

DEFENDING JACOB

Episode One: "Pilot"

by

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Based on the novel by William Landay

ANONYMOUS CONTENT
PARAMOUNT TELEVISION

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Somewhere rain is falling, the sound soothing, but lonely.

INT. A ROOM SOMEWHERE - DAY

TIGHT ON an old, laminated "PAIN ASSESSMENT CHART" on a wall. A line of cartoon faces, each assigned a number from "0" to "10." "0" is a lime green smiley face ("No Pain!"); by "10" the face is crying and beet red ("Worst Possible Pain!").

LOGIUDICE (V.O.)

Ladies and gentlemen, before we begin, it's my duty to remind you that a Grand jury proceeding is not a trial...

INT. MIDDLESEX COUNTY COURTHOUSE - FIRST FLOOR LOBBY - DAY

TIGHT ON A GREY PLASTIC BOWL. A set of car keys are dropped in. Then a cell phone. A man's wallet.

LOGIUDICE (V.O.)

As you can see, there's no judge here in the room with us, no defense attorneys.

KINGSTON, one of two Guards manning a metal detector, picks up the bowl, absently glances up at the MAN before him.

KINGSTON

That everything in your--

Suddenly recognizing the man, Kingston pauses, unsure whether he should smile in greeting or feign detachment. The man simply NODS; faced away from us, we are only privy to the back of his casual dress shirt.

KINGSTON (CONT'D)

Go ahead then.

As the man continues through the metal detector, he notices a WOMAN across the lobby filming him with her phone as if he were a celebrity. Although we still don't see his face, we can assume he's given her an icy glare when she quickly lowers her phone and pretends she wasn't gawking.

LOGIUDICE (V.O.)

This is an investigatory process, at the end of which you will be asked to decide whether I have presented you with sufficient evidence to grant a "true bill" of indictment.

INT. GRAND JURY ROOM - DAY

Now facing us in CLOSE-UP is the man we just saw (same casual dress shirt): ANDY BARBER (late 30s), his rough stubble and bleary gaze speak to a man who's been through hell. He sits dead center at a long and otherwise empty table.

LOGUIDICE (V.O.)

If so, I may then bring the case to Superior Court. If not -- if you return a decision of "no bill" -- then this case ends here, today.

He stares off straight ahead, lost deep within himself --

INT. A ROOM SOMEWHERE - DAY

TIGHT ON the text of the "PAIN ASSESSMENT CHART": "Use this scale to tell us the level of pain you are experiencing" --

O.S. we hear A SUDDEN ANGUISHED GASP --

INT. GRAND JURY ROOM - DAY

Andy blinks, as if now aware of where he is. He peers out at:

TWENTY MEN AND WOMEN seated like schoolchildren at cramped teardrop-shaped desks, all staring right back at Andy (us).

LOGIUDICE (O.S.)

You were asked to state your name.

Andy mutter-breathes an answer that is all but inaudible.

NEAL LOGIUDICE STEPS INTO FRAME. A few years younger than Andy, he strikes us as calculated and smarmy - the kind of guy who was surely hated as a boy and now relishes the sanctioned bullying a prosecutor can get away with.

LOGIUDICE (CONT'D)

A little louder if you don't mind.

ANDY

Andrew Stephen Barber.

LOGIUDICE

Are you intoxicated, Mr. Barber?

(off Andy's silence)

Mr. Barber?

ANDY

No.

LOGIUDICE

Under the influence of any drugs or medication we should be aware of?

For the first time, Andy's focus shifts to Logiudice -- a quiet loathing surfaces behind Andy's eyes, but his tone stays emotionless, albeit colder:

ANDY

I'm fine.

LOGIUDICE

All right. Will you please state your occupation?

ANDY

I was an assistant district attorney in this building for almost ten years.

LOGIUDICE

"Was." So you're no longer employed as a prosecutor for Middlesex County, is that right?

Andy stares hard back at Logiudice, who feigns ignorance.

LOGIUDICE

Mr. Barber--

ANDY

Yes. That's right.

Logiudice merely nods, lets a moment of silence linger.

LOGIUDICE

Mr. Barber...

(reconsiders)

Andy. I take it you understand your Fifth Amendment rights?

ANDY

I would hope so.

LOGIUDICE

And you've waived them, correct?

ANDY

Apparently. I'm here.

LOGIUDICE

Would you agree it's somewhat... unusual, given the circumstances?

ANDY

I don't have any tricks up my sleeve if that's what you're getting at.

LOGUIDICE

No one was implying--

ANDY

Sure you were. I would too.

Loguidice is somewhat thrown by Andy's bluntness.

ANDY (CONT'D)

I'm here because I believe in the system, that's all. I just want the truth to come out.

Loguidice holds Andy's hard, inscrutable stare, gauging him.

LOGUIDICE

I see... Well. Let's get started on the truth then.

Loguidice glances down at his yellow legal pad.

LOGUIDICE (CONT'D)

I'd like to begin by reading you a quote from the Boston Globe that ran a few weeks ago. "They became national news, an object of fascination for both the NPR set and the TMZ crowd - the subject of not one but two popular podcasts, hundreds of editorials and countless articles. So it's easy to forget that less than a year ago their lives were as mundane and uneventful as our own. Is there such a thing as 'the perfect family?' Of course not. But the Barber family was a happy family, and if there was anything truly special about them, it was this."

ON ANDY: forcing every muscle in his face not to react.

LOGUIDICE (CONT'D)

I wonder if you agree?

Andy swallows just perceptibly --

SMASH: THAT GREEN SMILEY FACE ON THE PAIN ASSESSMENT CHART

SMASH: A MOUTHFUL OF CROOKED YELLOW TEETH FORMING A GRIN --

Andy still willing himself to appear emotionless --

LOGUIDICE (CONT'D)

Is that an accurate description of
your family on the morning Ben
Rifkin was murdered? "Happy?"

Andy barely breathes, his gaze unwavering... then, quietly:

ANDY

Yes.

SMASH: THAT MOUTHFUL OF YELLOW TEETH START TO SAY SOMETHING TO US, BUT VOLUME IS MUFFLED AND INAUDIBLE --

SMASH: AN UNFOCUSED BLUE-GREEN TATTOO ON A MAN'S INNER WRIST, LOOKS LIKE A CROSS OR A DAGGER... THE MAN'S HAND SUDDENLY LASHES OUT, RED KNUCKLES LIKE BONY TALONS AS THEY GRAB A YOUNG BOY'S FOREARM --

INT. BARBER HOME - MASTER BEDROOM - DAWN

ANDY STARTLES AWAKE, JERKING HIS ARM FREE from the grasp --

Andy GASPS, swallows. Find his pillowcase damp with sweat. He turns to his wife's side of the bed. Empty.

INT. BARBER HOME - MASTER BATHROOM - DAWN

Andy splashes cold water on his face, then stares at himself in the mirror, waiting for the nightmare's lingering panic to ebb. We can hear RAIN tapping on the roof.

He's a year younger now, more fit, clean shaven - he looks almost like another person. He towels off his face, then pauses when he glimpses out the window:

His wife (LAURIE) walking up the driveway in the rain, head bowed. Dressed in workout rain-gear, she's clearly just returned from an early morning jog, sucking in deep breaths.

Andy admires her -- when O.S. A CLOCK RADIO ALARM goes off.

INT. BARBER HOME - JACOB'S ROOM - DAWN

The clock radio still BEEPING on a night stand blinks "6:17."

Andy presses the off button. The teenager buried under the bed covers doesn't stir.

The dark room goes suddenly quiet, rain tapping on the roof the only sound. Andy sits on the mattress edge and gently rests a hand on his son's bony shoulder.

ANDY

Time to get up, bud.

JACOB emits a muffled groan, but doesn't budge. Andy's gaze wanders the cluttered room, taking in 14 years of accumulated boyhood, the teenager and the little boy he once was:

-- BEATS HEADPHONES atop an IPAD; TEXTBOOKS, ALGEBRA PACKETS.
-- Posters for DJ Shadow. Gorillaz. "Stepbrothers." "The Hangover."
-- An old bumper sticker on the closet door: "BOSTON BRUINS 2011 STANLEY CUP CHAMPS!" It's been half peeled-off.
-- A cracked and faded LIGHT SWITCH PLATE that was probably a baby gift, the name "JACOB" painted in kiddie-blue surrounded by little basketballs and baseballs.
-- An old caricature of a grinning 6 year old Jacob holding a hockey stick (magic marker drawing, big head/ tiny body; the kind of thing you get at a bar mitzvah).

CUT TIGHTER ON THE CARICATURE, the cartoonish little boy face smiling back at us from a corkboard.

JACOB (O.S.)

(muffled)

You can go.

Andy turns to Jacob, who remains under his covers.

ANDY

What's that?

JACOB

I said you can go. I'm up.

INT. BARBER HOME - KITCHEN - EARLY MORNING

Now dressed for work in a suit and tie, Andy enters to find Laurie making coffee. Flushed from her jog, she's taken off her wet windbreaker, down to her sweat-stained Yale t-shirt and gym shorts. Andy kisses her neck.

LAURIE

Uch, don't, I'm all sweaty!

ANDY

Mmmm.

She gives him a faux-disgusted grin, nudges him away.

ANDY (CONT'D)

Where'd you run?

LAURIE

Along Boylston mostly. I got lost in that Malcolm Gladwell book I'm listening to. I think you'd really like it.

