

Arlington Road

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Ehren Kruger
received one of the five Academy Nicholl Fellowships awarded in 1996

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CUT IN:

A YOUNG BOY'S FACE

skin pale, eyes shallow pools, eight or nine years old. His dry mouth opens and shuts dumbly.

The child is staggering forward.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET -- DAY

The BOY shuffles down the center of a residential road. Unbalanced. One foot forward, jerks the other to catch up.

Stares blankly ahead into space.

He clutches one arm to his side, the other hangs limply with a closed fist.

AN APPROACHING CAR

swerves wide to pass him. The driver HONKS, calls a passing get-outta-the-road. Speeds off down the block.

THE BOY

does not alter his course. One foot forward, jerks the other. Sways a little, but rights himself.

Another oncoming car lays on the HORN, then accelerates around him and continues on.

The child staggers ahead. Face drained of color.

AS A THIRD CAR

brakes and swerves around him, driving on--

--and then slamming on its brakes twenty yards past. The driver jumps out, 35, academic-handsome, but his features now taut. This is MICHAEL CONROY.

MICHAEL

Kid...? Kid...

Starts toward him, hesitant. The boy has not turned.

Michael breaks into a run, leaving his car's engine humming--

REACHING THE BOY -- NEW ANGLE

He grabs his shoulders and spins him, revealing his back--
 --which is a bloody mass of shredded shirt and skin, fused
 together. The backs of his arms are similarly torn, oozing
 red. Like a grenade went off in an unworn backpack.

MICHAEL

Jesus Christ...what the...what
 happened. Kid, what happened.
 Do you hear me? Can you talk...

The boy's eyes find his, slack.

MICHAEL

(to the block)
 HELP HERE! WE NEED SOME HELP
 HERE!

The boy relaxes his arms, dropping his hidden bloody hand from
 his side. It has only a thumb and forefinger.

The child's other fist opens. Three severed fingers hit the
 asphalt.

MICHAEL

(widening horror)
 SOMEBODY!!!

The boy's eyes brim with water. He's shaking. The tears are
 coming. And he finally lets loose a SCREAM...

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. SUBURBAN STREETS -- DAY

Michael's Saturn speeds wildly, passing cars, running stop
 signs, skating dangerously through an intersection--

INT. MICHAEL'S CAR

Driving panicked. The boy lies in the backseat, wrapped in
 Michael's sportcoat. Pulling his phone to his ear:

MICHAEL

You're all right, you're almost
 there, just hang on--
 (into phone)
 I'm bringing in a child!--

INT. HOSPITAL -- DAY

Michael storms through the entry, carrying the now-unconscious
 boy. Scattering other VISITORS:

MICHAEL
 You! Hey! This kid needs surgery
 NOW! He's...doctors...

A NURSE has rushed to them, checks the damage, quickly summons more ORDERLIES, who take him from Michael, laying him prone--

ORDERLIES
 Kid's in shock! Stretcher!

Michael backs off, pulled away by the nurse:

NURSE
 Sir, what happened to him--

MICHAEL
 I don't know, I found him in
 the street, I was driving home...
 he was walking in the middle
 of the road...

NURSE
 Do you have any idea who he is,
 have you seen him before?

MICHAEL
 I, yeah...he lives next door...
 they live right next door--

NURSE
 What's his name?

Michael watches as the orderlies storm the boy down the hall.

NURSE
 Sir, please. His name. What's
 the boy's name?

A realization settles. Softly:

MICHAEL
 I don't know.

INT. HOSPITAL -- VENDING MACHINES -- NIGHT

Michael wears a borrowed shirt, carries his bloodied one in a bag. Looks tired. He puts fifty cents into an automatic coffee machine.

A cup drops into position, but no coffee. Michael thuds on the machine. Nothing. He tosses the cup away.

Tries another fifty cents. A cup drops into position, then the coffee starts to fill.

And doesn't stop, spilling over the top.

Michael pulls the cup away, burns himself...coffee squirting onto the floor...looks around, grabs the first cup out of the trash -- sticks it under to catch the rest of the stream.

INT. HOSPITAL -- WAITING AREA -- NIGHT

Michael carries his one-and-a-half coffees to where a couple is sitting, OLIVER HUNT and his wife CHERYL. Late-thirties, solid, Midwestern-looking. Holding each other.

MICHAEL

I brought another cup if you...

They shake their heads. Michael sits beside them, with both cups. A long silence.

CHERYL

I just thought he was going out to play with his friends. I wasn't even paying attention... he was back there in the garage...

OLIVER

He shouldn't have been doing what he was doing.

Oliver comforts his wife. Then:

OLIVER

We can't thank you enough, Michael...if you hadn't--

MICHAEL

I'm just glad he's here.

A silence. Michael's not going to ask.

OLIVER

He and his friends were in the park. Had some gasoline, Mason jars, Dran-O. Stuff they taken from home.

(shakes head)

Kids were trying to make a bomb.

MICHAEL

God.

CHERYL

You found him walking away, didn't you. By the park. He was walking away from home.

OLIVER

Didn't want us to know what
he'd been doing.

(sadly)

He didn't want us to know.

Cheryl puts her head on Oliver's shoulder. Closes her eyes.
Oliver looks to Michael, nods, and reaches out a hand.

Michael gives him one of the cups of coffee.

INT. A DARK BEDROOM -- NIGHT

The door opens, a sliver of light on a bed in which another 9-
yr. old boy lies. GRANT, small for his age. Looking in:

MICHAEL

Little big man. You asleep?

Grant shakes his head. Not looking up.

MICHAEL

He's going to be in the hospital
for awhile, but he's going to
be all right. His parents had
asked me to stay...

(no response)

How 'bout we see those woolly
mammoths tomorrow.

Grant shakes his head.

MICHAEL

What about this weekend.

Another head-shake.

MICHAEL

The museum'll have them all week,
don't you still want to see them?
What about their cousins, the
cashmere mammoths?

(nothing)

You don't get that, do you.

Grant rolls over, turns away. Michael enters the room, kisses
his son on the hair. Whispers:

MICHAEL

I love you, little big man. I'll
make it up to ya.

EXT. CONROY HOUSE -- FRONT STEPS -- NIGHT

Michael sits beside BROOKE WOLFE, 28, casual-pretty and assured. He's exhausted; she slips her hand around his.

BROOKE

I offered to take him to the museum, but he didn't want to go. He doesn't want me around, Michael.

MICHAEL

He's still getting used to you.

BROOKE

I'm wondering if he ever will.

MICHAEL

He will. It's not you, it's me.

They look toward the house next door. An average two-story development home. Lights off, windows dark.

BROOKE

They must be going through hell.

MICHAEL

A year and a half. Year and a half they've lived there, seen them coming in and out, the girls playing in the yard. Say hi to Oliver all the time, Cheryl... they borrow stuff for the house, walk with Grant to the bus stop...
(beat)

And I've never asked them over. Don't know what they do, don't know where they're from...I've never even asked.

BROOKE

No one says you have to be close with your neighbors, Michael.

Michael frowns.

MICHAEL

I had their son in my arms tonight. Hanging on for his life, Brooke. Their son who lives right there.
(guilty)

And I didn't even know his name.

CLOSE ON BANNER "WELCOME HOME BRODY!"
WIDEN TO REVEAL

EXT. HUNT HOUSE -- BACKYARD -- DAY

A small party in full swing. Two girls in Sunday dresses, 6-yr. old SUSANNAH and 7-yr. old ANNEMARIE are making huge soap bubbles with wire hangers. About thirty FRIENDS and NEIGHBORS are there, music and food.

INT. HUNT FOYER -- DAY

Cheryl Hunt opens the door to see Michael and Brooke outside.

CHERYL

Hello, hello, come in, come in--

BROOKE

I hope we're not late--

CHERYL

No, no, we're just getting started
-- oh, and who do we have there?
Is that Grant back there?

Standing, half-hiding behind Michael is his son. Cheryl slaps her hands on her knees, bends over:

CHERYL

Don't tell your dad, but there's
cake and ice cream in the kitchen
that's just for kids and not for
grownups. And we can take that
out back to where the kids are
making soap bubbles, how's that
sound?

A professional mom. Grant nods shyly. Cheryl walks him away, with a smile at Michael. Calling:

CHERYL

Oliver! Michael's here!

EXT. BACKYARD -- DAY

At a patio table, Brooke gets a plate full of food, chatting with a MUSTACHED MAN running a nearby barbeque grill.

Some KIDS are playing tag. A small circle, including Grant, have gathered around Brody (the Hunts' son), who is showing off his stitched-together fingers:

BRODY

An' they were on the ground, so
I picked them up and took 'em
with me, an' they stuck 'em back,
this-one-this-one-this-one...

OTHER KIDS

Wowwww...

Elsewhere, A FORTYISH MAN and a TWENTIESH MAN in slacks and polos are chatting with Cheryl, who's showing them the exterior design of the house.

Watching all of the above is--

MICHAEL

standing in the back doorway, with a plate of food.

OLIVER (o.s.)

Be glad you only have one to
worry about.

Oliver joins him, surveying the party too. Michael smiles.

MICHAEL

He looks in good spirits.

OLIVER

So would you if you'd gotten
yourself out of school for the
last two weeks.

MICHAEL

You're right, I would.
(off his frown)
I teach. For a university.

OLIVER

Really? Where?

MICHAEL

George Washington. Have summer
sessions starting next week.

OLIVER

In the city...what do you teach?

MICHAEL

American history.

OLIVER

Ah. I was always bad with history.

MICHAEL

Condemned to repeat it?

OLIVER
Yes, several times.

MICHAEL
(smiles)
What kind of work do you do?

OLIVER
Engineering, architectural. I work for a company -- you know the Falls Church Mall? We're designing the addition for it. You want bigger stores, more parking, now's the time to ask.

MICHAEL
I've got a class in the fall on the 20th century as the age of consumerism. That'd be a good name for it.

OLIVER
What.

MICHAEL
Bigger Stores, More Parking.

INT. LIVING ROOM -- DAY -- LATER

The party dwindling outside. Michael and Oliver sit in armchairs, each with drinks. Gazing out the bay window.

OLIVER
The work was too appealing to pass up; money was down through the whole Midwest...and we like it here, we really do. I was raised in Carson, Kansas, never lived East before. It's a wonderful part of the country.

MICHAEL
The city's falling apart.

OLIVER
Well, the government's too busy in everyone else's backyards to pay attention to the state of its own. All our contracts come from the suburbs.

MICHAEL

So do all our students.

(beat)

It must have been the same in St. Louis, though.

OLIVER

What's that.

MICHAEL

I mean, your contracts in St. Louis must have primarily come from the suburbs.

OLIVER

The city of St. Louis is falling apart because the city of Washington is falling apart. Business is as healthy as it's ever been, because Business knows what to do with its money.

As Susannah and Annemarie come running through the room, hands full of cake and frosting:

OLIVER

Outta the house! Girls! Hey!

They chase on and disappear, YELPING. Michael smirks.

MICHAEL

You have conversations like this back home?

OLIVER

What do you mean.

MICHAEL

People in Washington only think people in Washington talk about people in Washington.

OLIVER

Well. There's the problem with people in Washington.

(beat)

They should be building shopping malls.

Michael raises his glass. Oliver laughs.

OUT THE WINDOW

Grant and Brody are trying to catch the evening's first fireflies. They're arguing about each other's methods.

IN THE LIVING ROOM

The two fathers have fallen silent. Watching their respective boys. Michael glances over at Oliver, acutely aware of this bond they share.

And settles back to the view outside.

EXT. GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY -- DAY

Establishing. In downtown D.C., in the sweltering summer.

INT. CLASSROOM -- DAY

A modest lecture hall, thirty STUDENTS scattered. Electric fans are on. Michael -- in glasses, sleeves rolled up -- is at the chalkboard:

MICHAEL

The name of this course is...
(as he chalks)

American...Terrorism. If you are a history major, this course will count four credits as one of your necessary electives. You are here for six weeks. If you are in this class by mistake, you have one minute to leave, otherwise you'll be take hostage.

The class laughs. Michael turns, surveys.

MICHAEL

No hostages.

(continues)

This is a new course, it is in its second year, meaning I am still working out the kinks -- so let me clarify what we will not be studying. We will not be studying the I.R.A, the P.L.O., Turkey, Iran or the French Revolution. This course is concerned with terrorist acts waged in America by Americans, as a means of social dissent, which has played, we will find, a part in this country's history since its very inception. From the Unabomber to the Boston Tea Party.

He hands a pile of syllabi to a student in the first row.

MICHAEL (cont'd)

Nat Turner's Rebellion. The Lincoln assassination. The Ku Klux Klan. The Kennedy killings. The World Trade Center. Federal bombings in St. Louis and Oklahoma City. Our intention in this course will be to determine what leads certain factions to decide that their beliefs, their ends, if you will, may only be realized by extremist means. And, also to determine, how or if, certain ends might have been prevented. We are looking for patterns of behavior.
(walking to board)
There will be a midterm, there will be a final, there will be -- I know, I'm a bastard -- attendance taken...

The class groans.

FEMALE STUDENT

Professor? Will we also be covering Copper Creek? Those kind of things?

Michael slows in his tracks.

MALE STUDENT

What's Copper Creek...

FEMALE STUDENT

(still waiting)

Professor?

Thoughts lost for a moment, Michael turns. Nods.

MICHAEL

We will be covering terrorism in America. We will also be covering those who fought it.

EXT. ARLINGTON CEMETERY -- DAY
CLOSE ON MARKER

Which reads "Leah Conroy, 1965--1994. Wife. Mother. Defender of Country." A boy's hand sets flowers on the grave.

REVEAL GRANT AND MICHAEL

at the stone. After a moment, Grant shakes from his father's hand and wanders among the other markers.

Michael turns, as a black man (late 40's) in a government-issue suit approaches, with flowers of his own. WHIT CARVER.

He stands beside Michael at the granite.

WHIT

Good day to be thinking about
good days.

MICHAEL

That you, Whit Carver?

WHIT

Expecting somebody else?

MICHAEL

Never know when you're undercover.

WHIT

(lays his flowers)
Only woman I ever liked having
around that was smarter than me.

MICHAEL

Generous to a fault.

Whit smiles, watches Grant tramping a path:

WHIT

Hey, little big man!
(Grant looks up,
but doesn't wave)
How's he doing.

MICHAEL

He's all right. He's still
seeing his counsellor. She says
he's improving but...he still
keeps to himself a lot.

WHIT

How's his father doing.

MICHAEL

He's all right.

WHIT

He still seeing his graduate student?

MICHAEL

She says he's improving...

WHIT

But he still keeps to himself a lot.

They nod at the shared riff.

WHIT

You teaching that class again this summer?

(Michael nods)

I know she'd like that. I know what that'd mean to her.

(beat)

The partner they've got me with now, kid's a walking calculator. Real test jockey. You sit him across from a real-life bad guy, it's like he's surprised to see 'em. Oughta make him take your class.

MICHAEL

My invitation still stands, by the way. For you to sit in, as a guest.

WHIT

Well. They've been keeping me pretty busy.

A polite way of declining. Michael nods.

MICHAEL

Working on anything interesting?

WHIT

You know I can't tell you that.

Michael smiles, reflects:

MICHAEL

That's what I miss, y'know. The conversations about work. Where I'd tell her about my day and she couldn't tell me a goddamn thing. You wouldn't think I'd miss that, but I do.

WHIT

Then have me to dinner sometime. I'll keep some state secrets from you, make you feel like she never left.

MICHAEL

Do people remember her, Whit?

WHIT

What do you mean.

MICHAEL

I mean, there. Do they remember. Or do people forget.

WHIT

They remember, Michael. They do.
(reflex)
Leah died for her country--

MICHAEL

She shouldn't have.

Both men fall silent. After a moment, quietly:

WHIT

Well...that's for her to say.

Grant returns to Michael's side. Cranes up at the two men, tugs at his dad's coat. He's ready to go.

INT. CONROY HOUSE -- STUDY -- NIGHT

Michael at his desk, working on lesson notes. In the doorway behind him, Brody Hunt peeks his head around, sees Michael's back turned--

--and darts across the doorway, arms full of cushions. Grant, loaded down too, runs past right behind him.

