
On second thought...

Dawes never turns to face him.

FEVER
... Two million has a nice ring. One
from you. One from him. Hell, that's
pocket change for you.

DAWES
I doubt he has it.

FEVER
I doubt I care. Now skip along,
counselor. Scat.

Off the back of Dawes' head--

SNAP TO BLACK

ADD TITLE "MISSING 33 HOURS"

EXT. ANNIE'S HOUSE - DAY

Middle-class homes behind wintering lawns line the street.

TWO BLUE UNIFORMS hustle Annie out of the house and into a
waiting patrol car.

In the backseat, she fumbles with her phone. Dials.

Lights flash. A siren squawks. They race away.

INT. THE GRANGER HOME - LIVING ROOM - SAME

A **brown bubble-cushion mailer** lands on the coffee table--

DAWES (O.S.)
A similar packet was delivered to the
authorities earlier today.

Elizabeth considers for a moment...

Colt dives right in.

DAWES
Inside you'll find pictures
identifying Wesley Watkins, age fifty-
two and his home address.

Dawes hands Colt a BUILD-A-DOLL CATALOG.

DAWES

He was very specific about the girls he abducted, matching them to this catalog.

Pictures of dolls. Photos of girls taped alongside them.

Colt's eyes drop down the page...

DAWES (O.S.)

They're his doll collection.

Elizabeth shuffles through photos. Drops one. The picture of the Red-Haired Girl with pigtails and freckles.

EXT. LARGE TWO-STORY HOME - SAME

Everything is wet. Washed clean by melted snow.

An army of FBI, SWAT and POLICE OFFICERS stalks the house from all directions. Weapons drawn.

COLT (O.S.)

How soon before he's in custody?

DAWES (O.S.)

As we speak.

INT. THE GRANGER HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Everyone gathers a breath of lighter air.

Elizabeth SCRAMBLES for her phone. Dials.

DAWES

I doubt he'll give anyone trouble.

EXT. LARGE TWO-STORY HOME - DAY

Lights strobe. Uniforms everywhere. Radio chatter.

Crime scene tape crisscrosses the yard.

Confused, Wesley is led away in handcuffs.

DAWES (O.S.)

The authorities were also given his laptop, replete with graphic photos I chose not to include in your packet.

INT. THE GRANGER HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

ELIZABETH
(hangs up)
Annie's almost there.

She composes herself. Grabs her purse.

ELIZABETH
I'm going to see my granddaughter.

DAWES
There is one more detail... we very
much need to discuss.

COLT
Money.

DAWES
Yes, money.

Elizabeth edges between both of them.

ELIZABETH
Money? What money?

DAWES
He's peddling the notion of **two
million dollars from Your Honor.**

ELIZABETH
(blanches)
Tell him no--

COLT
Absolutely not--

DAWES
And after all the bread and circuses,
that's not even where it becomes
Byzantine.

ELIZABETH
(closes her eyes)
Please leave my house.

DAWES
You see, he'll never stop. He'll keep
coming back for more and more. As they
say, character is destiny.

COLT
But you know where he is.

DAWES
Holed up in a local motel.

COLT
So you... you can contact him.

DAWES
Yes, but I won't. This has become much more complicated than I'm prepared to deal with.

ELIZABETH
(to Colt)
What's his name again?

DAWES
Dawes. Eden Dawes--

She spits in his face.

ELIZABETH
Eden Dawes, you disgust me.

DAWES
As I was saying, more complicated than I'm prepared to deal with.

With a handkerchief, Dawes dabs warm spit off his cheek.

DAWES
You see, he sent armed people to my home and office earlier today.

But does he know they were Colt and Elizabeth?

We can't tell from anyone's face.

Dawes slides a note across the coffee table.

Apprehensive, Colt doesn't move.

Dawes urges him with his eyes.

Colt flips it over.

An address: "1900 Corson Ave S. Room 127"

The judge reacts. HOLY SHIT.

INT. DIM BASEMENT WITH NO WINDOWS - DAY

A FIRST RESPONDER reaches out.

The Red-Haired Girl refuses to be touched.

Haley rides out in the arms of the burly FBI Agent.

