

EIGHT YEARS



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Based on the novel, "The Disappearance" by David H. Hanks



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EXT. GRASS FIELD AS FAR AS THE EYE CAN SEE - DAY

Trees line the horizon.

SUPER: Based on actual events

SUPER: Valdosta, GA. 1987

FADE TO:

INT. VALDOSTA, GA COURTROOM - DAY (1987)

In the witness stand, ADULT "HAROLD HARMON" (28), a mountain of a man has his head bowed. Eyes squeezed shut. He shakes.

HAROLD
(murmurs to himself)
Water trees. Tend flowers. Pick
tomatoes. Wring rooster's neck.

At the defense desk, KENNY WINKLER (36), boyishly handsome, bites his nails. A flower is pinned on his suit's lapel. ATTORNEY CLAY LEE BARKER (70s) nudges Kenny to stop.

A JURY watches JUDGE JOHNSON (70s) nod to DISTRICT ATTORNEY COLLIER (50s) who steps up to Harold.

COLLIER
Before we begin, given the length
of time between Helen Harmon's
disappearance and today, would you
please remind the ladies and
gentlemen of the jury how old you
were when your mother disappeared?

Harold squeezes his hands into fists.

COLLIER (CONT'D)
Mr. Harmon?

Collier nears closer and puts his hand on the witness stand.

COLLIER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Harold?

Harold raises his head - His eyes are red and full of tears.

FADE TO:

EXT. FIELD OF TALL GRASS - DAY (1972)

The bright eyes of YOUNG "HAROLD HARMON" (13) aim down a rifle at a flock of ducks in the air. A GERMAN SHEPHERD sits beside him ready to pounce.

SUPER: 15 years earlier.

Harold shoots.

A duck falls...

HAROLD
Get'em Rosie.

Rosie runs into the field and returns with a stick. They play tug-of-war.

HELLEN (O.S.)
(from distance)
Harold?

Harold looks behind him -

HELLEN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
(from distance)
Harold!

HAROLD
Momma's callin, Rosie.

Harold and Rosie run through the field towards -

The Harmon house; a small peaceful rural brick home with a nearby wooden SHED, a VEGETABLE GARDEN, and FLOWER BED.

EXT. HARMON HOUSE - PORCH - CONTINUOUS

A wind chime dances in the wind as a rooster walks along the railing. HELLEN HARMON (35), a stately young mother wearing a green dress stands on the porch with five freshly picked tomatoes.

HELLEN
(to herself)
Where in God's name is that boy?

She turns and enters the -

INT. HARMON HOUSE - KITCHEN/LIVINGROOM - CONTINUOUS

A small kitchen with the basics amenities has a table with five chairs. Hellen comes up to the sink, washes the tomatoes and places one in five paper bags.

She takes a note page and writes.

HELLEN
(to herself)
"and wring rooster's neck."

JERRY HARMON (37), a broadly built prison guard enters the connected living room and pulls up the recliner's cushions.

JERRY
Hellen, have you seen my textbook?

HELLEN
Check the dresser.

Jerry rushes into the master bedroom.

Hellen clips the paper on the refrigerator - it is a list.

YOUNG "POLLY HARMON" (10) with braided hair runs in from the backdoor holding a flower. Dirt is on her dress and hands.

POLLY
Mommy, look what I got you.

HELLEN
(seeing the dirt)
Polly love, we talked about this.

Hellen kneels down and wipes Polly's dress.

POLLY
Hold still, Mommy.

Polly places the flower behind Hellen's ear. Hellen picks up Polly and has her wash her hands in the sink.

HELLEN
No more playing outside in your nice dresses.

POLLY
But Harold goes to school covered in mud sometimes.

HELLEN
Harold's a boy, my love. It's normal for them to be dirty.

Hellen kisses Polly's cheek.

HELLEN (CONT'D)
It's your job to stay clean and
pretty for mommy, hear me?

POLLY
Okay Mommy.

Polly sits at the table. Hellen serves her breakfast.

YOUNG "LISA HARMON" (15) races through in with dolled hair
and wearing a shirt showing her stomach. She pulls out the
chair -

POLLY (CONT'D)
I see your belly button.

HELLEN
Lisa, darling. No ma'am.

LISA
What?

HELLEN
You know what.

LISA
Momma, all the girls are wearing it
this way.

HELLEN
And are they living under this
roof?

Lisa grunts and turns towards the bathroom.

HELLEN (CONT'D)
I didn't raise no Christian lady to
be catcalled. You hear me?

LISA
(from room)
Yeah, yeah.

Hellen places tomatoes in five paper bags.

HELLEN
Oh and Lisa, here's the chore list
for you after school.

LISA
(from room)
Um, I have practice today, so...

HELLEN
 (remembering)
 Thursday...

A streak of dread comes over Hellen's face...

POLLY
 You okay, Mommy?

Hellen puts on a smile for Polly.

Lisa comes out wearing something more conservative and bumps into Jerry carrying a textbook.

JERRY
 (eyeballing Lisa)
 Why didn't anyone tell me Sally
 Kellerman was in town?

LISA
 Huh, Daddy, no!

Lisa heads to the bathroom. Hellen places the list on the refrigerator. Jerry kisses Polly.

JERRY
 Don't you sprout up on me, ya hear?

POLLY
 Are you going to play the guitar
 tonight?

HELLEN
 Daddy's got a big test tomorrow,
 love.

POLLY
 Okay.

JERRY
 Hold your horses. I'm sure we'll
 find sometime to pluck a few
 strings.

Jerry takes a piece of bacon from her plate.

POLLY
 Hey!

Hellen gives Jerry breakfast. Jerry takes the plate, sets it down and pulls Hellen in close. They share a kiss.

HELLEN
 You seen your boy?

JERRY
 (looks around)
 Rosie isn't around and most dogs
 love your cooking.

Hellen pops his chest. Jerry kisses Hellen and rushes out.

JERRY (CONT'D)
 See you at four.

HELLEN
 Jerry!

JERRY
 (returns)
 Yeah?

Hellen hands him a lunch bag. He takes it.

JERRY (CONT'D)
 What would I do without you?

HELLEN
 Seven. I also need you to pick Lisa
 up today.

Jerry's whimsical demeanor turns serious.

JERRY
 We talked about this, Hellen. You
 don't need to work overtime.

HELLEN
 Jerry -

JERRY
 We're getting by. If I pass this
 test -

HELLEN
When you pass the test and get the
 promotion, you're right, we will be
 okay, but in the meantime -

JERRY
 People are saying things about
 Kenny. I don't like him knowing
 you're all alone in that office.

HELLEN
 It's temporary, Jerry. Now get.

Hellen kisses him and pushes him out the door.

HELLEN (CONT'D)
 (yells)
 Harold!

EXT. PEACH ORCHARD/INT. MONTEGO - LATER

The Montego drives along a dirt road within an orchard and merges onto a paved road. It pulls up to a traffic light. A farmer on a tractor goes by.

Dangling under the ignition is a keyring holding a few other keys.

Hellen drives as Lisa sits in the front passenger seat. Polly sits in the back with Harold covered in dirt. Harold sees Hellen's expression in the rearview mirror.

HAROLD
 You okay, Mom?

HELLEN
 (snaps out of gaze)
 I'm with the three most important people in the world, honey. Wouldn't want to be anywhere else. There's a list of chores for you on the refrigerator, Harold. I expect them to be done by the time I get home.

HAROLD
 But it's Lisa's week!

HELLEN
 I know honey, but -

HAROLD
 That's not fair! Why - ?

HELLEN
 Sometimes things change and you just have to roll with the punches.

Harold crosses his arms and avoids eye contact.

A tractor rolls through the intersection.

EXT. BUS STOP - DAY

Hellen hugs Polly and watches her bolt to the bus.

POLLY
Love you, Mommy!

Harold walks by Hellen following Polly.

HELLEN
Harold.
(Harold turns)
You better get back here and give
your mother a hug.

Hellen extends her arms out. KIDS on the bus LAUGH. He bows his head, thinks, and continues to the bus.

HELLEN (CONT'D)
I love you, honey.

The bus drives off. Hellen turns to Lisa still in the Montego.

The Montego drives off and stirs up dust and dirt.

EXT. OLD HOUSE - DAY

Dust and dirt is swept off a weathered porch by MRS. TOLLER (80s). MR. TOLLER (80s) rocks in his chair and spits tobacco. They live across the street from the -

EXT./INT. WINKLER BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

"Winkler Outdoor Advertising", a southern styled business. The parking lot is empty, but along the building's side are two black, blue-collar employees; SAMUEL WREN (69), and HENRY MAYNARD (68) loading a 4 foot long, 3 foot wide, and 2 foot deep wooden box clad in sheet metal which reads 'Winkler Outdoor Advertising' on its side into the tailgate of a GMC work truck. The box gets loaded.

Wren removes a handkerchief and wipes his brow.

WREN
I's gett'in too old for dis shit.

Maynard pulls out the GMC key ring.

MAYNARD
You and me's both.

The Montego pulls up and parks. Hellen steps out with her purse and lunch bag. Wren waves. Hellen waves back as she sorts through the keyring, unlocks the door and enters the building.

MAYNARD (CONT'D)

We needs to get a move on, Wren.

WREN

Hush up, Maynard. I's got to say
hello to my girl now.

Wren walks towards the building's rear where a gate, loading dock and pocket window are found.

Hellen walks through the dark and empty office, sets her things on her desk and heads to the back. She opens the pocket window to find Wren waiting.

WREN (CONT'D)

Top of the morn'in, Mrs. Harmon. Em
eggshells help'in your mater
garden?

Hellen weaves a red-dotted key off the keyring.

HELLEN

Absolutely. Thank you, Mr. Wren.
Where are you and Mr. Maynard off
to today?

WREN

Over yonder to Albany. Last night's
storm done blowed over a damn
billboard down.

Hellen slides the red-dotted key through the slot. He takes the key.

WREN (CONT'D)

You's ever think boss'll give me
mine own pump key?

HELLEN

At thirty-two cents a gallon,
probably not.

WREN

You's proolly rat.

Wren heads back to the truck still smiling at her.

**INTERCUT: EXT. WINKLER BUILDING - REAR/INT. OFFICE -
CONTINUOUS**

Maynard drives the GMC to a gas pump with a padlock attached to its leaver. Wren unlocks it with the red-dotted key and gasses up the GMC.

Soon after, Wren locks up the pump and slides the key back through the slot. Hellen weaves the red-dotted key back on the keyring.

WREN

You's gonna be by yourself tis morn'n.

Hellen is confused.

WREN (CONT'D)

Boss and his boy dun headed off to Atlanta. Some kinda business, he done told me.

HELLEN

Well be safe. It's a scorcher.

WREN

Will do, Mrs. Harmon. Y'all have a mighty good day now.

Hellen nods, smiles and shuts the window. A sign of relief.

At her desk, sorts the day's work and puts the keyring into her purse - CRUMPLING of paper.

Hellen removes a folded piece of paper which reads, "APPLICATION" at the top.

PRE LAP: CHATTERING WOMEN adlibbing.

FLASHBACK - EXT./INT. BEAUTY SHOP TRAILER - DAY

Hellen is lost in a gaze as her hair is done by SUE (30s). DOT (30s) getting her hair done by LOUISE (30s) beside Hellen.

LOUISE

And then he jumped off the roof, grabbed ahold of the antenna, and landed right on his backside.

SUE

Got too much of his father in him.

LOUISE

For damn sure. I said, "What in the hell were you thinking, son?"

DOT

Don't you know? Boys don't think.

LOUISE
Amen to that.

Hellen breaks down crying. Everyone stops.

 SUE
What's wrong, dear?

 HELLEN
It's nothing.

 SUE
Honey, women don't cry for no
reason. Now, come on.

 HELLEN
I can't go back there. We need the
money though. Jerry, bless his
heart, is doing everything he can,
but...

 LOUISE
Did something happen, Hellen?

 HELLEN
I was alone, working late like any
other Thursday and Kenny, uh... He
put his hands on me.

The women gasp.

 DOT
Does Jerry know?

 HELLEN
Oh no, no, no, no.

 DOT
But, he'll take care of it.

 HELLEN
And I'll lose my job and then we'll
lose the house. The mortgage takes
both our salaries.

 SUE
That Kenny boy is a wolf in sheep's
clothing.

 LOUISE
What makes you say that?

SUE

Steve, the boy who fell out of the ugly tree and hit every branch on the way down -

DOT

Joe's kid?

SUE

The one who owns the morgue. Through the grapevine, I heard Steve and Kenny "have their way" with the female cadavers when Joe ain't around.

Women gasp.

HELLEN

What am I going to do?

Sue opens a drawer from her work station.

SUE

You're going to get the hell out.

Sue hands Hellen the application paper.

HELLEN

Foxy won't like me leaving.

SUE

You were reared by a bunch of damn moonshiners. You shouldn't give two shits about what others think. You do this for your kids. Ya hear?

END FLASHBACK

EXT. ATLANTA ROADSIDE - DAY

A YOUNG "KENNY" (21) urinates under a billboard. FOXY (65), an all-American businessman sits in his Oldsmobile. A police cruiser pulls up and a SHERIFF peers at Kenny.

SHERIFF

Boy, do you know who owns that sign right there?

Kenny turns still pissing. Sheriff recognizes him.

SHERIFF (CONT'D)

Sorry, Mr. Winkler. Have a g'day.

Kenny zips up and sits in the passenger seat of the Oldsmobile. Foxy peers at Kenny and belly laughs. The car tears off.

EXT. ROAD/INT. OLDSMOBILE - CONTINUOUS

The Oldsmobile blazes by vultures pecking at a dead animal.

Kenny cleans his nails with his pocket knife. They hit a pothole and Kenny cuts his finger - looks at it the blood and puts it in his mouth.

FOXY

What time is the reception tonight?

KENNY

Seven.

FOXY

How's she in the sack?

KENNY

Jane's alright.

FOXY

Don't dangle a carrot, boy.

KENNY

You seen 'Diamonds are Forever'?

FOXY

Yeah.

KENNY

Well, Jane likes to dress up like that Bond girl, has me wear a tux, and slap her around like Connery and persuade her to share the whereabouts of Blofeld. The best part though is right before we get into it, I make her soak in an ice cold bath for me. There's nothing like it, Deddy.

FOXY

That right? In my day, man just did the deed when a woman he wanted walked by. You know who would make a good Bond girl?

KENNY

Who?

FOXY
 Our receptionist, Hellen. Telling
 you, I was born too early, Kenny.
 If I were your age... Oh, mamma.

Foxy makes a right turn toward a sign reading, 'Valdosta'.
 Kenny grabs the wheel jolting the car back onto the road. The
 Oldsmobile swerves.

