

CAPITAL OFFENSE

by

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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 spill everywhere. Cute as a doll. Her eyes are as clear, bright, and blue 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.

SNAP TO BLACK

TITLE: "CAPITAL OFFENSE"

INT. SUPERIOR COURTHOUSE - UNDERGROUND GARAGE - DAY

Judge COLT GRANGER (65) rules every room he enters. Plain-spoken without a hint of dialect or pretense. His world is clear. Settled.

ADD TITLE: "SUPERIOR COURTHOUSE, NOVEMBER 5, 2018"

Accompanies his closest friend at the courthouse, Judge JEREMIAH TOBIN (45). African-American. Brilliant. Fearless in the face of a dessert tray.

COLT

... So you're abandoning me.

JEREMIAH

I could be shaping the mind of the next Thurgood Marshall.

COLT

An utter waste, playing wet nurse to a bunch of university trust-fund babies.

JEREMIAH

I believe the word you're searching for is "congratulations."

Colt grumbles.

JEREMIAH

--You fighting with Elizabeth again?

COLT
 (disappointed)
 Ah, it's my birthday.

JEREMIAH
 Well, congratulations.

COLT
 And if I see a single balloon...

JEREMIAH
 Perish the thought.

THE ELEVATOR

JEREMIAH
 We're not making a difference, Colt.

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
 Without order being our true north,
 the whole goddamn system crumbles. We
are the difference. At least you
were... til you decided to ditch me.

JEREMIAH
 Our backlog gets bigger every year.

COLT
 Jeremiah, you're better than anyone 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

When the accomplice retaliates and shoots the homeowner, well, now he's on the hook for murder, so he does not hesitate when two young boys come running out of the kitchen--

JEREMIAH

I don't wanna get into this.

COLT

Imagine that mother's last image of this wicked world, watching each boy's head explode off their 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 his actual 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

I do not agree!

COLT

Their lives have meaning again--

JEREMIAH

By inducing ventricular fibrillation?!

COLT

We balance the scales. We settle it!
--Why are you being so mean to me?

JEREMIAH

Why are you making it so easy? Colt,
I'm going to miss our little chats
when I leave.

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 growls 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. 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
That?

As she points, her sleeve hikes up her arm. Reveals a TATTOO.

WYATT
Jesus, if the judge sees a tattoo...

DYLAN
But you're gonna be cool, right?

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 winter 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.

The judge snatches a black robe. Quickly dresses.

WYATT

Everything's ready.

Colt grunts.

ZIPS. Dylan stretches to hand him a file. Slowly, Colt moves the file aside. Bends over his desk. Inspects the coffee.

He looks at Wyatt. Wyatt at Dylan. Dylan 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, are you familiar with 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. Dark wood. A jury box filled with somber faces.
The BAILIFF announces...

BAILIFF
You may be seated.

The courtroom settles in.

Colt's phone lights up with a text message from Elizabeth.

Without noticing it or breaking eye contact with the jury, he
stuffs his phone 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?

Defense attorney EDEN DAWES (70) slowly rises to his feet.
He's a mercenary in a bespoke suit.

His CLIENT sits beside him. More on that guy later.

JUDGE GRANGER'S CHAMBERS

Dylan rushes out the door without hanging up the phone.

THE HALLWAY

She SPRINTS around the corner and BURSTS into--

THE COURTROOM

--Colt SNAPS his head around.

She can't catch her breath.

DYLAN

Something... Something's happened.

INT. THE GRANGER HOME - KITCHEN - FLASHBACK - DAY

A pair of eyes squints.

ADD TITLE: "6 HOURS EARLIER"

Colt scans official court documents on his laptop. At the kitchen table, sips 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 your way to work.

Distracted, Colt grunts while typing.

COLT

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.

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 onto 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 out a few more keystrokes.

ELIZABETH
Colt.

COLT
(exasperated)
You would not believe 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 couch. 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
Okay, well, I don't wanna look until
you think it's ready.

HALEY
It's for your birthday.

COLT
Oh?

Honestly, not understanding what Elizabeth said.

COLT
Sweetheart, did you hear what Grandma
was yelling?

HALEY
She was yelling at you.

COLT
Yes, I know, but she wasn't mad.

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

COLT
That's what I thought. Well, sounds
like she's taking you to school.

HALEY
But you're supposed to--

COLT
I know. I know, but...

Her face wilts.

COLT
Look, say the word, and I'll march
right back in there and tell her no
way. It's my day to take Haley.

HALEY
But...

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

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

HALEY
Okay.

Solo, Colt climbs in the car.

HALEY
Don't forget about your surprise.

COLT
Wouldn't miss it for the world.

HALEY
Bye, Grandpa.

His sedan eases down the driveway.

Haley waves. The flowers still pinned behind her back. Grandpa's car disappears into suburbia. She evaluates her meager bouquet. Starts searching for a few more winners.

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

END FLASHBACK

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

Dawes sits. Head down. Perfectly coiffed hair.

Calm as a pipe bomb ready to blow, the arrogant snob raises his head and with perfect diction announces his terms...

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

ADD TITLE "MISSING: 3 HOURS"

Colt FIRES his chair into the wall.

Rounds his desk.

COLT
You threatening me, boy?!

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 then.

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, now
does it?

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.
I won't be played. 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 full
well who I am. I provide a service to
those with nowhere else to turn--

COLT

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

DAWES

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

COLT

Chills me to the bone.

DAWES

One call to Governor Delano--

COLT

What?!

DAWES

One call from you--

COLT

I'd be censured, removed, and disbarred.

DAWES

You put her in the governor's mansion.

COLT

Your client will pay for his crimes.

Dawes waits him out.....

DAWES

Take all the time you need.

COLT

Gimme proof. Then maybe we'll have something to talk about.

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 (V.O.)

He's asking for hard evidence.

His client from the courtroom, ANTOINE "FEVER" DUBOIS (25), rocks the vending machine back and forth.

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

Fishes out his cheeseburger. Raises it like a trophy.

FEVER
(a swampy drawl)
Got it.

A PRIVATE ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

PLOP! A steaming burger on a paper plate lands on the table. Still hot. Stupid hot. Fever taps it like it might bite.

Dawes taps on a laptop.

DAWES
Okay, let's back up. Why that particular house?

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.

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 dungeon or sumthin'. Kinda freaked me out, 'cause I thought we were alone. Didn't figure it til later.

Fever snaps his fingers. Points at Dawes.

FEVER
Hold that thought.

Grabs his burger.

--Instantly drops it.

FEVER
Mother...

DAWES
If you do it again...

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

Almost genuflecting, Fever offers a sweeping bow.

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
Nah, it's what I been sayin'. M-uh
joints go every which way-- Whole
family's got the syndrome and why we
all tend ta wiggle outta tight spaces,
manacles, straitjackets, and such... A
family of fuckin' Houdinis!

In the corridor, a GUARD scowls through the window.

FEVER
(barks at the guard)
Right there in my file. If they'd ever
bother to read it-- If they can read--

DAWES
Fever...

FEVER
Wanna see me pop my shoulder outta
whack?

DAWES

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

FEVER

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

Finally, chomps into his steaming burger. 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 purdy ripe. But they were still kinda young, ya know.

DAWES

And the whereabouts of the laptop now?

FEVER

We always planned on going back--

DAWES

Fever...

FEVER

I mean, hell. It was all so easy.

DAWES

(overlapping)

Fever...

FEVER

But then he upgraded all his security.

DAWES

Where's the computer now?!

Oozing confidence, Fever chews his burger. Swallows.

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

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

Colt opens an email. Subject line: "URGENT."

His sorrowful eyes overwhelmed as they drift across the computer screen. Something inside him breaks. He sobs.

INT. GOVERNOR'S MANSION - STUDY - DAY

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

COLT
Yes, Madam Governor.

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

COLT
Margaret, I need a favor.

DELANO
There you are. Anything! --That doesn't keep me from being re-elected.

She ekes out a smile.

He doesn't.

COLT
I need you to grant clemency for someone who's about to be found guilty.

