

RECTIFY
(Pilot)

Story and Teleplay
by
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01/05/12
For Sean Only

DANIEL LUCAS HOLDEN is waiting in a HOLDING CELL at the GEORGIA DIAGNOSTIC STATE PRISON in Jackson, Georgia. At 18 years old, Daniel was sentenced to die. He has spent over 19 years on Death Row. That's 233 months, 1012 weeks, 7084 days of waiting. Waiting to die. Waiting to live. Or waiting for a miracle. Today his waiting will end.

Daniel is now 37 years old, lean with a pleasing but pale face, and faint, dark shadows under his eyes. Through the Plexiglas window, Daniel observes a new INMATE stripping down to be searched. As the Inmate is ordered to bend over, Daniel looks away. He closes his eyes and begins meditating or remembering or dreaming.

CUT TO:

A BLACK-TOP ROAD RUSHING BY

EXT. TWO LANE ROAD -- MORNING

An IMPALA speeds down a rural road, past rows of corn and soy beans. Cows and rotting barns.

Behind the Impala is a TOYOTA LAND CRUISER followed by a HONDA CIVIC. A caravan of sorts. Running late and in a hurry.

INT. IMPALA -- CONTINUOUS

Daniel's MOTHER, JANET TEBOW, 58, reserved and attractive, is on her cell phone. TED TEBOW, SR, Janet's husband of 15 years and Daniel's STEP-FATHER drives. They are tense.

JANET

(on phone)

I don't know why you wouldn't ride with us.

INT. HONDA CIVIC -- CONTINUOUS

AMANTHA HOLDEN, Daniel's 32 year old SISTER rides alone.

AMANTHA

(on phone)

Something seemed karmically wrong about that, Mother.

Amantha has been angry for oh... about 19 years.

JANET

Well, we're late. Karma or not. So have your ID ready and take off your jewelry.

AMANTHA

I've been there a lot more than you lately, Mother. I know the drill.

Janet lets that go. Her call waiting beeps.

JANET

Honey, it's Ted Junior calling in.

AMANTHA

What? Does he want to stop at 7-11
for a Ding Dong?

Janet ignores that too.

JANET

I'll see you there, Amanda.

Janet clicks over to Ted JR.

INT. LAND CRUISER -- CONTINUOUS

TED TEBOW, JR, 29, Janet's STEP-SON and Daniel's STEP-BROTHER,
drives while Ted JR's 24 year old wife, TAWNEY, rides.

TED JR

Hey Mom. Tell Dad he'd better pick
it up. It would really suck if we
were late for this thing.

JANET

I know. I know.
(to Ted SR)
Ted, Teddy said pick it up.

Ted SR doesn't say anything. Just picks it up.

JANET (CONT'D)

(to Ted JR)
Teddy?

TED JR

Yeah, Mom?

JANET

Could you call me Janet?

TED JR

What?

JANET

Just until Daniel gets used to all
the changes and everything.

INT. LAND CRUISER -- CONTINUOUS

TED JR

Sure... Janet.

JANET

Just for a while.

Ted JR puts his phone away, looks at his wife.

TED JR
We've got to call her Janet.

TAWNEY
God, I can't imagine what she's going through right now.

TED JR
Don't assume it's all good.

TAWNEY
What do you mean?

TED JR
Mayor Johnny still believes Daniel was in on it. A lot of people do.

TAWNEY
You don't believe that, do you? That he could have done something that horrible to her?

TED JR
Well, I sure did. I mean, he was convicted. What would a rational person think all these years? Now? Hell, I don't know. I've never even met the guy.

TAWNEY
Which I still don't understand.

TED JR
Come on, Tawney. What was I supposed to do? Go down to death row and introduce myself. "Hi, I'm your new step-brother, Ted, and I'll be taking over the business you thought would be yours one day." Why torture the guy?

Tawney thinks about that.

TED JR (CONT'D)
I hate to say this but we all thought he'd be dead by now anyway.

INT. HOLDING AREA -- CONTINUOUS

Daniel's trance is broken by the sound of a door opening. A YOUNG AFRICAN-AMERICAN GUARD enters holding a suit, shirt, tie, shoes, belt, the works.

YOUNG GUARD
These are for you, Daniel.

Daniel stands up. Stares at the suit. After a moment:

YOUNG GUARD (CONT'D)
I'm supposed to take your prison
clothes.

With that, Daniel begins stripping. Without any self-consciousness. The Young Guard turns his back to Daniel to give him privacy.

Daniel continues undressing and then stops and looks at the Young Guard. It's the first time any guard has turned his back on Daniel in 19 years. It is surreal to him.

YOUNG GUARD (CONT'D)
(with back to Daniel)
Would you like something to drink?

DANIEL
What?

YOUNG GUARD
When I come back, I could bring you
something to drink.

Daniel thinks about it.

DANIEL
A coke.

YOUNG GUARD
Ice?

Pause.

DANIEL
Sure.

All sounds stop. The Young Guard cocks his head and then turns around.

Daniel stands there naked with his prison clothes held out for the Guard. The Young Guard takes them and hands Daniel the new clothes then exits. Daniel stares at the new clothes like they are a mirage.

EXT. PRISON -- CONTINUOUS

Just outside the prison walls, the circus of the PRESS CORP is setting up. TALKING HEADS powdering their faces and warming up their mouths. TECHNICIANS plugging in.

Daniel's Lawyer, JON STERN, early thirties, who works for the non-profit, *JUSTICE ROW*, is talking to a PRISON OFFICIAL.

JON STERN
(to Prison Official)
First, I'll introduce Daniel and his
family--
(Jon's phone rings)
Excuse me, for a moment.
(answering phone)
Where are you?

INT. HONDA CIVIC -- CONTINUOUS

AMANTHA
(on phone to Jon)
Closer by the day.

Jon and Amantha know each other very well from years of
working together on Daniel's case.

JON STERN
If you don't get here soon, I may
have to recruit some people in the
crowd to play the family.

AMANTHA
At least pick ones who are glad he's
still alive.

JON STERN
Good idea.

AMANTHA
Have you seen him?

JON STERN
No. Not yet.

AMANTHA
But he got the suit?

JON STERN
Yes.

AMANTHA
I hope I don't fall apart.

JON STERN
It's OK if you do.

AMANTHA
It just doesn't seem real.

JON STERN
I know. To get released from death
row is a real miracle, Amantha.

AMANTHA

I'm sure I should be grateful but it just makes me madder that he was there all this time. For what?

A Town Car pulls up.

JON STERN

Oh my God.

AMANTHA

What?

SENATOR ROLAND FOULKES gets out of the car. The Media rush over to him.

JON STERN

Roland Foulkes just showed up.

AMANTHA

You're kidding me? Why?

JON STERN

Well, he didn't get to be Senator by not looking out for his own interests.

AMANTHA

No, he got to be Senator by prosecuting my brother for a murder he didn't commit.

JON STERN

(in disbelief)

He's going to make a statement.

AMANTHA

That son of a bitch.

JON STERN

Right here. Wow.

Jon Stern thought he'd seen it all.

INT. DEATH ROW - FLASHBACK

Close on WENDALL JELKS, a white man, masturbating. Wendall was Daniel's Death Row Neighbor for nine years, five months and thirteen days.

WENDALL

Ahhhhhhh. Ahhhhhh. Ahhhhhh!

Pleasure is etched on Wendall's face. And then afterwards:

WENDALL (CONT'D)

Hey Danny boy. Top of the morning to you.

No answer.

WENDALL (CONT'D)

I know you're awake, Danny. You're always awake.

Daniel lies on his steel bed. Eyes open. The two men are in cells side by side. They can't see each other.

WENDALL (CONT'D)

Think you'd get tired of whacking off to the same memories year after year. Ain't happened yet.

Wendall cleans himself up.

WENDALL (CONT'D)

OK, so if you didn't rape the girl, slit her throat, and use her as fire wood--and damn if I ain't beginning to have my reasonable doubts, Dan. So what do you jack off to? Memories of ice cream? The prom?