Michael turns. Sees the empty doorway. Waits.

Brody and Grant walk back across, empty-handed. Grant waves at his dad.

Michael goes back to his work.

After a moment, Brody checks the coast again...and runs by with another load of cushions, Grant on his heels.

Michael gets up.

INT. LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

Grant and Brody have unloaded all the cushions and pillows in the house onto the living room floor. They are assembling them into walls.

MICHAEL (o.s.)

Guys. What are you doing.

BRODY

Making a fort, Mr. Conroy.

MICHAEL

A fort?

BRODY

A soldier's fort.

Michael starts into the room. Brody shoots up a hand:

BRODY

You have to know the secret handshake.

(asks Grant)

Should we tell him the secret handshake?

Grant shakes his head no.

BRODY

Sorry, Mr. Conroy. Major Grant says you are a security risk. I'm afraid we'll have to ask you to leave.

MICHAEL

Hey. No bombs in this fort, right, Brody?

GRANT

General Brody!

MICHAEL

No bombs, General Brody?

BRODY

That is classified information, Mr. Conroy. You do not know the secret handshake.

Brody turns to Grant and salutes him. Grant salutes back. They return to putting their pillow-fort together.

Michael smiles, shakes his head, walks through to--

THE KITCHEN

Where there's a stack of mail on the counter. Michael flips through it, stopping when he sees:

AN ENVELOPE

labeled University of Pennsylvania. It is addressed to "Oliver Hunt," with an old address scratched out and the current Arlington Road address hand-written, beside "Please forward to..."

Michael frowns.

INT. HUNT HOUSE -- FOYER -- NIGHT

Oliver Hunt answers the door to find:

OLIVER
Michael, hi! Come in!

MICHAEL
(hands the envelope)
Got something for you in our mailbox. Whoever's in your old house got your address wrong.

OLIVER
(frowns at it)
U Penn?

MICHAEL
Yeah -- I thought you hadn't lived East before.

OLIVER
I went to Kansas. Must have me mixed up with somebody else.
(reading)
Class of '82 reunion. Huh.

MICHAEL
That your class?

OLIVER
Sure, but at Kansas. Reunion... they musta lost track of this guy, sent it to me instead--

He shrugs, drops the envelope in the trash, leading him--

OLIVER
Come on in, though; I was just doing a little work, how's everything--

INT. LIVING ROOM

--where some architectural drawings are splayed out on a coffee table. Oliver quickly rolls them up...

MICHAEL
Everything's fine. Y'know, your son's really--

...as the phone RINGS from the kitchen. Oliver holds up a finger, disappears for a moment to answer it. Michael waits.

OLIVER (o.s.)
Yes. Hello. Yes. I...actually, I can't talk now. Let me call you back...

On the coffee table, the rolled paper unfurls a little. Michael takes a glance: it's a xeroxed blueprint, looks like that of a building.

Oliver returns, seeing Michael looking at the drawing. He steps to it, rolls it back up.

MICHAEL

That the addition for the mall?

OLIVER

Yeah. They're difficult people to deal with, actually. Money-wise. You want a drink? -- Cheryl and the girls are out at church group.

MICHAEL

No, thanks, I just...I was gonna say your son's really been great for Grant. He hasn't had a friend around in a long time.

OLIVER

He has trouble making friends?

MICHAEL

He didn't used to, but since his mother...

(trails off)

We have a counsellor who says he doesn't want to form attachments to people, because he's afraid they'll be gone one day.

OLIVER

Is he close with you? Or Brooke?

MICHAEL

He can be -- sometimes.

OLIVER

How long since she died.

MICHAEL

Three years. Longer than it should take for...

(to explain)

You may have read about, three years ago, there was an incident in Virginia at a place called Copper Creek...between F.B.I. agents--

OLIVER

I remember it--

MICHAEL

My wife was the agent that was killed.

OLIVER

Does Grant know how she died?

MICHAEL

He knows she was killed, and he knows the men who killed her weren't punished. It's a lot to ask a nine-year-old to understand.

OLIVER

Just takes time.

Michael nods.

MICHAEL

He's his old self again when he's around Brody, that's what I'm trying to say. He has fun with him. I wanted to thank you for that.

OLIVER

Thank me for what?

MICHAEL

For having a nine-year-old nextdoor.

INT. CONROY HOUSE -- MICHAEL'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Michael and Brooke are in bed together, she in a GW sweatshirt.

BROOKE

I went to the Library of Congress this morning, doing my research, and I ran into this girl I went to high school with. We talked for awhile -- she lives in New York now, making two-hundred thousand dollars a year as an advertising executive. Do you know what I told her I was doing when she asked?

MICHAEL

You're a student?

BROOKE

I'm a student. I'm twenty-eight years old and I'm still a student.

MICHAEL

Lots of people are still in school
at twenty-eight.

BROOKE

Studying history?

MICHAEL

History is one of the few things
people don't study to do. You
want to write, you want to teach,
you need the schooling.

(beat)

What was this girl doing at the
Library of Congress anyway.

BROOKE

Researching old advertisements
to steal their ideas.

MICHAEL

Then they're not paying her for
nothing.

Brooke gives him a soft shove. He smiles. A beat, something
occurring to him:

MICHAEL

You want to hear something? Tell
me what you think of this: I
was next door at the Hunts' today,
talking with Oliver for awhile,
and he had this blueprint, like a
copy of a blueprint on a table.
He said it was the Falls Church
Mall addition.

BROOKE

The one he's working on.

MICHAEL

Yeah. But it wasn't.

BROOKE

What do you mean, it wasn't.

MICHAEL

I looked at it, Brooke, it wasn't
a mall. It was a building.

BROOKE

Well, it's an addition.

MICHAEL

No. It was for a building.

BROOKE

So what. So it's another project he's got. What's your point.

MICHAEL

He said it was the mall. Why would he say that if it wasn't.

Brooke frowns at him.

BROOKE

When you took engineering in college, what kind of grades did you get.

MICHAEL

I didn't take engineering in college.

BROOKE

(her point made)
Goodnight, Michael.

She closes her eyes, mocking him. Firmly:

MICHAEL

It was a building.

He waits. She opens her eyes.

BROOKE

Will you help me go through sources for my paper this weekend?

He nods. Happily, she nestles against him.

BROOKE

Then it was a building.

INT. GW CLASSROOM -- DAY
CLOSE ON PHOTO OF STRUCTURE

A downtown office building, half of it reduced to rubble; smoke and debris. The image is projected on a screen:

MICHAEL (o.s.)

Two years ago, on a Monday in April, sixty-three federal employees went to work like they always did, at the Roosevelt Federal Building in downtown St. Louis. Except on that Monday they didn't come home.

WIDEN TO REVEAL CLASSROOM

Michael clicks a remote; another slide is projected:

MICHAEL

In a truck parked on the street was hidden fifty pounds of a concentrated explosive compound, which, once detonated, unleashed a force equivalent to 10,000 pounds of TNT. It disintegrated the entire street side of the building, all twelve floors -- obliterating, among numerous other offices and a day care center, the St. Louis branch of the Internal Revenue Service... which was later determined to be the specific target of the attack.

Another slide: a photograph of a wiry young man, David Scobee. Prematurely balding, outcast-looking.

MICHAEL

Not everything, however, went off as planned. The truck housing the explosive belonged to a thirty-five year-old electrician, David Scobee. Scobee had recently been released from prison for tax evasion, and was inside the vehicle at the time of the explosion. Investigators later concluded the device had detonated prematurely, probably as Scobee was setting the radio receiver for the charge.

Michael stops, his eyes on a student in a back row:

MICHAEL

Mr. Kemp, can you tell us anything else about what the investigators determined about the bombing?

KEMP, a burly student, has his head on his desk, snoozing quietly. A tape recorder is set beside him.

MICHAEL

Mr. Kemp?

Kemp wakes with a start. Looks around, sees the class snickering at him.

MICHAEL

I trust you're not staying up all night making explosives of your own.

KEMP

(holds up recorder)
I'm taking notes. It's voice-activated.

MICHAEL

And can it also tell me something else the investigators determined about the bombing of the Roosevelt Federal Building?

KEMP

I'm not a morning person, professor.

Kemp puts his head back on his desk. Michael moves on.

MICHAEL

It appears we will be receiving no insight from Mr. Kemp.

(concludes)

What federal investigators concluded was that although David Scobee had a history of teenage involvement with a paramilitary youth club, and had at times been affiliated with various right-wing interests, no connection could be found to indicate that the bombing was planned with any group of co-conspirators. David Scobee had been to prison for tax evasion, and his grievances with the I.R.S. were no secret. He was determined to have acted...alone.

INT. CONROY HOUSE -- GRANT'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Michael tucks his son in for the night, clearing his bed of books and toys, sitting beside him:

GRANT

Dad...can I join Scouts?

MICHAEL

Scouts? What do you mean, like the Boy Scouts?

GRANT

Cub Scouts. Brody says he's in a troop and they get to go camping, and on trips, and learn about fishing and tying knots and making fires and everything.

MICHAEL

You want to join in a troop
with Brody?

GRANT

He says they have meetings once
a week, and you wouldn't even
have to drive because Brody's
dad can.

MICHAEL

You know when I was a little
older than you, I was a Boy Scout.

GRANT

You were? Did you learn knots?

MICHAEL

Sure. But I think I forgot most
of them.

GRANT

We could go camping sometime,
you and me. I'll learn the knots,
and you can go hunting for
cashmere mammoths.

Grant smiles. Michael laughs, with a little relief to see him
in such good spirits. He brushes his son's hair:

MICHAEL

You and me.

GRANT

Yeah.

MICHAEL

Let's talk about Scouts in the
morning, okay?

GRANT

'Kay.

Grant rolls over. Michael kisses him, rises to go:

GRANT

Dad...is Brooke gonna live with
us?

A little caught off guard:

MICHAEL

Is she going to live with us?

GRANT

Yeah. Is she gonna take Mom's place?

Michael returns to his bedside.

MICHAEL

Little big man, nobody is going to take your mom's place. She's always gonna be with us--
 (touches his heart)
 --in here. Now, your dad loves Brooke a lot, and I don't know if she's going to live with us one day. But if we ever start thinking about that, we're gonna talk about it with you first, okay? Because Brooke takes Brooke's place, that's all. Not your mom's. Never your mom's. And she'll only ever live with us--
 (touches heart again)
 --if Mom says it's okay too.

This comforts the boy. Michael strokes his hair, looking at the nightstand, where a picture of Leah Conroy, 30, pretty, is framed. She wears an FBI windbreaker and a smile.

INT. CHURCH PARISH HALL -- NIGHT
 ANGLE ALONG ROW OF BOYS

All wearing navy Cub Scout uniforms, between the ages of seven and twelve. Reciting the Cub Scout pledge.

GRANT

is at the end of the row, trying to mouth the words with the rest of the boys. In a brand new uniform.

IN A ROW OF SEATS

sit a handful of FATHERS, including Michael, sitting next to Oliver. As the scouts finish the pledge, Grant sneaks a look to his dad and grins.

INT. PARISH HALL -- MOMENTS LATER

The fortyish man who was seen at Brody's welcome-home party, THE SCOUTMASTER, stands behind Grant, hands on shoulders:

SCOUTMASTER

Grant Conroy...

He steps back; Grant is suddenly turned upside-down as two other DADS in scout caps lift him up by the ankles.

SCOUTMASTER

Welcome to Troop 117!

As Grant dangles, The Scoutmaster pins a merit badge right-side-up to his uniform. The other scouts applaud.

INT. PARISH HALL -- LATER

At a table set out with lemonade and snacks, Michael stands with Oliver and the other dads. Grant is at his side, excitedly admiring his new upside-down badge:

GRANT

And when I get all my merit points, they turn the badge right-side-up and then I go on to the next badge--

BRODY (o.s.)

Grant!

Grant darts off to where the other scouts sit cross-legged, munching their grub. To a nearby parent:

MICHAEL

(bemused)

How many badges are there?

DAD #1

Don't worry, they'll keep him busy. They get harder to come by.

DAD #2

Yeah, for the tough ones they have to deliver babies and blow the whistle on political corruption.

SCOUTMASTER (o.s.)

Oliver, can I speak with you for a moment?

Oliver nods, smiling, leaves the group to confer in a corner with The Scoutmaster.

Michael pours himself some lemonade, listens to the other dads chatting...and then glances toward the corner.

OLIVER AND THE SCOUTMASTER

are talking with serious faces. The Scoutmaster, in particular, seems to be arguing, making a point with some vehemence. Oliver shakes his head, waving him off.

Michael looks away, then checks back...

The Scoutmaster still looks angry, but is keeping his voice too low for Michael to make anything out. Finally, Oliver just grins, claps The Scoutmaster on the shoulder and walks away.

RETURNING TO THE FOOD TABLE

Oliver rejoins Michael. Senses he's been watching. Explains:

OLIVER

Last week's meeting, I hit his
Jeep backing out of the lot.
One dent.

(shrugs)

You can't even see it!

Oliver smiles, takes his lemonade to the other dads.

Michael steps to follow, then takes another glance back toward The Scoutmaster. Their eyes meet.

The Scoutmaster's face relaxes and he gives a smile.

EXT. CONROY HOUSE -- DUSK

Michael walks the driveway to his mailbox. In the Hunts' yard, Oliver is playing with Brody, Susannah and Annemarie -- and Grant.

Collecting his mail:

MICHAEL

Grant, dinner's gonna be ready
in a few minutes! Better get
washed up!

GRANT

I'm eating with Brody!

OLIVER

Michael, I'm sorry, Brody invited
him for dinner over here tonight...
I though he'd asked you.

MICHAEL

Oh, well--

GRANT

Can I eat with Brody, dad?

Michael looks at Oliver, shrugs.

MICHAEL
As long as it's okay with Brody's
father, I guess tonight--

OLIVER
Thanks, Michael.

He resumes entertaining the kids. Michael heads back to his house, flipping through the mail...

...and stops when he sees another letter from the University of Pennsylvania, addressed to Oliver Hunt, with the "Please forward to" handwritten address.

Michael frowns, turns to call to Oliver...

...but something stops him. He looks at the parent next door giving a piggyback ride to his own son Grant, looks again at the letter, and sticks it with the rest of his mail. Walks on inside.

INT. CONROY HOUSE -- KITCHEN -- CONTINUOUS

Brooke is chopping vegetables, the sink running. Michael drops the mail on a table, walks behind her.

MICHAEL
Well. Just you and me tonight.

BROOKE
Mm.

He presses to her, starts kissing the back of her neck.

BROOKE
Mmmmmmmmmmm.

She tosses aside the knife and veggies, turns and mashes her lips to his. Exaggeratedly forcing herself on him. The both of them laughing, backing out of the room.

Leaving the sink running as they go.

CLOSE ON MAIL ON THE TABLE

with the alumni letter to Oliver poking out of the pile.

INT. MICHAEL'S OFFICE -- DAY
CLOSE ON LETTER

A small teacher's office, one window overlooking D.C. streets. Michael holds the letter in hand, tapping it thoughtfully.

Finally, he picks up the phone and dials.

MAN'S VOICE
Good afternoon. U Penn.

MICHAEL
Hi. Transcript office, please?

A pause as his call is transferred:

WOMAN'S VOICE
Transcript office.

MICHAEL
Hello, I'm calling from George Washington University. We have a student who has applied for graduate work in our history program, and I needed to get a copy of his undergraduate record from your school. He's been out of school for some time.

(beat)

The name is Oliver Hunt.

INT. GW LIBRARY -- DAY

An open area of research tables, where Brooke sits surrounded by piles of books and papers. Michael is beside her:

MICHAEL
Just listen to this, tell me if you don't think it's strange.

BROOKE
Michael, you're spying on your neighbor!

MICHAEL
The University of Pennsylvania keeps sending him alumni stuff for a 15-year reunion. He says he went to Kansas, they must have him mixed up with some other Oliver Hunt. So I called Penn, got Oliver Hunt's undergraduate transcript.

BROOKE
This is...this may be criminal, Michael.

