

THE GRAVE ROBBER

by

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EXT. GRAVEYARD - DAY

An unfilled grave--dirt packed into clean corners. It stares back at CHARLIE ESPINOZA (25) dressed in worker's clothes.

Noise behind him pulls his attention away. He sees NICK DUNHAM (25) set a water jug on a nearby backhoe. The modern machinery looks odd in the old Southern graveyard.

CHARLIE

Damn Nick, that almost took the whole lunch break.

Charlie walks over to the backhoe to root through a backpack.

NICK

(in a thick Southern accent)

Charlie, prayer meeting might take ten minutes, might take an hour. It runs on the Lord's time.

Nick looks to the sky.

NICK (CONT'D)

And it is all the sustenance I need.

Charlie fishes out a plastic Tupperware and opens it.

CHARLIE

That, and my mother-in-law's tamales, right?

Nick raises an evangelical hand to the sky and closes his eyes. His other hand reaches out to grab a tamale.

NICK

The Lord does provide, praised be His name.

He opens his eyes, takes a bite, and speaks with his mouth full.

NICK (CONT'D)

Speaking of your mother-in-law, I got old Suegra something.

Nick reaches into his pocket and pulls out a laminated prayer card to hand to Charlie.

(MORE)

NICK

I asked the pastor for one in Spanish so she can understand it. And you tell her I've been praying for her knee problems to get better.

CHARLIE

That woman could run a marathon if she wanted. But then she wouldn't have anything to bitch about.

NICK

Come on now, Charlie, we've talked about this. Just like the pastor says, "Only through love and forgiveness can you find joy."

CHARLIE

Sounds like he's got it all figured out.

A voice comes from the other side of a patch of trees. Charlie lowers his voice.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Hey, check out this funeral around the bend.

He walks to the edge of the trees, Nick follows.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

It's some real weird shit. A bunch of women dressed like witches on Halloween. Old timey black dresses, black veils. And none of them have said a word the whole time they've been here. Only the preacher talks.

Nick furrows his brow as he inspects the funeral. The scene is as Charlie described. The mourners watch as a casket is lowered. There's an enlarged old photograph next to it of a young man in the 1800s in a Confederate uniform.

NICK

(quietly)

This ain't that weird. That's just the UCD.

Charlie shrugs like that doesn't mean anything to him.

NICK (CONT'D)

The United Confederate Daughters.
Bunch of women who go to the graves
of old soldiers, monuments, stuff
like that.

Charlie nods at the picture of the teen. Nick casually slaps
his neck to kill a mosquito.

NICK (CONT'D)

Reckon he was buried on family land
out where they're building those
condos up 117. Probably dug him up
by accident and had to move him.

CHARLIE

Why not just put him in the
cemetery on Market with the other
soldiers?

NICK

They don't allow Confederates to be
buried there. They throw the rebels
down here near the swamp.

Nick takes another bite and speaks again with his mouth full.

NICK (CONT'D)

Anyway, these old bitties eat it
up.

Charlie studies the enlarged photo next to the headstone.

CHARLIE

Check out those medals. You think
they keep them on the body?

Nick raises his eyebrows and nods.

NICK

The UCD ain't touching that body.
Straight from one hole into the
other.

Charlie looks at Nick, a grin creeping across his face.

CHARLIE

And what's that pastor of yours say
about riches again?

Nick gives a harmless grin of understanding.

NICK

Ain't no need for them in heaven.

CHARLIE
But here on Earth?

NICK
Proverbs 22:4--The reward of
humility and the fear of the Lord
are riches, honor and life.

CHARLIE
You quote that scripture pretty
easily.

Nick is suddenly serious.

NICK
Now don't you think just because I
dabble in the liberation of goods
from the grave, I'm an immoral man.
(squaring up)
I'm a good Christian.

Charlie puts up his hands to calm him.

CHARLIE
I know, I know. You're a saint.

NICK
Now I ain't saying--

CHARLIE
Just stop by for supper tonight,
alright. You can tell my wife we
have to work the late shift. She
believes anything you say.

NICK
(smiling)
That's sweet of her.

CHARLIE
Yeah...just be there tonight.

INT. CAMPAIGN HEADQUARTERS/FRONT ROOM - NIGHT

A large room drenched in signage for "Swanson for Mayor 2009"
and North Carolina flags buzzes with activity--dozens of
people making calls, debating over district maps of
Wilmington, walking with purpose between desks.

CHRIS HARRELSON--a Black woman in her late 20s with a stiff
posture and gait, a police badge hanging on her belt--enters
holding a clipboard with papers.

She approaches an elderly Black campaign worker, MISS CAMBRIDGE, at the front desk.

MISS CAMBRIDGE
Officer Harrelson! It's good to see
you this lovely evening.

Chris looks down and sees her badge is out. She quickly places it in her back pocket and smiles politely.

CHRIS
Good afternoon, Miss Cambridge.
Please just call me Chris.

MISS CAMBRIDGE
Did I ever tell you
I knew the original Chris
Harrelson? Your granddaddy was a
great man. Did so much for our
community. And here you are
following in his footsteps.

CHRIS
Thank you, Miss Cambridge. I bet
he'd be proud of what everyone is
doing here.

Miss Cambridge sits back like she's impressed.

MISS CAMBRIDGE
I believe you're right.

CHRIS
Is the councilman in his office?

MISS CAMBRIDGE
He is. You go right back and see
him, baby.

Miss Cambridge reaches out to affectionately touch Chris' hand. Chris allows it and smiles politely again, but moves quickly into the chaos.

A group is gathered around a TV showing the news. Chris stops for a beat to watch. A NEWS ANCHOR speaks.

NEWS ANCHOR
The upcoming election has brought
activist Anne Sullivan to town. She
gave a speech yesterday to share
her thoughts on the candidates.

Cuts to a recording of a red-haired ANNE SULLIVAN (40). The title, "Founder, Save Our Cities" shows under her name.

ANNE SULLIVAN

What we're seeing here is another land grab by rich businessmen who don't care about the urban communities they're destroying. I've seen men like Mr. Clemmons all across this country, and I'll stop him like I stopped the others.

The crowd around the TV gets excited by this. Chris nods and moves on. At the back of the room among a line of offices, one is marked "Councilman Swanson". The door is partially open, she gives a light knock before quickly entering.

INT. CAMPAIGN HEADQUARTERS/SWAN'S OFFICE - NIGHT

SWANSON (55)--a well-dressed Black man holding a cigar-- hands a wad of hundred dollar bills to two young men dressed like thugs. A model of a community center sits on his desk.

CHRIS

Oh, I'm sorry.

The two thugs look up and freeze guiltily. Swanson glances at Chris casually and smiles.

SWANSON

Christina Harrelson, please come in!

He looks back at the thugs and makes the smallest motion with his head, causing them to hurry out a side door.

Chris stands in the middle of the room as Swanson leans back on his desk, still smiling.

SWANSON (CONT'D)

You going to arrest me?

CHRIS

Wh-what?

Swanson raises his cigar.

SWANSON

Cuban.

CHRIS

(chuckling nervously)
Oh, no sir.

SWANSON

I know I shouldn't, but after you try a proper Cuban cigar, it's hard to go back to anything else. You ever had one?

CHRIS

I don't think so, no.

SWANSON

Oh, you are missing out, Ms. Harrelson.

Swanson walks around the back of his desk to open a cigar box. He takes one out and offers it.

SWANSON (CONT'D)

Did you know your grandfather enjoyed a cigar on occasion?

(leans in)

He'd sneak them when your grandma wasn't around.

CHRIS

I had no idea.

He raises it towards her again. She reluctantly accepts it.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Thank you.

Swanson leans against the desk and takes a puff.

SWANSON

You must be excited about his statue dedication this weekend.

CHRIS

That's actually why I stopped by your office. I wanted to thank you for agreeing to speak at it.

SWANSON

Oh, anything for your grandma. I remember her when I was coming up. If your granddaddy was the king of the neighborhood, then she certainly was his queen. She still doing alright?

CHRIS

I'm actually going to see her after this. Having kind of a girls night with her and my mom and sister.

Chris looks down as if embarrassed by sharing this.

SWANSON

That many Harrelson women together--
watch out!

They laugh.

SWANSON (CONT'D)

And what does your grandma think of
our plans for the old neighborhood?

CHRIS

She's very excited. The
supermarket, the community center,
she loves all of it. You definitely
have her vote.

SWANSON

Well I should hope so!

Swanson take a puff and there's silence for a beat as the
smiles melt from their faces.

SWANSON (CONT'D)

I'd hate to see Joe Clemmons win
and that land turn into a baseball
stadium. It would only be a matter
of time before they start tearing
down the homes your grandma and I
grew up in, turning the land into
parking lots.

Chris shakes her head angrily.

CHRIS

Clemmons doesn't care about the
Creekwood neighborhood, or the
people in it.

SWANSON

Our people.

Chris nods solemnly.

SWANSON (CONT'D)

Speaking of Clemmons, did you check
out that speech Anne Sullivan gave
yesterday? She did everything but
call that man the devil himself.

CHRIS

I read about it this morning, and they're showing highlights of it right now.

SWANSON

She's a great ally to have. National following. Folks are starting to pay attention to what's happening in this town.

CHRIS

Yes, sir. She keeps it up like this, and there's no stopping you.

Swanson stops leaning on his desk and stands up straight.

SWANSON

Well, I appreciate everyone who helps the cause. Including you.

CHRIS

I'd do anything for this campaign.

Swanson grins, a little slyly. Chris' phone rings.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Excuse me.

She checks it--"TORY".

SWANSON

Do Wilmington's finest need you, or is that some lucky young man?

CHRIS

(nervously)

No, no. Sorry about that.

She declines the call and pockets the phone.

SWANSON

Well, I'll let you go get ready for your ladies' night. Say hi to your grandma for me.

CHRIS

I will. Thank you, sir.

Chris exits under Swanson's gaze.

EXT. GRAVEYARD - NIGHT

Nick works the backhoe while Charlie directs him.

CHARLIE

Almost there. One more and we can use the shovels to finish up.

Nick gets a last scoop and turns off the backhoe. The two descend into the grave with shovels. They begin working.

NICK

You really think these medals will be worth that much?

CHARLIE

I was watching this show where people bring old watches and medals and shit to an expert, and he tells them how much they're worth. Some of it's crazy money.

NICK

Really? I know plenty of folks with old Confederate medals from their kin.

CHARLIE

Then they need to go find an appraiser. They could be sitting on a goldmine.

Charlie strikes downwards--his shovel goes through the dirt and into the cheap casket. His leg falls into the casket and he's almost waist deep in the coffin.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

What the fuck?! Get me out of here! Get me out!!

Nick takes a broad stance to pull him up.

NICK

I've got you. Come on.

CHARLIE

What the fuck?!

Charlie stands safely near the wall of the grave and catches his breath.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Is the casket made of fucking cardboard?

(MORE)

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Don't those freaky UCD bitches have money for a better coffin?

NICK

I guess folks just ain't supporting fake Confederate widows like they used to.

Nick examines the hole Charlie made with a flashlight.

NICK (CONT'D)

Damn, you went through the whole casket.

Nick leans closer, then uses his gloved hands to scrape away dirt, remains and wood.

NICK (CONT'D)

There's something underneath.

CHARLIE

What?

Nick digs more. Finally, he holds his flashlight on the hole. A fresh corpse's hand is visible. He looks at Charlie.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Well, shit.

LATER

A skeleton in a ragged uniform, robbed of its medals, sits at one end of the grave next to pieces of wood. Nick and Charlie stare down at a dead woman.

NICK

This is that woman that's been all over the news lately. Fighting the building of the new baseball stadium.

CHARLIE

That Sullivan woman...Shit!

NICK

What are you thinking?

CHARLIE

I'm thinking we need to get out of this hole and fill it in. Then we never mention this to anyone.

NICK

But this woman--

CHARLIE

We can't mention this to anyone, do you hear me?!

Nick nods slowly.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Put the medals back.

NICK

Really? After all this?

Charlie grabs his shirt.

CHARLIE

Put them back now!

NICK

Alright, alright. Just seems like a lot of work for nothing.

Nick hands over some medals.

CHARLIE

This is it?

NICK

Yes! I'm just saying it ain't right. You saying this is some foul play or whatever, and we do nothing. Just ain't right.

CHARLIE

It 'ain't right'?

Charlie motions to the surrounding grave and old corpse.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Is any of this right?

NICK

This...

(motions around)

This ain't murder.

CHARLIE

We didn't murder anyone.

NICK

We're hiding it! That's helping out murderers. Folks breaking the first fucking commandment.

CHARLIE

Dammit, Nick. This woman was killed and disappeared by some bad people. People who will do the same thing to us without thinking twice. If they killed a famous person who was on TV, what do you think they'll do to a couple grave robbers?

NICK

We can leave an anonymous tip with the police if you're that--

Charlie grabs him tighter.

CHARLIE

No police!

NICK

Okay, okay.

Charlie lets Nick go and tries to calm himself.

CHARLIE

Alright. We'll fill this in and no one will know we were ever here. Just like always.

Nick nods. The two climb out.

EXT. THE HARRELSONS - NIGHT

A well-kept house in a largely downtrodden neighborhood. Chris carries a covered dish. She rings the doorbell and waits. The door opens to reveal NAILAH (30)--fit and well put together. Nailah gives a saccharin smile.

CHRIS

Nailah.

NAILAH

Hey little sis. What did you bring?

CHRIS

Sweet potato muffins.

NAILAH

Ooo, they sound delicious! Did you make sure to cook them all the way through this time? I don't know if Grandma's stomach can handle another batch of raw dough.

Chris pushes her way past her sister.

CHRIS
Those muffins were perfectly fine
and you know it.

Chris enters

INT. THE HARRELSONS - NIGHT

She is greeted by a sitting room with nice couches and walls covered in family photos. Her toothless GRANDMA (85) sits in a wheelchair pulled up to a coffee table.

Chris' mother, JULIA (60), sits on a sofa on the other side. Grandma sees Chris first and smiles, exposing her gums.

GRANDMA
Christina!

CHRIS
Hi grandma!

Julia turns.

JULIA
Well hello!

She stands and hugs her daughter.

CHRIS
Hey mama.

JULIA
What did you bring?

Nailah appears behind her.

NAILAH
Her sweet potato muffins.

JULIA
Oh...

CHRIS
Whatever, don't eat them, then.

GRANDMA
They sound delicious. Why don't you
give me one, baby?

CHRIS
Of course, Grandma.

GRANDMA

And bring me a glass of wine while
you're at it.

CHRIS

Sure thing.

JULIA

(firmly)

No, you know you can't have alcohol
on your pills.

GRANDMA

Oh, you hush up!

(to Chris)

Ever since my son passed away, this
one's got nothing better to do than
act like my jailer. Watching me
with those beady eyes.

JULIA

Mama!

