

Red Tree Park
by
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FADE IN:

EXT. DIRT ROAD - NIGHT

Dust fills the air of a small town in Mississippi as three police cars rush through the narrow dirt roads. The red and blue flashing lights paint the fields and farmhouses as they speed by.

Homeowners stand on their porches, trying to catch a glimpse of the rare action but, other than the whaling of the sirens, it doesn't look like much.

INT. SQUAD CAR - NIGHT

Jerking the wheel every few seconds to stay on course, CAPTAIN WILSON (46, southern accent) feels around the cars front console for his radio while keeping his eyes on the road. Once he finds it he puts it up to his mouth and yells into it.

CAPTAIN WILSON

In pursuit of a fleeing suspect.
Anybody not at the scene get on the
road. We're looking for any
suspicious characters.

EXT. MRS. RANCHDALE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Deputies hold back a small crowd of distressed onlookers as a stretcher slowly rolls around from the backyard of the small brick house. A white sheet covering the victim.

OFFICER DOVE (34, southern accent, out of shape) takes his own radio off of his belt to respond to the Captain.

DOVE

Captain, I was the first on the
scene here and we still have a long
way to go. Those three are the only
available.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - NIGHT

The squad cars fly over a hill in a frenzy, losing control for a second when they hit the ground and regaining it as they zoom down a wide road surrounded by corn fields on each side.

INT. SQUAD CAR - NIGHT

Captain Wilson pounds the dashboard with the radio out of frustration then responds.

CAPTAIN WILSON
Fuck it, he could be anywhere. We'd
be better with the dogs.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - NIGHT

Suddenly, a person dashes out from the right cornfield across the road.

The Captain's car slams its breaks followed by the other squad cars. The person stops just short of the opposite field, caught in the headlights.

The Captain yells out of his window.

CAPTAIN WILSON
Freeze.

Each of the squad cars aim their flood lights at the center of attention and blast the target with white light.

A young boy, TODD ANDERSON (18, white, southern accent, skinny) stands in the spotlight. His features are washed out by the light and his flesh looks like it has lost all of its color. He wears jogging pants and a T-shirt that have been ripped and dirtied.

CAPTAIN WILSON
Show me the gun.

The boy doesn't move, he's stiff with fear. Captain Wilson gets out of his car and draws his gun behind the front door of his car.

CAPTAIN WILSON
Where's the fucking gun, kid?

Todd slowly puts his hand into his left pocket.

CAPTAIN WILSON
Slowly, take it out and drop it.

The young man brings out a small handgun then lets it rest in the palm of his hand before he gently tips it over towards the ground.

All the officers now have their guns drawn at the suspect, standing tensely behind their car doors.

The gun falls to the dirt with clink.

FADE OUT.

INT. SCHOOL - AUDITORIUM - DAY - FLASHBACK

A banner hangs above the podium reading 'Congratulations Stockport High Class of '91.'

The crowd of teachers, parents and students mill around their seats and the refreshment table.

YOUNG CASEY (17, black, southern accent, shy) stands at the desert section with his friend YOUNG DOVE (17, white, portly) shoveling cake from their overfilled plates into their mouths.

YOUNG DOVE
This is good cake.

YOUNG CASEY
Boy you're right.

MRS. RANCHDALE (O.S.)
You boys had better slow down, it's
a long afternoon.

MRS. RANCHDALE (39, black, eloquent) stands behind them with a drink in her hand.

MRS. RANCHDALE
Casey, Dove, I'm just kidding.

YOUNG CASEY
Yes, ma'am.

MRS. RANCHDALE
So what do you boys have in store
after this?

YOUNG DOVE
I'm going to a barbecue at my
Auntie Diane's house.

Mrs. Ranchdale chuckles and taps him on the shoulder.

MRS. RANCHDALE
You gonna stay in town then, Dove?

Young Dove nods with a mouthful of cake before his parents yell from their seats for him to get by them for some pictures.

MRS. RANCHDALE
And what about you, Casey?

YOUNG CASEY
I'm going to study in Chicago.

MRS. RANCHDALE
Small town can't hold you, huh?

YOUNG CASEY
No, ma'am. I'm studying law.

Mrs. Ranchdale puts her cup down.

MRS. RANCHDALE
You're a smart boy, you know that,
don't you?

Casey nods with his eyes at the ground.

MRS. RANCHDALE
When you get out of here you're
gonna see a million things you
never thought of.

YOUNG CASEY
I'm just going to remember what you
always told us.

MRS. RANCHDALE
What did I always tell you boys?

YOUNG CASEY
Listen to everybody.

MRS. RANCHDALE
I said that?

YOUNG CASEY
Yup.

MRS. RANCHDALE
Well now so did you.

Casey smiles.

YOUNG CASEY
Yeah.

MRS. RANCHDALE
Trust yourself and you'll be fine.
And if you're gonna be a lawyer
you'd better be fair or the clocks
will start running backwards and -

Feedback resonates from the speakers throughout the auditorium and a man gets up to begin the ceremony.

MRS. RANCHDALE

Get back to your seat, say hi to your mom for me. I'll see you up at the front.

INT. SCHOOL - AUDITORIUM - DAY - FLASHBACK

The audience, sitting on single chairs in the sweltering heat of the indoor ceremony, looks up to the podium as Mrs. Ranchdale finishes her speech.

MRS. RANCHDALE

... This is a time when we can see things changing. We can see ourselves changing and our children changing. The future is bright for our country and our town and for our kids who will pass down what we have held dear in a changing world.

Mrs. Ranchdale looks down at Casey, who sits in the front row looking up at her, and smiles.

MRS. RANCHDALE

Let's give them the wisdom to change the wrongs that they see in their life and stay strong to uphold what might waver under opposition.

The overheated crowd applauds along with the graduating students and fellow staff.

MRS. RANCHDALE

Now I'll call up the graduates to receive their diploma.

Casey sits with his hands in the lap, looking up to Mrs. Ranchdale as she calls out the names of other students.

MRS. RANCHDALE (O.C.)

Casey Larmer.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

CASEY LARMER (34, black, no accent, sharp looking) stares blankly ahead.

A large picture of Mrs. Ranchdale sits on an easel beside a priest who continues his eulogy.

Behind Casey is the rest of the community who has attended the funeral. Beside him, his mother, NESTOR (55, southern accent,) grabs his hand and squeezes it to get his attention. On Casey's other side is his father, JEROD (59, southern accent, heavy set,) who holds back tears while holding his head high.

NESTOR

Casey...Casey let's go, baby.

Following his mother's lead, Casey gets up and is handed a rose on his way to the grave. Jerod follows behind him.

NESTOR

She used to ask about you all the time.

CASEY

I know.

NESTOR

She knew you were busy in the city but no one can be spendin' all their time in that craziness.

CASEY

I tried to get back but -

NESTOR

She knew you were doin' what you wanted. Don't worry about it, baby.

Nestor is first to drop her rose into the grave and say a prayer. Jerod puts his hand on Casey's shoulder.

CASEY

Dad.

JEROD

I can't believe all of this. It ain't right.

Casey pats his father on the back and they both move towards the grave.

A cedar coffin fills the bottom of the hole, its polish shines as Case's rose drops on to the other.

Casey's dad moves quickly by and says a prayer after he drops his rose in.

The Larmer family makes their way to the parking lot, each other them silent, a few feet behind each other. They stop at an old pick-up truck. And Nestor hugs Casey.

NESTOR

You take your time. Pick up whatever you want for dinner from the superstore.

Nestor gets into the truck while Jerod starts it up and reverses, revealing a brand new Mercedes on the other side.

Casey reaches into his pocket and touches his key chain which undoes the Mercedes' alarm with a beep.

INT. CASEY'S CAR - NIGHT

Casey cruises down the road as the sun sets. With one hand on the wheel and one hand on his groceries that sit in the passenger seat, he takes a quick turn.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

A police car inches out from a hidden driveway and pursues Casey when he speeds past.

INT. CASEY'S CAR - NIGHT

Casey sighs as he looks in his rear view. He turns his indicator on and begins to pull over without even having to hear the sirens.

I/E. CASEY'S CAR - NIGHT

The police car puts its lights on and pulls over behind him.

A YOUNG OFFICER gets out of the passenger door and promptly makes his way to Casey's window which has been lowered. The driving officer stays in the car, writing on his note pad.

The young officer wastes no time with pleasantries.

YOUNG OFFICER

License and registration.

CASEY

You got it officer.

YOUNG OFFICER

But keep your hands where I can see them. OK, guy?

CASEY

Whatever you say.

Casey opens his glove box but can't get a great view inside because of the amount of groceries on his front seat.

In the squad car the driving officer gets out and, while he unwraps a candy bar, begins to make his way to the car.

YOUNG OFFICER

Why the fast moves back there? What are you getting away from?

CASEY

Excuse me?

Casey moves the bag down to the floor to get a better look in the glove box.

OFFICER DOVE

What's that in the bag?

CASEY

It's nothing. Just a second.

The driving officer gets to the window as well but Casey can't see his face.

Casey continues to rummage deeper in the glove box and finds everything he was looking for.

OFFICER DOVE

I said what's in the fuckin' bag, boy.

The young officer puts his hand on his gun in his belt.

Casey slowly turns around and hands the young officer the papers.

The driving officer snatches the I.Ds from the young officer's hand and stares at him, furious.

DOVE

Get back in the fucking car.

The young officer takes one look at Casey and darts away.

CASEY

Listen, I'm a lawyer and I grew up in this town.

DOVE

You were going pretty fast though, Mr. Larmer.

CASEY

I apologize. I'm willing to pay whatever the fine is.

Dove sticks his head in the window and takes his hat off.

DOVE

Actually, I think we're going to have to take you in, or at least I want a ride in this car.

Dove starts to crack up.

Casey squints to recognize him but when he does he can't help but smile. He gets out of the car and the two old friends bear hug each other.

Dove and Casey give each other a big hug and pat each other hard on the back. Dove takes a long look at Casey's Mercedes.

DOVE

Why didn't you get the nice one?

Casey shakes his head.

DOVE

I guess I can guess why you're here, huh?

CASEY

Yeah, I just came from the funeral, where were you?

DOVE

Working. But I'll visit tomorrow.

Dove takes a cupcake packet out of his pocket and offers it to Casey.

CASEY

No, I'm OK.

Dove gestures back to the young officer.

DOVE

I'm sorry about that kid. This whole damn place has gone upside down since the night she died.

CASEY

Listen, I'd better get back with dinner but I'll see you around?

DOVE

You can count on it.

INT. NESTOR AND JEROD'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Casey steals a piece of chicken from the counter in the kitchen trying to avoid his mom, who is a whirlwind of activity.

NESTOR

Get your hands out of here. You're as bad as your father.

Jerod barks from his La-Z-boy in the living room as he watches an old T.V. set.

JEROD

Casey don't bother your mother she's got enough problems in that kitchen as it is.

Casey's father giggles to himself.

NESTOR

You watch your mouth or you'll be having cereal for dinner again.

Jerod keeps chuckling. In the kitchen Nestor smiles as she shoos Casey into the living room.

Casey gets comfortable on the couch and puts his feet up on the table to watch T.V. with Jerod.

Casey's father raises his eyebrow.