EXT. LARGE TWO-STORY HOME - DAY

Detectives Grady and Zane arrive on scene. Climb out of Grady's PICK-UP TRUCK. Bark orders.

INT. COLT GRANGER'S SEDAN - SAME

Unflinching, Colt stares out the window as his wife drives. Ignoring all traffic signals and common sense.

COLT

Tell me this wasn't my fault.

She sits in silent judgment.

EXT. LARGE TWO-STORY HOME - PORCH - DAY

Cassidy and Maddie file out the front door. Wrapped in blankets and First Responders.

A FEMALE PARAMEDIC tries to pry Haley from the FBI Agent--

But Haley ain't letting go.

Annie sprints through the front yard.

Good luck slowing her down.

Colt's sedan flies in hot.

INSIDE COLT'S SEDAN

Elizabeth reaches for her purse.

Colt's already halfway out the door.

THE FRONT YARD

A quiet rage fixes behind Colt's eyes.

GRADY

Your Honor.

ZANE

Juuuudge.

Colt storms past the detectives without a thought. Locked into Wesley in the backseat of a police cruiser -- surrounded by several Police Officers.

Somewhere well-beyond the reach of reason, Colt marches forward. Wrestles a 9mm out of his jacket.

ACROSS THE YARD

Elizabeth realizes what's happening.

ELIZABETH

Colt!

SLOW MOTION

NEAR THE POLICE CRUISER

Colt doesn't break stride. Raises his gun.

GRADY

Gun!

Dashes after the judge.

The Police Officers spot the gun.

FBI and SWAT agents raise their weapons.

GRADY AND ZANE

Put down the gun. Put it down now.

A mere stone's throw from the cruiser, Colt stops. Stiffens. Stock-still and locked into his shot.

Every law enforcement firearm is aimed at the judge.

Colt squints down the barrel.

Wesley stares. Possessed. Unblinking.

THE PORCH

Annie spins to see--

Drops Haley out of her arms. On to her feet.

END SLOW MOTION

At the top of her lungs...

ANNIE

DADDY!

NEAR THE POLICE CRUISER

Colt knows that voice anywhere.

EVERYONE

Down! Put it down!

THE PORCH

Annie runs to her father. Haley in tow.

NEAR THE POLICE CRUISER

Colt catches up to the moment.

Drops the gun. Steps away.

Locks his hands behind his head.

EJECTS a primal howl--

COLT

Ahhhhhhhh!

Police Officers creep toward him.

EVERYONE

On the ground! On the ground, now!

Colt considers retrieving his gun--

Annie and Haley wrap him in a tight bear hug. A protective blanket of innocence.

While officers bark from all directions, Colt's face-to-face with Annie. They share an intimate moment. He kisses her forehead. Kneels in front of Haley. Gently touches her cheek.

EVERYONE

Down! Down! Get down!

Surrendering, Colt lowers himself to the ground.

COLT

Okay. Okay.

ACROSS THE YARD

Annie hustles Haley to Grandma.

Elizabeth cries.

The little girl is smothered in tears and kisses.

NEAR THE POLICE CRUISER

Zane towers over Colt. Points his gun in an alpha pose.

Considers options.

--Offers his hand to the judge.

The police melt away as Colt struggles to his feet.

A half-dozen cars arrive, filled with anxious families looking for their long-missing daughters.

EXT. HOSPITAL - ENTRANCE - DAY

Ambulances. News vans. Medical teams swarm.

It's not chaos. But it's close.

INT. HOSPITAL - WAITING ROOM - DAY

Swollen to capacity. Dour faces riven with questions.

Parents of young victims corner a DOCTOR the instant they leave Annie and Jacob. Demand answers. Beg for answers.

Annie greets her mother with a lingering hug.

Katie doesn't know what's happening, but she knows it's serious. Takes her father's hand. A familiar warmth.

ELIZABETH

Can I see her?

ANNIE

They're running some tests.

ELIZABETH

Okay. Alright, we'll wait.

ANNIE

Where is he?

ELIZABETH

Your father... He's responsible for this. He's the one who got Haley back.

Loud enough for the entire room to hear...

ELIZABETH

Colt Granger got all of them back.