FOXY (CONT'D)
 Shit-fire, boy!

KENNY
 We have to see Oscar, remember?

FOXY
 Remind me why we need to visit that
 prune of a man?

KENNY
 If Jane's father isn't at the
 reception tonight, the family
 jewels wouldn't be polished.

FOXY
 Boy, sit'er down and give her the
 ol'one-two. Worked for your mother.

KENNY
 Jane's a daddy's girl. As long as
 Oscar is kicking, what I want comes
 second fiddle.

FOXY
 Sounds like you need to tip his
 bucket, son.

KENNY
 Yeah, and how would you suggest I
 go about doing that?

FOXY
 Planting a body out here in these
 fields is like dumping water into
 an ocean.

KENNY
 I could use one of our tool boxes.

FOXY
 Long as you log it as stolen and
 collect the insurance.

Kenny puts his finger in his mouth.

EXT. FOXY'S HOUSE - DAY

The Oldsmobile pulls up behind a GTO. Kenny bolts to it.

FOXY
Hold'yer horses. Where ya off to?

KENNY
The office. Want to square
everything for tomorrow's shipment.

FOXY
It's a sight to see you taking
pride in your ol'man's empire.

KENNY
See ya at seven.

Kenny hops into the GTO and hightails it.

EXT. WINKLER BUILDING/REAR - LATER

The GTO parks beside the Montego. Kenny steps out, runs his finger across the Montego's hood as he heads to the building's rear. He passes the gas pump, lifts the gate, and walks around to the loading dock. Enters the -

INT. LOADING DOCK/STORAGE/OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Kenny walks up the ramp, passes tools and a stack of large wooden boxes and travels through a room of rolled posters tied with rope.

He sneaks down the hall.

He sees Hellen, comes up from behind and grabs her shoulders. She screams.

KENNY
Got you.

Hellen stands.

HELLEN
Kenny. What are you doing here?

Kenny pushes the chair out of his way and grabs her backside.

KENNY
You're such a peach, Hellen.

Kenny runs his cut finger over lips.

HELLEN
Kenny. Please -

Kenny inserts his finger in her mouth. Hellen bites.
Kenny yanks it out and Hellen pushes him off. She runs.
Kenny chases, grabs her hair and pulls her into him.

HELLEN (CONT'D)
Let go of me!

Kenny grabs her breasts.
Hellen jabs Kenny's gut with her elbow.
Kenny bows over, grabs Hellen and throws her against the wall.

Hellen falls holding her head... Kenny grabs Hellen by the legs, turns her on her belly and drags her across the carpet. Hellen digs her nails into the carpet, kicks and squirms.

HELLEN (CONT'D)
No, no, no! Stop, Kenny! Please!

Kenny lifts her up by her legs and kicks her stomach. Hellen recoils, coughs...
The flower on Hellen's ear falls off as she is dragged into the storage room.

FADE TO:

EXT. OLD HOUSE - LATER

The Tollers rock in their chairs on the porch. Spits tobacco.

BACK TO:

INT. WINKLER BUILDING - LATER

Kenny, naked, cover in sweat uses Hellen's desk phone.

KENNY
Deddy, hey. - Yeah, all's good.
Could you swing by? I'm kinda tied
down with something. - Won't take
but a minute.

Kenny hangs up, sees the lunch bag and takes out the tomato. Takes a bite out of it... exits Hellen's office.

EXT. ORCHARD/HARMON HOUSE - MIDDAY

The bus drives off as Harold and Polly walk to their house. Rosie runs at Harold with a stick. Harold throws it into the field. Rosie chases after it. Harold follows.

POLLY
Mommy said you had chores.

HAROLD
Well, Momma isn't here right now.

EXT./INT. WINKLER BUILDING - STORAGE - CONTINUOUS

The Oldsmobile parks. Foxy sees the Montego and enters. All the lights are off.

FOXY
Kenny?

KENNY (O.S.)
In here.

Foxy walks down the hall, sees Kenny exit from the storage room fully dressed and closing the door.

FOXY
What's going on, boy?

Kenny stops his father from nearing the room. He sees the flower on the floor and puts it in his lapel.

KENNY
I did something, Deddy and I need you to keep it between us, alright?

FOXY
You're not making any sense, Kenny.

Kenny leads Foxy towards the room and opens the door. Foxy sees a glimpse of Hellen's mangled naked body on the floor.

Foxy covers his mouth, nears Kenny and slaps the crap out of him! Kenny covers himself, but Foxy finds other ways to hit his son.

FOXY (CONT'D)
Everything I've built will be buried with her, do you see that, boy?
(yells in face)
Do you see that?

Foxy holds his fist up to Kenny's face gearing for another hit and looks at his son. He unclenches.

FOXY (CONT'D)
How are you going to fix this, boy?

KENNY
We could dump her in the ocean.

Foxy looks at Kenny...

FOXY
I need to make a phone call.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL/FOOTBALL FIELD - LATER

Jerry's truck passes by LOWNDES COUNTY HIGH. He spots Lisa in her cheer outfit flirting with a senior FOOTBALL PLAYER.
HONK!

INT. WINKLER BUILDING - LOADING DOCK - LATER

Through the gate, the Oldsmobile drives in reverse up the ramp. The trunk pops. Kenny and Foxy put Hellen in it.

Foxy closes the trunk and gives a list to Kenny.

FOXY
Follow this to the 't'.

Foxy walks to the driver's door.

KENNY
Where you going?

FOXY
Across the street.

KENNY
The reception is in half an hour.

FOXY
You should have thought of that beforehand, boy.

Foxy gets in the car and tears off.

INT. HARMON HOUSE - LIVING ROOM/KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Jerry strums his guitar as Polly listens. Harold does homework at the table with Rosie under his feet. The pot boils over. Lisa walks by wearing a bath towel.

LISA
Dad, the pasta's done.

Jerry races over and dumps the pasta in the colander.

JERRY
Set the table, would ya?

LISA
You heard Dad, frog's-breath.

Jerry puts the pasta and tomato sauce in the pot.

HAROLD
He asked you to do it, butt-nugget.

Phone RINGS.

JERRY
Would one of you just do it?

Polly answers. Lisa heads to her room.

POLLY
Harmon residence. This is Polly.
How was your day today?
(listens)
Daddy, it's Mommy's boss.

Jerry looks confused at Polly. Takes the phone.

JERRY
(on phone)
Winkler?

EXT. ROAD/FOREST - LATER

The Oldsmobile travels along the paved road. Foxy turns at a new billboard and travels down a dirt road.

The Oldsmobile enters a forest of dead trees.

INT. WINKLER BUILDING - OFFICE - LATER

Kenny hangs up, scratches off '2. Police' and reads '3. Jane' above the last line item, '4. Gas GMC'. He dials and searches the drawers.

KENNY

(on phone)

Jane - No, everything's fine. -
Start the dinner without me. I'll
be there asap. - Two hours max. -
The office.

Kenny notices Hellen's purse, grabs it, and digs.

KENNY (CONT'D)

(on phone)

Hey, I got your dad to come
alright? - I know this is our
reception dinner, but you listen.
You marry me, you marry the
business - look, I'm sorry.
Remember Hellen? She's missing.

JERRY (O.S.)

What are you doing?

KENNY

(on phone)

Got to go.

Kenny sees Jerry coming around the desk. Drops the phone.

KENNY (CONT'D)

Now, Jerry let me explain -

Jerry snatches the purse from Kenny and notices the flower on Kenny's lapel.

JERRY

What's going on? Where's Hellen?

EXT. WINKLER BUILDING - LATER

Jerry checks the Montego as Kenny scrapes his fingernails with his pocket knife. LIEUTENANT BASSET (35) exits the building.

LIEUTENANT BASSET

Good news, the building's clean.
Bad news, Hellen ran off with a
man.

JERRY

Come again?

LIEUTENANT BASSET

Now Jerry, this is a bit harsh to hear, but the Tollers,
 (point at the old house)
 They said she got into a car with a man who had an Alabama license plate at 9:30 this morning.

Jerry looks across the street. Kenny smiles to himself and inserts the knife into his right pants pocket.

JERRY

They're older than dirt, Basset!
 And you were hardly in there.

LIEUTENANT BASSET

There's nothing in the building that indicates anything otherwise.

JERRY

Tell me, what woman in her right mind would leave her purse behind?

LIEUTENANT BASSET

Jerry, I'm not here to understand the mind of a woman now. Lord knows, I've tried. I'm sharing the facts. A man of your profession would know that.

Jerry takes Hellen's purse and lowers the tailgate of his truck. He sorts through all the items from Hellen's purse.

Kenny places his hand on Jerry's shoulder.

KENNY

I hate to be a pain, but I need that keyring there.

Jerry looks at Kenny's hand. Kenny removes it.

LIEUTENANT BASSET

We good there, boys?

KENNY

Yeah, just explaining to Jerry here that we have a gas pump in the back. There's only two keys. Deddy has one and the other is on that keyring.

JERRY
Which one is it?

KENNY
The one with the red dot.

Jerry weaves the red-dotted key off the ring, gives it to Kenny, and sees him insert it into his right pants pocket.

KENNY (CONT'D)
Thanks. It's not like she's going to need it anyway.

JERRY
Excuse me?

Kenny puts his hand on Jerry's shoulder again.

KENNY
If Hellen resurfaces, her position will be here for her. She's family.

Kenny walks off. CLINK. Jerry notices the red-dotted key and the knife on the ground. Kenny picks both items up. Jerry gets in his truck and drives off.

EXT. HARMON HOUSE/INT. TRUCK - NIGHT

Jerry stares at his house. The purse sits in the passenger seat. Harold and his sisters step out onto the porch.

EXT./INT. COUNTRY CLUB - NIGHT

A champagne bottle pops. MUSIC plays as PEOPLE mingle. Foxy dances with a LITTLE GIRL. OSCAR GRAVES (60s) sits in the corner minding his own business as -

JANE (20) sits pissed off at the head table. Kenny clinks his glass. The room settles.

KENNY
I want to thank everyone for coming tonight and share a secret you all.

Foxy peers at Kenny...

KENNY (CONT'D)
Growing up here, all anyone wants is to get out of dodge, but then you meet a girl who changes your mind.
(gestures to Jane)
(MORE)

KENNY (CONT'D)

If it wasn't for you, Jane, I wouldn't have ever realized how blessed I am.

(people cheer)

Now, if we're being honest half of you work for my Deddy and the other half wish you did, but as long as the whiskey keeps pouring, none of that matters tonight.

(people laugh)

Overall, I have not found a more friendly, warm Southern hospitable place than this beautiful Godly town of Valdosta. Here's to you, baby. The one who kept me here.

Kenny kisses Jane - still pissed.

KENNY (CONT'D)

(to Jane)

You mind driving yourself home tonight?

JANE

Are you joking?

KENNY

There's some work I gotta finish up tonight, baby.

JANE

Like what?

INT. GMC TRUCK - NIGHT

Rain pounds the windshield. Wren and Maynard load up in the cab. They are wet, covered in mud, and exhausted.

Kenny steps into the driver's seat. He too is wet and covered in mud, but is also drenched in BLOOD.

KENNY

Not a word to anyone, ever.

WREN

Yes, boss.

MAYNARD

We's still get'in paid?

WREN

Hush-up your mouth.

Kenny searches for the truck key.

KENNY
 You'll both be set straight.
 (to himself)
 Where's the key?

MAYNARD
 You don't got it, boss?

KENNY
 You drove us here.

MAYNARD
 You's asked for it back, boss.

WREN
 (motions weaving a key)
 You put'em pump key on the GMC key
 ring, remember? Check you's pocket.

KENNY
 (checks pocket)
 Wren, I'm telling you I don't -

Kenny's expression changes.

WREN
 Found'em?

Kenny pulls out the lining of his pocket and finds a hole.

THUNDER... They all look through the mud-covered windshield.

MAYNARD
 Is em keys where we thinks them is?

WREN
 Deep down there.

Kenny covers his face with his hands and laughs. Wren and Maynard look at each other.

EXT. PEACH ORCHARD/HARMON HOUSE - DAY

Bus drives off. Polly walks with Harold and points.

POLLY
 Look!

The driveway is packed with CARS. They race home.

INT. HARMON HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Polly and Harold barge through the front door.

POLLY Mommy?
 HAROLD Mom!

Their entire FAMILY turns to them. AUNT MARSHA hugs Polly.

AUNT MARSHA
 Oh, look how you've sprouted up.

Harold walks in the kitchen filled to the brim with FOOD.
 Jerry, in his recliner stares at the phone amongst the chaos.

UNCLE CARL intervenes.

UNCLE CARL
 We could put up a reward on TV.

UNCLE HUGH
 That's a great idea, Carl.

AUNT MARY
 Maybe she is lying somewhere
 bleeding to death...

AUNT CAROL
 Maybe the business got robbed and
 they took her captive...

Harold finds his mother's chore list on the refrigerator.

HAROLD
 (murmurs to himself)
 Water trees. Tend flowers. Pick
 tomatoes. Wring rooster's neck.

Harold reads it again. And again, and again amongst the chaos
 of the house.

EXT. SHED/FLOWER GARDEN - LATER

Harold nails wooden boards together. Polly plays with Rosie
 and falls in garden. She stands and looks down.

POLLY
 Uh-oh.

A few flowers are squished.

HAROLD
 Get up!

Polly cries. Harold grabs her and finds Jerry grabbing him. Harold tries to get free as Jerry takes off his belt.

HAROLD (CONT'D)
No! Daddy! No!

Polly continues to cry as Rosie whimpers.

EXT./INT. HARMON HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Jerry sits on the porch eyeing a police cruiser. Two Georgia Bureau of Investigation AGENTS sit across Harold and Polly.

GBI 1
Where's your older sister, Lisa?

HAROLD
At her friend's house.

GBI 2
What time is she coming back?

HAROLD
I don't know.

GBI 1
Why did she leave?

POLLY
Why is Daddy outside?

GBI 1
Have there been any issues?

HAROLD
Issues?

GBI 2
How often did your parents argue?

GBI 1
Has your father ever struck your mother or any of you?

Harold as he repositions in his seat.

POLLY
Daddy misses Mommy. He hasn't played the guitar since she left. But he will when she comes back. Right Harold?

Harold bows his head.

HAROLD
I don't know.

MONTAGE: EXT. AROUND VALDOSTA, GA - SEQUENCE

- A) The Uncles search the downtown alleyways with flashlights.
- B) The Aunts and Hellen's friends knock on multiple neighborhood doors and show Hellen's picture to RESIDENTS.
- C) POLICE OFFICERS comb the water front with Foxy.
- D) Jerry and Harold with a few other MEN walk Rosie around a landfill with Kenny. Harold throws up.