DELANO
Oh? Guilty of what?

COLT
Murder. A whole family.

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

COLT
Not exactly.

DELANO
Extenuating circumstances?

COLT
That part'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
That 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 a hypocrite.

COLT
You'd look compassionate.

DELANO
You told me he did it!

COLT
He did.

DELANO
This wouldn't even make it past the
Clemency Board, who absolutely hates
my guts by the way. No, Colt. I'm
sorry. The answer's no.

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

COLT
It's for my granddaughter.

DELANO
You're gonna have to explain that one.

Their eyes meet for an eternity.

Glassy-eyed and emotionally broken, Colt ekes out...

COLT

She likes to draw pictures, you know. Haley. Her name is Haley. We, um, draw them together. --She's very good for eight. She draws them of... of me.

DELANO

Colt, what's this all about?

COLT

(heavy sigh)

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

DELANO

No, this is a mistrial. You have to recuse yourself.

COLT

(opens his laptop)

I've seen the evidence.

DELANO

Oh, I believe you. I just can't be caught within a million miles of this.

A thought unfurls as she gently closes his laptop.

DELANO

How long?

COLT

A few hours.

DELANO

Who else knows?

COLT

Just you.

DELANO

There are two guys I use, discrete and very good at what they do-- You do not wanna watch. And don't ask. In county?

COLT

Yes, ma'am.

DELANO

They're wrapping up something right now, but I could have them here in... twenty... twenty-four hours tops.

Spinning out, Colt chokes on words he can't spit out.

COLT
No, but... No, that's... We don't have
that kind of time.

DELANO
Well then, that's it-- That's all I
got for you. This is a mistrial.

COLT
Margaret.

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

COLT
Madam 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

On a monitor labeled "EMPLOYEE ENTRANCE," the blurry image of
Colt POUNDING on the back door.

COLT
(over a muffled speaker)
Open up in there. You hear me?

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?

COLT
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 metal door splits Fain's lip.

FAIN
Fuck...

COLT

Goddamnit, son. I'm coming in. Don't stand in the door like I'm not. 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 Judge Colt Granger. You vonce.

FAIN

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

Colt looks past Fain for someone he recognizes.

FAIN

(snaps his fingers)

--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 (60) is old-school. All chin under a military flattop. Walks to his office with Fain.

TEASLEY

Was there a tussle?

FAIN

You could call it that. I thought we were gonna have to cuff him.

TEASLEY

(almost amused)

I'm sure that wouldn't have gone well for anyone. A little advice, son: Never pick a fight with a Marine decorated for covert ops in 'Nam. I'd say you got off light.

Gently, Fain touches his swollen lip.

FAIN

I caught the door as he came in.

TEASLEY

I'd stick with that story.

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. You realize my men
are filing reports on you as we speak--

COLT

You can make those go away.

TEASLEY

... And if you're planning on doing
what I know I would do... Besides, now
there's footage placing you here.

COLT

Footage disappears all the time.

TEASLEY

It's backed up.

COLT

(stands)

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

TEASLEY

Colt! You have to know the FBI is
already nosing around the courthouse.

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 in about thirty minutes. Agreed?

Colt hesitates. Duly stamps his agreement with a sharp nod.

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

Where y'all takin' me?

GUARD

You're being transferred.

FEVER

Bull-shit. I have rights, ya know.

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 (20s). 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.

FEVER

Come on, ladies. That yer best?

Muscle Head wipes his nose.

Sees his own blood.

Flames dance in his eyes.

Enraged, the inmate bullrushes Fever.

THE CORRIDOR

The Guards pull on cigarettes.

Keep watch at a comfortable distance. Grunts and curses echo down the corridor. One last KA-THUNK, and it goes quiet.

Suddenly alert, the Guards stomp out their smokes.

GUARD

Is he ready to talk?!

Fever staggers out with a swollen cheek and busted lip.

FEVER

I could chat.

(points)

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

EXT. DOWNTOWN STREET - NIGHT

From a distance, we see the JAILHOUSE EMPLOYEE PARKING LOT across the street. Captain Teasley approaches Colt's sedan. Bends down. Speaks to Colt through the window.

A low rumble of distant freeway traffic.

An argument ignites. We can barely make it out.

TEASLEY

Enough! Go home.

Teasley skulks away. Colt sprints after him. Teasley turns. Opens his arms like a linebacker ready to pounce. Mirrors Colt's every move. Teasley won't let him pass. It's a stand-off. More muffled growling...

TEASLEY

Go! Home!

INT./EXT. THE GRANGER HOME - NIGHT

A motionless American flag is mounted on the front porch. Icicles hang off the pole. Snow begins to fall.

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

At the kitchen table, two detectives sip coffee.

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

And DETECTIVE GRADY (50) is a dumpy mope. Dressed as if he were preparing for the coldest winter on record.

Elizabeth sits across from them.

Standing, Colt strangles the top rail of a wooden chair back.

ZANE

As you know, judge the first forty-eight hours are 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 your granddaughter alive.

ELIZABETH

How do you know that?

ZANE

He has a type. He definitely has a type, and she matches the profile.

ELIZABETH

And you're sure?

GRADY

Pretty sure.

Wrong answer. Colt's grip tightens. The chair legs tap against the hardwood. Soft, then relentless. Then angry.

GRADY

We've been on this for over six years.

ELIZABETH

Six years?! Colt, six years?

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

Concerned, Zane works between Colt and the chair.

ELIZABETH

Who are your suspects? Where are your leads? How many people are working on this, Colt? Two people! These two?!

GRADY

We're very sorry, ma'am, but--

Under the abuse, a wooden leg of Colt's chair SHATTERS.

ELIZABETH

Oh, fuck you. "I'm sorry."

COLT

(quietly threatening)
Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH

(snaps)
Okay, we're done. No, we're done talking now. Thank you, detectives.

Shoos them to the door.

COLT

Break whatever you have to. You get me?! I want constant updates!

GRADY

Copy that, Your Honor.

Notices the birthday cake.

GRADY

Oh, whose birthday?

ELIZABETH

Good night, detectives.

The instant the door closes...

ELIZABETH

Well, that was worthless. The FBI wasn't any better. What'd the governor say?

COLT

She didn't say anything.

ELIZABETH

Margaret always has something to say.

COLT

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

ELIZABETH

And how the hell do you think you're gonna keep me out of it? --And what was that other shit?

COLT

What other shit?

ELIZABETH

You took their side.

Quietly, Colt processes...

COLT

I told Margaret 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... --And fuck Margaret if she isn't gonna help.

He splashes a life-threatening pour of bourbon in a tumbler.

ELIZABETH

Have you even talked to your daughter?

COLT

Oh, do not throw Annie at me. Not now.

ELIZABETH

This "not talking" nonsense between you two has got to end.

COLT

And do not tell her I have a deal,
because I do not. Not yet.

ELIZABETH

If you'd stop telling her how to raise
her own daughter, maybe she'd forgive
you. "I'm sorry" wouldn't hurt either.

COLT

This is all Jacob.

ELIZABETH

Annie and Jacob are her parents, and
if they decided to raise Haley in the
church, well then...

COLT

Tell her to call me.

ELIZABETH

I've been telling her that for years!

COLT

Well, she doesn't listen!

ELIZABETH

Neither one of you listens! 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 taking her
to school. You said, "I'll get Haley."

ELIZABETH

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

COLT

No, this isn't on me.

ELIZABETH

Oh, Colt. Colt.

ELIZABETH

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

COLT

This wasn't my fault.

ELIZABETH COLT
 ... In that little girl's head, ever since Annie stopped talking to you. 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 the prisoner's attorney 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.

His failures mounting, he's wounded. Flailing for answers.

COLT
 I can do this... I will do this... within the law. In the gray areas.

ELIZABETH
 (snatches her purse)
 I'm sleeping at Annie's tonight.

COLT
 Why not? Everyone in this family's been leaving me for years.

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

She 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. We follow the bottle rolling toward...

THE KITCHEN

... And lands at the foot of the refrigerator. A crayon drawing of Colt and Haley pinned to it with magnets.