Grateful strangers. Tear-stained faces.

Annie sees the emotional impact on the other families.

ELIZABETH

And when you take an honest measure of the man... that's your father.

ANNIE

(tears threatening)
Then where the hell is he?

Elizabeth pats Annie's hand.

ELIZABETH
Oh, I'm with your father on this one.

INT. THE GRANGER HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

A rifle bag filled with a couple of shotguns ZIPS tight--
The doorbell chimes.

Dressed in black from head to toe, Colt answers the door.

Two prehistoric beasts, Officers CHICO JUÁREZ (28) and JAKE SHAY (32) stand shoulder to shoulder. They're as tall as a dumpster is long. Both well-acquainted with the weight room.

Colt isn't impressed.

JUÁREZ
Judge Granger?

COLT
Yes, officers. How can I be of assistance?

JUÁREZ
We need to talk.

COLT
Is this about earlier?

JUÁREZ
No, sir.

COLT
Yes, well, I have pressing business for the court right now. I'm sure you understand.

Pepper Shay breezes out from behind the man-wall.

SHAY
I was thinking the same thing.

MOMENTS LATER

Rifle bag at his side, Colt sits alone on the couch.

SHAY
Where ya going, Judge?

COLT
That's privileged.

She grins. He doesn't.

COLT
I'm not answering questions.

SHAY
We know about the conspiracy, the
obstruction, the lies...

COLT
(overlapping)
I want my attorney.

SHAY
Do you know the whereabouts of Antoine
Dubois or Eden Dawes? Have you spoken
to either recently?

He refuses to look at her.

SHAY
Well, we can go on, me asking
questions and you not answering 'em,
or we can do this the hard way.

Glances over her shoulders. The officers. STOIC.

SHAY
When I saw that self-aggrandizing
prick Eden Dawes on the docket,
everyone knew there would be some
shady shit. But Fever? He's a goddam
abomination and you set him free. Do
you understand the gravity of what's
happening here?

COLT
(a blank stare)
Yes, I do, ma'am.

SHAY
We're all looking for what's right.

She'd been waiting a while to unfurl that one.

Lifts official documents out of her blazer.

SHAY
Now, this is a warrant for the
arrest...

She opens the papers.

Slowly, Colt closes his eyes.

SHAY (O.S.)
... of Mr. Antoine "Fever" Dubois.

SHOCKED.

SHAY
I believe he's complicit in an attempt to obstruct justice. He tried to manipulate the court, and I believe you've been an unwitting part of it. Would you agree?

COLT
(reeling)
Yes. Yes, ma'am.

Colt spots the officer's nametag: "Shay"

Moves to the other nametag: "Juárez"

SHAY (O.S.)
In the meantime, my cousin Jake and his partner will provide any assistance you might need. Any assistance.

Huh? Colt's confused.

SHAY
If he's thought to be, I dunno, resisting...

That clears it up.

SHAY
These men are available twenty-four/seven. Most people are tourists in this world, Your Honor. The People demand justice. Do you understand?

COLT
(pats his rifle bag)
Got all the help I need.

COLT
(to the officers)
Thank you.

Shay stands.

Everyone stands.

SHAY
Goes without saying, but let's say it anyway. We were never here.

INT. SUPER SAVER MOTEL - ROOM 127 - DAY

TELEVISION DOCUMENTARY: A salmon leaps out of the water. A grizzly bear SWIPES at it.

DOCUMENTARY NARRATOR

Pacific salmon live for many years in the ocean before migrating to the upper reaches of the rivers where they were born, to spawn on gravel beds.

BEDROOM

Fever shovels a spoon in his mouth.

Digs out another bite from a pint of cookie-dough ice cream.

He's engrossed in the documentary. Until he's not.

Walks to the bathroom. Pulls a drag off his cigarette.

Gun down the back of his pants.

BATHROOM

Places his smoke and .45 on the edge of the sink.

No need for privacy. The door's open.

Drops trou. Parks on the commode.

The documentary drones in the background.

BEDROOM

CRACK! The front door SPLINTERS open--

A gigantic combat boot hangs mid-air...