GRANDMA

I ain't your mama. You call me
'mother-in-law'.

Chris stifles laughter.

CHRIS

How about some tea, grandma? You
know I make some good tea.

Chris lifts a flask out her pocket so her mother can't see.
Grandma beams.

GRANDMA

You do, sweetheart. I guess I'll
take some since Mussolini over
there won't let me enjoy my final
days on this earth.

Chris goes to the nearby kitchen to fill a mug with water and
put it in the microwave.

Julia shakes her head and takes a drink from her wine glass.
She puts down the glass and forces a smile.

JULIA

It's so nice to have all the girls
back together again for the
ceremony this weekend. And Nailah
coming all the way from Atlanta.

Nailah sits next to her mother on the couch and smiles.

NAILAH
It is nice, mama.

JULIA
(to Grandma)
And your husband is finally getting
the recognition he deserves.

GRANDMA
Harold was a great man. I miss him
every day. But I saw that statue.
He was taller than that. Stood six
foot five inches.

NAILAH
Really? I don't remember granddaddy
being that tall.

Julia looks at Nailah and subtly shakes her head.

GRANDMA
He was tall as the day is long. And
such a beautiful smile. That man
had great teeth. Never had his
wisdom teeth removed. In fact, he
had some extra teeth in his mouth.
Right at the back.

NAILAH
Is that right?

JULIA
(shaking head)
Mama.

GRANDMA
It's true. That's how he could
eat so fast. I once saw him win a
pie eating contest at the county
fair. Ate three times as many pies
as the runner-up, on account of all
the teeth.

Julia takes another drink. Nailah nods slowly.

NAILAH
Oh...

JULIA
Chris, Nailah was just telling us
about Thomas' new job.

Chris responds from the kitchen.

CHRIS

That's great.

NAILAH

It's a startup, but Thomas just got so sick of working for a huge company. I mean the pay was great but now he gets serious equity, which makes him so much more motivated.

JULIA

That's amazing, honey. We're all so proud of him.

The microwave beeps. Chris puts a teabag into the hot water, then drains some of her flask into the mug.

She returns to the living room and hands the drink to her grandma.

GRANDMA

Thank you, sweetheart.

Grandma takes a sip.

GRANDMA (CONT'D)

Delicious.

Chris winks at her. Julia is about to continue but Grandma interrupts.

GRANDMA (CONT'D)

And how is your work, Christina? Your granddaddy would be so proud you're following in his footsteps. I remember y'all watching those old Western films, then acting like a couple sheriffs.

CHRIS

It's going well, grandma. And I've actually started working with Councilman Swanson's office in my spare time.

Her mom and sister look surprised.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Someone has to get him elected mayor so we can keep this neighborhood intact.

JULIA
Chris, that's amazing!

GRANDMA
My granddaughter the politician.
Bringing the community up. The
first female Black president!

Chris scratches a scab on the side of her neck.

CHRIS
I don't know about that. But
working with the councilman is a
start.

NAILAH
So two jobs now? Does that busy
schedule leave you any time to look
for a man?

CHRIS
Not right now, but--

NAILAH
When was the last time you went on
a date? Don't tell me you haven't
been serious with anyone since you
left DeShaun down in Charleston.

Chris shrugs.

NAILAH (CONT'D)
Oh my goodness. How many years ago
was that now?

CHRIS
I've been focusing on other things.

GRANDMA
Don't you worry about that,
Christina. It can take a while to
find the right man. The good Lord
knows it took me a while. But I'll
tell you the secret to a good
marriage.

(leaning closer to Chris)
He's got to fill you up.

CHRIS
Like, emotionally?

GRANDMA
No, sweetheart. What I'm saying is,
he's got to have a large penis.

Chris stifles a laugh. Julia is aghast, Nailah just stares.

GRANDMA (CONT'D)

Now my Harold, that man's penis was enormous. But I'm what I believe the kids call a 'size queen'.

Nailah busts out laughing.

JULIA

Mama!

GRANDMA

Lord knows I tried all sizes of penises. Big penises, little penises, fat penises, thin penises--

JULIA

Mama! Stop saying 'penises'!

GRANDMA

Am I saying that right, 'penises'?
As in, more than one?
(to herself)
Many more.

JULIA

Jesus Christ, mama!

GRANDMA

Don't you blaspheme in this house,
Julia Harrelson!

JULIA

Stop talking dirty!

GRANDMA

You said this was girls' night.
Don't be a prude, now.

Julia turns to Nailah.

JULIA

Do you see what I have to deal
with?

Grandma waves a hand at Julia, as if shooing her away.

GRANDMA

To hell with it!

Grandma reaches into Chris's pocket for the flask. She unscrews it and turns it up, chugging.

JULIA

Mama!

(to Chris)

Chris, get that away from her right
now, young lady!

Chris puts her hands up.

CHRIS

I'm staying out of this.

The scene devolves as Julia tries to take the flask and
Grandma twists away from her.

EXT. THE HARRELSONS - NIGHT

Later, Chris exits the house, yelling back at her family.

CHRIS

Thanks again for the food, mama.
See y'all at the walkthrough for
the statue unveiling. Love you,
Grandma.

ALL (O.S.)

Bye!

She closes the door and begins walking to her car at the end
of the block.

Hip hop pulses from a parked car on the other side of the
street where young men congregate. One yells aggressively at
another. A stray dog trots across the road in front of her.

Chris takes out her phone and calls "Tory".

INT. TORY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A blonde woman Chris' age, TORY, sits in a messy apartment,
watching TV. Her phone rings. She looks at it--"Honeybug".
Chris' face lights up, she answers.

TORY

Hey! I've been trying to get a hold
of you.

INTERCUT - PHONE CONVERSATION

CHRIS

I know, I'm so sorry. I was at the campaign headquarters, and then the thing at my mom's took longer than I thought it would. But the good news is I know all about my brother-in-law's new job. Right down to his annual bonus.

TORY

Sounds like you had fun. So...what are you up to right now? Want to get a drink? I haven't seen you since our date-iversary.

CHRIS

(smiling)
That was last night.

TORY

I know. I can't get enough of you.

CHRIS

(more quietly)
I can't get enough of you, either.
(more normally)
But I can't. I have to swing by the station to finish up some work. It's like I'm working two jobs with helping out the campaign.

TORY

You're killing yourself, hon. You need to slow down. Swanson has an army of volunteers. You don't need to spend every day working for him.

CHRIS

The election is almost here, then everything will be back to normal.

TORY

Unless he wants to bring you on as a staffer. Which is the whole point of this, right?

CHRIS

Who knows? And if he does, I'll quit the force. Either way, things will slow down soon, alright?

Chris reaches her car and unlocks it.

TORY

Alright. Call me to tomorrow, okay?

CHRIS

I will. We'll get a drink at that new place in Sunset Park.

TORY

We better. Okay, stay safe. I love you.

Chris quickly glances to both sides, then speaks more softly.

CHRIS

Love you, too.

Chris is about to duck into her car when Nailah appears behind her.

NAILAH

Well.

Chris jumps, her hand flies to a concealed pistol.

NAILAH (CONT'D)

'Love you', huh? Someone's got a juicy secret.

CHRIS

Jesus, Nailah. You scared me half to death.

NAILAH

So you do have a man, but you don't want mama or grandma to know about him. I'm guessing it's because you know as sweet of an old woman as grandma is, she'd disown you if she knew you were going out with...

(looks around comically)

A white boy?

CHRIS

Nailah, now isn't the time for your...well, everything about who you are.

Nailah straightens up.

NAILAH

So maybe I go back to the house right now and tell those racist old women you've got some vanilla in your swirl.

CHRIS

Sure, and maybe I tell them Thomas got fired, I'm guessing for being an alcoholic, and now he works for pennies.

Nailah is stunned.

NAILAH

How did you--

CHRIS

I've met the man, Nailah. He's a drunk. And unlike mama and grandma, I know how to go onto LinkedIn. Thomas was begging for work for months on there.

Nailah leans in, suddenly the aggressive big sister.

NAILAH

You keep your mouth shut about that, you hear me?

Chris smirks.

CHRIS

Just like when we were kids.

She ducks into the car, then looks up from her seat.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Great seeing you, Nailah.

She shuts the door, starts the car, and drives off as her sister watches, silently fuming.

EXT. TRUCKER GAS STATION PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Rows of 16-wheelers, with beat up cars and trucks on the fringes of the lot. A few small groups of people are strewn about, some drinking, some arguing.

INT. NICK'S TRUCK - NIGHT

Nick lies on a sleeping bag in the covered bed of his old truck, his meager belongings around him. He rubs his eyes.

NICK

(to himself)

It just ain't right.

He takes out his phone and dials 9-1-1, but pauses to hit Send.

An open hand smacks into the window of the covered bed, he startles. A woman's voice yells at someone, who yells back. The sound of his side mirror being hit.

NICK (CONT'D)

Dammit!

He gets up, then looks at his phone again. The voices trail off into the distance. Nick hits Send.

INT. POLICE STATION/MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

Chris reads emails at her desk. A picture of her grandfather is prominently displayed. Her phone beeps--a text from Tory: "Check your coat pocket, Honeybug."

Chris reaches into her pocket to pull out a bag of sunflower seeds with a heart on them. She can't contain her smile.

She's about to text back when there's a commotion in the background--police talking excitedly. She shoves the bag back in her coat pocket, then walks over to the group.

CHRIS

What's going on?

POLICE OFFICER #1

You know that activist, Anne Sullivan?

CHRIS

Yeah.

POLICE OFFICER #1

Well, a call just came in that she's been found dead. Out in some cemetery near the swamp.

CHRIS

Oh, shit.

POLICE OFFICER #2

This is going to make tomorrow's debate between Swanson and Clemmons interesting.

POLICE OFFICER #1

(chuckling)

Yeah, political murders can do that.

Chris turns and walks around a corner. She takes out her phone, pulls up 'Swanson', and calls. Another cop, POLICE OFFICER #3, walks away from the group and exits the building.

EXT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

The officer looks around before making a call.

INT. THE PAINTED PHEASANT - NIGHT

A low rent country bar--North Carolina sports teams and alcohol posters cover the walls, country music plays. The place is generously populated for a weeknight, with people at the bar, playing pool, and sitting at four tops and booths.

KUTCHER (45)--polo khakis, gaudy watch, sunglasses on a strap around his neck-- sits at a large corner booth with others that look like him, and attractive women. His arm is around SHEILA (25)--attractive, dressed trashy. A Dale Earnhardt flag hangs above him.

SHEILA

(to the table)

So I told that bitch, she better get back in her car if she doesn't want to get stomped into the fucking pavement.

The table laughs. Kutcher's phone rings. The table continues talking as he answers.

KUTCHER

What's going on?

Kutcher pauses while the inaudible voice on the other end speaks.

KUTCHER (CONT'D)

Is that right?

He motions for Sheila to get up so he can slide out. She shoots him a look for his being so dismissive.

KUTCHER (CONT'D)

(to Sheila)

Just move, Sheila.

She rolls her eyes and does so.

KUTCHER (CONT'D)

(into phone)

Uh huh.

He walks through the bar to the front door.

He spies BJ (20)--tattoos rising above the neck of his fishing apparel--branded hooded sweatshirt, jeans, boots, and a cammo hat--and Dumpling (20)--dressed similarly but morbidly obese, "Mary Beth" tattooed in cursive over his right eyebrow--sitting at a table.

A bottle of pills sits in front of them; BJ is crushing one under the blade of his flip knife. Kutcher continues speaking as he raps loudly on the table with two hard knuckles. Their heads pop up like they've been caught.

KUTCHER (CONT'D)

Well, it ain't great.

He motions with his head for the two to follow him outside. They quickly jump from their seats and do so.

EXT. THE PAINTED PHEASANT - NIGHT

The bar is its own building, framed on both sides by fields, and across from a mechanic's shop, "CASTLE HAYNE AUTO REPAIR". The group walks past various pedigrees of pickups, and a few cars. Kutcher is still talking on the phone.

KUTCHER

Mm-hmm. Keep an ear out.

Kutcher hangs up and turns to the two young men. An antsy BJ speaks before Kutcher can.

BJ

What's going on, Mr. Kutcher?

Kutcher breathes in heavily, then lowers an ear to his shoulder, producing a loud crack from his neck.

KUTCHER

BJ, Dumpling...when you boys said you took care of that woman the other night, the one on TV talking shit about the stadium, I assumed you took her to the funeral home to be cremated like I told you.

He stares at them. Dumpling looks back at him, eyes wide, mouth open, breathing loudly but not speaking. BJ jumps in.

BJ

We were going to Mr. Kutcher, sir. But there we were right next to the graveyard.

(MORE)

BJ (CONT'D)

And we reckoned it'd be better to just get rid of the body instead of driving all over with it. Seemed like less of a risk.

Kutcher looks at Dumpling.

DUMPLING

(nodding)

Y--yes, sir. Less risk.

KUTCHER

So y'all's lazy asses decided to go directly against something I told you to do. Just because you didn't want to drive up to Porter's Neck?

BJ

Sir, we'd heard about folks doing that back in the old days. Putting the bodies in a grave that's fixing to get a casket laid over it. And we made it look real good. All even and everything. Even dug a couple feet further down. Just like I heard about in the old days, sir.

KUTCHER

BJ, this ain't the goddamn old days. And we don't do that shit anymore. Grind up the teeth and burn the bodies, one of the first fucking things you learn on this job.

BJ

I'm sorry, sir, did something happen?

KUTCHER

Yeah, something fucking happened. They found your woman in the graveyard. Cops are fixing to swarm it right now.

BJ

Shit!

Dumpling puts his head in his hands childishly.

KUTCHER

But it's fine, because you boys are going to handle this.

BJ/DUMPLING

Yes, sir.

KUTCHER

Find out who's responsible for calling the cops. We can't have this traced back to us or Councilman Clemmons, you hear me?

BJ/DUMPLING

Yes, sir.

KUTCHER

Good. Now get y'all's asses in gear and clean this up.

BJ and Dumpling hurry back to the bar. Kutcher takes his time.

As he passes a nearby truck, ODIN (25)--no tattoos, normal clothes and hair, but the right side of his face disfigured with a patch over his eye--pokes his head out to watch him walk in. Odin lights a cigarette.

INT. NICK'S TRUCK - DAY

Nick wakes up and stretches. He looks at the phone next to him, then gets up for the day.

INT. TRUCKER GAS STATION/BATHROOM - DAY

Nick brushes his teeth, then spits into the sink.

INT. TRUCKER GAS STATION/STORE - DAY

Nick walks through the isles past the young female CASHIER.

CASHIER

You have a good one, Nick.

NICK

You too. Say hi to Arlene for me when she gets in.

The cashier laughs. Nick smiles and exits.

INT. NICK'S TRUCK - DAY

Nick pulls into a diner parking lot. He looks around the lot, but comes up disappointed.

