

BACKWOODS CHIEF

"Sins of the Father"

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ACT ONE

*NOTE TO READER: DIALOGUE IN ITALICS IS IN SUBTITLED TSALAGI

EXT. TRAILER HOME - NIGHT - 1995

The cicadas SCREAM in the humid night air around a mobile home in the center of an overgrown grass field.

The door JERKS open, carefully controlled by a terrified, yet determined, YOUNG GENE WATKINS, late 20s, Cherokee. She balances two large sheets stuffed with laundry. One of the bags SQUIRMS underneath her.

GENE
(whispered)
Etlawei, usdi.

Moonlight illuminates BRUISES on Gene's face as she rushes toward a perfectly waxed '89 Chevrolet.

She opens the back door and places the squirming bag inside as RUSSELL BALDWIN, 20s, SLAMS open the mobile home door holding a light brown TEDDY BEAR.

RUSSELL
Where do you think you're going?!

GENE
(whispered)
Howa, howa, usdi.

Gene closes the car door and turns to face her abuser.

GENE (CONT'D)
Donetta's taking the laundry for me.

Russell towers over her. He eyes the bags in the backseat.

RUSSELL
Where's Charlie?

GENE
In her bed.

RUSSELL
I was just in her room.

GENE
That's where she is.

Gene turns to walk away, but is yanked backwards violently. Russell levels a RIGHT HOOK across her jaw.

YOUNG CHARLIE WATKINS, 8, Cherokee and White, SCREAMS as she struggles to emerge from the knotted sheet she was hidden in.

YOUNG CHARLIE
(wailing)
No!!! Mommy! Mommy! *Etsi!!!*

Russell's hands lift the grappling Gene by the hair to face her daughter. Gene reaches toward Charlie.

GENE
Usdi-

Russell pulls a REVOLVER from his belt and SLAMS it across Gene's head.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. WATKINS HOME - DAY - **PRESENT DAY**

CHARLIE WATKINS, now 30s, JOLTS awake. Her face is damp with sweat, her heart is racing. She turns toward the dreamcatcher dangling from the bedside lamp and FLICKS it hard.

CHARLIE
Thanks for nothing.

TITLE CARD

Her cellphone alarm BLARES from the nightstand.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Uka-shana... [Asshole]

She CLICKS to silence it and reads onscreen: "5:00 A.M... Get your ass up and run". She GROANS.

EXT. WATKINS HOME - DAY

Charlie emerges from a brick ranch-style house, sliding in her AirPods. She heads toward the road, catching the motor home from her dream in the corner of her eye.

CHARLIE
Welcome home, Charlie.

She hits PLAY on her phone and bolts onto the road as Halluci Nation's "Stadium Pow Wow" BLARES in her ears.

EXT. GENTRY - DAY

Charlie flies down the road past tractors, trailer homes, chicken farms and fruit stands.

Charlie's childhood trauma induced hyper-vigilance is at full throttle today.

She zeroes in on details in what we'll call CHARLIE VISION. This is one of the hallmarks of our show. LINES superimpose like an actively compiling MENTAL EVIDENCE BOARD connecting threats and details as she labels and assesses in her head.

*Note to Reader: Bold Underlined words SUPERIMPOSE scrolling and sliding in various directions as Charlie SEES items.

Charlie passes a large **CHEROKEE MAN**. He is covered in **BLOOD** all over his **HANDS**. **KNIFE**. **OVERALLS**. Her view expands to reveal a deer dangling from a rig attached to his double-wide. **VISIBLE EMOTIONS**. **SAFE**. **FRIEND**.

He WAVES a bloody hand at her.

CHARLIE

'Siyo!

(to herself)

Get it together, Charlie.

BEGIN MONTAGE:

-She passes the track housing and adjacent trailer park. **POULTRY WORKERS** and **MIGRANT FARMERS** are already kissing their **FAMILIES** goodbye to start their day.

-She slows as she passes the Urgent Care adjacent to the tiny American Indian **COMMUNITY CENTER** with a bulletin sign: "Didanilvsdi Uwetsiageyv" [Welcome Daughter]. She SMILES and picks up her pace again.

-Charlie rounds the corner to the enormous McKee Foods Factory and breathes in the smell of Little Debbie's **CREAM PIES** then... CHOKES as a TYSON FOODS TRUCK flies by packed with cages of SQUACKING **CHICKENS** and **FEATHERS** FLYING.

-Charlie continues to the other side of town where expanses of open land surround enormous family homes, providing a clear demarkation between Gentry's "**HAVES**" and "**HAVE NOTS**".

END MONTAGE.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Nothing changes.

She pushes faster and FASTER. Her face stoic with the weight of old memories from a city she had hoped to forget.

INT. PARADISE OF THE OZARKS CARE HOME - DAY

Charlie, now in her POLICE CHIEF UNIFORM, balances a cardboard drink holder of green smoothies as she pushes through the doors to the Memory Care Unit. She catches a familiar face leaving her mother's room. **FRIEND.**

CHARLIE

You make house calls to all your constituents, Mayor Roberts?

MAYOR CORNELIUS "NEAL" ROBERTS, 30s, Black, still as fine as he was in high school with an added layer of Marine Corps panache and charm.

NEAL

Only the pretty ones. You ready for the dog and pony show?

CHARLIE

You ready to have people question your judgment publicly.

NEAL

I'm Mayor. That comes with the territory. You still start your day with a half marathon?

CHARLIE

You should join me.

NEAL

(knocking his prosthetic)
Gotta get an upgrade first.

CHARLIE

Whatever, you could outrun me on your hands.

They LAUGH. Sparks are definitely rekindling.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Do we really need a press conference for an interim Chief?

NEAL

That "interim" is all you. I want you as long as I can get you.

Charlie shoots him a look.

NEAL (CONT'D)
You go see Malcolm, yet?

CHARLIE
Not yet...

NEAL
He'd be proud you're back. Pick up
where he left off.

Charlie rebalances the damp smoothie holder.

NEAL (CONT'D)
I'll let you get to your mom.
12pm, City Hall. And I *will*
convince you to take off the
interim.

INT. GENE'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

GENE WATKINS, now 60, is stuffing a bag behind her pillow.

CHARLIE (O.S.)
Are you kidding me?!

Gene sits up as Charlie nears the bed. Her shaking hands wipe
at the powdered sugar decorating the corners of her mouth.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Sugar accelerates dementia! What
don't you get about that, Gene?

Charlie searches behind Gene's pillow to retrieve a paper bag
with "Sweets for the Sweet by Regan" emblazoned across it.

GENE
(laying it on thick)
I'm sorry... I don't know who...
you are. Give me back my...
doughnut... holes... Please.

Gene reaches for the bag. Charlie yanks it away.

CHARLIE
Mom?!

Gene looks blankly at her. Charlie's face gives way to real
concern until... Gene lets out a devious LAUGH.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
That was just mean.

GENE
 (reaching for the bag)
 Come on now, those were a gift.

CHARLIE
 Why the hell am I here if you're
 doing everything you can to speed
 up forgetting me.

GENE
 I'm a... grown. I know my body.

CHARLIE
 No, ma'am. *I* know your body.

GENE
 (struggling)
 It's a good... day. Let me... enjoy
 it.

Charlie stares her mother down as the guilt wins out.

CHARLIE
 Thanks for the welcome sign.

GENE
 Oh good! Donetta took over the
 center while I'm... here. I worried
 she'd forget... Did you see her?

CHARLIE
 Nope. Just Sam cleaning deer. I
 went for a run, saw it on the road
 like a true celebrity.

Charlie reluctantly leans the bag toward Gene to let her dip
 her hand in for another doughnut.

GENE
 You love Mommy.

Charlie sees Gene's hands lightly shake as Gene lifts a
 doughnut hole to her mouth.

CHARLIE
 You want me to-?

Gene shoves it in her mouth.

GENE
 I can eat a damn doughnut. I only
 let 'em check me into this dump, so
 you wouldn't... come back... here-

CHARLIE

I know.

Charlie straightens her mother's blankets.

GENE

Then why...? You worked hard to get to that fancy FBI job and now you're throwing it away... for a dying old woman-

CHARLIE

Don't. You aren't going anywhere. I'm *here* to make sure *that* doesn't happen. And that job... I didn't-
(stopping herself)
I'm not me without you.

Charlie squeezes Gene's hand. Gene shakes it loose before their emotions get the best of either of them.

RADIO (V.O.)

Dispatch to 801.

Charlie lifts her radio to her mouth.

CHARLIE

(to Dispatch)
801, here, over.

RADIO (V.O.)

We need you out at the Hicks place, possible 107.

CHARLIE

(to Dispatch)
Copy that.