JEROD

Oh, I didn't know you were on vacation

CASEY

I do have some work to -

JEROD

Good, because I have a surprise for you, Casey.

Jerod leans in to whisper the surprise to Casey, who leans in as well.

CASEY

What is it?

JEROD

The house is gettin' old don't you think?

Casey smiles.

CASEY

You're buying a new house?

JEROD

Hell no. It needs a fresh coat of paint and I'm lookin' for a painter.

CASEY

Is this a birthday gift for mom or something? Did you need some money?

JEROD

Huh? What? No, let me speak for a second. I think I found someone who'd do it for nothing.

CASEY

Who?

Casey follows Jerod's eyes as they look to the corner of the room where four cans of pain and an old looking roller are stacked in an untidy pile.

FATHER

Surprise.

INT. NESTOR AND JEROD'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Casey's family sits around the dinner table.

NESTOR

Well, she was no good anyway.

CASEY

It just didn't work out.

NESTOR

You were with her for a year and she goes and breaks it off. That girl's messed in the head if you ask me.

CASEY

Now I've had time to concentrate more on my cases.

JEROD

That's good, get some work done, that'll teach her.

CASEY

Thanks, dad.

NESTOR

There's a market on the weekends, we can go down there and introduce you around. There's lot of fine girl down there just waiting for -

CASEY

No.

JEROD

Which one of them girls are single?

NESTOR

Helen Rorbeck.

JEROD

Helen Rorbeck she's alright.

Casey shakes his head.

NESTOR

Lisa Stern. She doesn't have anyone with her now.

JEROD

She's a bit...

(Makes a face)

Don't you think, Nestor?

Nestor copies the face.

NESTOR

What's that?

JEROD

You know, ugly. A bit ugly for Casey.

Casey shakes his head.

CASEY
You guys forget easily but I live
in the city. Why would I date
someone who lives here?

Casey's parents ignore him.

NESTOR
Virginia Matthews?

Jerod focuses on his food.

NESTOR
She's single I was just talking to
her the other day.

CASEY
I don't remember her.

JEROD
She's friends with that killer.

NESTOR
Oh, so what, she's nice and she
lives with here dad on the east of
the -

JEROD
Hey, I don't want anyone
associating with anyone like that
boy. Everyone's walkin' around with
their head up their ass.

NESTOR
I'm not talking about him.

JEROD
They're all chummy. He deserves to
rot, whatever he gets is too good
for him.

Nestor puts her utensils down and excuses herself from the table. Casey eats quietly with his father.

INT. NESTOR AND JEROD'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Casey walks into the kitchen with empty dishes just in time to see his mom putting on her coat and heading out the back door. He dumps the dishes and calls after her.

CASEY
Mom, where are you going?

EXT. NESTOR AND JEROD'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Nestor buttons up her jacket and checks the jacket pocket for keys while she heads to the truck.

NESTOR
I can't take him while he's like
this.

Casey follows behind with his slippers on.

NESTOR
I just need a walk.

CASEY
Then I'm coming.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

The truck drives down a dark, empty road and pulls over in a small dirt parking lot, leaving its lights on while Nestor and Casey get out.

EXT. PARK - NIGHT

The night's sky is bright with star overhead as the two walk down towards a majestically large red oak tree in the middle of the park.

The headlights of the car cut a path in the darkness where they walk.

CASEY
Does he get like that often?

NESTOR
Nope. You know your father, he's a
good man. It's just lately.

CASEY
Why lately?

Nestor waves her hand to ignore the question.

CASEY
I saw Dove earlier tonight.

NESTOR

Oh it's been ages since you two saw each other.

CASEY

He says since Mrs. Ranchdale died everyone's been on edge. Is that the same with dad?

NESTOR

When news came and they caught the boy who did it people were so quick to get wrapped up in it.

Casey listens.

NESTOR

A sleepy place like this it makes people imagine things, awful things, about each other.

CASEY

Murder brings out the worst in people.

NESTOR

I don't know if they care about this boy to tell you the truth. His name's Todd Anderson, just a young guy.

CASEY

If he's a killer then it's no wonder people hate him.

NESTOR

Oh last month no one was saying boo about him and now all the sudden he's a monster.

The two get to the large oak tree and looks up through it's branches at the sky.

NESTOR

You don't get night's like this in the city I'll bet ya.

CASEY

It's nothing like this. In the city we don't look up.

NESTOR

Too many distractions.

CASEY
So you know this Todd?

NESTOR
I do and, in my quiet opinion, he's
no killer. He doesn't hate people.

CASEY
So it's not a race thing?

NESTOR
I know what it looks a man looks
like when he hates. I've seen it
too many times. A lot of people
around this county have.

Nestor speaks sincerely to her son.

NESTOR
You can see it in their eyes when
they look at you. You can tell that
there is so much going on behind
them that they're trying to keep
there.

Casey listens as his mom continues.

NESTOR
I've met him dozens of times and
there isn't that in him. Everyone
just wants it to be there because
it would make things easier. It's
so easy to hate someone who hates
you.

CASEY
Dad hates him then?

NESTOR
He doesn't know him.

Casey nods and looks to the stars.

CASEY
I remember these stars.

NESTOR
Even the most familiar sky changes.
You just have to lose your
distractions.

EXT. NESTOR AND JEROD'S HOUSE - DAY

Casey and his father stand outside the house with their hands on their hips staring up at the side of the house that's definitely seen better days; the paint is chipped and faded.

Jerod walks away.

FATHER

Call me when you're done.

Casey looks at his supplies; a couple cans of paint and a roller.

CASEY

These cans aren't even the same color.

The back door slams.

EXT. NESTOR AND JEROD'S HOUSE - DAY

The family pick-up pulls out of the driveway and onto the country road.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

The truck pulls into a hardware store opposite a small diner.

EXT. HARDWARE STORE PARKING LOT - DAY

Casey lugs bags and cans out of the store and throws them into the back of his truck.

DOVE

Freeze. Put em up.

Dove yells from the other side of the street, a plate full of pie in his hand that he's chowing down on.

Casey yells back.

CASEY

You've got me, officer. You feel like getting some work done today?

DOVE

I am working.

CASEY

No, real work.

Casey smiles.

DOVE
What do you know about real work?

CASEY
You helping or not.

DOVE
Meet me at the station, shifts
change in about forty minutes. And
don't wear a suit for God's sake,
you're on vacation, aren't you?

Casey shakes his head.

INT. POLIC STATION - DAY

The officer at the front desk tips his hat to Dove and Casey as they walk through the front doors and into the sleepy station. Two detectives shuffle through papers on their desk while a couple of deputies gather around the coffee pot.

CASEY
Looks busy.

DOVE
You'd never know it but it is. Ever
since we got the Anderson kid in
we've had to have extra boys on
duty watching the house and -

CASEY
What do you mean you got him in?

Dove gets to his desk. It's a mess of papers held down by paperweights so that the small fan on the end doesn't blow them off the table when it rotates by.

DOVE
After the arraignment we have to
hold him until trial. He could get
life. I thought you were a lawyer?

Dove sits down and goes looks at some notes he's made for himself while he takes off his uniform and changes into another shirt hanging over his chair.

CASEY
Have you seen him?

DOVE

Sure. They drag him out every once in a while. The court stuck him with a public defender who comes by once in a while. I've even had some angry old timers shoutin' in at him from the window.

CASEY

What does he say?

DOVE

Not much.

CASEY

Can I see him?

DOVE

I saw him, and it doesn't make it any better, Casey.

INT. POLICE STATION - HOLDING CELLS - DAY

A solid metal door slowly swings open and Dove stands behind it. The walls are made of cold grey cement and dirtied with imperfections and rust stains.

DOVE

Third cell on the right. And if anyone asks, you broke out.

Casey nods. And takes his first step from behind Dove into the dim hallway.

He passes the first cell and has to turn his head and cover his nose to protect him from the smell of the homeless man who lies asleep, sprawled out on his cell bed.

Finally, Casey can see the third cell to the right.

Todd sits on the edge of his bed in his prison uniform, facing the wall, his head in his hands.

Casey stares at him from the other side of the bars. The boy is still and quiet. Not knowing what to say, Casey snaps around and heads for the exit.

TODD

You want me to die?

Casey stops.

TODD

I'm not gonna die just because ya'll want me to. But you're thinking an eye for an eye, no doubt. That's fine. But what's the sense in more bodies?

Todd lifts his head out of his hands.

TODD (CONT'D)

But to make it a personal matter to come in here and look at me and give me the look that I'm sure you just did, you must be real torn up. I hope this'll help you grieve if that's what you wanted.

Casey steps back and looks into the cell at Todd who still faces the wall.

TODD

If you came here just to curse me though...I don't know what to say about that.

CASEY

I'm not here to judge you and I think you'll live with what you deserve. She did more for this town than anyone I know.

Todd swings his head around and looks at Casey.

TODD

So what? I should wanna die? I should want to spend these last days sittin' in here, listening to people do what they will with my name and how I'm a monster and how I'm a biggot and then I'd want to end it. Right, sir?

Todd's eyes are red, strained and moist against his pale, dry skin.

TODD (CONT'D)

I would be the first to agree if I did it. But I'll tell you like I tell everyone else, I didn't do it. Not that it's going to make a difference to you, but it's all I got left.

Casey grabs a bar.

CASEY

I deal with so many people like you. No remorse. You don't give two thoughts to family or community.

TODD

People like me? Me who? You and I are pretty alike from what I see.

CASEY

You're nothing like me.

Todd looks away from Casey.

TODD

You're just like the angry fellows yellin' at me from outside.

CASEY

How am I like them?

TODD

You're black, to start.

CASEY

That's all you give a fuck about?

Todd shakes his head.

TODD

Nah, just pointing it out.

CASEY

If you and I are so alike then why are you in here and I'm out here.

Todd stands up and walks close to the bars.

TODD

We're both in here.

Todd taps one of the solid bars.

TODD

This whole thing is older than I am. It's about things long done, not me.

Casey and Todd look through the rusty bars of the prison cell at each other.

Dove opens up the door and calls in.

DOVE (O.S.)
Casey, let's move it.

Casey walks away from Todd.

EXT. NESTOR AND JEROD'S HOUSE - DAY

Casey and Dove stand with paint brushes in their hand beside an opened can. The sun sets in the distance as Casey walks away from the small patch the two have been able to do in an hour.

CASEY
Thanks for the help.

DOVE
You promise me some Barbque and
I'll be back again.

CASEY
Deal.

Casey and Dove lean against the truck.

DOVE
Did you get a chance to feel
better?

CASEY
No.

DOVE
What did you say?

CASEY
He did most of the talking.

DOVE
Really? I haven't heard him say a
word to anyone.

CASEY
He said I was like him.

Dove laughs.

DOVE
That's a stretch.

CASEY
We were both taught by Mrs,
Ranchdale, and we both want to hear
the truth.

DOVE
That doesn't make you anything like
him.

CASEY
Tell me, off the record, what do
you think? Did you know him?

DOVE
I knew him.

CASEY
And?

DOVE
And I was surprised to hear it but
you can't ignore what they have on
him.

CASEY
Which is?

DOVE
Prints, witnesses who have him
leaving the scene, prints on the
gun and motive.