Followed closely by Rondo's BENELLI M4 SEMI-AUTOMATIC SHOTGUN. On his heels, Colt waves a MOSSBERG PUMP ACTION 12-GAUGE SHOTGUN.

BATHROOM

Fever hikes up his pants. Reaches for his gun.

BEDROOM

Rondo nods to the bathroom.

Cigarette smoke wafts out the open door.

They both draw a bead on it. Determined faces.

A hot second on their motionless backs.

Fever jumps out BLASTING--

One round bites Rondo in the leg. Another finds his arm.

Colt's first shot...

BOOM!

... buckshot almost tears Fever in half at the waist.

Rondo's first shot...

BOOM!

... almost blows off his thigh.

Fever spins.

Colt pumps. Advances. Fires again.

BOOM!

Blood sprays through the back of his white shirt.

Fever's chest HITS the bathroom wall.

He loses his gun.

From one knee, Rondo fires again...

BOOM!

... blows a chunk out of the wall. The door jamb, kindling.

Fever slides down the bone-white wall. Blood smears.

He crumbles deep inside the bathroom, face-up.

A wet THUD.

Colt keeps coming. Pumps again.

Fever's leg shakes. Spasms. Blood pools on cheap vinyl.

Colt enters the bathroom. Kicks the .45 away.

Stands over Fever. Aims down at his head...

FEVER (O.S.)

(weak)

You? Fuck y--

BOOM!

BATHROOM

A couple drops of blood catch Colt's face.

He pants--

COLT

Clear!

BEDROOM

Rondo touches his stomach. A serious wound.

Colt helps him to his feet.

RONDO

I think it's bad.

The back wall peppered with bullet holes.

TELEVISION DOCUMENTARY: A dead salmon floats in the river.

DOCUMENTARY NARRATOR

After spawning, all Pacific salmon
die, and the life cycle starts again.

A stiff breeze cracks the front door open.

Outside, Colt staggers away. Rondo draped on his shoulder.

EXT. COLT GRANGER'S SEDAN - DAY

The car is a blur.

INSIDE THE CAR

Rondo struggles. He's lost a lot of blood.

THE STREET

A RED LIGHT.

Colt blows right through it.

Cross-traffic nearly collides.

Horns!

He weaves past cars like they were bolted to the asphalt.

Fires through another RED.

A speedy COMPACT with the right-of-way CLIPS his rear bumper.

INSIDE THE CAR

They jerk left-- then right. Colt fights for control.

Gets straight.

Checks his buddy. Checks the road. Checks his buddy.

Rondo grinds his teeth.

WRONG SIDE OF THE ROAD

Colt cuts into oncoming traffic to pass a TRUCK--

A MOTORCYCLE sweeps in front of the truck. Blocks Colt.

Trapped in oncoming traffic, he dodges head-on collisions.

Panicked. Colt searches for an opening.

Horns scream.

Motorists screech to a stop.

Colt zigs. Zags-- Dives back into the right lane.

Finds black ice.

INSIDE THE CAR

Colt over-corrects. Spins. Out of control.

Slides into a parked car.

WHAM!

RONDO

You drive worse than Elizabeth.

The engine's dead. Colt cranks it once. It won't turn over.
Tries it again.

A handful of Good Samaritans gather. Concerned.

RONDO

Hit it again.

Bingo.

Colt's foot drops the accelerator.

THE STREET

The crowd steps back.

His sedan gets loose on the ice again.

Tires grab clear pavement.

They're off.

BLOCKS AWAY

A flagger holds traffic.

INSIDE THE CAR

Through the side window, the world's a blur.

The engine throbs. Strains

COLT
How you doing soldier?

ROAD WORK comes up fast.

THE STREET

They scream past a line of cars being held by the flagger.

Clobbers an orange barrel that fires in front of a squad car.

A squad car sprints into action.

Fishtails around the corner. Flashing red and blue.

INSIDE THE CAR

Colt presses hands-free. It dials through the speakers.

RONDO
Colt, I'm scared.

COLT
It's gonna be okay.

RONDO
That's whatcha say when it's not gonna
be okay.

9-11 OPERATOR
Nine-one-one. What's your emergency?

RONDO
This is a lot of blood.