MICHAEL
Listen to me: the Oliver Hunt at U Penn had a completely different physical description and was not an architectural engineering major.

BROOKE

So they do have him mixed up
with someone else--

MICHAEL

But...this other Oliver Hunt
was the same age as Oliver, was
in the same class as Oliver,
and...also came from Carson,
Kansas. Oliver's home town.

BROOKE

What are you getting at. You
just said they're two different
people.

MICHAEL

Two people the same age and
from the same home town. I
looked it up, Brooke, it's a
small town.

BROOKE

Michael. What.

MICHAEL

They would have known each other.
Don't you think? Heard of each
other, at least, growing up.
Gotten mixed up before.

(troubled)

Oliver didn't say anything like
that. He just threw the letter
away.

BROOKE

There could be ten other Michael
Conroys here in Falls Church
and you'd probably never know.

(beat)

I can't believe we're having this
conversation. I can't believe
you did this. How would you like
it if he was checking up on you?

MICHAEL

So I called the University of
Kansas.

Brooke gives him a level look. He's beyond comprehension.

MICHAEL

Here's what I'm getting at:
the University of Kansas had no
record of an Oliver Hunt.

(MORE)

MICHAEL (cont'd)

From that year, from that class,
from any year. From any class.
So either he didn't really go to
Kansas...

(beat)

...or that's not his real name.

He waits.

BROOKE

Can I ask you something? Did
you do this kind of thing to me
when we started dating?

MICHAEL

Brooke--

BROOKE

Get my transcripts? Call my
ex-boyfriends?

MICHAEL

--you've got to admit that
something's not right here--

BROOKE

This isn't right! You are
investigating your nextdoor
neighbor, for God's sake! And
for what? Please...explain that
to me. What, Michael, did he do?

Unable to give her a good answer:

MICHAEL

Something's not right.

She fixes him with a chastening look. And goes back to her
research. End of discussion.

INT. HUNT HOUSE -- OLIVER'S STUDY -- NIGHT

Oliver and Cheryl are giving Michael and Brooke, dressed for a
dinner party, a little tour of the house. Entering:

CHERYL

And this is Oliver's study in
here; the only place he can get
away from the kids--

The walls have framed pictures on them, though not photos:
they are all drawings, various architectural sketches:

BROOKE

What are these, all the projects
you've built?

OLIVER

(laughs)

I wish, no. I collect sketches,
blueprints -- designs of buildings.
This one here's an original floor
plan for Monticello...here, that's
the Woolworth Building.

CHERYL

It's his hobby.

BROOKE

(identifying one)
St. Louis Arch.

OLIVER

Correct.

BROOKE

Hey, nothing gets by me.

She indicates some rolled-up drawings in a corner. A thought:

BROOKE

So all these drawings, they're
not just for your job then.

OLIVER

No.

BROOKE

So they're not all shopping malls.

OLIVER

No, I don't know of any
architecturally significant
shopping malls.

CHERYL

Oh, honey, you just haven't built
them yet.

She pats him, Oliver smiles. Brooke raises her eyes at
Michael as if to say -- well, that explains your "building."

Michael looks unconvinced.

INT. HUNT HOUSE -- DINING ROOM -- LATER

The four of them finishing dinner. The wine glasses now
empty; discussion around the table is animated:

OLIVER

When we talk about a country, what we are really talking about is an economy. A manner of distributing the wealth of its citizens.

BROOKE

Or lack thereof.

CHERYL

(despairing)

Ohh, we've talked about cars, we've talked about sports, now we have to talk about politics--

OLIVER

When we vote, what are we voting for. How we want our taxes distributed.

BROOKE

That's not always true.

OLIVER

It's true. So why, then, is it a radical idea to allow individual citizens to decide how they want their tax monies spent? Why should ten cents of every dollar I earn go to the national defense, if, say, I'd rather that ten cents went to fixing up roads and highways?

MICHAEL

Because you could conceivably be left with a country with no national defense.

BROOKE

But hey, great fucking roads.

OLIVER

See, that is taking the traditionalist's view, which says you can't leave decisions to the American people because they'll fuck things up. We say we live in a democracy, but not really. The founders didn't give us a true democracy; they set up all their safeguards to insure that decisions would not get to be made by people like you and I.

CHERYL

I'm gonna get a headache...

MICHAEL

Those safeguards are to make sure the country isn't run according to trends. Ideas that might be temporarily in fashion.

OLIVER

Radical views.

MICHAEL

Sure. Radical views.

OLIVER

Like the world being round. Or that women should vote--

MICHAEL

Which were accepted in time--

OLIVER

Long after they could've been.

(beat)

See, the problem with a country that is governed by those we trust to be our best and brightest is that in order to get to where they can be perceived as such, they have to conform to a set of political interests. Which become self-interests.

CHERYL

I give up...I'm taking the plates--

As she circles the table, collecting dishes:

BROOKE

Cheryl, here, let me help you--

OLIVER

Look, why is there such resistance whenever there's a third party movement? Because even with a two-party system, you can confine who has control. Whether you're a Republican or Democrat, if you're a politician, you agree on one thing: the average American does not have the capacity to make an informed decision about what is good for the country.

MICHAEL

Any bill before Congress should
be up for popular vote.

OLIVER

That's not what I'm saying. I'm
simply saying that there is
something fundamentally wrong
with the notion that the government
is the government because it knows
what's right, and the people are
the people because they don't.

There's a cool insistence in his voice. He smiles.
Meanwhile, headed for the kitchen:

CHERYL

Anyone want dessert? Apple pie,
hah-hah?

She and Brooke disappear. Michael eyes Oliver, nodding
slightly, with great interest.

OLIVER (v.o.)

Let me tell you what I mean...

EXT. HUNT HOUSE -- BACKYARD -- NIGHT

Michael and Oliver strolling across, watching the stars:

OLIVER

My father once owned some land by
the Fork River in Kansas. Just an
acre or two, but it'd belonged to
my father's father and his grand-
father before that. Not enough to
farm on, but my dad always meant
to build a home there -- a cabin,
maybe -- when he retired.

(beat)

Well, the state of Kansas at that
time was lobbying for a federal
power plant project that'd bring
Kansas a lot of money and tax breaks.
Nuclear project. And the state's
surveying people decided the perfect
spot for it was on the Fork River.
Part of that my father's land.

MICHAEL

So they bought your father out.

OLIVER

Tried to. But it was his right to keep what he owned. They made him various offers...then pretty soon started making threats.

MICHAEL

The government.

OLIVER

Wasn't that the land really mattered to him, or the money...so there wasn't anything they could do except find a way around him. Have one senator cut a deal with another...tack a line of legislation to a bill -- nothing anyone'd think mattered...

(beat)

One day my father had a riverbank in his family...the next it'd somehow been federal property all along.

MICHAEL

And he got nothing.

OLIVER

He'd had the right to that land. So when they had no other choice, to get what they wanted, all they had to do was take his right to it away.

(a rueful smile)

Shoulda thought of that from the start.

Michael waits him out, hoping to learn more:

OLIVER

My father was a citizen of their state and their country, so they claimed the right to decide what he needed.

At the back door, Cheryl and Brooke appear:

CHERYL

We have lemon cake, oatmeal raisin cookies and some popsicles that the kids didn't like...

OLIVER

Lemon cake, honey.

(back to Michael)

And they never built that power plant.

MICHAEL
 They never built it?
 (calls off)
 Cheryl, cake's great for me, too--

OLIVER
 Never built it.

The women are gone again. They've stopped walking.

OLIVER
 My dad grew old without the river
 he'd always wanted. No river.
 No river by his side.

Lost for a moment. A summer, suburban silence.

OLIVER
 I've known far too many people,
 Michael, who were under the thumb of
 the federal government. Presumption
 being, of course, that their
 government's intentions were to help.

Shadows play across his face as he turns to Michael. Looking
 for a reaction.

Michael nods.

INT. CONROY HOUSE -- HALLWAY -- NIGHT

Michael and Brooke, back from dinner, pass Grant's closed
 door. Sounds of two boys playing inside.

Michael stops, taking off his tie, knocks on the door:

MICHAEL
 Little big man? We're back.
 Time for bed.

He tries the knob. Locked.

MICHAEL
 Can your father come in?

GRANT (o.s.)
 You have to know the secret
 handshake!

MICHAEL
 I don't think I've been told that
 one. Whatcha doin' in there? Brody?
 (remembers)
 General Brody?

BRODY (o.s.)
 We're making plans for scout camp,
 Mr. Conroy. Top-level security
 clearance only!

MICHAEL
 Well, your father wants you home,
 soldier. What level security
 clearance does he have?

The door flies open, Brody darts out and down the stairs:

BRODY
 Goodnight, Mr. Conroy--

MICHAEL
 At ease, General.

He's gone. Inside, Grant's on his bed in his scout uniform.

MICHAEL
 At ease, Major.

GRANT
General. I was promoted.

He beams at his dad. Michael shakes his head, smiles.

INT. UNIVERSITY OFFICES -- RECEPTION AREA -- DAY

Michael strides toward his office, as a RECEPTIONIST stops
 him, lifting a book-sized package:

RECEPTIONIST
 Professor Conroy, you were expecting
 something from the University of
 Kansas?

MICHAEL
 Kansas? No, I don't...oh...yes, I
 am. From Kansas.

He takes the package, heads into his office, shuts the door.

INT. MICHAEL'S OFFICE -- DAY
 CLOSE ON PACKAGE

As the envelope is unwrapped, revealing a college yearbook,
 dated Class of 1982.

Michael opens it, turning the pages to the student photos.

He runs his finger down the names...Hollis, Hoberman, Hudson,
 Hunter, Huntley...there is no Hunt. No Oliver Hunt.

Michael frowns, starts turning pages forwards, then backwards, stopping as something suddenly catches his eye. He plants his finger on--

A PICTURE OF OLIVER

fifteen years younger, smiling dutifully at camera.

Michael runs his finger across the page...to the name...

"FENIMORE, WILLIAM."

Closing the book, Michael sets it on his desk, and looks to the window. His thoughts starting to turn.

EXT. CHURCH PARKING LOT -- DAY

A group of CUB SCOUTS is being helped onto a charter bus, destination "Camp Occoquan." PARENTS are loading luggage.

Michael is with Grant, in his Scout uniform:

MICHAEL

I want you always sticking with the group, all right? Don't go off on your own on any hikes or anything; don't set up your tent too far from anybody.

GRANT

I'll be with Brody. We stay together.

MICHAEL

Well, just 'cause Brody wants to explore somewhere doesn't mean you have to go there too. You know what's safe and what's dangerous, right?

Grant rolls his eyes, nods.

MICHAEL

Okay. You get lonely, you get homesick, you just tell the grownups there and have them call me right away, got that?

GRANT

Dad, they're getting on the bus--

MICHAEL

All right, okay. You have a good time now. Learn a lot. Listen to your Scoutmaster.

Grant nods mechanically, pulling away. Michael gives him a hug, then lets him go. Grant jogs to the bus, looks back at his father--

--and hurries back over with a crooked smile. He grabs his dad's hand, twists the fingers around, bangs elbows twice:

GRANT
(grins)
That's the secret handshake.

He darts back to the bus, climbs in. Michael smiles.

AT HIS CAR

Brooke is perched on the hood. Michael returns to join her; she drapes her arms around his neck.

BROOKE
Two weeks. Not long.

MICHAEL
He's never been away from home before.

BROOKE
Remember the first time you got to go away to camp? Remember how excited you were?

MICHAEL
That's different. My camp had Girl Scouts.

Grant waves at them from a bus seat window. Michael, meanwhile, glances across some cars, where:

OLIVER AND CHERYL

are saying their goodbyes to Brody. Cheryl gives him a resisted hug, Oliver spansks him off to the bus.

Oliver sees Michael looking his way. He smiles.

ON FULL SCENE

All the gathered parents watch and wave, as the bus pulls out of the parking lot.

MICHAEL (v.o.)
The Federal Bureau of Investigation keeps a central database which contains a file on every American who has ever been charged with a crime.

(MORE)

MICHAEL (v.o., cont'd)
Whether convicted or not. Certain offenses cause files to be "flagged," meaning that agents are assigned to procure periodic follow-up information on those persons, their friends and families.

INT. GW CLASSROOM -- DAY

Michael is in the midst of another lecture, continuing:

MICHAEL
Things that would cause a file to be "flagged" could be anything from a known association with organized crime, passing counterfeit currency, involvement with militant or extremist groups, or the ownership or sale of illegal firearms, chemical agents or explosives.

(beat)

The purpose of the flags are to construct a net that will help to identify those criminal elements whose target could potentially be the government itself. A net to track terrorists.

Michael flips a light switch, hits his remote: a family photo of a fortyish man -- Tyler Parsons -- his wife, three sons, aged 18, 16 and 10. Rural-looking, standing before a cabin.

MICHAEL
Three years ago, that database picked up a series of suspicious firearms purchases in Georgia, North Carolina and Maryland. Over 100 guns, from assault rifles to Army-issue revolvers, bought by residents in each state who were all known acquaintances of this man, Tyler Parsons. An amateur gun collector and a vocal member of the right-wing extremist community of Copper Creek, Virginia.

Michael switches slides: a wide shot of the mountain cabin.

MICHAEL
To the F.B.I., it appeared Parsons was stockpiling weapons. Why, they didn't know.

(MORE)

MICHAEL (cont'd)

So they sent three agents to Copper Creek, armed with a search warrant, expecting to find illegally-owned firearms as well.

Slide change: a fence to the property, a dirt road beyond leading up the mountain. As Michael talks, he walks among the desks of his students...

MICHAEL

At the fence to the property, the agents encountered Parsons' youngest son. Age ten. They asked the boy if he lived there, if his dad was home, but never identified themselves as F.B.I. The boy, according to the agents' affidavits, immediately took off running up the road, toward the house, screaming "They're coming. They're coming."

Michael reaches the desk of Kemp, who is asleep again, his tape recorder on. Michael takes the recorder, shuts it off. And pockets it.

MICHAEL

At the cabin steps, the child picked up a rifle and fired at the agents, who took cover. As more shots came from inside, the agents were forced to return fire. The siege went on for twenty minutes. When it was over, Parsons' youngest son and wife had been killed. His two older sons injured. Parsons himself had not been home.

Michael returns to the front. Closes his eyes briefly.

MICHAEL

A female F.B.I. agent also lost her life.

Another slide: a cache of guns in a cellar.

MICHAEL

The F.B.I. had believed its agents were closing in on a terrorist plot. But what their central database did not tell them, was that Tyler Parsons had recently come into a small inheritance with a relative's death, with which he arranged for all these weapons to be legally purchased.

(MORE)

MICHAEL (cont'd)

Nor did it tell them that Parsons had recently applied for a license as a gun dealer, a license still pending approval.

(beat)

Nor did it tell them that Parsons had warned his family repeatedly that there might be people keen on stealing his collection...instructing his wife, and sons, never to let anyone near the house when he was away.

He flips slides again: back to the Parsons family photo.

MICHAEL

Tyler Parsons was not a terrorist. Tyler Parsons had committed no crime. But three people died that day.

(finally)

Because the flags went up. And the flags were wrong.

INT. MICHAEL'S OFFICE -- DAY

Michael is on the phone, the Kansas yearbook in front of him:

MICHAEL

Hello, my name is Michael Conroy and I'm calling from George Washington University in Washington, D.C. I'm an admissions director. We've received some documents from a prospective student and I just wanted to verify the state's record of a legal change of name...I'm afraid I don't have the year...

RECORDS CLERK

(over phone)

A Kansas resident, sir?

MICHAEL

At the time, I believe so. The name was William Fenimore. From Carson, Kansas. Changed, I'm told, to an Oliver Hunt.

RECORDS CLERK

It may take me a few moments, sir.

MICHAEL

That's fine, I'll stay on.

INT. OFFICE -- MOMENTS LATER

Michael taps at the photo of "William Fenimore" in the yearbook, waiting. Then:

RECORDS CLERK

Sir? We do have a record of change of name for a William Fenimore of Carson, Kansas to Oliver Hunt.

MICHAEL

Could you tell me when that was?