CASEY
Sounds tight.

DOVE
It is, far as most people can see.

CASEY
What do you mean?

DOVE
Seems like people are, well,
distracted. It doesn't all fit
together.

CASEY
Will you show me what you got?

Dove nods.

DOVE
Good thing you showed up.

INT. POLIC STATION - NIGHT

A folder slams on a desk in the boardroom of the station.

DOVE
First, the prints.

Doves takes out the files and hands them to Casey as he speaks.

DOVE
Prints at the scene, prints on the body but nothing missing, no robbery.

CASEY
Forced entry?

DOVE
Nope.

Casey goes through picture after picture of the crime scene.

DOVE
Eye witness, Frieda Sealy, next door neighbor reports hearing a shot, running to the window and seeing the accused flee the scene out the front door and run down the street.

CASEY
Mrs. Sealy? She's gotta be ninty by now.

Casey goes over her statment.

DOVE
Eighty two. And then Captain Wilson picks him up about fifteen to twenty minutes later.

CASEY
He's a runner.

DOVE
Guess so.

CASEY
Next?

DOVE
Next we have the Smith and Wesson twenty two Caliber, 8 round revolver. Little thing stashed in his pocket when he got picked up. Bullet matches the gun along with more prints.

CASEY
Where did he get a gun?

DOVE
Registered to a Shayne Anderson,
his father.

Casey nods as he checks the photos over.

CASEY
What was the motive?

DOVE
He's a smart-ish kid, he wanted out
of this town, hoping to go to
college but Mrs, Ranchdale didn't
give him the marks. He was rejected
from the schools he applied to.

CASEY
I didn't know this place was that
bad.

DOVE
Apparently.

CASEY
Where was he going with the gun?

Dove shrugs.

CASEY
He lives South, why was he running
West?

DOVE
I didn't question him, don't look
at me like that.

Casey flips back to the crime scene photos and stops at a
shot of the living room.

CASEY
Did Mrs. Ranchdale get married?

DOVE
Huh?

CASEY
She lived alone?

DOVE
Every since I can remember.

CASEY

So who else was there I wonder?

Casey points to the picture where there are three glasses half filled with lemonade on the table.

CASEY

Who's assigned to this case?

Dove sighs.

DOVE

You're gonna start wearing the suit, aren't you?

EXT. MOM'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The sun sets on a half painted wall. Casey and his father lean against the wall and enjoy a beer.

FATHER

I don't know if I really meant what I said last night.

Casey looks at his father.

FATHER (CONT'D)

About the boy.

CASEY

I know.

FATHER

But when you've seen life one way for so long and then things start to change, there's always ways of seeing it like it used to be.

CASEY

But you can see what it's become. Aren't you proud that it's all changed?

FATHER

Sure I am. That's why I can't ever forget. The moment you forget why things have changed is the same time you can lose it all.

CASEY

A lot of people feel that way?

FATHER

Doesn't matter. They can't forget. We all lived through it and we all can still feel it. Maybe when even the memories have faded then the things that happened in Mississippi will be done and buried too.

Casey nods.

FATHER

So until then you got stuck in the middle. You hear how it was. You see how it can be. But you gotta do all the work.

CASEY

I talked to that boy today.

Casey's father looks around.

FATHER

I see

CASEY

He said he didn't do it.

Casey's father puts his beer down.

CASEY

I went in there, and I wanted to see a broken kid.

FATHER

But?

CASEY

He didn't give an inch. He told me Mrs. Ranchdale taught him when he was in school.

FATHER

So what the fuck does that mean that doesn't make him a Saint.

CASEY

But it made me remember what she taught me. About how snap decisions cause people to make bad decisions. If she were alive she wouldn't be having this. She would want this boy to be treated right.

FATHER

That's all well and good but she's dead. And I'm certain it is being taken care of proper.

INT. POLICE OFFICE - MORNING

Casey strides through the doors of the police station in a suit and carrying a briefcase close to his side.

He walks up to the man at the front desk.

CASEY

I'm here to see Todd Anderson.

OFFICER WILSON

You're Dove's friend, Right?

Casey nods.

OFFICER WILSON

Todd's in with his lawyer.

CAPTAIN WILSON points towards the blurred glass rooms at the left of the office and returns to a book he was reading.

Casey quickly walks past him and towards the room.

OFFICER WILSON

What the fuck are you doin'?

INT. PRIVATE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Todd sits at a table across from MR. SAMUEL, a tall skinny fifty something year old man.

Casey bursts into the room with Officer Wilson shouting behind him.

TODD

Sir?

SAMEUEL

Who the hell are you?

CASEY

What you said yesterday. You were right..

Samuel gets up out of his chair.

SAMEUEL

Why were you talking to my client
this is a private matter.

CASEY

And I'm the only person in town
who's gonna give you a chance.

SAMEUEL

I am representing this young boy so
if you would just back away...

CASEY

You want my help?

Officer Wilson grabs Casey's arm and pulls him sharply
towards the doorway.

TODD

What's your name sir?

CASEY

Casey Larmer.

TODD

You believe me Casey?

CASEY

I don't know enough to say that,
but I'm willing to believe you.

Captain Wilson pulls on Casey's shoulder now and gets him
almost out of the door.

Todd turns to Mr. Samuel.

TODD

I think it would be best if you
leave, sir. I found a new lawyer
now.

SAMEUEL

Shut your mouth kid.

Mr. Samuel looks back at Casey and then snatches his coat off
of the back of his chair.

Casey jerks himself out of Officer Wilson's grip and back
into the room.

Mr. Samuel slings his coat over his arm and carries his
briefcase towards the door but stops and leans in towards
Casey's ear and whispers gently.

SAMEUEL

What kinda black defends a Negro
killer?

Mr. Samuel brushes past Officer Wilson and out of the door.

INT. PRIVATE ROOM - LATER

Casey looks through many files and photos of the crime scene and reads statements from all of the neighbors of Mrs. Ranchdale.

Casey and Dove go over a large photo of the back yard where the victim lies dead and footprints and gun shells are circled.

Hours pass by and Casey's notes pile up. He receives files from officers in the station and highlights important bits of information. Casey reads statements from police officers and members of Todd's family.

CASEY

This is a statement from your mom.
It says that Mrs. Ranchdale taught
you in eleventh grade.

TODD

Yes, sir.

CASEY

And it say's that you weren't too
fond of her.

TODD

That's not true.

CASEY

Then what is true?

TODD

She was hard on me. She always used
to tell me "Todd, I'm expecting a
lot from you on this assignment"
and "Todd, I want you to give me
the best you can"

Todd takes a breath and catches his arms in the air.

TODD (CONT'D)

And it just was a lot to ask. I
wasn't all that good at writing and
reading.

(MORE)

TODD (CONT'D)

One day I just lost it and I told her I wasn't gonna do anymore work if she kept talking to me like that.

CASEY

What did she say.

TODD

She didn't say much.

CASEY

And did you ever do the work?

TODD

No, I stopped going to the class. She failed me for not handing in my papers. Now when I think about it, I mean it's been two years now, but when I think about that class I just remember that when I did work I always worked hard.

CASEY

I'll see if I can find out what happened. I'm going to go over the statements of --

TODD

Sir?

CASEY

Call me Casey, Todd.

TODD

Mr. Casey I know your trying to help me and, I just wanna know, the trials only two weeks from now and I already feel like I was behind. I plead not guilty to the judge, and I'll plead it again to the jury, because I can't ever stop thinking about it.

CASEY

Todd, I'm taking the night off tonight. I suggest you do the same. There's no point in worrying about these kind of things.

Todd nods his head and smiles.

INT. MOM'S HOUSE LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Casey goes over more files with a cup of tea by his side.

INT. PRIVATE ROOM - DAY

Todd sits eagerly at the table waiting for Casey to come in.

Casey walks in and says nothing to Todd.

TODD
Morning, sir.

Casey doesn't respond he just begins to place files in correct piles on the table.

CASEY
You're gonna have to be a lot more honest with me if we're gonna get anywhere Todd. You think it's a coincidence that they brought you in on this?

TODD
Sir?

CASEY
I spent all night going over this file and you don't even have an explanation of why you had the murder weapon in your pocket?

Casey rifles through papers and pulls one out of the pile and reads from it.

CASEY
I was running through the field and I found it.

TODD
Right.

CASEY
That's what you told an officer after they arrested you. And you also told them that you don't know how your footprints got around there.

TODD
Yes, sir.

CASEY

Stop calling me sir. Now I am going to ask you these same questions and you tell me what really happened.

TODD

Yes.

CASEY

Where were you on that night?

TODD

I was at my friend Charlie's.

CASEY

And what time did you leave?

TODD

Around ten thirty.

CASEY

And what happened on your way home.

TODD

I was walking home from Charlie's, through the field, and then I seen a gun on the ground so I picked it up and put it in my pocket. Then right after that I started running home, cause I was late. Real late for getting home. That's when they seen me and I got arrested.

CASEY

So you didn't see anything? You didn't hear anything? You were just walking around in a field? You want me to believe that?

Todd shifts in his chair and plays with his cards.

TODD

That there is the honest truth Mr. Casey. I don't know what more to tell you.

CASEY

We're done for today.

EXT. CHARLIE'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

CHARLIE'S MOTHER closes the front door and walks back into the house.

CHARLIE, a teenaged redheaded boy sits on the floor playing video games until she reaches down and picks him up by his arm.

Charlie protests as his mom drags him towards the front door and flings it open.

Casey stands at the door with his hands crossed in front of him.

CASEY

Charlie I'd like to ask you a few questions.

EXT. MRS RANCHDALES HOUSE - LATER

Casey drags his pen along the bricks at the side of Mrs. Ranchdale's house as he makes his way into the backyard.

The scene has been cleaned up and there is nothing left but strips of tape and discarded candy wrappers laying around.

Casey pulls out a picture from his breast pocket.

The picture is a black and white photo of Mrs. Ranchdales body laid out in her backyard with blood staining her clothes from the bullet wound.

Casey swings a light metal fence out of his way and then see the open backyard and the spot where she would have been that night.

Directly behind Mrs. Ranchdales house is another house of equal size. They would share a backyard if it weren't for a seven foot tall brown fence that divides them.

The last few planks of the fence is a small door. It blends in if not for a tight chain that is wrapped around a plank of the door and a plank of the fence to keep it locked.

KARLI, a young black teenage girl sits on her window sill with one leg over the outside of the house.

Casey looks up at her as she swings her leg from one side to another.

CASEY

Did you know Mrs. Ranchdale?

KARLI

Not too well, sir.

CASEY

Did you see anything the night -

The chain around the fence rattles against the wood as it gets pulled towards the other side.

The chain clinks against itself once it all ends up on the other side of the fence.

A large black man, Mr. Lyn steps through the door of the fence.

MR. LYN

Can I help you?

Casey takes a step back.

CASEY

I was just asking that young lady if she knew anything.

MR. LYN

I'm her father. She's Karli Lyn.

CASEY

And you're Mr. Lyn?

Mr. Lyn nods his head.

MR. LYN

We already told the police twice that we didn't see a thing. Who are you?

CASEY

I'm a lawyer.

MR. LYN

We didn't see a thing.