Charlie cups the top of her mother's greying head.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

You gonna be good?

GENE

...No.

Charlie exhales a LAUGH and kisses her cheek.

CHARLIE

Donadagohvi.

EXT. HICKS FAMILY ORCHARD - DAY

Charlie drives down a long dirt drive surrounded by a sprawling OVER-WATERED fruit orchard among the affluent section of Gentry.

She sees FLASHING LIGHTS as she approaches the clearing where the Hicks family home looms above City and County police vehicles crowding its circular drive.

CHARLIE

Here we go.

Charlie pulls around to the car port and parks next to an old Silver Camry with trash bags and suitcases inside of it.

FLASH to Young Charlie looking out the glass of the Camry.

Charlie shakes it off and gets out of her car to look inside.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Someone was about to go somewhere.

She catches the eye of SERGEANT/DETECTIVE WADE BYRUM, late 40s, EGOTISTICAL... GOOD OLE BOY, holding court with a distraught, JEFFREY HICKS, 27, White, a squeaky clean former teen dream. FURROWED BROW... EYES TWITCHING... NERVOUS.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Great. Gentry royalty. Day keeps getting better.

Charlie nods toward Jeff as Byrum pats him on the shoulder and heads over to meet Charlie with a shit-eating grin.

BYRUM

Mornin' Chief. Nice to finally meet you face to face.

He vigorously SHAKES her hand and Charlie gives it back to him just as firmly.

CHARLIE

Same.

BYRUM

Always good to see inclusion and diversity at the forefront of leadership decisions.

CHARLIE

Is that really how you want to start this relationship, Sergeant?

BYRUM

Whoa, there! Just yanking your chain. We all know how lucky we are to have you. Way I hear it, you were such a hot shot at that Behavioral Sciences place, you were running out of cases to solve.

CHARLIE

It was the Behavioral Analysis Unit and unfortunately... we'll never run out of cases to solve.

Charlie scans the scene and lands on WILL HICKS, 9, Cherokee and White, being examined in the back of an ambulance by FIRST RESPONDERS. **SCARED...** **BLOODY...** **TRAUMATIZED...** **NATIVE.**

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Who's the kid in the wagon?

Byrum escorts her toward the house as he talks.

BYRUM

Unfortunately, our prime suspect.

Charlie looks at him, "A kid?"

BYRUM (CONT'D)

Yup. Gets worse.

Byrum ascends the stairs to the porch and hands off gloves and booties to Charlie. They both gear up.

BYRUM (CONT'D)

I was first on scene this morning. On arrival, I observed one deceased female victim, Eunice "Eunie" Hicks, 27 years of age, stabbed, face down atop her son, Will Hicks, approximately nine-years-of-age still pushing the knife into his mother's stomach and screaming bloody murder.

CHARLIE

And the father?

BYRUM

Father made the call.

Charlie stares down the **SOBBING** and **SLUMP SHOULDERED** Jeff. Byrum grandly holds the screen door open for Charlie.

INT. HICKS HOME - DAY

JERRIKA, 30s, the medical examiner/coroner (M.E.C.) is collecting samples around the body.

Charlie moves inside. Her CHARLIE VISION starts TRACING LINES from the small CHEROKEE STAR hanging CROOKED on the wall in front of her-

CHARLIE
She's Cherokee?

BYRUM
Eunie's people were Western Cherokee. All gone, since her mother passed last year. Husband's Jeffrey Hicks. Maybe you heard the name growing up in these parts.

Charlie's eyes land on a framed photo of: REGAN HICKS, 50s, Jeff Hicks' mother, holding a saccharine smile as she cuts the ribbon outside her "Sweets for the Sweet" storefront.

CHARLIE
I know 'em.

Charlie scans down the wall over a BUSTED SHELF, to the thrust AKIMBO TABLE, a DISCOLORED CIRCLE on the hardwood floor in front of the refrigerator.

Charlie kneels to inspect the spot on the floor. She SNIFFS the air... BLEACH.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
You sample this?

BYRUM
The floor?

CHARLIE
(to Jerrika)
You're collecting it, right?

Jerrika nods, "Yes".

BYRUM
I told Becky you really didn't have to come out-

BECKY (O.S.)
What'd you tell, Becky?

DEPUTY BECKY STIDMAN, 30s, outspoken, underestimated by everyone but Charlie, even if they haven't caught up much since high school; pushes through the screen door as she slides a new battery onto a digital SLR camera.

BECKY (CONT'D)

Sorry, Chief, pulling double duty as C.S.P. today and she was running low on juice.

CHARLIE

I'll let Deputy Stidman catch me up from here, Sergeant Detective.

BYRUM

Come again?

CHARLIE

You can go back to securing the scene, while I conduct my investigation.

Charlie reads his **FLEXED NECK. TIGHT FISTS.**

BYRUM

I highly doubt your profiling mumbo jumbo is gonna tell you more than I just did, but I'm a team player.
(raising hands in retreat)
I'll be outside.

CHARLIE

Thank you.

Byrum brushes past her and lets the screen door SLAM.

BECKY

God a'mighty I missed your sorry ass.

JERRIKA

You keep giving it to Byrum, I'll hug you too. That entitled prick gives me reflux.

Charlie suppresses a LAUGH as her gaze lurches from a **NAIL** protruding from the adjacent wall, to the door, then down to the floor. A small **FRAME** is face down by an EVIDENCE MARKER.

CHARLIE

May I?

JERRIKA

It's your scene.

Charlie lifts the frame to SEE: A **FAMILY** PHOTO. **VICTIM**, EUNICE "EUNIE" HICKS, 20s, embraces a **BROODING** Will, while Jeffrey beams a Bible-belt grade smile. **TOO PERFECT**.

A chunk of GLASS wedges into Charlie's finger. It's a gusher.

CHARLIE

Damn it.

BECKY

You okay?

CHARLIE

Just stupid.

Charlie's free hand searches for spare gloves as her eyes land on **STRANDS OF** SHORT BLACK **HAIR** stuck to the **GLASS**.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

You got an evidence bag?

JERRIKA

I got you.

Charlie removes the glass and drops it into the baggie Jerrika is holding open for her.

CHARLIE

Thanks. I think I gave you a little extra DNA on there.

BECKY

Trust me we've had worse.

Charlie takes the bag from Jerrika and hands it to Becky.

CHARLIE

Can you get a rush from State on that DNA; Confirm there weren't any extra friends at this party?

BECKY

Sure thing.

Charlie stands where Will would have been and scans Eunice's body **OLD BRUISES... ARMS... FACE... HISTORY OF ABUSE...** blood pooling from the **KNIFE WOUND** in Eunice's **STOMACH. APPROXIMATE LENGTH OF KNIFE... 12 INCHES...**

FLASH to Young Charlie standing where Will would have been, holding the knife, as Eunice falls toward her.

Charlie thrusts the screen door open and goes out for air.

EXT. HICKS HOME - DAY

Becky joins Charlie on the porch.

BECKY
You alright?

CHARLIE
I'm fine- just... mixing some
memories... You about done here?

BECKY
Yeah. I'll turn it over to County
and go get ready for your presser.

CHARLIE
Don't remind me.

BECKY
You don't have to take this case.
I'm sure Byrum'd love to take lead.

CHARLIE
That's what I'm afraid of...

Charlie heads toward the ambulance to question Will.

JERRIKA (O.S.)
She's certainly different.

Jerrika steps out to join Becky on the porch.

BECKY
If by different you mean bad ass.
That girl's been through hell and
came out reading crime scenes and
people better'n anyone I've ever
seen. She's got a real gift.

JERRIKA
Old boys club won't like that
around here. She better watch out.

BECKY
She's survived worse. It's them
that should be scared of her.

INT./EXT. AMBULANCE - DAY

Charlie leans against the open Ambulance door. Will FLINCHES
as the back of his head is SWABBED by an EMT. **DEFENSIVE**
WOUNDS... OLD CONTUSIONS... NEW... WRIST...

CHARLIE
What's the verdict on that wrist?

EMT
My guess is an impaction fracture.

CHARLIE
How does something like that happen?

EMT
It'd take a significant amount of pressure, but kid bones are tiny. It's pretty common if the bones get jammed hard enough.

Will's eyes dart around. **RAPID BREATHING...** **DILATED PUPILS.**

CHARLIE
Give us a minute?

The EMT nods and hops out the back of the vehicle.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
(signing in Cherokee)
It's okay. I'm a friend.
(in Cherokee)
I'm Charlie. What's your name?

Will stares at her struggling to speak. **VOICE TRAPPED.** **SHOCK.**

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
It's okay. You're in shock. You don't have to speak. Your name is Will Hicks, right?