RECORDS CLERK

October fifth, nineteen-eighty-five.

Michael writes "10/5/85" in the yearbook.

MICHAEL

Thank you, that's the information I was looking for--

(an afterthought)

Oh, you know...maybe there's something else you could check for me. Is there possibly a name change record for an Oliver Hunt? From the same town, Carson?

RECORDS CLERK

Changed from Oliver Hunt?

MICHAEL

Yes. I'm afraid I don't know what it might have been changed to.

RECORDS CLERK

(a little annoyed)

It may take a few moments, sir...

MICHAEL

That's fine.

He waits. Scribbling further on the notepad:

FENIMORE ---> U.KANSAS/82 ---> 10/5/85: OLIVER HUNT

HUNT ---> U.PENN/82 ---> ????

The clerk returns to the line:

RECORDS CLERK

Sir? I'm afraid we have no record of any name change for an Oliver Hunt of Carson, Kansas.

MICHAEL

Oh, I see.

RECORDS CLERK

Our records indicate Oliver Hunt of Carson, Kansas was deceased as of October fourth, nineteen-eighty-five.

Michael darkens.

MICHAEL

October fourth?

RECORDS CLERK

Yes, sir.

MICHAEL

You have a copy of the death certificate.

RECORDS CLERK

(pauses)

You had said you were calling from a university?...

MICHAEL

Yes, thank you.

He hangs up. Looks at his diagram:

FENIMORE ---> U.KANSAS/82 ---> 10/5/85: OLIVER HUNT

HUNT ---> U.PENN/82 ---> 10/4/85: R.I.P.

He draws a circle around the dates.

EXT. F.B.I. HEADQUARTERS -- STREET OPPOSITE -- DAY

Michael is with Whit, dressed for work, finishing a lunch-truck sandwich. Walking the busy sidewalk:

MICHAEL

Just run through the scenario with me. Theoretically. Why would someone do that.

WHIT

Change his name to the name of a person who died one day before.

MICHAEL

A person the same age and from the same hometown. Why? To take over that person's life?

WHIT

That wouldn't work, Michael. When someone dies, that death certificate goes to both state and federal governments: banks are notified, social security numbers, driver's licenses -- they're voided. You wouldn't do it to become that other person.

MICHAEL

Then why would you do it?

WHIT

You'd do it to hide the person you were.

They reach a ledge with view of the monuments. Sitting:

WHIT

Let's say you wanted to find out, say, a criminal record for this guy -- prior to the name change. Well, unless you knew what you were looking for--

MICHAEL

--you'd check under his current name--

WHIT

--and the record you'd find back then would be for someone else entirely. That's the significance of changing names one day after a person -- a name -- died.

MICHAEL

There'd be no overlap to tell you you're confusing two different people.

WHIT

If you change your name to a name that never existed before, it doesn't take someone too long to figure out they should be checking your past under a different alias.

MICHAEL

But if you change your name to a name that used to be a real person--

WHIT

--most people wouldn't think
there's reason to check elsewhere
than that real person's real past.

MICHAEL

Gives you a whole new history.

WHIT

Or helps your old one disappear.

(beat)

You read in the paper someone's
died, he's your age, born where
you were...to most of the world,
you could basically hide your
background behind his.

Michael thinks for a moment. Gravely:

MICHAEL

Whit. If I give you a name, could
you run it for flags?

Whit almost falls off the ledge.

WHIT

Jesus Christ, Michael...

MICHAEL

One time. Just one.

WHIT

Check F.B.I. files as a personal
favor, that's what you're asking
me to do.

MICHAEL

I'd never tell anyone.

WHIT

You don't get fired for that,
you go to jail for that.

MICHAEL

It's important.

WHIT

Why. Your girlfriend hiding
something from you? Some student
whose looks you don't like? Do
you see the problem here?

MICHAEL

No, it's...it's a feeling.

WHIT

Michael. If you'd asked Leah to do it, she would have said the same thing. You're asking me to access you classified government information. "I love you, baby, but that I cannot do."

Michael nods, aware he's asking too much.

WHIT

Look. You want to find out about somebody...there are always ways to do it. But they're not through me.

EXT. VIEW OF HUNT HOUSE -- NIGHT

A side angle, all the lights out.

INT. CONROY HOUSE -- MICHAEL'S BEDROOM -- SAME

Dark. Michael at the window, surveying the house next door.

BROOKE (o.s.)

Watching the sunrise?

He turns to see her awake in bed.

MICHAEL

Yeah.

BROOKE

Yeah. It's two a.m.

MICHAEL

He's hiding something, Brooke.

BROOKE

Who's hiding something.

MICHAEL

My neighbor.

Brooke falls back against her pillow.

BROOKE

Why do you need to know.

MICHAEL

Why do I need to know?

BROOKE

What does it have to do with you?

(he can't answer)

I've done some things I wouldn't want certain friends to know about. What makes you think you should know everything about your neighbor.

MICHAEL

He's hiding who he is.

She shakes her head.

BROOKE

And what does who he is...have to do with you.

Again, he can't answer. Brooke climbs out of bed, walks over to him. Gives him a tired look.

BROOKE

I need some sleep for tomorrow, Michael. I have a lot of research to do.

And pulls the curtain across the window.

INT. GW LIBRARY -- COMPUTER TERMINALS -- DAY

Michael at his own research. An online program welcomes him to "Online Headline Access: Select newspaper or choose from a list of newspapers..."

He moves the cursor down the list, finding "Kansas Sentinel."

A KANSAS SENTINEL BANNER

comes on screen. Prompt reads: "Select dates for search."

He enters "1959--1985."

Prompt reads: "Select subject/keywords for search."

He enters "Hunt, Oliver."

"Searching..." Then: "0 records found."

Michael returns a stage, enters "Fenimore, William."

"Searching..." Then: "14 records found."

MICHAEL

accesses the list of articles with the name mentioned. Calls up the first one on the list.

ANGLE ON SCREEN

Showing a newspaper front page, with a picture of an office building and a smaller picture of a TEENAGED BOY in handcuffs, being escorted by police:

MICHAEL

(reading aloud)

16-year old William Fenimore of Carson, Kansas was arrested today in connection with the bombing attempt on the Kansas City offices of Amberson & Cole, a consulting firm, which were evacuated Wednesday after an explosive device was discovered in the building's mailroom...

(skipping on)

Bomb squad managed to defuse before it was set off...

Michael reads on, a chill passing through him:

MICHAEL

Sources say the firm had been retained by the state of Kansas to recommend prospective sites for a nuclear power facility...their proposed site encompassed land once owned by the suspect's father, William Fenimore, Sr...

Michael's fingers fly over the keyboard, calling up the paper's other stories on the incident. Scanning through fast and furious.

INT. HUNT HOUSE -- LIVING ROOM -- DAY

A KNOCKING at the door. Little Susannah, working her way through a sloppy popsicle, answers it. It's Michael:

MICHAEL

Hi, Susannah. How are you?

SUSANNAH

Daddy and Mommy aren't home.

MICHAEL

Oh, well, you know what, I actually don't need your Dad or your Mom. I was going out to work in the yard and I locked myself out of my house.

A TV is blaring from the kitchen. Annemarie appears in the doorway, carrying some dolls.

MICHAEL

Hi, Annemarie. What I needed to do was see if I could use your phone to call somebody to help me get back in. Would that be okay? If I used your phone?

Susannah looks at Annemarie. Annemarie nods.

ANNEMARIE

Kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN -- CONTINUOUS

Michael follows the girls in, sees they have food and toys on the counter. Susannah's popsicle is dripping:

MICHAEL

Y'know what, I'll use the phone in your dad's study...you guys are playing here--

ANNEMARIE

(something triggered)

That's Dad's study.

MICHAEL

I'll just be a sec, you guys go ahead and play, he wouldn't mind--

He steps on through the room. Annemarie watches him intently, looks to her sister...then looks to the kitchen phone.

INT. STUDY -- DAY

Michael closes the door and goes immediately to the boxes of rolled-up architectural drawings. Unfurls a couple, looking for the one he'd seen that day on the coffee table.

Rolls them back up, tries to peer into the tubes of a couple others. Doesn't have time to go through them all.

He moves to the desk, opens the top drawers. Rifling through papers, drawing implements, T-squares.

Finds nothing.

Frustrated, he leans against the desk, looking around...and then focusing on...

THE FRAMED FLOOR PLAN OF MONTICELLO

hanging on the wall. The frame is slightly askew.

Michael steps to take a closer look.

One corner of the drawing has inadvertently curled over. There appears to be another sheet of paper lying underneath...

MICHAEL

listens to the TV cartoons blare on, and lifts the frame from the wall. His back is to the door.

He feels along the frame, separating it from the back mount, and as it comes apart--

THE STUDY DOOR OPENS

And Cheryl walks in, groceries in arm, over his shoulder:

CHERYL

Michael!

He spins, drops the picture, hurries to grab it and stick it back together. She is smiling at him:

CHERYL

You locked yourself out of your house!

MICHAEL

I...yes, I was calling...and... the picture here came off the wall somehow, I thought I'd set it back...the locksmith's coming...

CHERYL

Oh, good. Did you want to wait here? I'm just back from the store--

She leaves, returning toward the kitchen. Michael quickly re-hangs the frame, wipes his sweating palms.

MICHAEL

No, no, thanks for the phone--

CHERYL (o.s.)
We got a letter from Brody today,
he and Grant are having a
wonderful time...

INT. KITCHEN -- CONTINUOUS

Cheryl is putting her groceries away as Michael follows her in. Annemarie gives him a long stare, then leaves the room.

MICHAEL
That's great, he writes you...

CHERYL
He went on at some length about
the bugs they're catching. I
don't know that they get any
sort of badge for that.

Michael smiles nervously. At the cupboards:

CHERYL
Are you sure I can't offer you
anything?

MICHAEL
No, thanks, I should get back
over there...
(relaxed by her manner)
Listen, Cheryl, actually there
was something I did want to ask
you--

CHERYL
Of course--

MICHAEL
When you lived in St. Louis, you
were there...at the time of
that bombing, the Federal Building.

CHERYL
That was right before Oliver got
the job here.

MICHAEL
Yeah...well, did...that is, was
that at all a part of your lives?

CHERYL
A part of our lives?

MICHAEL

I mean, that wasn't a building Oliver had ever done work on, or, the electrician who'd set the bomb, he wasn't someone you'd heard of...Oliver'd heard of... being in sorta that area of work.

CHERYL

I'm not sure I understand what you're asking, Michael.

MICHAEL

I'm teaching a class...a history class that addresses terrorism, and it's one of the things we cover, the St. Louis incident. I keep meaning to ask Oliver about it, since you lived there, whether it was something that affected you at all.

Cheryl looks at him somewhat oddly.

CHERYL

Well. We had a babysitter whose aunt was killed.

MICHAEL

Uh-huh.

CHERYL

As far as -- I don't know what you're asking -- engineering questions, you'd really have to ask Oliver.

MICHAEL

Well. Yeah. I will.

He's backing out of the room to go:

CHERYL

I didn't know you taught a course about terrorism, Michael. That's quite a frightening subject.

She's still smiling pleasantly at him. Something unnerving about it. He nods:

MICHAEL

Thank you...for the phone...

And leaves.

Annemarie steps back into the doorway to join her mom.

EXT. CONROY HOUSE -- FRONT STEPS -- DUSK

Brooke walks to the door, back from school, passing Michael -- who is sitting darkly on the steps, jingling his keys:

BROOKE

What are you doing...

MICHAEL

Waiting for the locksmith.

Off her puzzled look, he rises. She lets them both in.

INT. CONROY HOUSE -- LIVING ROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

Michael pacing, excited; Brooke dropping her coat, bookbag.

BROOKE

You have to stop this.

MICHAEL

Just hear me out. He changed his name. Why. To help hide his background. Why. Because there was something in it.

BROOKE

Something that's not your business.

MICHAEL

When he was sixteen, he tried to blow up a building, Brooke. A company that'd cheated his father. He served a short sentence because he was a minor.

BROOKE

Blow up a building, what are you talking about--

MICHAEL

Now why would you go to these lengths to lose that part of your past.

Brooke is frowning. Answering his own question:

MICHAEL

If it was not an isolated event.

BROOKE

Michael--

MICHAEL

If you thought you might try
it again.

BROOKE

What building, where did you
find this--

MICHAEL

Newspaper stories. His kid almost
killed himself trying to make
homemade fireworks, where do you
think that comes from, Brooke?
Where do you think he got that idea?

BROOKE

But you're saying this was over
twenty years ago.

MICHAEL

I'm saying...he has gone to
great lengths to hide it. I'm
saying...he lived in St. Louis
at the time of the Federal Building
explosion...and I'm saying that
there is a blueprint of a building
in that house that I was not
supposed to see!

Brooke stares at him. A small laugh.

BROOKE

Are you listening to yourself?

MICHAEL

Are you listening to me?

BROOKE

Your neighbor.

MICHAEL

Yes.

BROOKE

Is a terrorist.

MICHAEL

Something is going on over there.

BROOKE

Is blowing up buildings.

MICHAEL

Something is being planned.

BROOKE
Is part of a plot.

MICHAEL
Yes.

BROOKE
(she's heard enough)
Michael! This is...it's...it's
something out of your class!
You're lecturing about mad bombers
and assassins all day and now
you're bringing it home! This
is not normal!

MICHAEL
That house is not normal!

BROOKE
That house is normal! Don't you
see? He has a wife and three
children and a good home and
a future for his family and it's
driving you crazy...because it's
not you!

Michael looks at her, stung.

MICHAEL
Is that what you...

BROOKE
They have the life you wanted.
You see it right next door and
it's killing you.

MICHAEL
That's not what this is about.

BROOKE
That is what this is about. Bombs,
terrorists: this class you teach
to...carry on her work...to have
something in her memory...it's
taking over your life.
(beat)
You want your son to have a
family so much...you won't let
her go.

Michael has turned away. She approaches him, much softer:

BROOKE

She's the one who worked in a world of plots and paranoia... and conspiracies, Michael. That was her work. Not you.

A long beat.

MICHAEL

He has a history he wants to hide. He was in St. Louis two years ago...

BROOKE

Michael, don't--

MICHAEL

...and there is a building he is working on...that he did not want me to see.

He is looking out the window again, at the Hunt house. Brooke watches him sadly. Finally:

BROOKE

I'm not sure I can stay here tonight.

He says nothing.

BROOKE

I can't stay.

She collects her books and coat, stops at the door. Turns.

BROOKE

I'll call you--

And leaves. Michael remains at the window.

INT. MICHAEL'S OFFICE -- NIGHT

Lights out; the door is unlocked and Michael enters. Dark in the foyer beyond. Jacket on, he strides to a closet, in which several cardboard boxes of files are stacked.

He finds one labeled "St. Louis," opens it, carries it to his desk. Takes off his jacket.

Starts going through his research material on the St. Louis bombing, the Federal Building, and David Scobee.

CUT TO:

INT. FALLS CHURCH MALL PARKING GARAGE -- DAYS LATER -- DAY

Brooke is leaving the mall, alone, carrying some purchase bags, looking shopped-out. Strides toward her car.

AT HER CAR

Unlocks it, tosses her bags inside, and is about to climb in when a minivan drives by behind her. Recognizing the driver--

BROOKE

Oliver!

She waves, but he doesn't see her. He drives on to the end of the row, continues two rows further and pulls into a parking space.

Brooke shuts her car, starts walking over to say hi.

Oliver has gotten out of the Hunt minivan--

BROOKE

(crossing the rows)

Oliver!

But a CAR HORN somewhere in the garage drowns her out. She's about to wave again...but stops as she sees him start walking away from the mall entrance.

He strides casually down the row several yards--

--and walks to the driver's door of another car. A slightly beat-up Pontiac. He glances around--

--as Brooke takes a step behind a garage support--

--and unlocks the Pontiac. Climbs in, backs out of the parking space and drives for the garage exit.

BROOKE

watches him leave, steps back into the open.

Jingling her car keys.

Frowning deeply.

EXT. FALLS CHURCH STREETS -- DAY
ANGLE FOLLOWING PONTIAC

Two cars ahead, moving out of the shopping mall district of the suburbs.

