

THE LAST HEIR

Written by

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Revision August 5th, 2025

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FADE IN:

EXT. EVERGLADES - DUSK - 1916

A hazy orange sun hangs low over the swamp. Cypress trees rise from black water, moss dripping like old curtains. Frogs croak. Mosquitoes hum.

A dugout canoe glides silently across the surface, paddled by two SEMINOLE TEENAGERS. In the back sits a white boy, 15, strong frame, sun-kissed skin—ELIJAH HEED.

He's barefoot, shirtless, a cross hanging loosely around his neck. His eyes scan the water—not with fear, but reverence.

They dock at a hidden clearing where a small campfire glows.

EXT. EVERGLADES - CAMPFIRE SITE - MOMENTS LATER

A half-dozen boys—white, Black, and Native—sit around the flames. They pass a bottle. Quiet laughter. Cigarette smoke curls into the night.

Elijah watches a young Miccosukee boy, Jato, deftly carve a totem from a palmetto branch.

ELIJAH (V.O.)
(older, reflective)
They called themselves the
Unconquered People. And they were.
No treaty, no surrender. They just
kept livin'—in the water, in the
trees. Free. And I wanted that. I
didn't want to be my father.

FLASH CUT TO:

INT. MISSION TENT - EARLIER THAT DAY

A rickety pulpit. Elijah's FATHER, stern and severe, delivers a sermon to a dozen Seminole villagers. Elijah sits outside, sweating, drawing animals in the dirt with a stick.

FATHER (O.S.)
He who walks with God walks not in
the path of sinners...

BACK TO SCENE

EXT. EVERGLADES - CAMPFIRE SITE

The Miccosukee boy hands Elijah the totem. Elijah holds it like it's sacred.

JATO

You take that. You're different.
You listen.

ELIJAH

I ain't different. Just stuck here.

He takes a swig from the bottle. The boys laugh.

Suddenly, a loud SPLASH in the dark. Everyone freezes.

The boys instinctively scatter. Elijah hesitates—listens.

A COTTONMOUTH slithers nearby, curling at the water's edge. Elijah picks up a branch and slowly pushes it away.

SEMINOLE TEENAGER (O.S.)

You gonna die out here one day,
white boy.

ELIJAH

Maybe. But it'll be my death.

ELIJAH (V.O.)

That night I made up my mind. I
wasn't gonna preach. I wasn't gonna
convert. I was gonna build.

END SCENE

FADE IN:

EXT. DAWBER TRADING POST - EVERGLADES FRONTIER - DAY - 1918

A sunbaked clearing. Wooden buildings bleached by heat and time. Chickens roam freely. A sign reads:

DAWBER & SONS - SUPPLIES · LEDGER WORK · SHIPPING

Men haul crates off flat-bottom boats. White overseers bark orders at Seminole laborers.

ELIJAH HEED (17) walks through, carrying a battered satchel and a homemade slingshot at his side. Sweat clings to his skin, but his eyes are sharp and curious.

He stops in his tracks. Across the dirt yard, bent over a table of ledgers and receipts, is MARY ANN MALONE (16).

Tall. Slender. A swan among vultures. Her dark hair tied up, face focused, fingers racing through a stack of hand-calculated books.

She doesn't look up.

ELIJAH (V.O.)

I saw her before she saw me. And I knew two things. One—she wasn't from around here. And two—I was going to marry her.

ANGLE ON: A rough-looking MAN drops a sack of molasses near the books, splattering Mary Ann with thick syrup.

She flinches, then calmly wipes it off her cheek with a handkerchief. Never breaks stride with the numbers.

MARY ANN

You shorted us four coins.

MAN

Maybe I dropped 'em in the creek.

MARY ANN

Then you can swim back and find them.

The man chuckles—until he sees MR. MALONE (50s), beady eyes, starched collar, arms crossed. He gives a nod.

The man grumbles, digs in his pocket, tosses four coins on the table, and walks off.

ELIJAH steps closer.

ELIJAH

You're good at math.

MARY ANN

Better than you're good at flirting.

She still doesn't look up.

ELIJAH

You always talk like that?

MARY ANN

Only when someone wastes my time.

Now she finally glances up. Their eyes meet. Electricity.

ELIJAH
I'm Elijah.

MARY ANN
Mary Ann Malone. Bookkeeper.
Apprentice to my father. Future
owner of everything you see.

ELIJAH
Even the chickens?

MARY ANN
Especially the chickens.

They both smile—brief, involuntary. Then—

DAWBBER (O.S.)
You don't talk to the Malones
unless you got business, boy.

ELIJAH turns to see Mr Dawber—a sunburned land baron in a sweat-stained vest. Tall, red-faced, with whiskey breath and a permanent scowl, he stands at the post office door.

DAWBBER (CONT'D)
And you don't got business here.

Elijah nods, eyes still on Mary Ann.

ELIJAH
Not yet.

ELIJAH (V.O.)
That was the first time I saw her.
The first time I got warned. And
the first time I didn't give a
damn.

FADE IN:

EXT. RIVER MARSH NEAR WHISKEY CREEK - NIGHT - 1919

The swamp is alive—crickets, frogs, distant thunder. Lantern light flickers across the water as three canoes glide between reeds, silent but fast.

In the front canoe: ELIJAH (18), face focused. Behind him, two MICCOSUKEE BOYS—JATO and NOKOSE, not much older, expert with the paddles.

Each canoe is loaded with crates stenciled with a ROYAL CREST: "The Real McCoy."

ELIJAH

Stay close to the mangroves—if they see us in open water, we're dead.

NOKOSE

Your people made these laws. We just break 'em better.

They laugh quietly, adrenaline in the air.

EXT. DOCK NEAR WHISKEY CREEK - LATER

MUSIC CUE: "Air" by Hans Zimmer.

The boys unload crates in the dark—dozens of them. Glass clinks inside.

JATO

That's twenty-three. Enough to buy land, maybe a boat.

ELIJAH

It's not just about money. It's about being free to do it our way.

NOKOSE

You mean your way.

A tense moment—but they all smile.

Suddenly—TORCHLIGHT THROUGH TREES. A SHOUT.

MAN (O.S.)

Hey! You little swamp rats! Drop it now!

FLASHLIGHTS sweep through the reeds. GUNSHOTS crack out.

The boys scatter.

EXT. MANGROVE TUNNEL - MOMENTS LATER

Elijah runs full tilt through the roots, lungs burning, slipping in mud. Behind him—SCREAMS.

He turns a corner—

JATO LIES FACE-DOWN IN THE WATER, blood darkening the current.

ELIJAH

Jato!

He drops to his knees in the shallow water, flipping Jato over-his eyes wide open, lifeless. Elijah cradles him briefly, shaking, trying to speak.

ELIJAH (CONT'D)

(softly)

No, no, no... come on.

Footsteps behind him-SHOUTS GROW CLOSER.

A HAND grabs Elijah by the collar-

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAWBER PROPERTY - LATER THAT NIGHT

A lantern swings from a chain. Elijah, bloodied, face swollen, tied to a post. A line of men stands in front of him-THE DAWBER BROTHERS and SIR ALDEN BATTENBERG, mid-40s, sharp British suit, eyes like ice.

DAWBER

You steal from us? You use Injun boys to do it?

ELIJAH

It was just rum. You got a thousand crates just sitting in that warehouse.

BATTENBERG

Those boys are dead now. And you're not, because your daddy reads scripture to the natives.

DAWBER

You got one favor left in this county. Don't spend it twice.

CRACK! A club hits Elijah across the ribs. He groans.

BATTENBERG

(to Dawber)

Break both legs. Leave him in the swamp.

DAWBER

No. Let him crawl out. Let his holy father find him.

They laugh.

EXT. EDGE OF THE EVERGLADES - SUNRISE

Elijah, barely conscious, crawls through the reeds. Covered in blood, his lip split, ribs broken.

He collapses under a cypress tree. We hear thunder in the distance.

ELIJAH (V.O.)

They spared me. Only because I was
a Heed. But they didn't spare Jato.
Or Nokose. That was the cost.

EXT. MALONE HOMESTEAD - NIGHT

Mary Ann opens the door. Elijah, covered in mud and bruises, stands there, barely upright.

She doesn't speak. Just catches him in her arms.

INT. SHACK IN WHISKEY CREEK - LATER

By candlelight, Mary Ann tends to Elijah's wounds. He can barely sit upright.

MARY ANN

What did you do?

ELIJAH

I made a choice.

MARY ANN

And what happens now?

ELIJAH

Now... we run.

MARY ANN

To where?

ELIJAH

Anywhere but here.

They hold each other, both breathing hard, scared—but united.

FADE OUT.

END SCENE

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. THOMAS EDISON ESTATE - DAY - EARLY 1920s

ELIJAH HEED (20s), shirt off, shovels gravel as EDISON and FORD look on, mid-conversation.

ELIJAH (V.O.)

It all started in the mud. With the right hands... mud turns to concrete. My father preached with fire. I laid brick. He tried to save souls. I just wanted to keep them dry when it rained.

MUSIC CUE: "Light" by Hans Zimmer.

FADE IN:

EXT. FORT MYERS - EDGE OF TOWN - DAY

A battered wagon creaks down a dusty road.

ELIJAH HEED (early 20s) and MARY ANN MALONE (18) ride side-by-side. She holds a folded county map. He clutches a rolled-up deed.

A painted sign pokes out from under a blanket:

"H. & M. BUILDERS - FOUNDATIONS TO FUTURES"

ELIJAH (V.O.)

We didn't know anyone. Didn't have much. But we had two good hands apiece... and a reason to stay gone.

EXT. VACANT LOT - FORT MYERS OUTSKIRTS - MOMENTS LATER

An overgrown patch of brush. A faded "FOR SALE" sign swings.

Mary Ann hops down, scans the terrain. Elijah unfurls the deed.

MARY ANN

There's a freshwater line from the Edison estate two blocks south. If we dig right-gravity does half the plumbing.

ELIJAH

And the east side faces the breeze.

MARY ANN

We'll sleep cooler than the Dawbers
ever did.

They grin. He plants the first stake. She marks it with
twine.

ELIJAH (V.O.)

We didn't build with dreams. We
built with sweat, callouses... and
ledger books.

MONTAGE - "H. & M. BUILDERS" BEGINNING

- Elijah cuts planks, shirtless in the sun.
- Mary Ann tallies figures by lantern in a tent.
- A small sign: "FOUNDATIONS POURED - ASK FOR HEED"
- Curious neighbors look on. A farmer nods.
- A one-room house goes up. Then a second. Then a third.
- The goat roams freely, part mascot, part mower.

EXT. UNDER THE FRAME OF A HOME - SUNSET

They sit under unfinished rafters, eating cornbread, sharing
lemonade.

MARY ANN

We should call it something.

ELIJAH

The company?

MARY ANN

No. This street. This patch. This
life.

ELIJAH

What would you call it?

Mary Ann looks out at the amber sky.

MARY ANN

Grace.

ELIJAH

Grace Street?

MARY ANN

No. Just... Grace.
 (softly)
 After everything we've come
 through... what else would you call
 survival?

ELIJAH (V.O.)

She gave it a name. I gave it a
 foundation.

EXT. MAIN ROAD - FORT MYERS - MORNING

A wooden sign hammered into place:

WELCOME TO GRACE - EST. 1922

We PULL BACK to reveal a modest but growing town: frame
 houses, wagons, barefoot children running down red clay
 alleys.

ELIJAH (V.O.)

We didn't preach anymore. We built
 homes. A community. And little by
 little, people stopped asking what
 we ran from... and started asking
 where we were going.

FLASHBACK:

EXT. THOMAS EDISON ESTATE - DAY - 1924

Sunlight flickers through oak trees. Men in white linen sip
 iced tea.

EDISON fiddles with a battery cell. HENRY FORD examines a
 carburetor.

ELIJAH, clean but sweat-streaked, carries a crate toward the
 porch.

A SECURITY GUARD intercepts.

GUARD

Mr. Edison doesn't take walk-ins.

ELIJAH

I'm not selling. I'm building.

Edison looks up from his bench.

EDISON
Let him talk.

EXT. ESTATE PATIO - LATER

Blueprints unrolled. ELIJAH pitches with quiet fire. FORD folds arms. HARVEY FIRESTONE paces.

FORD
You want us to back a kid with a satchel?

ELIJAH
Florida's tapped. Asia's under monopoly. Liberia's the last bet left—millions of acres to build a rubber empire.

A long pause.

FIRESTONE
He's right.

EDISON (GRINNING)
You build it—we'll supply the wires and wheels.

A handshake. A FLASHBULB pops.

ELIJAH (V.O.)
That handshake changed my life.

EXT. LIBERIA - JUNGLE CLEARING - DAY - 1925

Laborers slash through jungle. ELIJAH (late 20s) leads them. He points to the terrain.

ELIJAH
Warehouse here. Mill downstream. Gravity moves the pulp. Nature pays the bills.

EXT. RIVERSIDE ENCAMPMENT - NIGHT

Fire crackles. Elijah opens a toolbox—his father's, now filled with blueprints. Tucked inside: the Miccosukee totem. He touches it gently.