ANDY

I'll check it out.

LAURIE

No you won't.

She smiles, pouring coffee, absently checking her phone.

LAURIE (CONT'D)

Did you sleep okay? I felt you tossing and turning...

ANDY

Huh? Oh, yeah, just -- some work stuff on my mind.

LAURIE

Oh, I need to talk to you. Claudia Hoffman emailed me twice yesterday. I need to give her an answer.

(off his blank look)

Lizzy's sister? The travel agent?

ANDY

Right.

LAURIE

That resort in Jamaica she likes is almost entirely booked up.

ANDY

Already? It's only April.

LAURIE

That's how these places are. If we ever took a real vacation you'd know that.

ANDY

What're you talking about? We went to Maui--

LAURIE

--Maui was four years ago, my love.

ANDY

What? No... Really?

LAURIE

(nods)

Jacob was ten.

O.S. footfall on the stairs, approaching. Laurie calls out:

LAURIE (CONT'D)

Speak of the devil! Hi, honey!

Jacob enters, focused on his phone as he deftly navigates to the table without looking up.

LAURIE (CONT'D)

Well thank you, sweetheart, good morning to you too! Why yes I did sleep well, thanks for asking!

Jacob glances up, cracks an amused smile, circles back and kisses his mom on the cheek.

JACOB

Morning, Mom. Hey, Dad.

He resumes playing some kind of "Clash of Clans"-esque game as he tugs open the fridge.

LAURIE

I have an early meeting so I'm jumping in the shower. There's new waffles in the freezer.

JACOB

K.

LAURIE

Are you walking today? I checked, the rain's supposed to stop soon.

Jacob nods, half-listening; she turns to Andy:

LAURIE (CONT'D)

So? What should I tell her?

ANDY

Tell who?

LAURIE

Claudia! Should she hold a room? We'll need to give a credit card.

ANDY

I vote yes. Jamaica sounds great.

JACOB

What about Jamaica?

ANDY

We were thinking of going for
Christmas break, all three of us.

JACOB

Oh. Okay.

LAURIE

You might be a little more excited.

JACOB

I am.

LAURIE

Well tell your face.

Jacob returns an eye-roll and a grin.

JACOB

You love that line.

LAURIE

I really do.

Laurie kisses Andy's cheek and continues out. Andy's smile lingers as he returns his attention to Jacob, re-absorbed in his mobile game as he pops a waffle in the toaster. Andy sips his coffee. Life is good...

Wilco's upbeat rocker "Dawned on Me" kicks in and we --

CUT TO:

A BRIEF SERIES OF SHOTS OF NEWTON, MASSACHUSETTS

Glimpses of an upscale suburb on an average spring morning:

-- NEWTON HIGHLANDS "T" STOP. A handful of sleepy commuters wait with umbrellas for the GREEN LINE train to Boston.

-- NEWTON CENTRE. Some HOUSEKEEPERS disembark at a bus stop. At the intersection behind them, a quaint sign reads:
"NEWTON: A Community of Families, A Family of Communities."

-- MCCORMICK MIDDLE SCHOOL (INTERIOR). In an empty hallway lined with putty-colored lockers, a JANITOR buffs the floors.

-- WHOLE FOODS. The wet parking lot all but empty at this

early hour. A WORKER collects shopping carts as A CLERK inside the supermarket unlocks the heavy automatic doors.

-- YOGA MOMS greet each other with mats under their arms outside a West Newton YOGA STUDIO. The rain has stopped.

-- NEWTON SENIOR CENTER STAFF greet ELDERLY WOMEN AND MEN disembarking from a PARATRANSIT VAN. The sky a pale grey.

-- STARBUCKS getting busy as the MORNING CROWD files in...

EXT. MIDDLESEX COUNTY COURTHOUSE - MORNING

A hulking government building in blue-collar Woburn. As Andy's car pulls in to one of the five spots reserved for "OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY" we realize the soundtrack music we hear is coming from his car radio. He kills the engine and the Wilco with it. He hurriedly checks his tie in the rearview, then quickly climbs out.

INT. COURTHOUSE - SIXTH FLOOR CORRIDOR - MORNING

Bustling with lawyers and defendants, friends, families, jurors, etc. A PLACARD on a wall reads: "MIDDLESEX COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT." The 12 CITIES (Cambridge, Lowell, Newton etc.) and 42 TOWNS in its jurisdiction are inscribed below.

MOLLOY (V.O.)

Yer Ahna, I just wanna explain--

JUDGE RIVERA (V.O.)

You'll have that opportunity in pre-trial, Mr. Molloy...

INT. FIRST SESSION COURTROOM 6B - MORNING

The courtroom near capacity with DEFENDANTS and LAWYERS awaiting appearances. MOLLOY (mid-30s, fuck-up) fidgets beside his exasperated COUNSEL before JUDGE RIVERA (50s).

JUDGE RIVERA

The charge is distribution of a Class-A substance.

MOLLOY

(mutters)

This is such bullshit...

Molloy's weary counsel tries her best to quiet her client... as the door at the back opens and Andy slips in, a thick file folder in hand. A COURT OFFICER stationed by the jury box

recognizes Andy at once, and NODS to him in a way that conveys affectionate respect. Andy returns a grateful smile.

JUDGE RIVERA

Bail is set at \$1,000 cash or
\$10,000 personal recognizance.

MOLLOY

C'mahn are you kidding me?!

MOLLOY'S COUNSEL

Thank you, your Honor.

MOLLOY

The hell are ya thanking her for?!

BANG BANG of Rivera's gavel as the Court Officer crosses to a CLERK and WHISPERS something; the Clerk looks up and now also notices Andy; she smiles and slow-blinks by way of indicating "we've got you covered." Andy nods back a subtle "thanks."

JUDGE RIVERA

Pre-trial conference is scheduled
for May 24.

(to Clerk, exhales)

Next. Please.

The Clerk scans her chart, then aloud:

CLERK

Indictment number 17-2832,
Commonwealth v. Marlon T. Hull.
Charge is one count of kidnapping,
three counts of aggravated rape,
one count of attempted murder.

JUDGE RIVERA

Is Mr. Hull's attorney present?

BURT KNOX (40s) steps forward, trying to mask his unsavory demeanor with overly polite affectation:

KNOX

Good morning, your Honor.

JUDGE RIVERA

Commonwealth?

Andy approaches the bench, and Judge Rivera nods; she and Andy clearly know each other.

JUDGE RIVERA (CONT'D)

Mr. Knox, is this a trial or is
there any chance of a plea here?

KNOX

Your honor, recent developments in this case suggest it may not go to trial. We have reason to believe the alleged victim intends to recant or is otherwise unwilling to go forward.

Judge Rivera looks up, her brow furrowing suspiciously.

JUDGE RIVERA

Is that so.

KNOX

Yes, your Honor.

Judge Rivera flips through the file before her, then:

JUDGE RIVERA

It says here the defendant was known to the victim prior to the alleged crimes?

She looks up at Knox, who smiles, about to downplay this --

ANDY

It's her ex-boyfriend, your Honor.

Knox's smile falters, visibly irked by Andy's interruption.

ANDY (CONT'D)

And she's not recanting.

KNOX

Your Honor, a prosecutor as in demand as Mr. Barber obviously maintains a very busy case load, so perhaps he hasn't had time to read the transcript of the victim's most recent statement to investiga--

ANDY

I know what she said - and why she said it. I spoke with her myself just yesterday. At length.

Knox's jaw tightens, back stiffens: clearly news to him.

ANDY (CONT'D)

She'll testify, your Honor.
(a cool glance at Knox)
This is a trial.

Judge Rivera's poker face betrays just a hint of admiration.

JUDGE RIVERA

Very well.

INT. MIDDLESEX COUNTY COURTHOUSE - LOWER CAFETERIA - DAY

The cafeteria is noisy and busy. Andy totes a plastic tray, picking up a yogurt and coffee, his secretary ROXANNE trailing as she reads off his schedule from her phone:

ROXANNE

You're due back in first session in 15 minutes, then meeting with Lynn, her office - I think she wants an update on the Willis case...

ANDY

That makes two of us.
(calls out)
Bobby, you guys all out of peach?

BOBBY, a 75 year old cafeteria worker, smiles on seeing Andy.

BOBBY

(hobbling off)
Could be, lemme check in back.

ANDY

Thanks. How's the hip?

BOBBY

Ah, you know. Worse than yesterday, better than tomorrow.

ROXANNE

You wanted a conference with Judge French in chambers, his clerk says he has an opening at 2:30 if you--

Andy's cell phone RINGS. Andy tries to balance his coffee on his tray and nearly spills it on himself before Roxanne takes the tray and he pulls his phone from his pocket.

ANDY

Thanks.
(checks caller ID, answers)
Hey... Jesus. All right, where?...

Roxanne studies Andy's face as Andy's expression suddenly tenses; he looks troubled... then finally replies, gravely:

ANDY (CONT'D)

Okay. I'll meet you there.

He hangs up, visibly distracted by racing thoughts --

ROXANNE

What's wrong?... Andy?

ANDY

That was Paul Duffy. A teenage boy was found murdered in Cold Spring Park.

ROXANNE

Isn't that right near your--?

Roxanne suddenly realizes what she's saying, stops herself --

ANDY

I thought the same thing, but it's not Jacob, thank God. Duffy read me the description --

BOBBY (O.S.)