ANGLE ON BROOKE'S CAR

keeping a safe distance.

EXT. OUTERLYING SUBURB STREETS -- DAY

The roads becoming more wooded, the Pontiac rounding a bend beyond which a guardrail overlooks a creek. Sparse traffic. After a moment, Brooke's car follows.

EXT. ROAD TO OUTLET CENTER -- DAY

A suburban warehouse district; the Pontiac takes a turnoff leading to a fenced building. A sign indicates "Capital Delivery." Some outlet stores across the road.

EXT. CAPITAL DELIVERY WAREHOUSE -- DAY

A UPS-type shipping service; trucks and vans loading and unloading, CUSTOMERS carrying packages inside.

Brooke pulls her car into the customer parking lot.

Watches as the Pontiac drives to the loading area. Stops at some distance from the other vans.

A twentish DELIVERY MAN in a Capital uniform greets Oliver as he gets out of his car. (The Delivery Man has been glimpsed before at Brody's welcome-home party.)

They confer for a moment, step to the Pontiac's trunk. Oliver opens it, he and The Delivery Man each unload a large metal box. Carry them into the warehouse. Return to the trunk, and carry two more of the boxes off.

The Delivery Man re-appears, closes the trunk. Stops.

Surveys the customer lot.

IN HER CAR

Brooke realizes her engine is still running. She puts the car into "Drive," turns around and leaves the lot.

THE DELIVERY MAN

watches the compact pull back onto the warehouse road.

EXT. OUTLET STORES -- ACROSS ROAD -- MINUTES LATER

Brooke climbs out of her car, glancing at the distant Capital Delivery complex. Goes to a pair of phone booths.

INT. CONROY HOUSE -- DAY
ANGLE ON ANSWERING MACHINE

As it picks up and the "Messages Received" indicator switches from "0" to "1".

BROOKE (over phone)
Michael, it's me, I tried you at school but they said you'd left already...listen, I was over at the mall and ran into Oliver in the garage, except he didn't see me...

EXT. OUTLET STORE PHONE BOOTHS -- SAME

BROOKE (cont'd)
...he went from his car to another car, acting...I dunno...so, look, I followed him; he drove to a delivery warehouse in Fair Oaks and unloaded a bunch of, like, metal boxes...except I think he met someone...I...I want to talk to you...I don't know if...

(nervous laugh)
Christ, I can't believe you've fucking got me following people... I'm coming over.

She hangs up, opens the booth and finds--

CHERYL HUNT

blocking her way, with a big smile.

CHERYL
Brooke! I knew it was you!

BROOKE
(thrown)
Cheryl, hi...I...

CHERYL
What are you doing here?

BROOKE
Here, I...shopping...what are you doing?

CHERYL
(holds up two bags)
Shopping!

BROOKE
That's great...

CHERYL

Yeah!

She grins. Brooke smiles back, calming. They hold these smiles for a long moment. Too long.

Cheryl's smile goes dead cold.

INT. CONROY HOUSE -- DAY

Michael has returned home, dropping his jacket, crossing into the kitchen. He flips on the TV, fixing himself a drink--

--as a helicopter shot of a wooded road comes on screen:

NEWSWOMAN (v.o.)

We have a live shot of the accident now, this is route 317 about two miles from the Fair Oaks Outlet Center. It appears the car lost control and went through that guardrail, it's about a forty foot drop to the creek bed. The victim is reported to be a 28-year old graduate student from George Washington University; she was pronounced dead at the scene...

Hearing this, Michael turns to the screen. Sees that the upturned car in the creek is Brooke's--

NEWSWOMAN (v.o.)

...but her identity is being withheld by authorities until her family has been notified...

Michael nearly collapses.

Turns, stumbles, runs from the room. Out the door.

NEWSWOMAN (v.o.)

...she was thrown some distance from vehicle, we understand, and was reportedly not wearing a seatbelt...

As Michael disappears, we--

ANGLE TO THE ANSWERING MACHINE

Where the "Messages Received" indicator now reads "0".

EXT. CREEKSIDE ROAD -- ACCIDENT SCENE -- DUSK

Police vehicles block camera crews, redirect traffic, as Michael CHARGES over a barricade, sliding down the ravine toward the car and investigators:

POLICEMAN

Sir, you can't go down there!

A couple officers chase after him; he reaches the creek, and is stopped by a DETECTIVE:

MICHAEL

Let me go, where is she...

DETECTIVE

You've got to clear the area,
I'm sorry--

MICHAEL

Where is she!

DETECTIVE

She's been taken to County. She's
gone. I'm sorry. There isn't
anything you can do.

He stops fighting. The policemen step to take him back:

POLICEMAN

Did you know her? Sir? Did
you know the victim.

MICHAEL

(staring at the car)
She's a friend.

The car rests upside-down, battered and smashed, the creek flowing through it.

INT. MICHAEL'S OFFICE -- DAY

Michael turns through a folder of collected papers. Somber. He stops, finding a note on stationery. Handwritten:

BROOKE (v.o.)

Dear Professor Conroy. I am
writing to let you know that even
though you felt my final paper
was C-plus material, I still enjoyed
your Graduate Topics in American
History course a great deal, and
think you are an inspiring instructor.

(MORE)

BROOKE (v.o., cont'd)

I am sorry that you found my theories on potential F.B.I. conspiracies "outlandish," and will try to support my hypotheticals with stronger research in the future. Perhaps you, too, have had some "outlandish" theories in your day. Best regards, Brooke -- C-plus material -- Wolfe. See you 'round school.

Michael sets the note down, closes the folder. Looks to the window a moment, then notices the file box of "St. Louis" research still on his desk.

He shoves it to the floor, contents spilling everywhere.

CUT TO:

INT. CAMP LODGE -- NIGHT
CLOSE ON GRANT

in his Scout uniform, Brody behind him, smiling into a phone:

GRANT

Hi, Dad!

INTERCUT INT. HUNT HOUSE

Michael, looking weary, holds the receiver. Trying cheer:

MICHAEL

Little big man...how're you holding up...

GRANT

Dad, we gotta go camping! It's so cool! We went swimming in this river, and we went in these mountains, and one night there was a storm and everybody had to pack up all the tents and we went to a Holiday Inn!

MICHAEL

You did...

GRANT

And I learned how to make campfires, and make a shelter, and me and Brody can tell animal tracks!

MICHAEL

That's terrific...

GRANT

Dad, Scoutmaster's calling us,
I have to go, we're going on
an adventure hike!

MICHAEL

Okay, you want to give the phone
back to Brody...does he want to
say bye to his parents?

GRANT

Dad, we gotta go!...

MICHAEL

I'll see you in a few days, okay?
Grant?

But Grant's hung up. Michael hands the phone back to--

--Cheryl, she and Oliver sitting with him. Susannah and
Annemarie are playing in another room. Absolute sympathy:

CHERYL

It's better to tell him when he
gets back.

MICHAEL

(nods)
Thank you for coming to get me.

CHERYL

When Brody called us, we asked him,
he said Grant was right there.

(beat)
Michael, if you need anything...

MICHAEL

Thank you.

Michael rises to go, the Hunts walking him to the door:

CHERYL

Don't let yourself...we're having
a party for the Fourth if you...
I mean...we all have our tough
times. All of us.

She doesn't know how to say it. Turns to Oliver for help.

OLIVER

(nods)
All of us.

The regret in his voice makes Michael look at him in a
somewhat different light.

OLIVER

She was a kind person, Michael.
Smart girl.

Michael nods. Suddenly feeling he needs to--

MICHAEL

If I haven't been myself...these
last couple weeks, I mean, even
before this...if I've acted
different at all...I haven't
meant to take any of it out on you.

The Hunts look at each other oddly, as if they've no idea what
he's talking about.

MICHAEL

She liked you...she liked your
family...very much.

He gives a brave smile; they nod their thanks. He leaves.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CREEKSIDE ROAD -- DAY

The guardrail repaired. Michael is in his car, parked at the
roadside. Surveying the scene, gazing up the road.

EXT. ROAD TO OUTLET CENTER -- DAY

Michael's car rolls to a stop at the turnoff. Looking at the
outlet shops, then to the Capital Delivery building.

Nothing unusual to catch his eye.

MICHAEL

(sotto)

Why were you out here, Brooke?...
What were you doing...

With no answers, he turns the car around. Heads back the way
he came.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CONROY HOUSE -- MICHAEL'S BEDROOM -- DAY

Michael is taking Brooke's things out of some drawers. A
heart still weary. The phone rings:

MICHAEL

Hello.

WHIT (over phone)
Michael, it's Whit. I haven't
heard anything from you...

MICHAEL
The student I was seeing was
killed last Friday. She had a
car accident.

INTERCUT WHIT'S F.B.I. OFFICE

WHIT
God...Michael, oh no...Friday...

MICHAEL
We'd had an argument. That
was the last time I saw her.

WHIT
Michael...

MICHAEL
(strength low)
Can I talk to you later, Whit?

WHIT
Of course. I'm at the office,
whenever.

MICHAEL
Thanks.

He reaches to hang up, then frowns. Something occurring to
him. Bringing the receiver back--

MICHAEL
Whit? You there?

WHIT
...Yeah, I'm here, what...

MICHAEL
What did you mean, you haven't
heard from me?

WHIT
What's that?

MICHAEL
You said you haven't heard
anything from me.

WHIT
The message I'd left, now I
understand, I left it that Friday.

MICHAEL

What message.

WHIT

About speaking to your class,
as a guest. You'd asked me if
I was interested...I don't see
why I can't do it.

MICHAEL

Wait, wait, wait -- you called me
Friday. You left a message.

WHIT

At the house.

MICHAEL

When did you call?

WHIT

In the afternoon, I don't know,
around four or five maybe?

Michael is standing at the window, starting to panic. He
looks out: there's a bearded PHONE COMPANY TECHNICIAN perched
on a phone pole down the street.

MICHAEL

I didn't have any messages Friday.

WHIT

You wouldn't remember it, Michael.
Christ, if you'd just found out--

MICHAEL

No. I didn't have any messages.

Still staring at the technician on the phone pole.

WHIT

Well, I had called you to say--

MICHAEL

I have to call you back.

He hangs up abruptly.

The technician seems to look toward his house.

Michael backs away from the window, surveying the room like
his own house is now horribly strange to him. He moves out--

INT. LIVING ROOM/KITCHEN

--hurrying down to the ground floor, into the kitchen, past
the answering machine, into the--

INT. GARAGE

Closed, car parked inside. Michael jumps in the car, settles there, picks up his cellular phone. Dials.

WHIT (over phone)

Whit Carver.

MICHAEL

It's me.

WHIT

Michael--

MICHAEL

I'm calling from somewhere else. Listen to me carefully. I know you can't do anything for me, give me any information. But I can give you information, and you can do what you want with it.

(beat)

When I talked to you that day, about someone hiding their history, I was talking about my neighbor. His name is Oliver Hunt, it used to be William Fenimore. Run it through your computers, see what you find. Don't do it for me, don't tell me anything. Oliver Hunt.

WHIT

Michael, slow down, what's--

MICHAEL

He has a history, Whit. Run the name.

WHIT

Wait, what has he done?--

MICHAEL

If I'm right, there's a wiretap on my phone. I'll call you from somewhere when I'm back.

WHIT

Back? Where are you going?

MICHAEL

To get you the proof.

EXT. CONROY HOUSE -- DAY

The garage door opens; Michael's car backs out fast. Speeds off down the street.

Passing the telephone pole where the technician had been. Because the technician and his truck are gone.

INT. GW UNIVERSITY HALLWAY -- DAY

Where some STUDENTS are gathered outside a classroom door: a notice reads today's class has been cancelled.

EXT. ST. LOUIS ARCH -- DAWN

Establishing city skyline. A plane descends overhead.

INT. ST. LOUIS AIRPORT -- DAY

Michael marches from the gate, rummaging through a shoulder bag; a suit jacket, some papers.

EXT. AIRPORT -- TAXI DISPATCH -- DAY

CABDRIVER

Happy Fourth. Where's the fireworks.

MICHAEL

(checking envelope)

4140 Sandalwood Way.

CABDRIVER

Where's that.

MICHAEL

I don't know.

CABDRIVER

Sounds like suburbs.

He sighs, grabs a city map from the glove, and hits the meter. Michael sets the envelope down.

CLOSE ON ENVELOPE

It's the U.Penn alumni letter. The scratched-out address still readable: 4140 Sandalwood Way. St. Louis, MO.

EXT. SUBURBAN DEVELOPMENT -- DAY

Much like the Falls Church community where Michael lives. Evenly-spaced homes and lawns, uniformly designed houses.

The taxi deposits him at the end of a block. Michael gets out wearing a wrinkled suit and tie, hands money to the driver:

MICHAEL

Drive around. Come back in a half hour; hang onto my stuff. Please, okay?

The driver gives him a weary look, takes the money, heads off.

Michael adjusts his suit, strides down the block until he finds 4140. An average two-story. Two scruffy BOYS, one on crutches, playing with a German shepherd in the yard.

The dog runs over and yips at Michael's feet. The boys call him back.

Michael surveys 4140, then moves on to the home next door.

EXT. NEXT DOOR HOUSE -- DAY

A doormat reads "Peters." Michael knocks; a pretty, 25-ish PREGNANT WOMAN, in paint smock, appears at the screen:

MICHAEL

Mrs. Peters?

YOUNG MOM

What are you selling.

MICHAEL

My name is Michael Conroy. I'm with the F.B.I. I'd like to speak with you a moment if I may.

He flashes an I.D. picture-wallet quick; doesn't smile. The woman looks him over, opens the door.

YOUNG MOM

Come on in.

INT. PETERS HOUSE -- DAY

Michael enters the living room; here-and-there decorated, the house of a young couple starting out.

YOUNG MOM
 (calling outside)
 Here, Wolf!
 (to Michael)
 It's been a while since we've
 seen you.

MICHAEL
 Seen...?

YOUNG MOM
 The F.B.I. Is there something
 new? About the neighbors?
 (Michael hesitates)
 You're here about the family that
 used to live next door, right?

MICHAEL
 That used to live next door. Yes.

YOUNG MOM
 Right.

MICHAEL
 I've just been assigned the case,
 I'm here from Washington, I
 didn't know you'd been contacted
 before.

YOUNG MOM
 A couple years ago, sure.

The German shepherd bounds in the house. The young woman
 closes the door, grabbing the dog by the scruff.

YOUNG MOM
 Good boy, Wolf. Good boy. Look
 at me. Wolf, look at me. Now
 look at the man. Good. Now,
 ready, and...get him.

The dog bares teeth and rushes Michael. He leaps onto a
 couch, higher to a side table, and clutches a bookshelf near
 the ceiling. Wolf snarls at his feet.

MICHAEL
 Hey, Jesus, what--

YOUNG MOM
 The last time the F.B.I. came
 here there were two of them, they
 gave me a long look at their I.D.'s,
 and they parked right there out
 front. The next command is Dinner.

MICHAEL

Okay, I'm not the F.B.I., I'm
not the F.B.I.--

YOUNG MOM

Whose badge was that.

MICHAEL

My wife's.

YOUNG MOM

It didn't look like you.

MICHAEL

But I'm here about that family.
From next door. Please--

YOUNG MOM

How do you know them?

MICHAEL

They're my neighbors. I'm from
Washington. My neighbors. Now.

The woman frowns at this. Calls off the dog:

YOUNG MOM

Wolf. Waffle.

The German shepherd goes silent, low to the ground. Begins
skulking back and forth, eyes on his prey.

Michael climbs down from the bookshelf.

MICHAEL

The F.B.I.'s asked you questions
before. Two years ago. After
the bombing.

YOUNG MOM

They're your neighbors...

MICHAEL

Yeah.

YOUNG MOM

And you've come all the way to
St. Louis...

MICHAEL

...because I think I know something
about them. Please hear me out.
Something...that I'm not supposed
to know.

EXT. FRONT PORCH -- DAY

Michael sits with girl-faced Mrs. Peters, both regarding the house next door. Wolf playing with neighbor kids again.