ELIJAH (V.O.)
 I came to Liberia not for fortune-
 but because I knew it. My parents
 were missionaries here. I learned
 to walk in this red dirt. But I
 didn't come back to preach.

TITLE: FORT MYERS 1926

EXT. FORT MYERS - HEED HOMESTEAD SITE - NIGHT - 1926

Mary Ann holds a lantern beside a wooden stake. Elijah joins her.

MARY ANN
 So this is it?

ELIJAH
 This is it. House here. Factory
 there. School near the trees.

MARY ANN
 And the church?

ELIJAH
 I'll build one. But it won't be my
 father's.

MARY ANN
 You're not your father.

ELIJAH
 No.
 (smirks)
 I'm worse.

They laugh-quiet, earned.

FADE OUT.

MONTAGE - THE BIRTH OF HEED INDUSTRIES

- Elijah with Edison and Ford at a concrete pour.

- Workers clock in beneath a sign: **HEED INDUSTRIES -
 TOOLING & RUBBER**

- Elijah inspects rubber in Liberia with a tribal chief. They
 shake hands.

– A portrait of Mary Ann and young Jonathan on Elijah's desk.
A Miccosukee totem beside it.

ELIJAH (V.O.)

I learned by watching men who built
empires out of wire and steel.
Edison. Ford. Firestone. They
didn't hand me anything. But they
let me watch. And that was enough.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

ELIJAH (V.O.)

The future we built wasn't just
steel and rubber. It was family. My
son... and his sons. One of them
"Jonathan" chose a different path.
He didn't want the company. He
wanted a uniform.

(beat)

I gave him the foundation. What he
built on it... that was never mine
to control.

TITLE: 1970 - BATTLE OF RIPCORD, VIETNAM

EXT. JUNGLE - DAY

CHAOS. Gunfire cracks through the humid air. Smoke coils from
craters. Trees splinter.

COLONEL JONATHAN HEED (30s), face streaked with mud and
blood, crawls through a jungle trench, gripping an M-16.

JONATHAN

Pull him out! I said get him out!

BOOM—An EXPLOSION erupts nearby. Jonathan is blown back,
slamming into the trench wall.

SMASH TO BLACK.

INT. CHELSEA NAVAL HOSPITAL - BOSTON - DAY

Jonathan lies in traction. His body is broken. Tubes snake
into his arms. A folded U.S. Army uniform rests on a chair.

DOCTOR (O.S.)
You're lucky to be alive, Colonel.

Jonathan doesn't look at him. His eyes are distant.

JONATHAN
Tell that to the ones who didn't
make it.

He stares out the window, lost.

ELIJAH (V.O.)
He came home with medals... But
something in him never made it
back.

MONTAGE - "THE NIGHT OF THE CRASH"

-- EXT. SKY OVER MASSACHUSETTS - NIGHT

A HEED INDUSTRIES PRIVATE PLANE cuts through a blinding
winter storm.

-- INT. COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS

ALERTS BLARE. The PILOT wrestles the controls. Ice slams the
windshield.

-- EXT. SNOWY FIELD - NIGHT

Wreckage burns in the blackness. Debris scattered across the
frozen hillside.

ELIJAH (V.O.)
That night, the storm took four
lives. Jonathan's father-my son.
His brother, who ran the company.
His wife. And Dolly's husband, who
was family in every way but name.

A flicker of fire reveals the broken frame of the company's
logo on the fuselage.

ELIJAH (V.O.)
Jonathan didn't just bury his
family. He inherited a company in
flames... ..and walked out of a
hospital into the fire.

FADE TO BLACK.

ELIJAH (V.O.)
I built the company from the swamp
up. But it would be Jonathan who
kept it from burning down.

FADE IN:

INT. HEED INDUSTRIES BOARDROOM - DAY

JONATHAN HEED (34), upright in a tailored suit, a long scar across his cheek. His face is hard but focused. He stands at the head of a polished oak table.

Executives and board members watch him cautiously.

BOARD MEMBER
Colonel Heed—can you lead this
company?

Jonathan opens a weathered leather notebook—Elijah's old journal—and sets it down in front of him.

JONATHAN
I didn't survive that jungle... to
sit quietly in one.

A beat. Then:

JONATHAN (CONT'D)
Let's get to work.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

INT. HEED FAMILY HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A quiet Florida night. Crickets hum outside. Inside, the glow of a single lamp.

JONATHAN HEED, late 30s, limps slightly as he enters. He's shed the uniform but not the burden.

Across the room, BLANCHE (30s)—elegant, whimsical, luminous but weary—paints on a canvas propped against an easel. Soft jazz plays on vinyl.

Beside her, two five-year-olds—EMMITT and SCARLETT—build towers with blocks. They argue softly, then laugh.

MUSIC CUE: "The Rains of Castamere" by Tina Guo.

ELIJAH (V.O.)

Jonathan remarried a nurse named
Blanche. A bright spirit—too bright
for this world. She had a daughter,
Scarlett, the same age as Emmitt.
And for a while, they were a
family.

Blanche pauses her painting and watches the children with
tired, tender eyes.

BLANCHE

That's not a tower. That's a
spaghetti stack.

EMMITT

It's a fortress.

SCARLETT

For princesses.

BLANCHE

(smiling)

Then it better have good plumbing.

They all laugh.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Jonathan helps Blanche clear dishes. She coughs into a
napkin—then quickly folds it before he notices. A speck of
BLOOD stains the fabric.

ELIJAH (V.O.)

She was already sick. But she
didn't tell him. Not at first.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Blanche sits alone on the bed, leafing through a sketchbook
filled with Emmitt and Scarlett's drawings. She lingers on
one of the three of them: a house, a dog, a sun with a smile.

She closes the book gently. Clutches it to her chest.

INT. KITCHEN - ANOTHER NIGHT

Blanche coughs again—harsher this time. Emmitt walks in
wearing a towel like a cape.

BLANCHE
What's this? Bedtime escape?

EMMITT
Scarlett's scared of monsters.

BLANCHE
(smiling through pain)
Then you better be her knight.

She tousles his hair—then winces, turning away to hide another spasm.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Jonathan and Blanche sit in silence. The DOCTOR speaks softly, the word "metastatic" hanging in the air.

DOCTOR
It's aggressive. Stage four.

Jonathan clutches her hand. Blanche looks away.

BLANCHE
Can I still paint?

DOCTOR
For a while.

INT. BLANCHE'S BEDROOM - DAY

The room is dim. Blanche lies in bed, gaunt and pale, but smiling faintly.

EMMITT and SCARLETT sit on either side, feeding her soup.

JONATHAN stands nearby with a tray of medications, unsure, helpless.

ELIJAH (V.O.)
Blanche fought the cancer with all
the fire she had left. But the
illness wasn't the only thing
inside her.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Rain against the window.

Jonathan finds Blanche asleep—or so it seems.

A half-finished painting leans in the corner. Her sketchbook open on the nightstand. A bottle of pills—empty. A folded letter rests beside it.

Jonathan reads the note, his hand shaking. He drops to his knees beside the bed.

ELIJAH (V.O.)

She was bipolar. No one said it back then. They just called it mood swings. But she knew what was coming. And she chose to go.

EXT. CYPRESS GROVE - DAY

A modest gravesite beneath the trees. Blanche's painting supplies sit in a basket beside the marker. Scarlett clutches Emmitt's hand.

ELIJAH (V.O.)

Jonathan buried her next to the grove. And he buried a piece of himself, too.

FADE TO BLACK.

ELIJAH (V.O.)

Emmitt and Scarlett never forgot. In grief, they found a bond. Not just step-siblings—but something deeper.

MONTAGE - EMMITT & SCARLETT THROUGH THE YEARS

-- Emmitt (10) shielding Scarlett from bullies on the school bus.

-- Scarlett (12) sobbing after a manic episode. Emmitt holds her close.

-- Teen Scarlett painting furiously in her room. Emmitt sketches beside her in silence.

-- Emmitt (16) waiting outside a therapy clinic, worried but patient.

-- Scarlett painting a mural. Emmitt brings her water, wipes paint from her cheek.

ELIJAH (V.O.)

She became his anchor. He became her protector. Through every storm, they held each other together.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. HEED INDUSTRIES - EXECUTIVE OFFICE - DAY - 1982

Jonathan Heed, now in his late 40s, scans a ledger while speaking on the phone. His suit is sharp, but his face is weary. He looks out the window toward the Heed compound, mind heavy.

JONATHAN

(into phone)

No, we're not delaying the Fort Lauderdale contract. Tell Simmons to make it work.

He hangs up and sighs. A FAMILY PHOTO on his desk shows a young Emmitt, Blanche, and Scarlett - frozen in happier times.

He flips open a second folder labeled: EMMITT - PROGRESS REPORTS

Red ink stains the page: "Falling behind in algebra. Inattentive. Low participation."

INT. AVA PRESLEY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Ava (50s), composed and sharp-eyed, chops vegetables with elegance. Jonathan stands in her kitchen, uncomfortable, hat in hand.

JONATHAN

I wouldn't ask if it weren't important. Emmitt... he's not himself lately. He's quiet. Angry. Failing.

Ava raises an eyebrow.

AVA

He's fourteen. That's the job.

JONATHAN

He needs someone outside all this. Someone kind. Steady.

AVA

Noah leaves in a month for
residency.

JONATHAN

Then that gives us a month.

She eyes him—calculating. Then, nods.

AVA

Alright. But only because I owe
you. And because Noah owes you
more.

FADE IN:

INT. AVA PRESLEY'S LIVING ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

The room is modest but warm. A piano, framed family photos,
and a large bookshelf fill the space.

Emmitt (14), sits stiffly on a couch, eyes down, hands in his
lap. His shirt is wrinkled, socks mismatched. A school
backpack lies beside him, bulging with papers.

NOAH PRESLEY (mid-20s), tall, confident, dressed casually,
walks in with ANNIE DONOVAN (20s), kind eyes, a quiet grace.

MUSIC CUE: "Light" by Hans Zimmer.

NOAH

Oh boy. Look at you.

ANNIE

Noah, stop.

NOAH

How bad is it kid?

Emmitt shrugs.

NOAH (CONT'D)

Let me see your assignments.

Emmitt opens his bag. Crumpled papers spill out. Some fall to
the floor. Noah digs through them, pulling out one from a
pocket.

NOAH (CONT'D)

Oh boy.

Annie starts laughing.

ANNIE
Noah, you can help him.

Noah looks Emmitt up and down.

NOAH
He's gonna need more than tutoring.
Look at the way he dresses.

ANNIE
Be nice, Noah.

NOAH
You got a girlfriend yet?

EMMITT
No.

ANNIE
Is there a girl at school that you
like?

Emmitt shrugs again.

EMMITT
Maybe.

ANNIE
Who?

EMMITT
Birdie Nash.

Noah bursts out laughing.

ANNIE
Stop it, Noah.

Noah points at the crumpled schoolwork, then at Emmitt's
socks.

NOAH
Birdie Nash? You think you can get
a girl like Birdie Nash dressed
like that?

Emmitt tries to hide a smile, looking away—his ears redden.

Emmitt glances at his socks—one striped, one plain—and starts
laughing too. Annie joins in.

NOAH (CONT'D)

Alright. I'll help with the schoolwork. And how to be a smooth guy.

ANNIE

And I'll teach you what girls like in boys.

NOAH

First, we're taking you shopping. No more t-shirts every day.

ANNIE

And let's start with socks that match.

Noah grabs a small pile of his clothes that Ava just washed and folded.

NOAH

You wear this? She'll have to say yes.

(holds up a neon Hawaiian shirt)

They all laugh again, the moment breaking the tension. Emmitt finally relaxes.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. MALL - CLOTHING STORE - DAY

Emmitt stands in front of a mirror, awkwardly buttoning a decent button-down while Noah and Annie critique.

FADE OUT.

TITLE: THIRTY DAYS LATER

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

Posters for the SPRING FORMAL cover the walls. Emmitt walks up to GRAYSON NASH (14), excited.

EMMITT

Hey, I'm thinking of asking Birdie to the dance.

GRAYSON
My sister Birdie? She's the most
popular girl at school.

EMMITT
I know. But I think I've got a
shot.

Grayson stares, baffled. Then—

GRAYSON
You're serious?

EMMITT
Dead serious.

Grayson shakes his head, chuckling.

GRAYSON
Man, you've got guts. Good luck.

FADE OUT

FADE TO:

INT. AVA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Noah paces in the kitchen, flipping through worksheets. Annie
sits nearby, reading quietly, sipping tea.

KNOCK. KNOCK.

The front door creaks open.

EMMITT (14) enters, holding a crumpled folder tight to his
chest.

EMMITT
Hey, is Noah around?

ANNIE
(smiling)
Kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Noah looks up as Emmitt appears in the doorway.

NOAH
Well, look who it is.

EMMITT
 (grinning, shy)
 I got my report card. Straight A's.
 Even algebra.

NOAH
 Damn right you did. I knew it.
 That's what happens when you stop
 stuffing your worksheets under the
 bed.

ANNIE
 You should frame that thing.

EMMITT
 I was gonna show my dad, but...
 figured I'd show you first.

Noah is about to say something when—

The doorknob rattles.