COLT
(overlapping)
This is Judge Colt Granger. I'm
declaring a medical emergency. There's
a unit right behind me in pursuit.
Tell 'em to get off my ass and clear
me a path.

9-11 OPERATOR
Stay on the line, sir.

COLT
 Granger. Judge Granger.
 (to Rondo)
 We're almost there. Keep talking,
 Rondo. Rondo?!

RONDO
 (in and out of it)
 I fucked up.

COLT
 You didn't fuck up. We got that son of
 a bitch.

RONDO
 I'm sorry, Colt.

The squad car ROCKETS past Colt's sedan. Siren blaring.

9-11 OPERATOR
 Judge, I'm going to stay on the line
 with you--

COLT
 (hangs up)
 Keep talking, Rondo.

RONDO
 (weak)
 Haley's safe?

COLT
 Yeah. She's safe.

RONDO
 That's good.

His belly is a mess.

RONDO
 I'm bleeding out, Colt.

COLT
 I know.

Every word that comes to mind seems inadequate.

COLT
 You're a good friend, Rondo.

RONDO
 Anything for a brother.

COLT
 Brothers in arms.

RONDO

No.

Rondo's bloody hand reaches for Colt.

Colt squeezes it tight.

COLT

That's right. That's right, Rondo.

Slowly, Rondo closes his eyes.

COLT

Rondo? Come on, man.

Steals a moment. Turns to his buddy.

Works between the road and his friend.

Colt wells up quick.

--Swerves to avoid a HATCHBACK.

Fights tears.

Rondo's motionless.

All sound falls away.

Colt hangs his head.

Flashing lights and sirens lead them down a cement ribbon of headlights and tail lights. Gunmetal gray and charcoal clouds stretch over the city. The sun dips below blue, snowy peaks.

The hospital, nowhere in sight.

INT. HOSPITAL - WAITING ROOM - NIGHT

Standing room only but subdued. Families line the halls. Fingers peck on phones, searching for any scrap of news.

Face in his hands, Colt slumps on the floor. Fights back tears. Elizabeth finds him. The judge shows a brave face.

ELIZABETH

Colt, what happened?

COLT

(stands)

Rondo. Rondo got shot.

ELIZABETH

But he's gonna be okay?

COLT
No, Elizabeth. Rondo's gone.

ELIZABETH
Dear God. Colt, I'm so sorry.

He wipes his friend's blood from his hands.

ELIZABETH
He was a good man. He was blessed to
have a friend like you.

COLT
I got him killed.

ELIZABETH
Don't say that.

COLT
I asked him to do it.

ELIZABETH
He was a grown man. Rondo knew what he
was doing.

COLT
He'd do anything I asked.

ELIZABETH
Because you were friends.

No, he was much more.

A respectful pause.

ELIZABETH
Colt, I'm sorry, but what happened to
the other thing?

COLT
Put it somewhere it ain't coming back.

She nods.

ELIZABETH
Good man. We're gonna spend the night.

COLT
Haley?

ELIZABETH
It's precautionary.

COLT

I can't lose another thing, Elizabeth.
Not one more-- I can't.

ELIZABETH

You won't. It's over.

COLT

(surveys the room)
Where's Annie?

JEREMIAH

--We got here as soon as we heard.

Jeremiah falls into a church hug with Elizabeth the instant he arrives. Dylan and Wyatt hot on his tail.

DYLAN

Is everybody okay?

ELIZABETH

(who the hell is this?)
Yes, thank you.

COLT

She's the new Wyatt.

WYATT

Hey, I'm standing right here.

ELIZABETH

(head on a swivel)
And these other people?

A half-dozen people behind Wyatt...

WYATT

The best damn clerks in the
courthouse.

DYLAN

We don't give up on family.

Colt inventories their faces.

Takes an extra moment on Dylan and Wyatt.

COLT

That's right.

JEREMIAH

How you holding up, Colt?

COLT
 Hard telling, Jeremiah. The day's
 still kicking.
 (still searching)
 Has anyone seen my daughter?

ZANE (O.S.)
 Colt Granger.

Grady and Zane work their way through the clerks.

COLT
 (dismissive)
 Detectives.