Wendall cracks himself up. After it dissipates, he says seriously. Intimately.

WENDALL (CONT'D)

Or maybe you just jack off to me jacking off. Maybe that's all you got.

CUT TO:

INT. HOLDING AREA -- PRESENT DAY

Daniel stands there placidly, wearing the new suit and sipping the coke. The Young Guard enters.

YOUNG GUARD

They say it's pretty crazy out there.

Daniel tries to imagine "out there".

YOUNG GUARD (CONT'D)

Where's your tie?

DANIEL

I.... uh... couldn't remember.

YOUNG GUARD

Remember?

DANIEL

How to... tie it. It's a Windsor knot, I think. Or half-Windsor...

Daniel tries to recall his lessons from childhood.

YOUNG GUARD
I could tie it for you.

Daniel looks up at him.

YOUNG GUARD (CONT'D)
I don't know if it's a Windsor knot
but it's the kind I do on me. You
know, for church.

Daniel thinks about that.

YOUNG GUARD (CONT'D)
Tie it on me then we transfer to
you.

DANIEL
OK.

Daniel pulls out the tie from his pocket.

EXT. PRISON -- CONTINUOUS

Senator Roland Foulkes speaks to the media.

SENATOR ROLAND FOULKES
Out of respect for the family of
Hanna Abbigail Dean, I felt it was
my obligation to make a statement
here and to make it today. Almost
two decades ago, I prosecuted a case
where Miss Dean was brutally raped
and murdered. New DNA testing is
not gonna change those facts nor
bring her back. We must remember
that Hanna was only sixteen, a child
with her whole life in front of her.
And that life was taken in the most
heinous manner I have personally
ever seen.

Jon's still on the phone with Amantha.

JON STERN
(on phone)
The court of public opinion is in
session.

AMANTHA
(on phone)
Couldn't he just let us have this
one day?

JON STERN
No.

INT. HOLDING AREA -- CONTINUOUS

The Young Guard and Daniel stand face to face. Daniel lowers his head as the Young Guard puts the tie on him.

YOUNG GUARD

I don't know who picked out your tie
but they got style.

The Guard smiles. The smallest of gestures but it's almost too much. Daniel has to look away as the Guard completes the act.

INT. GUARD ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

A GROUP of GUARDS are focused on the television which is showing the Press Conference live.

REPORTER (V.O.)

Senator Foulkes, sources are saying
that Mr. Holden is still considered
a suspect in spite of the new DNA
evidence?

SENATOR ROLAND FOULKES

(on TV)

I can't make an official comment on
the case as that is the purview of
our current D.A. But to clear up
any misinformation, it's important
to remember the DNA tests only
conclude that there was not a single
perpetrator as was first believed.
That is, there is more than one sperm
sample and those tests couldn't
exclude Holden as a contributor.

The Young Guard escorts Daniel out of the holding cell and through the Guard Room. Daniel stops at the TV and looks.

SENATOR ROLAND FOULKES (CONT'D)

(on TV)

Of course, there is still the other
solid evidence linking Holden to the
victim. Hair, fibers. Eye witnesses
to opportunity and so forth. Even
now as an outside observer, I would
be shocked if Holden doesn't continue
to be a person of extreme interest.

The Guards all look to Daniel who watches Senator Foulkes.

DANIEL

He's aged.

As Daniel starts to leave:

LARGE GUARD

Hey, Holden.

Daniel stops and looks at the Large Guard.

LARGE GUARD (CONT'D)

You ain't fooling me for a minute.

After a moment:

DANIEL

No. I'm not fooling you.

The Young Guard takes Daniel through the door.

EXT. PRISON -- LATER

BELIEVERS of Daniel's innocence and BELIEVERS that he is a killer let their voices be heard.

Jon Stern is leading Daniel's Family through the throng and toward the prison entrance. Amantha is incensed.

AMANTHA

Outside observer, my ass.

JON STERN

The Senator is just being smart. Had he said that in your hometown, a change of venue would have been difficult to oppose. Now he might get to have his cake and eat it too.

AMANTHA

And he sure does a fuck of a lot of unofficial commenting.

JON STERN

Laying the groundwork to re-indict Daniel before he's even released. Plus now our press conference will be tainted.

She sees the Senator speaking to a REPORTER.

AMANTHA

Why don't I just walk over there and kill him right now? They can take me straight to Death Row. Skip the middle man.

He takes her arm.

JON STERN

Amantha, remember everything we do is being watched and judged.

AMANTHA

Can I at least flip him the bird?

JON STERN

No.

A PRISON OFFICIAL meets them at the Visitors' Gate and lets them inside the prison compound.

INT. PRISON HALLWAY -- MOMENTS LATER

It's much quieter in here. The Prison Official leads Janet, Amantha, Jon Stern, Ted Sr, Ted Jr, and Tawney toward a door.

JON STERN

Everyone can say their hellos to Daniel--briefly-- and then we have to go straight to the press conference.

AMANTHA

Hellos and introductions, you mean. I don't know why these two are even here.

Meaning Ted JR and Tawney.

JON STERN

More family looks better. Remember just because he's getting out doesn't mean this thing is over yet. Already events today would indicate we're far from it.

Amantha turns to Ted JR.

AMANTHA

Just try and look like you give two shits.

JANET

Amantha, please.

Ted JR shakes his head. Amantha has never liked him. From day one.

Buttons are pushed and the steel door opens. They walk through the threshold and there he is.

INT. PUBLIC ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Daniel stands there in his new suit and holding his Coke. No glass partition. No door. Nothing between them but air. They all stop. Speechless.

And then Amantha rushes to Daniel and kisses him big on the cheek. And then the other cheek.

Her eyes are brimming with tears. Her face stuck in a big grin.

AMANTHA

That suit fits you perfect. Hot damn. I mean perfect. And you are perfect, brother. You are so Goddamn perfect.

She hugs him hard one last time and stands back to let her Mother come forward.

Janet comes to her son. She is composed. Dignified. She looks her son up and down. She takes his hands. Looks at them. She hasn't touched him or been this close to him in years and years.

JANET

Hello, Daniel.

He smiles slightly and says kindly:

DANIEL

Hello, Mama.

She looks into his eyes. Eyes just like hers. And his slight smile. Like hers. And his reserve. Just like hers. And then suddenly from deep down in a hidden store of sorrow and grief comes gushing forth other worldly sounds that evolve into wails and sobs.

JANET

Ohhhhhh. Ohhhhhh. Ohhhhhh. God. God. God. Goodddddddd!!!! Oh! Oh! Ohhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!

Janet's husband rushes to hold her up as her body heaves and retracts. Amantha holds her too, softening her own years of resentment toward her mother as Janet's sobs and wails continue to grow in power.

Ted JR is dumbstruck at the sight. He has never seen Janet lose control, even a little bit. Tawney is so embarrassed that she looks at the floor. But Jon Stern has seen this before. Or something like this. With other families. He particularly watches a detached Daniel as he calmly pats his Mother's trembling hands while she weeps and weeps.

FADE OUT:

EXT. PRISON -- LATER

Jon Stern stands at a podium set up for the press conference. Daniel stands beside him. The family is behind them. Janet is in shock from her emotional outburst earlier. She has a slight, pasted smile on her face. Amantha holds her hand.

Daniel looks behind him and sees Ted JR who smiles uncomfortably.

TED JR
Pretty weird, huh?

DANIEL
I would say so.

TED JR
Hey look. Sorry I never came for a visit. It's just... you know.

DANIEL
I think I do know, Ted.

Ted JR feels strangely revealed. Daniel turns back around to the front as Jon Stern addresses the crowd.

JON STERN
We are not here to play politics today or to comment on the vulgar theatrics earlier that I am still absolutely agog over. We are here today because the State presented evidence nearly two decades ago and based on that evidence, Daniel Holden was convicted of murder and sentenced to death. We are here today because of the perverse miracle that Daniel is still alive and because of the outright fluke that crucial DNA evidence was not thrown away or lost or destroyed.

During Jon Stern's speech, Daniel notices an OVERWEIGHT MAN in his thirties staring at him. Daniel seems to recognize him. The overweight man turns and walks away.