Will crinkles his face in confusion as he nods, "Yes".

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Looks like you and Mom were about to go on a trip?

He nods, "Yes".

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Everyone going? Mommy? Daddy?

Will STARTS at the word, "Daddy".

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Okay, Will. That's okay. Can you tell me what happened? Was he mad?

HYPERVENTILATION... **PANIC...** **FIST CLENCHING.**

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
May I see your other hand?

He slowly opens his left hand to reveal a pendant with the Cherokee symbols for "I love you" etched into the front.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Pretty. Mommy's?

Charlie sees a Sherriff's Department Patrol SUV pull up to the house. Her heart sinks.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Will, I need you to listen to me.
Some people in uniforms like mine
are going to take you somewhere to
stay until we know how to keep you
safe... Nod if you understand me--

Will nods frantically. Charlie looks at the pendant again.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
May I keep that safe for you? They
may take it. It's Mommy's right?

He nods. Charlie pulls a similar necklace from her collar.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
I'll keep it safe.

She takes his left hand in hers.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
I'll keep you safe.

Will releases the pendant into her hand.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Howa. Otsaliheliga.

Charlie slides the pendant into her pocket as the EMT returns with a SHERRIFF'S DEPUTY pulling out their cuffs.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
You don't need those. He's injured.

SHERRIFF'S DEPUTY
It's protocol, ma'am.

CHARLIE
Not ma'am, Chief. May I see those?

He shrugs and hands them to her.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
 You have another pair of these on
 you?

SHERRIFF'S DEPUTY
 Not today.

CHARLIE
 Good.

She chucks the cuffs into a mass of peach trees.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
 Protocol also states that he gets
 medical care before he's processed.
 So, I better see a bill for some x-
 rays and plaster in his file, or
 you'll be looking for another job
 longer than those cuffs.

EXT. CIRCULAR DRIVEWAY - DAY

Charlie storms toward Jeff, but Byrum steps into her path.

BYRUM
 Whoa, whoa, coming in hot.

CHARLIE
 Out of my way Sergeant.

BYRUM
 Hold on now, that man is a pillar
 of the community.

CHARLIE
 He's also a murderer or at least an
 accessory to it.

BYRUM
 The kid was literally holding the
 murder weapon, Chief. He's gotta be
 taken into custody.

CHARLIE
 The *kid* looks like he can barely
 lift that knife, let alone push it
 in to the hilt.

She tries to push past him. He stops her again.

BYRUM
 I don't like locking a kid up any
 better than you do, but-

CHARLIE

If that kid stabbed his mother on his own strength, tell me how he got an impaction fracture. I'm not a physics professor, but I'm pretty sure that only happens when inertia is working against you. Now move before I start thinking the city isn't the only one cutting your paychecks.

Charlie pushes past him to close the distance to Jeffrey.

JEFF

(seeing her)

Charlie, I haven't seen you since--

Charlie CUFFS Jeff and leads him to her squad car with Byrum following behind, protesting the whole way.

CHARLIE

Jeffrey Hicks, You're under arrest for suspicion of murder. You have the right to remain silent. Anything you say can and will be used against you in a court of law. You have the right to speak to an attorney, and to have an attorney present during any questioning.

She pushes Jeff into the back of her patrol car.

BYRUM

I'm warning you as a colleague, for your own good, this is not how you wanna start your term in this town.

CHARLIE

Thank you Sergeant, but I'll remind you that my posting is temporary. I'm not looking to build a career. I'm looking to find the truth and keep people safe.

Charlie gets in and starts her patrol vehicle.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

See you back at the station.

Her SIREN WAILS as she kicks dust out of the drive way.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Charlie glances in the far corner to confirm the RED LIGHT of a small surveillance camera is ON as she circles to the other side of a small table across from Jeffrey now in handcuffs.

Charlie slides a glass of water to him as she assesses him:
BREATHING STEADY. TOO CONFIDENT. TOO CONTROLLED.

CHARLIE

How you been Jeffrey?

JEFF

Before today, I would have said good.

His face flushes with sincere emotion. Charlie actually starts to feel pity for him.

CHARLIE

I'm sorry... For your loss. Can you tell me more about your wife?

Jeff chokes with emotion.

JEFF

Eunie'd been having a hard time. After her mother passed... there were drugs involved... and then Will.

CHARLIE

What about Will?

JEFF

He's been having a rough go of it in school the past several months. He was always quiet, but this was different. He started lashing out. He scratched one of his teachers and we had to pull him out of public school... Eunie wanted to get him into therapy, but he's just a kid. I figured it would work itself out.

(mounting emotion)

I never imagined he would... that he could ever-

CHARLIE
Was she leaving you?

JEFF
(knocked off kilter)
Why would you say that?

CHARLIE
I saw the car. It was packed. Will
said they were going on a trip.

Charlie looks deeply at him, assessing every twitch of his eyelid for the lie. **SHALLOW BREATHING. CONTROLLED. NERVOUS.**

JEFF
Right... Eunie and I--

CHARLIE
Without you.

Jeffrey considers how to respond.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Is that why you knocked her around?

JEFF
I would never--

CHARLIE
That's right, you're a 'pillar of
the community'.

Jeffrey straightens in his seat at the shifting tone.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Maybe Will did it? Hit your wife?

JEFF
He had troubles, but he wouldn't
hit his mother.

CHARLIE
So he wouldn't hit his mother, but
he'd stab her?

Jeffrey controls his simmering anger.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
How'd you do it, Jeff?

JEFF
What do you mean?

CHARLIE

How do you maintain an image so pristine, it's easier for folks to believe a nine-year-old kid did something only an adult could do?

JEFF

My son means more to me than anything or anyone-

CHARLIE

And Eunie was about to take him.

Jeffrey bursts from his chair toward her face.

JEFF

That is a lie!

CHARLIE

She was leaving you and taking your son with her.

JEFF

You watch your mouth, you crazy--

She drives her face closer to his.

CHARLIE

You gonna hit me like you did your wife?

Jeffrey stops himself with sharp a EXHALE. His eyes are COLD. CALCULATING. He smirks and takes his seat again.

JEFF

I'd like to speak to my lawyer.

CHARLIE

I figured.

EXT. HICKS HOME - DAY

Byrum is wrapping up with straggling First Responders as a rose gold Porsche Cayenne charges into the circular drive in a cloud of DUST.

Regan leaps from the driver's seat red with anger.

REGAN

What in the hell do you people think you're doing? Where's my son?

BYRUM

Now, Regan, I had nothing to do
with this-

REGAN

Don't patronize me you sorry S.O.B.
Where is my son?

BYRUM

Chief Watkins took him down to the
station to question him-

REGAN

And you let her?!

BYRUM

She's my boss, Mrs. Hicks. There's
not a lot I can do-

REGAN

Don't you dare. This orchard and my
family are all I have and they are
both dwindling down to nothing. If
you won't protect my interests,
maybe I should stop funding yours.
I'm sure your weirdo son would do
just fine at a steroid-ed up State
College.

BYRUM

It's her first day on the job--

REGAN

And it's about to be her last.

INT. GENTRY POLICE DEPARTMENT - RECEPTION DESK - DAY

Becky is stirring a cup of coffee as she cradles the phone.

DEPUTY BECKY

(on the phone)

Uh-huh... Uh-huh... I know it.
Well, Velma, honey, you just gotta
live your truth.

Charlie rushes in from holding untucking her shirt.

BECKY

(covering the phone)

It's the lab.

CHARLIE

Perfume? Deodorant?

Becky tosses her a can of air freshener. Charlie sprays herself down. She CHOKES on the floral stench. Charlie throws the can in the trash and runs into her office.

BECKY

Look, Vel, Clint is a pig. When I'm in Little Rock for a visit, I'm taking you for a drunken spa day.

CHARLIE'S OFFICE

Charlie opens the closet to search for a sweat-free shirt. It's empty. She runs back out to Becky.

RECEPTION DESK

CHARLIE

Extra shirts?

Becky swivels her chair around to reveal three shirts in plastic wrap, hanging on the back of her chair.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Bless you.

Charlie grabs a shirt and runs back into her office.

BECKY

(on phone)

Look Velma, I really gotta get, but I wanted to ask; I'm sending over some DNA samples we need a rush on... You'd do that? Girl, you're an angel. I hope Clint rots in Hell... Bye-bye, hon.

Becky hangs-up the phone with a dramatic SIGH.

BECKY (CONT'D)

It's exhausting to be that relatable.

CHARLIE

A drunken spa day?

BECKY

I got a rush for you, didn't I?

Charlie unbuttons her shirt while fussing with the interior blinds in her office for privacy.

