

9 INT. MT. ZION BAPTIST CHURCH - DAY

9

A sermon is in progress, parishioners in their Sunday best are gathered in prayer.

MINISTER

"Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it." He was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."

The congregation nod in agreement saying "Amen"

MINISTER (CONT'D)

How does this relate to us? Standing here today on this beautiful fall morning? I wanna talk about this city with its glorious arches we all know as the Gateway. Waynesville sits right off I-44 and it is the most direct route from Mexico to the Northeast. Passage to cities like New York, Boston, Chicago. These roads have given our community its prosperity in shipping, railways and business over the years. Well evil has taken over this corridor. We are the drug gateway now. Cartels from Mexico are using our city as the central passage for shipping to the north. When I was growing up they would teach Marijuana was a gateway. A drug opening the door to the evils of dope, and coke. These drugs are brutalizing our community, leading to gang life, homelessness. We need to build a new Gateway to allow heaven back into this house of God. As a community we are strong, alone we must find strength in our past.

10 EXT. RUNDOWN APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

10

A Police car and an ambulance sit in front of the building. Tommy's father has been lifted via stretcher into the back. *

Parker, holding an adult military jacket with patches under his arm, walks away from an OFFICER towards a playground, where Tommy sits on a rusted swing set. *

TOMMY

Hey, Mr. Jode.

*

PARKER

Hey T. I uh... brought you this. It was your father's. Thought you might like to have it.

TOMMY

Leave it with him.

*

PARKER

I'll put it here, in case you change your mind.

Parker drapes the jacket over a bar on the swing set which flaps lifelessly in the breeze.

TOMMY

I hate him, Mr. Jode.

*

The kid is emotionally dying inside. Parker can see it.

PARKER

Makes sense to me.

Parker kneels down so he's at the kid's eye-line.

PARKER (CONT'D)

I'm gonna tell you this because no one was around to tell me when I was your age: Your father messed up. Put himself before his family. Selfish no matter how you cut it.

TOMMY

I hate that he's my family.

*

PARKER

Family isn't only blood, its the good people around you, like the friends who got your back.

TOMMY

Ya makes sense, they're always there when I need 'em.

*

PARKER

Friends are like God's way of apologizing for your family. I'll make sure your baby sister is in good hands and you're protected lil man.

TOMMY

I can take care of myself. You'll
see...

*

Parker prays his words resonate with the broken kid.

11 EXT. SOTUH SIDE STREET - NIGHT

11

Parker, illuminated by the pale glow of grafitti-covered sodium vapor lamps, walks back to his car at a brisk pace.

He spots the two Shady Teenagers from earlier walking in the other direction. One holds a car stereo, the other a crowbar.

TALL TEEN

Whatup. We jacked your stereo son.

Parker looks to see the passenger window of his car is SHATTERED. He sighs, hard and chases after the culprits.

SHORT TEEN

Whatchu gon do? You in the wrong
neighborhood, fool!

The teens run effortlessly toying with Parker who is hurting trying to keep pace.

He is winded after pursuit, feeling defeated. He looks down at the ground, trying to calm himself. Then yanks his Glock.

PARKER

Give it back.

SHORT TEEN

Shit!

They turn and SPRINT.

PARKER

Stop! Hey!

Parker, about to follow after stops knowing he won't catch up.

12 INT./EXT. PARKER'S CAR - NIGHT

12

He gets in. Slides his pistol in the glove box. Puts the key in the ignition. Turns it. Nothing happens.

Deep breath. Long Morning. He pops the hood. Gets out. Readjusts the starter. Slams the hood.