JON STERN (CONT'D)
We are here because after years of fighting for the right to simply test the DNA to establish if it was Daniel's sperm or not, we finally succeeded. We are here because that testing conclusively disputes that there was a sole perpetrator or that the sole perpetrator was Daniel Holden as the State had claimed. And finally, we are here because justice is, at least, temporarily being served and Daniel Holden is going to be a free man for the first time in nearly twenty years.

The majority of the crowd applauds. There are some boos, too.

Daniel looks up at the open sky, its ceiling so high. Jon Stern gently touches him on the shoulder.

JON STERN (CONT'D)

Daniel?

How long has Jon Stern been calling him? Daniel looks at the microphone. He steps forward. He speaks quietly and humbly.

DANIEL

Hello. Um... I'm not sure what to think of this... drastic change of course in my life. I'm certainly not against it. Over the last two decades, I have developed a strict routine that I've followed religiously, you might say. A series of mental and physical um... habits or exercises that um... well... A way of living and thinking really, or not thinking as was often the point of the... well, the point.

So many faces staring at him. He looks at the ground.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Um... this way of being didn't encourage the contemplation that a day like today could ever occur or a tomorrow like tomorrow will, in fact, be for me now. I had convinced myself over time that kind of optimism, or what I regarded as fantasy really, served no useful purpose in the world where I existed. Obviously, that radical belief system was flawed, and was, ironically, a kind of fantasy itself... though it may have been best to experience things that way at the time. I don't know now. I just don't know.

Daniel thinks about that for a moment and then:

DANIEL (CONT'D)

At the least, I feel somewhat confident those um... specific coping skills were more suited for the life there behind me.

Daniel looks behind him at the prison walls. So odd to be on the outside looking in. He turns back to all the people in front of him.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

And would not serve me so well for the life in front of me. So I will need to seriously reconsider my world view.

Daniel starts snickering at the obviousness of his last statement. Almost like an adolescent. He catches himself and quits. He then falls into a blank stare. Jon Stern whispers into Daniel's ear.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

(to Jon)

Yes. Thank-you.

(to audience)

There are many people to thank. My mother and sister foremost for their enduring love, devotion, and faith. All of my family and friends that... I have. My lawyer, Mr. Stern here for his convictions and doggedness. Science obviously. And not the least, luck.

He looks to Jon Stern.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

That's all I have to say.

Jon Stern steps forward.

JON STERN

OK. A few questions.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PRISON -- DAY

SHOT OF the Impala, Civic and the Land Cruiser driving out of the Prison grounds. FLUME by Bon Iver quietly plays underneath as:

INT. HONDA CIVIC -- CONTINUOUS

Amantha drives Daniel home. He watches things rush by him. There is so much to take in. Too much. Daniel turns away from the window and stares at the floor board.

AMANTHA

Are you getting car sick, Danny?

He looks at her. His sister. Driving him home. The last time he was in a car with her, she was twelve.

AMANTHA (CONT'D)

Danny?

DANIEL

No. I'm just sleepy. I don't know why.

AMANTHA

You can sleep. Why not? I'll drive with both hands.

She made a joke. He smiles at her.

DANIEL

OK.

He turns back toward the window trying to watch all that's passing by but his eyes grow too heavy.

AERIAL SHOT OF:

We track the tiny Civic through the countryside as Daniel sleeps and Amantha drives.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. TEBOW KITCHEN -- LATE AFTERNOON

Janet and Amantha are preparing supper. Amantha is gentle toward her mother now. Janet, though still shaky, has regained most of her usual reserve.

JANET

He slept the whole way?

AMANTHA

Like a rock. All the way into the garage.

JANET

So he didn't see the town? Anything?

AMANTHA

Not even the new Target.

Janet thinks about Daniel's behavior. What it means. Or might mean. It's too much for her right now.

JANET

Hand me the peas, dear.

Amantha does. She watches her mother washing the peas.

AMANTHA

Mom?

JANET

Did you check the roast?

AMANTHA

I did.

Janet puts the peas in the pot.

AMANTHA (CONT'D)

Mom.

Janet knows that tone. She ignores her daughter.

AMANTHA (CONT'D)

What happened to you today was OK.
You know?

Janet doesn't answer. Just puts the pot on the stove.

AMANTHA (CONT'D)

It was a long time coming, Mom.

Janet doesn't want to discuss it. Or think about it. She checks the heat level.

AMANTHA (CONT'D)

For God's sake, it was normal, Mom.

Janet turns to her daughter.

JANET

How is any of this normal? How?
You tell me that.

Her intensity surprises Amantha.

JANET (CONT'D)

Nothing about this has ever been
normal, Amantha. It's not normal
now, and it never will be. Never.
And I'd just like to not talk about
it for a little while. I would like
to simply make supper.

Pause.

AMANTHA

Sure, Mom.

Janet goes to the refrigerator and pulls out the corn.

TED SR (O.S.)

Hello? Anybody in here?

We hear the front door closing. Footsteps.

JANET

(calling out)
Just us chickens.

Ted SR walks into the kitchen. He's followed by his and Janet's only child together: JARED TEBOW, 14 years old with a definite resemblance to his half-brother, Daniel.

JANET (CONT'D)

There's my buddy.

Jared goes to his mother. She kisses him and gives him a big hug. He is her light.

AMANTHA

Don't I get one?

Jared mock-dutifully walks over to his half-sister. She kisses him and holds him tight.

TED SR

Don't I get one?

JANET

Go kiss your Dad.

JARED

That's not what he means, Mom.

Janet knew that.

JANET

Oh.

She kisses her husband.

JANET (CONT'D)

There's one for you, too.

TED SR

Take what I can get.

Ted SR looks over to Amantha and then back to Janet. He senses the tension between them.

JARED

Where is he? He's in the house, right?

Jared's a little nervous about meeting his brother.

AMANTHA

He is taking a hot bath, Jared.

JARED

Oh. That's cool.

INT. BATHROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Daniel lies in the bath tub. With his big toe, he turns on the water.

Daniel fiddles with it to get the water just right. The water gushes out of the spigot. Daniel closes his eyes.

WHIMPERING INMATE (O.S.)
LET ME OUT OF HERE! I CAN'T TAKE IT
ANYMORE!

INT. DEATH ROW - FLASHBACK

Daniel lies on his steel bed. Eyes open. Motionless. It's the middle of the night.

WHIMPERING INMATE (O.S.)
OR KILL ME! JUST KILL ME!

It's not the first time this has played out.

TOUGHER INMATE (O.S.)
I'll kill you, you little punk. If
you don't shut the fuck up!

The Inmate starts whimpering.

WHIMPERING INMATE (O.S.)
Oh Please! I can't take it anymore!

Another INMATE exactly mimics the WHIMPERING one.

MIMICKING INMATE (O.S.)
(exactly mimicking)
Oh Please! I can't take it anymore!

TOUGHER INMATE (O.S.)
(to mimicking inmate)
You better shut up, too, you punk!

MIMICKING INMATE (O.S.)
(exactly mimicking)
You better shut up, too, you punk!

Other inmates join in the screaming and yelling and banging.

WENDALL
Hey Danny, boy. Have you gone mad
yet?

Daniel doesn't answer.

WENDALL (CONT'D)
I can take the perverts and the kooks.
It's the gorillas that try my
patience!

TOUGHER INMATE (O.S.)
(to Wendall)
Shut up Wendall, you child murdering
chomo punk!

WENDALL
(calling back)
Oh great, a fucking ethicist on death row.

TOUGHER INMATE (O.S.)
(to Wendall)
I'll kill you too, pervert!

WENDALL
You're giving me doubts about creationism, ape.

WHIMPERING INMATE (O.S.)
Please kill meeeeeee! Pleasse!

WENDALL
OK. That's it. Bananas for everyone!

They are all in an UPROAR. A frenzy. Banging and screaming. Wendall's laughter joins the CACOPHONY as underneath we hear:

TED SR (O.S.)
Dear Heavenly Father. We thank you for this most wonderful day.