DEPUTY BECKY

Girl, I've been seeing all your goodies since 8th grade gym class, no reason to hide now.

Charlie acquiesces and completes her shirt exchange in full view, revealing a large tattoo serpentine across her back.

DEPUTY BECKY (CONT'D)

You didn't have *that* in the 8th grade. Your momma know about all that ink?

CHARLIE

She does not and will not. Started it to keep me sane at the BAU. Elders believed we die twice. First, when we take our last breath. Second, when our name's spoken for the last time. No matter how many bad people we stopped it never brought back the good ones we lost. I was pretty desperate to give them a little longer, so...

BECKY

So you got an enormous tattoo your Assemblies of God momma would kill you for?

CHARLIE

Ha, ha.

BECKY

How'd it go with Jeffy?

CHARLIE

Got two sentences out of him before he asked for his lawyer.

BECKY

No surprise there-

CHARLIE

How's your relationship with the M.E.C.?

DEPUTY BECKY

Jerrika? Not usually my cup of tea, but I've considered taking a sip.

CHARLIE

Working relationship, Rebecca Jo.

DEPUTY BECKY

All in tact.

CHARLIE

Good. Can you get me a heads up on the autopsy? I wanna be there.

Becky holds up a mirror and hands Charlie a brush.

BECKY

Sure thing.

Charlie panics over her reflection and brushes her hair back into a bun. Becky hands her lipstick.

CHARLIE

(re: lipstick)

No.

DEPUTY BECKY

This is Benton County, honey. At least let them think you give a shit at the beginning.

Charlie reluctantly dabs on the aggressive shade of rose.

BECKY

Now get your ass next door before they give your job to someone I can't drink with.

Charlie looks at her watch and flies toward the exit.

EXT. GENTRY CITY ADMINISTRATION BUILDING - DAY

Mayor Roberts is holding court with rotund McKee Foods Executives, BO and REX HORTON, and a smattering of GENTRY ELITE in front of an elevated platform with a podium on it in the shared parking lot with the Police Station.

LOCAL MEDIA are set up around the back of the folding chairs filled with DOTING CONSTITUENTS, GRUMPY CHICKEN FARMERS, and a few HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS from the news and yearbook club.

Charlie emerges from the station doors still buttoning the top buttons of her clean shirt.

NEAL

(waving, relieved)

Chief!

Charlie jogs toward him.

BO HORTON

Ah, the woman of the hour!
 (thrusting a hand shake)
 Bo and Rex Horton with McKee Foods.
 Excited to have you home-

NEAL

Ladies and gentlemen, we're gonna
 get started. It's already been a
 busy morning for Chief Watkins, so
 we'll make this quick.

Everyone settles into their seats as a few CAMERA OPERATORS
 move in closer with their enormous cameras to CLICK and FILM.

APPLAUSE from the CROWD.

NEAL (CONT'D)

Thank ya'll. We here in Gentry were
 already fortunate to have an
 accomplished former resident
 represent us at the FBI's
 Behavioral Analysis Unit in D.C.,
 but when Charlie Watkins told me
 she was moving back home, I
 couldn't help but try to make the
 FBI's loss our gain while we
 continue our search for a permanent
 replacement after the unexpected
 removal of former Chief Baldwin.

GENTRY RESIDENT

Crook!

GENTRY RESIDENT 2

Pipe down!

NEAL

Lets focus on the present shall we?

GENTRY RESIDENT 2

Here! Here!

NEAL

I'm sure some of you will remember,
 Ms. Watkins got her start serving
 under one of our beloved former
 Chiefs, Malcolm Pray.

(MORE)

NEAL (CONT'D)

Since then, she's gone on to become one of the youngest members of the FBI's elite BAU with one of the highest solve rates and instincts that were instrumental in creating the FBI's latest protocols on threat assessment; Meaning she prevents crimes as successfully as she solves them. So, I am confident that Interim Chief Watkins is just the person to bring safety and trust back to Gentry.

APPLAUSE.

REPORTER 1

How long will she be with us?

NEAL

My *hope* is that your warm welcome might convince our local hero to stick around permanently!

APPLAUSE.

NEAL (CONT'D)

Chief Watkins?

APPLAUSE.

CHARLIE

Thank you, Mayor. It's an honor to be... back home...

Charlie scans the audience, overwhelmed by assessments: **HOSTILE... CONCEALED HANDGUN... LEGAL... STOP IT, CHARLIE...** Her mind spins... Until she SEES a little girl in the audience holding a **TEDDY BEAR.**

INT. GENE'S CAR - NIGHT - **FLASHBACK**

Young Charlie's backseat POV as Russell gets into the driver's seat. Young Charlie hyperventilates in the backseat; seized by panic. Her eyes dart around the car. We SEE the start of CHARLIE VISION in real time.

ESCAPE... DOORS... LOCKED... GUN... BEAR...

BACK TO:

EXT. GENTRY CITY ADMINISTRATION BUILDING - DAY

Charlie GRIPS the podium and forces herself to focus.

CHARLIE

...It's an honor to be back home
serving you all.

REPORTER 2

Chief Watkins, can you tell us
about the call out at the Hicks
place today?

CHARLIE

Unfortunately, that's an ongoing
investigation-

REPORTER 3

Do you think you're letting a
little unconscious (or conscious)
bias affect how you're choosing to
investigate the case?

NEAL

Is that necessary, Ronnie?

A smattering of UNCOMFORTABLE RESPONSES in the crowd.

CHARLIE

Seventy five percent of the crime
in this county, from murder to drug
trafficking is committed by and on
caucasians, of which I am half. So
which part of myself do you want me
to hate to make this a safer place
to live?... I am here to keep
everyone in Gentry safe, no matter
where they're from, or what they
look like. Or, whether you, or I,
think they deserve it. That's the
law and I'm here to serve it.

Charlie sits in the uncomfortable silence she created as Neal
takes the stage encouraging the crowd's anaemic APPLAUSE.

NEAL

(clapping)
Thank ya'll so much.

INT. JUVENILE DETENTION CENTER - DAY

Will's arm is in a cast now. He stares blankly as he is
processed into the Juvenile Detention Center.

A SUCCESSION OF SHOTS: Will is photographed and fingerprinted. He is escorted down a long hallway to a room lined with bunk beds now wearing INMATE SCRUBS as a DETENTION OFFICER barks information above him.

DETENTION OFFICER (O.S.)

You are to only sleep on your assigned bunk. On your bunk you will find a toothbrush, comb, bar of soap, toilet paper, cup, towel, deodorant and cards. Other hygiene supplies will be given as needed. Soap & shampoo will be given at shower times only. Free time and privileges are earned by good behavior. You act like a punk, you get treated like a punk. Corporal punishment is still legal in these parts and we will belt your sorry ass if you make trouble. Do I make myself clear?

Will's mouth opens, but nothing comes out.

DETENTION OFFICER (CONT'D)

Do I make myself clear?!

Will FLINCHES.

EXT. ADMINISTRATION BUILDING - LATER

NEAL

You certainly made an impression.

Charlie sees Regan's Porsche rip into the parking lot.

CHARLIE

Looks like it isn't over.

NEAL

Go get 'em, Chief.

CHARLIE

(walking away)

Interim, Neal... *Interim* Chief.

INT. CHARLIE'S OFFICE - DAY

REGAN (O.S.)

This is a joke!

Charlie sits at her desk as Regan paces on the other side beside her attorney, HUDDY, 50's, as expensive as he looks.

CHARLIE

Mrs. Hicks, your son is not the only one being held. Your grandson's being processed as we speak and could probably use his own over-priced attorney. Or do you only protect the people in your family who look like you?

REGAN

For your information, I happen to love my grandson. Huddy here's taking care of both of them while you keep busy nursing grudges you've clearly held onto since you left.

CHARLIE

I don't have any grudge against you-

REGAN

Bull. My husband, Duane, God rest his soul, bought the land that damn eye sore of an Indian-

HUDDY

Native American-

REGAN

Shut up, Huddy. He bought that land that eye sore of an Indian Center is on as a favor to your mother. And therefore, I am allowed to collect rent!

(flashing her Rolex)

And I'm allowed to use that rent to buy whatever I want with it.

CHARLIE

(totally blindsided)

What are you talking about?! They own that land outright.

REGAN

Maybe you can go ask your mother about it... before she forgets too.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. THE FINAL SCORE SPORTS BAR - NIGHT

Charlie's in street clothes nursing a beer at a dimly lit local sports bar with more televisions than customers.

CHARLIE
(on the phone)
Momma, I need to talk to you about
the community center-

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. GENE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Gene is in her bed trying to decipher her remote from her cell phone. She is foggier than she was this morning.