You're a lucky man, Mr. B.

Bobby suddenly appears at his side with a peach yogurt.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

Only got one left.

Andy absently takes it with a barely audible "Thanks, Bobby."

ANDY

Call Lynn's office, tell her I'm--

ROXANNE

I'll clear everything. You just go.

INT. MCCORMICK MIDDLE SCHOOL - SCIENCE CLASSROOM - MORNING

8TH GRADERS noisily huddled around lab tables in groups of four, testing pH levels of various liquids. MR. FULLER strides between tables, checking on them.

We find Jacob at a table toward the back with a boy and two girls, all four of them laughing and talking as they test the pH of milk.

Seeing him here at school, we get a clearer picture of Jacob: as opposed to the obvious jocks, the helplessly nerdy or the overtly weird, Jacob strikes us as fairly down-the middle: smart but quiet about it, low-key good looking but too self-conscious to be considered "cool" - in short, more introvert than extrovert, but social... or social enough.

Mr. Fuller stops by a lab station two tables away:

MR. FULLER

(re: a pipette in a rack)
Be careful taking it out, we don't
want a mess.

The boy beside Jacob immediately spins to him, but Jacob is quicker on the draw:

JACOB

That's what she said.

His lab partners all crack up as Jacob stifles a shy smile, his sense of humor clearly an asset --

THE SUDDEN POP AND HISS of the P.A. SYSTEM interrupts:

PRINCIPAL (OVER P.A.)

*Attention students and faculty:
McCormick is now on lockdown,
effective immediately. All
students are to remain in their
classrooms until further instruct--*

The CLASS ERUPTS in a din of confused and alarmed voices, drowning out the Principal. Mr. Fuller hurries to the door, locking it while stealing a peek through its small pane.

MR. FULLER

(shouts back, anxious)
Guys, I can't hear the announcement--

But the panicked kids are only getting louder, nearly all of them rushing to the windows to peer out as Mr. Fuller activates the electric shades, which begin to lower... A girl (CHLOE) turns to Jacob beside her --

CHLOE

(scared)
What the hell?

Jacob shakes his head, looking equally freaked out. He glances around: half the class are already on their phones, calling parents or trying to search what's going on...

EXT. COLD SPRING PARK - PARKING LOT - DAY

Police vehicles amassed. Sawhorses manned by UNIFORMED OFFICERS keeping NEIGHBORS and leering PARKGOERS at bay. We CRANE UP to reveal its relative enormity: a vast expanse of pine woods veined with narrow dirt trails.

EXT. COLD SPRING PARK - JOGGING PATH - DAY

More police. A shaken-looking woman (PAULA GIANETTO, 50s) is interviewed by an OFFICER as her dog rolls in wet leaves.

Up ahead, PAUL DUFFY (40s, plainclothes detective) escorts a tense Andy along a wooded dirt path.

DUFFY

You do realize the extent of the coming shitstorm. I don't think this town's had a murder in at least two years.

ANDY

(glancing back)
She's the one who found the body?

DUFFY

And the kid's cell phone, which is how they managed to ID him. Name's Benjamin Rifkin, 14 years old, stabbed three times in the chest...

Andy slows to a halt, like he's just had the wind knocked out of him. Duffy puts it together immediately:

DUFFY (CONT'D)

Oh fuck.

ANDY

(nods, grimly)
He's Jacob's year at McCormick.
Jesus Christ, his poor parents...

DUFFY

I take it you know them.

ANDY

Not well, but...
(rubs his temples, finally exhales)
Anyway, go on.

DUFFY

M.E. thinks he was dead less than an hour before he was found. The stabbing probably took place on or near the jogging trail, a lot of cast-off on the ground.

Arriving at the crime scene tape, Duffy lifts the tapes to duck under -- when a fresh-faced ROOKIE COP hurries over --

ANDY

It's ok, Detective Duffy's with the CPAC unit assigned to our office--

PETERSON (O.S.)

Let 'em through! The fuck's wrong with you? Sorry, Duff.

Andy follows Duffy down the slope where they're met by Detective PETERSON. Some 30 feet below, men and women in STATE POLICE CRIME LAB jackets work the scene.

PETERSON (CONT'D)

Karen, you know Andy Barber.

KAREN RANKOWSKI glances up at Andy; they exchange a mutually bleak "this is fucked up" nod, then she resumes her work.

Andy's gaze fixes on BEN RIFKIN'S BODY. The boy is lying in an inverted position on the sloping ground down below, feet above head. His t-shirt is torn and sopping wet with blood.

PETERSON (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Our thinking is the attack took place here, then the body fell or was pushed down the hill to--

Andy's cell phone RINGS; Peterson pauses as Andy reluctantly fishes it out, takes a quick glance and sees it's "JACOB."

ANDY

I'm sorry, I need to take this.
(picks up; low, urgent)
Jacob? Are you okay?

INT. MCCORMICK MIDDLE SCHOOL - SCIENCE CLASSROOM (INTERCUT)

Still noisy, Jacob plugs his free ear, talking on his phone:

JACOB

(uneasy)
Yeah, I'm... the school's on lockdown, but nobody knows why.

EXT. COLD SPRING PARK - JOGGING PATH - DAY

Andy cups his phone, aware of the eerie sensation of talking to his son while staring at the dead body of his classmate.

ANDY

It's um... Jake I'm sorry, but I can't go into it right now. You
(MORE)

ANDY (CONT'D)
need to just listen to your
teachers and do exactly what they
say.

JACOB (PHONE)
But you do know why?

Andy's gaze travels to dead boy's lifeless eyes.

JACOB (PHONE) (CONT'D)
I mean is there some psycho shooter
or--

ANDY
Jake, I just told you, I can't --
(exhales; assuring)
I don't think you're in any kind of
danger, okay? Jacob?

JACOB (PHONE)
Okay.

Andy's gaze lands on the dead boy's limp, blood-flecked hand.

JACOB (PHONE) (CONT'D)
Dad?

ANDY
Yes?... Jake, what is it?

A beat -- then:

JACOB (PHONE)
Nothing.

ANDY
You sure?

JACOB
Yeah.

ANDY
Listen, I need to go, but I'll see
you at home, okay? I love you very
much.

JACOB (PHONE)
All right. Love you too.

Andy hangs up, rejoining Duffy and Peterson.

PETERSON
...lady who found him said he was
face down. She thought maybe he
(MORE)

PETERSON (CONT'D)
was sick, so she rolled him over,
took one look at him and freaked --

He points to the scattered leaves and sloppy divots of dirt.

PETERSON (CONT'D)
Crabbed away on her palms and
knees, then got up and ran.
Basically fucked the whole scene.

Andy manages to pull his gaze from the body.

ANDY
Did anybody in the park see
anything, hear anything?

PETERSON
We're still asking around.

ANDY
What about a weapon?

KAREN
Nothing yet. Park's a good 65
acres though.

Andy steals a grim look at Duffy, then takes a last look at Ben Rifkin's body as the M.E.'s proceed to tarp it.

LAURIE (V.O./PRE-LAP)
"Children are living messages we
send to a time we will not see."

TIGHT ON: A PROFESSIONALLY PRODUCED VIDEO

-- Mostly BLACK CHILDREN between the ages of 6 and 16 are playing basketball as a pair of COLLEGE STUDENTS cheer them.

LAURIE (V.O.)
That quote from John F. Kennedy
speaks directly to our work here at
Children's Village, where our
mission has always been to nurture
those who need it most: abused,
neglected and traumatized youth in
the greater Boston area.

-- Another group of CHILDREN are rehearsing a skit.

LAURIE (V.O.)
Most of these young people have
parents facing or serving jail
time, and so they are justifiably
(MORE)

LAURIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
scared and angry. Some act out or
resort to violence. And who can
blame them?

-- A TALKING HEAD shot of LAURIE AT HER DESK; A chyron below
reads "**LAURIE BARBER, VOLUNTEER SERVICES DIRECTOR.**"

LAURIE
A residential campus provides not
just stability and safety, but
support. That starts with our
staff of trained social workers,
but includes our many wonderful
volunteers who generously donate
their time and varied skills to --

LAURIE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
I'm sorry, can we pause it a sec?

Widen to REVEAL --

INT. CHILDREN'S VILLAGE - ADMIN BUILDING - OFFICE - DAY

Laurie and THREE CO-WORKERS sitting around a table facing a
TELEVISION. KATHLEEN picks up the remote, trying to find the
"stop" button, but only manages to MUTE it.

LAURIE
Look, I know the gala's not for
another month, but maybe this needs
a re-think. Don't you think I
sound stiff?

SPENCER
You sound great, you're just self-
conscious.

LAURIE
I just feel if the plan is to show
this video right before the paddle
raise, then it really needs to--

CARA
Sorry guys, my phone's going crazy.

CARA picks up her phone from the desk as --

KATHLEEN
Wait, sorry... there.

-- Kathleen finally presses "stop" and the video blinks out,
replaced by cable TV.

LAURIE

I want it to-- Kathleen?

Kathleen's hand is clasped over her mouth; confused, Laurie follows her look to THE TELEVISION (still muted) on which "BREAKING NEWS" shows helicopter footage over Cold Spring Park. Chyron: "BODY OF 14 YR OLD BOY FOUND IN NEWTON PARK."

CARA

(reading her phone)

Newton schools are on lockdown --

(glances up, sees news)

Oh my God...