INT. TEBOW DINING ROOM -- EVENING

Janet, Amantha, Daniel and Jared sit at the dining table as Ted SR prays. Everyone has their eyes closed but Daniel who is staring wide eyed at his younger brother. It's like Daniel is seeing himself before the fall.

TED SR
We thank you for this miracle that you have bestowed upon us.

Jared opens his eyes and finds Daniel fixed upon him. It unnerves Jared and the 14 year old almost laughs. He holds it in. Barely. Daniel just watches Jared with a benign fascination. Unaware of his unnerving affect.

TED SR (CONT'D)
We ask that you give us strength and guidance as we begin the healing and the rebuilding of this family.

Jared doesn't understand Daniel's stare. It scares him. Finally he closes his eyes and bows his head again, still feeling the hot, hungry gaze. Daniel is utterly beguiled.

TED SR (CONT'D)
We ask for wisdom as we go forward into the uncertainty of the days ahead.

CLOSE ON: Janet watching her oldest son watching her youngest.

TED SR (CONT'D)

We ask you to bless this food to the
nourishment of our body. And forgive
us of our sins. In Jesus name we
pray. A-men.

AMANTHA

(raising head)

Very nice, Ted.

Daniel looks over at Ted. Almost mimicking Amantha.

DANIEL

Very nice, Ted.

Daniel said that too loud. Everyone notices.

TED SR

Thank you, Daniel.

Daniel tries it again. Quieter. Almost to himself.

DANIEL

Very nice, Ted.

There is an awkward pause.

JANET

Well...

TED SR

Everybody dig in.

Everybody starts helping their plate but Daniel who is
mesmerized by the food, the familial chatter, the delicate
sound a silver serving spoon makes on china.

TED SR (CONT'D)

This sure looks good. What do ya
think, buddy?

JARED

Looks tasty, Mom.

JANET

Thank-you, Jared.

JARED

You're welcome, Mom.

For Daniel, the family gathering is a nearly intolerable
contrast to the seven thousand solitary plastic dinners.

AMANTHA

Can I help your plate, Danny?

Daniel looks at his sister a little too long.

DANIEL

Sure.

As Amantha helps his plate, Daniel sits there like an astronaut waiting for blastoff.

INT. TED JR.'S BEDROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Ted JR and Tawney are in their king sized bed eating delivery pizza while watching the news on the big screen TV.

TV REPORTER (O.S.)

Five times during his incarceration,
Mr. Holden had been scheduled to die
but each time his execution was stayed
through appeal.

Ted JR pops open a beer.

TED JR

I didn't remember it being five.
Damn, that'll tighten your sphincter.
Hand me another slice, baby.

Tawney hands him a slice of pizza.

EXT. PRISON -- NIGHT

A TV Reporter stands outside the prison. Intercut with Ted JR and Tawney.

TV REPORTER

Holden seemed unnerved by all the
attention, sometimes losing his train
of thought, other times laughing, in
what has been characterized, as
inappropriate to the situation.

TED JR

(agreeing)
It was weird.

Cut to a clip of Daniel answering questions. The family is seen behind Daniel.

TED JR (CONT'D)

There you are. See?

Tawney nods.

TED JR (CONT'D)

God. Mom--I mean, Janet freaked
out, didn't she?

TAWNEY

Sssh.

Ted JR looks at Tawney. She stays focused on the TV.

TV REPORTER

(on TV)

Daniel, you don't appear to be very happy at being released.

DANIEL

(on TV)

Uh... there is a lot to process right now. I will probably be happier later.

TV REPORTER

(on TV)

But aren't you even angry that the state took so much of your life from you?

DANIEL

(on TV)

Well...

TV REPORTER

If you didn't commit this crime, then how can you not be enraged at the injustice of your incarceration?

DANIEL

(on TV)

Um... I'm not sure. Perhaps I will be angrier later as I will be happier.

He meant that sincerely but some in the crowd laugh. Daniel looks curiously at them.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

(on TV)

I hope not at the same time though.

More laughter.

TED JR

I hate to say this but it was almost like he was playing for laughs sometimes.

TAWNEY

I don't think so. He just sees things differently.

TED JR

Seriously, did you understand half of what he said in that speech today?

TAWNEY

A lot of it.

TED JR

Yeah right.

TAWNEY

I did.

TED JR

Let's watch something else. This is giving me the creeps.

Ted JR changes the channel. Tawney looks at Ted JR.

TED JR (CONT'D)

Just messing with you.

He changes back.

INT. NURSING HOME -- CONTINUOUS

A sick, ancient WHITE MAN with tubes in his nose watches the same channel. Milky blue eyes wide open.

TV REPORTER (O.S.)

The murder that tore a town apart nearly twenty years ago will likely do so again as this case is far from over.

The Old Man wheezes with every breath.

TV REPORTER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

There's even talk that little Hanna may be exhumed from her resting place.

The Old Man looks haunted.

INT. TEBOW FAMILY ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

CLOSE ON: Daniel.

He is watching the first LORD OF THE RINGS. He looks bombarded. Ted SR and Jared watch with him.

INT. TEBOW KITCHEN -- CONTINUOUS

Amantha and Janet are cleaning up the kitchen. Amantha peeks into the Family Room at Daniel.

AMANTHA

(quietly)

I hope that's not too over stimulating for him.

JANET

Might be a good distraction.

Amantha's phone rings.

AMANTHA
Mama, I got to get this.

JANET
OK.

AMANTHA
(walking away)
Hello?

Amantha takes her purse with her and heads out of the house.
Daniel turns and watches her leave.

EXT. TEBOW HOUSE -- NIGHT

AMANTHA
(on phone)
No, I haven't seen anything tonight
but snatches of LORD OF THE RINGS.

Amantha fumbles in her purse for a cigarette.

INT. EXTENDED STAY MOTEL -- CONTINUOUS

Jon Stern lies on the bed with the TV on and the sound off.

JON STERN
Well, ours was the big story of the
day especially with the Senator's
grandstanding.

AMANTHA
(lighting up)
Is it good for us to be the big story
of the day or not?

JON STERN
I could argue either side.

AMANTHA
Of course.

Amantha takes a long drag. She's exhausted. So is Jon Stern.

JON STERN
Nancy Grace called. Well, her people
did.

AMANTHA
No. No way.

JON STERN
I know. Just had to let you know.

AMANTHA
You saw him today. He's... He's
overloaded.

JON STERN

Yeah.

AMANTHA

Daniel needs some time alone. Well not alone but... but not with Nancy Grace either. God.

JON STERN

How is he doing?

AMANTHA

Staring at silverware like he hasn't seen any in twenty years. Staring at his younger brother who he's never seen, staring at me, and at bright shiny things in general.

JON STERN

I bet.

AMANTHA

Why couldn't Ted Junior be wrongly convicted and spend more than half of his life on death row? He'd probably come out fine.

That makes Jon laugh.

JON STERN

That might be a little harsh.

AMANTHA

No it's not.

JON STERN

I can't imagine you and Ted JR living in the same house as adolescents.

AMANTHA

We had to share a bathroom, too. So gross.

Makes Jon laugh more.

AMANTHA (CONT'D)

It's not funny.

JON STERN

Of course not.

AMANTHA

In hindsight maybe but I need therapy just for those three years alone.

JON STERN

Post traumatic Ted syndrome.

She starts laughing too.

AMANTHA

Yes. And so under reported.

It's a nice release for them after today. The black humor and the laughter. Daniel starts laughing too. Behind her. In the dark. It startles Amantha.

AMANTHA (CONT'D)

Oh hey, Daniel.

(to Jon)

Gotta go.

She disconnects. Daniel is still laughing.

AMANTHA (CONT'D)

I didn't hear you come out, honey.

He sees she is unnerved. He stops laughing.

DANIEL

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to... scare you.

AMANTHA

No. It's OK. You didn't scare me.

DANIEL

I wasn't here long... I just walked out and saw you laughing and it made me laugh. I'm sorry.

AMANTHA

No, it's OK.