YOUNG MOM

All I can tell you is what we told the F.B.I. back then. They were nice people, they always acted normal, we babysat their kids a few times. We only moved in three years ago, so we only knew them a little while.

MICHAEL

What exactly did the agents ask you?

YOUNG MOM

Ohh, if we ever thought they were doing anything suspicious. If they talked about politics with us. What groups we knew they were involved in; they were in everything, church things, Neighborhood Watch, stuff for the kids.

MICHAEL

Did the agents tell you why they were asking?

YOUNG MOM

They said they were investigating all sorts of people. They interviewed us two times. That was back when everyone thought that bomber couldn't have done it alone.

MICHAEL

But you told them you'd never seen anything strange next door.

YOUNG MOM

Never. They were nice people.

MICHAEL

And the way they were acting around the time of the bombing -- just before, just after...

YOUNG MOM

They were nice people.

Michael frowns. He's getting nothing.

MICHAEL

What about work. Oliver. Do you know where he worked?

YOUNG MOM

An architecture firm? Or construction? I don't remember, somewhere around here.

MICHAEL

Not anywhere downtown.

YOUNG MOM

Oh, no. That's twenty miles from here. Why -- is he doing something different now?

MICHAEL

Something different?

YOUNG MOM

A different job. I remember they were moving to Washington, he said he didn't have a job yet. He was going to find something there.

Michael stares at her a long moment.

MICHAEL

He didn't have a job before they moved.

YOUNG MOM

No, because my husband asked him where--

MICHAEL

Did they tell you why they were moving? To Washington?

He shrugs.

YOUNG MOM

He said there'd be work there.

Michael ponders this. The girl studies him.

MICHAEL

When he was a teenager, he tried to leave a bomb in a building. A company -- working for the government -- that had cheated his father. That's why the F.B.I. interviewed you about him after St. Louis. They were looking at anyone with a past.

YOUNG MOM

When I was 12, I was arrested for peeing on a junior high. That's gonna follow me forever?

Michael manages a smile. Perhaps something about her reminds him of Brooke. She continues:

YOUNG MOM

I don't understand. If the F.B.I. decided he wasn't involved, what makes you...

(trails off)

What made you come all this way. What exactly did you see.

He doesn't answer. The girl looks off to the house.

YOUNG MOM

The people who live there now... they never come out, no one ever comes over, they leave their house a mess -- now they're suspicious.

(beat)

Oliver and Cheryl...always seemed like they knew everybody. They had all the friends in the world.

EXT. ST. LOUIS FEDERAL BUILDING -- DOWNTOWN -- DAY

Michael sits at a bus shelter, holding one of his research folders. Looks across the street at a brand-new building.

Checks down at his open folder: a picture of the old building's wreckage, inset a shot of the bomber David Scobee. Next to that is a shot of an older, distinguished-looking man and woman avoiding reporters.

A caption reads "Dr. Alan Scobee and wife Abigail, the suspect's parents, after F.B.I. questioning."

A bus arrives. Michael gets on.

EXT. SUBURBAN THREE-STORY HOUSE - DAY

In a posh suburb of city. Michael is at the door, inquiring to a dignified HOUSEWIFE who is shaking her head no.

EXT. CITY TOWNHOME -- DAY

Amidst a modest row of urban townhouses. Michael at the front door. Another WOMAN offering him some directions.

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX -- DAY

A downtown neighborhood significantly edgier than the other two. A drab building in some disrepair. Michael enters.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING -- DAY

No doorman or front desk. A sign at the elevators reads "Out of Service." Michael checks the mailboxes.

Finding the strip of punch-tape marked "Scobee."

INT. THIRD FLOOR HALL -- DAY

Sad walls, faded carpet. Michael reaches a door and KNOCKS. After a long moment, an older voice through the wood:

ALAN (o.s.)

Who's there.

MICHAEL

My name is Michael Conroy, Dr. Scobee. I'm a professor, I teach history. I'm from Washington.

ALAN (o.s.)

What do you want.

MICHAEL

I teach a course in terrorism.

ALAN (o.s.)

No more reporters.

MICHAEL

I'm not a reporter, I'm a history professor, I'm not here to bring you any attention. I can show you...this is my faculty card...

He slips a card under the door. A long beat.

ALAN (o.s.)

No more reporters.

The sound of footsteps shuffling away.

MICHAEL

Sir, I'm here because I know your son didn't act alone. I know who else was a part of it, maybe even forced your son into it...

(MORE)

MICHAEL (cont'd)

...but unless I can find a connection
between them, I have no proof.
There's a connection somewhere...

(no response)

I'm not here to write a book, I'm
not here for my studies...I'm here
because I know who this other
person is.

(beat)

I think there's going to be
another bombing.

A silence. Then a chain rattles in the lock. The door opens
to reveal DR. ALAN SCOBEE, his black hair now grey, looking
ten years older than the newspaper photo from two years ago.
Wears an Oxford shirt and slacks which seem two sizes too big.

He looks Michael over with blank eyes, shuffles away inside.

INT. SCOBEE'S APARTMENT -- DAY -- LATER

An extensive library, a half-house full of furniture crammed
into the small unkempt space. Michael stands. Dr. Scobee
sits at a dirty window's ledge.

ALAN

Was it hard to find me.

MICHAEL

You've moved several times.
Your wife...your ex-wife--

ALAN

I live alone now. I haven't
been working since...after...

(trails off)

People know whose father I am.

The older man finally turns back to Michael:

ALAN

How long has it been.

MICHAEL

Two years.

ALAN

Seems...longer.

(beat)

You're a professor, you say.
I taught things once.

He pauses, seems to gather his strength:

ALAN

I've been through all this before. Government, the police, then writers. Everyone wanted to believe it was political. Part of a conspiracy, part of a group. Abby and I too, David wasn't a... strong...boy, he was impressionable. Believed what friends around him said...why couldn't he get involved with people who could talk him into... even this...

(resigned)

The police, the F.B.I., they found nothing. It was him alone. They decided this. Sixty-three people dead. Over taxes. David alone.

MICHAEL

And do you now believe that?

ALAN

I...will never...believe that.

MICHAEL

Have you ever heard the name Oliver Hunt. Or William Fenimore.

The older man shakes his head.

ALAN

I have heard too many names.

MICHAEL

Your son was an electrician. Had he ever been employed by any engineering firms? Companies involved in construction--

ALAN

He worked the same place ten years. Tarry Electrical. Right downtown.

MICHAEL

I've been to see them.

ALAN

He did his time, they took him back.

MICHAEL

He never did any work out in the suburbs?

(Scobee shakes head)

The people he knew, his friends--

ALAN

(losing patience)

They were all checked: neighbors, customers, people he grew up with, all this long ago. Two years--

MICHAEL

The man I think knew your son would have been thirty-six. Worked in architectural engineering, lived in the western suburbs. In St. Louis for years, grew up in Kansas, strong feelings on politics. A son and two daughters, a wife, they go to church, he's made himself...a normal life...

He trails off, realizing the futility of how this sounds.

ALAN

Professor. May I ask you why you're so sure this man of yours was a part of what happened here.

MICHAEL

The same reason you're sure David didn't act alone.

Michael looks around, hoping to find some inspiration, some clue...but there is nothing. Resigned, he looks again to the older man.

MICHAEL

I had to come here. You must understand. I had to try.

Dr. Scobee nods imperceptibly.

MICHAEL

I'm sorry to bring it back.

ALAN

It never goes away.

Michael muses, turns for the door. Reaching it:

ALAN

Professor Conroy...I know my son didn't act alone because ten children died that day. That day care center, in the building. He had to know it was there. David would have never done anything to harm children. Not on his own.

MICHAEL

Though he had none.

ALAN

No. But he did things for them.
Sometimes sponsored boys from
city shelters, and scout troops,
even coached boys' football when--

MICHAEL

Wait...scout troops...?

ALAN

Yes. Like Boy Scouts, but for
younger children.

Michael has died in his tracks. The terror coming:

MICHAEL

He worked with scouts.

ANGLE ON BOX OF PHOTOS -- MOMENTS LATER

A large cardboard box, the older man's hands rifling through
odd snapshots of David, all through his life:

ALAN (o.s.)

He was a grownup chaperone, would
take boys camping, go to their
meetings, teach them--

(finding shot)

Here. Here he is, this must have
been some weekend adventure--

He hands a picture to Michael: David Scobee roasting
marshmallows with a half-dozen BOYS in Cub Scout uniforms.

ON MICHAEL

studying the picture...and then going rigid.

ON THE PHOTO

where one child's face smiles clearly in the firelight.

It is Brody. Oliver's son. Two years younger.

ALAN (o.s.)

David was best with children.

INT. APARTMENT HALLWAY -- SECONDS LATER

Michael bursts out of the room, sprinting for the stairs--

ALAN
Mr. Conroy! Professor!

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING -- LOBBY -- DAY

Michael hits the ground floor running, tearing for the doors, flying by a bearded MAN on his way out, hand in pockets--

MICHAEL
Look out--

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING -- DAY

Michael bursts out, stuffing the photo into his jacket, looking desperately for a cab. Behind him, the man he almost ran over leaves the building, walking down the street.

Michael starts the other way. Then freezes.

Something has registered.

He turns around. Watches the man walking off. Dressed casually, moving quick.

Michael darkens.

MICHAEL
Sir...!

The man turns. It's The Technician who had been perched on the phone pole in Falls Church. And also the same bearded man from Brody's welcome-home party who'd been manning the grill.

Whether or not Michael recognizes him, the man thinks he has.

And takes off running.

Michael immediately breaks in pursuit.

EXT. CITY NEIGHBORHOOD STREETS -- ON CHASE -- DAY

The Technician darts around a corner, through an intersection, narrowly DODGING a pair of passing cars.

Michael sprints after him, skirting the street, fifty feet behind as The Technician races into--

INT. ANOTHER APARTMENT BUILDING

--CRASHING through the doors and barrelling down a long, carpeted center hall, past some PEOPLE waiting at elevators:

MICHAEL
Stop him! Somebody...!

Michael closing the gap, hurtling down the corridor--

EXT. A BACK EXIT -- ALLEYWAY

Michael BURSTS out, as a garbage dumpster SLAMS right toward the door. He slips aside as it CRASHES hard to the wall.

The Technician is running down the alley.

Michael resumes the chase.

THROUGH THE ALLEY

along more buildings, until one side opens upon a long, link fence. The Technician leaps, scaling it up and over--

EXT. CITY GRADE SCHOOL -- PLAYGROUND

A fence-enclosed asphalt schoolyard, painted ball courts and steel monkey bars. The Technician hits the ground.

A bell RINGS.

Michael jumps at the fence, hauling himself over. Spills to the asphalt. The Technician is running toward one set of school doors--

--and inside, disappearing. Michael scrambles up, racing for the school at top speed--

AS DOZENS AND DOZENS OF SCHOOLCHILDREN

come spilling out of the doors, LAUGHING and YELLING. Recess time. Funnelling onto the playground.

Michael hits the wave, trying to edge kids aside to get into the building.

MICHAEL
Let me through...let me through!

But the little people just keep coming. He's cut off. Looks around at the smiling kids with helplessness.

And a terrible, growing fear.

INT. ST. LOUIS AIRPORT -- TICKET COUNTER -- DAY

Michael, looking a wreck; a scared flight AGENT checking:

FLIGHT AGENT

Sir, the next Washington flight
is booked, but we have one leaving
in three hours--

MICHAEL

I need a FLIGHT...FUCKING...NOW!!!

EXT. MOUNTAIN ROADS/INT. MICHAEL'S CAR -- DUSK

Michael driving madly, passing every car on the road, his
hands with a death-grip on the wheel. He's in panic state.

EXT. ENTRANCE TO CAMP OCCOQUAN -- DUSK

His car skids onto the dirt road to the campgrounds.

INT. CAMPGROUND OFFICE -- DUSK

MICHAEL

My son--

CAMP OFFICIAL

What troop was that, sir?

MICHAEL

Troop, I don't know what troop,
from Falls Church. Conroy.
Where is my son--

2ND OFFICIAL

(overhearing)

Conroy? He was taken home this
afternoon?

MICHAEL

No--

2ND OFFICIAL

His father called. Said there'd
been an accident at home. Car
accident.

MICHAEL

Wait, no, I'm his father--

2ND OFFICIAL

Well...a man had called...we
put his scoutmaster on the phone--

MICHAEL

Where is my son!

The lead official is checking the camp register:

CAMP OFFICIAL

He was taken home, Mr. Conroy--

MICHAEL

Taken by WHO!?

2ND OFFICIAL

His scoutmaster, sir. His
scoutmaster drove him home.

CAMP OFFICIAL

(off the register)
It's right here. Him and another
boy--

Michael locks on the first official:

MICHAEL

What other boy.

CAMP OFFICIAL

Hunt. Brody Hunt. Their
scoutmaster left with them both.

Michael's heart sinks. Nervously:

2ND OFFICIAL

Was...there was an accident?

MICHAEL

Where...is...their scoutmaster.

The camp officials trade troubled glances:

2ND OFFICIAL

They only left a few hours ago,
Mr. Conroy. Maybe you...
(hopeful)
...maybe you passed them on
the way.

Michael backs from the office, looking at the men with dread
fear in his eyes.

CAMP OFFICIAL

We can get someone from their
troop--

--but Michael's out the door.

EXT. CAMPGROUND OFFICE -- DUSK

He stumbles to his car, parked at an angle in the dirt lot, slams his way inside--

--as the faint WHISTLE of a bottle rocket freezes him. He looks skyward to see a spark of distant white light. An early firework.

He jams his key in the ignition.

CUT TO:

EXT. HUNT HOUSE -- NIGHT

Approaching the block, the street becomes lined with cars. At the house, the driveway is packed, five cars crammed. A few lights on, MUSIC playing, many VOICES.

Above the house, a few flashes of colored LIGHT as sparklers are being tossed high in the air.

ON THE STREET

Michael's car creeps by. Headlights off. Inside, Michael looks worn, eyes checking everything he passes, on edge.

He rolls into his driveway at an angle. Stopping halfway into his yard. Climbs out of the car.

FROM THIS ANGLE

He can glimpse the 4th of July party being held in the Hunts' backyard. Reminiscent of Brody's welcome-home party: ADULTS talking, KIDS playing, barbecue, music...

Michael shuts the car door.

EXT. HUNT BACKYARD -- NIGHT

CHILDREN are lighting sparklers and flinging them into the sky, then dodging out of the way as they tumble down.

Neither Grant nor Brody are among them.

MICHAEL

his movements slow, dazed, steps through the shrub-gap from his property to the Hunts'. Joining the party.

Thirty, maybe forty GUESTS, milling about. Eating. Laughing.

Michael looks to his right, sees The Delivery Man that Brooke had seen at the warehouse. Talking to a teenage GIRL. He glances up, catches Michael's eye. Holds it. Looks away.

AT THE BARBECUE

The Technician wears a madras shirt, holding a plate of hot dogs. Serving them up to Susannah and Annemarie.

BY THE PORCH TABLES

Stands the Scoutmaster, talking with Cheryl. Serious tones. The Scoutmaster looks over, sees Michael, tells Cheryl. She looks up. Stone-faced. Then resumes their conversation.

MICHAEL

makes his way through the crowd, studying every face. Husbands in golf shirts, wives in sundresses, teenagers around a radio, a loner who looks awkward at parties...

He moves toward the house.

THE SCOUTMASTER AND CHERYL

split up. He toward the barbecue. She toward the children.

AT THE PORCH

Michael stops, the guests seeming to give him a wide circle to himself. All still chatting and eating.

Sensing a presence behind him, Michael turns.

From the study...

OLIVER

is watching. Through the window. Staring at Michael. He stirs his drink, face expressionless. Then turns his back.

INT. STUDY -- NIGHT

Oliver, flanked by his pictures of buildings, is waiting as Michael enters. A television is on: the fireworks display downtown -- a lightshow over the Mall.

Michael looks to the window...and the party outside.

What to anyone would look like a normal suburban party, seems to him a coven of witches.

OLIVER

You've been asking questions
about me, Michael.

(beat)

What would possess you to do
something like that.

No response.

OLIVER

You should have come to me...
if there was something you
wanted to know.