END SEQUENCE

EXT. FOREST FIELD - DAY

MEN help Jerry and Harold search. Rosie follows the scent from the purse. Foxy and Kenny are up ahead.

FOXY
How deep did you bury her?

KENNY
She's in a box covered with rain,
roots, and mud. There's no way -

Rosie BARKS. Harold lets go of her leash and Rosie bolts past the Winklers.

FOXY
You were say'in?

Kenny runs after Rosie as does everyone. Rosie digs in-between the trees. Kenny makes it to Rosie and hits her. Rosie attacks.

Jerry runs up and discovers Rosie drawing blood from Kenny's arm as they squabble in the dirt.

KENNY
Get her off me!

Jerry grabs her leash and pulls Rosie off. Kenny lies in the dirt holding his bleeding arm.

FOXY
Jerry, you best shoot that mutt!

HAROLD
No! He hit her first. I saw him!

FOXY
(to Harold)
Hush now, boy!
(to Jerry)
Put her down, son!

KENNY
(holding the bloody wound)
Oh, God - It won't stop!

HAROLD
(crying and tugging)
You know Rosie wouldn't bite him
unless she had too - you know her!

Kenny screams and rolls in the dirt.

FOXY
(to Jerry)
I will press charges if you don't.

Jerry looks at Harold who knows this look.

HAROLD
No!

Harold runs over to Rosie and embraces her.

HAROLD (CONT'D)
Please, Daddy, don't hurt her.

Foxy grunts for Jerry to get a move on.

JERRY
Harold, move now.

HAROLD
SHE DID NOTHING WRONG!

Foxy grabs Harold trying to pull the boy away from the dog,
Rosie bites Foxy's hand - draws blood. Harold lets go -

HAROLD (CONT'D)
Run Rosie! GO!

Rosie runs.

FOXY
(shows bloody hand)
This is on you, Harmon!

Jerry tears up as he brings up the rifle.

Harold goes at Jerry, but the men hold him back.

HAROLD

Rosie!

GUN SHOT... Jerry eyes fill with tears but holds his composure.

FOXY

Let's get a move on. Losing daylight, boys.

EXT./INT. HARMON HOUSE - NIGHT

Rain patters the windows. Jerry, in his recliner rocks Polly to sleep. KNOCK, KNOCK.

Jerry opens the door to find Foxy.

FOXY

May I come in?

Jerry leans on the door frame.

JERRY

What do you want, Mr. Winkler?

FOXY

Aw well, straight-shooter. Came to say you did the right thing today.

JERRY

And the charges?

Foxy pulls out a bottle of whiskey and gifts it to Jerry.

FOXY

What charges?

EXT. FLOWER GARDEN - NIGHT

Harold puts the last bit of dirt over a small grave and places Rosie's collar on top... Harold shakes.

HAROLD

(murmurs to himself)

Water trees. Tend flowers. Pick tomatoes. Wring rooster's neck.

FADE TO:

38

EXT. HARMON HOUSE - DAY (1975)

38

TEEN "RUSTY" (16) spots another teenager on a homemade bench.

RUSTY

Come'on, Harold! You can do it!

TEEN "HAROLD HARMON" (16), 6'2 and thick, racks the bar and sits up covered in sweat.

SUPER: Three years later

RUSTY (CONT'D)

My man! You pumping up for tryouts?

HAROLD

In Quitman. Yeah.

RUSTY

I heard one kid had to learn how to write with his mouth because he broke both his arms last year.

HAROLD

Long as it gets me out of here.

Rusty does their special handshake and gets on his dirt bike.

RUSTY

You wanna tear up the forest?

HAROLD

Can't Rusty. Gotta do some chores.

RUSTY

No worries, my man!

Rusty rides off, hits a hole and falls off the bike.

RUSTY (CONT'D)

I'm okay!

EXT. HARMON HOUSE - FIELD/DRIVEWAY - LATER

Harold waters the bush-like pine trees. Near the house we find Hellen's Montego is replaced with a VW Beetle.

INT. HARMON HOUSE - GIRL'S ROOM/KITCHEN - DAY

TEEN "POLLY HARMON" (13) is asleep. Lisa's bed hasn't been touched. Harold places a flower on Polly's end-table.

On the calendar, Harold scratches off a day in July. At the end reads, "Try Outs".

Harold puts his head under the sink and finds an empty whiskey bottle. He tosses it in a trash full of beer cans and microwavable meal boxes.

BETTY (39) comes out of the master bedroom wearing her Sunday best. Jerry exits wearing a tie. This is odd.

BETTY

Dear, go put on a dress shirt.
She'll be here any minute.

KNOCK, KNOCK. Harold opens the door and sees MAXINE (16), a Barbie doll. Betty runs passed Harold, and hugs her.

BETTY (CONT'D)

Oh, Maxine! My baby girl. How was the drive, tell me all about it.

Maxine looks at Harold.

INT. HARMON HOUSE - GIRL'S ROOM/KITCHEN - LATER

Betty waits by the microwave. Jerry cracks open a beer and sits at the table covered with food microwaved. Polly has the flower behind her ear and braided hair. Harold now wearing a shirt sits beside Maxine. He glances down her shirt. She catches him. He looks away.

POLLY

I like your hair.

MAXINE

Thank you. I like your flower.

POLLY

Harold gives me one every morning.

Maxine glances at Harold who is still embarrassed.

MAXINE

Did you braid it yourself?

POLLY

Yeah, Lisa taught me.

MAXINE

Who's Lisa?

Harold glances at Jerry.

A) FLASHBACK - HARMON HOUSE - NIGHT

Betty, in the recliner watches TEEN "LISA" (18) and Jerry now 40-years-old hash it out red faced and pointing fingers. Eventually Lisa storms out of the front door.

END FLASHBACK

JERRY

My eldest.

MAXINE

Well, I'll let you braid my hair.

POLLY

Really?

MAXINE

We can play dress up for the entire summer if you want.

Polly jumps with excitement as Harold looks at Jerry, confused.

JERRY

Maxine will be staying with us until school starts. Then it's off to -

BETTY

(sets bowl)

Florida, where her father lives. But we are here now and that is what is most important. One big happy family.

Betty kisses Jerry and holds Maxine's hand. Maxine slides her hand along Harold's inner thigh.

EXT. SHED/PEACH ORCHARD/RIVER - DAY

Harold rolls out his dirt bike. Maxine walks up to him.

MAXINE

You ride?

HAROLD

Yeah.

MAXINE

That's cool.

They race through the peach orchard. Harold dodges trees with serious concentration as Maxine has the time of her life.

The bike rests on a tree. The river flows. Harold watches Maxine undress and run into the water in her underwear.

MAXINE (CONT'D)

Don't be shy.

INT. HARMON HOUSE - HAROLD'S ROOM - NIGHT/DAY

Rain pours down the window. Harold lies in bed. The door opens. Harold jumps up as Maxine enters.

HAROLD

What are you doing?

Maxine closes it softly and gets in bed with him.

MAXINE

I want to spend my last night with you.

Harold shakes with anxiety.

HAROLD

(murmurs to himself)

Water trees. Tend flowers. Pick tomatoes. Wring rooster's neck.

Harold shakes and clenches his hands together as he tries to breathe. Maxine hugs him tightly.

MAXINE

It's okay. I'm here.

Harold calms down.

HAROLD

I don't want you to leave.

MAXINE

I'll be here when you get back from tryouts. Promise.

EXT. BUS STOP - DAY

Harold exits the passenger side of the truck, grabs his gym bag and sees his mother's purse behind the seat.

Jerry watches other fathers hugging their sons.

JERRY

See ya in a week if not sooner.

Jerry gives Harold a handshake.

SERIES OF SHOTS

The PLAYERS heckle the boys as they travel through a series of drills, tackles, and plays. During a run, Harold stops, Rusty helps him finish.

END MONTAGE

EXT. BUS STOP/INT. TRUCK - DAY

Jerry sits in his truck. He takes a swig of beer as the bus pulls up. Harold exits with Rusty. They do their handshake.

RUSTY

See ya on the gridiron, my man.

Harold loads up in the truck.

HAROLD

I made the team.

JERRY

Maxine went to her father's.

Jerry cranks up the truck.

EXT./INT. HARMON HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Harold dumps the trash at the end of the driveway. It CLINKS.

Jerry watches TV and drinks. Harold presents his diploma.

HAROLD

I'm done, Dad.

Jerry glances at the diploma and goes back to the TV.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

Got accepted to Georgia Tech too.
It's a lot of money though.

JERRY

You want to go to college?

Harold nods.

JERRY (CONT'D)

Then I suggest you be a man and get a job. I've got nothin' to give.

Jerry takes a swig of beer.

HAROLD

You've got nothing to give? Each night I take out the trash, I find it stuffed with your bottles and your cans. So don't tell me you don't have anything to give.

JERRY

Don't talk to me that way, boy.

HAROLD

Ever since mom left us you've been drowning and sitting and drinking and taking us down with you.

JERRY

Your mother didn't leave us, boy.

HAROLD

How do you know, Dad? Tell me what you've done to prove she didn't just leave us for some Alabama hick. "Be a man.". To what? Be like you? A man who's wife leaves him because he's a pitiful fucking father?

Jerry jumps up and punches Harold in the face.

JERRY

Get the hell out.

Harold holds back the tears.

HAROLD

It should've been you who left us.

JERRY

Get out!

Harold exits. Jerry goes for his drink and cries.

INT. NAVY RECRUITMENT OFFICE - DAY

A reflection of Harold is seen in a Navy poster as he waits.

EXT. BUS STOP - DAY

YOUNG MEN load up on the bus as Jerry's truck pulls up. Polly and Harold get out of the truck and walk up to the bus.

Polly takes Harold's hands and prays...

POLLY

God, be with my brother. Show him
grace through all the trials -

HAROLD

Polly, He's not listening anymore.

Harold steps out of the truck and nears the bus.

Polly grabs Harold's shoulder and turns him around. She pulls out a flower and puts it in his hand.

POLLY

He's always listening.

Polly hugs Harold and walks off.

EXT. IDAHO - GREENBELT/EXT./INT. SMALL HOUSE - DAY (1979)

An SUV sits in the driveway. ADULT "HAROLD HARMON" (20), thinned out with a buzzcut finishes his run. He checks the mailbox. Harold finds an envelope - reads it.

SUPER: Four years later

Harold enters the house and is hit with a haze of smoke.

HAROLD

Stoner, come on man.

STONER (18) works a thermodynamics math equation on the wall with a marker. Reads worksheet.

STONER

Bro, help me out. "What is 'X', the
necessary force to compress a gas
in a reactor vessel when 'F' equals
the constant?"

HAROLD

Another can of paint.

Harold heads to his room. CHARLIE (20) opens refrigerator.

CHARLIE

We're dry.

Stoner writes on the wall.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Cut'n Shoot tonight it is.

INT. SMALL HOUSE - HAROLD'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Harold sits on his bed and opens envelope.

LISA (V.O.)
Dear Dingbat, congrats on surviving
basic. I feel safer already. Keep
me updated on your technical class.

INT. LAWYER'S OFFICE/EXT. GRAVEYARD - DAY

Teen Polly and ADULT LISA (22) listen to a LAWYER.

LISA (V.O.)
It's been seven years now since
mom's disappearance. Legally she's
pronounced dead. It's hard for all
of us to swallow.

Polly and Lisa look over plots with a GROUNDS KEEPER.

LISA (V.O.)
But we all agree it's time to move
on. We're building mom a memorial
and would like you to write her
epitaph. Take your time, but not
too much. Big Sis, Lisa. P.S. Dad
married Betty. So there's that.

EXT./INT. BAR - NIGHT

The SUV sits at 'The Cut n Shoot' bar with billiard balls in
flashing neon.

Inside is full of COWBOYS, and DAISY DUKE look-alikes.

CHARLIE
A round of your finest!

Stoner nears the pool tables. Harold pulls him aside.

HAROLD
Be cool tonight. Okay?

STONER
Ice cold.

Stoner nears cowboys racking the table and pulls out a few bucks. Harold sits at the bar and studies his textbook. The jukebox changes songs. Bob Dylan's song, "FOREVER YOUNG" plays. Harold writes it down.

MARGIE (O.S.)

What's a nice guy like you doing in a place like this?

Harold turns to see MARGIE (19), a cute young lady.

HAROLD

Sorry, have we met before?

MARGIE

I've seen you around.

EXT./INT. BAR - LATER

Shooter hustles a Cowboy, gets paid and racks a new game. Charlie dances with a girl and a half empty pitcher is in-between Harold and Margie as they laugh.

HAROLD

Kids are hellcats where I'm from.
It's amazing we got away with what we did and didn't die.
(refills the glasses)
Sorry, I don't talk this much.

MARGIE

(touches his hand)
No. You're a good storyteller.
Where are you from again?

HAROLD

The sticks. Morven, Georgia.

MARGIE

I'm from Valdosta.

HAROLD

What high school did you go to?

MARGIE

Lowndes County High.

HAROLD

My sister cheered there. I was the tight end.

Margie looks at her beer.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

You okay?

MARGIE

You ever feel like no matter how far you run from home, it always seems to find its way back to you?

A Cowboy hits Stoner over the head with a bottle. Charlie jumps in to the fight. An ugly brawl begins.

HAROLD

Excuse me.

Harold pulls Cowboys off his pals and ends up in the fight.

EXT. BAR - NIGHT

Harold sits on the SUV's tailgate holding a handful of snow on his cheek. Charlie and Stoner hop in and start it up.

STONER

Com'on, let's hit another!

Harold gets off the tailgate and starts walking.

HAROLD

You go on.

SUV heads in the opposite direction further into downtown.

MARGIE (O.S.)

Need a ride, Sticks?

Harold turns. Margie runs after him holding his textbook.

INT. HAROLD'S ROOM - LATER

Harold plops Margie on his bed and they make-out. He shakes.

HAROLD

(murmurs to himself)

Water trees. Tend flowers. Pick tomatoes. Wring rooster's neck.

MARGIE

Hey, you okay - what's wrong?

Harold pulls back and sits on the bed. Controls breathing.

HAROLD

I'm leaving. I - I don't know when.
Don't get me wrong, I like you, but
I don't want to get your hopes up.

Margie pushes him on his back and crawls on top.

MARGIE

No hope here.

Margie kisses Harold. He rolls her over.

CUT TO:

INT. HAROLD'S ROOM - DAY

Harold wakes up, looks over at the pillow beside him with a note which reads, "Call me." There's a phone number with a lipstick mark. He flips the note finding Lisa's letter.