He looks at her with that look of his. Like he's eating the sight of her up. But she's so frazzled from it all, she looks away.

DANIEL

You're tired, aren't you?

AMANTHA

What? No. I'm good.

DANIEL

I know you're good.

She smiles.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Could you drive me around town?

AMANTHA

Now?

DANIEL

Just for a little while. I don't think I want to see it in the daylight. Not at first.

AMANTHA

Oh. Of course. Let's tell Mom.

INT. TEBOW FAMILY ROOM -- NIGHT

Janet is alone watching the news. More of the day's events. The sound is on real low. A door opens. She turns. It's Jared. She mutes the TV.

JARED

Where'd they go?

JANET

Just riding around.

She changes the channel.

JARED

Mom, I'm gonna see all this stuff. There's no way to avoid it.

JANET

How about just for one night, you don't see it?

JARED

I feel he should have his room back, Mom.

JANET

No. That's your room now.

JARED

But it was his before and it's not like he went off to college.

JANET

Jared, Daniel wanted you to have the room.

JARED

He told you that?

JANET

Yes. A long time ago. It made him very happy to know you were in there.

JARED

He didn't hardly say anything to me tonight.

She turns off the TV.

JANET

He doesn't know how to, honey.

JARED

Yeah. I kinda don't either.

JANET

Nobody does. We'll just all learn together. OK?

JARED

OK.

Pause.

JANET

Want to sit in my lap for a little bit?

JARED

God, Mom. I'm fourteen.

JANET

Right. Right. I forgot. How about squeezing in beside me then? For old time's sake.

He is intrigued.

JANET (CONT'D)

Dad's chair is big enough. Come on.

JARED

OK.

He squeezes in beside his mother in Ted SR's big chair.

They sit there together. The phone rings. Jared starts to get up.

JANET

Your Dad will get it.

It rings again. Janet stares into the past. Remembering. The ringing stops.

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE -- NIGHT

THREE MEN sit in a conference room. First term SHERIFF, CARL DAGGETT 46. His dad, former Circuit Judge and current Mayor, JOHNNY DAGGETT 66, and former SHERIFF, CJ PICKENS, 63. All these men were involved in the original prosecution of Daniel.

MAYOR JOHNNY DAGGETT

You see him talking today? Never once said, "I didn't do it."

SHERIFF CARL DAGGETT
No. Not once, Pop.

The former Sheriff speaks up.

FORMER SHERIFF CJ PICKENS
Yeah, but there's a little bit of a
hole in the case now, Mister Mayor.
There was multiple semen samples on
that girl's panties.

SHERIFF CARL DAGGETT
I guarantee you one was Holden's.

FORMER SHERIFF CJ PICKENS
But that can't be proven for sure,
can it Sheriff Daggett?

MAYOR JOHNNY DAGGETT
We know that, CJ, and nobody's
deciding anything tonight.

FORMER SHERIFF CJ PICKENS
Deciding what? Don't the new DA got
a say in this?

MAYOR JOHNNY DAGGETT
She's gonna be brought in.

FORMER SHERIFF CJ PICKENS
But not tonight.

MAYOR JOHNNY DAGGETT
No.

CJ waits.

MAYOR JOHNNY DAGGETT (CONT'D)
Look, Trey Warren said the girl slept
around a little bit.

FORMER SHERIFF CJ PICKENS
That Warren boy said a lot of things
back then depending on which way the
wind was blowing.

MAYOR JOHNNY DAGGETT
(ignoring that)
It's reasonable to think a couple of
them other boys coulda had intercourse
with her. Doesn't mean they killed
her.

FORMER SHERIFF CJ PICKENS
Don't mean they didn't.

SHERIFF CARL DAGGETT
The son of a bitch confessed, CJ.

FORMER SHERIFF CJ PICKENS
It was thrown out, Carl.
Inadmissible. Remember?

SHERIFF CARL DAGGETT
I don't give a shit. Why would a
person confess to something they
didn't do?

FORMER SHERIFF CJ PICKENS
You've had 19 years to think on that
and you ain't figured out an answer
other than "he did it" yet?

SHERIFF CARL DAGGETT
Meaning what?

CJ doesn't answer.

MAYOR JOHNNY DAGGETT
Look CJ, there's still a lot of
evidence pointing to Holden being
involved in the crime.

FORMER SHERIFF CJ PICKENS
Evidence that your son here helped
gather.

SHERIFF CARL DAGGETT
Under a lot of pressure from you to
find some. And you was mighty damn
happy when we did.

FORMER SHERIFF CJ PICKENS
All I wanted from you was good, solid
investigative work.

SHERIFF CARL DAGGETT
It's easy to say that now, ain't it?

CJ looks away. It is easier to say that now.

FORMER SHERIFF CJ PICKENS
Be honest, I got my doubts that Holden
boy was even involved now.

SHERIFF CARL DAGGETT
I damn sure don't have any doubts
that he did it. Alone or not.

SENATOR ROLAND FOULKES (O.S.)
I don't either.

Roland Foulkes has arrived.

INT. HONDA CIVIC -- NIGHT

Amantha and Daniel are riding around the town of Paulie, GA., population 12,731. Only a few businesses are open at this hour-9:30PM.

AMANTHA

The Dairy Queen's still here. But Hardee's closed down.

Daniel watches the buildings go by.

AMANTHA (CONT'D)

Not long after you got your license, you took me to Hardee's. Remember?

He tries to remember.

DANIEL

No, I don't. I'm sorry.

AMANTHA

(making light)

It wasn't very memorable.

He looks over at a store called WILDCAT VIDEO. Its lights are out.

DANIEL

How long's the video store been here?

AMANTHA

It was here about fifteen years.

DANIEL

Was?

AMANTHA

It's been out of business for a year or so.

That's curious to Daniel.

AMANTHA (CONT'D)

The highlight of the town now is the new Target.

DANIEL

What's a Target?

AMANTHA

You are.

Daniel stares at her.

AMANTHA (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I don't know why I said that. It just came out.

Daniel smiles.

DANIEL

You're a funny sister.

AMANTHA

Oh, thank God. You got it.

A MAN walking down the sidewalk stops and stares at Daniel like he's a movie star. Right here in Paulie.

AMANTHA (CONT'D)

It's how I deal.

DANIEL

Gallows humor.

AMANTHA

Exactly. Of course, you would know about that. I mean... God, there I go again.

DANIEL

We call it a lethal injection of humor. It's more humane but not as funny.

It's delayed but Amantha starts laughing. Daniel smiles at her.

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

Roland is now seated with the rest of the men.

SENATOR ROLAND FOULKES

Look CJ, we knew this day was coming once the DNA results came back and that it would have ramifications for the entire community--especially us.

FORMER SHERIFF CJ PICKENS

That I clearly understand, Roland.

MAYOR JOHNNY DAGGETT

We just want to know if Holden is re-indicted by the new D.A based on the evidence--

FORMER SHERIFF CJ PICKENS

And who's gathering that evidence? The Sheriff's office? Talk about getting bit on the ass again.

SENATOR ROLAND FOULKES
We're asking the State to come in to
oversee the investigation.

FORMER SHERIFF CJ PICKENS
Are you handling that, Roland?

SENATOR ROLAND FOULKES
I'm not gonna dignify that with an
answer.

MAYOR JOHNNY DAGGETT
We wanta get the right man or men.
That's all. Period.

CJ thinks about all this. It's damn complicated.

FORMER SHERIFF CJ PICKENS
So what do you want from me?

SENATOR ROLAND FOULKES
Just wanted to make sure you weren't
holding any ill will toward Carl--

FORMER SHERIFF CJ PICKENS
Why? That he's now Sheriff, in large
part, because he hung his hat on one
damn case that's now falling apart?

SHERIFF CARL DAGGETT
And you didn't hang your hat on it
as Sheriff for all those years?

FORMER SHERIFF CJ PICKENS
I guess not enough for one more term.

There it is. The Senator mediates.

SENATOR ROLAND FOULKES
Look CJ, maybe Carl shoul'da waited
four more years before running.
Nobody's arguing that.