MICHAEL

Where's my son.

OLIVER

With mine. They're safe.
Can I get you something to drink?
Martini, some punch?

MICHAEL

I saved his life...

OLIVER

What's that?

MICHAEL

Your son. I saved his life.

OLIVER

Yes. It's why you're still
here with us.

Michael turns. Oliver smiles. No trace of menace. Merely...
neighborly.

MICHAEL

And Brooke...

Oliver takes a drink.

OLIVER

We're on a schedule. That's all.

MICHAEL

What's the target.

OLIVER

I'm sorry?

MICHAEL
 The target. The building.
 (no response)
 How many people are you going
 to kill. This time.

The way Oliver speaks, they might as well be talking about gardening:

OLIVER
 Well. If you're compelled to go
 talk to someone...tell someone a
 story of some kind...the police,
 perhaps, federal agents of some sort...
 (lightly)
 ...well, then I imagine we'll
 kill just one. Are you sure I
 can't offer you a drink?

Michael looks to the framed floor plan of Monticello:

OLIVER
 It's not there anymore, Michael.

MICHAEL
 What are you.

Oliver doesn't answer. It sounded rhetorical.

OLIVER
 I'm waiting--

MICHAEL
 He's nine years old.

OLIVER
 Yeah. When'll he be ten?

Michael takes a step; Oliver immediately steps to the side. Clearly, he's ready for any move.

MICHAEL
 Sixty-three people were killed
 in St. Louis. And it was you.
 You knew David Scobee through
 the Scouts. You...
 (looking out, finding
 Scoutmaster, Technician)
 ...him...him...
 (scours the guests)
 ...who else...
 (back to Oliver)
 ...you were all together.
 (MORE)

MICHAEL (cont'd)

David was just the one who drove in with the bomb. His history with the I.R.S., people just assumed he was in it alone.

Oliver looks almost amused.

MICHAEL

And now the rest of you are here.

As he finds a little strength:

MICHAEL

How hard has it been to keep it all secret. How careful have you had to be...all of you...with that moment in your past you know will always be there. Whenever someone comes looking...

(snaps)

What is the TARGET?! How many PEOPLE are you going to KILL!?

Some heads turn outside, hearing the raised voice. Oliver sets down his drink, calmly walks to Michael. A foot away:

OLIVER

If you want...to be a father... to a son...you will walk to your house, sleep in your bed, teach your classes, and live your life.

(beat)

However, if I see...a strange car...on my street...if I detect... an odd sound...on my phone.

(beat)

The last choice you made was wrong. Here is another one.

Cold eyes.

OLIVER

In a few days, this will all be over.

MICHAEL

How many days.

OLIVER

In a few days.

MICHAEL

When. Tell me.

Oliver considers.

OLIVER

Because of you, my son is alive.
I would very much like to return
the favor.

(nothing more)

We're having a party, Michael.
You're more than welcome to
join us.

Oliver leaves, outside to the porch, where Cheryl puts her arm around his waist. They watch the children tossing sparklers.

Michael is left.

INT. CONROY HOUSE -- LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

Dark. Strains of the party next door still going on. The door opens; Michael's silhouette shuffles in.

Looks around his home as if he's a stranger there.

Shuts the door. Starts toward the stairs--

--and simply collapses, falling against a wall, sliding down, upturning a side table on his way to the floor. He sits there, staring into the darkness.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM -- MORNING

Michael has not moved.

Through the window, the Hunt house is visible. Cheryl leaves with Susannah and Annemarie, trundling them in the minivan.

Oliver appears at the steps, seeing them off. He turns to look toward the Conroy house. Then returns inside.

Their vague voices are audible, but if Michael hears them, he gives no sign. On the floor. He remains.

INT. GW CLASSROOM -- DAY

Michael sits at the desk, papers and photos spread out before him. He doesn't hear the door open:

WHIT (o.s.)

I wasn't sure if I'd find you
here.

Whit, in his government issue suit and coat, in the doorway.

WHIT

Where the hell'd you disappear?

MICHAEL

I...I have a class I have to get ready for.

WHIT

You got no time for me? I didn't want to call you, the way you were talking...

(trails off)

What's going on, Michael.

(no response)

I'm here about Oliver Hunt.

EXT. KEY BRIDGE -- DAY

Michael and Whit stand at the railing, the Potomac below. Beyond them, the spires of Washington's landmarks: the Monument, the Capitol, Lincoln Memorial, Kennedy Center...

WHIT

He did time as a minor for trying to leave a homemade bomb in a mailroom in Kansas City. Twenty-two years ago, before he changed his name. Not a charge on his record every since. He was one of the thousand guys we looked at after the St. Louis bombing, because of his background, since he was living there at the time. But he and everybody he was known to be close to came up clean.

(beat)

Any other information I should know about?

Michael looks over the river. Says nothing.

WHIT

Is that what you found out? The Kansas City thing, when he was sixteen? Got you thinking?

(beat)

People hide their pasts for a lot of reasons.

MICHAEL

Some don't have to.

WHIT

Do you have something on this
guy or not? Or do you just not
like him in your neighborhood?

Michael remains silent. Exasperated:

WHIT

If you've got nothing, Michael,
if this is all you have to tell
me, then you shouldn't be teaching
this class again. Because it's
getting inside your head.

(beat)

You can tell me there's something
to go on and I'll go. But I
won't walk into another Copper
Creek. Neither should you.

Michael is looking at the monuments:

MICHAEL

(distant)

How many are there.

WHIT

How many what.

MICHAEL

The buildings, in this city. How
many of them are government.

Whit frowns, follows his gaze.

WHIT

Maybe a hundred. Two. What are
you talking about.

MICHAEL

Those people in St. Louis. Sixty-
three people you never met, good
and bad. Would you have traded
your life for theirs?

It takes a moment.

WHIT

Yes.

Michael nods.

MICHAEL

Would you have traded mine?

Whit doesn't answer. Warily:

WHIT

There was no tap on your phone.
I ran a check. Coulda meant my
job, but I ran it. Your phone
that day was fine.

(beat)

Give up the class, Michael.

Whit pulls his coat tight and leaves him. Walking away down
the bridge.

INT. GW CLASSROOM -- DAY
CLOSE ON PHOTO PROJECTION

of the World Trade Center. The aftermath of the bombing.

MICHAEL (o.s.)

The men who targeted this building
did not do it to destroy any
institution. No terrorist could
do that. Nor did they do it to
throw the country's financial
markets into chaos, nor to strike
a blow at any government offices.
There were none inside.

CLOSE ON MICHAEL

lecturing, but wearing this time, pondering the words with
haggard weight.

MICHAEL

They did it to strike a blow at
a symbol. Of a system. Which
they wanted to see one day fall.
And had they not been caught,
they would have continued...to
attack such symbols with these
methods...until they were found,
or until these strikes turned the
country to their view that it
was not they who were the enemy,
but the system.

Michael looks out his window. Stares off.

For a long time.

STUDENT #1

Professor?

MICHAEL

(snaps back)

Yes--

STUDENT #1
Is everything all right?

Michael stares at her, lost.

MICHAEL
Are...are there questions?

The students trade looks. Something's off about their teacher today. Finally, a hand raises from the back.

It's Kemp, the student who's usually asleep.

KEMP
Yeah, I got a question.

MICHAEL
Mr. Kemp. Glad you're with us.

KEMP
You said that four people were charged and convicted in the bombing. As being conspirators.

MICHAEL
That's right.

KEMP
What about the other people who knew. Maybe they weren't in on it, but, I mean, you figure there were others who knew what was going on. Right? Maybe they didn't know it was a bombing, but they knew something was gonna happen at the Trade Center. Or maybe they didn't know where, but they knew there was gonna be a bomb.

MICHAEL
Yes, Mr. Kemp...?

KEMP
What happened to those people.

MICHAEL
What do you mean.

KEMP
I mean if they knew something was happening, and they said nothing...weren't they conspirators too?

The class waits for Michael's answer. His eyes float over their expectant faces. Utterly blank. Finally:

STUDENT #1
(turns to Kemp)
Not if they didn't know what
was being planned--

STUDENT #2
Yeah, how could they be
conspirators--

KEMP
Because if they'd done something
it might've been stopped--

STUDENT #1
You can't just prove what
somebody knows--

STUDENT #2
Somebody keeps a secret to
protect themselves, how can you
say they shouldn't have?

KEMP
Professor?--

They look to the front to see the door swing shut. Michael is gone.

SLOW STUDENT
I had a question about the term
paper.

INT. CAMPUS OFFICES -- HALLWAY -- DAY

Michael walks quickly through, checking the faces of STUDENTS, PROFESSORS, PARENTS as he passes. Never knowing where or when he may be being watched.

INT. MICHAEL'S OFFICE -- DAY

He strides in, shuts his door, draws his blinds. Dials his phone. Looks at it, unsure.

And hangs it up.

EXT. PHONE BOOTH -- D.C. STREET -- DAY

Michael glancing around nervously, checking the passing faces, waiting for the call to go through:

VOICE (over phone)
Good afternoon. CityCar.

MICHAEL
Hello, yes. Tomorrow, in the
morning. I need to rent a car.

EXT. CONROY HOUSE -- DUSK

Michael drives home in his Saturn. Pulls into the garage.
Next door, Cheryl is doing some gardening.

She glances up as he arrives. Waves.

The garage door slides shut.

INT. CONROY HOUSE -- BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Lights out. Michael lies in bed, fully clothed, staring at
the ceiling. He turns to a clock. It reads 4 A.M.

INT. LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

Michael quietly comes downstairs. About to pass a window, he
ducks to all fours and crawls under it.

EXT. CONROY HOUSE -- BACK DOOR -- NIGHT

Painstakingly quiet, the door opens. Suburban silence:
crickets, far-distant traffic, early birds.

Michael crouches out, pulls the door shut, low to the ground.
He has Brooke's bookbag on his shoulder.

His eyes are on the Hunt house. Dark. Silent.

In a crouch, he creeps to the shrub-line. Uses it as cover as
he hurries toward the back of his yard. Into some trees.

And into another neighbor's yard beyond.

EXT. ANOTHER SUBURBAN STREET -- NIGHT

Michael appears from the darkness, cutting through a
stranger's yard and out to a road. He starts jogging away.

EXT. CITYCAR RENTAL -- PRE-DAWN

Michael signing the papers to pick up his rental car.

INT. LOCAL DINER -- MORNING

At a corner counter stool, Michael sits, staring at a clock. It shows 8:59. His every nerve is on edge.

WAITRESS (o.s.)
Can I get you another cup?

MICHAEL
(oblivious to her)
Please.

The waitress shakes her head. Pours.

WAITRESS
Mister, you're about to set
our new coffee record.

MICHAEL
Thank you.

The clock switches to 9:00. Michael springs off his stool.

EXT. DINER -- PAY PHONE -- MOMENTS LATER

RECEPTIONIST (over phone)
Archer/Talmadge Engineering.

MICHAEL
Yes, Oliver Hunt, please.

RECEPTIONIST
Mr. Hunt is out of the office,
sir. Would you like to leave a
voice mail?

MICHAEL
No, I have to reach him, it's an
emergency.

RECEPTIONIST
(reluctant)
Well, I'm afraid he's not here,
he's out sick today--

MICHAEL
Thanks--

He hangs up. Swings the bookbag around his shoulder.

EXT. CREEKSIDE ROAD -- MORNING

The site of Brooke's accident. Michael's rental Camry speeds around the bend, toward the outlet center.

EXT. CAPITAL DELIVERY WAREHOUSE -- MORNING

Where trucks and vans are being loaded for the day's runs.

ANGLE ON ROAD TO OUTLET CENTER

Where the rental Camry is parked at the roadside. The hood up, hazard lights on, as if the car has given out.

Inside, Michael is low in the seat, watching the delivery center through a 35mm camera's telephoto lens.

MICHAEL'S P.O.V.

In camera crosshairs, his focus is the parking lot. Where The Scoutmaster and The Technician emerge from a sedan.

The camera WHIRS. A picture taken.

They walk around the side of the warehouse. Where they are met by The Delivery Man.

The camera WHIRS. Another picture.

They talk for a moment, then split up. The 35mm follows--

THE DELIVERY MAN

--to the truck loading area. He climbs in a white van emblazoned "Capital Delivery." And pulls toward the exit.

AT THE EXIT

He pauses the van, allowing The Scoutmaster and The Technician to open the back doors and climb in.

The camera WHIRS again.

EXT. FULL SCENE

As the Capital Delivery van pulls onto the outlet center road and drives past, Michael stuffs the camera back in Brooke's bookbag.

He rises from hiding, jumps out to close his hood. Shuts off his hazards and starts the engine.

Following the van.

EXT. OUTERLYING SUBURB STREETS -- DAY

The Capital Delivery van makes its way back toward Falls Church. At a safe distance, Michael's Camry follows.

EXT. FALLS CHURCH STREETS -- DAY

Into a commercial district. Michael keeps a couple cars behind. The van clearly visible up ahead.

EXT. OLD OFFICE DISTRICT -- DAY

Cruising along the street, the van suddenly pulls to a STOP at the curb. Michael is approaching it too fast--

--so he has to keep going. Passes the van. Shields his face.

In his rearview, he sees the van take a TURN into an alley between two office buildings. Empty and for lease.

THE CAMRY

narrowly hooks a U-turn: Michael returns to the office buildings, braking to peer down--

THE ALLEY

which is empty. No van.

Michael tenses, makes the turn, driving into the alley. SPEEDING UP toward the daylight of the street ahead, trying to play catch-up as--

OLIVER'S MINIVAN

--suddenly SHOOTs OUT from a cross-alley!

Blocking Michael's path; he brakes hard, swerves--

--and CRASHES his front fender into the minivan's side. He's thrown a little; but the cars are not badly damaged.

EXT. OFFICE BLDG. ALLEY -- ON SCENE

Oliver leaps from the minivan, hurrying to Michael's door:

OLIVER

(pulling him out)

Neighbor, are you all right?
What are you doing in this part
of town--

As he throws a FIST into his gut. Michael doubles over.

At the alley's end, the Capital Delivery van pulls back into view. Calling to it:

OLIVER
I've got him! Go ahead! We're
on schedule!

From the van, The Delivery Man nods. Accelerates away.

Oliver grabs Michael, hefts him up, checks both directions:

OLIVER
Had to know, didn't you. You
just had to know--

INT. FOR-LEASE OFFICE BUILDING -- DAY

As a door from the alley is forced open: Michael goes
TUMBLING to the ground.

The huge space is abandoned. Awaiting a new tenant. Shredded
carpet, pocked walls, pole supports, trash strewn.

Oliver strides in, delivers another KICK to Michael's stomach.

OLIVER
Couldn't leave your neighbor alone.
(picks him up)
Didn't you check up on me? Didn't
you? Did you really think we'd
leave anything to chance?

Michael coughs, sprawled. Oliver HURLS him into a trash pile.

OLIVER
Aren't you gonna miss your son?

MICHAEL
You can't--

OLIVER
No? Have you ever believed in
something, Michael? Believed with
all your heart? Or were you just
put on this earth to lead your
selfish, lonely life.

Michael tries to get up; Oliver knocks the wind out of him.
He collapses back in the junk.

MICHAEL
What you're about to do--

OLIVER
You have no idea what we're
about to do.

MICHAEL

How many of you...you're madmen...

He struggles for breath. Oliver towers over him.

OLIVER

People believe the government
will never change. No one votes,
no one hopes, no one cares.
Because they have been cheated too
many times. Because they believe
the government is unassailable.

(beat)

They are waiting...millions are
waiting...for someone to show
them that they're wrong.

MICHAEL

You'll be caught. They'll know
it was you this time.

OLIVER

Who will tell them.

MICHAEL

You'll leave your children without
a father--

OLIVER

And you yours.

MICHAEL

Where are they leaving the bomb--

Oliver pulls gloves from a pocket, putting them on.

MICHAEL

WHERE ARE THEY LEAVING THE BOMB?!

OLIVER

You couldn't leave me alone, could
you, Michael. You had to know.

(beat)

Well, now you do. And are you
now glad. And are you now happy.