INT. DINER - DAY

Nick is sitting at a table and looks out the window for Charlie. A WAITRESS approaches with food.

WAITRESS

Alright, hon, I got your liver
pudding and your eggs.
(sets down a plate)
And that bowl of grits.

NICK

Thank you, ma'am.

WAITRESS

Charlie isn't joining you today?

Nick checks his phone on the table again.

NICK

I don't know where he is. Hasn't
called in sick, either.

WAITRESS

Huh. Well, let me know if you want
me to pack something up for him.

NICK

Thanks.

The waitress walks away. Nick starts eating, but keeps an eye on the window.

INT. CAMPAIGN HEADQUARTERS/SWAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Swanson sits behind his desk--an aide at one side, and a makeup artist lightly dabbing at his face. Chris sits on the other side of the desk. Swanson seems excited and focused.

SWANSON

Clemmons has a lot to answer for
today.

Chris nods, feeling the energy in the room.

CHRIS

Yes, sir. I knew he had worked with
the good old boys in Castle Hayne
in the past, but he's crossed a
line this time.

SWANSON
(under his breath)
Sloppy work, too.

CHRIS
Excuse me, sir?

SWANSON
Is the WPD working with the
Sheriff's on this? Castle Hayne
falls outside your jurisdiction.

CHRIS
We are. But half the sheriff's
deputies are on Kutcher's payroll.

Swanson chuckles, then speaks almost to himself.

SWANSON
Kutcher the Butcher. It's about
time all that got burned down. Make
way for something new.
(to Chris)
Will you be joining us for the
debate?

CHRIS
Yes, sir. I took the day off to be
available.

SWANSON
Good. Stick around afterwards, I
have someone I'd like for you to
meet. He could be very helpful if
I'm elected mayor.

CHRIS
When you're elected mayor.

Swanson grins.

SWANSON
That's looking like more of a
reality by the day.

INT. CHARLIE'S HOUSE - DAY

Charlie, CHARLIE'S WIFE, and his mother-in-law, SUEGRA, are
bound and gagged, on their knees on the floor.

Charlie's wife cries softly; he tries to lean into her to
comfort her. A telenovela is loud on the TV.

BJ stands over them with a pistol, inspecting the house. He picks up a bottle of Tajin on the table, then looks at the TV. He grins.

BJ
 You know, I've heard about this place y'all would love. They've got Mexican food,
 (points at mini Mexican flag)
 Mexican flags all over the place, everybody speaking Spanish.
 (scratches temple with pistol)
 Goddamn, what's the name of that place...
 (snaps his fingers)
 Mexico! That's it! Shit, y'all would be in high cotton there.

His phone rings. He takes it out and looks at it, then addresses the group one last time.

BJ (CONT'D)
 Swear to God, Mexican flags everywhere. You don't even have to bring your own.
 (into phone)
 Yep.
 (pause a beat)
 Yeah, we're good. Three of them-- husband and wife, and an older woman, I reckon one of them's mama.
 (pause)
 You serious? It's just me and Dumpling here. You think his fat ass can help me with three bodies?

Charlie's wife starts sobbing in her gag. Charlie speaks pleadingly into his.

BJ (CONT'D)
 No, he's not strong. He's just morbidly fucking obese. He's made me do all the goddamn work so far. And he just disappeared, off spreading his diabetes around the goddamn house.
 (pause a beat)
 Shiiiiit, you've got to be--
 (pause a couple beats)
 Alright....alright.

BJ shakes his head and hangs up. He squats in front of the hostages, then presses the pistol to the wife's head, eliciting a fresh wave of sobs and pleas.

BJ (CONT'D)
Now, hold on. Hold on.

He puts his hand on Charlie's gag and speaks to him.

BJ (CONT'D)
I'm fixing to take this off, and if you yell, you can take a wild guess what happens to your girl here. Or...you can take this last chance to tell me where your buddy is. Maybe save y'all's asses.

INT. NICK'S TRUCK - DAY

Nick pulls up outside of Charlie's house. He looks in the driveway and sees a car and a truck. He looks back at the house--all the blinds are drawn, the telenovela is loud enough to be heard. He gets out.

EXT. CHARLIE'S HOUSE - DAY

Nick walks up and knocks on the front door. No answer.

He walks to the side of the house. As he turns the corner, Dumpling hits his head with the butt of his pistol.

DARKNESS

Nick regains consciousness slowly, but can only hear. A sliver of light comes from the bottom of his blindfold but it reveals nothing. There's awkward breathing, someone sniffing. Then proper voices above him.

BJ (O.S.)
Goddamn, Dump. They say if you can't be good, be lucky. And you're about the luckiest sonbitch I've ever seen.

DUMPLING (O.S.)
What are we doing with him?

BJ (O.S.)
Throw his ass in the truck along with the rest. I'll call Kutch on the way to the funeral home. Reckon he'll want Odin to question him.

INT. CITY HALL - DAY

Campaign signs for both Swanson and Clemmons adorn a large, packed room with a stage. Both stand behind podiums. A TV camera films from the side.

Clemmons (65)--white, skinny, thick glasses--looks out in the crowd to find Kutcher, who is staring back at him. The vocal crowd are split in their support. Police watch over the room.

A single MODERATOR stands at a podium before the politicians.

MODERATOR

Final question.

RANDOM CITIZEN

Ask about the murder!

Half the people in the hall shout their agreement.

CITIZENS

The murder!

MODERATOR

Calm from the crowd, please. Calm from the crowd.

The yelling dies down, people on the edge of their seats.

MODERATOR (CONT'D)

The body of Anne Sullivan, a vocal opponent of the baseball stadium--

The yelling starts up again. The moderator powers through.

MODERATOR (CONT'D)

(louder)

The body of Anne Sullivan, a vocal opponent of the baseball stadium, was discovered early this morning in Longleaf Cemetery. Mr. Clemmons, what effect do you think this will have on your campaign, and your plans to use city funds to build the stadium?

CITIZENS

Murderer! Murderer!

Kutcher looks at his phone as Clemmons' eyes cast him the briefest of glances. Swanson stares at Kutcher.

CLEMMONS

What type of question is that?
That's a police matter.

MODERATOR

You don't think it will have any
effect on your push to build the
stadium?

CLEMMONS

It certainly will when you bring it
up in this context and people yell
"murderer" at me.

Some in the crowd start up again but Swanson's speaking
silences them.

SWANSON

Mr. Clemmons is right, the police
haven't proven anything yet. And in
this great country, everyone is
given a trial, which my opponent is
far from.

Clemmons throws his hands in the air.

SWANSON (CONT'D)

But let's focus on the positive.
What those funds can be used for
instead of putting more money into
the pockets of the...

Swanson acts like he's looking for the right words, then
waves casually at Clemmons.

SWANSON (CONT'D)

The ultra wealthy.

Half the crowd cheers.

SWANSON (CONT'D)

The Urban Renewal Project would
take those funds and build a
supermarket and a community center
in Creekwood, one of our city's
poorest neighborhoods. One that is
in a food desert where single
mothers have to pay twice as much
at a convenience store because they
don't have a car to drive to a
supermarket. Now I say we do the
right thing and give the money to
the people who need it.

The same half erupts in cheers. Chris, watching from behind the stage's curtain, joins them. The other half of the audience yells their objections--"Why do you get the money?", "We need jobs!", "Not with my tax dollars!".

CLEMMONS

Let's say you do build that supermarket. Then what? The poorest people in the city have a place to spend money they don't have? Building a stadium brings business, business means jobs. That means those single mothers can afford cars. And when a food chain sees the income in that neighborhood rise, they'll build a supermarket there themselves, not on the taxpayer's dime.

Cheers from the other half. One of the thugs whispers something to Kutcher. He stares forward a second, then nods.

DARKNESS

Still only the sliver of light at the bottom of Nick's blindfold. A new round of sobs and pleas through gags as the passengers are moved into a building. A phone rings.

BJ (O.S.)

Yeah...yep...alright.
(to Dumpling)

Just the Mexicans. He's saving the other for Odin.

More jostling and crying, this time more frantic. A muted gunshot. Then another. And another. Nick wails through a gag.

INT. CITY HALL - DAY

SWANSON

How often have you eaten your supper from a convenience store, Mr. Clemmons?

CLEMMONS

What does that have to do with having a basic understanding of economics? There's a sign in Greenfield Lake that says don't feed the gators. You feed them, they keep coming back for more.

(MORE)

CLEMMONS (CONT'D)

You feed a bear, it stops hunting,
it's looking for that next handout.

SWANSON

Are you insinuating the people in
Creekwood are animals, Mr.
Clemmons?

Clemmons shakes his head in disbelief.

CLEMMONS

You talk about moving forward, but
everything you do ultimately keeps
your constituency down.

SWANSON

You mean Black people? Well, excuse
me if my constituency didn't grow
up surrounded by buildings with
their family's name on it.

The audience is VERY hot now. Cops move towards the crowd
hesitantly. One speaks to the moderator.

MODERATOR

That will be all for today. Thank
you, gentlemen, for your time and
spirited debate. We'll--

SWANSON

If you love Wilmington and all of
its people, vote Swanson. Thank
you.

Another eruption from both sides as Swanson walks off the
stage. Chris and his aides join him, all looking like they're
about to march into the White House.

INT. FUNERAL HOME/BASEMENT - DAY

The blindfold is removed. Nick takes in the funeral home: the
furnace is on full blast, a single body bag remains next to
the conveyor. Nick wails again through his gag.

BJ

(to Dumpling)

That's why you lift with your
fucking back, man.

DUMPLING

I did lift with my back. It's all
messed up from football.

Odin walks out from behind Nick and tosses the blindfold in his lap. Odin wears a shirt with a picture of Joey from Friends, with "How You Doin'" underneath. He smiles.

ODIN

Back in the land of the living!

BJ turns away from Dumpling to look at Odin.

BJ

(under his breath)

Fucking Odin.

(to Dumpling)

Come on, last one. Squat down low, then lift on three.

Nick tries to yell.

ODIN

(to Nick)

I'm afraid that's not going to do you much good.

Odin pulls a chair in front of Nick and sits. He takes out a pack of cigarettes and lights one with a USMC Zippo.

BJ

(to Odin)

You nice and relaxed over there?
Want me to grab you a drink?

Odin stares at Nick as he speaks.

ODIN

I'm fine, but thank you.

He replaces the Zippo in his pocket, pulls out a KaBar knife from behind his back. He keeps staring at Nick as he deftly flips it in his hand, catching it by the blade each time.

BJ and Dumpling grunt as they lift the last corpse onto the conveyor.

BJ

(to Dumpling)

We're working our asses off while
this sonbitch has a smoke.

Odin never takes his eyes off Nick, and always seems amused.

ODIN

Maybe if you'd done a better job
interrogating the dearly departed,
I wouldn't need to be called in at
all.

BJ

You ain't no better than us. You do
this shit in the Marines or
something?

ODIN

I was a cook.

BJ forces a laugh and walks over to Odin. Dumpling follows.

BJ

A cook. Shit. I was a Petty Officer
Third Class in the Navy.

ODIN

Navy, huh? Thanks for dropping us
off at the war.

BJ

Motherfucker, I've been here twice
as long as you. You ain't special.
(to Dumpling)
'Odin'. Looks more like Long John
Silver to me.

Dumpling laughs. Odin flips the knife and BJ tries to grab
it. The knife cuts him and falls to the ground.

BJ recoils, grabbing his bleeding hand. Odin finally looks at
him, still amused.

ODIN

Looks like you've won this round.

BJ

Fuck you!
(to Dumpling)
Let's get the hell the out of here,
Dump. Let this one-eyed freak have
his fun.

The two exit. Odin waits until the door is closed before
standing to slowly retrieve his knife.

ODIN

My granddaddy used to run shine.
Not a major operation, just a still
out in the swamp.

(MORE)

ODIN (CONT'D)

Now I'm not much of a drinking man myself but it interested me, how alcohol is made.

The body behind him moves into the fire. Nick sobs.

ODIN (CONT'D)

All you need is sugar, liquid, and, the most important thing, yeast.

Odin sits down in front of him again. He begins cutting off Nick's pant leg.

ODIN (CONT'D)

Yeast is a fascinating organism. You can learn a lot from it.

He strips down the cut off pant leg to expose Nick's upper leg. He bounces the flat of the knife on the leg while Nick pleads through his gag.

ODIN (CONT'D)

What the yeast does is eat the sugar.

He begins making a shallow, long cut on Nick's leg. Nick screams in pain.

ODIN (CONT'D)

And then, for lack of a more civilized term, it shits out alcohol.

He makes a second, parallel cut.

ODIN (CONT'D)

But the interesting thing is, yeast can't live in alcohol.

The second cut finished, he makes a third short cut to connect the two so there's an open rectangle.

ODIN (CONT'D)

But it can't stop eating. And it can't stop shitting. So...

He grabs the short end of the rectangle and pulls, flaying the skin from Nick's leg. Nick howls.

ODIN (CONT'D)

It creates an environment so poisonous that it causes its own death.

DARKNESS

Nick comes to moments later. Odin is admiring the strip of skin. He drapes it gently over Nick's knee.

ODIN (CONT'D)
I'm going to take out your gag now.
And if you scream...

He holds the knife with two fingers and moves it back and forth, then winks with his good eye.

ODIN (CONT'D)
You understand?

Nick nods. Odin undoes the gag.

ODIN (CONT'D)
Let me get those zip ties, too.

Odin keeps talking as he moves behind him to cut his zip ties. Nick moves his mouth oddly from the gag.

ODIN (CONT'D)
Nick Dunham. Foster son of Keith
and Myrtle Dunham. 341 Chattel Way,
Delco, North Carolina. Took your
foster parents' last name, huh?

NICK
Yes, sir.

ODIN
They must be pretty good folks. I
mean, they raised a morally upright
young man like you. You see a
crime, you report it. Your friend
needs help, you come to save him.
You're a regular everyday hero,
huh?

NICK
I was just doing what I thought was
right. And when I did...

Nick looks at the furnace and tears up.

NICK (CONT'D)
I got them killed. I got them all
killed.

He breaks down. Odin puts his knife in its scabbard behind his back, then puts both hands on Nick's shoulders and nods with a comical expression like "but what are you gonna do?".

ODIN

Hey, it's alright. I have a way you can make it up to them.

Nick looks up, hate and sorrow in his eyes.

ODIN (CONT'D)

I know you have a strong sense of right and wrong. And it just doesn't seem right to me that people can go around killing whoever they want. Throwing them in graves. Burning them up until they're nothing but ash. Do you think that's right?

Nick shakes his head slightly.

ODIN (CONT'D)

What's that now?

NICK

No, sir.

ODIN

You probably see me as one of the bad guys, like those two clowns who were in here. But,
(leans in close)
Can you keep a secret?