FORMER SHERIFF CJ PICKENS
You think so?

SENATOR ROLAND FOULKES
But he didn't. And what's done is
done.

The former Sheriff knows what they want.

FORMER SHERIFF CJ PICKENS
I'm not gonna interfere with things.
I'm retired. Remember?

SENATOR ROLAND FOULKES
You might even have to testify at
some point.

FORMER SHERIFF CJ PICKENS
No kidding.

Mayor Johnny looks to the Senator.

MAYOR JOHNNY DAGGETT
Well, that's it then. Just wanted
to clear the air, CJ.

CJ gets up to leave. It's been a long day for him, too.

FORMER SHERIFF CJ PICKENS
Where is Holden at anyway?

Carl cuts an eye to his Dad. And then:

SHERIFF CARL DAGGETT
At his Mama's.

FORMER SHERIFF CJ PICKENS
He's not moving back here, is he?

SHERIFF CARL DAGGETT
We don't know.

FORMER SHERIFF CJ PICKENS
Good God.

CJ takes a breath. Just a bad situation all the way around.

FORMER SHERIFF CJ PICKENS (CONT'D)
Bit of advice from an old Sheriff.

SHERIFF CARL DAGGETT
You bet, CJ.

FORMER SHERIFF CJ PICKENS
Try and avoid arresting him for
anything. Like rolling stops, jay-
walking, shit like that. He's got a
whole new crowd repping him now.
And they're playing to win.

CJ leaves. The men look at each other but don't say anything.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JANET'S BEDROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Janet and Ted SR are in bed. They are not asleep.

JANET
Did the person say anything?

TED SR
No, and the ID said "unknown caller".

Janet thinks about that.

TED SR (CONT'D)
You know what they say, it's the
ones who don't call that you have to
worry about.

JANET
I feel better now, Ted. Thank-you.

He pulls her close.

JANET (CONT'D)
You should have heard some of the
things people said the first time.
Very creative.

TED SR
We're gonna get through this, Jannie.

She's not so sure.

JANET
Let's just keep this between us for
now. OK?

TED SR
OK.

EXT. PAULIE -- LATER

The town is closed up. No cars out except Amantha's Civic
which moves slowly through town.

INT. HONDA CIVIC -- CONTINUOUS

Amantha's phone rings. She answers quickly.

AMANTHA
(whispering)
Hello.

INTERCUT

JANET
It's after twelve.

AMANTHA
I know.

JANET
What are y'all doing?

AMANTHA

Driving around.

JANET

Why are you whispering?

AMANTHA

Daniel's asleep.

Daniel is indeed asleep in the other seat.

JANET

Are you gonna drive him around all night?

AMANTHA

Probably not.

JANET

Well, I'm not gonna worry then.

AMANTHA

No. Go on to sleep.

Amantha disconnects and drives on as her brother sleeps.

Up ahead is a Sheriff's Car parked at the train depot. An old fear grips Amantha.

AMANTHA (CONT'D)

(quietly)

I'm not breaking the law, you asshole.

She moves closer to the Sheriff's car, deliberately not looking over.

INT. SHERIFF'S CAR -- CONTINUOUS

Sheriff Daggett watches a sleeping Daniel and a driving Amantha go past him.

INT. HONDA CIVIC -- CONTINUOUS

Amantha sees the Sheriff's car pull out and move in behind her.

AMANTHA

(quietly)

You've gotta be kidding me?

If she gets pulled over, she doesn't know how Daniel will react. He could freak the fuck out or sleep through it.

EXT. PAULIE -- CONTINUOUS

The Sheriff follows Amantha. Not too close but just close enough. Nice and easy.

INT. HONDA CIVIC -- CONTINUOUS

Amantha can't decide whether to wake Daniel up to prepare him or chance it that they won't get pulled over. She looks over to him. He looks so innocent.

Suddenly the Sheriff's car stops. Right in the middle of the road.

INT. HONDA CIVIC -- CONTINUOUS

Amantha looks in her rear view mirror as the Sheriff's car stays at a dead stop in the road while she keeps heading out of town.

AMANTHA

Fucking juvenile.

Juvenile yes but it worked. Amantha is shaken as she drives into the darkness beyond the town.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ALAPAHA RIVER -- PRE-DAWN

A red rim lays just behind the live oaks that overhang the primordial brown river. The calm waters creep along as if the river itself is just waking. Morning doves quietly call each other. A fish rolls in the shallows exposing its white belly to the sun.

We PULL BACK to find Daniel standing on the sand bar of an old swimming hole. A place where generations of kids have come to swim and to play. To be kids. His back is to us as his bare feet dig into the sand.

The red glow grows to orange as the sun makes its inexorable daily rise.

We are in front of Daniel now. Pushing in. His face is impassive. Unreadable. Unreachable. As we push in closer and closer into his face, the sun breaks. We can see it. The golden sun rising. Right there in his eyes. But the spark we see is from the outside. He remains opaque.

EXT. HONDA CIVIC -- LATER

The Civic is parked a ways back from the swimming hole. Amantha has her seat in recline. She is asleep with Daniel's jacket over her. The sun hits her face. She slowly wakes up. Looks beside her. Daniel's not there.

DANIEL (O.S.)

Good morning.

Daniel is leaning on the car. Watching the sun on the river. His back is to her.

AMANTHA

Good morning. You like?

DANIEL

Yes.

AMANTHA

Your first day. I thought this might be the perfect place.

DANIEL

Yes.

AMANTHA

I wanted it to be special for you, honey.

Pause.

DANIEL

It is that. Lotta um... texture.

And then:

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Thank-you, Amantha. For everything.

AMANTHA

You're quite welcome, brother. Any time.

FADE OUT:

INT. PAULIE TIRE AND RIM COMPANY -- MORNING

Ted SR is at the counter of a clean, well kept tire store. There are both car and truck tires displayed. The rims range from the huge ones used for truck boggin' to the kind that spin on the streets. Serving both red and blue constituents.

The door opens. It's Ted JR.

TED JR

Sorry, I'm late.

TED SR

Yep.

TED JR

Couldn't sleep last night. Wound up like a top.

TED SR

Yep.

TED JR

Then me and Tawney got in a big fight.

Ted SR glances at his son grabbing a donut that's supposed to be for the customers.

TED JR (CONT'D)
You see all that coverage?

TED SR
Some of it.

TED JR
Boy, it's controversial.

TED SR
It's that.

Ted JR looks at the day's schedule.

TED JR
When do you think he's gonna start working here?

TED SR
Whenever he wants to.

Ted JR looks at his father.

TED JR
Dad, the minute he steps in this store, at least half the people who do business here will stop coming.

Ted SR doesn't respond.

TED JR (CONT'D)
I just wanted you to be aware of that.

TED SR
I am aware of that.

TED JR
And a fifty percent cut in revenue will not support two households.

TED SR
I'm aware of that, too.

TED JR
Much less three.

Ted SR walks away.

TED JR (CONT'D)
Look, maybe if we tell him the situation--

TED SR

No sir.

TED JR

But Dad, he deserves to have all the information to make an informed decision.

TED SR

Absolutely not, Teddy. This is his family's business not ours. We just married into it. If he wants to come work here, that's his right. We can't put that kinda weight on him. Not with everything else he's had to deal with in his life.

Ted JR looks out the window.

TED JR

Well, I might as well start looking for a job right now.

Ted SR says nothing.

TED JR (CONT'D)

Hell, you may have to start looking for one, too.

Ted SR looks at his son.

INT. MARCY'S CAFE -- MORNING

Sheriff Carl Daggett sits at a table in the back corner reading the Atlanta paper. He looks up when he hears:

PORTLY MAN (O.S.)

Saw your speech on TV, Senator. Me and the wife still believe in you.

Roland speaks to a PORTLY MAN at the front of the Diner.

SENATOR ROLAND FOULKES

Preciate it, Sam.

Roland moves on. Joins Carl.

SENATOR ROLAND FOULKES (CONT'D)

(quietly)

One vote at a fucking time. Every time. Where's your Daddy?