EXT. ANNIE'S HOUSE - BACK DECK - NIGHT

Annie's husband, JACOB (35), holds a cup of tea. 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 you the police don't know shit.

JACOB

It's cold. I'm gonna check on Annie--

ELIZABETH

Colt has an informant.

It's not as cold as he thought.

With puffy, red eyes, ANNIE (35) steps out on the deck.

ANNIE

I-I can't... I can't breathe.

Shakes so hard, she can barely keep a lit cigarette from flying out of her hand.

Elizabeth wraps her arms around her daughter.

ELIZABETH

We'll find out more in the morning.

JACOB

I've been praying for a miracle--

ELIZABETH

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

JACOB

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

ELIZABETH

It's a complicated deal with this guy. Colt hasn't agreed to it yet. He will.

Annie squeezes tears. Covers her mouth.

Elizabeth rubs Annie's arm.

ELIZABETH

He will, Annie.

ANNIE

I can't stop crying.

ELIZABETH

And after we get Haley back, I want you two to make up.

Annie stiffens.

ELIZABETH

He's going to butt out of your business. I told him he has no say.

ANNIE

Don't ask me to do that.

ELIZABETH

But if we're waiting on him to ever admit he was wrong...

ANNIE

I'm never talking to him again.

ELIZABETH

One step at a time. First, he needs to get this deal done for Haley.

ANNIE

I'd get down on my hands and knees and beg if I thought that would help.

ELIZABETH

Well, yelling hasn't done the trick, but I'm not giving up on more yelling.

JACOB

Then what can we do? What's the plan?

Annie pulls one last drag.

Snuffs out her cigarette.

ELIZABETH

If Colt's guy knows something, we're not going to the police. We're gonna deal with it as a family.

JACOB

Come again?

ELIZABETH

I'm gonna saw off every last part of him that's touched that child.

Light catches her resolute eyes.

ELIZABETH

That's not a metaphor.

JACOB

(after deep contemplation)
I'll do it.

ANNIE

You'll do what?

JACOB

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

ANNIE

Jacob.

ELIZABETH

To begin with, you're the first one the police'll suspect.

JACOB

I'm her father!

ELIZABETH

And besides, 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 aide. No one's gonna question your word. So, for the family, if anyone comes scratchin' around, you will testify under oath we were with you when this goes down.

Jacob offers a timid nod.

Elisabeth's unsure whether he's the man for the job.

ELIZABETH

In the meantime, act normal.

ANNIE

We're canvassing in the morning, the whole neighborhood--

ELIZABETH

Good, do that. 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

I've heard the stories about him and Rondo. But you're gonna need a helluva lot more than you and Colt.

ELIZABETH

Oh, Jacob, there's so much you don't know about me. And don't forget Rondo.

ANNIE

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

A bit of a sweet tooth.

Colt looks like hell.

Huddles with Dawes in a private nook.

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 a lot of sketchy shit goes down in county.

DAWES

(protesting)

Your Honor...

(referencing the attack)

Happy to see you embracing the moral flexibility required of the situation.

COLT

What's that supposed to mean?

DAWES

Before this is done, both of us are likely to face ideological challenges.

COLT

(sighs)

Do you even have proof she's alive?

DAWES

Every minute that passes lessens the likelihood of that outcome.

COLT

He pleads 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

Plan B: He takes a plea deal.

DAWES

Negligent homicide?

COLT

For God's sake, man. They have your guy on home surveillance doing the whole thing. Plan B is messy.

(rambling)

Gimme the address, and I'll grant bail. He skips, and we never hear from him again.

DAWES

Oh, that's going to be a problem.

Colt's dumbfounded.

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 either way, I want the information today-- Right now.

DAWES

We can give you the exact address.

COLT

Then give it to me!

DAWES

After my client is released.

COLT

You know, of course, the next family he murders, that's on us.

DAWES

On you. You mean you.

COLT

The word is drug cartels won't even 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. Life in prison. 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?

INT./EXT. DISTRICT COURTHOUSE - DAY

A black TOWN CAR glides to a stop. Dawes behind the wheel. As Colt climbs out and lingers in the door...

COLT

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

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 approaches 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. It gets heated fast. 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 climb the steps to a porch. Ring the doorbell. Bow their heads. Flyer in hand.

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

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

Colt pokes his head out of his Private Chambers.

COLT

(to Dylan and Wyatt)

You two, stop what you're doing. I need a compelling argument against lethal injection in the next hour.

Ducks back inside.

WYATT

Because it's wrong?

COLT (O.S.)

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

DYLAN

Over two hundred people on Death Row have been exonerated and reunited with their families.

Colt pops his head back out.

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.

INT. JUDGE TOBIN'S CHAMBERS - LATER

Jeremiah hands Colt a cup of coffee.

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, prosecutor, and twelve jurors say that is your fate, who am I to intercede?

JEREMIAH

I'm pretty sure that's our job.

COLT

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

JEREMIAH

Colt, 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

Ah, but we're not so evolved. We do not see all lives as equal. In this 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, bloodthirsty murderer, convicted in the first degree--

JEREMIAH
 Antoine "Fever" DuBois--

COLT
 For example!

JEREMIAH
 Okay, this isn't some existential crisis. Does this have something to do with what happened to Haley?

Colt shakes his head, but every fiber in him screams yes.

JEREMIAH
 Then what are we doing here? Did the prosecution fuck this up?

Riddled with guilt, Colt throws his hands in the air.

COLT
 Aw, forget it. I just offered DuBois 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. You can appreciate the moral gymnastics I'm wrestling with here.

JEREMIAH

Colt, what's really going on?

Colt avoids Jeremiah's gaze. Straightens a clock on his desk.

JEREMIAH

And why do you look like "guilt" dressed you this morning?

COLT

I thought I knew what justice was. I don't know anything anymore.

JEREMIAH

(shocked by the time)

Oh, shit, Colt, I'm sorry, but we have to do this later. I'm late for court.

Picks up the phone.

Before Colt walks through the door...

JEREMIAH

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

COLT

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

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD PARK - DAY

In front of a playground of children, Annie texts. Hits send.

We see the message for Elizabeth: "Any news?"

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 (V.O.)
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.

DAWES (V.O.)
And he wants proof she's alive.

FEVER (V.O.)
Lookie here, you two buckaroos gotta
figure out sumthin' better 'n puttin'
me in a box for all of time.

THE HALLWAY

The Intern walks the mailers into...

EDEN DAWES' OFFICE

... And place them in front of Dawes, talking on the phone.

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

FEVER (V.O.)
Boy, I got me a "get out of jail free"
card, and I expect him to honor it.
Hell, with all this heat, they could
find her dead in a ditch somewheres
and then yours truly is abominably
fucked. Now git on that shit.

So much for Plan A.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET - DAY

We move down a road crowded by high trees and 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 on the bed. Fear. Never a word. Never a tear.

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

At first glance, WESLEY WATKINS (50) looks like your neighbor. A tad shabby. Slightly overweight. Soft-spoken. Average in almost every way. At first glance.

WESLEY

Come to the mirror, Little Bo.

Composing herself, she obeys.

Proud of his new toy, he gently cuddles Haley in front of a full-length mirror.

WESLEY

What a pretty dress. Raise your hand.

She does.

WESLEY

Good. Now put it down, pretty.

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

The Determined Woman, Annie, is emotionally undone.

Relieves Wyatt of the office phone in his hand.

ANNIE

... No, he's not expecting me.

She returns the handset to 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 struggles 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

PRE-LAP AUDIO: Hard soles lope across marble floors.

INT. DISTRICT COURTHOUSE - HALLWAY - LATER

Colt heads for his chambers without breaking stride.

Dylan and Wyatt try to slow him down with words.

DYLAN

Judge?

COLT

(to Wyatt)

How fast can we get the jury back?

WYATT

On it.

DYLAN

--Miss Shay came by, Your Honor.

COLT

When Dawes gets here, show him into my chambers and close the door.

Stares past Jeremiah in the hall.

Moves by him without a word and disappears into his office.