GENE
I only go on weekdays now.

She doesn't remember.

CHARLIE
Did they give you your medicine?

GENE
When do you get home?

CHARLIE
Momma, I am home.

INT. FINAL SCORE BAR - CONTINUOUS

Becky appears in the doorway of the Sports Bar dressed for a night out. Charlie waves her beer in Becky's direction.

CHARLIE
I gotta go, Momma. *Gvgeyuhi*.

Becky slides onto the stool next to Charlie as she hangs up.

BECKY
That looks like a happy call.

CHARLIE
Mom. It feels like she's different
from one moment to the next.

BECKY

I'm sorry.

CHARLIE

It is what it is.

Charlie takes a sip of her beer.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Should I feel special, or do you dress like this for all the girls.

BECKY

My ex works nights, I don't usually get outings that don't involve McDonald's Playland.

Charlie slides her a beer.

CHARLIE

Any luck with the DNA?

BECKY

Oh honey, you realize we're in the sticks? You won't see anything back on DNA for at least 72 hours even with my empty promises to Velma.

(to bartender)

Two tequilas, no salt.

(to Charlie)

Prints came back on the murder weapon though...

CHARLIE

And?

BECKY

One set... Will Hicks.

CHARLIE

No way that kid's strong enough--

BECKY

They'll probably try to say it was adrenaline or some shit.

CHARLIE

Any dirt on model citizen 'Jeffy'?

BECKY

Deacon at his church. Volunteer at the Boys and Girls Club...

Charlie rolls her eyes.

BECKY (CONT'D)

Charlie, you know this town.
Nobody's gonna talk unless it's
behind somebody's back.

CHARLIE

That's fine, as long as they're
talking to me. Feels like everyone
knows everything before I do.

BECKY

I got one more piece of intel, but
I haven't figured out how it fits.
Layla, at the Circuit Clerk's
Office said Huddy just filed a deed
transfer for the Hicks Estate
Properties into Will Hicks' name.

CHARLIE

Why would they do that?

BECKY

Knowing them it's some tax haven,
but I'll keep hunting.

Charlie finishes her beer.

CHARLIE

I can't believe this is still the
closest bar. I feel like I need to
scald off the film of bad high
school decisions.

BECKY

They weren't all bad. If I
remember, you and one very eligible
Mayor shared a few dances on that
poor excuse for a dance floor.

Becky nudges Charlie playfully.

BECKY (CONT'D)

Why aren't you walking down memory
lane with Mayor Hottie?

CHARLIE

Ha, ha.

Charlie gets up to go.

BECKY

Where do you think you're going?

CHARLIE

Momma. Maybe I can help at least
one of us get some sleep.

Becky puts her hand on Charlie's.

BECKY

You aren't alone, honey. It's okay
to ask for help.

Charlie leaves cash on the bar.

CHARLIE

(re: the cash)
You better drink all of that.

BECKY

(lifting her beer)
I will certainly try!

INT. PARADISE OF THE OZARKS - LOBBY - NIGHT

Charlie walks through the sleepy nursing home toward the
Memory Unit carrying an overnight bag. As she nears the
Memory Wing she hears ALARMS mixed with SOUNDS OF A STRUGGLE
coming from Gene's room.

GENE (O.S.)

Let me out of here! Where am I?!
Who are you?! Charlie! Charlie!!!

INT. GENE'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Charlie runs in to see her mother being restrained by TWO
ENORMOUS ORDERLIES... NURSES... RESTRAINTS... PANIC....

CHARLIE

Let her go!

NURSE

This is procedure Ms. Watkins!

CHARLIE

I don't care what it is! GET! OFF!
MY MOTHER! NOW!!!

Charlie FLINGS the Orderlies off of her mother with
impressive FORCE then drops to the floor to hold her PANICKED
and SOBBING Mom. She strokes her face and tries to calm her.

NURSE

The Director will hear about this.

CHARLIE
I look forward to it.

GENE
Where am I?! I need to go home!
He's coming! My baby! I have to
keep my baby safe!

INT./EXT. RUSSELL'S CAR - NIGHT - (FLASHBACK)

Young Charlie is strapped into the backseat of Russell's car.
DANGER... ESCAPE... ROAD... GUN...

She stretches to reach the REVOLVER on the passenger seat by
the Teddy Bear. The convenience store door DINGS. **HE'S**
COMING... Young Charlie stretches harder.

RUSSELL
(to store clerk)
Thanks, buddy.

Russell gets into the car and pulls out of the station. Maple
trees and willow oaks flick by the windows. Russell channel
surfs RADIO STATIONS until he hears the COCK of his
revolver's hammer.

He looks toward the passenger seat for his gun. It's GONE!

A GUNSHOT explodes the back of Russell's seat.

The car SPINS OUT and SLAMS into a ditch. Charlie is thrown
onto the floorboard. Russell's head CRACKS onto the glass.

Young Charlie's eyes shoot open. **BLOOD DRIPPING... NO**
BREATHING... HE'S DEAD... RUN.

Charlie pushes her door open and runs into the night.

BACK TO:

INT. GENE'S ROOM - NIGHT

CHARLIE
He's not coming back, Momma.

Her mother SOBS in her arms.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
He'll never come back.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

INT. PARADISE OF THE OZARKS - DIRECTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Charlie sits in the only chair in the tiny cluttered office of the care home DIRECTOR. She's exhausted.

DIRECTOR

We're gonna try switching her off of the Sinemet to alleviate the hallucinations, but Charlie, at this point, I'm more worried about you than your Mother. These lapses are bound to happen more and more and unfortunately with Lewy dementia there's really no way to track how it's going to proceed.

CHARLIE

I know. I have the internet.

DIRECTOR

Maybe you can bring by some photos, trinkets from home? Usually helps our dementia patients orient themselves a little quicker when these episodes strike.

She gets up to leave.

CHARLIE

I'll add it to my list-

DIRECTOR

Charlie, there's no way to know if her dementia's linked to a brain injury or genetics. You gotta take care of yourself too.

Charlie heads for the door.

CHARLIE

Forgetting some of my life might be a good thing at this point.

EXT. AMERICAN INDIAN COMMUNITY CENTER - DAY

Charlie stares at a display case outside the building she passed earlier. Inside the case is a YOUNG PHOTO of: GENE, MALCOLM, SAM and DONETTA beneath the words: "Do-hi-yi. Founded 2008".

SAM (O.S.)
You going in?

Charlie turns to see the Native Man from her run, SAM, 60s, as massive as he is warm. He wraps her in an enormous hug.

SAM (CONT'D)
Tohitsu.

CHARLIE
Osda. You got old.

He holds the door open and nods her inside.

SAM
She's in the back.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER - KITCHEN - DAY

SAM
Look who I found.

DONETTA, 60s, not as stern as she looks, knots fabric for a jingle dress.

DONETTA
You like your sign?

Sam leaves them.

CHARLIE
(re: the dress)
Who's that one for?

DONETTA
My niece, G's girl, Lila. She's competing this year.

CHARLIE
Gisela?... She had a kid?

DONETTA
It happens.

The mutual recognition that neither of them have a child sits heavy in the air between them.

DONETTA (CONT'D)
You're mom's pissed you came home.

CHARLIE
Were you ever going to tell me she sold the land this place is on?

DONETTA

You needed to go to the Academy.

CHARLIE

I would have found another way. You and Mom and Sam fought too hard to build this place. If it goes...

DONETTA

If it goes we find a new spot. Our people always find a way.

CHARLIE

You built this place to give our people a home. A refuge for kids like Will Hicks who have no one else fighting for them.

DONETTA

You're fighting for them... If Gene hadn't sold it I would have. We need more than a building fighting for us, *usdi*.

Donetta looks up at Charlie for the first time.

DONETTA (CONT'D)

Family is made of more than blood... You know that.

Charlie lets the argument rest.

CHARLIE

That's a lot of jingle dresses, Auntie.

DONETTA

Ask me what you need to know.

CHARLIE

Eunie.

DONETTA

Her boy would never hurt anyone.

CHARLIE

Would her husband?

Donetta returns to the fabric.

DONETTA

You visit the clinic, yet?

Charlie looks at her waiting for more.

DONETTA (CONT'D)
 Seems like the Chief could get
 someone to share records about that
 kind of thing if they ask nicely...

CHARLIE
 Thanks.

INT. MAYOR ROBERTS' OFFICE - DAY

Neal is mid-schmooze with Bo and Rex Horton in front of a
 spread of Little Debbie's SWISS CAKE ROLLS and OATMEAL CREME
 PIES next to a crystal carafe of BOURBON.