CASEY

I understand. I just wanna make sure justice is done.

MR. LYN

Justice is far from being done. This is Mississippi. There's been nothing but bad things happening here. And no one got justice for that.

CASEY

He's just a boy. He deserves a fair trial.

MR. LYN

He's white trash. Nothing but. And the best he deserves is to rot in jail.

CASEY

Did you know him?

MR. LYN

No. But if you want justice done. That's a start.

Karli yells down at the two men from her window.

KARLI

We can't help you, sir.

Casey looks at her and nods before she gets back into the house and closes her window tight.

MR. LYN

Have a good day.

INT. PRIVATE ROOM - THE NEXT DAY

Casey and Todd sit at opposite ends of the table.

Casey finishes an apple and rests the core on the side of the metal table.

Todd stares at him speechless.

Casey opens his briefcase wide and looks into it and pulls out another apple.

TODD

Where is all your papers?

Casey knocks his briefcase onto the ground but nothing spills out. The case is empty.

Todd looks down and swallows hard.

CASEY

What good are papers?

Todd shakes his head.

CASEY (O.C.)

You say something and someone writes it down and then u say you didn't say that. Who needs it.

TODD
I suppose.

Casey takes another bite out of his apple.

CASEY
Why won't anyone around here talk
about this case.

TODD
What do you mean.

CASEY
Someone got shot. And no one saw
anything. And no one heard
anything.

Casey sits back in his chair and takes a bite of his apple.

CASEY
Why is that?

TODD
It's a tough issue.

CASEY
Murder?

TODD
Hate.

Todd's handcuffs clang against the metal table when he puts
his hands in his lap.

Casey places the new core beside the old one.

CASEY
Your friend Charlie backed you up.
Word for word.

TODD
What'd he say?

CASEY
He said you were there. Nothing
else.

Todd nods his head.

TODD
I was there.

CASEY

What do you think is gonna happen when I go into court and tell them that your alibi is a terrified high school student.

TODD

Don't matter what they think about it.

CASEY

You're wrong. Those people are the only people worth convincing right now.

TODD

My mom told me when all this was happening that only God can judge me no matter what I did.

CASEY

You had better tell your mom that so far, he's also the only one who can save you.

INT. ANDERSON HOME - NIGHT

DEBBIE ANDERSON, a small 50 year old woman with her hair done perfectly, and Casey sit beside each other on a love seat. The only other piece of furniture in the house is an old rocking chair.

The house is small and filled with decorative lamps and wooden carvings. Debbie is sipping on a cup of tea as she smiles at Casey.

DEBBIE

Mister Casey, let me thank you again for taking Todd's side in court. He really seems to like you.

CASEY

I think he's a good kid. But you are gonna have to be really straightforward with me today Mrs. Anderson or it's not going to do him any good.

Debbie nods and puts her tea on the table

CASEY

Have you ever known Todd to be violent?

DEBBIE

No sir. Todd wouldn't ever hurt a fly. He never got into any fights at school or no where else. This is all just a big mistake.

CASEY

Did Todd tell you where he was going that night?

Debbie picks up her tea and takes a sip.

DEBBIE

He's a nineteen year old man, he doesn't tell me where he's going at night.

CASEY

Has Todd ever shot a gun before?

DEBBIE

This is the South, Todd's been around guns since he was young and I know he can fire a gun and he has fired a gun.

CASEY

I see but -

DEBBIE

There are no buts about that. He didn't have any blood on him he didn't hurt that lady. He didn't have that mean streak. He's got a temper sometimes and that's why him and the teacher got off on a wrong foot. He get's that temper from his daddy. But he would never shoot a person.

CASEY

Todd hasn't mentioned his father to me much.

DEBBIE

Probably cause he ain't around much so there's nothing to talk about.

CASEY

Could I talk to him?

DEBBIE

I don't think that's a very good idea Mr. Casey, he is a very busy, very hard working man and he is not taking his son behind bars too lightly. Especially since everyone is ignoring the evidence. My son didn't have any blood on him. No money or necklace or nothing.

CASEY

Why was he there Mrs. Anderson?-

The screen door opens and a large man wearing blue jeans and a white dirty T-Shirt takes one step inside.

With her tea gripped tightly in her hand Debbie bolts up out of her chair and begins to speak quickly.

DEBBIE

Greg this here is Mr. Casey. He's helping Todd remember. He's taken his own time to help him and now he's taken his own time to come here and ask me some questions about how to defend Todd.

Greg brings his second foot inside the house and closes the screen door behind him. He takes a deep breathe and walks forward towards the love seat.

GREG

Well, I'm glad he's helping. It's nice to meet you.

Greg takes a breathe and puts his hand out to Casey.

CASEY

Nice to meet you.

GREG

Yes, sir. My boy didn't do no wrong you hear. This is some bullshit.

Debbie sits down and sips on her tea. With no where to sit Greg stands and speaks to Casey.

CASEY

That's why I took the case. I just came here to find out more about Todd's background, your wife has been helpful.

GREG
She's a sweetie.

CASEY
She mentioned that Todd had a temper like you, can you remember any times when he got violent after he lost his temper.

Greg stands tall.

GREG
I'm sure that I can't

CASEY
And we know that Todd can fire a gun well. Do you know how well of a shot he is?

GREG
I think you have your questions backwards.

CASEY
It's just best that I know everything so that there are no surprises.

Greg sighs.

GREG
He's a fine shot.

CASEY
Did he ever speak to you about Mrs. Ranchdale?

GREG
He told me that she was a no good bitch who was ridin' him day in day out. I sure didn't appreciate it but he said he would take care of it and he did. He left that sour cows class and didn't have nothing to do with her again.

Casey stands up.

CASEY
If you don't mind she was my teacher too and she was a fine woman and a pillar of the community.

Greg grits his teeth and squares his shoulders.

GREG
Who's community?

The two men stand looking into each others eyes.

GREG
I guess it isn't any community that
I know about. What do you say to
that mister lawyer.

The two men stare at each other. Debbie's empty cup rattles
as she puts it down on the table.

DEBBIE
We do appreciate your help Mr.
Casey. It's just a tough time.

GREG
You'll have to excuse me my wife
and I are going to sit down for
dinner. But I will see you soon Mr.
Casey.

Casey's fists are clenched as he moves by Greg Anderson who
keeps an eye on Casey while he moves towards the screen door.

EXT. CASEYS HOUSE - LATER

A steak sizzles on the BBQ and Casey's dad smothers it with
sauce. Casey, Dove and his father look down at the meat.

DOVE
Not too much, what do you think
you're doing.

FATHER
You think you're gonna taste it
otherwise?

DOVE
We'll taste it fine, you don't
wanna overpower the meat.

FATHER
Meat is meat it don't taste like
nothin' other than burnt if you
burnt it. It tastes of what you put
on it.

CASEY
Just don't put so much sauce on
mine.

FATHER
Boy I'll tell you how much sauce
you've been having.

Casey's dad shuts the lid of the BBQ and look back at the
half painted back of the house.

CASEY
It's not bad.

DOVE
It sure isn't.

FATHER
You boys done giving yourselves a
pat on the back or are we gonna get
back to work.

DOVE
The day's done I'm not working on
this anymore.

CASEY
Yeah I got papers to look over.

FATHER
You always working your case don't
have time for nothing else.

A beat up old convertible turns onto the driveway. Alice
slows the car beside the house and helps her son out. Jeremy
walks beside Alice until he's a few feet from them and then
he goes exploring.

Casey's dad looks over at Dove.

FATHER
Time for nothing else now.

Dove nods with a smirk on his face.

ALICE
Mr. Larmer

FATHER
Alice.

ALICE

Casey, I brought over something to eat I thought you might have time for dinner. But I see you already got something going.

CASEY

It's ok. I was just about to take a break anyway.

DOVE

Damn right. I'm takin off.

FATHER

I got all this steak here who's gonna eat em.

Jeremy knocks over a can of paint and some supplies splattering them against the house.

FATHER

What the hell you doing?

CASEY

We should leave. He's got a lot of work to do.

ALICE

Great. We could bring Jeremy but I was hoping we would find a baby-sitter on short notice.

They both turn to Casey's father who just starts shaking his head.

FATHER

Oh, no.

ALICE

Thank you, sir.

CASEY

Thanks dad.

FATHER

Oh, no. You don't leave me with that boy of yours.

Jeremy comes running over when Alice calls him. She leans down and whispers something to him and he walks over to the BBQ staring up at Casey's dad.

Casey and Alice drive down the road towards town.

FATHER
You paint?

Jeremy loses his smile.

INT. ALICE'S CAR - LATER

The car rolls down the road.

CASEY
Pull over. Down that road.

Alice makes a left.

The car pulls into a small dirt parking lot that overlooks Red Tree Park. The park is isolated with no buildings in site to obscure the view, only acres and acres of open beautiful grass.

A majestic red oak tree stretches to the sky above. It's trunk is wide and it's branches are so thick that it let's only a few rays of bright orange light through on to the field this late at night.

A few pieces of a playground sit close to the tree as does a bench. A mother watches as her twins play on the slide.

Casey walks by the bench with Alice following him and heads for the trunk of the oak tree. He traces his fingers along the dozens of carvings in the tree that are the result of young crushes.

The two sit on the bright side of the tree as dusk settles into the sky.

Alice reaches into the bag she's prepared and pulls out some sandwiches. The kids laugh and play in the field.

CASEY
Do you bring your son here?

ALICE
Yeah, I used to more often. He's gettin' to big and wild for this sort of thing.

CASEY
I used to run wild here myself.

ALICE
Jeremys been quiet growing up though. He doesn't cry he doesn't complain.

(MORE)

ALICE (cont'd)

Only since we moved here now he's getting his adventurous streak.

CASEY

Where were you before you were here?

ALICE

Long Island.

CASEY

Is that where Jeremy's dad is from?

ALICE

Right.

CASEY

Sorry, I didn't mean to -

ALICE

I just don't think about it too much that's all. Once his dad left I had to find a place and the only family I had left to turn to was my uncle down here.

CASEY

Well he's a great kid.

ALICE

He is.

The two chew on some crackers.

ALICE

I heard some gossip about you.

Casey's mouth is full so he points at himself.

ALICE

Yes you. I heard you're taking up the slack for the Anderson boy.

CASEY

You believe it?

ALICE

I sure do.

CASEY

Well, I am. I should be working on it right now.

ALICE
I think that's great what you're
doing for him.

CASEY
Thank you.

ALICE
How's it coming along?

CASEY
It's ok. He doesn't want to
cooperate. I don't know how we'll
do next week in court.

ALICE
But what do you think?

CASEY
I think that I believe him.

Alice nods.

CASEY
What do you think?

ALICE
I think that good or bad, nobody
suffers for nothing.

The mother who has been playing with her children walks by.
One of the twins runs to the car and gets in the back seat
while the other stays with her mother. Alice looks up and
smiles at the woman.

ALICE
Time for bed huh?

MRS. BRIGHTMAN
I think it's time for us all to
turn in.

CASEY
Mrs. Brightman I didn't recognize
you.

Casey stands up and brushes himself off.

MRS. BRIGHTMAN
Maybe not but I sure recognized you
Casey Larmer.