Dylan and Wyatt pause near Jeremiah. Something's brewing.

A scream bursts from behind the judge's closed door.

PRIVATE CHAMBERS

Colt finishes screaming at a row of law books.

A CALM MOMENT - LATER

Delighted, Dawes sits across from Colt.

DAWES

... And so, we are agreed on what we're calling Plan B.

COLT

I really don't have a choice, do I?

DAWES

My client will agree to a plea deal. You will set bail...

COLT

And I'll cover the bail...

Colt turns to framed signatures on 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 present you with a complete dossier on the abductor--

COLT

That wasn't the deal!

DAWES

You're in no position to negotiate.

COLT

I've cast aside everything I've held, my entire life, to be sacred.

DAWES

Sometimes that is what's required.

Worn to a nub, he swallows his last pretense of dignity.

COLT

She... She wasn't supposed to be all alone like that. This whole thing... It... It might be my fault.

DAWES

Then you really don't have a choice.

COLT

Get out of my chambers.

We hold on Colt's face.

SHAY (V.O.)

Not until you answer my question.

It's later, though it appears no time has passed. The prosecuting attorney, Pepper Shay, sits in Dawes' 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. A meeting off the books? This could be obstruction.

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 wrestles to his feet. Paces.

SHAY

At the scene, detectives said they could still smell cookie dough on the little boys' 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. But I'm not going with you on this one. I'm washing my hands of this.

Both pause for a tick.

Colt moves to the window. 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

The day my father found out I was accepted to Harvard, he drove me straight to the recruiter's office.

SHAY

I didn't know that.

COLT

Last time anyone had me by the scruff of the neck. I didn't like it.

SHAY

I'm sorry.

COLT

Well, I came back from Vietnam and finished top of my class.

SHAY

I'm not sure where this is going--

COLT

Draw up a plea deal: four counts of manslaughter, life without parole, no appeals. In exchange for sensitive information related to another case.

SHAY

That's fantastic, Your Honor. But what information? What other case? Judge?

COLT

Leave that part blank. I'll fill it in myself. It's... It's privileged.

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

EXT. THE GRANGER HOME - PORCH - DAY

Windows boarded behind them, Elizabeth shouts at Zane and Grady. Looks like they brought a couple of FBI AGENTS with them. Elizabeth shoves Zane in the chest.

Zane bites back. She glares at Grady. 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 kicks the front door closed.

ELIZABETH

You're damn right, and I told her to do whatever she had to do to get through to you. 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. And now she may never talk to you again-- I may never talk to you again. Do we have a deal?

COLT

We had a deal.

That breaks her. Elizabeth heads for the bedroom.

COLT

His damn attorney keeps changing the goddamn deal--

ELIZABETH

Stop talking.

She enters...

THE BEDROOM CLOSET

... Punches a code into a wall safe.

ELIZABETH

I'll take care of this myself.

COLT

You act like I'm not doing anything.

She removes a .45 AUTOMATIC from the safe. Inspects the gun. Disassembles and reassembles it in seconds. Snaps in a full mag. Stuffs one in the chamber.

COLT

I'm already abdicating my sworn oath to the law.

ELIZABETH

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

Elizabeth ends the call.

Colt drops his head. Defeated. Looks up. A face full of pain. Gets right with the only move left.

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

Jeremiah pulls Colt into his office for a word.

JEREMIAH

Richter is, um, floating the idea of you stepping away. Insisting actually.

COLT

What? No, absolutely not--

JEREMIAH

Temporarily, so you can focus on Haley.

COLT

He's afraid of me, isn't he? That's why he sent you.

JEREMIAH

Terrified. But he's still our boss.

COLT

I can do my job!

Squirms a little. Senses his leverage slipping away.

COLT

The DuBois case would be a mistrial. We have a plea agreement-- This would be a mistrial.

Jeremiah considers how to shape his next words.

JEREMIAH

Alright, uh, I'll pass that along, but eyes are watching you, my friend.

COLT

You, Richter, my wife, daughter, Dawes, Fever, Shay, two detectives who can't find their ass with both hands, and the FBI. Am I missing anyone?

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. 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.

Colt points to Rondo's chair. They sit.

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

RONDO
What about the cops?

COLT
No one can know about this. But so help me God, we're getting my little girl back.

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, ya know--

COLT
I got my own plan--

RONDO
Good. I hate her plan.

COLT
Did she blame me?

RONDO
How's this your fault?

COLT
Never mind.

RONDO
What's the mission? I got some hard-
case motherfuckers shooting right now.
Just say the word.

COLT
After this, there's no turning back.

RONDO
She's my goddaughter.

Colt stares at the floor like it's whispering answers.

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

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

Wearing a ski mask, Elizabeth kills ceiling tiles as she marches into a cubicle maze. Stops. Sweeps for a target.

ELIZABETH
I'm here to renegotiate the deal!

The staff cowers.

ELIZABETH
Who's in charge?

The Receptionist crawls out on her hands and knees.

RECEPTIONIST
Ma'am? Everyone's in court today.

INT. DISTRICT COURTROOM - DAY

The gavel drops. BANG. The striking block hops.

BAILIFF
Please be seated.

The jury drops into their seats.

SNAP TO BLACK

ADD TITLE "MISSING: 27 HOURS"

COLT (V.O.)
My apologies to members of the jury. I
was attending to a personal matter.

BACK IN THE COURTROOM

Jurors nod.

It's a full house. Gallery overflowing. REPORTERS crowd the
back wall. Jostle for position.

Colt spots Jeremiah among them.

COLT
However, I understand the time was
well spent. I believe we have a deal.

DAWES
(rises)
We do, Your Honor.

A titter ripples through the gallery.

COLT
The state?

SHAY
(rises)
The state accepts the terms laid out
in the plea agreement.

Colt turns to the jury...

COLT
Well then, the jury is dismissed. And
we thank you for your service.

The BAILIFF booms...

BAILIFF

All rise.

The jury files out.

Dawes whispers something to Fever.

BAILIFF

You may be seated.

COLT

(studies a document)

Now, there's a series of questions I need to ask. But I see they've been submitted in writing to expedite matters. However, we will hear this one out loud for the record.

Fever perks up as Dawes guides him to his feet.

COLT

Antoine "Fever" Dubois, you are charged with four felony counts of aggravated manslaughter. How do you plead?

In a whisper, Fever leans close to Dawes.

FEVER

What 'bout my bail?

Shay bolts out of her chair.

The word "pissed" seems inadequate.

SHAY

Your Honor!

COLT

Hold your water, Miss Shay.

Fever and Dawes whisper furiously until...

FEVER

Guilty.

The courtroom erupts.

Colt gavels them silent.

COLT

That's the word we were looking for. I direct that the plea be entered.

Jeremiah beams. A silent victory.

Catches eyes with Colt.

DAWES
Your Honor, approach?

The judge beckons both sides closer for a hushed word.

DAWES
I ask that my client be released on
bail until--

SHAY
Absolutely not! 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.

Jeremiah's smile fades as the sidebar turns sour and loud.

Colt's attention edges between his friend and the attorneys.

DAWES
My client cannot provide the evidence
the court requested for the other case
while being incarcerated.

SHAY
Gentlemen, this isn't how it's done.
We had a deal! And there was nothing
in there about bail.

Jeremiah stares. Judging Colt.

Pinned by guilt he'd never admit, Colt turns to Shay.

COLT
It's the only way this works.

Searches for Jeremiah. But he's gone.

COLT
I'll allow it with restrictions on
your client's movements.
(announces to the courtroom)
Bail is set at one million dollars.

Colt drops the gavel...

BANG!

... The courtroom crackles to life.

SHAY
You've got to be kidding me!

COLT
Sentencing in one week...

SHAY
Your Honor!

COLT
... And we're adjourned.

Colt drops the gavel again...

BANG!

... The courtroom BOILS OVER.

People surge forward. Shouting.

As Colt backs away...

COLT
And I'll see the prisoner in my
chambers before he's processed!

Captain Teasley steps behind Fever. Lords over him.

BEDLAM DETONATES.