Annie tenses. Noah shifts slightly. Emmitt looks confused.

The door flies open.

SPENCER (20s)—sweaty, drunk, flushed with rage—stumbles into
 the kitchen. His shirt clings to him with sweat. His eyes
 bloodshot, jaw clenched.

SPENCER
 (seeing Noah)
 You think you're better than me?
 Telling Annie what she needs?

NOAH
 (flat)
 Emmitt, go wait in the living room.

EMMITT
 (confused, scared)
 No, I can—

NOAH
 (cutting him off)
 Now, Em.

Emmitt backs into the hallway but doesn't leave entirely—he
 hides just around the corner, watching.

SPENCER
 You always looked down on me. Since
 we were kids. With your neat little
 books and your straight-A crap.

NOAH

You're drunk. Get out of here.

SPENCER

You think she'd still talk to you if you didn't have the degree? The smile? You think it's not about race?

Noah's eyes flick toward the hallway—he knows Emmitt is listening.

NOAH

It's not about race. It's about character. Something you lost the minute you hit her.

SPENCER

You're just a Black kid with a fancy shirt and a head start. You think that makes you better than me?

NOAH

No. I think that makes me safer to be around.

Spencer lunges.

EMMITT flinches.

But Noah doesn't miss a beat. He sidesteps, pins Spencer to the wall in a clean, efficient move—fast, powerful, practiced.

Noah's arm shakes—not from fear, but from restraint. His voice drops to a lethal whisper.

NOAH (CONT'D)

You ever come back here—if you even look at her the wrong way—I will bury you.

SPENCER

(spits)
She's not yours.

NOAH

No. But she's sure as hell not yours anymore.

Noah lets go.

Spencer stumbles. Glares at all of them—and storms out, slamming the door behind him.

Silence.

Noah breathes heavy. Annie stares. Emmitt steps into the room, wide-eyed.

EMMITT

(low)

That was... like something out of a movie.

Noah looks over at him. Tries to soften.

NOAH

You okay?

EMMITT

Yeah. I just... I didn't know what to do.

NOAH

You did the right thing. Some fights aren't yours to fight.

A long beat.

EMMITT

You're not just smart. You're strong.

NOAH

Don't forget kind. And devastatingly handsome.

Emmitt lets out a laugh—relief breaking through.

ANNIE

(to Emmitt, softly)

Come sit. You're safe here, sweetheart.

They sit at the table. Noah puts a hand on Emmitt's shoulder. Annie grabs the tea.

The moment holds—wounded, but warm.

ELIJAH (V.O.)

That night, Emmitt saw what strength looked like. Not fists or fury. Not screaming.

(MORE)

ELIJAH (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 But power wrapped in stillness. And
 restraint forged in fire.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. SPENCER'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A rundown one-bedroom. Dimly lit. Boxes half-packed, others overturned. Clothes strewn. A torn photo of Spencer and Annie rests face-down on the coffee table beside an empty whiskey bottle.

Spencer paces in boxers and a stained t-shirt. His knuckles are raw—he's been punching something. The air feels stale.

A local newscaster drones from the background TV:

ANCHOR (V.O.)
 —warm weather expected through the
 weekend. In other news, school
 districts are preparing for the
 annual—

SPENCER
 (shouting at nothing)
 He thinks he's better than me.
 Always did.

He grabs the photo frame and hurls it at the wall. Glass shatters.

SPENCER (CONT'D)
 You think she really wants you,
 Noah? She's mine.

He stares at his reflection in the dark window. His face is puffy. Bruised. Twisted in a mixture of shame and fury.

He stumbles to the couch, drops down. Pulls out his wallet.

Inside: a tattered wedding photo of him and Annie at nineteen. Smiling. Carefree. She's looking up at him. He stares at it for a long time.

He closes his eyes. His breath shakes.

A beat of silence.

Then his jaw tenses again. The rage returns like a tide.

He opens the drawer beneath the coffee table.

Inside: a small pistol wrapped in an old cloth.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

EXT. NASH FAMILY HOUSE - PORCH - NIGHT

Birdie Nash (15), confident and radiant, opens the door.
Emmitt stands nervously.

SCARLETT (O.S.)

(gently)

You got this, Em. She'd be crazy to
say no.

EMMITT

Hey, Birdie. You look... amazing.

BIRDIE

You clean up nice, Heed.

EMMITT

So... you wanna go to the dance
with me?

Birdie smirks, leans on the doorway.

BIRDIE

Took you long enough.

She grabs her coat. They head off.

ELIJAH (V.O.)

First love's got no timing. It just
crashes in like a thunderclap.

FADE IN:

INT. SCHOOL GYM - NIGHT

The SPRING FORMAL is in full swing. Colored lights spin
across the walls.

A DJ blasts "Celebration" by KOOL & THE GANG. Students laugh,
dance, and pose for pictures.

FLASH INSERT - DRESSING ROOM

Noah holds up a ridiculous neon jacket. Emmitt grimaces.
Annie adjusts Emmitt's tie, grinning.

NOAH (V.O.)
You wear this, she's yours.

BACK TO GYM:

Emmitt, dressed sharply, leads Birdie onto the dance floor. They join a crowd of students dancing.

ANNIE and NOAH stand by the punch bowl, smiling.

NOAH
Come on. One dance. For old times.

ANNIE
(laughing)
You're going to embarrass us.

NOAH
Exactly.

They jump in with goofy moves. Students cheer them on.

INT. SCHOOL GYM - LATER

MUSIC CUE: "I want to know what love is" remastered by Foreigner."

The music slows. Lights dim to a warm glow. Students pair up.

Emmitt and Birdie sit at the edge of the dance floor, laughing.

EMMITT
You wanna sit this one out?

BIRDIE
What? Miss the slow dance? Not a chance.

They walk hand in hand to the floor. Emmitt sees Noah.

EMMITT
Thanks for everything. I mean it.

NOAH
Stay confident. Keep studying hard. She's waiting for you.

Emmitt nods and rejoins Birdie.

Across the gym, GRAYSON nervously approaches SCARLETT.

GRAYSON
Uh... wanna dance?

Scarlett grins and takes his hand.

DANCE FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Emmitt and Birdie sway. Slowly, his hand finds hers. Their fingers intertwine. A subtle smile from her.

Across the gym, Scarlett gently rests her head on Grayson's shoulder.

In that soft moment—they all seem safe.

INT. SCHOOL GYM - SIDE EXIT - CONTINUOUS

The gym doors swing slightly open.

A MALE FIGURE (SPENCER) stands half-shrouded in shadows, just outside. Watching.

Then disappears back into the night.

ELIJAH (V.O.)
For one night, the world was kind.
First loves bloomed, fears faded,
and everything felt possible. But
storms don't announce themselves.
They wait. And this was their last
moment before the rain.

FADE OUT.

INT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

The SPRING FORMAL winds down. Teens pile into cars, music still faintly pulsing from the gym.

Noah walks Annie toward her car, both glowing from the night.

MUSIC CUE: "Fate of the Kingdoms" by Ramin Djawadi.

NOAH
You looked good out there.

ANNIE
You didn't look too bad yourself.

A flicker of something crosses Noah's face. He looks around.

NOAH
(sharper)
Let's get you home.

They pick up the pace. Annie wraps her arm in his.

From the shadows behind a row of cars, a figure shifts.
SPENCER (20s), drunk, jittery, and wild-eyed, steps into the open.

SPENCER
Annie!

ANNIE
Spencer... what are you doing?

Annie gasps and freezes.

SPENCER
You think you can ignore my calls?
Dance with him like I'm nothing?

NOAH
(stepping forward)
Walk away, Spencer.

SPENCER
This is your fault. Always was.

NOAH
You need help. This isn't the way.

SPENCER
You made her hate me!

He pulls a GUN from his coat.

ANNIE
No—!

Noah instinctively steps in front of her.

NOAH
Annie, run.

BANG.

The first shot hits Noah in the chest. He stumbles.

BANG.

The second hits him in the side. He collapses to the pavement.

 SPENCER
 (sees Noah hit the ground)
Oh my God...
 (staggered breath, lowers
 the gun)
What did I do...
 (regret)
Noah...

A frozen beat. His face twists between panic and horror.

 SPENCER (CONT'D)
No, no, no—

He drops the gun. It clatters on the pavement.

Then he bolts into the night.

 ANNIE
 (screaming)
Noah!

She drops to her knees beside him.

SPENCER runs into the night. Distant SCREAMS from the dance echo.

Noah reaches up weakly, brushing Annie's hand.

 NOAH
 (grasping)
At least you're safe... My mom...
she'll help you. Help Emmitt.

His hand falls.

Annie wails.

 ELIJAH (V.O.)
Noah Presley gave Emmitt the tools
to live. And then, without
warning... he gave him the pain
that would shape everything after.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. AVA PRESLEY'S HOUSE - NEXT DAY - AFTERNOON

MUSIC CUE: "The Night King" by Ramin Djawadi.

Jonathan's black sedan pulls up slowly to the curb. The driveway and front lawn are packed with cars. Heed Industries employees and neighbors gather, subdued, offering food and flowers at the front door.

Inside the car, Emmitt sits in the back seat, face sullen, his fists clenched in his lap. A faint bruise marks his temple. Jonathan kills the engine, exhausted and seething.

JONATHAN

(in a low, bitter voice)

You got suspended for vandalizing
the school. Cursing at the
principal. Skipping class. And now
this.

Emmitt doesn't look up.

Jonathan opens the door—but before he can get out, DICKIE HARRISON (50s, grizzled, silent and unnerving) steps up to the driver's side window. He's dressed in all black, a pistol barely hidden beneath his blazer. His eyes are locked on Emmitt.

JONATHAN (CONT'D)

Dickie.

DICKIE

(quietly)

We found him.

JONATHAN

Spencer?

Dickie nods. A long pause.

DICKIE

Won't be a problem anymore.

Jonathan absorbs that. He doesn't flinch.

JONATHAN

Probably for the best.

Dickie shifts his gaze back to Emmitt.

DICKIE

(slowly)

You coming in, kid?

Emmitt finally lifts his eyes. Dickie stares straight through him, saying nothing more. The tension crackles. Something unsaid hangs in the air.

JONATHAN
Come on, Emmitt. Show some damn
remorse. Ava lost her son.

Jonathan slams the door shut and walks ahead.

Emmitt gets out. Dickie watches his every movement.

JONATHAN (CONT'D)
(to EMMITT)
Come inside. Try to show some
respect.

INT. AVA'S HOUSE - FOYER - CONTINUOUS

Emmitt steps into the foyer, stunned by the chatter, the food, the normalcy.

Emmitt turns toward his friends. Jonathan grabs his shoulder.

JONATHAN
Absolutely not.

His eyes dart to Birdie, Scarlett, then land on Trey—smirking.

TREY
Real classy, showing up like this.

Emmitt shoves him hard—Trey crashes into a table.

JONATHAN
Enough with you! After everything
Noah, Annie, and Ava did for
you—this is how you show respect?

He drags Emmitt into the dining room.

INT. AVA'S DINING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The table is lined with food. Guests try to act casual.

JONATHAN
(shouting)
Sit down. Shut up. Don't get up
until I say so.

EMMITT
(shouting)
Why don't you shut the fuck up, for
once in your life?!

Gasps around the room. Jonathan storms over.

JONATHAN
Knock it off!

EMMITT
You knock it off, you asshole!

Jonathan yanks him to his feet.

EMMITT (CONT'D)
(CONT'D)
(screaming)
I wish YOU were the one who died!

Jonathan reels. Emmitt continues, breaking down.

EMMITT (CONT'D)
(sobbing)
Why do all the good people die? Mom
died! Blanche died! They should've
never died! People like Trey should
die! YOU should die! I should die!

Emmitt's voice lowers. Lost now.

EMMITT (CONT'D)
But Noah?

Then he snaps back into screaming:

EMMITT (CONT'D)
Not Noah! All Noah ever did was
help people! Annie didn't deserve
this! Ava didn't deserve this!

The room is silent. Jonathan softens, stunned.

JONATHAN
I didn't know. I didn't know you
were hurting this bad.

Emmitt is hysterical. Nothing calms him.

A quiet hush. AVA enters from the hallway.

She approaches Emmitt.

AVA

Emmitt.

EMMITT

(sobbing)

I'm sorry... Not Noah... I'm sorry
I did this in your house.

AVA (SOFTLY)

Do you want to go upstairs and see
Annie?

He nods, breath hitching. She takes his hand.

AVA (CONT'D)

Noah was proud of you. He'll always
be looking out for you.

She leads him upstairs. Guests look on, quiet with grief.

FADE OUT.

TITLE: THREE YEARS LATER

Emmitt (16) slides into the passenger seat of a used but
clean coupe, grinning from ear to ear.

ELIJAH (V.O.)

At sixteen, Emmitt had his first
car. He had straight A's. And
Birdie Nash. Life was finally
looking up.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - DAY

Emmitt and Birdie laugh, driving with the windows down. They
park at a quiet spot overlooking the water.

BIRDIE

You ever wonder if it's too good
right now?

EMMITT

(grinning)

Only every second I'm with you.

ELIJAH (V.O.)