Nick nods. Odin raises an eyebrow to elicit a vocal response.

NICK

Yes, sir.

ODIN

I want to see those men come to justice, same as you. Now justice my way...

(shrugs)

It may not end in them being locked up, but there's a certain finality that might appeal to you at this point.

Odin nods at the furnace.

ODIN (CONT'D)

And fortunately for you, you're in a unique position, with a unique skillset I could use. So I'm thinking we work together, punish the bad guys, and hell, when we come out the other side of this thing, you won't be living in that truck of yours. I promise you that. What do you say?

Odin picks up the strip of skin and plays with it in his fingers.

ODIN (CONT'D)

You interested?

Nick looks at him for a beat. His face hardens. He nods.

NICK

Yes, sir.

INT. CAMPAIGN HEADQUARTERS/FRONT ROOM - DAY

Swanson, his aide, and Chris enter to loud applause from a room full of volunteers. Swanson smiles, waves and nods.

SWANSON

Thank you! Thank you!

Chris beams with pride. The crowd eventually dies down and waits for Swanson to speak.

SWANSON (CONT'D)

Thank you all for your support! This has been a long campaign. We've faced adversity at every turn. Including, and I never thought I'd have to say this, the heinous murder of a close ally.

VOLUNTEER IN CROWD

Clemmons is a thug!

OTHERS

Murderer!

Swanson raises his hand to calm them.

SWANSON

Despite the obstacles we have faced, and continue to face, we will overcome!

The volunteers erupt in applause and yells of approval. Swanson and his entourage move through them towards his office, him shaking hands and thanking people.

Chris follows, on top of the world. They enter

INT. CAMPAIGN HEADQUARTERS/SWAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Two men sit in front of Swanson's desk: EZ PATEL (50)--a shorter, thin Indian man with a paunch, glasses, dressed like he's about to play a round of golf--and his linebacker-sized Indian BODYGUARD (25).

Swanson walks behind his desk as if they aren't there. The aide follows him and stands to his side as Swanson sits.

Chris looks at the Indian two men and stops in confusion.

SWANSON

(to Chris)

Please, come in and shut the door.

Chris does, and stands next to the door awkwardly.

SWANSON (CONT'D)

Christina, this is EZ Patel. EZ, this is Christina Harrelson, one of my most valuable volunteers.

EZ turns and nods at her.

EZ

(in an Indian accent)

It is nice to meet you.

CHRIS

Nice to meet you, too.

SWANSON

Chris here is the granddaughter of the first Black police officer in Wilmington. I'm actually speaking at his statue dedication this weekend.

EZ nods as if he's trying to show interest.

SWANSON (CONT'D)

Chris is certainly following in his footsteps as one of Wilmington's finest.

EZ nods again, this time in recognition.

EZ

This is the woman.

Swanson nods slightly.

SWANSON

(to Chris)

And EZ is a local entrepreneur who has been most generous in his support of our campaign.

Chris looks uncomfortable.

CHRIS

I've heard the name before.

SWANSON

EZ runs a contracting company that will be handling the construction of the supermarket in Creekwood.

EZ

You have not won yet, but the debate went very well. I want to be in a position to break ground as soon as possible.

SWANSON

(to Chris)

Eager to get to work making the old neighborhood a better place.

Chris nods dutifully.

EZ

But there is the issue of the archeologist.

SWANSON

Dr. Elizabeth McShane, of course.

CHRIS

The woman claiming the Creekwood lot was an old Indian burial ground?

SWANSON

Yes, she actually just published an article in the Hoffstead Journal of Archeology. It's not exactly the New York Times, but people have started paying attention to her.

(MORE)

SWANSON (CONT'D)

Especially among the Native American community, which can always get sympathy votes.

EZ

If she continues to make noise like this, posting on social media, talking to the press, this will be a problem. It must stop now.

Swanson nods in understanding.

SWANSON

(to Chris)

Ms. Harrelson, do you think you'd be able to speak with Dr. McShane? Present our side of the story to her? This is a lot of extra noise at a crucial time for our campaign.

Chris looks stunned.

CHRIS

I...I'll do whatever you need, but why me?

Swanson leans back in his chair.

SWANSON

I just know how well you get along with folks here. How persuasive you are when you go door to door. I just see this as a...next step.

CHRIS

Whatever you need, sir.

SWANSON

Great! You can tell her that if she just lays low until after the campaign, she'll get a week to excavate to her heart's content after I'm elected. Just to make sure there's nothing there.

CHRIS

And if there is, we'll be sure to let her know.

EZ

There will not be by the time she starts digging.

Chris shifts uneasily.

SWANSON

Christina, you've been such an asset for the campaign. For our mission.

CHRIS

Thank you, sir.

He pauses as he searches for the right words.

SWANSON

I've already spoken with some experts. They find arrowheads and and things like that all the time, it's not worth worrying Dr. McShane about. And more importantly, our opposition would use any small finding as an excuse to halt construction while they plot some other way to take the land. To stand in the way of our people's progress.

He points to the model of the community center. Chris looks defiant at the thought of it not being built, and nods slightly.

SWANSON (CONT'D)

And Dr. McShane will get what she wants, too. I'll be setting aside a lot in North Chase that she's been interested in excavating. We all win.

Still looking at the model, Chris nods more emphatically.

CHRIS

Okay, I'll speak with her.

Swanson beams.

SWANSON

Excellent!

(to EZ)

See, I told you she was a team player.

EZ nods. Swanson looks to his aide.

SWANSON (CONT'D)

Can you give Chris the details?

The aide nods and motions for Chris to follow her out the door.

SWANSON (CONT'D)

Thank you, Christina!

CHRIS

Of course.

Chris scratches her neck as she's ushered out.

EZ

That took some convincing.

SWANSON

(shakes his head)

She's a true believer, saving the ghetto one block at a time. It's amazing what you can get people to do out of a misplaced sense of duty. Are you good on your end?

EZ

I have the equipment ready, I just need the personnel. I do not trust any of the workers on that crew to treat this with the level of secrecy we need. They do not work for me in that way.

SWANSON

Don't worry about that. I've been speaking with a man in Kutcher's squad who isn't happy with the status quo over there. Looking to make a move. He'll handle that aspect of it.

EXT. MUSEUM - DAY

Chris pulls up in front of the small museum and gets out of her car. As she nears the front door, she sees a handwritten sign taped up: "CLOSED FOR MOLD".

Chris walks to the side of the museum and sees a few parked cars. Someone ducking into a back door catches her eye. She follows and enters

INT. MUSEUM/BACK ROOM - DAY

Dimly lit, filled with crates large and small. Various museum staples peak out of the dark--ancient masks, weapons, pottery. Chris is drawn to a light at the back.

Out of Chris' view, Nick stuffs an old dagger into his backpack with the help of a flashlight.

CHRIS (O.S.)

Hello?

Nick freezes, his eyes open wide. He zips up the backpack as quietly as possible, then steps out confidently to face Chris, aiming his flashlight at her eyes.

NICK

I'm sorry, ma'am, you can't be back here. Museum staff only.

Chris shows her badge. Nick tries to hide his panic.

CHRIS

Christina Harrelson, Wilmington PD.

She motions for him to lower the flashlight; he does.

NICK

Oh, I'm sorry. Is there something I can help you with, ma'am?

CHRIS

I thought this place was closed for mold.

NICK

It is to the public. Some staff are still here.

(raising the flashlight)

Maintenance. Seeing the extent of the damage.

CHRIS

The lights don't work?

NICK

Breaker went and broke last night. Reckon it has something to do with the water damage that caused this mold. Hell, I'm surprised this place has the money to keep the lights on even when they do work.

Chris looks him up and down one last time.

CHRIS

Yeah. Do you know a Dr. McShane?

NICK
Sure do. If she's here, she's
likely in her office. Just through
that door.

Nick points to the only other door besides the exit. Chris checks out the scene again, then nods.

CHRIS
Thanks.

NICK
No problem. You have a good one,
ma'am.

Chris exits through the door to the museum. Nick finally exhales, and hurries out the other exit.

INT. MUSEUM/HALLWAY - DAY

Chris finds a partially open door with McShane's name. She knocks.

INT. MUSEUM/DR. MCSHANE'S OFFICE - DAY

McShane looks up from her desk.

DR. MCSHANE
Yes?

Chris steps into the doorway to take in the office. The walls display a mediocre mind trying to project greatness--degrees from low level colleges, pictures at archeological digs with insignificant finds, clippings from minor newspapers.

CHRIS
Dr. McShane?

DR. MCSHANE
Yes, and you are?

Chris shows her badge.

CHRIS
Christina Harrelson, Wilmington PD.

McShane straightens up.

DR. MCSHANE
Oh...come in, have a seat.

CHRIS
Thank you, ma'am.

Chris does so.

DR. MCSHANE
Harrelson, you said?

CHRIS
Yes. Detective Harrelson.

DR. MCSHANE
You wouldn't happen to be related to the late Christopher Harrelson, would you? The officer they're honoring for being the first Black man in the police department here?

Chris smiles a little.

CHRIS
Yes, ma'am, I'm his granddaughter.

DR. MCSHANE
That is fascinating! Just an amazing achievement.
(shaking her head)
Just...what he must have gone through.

McShane reaches across the desk for Chris. Chris awkwardly lets her hold her hand.

DR. MCSHANE (CONT'D)
I'm sorry.

Chris forces the slightest frown, then nods.

CHRIS
Dr. McShane, you recently wrote that paper about the possible burial site in the Creekwood area.

DR. MCSHANE
Yes! The pottery shards those school children brought to me.
(puffing herself up)
I knew my paper had garnered some attention, but I had no idea this much.

CHRIS
Yes, well, I'm actually here on behalf of Councilman Swanson.

DR. MCSHANE

I love the work he's doing. So much good for your community.

Chris pauses a beat, then leans into it with a smile.

CHRIS

And that's exactly why I'm here. As you've probably heard, Mr. Swanson is looking to develop that area once he becomes mayor. Bring much needed services to a neighborhood, and a people, who have been ignored for so long.

DR. MCSHANE

That is truly wonderful. He has my vote.

CHRIS

And I know he appreciates that, ma'am.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

The only issue is that the community supermarket that Mr. Swanson is planning--the one that's going to feed those people currently living in a food desert--it's planned to go on the same lot where you want to start your archeological dig.

DR. MCSHANE

(alarmed)

Oh my goodness...

CHRIS

Fortunately, he thinks he has a way everyone can get what they want. Mr. Swanson is willing to green light a dig in the North Chase area you've been interested in. That area where rich developers want to build a planned neighborhood.

DR. MCSHANE

I heard about that. Horrible.

CHRIS

We just need to be able to move forward with breaking ground on the supermarket.

Dr. McShane leans forward, trying to take it all in.

DR. MCSHANE
But...the burial site.

CHRIS
Mr. Swanson is also willing to subsidize a preliminary dig at the Creekwood lot to see if there is, in fact, more to find. We just need the noise around this to die down for the time being.

DR. MCSHANE
I don't know...You have to understand this project is very personal for me.
(leans forward again)
I'm actually part Cherokee.

Chris feigns being impressed. McShane sits back, satisfied.

CHRIS
Dr. McShane, I can tell you want to do right by people. That's what we want, too. This way, you'll have your dig, the condo development is stopped, and we can quickly see if there's more to the Creekwood site.

DR. MCSHANE
And if there is?

CHRIS
You can dig all you want. And we'll still give you the North Chase excavation.

Dr. McShane sits back, not used to big decisions.

DR. MCSHANE
When do I have to tell you by?

CHRIS
Mr. Swanson would appreciate an answer now. So he can focus on his campaign.

McShane hesitates a beat.

DR. MCSHANE
You know what? I'm in. It'll teach those fat cat developers a lesson.

Chris smiles.

CHRIS
That's great! Mr. Swanson will be
so pleased.

Chris leans forward and touches McShane's hand.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
You're doing the right thing.

McShane's self-satisfaction knows no bounds.

EXT. MUSEUM - DAY

Chris has a proud look on her face as she exits the building.
She makes a call. Swanson picks up.

SWANSON (V.O.)
Christina! Tell me good news.

CHRIS
She agreed to it.

SWANSON (V.O.)
Excellent! I knew you were the
right person for this. You've done
a great thing here today.

Chris beams.

CHRIS
Thank you, sir.

SWANSON (V.O.)
Now we can move forward with
ensuring that lot can be used for
the people of Creekwood. And as
part of moving forward, there's
actually something else I'd like
for you to do for me tonight, if
you're available.

CHRIS
Tonight, sir?

Her hand floats to her neck to start scratching.

SWANSON (V.O.)

Unfortunately, yes. I hate asking you to work so late, but this is an important job, and you're proving to be one of my most important people.

Chris hesitates a beat, then responds.

CHRIS

Of course, whatever you need.

When Chris takes her hand from her neck, a little blood is on her nails.

INT. PAWN SHOP/FRONT ROOM - DAY

Nick enters the pawn shop, passing a wall of firearms to get to the back.

RUSTY (60)--looks like an old soldier with short hair, cammo pants tucked into boots--inspects a dissected handgun through reading glasses. He looks up to see Nick. Nick nods.

NICK

Rusty.

Without a word, Rusty scoops up the handgun parts and ushers Nick into the back office.

INT. PAWN SHOP/OFFICE - DAY

A desk is somewhere under mounds of clutter. CCTV screens show the store, empty except for one other employee.

Rusty clears a place for Nick to set his bag. Nick lays out what he's stolen: an African dagger, and an Egyptian container. Rusty inspects.

RUSTY

These are authentic?

NICK

Straight from the museum. Yep, I reckon I've been wasting time in those cemeteries. Aiming too low. And then when I heard they've got mold in there? I knew it was my chance.

Rusty lets out a pensive growl as he turns the container.

NICK (CONT'D)

Oh, that little piece that's missing? Hold on.

Nick digs through his pack and retrieves the piece.

NICK (CONT'D)

There you go. Just glue that right back on. Like it never happened.

Rusty shoots him a look, but takes the piece. He sets both down and examines the dagger.

RUSTY

You get dates and places of origin on these?

NICK

What? No. I didn't know to do that. Your buyers you got lined up don't know that stuff?

RUSTY

I don't have anyone lined up yet. But I will. And yeah, they should know. Still, it makes it easier if I have that information when I reach out to them.

NICK

(nodding at artifacts)

Well, they're old as Methuselah, I'll to you that much. They had all sorts of ancient looking stuff. From all over the world, too. It was like a...

Nick searches for the word. Rusty doesn't look up.

RUSTY

Like a museum.

NICK

Well...yeah.

Rusty finally looks up and takes off his glasses.

RUSTY

Alright, I'll handle it for you. I've got a guy in Charlotte who'll be interested in this.

(taps container)

(MORE)

RUSTY (CONT'D)

I don't know about the dagger. But I'll make some calls.