SHERIFF CARL DAGGETT

He's got belly problems.

SENATOR ROLAND FOULKES

Who ain't?

MARCY, late 40's and on the tail end of cute, comes up with coffee. Pours it.

SENATOR ROLAND FOULKES (CONT'D)
You're a sight for sore eyes, Marcy.

MARCY
Whatcha gonna have, Sweetie?

SENATOR ROLAND FOULKES
Everybody else calls me Senator.
You call me Sweetie.

MARCY
That's cause I've known you as Sweetie
a lot longer than I have known you
as Senator.

SENATOR ROLAND FOULKES
Now that's a fact. Get me the Wildcat
Breakfast. Extra Sausage.

MARCY
You got it, Senator Sweetie.

She sashays off. Carl watches Roland watching her.

SHERIFF CARL DAGGETT
You ain't tapping that again, are
you?

SENATOR ROLAND FOULKES
Naw, I'm on the wagon.
(calling out)
Extra biscuits too, Marcy!

SHERIFF CARL DAGGETT
Thought you had belly problems.

SENATOR ROLAND FOULKES
Perception, Sheriff. I'm gonna eat
like I don't have a care in the world.

The Senator loads up his coffee with sugar.

SHERIFF CARL DAGGETT
(re/newspaper)
You seen the front page of the Atlanta
Journal?

SENATOR ROLAND FOULKES
Two hours ago.

SHERIFF CARL DAGGETT
Feelings hurt?

SENATOR ROLAND FOULKES
 Tickled pink. Having the big city
 paper attacking me is an asset not a
 liability.

And then quietly.

SENATOR ROLAND FOULKES (CONT'D)
 Now tell me what you know about our
 new D.A.

SHERIFF CARL DAGGETT
 Well, you'll probably want to fuck
 her.

SENATOR ROLAND FOULKES
 May be. But I learned that lesson
 the hard way. Never shit where you
 eat.

WIDE SHOT OF:

A Toyota Tundra moves down a country road. The truck pulls
 off the road and down a one lane road.

INT. TUNDRA -- CONTINUOUS

TREY WARREN, 36, is driving. There is a clearing ahead.
 Trey sees another man standing by a lone tree.

It's GEORGE MEDLOCK 34, overweight. George is the man seen
 earlier at Daniel's press conference. Trey pulls up to George
 and gets out.

EXT. CLEARING -- CONTINUOUS

TREY WARREN
 Funny place to have a reunion.

GEORGE MEDLOCK
 Not so funny.

TREY WARREN
 How's Florida?

GEORGE MEDLOCK
 I don't care for it.

Trey looks around. Perplexed.

TREY WARREN
 Where's your car, Georgie?

GEORGE MEDLOCK
 I took the bus. Make sure I wasn't
 being followed.

TREY WARREN

By who?

GEORGE MEDLOCK

Now they know what they didn't know.

TREY WARREN

Yeah, it's kinda big news around here.

George looks at Trey.

GEORGE MEDLOCK

Did you kill her, Trey?

Trey looks straight at George.

TREY WARREN

No.

And then:

TREY WARREN (CONT'D)

Did you, Georgie?

George looks away.

GEORGE MEDLOCK

No.

The years haven't been kind to George.

GEORGE MEDLOCK (CONT'D)

They're gonna want to talk to us again. Put us on the stand, I guess.

TREY WARREN

Oh yeah. It's gonna be a real big deal. Just like before... except they may go after more than one person this time.

GEORGE MEDLOCK

I think about it a lot.

TREY WARREN

That's always been your problem.

GEORGE MEDLOCK

But I get stuff mixed up. What they told us. What I remember. What I think I remember. I don't know which is which anymore.

TREY WARREN

You'd better review then.

GEORGE MEDLOCK

We were just kids. It wasn't real then.

Trey is noncommittal.

GEORGE MEDLOCK (CONT'D)

Sometimes I think about what it would be like to talk to him. You know? Maybe even go fishing with him.

TREY WARREN

That's not how the world works.

GEORGE MEDLOCK

No.

George looks at Trey. Pain in his eyes.

GEORGE MEDLOCK (CONT'D)

What are you gonna do, Trey?

TREY WARREN

Tell the truth.

GEORGE MEDLOCK

What is the truth?

Trey doesn't blink.

TREY WARREN

What I said before. Change now at your own peril.

Trey stands there unyielding. George stands there weighed down.

CUT TO:

EXT. CLEARING -- MOMENTS LATER

WIDE SHOT

The Tundra drives away leaving George standing there all alone.

INT. EXTENDED STAY MOTEL -- DAY

Jon talks through his phone ear piece as he packs.

JON STERN

It's called "the unindicted co-ejaculator theory".

EXT. TEBOW BACK YARD -- DAY

Amantha is on the phone, furtively smoking a cigarette.

AMANTHA

I'm sorry?

INTERCUT WITH JON STERN

JON STERN

Exactly. The term was coined by prosecutors trying to get around the Pandora's Box of DNA. Case in Mississippi right now where a man was freed on bond after fifteen years on death row for a rape and murder conviction when DNA testing showed the sperm wasn't his.

AMANTHA

Hmmm. Sounds familiar.

JON STERN

Actually more cut and dry than our case. There was only one sperm sample-- not the condemned man's. And yet, he will be retried for that murder.

AMANTHA

How thrilling.

Jon goes to the cheap desk, digs through his papers.

JON STERN

The D.A. said:

(reading)

"Whether the defendant actually penetrated that child or not, functionally doesn't make any difference if he was aiding, assisting, and encouraging in her death."

AMANTHA

That's our ticket out.

JON STERN

What is?

AMANTHA

"Encouraging in her death." Daniel's not a rah-rah kind of fella.

Jon shakes his head.

JON STERN

There are other evidentiary issues I'm more concerned about.

AMANTHA

Hanna had been Daniel's girlfriend,
Jon. Of course, they found
evidentiary shit.

JON STERN

I understand but--

AMANTHA

What's your point?

JON STERN

My point is, there's a hundred
different ways prosecution can
convince a jury that Daniel was still
a part of this no matter what the
DNA does or doesn't say.

AMANTHA

That's right. Because they're in
the convincing business, Jon. That's
what they do. First, they convince
themselves, then they convince anybody
necessary by any means necessary
including sometimes the defendants
themselves. All you have to do, Jon--
if it comes down to it--is to convince
one out of twelve people on a jury
that the prosecutors are full of
shit.

Amantha sits down.

AMANTHA (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. I shouldn't have--

JON STERN

No you're right. I sometimes forget--

AMANTHA

What? That I'm just the sister?

JON STERN

No, of course not. It's just that...
I'm coming down tomorrow.

That stops her momentum.

AMANTHA

Really? Already?

JON STERN

(and then)

Rutherford Gaines has lung cancer.

AMANTHA

Yeah, I heard the good news.

JON STERN

I don't want to regret anything later
I could have asked him.

AMANTHA

The only thing I regret was that he
was Daniel's lawyer in the first
place. Talk about a chicken shit.

JON STERN

I think he regrets it now, too.

AMANTHA

"Old man regrets." Hollow and too
fucking late.

Amantha softens. A little...

AMANTHA (CONT'D)

Anyway, you can be here for Mom's
lame Welcome Home Party.

JON STERN

Oh now.

AMANTHA

Admittedly less lame with you
attending.

JON STERN

Thanks, I think.

AMANTHA

(sincerely)

I'm glad you're coming down, Jon.
And real glad you're on our side.

JON STERN

Me too, Amantha.

INT. EXTENDED STAY MOTEL -- CONTINUOUS

Jon stands there for a moment after the call. Then continues
packing.

INT. BATHROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Daniel is in the tub soaking. Watching the bubbles gather
around his knees.

DANIEL

(to self)

Of human bondage.

VOICE

Of human bondage?!

INT. DEATH ROW - FLASHBACK

KERWIN WHITMAN, an African-American man in his late twenties, is standing up in his cell on Death Row.

KERWIN WHITMAN

You want me to read a book called OF HUMAN BONDAGE?! I'll pass. Don't want to know any more on that particular subject.