Grayson and Scarlett were close,
but dating other people. Jonathan,
though, was never home.

SWITCH TO:

INT. SCARLETT'S ROOM - NIGHT

Scarlett clutches the edge of the sink. Her reflection flickers in the bathroom mirror, distorted by steam. Her breath shortens. Her hands tremble. She wipes tears furiously, as if they betray her.

ELIJAH (V.O.)

Scarlett had inherited her mother's illness. No one knew—except Emmitt. He kept her secret. He protected her.

SWITCH TO:

INT. HEED INDUSTRIES - DOLLY'S OFFICE - DAY

DOLLY NASH (50s), fierce and poised, speaks into the phone while scanning reports.

ELIJAH (V.O.)

While Jonathan fought to keep Heed afloat, it was Dolly who kept the home office together. She had already saved the company years earlier, after the plane crash that took her husband, and the collapse that followed. But this was different.

INT. HEED INDUSTRIES - BOARDROOM - NIGHT

Jonathan confronts irate investors. Charts and maps flash on a screen.

ELIJAH (V.O.)

The loans Jonathan took during the Carter years came due. Junk bond sharks circled. Rivals saw blood in the water.

INT. DARK ROOM - NIGHT

JACOB T. REYNOLDS (60s), a man who could bankrupt you with a handshake, sips bourbon in his leather bunker.

ELIJAH (V.O.)

Jacob T. Reynolds—a crook dressed in suits—wanted Heed for himself. He began sabotaging the company from the inside.

INT. MIAMI NIGHTCLUB - PRIVATE BOOTH - NIGHT

JOHNNY MALONE, 50s, sharp-eyed and dangerous, lights a cigar. He flips through Heed's financials.

ELIJAH (V.O.)

But blood runs deep. Johnny
Malone—a distant cousin from
Elijah's side, and Jonathan's old
war subordinate—heard the call. He
served under Colonel Heed in
Vietnam. He had money to launder.
And a debt to repay.

INT. DOLLY'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Malone meets with Dolly. She's skeptical, but firm.

DOLLY

Last time we took a shortcut... was
after we buried my husband and half
the board. That was a plane crash.

MALONE

I'd have buried the bastard who
rigged the engine.

DOLLY

You show up with money and secrets.
You think I'm just going to say
yes?

MALONE

No. I think you're smart enough to
say yes before someone else bleeds
for your 'no.'

DOLLY

We're not taking cartel money.

MALONE

I'm not cartel. I'm family. And I
don't want control. Just give me a
corner to hide my cash.

DOLLY

I've seen deals like this before.
They always start with
handshakes... and end with
funerals.

MALONE

Not this one. This ends with the
Heed name still on the building.

INT. HEED INDUSTRIES - NIGHT

ELIJAH (V.O.)

Malone's money flowed in quietly.
But Reynolds didn't stand down. So
the old ways came back.

EXT. REYNOLDS' ESTATE - NIGHT

Reynolds wakes to headlights and shadows. HEED HENCHMEN storm
through the house. Guns out. Quiet. Efficient.

One henchman falters, gun shaking. The leader grips his
shoulder:

HENCHMAN LEADER

We don't miss. We don't return.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Reynolds shakes, barefoot, as a blade glints under his chin.

HENCHMAN

This is your only warning.

ELIJAH (V.O.)

They made their point. Heed
Industries would not be taken.

INT. MALONE'S PLANE - DAY

Malone toasts alone, flying over the Everglades. He reaches
into his coat, pulls out a faded photo of him and Jonathan in
uniform.

MALONE

For the Colonel.

ELIJAH (V.O.)

Malone was glad to help. For blood.
For loyalty. And for the kind of
honor only thieves remember.

FADE OUT.

INT. HENCHMEN'S BUNKHOUSE - NIGHT

A rustic building on the edge of the Heed compound. Inside, two men sit in quiet reflection: RALPH "RALPHIE" GATES (late 70s) and DICKIE "SLICK" HARRISON (60s), polishing weapons, sipping coffee.

Nearby, an open cabinet reveals rows of tagged knives, handguns, and worn radio sets. Above it, a framed newspaper clipping:

"Attempted Heed Takeover Thwarted."

A younger Ralphie stands behind Elijah in the photo.

Ralphie walks with a limp. His pressed slacks and loafers give him the look of a retired banker—until he adjusts the .38 on his hip.

RALPHIE

(to Dickie)

Remember when Jacob Reynolds thought he could shake down the Heeds? He squealed like a hog in that silk robe.

DICKIE

(chuckling)

Man couldn't even finish his sentence before pissing himself.

RALPHIE

Elijah would've liked you. You don't talk much, but you move quick.

DICKIE

Let's just hope we don't need to move again.

RALPHIE

(smiles)

We always move when it matters.

NARRATION:

ELIJAH (V.O.)

Elijah found them when the company was young—rodeos, rail yards, backroom bars. Never on the payroll as anything official. Security consultants. Facility managers. Whatever the accountant wrote.

EXT. HEED COMPOUND - NIGHT

The henchmen climb into an old truck. As the truck disappears down the service road, its red tail lights flicker across the Heed crest on a gate post.

The old guard, still watching the perimeter.

ELIJAH (V.O.)

They weren't thugs. They weren't heroes. They were the last promise Elijah Heed made to himself—that no matter what came for his family, someone would always be ready to answer.

FADE OUT.

TITLE: 30 YEARS LATER

INT. HEED FAMILY ESTATE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

The house is larger now, but still holds its character. Framed photographs line the walls—weddings, family vacations, proud newspaper headlines.

A faint dent remains in the bannister from Emmitt's childhood tantrum. A worn patch in the rug where Elijah once paced.

The house had grown... but never forgot.

ELIJAH (V.O.)

Thirty years had passed. Birdie and Emmitt had married and raised a son—Reed, now eighteen. Grayson and Scarlett had married too. Their children, Conrad and Kimberly, were growing fast.

INT. HEED INDUSTRIES - EXECUTIVE BOARDROOM - DAY

Grayson (mid-40s), poised and methodical, sits across from Emmitt (mid-40s), confident and weathered by leadership. Papers are spread before them—strategic plans, new ventures.

ELIJAH (V.O.)

Jonathan passed of natural causes. Dolly stayed on, loyal as ever. And when she retired, Emmitt and Grayson took the reins.

INT. HEED INDUSTRIES - DOLLY'S OFFICE - DAY

Dolly closes a heavy file. Stands. A lone photo of her late husband sits on the desk. She places her hand over it, nods once, and walks out.

INT. HEED INDUSTRIES - SECURITY OFFICE - DAY

RALPH "RALPHIE" GATES (late 70s) and DICKIE "SLICK" HARRISON (60s), sharp-eyed and battle-scarred, clear out their desks.

ELIJAH (V.O.)

One of Emmitt's first decisions as CEO—he let the henchmen go. With pensions, yes. But no more shadows. No more backroom enforcement.

INT. PARKING LOT - LATER

Ralph and Dickie exit the building in silence. They don't speak, but their expressions say everything.

DICKIE

(retired drawl)

Don't feel like a victory, Ralphie.

RALPHIE

It ain't.

They drive off separately.

ELIJAH (V.O.)

They'd been protectors, problem-solvers—ghosts of a bloodier era. And now, ghosts with nowhere to haunt.

EXT. TRUCK STOP - LATER

Ralphie's truck idles. A duffel bag in the backseat. He opens the glove box. Inside: a pistol and a folded photo of Elijah and Jonathan.

ELIJAH (V.O.)

Some men fade. Others wait.

FADE OUT.

FADE TO:

EXT. DOLLY'S ESTATE - BACKYARD - NIGHT

A lavish party is in full swing. Hundreds of guests mingle beneath twinkle lights. A band plays jazz under a white tent. Laughter, drinking, dancing – the world of wealth on full display.

MUSIC CUE: "Stone in my Heart" by Hans Zimmer.

INT. DOLLY'S ESTATE - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Emmitt walks alone, a bit tipsy. He opens the door to Birdie's old bedroom to grab cigars.

INT. BIRDIE'S OLD ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Emmitt steps inside, flipping the light.

FREEZE.

INT. BIRDIE'S OLD ROOM - CONTINUOUS

To his shock, he sees a MAN – someone they know but aren't close with – partially undressed, with SCARLETT, naked. They're startled but not mid-act.

EMMITT

What the hell are you doing?

Scarlett giggles suddenly. Then bursts into tears.

SCARLETT

You don't get it... I'm broken.

Scarlett, dazed, mutters something incoherent. Emmitt's face changes—he recognizes the signs. She's having a bipolar episode.

EMMITT

Get dressed. Now.

(to the man)

If you say one word about this,
I'll make you regret it.

The man scrambles out. Emmitt tosses Scarlett her clothes. She stares at him, disoriented.

SCARLETT

You have to protect me. Like
always. Like when we were kids.

EMMITT

Get dressed. I'll say you had too much to drink, and you weren't feeling well.

SCARLETT

(yelling)

No! I need to leave now!

EMMITT

Scarlett, please. You can't-

SCARLETT

NOW!

Emmitt grabs a blanket, wraps it around her.

EXT. BACKYARD - NIGHT

Emmitt leads Scarlett along the edge of the garden. Laughter echoes from nearby.

From the tent, someone turns - A GUEST - but Emmitt ducks behind a hedge.

EMMITT

(whispering)

Just a little farther...

They reach the garage and take one of the cars.

INT. CAR - NIGHT - MOVING

Scarlett cries beside him.

SCARLETT

I love Grayson... I don't know why I did that...

EMMITT

It's going to be okay. We'll get through it.

SCARLETT

You're the only one who knows. I'm sorry. You're the only one who understands.

Suddenly, she tries to open her door.

SCARLETT (CONT'D)

I shouldn't exist. I ruin
everything. You should've let me
die.

She lunges for the handle.

EMMITT

Scarlett, stop!

He grabs her arm. The car veers off the road. Tires screech.
They crash—violently.

EXT. ROADSIDE - MOMENTS LATER

Emmitt crawls through the shattered glass.

EMMITT

Scarlett?

She's motionless. Her eyes open but blank. Blood trails from
her hairline.

EMMITT (CONT'D)

No... no... no...

He screams — a sound we've never heard from him before.

Twisted metal. Smoke. Emmitt lies on his back, dazed.
Scarlett's lifeless body lies beside him.

BLACKOUT.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Beeping machines. Emmitt wakes, face bruised. GRAYSON looms
above him.

GRAYSON

(quietly)

She's dead, Emmitt. Scarlett is
dead.

(beat, simmering)

And you were found with her. She
was half-naked. In a wreck.

(rising fury)

What the hell were you doing with
my wife?!

Emmitt says nothing. His jaw tightens. A tear slides down his cheek. He grips the blanket to stop his hands from shaking. Emmitt struggles to sit up.

EMMITT

Grayson, I-

GRAYSON

Don't! You were found with my half-naked wife and you crashed a car! You...!

EMMITT

Nothing happened. She was drunk.

GRAYSON

She wasn't. They tested her. She was stone sober.

OUTSIDE THE ROOM

A UNIFORMED OFFICER watches through the glass, taking notes.

Emmitt stares, silent. He can't reveal the truth.

GRAYSON

You're going to pay for this. I'll make sure of it.

He storms out.

ELIJAH (V.O.)

Some lies protect the living. Others bury the dead. Emmitt chose silence—for Scarlett's dignity. But the cost would come due.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. GRAYSON'S OFFICE - EARLIER

Grayson stands before a mirror, adjusting his tie. Kimberly and Conrad's photos stare back from his desk.

GRAYSON

You always said I'd never lead, Scarlett. Watch me now.

INT. BOARDROOM - HEED INDUSTRIES - DAY

A board meeting in session. Grayson stands at the head of the table, composed and assertive. Dolly sits quietly at the far end, eyes cold.

GRAYSON

As you know, the bylaws state that any officer serving prison time must be removed from their position. Emmitt's case is pending, and the optics are damaging.

BOARD MEMBER 1

We can't wait. The company needs stability.

BOARD MEMBER 2

We vote today.

The vote is called. Hands raise.

BOARD MEMBER 1

By majority vote, Grayson Nash is appointed CEO, effective immediately.

Dolly slams her hand down.

DOLLY

This is a mistake.

Grayson turns toward her with false calm.

GRAYSON

Then we'll vote on one more thing. I move to remove Dolly Nash from the board of directors.

DOLLY

You'd cast me out, your own mother?

GRAYSON

You've let emotion cloud your judgment for too long.

The vote is swift. Dolly's eyes burn with betrayal as the result is announced.

BOARD MEMBER

Motion passes.

Dolly stands. Her voice trembles with restrained fury.

DOLLY

You've forgotten who built this company. Who saved it—twice.

She turns to leave.

(beat)

DOLLY (CONT'D)

But you'll remember. When this all comes crashing down. Just don't pretend you weren't warned.

She walks out. Silence.

INT. BOARDROOM - CONTINUOUS

No one moves. No one breathes.

Grayson stares at the empty seat.

FADE OUT.

INT. COUNTY JAIL VISITATION ROOM - NIGHT

A dim, windowless room with two chairs and a metal table. Emmitt sits in one, bruised but defiant. The door opens—DOLLY steps in, her expression tight but determined.