Laurie can barely breathe, blood draining from her face -- she grabs for her phone, finds three Emergency Notifications from "Newton Central School District," two "Missed Calls" from Jacob, and at the top (the latest incoming) a text:

Toby

Just heard about Ben Rifkin. omg in shock. Call me.

Reeling, Laurie's stricken gaze returns to the news' aerial footage of Cold Spring Park as we MATCH CUT TO --

EXT. COLD SPRING PARK (AERIAL) - DUSK

POLICE fanned out across the park.

EXT. SURROUNDING NEIGHBORHOOD - DUSK

POLICE canvassing, the twilight suburban streets strobed blue and red by the sirens of idling cruisers.

We spot a dented old TOYOTA SEDAN approaching --

INT. TOYOTA SEDAN - CONTINUOUS

Its equally shabby interior is strewn with candy and junk food wrappers.

Behind the wheel, a clammy OVERWEIGHT MAN (30s) in the too-tight red polo of a Staples employee stares wide-eyed through his smudged windshield. All these cops. The man swallows hard on his spiking anxiety, thick hands gripping the wheel tighter. We can hear him breathing hard through his nose. His name is LEONARD PATZ, but we don't know this yet.

Breathing harder, he slows to a tentative crawl... then abruptly makes a U-turn and drives away.

INT. BARBER HOME - KITCHEN - EVENING

Laurie looks preoccupied as she unpacks some take-out Indian food. She stops, quickly picks up her phone and opens "Recent calls." We see four calls made to Andy's cell, all "no answer." Her finger hovers over the most recent, debating whether or not to call him again -- when HEADLIGHTS illuminate the window.

She peers out to find Andy parking in the driveway. She watches him a moment, mulling something...

INT. BARBER HOME - FOYER - MOMENTS LATER

Andy enters, finds Laurie waiting in the doorway.

ANDY
(quietly, exhausted)
Hey.

He crosses, kisses her on the cheek.

ANDY (CONT'D)
I got your messages. This day's
been crazy --

LAURIE
I'm sure. That poor family. I
don't even know what to say...

ANDY
Where's Jacob?

LAURIE
They closed school early. Derek's
over, they're playing video games
in his room.

ANDY
Did you get a chance to talk to him
about it?

LAURIE
Only a little. I could tell he
didn't want to with Derek here. I
figured we could talk to him later.

Andy nods, then realizes Laurie is staring at him, as if something's gnawing at her? Andy's about to inquire -

- when she retreats to the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Laurie is fixing plates for them both as Andy enters.

LAURIE

The boys had pizza. I brought in Indian for us.

ANDY

Thanks. Listen, are you okay? I mean aside from, you know.

Laurie hesitates a beat, then nods. Taking her at face value, Andy pours himself a glass of wine.

LAURIE

I take it you'll be in charge of the case.

ANDY

It's a homicide, so, yeah. I was at the scene most of the day. It's a nightmare.

Laurie quietly continues preparing the plates.

ANDY (CONT'D)

You're sure there's nothing else?

Laurie goes still, then --

LAURIE

It's stupid, it's just -- you wonder where Jacob gets it from.

ANDY

What are you talking about?

LAURIE

You couldn't find five minutes to call me?

ANDY

Honey, I just told you -

LAURIE

I know, I do. I hate myself for even saying anything, because I realize how selfish and petty it sounds -- but I mean, a boy in our town was murdered, a boy whose family we both know, and you didn't once feel the need to check in with your wife about it?

He gets it now, and he's genuinely contrite:

ANDY

You're right. I'm sorry, I... I should have.

LAURIE

I'm not asking for an apology, honest. It's ridiculous of me, I know that, it's just -- something like this happens and you're the very first person I think to call. The only person I want to talk to.

ANDY

And you, me.

She exhales, feeling embarrassed.

ANDY (CONT'D)

Laurie, I mean it. Hey -

LAURIE

I know. I promised myself I wouldn't say anything. I'm sure it was an insane day.

ANDY

It was. I still should've called.

LAURIE

It's fine, Andy. Honest. It was just so... I don't know. You.

He gingerly approaches her, wraps his arms around her waist.

ANDY

I'm a repressed gentile. You knew that when you married me.

Laurie softens a little with a sigh. Andy nuzzles her neck.

LAURIE

I need a daughter to even things up around here. It's like living with a couple of tombstones.

ANDY

What you need is a wife.

LAURIE

The thought has occurred to me.

INT. BARBER HOME - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - EVENING

Andy approaches the door to Jacob's room, hears the boys' muffled voices within:

DEREK (O.S.)
Do it, you pussy! What're you waiting for?

JACOB (O.S.)
I'm trying!

DEREK (O.S.)
You said you knew how!

Andy frowns to himself as he KNOCKS on the door, opens it --

INT. BARBER HOME - JACOB'S ROOM - EVENING

-- to Jacob and his friend DEREK YOO playing a "Fortnite" type game on his X-Box, both intently staring at the monitor.

ANDY
Derek, your Dad's here.

DEREK
Oh, okay.

Derek sets his controller down, finds his jacket.

DEREK (CONT'D)
Later, Jake.

Jacob doesn't stop his game-play, just mutters:

JACOB
Yeah.

DEREK
Thanks for having me, Mr. Barber.

ANDY
Any time. Say hi to your folks.

Derek exits. Andy lingers by the door, takes a step inside.

ANDY (CONT'D)
Sounds like it got a little intense in here.

JACOB
Not really. Derek just thinks he's the shit is all.

ANDY
C'mon, language.

Jacob shrugs, still visibly irked by Derek.

ANDY (CONT'D)
Can we talk for a sec?

Jacob glances up at his dad, then pauses the game.

ANDY (CONT'D)
Mom said she didn't have much of a chance to speak to you about what happened to Ben Rifkin.

JACOB
It's okay, I'm fine. I mean it's weird, but, it's not like we were close friends or anything.

ANDY
Still, it must be scary for you. To know someone who was murdered. Someone your own age.

JACOB
I guess. I mean yeah, a little.

ANDY
Was he a nice kid?

JACOB
Ben? He was all right.

ANDY
Just all right?

JACOB
Well - not to be mean, but, he was pretty full of himself, you know? Like he thought he was really cool.

ANDY
Was he?

JACOB
To some people maybe. Girls were into him.

ANDY
He was a good looking kid.

JACOB
I guess. He wore, like, hair wax.

Andy allows a faint smile.

JACOB (CONT'D)

Dad?

ANDY

What, bud?

JACOB

How long do you think they'll keep school closed?

ANDY

I'm not sure. A few days maybe?
It'll probably depend on how quickly we get some answers about what happened to Ben.

Jacob considers this, nods. His eyes flit back to his game.

ANDY (CONT'D)

So I can tell Mom you're okay?

JACOB

I'm fine, yeah.

ANDY

Because we're here if you want to -
I don't know, talk through whatever you're feeling, or... you know...
(an awkward smile)
This isn't really my forte.

JACOB

(amused)

I know. I'm good though. Really.

Andy smiles at him, affectionately squeezes Jacob's shoulder.

ANDY

All right, don't stay up too late.

Andy tugs the door closed behind him as Jacob un-pauses his game -- with the sound of the DOOR SHUTTING we HARD CUT TO --

INT. GRAND JURY ROOM - DAY

Andy (one year older) stares back at Loguidice, standing before the amassed jurors. Andy's attitude remains just a notch shy of hostile:

ANDY

What about the knife?

LOGUIDICE

You explained that Ben Rifkin had been stabbed three times in the chest. Could you describe the angle of entry?

ANDY

The weapon was driven straight in and jerked straight out again.

LOGUIDICE

So the motion was a thrusting motion? Like a bayonet?

ANDY

I suppose, yes.

LOGUIDICE

Which would suggest an attacker about Ben Rifkin's size, five foot ten or so, isn't that right?

ANDY

Not necessarily. The sloping ground in the park made that kind of projection unreliable.

Loguidice steals a glance at the jurors, then:

LOGUIDICE

You mentioned that the police searched the park immediately after the discovery, and again 24 hours later. Was a knife ever recovered?

ANDY

No.

LOGUIDICE

Exactly what sort of knife were they looking for?

ANDY

Judging by shredding at the left edge of each wound, one with a jagged or serrated edge, a blade anywhere from nine to twelve inches.

LOGUIDICE

But they never found it.

ANDY

Like I said. No.

LOGUIDICE

Did the first 48 hours produce anything useful? DNA, footprints, fingerprints --

ANDY

The state's criminologist--

LOGUIDICE

That would be Karen Rakowski?

ANDY

Right. Karen discovered a partial print on the label inside the victim's sweatshirt, pressed in the victim's blood. Aside from that, her team found no physical evidence in the vicinity of the body that could be linked to anyone other than the victim or Paula Giannetto, the woman who discovered the body.

LOGUIDICE

So a single fingerprint was the entirety of the physical evidence?

ANDY

Yes.

LOGUIDICE

Hmm. Any eyewitness accounts?

ANDY

A man interviewed on day two of the investigation recalled hearing a boy's voice from somewhere in the park cry out "Stop!" He assumed it was kids roughhousing. He also couldn't be sure the cry came from the area where the attack occurred.

LOGUIDICE

Murder.

(off Andy's look; loaded)

You said "attack." It was a murder, Mr. Barber.