Darkness in his eyes, he steps toward Michael--

--who lunges forward, grabbing the edge of the tattered carpet
and yanking it upwards. Staples POP free, the fabric flies up
from under Oliver's feet--

--he loses his balance, CRASHES to the ground. Scrambles up--

--as a metal ceiling brace is BASHED across his head. Michael
wields a weapon from the junk pile, starts forward.

Oliver HOWLS, tumbles down.

Michael holds the jagged point to Oliver's throat. Oliver watches coolly...

...as Michael pulls from his pocket a tape recorder. The one he'd taken from Kemp in class. Its tape turning.

MICHAEL

My son is killed, I have you threatening to do it. That bomb explodes, I have you bragging why.

(beat)

They'll know it was you...this time.

Oliver darkens.

MICHAEL

If you want a chance...to get away...to take your family and get far away...you will call off the bomb.

OLIVER

They're gone. It's too late.

MICHAEL

You can contact them!

OLIVER

I can't. It's too late.

MICHAEL

What is the target!

Oliver says nothing. Michael presses the metal to his skin.

OLIVER

You can't stop it.

MICHAEL

What is the building!?

OLIVER

No one can stop it.

MICHAEL

WHAT IS THE BUILDING!?

Oliver stares at him, uncaring. The metal is drawing blood. Then slowly, his eyes turn to the tape recorder.

Michael understands. He presses "stop."

OLIVER
(savoring it)
They sent your wife to her death,
Michael. Surely you won't be
sorry to see them go.

As Michael races from the room--

OLIVER
You can't stop it! YOU'RE TOO
LATE!!!

EXT. ALLEY -- DAY

Michael BURSTS out the door, scrambles to the Camry. Leaps
in, drops the tape recorder in the bookbag. GUNS it--

EXT. OLD OFFICE DISTRICT -- DAY

The Camry SQUEALS out of the alley in reverse, tires SMOKING.
Street traffic BRAKES and SWERVES; it comes from nowhere--

--SKIDDING backwards to face front, accelerating from zero
toward top speed in seconds--

INT. CAMRY -- CONTINUOUS

Michael fights the wheel, shifting, fumbling for the rental
car phone. Unhooks it, dropping it:

DIGITIZED VOICE
To use CityCar cel phone, please
insert your credit card--

MICHAEL
Goddamnit, goddamnit!

EXT. FALLS CHURCH STREETS -- DAY

The Camry flies through a stoplight, sending cross-traffic
into FISHTAILS. It ZIPS into the oncoming lanes--

INT. CAMRY

MICHAEL
(laying on the horn)
Get out of the way!

He has the phone working, panic-dialing.

INT. WHIT'S F.B.I. OFFICE -- INTERCUT

WHIT
(picking up)
Whit Carver.

MICHAEL
Whit, listen to me! There's a
bomb on its way to your building!
You've gotta get everyone out
of there!

WHIT
Michael, what's going on--

MICHAEL
It's in a white van! A Capital
Delivery van!

WHIT
Hang on, slow down--

MICHAEL
They're going to hit your
goddamn offices, Whit! They're
after the F.B.I. this time!

The cel phone signal starts to BREAK UP--

WHIT
Michael, what are you talking
about? Hello? Michael?

MICHAEL
This is real, Whit! It's...
a van...Capital--

WHIT
Michael, where are you?

MICHAEL
Get everybody out of--

WHIT
(deafening static)
Michael? Michael?

MICHAEL
...real!

INT. CAMRY

As the connection HUMS and dies. Michael slams down the
phone, pedal to the floor. SWERVES across three lanes of
traffic--

EXT. HIGHWAY ON-RAMP

--to narrowly skirt a guardrail and make the highway entrance.

INT. WHIT'S OFFICE

Whit stares at the silent phone, not knowing whether his friend is in his right mind. The decision is excruciating--

--and finally he picks back up the receiver:

WHIT (into phone)
Security. Main gate.
(waits)
I need a check of all the deliveries
scheduled for this building.

EXT. LEE HIGHWAY -- DAY

The Camry speeds toward the city from the suburbs. Zig-zagging in and out of heavy traffic. Skirting the shoulder.

The Memorial Bridge ahead, the monuments beyond.

EXT. MEMORIAL BRIDGE -- CITY SIDE

Where the Capital Delivery van, The Delivery Man at the wheel, enters Washington, D.C.

EXT. HIGHWAY -- APPROACHING BRIDGE

Across the river, Michael sees the distant van moving along a parallel parkway. He grips the wheel tighter--

EXT. MEMORIAL BRIDGE -- VIRGINIA SIDE

--and SWERVES past stopped traffic onto the bridge's sidewalk, scraping concrete, SCATTERING pedestrians: two wheels on the curb, two on the road--

INT. F.B.I. BUILDING HALLWAY -- DAY

Whit marches from his office, grim, hurtling into his coat.

INT. WHIT'S OFFICE

Where the phone is RINGING...

INT. CAMRY

...without answer. Michael gives up, focuses on the road--

EXT. FEDERAL DISTRICT -- WASHINGTON, D.C.

--as the Camry blows around traffic, GUNNING through the streets--

--to find its path blocked by a Metro Bus--

--as Michael SWERVES wildly, forced into a detour--

EXT. F.B.I. HEADQUARTERS -- DELIVERY GATE -- DAY

A security post at the gated entry and exit lanes. From the street fence, a road leads fifty feet to the garage underneath the building.

The Capital Delivery van pulls up to the gate/security post.

A GUARD holds up a hand, steps to the driver's window.

EXT. DISTRICT STREETS

The Camry SKIDS around a corner, the F.B.I. building only two blocks off. THREADING the traffic--

INT. CAMRY

Michael sees the van at the security post. Two GUARDS beside:

MICHAEL

That's them! Check the van!

Sees the gate starting to slide open--

MICHAEL

CHECK THE VAN!

Sees the van pulling inside--

MICHAEL

NO!!!

EXT. F.B.I. BUILDING -- DELIVERY GATE

The Camry HURTLES toward it; the guards see, start to pull their guns. As the Camry SKIDS to a halt--

BURSTING out of a door to the building--

WHIT
(sees the car)
Michael!

AT THE GATE

--which is rolling back shut--

--the van is entering the parking garage--

MICHAEL
(to the guard)
Stop the van! There's a bomb
in the van!

GUARD #1
Sir, step out of the car--

MICHAEL
(sees Whit)
THAT'S the van!

WHIT
Michael, wait--

GUARD #2
That van was authorized--

The van disappears down the ramp underground--

MICHAEL
It's got a goddamn BOMB!

GUARD #2
(to Whit)
It's an authorized delivery!

Michael has no more time: he hits the accelerator. The Camry
BURSTS forward, barely SCRAPING through the closing gate--

The guards wheel, aiming their weapons--

WHIT
Hold your fire!

Whit blocks their way; Guard #1 dives for the security post,
slamming an ALARM button--

FOUR ROWS OF METAL TEETH

POP UP in the road between the gate and the garage--

--SHREDDING the Camry's tires. Down to its rims, the car's
momentum gets it to the ramp--

INT. UNDERGROUND GARAGE -- CONTINUOUS

--and SKIDDING down into the delivery level. Coasting dead fifty feet inside. GUARDS swarm from everywhere.

THE CAPITAL DELIVERY VAN

is parked fifty feet ahead, at an area marked "Mail/Parcel Loading."

MICHAEL

leaps out of the Camry, immediately TACKLED by F.B.I. agents--

WHIT AND THE STREET GUARDS

--are racing down the ramp--

WHIT

Hold your fire! He's all right!

MICHAEL

(on the ground)

In the van! IN THE VAN!!!

The agents look to Whit; he nods to them urgently--

--a dozen AGENTS sprint to the van, guns drawn, THRUSTING open the driver's doors and cargo doors--

MICHAEL

Whit, you've got to get everyone out of the building--

As he's hauled up by Whit and the others--

VAN AGENT (o.s.)

It's clean!

MICHAEL

whips his head around. The van agents have all relaxed.

VAN AGENT

The van's clean!

A DRIVER is pulled out: a tall, older man. It's not The Delivery Man.

Michael stumbles free of his guards; they look to Whit, who nods okay. Mystified, Michael moves toward the van.

Whit and the other guards follow--

2ND AGENT
(with the driver)
Says he's here for a pickup--

GATE GUARD
It's the noon pickup--

MICHAEL
(sotto)
It's the wrong van...

GATE GUARD
I tried to tell him at the gate--

3RD AGENT
Whit, what's going on--

WHIT
Michael...?

MICHAEL
It's the wrong van...

GATE GUARD
The guy comes every day, it's the
noon pickup--

WHIT
Michael...?

Michael reaches the van's doors. Looks in the cargo bay.
Empty. Completely empty.

MICHAEL
I...it's...

WHIT
He's authorized to be here, Michael.
You can't get in otherwise. Do
you hear me? For God's sake...

Michael simply stares at the empty van. Whit shakes his head
sadly. His friend is lost.

WHIT
Everyone in here is authorized,
Michael. Everybody.
(sighs)
Except you.

Michael stands there.

And slowly raises his head.

As his eyes seem to awaken. And things start to focus...

...and as he turns around to face his Camry, everything becomes clear. So clear...so very clear...

THAT THE WORLD SEGUES INTO SLOW-MOTION

As he begins to walk...then run...

...a fifty-foot distance that suddenly becomes a chasm...

...as the F.B.I. agents look to Whit...

...instinctively drawing their weapons...

EXT. FALLS CHURCH ALLEY -- SAME TIME

Miles away. Where Oliver's minivan still sits parked in the old office district.

And its side door rolls open, revealing The Scoutmaster and The Technician inside.

EXT. F.B.I. HEADQUARTERS

Where another Capital Delivery van rolls to a stop across the street. The Delivery Man behind the wheel. He gazes at the structure.

INT. PARKING GARAGE -- SLOW-MOTION

Michael is running for the Camry...running...running...

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING ROOFTOP

The towers of the city are visible across the Potomac.

EXT. FALLS CHURCH ALLEY

The Technician climbs out of the minivan to stretch. The Scoutmaster smokes a cigarette.

Behind them, in the minivan, are four empty metal cases.

INT. CAPITAL DELIVERY VAN

The Delivery Man opens a briefcase on the seat beside him. Removes a hand-held device with a readout and a keypad.

He extends its antenna.

INT. PARKING GARAGE -- SLOW-MOTION

Whit is yelling at the other agents "Don't shoot...don't shoot..." He starts after Michael...

...who is almost to the car, stretching hands before him...

EXT. HIGHWAY MOTEL

Somewhere in rural Virginia. A small gated pool beside the parking lot. Some figures at the pool.

In the gravel, Annemarie and Susannah are skipping rope.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING ROOFTOP

A stairwell door opens. Oliver emerges, a handkerchief to his cut neck, walking toward the edge.

Surveying the distant city.

INT. CAPITAL DELIVERY VAN

The Delivery Man punches a code into the keypad. Flicks open a safety lock covering another button.

INT. PARKING GARAGE -- SLOW-MOTION

...running...running...Michael is there...

EXT. HIGHWAY MOTEL

At the pool, Cheryl is lounging, reading a magazine. She smiles off at Brody, leaping off a divingboard and starting a water fight--

--with Grant, the both of them happily splashing away.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING ROOFTOP

Where Oliver breathes in the fresh air and the summer view.

INT. PARKING GARAGE -- SLOW-MOTION

As the trunk of the Camry is lifted open. And Michael's eyes race back and forth, realizing what they're about to see...

EXT. ROOFTOP
CLOSE ON OLIVER'S FACE

Staring. At us. As he says, simply:

OLIVER

Boom.

CUT TO:

BLACK.

And a long darkness.

Eventually, the distinctive WHIRRING of a helicopter...

FADE IN:

GRAINY VIDEO IMAGES FROM ABOVE
EXT. A PARTIALLY DESTROYED BUILDING -- DAY

A former city structure, half-rubble and smoking. Emergency vehicles everywhere. Chaos. Our vantage is circling:

NEWS REPORTER (v.o.)

We are in downtown Washington, D.C., where an explosion has just destroyed two entire wings of the headquarters of the F.B.I. No word yet on the number of casualties; the damage, though, as you can see, looks very severe. No one yet has claimed responsibility for the attack...we're trying to get information on what's going on down there just as fast as we can...

As this segues into another news report...

2ND REPORTER (v.o.)

Witnesses say they saw a man in a rental car force his way through the gate there that leads to the garage. No word yet on who or why... only that this can now officially be called the worst terrorist act in United States history...

Cross-fading into another broadcast...

3RD REPORTER (v.o.)
Preliminary reports indicate the bombing was the work of this man, Michael Conroy, a professor of history at George Washington University who had instructed courses on terrorism. Officials will not confirm reports that the bombing had anything to do with the death of Mr. Conroy's wife, who had been an F.B.I. agent...

Dissolving into another angle, another news crew's camera...

1ST REPORTER (v.o.)
Investigators are now focusing on the prospect that Conroy blamed the Bureau for its role in his wife's death two years ago. Specifically, sources speculate his target may have been Field Agent Whit Carver, who was one of the hundred and eighty-four people to perish in the attack...

2ND REPORTER (v.o.)
Students and colleagues both say Conroy's behavior was increasingly erratic in the weeks leading up to the bombing...

3RD REPORTER (v.o.)
...and it may have been that very auto accident, which took someone else away from him, that pushed him over the edge...

1ST REPORTER (v.o.)
Yet all of them described Conroy as solitary but friendly, as a talented professor fascinated by the American underground, and as a loving father to his nine-year old son...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HUNT HOUSE -- DAY

A brilliant autumn afternoon.

1ST REPORTER (v.o.)
...who is now in the legal care of friends...living next door...

INT. HUNT HOUSE -- LIVING ROOM -- DAY

The television is on; young Grant sits in front of it:

2ND REPORTER

And so, after exhausting hundreds of thousands of man-hours and leads, federal investigators are finally ready to say that -- much like the I.R.S. bombing two years ago in St. Louis -- this summer's attack on the F.B.I. was the work of one man...and one man alone.

(beat)

Reporting from Washington, Charles Bell.

The screen zaps off. Grant looks up to see Oliver standing with the remote. He sits on the sofa:

OLIVER

Come here.

Grant shuffles to him, sits beside. Oliver pulls him tight, with an arm around him.

OLIVER

I want you to remember something. No matter what anyone says to you, any kids at school, anybody you ever meet for the rest of your life, you remember this:

(beat)

Your dad was a hero. He was the bravest man I've ever known. Do you know why? Because he believed in something. And no matter how many people told him he shouldn't, or told him he was wrong, he didn't change what he believed. To do something like that, you have to be very brave.

Grant continues to look glum. Oliver tips up his chin:

OLIVER

But that's not why your dad was a hero. Your dad was a hero... because he was right.

Oliver nods. Grant nods too.

OLIVER

And don't you ever forget.

Grant gives a smile, Oliver ruffles his hair and helps him back off the couch:

OLIVER
Run and play.

EXT. HUNT HOUSE -- DAY

Grant emerges to join Brody in the front yard; they begin chasing each other with water pistols. Annemarie and Susannah have set up a tea party table in the driveway; they SQUEAL as the boys run past, getting them wet.

Cheryl watches from the front steps, smiling. Oliver steps out to join her. Puts an arm around her waist.

As our vantage starts to pull away...

CHERYL
Any news yet?

OLIVER
Not yet. Maybe Chicago. Maybe New Orleans.

Pulling back further, past a "For Sale" signpost in the yard...

CHERYL
Mm. Somewhere nice?

OLIVER
Somewhere nice.

CHERYL
Somewhere safe?

OLIVER
Always.

CHERYL
Good.

Their faces search each others' comfortably. They share a kiss. The children continue to play.

As we pull back even further, into the street...

...such that we see the full of the Hunts' house, and also the former Conroy house next door.

Where the lawn is overgrown, some windows broken, and the home is dark and empty.

It's the kind of house that makes you shudder when you drive by. Something bad happened there, you're sure, but what exactly, of course--

CHERYL

I wonder who we'll have for neighbors.

--you'll never know.

CUT TO BLACK.