



1        **EXT. GRAVEL ROAD - NIGHT**

1

Northern East Coast. Fall. Field. Middle of NOWHERE.

Crickets CHIRPING. Wind RUSTLING. A wood fence CREAKS against the wind. On the side of a stretch of gravel road, a black 1999 BMW is IDLING. The headlights shine into the vacant darkness.

2        **INT. BMW - NIGHT**

2

Grizzled fingers DRUM on the steering wheel. A BROKEN WATCH displaying the face of a young boy rests on the driver's wrist. The driver will grip this watch when he gets nervous.

In the driver's other hand is a battered, black GUN, resting against the BAGGED temple of a MAN reclined in the passenger seat. Handcuffed and sweaty, he shudders at the barrel.

MIKE, 56, hairs graying, wrinkling accumulating, eyes weary with his self-assuredness that he will always do what needs to be done, eases in the driver's seat.

Behind him, KOREY, 35, a thin, gaunt killer, sits in shadow. He treats others without compassion and looks the part. His hands fidget, his eyes dart; his paranoia front and center.

In an awkward instance, his eyes meet Mike's through the rear view mirror.

MIKE

Something on your mind?

KOREY

You shouldn't be letting the tank run like that.

MIKE

Tell me more when you're shivering in the cold.

KOREY

How much is left?

Mike glances lackadaisically to the dashboard, exasperated.

MIKE

It's just under a quarter. It's fine.

KOREY

So...it's been running here for...thirty-ish minutes, not to mention the drive here which was another forty-five. I'd say we've got another twenty before we're stranded here.

MIKE

You're exaggerating again, it's not a good look for you.

KOREY

Again? Fuck, you're wasting all our fuel! How am I not supposed to -

MIKE

There's a Quickway in Garrattsville. We can top off after. Satisfied?

Korey's leg starts shaking in anticipation. He watches snow drift in the headlights. There is nothing else in the darkness.

KOREY

And what if we run out? What happens then?

MIKE

Then it's a thirty minute walk there and back and if you stop asking questions about it I will happily volunteer.

KOREY

Don't fucking trivialize this, Mike. If none of these guys show up and we're caught hitching a ride in the middle of bum-fuck, Colin is going to have both our heads on a spike. Let's cut our losses and go.

Korey reaches for the door, but Mike CLICKS the lock shut. Pulling at the handle, he can't believe Mike's petulance.

KOREY (CONT'D)

You've got to be kidding - I will break through this glass, Mike I swear.

He hold the butt end of his gun up, waiting for his bluff to be called.

MIKE

Colin will have to suck it up,  
then. You know what he rewards even  
more than results? Level-  
headedness... and commitment.

KOREY

How do you know?

MIKE

Hunch.

Mike begins to HUM to himself, staring ahead.

KOREY

Unbelievable.

Mike DRUMS on the wheel. Korey TAPS RAPIDLY on the arm rest.

MIKE

When they get here we play nice. We  
didn't escalated this, so watch  
your temper and keep your mouth  
shut.

Korey exhales heavily.

KOREY

You know what I'm learning from  
working here instead of Brooklyn?

MIKE

Hit me.

KOREY

Everybody's temper.

MIKE

How so?

KOREY

It's like every guy here popped an  
extra xanax and now they're riding  
this wave where they think nothing  
has any consequence. Take you for  
example.

MIKE

Me?

KOREY

Why were you late to pick me up?

MIKE

What?

KOREY

Why...were you...late?

MIKE

Family stuff, it's really not your business. If you wanted to do my job, you should have sat in my seat.

KOREY

How much does your wife know about what you do?

MIKE

I think I expressly said it's not your fucking business, Korey.

KOREY

Hey, just conversation. It'd be worse to die of boredom before the cold gets me.

The wind HOWLS against the car windows. Small cracks let WHISTLES of cold air into the rickety vehicle.

MIKE

Little. She knows very little.

KOREY

Have you ever been caught before?

MIKE

Like what, have I slipped up?

Korey nods.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Maybe once or twice. I've gotten some stern glances at the dinner table. But if she's ever worried about it she hides it well, bless her heart.

KOREY

Tell me about a time she suspected.

MIKE

What for?

KOREY

What- I don't know, call it educational. Just tell a fucking story, man. What else are we going to do? You're the one calling the shots, evidently.

MIKE

Alright, so maybe this was...I wanna say five, six months ago. This guy I was doing some side business with had a son, Bill, who just turned 15. Buzz cut. Earring. Burn mark right here, dumb fucking kid. Went to the same school as my son.