Andy's face hardens, resisting the urge to say any more than:

ANDY

I'm well aware of that.

A beat of silent, icy tension. Then, more "casually":

LOGUIDICE

So just to review, by day three of the investigation, were you and your colleague Detective Duffy any closer to naming a suspect?

ANDY

We were not.

INT. LYNN CANAVAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Andy enters the big corner office of District Attorney LYNN CANAVAN. A political pro, Lynn maintains a practiced reserve in all things; she wears little makeup or jewelry, keeps her hair short, and rarely smiles.

LYNN

Have a seat.

Andy does. Lynn sits down as well, rubs her temples.

ANDY

I thought the press conference went well enough.

She gives him a skeptical look.

LYNN

They want answers, Andy. So do the boy's parents.

ANDY

And so do I. Look, you know as well as I do some cases take--

A KNOCK on the door, and Loguidice enters (a year younger than in the Grand Jury scenes, hair kept a little longer).

LYNN

I asked Neal to join us.

LOGUIDICE

(sitting; a curt nod)
Andy.

Andy leans back with a sigh of barely concealed disgust.

LYNN

This isn't an ambush, Andy. I'm just not sure if you handling this case is still the best idea; you're friendly with the parents, your son goes to the same school --

ANDY

We barely know the parents.

(then)

Let me guess. Rasputin here has offered to take over.

Loguidice scoffs defensively.

LYNN

Neal has legitimate concerns about an appearance of conflict. Frankly so do I. Appearances matter, Andy.

ANDY

To voters, you mean.

LYNN

(snaps)

Oh please give me a little credit.

ANDY

You're right, that was shitty of me.

LYNN

This isn't a critique of your abilities. You're the best prosecutor in this entire office, present company included.

Loguidice makes a slight face but swallows it.

LYNN (CONT'D)

Your competence is not the issue.

LOGUIDICE

It's a question of objectivity.

ANDY

Shut up, Neal. Are you pulling me off the case, Lynn? Yes or no.

LYNN

Right now I'm merely asking what you think.

ANDY

I think I should stay on. If I was worried about my reputation, maybe I'd feel differently. But unlike Mr. Lojudas here, I'm not gunning for your job.

LOGUIDICE
Fuck off, okay Andy?

ANDY
Hey, I don't blame you. It's a high profile case. A big splashy win could be a game changer.

LOGUIDICE
You're a real piece of work, you know that?

LYNN
Gentlemen--

LOGUIDICE
You've been dragging your feet on this one and we both know it.

ANDY
The case is going slow because that's how it's going. I'm not going to indict someone just to make it look good. I thought I taught you better than that.

LOGUIDICE
You taught me to push every case as hard as I could.

ANDY
I am pushing as hard as I can.

LOGUIDICE
Then why haven't you interviewed any of the kids yet?

Andy returns a glare.

LOGUIDICE (CONT'D)
It's been three days already.

ANDY
You know damn well why. This isn't Boston, Neal, it's Newton. Every detail has to be negotiated: which kids we can talk to, where we talk to them, what we can ask, who has to be present. This isn't Dorchester High. Half the parents in this school are lawyers.

Andy abruptly rises. Turns to Lynn:

ANDY (CONT'D)

Look, the school reopens tomorrow,
and we have student interviews
scheduled for the afternoon. You
want to send Neal? Be my guest.

Lynn considers him a long beat, then finally shakes her head.

LYNN

I have concerns, I voiced them. If
you say there's no conflict...

ANDY

There isn't.

LOGUIDICE

I don't see how you can make that
call.

ANDY

Because that's the way it works,
Neal. I make the calls. And if
I'm wrong, it'll be me standing in
front of the jury to take the hit.

(to Lynn, sincere)

I appreciate your trusting me, I
mean it.

LYNN

Of course, Andy.

ANDY

I'll keep you updated.

LYNN

Please.

Andy exits as Loguidice shoots Lynn a skeptical frown, which
she meets with a cool look of forced neutrality.

EXT. NEWTON - AN UPSCALE NEIGHBORHOOD - EVENING

Parked cars line both sides of a residential street...

INT. ANDY'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Andy finally finds a spot and parks as on the radio we hear:

LYNN (V.O.)

*"...and to assure everyone in our
community that we are indeed making*

(MORE)

LYNN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
*progress, and will not relent until
 a suspect has been apprehended."*

NPR REPORTER (V.O.)
*That was Middlesex County District
 Attorney Lynn Canavan, speaking to
 reporters earlier today. As of yet
 no arrest has been made in the
 murder of 14 year old Benjamin Rif--*

Andy turns the radio off, then kills the engine. He doesn't get out, however; he seems to be bracing himself, staring out his windshield uneasily at a HOUSE halfway down the street.

INT. RIFKIN HOME - FOYER/ LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Andy enters to many conversations happening at once, and at least FIFTY PEOPLE crowded into the foyer and adjacent living room, some sitting on cardboard boxes. Framed photos of Ben Rifkin have been lovingly arranged on a parsons table.

A few of the men and women around Andy's age recognize him; some say hi, others nod. Andy asks someone if they've seen Laurie, they point him toward the kitchen. Andy nods thanks, proceeds to weave his way through the dense crowd of *shiva* attendees; hears faintly over the din:

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
 Wait, I think that's the lawyer --

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
 Andy Barber's here --

Andy wills himself not to look up, wending his way into

A HALLWAY

Equally crowded, Andy maneuvering as best he can, saying more hello's -- when an OLDER MAN in a yarmulke seizes his elbow.

OLDER MAN
*Minyan is about to start in the
 den, if you'd like to join us.*

ANDY
 Oh, um...

OLDER MAN
 (realizes, a gentle smile)
 You're not a Jew, are you. Forgive
 me.

IAN (O.S.)

Andy!

IAN, an abrasive finance guy around Andy's age, approaches --

ANDY

Ian, hi.

IAN

Man. How fucked up is this?

ANDY

(forced)

Very.

IAN

Listen, do you have a sec?

ANDY

Actually I'm trying to find Laurie.

IAN

I just wanted to ask how it's going with the case. What do we know so far?

ANDY

We?

IAN

(oblivious)

Like is it just a random thing or is there some link to another--

ANDY

I'm really not at liberty to say.

IAN

Sure, no, I get it, I was only--

ANDY

Excuse me, Ian, I need to find my wife.

Andy presses onward, exchanging a few more tense, perfunctory greetings to those he recognizes as he finally enters --

INT. RIFKIN HOME - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Vast, with high-end appliances and a huge granite island. Lots of parents are huddled in groups of threes and fours.

Andy spots TOBY LANZMAN (early 40s, uber-fit and sinewy) at the island, arranging hors d'oeuvres on a platter, dish towel slung over her shoulder. She smiles sadly as she and Andy exchange a peck on the cheek, then nods across the kitchen:

TOBY

She's over there, mothering the mothers.

ANDY

What a surprise.

TOBY

We can all use a little Laurie right now.

Toby picks up the tray and carries it off as Andy crosses to

LAURIE standing with a small group of MOMS, her hair up in a loose bun affixed by a big clip; she's clearly the group's focal point, listening with palpable compassion, like she's conducting group therapy.

WENDY

...how best to talk to Jeremy about it. He and Ben were such buddies.

Laurie rubs Wendy's arm consolingly as she now sees Andy, approaching her from across the kitchen. She flashes him a discreet, helpless half-smile.

KAREN

Dylan told me the kids set up some kind of online community thing as a way of supporting each other.

WENDY

Aren't they amazing that way? Hi, Andy.

Andy arrives at Laurie's side; Laurie puts her arm around his waist, squeezing him affectionately without breaking eye contact with the moms.

KAREN

Did you come straight from work?

ANDY

I did, yeah.

WENDY

Any new--

ANDY

Sorry, I just need to ask Laurie something.

LAURIE

Oh, okay. Excuse us just a sec.

She and Andy step aside. Quietly:

ANDY

Do you have your car here?

LAURIE

No, I came with Toby. I figured you'd drive Jacob and me home.

ANDY

Jacob's here too?

LAURIE

Somewhere.

ANDY

Listen, I need to go.

LAURIE

What? You just got here --

ANDY

I shouldn't have come to begin with. You know I don't do well at these things even under normal conditions, let alone when I'm--

Andy pauses to muster a forced smile to a passing couple.

ANDY (CONT'D)

This was a mistake. Trust me.

Laurie considers him a moment, then acquiesces.

LAURIE

Okay. But I think I need to stay a little longer. Toby can drive me back. You can take Jake with you.

ANDY

(grateful, kisses her)
I'll see you at home.

Laurie returns to the moms, all grateful to have her back. Andy watches her a beat, moved by how natural Laurie is with her friends, how effortlessly she exudes warmth.

INT. RIFKIN HOME - FAMILY ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The de-facto "kids" room -- about twenty kids in all, more boys than girls, most of them age 14 or 15. A quartet of pretty, POPULAR GIRLS are clearly the focal point. They're all tearful, but one in particular (Chloe; we met her very briefly in Jacob's algebra class) appears to be giving something of a performance:

CHLOE

(choking on her sobs)

And I told my mom... I said, I
don't care, let them suspend me...
I can not go back to school yet...
I just can't...

JEREMY, blond and handsome, somberly approaches and drapes his arm around her shoulder. Chloe buries her face in his Vineyard Vines shirt and cries harder as AMANDA pats her back, trying to conceal a pang of envy.