REX HORTON
 How's that bourbon, huh? Bet you
 never thought to pair it with a
 Little Debbie; Pretty damn good if
 I say so myself.

Bo and Rex LAUGH. Neal humors them with equivalent LAUGHTER.

NEAL
 This has made for an eventful
 afternoon gentlemen, but I'd better-

BO HORTON
 Right, right. We know you're busy.

REX HORTON
 Mayor, McKee Foods'd like to throw
 our hat in the ring should any
 developments with the present Hicks
 court case occur which might make
 acquiring Hicks properties--

BO HORTON
 More attainable.

NEAL
 I assume you're asking if the
 property will be seized, but I'm
 not the first to know that
 information-

REX HORTON
 But your girl is.

NEAL
 Charlie isn't anyone's 'girl'.

BO HORTON

I think we can come clean here and say peaches aren't the only thing keeping that orchard afloat.

Neal finishes his drink.

REX HORTON

There's been talk about other things being manufactured there.

Neals hand shakes as he places the glass back on the table.

BO HORTON

Pills. That kind of thing. You know anything about that?

Neal rubs his leg.

NEAL

I'll see what I can find out.

REX HORTON

Pills are a hard habit to kick, I hear. Be terrible to see our community affected.

Neal feels cornered. He rubs his throbbing leg again.

BO HORTON

We could do a lot with the Hicks properties. Expand our operations. Maybe use that parcel out by the urgent care to make a community center for everyone--

NEAL

You mean the American Indian Community Center?

REX HORTON

Exactly. Why can't it be for everyone. Inclusivity, right?

BO HORTON

We could build something really special, maybe even name it after our favorite Mayor.

NEAL

You boys ever thought of just making Regan an offer?

They PAT him on the back as they push past him to leave.

REX HORTON

It's a lot more fun this way.

BO HORTON

Be seeing ya, it'd be such a pain
to have to break in a new Mayor.

Neal's anger seethes as he locks the door behind them, then limps over to sit at his desk. He pulls up the pant leg covering his prosthetic limb and rubs his thigh.

Desperate for relief, Neal makes a choice. He unlocks the bottom left drawer, pulls out a burner phone and TEXTS: A **blue circle** and a **blue "P"** to a number labeled "Pain Doctor".

INT. CLINIC - OFFICE - DAY

Charlie sits across from an overworked CLINIC MANAGER while a YOUNG INTERN, 18, files timidly behind her.

CHARLIE

Thanks for seeing me. I'm here
about a case-

CLINIC MANAGER

Hicks wife, right?

CHARLIE

There really are no secrets in this
town.

CLINIC MANAGER

Family attorney's already been
calling me. Eunice came through
quite a bit.

The Manager catches herself. **HIDING SOMETHING... CAUTIOUS.**

CHARLIE

That's what I gathered.

CLINIC MANAGER

I'm sure you can appreciate that
I'm gonna need a subpoena. HIPPA
compliance aside, we're still a
privately funded clinic in a state
that has outlawed Planned
Parenthood and Plan B.

CHARLIE

By the time I get that subpoena,
Jeff Hicks will be a free man...
The woman next door, Donetta, she--

A drawer accidentally SLAMS behind the Manager.

YOUNG INTERN

Sorry.

The Clinic Manager glares at her intern who resumes filing.

CLINIC MANAGER

The Hicks Family carries a lot of weight in this town.

CHARLIE

I'm aware, but-

CLINIC MANAGER

(standing)

Did the Hicks woman come in with some black eyes? Probably. But so do half my other patients. It doesn't mean the guy killed her. Bring me back a subpoena and I'll hand over her file, but until then, Lila here, can show you out.

The Manager exits the room leaving the door open behind her.

CHARLIE

Lila? G's daughter?

Lila looks around nervously. **AVOIDING EYE CONTACT...**

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

(in Cherokee)

That boy needs all the help he can get.

Lila's face flushes. **TERRIFIED... HOLDING BACK...** Charlie slides her card across the desk. Lila picks it up and rushes out the door without looking back.

Charlie's phone DINGS with a TEXT from Becky: "Jerrika. Morgue. Twenty Minutes."

INT. MORGUE - DAY

Eunice's body is laid out on a cold metal slab in front of Jerrika and Charlie.

JERRIKA

Victim sustained four cracked ribs from the thrust of a blade approximately 12 inches in length.

(MORE)

JERRIKA (CONT'D)

Injuries indicate significant force, behind the knife. However, the blade didn't puncture any organs. Significant blood loss was sustained, but it is unclear whether that was ante or post mortem-

CHARLIE

If it wasn't the wound, what else could it have been?

JERRIKA

I'm waiting for her CT's and bloodwork, but the tissue samples I've taken of the heart, lungs and liver show massive cell death.

Charlie looks at her blankly.

JERRIKA (CONT'D)

Hypoxia. Suffocation.

CHARLIE

She was dead before she was stabbed?

JERRIKA

Hypoxia can indicate several things: suffocation, heart attack, organ failure. The stabbing didn't help, but without knowing what caused the hypoxia... I'm unable to determine cause of death.

CHARLIE

Jeffrey Hicks is likely being released tomorrow!

JERRIKA

I wish I had better news.

CHARLIE

Me too.

INT. JUVENILE DETENTION CENTER - DAY

Charlie sits on the other side of the glass as Will is guided to a seat on the other side. **MALNOURISHED...** **DISTENDED STOMACH...** **DARK CIRCLES...** **INSOMNIA.**

CHARLIE

'Siyo, Will. You remember me?

Charlie flashes the pendant she is keeping safe on the chain around her neck. Will shakes his head, "Yes".

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
They treating you okay in here?...
How's your wrist?

WILL
It hurts, but they said I can't
have any medicine in here.

CHARLIE
Will, I want to get you out of this
place, but I need your help. I need
to know what happened that night.

Will shakes his head, "No".

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
I know you're scared.

Will stares at her, terrified to speak.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
My dad hurt my mom too. You aren't
alone... Will, please. I can't help
you if you won't talk to me!

WILL
He... was hurting her. I grabbed
the knife to stop him and she...
She just dropped. She fell on me.

CHARLIE
Stop protecting him, Will!

WILL
I'm not!!! I stabbed her. It's my
fault!!! It's all my fault!!!!

Will violently pushes away from the glass and dissolves into a MASSIVE FIT. The GUARDS descend to subdue him. **SCREAMS...**
FISTS FLAILING... **RESTRAINTS...**

CHARLIE
Will? It's gonna be okay, Will!
(to Guards)
You be careful with him! Don't you
hurt him! Don't hurt him!

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

EXT. E-Z MART - NIGHT

Neal sits in his car waiting in a dark corner of the back lot by a dumpster. His leg is jerking from the pain.

TAP. TAP.

A MAN in a hoodie stands outside his window. Neal slides his window partially down. The Man shoves his hand inside. Neal removes a baggie of pills from the man's hand.

NEAL
(counting pills)
What's this? I'm buying twenty.

MAN
Distribution's down, man.

NEAL
I need the rest.

MAN
I'm sorry. That's my whole stash.

Neal shoves cash into the Man's hand.

MAN (CONT'D)
Hit me up in a week, brother.

Neal rolls his window up. He punches his steering wheel, angry at the pain and his weakness. He stares at the pills... BUZZ, BUZZ a TEXT from Charlie lights up his phone: "You up?"

NEAL
Saved by the Bell.

He exhales and touches a kiss to the roof in gratitude.

EXT. GENTRY - NIGHT

Charlie runs down the same winding Gentry roads.

CHARLIE
Damn it. Just had to push him,
Charlie. Just can't leave it
alone...

She pushes her pace to outrun her thoughts. She can't.

INTERCUTTING **FLASHES TO:**

Young Charlie running down the same road after shooting her father. Her face determined. WET ROAD... CAR COMING... RUN... DON'T STOP... SAVE HER...

Charlie runs harder.

Young Charlie waves her arms at a PATROL CAR in the distance. CHIEF MALCOLM PRAY, 50s, kind, paternal, is at the wheel.

Charlie runs HARDER.

Young Charlie and Malcolm find Young Gene, still unconscious in front of their mobile home. Malcolm radios for help. MOTHER... UNCONCSCIOUS... GASH... HEAD... BLOOD.

Young Charlie SOBS as Malcolm tries to wake her mother.

MALCOLM

I'm sorry, Genie. I'm so sorry.

Young Charlie stares at the Malcolm in her memory differently. This is new. Confusing. LOVE. HE LOVED HER.

Charlie slows. She now stands at the entrance of

EXT. GENTRY CEMETARY - NIGHT

Charlie scans the words on a large HEADSTONE with several badges and military insignia engraved upon it:
"CHIEF MALCOLM PRAY...End of watch May 25, 2019... 'I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me.' Isaiah 6:8"

Charlie's head sinks into her hands.