NICK

Hell yeah.

RUSTY

I'll let you know when we're set. If all works out, I'll have funds wired to me in a couple days.

Nick shakes his head.

NICK

Man, I told you, I've got to get out of town now!

RUSTY

If you're so desperate, then just leave.

NICK

I don't think I can go down to Mexico for free.

RUSTY

Mexico? What the hell you going there for? You best not be coming in here with the law on your ass.

NICK

(shaking head)

I've got to spread my friends' ashes. Or at least some of them, or what I think are his...whatever. I just need to get down there.

RUSTY

Well, ain't no advances in this line of work.

NICK

(to himself)

Jesus, Lord, help me.

(to Rusty)

Alright. But call me as soon as you find something out, okay.

Rusty looks at him skeptically.

RUSTY

You sure you don't got the law on your ass?

NICK

It ain't the law, Rusty. It's the devil.

EXT. PORT OF WILMINGTON - DAY

Odin gets out of a beat up '90s Ford Ranger. Dock workers scurry among the cargo containers and cranes. He walks to a small office building.

EZ's bodyguard sits on a foldout chair. He stands and opens the door for him.

INT. PORT OFFICE - DAY

Odin enters. The bodyguard follows, then frisks him. EZ sits behind the desk.

EZ

Mr. Odin, please come in.

EZ lifts a decanter of liquor off his desk and pours two glasses. The bodyguard looms over Odin.

EZ (CONT'D)

I know you people here do not drink much Scotch, but you have to try this. You cannot find it in your ABC stores. Forty year old single malt from a tiny distillery in the Highlands.

He pushes a glass to Odin.

ODIN

Thank you, sir.

Odin sniffs it, then lifts the glass in a cheers and has a sip. EZ smiles at him.

ODIN (CONT'D)

That'll do the trick.

EZ chuckles.

EZ

Best whiskey you will ever have. I cannot drink anything distilled before 1990. People used to respect the process, take pride in their work. Now, everything is mass produced.

(MORE)

EZ (CONT'D)

The man who owned this, his children sold the distillery as soon as he died. Disgusting.

ODIN

But it does make this even more valuable.

EZ bounces his head off his shoulders.

EZ

Valuable...expensive...But let us talk about the Creekwood lot. I can have the equipment dropped off within the hour.

ODIN

Works for me. I've got a guy who can clear it out, ready to go. The Swan's boys are watching the place. We're good on all that. But there is the situation with my current employer.

EZ smiles.

EZ

I am a man of my word. Do not worry. If this works out, you will be a very powerful man soon.

EZ lifts his glass in a cheers and they drink. Odin sees an ovular black rock on the desk. EZ notices him eyeing it.

EZ (CONT'D)

Tourmaline, from India.

ODIN

May I?

EZ motions for him to pick it up. Odin examines it.

EZ

It is usually very jagged, but I found this myself in a river. It must have been there for thousands of years, the water eating at it.

Odin rubs a finger over it and nods.

EZ (CONT'D)

Have it, please. It is good luck.

ODIN
Is that right?

EZ shrugs like he just made it up and he doesn't know.

EZ
Well, you just got a free rock, so
it must be.

Odin grins and slips it in his pocket.

EXT. PORT OF WILMINGTON - DAY

Odin walks out the door of the office. The bodyguard follows him and sits back down in his chair.

As Odin drives off, BJ watches him from behind a container. He makes a call.

INT. PAINTED PHEASANT - DAY

Kutcher is finishing the phone call. Sheila sits next to him.

KUTCHER
Alright, keep an eye on him.

He hangs up. Sheila leans in.

SHEILA
So was I right?

KUTCHER
Maybe.

SHEILA
What do you mean, 'maybe'? I heard
that whole goddamn call. I told
you, I can read people. It's my
gift.

KUTCHER
For me to believe Odin's a traitor,
it takes a lot more than your
'gift'. And those fucking retards
BJ and Dumpling are useless as tits
on a boar hog. I ain't killing
someone because of their
interpretation of something they
saw. I need real evidence.

SHEILA
(under her breath)
What you need is to stop being a
pussy.

KUTCHER
What the fuck did you say?!

SHEILA
I didn't say nothing.

Sheila goes back to sipping her drink. Kutcher stares forward in thought.

INT. CHRIS' APARTMENT - DAY

Chris walks through her well-ordered studio apartment. Her hand gravitates to her neck to scratch.

She feeds her fish, noticing one goldfish has been mostly eaten. She gets upset at a larger fish.

CHRIS
Jesse James, did you eat Goldie
Hawn?

She scoops the remains of Goldie out and flushes them down the toilet. There's a knock on her door.

She approaches the door with a concerned look, gun still on her hip from work. Another knock.

She cautiously looks through the peephole to find Tory's eye pressed against it on the other side.

TORY
Let me in!

Chris smiles and opens the door.

CHRIS
What are you doing here?

Tory enters with a pizza box and a magnum bottle of wine.

TORY
I can't bring an early supper to my
girlfriend?

Chris embraces her, almost knocking her over. They kiss.

TORY (CONT'D)
Whoa!

CHRIS

Sorry, I just really needed to see you. Here, let me clean off the table.

Chris turns and Tory sees her neck.

TORY

Honeybug, your neck.

CHRIS

Oh, I'm fine.

TORY

You put a bandaid on that while I get this ready for us.

(jokingly)

I can't be looking at that while I eat.

CHRIS

Fine, I'll be right back.

LATER

The pizza is half gone, as is the wine. They're laughing. Chris grabs the wine bottle to refill her glass.

TORY

Damn. Hard day at work?

Chris looks at her with wide eyes, grinning.

CHRIS

Excuse me?

TORY

(putting her hands up)

Hey, I'm not complaining. I'm usually the one finishing off the bottle.

CHRIS

Well not tonight.

Chris pours her glass.

TORY

Does this have to do with that girls' night at your mama's house?

CHRIS
(sarcastically)
It's always great to see Nailah again. Hear excuses about why her sauced up husband had to find another job.

TORY
(shaking head)
Jesus.

CHRIS
But she can do no wrong in my mom's eyes. And Thomas is a damn saint.

Tory eyes the piece of crust on her plate.

TORY
Did they ask about your love life at all?

Chris eyes her wine glass and nods her head slowly.

CHRIS
As usual. Asking if I'm seeing anyone serious. Nailah talking about how I can't hold a relationship since I ran off down to Charleston with DeShaun after college.

TORY
Denise. You ran off with your girlfriend Denise to Charleston after college.

CHRIS
Well, obviously, but you know I can't just tell them--

TORY
The truth? No, you can't. You'd rather let them tell you who you are.

Chris flinches like she's been slapped.

CHRIS
What? What do you mean by that?

TORY

I mean you can't admit you ran home scared and hurt after Charleston, and jumped headfirst into this life you think you're supposed to have, thinking that will make everything better. This is the same as I've said before.

CHRIS

You don't know what it's like with my family. The pressure.

Tory leans forward and extends her hand.

TORY

Honeybug, you're a force to be reckoned with. But this life you've fallen into, trying to live up to your family name or whatever, it's not you. And I see it eating you up.

Tory nods to the bandaid. They sit in silence a beat.

TORY (CONT'D)

It's just...I love you so much. And I want you to be happy and it kills me to see you hiding who you really are from the world.

Another beat of silence.

TORY (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. I should head out. I've probably overstayed my welcome.

CHRIS

Wait.

She reaches out and grabs her girlfriend's hand.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Wait, please. I don't want you to go. And I know I'm being defensive, I've just had a hard day. Not just the Nailah and mom stuff. Stuff at work. On the campaign. I'm just...off right now.

The two take each other's hand.

TORY

What's going on at the campaign?

CHRIS
Nothing, probably. I don't know.

TORY
What? You know you can talk to me.
About anything.

Chris takes a drink.

CHRIS
It's nothing. I'm just...I guess
I'm just seeing more of how
politics actually works. How 'one
hand washes the other', or
whatever. It's fine.

TORY
(leaning in)
Is Swanson involved in something
shady? If so, you've just got to
watch--

CHRIS
No, nothing like that. Nothing *bad*.
Just politics stuff.

Chris shrugs it off.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
I'm just saying, I'm a little off
tonight, and I have to go back out
later for work. I'm just all over
the place.

TORY
Well that's what I'm here for. You
can tell me, get it out of your
head. I can take it, I'm tough.

CHRIS
I know you are.

Chris leans in and they kiss.

INT. NICK'S TRUCK - NIGHT

Nick lies on his makeshift bed, staring at the roof of the
camper. His phone beeps with a text from Rusty--"Good on
both. \$\$\$ in two days"

Nick closes his eyes and exhales deeply. He opens them and
reaches under a pile of junk to retrieve a bag of ashes.

NICK

I'm going to get y'all home. I swear. Then start a new life away from all this.

A hand slaps the window. He hides the ashes and gets up.

INT. CHRIS' APARTMENT - NIGHT

Chris puts her shoes on at the edge of the bed while Tory lies next to her, under the sheets.

TORY

Just have your way with me and leave, huh?

CHRIS

That doesn't even make sense. This is my apartment.

TORY

So you're saying I earned the right to stay the night?

Chris finishes tying her shoe, then turns back to Tory.

CHRIS

You most certainly did.

They kiss.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

But don't stay up for me. I don't know how long I'll be.

TORY

Where are you going again at this hour?

CHRIS

Councilman Swanson wants me to check out the Creekwood lot.

TORY

(under her breath)
Doing work for The Swan after dark.
(to Chris)
You know you can tell me what you're actually doing. Or are you trying to give me...what's that legal term?

CHRIS

I think you're referring to
plausible deniability.

TORY

There we go, Miss Pre-Law.

CHRIS

And it's not like that. And don't
call him The Swan.

TORY

That's what they call him on the
streets.

Chris smirks.

CHRIS

The streets, huh? You spending a
lot of time on the streets now?
Seeing what's hot?

TORY

Maybe.

Tory pulls her down again.

TORY (CONT'D)

But seriously. Be safe. And like I
told you earlier, you share
anything you want with me, alright?

Chris nods and they kiss again.

INT. CHRIS' CAR - NIGHT

Chris drives through Creekwood--groups of young people hang
out in front of houses and on the street. A group of older
people talk on a front porch. She drives to the lot.

EXT. CREEKWOOD LOT - NIGHT

A backhoe rips into the ground, Nick at the controls. On the
perimeter of the lot, Black gangsters sit in a couple cars on
the street. The WATCHER--a Black man in his mid-20s dressed
like a thug--stands against a tree.

Chris pulls up and gets out of her car to walk to the
backhoe. She's catcalled by the men in the closest car. The
Watcher approaches and nods at her.

CHRIS
Swanson wanted me to come check on
the digging.

WATCHER
So you're her.

He looks her up and down.

CHRIS
(aggressively)
You like what you see?

Chris pulls her jacket to the side to show the badge on her
hip. The Watcher smirks, then motions to the backhoe.

WATCHER
He's been at it now since sundown.

CHRIS
No one from the neighborhood has
asked what's going on?

The Watcher chuckles.

WATCHER
He said you grew up around here,
but I guess you ain't been back in
a while.

Chris just stares at him.

WATCHER (CONT'D)
If The Swan tells folks in
Creekwood to keep quiet, they shut
the fuck up.

CHRIS
I guess I would too if I were about
to get a supermarket and a
community center.

The Watcher shrugs and starts walking back to the tree. Chris
scratches at her bandaid.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
Hey.

He turns. Chris motions with her head to the backhoe.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
How do we know the worker won't
talk?

WATCHER

That dude out there is sleeping in his truck. We order food for him. He shits in the woods. He ain't going nowhere. That fucked up looking white boy has him under his thumb.

Chris makes a questioning face.

WATCHER (CONT'D)

'Odin' or some shit. You can go see for yourself.

Chris scratches and watches the backhoe eat the earth.

She walks to the machine, positioned so she can't see Nick's face, and finds a growing pile of dirt. She sifts through it to find shards of bottles, things that could be artifacts or just older trash, and finally a bone.

A Zippo flicks.

Chris looks to the nearby trees to see the illuminated face of Odin lighting a cigarette. He's not wearing an eye patch; the light dancing off his hollow socket and thin, scarred face makes him look ghoulish.

Chris jumps a little, then tries to compose herself.

CHRIS

You Odin?

Odin nods at her.

ODIN

Pig.

CHRIS

What?

Odin casually takes a puff, then points at the bone.

ODIN

It's from a pig.

He walks to the bone and squats. He runs his hand holding the cigarette an inch above it.

ODIN (CONT'D)

Knife marks from where someone was sawing on it to get the meat off.

Chris takes a step towards it to inspect, then nods slightly.

CHRIS
Y'all find anything real yet?

ODIN
Well, there are those.

Odin, still squatting, points to small pile of bones and skulls in various states of wholeness.

CHRIS
Shit. So Dr. McShane was right.

ODIN
It appears so. The Swan said to separate them out. Reckon he aims to sprinkle them around that North Chase property he's dangling in front of her.

Chris starts scratching harder. The bandaid comes off.

ODIN (CONT'D)
You alright?

CHRIS
Sure, I'm fine.

ODIN
Alright. Just watch out or you'll end up like me.

Chris looks at him quizzically. Odin touches a finger to his scarred face.

Chris nods to Nick, his face still not visible due to the angle and light.

CHRIS
Do we need to worry about him?

Odin reaches into his pocket to retrieve the rolled up strip of Nick's flayed skin, unrecognizable to Chris, and grins.

ODIN
You never know. But they say ninety percent of what you worry about will never come true, anyway.

He stands. While only average in height, he still looks down on Chris with his mangled face. He takes a puff from his cigarette, exhales.

ODIN (CONT'D)

Does your Dr. McShane fall in that other ten percent?

CHRIS

No, we've worked out a fair deal with her. Everyone wins.

Odin grins and nods very slightly while still looking at her.

ODIN

How'd someone like you get involved in this?

CHRIS

What do you mean, 'in this'? I work for Councilman Swanson, and he's been fighting to make this neighborhood better for the last fifteen years.

Odin looks around--gangsters in cars, a couple homeless, dilapidated buildings.

ODIN

So...any day now, then?

Chris stares at him a beat, then turns to leave.

ODIN (CONT'D)

Nice meeting you, ma'am.

She doesn't acknowledge him. He takes another puff and keeps watching.

Chris walks through the field. She sees now The Watcher is carrying a gun tucked into the back of his pants. The men in the car catcall her again, this time more rudely.

Her phone beeps. She pulls it from her pocket to see a number she doesn't recognize, and a text "Just in case."

She furrows her brow, then looks behind her to see Odin in the distance, casually waving his phone. She pockets her phone, quickly gets into her car, and drives off.

INT. CHRIS' APARTMENT - DAY

Chris lies awake, staring at the ceiling. Tory sleeps soundly at her side. Chris' phone beeps with a text. She quickly grabs it--Nailah: "Mom wants us to meet at her place before the ceremony rehearsal. Try to make it."