A few feet away, Jacob and the other less "cool" kids stand awkwardly on the periphery not really knowing what to do with themselves; a few offer up some half-hearted mumbles of "it's okay" and "I know how you feel," others check their phones...

Except for one girl (SARAH GROEHL) who can barely conceal her distaste for this showy display. Pretty, with unruly hair and an unconventional style, she's an intriguing presence -

- at least to Jacob, who we find is watching her, a bit mesmerized... until she glances up and they accidentally make eye contact. Flustered, Jacob quickly drops his gaze, pretending to check his phone --

ANDY (O.S.)

(quietly)

Hey.

Jacob turns to find Andy arriving behind him:

ANDY (CONT'D)

You ready to go?

JACOB

Yeah. I guess.

ANDY

Did you bring a coat?

JACOB

Mom put it upstairs with hers.

ANDY

All right, I'll find it. Meet me
at the front door.

INT. RIFKIN HOME - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY

Happy FAMILY PHOTOS on the walls (ski trips, beach vacations, etc). Andy pokes his head into a BATHROOM; keeps going, peeks into a MASTER BEDROOM. Finds a bed piled with coats.

Andy enters, hunts through the pile until he finds Jacob's. He returns to the hallway, anxious to get going, when--

DAN (O.S.)

Andy?

Startled, he spins to find an open door across the hall. He hesitates, then musters a look of calm as he approaches --

INT. BEN'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

DAN RIFKIN (40s) is sitting on the edge of a bunk-bed's lower mattress, a glass of whiskey in his hand.

DAN

I thought it was you. Forgive me,
I've been hiding out up here.

ANDY

Of course.
(beat; awkward)
I didn't mean to intrude--

DAN

No please, come in, sit...

Dan gestures to a chair by what was Ben's desk.

DAN (CONT'D)

Please.

Andy's heart sinks as he reluctantly sits down. He peers around; the room is not unlike Jacob's, only more Red Sox-oriented, better furnished, and eerily neat.

DAN (CONT'D)

Any news? Since yesterday I mean?

ANDY

We should know more soon. Everyone
is working round the clock.

Dan nods vacantly. Then looks down at the Red Sox pillow on the bed; his eyes glisten, but his voice is controlled:

DAN

I always loved his room. Joan still can't bring herself to come in here, but I can't help it. I'm in here all the time.

Dan drains more of his whiskey, eyes roaming, voice foggy:

DAN (CONT'D)

Where'd you grow up, Andy?

ANDY

Me? East Hartford.

DAN

Connecticut? That's kind of a rough area, isn't it?

ANDY

It can be.

DAN

Joan and I grew up in a suburb of Baltimore. High school sweethearts. Our town was a lot like this, to be honest. I guess that's why we liked it here. It felt familiar. Safe. Boring, but safe.

The word causes Dan's jaw to quiver. He drains his drink.

ANDY

Listen, Dan--

DAN

We went to dinner once with you and Laurie, you remember?

ANDY

I, um...

DAN

It was a good ten years ago at least, the kids were babies. I think you'd just moved to Newton. It was us and the Lanzman's --

ANDY

Oh, sure --

DAN

We got along all right, even though you were quite a bit younger than Kenny and I. But I remember thinking there was something just a little off about you.

Thrown, Andy tenses, but Dan is too far gone to notice.

DAN (CONT'D)

Not in a bad way, no, just... like you were playing a part, you know? Going through the motions of what a "suburban dad" was supposed to talk about. I thought, this guy's not really one of us. And how weird it was that you'd even want to be.

TIGHT ON ANDY. Speechless but unmistakably shaken, as if Dan accidentally stumbled on a secret he thought no one could possibly know. Only now does Dan notice Andy's expression --

DAN (CONT'D)

Shit -- I'm sorry, Andy, I'm fucking untethered here...

ANDY

It's okay. You have a right to be.

DAN

(suddenly choking up)
The thing I can't get past is...
why did this guy do it?

Dan wipes his eyes with his arm as he grips his empty glass.

ANDY

Dan, it's not a good idea to--

DAN

No just, hear me out. When you call to update us, it's always the details: the evidence, the court procedures. But all I really care about is why. Ben was so good. So good. Who could feel that kind of, of rage against him? Tell me. What separates these people?

ANDY

I wish I knew.

DAN

But you must have some idea -- you talk to them, don't you? The killers? What do they say?

ANDY

Most of them don't talk much.

DAN

But do you ever ask? Not why they did it, but what makes them capable of it in the first place?

ANDY

They wouldn't answer. Their lawyers wouldn't let them.

Dan massages his forehead with the most profound agony.

DAN

Do other parents ask these sort of things?

ANDY

They ask a lot of things.

DAN

When you see them after the case is over, the parents, how do they seem to you? Are they all right?

ANDY

Some are, yes.

DAN

And what about the ones who aren't? The ones who never recover?

ANDY

You're not going to be one of them. We won't let that happen. Ben wouldn't want it to happen.

Silence. Andy visibly torn between wanting to be of comfort and aching to get out of here --

DAN

Your son, Jacob. I've seen him around. He seems like a nice boy. Handsome. You and Laurie must be very proud.

ANDY

We are.

DAN

I bet there's nothing you wouldn't do for him. Nothing in this world, am I right?

ANDY

That's true.

Dan musters a smile as he fights back the tears.

DAN

I think... I think it would just help me if I knew, if, if the case was resolved. In other cases you've seen, that helps the parents, doesn't it? Closure?

Dan's desperation is almost too much for Andy to bear...

ANDY

I like to think so.

DAN

I don't mean to pressure you. I just think when you finally find this guy, and you lock him up and put him away... Once you do that, I think it'll help. Don't you?

Hold on Andy forcing himself to nod as we CUT TO --

INT. ANDY'S CAR - DRIVING - EVENING

Andy driving home, still shaken by his exchange with Dan. Jacob's in the passenger seat, face lit by his cell phone.

ANDY

C'mon, we agreed no phone when I'm driving. It makes me feel like your chauffeur.

Jacob reluctantly turns his phone off and pockets it.

JACOB

Sorry.

ANDY

So, are you ready to go back to school tomorrow?

JACOB

More or less.

ANDY

Got all your homework done?

JACOB

Like two days ago. Mom made me finish Catcher In the Rye today even though it's not even due til next week.

ANDY

Did you like it?

JACOB

It was pretty good, I guess. Do you know the deal with his name?

ANDY

J.D. Salinger?

JACOB

No, Holden Caulfield, the kid in the book. Ms. Sprung says it's symbolic. Like the name Holden is supposed to be like "hold in." And a "caul" is another word for a womb. And field is because of the field of rye, you know, from the poem.

ANDY

Huh. I never thought about that.

JACOB

Yeah. I don't know, I think it's kind of annoying actually. All the books she makes us read always have these metaphors and similes and symbols you're supposed to figure out. But it's like, who cares? Just tell the friggin story, why do you need to have these layers to decode? Just say what you mean.

ANDY

(chuckles)

You make a good point.

JACOB

Right? I don't know, it just bugs me.

(beat)

The book's right about one thing though. How phony most people are.

ANDY

I remember that about it.

JACOB

It's like, even tonight...

Jacob's words trail off; Andy steals a glance at him.

ANDY

You felt people were being phony?

JACOB

Some, yeah. The kids especially. I'm not saying they're not upset, but it's like, they're acting the way they think you're supposed to act. Like how they've seen it in movies or whatever. Do you know what I mean?

ANDY

I do, actually.

Jacob looks a little surprised, and relieved he's understood.

JACOB

And nobody's gonna call them on it because then you look like a jerk.

Andy nods. He gets it. They drive in silence a moment.

ANDY

I was talking to Ben's dad before. Upstairs.

JACOB

How is he?

ANDY

(shakes his head)
Not good.

Andy looks unsettled recalling the conversation. He glances over at Jacob, his love for his son like a life-rope.

ANDY (CONT'D)

Hey, did you eat back there?

JACOB

A little.

ANDY

What would you say to a pit stop at Lee's?

INT. LEE'S BURGERS - NIGHT

A local spot, suburban but authentically retro (lots of linoleum and quilted tin). Very few customers at this hour.

Andy and Jacob sit at a cozy booth in the back, devouring a pair of greasy bacon cheeseburgers and a large fries.

JACOB

(grinning)

...and so the doctor gives him one of those - what do you call those plastic cups with a lid on it?

ANDY

I don't know, a cannister?

JACOB

Right. The doctor gives him a cannister and says come back tomorrow with a semen sample.

ANDY

(semi-disapproving grin)

Jacob.

JACOB

So the old man goes home and next day comes back with an empty cannister. The doctor asks what happened? The old man says "Doc, first I tried with my right hand, but it didn't work. Then I tried with my left hand, and it still didn't work. Then my wife tried with her right hand -"

ANDY

Dude, seriously?

JACOB

(grinning wider)

"- it didn't work. Then she tried with her left hand, it didn't work. Then she called the neighbor over, and she tried with her right hand, it still didn't work. Then she tried with her left hand, but no matter what, we just couldn't get this damn cap off!"

Andy bursts out laughing. Jacob cracks up too...

ANDY

Honey, we're going to catch the
guy, I promise.

LAURIE

How do you know that?

ANDY

Because we always catch them.

LAURIE

Not always. Remember the guy who
killed his wife and wrapped her in
a blanket in the back of the Saab?