DOLLY

There's someone you need to meet.

She steps aside. JOHNNY MALONE (60s), sun-worn, slick-haired, with an aura of quiet menace, steps into the room. He wears a linen jacket, looks like he just stepped out of a storm.

DOLLY (CONT'D)

This is Johnny Malone. He's your father's cousin. Served under him in Vietnam. Loyal. And quiet—when it counts.

EMMITT

(to Malone)

You the one who kept the lights on?

MALONE

You could say that. Your daddy needed capital. I had... liquidity. Came from a few fast boats and a few slower men.

Emmitt gives him a long look. No judgment—just curiosity.

MALONE (CONT'D)

Never got charged. Helped the feds crack the pipeline in the Glades. Burned a lotta bridges doing it. Stayed gone after. Until Dolly said you were worth coming back for.

DOLLY

He's not here for glory, Emmitt. He's here to keep you alive.

MALONE

You're going to prison. That's real. But I've got people in there—lifers who owe me favors. They'll watch you... if I keep the warden happy.

EMMITT

(quiet, almost bitter)
At what cost?

MALONE

You already paid most of it.

A pause.

MALONE (CONT'D)

Now listen close. Before they sentence you, shift your voting power. Give it to a hedge fund out of New York. They're not saints, but they'll keep your company out of Grayson's hands. I already made the calls.

DOLLY

This might be the only way to save what's left.

Emmitt nods slowly.

EMMITT

Alright. Let's do it.

INT. COURTHOUSE - DAY

Flashes pop. Emmitt, suited but gaunt, walks toward the courthouse flanked by lawyers.

INT. COURTHOUSE - PRIVATE ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Emmitt signs the last page. He hesitates, then sets the pen down slowly—like he's surrendering a part of himself.

MALONE

(to Emmitt before exiting)
Keep your back to the wall. And
your heart out of sight.

INT. PRISON INTAKE - NIGHT

Fluorescent lights. Emmitt is escorted in, shackled and stripped of all status. A TRUSTEE smirks, pushing him against a wall.

TRUSTEE

Malone better keep the checks
coming. Or next time, it's not just
a warning.

Emmitt's eyes burn with rage, but he stays silent.

PRISON ARC - MONTAGE / SEQUENCE DRAFT

INT. PRISON CAFETERIA - DAY

Emmitt sits at the front table with the Trustees—brutal enforcers of the Warden's order.

He eats in silence, eyes cast down, surrounded by men who laugh too loud and stare too hard.

They serve him first. It's not respect—it's the Warden's leash.

TRUSTEE (MOCKING)

What's your net worth now, Wall
Street?

He slaps the back of Emmitt's head.

A tray clatters somewhere. Emmitt doesn't flinch.

TRUSTEE 1

Enjoy it, CEO. Hot meal and a
warning.

He shoves Emmitt's shoulder—smiling too wide.

INT. CELL BLOCK - NIGHT

A GUARD (Malone's man) watches silently as a group of high-value inmates—Emmitt included—stagger into their cells. They're bruised, beaten, but their faces untouched.

ELIJAH (V.O.)

Malone paid for protection. One man behind bars. One in uniform. But protection doesn't always mean peace.

INT. INFIRMARY - LATE NIGHT

Emmitt lies on a cot. Beside him, a former politician, ribs taped, eyes swollen. No doctors. Just time.

Their hands rest near each other on the edge of the bed. Fingers tap once—twice—like Morse code.

They say nothing. But it's understood. Survive.

INT. GUARD'S OFFICE - NIGHT

The guard loyal to Malone dials a burner phone under flickering lights.

GUARD

Malone... it's getting worse. Your guy on the inside? They took him out last night. And the warden's tightening the leash.

INT. PRISON YARD - NIGHT

Rain falls. Emmitt stands alone under a flickering light, staring through razor wire at the sky.

ELIJAH (V.O.)

In prison, silence isn't safety. It's survival.

LIGHT BUZZES. CUT TO BLACK.

BETRAYAL BACK HOME - INTERCUT

INT. GRAYSON'S OFFICE - DAY

Grayson stares at a dossier—grainy photos of Emmitt and Sheila, labeled timelines, paternity speculation.

He slams a hand down.

GRAYSON
Son of a bitch.

INT. SMALL BAR - FLASHBACK (YEARS EARLIER)

Emmitt, mid-40s, shares a quiet, passionate moment with Sheila, Trey's wife.

They kiss in the back booth—regret and desire colliding.

SHEILA
This can't happen again.

EMMITT
I know.

ELIJAH (V.O.)
In times of silence and separation,
hearts drift. Some drift into fire.

INT. TREY'S HOUSE - PRESENT DAY

Trey, drunk and shaking, stares at a photograph of his son. He throws it across the room, glass shattering.

TREY
(to himself)
He got her heart. Did he get my son
too?

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Reed, now a young physician, confronts Birdie.

REED
You knew. You knew something
happened. And you stayed?

BIRDIE
It was a mistake... a long time
ago.

REED
Then fix it now.

MONTAGE:

- Papers signed. - Divorce finalized. - Birdie packs a suitcase.

INT. PRISON VISITATION - DAY

Emmitt sits alone.

The guard walks over.

GUARD
Nobody's coming.

He nods. Doesn't flinch.

INT. PRISON YARD - NIGHT

A light drizzle coats the cracked pavement. Emmitt, older now, gaunt but hardened, walks alone by the fence. A TRUSTEE approaches with two others, grinning.

TRUSTEE
You been quiet lately, Heed. Boss thinks maybe you're forgetting who runs this place.

The beating starts. Emmitt tries to shield himself, but it escalates. One trustee pulls a shiv.

The blade cuts Emmitt's shoulder-deep.

His eyes lock with the attacker's. Something breaks inside.

EMMITT (LOW)
No more.

He lashes out-grabs the wrist, twists, slams.

Suddenly-Emmitt turns savage, fighting back with primal fury. He stabs one of the men with their own blade. The others back off.

INT. WARDEN'S OFFICE - LATER THAT NIGHT

The WARDEN sits with his feet on the desk, nervously puffing a cigar. The body is gone. A GUARD stands nearby.

WARDEN

If that boy leaves this prison, so does my lake house. Now, unless you want to be mopping blood off the commissary wall, this never happened.

The guard nods.

ELIJAH (V.O.)

In a place where justice never set foot, survival wrote its own laws. Emmitt didn't want to kill that man. But in that moment, he chose life.

INT. DOLLY'S STUDY - NIGHT

Stacks of old ledgers. Framed newspaper clippings. A wall of Heed Industries' history. Dolly (late 60s), dressed in silk and steel, speaks into a phone with fire in her eyes.

DOLLY

You remember 1982, don't you, Frank? When your boy got caught moving steel with no permit? Who kept that off the books?

(pause)

Now you keep your end. I want a voice on that debate stage. Tonight.

She hangs up, exhales, and pulls a faded photo from her drawer - Elijah, Jonathan, and a young Dolly standing proudly in front of the original Heed plant.

INT. CAMPAIGN OFFICE - DAY

A disheveled candidate, CLAYTON WARD, mid-40s, populist charm, looks up as Dolly walks in flanked by two aging but formidable former HENCHMEN. She places a file on his desk labeled: WARD '86 STRATEGY - BY DOLLY HEED.

CLAYTON

You bring two ghosts and a war plan. Should I be scared?

DOLLY

Only if you say no. You're running a nice campaign. Too nice.

CLAYTON

I don't have the machine behind me,
Mrs. Heed. They've got Wall Street
and the press.

DOLLY

They've got money. We've got the
people. You run on labor, legacy,
and justice. I'll give you field
ops in every industrial county and
an ad budget big enough to make
your rivals wet themselves.

CLAYTON

What's the price?

DOLLY

Just one thing. First day in
office, you sign a pardon. Full and
unconditional. Emmitt Heed walks
out a free man.

CLAYTON

Done.

She shakes his hand - firm and final.

INT. TV STUDIO - NIGHT (DEBATE)

Clayton Ward lights up the screen. He hammers corporate
corruption, promises criminal justice reform, and calls out
Florida's prison abuse scandal by name.

CLAYTON

(on stage)

It's time we stop punishing good
men for protecting bad legacies.

Clayton points directly at his opponent.

CLAYTON (ON STAGE) (CONT'D)

We punish working men while crooked
politicians walk free. We lock away
sons for sins they didn't commit. I
believe in redemption. I believe in
Emmitt Heed.

MONTAGE:

- Flyers flood union halls: "VOTE WARD. SAVE OUR JOBS."
- Old Heed workers canvass door-to-door.

- Dolly on the phone, calling in senators, bishops, union bosses.
- Ballot boxes fill.
- TV ticker rolls: WARD WINS IN HISTORIC LANDSLIDE.

INT. GOVERNOR'S MANSION - MORNING AFTER INAUGURATION

A marble hallway. HARRIET RICHARDS, mid-40s, no-nonsense Chief of Staff, hands the Governor a manila folder marked

EXECUTIVE PARDONS.

HARRIET

I hope he's worth it. Because this one's going to raise hell in Tallahassee.

GOVERNOR WARD

I gave Dolly Heed my word. And I keep my word.

He signs.

EXT. PRISON - MORNING

A convoy of BLACK SUVs rolls up. HARRIET RICHARDS (40s), sharp suit, sharper eyes, steps out flanked by elite STATE POLICE.

WARDEN

(to himself)
What the hell now?

Harriet flashes credentials.

HARRIET

We're here for Emmitt Heed. By order of the Governor.

INT. PRISON - CELL BLOCK

The Warden scrambles to catch up. Harriet marches through the block. One GUARD hesitates. She stares him down.

HARRIET

Take me to him. Now.

They round the corner-

-TRUSTEES are torturing high-value inmates. Emmitt stands in the center, soaked, hands raised, being punched in the back.

Harriet steps forward.

HARRIET (CONT'D)
STOP THIS NOW!

The Guard knocks out the lead trustee. Chaos halts.

WARDEN
(pretending surprise)
What in God's name-

HARRIET
(cold)
Save it.

WARDEN
This must be a misunderstanding-
these men were just being...
disciplined.

HARRIET
(ice cold)
No. They were being brutalized.

She steps up to Emmitt. His lip is bleeding. He's in shock.

HARRIET (CONT'D)
(SOFTLY)
Mr. Heed. The Governor of Florida
has issued you a full pardon.
You're a free man.

Emmitt stares, numb.

WARDEN
Lower your hands, son. You're going
home.

Harriet turns to her men.

HARRIET
Secure the yard. Arrest every
trustee. Escort every one of these
prisoners to medical. No more
secrets.

ELIJAH (V.O.)
Sometimes it takes fire to end the
darkness. For Emmitt, freedom
didn't feel like justice. It felt
like survival.

INT. PRISON YARD - CONTINUOUS

HARRIET turns to the WARDEN, who fumbles for control.

WARDEN

I'll begin processing Mr. Heed this week. Paperwork, medical, the usual—

HARRIET

No. He walks in an hour. With us.

WARDEN

(swallowing hard)
Of course.

He gestures toward Emmitt, still shaking and bloodied.

WARDEN (CONT'D)

I'll take him to my office. He can clean up. Private washroom. We'll... expedite.

As they move, Emmitt suddenly bends forward and vomits on the pavement.

GUARD

Sir—are you able to walk?

Emmitt breathes through it, nodding.

EMMITT

Yeah. Let's just get it over with.

INT. WARDEN'S OFFICE - LATER

A sterile room, fake wood paneling. Emmitt stands shirtless at a basin, steam fogging the mirror. His back is a horror of old bruises, lash scars, and infected welts.

The WARDEN watches from the doorway, frozen. He's seen a lot—but not this.

WARDEN

(softly)
Jesus Christ...

He clears his throat, regaining composure.

WARDEN (CONT'D)

If I had known—I would've stopped it. You should've come to me.

EMMITT
(deadpan)
You think I'm stupid?

The Warden exhales, pacing.

WARDEN
Okay. Fine. You got me. You say one
word—just one—and those "friends"
of yours? They disappear. Cell by
cell. And nobody asks why.

A long pause.

EMMITT
(measured)
I won't say a thing.

Emmitt dries his hands. Meets the Warden's gaze in the
mirror.

EMMITT (CONT'D)
You're going to do something for
me.

The Warden narrows his eyes.

EMMITT (CONT'D)
You make them safe. All of them.
And you make them the new trustees.

WARDEN
You serious?

EMMITT
Dead.

Another pause. The Warden considers. Nods slowly.

WARDEN
Done. Long as you keep quiet.

EMMITT
You should've kept your hands
clean.

He turns back to the sink.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. GOVERNOR'S RESIDENCE - SARASOTA - LATE AFTERNOON

A majestic coastal estate brims with power players—judges, donors, political lifers. Luxury cars glint in the circular drive. EMERGENCY VEHICLES idle discreetly at the curb.

A BLACK SUV caravan pulls up. Doors open. EMMITT, gaunt but upright, steps into the sunshine, flanked by HARRIET and

STATE POLICE.

From the steps, WYATT (70s, cane in hand, proud but weathered) steps forward with a smile.