She gets up, wipes her face with her hands, then walks to the fishbowl. Another mostly eaten goldfish corpse floats in the water.

CHRIS
Golda Meir?

She scoops out the fish as she admonishes its killer.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
(in a loud whisper)
Jesse James, you're not supposed to
be doing this! What's wrong with
you?

She walks quietly to the bathroom to put the fish in the toilet. When she steps out, Tory is awake, rubbing her eyes.

TORY
You're not even going to flush?
That's nasty.

Chris raises the fishbowl scooper.

CHRIS
It was a fish. I didn't want to
wake you.

TORY
Too late for that. You were tossing
and turning all night. Hell, I woke
up once checking for bed bugs.

CHRIS
Sorry about that.

Chris returns the scooper.

TORY
Did something happen last night?

Chris hesitates a beat, then shakes her head.

CHRIS
No, not really.

Tory sits up in bed, frustrated.

TORY
(patting the bed)
Come over here.

CHRIS
What?

TORY

Come on.

Chris reluctantly does as she's told.

Tory lifts her arm to show her ribs. They look like a child molded them out of clay.

TORY (CONT'D)

You remember what I told you about this?

CHRIS

Of course. When you were younger, a horse kicked you in the ribs. Back on the farm you grew up on.

TORY

That's right. Except I didn't grow up on no farm. And I sure as hell never owned a damned horse.

CHRIS

But what about all the—

TORY

I got married at sixteen. His name was Mike.

CHRIS

WHAT?! How could--

TORY

Don't start on that. It's been a year and you still haven't told your family about me. Besides, no one here knows about it. I left that behind me.

Chris shuts her mouth.

TORY (CONT'D)

Anyway, Mike was a real son of a bitch. Used to beat the shit out of me every time he got drunk, and that motherfucker was rarely sober.

CHRIS

Oh my God, Tory...

TORY

But I'll say this for him, he was smart in his own way. Never touched my face.

(MORE)

TORY (CONT'D)

Never hit me anywhere folks might notice. He loved to hold me against the wall so I couldn't breathe. His big ass hand pushing on me. It's like I could feel my skeleton starting to give in or something. Anyway, one time he was doing that and I slapped him, and he took his other hand and turned these ribs into jelly.

CHRIS

Jesus Christ.

TORY

He told me if I went to the hospital, he'd kill me. So instead, I went to a pawn shop and bought a .357.

Tory leans in.

TORY (CONT'D)

Mike never hit me, or anyone else, ever again.

Chris stares at her like she's thinking. She leans back, away from Tory.

TORY (CONT'D)

Now you do with that story what you will, Miss Detective. But the purpose of me telling it is so you know you can unburden yourself to me. About anything.

(touches her hand)

I'm in this with you. No matter what.

Chris looks down, inhales deeply, exhales and nods slightly as she looks back up. She opens her mouth to begin talking.

EXT. THE PAINTED PHEASANT - DAY

Odin walks through the full parking lot, the front of which is blocked off for a giant grill covered in wet, full burlap sacks, and tables for people with oyster shuckers. The crowd includes the shadier lot, along with families with kids.

A man carries over a sack and empties it on one of the tables and the crowd descends like vultures.

Odin walks past an OLD MAN frying up long balls of corn meal. He empties out a batch on paper towels.

OLD MAN
Hush puppy, Odin?

Odin grins politely.

ODIN
No, but thank you, sir.

Odin enters

INT. THE PAINTED PHEASANT - DAY

Odin sits at the bar. The attractive female bartender JESSE (20), quickly comes over.

JESSE
Hey, there!

ODIN
Hey, Jesse. Can I just get a water?

JESSE
Sure thing.

She speaks while getting his water.

JESSE (CONT'D)
No plate? What proper local boy doesn't like an oyster roast?

Odin grins.

ODIN
I'm just waiting until the other folks get their fill. I know better than to get between a hungry crowd and a mess of oysters.

JESSE
Probably smart. I just figured since you were a cook in the Marines and all, you might think you know how to do it better.

ODIN
I wasn't exactly pushing culinary limits while I was in. And those boys seem to know what they're doing.

JESSE

Hell yeah, they do! That's my uncle and his buddy on that grill. They also make the best chopped pork you'll eat this side of Raleigh. And that means it's the best there is, period.

ODIN

I'll make sure to try it.

Jesse looks up and freezes, then looks to Odin.

JESSE

Looks like Kutch wants to speak at you.

Odin doesn't follow her eyes, but casually throws down a twenty dollar bill on the bar.

JESSE (CONT'D)

Oh, you don't need to--

ODIN

A tip.

JESSE

(smiling sweetly)
Thank you.

Odin gets up and walks through the crowd to the back corner table with the Dale Earnhardt flag behind it.

Kutcher is holding court, the table laughs. He has his arm around Sheila. When he sees Odin approaching, he ushers him over. Odin stands in front of him in an 'at ease' position.

KUTCHER

Now this is what I'm talking about.
A proper Marine!

Odin grins politely.

KUTCHER (CONT'D)

(to Odin)

I was telling these folks about my time in the Corps during Desert Storm.

Odin nods.

KUTCHER (CONT'D)

But see, old Lyle over here,

Kutcher points to LYLE (45).

KUTCHER (CONT'D)
He was a zoomie.

LYLE
Better than being a crayon-eating
jarhead.

KUTCHER
Ohh!

The table laughs. Odin smiles.

KUTCHER (CONT'D)
Shit, we need more jarheads here.
Proper discipline, like this one.
(motions to Odin)
Only problem with him is...

Kutcher pauses a beat and stares at Odin.

KUTCHER (CONT'D)
He's a Richard Petty man.

The table loudly expresses their discontent, except for Sheila.

SHEILA
Hold on, now, what's wrong with
Richard Petty?

The table turns on her.

LYLE
Goddamn, you serious, Sheila?

SHEILA
What? He's a good Carolina boy,
just like Dale.
(looks to Odin)
You tell them.

ODIN
Petty was 'The King'.

The drunken table objects. Kutcher twists to point at the flag behind him.

KUTCHER
Don't you put down 'The
Intimidator' now! Dale would mess
someone up! And he has a legacy.
(MORE)

KUTCHER (CONT'D)

The family name. Petty was just one man.

ODIN

He did have a good hat, though.

Kutcher looks at him a beat, then busts out laughing. The others follow his lead.

KUTCHER

Talking about his goddamn hat.
Shit.

Kutcher takes a drink, then motions people out of the way so he can slide out.

KUTCHER (CONT'D)

Alright, y'all keep enjoying my gracious hospitality.

Kutcher rises and leads Odin back to the bar. A couple thugs see him near. They nod and vacate the seats at the end of the bar so the two are as alone in the packed place as possible.

Jesse stops what she's doing mid-refill to attend to Kutcher. He turns to Odin as they sit.

KUTCHER (CONT'D)

I've been drinking gin and tonics all morning. Need to keep my wits about me.

(to Jesse)

Two G&T's.

JESSE

Coming right up.

Kutcher straightens the sunglasses hanging around his neck, not looking at Odin as he speaks.

KUTCHER

It's good to have folks from the area here for things like this. Give back. But that's just me. I grew up a couple miles up yonder.
(points)

Went from picking tobacco to this.
(motions around the bar)

But I'm still loyal to my people.

Silence for a beat. Odin nods.

KUTCHER (CONT'D)

Loyalty is an important trait. The most important, if you ask me. Semper Fidelis.

ODIN

Semper Fidelis.

They get their drinks.

KUTCHER

Cheers.

They drink. Silence another beat.

KUTCHER (CONT'D)

I know you were gone for a while. But I reckon you know what they started calling me while you were over there.

ODIN

Kutcher the Butcher.

Kutcher laughs.

KUTCHER

You know how I got that name?

ODIN

I can take a wild guess.

KUTCHER

I don't know about that. It's actually because I'm the best goddamn deer hunter in Southeastern North Carolina.

He takes a drink and then looks directly at Odin.

KUTCHER (CONT'D)

That, and the fact I killed at least a dozen men to get, and keep, that seat at that table back there.

He looks at the table. Odin nods.

KUTCHER (CONT'D)

A lot of those men I killed probably didn't deserve it, to be honest with you. But some did. Those who weren't loyal.

Another drink in silence.

KUTCHER (CONT'D)

A couple friends of mine, dock workers, said they saw you down at the port.

ODIN

Just checking in on our various business ventures.

Kutcher laughs.

KUTCHER

I always liked how you talk.
'Various business ventures'.

ODIN

Yes, sir. I showed up here to tell you I stopped by to see EZ Patel, see what his plans are in case Clemmons loses. Reckoned he might be amenable to delaying work on that Creekwood project while we think of another way to get that stadium built.

Kutcher takes another drink and nods. He waits a beat, then looks at Odin.

KUTCHER

And?

ODIN

I think with the right motivation, he could be persuaded.

Kutcher looks forward again and nods slowly.

KUTCHER

Taking the initiative.

ODIN

Doing what I can, sir.

KUTCHER

Well, next time you set foot in that dot head's office without me knowing about it first, you lose that foot.

(looks at Odin menacingly)
You hear me, boy?

ODIN

Of course, sir. I apologize.

Kutcher smiles.

KUTCHER

No need for all that! It's a party!
Enjoy yourself, get some oysters.
You know that's Jesse's uncle on
the grill?

ODIN

I've heard that, sir.

KUTCHER

Smokes a mean hog, I'll tell you
what.

Kutcher gets up.

KUTCHER (CONT'D)

Well go on, boy, grab some oysters!

ODIN

Yes, sir.

Odin takes his drink and exits as Kutcher watches.

INT. POLICE STATION/MAIN ROOM - DAY

Chris sits at her desk, typing. Her phone beeps with a text--
Tory: "Just saying hi to my honey bug. Give me a call
whenever you can. I love you."

Chris smiles. She's about to write back when another text
comes through--Odin [unlabeled]: "Call me at 910-487-2231."
[Different number than where the text came from.] Her smile
vanishes, but she seems secretly thrilled.

She gets up and walks to

INT. POLICE STATION/OFFICE - DAY

A small unoccupied office with a phone. She calls the number.
The line connects but it's silent.

CHRIS

Hello?

ODIN (V.O.)

Just checking on my new best
friend. Things alright down at the
station today?

Chris looks around.

CHRIS
What do you want?

ODIN (V.O.)
We're good on this line?

CHRIS
Yeah.

ODIN (V.O.)
I just had an interesting conversation that makes me wonder if things are as tight in The Swan's camp as he thinks.

CHRIS
I...what do you mean?

ODIN (V.O.)
To be very clear, I'm asking if there's a leak in his office. Someone giving out information about him or those associated with him, such as myself, or you, and our dealings.

A police officer walks by outside the office. Chris leans back like she's on a casual personal call.

CHRIS
What? Why would there be a leak?

ODIN (V.O.)
You might be surprised to hear this, but not everyone is as upstanding a citizen as yourself. And the conversation I just had makes me wonder if someone is being paid to report our plans to your opposition.

CHRIS
Opposition? You mean Clemmons?

ODIN (V.O.)
And his associates. Who all has been in these conversations you've had with The Swan? When y'all talk about preparing the lot, getting rid of all those old bones and arrowheads.

CHRIS

There was an Indian guy, EZ Patel.
And he had some other big Indian
guy with him.

ODIN (V.O.)

Anyone else?

CHRIS

Swanson's aides are always around,
but they'd never do anything like
that.

ODIN (V.O.)

Send me their names.

CHRIS

What?!

ODIN (V.O.)

Calm down, I just want to check on
them. If you don't send me the
names, I'll find out some other
way.

CHRIS

Alright, alright.

(pauses a beat)

Let me know if you find out
anything.

Silence for a beat. Then Odin's low laughter.

ODIN (V.O.)

There we go.

CHRIS

I'm hanging up now.

ODIN (V.O.)

You do that. But keep your eyes
open. You never know how things can
go sideways until they do.

He hangs up. Chris holds the phone for a second, then hangs
up. She looks both ways before exiting the office.

INT. DR. MCSHANE'S CAR - DAY

An inexpensive sedan with clutter on the seats and in the
back. A dream catcher hangs from the rearview mirror. McShane
gets in and slams the door behind her. She's on the phone.

DR. MCSHANE

Yes, I understand. But I shouldn't have to sign for that personally.

(pauses)

Yes, I--it doesn't matter, I'm driving there now. I'll be there in ten minutes.

She starts the car. Very sexually explicit rap music comes on. She pulls out of her driveway and onto the road, rapping along under breath.

EXT. WILMINGTON STREET - DAY

A procession of the United Confederate Daughters--fully clad in their all black dresses and veils--cross the street to the entrance of a cemetery.

INT. DR. MCSHANE'S CAR - DAY

McShane is now rapping along louder to the music. She hits the traffic caused by the UCD.

DR. MCSHANE

Come on. What is this?

She cranes her neck to see the procession.

DR. MCSHANE (CONT'D)

Oh my God, these people!

Finally sick of it, she rolls down her window to yell at them.

DR. MCSHANE (CONT'D)

You lost, get over it!

A woman stops and turns to look at her under the black veil, her face not visible. McShane rolls up the window.

DR. MCSHANE (CONT'D)

Screw this.

McShane turns down a side street to avoid the procession.

LATER

McShane drives through a bad neighborhood. An older Black couple sit on their porch, drinking ice tea. She makes sure her doors are locked.

DR. MCSHANE (CONT'D)
Where the hell am I?

She keeps driving and sees a sign over a storefront--
"CREEKWOOD LAUNDROMAT". Her eyebrows raise.

She continues driving through the poor neighborhood until she
sees an empty lot with a backhoe.

DR. MCSHANE (CONT'D)
What is this?

She parks the car and gets out.

EXT. CREEKWOOD LOT - DAY

The lot is still being patrolled by Swanson's men. A GANGSTER
gets out of his car. She stops dead in her tracks.

GANGSTER
Hey! You can't be here. No one can
be on this lot.

DR. MCSHANE
But...but this is--

GANGSTER
You hear what the fuck I said,
bitch?!

DR. MCSHANE
Yes, yes.

McShane scurries back to her car, almost hyperventilating.

INT. DR. MCSHANE'S CAR - DAY

She pulls up the street, out of sight of the gangsters, and
pulls over to try to regain her composure. The movement of
her dream catcher hanging over the rearview mirror catches
her eye. She steels herself, and nods. She looks up and down
the street, then exits the car.

EXT. CREEKWOOD LOT - DAY

McShane closes her door quietly and creeps towards the trees
at the back of the lot.

She daintily makes her way through the trees to come upon a
large freshly dug area with the backhoe looming over it.

She sees The Watcher--looking away from the field, towards the street.

She takes a hesitant step towards the large hole.

NICK

Ma'am?