EXT. GRAVEYARD - DAY

Harold walks up the hill wearing his Service Dress Whites. He nears a small collection of PEOPLE all dressed in black. He comes up behind a woman with braided hair.

HAROLD

Pardon. Is this the - ?

Polly (now 17-years-old) turns to Harold and hugs his neck.

POLLY

I knew you'd come.

LISA (O.S.)

Hey fathead.

Harold looks up at Lisa (now 22-years-old) joins the hug.

EXT. GRAVEYARD - LATER

Harold, Lisa, Polly, walk up to the grave stone reading, "'May you be courageous, stand upright, and be strong.' Forever Young/ B. Dylan".

Harold sees Young Harold down way looking at him.

EXT. AIRPORT - LATER

Polly hugs Harold.

POLLY
You can't stay?

HAROLD
I got class.

Polly nods, lets go and dries her eyes. Lisa hugs Harold.

LISA
This was a good day. A new start.

Harold looks at her and goes toward the entrance.

POLLY
Harold!

Harold turns and gets another hug from Polly.

POLLY (CONT'D)
She's proud of you, you know.

Polly lets go and watches Harold near the airport.

INT. SMALL HOUSE - HAROLD'S ROOM - NIGHT/DAY

Harold lies in bed and looks at the lipstick mark along the note. Stoner kicks the door in!

STONER
We're out of here! Our orders, bro.
They're finally out of here!

Stoner tosses Harold an envelopee. PRE LAP: PHONE RINGS.

EXT. PIER - DAY

Harold follows a few hundred SAILORS up the gangway. He stops in awe of the USS NIMITZ; a twenty-story high and quarter of a mile long metal boat.

MARGIE (V.O.)
How long will you be gone?

HAROLD (V.O.)
Six to eight months.

MARGIE (V.O.)
We agreed not to get our hopes up.

HAROLD (V.O.)
I know. I just...

MARGIE (V.O.)
It's just what, Harold?

SERIES OF SHOTS - NIMITZ - DAY

A) Harold walks through a maze of hallways. He locates his confined living quarters full of bunk beds.

HAROLD (V.O.)
I don't want to let you go.

MARGIE (V.O.)
Six months is a long time.

HAROLD (V.O.)
I know, Margie, but...

B) In the mess hall, Harold eats the grub and ROB (24), a helicopter pilot introduces himself and sits down.

MARGIE (V.O.)
I won't be here when you get back.

HAROLD (V.O.)
Where are you going?

C) On deck, harsh head winds blow Harold backwards. Later, a DOCTOR applies cream on second-degree burns to his face.

MARGIE (V.O.)
The sticks. My mom's sick.

HAROLD (V.O.)
Sorry.

D) A line of SAILORS stand outside the gym. SAILORS inside place bets as Harold pumps iron on the bench press.

MARGIE (V.O.)
I don't know if I'm ready to do
what you're asking.

E) A PRIEST holds the door of a chapel open. Harold walks on.

HAROLD (V.O.)
(to himself)
Every goddamn time.

MARGIE (V.O.)
What's that?

INT. MILITARY OFFICE

HAROLD

(on phone)

My life is full of heartache, but
since I met you... I just don't
want to let you go is all.

MARGIE (V.O.)

Do you have a pen?

EXT./INT. NIMITZ - DECK/HANGAR - DAY

The Nimitz voyages across the sea. SAILORS reach for their
bundle of letters.

Rob hands Harold a bundle of letters, he steps away from the
line of men painting helicopters sand-brown. There's a letter
from Margie.

SPEAKER CUE. All stop and turn to the speaker.

MESS HALL/LIVING QUARTERS/GYM/REACTOR ROOM/HANGAR

1 MC SPEAKER

*Sixty-six American hostages are
held against their will within the
U.S. Embassy of Tehran. Carter has
approved 'Operation Eagle Claw'.
Naval forces are due East. All
outside communication will cease
until mission is complete.*

All the men cheer.

ROB

Finally, some action!

Harold looks down at his letters.

ROB (CONT'D)

Don't worry. Margie's not going to
vanish into thin air.

SERIES OF SHOTS - NIMITZ

A) Reactor Room - Harold dripping with sweat runs around
recording gauges, turning levers, and rotating wheels to
maintain the reactors in perfect operation condition.

- B) Control Room - the CAPTAIN orders a new set of coordinates and declares they are nearing the Iranian shoreline.
- C) Ocean - the giant boat changes direction.
- D) Reactor Room - gauges spike, steam shoots and pressure builds in the pipes. Harold shakes, but continues working.

HAROLD
Water trees. Tend flowers. Pick
tomatoes. Wring rooster's neck.

INT. NIMITZ - MESS HALL - DAY

Harold eats alone amongst the sailors.

SAILOR
Hey, Harold. You seen Rob anywhere?

HAROLD
His craft hasn't returned yet.

SPEAKER CUE.

1 MC SPEAKER
*'Operation Eagle Claw' declared
flawless.*

The men cheer.

1 MC SPEAKER (CONT'D)
*However, at the time of arrival,
near the designated refueling
station in the Iranian desert,
delays occurred. Due to
misdirection caused by sand in the
aircraft navigation equipment,
several helicopters lifted off too
hastily in the final phase. A
number of helicopters collided with
a C-130 airplane killing several
personnel. Carter has called off
the mission.*

All the men sit in silence. The sailor looks at Harold.

EXT. NIMITZ - DECK/INT. GYM - DAY

SAILORS mob over mail. PETTY OFFICER tosses a bundle of letters at Harold. The top letter is from Jerry.

JERRY (V.O.)

Dear Son...

Harold reads on, shakes and drops the letters. Petty Officer hears the thump.

PETTY OFFICER

Harmon?

EXT. FOREST FIELD - DAY (1980)

The billboard stands with the same advertisement on it but severely aged. A TRACTOR driven by DALE, a farmer tills up the field. EARL, another farmer watches the chisel unearthing roots. It catches something and pulls it up from the dirt.

EARL

Woah, Woah, Dale!

DALE

(turns off the engine)

What's the matter, Earl?

Earl jumps down from the tractor and nears the lid.

DALE (CONT'D)

We've only got just a few more
hours until dark.

Earl wipes the dirt off the lid to show the words, "Winkler Outdoor Advertising".

Dale looks down from the tractor's seat as Earl finds a loose board. He lifts it, peeks, and falls back petrified.

EXT. FOREST FIELD - NIGHT

Generator lights POP on. A SHERIFF ropes off the area. DETECTIVE STARNES (40s) interviews the farmers as LIEUTENANT SPARKS (40s) watches the box being lifted out of the ground. A PHOTOGRAPHER takes a picture.

STARNES

Lieutenant Sparks.

Sparks heads over to Starnes.

SPARKS

Yes, Detective?

STARNES

Everything needs to be accounted for. Fingerprints, dental records, I want to know who's in that box.

A photo is taken of the hole. A reflection of metal is seen at the bottom.

SPARKS

What do you see, Starnes?

Starnes and Sparks near the hole. Starnes puts on a glove. He climbs down into the hole and picks up a keyring with two keys on it; a GMC key and the other has a red dot.

Starnes looks at the height of the hole.

STARNES

What's this, four feet or so?

SPARKS

Yeah.

Starnes looks over to Dale and waves him over. Dale comes.

STARNES

How deep does the chisel on the back of your tractor go?

DALE

A foot maybe? Depends on the dirt.

SPARKS

What are you thinking, Starnes?

STARNES

Six inches deeper, none of us would be here now.

INT. LAB - NIGHT

A FORENSICS SPECIALIST removes a mangled, balled up green dress. She unwraps it and a bra, underwear, and sandals fall out. On the table lies an assortment of jewelry; a wedding ring, earrings, and a necklace. A skeleton with a rope around its neck lies on the table too.

STARNES

What do we know?

SPECIALIST

Well, for one, we're in luck that eighty percent of the bones are intact.

STARNES

And two?

SPECIALIST

Due to the decomposition rate, she's been a concealed murder for the last eight years.

STARNES

She?

SPECIALIST

Other than the underwear, dress, jewelry and the bone structure is female.

STARNES

Any fingerprints?

SPECIALIST

Due to decomposition, anything like fingerprints, hair, and excess blood outside of the box disappears. It's strange though.

STARNES

What's strange?

SPECIALIST

Most victims don't have anything of value on their person when they are found like this. But she does.

STARNES

So, he didn't want money.

SPECIALIST

Can't assume the person who put her in the box is a he.

Specialist moves toward the rope around Hellen's neck.

SPECIALIST (CONT'D)

She has a fractured jaw and a few broken ribs, but it seems that she was strangled to death.

Starnes feels the texture of the rope.

STARNES
Premeditated?

SPECIALIST
No.

STARNES
No?

SPECIALIST
Usually the killer has a plan of how to dispose of the body, but this one didn't. They weren't planning on killing her. And I don't think the killer knew she wouldn't fit in the box.

STARNES
Why do you say that?

Specialist calls Starnes' attention to the severed leg bone.

SPECIALIST
Normally, in a case like this where there's a body in a box, a practiced killer would bring a large blade like an axe or something to dismember the body. That way the bone can be cut in one quick motion which saves time.

STARNES
But this body is dismembered.

SPECIALIST
Yes, but -
(points at KNEE CAP)
Look at the knee cap.

The bone is twisted.

STARNES
My God.

SPECIALIST
Both of them. Best guess, the killer broke her skin with a small blade indicated by these cut marks...
(points at marks on bone)
And twisted her legs off because they had no other way of getting her to fit inside.

STARNES

Which makes her his first.

SPECIALIST

Again, can't confirm the killer was a male, but...

Starnes folds his arms.

STARNES

But?

SPECIALIST

Around 83 percent sure there was a sexual motive.

STARNES

Go on.

SPECIALIST

He didn't plan to kill, but ended up needing to. He probably planned to rape, and in doing so, she fought back, and things escalated.

STARNES

Show me where you see that.

Specialist folds out the dress.

SPECIALIST

The stitching along the side of her dress is cut... with care. Cut with most likely -

STARNES

The small blade.

SPECIALIST

He didn't want to hurt her.

Starnes looks at the red-dotted key and the GMC truck key.

STARNES

But he did. Can I take these?

Specialist nods. Starnes makes his way out.

STARNES (CONT'D)

Thank you. Let me know if you find anything else.

SPECIALIST

Detective...

Starnes turns around.

SPECIALIST (CONT'D)
Thank me by burying this guy alive.

INT. STARNES' OFFICE - NIGHT

Starnes stares at the keys pinned on an empty corkboard.
Sparks enters with a file and hands it to Starnes.

SPARKS
The dental records came in.

Starnes reads it.

STARNES
Does her husband still live around
here?

SPARKS
No. He moved to Morven.

EXT. FOREST FIELD - LATER

Starnes holds the keyring and drops it on the ground. Sparks
lights a cigarette. Offers one to Starnes.

STARNES
Wife back home quit.

Starnes picks up the keyring and drops it.

SPARKS
Where's home again?

Jerry's truck pulls up. He steps out. Sparks and Starnes meet
Jerry halfway, shakes his hand.

SPARKS (CONT'D)
Mr. Harmon. Lieutenant Sparks.
(gestures)
My partner, Detective Starnes.

STARNES
Tell me, Mr. Harmon -

JERRY
Jerry.

SPARKS
Mr. Harmon, do you know this field?

Jerry sees the weathered wooden cross. He nods to both men.

STARNES

And did you bring the item we
called you about?

Jerry steps back to the truck and pulls out the purse. He holds it for a moment and hands it to Sparks.

JERRY

Foxy's boy had his damn paws all up
inside it. Said he was searching
for something...

SPARKS

Searching? For what?

JERRY

Keys or something or other.

Sparks looks back at Starnes. Jerry sees the hole and walks towards it... Sparks and Starnes follow.

STARNES

Mr. Harmon? Why was Kenny Winkler
searching for keys in your wife's
purse?

Jerry can't stop staring at the hole.

JERRY

(to himself)
She was here right this whole time.

SPARKS

Mr. Harmon, do remember anything
about the key or why Kenny Winkler
needed from your wife's purse? Do
you know what it was for?

JERRY

Gasoline. It was a key to a pump
behind Foxy's building.

STARNES

Does it look like any of these?

Starnes pulls out the keyring. Jerry picks up the keyring, looks at the GMC key and then looks at the key with the red-dot on its face. Jerry glares at Starnes.

JERRY

Where did you find them?

Starnes looks at the hole.

SPARKS

They were under the box your wife
was found buried in.

Jerry drops the keys, hurries to the truck and pulls out the
rifle.

STARNES

Mr. Harmon, put the gun down.

JERRY

Winkler's your man.

STARNES

We can't confirm that yet!

JERRY

The boy had a damn hole in his
pocket!

STARNES

What?

JERRY

(loads up in truck)
Best take care of this before I do.

Jerry drives off. Starnes picks up the keys, looks at Sparks.

EXT. HARMON HOUSE - NIGHT

The truck pulls up in the driveway. Betty and Polly run out
of the house to meet Jerry.

BETTY

Where'd you go, dear?

POLLY

Daddy?

BARK, BARK! Polly and Betty look at each other. Jerry opens
the driver's door and a German Shepherd puppy jumps out.
Polly hugs the dog.

BETTY

Why did you buy a dog?

JERRY

Her name is, 'Tulip.'

EXT. MARGIE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

KNOCK, KNOCK. Harold stands outside with his bags. The door opens and Margie is seen six months pregnant.

Crickets CHIRP. Harold and Margie sit on the porch.

MARGIE

Read about your mom in the paper.

HAROLD

I'm sorry about your mom too.

MARGIE

The world's a lot less brighter
without them in it.

She swings on the swing. Lightning bugs fly around.

HAROLD

Why didn't you write me about this?

MARGIE

There's just too much going on
around here, Harold.

HAROLD

What do you want to do?

MARGIE

Just give it up for adoption or
something. I'm only twenty-two and
you're still in the army...

HAROLD

Navy.

Harold reaches, holds her hand, and takes a knee.

MARGIE

What are you doing?

HAROLD

Doing something.

EXT. FOREST FIELD - NIGHT

The GTO pulls up. KENNY (now 30) walks across the field, ducks under the police tape and stops at the hole. He looks down in it and spits.

EXT./INT. APARTMENT COMPLEX - DAY

Harold with long hair finishes a run and checks the mailbox. He pulls out a bundle of envelopees and walks up the staircase.

Margie is dolled up and screaming on the phone in the kitchen as SCOTT, (a 6 month-old baby), cries in his high chair.

Harold enters, tosses the envelopees in a box by the front door and rushes to his son.