ANDY

We did catch that guy, we just
couldn't -- all right, almost
always.

Laurie gives him a look, then reaches over him and shuts off
the light. They lay there in silence a moment. Then:

LAURIE

Can I admit something horrible?

Andy turns to face her, their heads on respective pillows.

LAURIE (CONT'D)

The whole time tonight, I kept
thinking: "Thank God. Thank God it
was their kid and not mine."

ANDY

Believe me, everyone thought that.

A hitch in Laurie's throat as she chokes up.

LAURIE

I just don't think I could survive
the loss. I really don't.

Andy reaches out and encircles her in his arms. She sighs.

LAURIE (CONT'D)

(softer)

Do you remember when Jacob was
little, your bedtime routine?
You'd always ask "How much does
Daddy love Jacob?" and he'd say--

LAURIE (CONT'D)

"Tooooo much!"

ANDY

"Tooooo much."

She chuckles sadly, scootching her body into Andy's.

LAURIE

In four years he'll be going off to college. Isn't that crazy?

ANDY

I can't think about it.

Laurie closes her eyes, her voice drowsier:

LAURIE

Do you ever wish you'd known your father?

ANDY

Not really. When I was younger, sometimes. From what little my mom told me, I didn't miss much.

(beat, gently)

Honey, we need to get some sleep.

LAURIE

I know. I like talking to you.

Andy kisses the top of her head. She takes his hand, lacing her fingers in his so that their hands make one fist.

ANDY

I love you.

LAURIE

I love you too.

HOLD ON ANDY as he too shuts his eyes...

...as the muffled echo of a 70s-era TV LAUGH TRACK FADES UP, under it the muted blather of some dated sitcom -- cut off by the STARTLING **SLAM** of a DOOR as we --

SMASH: THE PEARL-HANDLED KNIFE TUCKED INTO THE MAN'S BACK --

SMASH: THE MOUTHFUL OF CROOKED YELLOW TEETH FORMING A GRIN --

INT. BARBER HOME - MASTER BEDROOM - PRE-DAWN

Andy jolts awake. Laurie stirs, then drifts off again. Andy lies back and stares at the ceiling, swallowing hard.

A BRIEF SERIES OF SHOTS:

-- **NEWTON HIGHLANDS "T" STOP.** Early commuters boarding the GREEN LINE.

-- **WHOLE FOODS.** The same WORKER collecting shopping carts.

-- **COLD SPRING PARK.** A MAKESHIFT MEMORIAL has materialized at the site where Ben Rifkin was murdered. Photos, stuffed animals, candles, flowers, notes, etc.

-- **MCCORMICK MIDDLE SCHOOL.** A traffic jam of minivans and SUVs competing with TV NEWS VANS. POLICE man the entrance as STUDENTS file in. We find Jacob's friend Derek Yoo among them, staring uneasily across the sea of faces... at Jacob.

Jacob glances up, and Derek looks away, avoiding eye contact.

INT. FITNESS CLUB - SWIMMING POOL - EARLY MORNING

TIGHT ON ANDY swimming laps at a furious pace, not so much working out as expelling his anxiety and aggression.

INT. FITNESS CLUB - MEN'S LOCKER ROOM - EARLY MORNING

Andy in his towel, drying off. Across the room, TWO MEN around Andy's age are dressing as they talk in low, warm voices peppered with genuine laughter.

Andy subtly observes them: their jocular tones, their easy body language... As they head for the door, one of them recognizes Andy.

MAN 1
(polite nod)
Hey, how's it going?

ANDY
Good, thanks.

They continue out the door. Andy lingers a moment... then finishes getting dressed.

EXT. MIDDLESEX COUNTY COURTHOUSE - STAFF PARKING - DAY

Andy and Duffy are walking to Duffy's unmarked Caprice.

ANDY
The deal is we're only allowed to interview students on school grounds, and only on certain conditions. I say we talk to our high-priority witnesses first: Ben's close friends, any kids known to walk to school through Cold Spring Park, and those who
(MORE)

ANDY (CONT'D)
specifically asked to speak with
investigators.

DUFFY
Sounds good. How'd it go with
Jacob this morning?

ANDY
Oh, he was okay. Nothing bothers
Jake. Laurie, on the other hand...

DUFFY
A little shook up?

ANDY
You remember in "Jaws" when Roy
Scheider has to send his kids into
the ocean to show everyone it's
safe to swim again?

Duffy chuckles as he and Andy climbs into the car.

INT. MCCORMICK MIDDLE SCHOOL - PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

Andy and Duffy sit in two chairs that would normally face the
presently-vacant Principal's desk, but are for the purposes
of the interviews turned to face a small sofa on which the
selected 8th grade students are each questioned individually.

The following is shot as a series of ping-pong cuts; every
time we cut to the sofa a different student is sitting there:

DUFFY
I'm Lieutenant Duffy. I'm with the
state police. This is Mr. Barber,
he's the assistant district
attorney in charge of this case.

BOY 1
You're Jacob's dad, aren't you.

ANDY
That's right. So, how did you know
Ben Rifkin? Was he a friend?

BOY 2
Yeah. I guess.

ANDY
Tell us about Ben.

BOY 3
He was okay.

DUFFY
Can you be a little more specific?

GIRL 1
He was nice.

DUFFY
(deadpan)
Anything else?

GIRL 2
Wait, are you Jacob Barber's dad?

ANDY
Do you know anyone who would've had
a reason to hurt Ben?

BOY 4 (JEREMY)
I don't know. No, not really.

ANDY
What about people Ben didn't like?

BOY 5
I dunno.

Andy and Duffy exchange a frustrated look.

GIRL 3
I don't think so. Maybe.

DUFFY
Maybe?

GIRL 3
I don't know. I mean nobody likes
everybody.

ANDY
Did Ben have any enemies?

BOY 6
I don't know. No, I guess.

DUFFY
Did Ben ever say anything to you
that made you think he might be in
trouble?

BOY 7
In trouble?

ANDY

Did Ben ever say anything to make you think he might be in trouble?

GIRL 4

No.

ANDY

Did Ben seem any different to you the week that this happened? Was he acting unusual in any way?

GIRL 5 (AMANDA)

I don't know. Not really.

DUFFY

Never said anything about anyone following him? Anyone bothering him?

BOY 8

Nuh-uh.

Andy and Duffy exchange an even more frustrated look as these futile sessions grind on...

ANDY

Is there anything else you can think of that might help us? Anything at all?

BOY 9

Nope.

ANDY

Nothing? Think hard now.

GIRL 6

Like what?

DUFFY

Is there anything you haven't told us about Ben? Anything about him you think we ought to know?

BOY 10

Not really, no.

ANDY

So nothing else you think we should know?

BOY 11

About Ben?

DUFFY
(exasperated)
About anything.

BOY 12
Um.... No.

ANDY
Thanks for talking to us. This is
my business card. My phone number
is on it, as well as my email.

BOY 13
(takes the card)
Okay.

Andy hands a business card to GIRL 7. She looks at it.

ANDY
If anything else occurs to you,
even if you think it's nothing --

BOY 14 picks up Andy's business card from the coffee table.

BOY 14
Like if I heard something?

ANDY
Exactly. Wait, did you hear
something?

BOY 14
No. Just, you know.

DUFFY
(harder)
No. We don't.

Boy 14 picks up Andy's business card from the coffee table.

BOY 14
Can I go now?

Andy about to set another business card down before another
student -- when Duffy's cell phone vibrates. Duffy checks
it, frowns to himself, then rises.

DUFFY
(dryly, to Andy)
Let me know what I miss.

Andy returns an eye roll as Duffy steps out, leaving Andy
alone with Girl 8: Sarah Groehl (the slightly edgy-looking
girl from shiva).

ANDY

So nothing else you want to tell us
about Ben?

Sarah shakes her head apologetically. Andy sighs quietly,
extends one of his business cards.

ANDY (CONT'D)

This is my card, my email and phone
number are on the back. If you--

SARAH

The cop who came to our class said
there was a tip line. In case we
wanted to say something anonymously
or whatever.

ANDY

That's true.
(beat)
Is there something you --

SARAH

(shakes her head, quickly)
I was just wondering.

She pockets Andy's card, starts to rise. Then, hesitantly:

SARAH (CONT'D)

I know your son Jacob.

Andy just nods -- he's heard this enough today -- but when he
notices the way Sarah seems to be lingering:

ANDY

Are you two friends?

SARAH

I guess so. Well, not exactly.
But we know each other.

She considers saying something more, stops herself, then:

SARAH (CONT'D)

Have you talked to Jacob about
this?

ANDY

About Ben, you mean? Only as a
parent. Why?

Sarah just shrugs "no reason" and hefts up her messenger bag
to leave, but Andy senses there's more.

ANDY (CONT'D)

Sarah? You must have a reason for asking --

SARAH

(shakes her head)

I was just asking. Really.

She heads for the door, Andy watching after her.

ANDY

Remember, if you think of anything else...

She returns a quick thumbs up as she steps out.

Alone in the principal's office, Andy leans back in his uncomfortable chair, utterly spent and frustrated.

EXT. MCCORMICK MIDDLE SCHOOL - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Sarah is walking down the empty hallway.

INSERT (HANDHELD) POV: someone watching her from around the corner. The anonymous POV begins to follow her...