Mike motions to his neck to signify the placement of the burn mark. The hostage grumbles in his seat. Mike pushes his gun further into his temple, eliminating his room to protest.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Do you remember on the news a while back, there was an APB out for a missing science teacher in Chenango county?

KOREY

Can't say I do.

MIKE

Well two days before he went missing, he had Bill in a physics class. I guess he was doing one of those, wha-da-ya-call-em...tricks that the teacher does when they turn the gas on in the class lab and says "everyone, get back" before he lights up this huge fireball.

Mike is wrapped up in his story and is no longer aiming his gun accurately.

MIKE (CONT'D)

So this teacher gets to the part where he says "get back" and either Bill didn't hear or the teacher didn't judge how big the fire'd be. Next thing everyone knows, Bill runs out of the room, flails his shirt off in front of everybody, and runs over to a water fountain with the speed of God in him.

The Hostage breathes loudly through his nose. Korey darts a malicious glare down at the Hostage. Mike doesn't notice.

KOREY

How bad was the burn?

MIKE

No real noticeable damage. But he did get that scar. I think they said his eyebrows were singed and he lost some hair on one of his arms but that's it.

Korey slowly draws out a three-inch DAGGER from his pocket. He silently brings the knife to the Hostage's throat. The Hostage winces as a drop of BLOOD rolls down the bag.

KOREY

So when does this become a busted job?

MIKE

(turning around to face  
Korey)

If you're patient, I'll get there.

Korey hides the knife in time. The hostage rapidly catches his breath.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Not so long after that... Bill's dad considered that "*altercation*" with his son to be resolved. Guy was just gone. I mean, this teacher knew who that kid was, who his father was. It's not like he didn't have a reputation. Bill should have been given protective goggles or special treatment or some shit before that teacher screwed the pooch.

KOREY

Even though it barely burnt him.

MIKE

Yeah, well...okay, if you have a reputation you uphold it I guess it what it boils down to. Trust me, no one was wondering who took this guy. Everybody was just wondering where he put him.

(MORE)

MIKE (CONT'D)

When I got back one night and it was on the news I saw my son whispering about it to her. We didn't talk the rest of the night. Astute little bugger.

KOREY

So with that...do you think these guys respect Colin's reputation? Or ours?

MIKE

Who?

KOREY

Who?!

Korey gestures wildly past the windshield.

KOREY (CONT'D)

These no-show shit heads, whoever they are! What, they've kidnapped one of our guys and now they're late for the exchange?

MIKE

So to speak.

KOREY

It is or it isn't, man. Jesus. They don't give a shit who we're working for. *Fuck* reputation. They could be planning an ambush and we're sitting ducks.

MIKE

All being late makes them is lazy.

KOREY

Or unpredictable. That makes them dangerous.

MIKE

Fine, let's indulge that for a second. If they managed to kill us they'd have started a war with the most dangerous man upstate.

KOREY

Isn't that a menacing title.

MIKE

Cool off, Korey.

KOREY

They've already stepped on toes, right? If not we wouldn't be waiting out here with *this* shit sack. Hypothetically, they could have two boys camped out behind one of those rocks over there with a clear vantage point.

Korey points at the rigid side of the road ahead of them.

KOREY (CONT'D)

And that, *hypothetically*, they're waiting for us to slip up, do something stupid, like, *I don't know*, run out of gas-

MIKE

Believe me, I will drive this car off a cliff before I cut the engine, Korey. If you bring up the gas one more time I swear to God.

I don't tell you how to do your fucking job!

KOREY (CONT'D)

So we're stuck in the middle of *fucking* nowhere with their guy for the taking! They've probably already killed whichever boy of ours they have and never had any intention of bringing him back.

Mike boils up at the word 'boy.' His hands grip the steering wheel. His fingernails dig into the leather.

KOREY (CONT'D)

Maybe this thing is a whole lot more complicated than you'd like to assume based off of your fucked up hunch. So just do us a favor and cut the engine until they show, and then at least we have a plan B. A real, definitive plan B.

Mike turns on the RADIO. He doesn't look back at Korey for his response. An old-timey song by White Elephant echos through the car.

Korey is done.

KOREY (CONT'D)

You don't have a timer on your phone, do you? No?

Korey reaches into his pocket and sets a timer on his phone for 3 minutes. Korey sets the countdown on the center console and COCKS THE HAMMER of his pistol.

He presses it again the hostage's head. Mike's silent treatment tactic is wearing thin.