WYATT
(quietly, with weight)
Welcome home, Emmitt.

They clasp hands. It's not warm—but it's deeply respectful.

INT. GOVERNOR'S RESIDENCE - MAIN HALL - MOMENTS LATER

OPULENT INTERIOR. Chandeliers sparkle. Waiters pass champagne. Political elites mill, laughing too loudly.

EMMITT, in borrowed dress clothes, follows WYATT past a curious crowd. He keeps his head down.

WYATT
You clean up better than you think.

EMMITT
I still smell like that place.

WYATT
Then let them smell it. Might do them some good.

They enter —

INT. SALON - CONTINUOUS

A FIRST LADY, early 50s, polished and powerful, greets HARRIET with a tight hug. HARRIET whispers something about the prison. The First Lady listens with visible emotion.

FIRST LADY
Poor man. I want to meet him.

WYATT
Let's let him breathe first.

Meanwhile, Emmitt leans near the bar, trying to vanish.

He turns—surprised—to see three aging HENCHMEN in the corner, dressed surprisingly well, sipping whiskey. They nod to him.

EMMITT

(quiet)

What the hell are they doing here?

WYATT

Dolly's idea. Just in case this little party needed... security.

EMMITT

They probably hate me. I fired them all.

WYATT

You really don't get it, do you?

EMMITT

What?

WYATT

They didn't work for you, son. They served your family. Generations of them. You think firing them changed that?

INT. SALON - HENCHMEN CORNER

The three old henchmen sip their drinks, watching Emmitt from across the room.

HENCHMAN #1 (GRUFF)

Bet the spoiled brat had it easy in there.

HENCHMAN #2 (CHUCKLING)

Spoiled brat? Hell, I saw him at thirteen patching tire treads with bare hands. Tough as his granddaddy.

HENCHMAN #3 (SMIRKING)

Still fired us.

HENCHMAN #2

If I were him, I'd have fired you ten years before that.

They all LAUGH—rough, guttural, genuine.

Back across the room, Emmitt sees them laughing and instinctively tenses—until one of them raises a glass and tips it to him.

Emmitt nods back—just a flicker—but something in him softens.

INT. SALON - LATER

FIRST LADY finally approaches.

FIRST LADY
Mr. Heed. I just want to say...
your story matters. Florida needs
men like you home.

EMMITT
(stiff, quiet)
Thank you, ma'am.

HARRIET, standing behind, watches closely. She nods to the First Lady.

HARRIET
That's enough for now.

INT. SALON - CORNER WITH WYATT

WYATT
So... what now?

EMMITT
I don't know. But I ain't afraid
anymore.

WYATT
Good. You'll need that.
(beat)
Dolly'll be proud you stood up.

EMMITT
She already stood up enough for me.

INT. GOVERNOR'S RESIDENCE - SALON - LATER THAT EVENING

WYATT speaks with a small group of power players—retired generals, judges, and former CEOs. Behind him, EMMITT stands still, pale and trembling slightly, his body catching up to the trauma.

MUSIC CUE: "Funeral by the Sea" by Ramon Djawadi.

WYATT
(quietly, to Emmitt)
You okay, son?

EMMITT
I... think so.

WYATT
Why don't you take a break? Couch
is right behind you.

Emmitt nods. He moves slowly, as if each step takes effort.
But instead of sitting—

INT. SALON - COUCH - CONTINUOUS

EMMITT lies down on his side in the fetal position, clutching
a pillow, facing away from the crowd.

GUESTS glance over. The HENCHMEN squint from across the room.

HENCHMAN #1
What the hell is he doing?

From the other side of the room, HARRIET and the FIRST LADY
look over, concerned.

WYATT, still mid-conversation, turns slightly—just in time to
notice the henchmen moving toward the couch.

WYATT
(under his breath)
What now...

He walks toward the couch—then freezes.

INT. SALON - COUCH - MOMENTS LATER

Blood.

Spreading through Emmitt's shirt, soaking the back. WYATT's
face goes pale.

WYATT
Jesus...

He kneels beside the couch and gently touches Emmitt's arm.

WYATT (CONT'D)
Emmitt. Emmitt, can you hear me?

EMMITT
(stirring, barely audible)
Sorry. I didn't mean to... lay
down.

WYATT
It's alright. Just... can you sit
up?

Emmitt nods weakly. With effort, he leans forward.

WYATT (CONT'D)
Let me see your back.

EMMITT
Okay...

HARRIET, FIRST LADY, and the HENCHMEN gather. Someone
unbuttons and lifts Emmitt's shirt.

Gasps.

Silence.

His back is a map of horror—fresh welts, long scars, and
still-bleeding wounds. Some too deep to have healed. No one
speaks.

Even the henchmen, hardened men who've seen and done terrible
things, stiffen in shock.

FIRST LADY
Oh my God...

HARRIET, stoic to a fault, steps forward. Her armor cracks.
Tears well instantly. She tries to speak, but can't.

HARRIET
(softly)
Who... did this?

WYATT
(angrily)
We need an ambulance.

EMMITT
No. Just take me home.

WYATT
Emmitt—

EMMITT
Just... get me out of here.

The group clears a path. Emmitt slowly rises, helped by two henchmen. He keeps his shirt half-off, bleeding but standing tall.

HARRIET steps into his path. She looks down—then gently touches one of the scars.

Then, she cries. Not a sob—but a single, devastated tear.

HENCHMAN #1
(buttons Emmitt's shirt)
Let 'em look at your eyes instead.

EXT. GOVERNOR'S RESIDENCE - NIGHT

EMMITT exits the house flanked by WYATT and the HENCHMEN.

Harriet stays on the porch, a single light casting her in silhouette. She doesn't move.

The door closes behind them.

INT. WYATT'S CAR - MOVING - NIGHT

WYATT drives, silent and tense. EMMITT leans against the window, eyes closed.

The taillights vanish beneath the moss, swallowed by the swamp road.

INT. WYATT'S CAR - LATER

WYATT glances over. Emmitt's eyes are open now, staring forward.

WYATT
(softly)
They're gonna answer for what they
did to you.

EMMITT
Not if we burn it all down first.

They drive on into the dark.

INT. HEED INDUSTRIES - BOARDROOM - DAY

The long, gleaming conference table is surrounded on one side by cocky, young hedge fund officers in expensive suits—R.J. DOOLEY among them.

They're laughing, scrolling their phones, and sipping coffee from branded mugs. The vibe is casual, dismissive.

MUSIC CUE: "Rhaenyra's Welcome" by Ramin Djawadi.

The heavy doors BURST open.

EMMITT HEED steps in—calm, determined, his posture unwavering despite the scars and trauma barely a week behind him. Cindy trails him, clutching a clipboard, trying to keep up.

EMMITT
(to Cindy)
Bring the portrait, a nail, and a
hammer.

He walks to the head of the table, moves every chair to the opposite side except one in the center for himself. The young men exchange confused glances.

R.J.
Uh... what's going on here?

EMMITT
You're about to find out.

He sits. Silence. The hedge fund officers murmur among themselves. Cindy enters quietly with the hammer, nail, and a picture of Emmitt, his father Jonathan, and Dolly. Emmitt hangs it on the wall with a single THUD.

One of the hedge funders notices a fresh scar beneath Emmitt's collar. His smirk fades.

EMMITT (CONT'D)
(to Cindy)
Call Robby. Put him on speaker.

INT. ROBBY DOOLEY'S OFFICE - NYC - INTERCUT

ROBBY DOOLEY answers, cheerful.

ROBBY
Emmitt! Hell of a comeback. I
assume you're calling to thank me?

EMMITT
No, Robby. I'm calling to give you
a choice.

The room stiffens.

EMMITT (CONT'D)

I know about the REIT. I know your fund sold off our properties... and then bought them through your own real estate trust.

Robby flinches.

ROBBY

(sputtering)

We... we made you a fortune while you were gone!

LAWYER (O.S.)

It's not illegal. Maybe unethical, but-

EMMITT

(interrupts)

If I don't get every deed and asset back, I'll make sure both of you face RICO charges before Christmas. You didn't just betray a company—you laundered, double-dipped, and defrauded shareholders.

Silence.

ROBBY

(quiet)

You wouldn't....

EMMITT

Try me.

Suddenly, the boardroom doors open again. WYATT steps in, followed by a group of ELDERLY MEN in crisp suits—the original board of HEED INDUSTRIES. These men, now old but sharp-eyed and steady, beam when they see Emmitt.

WYATT

As requested.

EMMITT

(to the hedge fund officers)

Gentlemen, meet your replacements.

The YOUNG MEN look stunned as the OLD GUARD takes seats around the table. They greet Emmitt warmly.

OLD BOARD MEMBER #1

Didn't think I'd sit in this room again. Damn good to be back.

OLD BOARD MEMBER #2
 We heard you boys took away the
 pension plans. That ends today.

EMMITT
 You have no idea what else they
 did. But you're about to.

Cindy starts moving chairs back into their original
 positions. The receptionist peeks in, jaw dropped.

INT. BOARDROOM - LATER

The hedge fund officers are now quiet, some visibly sweating.
 A stack of signed documents rests in front of Emmitt.

EMMITT
 Consider this a full reversal.
 Every property returned. Every
 pension restored. And Robby's
 voting rights-gone.

R.J.
 You can't just-

EMMITT
 I can. I did. And you all signed
 it.

R.J.
 (desperate)
 You'll destroy our fund. We can
 work something out. You need us-

EMMITT
 I needed my family. You sold them.

R.J. and the rest slowly rise, defeated.

OLD BOARD MEMBER #2
 (to Emmitt)
 You look just like Jonathan when he
 fought off those junk bond
 corporate raiders.

As they walk out, the OLD GUARD rises and begins pounding the
 table.

OLD GUARD
 (chanting)

HEED! HEED! HEED! HEED!
 The chant grows louder, echoing
 like thunder. Emmitt closes his
 eyes for a moment—his name, once
 disgraced, now vindicated. He is
 finally home.

FADE OUT.

INT. BANQUET HALL - NIGHT

Laughter, champagne, applause.

A banner reads: WELCOME HOME EMMITT.

Emmitt enters the packed banquet hall. Handshakes, back pats.
 Flashbulbs pop.

But Emmitt's smile is thin. His eyes scan the room. No
 Birdie. No Reed. No Grayson.

ELIJAH (V.O.)
 He came home a hero... But the chairs
 once filled by love sat empty.

INT. BANQUET HALL - LATER

A glass clinks. Someone gives a toast. Emmitt nods politely,
 drink in hand. The room roars for him.

ELIJAH (V.O.)
 Scarlett was gone. Birdie had moved
 on. And Grayson...

INT. GRAYSON'S LIVING ROOM - FLASHBACK - NIGHT

Dark. Hot. The hum of a dead HVAC.

KIMBERLY (20s) puts on a t-shirt, a flashlight in hand. Her
 sweat is visible.

GRAYSON (O.S.)
 I'll call the electric company
 again. I promise.

Kimberly stares at him—frustrated, loyal.

KIMBERLY
 Or you could call Grandma. Or Aunt
 Birdie. We're hot, Dad.

GRAYSON

No.

He forces a smile. She doesn't return it.

INT. COLLEGE CAMPUS - FLASHBACK - NIGHT

CONRAD (late 20s), black t-shirt and mohawk, climbs into his beat-up truck. A guitar case in the backseat. He's on the phone.

CONRAD

I got it. I'm headed there now.
Tell Dad not to do anything dumb.

INT. GRAYSON'S LIVING ROOM - FLASHBACK - LATER

Kimberly finds a note on the kitchen counter. Her face drops.

KIMBERLY

Oh my God...

She bolts to the hallway.

KIMBERLY (SCREAMING) (CONT'D)

DAD?!

INT. BATHROOM - SECONDS LATER

Conrad CRASHES through the door.

Grayson lies in the tub. Water tinged red. A bloody razor. Passed out.

CONRAD

No, no, no...

Conrad leaps in, slipping. He wraps Grayson's wrists in towels, holding them tight. Kimberly fumbles for her phone with shaking hands.

CONRAD (TO KIMBERLY) (CONT'D)

Call 911! Now!

He holds his father's face above the water.

ELIJAH (V.O.)

Grayson thought ending it was the only way to leave his kids something.

(MORE)

ELIJAH (V.O.) (CONT'D)
But Conrad and Kimberly gave him
what he really needed: A second
chance.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - FLASHBACK - WEEKS LATER

Grayson lies in a hospital bed, eyes hollow. Birdie sits
beside him, holding his hand.

BIRDIE
(softly)
Come back to us.

ELIJAH (V.O.)
He refused the money. But he
accepted the love.

INT. BANQUET HALL - NIGHT (PRESENT)

Emmitt stares at his untouched drink. Wyatt leans in.

WYATT
You alright?

EMMITT
I just found out about Grayson. He
tried to...

He trails off.

EMMITT (CONT'D)
I knew he was angry. I just didn't
know how much it hurt him.

WYATT
Pride can take a man high. But it
can leave him stranded when the
wind dies.

Emmitt nods, eyes misting.

ELIJAH (V.O.)
For all the empires he'd rebuilt...
Emmitt was only beginning to
understand the cost.

FADE OUT.