Reporters shove and swarm Shay like a pack of jackals.

SHAY
I have no idea what just happened, but
I'll be filing a string of complaints!

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
That didn't take long.

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 the door to his Private Chambers--

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.

Dawes arrives, dragging excuses at the ready.

COLT

Do you have my file?

DAWES

I'll just need another minute or two--

COLT

Get out! And don't come back without that file. You hear me? Out!

Teasley leads Fever inside. Cuffed. Grinning like a fool.

COLT

Everyone out! Now!

Dawes, Shay, Dylan, and Wyatt scramble.

SHAY

What the hell's going on?

Teasley is no fool. Doesn't ask. Uncuffs Fever, who slips inside Colt's Private Chambers.

COLT

Thank you, Captain. You're a good man.
Can you make sure we aren't disturbed?

Teasley nods. Exits. Locks the hallway door behind him.

PRIVATE CHAMBERS

Fever lounges in the judge's chair.

Colt enters hot. Spikes his bundled robe on the desk.

RONDO

I told 'im not to sit there.

FEVER

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

Rondo moves behind Fever.

RONDO

This the guy?

COLT

That's the guy.

The judge pins Fever's hands to the armrests.

Mugs him up.

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 starts breathes.

COLT

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

Wraps his sidearm in his wadded black robe and points it at Fever's crotch.

COLT

So you're going to tell me where Haley is being held, or I'm gonna start putting holes in important places.

FEVER

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

The judge tosses Rondo the 9mm Colt Commander.

RONDO

This thing still work?

COLT

Worked on Viet Cong.

RONDO

Now I know what ta getcha for yer 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 conjures a winning smile.

FEVER

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. Stabs her hand into the air. Twists and turns for the team leader.

EXT. A LARGE TWO-STORY HOME - PORCH - DAY

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

Patiently waiting... Annie.

THE BASEMENT

Slowly, Haley angles her head toward the ceiling.

THE PORCH

A security camera mounted above the door.

The peephole darkens.

WESLEY
(muffled)
Who is it?

POV THROUGH THE PEEPHOLE

Annie raises a flyer of Haley.

ANNIE
Excuse me, I'm wondering if you've
seen my daughter? She's eight years
old and wearing a pink coat and cap.

THE FOYER

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. Wesley flips to the next page. Then the next one.

ANNIE (O.S.)
Uh, Hello?

WESLEY

No, I... I don't think so.

ANNIE (O.S.)

You know, there's a playground. It's not far from here. Maybe, 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 to the playground.

Anxiously waits for a response.

ANNIE (O.S.)

Okay, well, is there anyone else at home I might talk to? Maybe your wife?

THE NOTE PAD

His finger traces down the decision tree.

WESLEY (V.O.)

I live here alone.

The next box in the decision tree.

WESLEY (V.O.)

You have to leave.

THE BASEMENT STAIRWAY

Barefoot, Haley climbs the basement stairs. The voice from the porch is barely audible. A wooden step creaks. Loud.

THE FOYER

Wesley turns to the creak. Panic etched on his face.

THE PORCH

Annie folds the flyer.

ANNIE

Of course, I'm sorry. I-I'm gonna leave this in case you see her, okay?

Stabs the flyer through the mail slot.

THE FOYER

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 Haley and SEVERAL OTHER GIRLS huddled halfway up the stairs.

Their eyes flutter and squint. They slowly retreat.

THE PORCH

A submissive Pomeranian runs down Annie.

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.

Another HARD KNOCK on the door snaps his head around.

The basement door slams closed.

IN DARKNESS

We hear measured footsteps across hardwood floors.

The sound of a DRAWER sliding open. Closes.

More footsteps.

Heavy breathing from Haley.

THE PORCH

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.

Tiger barks. Jumps out of Annie's arms.

THE BASEMENT

Under a faint shaft of light, Haley loses control. As she starts to cry, her mouth and face are smothered by a half-dozen little hands from behind her.

Haley's pulled back into darkness.....

ADD TITLE "MISSING: 30 HOURS"

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET - DAY

A light dusting of snow covers lawns and houses.

FEVER
Y'all hungry?

INT. RONDO'S SUV - DAY

Rondo drives. Colt beside him. Armed.

FEVER
I could eat.

In the backseat, Fever's cuffed to the armrest.

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
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.

(MORE)

FEVER (cont'd)
 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 brandishes a monstrous handgun, a .50 DESERT EAGLE.

RONDO
 Oh, we're bringin' the smoke.

COLT
 (cautioning)
 Rondo.

RONDO
 So what is the plan, Colt? 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

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 left)

It makes sense.

FEVER

The judge don't care a lick about you
or me, Rondo. 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

Shay confronts Dylan and Wyatt at their desks.

SHAY

... So you guys have no idea what's
going on?

DYLAN

This is literally, like, my third day--
Is it always this crazy?

WYATT

This is bad. Like career ending-bad.

Turns to a sun-bleached wall of framed autographs. Square shapes of darker paint tell which ones are missing.

SHAY

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

Wyatt's shaken.

Dylan less so.

SHAY

My advice is to keep your head down and your mouth shut.

DYLAN

That doesn't sound right.

SHAY

What part?

DYLAN

Well, I've only known the judge for, like I said, three days, but if he's in trouble, he might need our help. You don't just give up on folks. Besides, he's one of us.

Checks to see if the coast is clear. Breaks out the real sugar and falls into a South Carolinian lilt.

DYLAN

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

(to Wyatt)

Why's she talking that way?

WYATT

She does that. Watch. It works.

DYLAN

Lemme tell y'all a story. 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

D-A-D.

Wyatt nods.

Shay swoons a little.

SHAY

I think he would've liked your tattoo.

DYLAN

He's one of us.

Checks Shay. Then Wyatt.

Taps out a text message on her phone.

DYLAN

We're gonna need more help.

INT. RONDO'S SUV - DAY

Fever feigns disinterest. Adjusts in his seat.

COLT

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

FEVER

Do tell.

COLT

Because we do it wrong. Have you been
to an execution, son?

FEVER

Can't say I've ever walked that tract.

COLT

It's a well-orchestrated procession.
Steeped in clinical precision. And we
do it all wrong.

Colt waves his gun around.

Fever calculates 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?

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

Colt squares the gun at Fever's kneecap.

COLT

Whaddaya mean 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

You keep my family out of your mouth.

FEVER

Reckon our families are a lot alike: thick as thieves. Though we probably gotcha on total number incarcerated.

Rondo's expression urges Colt to let it go.

Colt drops back in his seat.

FEVER

Hold on there, Rondo. Slow 'er 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

Gray concrete walls. Bare. Cobwebs stretch across exposed cross beams in the ceiling. Haley and other young ladies sit on cots. Groomed. Second-hand store T-shirts and sweatpants.

They all stare at broken pieces of a shattered lamp on the floor. Haley scoops up a shard. Tucks it under her pillow.

Panicked, CASSIDY (13), sweeps the ceiling with her eyes.

The sound of footfalls. Wesley is 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 open.

Slams it again.

And again.

And again.

As the door 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. But it doesn't. He keeps slamming.

HALEY
What's happening?

Curled on her cot. Fetal. A sob cracks from her chest. Then ceaseless blubbing.

CASSIDY
(to Haley)
Shut up!

The door slamming stops.

THE 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 it?

They all peer...

THROUGH THE WINDOW

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

FEVER
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.

Haley charges him with a deadly shard.

HALEY
Aaaaaaah!

Wesley doesn't move. --Cassidy snatches Haley's arm.

Wrenches the shank from her hand.

Shock explodes across Haley's face at Cassidy's betrayal.

Unscathed, Wesley turns to Haley.

INT. RONDO'S SUV - DAY

Colt and Rondo trade a moment, then prep.

COLT
 (to Fever)
 You're sure?

RONDO
 He said he's sure.

COLT
 But is he sure-sure?

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

Rondo snags an extra mag out of the glove box.

RONDO
 --Lemme shoot 'em, Colt.

FEVER
 Y'all bought the ticket. Should at
 least take the ride.