McShane jumps out of her skin. She puts up her hands like she's shielding herself from an attacker. When she sees Nick, her guard relaxes.

NICK (CONT'D)

Is there something I can help you with, ma'am?

McShane straightens up, trying to project authority.

DR. MCSHANE

Yes, actually. I'm Dr. McShane.

She waits for acknowledgement. Nick stares at her.

DR. MCSHANE (CONT'D)

The archeologist overseeing this project.

Nick's eyes open wide at the fanciness of the statement.

NICK

I don't know nothing about no archeologist project. I just do what they tell me to.

McShane looks around.

DR. MCSHANE

Who are 'they'? And what are they telling you to do?

Nick's breathing quickens, he looks at the ground.

NICK

I...well, it's...

McShane spies Odin's pile of bones.

DR. MCSHANE

What is this?

Nick tries to stop her from inspecting them.

NICK
I don't think you should be looking
at those, ma'am.

McShane stays on her warpath.

DR. MCSHANE
I told you, I'm the lead
archeologist.

NICK
And the project. I know, ma'am, but
you can't just do that. If he finds
out...

She turns to him.

DR. MCSHANE
He?

Nick turns white.

DR. MCSHANE (CONT'D)
Swanson. So he knew there would be
findings here.

Nick furrows his brow. She bends over to get a closer look at
the bones. She's entranced again.

DR. MCSHANE (CONT'D)
Unbelievable.

She holds out a bone to Nick.

DR. MCSHANE (CONT'D)
Here. Help me get these back to my
car. And be careful!

Nick puts his hands up and takes a step back.

NICK
Oh, no ma'am. I can't be doing
nothing like that. I'm actually
supposed to tell that guy over
there,
(pointing to Watcher)
If I see anybody. And I just do
what I'm told.

He takes a step in that direction. McShane stands.

DR. MCSHANE
What's your name?

Nick hesitates.

DR. MCSHANE (CONT'D)
(impatiently)
Your name.

NICK
Nick.

DR. MCSHANE
And what is it you do here, Nick?

NICK
I run the backhoe.

Her eyes widen.

DR. MCSHANE
Ohhhh. So you're responsible for
this.

NICK
For what?

DR. MCSHANE
Do you realize, Nick, that these
bones you've nearly destroyed are
archeological artifacts? The
remains of the first people to
inhabit this area.

Nick is frozen, eyes wide.

DR. MCSHANE (CONT'D)
These belong in a museum.

His eyes light up.

NICK
Oh...so you're like Indiana Jones!

DR. MCSHANE
(annoyed)
No, I'm...sure, I'm like Indiana
Jones.

NICK
So these are ancient skeletons you
need to put together? Probably find
some clues or something?

DR. MCSHANE
Yes.

NICK

Well, I'd love to help you, ma'am,
but he told me not to let anyone
touch these.

DR. MCSHANE

I understand Councilman Swanson is
just trying to do the best for his
people. But that's no excuse. You
can tell him the deal's off.

NICK

What deal?

DR. MCSHANE

(shaking head)

Nice try.

She takes out her phone.

DR. MCSHANE (CONT'D)

I know just who to speak with about
this. I can't believe she looked me
in the eye and lied to me.

She makes a call.

EXT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Chris stands next to the covered statue of her grandfather,
along with her family. They listen to a PLANNER.

PLANNER

And then after the mayor speaks,
we'll have this group--

Chris' phone rings and she looks at it.

CHRIS

(to the Planner)

I'm sorry, I have to take this.

Nailah rolls her eyes. She looks to her husband, THOMAS, next
to her.

NAILAH

Can you believe this?

PLANNER

It's no problem, we're pretty much
done here.

Chris walks away and answers.

CHRIS
Dr. McShane, how are you?

INTERCUT - PHONE CONVERSATION

DR. MCSHANE
I'm furious, that's how I am. You
lied to me.

Chris stops in her tracks. She looks around nervously.

CHRIS
I'm sorry, what do you think I lied
to you about?

DR. MCSHANE
I'm at the Creekwood lot that you
wanted me to stay away from so
badly. And I'm staring at a pile of
remains that have been mutilated by
a bulldozer.

Chris starts scratching furiously.

CHRIS
I see. Well, I promise you I'm as
shocked as you are there are
remains on the lot.

While staying on the line, Chris starts sending a text.

DR. MCSHANE
I'm sure you are. Well, the deal is
obviously off. I'm going to get
this whole area blocked off so we
can get a proper crew in here,
(shoots a look at Nick)
And make sure this is treated as an
archeological site.

Nick looks around nervously. He pokes his head around the
view of the backhoe and sees The Watcher looking at his
phone. The Watcher looks up and their eyes meet.

NICK
Oh shit.
(to Dr. McShane)
Ma'am, we need to go now.

DR. MCSHANE
(to Nick)
I'm on the phone.
(to Chris)
(MORE)

DR. MCSHANE (CONT'D)

And I'm going to make sure the media hears about this.

The Watcher starts walking towards McShane and Nick.

DR. MCSHANE (CONT'D)

As you know, I'm all for this neighborhood rising up from oppression, but not at the expense of the native people.

The Watcher is getting closer. Nick taps her shoulder gently.

NICK

Ma'am, you need to leave now.

DR. MCSHANE

(to Nick)

I'm not going anywhere.

(to Chris)

Someone has to tell their story.

The Watcher motions angrily for Nick to bring McShane to him. Nick hesitates.

NICK

(to McShane)

Ma'am, you've got to go. I can't be getting involved in all this. I just...

The Watcher pulls a pistol. McShane finally sees him nearing.

DR. MCSHANE

Oh my God!

END PHONE CONVERSATION

Nick runs a frustrated hand through his hair as he debates with himself.

NICK

Dammit!

Nick grabs McShane and practically carries her into the woods.

The Watcher is in pursuit. He takes a couple shots; tree bark explodes around Nick and McShane.

Nick runs with her to his truck, hidden in the trees.

NICK (CONT'D)

Get in!

Nick jumps in the driver's seat as a panicking McShane manages to climb in the passenger's side.

More shots; this time, the sound of bullets hitting metal. Nick starts the truck and floors it. The truck bounces violently across the field until it slams down onto the street.

The Watcher emerges from the trees and watches the truck fly around a corner, graze a parked car, and drive out of sight.

WATCHER

Shit!

INT. NICK'S TRUCK - DAY

DR. MCSHANE

(hyperventilating)

Oh my God! Oh my God!

NICK

Calm down, now. Just breathe.

DR. MCSHANE

What was--who was that? What just--

NICK

Just breathe, I have an idea of someplace we can go.

(under his breath)

That sick sonbitch thinks I'm stupid. Well, I ain't stupid. I can see what's going on.

DR. MCSHANE

What?

NICK

Nothing, don't worry.

DR. MCSHANE

I'm calling the police.

NICK

No! That ain't going to do no good. I've learned my lesson. We're going to go to some folks who can actually help. The same that pulled me into this.

EXT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Chris sits on a bench, staring at the ground and tapping the phone against her hand. Swanson approaches. She stands.

SWANSON
You're fine, sit down.

They both sit on the bench.

CHRIS
Sir, I--

SWANSON
I got a call from Creekwood, sounds like things aren't going as planned.

CHRIS
I just heard. I'm going to--

An ELDERLY MAN and his wife pass and Swanson puts on his politician's smile.

ELDERLY MAN
You've got our vote, Councilman!

SWANSON
Thank you, sir! I appreciate that.

The old couple pass. Swanson turns back to Chris, the smile dissolved from his face.

CHRIS
I was saying--

SWANSON
Interesting timing for all this, isn't it?

CHRIS
What?

SWANSON
Here you are, fucking with my business at the same time your family is here to honor your grandfather. The spotless Christopher Harrelson.

Swanson scoffs. Chris looks scared and confused.

SWANSON (CONT'D)

If you're having some crisis of conscience, sitting here next to his statue, don't ponder on that too long.

(nods to statue)

That man had his hands in all sorts of shit in this town. You think that pretty house you grew up in was free?

Chris stares at him.

SWANSON (CONT'D)

Shit, he even got me into the game as a youngin.

CHRIS

I don't--

SWANSON

But I rose above all that. Even got his granddaughter working for me. And now I'm about to be mayor. If she doesn't fuck it up.

He turns to look at her. She's speechless.

SWANSON (CONT'D)

Fix this shit.

She opens her mouth but no words come out.

SWANSON (CONT'D)

Now.

Chris jumps up.

CHRIS

Yes, sir. I'm sorry, I...I'll fix it.

She hurries away. Swanson stays seated. Another person passes; his smile reappears.

EXT. FUNERAL HOME - DAY

Nick's truck pulls up and he jumps out, a confused McShane following him.

DR. MCSHANE

What are we doing at a funeral home?

NICK

You got caught up in something bigger than you realize. And so did I. But if you stick with me, I'll keep you safe, alright? Ain't no right way out of this, but I can keep you safe. Just an innocent person in all this.

He opens the door to the funeral home.

INT. FUNERAL HOME/RECEPTION AREA - DAY

They enter. The FUNERAL HOME RECEPTIONIST looks up from his desk at the panting, disheveled duo.

FUNERAL HOME RECEPTIONIST

Can I help--

NICK

I need to speak to the owner.

LATER

The FUNERAL HOME OPERATOR stands at the desk, on the phone. The receptionist is gone. Nick and McShane hang on the operator's every word.

FUNERAL HOME OPERATOR

That's right, Mr. Kutcher.

(pause)

Yes, sir, they're still here right now.

(pause)

Yes, sir. Hold on.

He puts the phone against his chest to cover the speaker and looks at the expectant Nick and McShane.

FUNERAL HOME OPERATOR (CONT'D)

He's going to send some men over in a little bit.

NICK

In a little bit? These guys are trying to kill us!

FUNERAL HOME OPERATOR

He said he's working something out, and y'all need to lay low. Can y'all do that?

McShane looks around nervously.

FUNERAL HOME OPERATOR (CONT'D)
Y'all can stay down in the
crematorium.

NICK
No!

The operator is confused at Nick's staunch refusal.

FUNERAL HOME OPERATOR
Okay. My office, then. I've got
work to do out here, anyway.

Nick lays a hand on McShane's shoulder. He nods, prompting
her to do the same. He looks back to the operator.

NICK
Okay.

The operator puts the phone up to his ear.

FUNERAL HOME OPERATOR
They'll be here, sir.

INT. THE PAINTED PHEASANT - DAY

Kutcher lays his cell phone on the table in front of him. He
looks to his side--Sheila sits there, grinning.

KUTCHER
I didn't want to believe it, but
you were right.

SHEILA
I told you, I've got a gift. You
need to learn to trust me.

KUTCHER
Reckon I've been too trusting.

EXT. RESTAURANT ALLEY - DAY

The downtown alley is cramped by centuries-old brick
buildings. A couple of WAITRESSES smoke weed outside the back
door of the restaurant.

WAITRESS #1
You need to get your shit out of
that apartment and leave him, girl.

WAITRESS #2

It's not that easy. We've been off
and on since high school. Hell,
I've known him longer than my
stepbrother's been alive.

WAITRESS #1

Exactly. And he's holding you back.

Waitress #1 takes a hit. Chris enters the alley. Waitress #2
sees her, and quickly hits her friend's shoulder.

WAITRESS #2

(quietly but emphatic)

Cop!

Waitress #1 looks at Chris and furrows her brow.

WAITRESS #2 (CONT'D)

That's Tory's girlfriend. The
detective!

Waitress #1 turns to exhale behind her and tries to put out
the joint before Chris reaches them. Waitress #2 tries to
block Chris' view.

WAITRESS #2 (CONT'D)

Heeeeeyyyyyy...

She squints like she's trying to think of Chris' name.

WAITRESS #2 (CONT'D)

There. How's it going?

Chris cranes her neck to watch #1, then turns back to #2.

CHRIS

Can you grab Tory? It's important.

WAITRESS #2

Yeah, yeah, of course.

She disappears through the back door.

#1 has put out the joint and tried to hide it. She turns
awkwardly to face Chris.

WAITRESS #1

Hi.

Chris stares at her a beat.

CHRIS

You can go inside, too.

WAITRESS #1

Thank you.

She jumps inside.

Chris lets her head fall back and inhales deeply while she nervously taps her foot for a couple beats. She exhales and looks down just in time for a rat to squeeze into a hole in the brick across the alley.

Tory enters the alley from the restaurant's back door. She has a concerned look.

TORY

Hey, is everything al--

Chris embraces her. After the initial shock, Tory reciprocates.

TORY (CONT'D)

Hey, it's alright. It's okay.

She rubs Chris' back as they continue hugging.

CHRIS

No, it's not okay. It's bad. Really bad.

Tory holds her at arms' length to look at her.

TORY

What happened?

CHRIS

It's bad.

(looks around quickly)

So that lot in Creekwood I told you about.

TORY

The one where they were digging up the bones so the archeologist couldn't find them.

Chris looks at her like the words sting.

TORY (CONT'D)

Sorry, I'm just saying that's what's happening, right?

CHRIS

Yes. Or, it was. That archeologist found out what we were doing.

Tory's eyes go wide.

TORY

Oh shit.

CHRIS

Yeah, 'oh shit'. And now Swanson wants me to 'fix it', whatever the hell that means.

Tory nods while she thinks.

TORY

Well...this woman's going to try to go to the media, right? I mean, she can't exactly go to the cops...

Chris stares at Tory a second, then grabs her own hair like she's going to tear it out.

CHRIS

What the fuck am I doing?!

TORY

It's fine.

CHRIS

It's not fine! I'm a-
(quietly)
I'm a fucking crooked cop now!

TORY

Hey, look at me.

Chris does.

TORY (CONT'D)

You're not a crooked cop, okay. You're one of the straightest laced people I've ever met. You just got caught in a shitty situation. But that's alright. We'll get you out of it. I'll be right here with you, okay?

CHRIS

Okay.

TORY

I'll go in there and tell them I'm done for the day, and I can handle all this with you.

(begins taking off apron)

You know what I've done.

(MORE)

TORY (CONT'D)

I ain't scared to take care of
business if I've got to.

CHRIS

You don't have to take off work.

TORY

I'm serious. I'll be right by your
side. You just tell me what I need
to do and we'll handle this shit.

She lays a hand on Chris' cheek.

TORY (CONT'D)

And by tomorrow afternoon, we'll be
sipping champagne after the statue
ceremony, and this will all be in
the past.

CHRIS

(under her breath)
Well, not at the ceremony.

TORY

What?

CHRIS

Nothing, that's all very sweet and
I appreciate it. I was just saying
you obviously won't be at the
ceremony, but we can plan something
special afterwards.

Tory takes a step back.

TORY

Why won't I be at the ceremony?

CHRIS

What do you mean? Because of my
family, obviously. My mom and
grandma will be there. Not to
mention folks from work.