The Hostage's FRANTIC, MUFFLED PLEADS only make Korey dig the barrel harder into his skull. Mike intervenes.

MIKE  
What are you-

KOREY (CONT'D)  
If they don't show up in three minutes, I'm going to kill him.

MIKE (CONT'D)  
Are you insane? Like hell you are! You know the only reason he's here is so we can give him to them alive? We have a deal. I made a deal!

Korey stares back into Mike's eyes. He's not bluffing.

KOREY  
We won't need him if they don't show up, will we? Hit them with their tactics. Eye for an eye.

Mike is silently frantic, anxiety rising. Korey leans back, collecting his composure; in total control.

MIKE  
This was my responsibility, Colin had me bring you on, you have no right to hijack-

KOREY (CONT'D)  
You're out of chances, Mike. You made this the only way we go home tonight.

Mike's anger is welling up. He starts to quiver. Korey is reveling in his sadistic manipulation.

MIKE (CONT'D)  
You might think you know what you're getting yourself into, but I promise you you don't. Just look at me, for one second, really look at me. Put the gun down. Korey. Korey, please... you need to let me handle this. Look at me you arrogant son of a bitch!

Korey, still holding the gun, is getting suspicious. Something's off. Mike grips his wrist tight.

KOREY

What's got you so worked up, Mike?  
You can always change the station  
if you don't like the music...

Korey trails off. Mike is twisting his skin around his watch.

Korey looks down at his own watch. *Tick. Tick. Tick.*

Mike's is SILENT - BROKEN. The face of a boy stares back.

KOREY (CONT'D)

These people we're waiting for...

Mike's staring back at him, apprehensively. Korey thinks he gets what's going on. He stops the timer with seconds to go.

KOREY (CONT'D)

They have your son, don't they?

Mike doesn't, can't answer. Korey tries to read his silence.

KOREY (CONT'D)

Who else knows?

Mike ruminates in the culmination of his nightmares.

MIKE

Colin.

KOREY

And what'd he say?

MIKE

There's nothing he could do. He  
told me he was sorry for my loss.

The two reflect quietly on the cold-bloodedness of the act.  
The boy's face on the watch shines through.

KOREY

If Colin didn't send us...what  
exactly are we doing about it here,  
Mike?

MIKE

(totally defeated)  
Look under the bag.

Korey turns to face the masked man in the passenger seat. The facelessness of the burlap bears a new ominous connotation. He rips it off to see...

Bill, 15, has gone silent, covered in tears he can't wipe away. His eyes are wide and pleading. His mouth gagged closed. Buzz cut. Earring. Scar on his neck.

KOREY  
Is that the kid?

MIKE  
Bill.

Suddenly, Mike snatches the gun from Korey. With swift efficiency, Mike releases the safety and removes the bullet in the chamber, which falls at the foot of the gas pedal.

KOREY  
What the hell-

Korey lashes toward Mike. Mike aims his own gun at Korey's gut.

MIKE  
Korey you have to understand -

Korey tries again for the gun. Mike is faster. He WHIPS the gun out of reach and re-aims for Korey's head.

MIKE (CONT'D)  
Nothing's going to come between me  
and getting my son back. Not you.  
Not a thousand men.

KOREY  
But the kid-

MIKE (CONT'D)  
They'll get what they want in  
the trunk, but I have to get  
my son back.

KOREY (CONT'D)  
What's in the trunk?

3

**EXT. ROAD SHOULDER - NIGHT**

3

Korey POPS the trunk with Mike in tow, his gun still fixated on his target. Bill leans up, trying to see what's going on from the passenger seat. Inside the trunk is a lone, BLACK LOCK BOX.

KOREY  
Is it cash?

MIKE  
A hundred thousand.

KOREY

Jesus Christ, Mike. You better start talking, I have to wrap my head around this.

MIKE

They'll be here any minute.

KOREY

*Talk.*

Mike inhales deeply, facing his misgivings.

MIKE

For a long while I had a problem with spending money where I shouldn't...it made me owe people like Bill's dad. So I offered to work for a while to pay off my debts. It worked at first...

KOREY

So it isn't enough or you drop the ball. They take your kid, we drive out here, do your deal, steal Colin's money. You auction off your son's kidnapper's *flesh and blood*. What's going to happen when either of these guys catches up to you?

Mike takes a step back. He sobers up.

MIKE

You...stole the money.

It clicks. Korey laughs.

KOREY

So what am I. Your sorry excuse for an alibi?