HAROLD

Margie.

(picks up Scott)

It's okay buddy. We're going to get you something to eat.

Harold enters kitchen.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

Margie!

MARGIE

(on phone)

I swear you'll be sorry. You don't want to mess with me!

HAROLD

Margie, what's going on?

MARGIE

(to Harold)

It's one of them again.

HAROLD

(cleans Scott)

Then hang up!

Scott cries. Margie hangs up and throws her hands up.

MARGIE

I can't do this anymore!

She nears the door.

HAROLD

What are you talking about? Where are you going?

MARGIE

I gotta go out, okay? I need to get out of this crappy apartment and escape all of this...

HAROLD
 Margie, I have to go to work and
 Scott's hungry...

Margie turns back to Harold and takes Scott from him.

MARGIE
 Fine, go. I'll take care of him Go
 to work and leave me be.

HAROLD
 What is this? Why are behaving like
 this, Margie?

MARGIE
 Harold, I'm just done, okay? That's
 all.

HAROLD
 What does that supposed to mean?

MARGIE
 Go, Harold. Let me take care of
 this and just leave me alone.

Margie goes to the kitchen and retrieves baby food.

INT. STARNES' OFFICE - DAY

Harold studies the collection of photos and newspaper
 clippings on a corkboard. Some items are linked together with
 an assortment of string. The keys on the keyring hang on a
 single tack beside a photo of Kenny.

A file on the desk reads, "Kenny Winkler".

STARNES
 (entering)
 Mr. Harmon, did we have an
 appointment?

HAROLD
 Why hasn't anyone been arrested?

STARNES
 Cases such as this take time.

HAROLD
 Do you know what my family puts up
 with every day?

STARNES
 No sir.

HAROLD

Strangers call to cry and admit
guilt. Others describe what my
mother's skin felt like, some just
breathe on the other line...

STARNES

Mr. Harmon, I'm sorry for the
situation, but with all due
respect, you're a snipe.

HAROLD

And?

STARNES

You're a man who's given orders and
expected to execute them and that's
all we ask of you.

HAROLD

But I can help.

SPARKS

Trust us to do the job. When do you
go back to the boat?

HAROLD

Day after tomorrow.

STARNES

You have a new born, correct?

HAROLD

A boy.

STARNES

Then be with him during this time.
I think that's what your mother
would have wanted.

HAROLD

How many suspects do you have?

SPARKS

Six.

Harold stands and looks at the photo on the board of the box.

STARNES

But it is a dry spell. We will get
your guy. Just hold tight.

HAROLD

You should look at all of them.

SPARKS

What makes you say that?

HAROLD

The box was made out of wood,
right? Built to carry tools?

STARNES

Yes. So?

HAROLD

So, you'd have you be Superman to
lift the sucker up by yourself.

Starnes looks at Sparks... PRE LAP: SEAGULS

EXT. NIMITZ - DECK - DAY

Harold looks down at the pier. He spots Margie holding Scott.
Neither of them are happy.

EXT. OLD HOUSE - DAY

The rocking chair is rotten along the deserted porch.

EXT./INT. WINKLER BUILDING - DAY

Sparks' cruiser pulls up beside the GTO and a Camaro. Starnes
wears a camera round his neck and looks at the old house
across the street.

STARNES

Who's property is that?

SPARKS

The Toller's. Mean as hell.

STARNES

Doesn't look like anyone's home.

SPARKS

No one's lived in it since 1973.
People say it's haunted you know?
It's where the witch lived.

STARNES

73, you say?

SPARKS

Mr. Toller died in 72 and then his wife moved to South Carolina. Has family out there.

Starnes reads the file.

STARNES

Toller. She gave a statement back in 72. Said she saw Hellen, "Drive off with a man with an Alabama license plate."

SPARKS

Probably dead and gone by now.

STARNES

A-salt-of-this-earth woman who has roots within the community, leaves the house she built a year after being reported as the last person who saw Hellen Harmon...

Starnes takes a photo and the two turn towards the office.

EXT. WINKLER BUILDING - FRONT DOOR - CONTINUOUS

KNOCK, KNOCK. Kenny opens the door wearing a sport's coat with a flower in its lapel.

KENNY

Afternoon, what can I do you for?

Starnes holds out a warrant. Inside, Starnes wanders the office. Kenny and Sparks follow.

STARNES

This place typically this quiet?

KENNY

Only on Thursdays.

SPARKS

Foxy Winkler. Your father. He died recently, yes, Mr. Winkler?

KENNY

My old man croaked around five or so years ago. Yeah.

STARNES

Took all them secrets with him too.

KENNY

Only he would know that. I mean, we all have secrets, right?

SPARKS

Where was Hellen's office?

KENNY

(moves by Starnes)
Down this way.

They follow Kenny. He picks at his nails.

STARNES

The evening of August 31st, 1972 when Mrs. Harmon disappeared, you were scheduled to meet your wife, Jane, at a reception, correct?

KENNY

She's dead too.

SPARKS

Say again?

KENNY

That's how the divorce felt anyhow.

Kenny knocks and opens the door to Hellen's office. MARY (25) is seen doing some accounting.

KENNY (CONT'D)

Mary, dear. This is the good detective and his sidekick. They're just going to look around. Okay?

Mary nods.

STARNES

(looks around)
How often are you alone here on Thursdays, Miss?

Mary looks at Kenny.

MARY

Often enough. I called Kenny in today to verify some numbers.

KENNY

Mary is Hellen's replacement.

SPARKS

How does the Harmon family feel about that?

KENNY

I don't follow.

SPARKS

Didn't you tell Jerry Harmon, that when Hellen "resurfaces", she'll have her job back?

KENNY

A business of this scale can only operate for so long without its main components.

STARNES

And when were you hired on, Miss?

Mary looks at Kenny again.

SPARKS

Our records indicate one week from Mrs. Harmon's missing persons report.

STARNES

Sound's like you did not have faith that Hellen was going to return from where was it?

Kenny scrambles around in his head to remember the state.

SPARKS

Alabama.

STARNES

That's right.

KENNY

Look, all that was up in the air. The man just lost his wife. What else was I going to say?

STARNES

That's very interesting though. That word you used.

KENNY

What word?

STARNES

"Resurfaces", Mr. Winkler.

SPARKS

Given the circumstances which Mrs. Harmon was found, don't you find it a bit coincidental?

Kenny doesn't know what to say. Picks at nails.

MARY

I feel like I'm in an episode of Miami Vice.

KENNY

Do I need my lawyer here?

SPARKS

Not if you're innocent.

STARNES

First thing a guilty person does is call their lawyer.

SPARKS

Do you feel the need to call your lawyer, Mr. Winkler?

KENNY

I think we're dandy.

STARNES

Let's continue the tour then.
Lieutenant Sparks after you.
(to Mary)
Miss.

Starnes takes a photo of the office.

INT. WINKLER BUILDING - DIFFERENT AREAS - DAY

Sparks takes out a file as Starnes continues his investigation. Kenny and Sparks follow Starnes around.

SPARKS

I have your statement here noted by the late Lieutenant Basset.

KENNY

Man-live, everyone's dropping like flies.

SPARKS

Mind telling me what's in it?

KENNY

That's over ten years ago.

SPARKS

Eight. But you're innocent. So, I'm sure whatever you say will be on track with what I've got here.

Starnes touches the indentation in the wall. He takes a photo and looks at the carpet.

He walks into a room full of rolled up signs tied with rope. Starnes feels the texture of a rope. He takes a photo.

KENNY

Deddy and I had a business meeting with Lamar Advertising in Atlanta. We arrived after paying my ex-father-in-law a visit around 4pm. Oscar Graves is his name.

STARNES

(gestures to rope)
Can I have this?

KENNY

Sure.

Starnes unties the rope and pockets it. He walks out.

SPARKS

Show us the boxes.

Starnes stands in the middle of the loading dock. Sparks kicks one of the boxes.

STARNES

How often do you lose one of these?

KENNY

Not very often.

Starnes goes at picking one up. He has difficulty.

STARNES

Your boys must be built like bulls. These go in the bed of a truck?

KENNY

Yeah, takes at least two men. Usually they are full of tools.

SPARKS

So, when did you drop off your father and go to the office -

KENNY

No, Deddy and I both came to the office. We needed to see if our drivers were done with a job in Albany. It was then that neither of us saw Hellen.

SPARKS

The drivers, what are their names?

KENNY

Oh hell. All I remember is that they were two shiners on payroll.

SPARKS

You mean, "'African Americans' on payroll", correct?

KENNY

No. Shiners.

SPARKS

I see.

Sparks takes a note and looks at Starnes.

STARNES

Tell me, what kind of trucks do you use, Fords, right?

KENNY

Hell no. You know what Ford stands for, don't ya?

SPARKS

Wasn't aware it was an acronym.

KENNY

'Found on road dead.'

All three men laugh. Starnes gives Sparks a nod.

SPARKS

What time did you call Jerry Harmon?

KENNY

Five.

SPARKS

So you waited an hour to call him
and the police at that time?

KENNY

Look, we walked into the office and
didn't see Hellen which was normal.
Sometimes she goes out for dinner
on Thursdays. She worked late.

SPARKS

And Foxy reported a box like this
one missing in 1972?

KENNY

He kept up with all of that. If a
paperclip was out of place, he'd
know. He even put a lock on the gas
pump out in the back so the shiners
couldn't fill up their cars.

Kenny takes out his pocket knife and cleans out his nails.
Starnes calls Sparks' attention to Kenny's knife.

SPARKS

Why did you call your wife?

KENNY

I was going to be late. She's the
type who gets pissed even when you
show up to church late.

STARNES

Did you speak to the Tollers?

KENNY

No. Deddy did.

STARNES

Well, I've got enough. You think we
can check Kenny here off our list,
Lieutenant?

SPARKS

Indeed, I think we can.

KENNY

Well, all right then.

(handshakes)

You boys let me know how else I can
help out.

The two investigators make an exit towards the gate.

STARNES
Can we go out this way?

KENNY
Sure.

Kenny pulls out his keyring from his pants pocket and lifts the gate.

EXT. WINKLER OUTDOOR ADVERTISING - REAR - CONTINUOUS

The two officials walk out check the gas pump. Starnes turns around.

STARNES
One last question.

KENNY
Shoot.

SPARKS
You said, your ex-wife didn't like when you're late. Could you elaborate on what time the dinner started and when you arrived?

KENNY
Started at eight on the dot and I did not arrive until 9pm.

STARNES
Again, thank you very much.

They shake hands. Kenny closes the gate.

INT. WINKLER OUTDOOR ADVERTISING - CONTINUOUS

Kenny tracks through the office and lands in the lobby. He peaks out the window to watch the officials drive off.

MARY
They gone?

EXT. NIMITZ/INT. ITALY BAR - NIGHT

The boat ports in Naples, Italy. It's Christmas.

Harold sits alone at the bar with his mail bundle and rips open the fourth envelope. Another clipping of his mother's case. He lays it down and takes a shot of whiskey.

HAROLD

Another!

Harold's had a few too many. The BARTENDER fills his glass as Harold goes through the stack one more time.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

Margie. Where are you, Margie?

MARGIE (O.S.)

Hiya.

Harold turns to see Margie as a twenty year old. She pulls him off the stool and onto the dancefloor. The Italian MUSIC switches to Bob Dylan's song, "Forever Young". Margie pulls Harold in close as they dance.

HAROLD

Why didn't you write me?

MARGIE (O.S.)

Non capisco.

Harold pulls back and sees a young ITALIAN WOMAN. He is yanked back by a young ITALIAN GUY who shouts at Harold in a foreign language and gets in his face.

HAROLD

(trying to make sense of
it all while drunk)

I don't - I'm sorry - I thought...

Italian guy beats up Harold as the Italian woman tries to come to his rescue. The Dylan song continues to play.

EXT. WINKLER BUILDING/OLD HOUSE/PUMP - NIGHT

Mary and Kenny exit the building. They kiss, he slaps her butt, and they drive off in opposite directions.

From across the street, headlights turn on and Starnes' car pulls up. He and Sparks exit the sedan and walk to the back.

Sparks turns on a flashlight and finds the gas pump along with the padlock. It's old, and rusty. Starnes takes out the red-dotted key, inserts, turns, and the latch unhinges.

STARNES

Bingo.

INT. STARNES' OFFICE - DAY

Starnes sorts through photos of all the black employees.
Sparks enters with a note.

SPARKS

Turns out Kenny was telling the
truth about Atlanta.

Sparks looks at the board.

SPARKS (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

STARNES

Whether that box came from the
office or it was in fact stolen, it
took at least two men to lift that
thing.

Sparks looks at the list.

SPARKS

They only had two African American
drivers listed for 72 and one of
them is dead. Odd, they were both
terminated at the same time in 73.

STARNES

Who's the one still living?

INT. POLICE STATION - BREAKROOM/INTERROGATION - NIGHT

A POLICEMAN walks up to Starnes as he gets a drink of water
from the water cooler and covered in sweat.

POLICEMAN

Don't you think he's had enough?

STARNES

He's about to crack.

Sparks runs up with a bag and hands it over to Starnes.

SPARKS

This should do it.

POLICEMAN

He's been in there for the last
five hours without food or water.

SPARKS

You want to step off and let my partner work?

POLICEMAN

Look we turned off the air-conditioning, but what you're doing is torture. If he knew something, he would have told you by now.

SPARKS

You want to step back from my partner?

Starnes grabs another cup, fills it with water, and enters the interrogation room as Sparks keeps the policeman back.

Starnes turns on the lights. Wren, now in his late seventies hooked up to a polygraph machine and handcuffed to the table drenched with sweat. Starnes sets the bag by his chair and sits across from Wren. He turns on a tape recorder.

STARNES

Let's try this again.

WREN

Is that there some water, sir?

STARNES

You hear that arguing out there when I opened the door, Wren?

STARNES (CONT'D)

Their arguing about whether you should be dragged to jail or hook you up to the electric chair.

WREN

I's done told you the truth. I's be in Albany that day.

STARNES

We're passed that, Wren. What I want to know is what happened after. This whole mess is going to fall on you if you're not careful. I want to help you be careful. Do you want me to help you?

Wren nods.

STARNES (CONT'D)

I know you're not hard of hearing.

WREN

Yes sir. I's wants your help.

STARNES

Great. Did you drive the box to the field?

Wren looks at the needle on the page.

STARNES (CONT'D)

Look at me, Wren. Did you transport the box?

WREN

Yes sur, but there were nothin' in it at the time.

The needle is smooth. Starnes removes the handcuffs and gives the water to Wren who gulps it down.