TORY

Are you fucking serious right now?!

CHRIS

What?

TORY

I just told you I'd--
(leans in)
I just told you I'd kill for you.
(MORE)

TORY (CONT'D)

But you won't even let your family know I'm alive?

CHRIS

Tory, you know it's not that simple.

TORY

Fuck that! Yes it is! We've been together for a year now and you're still running around like you're having a goddamn affair.

CHRIS

That's not how my family--

TORY

You know what? Fuck this. This is over.

Tory turns her back to open the back door.

CHRIS

Tory, wait. This is crazy.

Turning back.

TORY

Yeah, it is crazy. It's crazy that I've wasted a year of my life falling in love with you, only to have you treat me like a fucking side piece. Good luck with all the shit you've gotten yourself into.

Tory turns and enters the restaurant. Chris presses against the door.

CHRIS

Tory, wait.
(a beat)
Tory!

Chris pounds on the door.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Tory, get out here. Please, I'm sorry! Tory!!

Chris turns and falls back against the door, holding back tears.

INT. THE PAINTED PHEASANT - DAY

Odin enters wearing a Dunder Mifflin shirt. He walks towards the bar.

BJ and Dumpling look up from a nearby table. They make a beeline for Kutcher, sitting alone at his corner table.

Odin watches out of the corner of his eye as BJ speaks hurriedly to Kutcher. Jesse brings Odin a drink.

JESSE

Water, hon?

ODIN

Thank you, ma'am.

An ENFORCER walks toward him. Odin takes a sip before the enforcer lays a heavy hand on his shoulder.

ENFORCER

Kutch wants to see you.

Odin nods calmly and follows the man back to the corner table. Kutcher studies him, but speaks cheerfully.

KUTCHER

Richard Petty's biggest fan!

Odin stands at ease. BJ stares at Odin.

ODIN

Sir.

KUTCHER

I recently got an interesting call from the funeral home in Porter's Neck. They said a couple folks showed up, claiming The Swan's men were trying to kill them because they knew he broke ground on that ghetto supermarket already.

Odin puts on a slight frown and nods slowly.

ODIN

Who were the people who called?

KUTCHER

Y'all are going to find out soon enough. They're still there and we need to get them safe before The Swan's boys figure out where they are.

ODIN

Yes, sir.

KUTCHER

Oh, and leave your cell phone here.

(points at the table)

I'm having everyone's phone checked. Heard about some way the federal government's listening in on conversations. Probably nothing, but still.

ODIN

Of course.

Odin places his phone on the table. Kutcher nods them away.

The three walk through the bar, Odin in front with BJ staring at him from behind. They exit the bar.

EXT. THE PAINTED PHEASANT - DAY

BJ

We'll take my truck.

(to Dumpling)

You're driving, Dumpling.

Dumpling nods. They get to the truck and Odin reaches for the back door. BJ beats him to it.

BJ (CONT'D)

You ride up front. I want to keep an eye on our tail.

Odin nods and gets in the front passenger's seat. BJ sits directly behind him.

INT. BJ'S TRUCK - DAY

They begin driving.

BJ

So Dumpling, you really think Kutcher's killed a dozen people?

DUMPLING

I don't know.

BJ

I mean, don't get me wrong, I respect the man and all. But a dozen people?

(MORE)

BJ (CONT'D)

And not including civilians or anything, I mean gangster motherfuckers. I don't know. How does the situation even present itself that many times? You know?

DUMPLING

I don't know.

BJ

What about you, Long John? You ever get a chance to pull yourself away from the mess hall and pop your cherry over there?

ODIN

Once or twice.

BJ

Oh shit!

(to Dumpling)

I told you this was a bad man we got here.

(to Odin)

How many people you kill, Long John? Not including all the women and children.

ODIN

Couldn't tell you. I'd just point and shoot, and hope for the best.

BJ

Uh huh. You know what I think?

(to Dumpling)

I think our boy here was too busy wringing the piss out of his underwear to get any confirmed kills.

Odin grins politely.

DUMPLING

Uh oh.

BJ

What?

DUMPLING

I'm sorry.

BJ

What is it?

DUMPLING
We're fixing to run out of gas.

BJ looks to the ceiling of the truck.

BJ
(yelling)
Dump. You. Fat. Fuck.

DUMPLING
I'm sorry.

BJ
Pull on over at the next gas
station. Your ass is paying.

DUMPLING
I'm sorry.

They pull over at a station. Dumpling gets out to pump gas.

ODIN
I've got to take a shit.

BJ
Fuck that.

ODIN
I had to back at the Pheasant, but
Kutch sent me with y'all.

BJ eyes him.

ODIN (CONT'D)
Goddamn, it's either I go in there,
or this ride is fixing to get a lot
less pleasant for everyone.

BJ looks at the station. Fields sit on either side.

BJ
Alright, make it quick.

Odin exits the truck.

EXT. GAS STATION - DAY

Odin walks past Dumpling. BJ also gets out and stands next to
Dumpling as Odin enters the gas station.

INT. GAS STATION/BATHROOM - DAY

Odin enters. A TRUCKER washes his hands. Odin reaches behind him, and pulls out his wallet.

ODIN
A hundred bucks if I can make one
call on your phone.

Odin shows him a hundred dollar bill. The trucker is stunned.

ODIN (CONT'D)
It'll take less than a minute.

TRUCKER
Hell yeah, brother.

The trucker hands Odin his phone.

EXT. POLICE STATION - DAY

A dazed Chris sits in front of the covered statue of her grandfather, already surrounded by pigeons. She mechanically reaches into her jacket pocket and finds a packet of sunflower seeds. She throws some out and watches as the birds eat.

Suddenly, there's a flash and a hard thud. The pigeons all fly upwards, leaving only one. It's pinned on the ground, being eaten alive by a hawk.

Her phone rings. She frowns at the number, but answers.

CHRIS
Hello?

EXT. GAS STATION - DAY

Odin emerges. Dumpling is already back in the driver's seat but BJ is waiting for him.

BJ
That took fucking forever. What
happened? They didn't have the
right size tampons for that big old
pussy of yours?

ODIN
I don't think that's how that
works.

They get into the truck and drive off.

INT. CHRIS' CAR - DAY

She's speeding down the highway. She takes the police light sitting on the passenger's seat and puts it on the roof. The bandaid on her neck is hanging on by a thread.

INT. DUMPLING'S TRUCK - DAY

They pass fields and housing developments. Dumpling turns down a side road.

A single light on the roof of an undercover cop car goes off and a siren sounds.

DUMPLING

Fuck!

BJ looks behind them at the Black woman in the car.

BJ

Don't pull over.

DUMPLING

What?

BJ

Something's wrong here.

(to Odin)

What the fuck did you do?

ODIN

(to Dumpling, calmly)

I'd just pull over. We're not doing anything wrong. We own half the cops in this town, anyway.

BJ

Yeah, and that cop looks like the wrong half.

(to Dumpling)

Keep going, Dumpling.

ODIN

I'd just pull over, man. You're not even speeding.

Dumpling looks torn.

BJ

Keep going, Dumpling!

BJ covertly takes out his pistol.

ODIN
Goddamn, BJ, alright.

Odin shifts his weight in his seat and moves a hand towards his pants. He quickly pulls his pistol, presses it to the back of his seat and fires multiple times.

BJ frantically pulls his trigger. Dumpling yells like someone just tore off his leg. At the end of the two second-long exchange, BJ has a hole in his head, and Odin in his side.

Odin puts his pistol to Dumpling's head.

ODIN (CONT'D)
Pull over.

Dumpling cries out.

DUMPLING
BJ!!

He hits the gas. Odin glances at the road, then back at Dumpling.

ODIN
I said pull o--

DUMPLING
I ain't letting you go alone,
brother! We're going to finish the
job!

The truck keeps accelerating. Blood pours from the hole in Odin's side.

Odin presses the gun against Dumpling's head harder as he looks out the front. The funeral home is rapidly approaching.

ODIN
(emphatically)
Pull over.

DUMPLING
You're a dead man, you fucking
traitor! I'll see you in hell, you
ugly sonbitch!

Odin grabs for the wheel and Dumpling hits him in the side. Odin doubles over in pain.

ODIN
Goddammit.

Odin replaces his pistol in its holster. He takes off his shirt--Norse runes cover his torso. His eye patch falls. He wraps the shirt around his head, buckles his seatbelt, and relaxes his body against the seat.

INT. CHRIS' CAR - DAY

Chris is in hot pursuit. She watches as the truck hits the curb in front of the funeral home. It bounces wildly into the air, lands roughly, then slams into the funeral home's sign inlaid in brick. It flips over and lands upside down.

EXT. FUNERAL HOME - DAY

Nick and Dr. McShane run out to see what happened.

Chris' car screeches to a halt close to the wreck and she gets out. When Nick and Dr. McShane register she's there, Nick turns to McShane.

NICK

Run!

Chris quickly draws her pistol and fires. Nick falls, gut shot. McShane freezes, then drops to her knees, screaming. Chris looks at what she's done like she wishes she could take it back.

CHRIS

You didn't...why...

There's a noise from the wreck. The cracked windshield seems to pulse. Finally, a bloody arm pushes it outwards.

Chris, Nick and McShane all stare as Odin crawls out--half-naked and bloody, his mutilated face on full display. He breathes heavily, almost hyperventilating. Blood drools from his torso.

Suddenly, he stops. He rises to his feet, a mess of scars and tattoos and blood. He looks at each of the people in front of him, their jaws on the ground. Odin walks to Nick. Nick pulls himself up to his knees to pray.

NICK

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy--

Odin raises his pistol and pulls the trigger. The back of Nick's head spits blood. Odin turns to McShane. She starts screaming again in panic as the monster nears.

CHRIS

Wait.

Odin looks at her, the pistol still in her hand, then back at McShane. He steps toward McShane. Chris pulls the trigger.

Odin has his pistol trained on Chris in a split second, but realizes she wasn't aiming at him. He follows the angle of her weapon to the wreck behind him and finds Dumpling falling to the ground, a pistol in his own hand.

Odin looks to Chris and gives her a nod, then looks back to McShane. The archeologist lets out a long wail like a baby just before Odin shoots her in the head.

An eerie silence falls. Chris looks at the dead woman. She casually tears off the bandaid on her neck.

ODIN

We need to de-ass the premises.

CHRIS

I know a doctor I can take you to.

ODIN

Alright. But we've got to make a stop on the way.

EXT. KUTCHER'S MANSION - DAY

An old, beautiful house sitting on a plot of land surrounded by forest. Two men stand guard out front, smoking.

INT. KUTCHER'S MANSION/BEDROOM - DAY

Sheila puts on a pair of distinctive diamond earrings. She smiles in the mirror. She walks to the bathroom door. The shower is running. She yells through the door.

SHEILA

I love these earrings you got me!

INT. KUTCHER'S MANSION/BATHROOM - DAY

Kutcher is taking a shower. He leans his head out from behind the glass partition.

KUTCHER

What?

INT. KUTCHER'S MANSION/BEDROOM - DAY

Sheila exhales, exasperated. Odin now stands silently behind her with his knife drawn, covered in fresh blood. His shirt is strapped to his side with his belt to stop the bleeding.

Chris stands behind him at the door with her pistol drawn.

SHEILA

I said...

INT. KUTCHER'S MANSION/BATHROOM - DAY

SHEILA (O.S.) (CONT'D)

...I love these new earrings!
They're--

A muffled, odd noise comes from the other side of the door.

KUTCHER

They're what? Sheila?

Kutcher gets out and puts on a towel before opening the door. He finds Sheila being held at gunpoint on the bed by Chris, and Odin staring him in the face.

INT. KUTCHER'S MANSION/BEDROOM - DAY

Sheila screams as Odin pushes Kutcher down into the bathroom. Chris pistol whips her, then turns to watch Odin until she can't take it anymore. The horrific sounds finally stop.

Odin reenters the bedroom, now drenched in blood. He looks at Chris, then at Sheila. Sheila seethes.

SHEILA

You'll never get away with this!
Some people are actually fucking
loyal!

ODIN

And a certain Indian man will be
taking care of them very soon.

He looks to Chris. Chris' breathing grows heavier.

SHEILA

(to Chris)
No, please! No!!

Chris holds her breath, her hand shaking as she raises the pistol. She looks to Odin again. He gives the slightest nod.

EXT. POLICE STATION - DAY

The Swan stands at a podium addressing a largely Black crowd.

The four Harrelson women sit next to officials at the side of the podium. Tory sits next to Chris, wearing Sheila's diamond earrings. Chris, her gnarly-looking neck on full display, grins. Tory beams. Chris' grandma and mom glare. Nailah looks contemptuous. A photographer snaps photos.

SWANSON

To begin, let us bow our heads in prayer.

The crowd does as instructed.

SWANSON (CONT'D)

Lord, we come here to honor a man. Some would call him great, others may not. Because time can change how a man is remembered.

MONTAGE

Swanson's speech continues as the following shows:

--Chris overseeing men getting to work on the Creekwood lot.

SWANSON (V.O) (CONT'D)

Heroes become villains, conquerors become oppressors, imposters become genuine, the downtrodden become noble. But at the end of the day, we're just as You made us. With our best intentions dirtied by our flawed, human hands.

--Odin, sans eye patch, watching at night as they fill in a grave with the bodies of the recently killed, Kutcher on top.

SWANSON (V.O.)

Wars are started by covetous men. They are fought by dutiful soldiers, who bleed in the name of whatever tale they've been told. The victors preach of their own glory and righteousness, while the defeated lie under the victor's boot, casting a hateful glance upward as they wait for retribution.

--EZ swirling a glass of Scotch as they put up his restaurant sign, "Uncle EZ's Down Home Cookin'".

His nephew RAMA (15) is at his side, playing a video game and not caring as EZ puts a hand on his shoulder.

SWANSON (V.O.)

Those children hear that story.
They reap the advantages of
victory. But they don't understand
a soldier's sacrifice. And the
covetous ways of their parents are
just ammunition to use against that
old guard. Ammunition fired by a
generation just as morally corrupt
as any who came before it.

--Odin walking into The Painted Pheasant. Everyone stands. Men in the corner booth tear down the Earnhardt flag and someone brings over a Petty flag to hang. People nod in respect, some looking fearful, as Odin walks to the booth.

SWANSON (V.O.)

Over time, this statue I stand
before will corrode and fall.
Everyone here will pass from this
world. Our stories will become
threadbare and dissolve. And this
man will be forgotten. But that
won't change who he was and what he
did here. And his deeds won't stop
the world from turning.

END MONTAGE

EXT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Swanson finishes his speech.

SWANSON (V.O.)

As it was, as it is, and as it
always will be.

CROWD

Amen.

EXT. GRAVEYARD - DAY

Chris stands looking over where Nick and the other murdered are buried.

A final shot of the empty grave.

FADE OUT.