COLT
 So, do we ring the bell?

RONDO
 Hell, no. I'll just knock it down.

COLT
 We're not twenty anymore.

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

The judge mumbles a quick prayer. Crosses himself.

FEVER
 --Oh, I wouldn't count on the Almighty
 steppin' anywhere near this shit show.

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

COLT
 (double checks his gun)
 I'm good.

Rondo puts on his game face. 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 cold.

THE DIM BASEMENT

Each girl sits frozen on their cot. Emotionless. Silent.

Feet on the floor. Hands at their side. Staring straight ahead.

Order restored, Wesley heads upstairs with the busted lamp.

EXT. LARGE TWO-STORY HOME - PORCH - DAY

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

COLT
That shit he was saying back there--

RONDO
Ah, fuck him.

They fist bump. Rondo lifts the battering ram.

THE STAIRWAY

Wesley trudges up the stairs.

THE PORCH

Rondo swings the ram. Mumbles a countdown...

RONDO
Two... one...

CRASH!

COLT
Haley!

The door breached, they tumble inside...

THE LIVING ROOM

... Wave their weapons left and right. Eyes bright.

RONDO
Clear!

COLT

Clear.

Folded in the deepest corner of a breakfast nook, Colt spies a TEENAGE GIRL. Slightly older than the other girls we've met. Paralyzed with fear.

Colt and Rondo hustle into...

THE KITCHEN

... The Teenage Girl comes alive. Yelps.

Claws a butter knife off the table. Swings it like a credible threat. A two-handed grip. Shaking.

Colt presses a finger to his lips.

COLT

We're not here to hurt you.

Rondo disengages. Searches the kitchen.

Crouched, the Teenage Girl sidesteps to the counter, never losing eye contact with Colt, never lowering the butter knife.

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

TEENAGE GIRL

Help. Somebody help!

COLT

Where are the other girls?

He tiptoes 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!

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 front door.

The backstairs door BURSTS open. Out steps MRS. DAWES (70) 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. Scrawled in blood on the window: "FAMILY."

In a nearby driveway, a HOUSEWIFE throws up her hands.

HOUSEWIFE
Where's my goddamn 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.

Elizabeth's voicemail. --Beep!

COLT

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

RONDO

How's 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. THE GRANGER HOME - LIVING ROOM - LATER

With a REMINGTON RIFLE tucked under his chin, Colt quietly slips past the sofa. Eyes sharp, he sweeps his six.

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

THE KITCHEN

... Tiptoes around the island. Jerking his rifle left, then right, hunting for a target. STOPS. Fixes on something.

THE LIVING ROOM

Colt steps up carpeted stairs, every sense wired.

THE KITCHEN

A draft nudges the basement door open.

Rondo coaxes it wider with the muzzle of his Winchester. Hinges MOAN. It's dark down there.

He freezes. Considers. Vanishes into the black void.....

THE UPSTAIRS BEDROOM

Colt scans. No Fever. Mutters a curse. Lowers his weapon.

THE KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Confidently, Colt strides in and stops. Something's wrong.

COLT

Rondo? Rondo!

Notices the basement door. Wide open.

From out of the darkness, racing footsteps pound closer.

Colt's eyes fire bright.

Squeezes his grip on the Remington.

--Rondo bursts out of the darkness.

RONDO

Well, he ain't here--

COLT

Jesus! You scared the shit out of me.

RONDO

What? Were you gonna shoot me?

The draft whips the basement door shut. THUMP.

--Colt blasts a hole in it with his Remington. BOOM!

Both men stunned. Well, that just happened.

The adrenaline slowing...

RONDO

You think he's really gone?

COLT

Not a chance.

RONDO

Me either.

COLT

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

We hold on Colt's face.

ELIZABETH (V.O.)

Then how are we gonna find Haley?

It's later, though it appears no time has passed.

Rondo is long gone.

COLT

The authorities should have the files
on the creep who took her by now...

ELIZABETH

--Thank God.

COLT

... And the attorney's on his way.

ELIZABETH
But you're sure this time?

COLT
We may have to pay for his front door.

ELIZABETH
We'll find a 2-for-1 sale.

It's impossible to miss the gaping hole in the basement door.
Colt wraps his girl in a tender hug.

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.
(kisses her head)
Don't worry. It's almost over.

SNAP TO BLACK

ADD TITLE "MISSING: 34 HOURS"

INT. FBI FIELD OFFICE - DAY

A **brown bubble-cushion mailer** lands on a 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 inspects their
rifles. The rear door SLAMS closed.

-- Resting on an end table, Delano's cell phone 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. Flat-screen TV.

A burger wrapper and half-eaten WAFFLE FRIES on the nightstand next to a SEMI-AUTOMATIC.

DAWES
I was surprised to hear from you.

FEVER
You and me, we still got bidness.

DAWES
Oh?

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.

FEVER
Y'all still can't never repeat anything I say, right?

DAWES
That's correct.

FEVER
Or the judge, neither?

DAWES
I am certain he wants to forget these events ever took place.

FEVER
Yeah, now, ya see. Don't cha think that's a powerful card to play?

DAWES
Eh, 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 days. Figure that's worth sumthin'.

DAWES

(chortles)

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

FEVER

Huh. How much ya think a judge makes?

DAWES

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

FEVER

Bet a mil would be an easy grab.

DAWES

When you don't show up in a week for sentencing, all of law enforcement will be alerted and looking for you.

FEVER

M-uh point exactly. Gonna need me a spot uh runnin' 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.

Dawes fights to hide his contempt. Wheels turning.

The loaded .45 on the nightstand appears awfully tempting.

FEVER

I got plenty on both of y'all. We can make it an installment situation.

Dawes 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 pulls a confident drag off his cigarette.

Dawes heads for the door before another thought pops into Fever's head. Too late--

FEVER

'Twas easy enough for Wesley Watkins.

Dawes never turns to face him.

DAWES

You were extorting him, weren't you?

FEVER

How ya think I'm affordin' you? The big pussy hand delivered another brick faster than Amazon. Now that's service with a smile. Stood in that very spot.

This clown ain't going away.

FEVER

On second thought, two million has a nice ring to it. One from you. One from the judge. Hell, that's pocket change for you.

DAWES

I doubt he has it.

FEVER

I doubt I care. Now skip along, law boy. Scat.

Off the back of Dawes' head--

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.

Pecks out a text message.

INT. THE GRANGER HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

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

DAWES

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, 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

They're his doll collection.

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

DAWES

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

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

The yard is wet. Washed clean by melted snow.

From his bedroom window, Wesley cracks the curtains.

COLT (V.O.)

How soon before he's in custody?

DAWES (V.O.)

As we speak.

Cautiously, a small army of FBI, SWAT, and POLICE OFFICERS approaches the house. Stalking. Weapons ready.

INT. THE GRANGER HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Elizabeth reads a text from Annie. Grabs her purse.

ELIZABETH
Annie's almost there.

DAWES
There is one additional detail.

ELIZABETH
--I'm going to get my granddaughter.

DAWES
One we 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)
Well, 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 even I'm prepared to deal with.

ELIZABETH
(to Colt)
What's this one's name again?

DAWES
Dawes. Eden Dawes--

Elizabeth 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 assailants to my home and office earlier today.

But does he know it was 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 a gesture.

Colt flips it over: "1900 Corson Ave S. Room 127."

The judge reacts. HOLY SHIT.

DAWES
But I believe you now possess the required moral flexibility.

INT. LARGE TWO-STORY HOME - UPSTAIRS BEDROOM - DAY

FIRST RESPONDER UNIFORMS hang in a closet. None of them perfect, but convincing enough in chaos.

We hear the commotion of officers clearing rooms downstairs. Voices bark. Boots thunder. Doors slam.

Wesley wears a BULLETPROOF VEST marked FBI along with BLACK CAMO, HELMET, and GOGGLES. Yanks the pin on a smoke canister. It hisses to life. Thick fog swirls.

He lifts the top of a heavy BEDROOM BENCH, revealing a hidden passageway. Calm and steady, he steps down a ladder inside.