INT. MCCORMICK MIDDLE SCHOOL - STAIRWELL - MOMENTS LATER

Same anonymous POV trailing about eight steps behind Sarah as she starts down an empty stairwell. Glancing up as she makes the turn at the landing, Sarah sees us and looks startled.

SARAH

What the hell? Are you following me?

REVERSE ON: DEREK YOO

Standing on the stairs above her. His flat expression is hard to interpret, beyond a perceptible tension:

DEREK

What'd you tell them?

Sarah regards Derek coolly, a little creeped out by him.

SARAH

None of your business.

DEREK

Sarah, just--

SARAH
I'm late for class.

She hurries down the next flight of stairs.

HOLD ON DEREK, watching after her.

INT. DUFFY'S CAR - DRIVING - DAY

Duffy drives, pulling out of the school parking lot, Andy beside him in the passenger seat.

ANDY
Jesus, these kids are like
Sicilians. Each one was more tight-
lipped than the next.
(sighs irritably)
We're no better off than yesterday.

DUFFY
Not necessarily.

Andy's surprised as Duffy hands him his cell phone, its screen open to a page.

ANDY
What's this?

DUFFY
Just came in.

Andy sees it's a pdf of a Board of Probation record. Reads:

ANDY
"Leonard Patz. Indecent A&B on a
minor; lewd and lascivious; lewd
and lascivious; trespass; indecent
A&B, dismissed; indecent A&B on a
minor, pending."

DUFFY
He's 36 years old. Lives near the
park in that condo place, the
Windsor or whatever they call it.

ANDY
Why didn't we know about him?

DUFFY
He wasn't in the sex offender
registry. He moved to Newton in
the last year and never registered.

ANDY

So how'd you find him?

DUFFY

One of the ADAs in the Child Abuse Unit flagged him. That's the pending indecent A&B in Newton District Court, top of the page.

ANDY

What's the bail?

DUFFY

Personal.

ANDY

What did he do?

DUFFY

Grabbed some kid's package in the public library. The kid was fourteen, same as Ben Rifkin.

(nods)

It's not a lot, but it's a start.

ANDY

Wait, he grabs a kid's balls and gets out on personal?

DUFFY

Apparently there's some question whether the kid wants to testify.

ANDY

Still, I go to that library.

DUFFY

Better wear a cup.

Andy swipes the screen to the next page: a mug shot of a LARGE MAN with a pudgy face and close-cropped hair.

ANDY

I think it's worth giving him a shake, at least.

DUFFY

I agree, thing is there's no violence anywhere in Patz's record. No weapons, nothing.

ANDY

What about the A&Bs?

DUFFY

Grabbing a kid by the grapes isn't the same as murder, you know that. Plus the sex angle -- the Rifkin kid had no signs of sexual assault.

ANDY

Maybe Patz never got that far. He could've been interrupted. Maybe he propositions the kid or tries to force him into the forest at knifepoint and the kid resists. Or maybe the kid laughs at him, and he flies into a rage.

DUFFY

That's a lot of maybes.

ANDY

Well, let's see what he has to say when we bring him in.

DUFFY

On what? We need something to tie him to the case.

ANDY

Tell him you want him to come look through the mug books and see if he can identify anyone he may have seen around the park.

DUFFY

Andy. There's no way he's coming in voluntarily. Come on.

ANDY

Then tell him you'll violate him for not registering his new address, you've already got him jammed up on that.

(off Duffy's reticence)

What?

DUFFY

You don't think we're jumping the gun? Why not show his picture around first, see if anyone can put him in the park the morning of?

ANDY

And lose a week? Two weeks?

DUFFY

If we pick him up now, he's just gonna call a lawyer.

ANDY

Maybe not.

DUFFY

No? He's already got a Committee lawyer for the pending case.

Andy weighs this, visibly torn --

DUFFY (CONT'D)

I'm just saying, you play this wrong, and you could lose your one chance to talk to him.

Andy considers this a quiet beat... then:

ANDY

Let me sleep on it.

INT. BARBER HOME - MASTER BEDROOM - LATE NIGHT

Dressed for bed, Laurie is sitting up against her pillow as she marks up a first draft of her speech for the Children's Village fund-raising gala.

She yawns, exhausted.

INT. BARBER HOME - DEN - LATE NIGHT

Andy is on his laptop, nursing a glass of bourbon as he reads through pages of Leonard Patz's various arrest reports. He appears just as torn as he did earlier.

He clicks on another file: the MURDER SCENE PHOTOS. Stares hard at the images of Ben Rifkin's body lying in the leaves. A tighter shot of the boy's face, turned at an unnatural angle. Tight shots of the gruesome stab wounds.

Andy rubs his eyes, debating... debating... He finally reaches for his cell phone, dials a number.

ANDY

Hey, I wake you?... Pretty much, yeah... I want to bring him in.
(listening, determined)
I am... I know. Thanks, Duff.

Andy hangs up, mulling his own decision -- when a text PINGS.

Laurie

I'm dead tired. Coming up soon?

Andy types back: In a bit. Sleep well. xoxo

Andy sets his phone down, returns his attention to his laptop. Sees he's got a new email message.

Subject line: "RE: BEN RIFKIN >>> README."

Sender: "tylerdurden982@gmail.com" at 10:54:27 PM.

Frowning to himself, Andy opens the message. It contains a single line, a hyperlink: Look here.

Andy clicks it -- and is directed to an INSTAGRAM post "#GONETOOSOON" with a photo of Ben smiling at the beach. It has 1,279 LIKES. Below are hundreds of messages in reverse chronological order. Andy glimpses at random:

Jenna.Linde I miss you ben. I remember our talks. ILYSM. 23min Reply

Andy keeps scrolling down, arbitrarily reading similarly worded messages, lots of heart and crying face emojis. He starts to lose interest and patience -- when a message he scrolls past grabs his eye. He scrolls back up to read:

Dylan.Stone04 Jacob STFU. If you dont want to read it go away. You of all people. Dickhead. 18h Reply

Andy frowns, reads a few posts below --

ScottWernerN4cer9 jake, not cool, esp the way things went down. u shd keep ur head down & be quiet 2d Reply

GregKDaGawd WTF? JB go f*ck off and die. The world would be a better place. 2d Reply

Tighter on Andy, his heart pounding a bit faster as he sees --

Jacob.Barber3 Maybe you all haven't heard - Ben is dead. Why are you writing him messages? And why are some people acting like his best friend who never were?

Andy takes a steadying breath, shuts his eyes. Then opens them. He re-reads Jacob's post, then clicks on Jacob's name.

JACOB'S OWN INSTAGRAM PAGE opens in a new window. Andy's eyes roam, pausing on a thread that appears to be intense:

Marlie.Kunitz Derek do NOT say stuff like that. Even if it's a joke, it's stupid and dangerous. 22h Reply

Joe.McLaughlin89 everyone should all just keep their mouths SHUT. that means you DY, you tool. ignore him, jake. 1d Reply

ChoiAmy ANYbody could say ANYthing about ANYbody. Maybe YOU have a knife derek? Hows it feel when somebody starts a rumor about YOU? 1d Reply

Andy looks as confused as he is alarmed -- until he sees something that seizes his breath.

IN EXTREME CLOSE-UP we PAN across a message:

Derek.Yoo Jacob, everybody knows you did it. You have a knife. I've seen it. 1d Reply

Andy sits frozen, staring at the words.

Staring.

INT. JACOB'S BEDROOM - LATE NIGHT

Silent. Jacob fast asleep in bed... when the door eases open with a sliver of hallway light.

Andy slips in, careful not to make a sound. In the moonlit dark, he watches Jacob's body rise and fall under his covers. Andy studies him a moment to ensure he's truly out, then pads further into the room.

INT. JACOB'S BEDROOM - CLOSET - MOMENTS LATER

Andy slips into Jacob's closet, silently closes the closet door behind him, then uses his phone screen as a flashlight as he proceeds to check each and every dresser drawer.

Finding nothing but clothes and some random odds and ends, Andy proceeds to search the shelves. Runs his hands along the top where he can't quite see. Feels nothing.

He stands still a moment inside his son's closet, in a holding pattern between anxiety and relief...

INT. JACOB'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Andy slips back out of Jacob's closet. Eyes again roam the dark. Land on Jacob's desk.

Again staying as silent as he can, Andy searches all three desk drawers. Lots of computer cords, harddrives, Xbox cartridges, pens and junk, but that's all.

Shutting the last drawer, Andy feels more certain he won't find what he's looking for, about to make his exit -- when his eyes land on Jacob's nightstand. The clock radio blinks "11:52." Andy tiptoes to the nightstand, hovering just beside Jacob's bed.

As quietly as he can, he slides the nightstand's lone drawer open. He feels around inside, finding just more random junk, reaching farther back just to be sure...

...and then he goes still, his face telling us he's just found something. He slowly removes from the very back of the drawer a FOLDING KNIFE with a black rubberized handle.

Andy stares at it breathlessly as he tweezes the blade between his thumb and forefinger to quietly pull it open.

The blade is about ten inches long, curved and tapered with an intricately serrated cutting edge that comes to a lethal point. Its gleaming surface is pristine.

Andy slowly folds the blade back into its handle, the chill down his spine almost palpable. Raising his eyes, his gaze fixes on something across the room...

THE CARICATURE OF SIX-YEAR-OLD JACOB. We PUSH IN on the doe-eyed cartoonish face, grinning back at us -- hold, then --

SMASH BLACK.

END