STARNES

Did Kenny Winkler and his father tell you to transport the box.

WREN

No sir.

The needle spikes. Starnes turns off the tape recorder.

STARNES

(leans in close)

You lie one more time and you'll be going straight to hell, boy. Why are you protecting the Winklers? They worth going to hell for?

Wren does not say a word.

Starnes turns the recorder back on, sets the bag on the table and unzips it. Starnes pulls out one of Hellen's severed leg bones and lies it in front of Wren. Wren breaks down.

STARNES (CONT'D)

Did you kill Hellen Harmon?

WREN

No sir.

Smooth needle.

STARNES

Do you know who killed her?

WREN
She was already dead when Mr.
Winkler pulled up.

STARNES
So the Winklers were involved?

WREN
Em boss' boy. He done wrong.

A) FLASHBACK - EXT. FOREST FIELD - NIGHT

Kenny nears the hole where Wren and Maynard stand inside as the rain pours down.

KENNY
That's good enough.

Wren reaches up for help out. Kenny pulls Wren out and ends up slipping inside the hole. The keys land in the wet dirt.

KENNY (CONT'D)
Aw shit, Wren!

WREN
Sorry boss.

Kenny climbs out. Maynard gets out and helps Wren.

KENNY
Get the box off the truck. We ain't
got all night!

Kenny nears the Oldsmobile, signals for Foxy, still in the car, to pop the trunk. He does.

Wren and Maynard slide the box off the tailgate and set it down. Kenny nears them with Hellen in his arms. They stare.

KENNY (CONT'D)
Open it!

Wren steps back as Maynard opens the lid. Kenny plops Hellen's body into the box along with her clothes. Her legs stick out.

KENNY (CONT'D)
You boys bring an axe?

Both Wren and Maynard shake their heads.

Kenny pulls out his pocket knife and kneels. He cuts the skin around the knee, goes through the muscle and veins. Kenny gets blood all over him. Wren throws up.

Kenny stands, looks at Maynard's shovel and grabs it. He jabs at one leg, blood squirts, but it doesn't cut the bone.

KENNY (CONT'D)

Come on!

Kenny covered in blood leans over grabs Hellen's foot and twists the leg. It's working. Kenny laughs.

The leg detaches and Kenny drops it in the box.

END FLASHBACK

Starnes shows Wren the GMC key.

STARNES

Where is the truck?

INT. NIMITZ - LIVING QUARTERS - NIGHT

Harold looks at a newspaper clipping and slides it behind a photo of Scott.

SAILOR 2 enters with mail and distributes envelopees amongst the MEN. He makes his way out of the quarters.

HAROLD

Anything for me?

Sailor 2 checks his bag. Shakes his head, no.

INT. NIMITZ - REACTOR ROOM - LATER

Harold beats the living crap out of a metal workbench with a sledge hammer. He drops the tool and plops to the floor - breathing hard, covered in sweat.

HAROLD

(murmurs to himself)

Water trees. Tend flowers. Pick tomatoes. Wring rooster's neck.

INT. NIMITZ - CHAPEL - LATER

Harold sits in the pew peering at the statue of Christ looking back at him. A CHAPLAIN enters and sits near Harold.

Chaplin opens a file.

CHAPLAIN

You know what these files never say about a person?

(looks at Harold)

How humble they are. If you were disciplined, or went AWOL, but it's in-between the lines that the person is found.

(looks at file)

Your captain recommended that you see a psychiatrist and you declined. Care to elaborate?

HAROLD

No.

CHAPLAIN

Your six-year contract is almost up, I see. Plan to make a career within the Navy?

HAROLD

No.

CHAPLAIN

Can I get more than one word answers out of you?

HAROLD

No.

Chaplain gestures an open envelope to Harold.

CHAPLAIN

Your petty officer had your mail pulled. Assured he could figure out what's going on in that thick head of yours.

HAROLD

Who's it from?

CHAPLAIN

Would you like for me to read it?

Chaplain unfolds the letter.

CHAPLAIN (CONT'D)

Dear Son.

INT. HARMON HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Jerry pens a letter at the table.

JERRY (V.O.)

It brings me no pleasure to write this for it's the first time we have communicated since you left. For that, I'm sorry and while I wish I were reaching out on better circumstances, it's just not the case.

Betty rocks in the recliner while holding Scott in her arms.

INT. APARTMENT COMPLEX - DAY

Jerry barges in and checks each room. He finds Scott struggling to breath and covered in his own waste.

JERRY (V.O.)

Margie is not fit to be a mother.

INT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Jerry tends to a weeping Betty as a NURSE puts an IV into his Scott's head.

JERRY (V.O.)

Scott was in the hospital due to severe dehydration. Betty and I have him now. He's a strong boy like his father.

EXT. HARMON HOUSE - DRIVEWAY - DAY

Jerry opens the passenger door and sets Tulip on the ground. Betty comes rushing out of the house.

JERRY (V.O.)

We got a call from your neighbor. She told us that Scott had been crying for hours and Margie was nowhere to be found.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Margie takes a shot and joins a MAN on the dance floor.

JERRY (V.O.)
 Margie deserted her child. Your neighbor said she saw her with another man. I'm sorry, Harold.

INT. NIMITZ - CHAPEL - NIGHT

Harold flexes his hands into fists.

CHAPLAIN
 If we didn't receive the call,
 Scott could've very well died
 before his first birthday. Come
 home, son. Dad.

Chaplain folds the letter and takes the cuffs off Harold.

NEWS REPORT - VARIOUS LOCATIONS/INT. STARNES' OFFICE

NEWS REPORTER
Police misconduct occurred during questioning of Samuel Wren, a 73 year old African American of Valdosta, Georgia by lead investigator, Detective Starnes.
 (Wren interview)
"If someone would kill a white woman and put her away like that, they wouldn't mind pinning it on a black man."
 (back to reporter)
Tape recordings of Starnes showcase Mr. Wren threatened with lynching.
 (Wren interview)
"I's so scared of someone coming in a night and stringing me up."
 (back to reporter)
Detective Starnes noted he has questioned both white and black men during the case, but denies any threats were made to them personally.

Starnes looks at the mannequin, the photos, and the keys. He flings the board off the wall, rips the photos and throws the keys. Sparks grabs Starnes.

SPARKS
 Starnes! Starnes! Stop! You can't lose it, now. We're this close.

STARNES

They're making it political by twisting my words. We'll never solve this case if they make it into something else.

Sparks smiles.

SPARKS

We found the truck.

EXT. WINKLER BUILDING - DAY

NEWS REPORTER (V.O.)

Kenny Winkler was arrested today for the murder of Hellen Harmon.

Starnes and Sparks arrest Kenny and escort him out of the office building.

NEWS REPORTER (V.O.)

Findings show what connects him to the crime was an abandoned 1970 GMC work truck -

(b-roll of truck)

- owned by his father, Foxy Winkler which was used to transport the box Hellen was buried in so long ago. Samuel Wren, a prior suspect in the investigation said "Kenny had lost the keys in the hole," and told his late co-worker to "Hotwire the truck and drive it to the junkyard."

The Reporter walks over to Attorney Barker, a Colonel Sanders looking fella pulling at his goatee.

NEWS REPORTER

Representing the Kenny Winkler, Attorney Clay Lee Barker had this to say.

INT. HARMON HOUSE - DAY

ATTORNEY CLAY LEE BARKER

Kenny Winkler is not guilty. That boy simply doesn't have it in him to take a life. Especially a mother.

Betty jumps from the couch and kisses Jerry.

BETTY
Is it all over, Jerry?

Jerry remains in his recliner and pets Tulip.

JERRY
It's the calm before the storm.

EXT./INT. APARTMENT COMPLEX - DAY

A cab pulls up, Harold steps out with his bag. He notices his 1980's Camaro parked beside his Mustang. He walks up.

Harold sees men and women's CLOTHES scattered along the living room. Beer bottles alongside a joint smoldering in an ashtray.

HAROLD
(murmurs to himself)
Water trees. Tend flowers. Pick
tomatoes. Wring rooster's neck.

Margie MOANS. Harold enters the -

INT. APARTMENT COMPLEX - BEDROOM - DAY

DERRICK jumps off of Margie.

DERRICK
Who the hell are you?

MARGIE
What are you doing back, Harold?

DERRICK
Oh, God. Uh...

MARGIE
Harold, I can explain.

Derrick gets out of the bed.

DERRICK
Hey now, man. Let's take it easy
alright. She invited me, okay?

Harold punches Derrick in the face.

MARGIE
Harold!

HAROLD

Get out.

Derrick dashes out of the room holding his bloody nose.

Harold looks at Margie and sits on the edge of the bed.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

We need to talk, Margie.

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX - LATER

Harold opens the trunk of his Mustang and loads a suitcase. Margie comes out on the balcony in her robe.

MARGIE

What about Scott?

HAROLD

Were he's supposed to be.

Harold enters the Mustang and drives off.

EXT. HARMON HOUSE - PORCH - NIGHT

KNOCK. KNOCK. Harold stands at the door. Jerry opens it.

HAROLD

Hey Dad.

INT. HARMON HOUSE - GIRL'S ROOM/KITCHEN - NIGHT

Harold puts Scott to bed and watches him sleep. Tulip paws at him. Harold picks her up and lays her in the bed. She coils beside Scott.

Harold exits the room leaving the door cracked.

Jerry sits at the kitchen table.

HAROLD

Thank you for taking care of him.

JERRY

He's my grandson. What's your plan?

HAROLD

Probably Mississippi. I got a lead on a power plant out there, hope the one here in Georgia calls me first.

(MORE)

HAROLD (CONT'D)

That way I can be closer to home,
be here for Scott. Help Starnes and
Sparks get things in order...

JERRY

There's an update on that, but
foremost what of Margie?

HAROLD

What is it? What have they found
out? Did they arrest Kenny?

JERRY

Yes, but Harold -

Harold hits the table. Jerry puts up his hand to calm him.

HAROLD

(whispering)

Yes! It's about damn time. What did
they get him on?

JERRY

Sit down. Sit.

(Harold does)

What about Margie? Has that line
been cut yet?

HAROLD

Just waiting for her to sign the
divorce papers, Dad. Hopefully she
will before I go on my last order
and then I'll have full custody. I
have to trade my Mustang in... Tell
me Kenny's locked up for good.

JERRY

I want Scott to stay here for a
little while longer. At least until
you get things settled.

HAROLD

Are you sure?

JERRY

Betty loves him more than me now.

Harold chuckles.

HAROLD

Thank you. So, what's going on?

JERRY

Harold, I need for you to understand something okay?

Harold scooches in closer.

JERRY (CONT'D)

I'm sorry I wasn't there for you and your sisters like I should have been -

HAROLD

Dad, it's fine. I don't blame you -

JERRY

Just let me get through this, boy.

Harold leans back.

JERRY (CONT'D)

I took your mother for granted. You didn't know it at the time, but she took care of our finances, she kept me in order. Got us to church on time, always made sure her children were fed, and for some reason loved me. I died that day Hellen disappeared and I should have been there for you all. She loved you, boy and I should've continued that love in this house. In her house.

Jerry grabs Harold's hands.

JERRY (CONT'D)

Don't make my mistake. Don't disappear from Scott's life like I did you. Kenny may walk.

Harold lets go of his father's hands.

JERRY (CONT'D)

You have to let this all go, son.

HAROLD

What are you not telling me?

JERRY

It's going to trial and he's got some bigshot defending him. Pulled up here in a damn Rolls Royce. And we got a guy but -

HAROLD
We got a guy? Who? He's here in town?

JERRY
Yeah, at the local hotel.

Harold jumps up and grabs his car keys.

JERRY (CONT'D)
Harold, no, son. Please.

Harold runs out the door.

EXT. HARMON HOUSE - DRIVEWAY

Harold hops in his Mustang and tears down the road.

INT. DINER - NIGHT

DISTRICT ATTORNEY COLLIER (50s), a small man in stature with a heavy mustache looks half asleep. A WAITRESS brings he and Harold a cup of coffee.

COLLIER
Thank you, dear.

Harold guzzles it down, black. Waitress refills Collier's cup.

HAROLD
You're the head Prosecutor on my mother's case.

COLLIER
I was warned about you. District Attorney Collier at your service.

Stirs coffee.

HAROLD
So you just let that sociopath walk back onto the street?

COLLIER
He was put on bail in a matter of hours after he was arrested, Mr. Harmon. He's not going anywhere, and if he does, pray he does it soon so I get to bed.

Pours milk.

HAROLD
Is this some kind of joke to you?

COLLIER
Mr. Harmon, it is 4 in the morning.
I only just arrived, so forgive me
if I don't share your empathy.

HAROLD
Of all the lawyers in the state.

Adds a sugar packet.

HAROLD (CONT'D)
Would you quit with the coffee!

The waitress looks at him. Harold bows his head and shakes.
Collier sees Harold's hands form into fists.

HAROLD (CONT'D)
(murmurs to himself)
Water trees. Tend flowers. Pick -

COLLIER
What's your biggest regret when it
comes to your mother?

A) FLASHBACK - EXT. BUS STOP - DAY

Hellen holds out her arms ready for a hug.

END FLASHBACK

Harold calms down.

COLLIER
That's how we are going to win.

HAROLD
With memories?

COLLIER
With stories, Mr. Harmon and it's
through them that the jury will see
what that snake-in-the-grass took
from you.

HAROLD
What about the evidence?

COLLIER

A lot of things have changed since 1972, but there's not a single piece of hard evidence that labels Kenny as the murderer. It can help the jury see a tangible and logical trail leading to Kenny's guilty verdict, but all we have is a story. Her story.

HAROLD

What about the truth?

Stirs coffee.

COLLIER

Why do you drink your coffee black?

HAROLD

I don't know. It's quicker, better.

COLLIER

Okay, So if everybody were like you, why do you think there's cream and sugar present on the table?

Harold looks at the items.

HAROLD

My service term is about to end and I'll be home more after. How can I help you get Kenny behind bars?

COLLIER

By staying home, Mr. Harmon and holding your family close.

Collier pays for the coffee, takes his last sip and exits.

EXT. OCEAN - NIMITZ SAILS OFF/INT. REACTOR ROOM/OFFICE - DAY

Harold completes his checklist and exits.

He signs a book, is handed an envelope and a handshake by the DEPARTMENT HEAD.

DEPARTMENT HEAD

Is there anything we can do to keep you in the Navy?

EXT./INT. VALDOSTA, GA COURTHOUSE - DAY (1987)

Reporters from all over wait outside.

The courtroom is packed. Jerry and Lisa are in the front pew just behind the plaintiff desk where Collier wearing a suit speaks with Starnes and Sparks.