INT. BANQUET HALL - NIGHT

The celebration has ended. People are clearing out, hugging, and thanking Emmitt. The energy has calmed, and Emmitt now stands alone by the door.

EXT. DOLLY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A modest Southern-style home. Emmitt pulls up quietly, turns off the car, and walks toward the door. The porch light is on.

INT. DOLLY'S HOUSE - FOYER - NIGHT

MUSIC CUE: "Journey to the Line" by Hans Zimmer.

EMMITT enters and is surprised to find REED, his son, standing in scrubs, arms crossed.

EMMITT

Reed.

Reed does not move. The air is heavy with tension. That walk feels like a mile.

Emmitt moves in for a hug. Reed doesn't reciprocate.

EMMITT (CONT'D)

I'm proud of you. You became a doctor.

No response.

EMMITT (CONT'D)

Where's your mother?

REED

With her husband. Tom.

EMMITT

Of course. I hope she's doing well.

REED (DRYLY)

Of course, she is. She's married to a doctor. One who's never served time in prison or killed anyone.

Emmitt stares at his son, absorbing the hit.

EMMITT

I know you're angry. But I love you. I'll always care for your mother.

REED

You cheated on her—with Trey's wife. I might have a brother.

EMMITT

Son, I'm sorry. Your mother and I were separated. And that is Trey's son.

CONRAD walks past silently. A mohawk, ripped jeans and a black shirt. Emmitt blinks.

EMMITT (CONT'D)

Who was that? What's with the mohawk?

REED

That's your godson, Conrad. Talking to Kimberly.

Emmitt glances around the corner, sees CONRAD and KIMBERLY near Dolly's room.

REED (CONT'D)

You ruined their lives too. They came home to no power. Uncle Grayson slit his wrists.

A LITTLE GIRL runs in.

BETHANY

Are you my grandpa?

EMMITT (SOFTLY)

I must be. And you must be Bethany.

BETHANY

Yes! How did you know?

They laugh together.

EMMITT

I look forward to getting to know you.

REED

Let's not get ahead of ourselves.

Emmitt glares. Reed smirks.

JO JO, Reed's wife, walks in carrying a BABY. She sees the tension.

JO JO
Hello, Emmitt. I'm glad to finally meet you.

REED
Don't get too excited.

JO JO hands him the baby.

JO JO
(to Reed)
Stop it.

She turns back to Emmitt and hugs him. He's stunned.

JO JO (CONT'D)
I'm sorry for everything you've gone through. I feel like I already know you. All the stories Dolly and Birdie told me... You'd think Birdie was still in love with you.

REED
Enough already.

JO JO
No, enough with you. I'll make sure he's in his granddaughter's life.

REED
Over my dead body.

JO JO (SMILING)
That can be arranged.
(laughing)
I'll call Dolly's hench-guys or whatever they're called.

Emmitt chuckles.

EMMITT
You landed a winner, son.

REED
It's time to go.

Emmitt hugs the girls goodbye. Reed walks out without another word.

INT. DOLLY'S HOUSE - DEN - NIGHT

A warm, wood-paneled room with a fireplace and an antique bar. Family portraits line the walls. The silence is heavy but comforting.

Emmitt enters, loosening his tie. He walks to the bar and carefully selects a bottle - Macallan 1926. He takes a moment, reverent.

Across the room, GRAYSON sits in a chair, legs crossed, nursing his thoughts. He's older, weary. He watches Emmitt.

GRAYSON

Going for the good stuff, huh?

Emmitt grabs two Glencairn whiskey glasses. Drops an ice cube in each.

GRAYSON (CONT'D)

I spotted that bottle when I walked in. Always wondered what it tasted like.

Emmitt pours the whiskey. He picks up his glass, swirls it gently, inhales deeply. Then sips - savoring it.

GRAYSON (CONT'D)

So...

(smirking)

You drop the soap in there?

Emmitt freezes. Just for a beat. Then shakes his head.

EMMITT

You're still a jackass.

He walks the second drink over to Grayson without a word. Then returns to the bar with his own glass.

Grayson chuckles, raises the glass in a mock toast, and takes a sip.

GRAYSON

Damn. That's... really good.

Emmitt nods, his back still to Grayson.

GRAYSON (CONT'D)

Listen, I was a bastard. I know that. But you should've told me what really happened with Scarlett. You didn't have to be... Noah.

Beat. Emmitt turns, face unreadable.

GRAYSON (CONT'D)

And look how that ended for both of
you.

Emmitt puts his drink down and crosses to Grayson. Without asking, he kneels and gently pulls up Grayson's sleeves.

Scarred wrists. Fresh and faded.

Grayson looks away, ashamed.

EMMITT

Why, Grayson?

GRAYSON

(quiet)

I thought the only shot my kids
had... was if I died. The suicide
clause had expired. They'd get the
insurance.

EMMITT

You could've asked Dolly.

GRAYSON

(shrugs)

I was angry. At you. At her. At...
everything. She backed you. Always
did. Always you.

EMMITT

(softly)

She saved my life.

Grayson takes another sip. Emmitt watches him, both men cloaked in old pain and uneasy forgiveness.

GRAYSON

I wasn't supposed to end up like
this.

EMMITT

None of us were.

Silence. Emmitt sits next to his oldest friend. They both stare into the fire.

GRAYSON

It was never about the company.

EMMITT

I know.

They sit in the flickering firelight, two broken men bound by blood, mistakes, and the women they loved and lost.

FADE OUT.

INT. DOLLY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

A fire crackles gently. Dolly rests in bed, thinner than before but radiant with joy.

The door creaks open—GRAYSON and EMMITT step in together, laughing, shoulders bumping like the boys they once were.

DOLLY
(teary, smiling)
My boys. My boys are back...

She claps softly, overwhelmed.

DOLLY (CONT'D)
I lived long enough to see this.
Thank you, Lord.

Grayson raises his drink, a little drunk but glowing with warmth.

GRAYSON
Hey kids, look at this—your
godfather's out of prison. And
we're speaking again.
(pause)
Has hell frozen over?

They laugh. EMMITT pulls Kimberly and Conrad into a hug.

EMMITT
If there's anything you ever
need... you ask. I mean it.

GRAYSON
(Waves him off)
No handouts. But they could use a
nudge.
(raises glass)
But I won't turn down another one
of these.

DOLLY laughs from the bed—a sound that feels like old times.

DOLLY
I prayed for peace... and you
idiots finally delivered.

They all share a quiet moment. Grayson sits on the edge of Dolly's bed. Emmitt stands nearby, steady.

ELIJAH (V.O.)

Some wounds don't heal clean. But
for one night, they forgot the
pain. For Dolly... it was enough.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

A stained-glass window bathes the pews in gold and violet light. The place is full—but Emmitt stands alone at the rear.

He wears a dark suit. Tired. Heavy. The room buzzes softly.

At the front: GRAYSON, now quietly respected, sits near the altar with his kids. DR. TOM is beside BIRDIE. REED, JO JO, and Emmitt's granddaughters cluster near them.

MUSIC CUE: "The Prince That Was Promised" by Ramin Djawadi.

Emmitt sees them. It lands like a gut punch.

INT. CHURCH - MOMENTS LATER

The OLD GUARD, dressed sharp, shake Emmitt's hand. HENCHMEN nod solemnly. One of them slaps Emmitt's shoulder, like old times.

But the warmth doesn't last. He keeps glancing toward his son—and the distance between them is louder than any prayer. He looks at Bethany and stairs for a moment

INT. CHURCH - EULOGY

EMMITT stands at the pulpit. He looks down at Dolly's casket. His voice is steady, but behind it is the ache of a broken compass.

EMMITT

She saved this company three times.
She saved me more than that.

(pauses)

If you knew Dolly... you knew
someone who believed in you more
than you did. Sometimes that was
enough. Sometimes... that was all
that held you together.

INT. HEED INDUSTRIES - NIGHT

Fluorescent lights. Emmitt sits at his desk, still in his funeral suit.

The HENCHMEN file in. Their faces are tight.

HENCHMAN #1

Trey's drunk. Talking like he knows something.

HENCHMAN #2

About the warden. About you. Wants money to shut up. We hid surveillance cameras in house.

EMMITT (QUIETLY)

Pay him.

HENCHMAN #1

Even if it ain't true?

EMMITT

A rumor doesn't have to be true to ruin us.

Beat.

Emmitt is staring at a picture of Dolly.

EMMITT (CONT'D)

Keep it clean. Quiet. No more blood. Just... handle it.

The henchmen nod and exit. Emmitt stares out the window.

The skyline glows, indifferent. Behind him, the office is filled with plaques, awards, and silence.

ELIJAH (V.O.)

The empire stood. The family... didn't. And legacy, Emmitt learned, is a crown made of thorns.

INT. HEED INDUSTRIES - PRIVATE OFFICE - NIGHT

The room is dark, save for the glow of a monitor.

EMMITT sits alone. The HENCHMEN wait in the adjoining lounge, unusually quiet.

ON SCREEN - a video plays. TREY, drunk, stands over JUNIOR.

TREY
 (on video)
 You ain't mine. You're that
 convict's mistake.

JUNIOR
 (choking up)
 Please stop... I'm not... they just
 said things. I'm not...

TREY
 Fag. That's what you are. Weak.

Junior flinches. The camera shakes as Trey stumbles
 offscreen.

EMMITT watches, jaw clenched. Then—another clip:

JUNIOR, alone in his room. Tear-streaked, clutching a pillow.

JUNIOR (MUMBLING)
 I can't take it anymore. I didn't
 do anything wrong... why do they
 hate me?

Silence.

Then, a whisper:

JUNIOR (CONT'D)
 I wish I was never born. I wish I
 was dead.

Emmitt SLAMS the laptop closed. A SCREAM erupts from inside
 him.

HENCHMEN (O.S.)
 Whoa—what the hell?

INT. HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

The door BURSTS open. Emmitt storms out—eyes bloodshot,
 breathing hard.

HENCHMEN
 Emmitt! What did you see?

EMMITT
 (shaking)
 Stay out of it.

He barrels out the door. Tires SCREECH moments later.

The henchmen scramble to follow.

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Emmitt's car cuts through traffic like a bullet, headlights blazing.

INT. HENCHMEN'S CAR

HENCHMAN #1
He's going to kill Trey.

HENCHMAN #2
Not if we get there first.

INT. TREY'S FRONT PORCH - NIGHT

Rain taps on the wooden planks. TREY opens the door shirtless, drunk, bottle in hand.

TREY
(grinning)
Look who finally-

SLAM. EMMITT shoves Trey hard, the bottle falls and shatters.

INT. TREY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Trey stumbles backward into a dark, cluttered living room.

TREY
What the hell, Heed-?

EMMITT
(shaking with rage)
You miserable, pathetic piece of
shit.

Trey reaches for a fireplace poker. Emmitt tackles him into a shelf. Glass and wood shatter.

EXT. TREY'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Rain falls harder.

Three HENCHMEN wrestle with Emmitt on the porch, dragging him out of the doorway.

HENCHMAN #1
Get him out of here!

HENCHMAN #2
He's gonna kill the bastard!

Emmitt's shirt is ripped. His knuckles are bloodied. He's in tears, shaking, enraged and broken.

EMMITT
LET ME GO! YOU DON'T GET TO HURT

HIM LIKE THAT!

They throw open the car door and shove him inside. Slam it shut. The car peels off.

INT. TREY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

A FOURTH HENCHMAN stands in the entryway. He surveys the damage. The room is wrecked. Blood on the floor. A cracked photo frame.

He looks down the hallway. We don't see what he sees.

HENCHMAN #4
God help us...

He closes the door slowly, locking it behind him.

INT. CAR - NIGHT - DRIVING

Emmitt sits in the back, staring into space. Rain streaks across the windows. The other henchmen sit in silence, unsure if they just prevented a murder—or covered one up.

EXT. TREY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The car vanishes into the night, red tail lights bleeding into the dark road. Rain begins to fall.

INT. JUNIOR'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

JUNIOR sits on the edge of his bed, still trembling from what he's heard. The room is dim. He opens the drawer beside him and pulls out a worn photo of his mother—smiling, alive, holding a much younger version of him in her arms.

His fingers brush the edge of the photo. He holds it to his chest. A tear falls. For the first time in a long time, it's not from pain, but from relief.

NOAH (V.O.)

Something changed that night for Junior. Since the day his mama died, he'd been drifting—no anchor, no reason. But now... he knew. Someone was watching over him. And for the first time in a long time—he had a reason to live.

INT. EMMITT'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - NIGHT

EMMITT stands at the sink, shirt torn, blood drying on his hands and forearms. His reflection in the mirror is blank—calm, almost.

He turns on the faucet.

The blood runs off in ribbons—thick, red, and final.

He watches it go, like he's watching something leave him.

FADE TO BLACK.

MUSIC CUE: "The Night King" by Ramin Djawadi

INT. REED'S HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - DAY

Emmitt stands at the door, holding a neatly wrapped gift with trembling hands. He hesitates. Looks at the doll box, then to the house.

A beat. He takes a deep breath and knocks. No answer.

He places his hand on the doorknob, wrestles with his conscience... then slowly opens the door.