CHARLIE

I don't know how you did this. That kid has no one and I have no idea how to help him. I'm so tired of the bad guys winning, Malcolm. I'm so tired... I miss you.

She pats the headstone, wipes her face and resumes her jog.

EXT. CHARLIE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Charlie returns from her run to find a Tesla parked in her driveway and Neal sitting on her porch with a six-pack of beers and a YEARBOOK in his hands.

NEAL
 (waving beer)
 Help me drown my misery?

CHARLIE
 The beer I can help you with, but
 if that thing in your hands is a
 yearbook, you can climb right back
 into your ugly ass four-wheeled e-
 bike.

She joins him on the porch.

NEAL
 You go see him?

CHARLIE
 Yeah. It all feels so weird. Me in
his job. Mom in a nursing home. You
 in an electric SUV.

NEAL
 I had to stand out somehow.

CHARLIE
 Trust me, you stand out.

Neal hands her a beer and they CLINK bottles.

NEAL
 Any progress with the case?...You
 think Jeffy'll get felony charges?

CHARLIE
 You know I can't talk about my
 cases.

NEAL
 Alright, alright. You got me.
 Constituent minds want to know...

She laughs it off, but he crossed a line.

NEAL (CONT'D)
 How do you do it, Charlie?

CHARLIE
 What?

NEAL
 You know, your spidey senses thing.
 Even since we were kids... I
 couldn't get away with shit.

CHARLIE
My trauma powers?

She laughs.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
I guess the hypervigilance never
stopped after my Dad took me... I
just wish I could shut it off
sometimes. At least this job
lets me put it to good use.

NEAL
Must be hard living in a world
where everything and everyone is a
threat.

Neal sips his beer, considering how that applies to him.

CHARLIE
(nudging him)
Not everyone.

A flirty and facetious smirk spreads across Neal's face.

NEAL
You think Malcolm and your mom ever-

CHARLIE
What?! No!... Why?

NEAL
I don't know just a spark I thought
I saw once or twice.

CHARLIE
Men and women can be just friends.
Not everything has to be sexual.

They sit in the moment together, smiling at the irony.

NEAL
Well... not *everything*.

Neal leans in for a kiss, but Charlie's cell phone sabotages
the moment with aggressive BUZZING. Shit. IT'S HER MOM.

INT. HUDDY'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Regan has nearly worn a hole into the ornate Persian rug
under her Louboutins.

REGAN

I want you to get the orchard and that Indian Center's land back in my name.

HUDDY

We just processed the transfer. The deeds haven't even updated with the State.

REGAN

Good, then it'll be easy to stop.

HUDDY

Regan, we don't know what's going to be unearthed in this case.

Regan glares at him.

HUDDY (CONT'D)

You asked me to keep Jeffrey safe, well now I'm going to keep you safe. If anyone finds out what is actually cooking on that orchard you'll lose a lot more than land or money.

REGAN

He's just a kid.

HUDDY

That's the only reason it works.

REGAN

Nothing works if my grandson gets charged with a felony.

HUDDY

He can't be. We went over this. Not in the state of Arkansas. Even if he were charged with Eunice's murder it won't raise above delinquency. Right now your assets sit in a trust, separate from your bakery or pastry holdings. We can reassess everything when he's 15, but trust me-

REGAN

I don't trust anyone.

INT. GENTRY POLICE DEPARTMENT - NIGHT

Byrum signs in for the night watch cradling a Big Gulp sized Mountain Dew and a computer bag. He reviews the log then scans the empty precinct. The ticking clock is annoyingly loud in the silence.

BYRUM

Hello! Anyone home?

He laughs at his dumb joke then turns his head toward Charlie's office.

INT. CHARLIE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

The DOORKNOB TWISTS and SHAKES as it is pried open. The door CREAKS open to reveal Byrum.

BYRUM

Don't mind if I do, Chief.

He crosses to sit in her empty chair and take in the kingdom that should have been his.

He checks the time on his phone then DIALS.

BYRUM (CONT'D)

Howdy do... What?... No, I told you it's clean. I bleached everything. Now when can we start back to cooking?... I CAN'T wait. My kid's school fees are due and--No one's gonna know. The whole house is roped off with crime tape- Fine. Fine!... You're the boss.

Byrum ends the call and looks at the name plate in front of him: "Chief Charlie Watkins". He SNORTS in disgust.

Fuck it. He flips the name plate down, pulls a laptop out of his bag and signs in to ZOOM from Charlie's desk. DING. Byrum's goth-looking son, LONNIE, 17, fills the screen.

BYRUM (CONT'D)

Hey there, son.

BYRUM'S SON (V.O.)

Hey.

Byrum reclines in Charlie's chair like the top dog he wishes he was for a son who could truly care less.

INT. PARADISE OF THE OZARKS - GENE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Charlie rushes into her Mother's room with her bag.

CHARLIE

I'm here mom... I'm here-

Charlie watches her mother's chest rise and fall with sleep. She creeps inside and closes the door behind her.

GENE

I can't sleep for shit.

Charlie LAUGHS and kicks off her shoes. It's a good day. Charlie slides in beside Gene. She pulls her close and breathes deeply; Taking in the smell of home.

GENE (CONT'D)

You need a shower.

Charlie shoves her cold feet onto Gene's.

GENE (CONT'D)

You bitch.

They LAUGH.

CHARLIE

I thought you had an emergency old woman.

GENE

I did... I missed you.

The quiet settles in the space.

CHARLIE

Momma, why did you leave him when you did?

Gene doesn't answer.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

...He was awful to you. It was constant. What made you finally...

Gene stares at the wall in front of her, now peppered with photos of her and Charlie through the years and a sign that reads: "This is Home. You are Safe."

GENE

I could take what he did to me, but not when he started on you.

INT. MOBILE HOME - NIGHT - **FLASHBACK**

Young Gene is drying dishes at the kitchen table.

Russell opens the bathroom door at the end of the hall WHISTLING and ZIPPING UP his pants. He turns into another doorway REVEALING a traumatized Young Charlie behind him, sucking her thumb and gripping the now new TEDDY BEAR.

BACK TO:

INT. GENE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Gene SQUEEZES Charlie's hand.

GENE

There's some things I'm looking forward to forgetting.

INT. JUVENILE DETENTION CENTER - NIGHT

GUARD

Lights out!

The lights SLAM OFF. Every bed in the space is filled with a YOUNG PERSON except one, Will's empty bottom bunk.

We continue tracking toward the floor under the bed where Will is huddled against the wall SHAKING.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER - DAY

Charlie rushes into the Center searching...

DONETTA (O.S.)

Back here.

Charlie rounds the corner to the...

KITCHEN

Donetta stands behind the kitchen island next to Lila.

DONETTA

I'll leave ya'll to it.

Donetta kisses Lila on the head and leaves.

LILA

I'm gonna get in so much trouble. I could lose everything--

CHARLIE

You knew he was hurting Will, didn't you?

Lila slides a folder onto the kitchen island.

LILA

It's all in there.

Charlie picks up the folder and begins reading the documents.

LILA (CONT'D)

Eunice tried to say she just fell a lot at first, but then, when she started bringing Will-- What he did to that boy- his own son...

(choking back emotion)

I told the staff at the Boys and Girls Club to stop letting him be alone with kids, but they didn't believe me... those kids... and now... I'm pregnant. If anyone ever did that to my baby--

Charlie looks up overcome with grief for Will.

LILA (CONT'D)

Eunie was leaving him. She called me. Said she got ahold of some money and they were gonna head to California. Maybe see the ocean... Jeff's a monster. He shouldn't be with children. How could anyone...

Charlie touches Lila's hand to calm her.

CHARLIE

Wado, Lila. Thank you.

Lila nods, wipes off her face and leaves out the back door.

A thought hits Charlie. She closes the folder and speed dials "Becky" as she heads for the front door.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

(on phone)

Becky? Is Jerrika with you... Tell her to bring the results with her. I need you both to meet me at the Hicks place... now.

INT. HICKS HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Charlie is laying on her back taking in the scene again.

FLASH TO Will grabbing a knife to threaten Jeff who is restraining Eunice and SCREAMING at her.

Charlie's eyes open. **REWIND...** Jeff, Will and Eunice all move backwards until Will is outside playing, Jeff is gone and...

Charlie looks to her right...

CLOSE ON: WHITE VIVIER HEELS step across the threshold. REGAN.

Charlie's eyes scan the scene till they catch the corner of an **ENVELOPE** poking out of the base of Regan's photo.

Charlie goes to the counter and shimmies out an envelope full of **CASH**.