ZANE
 Can we have a minute?

COLT
 In a minute--

GRADY
 In private.

ZANE
 Now, Your Honor.

JEREMIAH
 I'm Judge Tobin. Can I help you?

ELIZABETH
 What's this all about?

COLT
 Where's Annie?!

The crowd parts...

ANNIE
 I'm right here.

No other words are necessary.

A smile starts deep in Colt's heart. Blooms across his face.

Haley steps out from behind Annie. Continues to Grandma.

Elizabeth sweeps her a few feet away. Kneels.

ELIZABETH
 Oh, baby, we were all so worried.
 Why'd you leave the yard like that?

HALEY

I was picking flowers for Grandpa. Did he get flowers for his birthday?

ELIZABETH

(with a hug)
Oh, Haley.

Something rolled up in her tiny fist. Offers it to Grandma.

HALEY

The nurse helped me draw it.

Elizabeth unfurls a drawing of orange flowers.

HALEY

All they had was orange. Do you think it's okay?

ELIZABETH

I think it's perfect.

Haley lights up. Nods.

ZANE

Judge Granger.

COLT

(staring at Annie)
Not now, detective.

ANNIE

Daddy, I wanted to say--

COLT

You don't have to say anything.

She mouths "I love you."

They fall into a deep hug.

Elizabeth's on the verge of tears.

Dylan too.

ZANE

Judge Granger, you're under arrest for suspicion of murder.

Colt looks for comfort in Elizabeth's face.

Her eyes, sadder by the moment.

JEREMIAH

--Hold on, now.

COLT
 Alright... It's alright.

ANNIE
 Daddy?

COLT
 I need a minute.

Doubles over.

Reflectively, the crowd steps toward Colt.

JEREMIAH
 Colt? ANNIE
 Are you okay?

WYATT
 Judge? ELIZABETH
 Someone get a nurse!

COLT
 (composes himself)
 No, I'm okay. I'm okay.

Draws a wiser conclusion.

COLT
 Actually, I'm not okay. I lost a lot
 today.

Haley presents Colt her drawing.

HALEY
 They're flowers for your birthday.

A cocktail of emotions writ large on Colt's face.

Elizabeth covers her mouth as if her hands could hold back
 the tears.

Colt edges between the drawing, Haley and Annie.

COLT
 (to Dylan)
 And that's why we never give up on
 family.

DYLAN
 You're gonna have the best defense
 team in the city.

JEREMIAH
 Damn right.

Colt hands the drawing back to Haley.

COLT

You keep this safe for me.

She handles the drawing like treasure.

Annie hoists her daughter into her arms.

Colt feels his age. Moves slower. Kisses his wife.

COLT

I love you.

ELIZABETH

I love you too.

COLT

Please bail me out.

ELIZABETH

Of course.

She can't keep her hands off her man.

ELIZABETH

And I got you a nice new suit. Yer gonna look great in court. It's gonna be okay, Colt-- You'll see.

Lost in each other's eyes until--

Zane yanks Colt's arm behind his back.

Shocks both judges.

JEREMIAH

Do we really have to do the cuffs?

Zane relaxes.

Pinches Colt's shoulder.

COLT

I'll need counsel.

JEREMIAH

I'd be honored.

COLT

I mean someone good.

They chuckle.

As Colt's escorted away, Grady recites from a Miranda card.

A thick pall settles across Colt's friends and family.

Except for Annie. You can't tell her any different. She's never been more proud of her father.

FADE TO BLACK:

TITLE: "SIX MONTHS LATER"

INT. MINIMUM SECURITY PRISON - LOBBY - DAY

A PRISON GUARD escorts a handful of visitors through a security gate.

They stop. Wait.

A loud BUZZ.

A heavy door pops open.

One at a time, each walks into a...

VISITING AREA

Dozens of tables teeming with inmates in jumpsuits. Visitors in street clothes. Some chat. Some play board games.

The mood, friendly and light.

From a window, a CHERRY TREE blooms outside. Petals flit in a gentle spring breeze.

Elizabeth and Annie sit together laughing.

They have eyes on another table...

Inmate Colt Granger plays checkers with Haley. She's letting him win again.

FADE OUT.