Collier nears the jury with an unbuttoned coat with his hands in his pockets.

COLLIER

Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, I agree with Attorney Barker in how we should begin this trial with the truth. I'm a straight arrow and instead of filling your ears with ineffectual rambling of a high-powered defense, the truth is that Kenny Winkler killed Hellen Harmon in cold blood. He was infatuated with her and demanded that his desires be met by any means necessary. He has a profound belief that he is above the law. He is above all of you and with the evidence we will present, I wholesomely believe you will see the man before you not as a friend, but as a man who, beyond a reasonable doubt, is guilty of murdering a member of your community. No man on God's earth is above anyone else. Thank you.

Collier nears the table and nods at Jerry as he sits.

Barker across the way near the defense desk wears an expensive suit as he opens a giant file beside Kenny.

Barker nears the jury with a holier-than-thou stride.

BARKER

Ladies and gentleman of the jury, we should begin this trial with the truth that Kenny Winkler is an innocent man.

(gestures to Kenny)

He has been a part of a witch-hunt and accused of killing Mrs. Hellen Harmon. Kenny Winkler is a victim of circumstance. His accusers,

(gestures to Collier)

(MORE)

BARKER (CONT'D)

Expect you to believe that evidence which has been in the ground for eight years is sufficient enough to convict a man of murder. I only expect you to listen with logical intent as this unbelievable case is laid out. In closing, I hope you see Kenny Winkler as I do. As both an earnest businessman and friend of this community. Thank you.

Barker resumes his seat.

JUDGE

The prosecution may call your first witness.

EXT. DEALERSHIP/MISSISSIPPI ROAD/INT. USED TRUCK - NIGHT

Harold gives his Mustang keys to a SALESMAN who then gives him a pair of truck keys.

His used truck drives past a Mississippi sign with cargo trailer towed behind.

INT. VALDOSTA, GA COURTROOM - DAY

Collier nears Lisa sitting in the witness stand.

COLLIER

Lisa has anyone ever told you that you favor your mother?

Jerry tries not to cry.

LISA

Yes. Thank you for saying that.

COLLIER

I've only seen pictures of Hellen and from what I can tell, she was a very strong, intelligent, and beautiful young woman. Would you agree?

LISA

Very much so.

COLLIER

(nears the jury)

Lisa Harmon, is it a fact that you are the last family member to see Hellen Harmon, your mother, alive on August 31st, 1972, the very day she disappeared?

LISA

I am.

COLLIER

Tell us a bit about it.

LISA

I was trying to get away with wearing this ridiculous outfit to school, but she made me change right before it was time to head out. I was smitten with this football player in homeroom... On the way to school, we talked in the car.

COLLIER

What about?

LISA

How a woman doesn't need to change herself for the eye of a man. Looking back, I didn't care about what she was talking about. I just wanted to see him, but the truth is I'd give anything just to hear her get on to me one more time.

Some jury members weep.

COLLIER

(nears)

I'm sorry for your loss, Lisa. Do you happen to remember the dress your mother was wearing that day she dropped you off?

LISA

It was polyester and green.

COLLIER

Bailiff, please bring in the evidence marked exhibit A.

Bailiff rolls out the mannequin wearing Hellen's green polyester dress, opened along the right side seam.

Lisa tries to hold in her tears.

COLLIER (CONT'D)
Is this the dress she wore, Lisa?

LISA
Yes. That's the one.

COLLIER
Your honor, the prosecution has no more questions for this witness.

JUDGE
(to Lisa)
Mrs. Harmon, would you like a brief recess before being cross examined?

Lisa dries her eyes and sits up strong. She shakes her head.

JUDGE (CONT'D)
Defense may question the witness.

Barker stands behind the desk.

BARKER
Can you say with absolute certainty, Mrs. Harmon, that you remember everything that happened that morning after all this time?

LISA
If I think back on it, I'm sure -

BARKER
That's not my question. Do you remember everything as if it happen yesterday? Could you write down everything which happened to you - that you observed, heard, and saw on that day minute by minute?

LISA
Well no, that's impossible. But -

BARKER
So, in other words, most of the other things going on at the time of your mother's disappearance, you don't remember, correct, Lisa?

LISA
It's possible.

BARKER

(moves out from behind
desk and nears jury)

I believe this will be the case in
all the testimony we hear during
deliberation. That people only
remember the small parts of what
was going on during a particular
period.

(to Lisa)

Wouldn't you agree, Lisa?

LISA

I remember my mother.

Barker looks at her and then at the judge.

BARKER

That's fine. But can you recall
everything?

LISA

No.

BARKER

I have no more questions for this
witness, your honor.

Lisa leaves the stand and is escorted into another room -

INT. WITNESS ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The door shuts and Lisa breaks down crying.

EXT./INT. TRAILER - NIGHT

Harold's used truck sits under a tree in full bloom. A single-
wide trailer resides in a trailer park.

Harold cooks dinner for himself on a hotplate plugged into
the wall. He takes the pot, sits at his table for two and
eats out of the pot.

INT. VALDOSTA, GA COURTROOM - DAY

There is a veiled canvas photo. Collier pulls the veil. It's
a photo of Hellen's skull and neck bone with the rope around
it. Starnes lowers his head.

COLLIER

Let the court observe exhibit B.
The skull of Hellen Harmon. Miss.
Willis, what is this around
Hellen's neck bone here?

SPECIALIST

A rope.

COLLIER

And did you do some sort of
chemical test on this rope?

SPECIALIST

Yes.

Collier inserts a photo of the storage room.

COLLIER

Exhibit C.

(to jury)

This photo is of a storage unit
found within the Winkler Outdoor
Advertising building taken by
Detective Stares during their
investigation. You know all those
corny advertisements along the
highway you can't help but read in
order to pass the time? Well, when
they are taken down, they are
rolled up and stored in here and
what keeps them from unraveling is
a string of rope like this one
Detective Starnes was given by
Kenny Winkler.

Barker gives Kenny a look.

Starnes hands a rope to Collier who shows it to the jury.

COLLIER (CONT'D)

Exhibit D. is a normal looking
rope. But it strikes a similar
resemblance to what we see in the
photo.

Sparks gives Collier a transparent bag holding a knotted
rope.

COLLIER (CONT'D)

The rope which was used to strangle
Hellen Harmon.

BARKER

Objection. The prosecution has no way of knowing the victim died due to strangulation.

JUDGE

(to Collier)

Best get to your point.

COLLIER

Miss Willis. You mentioned conducting a chemical experiment on the rope around the victim's neck. Does it match the other rope found within Kenny Winkler's storage unit?

SPECIALIST

One hundred percent.

Gasps from jury.

COLLIER

No further questions.

Collier sits.

JUDGE

(to Barker)

Your witness.

Barker stands, but doesn't move from around the desk.

BARKER

You conducted a blood test, correct?

SPECIALIST

Yes.

BARKER

Did you find any hard evidence directly linking my client to Mrs. Harmon's murder?

SPECIALIST

Well, his box was underground for years. The decomposition rate would've eliminated all of that.

BARKER

I didn't ask about the rate of decomposition.

(MORE)

BARKER (CONT'D)

Did you find any tangible link to
Kenny Winkler in, outside, and or
around the box Hellen Harmon was
found within?

SPECIALIST

No.

BARKER

So, your professional deduction
based on finds which have no
correlation to my client is at the
end of the day, an opinion?

SPECIALIST

No.

BARKER

No?

SPECIALIST

His name is written on the box. You
don't need a four-year degree to
connect the dots.

The jury stirs with chatter.

JUDGE

Order!

BARKER

No further questions.

INT. HARMON HOUSE - DAY

Harold finds Scott, now three-years-old, running around with
Tulip. Jerry sees Harold's truck pull up in the driveway and
Harold step out.

Scott runs to his father.

SCOTT

Daddy!

Harold holds his son and doesn't let go.

INT. VALDOSTA, GA COURTHOUSE - DAY

Jane, now in her early thirties, sits in the stand.

COLLIER

Miss. Graves, you were married to Kenny Winkler for three weeks prior to the murder in 1972, correct?

JANE

My ex-husband is a scorpion on a frog's back.

COLLIER

I must've missed that day in Sunday school.

JANE

It's a fable. Look it up.

COLLIER

I certainly will, but please answer the question.

JANE

I was young and dumb.

Sparks hands Collier a report.

COLLIER

Based on our police report, coincidentally, your reception with Mr. Winkler was on the very night Hellen Harmon disappeared. Would you mind taking us through that night?

JANE

Where do you want me to start?

COLLIER

It says here Kenny called you and informed you on the time of his arrival in Valdosta from a trip from Atlanta. What time did he say he and his father arrived?

JANE

Around three. Stopped in Cordele to convince my father to come to dinner.

COLLIER

Why would Mr. Graves need convincing to go to his own daughter's reception?

JANE

My Daddy only hates two things in this world. Tire-kickers and the Winklers. I unfortunately married the both of them.

Collier looks at his report.

COLLIER

And the dinner started at eight in the evening, correct?

JANE

No. My reception started at seven on the freckle.

Collier glances back at the report.

COLLIER

I think you mean eight... on the freckle.

JANE

No. Seven. Kenny finally arrived at nine with Foxy and they only stayed an hour or so. Then I had to drive myself home cause he said he forgot to lock up the damn office.

COLLIER

You do know you are under oath?

JANE

Lord knows I'm telling the truth.

COLLIER

I'm sorry, Miss. Graves, but the police report here says your dinner according to Foxy's statement, started at eight p.m. and -.

JANE

Who wrote that there police report? Was it Lieutenant Basset?

COLLIER

Yes.

JANE

Basset was in Foxy's pocket.

The room rumbles with chatter.

BARKER
Objection. Calls for speculation.

JANE
(to Barker)
You and your fancy suit are right there with him. Basset along with a number of other officers, residents and anyone else who wanted to be on the Winkler Christmas list, did anything Foxy wanted them to. You don't become a crème-de-la-crème of the South by being polite on the porch.

COLLIER
No more questions.

JUDGE
(to Barker)
Your witness.

Barker looks at Jane and waves her on.

KENNY
(whispers)
What are you doing? I'm not paying you to sit there.

BARKER
(whispers)
You're paying me for protection. She has an agenda and it's not in your favor.

INT. HARMON HOUSE - NIGHT

Scott sleeps. The PHONE RINGS from the other room. Harold kisses Scott and exits.

In the living room Harold sees Jerry on the phone.

JERRY
(on phone)
Okay. I'll do my best. Bye.

Harold pulls two beers out of the refrigerator.

HAROLD
Who was that?

JERRY
Is Scott finally asleep?

Harold gestures Jerry the beer. Jerry takes it.

HAROLD
I'll find a way to pay you back.

Harold sits in the recliner, opens his bottle, takes a swig and puts his head back.

JERRY
How's Mississippi coming along?

HAROLD
It's a graveyard.

Jerry walks to the refrigerator and put the beer back inside. Stands there for a moment.

JERRY
Collier wants me on the stand.
(closes refrigerator door)
Would you be okay if Kenny walked?

Harold snores. Jerry looks over at his son asleep in the recliner. He covers his son with a blanket, takes the beer and sits on the couch. Takes a swig.

INT. VALDOSA COURTHOUSE - DAY

Jerry, at the stand, sees Collier present the keyring to the jury and then him.

COLLIER
Exhibit E., Mr. Harmon, is this the set of keys that you pulled from Hellen's purse at Kenny Winkler's request?

JERRY
It is.

COLLIER
Could you tell us the significance of this key here -
(holds red-dotted key)
And the turn of events which make it significant?

Jerry looks at Kenny straightening the flower on his lapel.

JERRY
Gladly.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Harold sits at the bar. RUSTY (25) runs into him.

RUSTY
As I live and breath. My man!

The two hug.

RUSTY (CONT'D)
Hey do you remember my cousin,
Anne?

HAROLD
Can't say that I do.

Rusty drags Harold across the way to ANNE (24), a gorgeous young woman with a smile that can light up the room.

ANNE
You must be Harold.

HAROLD
I hope so.

The two dance, the two talk, show photos of their kids, and end the night with a kiss.

INT. VALDOSA COURTHOUSE - DAY

Oscar Graves, now in his late 60s, tries to get comfortable in the stand.

COLLIER
Mr. Graves, having been a father-in-law to Kenny Winkler, how would you describe your relationship?

OSCAR
I didn't care for the man.

COLLIER
I'd say not. The court has seen exhibit F., but let's look at the other key, GMC key for a minute.
(shows key to Oscar)
Mr. Graves does this key look familiar to you?

OSCAR
Yes.

COLLIER

And why is that?

OSCAR

Because I used to sell GMC work trucks to Foxy for his advertising business.

COLLIER

Would you believe that Kenny Winkler and his father used one of them to transport Hellen Harmon in a box to her grave? A hearse if you will.

BARKER

Objection: Argumentative!

OSCAR

I wouldn't put it passed them.

COLLIER

And how many trucks did you sell the Winklers in the year 1972?

OSCAR

Two.

COLLIER

And did you keep some sort of log of inventory sold?

OSCAR

Of course.

Oscar pulls out a log book and turns to a particular page.

Collier hands the book to the judge.

COLLIER

Your honor, I'd like to present as evidence G., this page of Mr. Graves inventory log book.

JUDGE

Evidence noted, Mr. Collier.

COLLIER

(holds page to Oscar)

Mr. Graves, could you kindly read us the make, model, year, and VIN number of inventory 12-05 through 12-06?

OSCAR
(puts on glasses)
Sure. Inventory 12-05. GMC Pickup
Truck. 1972 VIN, CE257-SZ58221.
Inventory 12-06. GMC Pickup Truck.
1972 VIN, CE258-SZ48226.

Starnes hands over a file.

COLLIER
(presents photo)
Do you recognize the truck in the
photo, Mr. Graves?

OSCAR
It's a rust bucket, but yeah. This
is one of the GMC trucks I sold to
the Winklers. It's a 1972 model,
same color and everything.

COLLIER
And what makes it a Winkler Outdoor
Advertising work truck?

OSCAR
Their logo on the door there.

COLLIER
Terrific.
(shows photo to Judge and
jury)
Our very own investigators went on
a little scavenger hunt a few
months ago and found this treasure
in a junk yard within Valdosta.
Sure it's beat to hell, probably by
some angry teenagers, but this
piece of junk proves to be useful.
(presents another photo to
Oscar)
Mr. Graves, what's that a photo of?

OSCAR
The truck's VIN number.

COLLIER
And just for prosperity, go ahead
and read it off to the court.

OSCAR
VIN, CE257-SZ58221.

COLLIER

Thank you, Mr. Graves. Last question, when you sell a truck such as this, how many keys does it come with.