CASEY

It must have been six years since I saw those kids last.

MRS. BRIGHTMAN

Casey, I think you should leave this park. You aren't welcome here.

CASEY

Excuse me.

MRS. BRIGHTMAN

Don't act like you think this is one big surprise coming your way. You should be ashamed of yourself. Defending that boy who killed Mrs. Ranchdale.

CASEY

I don't think that has anything to do with -

MRS. BRIGHTMAN

I think you've forgotten yourself. Mrs. Ranchdale built this park and now you can't take the side of her killer and act like nothing happened, it ain't right. The whole community is talking. And we're all saying the same thing. We'll be there at the trial.

Mrs. Brightman gestures to her daughter to run to the car and she does.

CASEY

I'll leave as soon as the lady's finished eating.

MRS. BRIGHTMAN

I hope you do.

Mrs. Brightman walks to her car.

CASEY

Is that the kind of gossip you heard?

ALICE

Yeah.

CASEY

I never thought of it this way but she's right.

ALICE
She can't be right she's an old
bitch.

CASEY
Not her. It's just that this park
used to stand for something. And my
mother was one of the first people
to support it. Even through the
wars and the violence my mom and
Mrs. Ranchdale kept it going for
everyone.

Alice finishes her sandwich.

ALICE
It sounds beautiful.

CASEY
How would I feel if someone from
town defended the man who killed my
-

ALICE
Don't talk like that.

Alice rests her head on Casey's shoulder.

ALICE
You're gonna be a hero. Like her
and your mom. Someone for the kids
to look up to.

The sun creeps behind the horizon and casts the red tree in
shadow.

INT. TAXI - MORNING

Casey sits in the back of the cab wearing a sharp suit and
playing with his reading glasses.

His briefcase lays flat on his lap as the country landscape
turns more urban and the cab winds it's way to the
courthouse.

Outside of the courthouse stairs, police officers are
committed to keeping the angry African American citizens from
blocking the entrance.

The taxi stops and Casey takes a deep breathe before he steps
out of the cab.

A collective scream rises from the crowd that now wave their signs in his face and scream at Casey as he makes his way up the stairs.

PROTESTOR 1

Why do you hate your own people!?

A woman yells in his ear as she waves a poster supporting justice in the south.

PROTESTOR 2

You should be ashamed!

A man screams in his ear and Casey turns to see him. The mans fists wave frantically but Casey's attention is caught by a familiar face.

Karli, the girl in the window behind Mrs. Ranchdale's house stands by the man. Karli is not holding a sign nor is she screaming in fact her eyes look quickly at Casey and then down. She puts her hands behind her back and stands quietly.

Before Casey can see anymore the officers rush him into the courthouse and the first day of the trial begins.

INT. COURTROOM - LATER

The audience murmurs amongst themselves as they wait for the Judge to enter the room. The audience benches are mostly full. On-lookers and reporters stand out from the front row of grieving family and friends who have their eyes locked on the door. The audience is predominantly black.

Mr. Lyn sits on the side of the prosecutor alone watching Casey.

Casey sits beside Todd who is wearing a smart blue dress shirt and dark jeans. His hair is finely combed.

Todd cannot stop moving his hands he touches each finger to the other and then does the same in reverse.

The prosecutor, Mr. Parker sits across from Casey with his two briefcases on the ground at his reach.

He is a thin man with a very thin mustache. His glasses round out his already round face as he sits comfortably in his chair.

The Judge, Judge Hayes is announced by the bailiff. The court rises and the Judge takes her seat. Casey puts Todd's hands down onto the table before she speaks.

JUDGE HAYES

We are here to settle the matter of the people verses Todd Anderson. The prosecuting attorney is Mr. Parker. Mr. Anderson you have plead not guilty to the charge of first degree murder and have employed your own counsel, Mr. Larmer. I will hear the prosecutions opening statements whenever you are ready.

Mr. Parker clicks his pen as he walks towards the jurors.

MR. PARKER

This case is about a dead woman. Gentlemen of the jury this woman could have been your wife or mother. Ladies of the jury this could have been you. She was shot once in the chest and bled to death before paramedics could even try a thing.

Mr. Parker's pen clicks.

MR. PARKER

This case is about a dead woman who tried to teach kids about right and wrong. A woman who is so admired by the community that her death was felt in every aspect of our town. She ended up dead in her backyard with all of her jewels missing. This case is about hate.

Mr. Parker clicks his pen and walks to the other end of the jury box.

MR. PARKER

Mr. Casey is going to tell you that Todd Anderson isn't a killer. That Todd Anderson was at his friends house at the time and this is all a big mistake. He's going to say that Gloria Ranchdale was his teacher and he wouldn't hurt her. But, that is exactly why he would. Mrs. Ranchdale was a woman with authority over him. She kept him from graduating and he couldn't take it.

(MORE)

MR. PARKER (cont'd)

The fact of the matter is that Todd had the gun, Todd's prints were on the scene and Todd had a motive. Please don't let him get away with it.

Another click and Mr. Parker takes his seat.

Mrs. Ranchdales family breaks down and cries but regains their composure when the Judge asks Casey to make his case.

JUDGE HAYES

Mr. Larmer, when you are ready.

Casey pens some notes onto a piece of paper in front of him, leaves his glasses on the table and approaches the jury box.

CASEY

This case is not about hate. It is about justice. I grew up in this town. And I was taught by Gloria Ranchdale just as Todd was. And that is why I stand here today. No one is sorrier than I am that she was killed. But she taught me that justice will prevail and Todd Anderson is innocent. Everyone condemned this boy before this trial they didn't wanna hear it.

Casey shakes his head.

CASEY (CONT'D)

But that's not what Mrs. Ranchdale would have said. She wouldn't be on the front lines cheering for this boy to go to jail. She would be asking herself why. Figuring out why this all doesn't add up. Why would a boy kill his teacher almost two years later. Why were there no jewels found on his person. And why was there no blood or sign of a struggle on my client.

Casey walks over to Todd.

CASEY (CONT'D)

Gloria taught this boy the same thing that I am going to be telling to you. My clients story is the truth.

(MORE)

CASEY (CONT'D)

My client had no prints inside the house, he had no prints on the victim and no blood on himself.

Todd nods.

CASEY (CONT'D)

This trial is not about a dead woman. It is about an innocent boy who never got a chance.

EXT. CASEYS HOUSE - NIGHT

There is very little sunlight left but Casey paints the side of his house by himself.

A small bit of supplies lay on the ground but Casey is high up on the ladder painting around a window. He gives the outside of the window a final stroke and lets himself down from the ladder.

Casey throws the paint brush at the lump of supplies and looks up at the wall. The house is almost half painted now and Casey retires into the house wiping the sweat from his face.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

Mr. Parker holds a gun in a tight plastic bag at the front of the courtroom.

MR. PARKER

Smith and Wesson twenty two Caliber, 8 round revolver. Some people call it Uncle Mikes Boot.

The prosecutor palms the gun in his hand.

MR. PARKER

Just because it's that damn small. When Todd Anderson was caught by police running through a corn field this is what he had in his pocket. After reviewing the gun and the bullet there is no denying that this is the gun that shot Gloria in her backyard.

Mr. Parker puts the gun down on his desk and walks over to a poster sized board with a picture of the backyard where Gloria Ranchdale was found.

MR. PARKER

This photo shows where Todd
Anderson's shoe prints were found.

Mr. Parker points to two red circles around a spot of mud.

CASEY

Objection, those are shoe prints
they could be anyone's.

Mr. Parker speaks before the Judge can open her mouth.

MR. PARKER

My mistake. Shoe prints identical
to the shoes Todd was wearing that
night.

Todd plays with his hands, crossing and uncrossing them as
the prosecutor speaks. Mr. Parker walks away from the photo
and towards the desk now where he runs his hand over a small
jewelry box that has been broken.

MR. PARKER

Finally, this is Gloria Ranchdale's
Jewelry box. Pried open and robbed
for almost all of it's contents. I
would like to admit these items as
evidence.

INT. CASEYS HOUSE - EVENING

Casey stands on his porch looking up at the country night
sky.

Casey's mom pokes her head around the side of the screen
door.

MOM

Whatever you're thinking, you gotta
say it out loud.

CASEY

She wouldn't wanna hear it.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

Casey pats Todd on the back as Todd gets up and walks past
Mr. Parker to the stand. He is sworn in and takes his seat.
The Judge asks him to say his name.

TODD

Todd Anderson.

Todd speaks too far from the microphone and no one hears him.

JUDGE HAYES

Say again?

Todd leans in and speaks only one inch from the microphone and it is very loud and deep.

TODD

Todd Anderson ma'am.

Mr. Parker turns around now and walks towards the young man who is dressed nicely today.

MR. PARKER

I like your tie Todd.

TODD

Thank you sir.

MR. PARKER

Todd, where were you the night of the murder?

TODD

I was at my friends house.

MR. PARKER

Your friend Charlie that's right.

TODD

That's right sir.

MR. PARKER

Charlie won't be seen by the jury though will he.

TODD

No sir.

MR. PARKER

No, sir. Charlie is pleading the fifth. He won't speak. He's scared.

Todd sits silent.

TODD

He doesn't swear on the bible sir.

MR. PARKER

He's afraid.

CASEY

Objection.

Mr. Parker throws his hands up.

MR. PARKER
Why won't he swear on the bible
Todd?

TODD
Charlie told me that there ain't
nothing in this world that he's
sure enough to swear on God about.

Todd leans back into his seat then forward quickly.

TODD
Sir.

MR. PARKER
Fair enough. Todd, are those your
footprint in the mud? The ones in
that photo?

TODD
No sir.

MR. PARKER
No, sir! No how could they be you
were at Charlie's house. Let me ask
you another question then Todd,
Todd what was in Mrs. Ranchdales
jewelry box?

TODD
I have no idea. I'd never seen that
there before in my life.

MR. PARKER
In the twelfth grade Mr. Anderson
you had Gloria Ranchdale as a
teacher didn't you?

TODD
Yes.

MR. PARKER
What happened?

TODD
She was very nice but she was
always on me about my school work.

MR. PARKER
She was always on you because you
wouldn't do your work right?

TODD
That's right.

MR. PARKER
And then one day you didn't do your school work and what happened?

TODD
She said that I wasn't workin enough and that she couldn't pass me. She didn't pass me in the class.

MR. PARKER
She failed you? And what happened because of that?

TODD
I didn't graduate on time. I didn't graduate with my friends.

MR. PARKER
And were you angry?

TODD
Yes sir I was.

MR. PARKER
What did you do about it?

TODD
Nothing I just got a job down the street and that's about it.

MR. PARKER
You didn't go back to school?

TODD
No.

MR. PARKER
Todd, why did you have that gun?

TODD
The gun.

MR. PARKER
That night why did you pick up that gun?

TODD
I don't know.

MR. PARKER
Did you use it?

TODD
No.

MR. PARKER
Did you want to?

TODD
No.

MR. PARKER
Then why'd you have it?

TODD
I was scared.

Casey leans forward behind his desk. And the prosecutor backs off a bit.

TODD
There were cop sirens all over the place. I didn't wanna get hurt. All I knew was that there was gonna be some trouble and I thought that it would protect me to have it.