INT. REED'S HOUSE - FOYER - CONTINUOUS

Emmitt steps inside cautiously.

EMMITT
(softly)
(MORE)

EMMITT (CONT'D)

Hello? Anybody home?
He hears muffled laughter
coming from the backyard.
Just then
REED enters from the
hallway. Stops dead when
he sees his
father.

REED

What the hell are you doing here?

EMMITT

I... I just wanted to drop off a
gift. For Bethany.

He gently places the present on the table. Reed walks over,
grabs it, and shoves it against Emmitt's chest.

REED

No. You don't get to walk in here
like nothing happened. You're not
welcome.

EMMITT

Reed, I made mistakes. But I always
loved you. We were close—

REED

Before you went to prison. Before I
knew what you did to Mom.

EMMITT

I loved Birdie. I still do. And
I've tried to protect this family,
even when I failed.

A tense silence. Emmitt's eyes well.

EMMITT (CONT'D)

I'm not asking you to forgive me.
Just... don't erase me.

JO JO enters from the hallway, holding plates.

JO JO

Reed, are you bringing the cake—

She stops cold when she sees Emmitt. Her eyes soften
instantly.

JO JO (CONT'D)

Emmitt?

EMMITT

Hey, Jo Jo. I didn't mean to interrupt.

She walks over and hugs him.

JO JO

Bethany's going to love seeing you.

REED

He was just leaving.

JO JO

Reed, stop it.

REED

Stay out of this and get back outside.

JO JO

Don't talk to me that way.

REED

Get out of here and let this asshole leave!

Emmitt's eyes fill with shame and heartbreak.

JO JO

You don't mean that.

She takes the gift from Emmitt. Reed lunges to grab it back. The paper RIPS.

JO JO (CONT'D)

Enough!

Jo Jo looks at the torn wrapping, her thumb brushing the edge as if trying to put it back together.

JO JO (CONT'D)

(CONT'D)

(softly)

She'll. Love it.

She storms toward the back door.

JO JO (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, Emmitt. She's going to be so happy.

REED

Don't tell my mom about this.

Jo Jo ignores him and exits. Reed turns back to Emmitt.

REED (CONT'D)

Now you want to ruin my family too?
I hate you. Don't ever try to see
my girls again.

Emmitt doesn't speak. He stares at his son—then turns and walks out.

EXT. REED'S HOUSE - STREET - CONTINUOUS

Emmitt steps into the sunlight. Behind him, distant echoes of children singing "Happy Birthday" drift out from the backyard.

Emmitt pauses, listening. The voices are joyful. His is silent.

A single tear rolls down his cheek.

FADE OUT.

INT. EMMITT'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Silence, broken only by the faint sound of a clock ticking.

The house is dimly lit. The sterile glow of a lone lamp spills across the living room. EMMITT HEED, in his 50s, sits on the edge of a chair like he doesn't belong in his own home. His face is worn, his eyes empty.

On the walls—family photos in silver and gold frames.

He slowly walks over to them, glassy-eyed.

CLOSE ON:

— A photo of a YOUNG REED riding on Emmitt's shoulders. — BIRDIE holding their newborn. — JONATHAN HEED in uniform, smiling beside a young SCARLETT.

Emmitt's fingers trail across the glass.

He opens a cabinet, removes a bottle of JACK DANIELS. No hesitation. He carries it to the dining table, unscrews the cap, and pours a heavy glass.

He sits.

Alone.

Cue music: A haunting melody reminiscent of "Funeral by the Sea" by Ramin Djawadi begins to swell softly in the background. Sparse piano. Strings aching like breath held too long.

FLASH MEMORY MONTAGE - EMMITT'S LIFE

- TODDLER EMMITT and SCARLETT playing in a sunlit garden. - SCARLETT'S MOTHER in a casket, surrounded by white roses. - YOUNG NOAH tutoring Emmitt, laughing warmly.

- ANNIE carefully tying Emmitt's tie before a dance. - TEEN EMMITT dancing to "Celebration" with ANNIE, BIRDIE, NOAH, and

GRAYSON.

Laughter. Color. Motion.

- A slow dance between EMMITT and BIRDIE at their wedding. - BABY REED in Birdie's arms, surrounded by JONATHAN, DOLLY, SCARLETT, GRAYSON. - EMMITT and GRAYSON addressing a packed room of Heed Industries staff—confident, in control, before the fall.

BACK TO SCENE - INT. EMMITT'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Emmitt downs another shot.

He glances around the empty room.

Everything is quiet now.

The music softens. A subtle shift. The melancholy deepens. The warmth of memory fades, replaced by a darker undertone.

Emmitt sets the glass down, presses his fingers to his temples.

His breathing slows.

His eyes fix on the last photo—he and Birdie, standing together, holding Reed between them.

Emmitt doesn't cry.

He just... breaks a little more inside.

HOLD ON EMMITT'S FACE - drained, lifeless.

CUT TO: his body, hours later, collapsed on the floor.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. EMMITT'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Cue music: A slow, haunting composition reminiscent of "Silence" by Hans Zimmer. A spiritual hum beneath soft strings, barely breathing.

EMMITT HEED lies on the floor in only his underwear, curled in a fetal position. His body is soaked in sweat, twitching, convulsing lightly as if reliving a nightmare. His chest rises in shallow gasps.

Tears streak his cheeks.

His hands grip nothing, trembling.

FLASH TO: INT. EMMITT'S BEDROOM - EARLIER THAT NIGHT

EMMITT, drunk, slumped in a chair, a revolver in his shaking hand. He raises it to his head—slips. Tries again.

Can't do it.

He lets it fall into his lap.

Silence. Defeat.

He drops to the floor.

FLASH MEMORY - DARK REVELATIONS

INT. OLD BARN - LATE AFTERNOON (1980S)

YOUNG EMMITT, 12, walks into a dusty barn. SPENCER, teenaged and ragged, turns around, startled.

SPENCER

(soft)

Emmitt. I'm so sorry. I didn't mean to hurt him. I didn't mean to kill Noah.

YOUNG EMMITT stares, expression hollow. He takes another step.

SPENCER (CONT'D)

I was going to turn myself in. I
just needed to say goodbye.

Suddenly-

SHLICK!

A blade flashes. Emmitt stabs him in the gut. Then again. And again.

SPENCER collapses.

DICKIE (40s) bursts in, wide-eyed.

DICKIE

Jesus... Emmitt, go. Go back to
school. Vandalize something. Pick a
fight. Anything.

(beat)

No one can know you were here. I'll
clean it up.

Emmitt, covered in blood, nods in a daze and stumbles away.

EXT. AVA PRESLEY'S HOUSE - THAT NIGHT

JONATHAN HEED pulls up in his car. DICKIE leans into the
window.

DICKIE

We found Spencer. I took care of
it.

He gives a loaded look to Emmitt in the back seat.

BACK TO: INT. PRISON - NIGHT (YEARS LATER)

A prison cell. Chaos. EMMITT is locked in violent struggle
with a TRUSTEE. A shiv in his hand.

Over and over-stab, stab, stab.

Blood sprays the walls. The trustee falls.

EXT. BACK OF VEHICLE - DAWN (FLASHBACK)

The HENCHMEN open a van door.

THE WARDEN, hands bound, is pulled out, forced to his knees.

Footsteps.

EMMITT emerges from the shadows.

Raises a pistol.

BANG.

The warden falls.

INT. TREY'S HOUSE - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Trey is bloodied, crawling. Emmitt, like a storm, strikes again and again. Vicious, primal.

Tears stream down Emmitt's face even as he delivers each blow.

BACK TO: INT. EMMITT'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Music builds in layered sorrow.

Emmitt still lies on the floor, barely breathing. His mouth opens slightly.

He whispers.

EMMITT
Noah... I'm sorry.

INT. BIRDIE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

JO JO sits on the couch, face red and tear-streaked, gripping a tissue. BIRDIE stands nearby, quietly alarmed.

JO JO
(sobbing)
He just... showed up with a gift.
That's all. And Reed—he treated him
like a criminal, like a stranger.
(beat)
You should've seen Emmitt's face. I
couldn't take it. You needed to
know.

Birdie stiffens, heart pounding. She glances toward the hallway.

JO JO (CONT'D)
 He's in the other room. Refuses to talk.

Birdie squares her shoulders.

BIRDIE
 Not for long.

She turns and storms down the hall.

INT. BIRDIE'S HOUSE - DEN - CONTINUOUS

REED sits on the edge of a recliner, brooding.

BIRDIE
 Get your keys. You're taking me to Emmitt's.

REED
 (scoffs)
 He's probably not even home.

JO JO (O.S.)
 If you don't take her, Reed, I'm packing up and moving the girls in with your mother.

Reed looks over, stunned. Before he can answer—

BETHANY (5) appears in the doorway, clutching a doll.

BETHANY
 (quietly)
 Please, Daddy... go talk to Grandpa.

Reed freezes.

After a long pause, he stands.

REED
 (sighing)
 I can't believe I'm doing this.
 (beat, to Birdie)
 Come on, Mom. Let's go.

MUSIC CUE: "The Green Dress" by Ramin Djawadi.

EXT. EMMITT'S HOUSE - NIGHT

They pull up in silence. The porch light is on. Reed knocks.

No answer.

REED

Told you. No one's home. Let's go.

BIRDIE

(sharp)

Stop.

She reaches beneath the flowerpot by the steps—pulls out a hidden key. Reed watches, surprised.

Birdie unlocks the door and walks in.

Reed hesitates, then follows.

INT. EMMITT'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The door creaks open. The house is dark and still.

Their eyes adjust.

Family photos litter the floor—ripped, torn, broken glass.

REED

Jesus...

They step further in—then freeze.

EMMITT lies on the floor, fetal position, soaked in sweat. His chest barely moves.

BIRDIE

Oh my God—Emmitt!

She rushes to him, kneels down, cradles his head.

BIRDIE (CONT'D)

Emmitt... Emmitt, wake up! Please wake up!

His eyes flicker.

He sees Birdie. Then the ruined photos around him.

EMMITT tries to reach for them—embarrassed, ashamed—but collapses again.

BIRDIE (CONT'D)

Don't move. Just stay down. I've got you.

Birdie gently pulls the closest photo from the floor. She presses it into his trembling hand.

BIRDIE (CONT'D)
You're still part of this family.

She holds him, rocking slightly.

BIRDIE (CONT'D)
It's okay... I'm here. It's gonna be okay.

She looks back at REED, eyes blazing with grief and rage.

BIRDIE (CONT'D)
Your father is a good man. Try walking a mile in his shoes—try surviving what he has. And still be standing. ...And if you still judge him after that—God help you.

REED is frozen. Broken. He reaches for his phone.

REED
I'll call an ambulance.

EMMITT
(whispers)
Birdie... I'm sorry. I've always loved you.

Birdie closes her eyes, holds him tighter.

FADE OUT.

INT. EMMITT'S HOUSE - STUDY - NIGHT

A stillness hangs in the air. Curtains sway slightly from an open window. EMMITT HEED, older, worn, sits at his desk. Legal papers neatly stacked beside an untouched glass of whiskey.

SPEAKERPHONE - WYATT (V.O.)
That's it. Your estate is locked. Junior's trust is secure. Reed, Bethany, Kimberly, Conrad... they'll be taken care of.

EMMITT
And Heed Industries?

WYATT (V.O.)
Goes to Grayson, like you wanted.
He's earned it.

EMMITT
Then we're done.

He ends the call.

Emmitt leans back, breathes deep. Silence.

Then --

FLOORBOARD CREAKS behind him.

EMMITT (CONT'D)
(sighs)
Trey, if you came to finish the
job, at least knock.

He turns --

ROBBY DOOLEY stands there. Disheveled. Pale. Desperate. A GUN
in hand.

ROBBY
I lost everything. My firm. My
wife. My kid.

EMMITT
Good. You stole everything first.
You lost yourself a long time ago.

ROBBY
You think you're some hero now? You
think this company-this family-is
pure?

EMMITT
No but it's still standing. And I
paid my price.

ROBBY
I didn't come here to talk.

EMMITT
Then shoot.

ROBBY's hand trembles. A long beat.

BANG.

Emmitt recoils. Slumps into the chair. Blood seeps into his shirt.

ROBBY stares at the blood on his hands. Shaking. Then runs.

MUSIC BEGINS - "Journey to the Line" by Hans Zimmer

MONTAGE --

-- Blood drips from Emmitt's chair. -- JUNIOR stands at a podium, delivering a speech. -- GRAYSON, now CEO, enters the Heed Industries boardroom. -- BETHANY unwraps her favorite doll. -- WYATT and KIMBERLY walk the Heed campus. -- BIRDIE sits alone holding a letter at a gravesite - it's Dolly's grave not Emmitt's.

INT. EMMITT'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - NIGHT

The familiar sink.

A BLOODIED HAND reaches into frame.

It turns on the faucet.

Water runs red. Slowly fades clear.

We never see the face.

EMMITT (V.O.)

Legacy's not about what you leave
behind. It's about who keeps
going... after you're gone.

(beat)

This family isn't finished. And
neither am I.

ONSCREEN TEXT: For Dolly. For Noah. For the ones who held it
together.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END