OSCAR

One.

Collier gestures to judge.

JUDGE

Mr. Barker, your witness.

Barker waves this off.

INT. TRUCK/EXT. STONE MOUNTIAN - DAY

Harold, Scott, Anne and her daughter, LOUISE (5) drive to Marietta. The kids goof off in the back as Anne sits in the far end of the passenger seat.

They host a picnic within the park. Harold plays tag with the kids. They hike along the old American Indian trails where Anne points out hidden beauties.

And on the way back, while Scott and Louise are passed out in the back, Anne sits right beside Harold as he drives.

INT. VALDOSTA, GA COURTROOM - DAY

A AAA LOCK AND KEY GUY sits in the chair with coke bottle glasses.

COLLIER

Mr. Watson. What is your profession and how long have you practiced it?

AAA LOCK

Well sir, I'm a AAA Lock and Key Smith and just retired.

COLLIER

Congratulations. Tell me, along with houses, gates, and locks, do you deal with any automobile key issues.

AAA LOCK

That's the majority of our business.

(MORE)

AAA LOCK (CONT'D)
People either lose them or lock'em
in the car all the damn time.

COLLIER
(hands GMC key to AAA)
Mr. Watson, what can you tell me
about this key here?

AAA LOCK inspects the key.

AAA LOCK
It's for a GMC truck. 1970s model.
Corroded as hell. Probably won't
work if installed.

COLLIER
It was found under the box, Hellen
Harmon was within.

AAA LOCK looks at Collier. The bailiff rolls out a steering
column.

COLLIER (CONT'D)
Your honor, I'd like to present as
evidence this steering column
removed out of the truck VIN, CE257-
SZ58221 as exhibit G.

JUDGE
Evidence noted.

COLLIER
Mr. Watson, if a client of yours
had a rusted key that wouldn't fit
in their ignition switch, what
would your plan of action be?

AAA LOCK
We would make a duplicate. Each
automobile key is given a CID
number - a Company Identification
Number which is paired with a the
VIN number of a vehicle. So, we
plug in those and ta-da, you have
your replacement.

AAA Lock pulls out his equipment, plugs in the numbers, and
the machine produces a key.

AAA Lock inserts the new key in the ignition switch of the
steering column and it CLICKS with an effortless beauty.

The jury members nod and look over at Kenny.

EXT. FIELD - DAY

Harold and Anne stand together along the pine trees as the PREACHER commences the vows. Jerry is Harold's best man. Scott holds the rings and Louise scatters flower peddles.

EXT./INT. MISSISSIPI HOME - (CHRISTMAS) - DAY

Harold watches Scott and Louise ride their new bicycles in the snow.

SCOTT
Watch this Daddy!

LOUISE
Now watch me, Daddy!

HAROLD
I'm watching both of you!

Anne comes up from behind with a cup of coffee.

HAROLD (CONT'D)
Yes, please.

Anne kisses him.

HAROLD (CONT'D)
What would I do without you?

Harold hugs Anne, kisses her again and the PHONE RINGS.

ANNE
It's probably Betty wondering when we'll be down.

Harold steps inside and picks up the phone.

Anne stays outside watching the kids.

ANNE (CONT'D)
Scott, no going into the street.

Anne looks through the glass door at Harold on the phone. He gives her a look. She knows.

LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Anne sits on Harold's lap in the recliner.

HAROLD
It was a good day.

ANNE

Yeah.

HAROLD

I was called in as a witness. It's me against him now.

ANNE

Promise me something.

HAROLD

Okay.

ANNE

Let it be the end. Even if Kenny gets off and is allowed to knock on our front door, promise me you'll leave it there.

She touches her stomach.

ANNE (CONT'D)

There's nothing but the future to look forward to.

EXT./INT. VALDOSTA, GA COURT HOUSE - DAY

Harold's truck pulls up to the courtroom.

He and Anne get bombarded by reporters while entering the courthouse. Starnes and Sparks help them through.

EXT./INT. VALDOSTA, GA COURT HOUSE - LATER

Anne shakes in the pew.

COLLIER

We call Kenny Winkler to the stand.

Kenny stands from the desk, buttons his jacket, straightens the flower on his lapel and nears the stand.

Bailiff comes to him with a Bible.

COLLIER (CONT'D)

There's no need for that bailiff.

Bailiff retracts the Bible from Kenny. Kenny sits.

Collier nears Kenny.

COLLIER (CONT'D)
Mr. Winkler, would you say you are
a passionate man?

Kenny shifts his position.

KENNY
I appreciate life. Yes.

COLLIER
Will you explain why you returned
to your office early from your trip
to Atlanta the day Mrs. Harmon
disappeared?

KENNY
I remember getting to the office at
four o'clock.

COLLIER
We have a witness who says you
arrived in Valdosta at 2:30pm based
on the time it takes to travel from
Cordele and another witness who
testified that you told them
through a phone call you arrived at
3pm. So which is it?

Kenny remains still with no expression.

KENNY
I just told you the truth.

Collier turns to Harold.

COLLIER
How do you take your coffee, Kenny?

KENNY
What does that have to do with
anything?

COLLIER
I'll rephrase. It seems odd that
Mrs. Harmon left her purse and her
car full of all her belongings at
your office. Why do you think she
would do that?

KENNY
She's a woman.

COLLIER
What does that mean, exactly?

KENNY
They're unpredictable. Illogical
thinkers.

COLLIER
Compared to, what? You?

KENNY
The stronger sex.

COLLIER
(eye balls women in jury)
Wow, never thought about it that
way. So, with you, Mr. Winkler
being a part of the stronger sex,
why were you going through Mrs.
Harmon's purse?

Kenny shifts in his seat again.

KENNY
I was looking for the office keys.

Collier pulls out the red-dotted key.

COLLIER
Do you mean, exhibit H. from Jerry
Harmon's testimony?

KENNY
That's it.

COLLIER
Do you believe that you can search
someone's personal property without
their permission, Mr. Winkler?

KENNY
I had an emergency on my hands and
I needed to get the office keys
from her purse.

COLLIER
Pray tell, what emergency was on
your hands that made you feel it
was perfectly fine to dig through a
missing woman's purse?

KENNY
I needed to fill up my car. I was
running low on fuel and had my
reception to get to.

COLLIER

I remember that. Why is there a gas pump in the rear of the Winkler Outdoor Advertising office?

KENNY

Strictly for the work trucks.

COLLIER

The GMCs which carry the boxes of tools to put up signs, right?

KENNY

Correct.

COLLIER

Tell me, Kenny. Why do you need a key to pump gas behind your office?

KENNY

Deddy put a padlock on it to keep our drivers from filling up their personal cars.

COLLIER

So, I'm confused. How did they pump the gas into the GMC work truck?

KENNY

They had to get the key from Hellen and give it back.

COLLIER

That makes sense. Thank you.

(nears desk)

So, you got the gas pump key from Hellen's purse and was planning on using company assets on your personal vehicle?

KENNY

I had somewhere to be.

COLLIER

Were you going to write it off for taxes? Were you going to tell your father for inventory? Tell me Kenny, did you use any other asset within the company for personal use on the day Mrs. Hellen Harmon disappeared?

A) FLASHBACK - INT. STORAGE ROOM

Kenny unbuckles his belt.

HELLEN

Kenny. Don't do this.

END FLASHBACK

KENNY

No.

COLLIER

Let the court know exhibit I., as
the padlock from the gas pump
behind Mr. Winkler's office.

Collier sets the lock down in front of Kenny and hands him
the red-dotted key.

COLLIER (CONT'D)

Unlock it.

Kenny looks at the items, picks them both up, inserts the key
and unhinges the lock.

Jury murmurs about. Judge hits his gavel.

Collier takes the lock and key back. Removes the key.

COLLIER (CONT'D)

Mr. Winkler, do you know where
Detective Starnes and Lieutenant
Sparks found this key?

KENNY

No.

Collier shows a photo of the hole with the keys at the
bottom.

COLLIER

At the bottom of the hole.

COLLIER (CONT'D)

In previous testimony, you were
found searching through Hellen's
purse - then Wren, your employee
observed you weaving the key onto a
keyring with an attached GMC truck
key. Do you know how this key found
its way between the dirt and the
box Hellen Harmon was stuffed
inside?

B) FLASHBACK - INT. STORAGE ROOM

Hellen crawls to the door.

KENNY
Where you going, Hellen?

Kenny kicks her in the chest. She recoils and gags.

He reaches over to a rolled up sign, unties the rope from the top and steps over Hellen.

Kenny wraps the rope around her neck and pulls tight.

STRUGGLES OF BREATH.

END FLASHBACK

BARKER
Objection your honor, the prosecution is asking the witness to speculate.

JUDGE
Sustained.

COLLIER
I will rephrase your honor.
Bailiff, please bring out exhibit J.

Bailiff rolls out the box. It is contorted and stained black with old blood.

The jury can hardly look at it. Anne tears up.

COLLIER (CONT'D)
Read us the name listed on the box.

KENNY
"Winkler Outdoor Advertising".

COLLIER
Is that your name?

KENNY
Yes.

COLLIER
Is that your box?

KENNY
Yes.

COLLIER
Did you murder Hellen Harmon?

C) FLASHBACK - INT. STORAGE ROOM

Kenny lets go of the rope and finds Hellen dead on the floor. He breathes hard and shakes with excitement.

Kenny gets on the floor, runs his hands up her legs, takes out his pocket knife, flips her on her side and carefully cuts her dress off.

END FLASHBACK

Kenny looks at Harold and then at Collier.

KENNY
No, I did not.

The jury stares down Kenny as he bites his fingernails.

COLLIER
I have no more questions for this witness, your honor.

JUDGE
(to Barker)
Your witness.

Barker shakes his head.

JUDGE (CONT'D)
We will take a brief recess.
Prosecution, prepare your final witness.

INT. VALDOSTA, GA COURTROOM - BATHROOM - DAY

Harold GAGS and exits the stall. He washes his hands and looks at himself in the mirror.

The toilet FLUSHES and Barker exits the other stall. He comes up beside Harold and washes his hands. Harold lets the water run over his hands. Barker dries his hands and glances over at Harold.

BARKER
You know Harold, you should smile when you're up there. Everyday above ground is a good day.

Barker exits. Harold watches the water run.

INT. VALDOSTA, GA COURTROOM - LATER

In the witness stand, Harold, squeezes his hands into fists as a muffled voice calls for his attention.

COLLIER
Are you okay to proceed, Mr.
Harmon?

Harold collects himself and looks at Collier.

HAROLD
Yes.

COLLIER
How old were you were when your
mother disappeared?

Harold looks over at Anne. She smiles.

A) FLASHBACK - EXT. FIELD - DAY

Hellen and 13-year-old Harold place a pine tree seed in a small hole.

HELLEN
Now cover it up.

Harold fills the hole with dirt.

HAROLD
Now what?

HELLEN
We water the trees everyday until
they don't need us.

HAROLD
When will that be?

HELLEN
You'll know.

END FLASHBACK

HAROLD
For years, I've dreamt of this
moment for years. Longed for to see
someone behind bars. My entire life
has been consumed with this moment,
but now that I'm here... I realize
this is the last place I want to
be.

Harold looks to Anne. She nods.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

Collier wants me to share the truth - to earn your sympathy by describing the turmoil my mother's disappearance had on my family, the years of strife and anguish of not knowing anything, how I would give anything to hug her one last time... and though all of it is true... the truth is she wouldn't want me to dwell any longer. My mother would want me to take care of my children in the same way she did her own and that's what I'm going to do. So, if you'll excuse me, I'm going home now, hold my children and tell them everything is okay.

Everyone is speechless.

COLLIER

No further questions, your honor.

JUDGE

Have anything to add, Mr. Barker?

Barker looks at Kenny, then at Harold. He stands.

BARKER

Let him go home.

Harold exits the stand, collects his wife and they exit.

EXT. VALOSTA COURTHOUSE - DAY

Harold and Anne descend the stairs holding hands. Something comes over Harold and sits. He cries.

Anne kneels in front of him. She whispers something in his ear. Harold looks at her, smiles, and kisses her.

Nearing the truck, the crowd continues to follow, across the street, Harold spots the 13-year-old boy sitting on the curb with Rosie. Their eyes meet.

The boy looks to his left, Harold looks and sees Hellen walking towards the boy. The boy spreads his arms and Hellen gives him the biggest hug in the world. She looks over at Harold across the way and smiles at him.

ANNE
You ready to go home?

INT. MISSISSIPPI HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Harold sets his box on the table, opens its lid, and pulls out a PHOTO of Hellen. He glues it in a large scrapbook.

INT. MISSISSIPPI HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Harold is asleep on the table. Scott shakes Harold's arm.

SCOTT
Daddy, are you okay?

Harold wakes up and sees Scott. He looks at the box. It's empty and the scrapbook is thicker than before.

HAROLD
Yeah. What are you doing up this early?

Harold gets up and notices his hands are black, red, and smudged with glue.

Scott climbs up on the chair and looks at the scrapbook, opens it and sees Hellen's photo.

SCOTT
Who's that? She's pretty.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
Is this grandma.

Harold looks over to see Scott flipping through album.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
What's all this?

HAROLD
A story I'll tell you when you are older.

Harold smiles and kisses the top of Scott's head.

Anna enters holding his baby girl.

HAROLD (CONT'D)
You hungry? Want pancakes?

SCOTT
Oh yeah - with chocolate chips!

HAROLD
With chocolate chips it is.

ANNE
(to Scott)
Why don't you set the table?

Scott runs over to the refrigerator and pulls out the milk.

Harold shares a smile with Anna and nears the sink.

Water washes all the ink, blood and glue off of Harold's hands. He looks out of the window and sees -

A collection of fully grown pine trees swaying in horizon.

FADE TO BLACK.

SUPER: David Harold Hanks and Wynne Anne Hanks have been married for over 30 years and currently reside in Georgia. Their three children and grandchildren live near them, as well. David has a long career in nuclear power, nuclear nonproliferation and is among the recipients of the Nobel Peace Prize awarded to the International Atomic Energy Agency in 2005.

SUPER: E. Keller Wilcox, Jr. was convicted of the murder and concealing Hellen Griffin Hanks' remains in 1972. Keller was sentenced to life in prison by a jury in Valdosta, Georgia in 1982. After serving over three years in prison, he was released on appeal for about 18 months, before being returned to prison by the 11th Circuit Court in Atlanta, Georgia. Keller Wilcox admitted to killing Hellen and was released on parole in 2008—after his father E.K. (Foxy) Wilcox died.

SUPER: Dedicated to Hellen Griffin Hanks, my mother.



The End