MR. PARKER
In your statement you said you found it in the field and you picked it up cause you were gonna sell it.

TODD
Well no, I was scared and that too.

MR. PARKER
You said you were running through the field because you were late home. Is that because you were scared too?

Todd nods. He holds back his tears while he looks around the courtroom audience and skims past Gloria's family and another black family and Mr. Lyn and then finally to his mother, alone in the stands.

MR. PARKER
Todd, did you shoot Mrs. Ranchdale?

Casey stand up and bangs his desk with his fist and Mr. Parker raises his voice.

CASEY
This is ridiculous my client
is under emotional distress
and he is leading him and
twisting his words around!

MR. PARKER
Did you do it? This is the
time to come forward and
admit it here in front of God
and everyone!

The Judge bangs her gavel and begins to yell louder to
silence the men.

JUDGE HAYES
Order in my court, order.

Todd leans into his microphone again and still holding back
his tears answers very loudly over the Judge.

JUDGE HAYES	TODD
Order in the courtroom, I'll have you escorted out.	No. No sir I did not. I did not kill her. I did not. No.

The microphone rings with feedback and it silences the
courtroom but Todd is still speaking.

TODD
It wasn't me. No.

The Judge takes a deep breathe and looks around the court.

JUDGE HAYES
Due to new testimony and the
fragile state of the defendant this
trial will break today and resume
one week from now at 9am.

The Judge bangs her gavel.

INT. CASEYS HOUSE - EVENING

Casey and his father eat at the dinner table while his mother
fixes herself a plate in the kitchen.

FATHER
That paintin job's almost finished
up. You been doing a good job.

Casey continues to eat without looking up at his dad who just
keeps talking.

FATHER
Maybe we could redo the porch next
week.

CASEY
I'll be gone.

FATHER

Well I know but you can come back
once in a while and -

CASEY

No I'll be gone I'm not coming back
here. This place is lost. I don't
want to be here.

Casey's mother comes into the room which hushes the boys
down.

FATHER

Well that may be, but the last bit
of the front of the house still
needs painting, don't give up on
that too.

Casey drops his knife and fork and slides his chair out from
underneath him.

CASEY

I don't have any choice. You all
have already given up. I'm just
fittin' it.

Casey storms out of the room.

MOM

There you go.

FATHER

What?

MOM

You did it.

FATHER

Whatchu talking about?

MOM

You always do that?

FATHER

Your talking crazy.

EXT. CASEYS HOUSE - NIGHT

Casey stands on the porch and looks up at the stars.

MOM

Now what are you thinking about?

CASEY
I miss the city.

MOM
I know sweety.

CASEY
What changes from here to there?

MOM
Only the street signs.

CASEY
You know what I mean. What's the difference?

MOM
You tell me.

CASEY
It's the people. Everyone's open in the city. They're moving. They don't sit out on the porch they don't drive into town to do groceries -

MOM
They don't walk anywhere, they don't sit down for a meal and they don't carry cash no more. None of those things there are real problems. You can do with em or without em. I guess maybe in the country out here you know people too well. But in the city, you don't have time to really know anybody.

Casey nods.

MOM
Boy what are you thinking about? I told you this is no good -

CASEY
What if I'm making things worse?

A knock rattles the screen door from the inside.

Alice stands inside with her hands behind her back and a smile on her face.

ALICE
I hope I didn't interrupt anything.

MOM
No your right on time.

Alice comes out onto the porch and mom opens the door to go inside.

CASEY
I didn't hear you pull up.

ALICE
I walked.

Mom smiles behind Alice just as she closes the door.

ALICE
I had a real sitter this time and I heard about what happened yesterday.

CASEY
Let me guess, your here to tell me not to give up?

Alice nods her head and puts her hand on Casey's.

ALICE
Now what am I supposed to say?

Casey draws his hand away.

CASEY
What makes anyone think that he's innocent? All this trial is doing is getting people more upset and putting this poor family through hell.

ALICE
That's not true.

CASEY
It is true.

ALICE
You're seeing it wrong.

CASEY
I go to court. I walk up those stairs everyday and they are so angry, Alice. They don't want to see him walk. I am the only person behind this kid and for all I know I should be on the other side of the bench.

ALICE
You already gave up.

CASEY
Don't you see -

ALICE
No. I do see. You think everyone gave up and maybe they did. But that's what set you apart. But once you're gone then it's all gonna go back the way it was and the way everyone is used to it being. This town is just gonna stand still until it's time to remember this trial and let the same mistakes happen.

Casey heads towards the door.

CASEY
This case is finished. I'm through.

ALICE
How can you help by leaving. That's the dumbest shit I've ever heard. Next time you wanna make a difference. Make one, don't just act like you're gonna.

Casey slams the door.

EXT. CASEY'S HOUSE - DAY

Casey opens his eyes when he hears the jingle of metal on metal. Hand cuffs clink together in his face.

DOVE
You're going downtown...

The glare of the sun off the metal makes Casey blink.

DOVE
Go get your coat.

Casey looks up to see Dove munching on a bag of chips that he has in his hand. Casey sits against the house in an undershirt beside his painting supplies.

The back of his shirt and shoulders are sticky from the paint and the heat.

Dove brushes the grease off of his hand and onto his pants before he helps Casey to his feet.

DOVE
A little bright for sleeping don't
you think?

Casey looks down by the supplies and spots three empty beers. Dove follows his gaze.

DOVE
A little bright for sleeping and
drinking don't you think?

Casey and Dove walk over to his dad's pick up truck and lean against it.

DOVE
So I guess you're going back soon
then huh?

CASEY
Yeah, I'll be back though once in a
while.

DOVE
For Christmas maybe?

CASEY
Maybe.

DOVE
It's not that bad? You think?

CASEY
Nah, it's not that bad.

Dove finishes his chips and throws the bag on the ground.

DOVE
Certainly it's none of my business
but you haven't been in to see that
boy in a few days now.

CASEY
Don't start.

Dove throws up his hands.

DOVE
I'm not starting. We just miss you
around the station. You know
causing trouble. Getting everybody
all riled up.

(MORE)

DOVE (cont'd)

If you lived here there'd be so
much work for us police I'd
probably get an assistant.

The radio on Doves belt buzzes.

DOVE

Not one of the student assistant
neither. One of those girls who
wears glasses but she's still sexy,
those kind.

Dove winks at Casey and cracks a smile as he picks up his
radio and it buzzes in his ear.

Doves smile drops and he looks back at Casey who's sleepy
eyes widen.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

A cop car flies down a dirt road with it's siren on, kicking
up dust in front of the pickup truck that drives tightly
behind it.

EXT. CITY STREETS - CONTINUOUS

Doves car has met with one other police cars now and they are
all followed by Casey in his pickup.

They screech to a halt in front of the courthouse. The front
windows are shattered and citizens stand on the street
staring at the small group of men and women in front of the
court house.

Most of them turn back when they hear the police car but
other raise their signs and throw rocks at the courthouse.

All of the group of ten are dressed alike with black dress
pants black dress shirt and a black tie with a white
handkerchief out of the back pocket.

The police and Casey get out of the cars' and three of them
draw their guns but not Dove.

OFFICER 4

Everybody hands in the air!

OFFICER 5

Hands in the air do it, do it!

This get everyone's attention and more officers show up on
the scene and begin to cuff the violent protestors.

The other protestors shout in the ears of the officers as they make their arrests.

Casey looks around at the damage and begins to approach the scene behind Dove. A rioter looks straight at Casey.

RIOTER 1

You, Larmer, what the fuck are you doing here.

A cop takes him away but now all of the protestors focus their attention on Casey.

A protestor, VICTOR steps forward out of the crowd of non-violent protestors and gets Casey's attention.

VICTOR

Casey Larmer, you fucking piece of shit go back home. We don't need your kind of help here.

Casey looks at Victor but then his eyes are drawn towards Victors shoulder as he taps a badge on his left arm.

The Knights Cross, symbol of the Klu Klux Klan. A red crest with a thick white cross in the middle stood out on Victors shoulders each time his finger touched it.

Casey begins to walk quickly towards the group who's numbers have thinned out. Casey pushes by Dove and comes face to face with Victor while Dove stands behind him with his hand on his gun.

CASEY

What are you doing here?

VICTOR

This isn't a trial. This is an execution. We got one of our boys in there telling everyone he didn't do it and you're not doing a God damn thing black boy.

Casey presses his chest against Victors and the protestors behind him begin to wave their signs furiously.

VICTOR

He had someone to defend him and you had to step in. You haven't done a God damn thing for that boy other than look stupid on the chair.

CASEY

I'm the only one defending him in there.

VICTOR

Not anymore. We've come to make sure things are right and you don't sabotage his chances of getting out of this place no more.

CASEY

You don't know what you're talking about.

VICTOR

Whatever plan you had to frame an innocent Christian boy, it's come to an end.

More officers approach the protestors now.

OFFICER 5

You guys need to get the hell outta here.

VICTOR

We'll leave, but just know you're not gettin away with nothing Larmer. This trial ain't gonna go the way you thought. Things are changin around here.

The KKK members turn and walk away. Glass crunches under their feet from the destruction they have brought to the courthouse.

Victor glances back at Casey while his white handkerchief blows in the gentle wind.

INT. ALICE'S DINER - EVENING

The diner is quiet and although some booths are filled with one or two people they share their conversations softly, whispering to each other.

The old black and white gentlemen sit at the counter in front of the T.V. While Alice cleans off the counter top.

A news report is loud enough to be heard in the whole diner.

The news woman begins.

CHERYL HICKEY

I'm standing at the Stockport
courthouse where officers have just
finished detaining and dispersing
violent protestors

Police tape waves behind the reporter and officers are busy
attending to the scene.

CHERYL HICKEY (CONT'D)

The protestors identified
themselves as a faction of the Klu
Klux Klan who's presence in
Mississippi has dwindled over the
years.

The courthouse windows have been smashed.

CHERYL HICKEY (CONT'D)

These acts of violence are backlash
from the Todd Anderson murder trial
that started a few weeks ago and is
now on recess. The statements from
the protestors point to the fact
that the trial is not going well
for the young boy.

The black gentleman and white gentleman look at each other
out of the corner of their eye's.

CHERYL HICKEY (CONT'D)

Not only was the community shocked
by this reappearance of the KKK but
it agrees that this will only lead
to a swifter conviction of Todd
Anderson.

The black gentleman swing around on his stool and slowly
makes his way out of the diner.

The bell over the swinging door chimes as it closes behind
him.

INT. POLICE OFFICE - EVENING

The stars shine outside of the prison bars while Greg sits on
one side of the table with Todd beside him. Debbie stands
behind Todd with her hands on his shoulders and watches as
Casey strolls in.

DEBBIE

Where have you been?

CASEY

I was just making my way. Sorry for the inconvenience.

Casey takes a seat on the other side of the table opposite Todd.

CASEY

So, Todd, how goes it.

TODD

It's fine sir.

CASEY

Well that sounds good to me.

Greg shakes his head and looks straight against the wall.

CASEY

Because I clearly don't know what's going on here. I mean I know you didn't kill that woman. But I sure don't know why not.

DEBBIE

Mr. Casey.