MIKE

You're the guy who just got here, who's aggressive, short fused. You turn everyone you talk to against you. How hard would it be for anyone to believe you broke bad? I intervene and then maybe the people you're dealing with just so happened to lead me to my son.

Korey simmers on this information and changes tactics.

KOREY

I hear you using this inflection that makes it sound like you're trying to intimidate me. But you didn't come here tonight as a killer. You're here as a father... What's your son's name?

MIKE

You don't get to ask me that.

KOREY

Stop trying to act tough! The show's over, Mike. Stalling's just exposing you more than you think.

MIKE

I will stay here until I'm back home watching Saturday morning cartoons with my son with every door in our house locked. How can I be expected to trust you?

KOREY

I could ask you the same. But I'm trying Mike. I'm *really* trying here. Tell me his name.

MIKE

Like you could give a shit.

KOREY

You want to go home tonight with your son and diffuse this whole thing?

MIKE

Of course.

KOREY

Then stop aiming the gun at the one person who's rationalizing this with you and reconsider that you stole a drug lord's money, whom you work for, and kidnapped a killer's son to keep your kid out of harm's way. You dug a hole, man. Trust me, I could give a shit about this kid, but someone very important does. You've got a picture of your son in your watch, I bet he has one of his in his wallet or above his mantle. Think of who's going to hurt your boy if you hurt theirs.

Mike doesn't want to accept Korey's voice of reason. He's on the verge of a breakdown.

MIKE

I tried so hard for him. You think you have all the answers... then you realize you never knew what the question was.

Korey lets Mike succumb to his emotional side for a moment, the gun RATTLING in his hand.

KOREY

What's his name, Mike?

MIKE

...Jayden.

KOREY

What grade is he in?

MIKE

Third. He's got straight As, for whatever that's worth for his age.

KOREY

Do you think you failed him as a parent?

His questions break Mike down word by word.

KOREY (CONT'D)

If you had, you wouldn't be out here trying to get him back. Don't put more people between you and your kid. Let's just go back to the car and we'll sort something out. We'll make a game plan.

Mike trembles.

KOREY (CONT'D)

You're going to see Jayden again.

MIKE

What about Bill?

KOREY

He won't talk. You have my word.

Mike folds and lowers his gun. Nodding in defeat, he begins to walk back to the car in a haze while Korey closes the trunk. Mike stops, fingertips resting on the door handle.

His doubts begin to consume him. His palm clenches his weapon.

MIKE

Korey... I can't risk-

FOOTSTEPS against gravel. The metallic *SHINK* of a blade. Korey is already inches from him.

Korey grasps the back of Mike's neck, restraining him as he *SLIDES* his dagger directly into the abdomen.

KOREY

Easy.

Mike stumbles backward. **BANG**. His gun fires. **BANG**. A bullet penetrates Korey's foot. Working through the pain, Korey leverages Mike's gun from his hand and shoves him to the ground.

Bill writhes from inside the car. Korey adjusts the weapon before...

**BLAM**. The sound echos in the countryside, suppressed by wind.

Korey regains his composure, looking inside the car to see Bill staring back at him - eyes wide with horror.

4 **INT. BMW - NIGHT**

4

Korey reenters the car, ignoring Bill as he *SLAMS* the car door behind him. He reaches over Bill to open the glove compartment. He grabs a rag to wipe down the gun, holding it in his sleeve.

Settled and ready, he triggers the ignition. The *SPUTTERING* engine shuts off. Korey tries again. He tries again. Nothing.

Korey *YELLS* in anguish. Bill sits paralyzed; trapped with a tiger. Attempting to focus his pain, the tiger evaluates Bill, trying to decide what to do with him.

5 **EXT. ROAD SHOULDER - NIGHT**

5

Korey hauls the lock box from the trunk and *CLOSES* it. He hobbles slowly to the driver's side door and lingers there for a moment, his head not in Bill's line of sight.

He tosses his dagger onto the front seat. Bill's eyes dart like bullets. If given enough time maybe he could reach it.

He THROWS the door shut and begins limping down the road, dragging the lock box behind him. It's a GRATING METALLIC sound.

KOREY (V.O.)

Yes, I have a missing person to report... Jayden Bennett. B-E-N-N-E-T-T. He goes to Sidney Center High School. Brown hair, dimples, freckles on his cheeks.

Korey grips Mike's watch as he limps into the nowhere.

KOREY (V.O.) (CONT'D)

At least thirty-six hours... He's in third grade.

The watch JINGLES. Hard boots TRUDGE through fresh snow.

Jayden's petrified smile lingers in his grasp.

END.