Across the hall, we hear officers kicking down doors. Shouts. They're seconds away.

The bench lid closes just as the door bursts open. All that remains is smoke. Thick. Swallowing the room whole.

INT. DIM BASEMENT WITH NO WINDOWS - DAY

A female FIRST RESPONDER reaches out.

The Red-Haired Girl refuses to be touched.

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

INT. COLT GRANGER'S SEDAN - DAY

Elizabeth drives, ignoring traffic signals and common sense.

ELIZABETH

How in the world are you ever gonna
look that little girl in the face and
forgive yourself, Colt? Colt?

Unflinching, Colt stares out the window.

COLT

I'm gonna make this right.

ELIZABETH

No, we let the police handle this--

COLT

All of this. All of it's my fault.

ELIZABETH

Colt, they will arrest you...

COLT

And he's not getting off on some
technicality. He won't cheat justice.

ELIZABETH

... Or they will shoot you!

COLT
I'm not entirely convinced they would.

EXT. LARGE TWO-STORY HOME - PORCH - DAY

Wrapped in blankets and confusion, Cassidy and the other girls file out the front door. Hug each other. Some cry.

A FEMALE PARAMEDIC tries to pry Haley off the FBI Agent, but Haley ain't letting go.

Annie sprints through the front yard. Good luck slowing her down. In the distance, Colt's sedan skids to a violent stop.

Dressed like an FBI agent, Wesley emerges from a detached garage. Resolved. Calculated. He threads through chaos, slipping past First Responders rushing the house.

He beelines for a tangled labyrinth of woods.

THE FRONT YARD

Colt makes for the house. A quiet rage fixes behind his eyes.

Detectives Zane and Grady block him.

ZANE
That's far enough--

GRADY
They haven't cleared the house.

Colt slaps away Zane's hands. Emotions erupt.

Grady swallows the judge in a bear hug.

GRADY
He could still be in there.

Elizabeth hustles past them to...

THE PORCH

... Where Annie, then Elizabeth, smother Haley in tears and kisses. The little girl's still haunted. Shaken.

Annie spies her father. A sparkle of relief on her face.

As Colt breaks free to join his family...

TIGER SNAPS

... Barking at someone across the yard...

WESLEY IN AN FBI UNIFORM

... Slips toward the treeline.

Annie spots Tiger scampering after Wesley.

A real GUT-PUNCH of horrible realization.

At the top of her lungs...

ANNIE
DAAAAADDY!

Annie points.

Colt turns. Sees Wesley.

Wesley freezes. Oh, fuck. Bolts into the woods.

Somewhere well beyond the reach of reason, Colt wrestles a 9mm out of his jacket and storms after him.

THE WOODS

Wesley crashes through brush and brambles. He's desperate. Fast. Checks over his shoulder. Runs for his life.

Over crisscrossing trails, Tiger is hard on his heels. Barks.

Colt cuts through the same terrain. Stops. A fresh break in a twig. Listens. The barking stops. Tiger YIPS. Movement deep in the woods. He raises his weapon. No real shot.

Scrambles down a ravine. Races past muddy tracks on a wet switchback. Pauses at discarded goggles and a black helmet.

Wesley ducks behind a mature oak. Pants. Quivers like cornered quarry. Licks his lips. Peeks around the tree.

Scrub rustles behind Colt. He wheels. And nearly shoots...

ZANE

... Wheezing with his hands up.

ZANE
Hold up. It's me. It's me, man. Whew!

Colt lowers his weapon. Only slightly. Starts away.

COLT
Keep up.

ZANE
No. You don't wanna go down there.

Oh, yes. He does.

ZANE

They found booby traps in the house.
Who knows where he's leading you?

Considering a blind monkey could have followed this trail,
Colt scans for disguised tripwires.

Behind the tree, Wesley fumbles a GLOCK from his UTILITY BELT
like he's never seen a gun before. Strains to hear Zane.

ZANE

I got air support and dogs en route.
We got this. Oh, and, uh, he killed
the dog. His own fucking dog.

Colt moves to a ridge. Scowls at the vista.

ZANE

We know who he is now. We got him.

Claps Colt's back. Grady arrives, winded. Grabs his knees.
They all trudge back. Every step deliberate.

Glassy-eyed, Wesley presses the Glock into his mouth.
Squeezes his eyes shut. Weakly, lowers the gun. Whimpers.

EXT. HOSPITAL - ENTRANCE - DAY

News vans. Medical teams. It's not chaos. But it's close.

INT. HOSPITAL - WAITING ROOM - DAY

Swollen to capacity. Dour faces riven with questions.

After consulting with Annie and Jacob, a DOCTOR is swarmed by
the PARENTS of young victims, begging for answers.

Annie greets her mother with a lingering hug.

ELIZABETH

Where is she?

ANNIE

They're running some tests.

ELIZABETH

Okay. Alright, we'll wait.

ANNIE

Where is he?

ELIZABETH

You know he's responsible for this.
He's the one who got Haley back.

Raises her voice 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

You wanna know who your father is?
That's it. Right there.

ANNIE

(tears threatening)
Then where the hell is he?

ELIZABETH

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

INT. THE GRANGER HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

A couple of shotguns inside a rifle bag. It ZIPS tight.

The doorbell chimes.

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

Two prehistoric beasts, Officers CHICO JUÁREZ and JAKE SHAY, 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 should talk.

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 are you going, Judge Granger?

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.

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 goddamn abomination, and you set him free. Do you understand the gravity of what's happening here?

COLT
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

... of Mr. Antoine "Fever" Dubois.

SHOCK.

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

Yes. Yes, ma'am.

Colt spots the officer's nametag: "Shay."

Moves to the other nametag: "Juárez."

SHAY

In the meantime, my cousin Jake and his partner were sent by the governor to provide assistance. 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--

COLT

(pats his rifle bag)
Got everything I need right here.

SHAY

You understand if sacrifices must be made... The People demand justice.

COLT

Justice was stolen from me earlier today. That won't happen twice.

Shay stands. Everyone stands.

SHAY

It goes without saying, but let's say
it anyway. We were never here.

INT. SUPER SAVER MOTEL - ROOM 127 - BATHROOM - DAY

Fever places his smoke and AUTOMATIC on the edge of the sink.

No need for privacy. The door's open.

Drops trou. Parks on the commode.

--POUNDING at the front door.

Fever hikes up his pants. Grabs for his gun.

HOTEL ROOM

On edge, Fever creeps to the window. Squints outside.

Throws open the door. WESLEY stands there. Black camo.
Bulletproof vest. Gun leveled at Fever's gut.

Fever clocks it instantly.

FEVER

(irritated)

The fuck 'r' ya doin' here?

In one slick move, snatches the gun and drags Wesley inside.

EXT. SUPER SAVER MOTEL - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Fever Checks if anyone followed Wesley. Ducks back inside.

Down the hall, a surveillance camera keeps watch.

INT. SUPER SAVER MOTEL - DAY

Fever flips Wesley's gun on the bed.

WESLEY

(childlike)

I... I gave you the money.

FEVER

You can not be here--

WESLEY

But I gave you the money.

FEVER

Best ya probably ought not go back home neither. Place is likely crawling with Federalies by now. Or more likely ya already know that.

WESLEY

You told on me. You... you said you wouldn't tell if I gave you the money.

FEVER

Whoa, now, hold on a tick. That... You can't throw 'round accusations like that. That weren't yours truly. Likely my shyster lawyer done the deed.

WESLEY

(stares lost)
What? No.

FEVER

Wait, you... Nah. Y'all didn't happen ta snatch yourself a little souvenir on yer way outta there, now did ya? Perchance, the judge's baby girl? Oh, that'd be some sweet insurance for the both of us.

Wesley's face twists ugly.

FEVER

Probably broke her in right nice, didn't, ya? Didn't, ya. Yeah, ya did.

Cackles as he shows Wesley his back.

In a flash, Wesley whips out a HATCHET from his utility belt.

FEVER

(faces Wesley)
I could pay ya--

The blade sinks into Fever's forehead. CRUNCH. Wedges tight.