CASEY

And hell, I know you. I talk to you all the time. I'm your lawyer for fuck sake. And I can't prove you didn't kill her. How am I gonna convince a jury you didn't do it?

DEBBIE

Mr. Casey -

CASEY

Because from what happened last week there isn't much that's gonna make them think that you didn't kill her.

Greg clears his throat loudly and interrupts Casey.

DEBBIE

Well, we all have talked about it and we think that Todd here has been through enough. He told his side of the story and now it's time for them to believe him. They'll do the right thing.

CASEY

Why would they do the right thing?
You think these people are gonna
hear all that has been going on
then take a look at your boy at the
last second and say to themselves
'ah, well, he looks like a good
kid'.

DEBBIE

They will know in their hearts.

CASEY

Maybe he can come paint my fence
once this is all through. Because
he's not gonna get a job again in
this city.

Debbie raises her voice.

DEBBIE

The Lord will shine in their hearts
Mr. Casey and they will see that my
boy is full of good.

Everyone goes silent.

CASEY

Maybe I should turn to God too.
Maybe he'll tell me what the hell
happened that night.

DEBBIE

My son told you and the court what
happened that night.

CASEY

Mr. Anderson?

Greg looks at Casey.

CASEY

Would you like to involve yourself
in this discussion?

Greg turns away.

CASEY

Greg what the hell was your son
doing that night?

DEBBIE

You already know what happened.

CASEY
Because I think you know.

Greg keeps his stare away from Casey.

CASEY
I think you know and you won't tell me.

DEBBIE
We told you all we could.

CASEY
Why won't he talk to me?

Debbie starts to raise her voice at Casey.

DEBBIE
You know all there is to know so be done with it.

Casey raises his voice.

CASEY
Why won't you say a word to me I wanna know.

Both men shoot up out of their chairs. Greg throws his fists on the table while Casey points his finger straight at him.

<p>CASEY You know what happened. Why were his fingerprints there?</p>	<p>GREG I know what happened that night and I had enough of you Larmer</p>
---	--

The both of them catch their breathe.

CASEY
Then what happened?

Greg leans across the table towards Casey.

GREG
Some nigger died.

Casey steps back while Greg slowly takes his seat and puts a firm grip on his sons shoulder over his mothers hand.

GREG
We won't be needing you to know the story. We, my boy, is changing his plea. He's changing it to guilty.

Casey shakes his head.

CASEY

You want your son to rot in jail?

GREG

My son has a responsibility. He is going to accept the sentence and he'll be paroled in no time.

A tear rolls down Todd's nose.

TODD

I don't want to go.

GREG

Boy this is bigger than you. You have to stand up. These people around here are pushing you around, making you go through hoops just so they can have some judge say your goin to jail anyway. You're making a point.

TODD

I'm gonna die in jail if I go to jail I know it.

GREG

You won't get touched in there. We know a lot of people in there -

CASEY

You know people in there? You want your son hanging out with killers and robbers and rapists is that the kind of people he's gonna meet?

GREG

No, boy. This is the kind of people he's gonna meet.

Greg rolls up his sleeve and taps on his tattoo of the Knights Cross.

Casey swallows hard.

GREG

I'm sick of ya'll feeling sorry for yourselves. I'm sick of you people wanting to see my son dead. There was a time when good Christian boys got treated fairly. And I won't have my son begging.

Casey shakes his head at Todd.

GREG
You hear me son?

TODD
Yes.

Greg sits back in his chair, with a smile on his face.

GREG
Well then it's settled. In two
day's when courts back on my boy
will change his plea. This suit you
very well Casey Larmer?

CASEY
Fuck you.

GREG
I think we're done here. Just show
up on the day of so my boy doesn't
get further embarrassed.

Greg gets out of his chair and rubs his sons head before
exiting.

INT. CASEY'S HOUSE - DAY

The garage door flies open and Casey stands on the outside
with a suitcase in his hand. He rips off the tarp protecting
his Mercedes and lets it slide to the ground. His trunk pops
open at the press of a button.

MOM
You can't stay for dinner?

FATHER
You sure you don't wanna stay we'll
make whatever you want?

CASEY
I should have been home a long time
ago. There's a lot I left behind.

Casey puts his luggage in the trunk.

FATHER
Look at this damn house!

Casey's father turns around to the house. It is beautifully
painted except for only half of the front.

FATHER

You almost done finished and now
you're gonna leave I can't get up
that high.

CASEY

I'll call a painter when I get into
the city to come finish it up.

Casey walks over to his mom and gives her a kiss.

CASEY

I might not be coming down for the
holidays but you guys should come
up and stay with me for a week, see
the sites.

MOM

Oh, I don't know you always came
back home for holidays.

CASEY

Well, things might be different
this time.

MOM

We'll see if we can make it up
there. We'll talk on the phone.

Casey nods and puts his hand out to shake his dad's hand
goodbye.

CASEY

I'll talk to you too dad.

FATHER

I can't believe you gonna leave me
with a half painted house.

CASEY

I told you -

FATHER

Ah ah! Doesn't mater how hard you
work on something if nobody can see
it. You might as well of not
started.

CASEY

I'll call someone else. Leave it to
them.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - LATER

Casey drives down the road with his air conditioner blasting.

There are no cars on the road for miles behind or in front of him until he gets over a hill and he can see a small pickup truck barreling down the road in the opposite lane.

The dirty grey truck gets closer and closer until it finally swooshes past Casey.

Casey hears the truck slam on it's breaks and when he checks his rear view he can only see the truck enveloped in a cloud of dust.

Casey taps the breaks and begins to slow down. The dust is thick and still in the air. Casey applies his break a little more.

The pickup shoots out of the still cloud leaving the dirt swirling behind and around it. The truck is heading towards Casey now so he slams on the gas.

Casey's Mercedes speeds along the roads but is slowed down by turns and pothole while the truck swerves and avoids the imperfections in the lane.

Finally with the truck following close behind him Casey pulls into Red Tree Park and slams on his breaks.

The truck pulls up slowly behind him although Casey cannot see the driver for all the dust in the air.

Casey undoes his seat belt and takes off his jacket then rolls up his sleeves. Casey step out of the car.

CASEY

What do you want from me?

No response.

CASEY

I'm leaving, whatever you were going to do, I'm leaving, you win.

The dust settles on the road and Casey sees there is only one person in the car. With this he runs towards the car and rips open the driver door.

CASEY

I'm finished here.

Debbie Anderson is curled up into a ball in the drivers seat with her hands protecting her face.

Casey steps back.

CASEY

What?

Debbie withdraws her defense and talks to him.

DEBBIE

I need to tell you something.

EXT. RED TREE PARK - NIGHT

The sun sets in the park with only the dim headlights and drivers light from the truck gleaming towards the hills.

FADE OUT.

EXT. COURTHOUSE - MORNING

A police officer holds back an angry crowd at the front stairs of the courthouse.

Between sixty and seventy members of the black community have shown up to voice their opinion but they are all contained on one side of the stairs by a barricade and several police officers.

On the other side of the stairs behind another barricade stands twelve Caucasians dressed in black uniforms.

The mens' head's have been shaven and the women wear their hair back in a pony tail, the only color they dress in is the white handkerchief in their back pocket and the small, red badge on their shoulders.

Police swarm everywhere around the courthouse making sure that no violence erupts but the two sides still wave their homemade signs at each other and curse each others name.

A bus pulls up in front of the courthouse to let out the jury which causes the police to rush towards them and ten police officers stand surrounding the jury as they walk them up the stairs. After the jury enters a sharp black taxi pulls up behind the bus and Casey steps out with his briefcase in hand.

The crowd on both sides explodes into a fit of screams and slander.

The officers stand at the top of the stairs since they have only just now finished bringing in the jury.

Dove steps forward to escort Casey up the stairs but the arm of Police Chief Meyers swings in front of him.

MEYERS

We ain't doing nothing for him.

He lets his arm down and the entire force stands cross armed and watches Casey begin to walk up the stairs.

The members of the Klu Klux Klan spit in Casey's path while the black community stretch out their arms to strike him and scream with all the breathe they have.

Dove moves two of the officers aside and, while Police Chief Meyers shakes his head, Dove makes his way to Casey and acts as a shield to protect him the best he can from both sides. Dove shouts back to Casey over the mobs screaming.

DOVE

I thought you went home?

Casey puts his hand on Doves shoulder and stops him from acting as a shield. Casey steps up beside him.

CASEY

I am home.

The two walk up the stairs side by side and past the idle officers.

INT. COURTROOM - LATER

Casey looks behind him into the dead silent audience. The benches are full not one spot remains.

Angry black faces stare back at him and Casey can recognize the Ranchdales and Mr. Lyn in the audience once again. Along with people from the community many reporters also sit around with note pads ready to be written in.

Todd looks back behind his shoulders and scans the audience but doesn't find his parents. Not even his mother.

Todd leans in to talk to Casey from the chair beside him.

TODD

I guess nobody wants to see their kid go to jail, right sir?

Casey shakes his head.

CASEY

Only your daddy.

Todd sits back into his own seat.

Judge Hayes takes comes in and sits down. Everyone rises.

JUDGE HAYES
I trust there won't be any
outbursts this time around?

Both prosecution and defence nod.

JUDGE HAYES
Then if there is no new business
Mr. Larmer was that your final
witness.

CASEY
No.

Todd looks at him and stands up.

TODD
Your honour I have something to
say.

JUDGE HAYES
Then I'll see your next witness.

TODD
Judge Hayes!

The Judge looks at Todd.

CASEY
I call Karli Lyn to the stand.

Todd screams out when he hears Casey.

TODD
I change my plea.

JUDGE HAYES
What is going on here?

CASEY
Bring them in.

Todd and Casey look behind them and see the large courtroom doors swing open and behind them, escorted by a police officer and a bailiff, walk Todd's mother with her arm around the black teen in front of her.

TODD
I'm guilty, I did it.

Todd turns back to the Judge.

TODD
You gotta stop this I did it. Stop
the trial. I plead guilty.

The audience talks amongst themselves and Karli's father grinds his teeth and looks away from his daughter as she passes him in court.

Debbie lets go of Karli as Karli makes her way to the stand and Debbie turns to Casey and walks towards him.

Todd shakes his head at his mother while Casey takes a few steps forward. Debbie sits behind the desk with her son beside her.

Karli bites her lip while she gets up into the witness box. Her eyes are red and her hair is unkept but she wears a beautiful dress.

CASEY
Hi, Karli.

Karli flashes her flawless smile but then bites her lip again when the audience murmurs.

The Judge silences the room.

CASEY
Karli did you know Mrs. Ranchdale?

KARLI
Yes, I did.

Casey nods his head.

KARLI
She was a great woman and neighbor
and she'll be dearly missed.

CASEY
What was your favorite memory of
her?

KARLI
I guess when she used to baby-sit
for us and we would play in one of
those little pools when we were
kids. Everyone from the block would
come.

CASEY

Yea she was great. You say you were neighbors?

KARLI

Her backyard and my families backyard are side by side.

Casey nods again and takes a few steps back.

CASEY

Karli do you know Todd Anderson.

KARLI

Yes.

Karli looks at her family who sits in the audience. Her fathers eyes well up with tears.

KARLI

I'm sorry daddy.