Daniel is reading Somerset Maugham's OF HUMAN BONDAGE.

DANIEL

It's another kind of bondage.

KERWIN WHITMAN

I would hope so.

DANIEL

Or not.

Kerwin walks around his cell some. Daniel reads some more. Conversations here don't keep a certain pace.

KERWIN WHITMAN

I'll be glad when you get past your dead white men writing about a lily white Europe stage. White on white. Day and night.

DANIEL

I am kind of on a jag.

KERWIN WHITMAN

You ought to sprinkle in a little author-author brother-brother from time to time.

DANIEL

Sure.

KERWIN WHITMAN

Got one I think you'll appreciate, too. It ain't modern either. It's about black folks owning slaves in the South before the Civil War.

DANIEL

Curious.

KERWIN WHITMAN

You know, when in Rome.

DANIEL

I'm hooked already.

KERWIN WHITMAN

OK. Then I'll give your dead Somerset
Maugham a shot when you're done.

DANIEL

It's yours.

KERWIN WHITMAN

But if it don't-- But if it doesn't
grab me early, I'm setting it down.

DANIEL

No rules in the club that's not a
club.

Kerwin sits. Contemplative.

KERWIN WHITMAN

Daniel, I made up my mind.

Daniel looks up from his book.

KERWIN WHITMAN (CONT'D)

I'm waving the rest of my appeals.
Shortening the exit.

Daniel's silence feels like words.

KERWIN WHITMAN (CONT'D)

I can't do time like you do it. I
tried, man. It's unbearable being
in this tomb alive. Day after day.
Year after year. For how long? And
I did what they say I did. That's
never gonna change so...

DANIEL

Well...

KERWIN WHITMAN

I'm not looking for advice. Just
telling you my plans.

Daniel doesn't respond.

KERWIN WHITMAN (CONT'D)

I mean, you can say something.

DANIEL

I don't really know what to say other
than I would miss you beyond words.

KERWIN WHITMAN

I know, partner. I know.

INT. BATHROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Daniel watches the last of the water drain from the tub as he remembers his best friend.

INT. TEBOW KITCHEN -- DAY

Janet sits at the kitchen table typing on her notebook computer. Daniel walks in. Hair still wet from the bath. Stands in the middle of the kitchen.

JANET

Hungry?

DANIEL

I think I'd like a beer.

Janet hesitates.

JANET

Oh... uh... Teddy should have one or two in the frig. Sometime's he stops by for a visit.

DANIEL

Would he mind?

JANET

Of course not.

Daniel gets one. He walks over to Janet as she navigates on the computer.

JANET (CONT'D)

I'm paying bills.

He watches.

JANET (CONT'D)

Sit down if you'd like.

He does.

DANIEL

I don't think I want to become computer literate.

He looks outside at Amantha talking on her phone and smoking like a chimney.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Or mobile phone literate really.

JANET

Might be a little much all at once.

DANIEL

I'd like to get a TV with a movie player though... a DVD player.

JANET

We can do that.

DANIEL

I'll pay you back when I start working.

JANET

Don't be silly.

DANIEL

OK.

JANET

No. I mean, we have one already.

DANIEL

I see.

She goes back to paying bills. He takes a swallow of his beer. Contemplates it then sets it down.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

We didn't have TVs on death row. Some state's death rows do, some don't. Luck of the draw, I guess.

Janet looks up. She doesn't know what to say.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

I think it worked out better for me. I liked to read. Kinda tough on the guys who didn't or couldn't.

JANET

What did you read?

DANIEL

Um... Mostly novels of other times and places. I found it um... unsettling when I read something in the present day so I stopped doing that a long time ago.

She puts her hand on his. He lets it lay there. She finally pulls it away. Goes back to her computer.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

I won't be here forever, you know.

JANET

What do you mean?

DANIEL

In your house. And Ted's.

JANET

This is your house too, Daniel. You can stay as long as you like.

DANIEL

I can't really get a handle on time yet. There are moments where I feel I have only been gone from here for a few weeks and I'm still in high school.

Janet looks at her first born.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

But mostly it seems I was always... there. Always there.

Janet looks away from him. Her grief is surfacing again.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

So you may need to tell me, Mother.

JANET

Tell you?

DANIEL

When it's time for me to leave.

He gets up and walks away leaving the beer barely tasted.

CLOSE ON: A HAND KNOCKING ON A DOOR. The door opens revealing Daniel.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Hello.

INT. HALLWAY -- CONTINUOUS

Jared stands there with a TV at the threshold of the guest room where Daniel is staying.

JARED

Um... This has a DVD player in it and you can watch movies and stuff.

DANIEL

Is it yours?

JARED

Yeah, but I got an I-Pad so I just stream mostly.

Pause.

DANIEL

OK. Thank-you, Jared.

Daniel takes the TV into the room. Jared hovers outside.

JARED

I could help you hook it up. I mean, you just plug it in but I know where the plug is.

DANIEL

OK.

Jared walks in and takes the TV back. Sets it on the desk. Plugs it in.

JARED

I'm guessing you don't have any DVDs yet.

DANIEL

No.

JARED

I didn't think so but I didn't want to... you know...

DANIEL

Presume.

JARED

Yeah, exactly. Presume. Anyway, I've got kinda a collection and I've been thinking like if you haven't really seen movies in a long time which ones might be good to start with and then work your way up.

DANIEL

I'd appreciate the guidance.

JARED

OK. Well, you can go a lot of ways but one of my favorites--It's called DAZED AND CONFUSED?

DANIEL

I like the title.

JARED

Yeah, I heard that.

Jared snickers like an adolescent. He regroupes.

JARED (CONT'D)

Anyway, it's a cool movie.

(MORE)

JARED (CONT'D)

It's not heavy or anything like that
and I could even watch it with you...
or you might want to be by yourself...
I mean, it's all good.

Daniel thinks about it.

DANIEL

I think I'd rather see it with you.

JARED

Oh sure. Cool.

Daniel sits down. Waiting.

JARED (CONT'D)

Right now?

DANIEL

Oh. Did you mean now?

JARED

Uh... Yeah. Sure. I'll go get it.

Jared exits. Daniel sits there staring at the blank TV.
Staring at nothing. Perfectly content or completely empty.
Simply waiting. Waiting as:

*CAT POWER's sweet-sad-beautiful song, THE GREATEST, begins
and then plays under a SUCCESSION of SHOTS of:*

JON STERN sits in his souless Motel Room. Alone. Thinking
about the long road ahead.

SENATOR ROLAND FOULKES, sifts through papers from the first
trial of Daniel Holden. Takes a slug of Pepto-Bismol. Smooth
facade gone, just a greedy face and fierce determination.

TED SR watches TED JR adroitly close a deal on a set of
spinners to a KID with PARENTS. Ted JR winks at his Dad.

JANET stands just out of sight of the door where her two
sons are watching DAZED AND CONFUSED, conflicted at their
burgeoning relationship. She walks away.

DANIEL and JARED watch DAZED AND CONFUSED. Daniel looks
over at Jared. Jared looks at Daniel. Damn strange alright.

GEORGE MEDLOCK, still standing there under the tree in the
clearing. Hours later. He starts walking.

AMANTHA sits outside alone as the sun goes low in the sky.
Out of fight for the day. She looks up. It's her mother.
JANET waves tentatively. Amanda waves back.

GEORGE MEDLOCK. Walking toward the red sky. Haunted.

PUSH IN on JANET now sitting by AMANTHA. Neither saying anything. Then Amantha starts crying. Janet takes Amantha in her arms and pets her middle child.

PUSH IN on JARED and DANIEL lost in the movie. Jared is laughing his ass off. And then Daniel breaks into a beautiful smile. Forgetting all his troubles, if only for a time.

PUSH IN on GEORGE MEDLOCK now standing above a ravine, so terribly burdened by his troubles. George slowly raises a gun to his head just as the sun drops from the sky.

WIDE SHOT of the MUZZLE FLASH next to George's head and then George dropping off into the darkness.

THE END