WESLEY

No one plays with my toys!

Fever blinks, stupefied. Blood runs down his face. He stumbles, swatting at phantoms. Ricochets off furniture.

Fascinated, Wesley steps aside as Fever stumbles into...

THE BATHROOM

... Tangles in the shower curtain and collapses. His face shrouded in cheap plastic. Legs akimbo, hang over the tub.

On the lip of the sink, his cigarette still burns.

Unfazed, Wesley stares.....

--Startled, he turns.

HOTEL ROOM

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.

Rondo nods to the bathroom.

Cigarette smoke wafts out the open door.

Both draw a bead on it. Determined faces.

A hot second on their motionless backs before they slowly march to the bathroom door.

Colt slips inside...

THE BATHROOM

... EMPTY. Colt sweeps left, then right. Rips away the bloody shower curtain.

Fever stares back. DEAD. A hatchet buried in his skull.

Rondo nods to an open sliding window.....

EXT. SUPER SAVER MOTEL - HALLWAY - DAY

With Fever's automatic in his mouth, Wesley still can't finish the job. His attention drifts back to the open bathroom window. Cooks a different solution. Eases away.

INT. SUPER SAVER MOTEL - ROOM 127 - CONTINUOUS

Crying, WESLEY bursts through the front door. Shoots blind. Looks away. Fires nonstop. Keeps coming.

Turned the wrong direction, Colt and Rondo spin too late.

One round bites Rondo in the leg. Another rips into his gut.

Colt steps out from behind Rondo and his first shot...

BOOM!

... Buckshot almost tears Wesley in half at the waist.

Rondo fires back...

BOOM!

... Almost blows off his thigh.

Wesley spins. Staggers back.

Colt pumps. Advances. Fires again.

BOOM!

Wesley's back catches every pellet. The blast sends him chest-first into the wall. He drops the gun.

From one knee, Rondo fires again...

BOOM!

... Blows a chunk out of the wall.

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

He crumbles into a wet THUD.

Colt keeps coming. Racks another shell.

Wesley's leg shakes. Spasms. Blood pools on the floor.

Colt kicks away Wesley's gun.

Aims down at his head...

Wesley rolls over in horrible pain. Dribbling blood.

WESLEY

We're together now.

COLT

What?

WESLEY

Look in their eyes. I'll always be in there. You'll see.

BOOM!

Flecks of blood catch Colt's face.

Chest heaving--

COLT

Clear!

Considers what he's become. Moves his attention to Rondo.
Rondo's trembling hand touches his stomach. A serious wound.

RONDO

I... I think it's bad.

Before a wall peppered with bullet holes, Rondo shrinks down.
Colt presses Rondo's hand over his shirt. Leaking life.

COLT

Get pressure on it-- You pressing?

RONDO

I'm pressing.

COLT

Come on, man. One, two...

Tries lifting Rondo to his feet. That ain't happening. His
belly is a mess. Rondo's face says it first...

RONDO

Colt, I'm scared.

COLT

Don't say that.

RONDO

Of all the shit we've been through...
And that fuck?

COLT

It's gonna be okay. We'll, uh, get you
to a hospital and it's gonna be okay.

RONDO

That's whatcha tell people when it
ain't gonna be okay.

Slowly, closes his eyes.

RONDO

(hoarse)
Haley's safe?

COLT

Yeah. She's safe.

RONDO

That's good.

Rondo's bloody hand claws for his friend.

Colt squeezes it tight.

Searches for words. All seem inadequate.

COLT

You always show up.

RONDO

That's what family does.

Colt's jaw clenches. He wells up quick. Fights tears.

Rondo's motionless.

All sound falls away.

Shattered, Colt hangs his head.....

INT. HOSPITAL - MAIN LOBBY - NIGHT

Crowded. Subdued. Families line the halls. Fingers peck on phones, searching for any scrap of news.

Slumped on the floor, Colt fights back tears. Elizabeth finds him. The judge shows a brave face.

ELIZABETH

Colt? What happened?

COLT

(fights to his feet)
It's Rondo. He's gone.

ELIZABETH

What are you saying? Colt?

Unable to summon the words, Colt shakes his head.

ELIZABETH

Oh God. Colt, I'm so sorry.

He wipes his friend's blood from his hands.

ELIZABETH

He was a good man. Blessed to have a friend like you.

COLT

Rondo was family.

ELIZABETH

Of course he was.

COLT
I asked him to do it.

ELIZABETH
Don't you do that. Look at me. Rondo
made his own choices. You both did
what had to be done.

A respectful pause.

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

COLT
Came to a fitting end.

ELIZABETH
Good man.

COLT
The, uh, other one too.

ELIZABETH
Working together?

COLT
Not near the end.

The room gets a little lighter for Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH
We're gonna spend the night.

COLT
Haley?

ELIZABETH
It's precautionary. Annie and Jacob
are around here somewhere.

COLT
(surveys the room)
Where is Annie?

Jeremiah pulls Elizabeth into a church hug.

JEREMIAH
We came as soon as we heard.

Dylan, Wyatt, and a half-dozen clerks are hot on his tail.

DYLAN
Is everyone alright?

ELIZABETH
Yes. And who are all of you?

COLT
(scanning for Annie)
She's the new Wyatt.

WYATT
--Hey, I'm standing right here.

JEREMIAH
And we brought some of the best damn
clerks in the courthouse, too.

DYLAN
We're his other family.

Colt steals a moment with Dylan and Wyatt.

DYLAN
We show up for kin.

COLT
Damn right.

JEREMIAH
How you holding up, Colt?

COLT
(continues searching)
Better if I could speak with my
daughter.

ZANE
--Colt Granger.

Grady and Zane work their way through the clerks.

COLT
(dismissive)
Detectives.

GRADY
Can we have a minute?

COLT
In a minute--

GRADY
In private.

ZANE
Now, Your Honor.

JEREMIAH

--Gentlemen, I'm Judge Tobin. How can I help you?

ELIZABETH

--What's this all about?

COLT

Has anyone seen my daughter?!

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. They embrace.

Jacob and Haley step out from behind Annie.

Haley 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

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

ELIZABETH

(with a hug)
Oh, Haley.

Haley moves closer to Colt.

Offers him a paper rolled up in her tiny fist.

HALEY

They're flowers.

Colt unfurls a drawing of orange flowers.

HALEY

The nurse helped me draw 'em. All they had was orange.

COLT

I, uh. I think it's perfect.

Haley lights up.

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

Well, I sure made a mess of things.

ANNIE

Oh, don't say that, Daddy.

COLT

(to Annie and Haley)

I... I made mistakes. I'm sorry.
But the worst mistake was letting
either one of you out of my sight.

More hugs.

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.

JEREMIAH

--Hold on, now

ANNIE

--Daddy?

Colt turns to Elizabeth for comfort.

Her eyes, sadder by the moment.

COLT

Alright... It's alright. I just need a
minute.

(composes himself)

Wyatt, please clear my docket.

WYATT

Uh, what's happening?

It dawns on everyone that Colt is saying goodbye.

DYLAN

Your Honor, yer one of us. That means yer gonna get the best darn defense team in the whole city.

WYATT

--Like it or not.

JEREMIAH

--Damn right.

COLT

(hands the drawing to Haley)
Keep this safe for me.

She handles it like treasure.

Jacob wraps Haley in his arms.

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

COLT

I love you.

ELIZABETH

I love you too.

COLT

Please bail me out.

She nods. Can't keep her hands off her man.

ELIZABETH

I got you a nice new suit. You're gonna look great in court. It's gonna be okay, Colt. It's gonna be okay.

Lost in each other's eyes until--

Zane yanks Colt's arm behind his back.

Shocks both judges.

JEREMIAH

We really have to do the cuffs?

Zane relaxes. Pinches Colt's shoulder.

COLT

I'm gonna need counsel.

JEREMIAH

I'd be honored.

COLT
I mean someone good.

They chuckle.

As Colt is 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 prouder of her father. Haley takes her hand.

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 heavy door pops open.

A loud BUZZ.

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 is 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.