CASEY

How did you know him.

KARLI

We were in love.

The courtroom bursts into small conversations and Judge Hayes bangs her gavel to bring calm back to the court.

CASEY

Why did it take you so long to come forward.

KARLI

My daddy doesn't like Todd. He doesn't like anyone much. Just a few months ago he found out that he and I were going together. He said if he caught us again he wouldn't know what he'd do.

CASEY

You say he found out. Why did you two keep it a secret.

KARLI

Our fathers. They're the same.

CASEY

How do you mean?

KARLI

About people. That's how they're
the same.

CASEY

Tell the jury what you mean.

KARLI

My daddy says that he'd rather be
dead before I go off and marry a
white man or have a white baby.

Karli's dad lets a tear run down his face but doesn't move an
inch.

CASEY

I understand.

Karli brushes a tear out of her eye and continues.

KARLI

That's why we had to be more
careful so that my daddy didn't
find out.

CASEY

What happened the night Mrs.
Ranchdale was murdered?

Todd bursts out of his seat.

TODD

Somebodies gonna get hurt. More
people are gonna get hurt then have
already, now.

KARLI

I have to tell em.

INT. KARLI'S HOUSE - NIGHT

KARLI (V.O.)

He used to have to climb into my
window.

Karli and Todd finish making love quietly on her bed. Todd
grabs his shirt from the floor and rolls it up to put it on
as Karli kisses his back. Todd throws his shirt on and kisses
her gently on the lips. Karli giggles but he puts his finger
to her lips to shush her.

Suddenly a gunshot rings out outside the window.

Karli covers herself up while Todd puts his track pants on quickly and runs to the window.

Two men run through the backyard to the front yard of Miss. Ranchdale's house, tossing the gun in the backyard.

Mr. Lyn charges in through Karli's door.

The two scared young adults look at each other quickly before Todd puts his leg out of the window and onto the small roof over the patio of Karli's house.

Mr. Lyn roars at Karli and slams her door. Mr. Lyn flies down the staircase and towards his back door.

Todd lands hard on the ground but gets to his feet fast and struggles to hop over the large brown fence between the Lyn backyard and the Ranchdale backyard.

Out of the corner of his eye Todd sees Mr. Lyn charge out of his back door and towards him.

With all of his strength Todd throws himself over the fence and lands on his back in a painful thud. Todd winces in pain and rolls twice away from the fence and onto the twenty two millimeter pistol.

Karli hangs out of her window, screaming, watching this all happen.

KARLI (V.O.)

And then I heard my daddy say
'When I get to you, you're dead'

Mr. Lyn hops onto the fence and pulls his torso up and just as he shifts his weight to pull his leg up he sees Todd, bent over, with one hand holding onto his sore back and the other lining up the sight of a small firearm between his right eye and Mr. Lyn's heart.

Mr. Lyn stops dead in his tracks and, after a moment of staring at the young man, lets himself down and stares at the fence.

Todd puts the gun in his pocket and runs the opposite way. Neither man had noticed the body of Mrs. Ranchdale laying just meters away from where Todd had landed.

INT. COURTROOM - CONTINUOUS

The court is silent except for the sobbing of Karli on the witness stand.

KARLI

Daddy said for me to keep my mouth shut. He said that there was no reason to be talkin' about what I was doin' anyhow.

Casey looks back at Mr. Lyn who lets another tear run down the side of his face.

Casey looks at the prosecutor.

Mr. Parker adjusts his glasses and looks straight ahead.

CASEY

Mr. Parker, your witness.

Mr. Parker fumbles his words and looks at the judge.

EXT. COURTHOUSE - AFTERNOON

The doors burst open and Todd and Casey are mauled by five or six reporters shoving microphones in their faces.

The reporters ask how it feels to be free and if he knew who the real murders were and if Todd was going to charge Mr. Lyn. Dove shakes off the reporters.

The protestors have quieted down now on both sides.

DOVE

You can talk to them later we gotta get them outta here.

Casey and Todd get into a taxi that takes them away. Mr. Lyn and his daughter Karli walk out of the doors escorted by an officer as well and make their way to a crowd of black onlookers.

GREG (O.S.)

You better keep your daughter away from my boy.

The small group of KKK members stand scattered in front of the black community.

Greg Anderson steps forward with his chin raised and looks Mr. Lyn in the eye.

The other hate activists stand silently behind.

MR. LYN

I wish I could.

Mr. Lyn takes a step to the left, away from Greg.

Greg takes a step forward and right in front of Mr. Lyn.

The sixty black civilians looks at each other and back at the small band of Klan members.

GREG

I said keep your daughter away from
my son.

Karli's eyes begin to well up and she grabs hard onto her fathers wrist.

Mr. Lyn gently guides his daughter from standing in front of him to standing behind him.

GREG (CONT'D)

You fucking nigger.

Mr. Lyn punches Greg straight in the face and he goes down hard on his back.

Greg's hands cover his face and he screams from the ground.

GREG

Fuckin' get em.

The Klan still stands silent and still.

Blood pours out between Greg's fingers and he lets his hand down once he has smeared most of the blood off of his face away from his broken nose.

From the back of the group Victor walks forward towards Greg.

Victor leans down beside Greg and whispers to him.

VICTOR

You don't belong here. Your
families a bunch of no good nigger
lovers.

Greg looks back at him and shakes his head.

GREG

Fuck you.

VICTOR

You might as well be one of them,
now.

Greg rolls over again and the handkerchief in his pocket falls onto the ground.

A few officers get into the situation and tell everyone to go home and keep moving.

An officer grabs Greg off of the ground and escorts him away with his hands behind his back.

The wind catches the white handkerchief and flips it over once. The KKK members look at each other and around at the vast sea of black community that stands before them.

The wind catches the handkerchief again and tosses it around again until it lays between the two groups, wide open, in the form of an old Klansman's mask with a pointed top and cut out eyes that stare empty to the sky.

The black community takes a second and doesn't move even though they are being strongly encouraged to by the officers.

Mr. Lyn brings his daughter forward and stands with both hands on her shoulders.

MR. LYN

Things have changed in the South.
Old men like me have to see that.
But you have to realize that not
only did the South change for you.
But the whole world has changed for
you.

Mr, Lyn and his daughter step forward and are quickly followed by the entire black community that walks together, strong.

The African-Americans walks over the old Klansman mask covering it with dirt and dust. Everyone passes by the four Klan members, looking them in the eye as they pass and nudging them firmly out of their way as they walk past them.

The Klan members stand tall and raise their chins high as the large black community makes it's way by. The KKK gets shoved out of the way and back and forth as the crowd progresses and the white supremacists make eye contact with no one.

INT. TAXI - DAY

Todd and Casey sit in the back of the cab.

CASEY

Actually just stop here there's
something else I gotta do today.

INT. OLD DINER - MOMENTS LATER

Alice's diner is full of patrons but most of them sit close to the counter watching a news broadcast on television about the newly reported verdict of the Anderson case.

Alice goes behind the counter and switches the T.V. to a sitcom.

ALICE

Who cares about all that you'll
hear enough of it for the next ten
years. Let everyone enjoy their
lunch.

The crowd around the T.V. breaks up and goes back to their seats.

Jeremy comes taps his mom on the shoulder as he swivels around on a chair.

JEREMY

Mom, two cokes.

ALICE

Well, OK you know what to do,
sweety.

JEREMY

He says ones yours.

Alice looks to the corner of the diner and sees Casey sitting at a small table. Alice smiles and catches Casey's attention. He smiles back at her and she makes her way to the chair.

Alice sits down and loses her smile.

ALICE

This better be fast.

CASEY

I'm sorry.

ALICE

Not bad.

CASEY

When I got here, I had lost someone
who meant a lot to me.

Alice puts her hands on the table.

CASEY (CONT'D)

Maybe that's why I started to give up. I need someone to believe that there is some right to be done.

ALICE

I knew you would do the right thing.

CASEY

I know. And that's when I realized that even though I had lost one woman I could believe in...I found another.

Alice puts her hand on Casey's side of the table.

ALICE

I can't be with someone who only half believes in something. Who gives up when things get tough. Because things get tough.

CASEY

Anything can change.

Jeremy slowly makes his way to the table with two cokes on a tray.

Alice helps her son take the cokes off and put them on the table.

CASEY

Thank you.

ALICE

Thank you, baby.

CASEY

I looked up to someone when I was a kid. And I want to be someone to look up to.

FADE OUT.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAYS FROM THEN

Casey walks down the road with his arm around Alice. Alice has a picnic basket in one hand and her other hand on the top of her sons head as he walks beside her.

Red Tree Park is in the distance and Jeremy takes off from under his mothers hand towards it.

ALICE
Watch the road.

Jeremy heads straight for the park ahead of his mother and Casey.

A small car pulls onto the shoulder just behind Casey and Alice.

Todd and Karli step out of the car but quickly meet up in front of it where Karli locks her arm around Todd's before they walk towards the other couple.

The two loving couples stand only feet away from each other.

ALICE
You sure you're willing to baby-sit?

TODD
Yes ma'am.

KARLI
Yes, Ma'am

Casey smiles.

ALICE
We'd just like to thank you.

TODD
Yeah, I just wanna thank you for everything, sir. Not a lot of people done that.

CASEY
It was nothing. How're your parents?

TODD
My mom's good.

Karli squeezes Todd's arm tighter.

CASEY
I don't think anyone's going to forget th-

Jeremy screams in the distance.

JEREMY
Momma! Momma! Momma!

Alice leaves from under Casey's arm and jets towards the sound of her child in distress. Casey follows quickly behind and, after Todd grabs Karli's hand tightly, they sprint after Alice as well.

EXT. RED TREE PARK - CONTINUOUS

Jeremy stands very small in front of the overwhelming size of the old tree. His eyes are centered on something and do not budge even when his mother calls out his name and runs full speed behind him to get to him as fast as she can.

Alice dives to her knees and quickly puts her hand over her sons eyes and turns him away. She bursts into tears and holds him tightly against her chest.

Casey comes in quickly and kneels down behind her to put his hand on her back and lend support. He shakes his head when he looks forward towards the tree.

Todd sees the horror ten feet before Alice and Casey did and stops his sprint instantly. He stops so fast that his tight hold on Karli's hand snaps her back towards him when he stops.

Todd swallows hard.

KARLI

Honey.

'Red Tree Park' is written in black paint on a wooden sign in the parking lot.

The hand painted sign for the park glows red as the sun begins to set and it casts hue on the entire park.

A rope creaks back and forth rubbing against the bark of a massive horizontal branch only twelve feet above ground.

Karli looks away from the tree and at Todd.

KARLI

Don't look.

A man in black pants and a black dress shirt that has been ripped and torn and dirtied swings slowly back and forth on the end of the noose that holds his feet dangling above the green grass.

A white Klansman hood sits lifelessly over his head and moves ever so slightly with every swing.

The sound of the rope creaking against the branch is overpowered by the sobs of Alice who still holds her son tight.

The corpse swings sharply against the wind and the hood falls off and to the ground.

Todd straightens up catches his breathe.

KARLI
Baby, don't look.

Karli squeezes her boyfriends hand tightly.

Todd's eyes burn with fury and hate.

Todd let's go of Karli's hand.