CHARLIE
(contemplating the photo)
Where is the...

Her eyes sail over Regan's photo and down to flour highlighting the rings of a missing **CAKE STAND**.

Her eyes dart through the space to find the stand. **CABINETS. SHELVES. COUNTERS... REFRIGERATOR.**

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Bingo.

Charlie stretches on gloves and pulls open the refrigerator door to see a half-eaten **PRINCESS CAKE**. She leans in to SMELL IT. A wave of nausea instantly seizes her.

Jerrika and Becky run up the steps behind her as Charlie braces herself on the refrigerator door.

JERRIKA (O.S.)
Cytochrome C! It was cytochrome C!

Charlie VOMITS.

INT. HICKS FAMILY OFFICES - DAY

Charlie passes off a handcuffed Jeff to the Sheriff's Department to be taken into custody.

REGAN (O.S.)
You are going to regret this!

Charlie sits in Regan's desk chair.

CHARLIE

I feel pretty good about it myself.
Any day a pedophile gets locked up
is a good one by me.

Regan's face FLUSHES with ANGER... Her JAW TIGHTENING.

REGAN

You watch your volume.

Charlie crosses to her, circling her like prey.

CHARLIE

You don't seem very surprised to
hear your son called a pedophile.

REGAN

I said lower your voice!

CHARLIE

You knew... That's why you
transferred the trust from Jeff's
name to Will's. If Will's convicted
it isn't a felony, but if Jeff goes
down for being a pedophile... you
lose it all.

Regan's boils. TEETH GRINDING... ANXIETY BUILDING.

REGAN

My son is not a--

CHARLIE

Eunice came to you for help, maybe
a little blackmail. She'd muscled
through your son's violence and
urges for years until he turned his
gaze onto their son.

REGAN

Stop it!

CHARLIE

You told Eunice you'd help them
leave and when you brought her aid,
you sealed it with a cake. Only you
made a mistake, you told your son.

REGAN

(struggling)
Stop antagonizing me!

CHARLIE

If Jeff had only stayed away, maybe
Will would have had some cake too.

REGAN

(starting to break)
Please, stop.

Regan slides into the closest chair.

CHARLIE

I know you had help.

Regan steels herself.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Was it Jeffrey? Huddy?... Maybe
someone closer?

REGAN

Not sure what you mean.

CHARLIE

You can stop the games Regan. You
ground up enough cyanide from the
Peach Pits on your precious orchard
to poison a fleet of horses. Your
bakery is being sampled now. That
spot on the floor, the smell.
Bleach can only destroy so much
when you don't account for
splatter.

(leaning in closer)

You know what cyanide does? It
suffocates you from the inside out
and you baked a cake with it.
'Sweets for the Sweet by Regan'...
Not anymore. You're going to prison
for a very long time and your
grandson will own your entire
estate by the time you get out.

Regan looks at Charlie. **COLD... EMOTIONLESS.**

REGAN

We'll see about that.

CHARLIE

Take her away.

OFFICERS surround Regan and cart her out of the room.

END OF ACT FIVE

ACT SIX

INT. AMERICAN INDIAN COMMUNITY CENTER - NIGHT

Charlie holds Will's hand as she guides him into the rec room where GUESTS are milling about. There is a framed photo of Eunie on a table in the center of the room surrounded by trinkets and flowers.

Charlie kneels down to face Will.

CHARLIE

I spoke to the Judge and he says
you should stay with your
community.

She finds Donetta and Sam in the crowd.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Do you remember Auntie Donetta and
Uncle Sam.

Will nods, "yes".

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

They would like to take care of
you. Would you like that?

Will doesn't answer.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

I know it's scary, but they helped
my mom raise me when I was little.
I turned out okay, yeah?

Will wraps his arms around Charlie in a hug. Her heart is about to burst. She quickly wipes her eyes as she pulls back to give him something.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Did you know that the greatest
thing you can do is risk your life
for the people you love and your
Mother did that for you.

Charlie fastens Eunice's pendent on a new chain around Will's neck. Will's eyes light up.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

That kind of love marks you for
great purpose.

(MORE)

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

So, no matter what life brings you from here, Will Hicks, know that you matter enough to fight for and if you ever need help remembering... You call me.

Charlie presses her card into his hand.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Family is made of more than blood.

She looks up to see Sam and Donetta standing above them. Donetta picks Will up.

DONETTA

You ready to celebrate your Momma?

Charlie nods and turns to go.

WILL (O.S.)

Auntie!...

Charlie turns back to Will.

WILL (CONT'D)

Wado!

Charlie SMILES.

EXT. AMERICAN INDIAN COMMUNITY CENTER - NIGHT

Charlie takes a deep breath as she descends the steps to the parking lot.

LIGHTS FLASH from the far corner of the lot. Neal gets out of his car holding a bouquet of flowers.

Charlie strolls over with a smile she can't hide. Neal extends a flask toward her.

NEAL

To a job well done.

Charlie takes a sip.

CHARLIE

(gagging)

What is that?! Gasoline?!

NEAL
 (laughing)
 I started distilling my own whiskey
 during the pandemic. Guess, I
 haven't quite mastered it.

He knocks back a swig from the flask, clearly more practiced.

NEAL (CONT'D)
 It grows on you.

They smile at each other.

CHARLIE
 (keeping eye contact)
 Yeah. It does.

Neal brushes Charlie's hair out of her face, resting his hand on her cheek as the two continue taking each other in.

NEAL
 Welcome home, Charlie.

The DRUMS and "Memorial Song" CHANT begin in the distance inside the Community Center.

Charlie's eyes well with tears as they meet for an all-consuming EMBRACE in the moonlight.

The DRUMS SWELL as their passion mounts.

The CACOPHANY of sound and music UNDERSCORE and CARRY US TO:

INT./ EXT. HICKS ORCHARD HOME - NIGHT

A slat in the floor of the den slides over as a MAN in a commercial grade GAS MASK ascends hidden basement stairs carrying two large BAGS OF PILLS identical to Neal's.

He steps onto the porch and slides the gas mask down to reveal a very self-satisfied, Sergeant Detective Byrum. He texts: "Ahead of schedule" and clicks "SEND".

INT. MAYOR ROBERTS' CAR - NIGHT

Neal sits alone in his car TAPPING his phone in his hand. His face is wet with PERSPIRATION and CONTORTING with PAIN.

He removes his PROSTHETIC LEG and rubs his aching limb. He contemplates his next move deeply. His leg THROBS again.

He steels himself to his decision, reaches in his pocket, throws back a couple PILLS and SWALLOWS.

INT. GENTRY POLICE DEPARTMENT - NIGHT

Becky is twisting in her chair and dirty texting with Jerrika. Her email PINGS from the desktop.

She leans in to READ: **"FROM: Arkansas State Crime Laboratory...SUBJECT: DNA RESULTS..."**

Becky clicks to read the email and what she sees has her drop back into her chair.

EXT. NURSING HOME - NIGHT

Charlie struggles to balance bags of Sonic as she gets out of her patrol car. She balances the food on the hood to answer her RINGING cell phone.

BECKY

Hey hon, you got a minute?

CHARLIE

Be quick, Mom'll kill me if her limeade melts.

BECKY

I got the results back from the State on the DNA samples finally. Hon, one of the samples was a fifty percent DNA match to an Unidentified Subject linked to an arsenal of cold cases.

CHARLIE

Jeffy?

BECKY

No, honey...it was you-- I thought your daddy died in a car accident?

CHARLIE

So did I.

EXT. GENE AND CHARLIE'S MOBILE HOME - NIGHT

Charlie stands at the door of the aged mobile home. She searches the porch for a hide-a-key, then stops short with a chilling premonition... she tries the door... **UNLOCKED.**

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. GENE'S ROOM - NIGHT

FROM UNSEEN MALE POV: Gene tosses in her bed with nightmares.

Charlie's threat assessment goes into overdrive. She pulls out her PISTOL and MAG LIGHT and darts them around the musty mobile home. **PREDATORY. PLANNED. THREAT.**

A SHADOW looms closer, hovering over Gene in her dark room.

Charlie's mag light lands in the bathroom at the end of the mobile home's hall where she SEES an aged and familiar TEDDY BEAR staring back at her from the bathroom counter.

The light in Gene's room extinguishes as her door SHUTS.

EXT./INT. RUSSELL'S CAR - NIGHT - 1995 (FLASHBACK)

The cicadas SCREAM in the humid night air as we return to Charlie's father Russell's car from her memories.

A bloody HAND aggressively GRIPS the STEERING WHEEL as Charlie's dead father GASPS air into his very alive lungs.

The ENGINE STARTS.

END OF PILOT