

"BACK"

CBS Pilot

By Dean Widenmann

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"Hope is faith holding out its hand in the dark."

-- George Iles

TEASER

FADE IN:

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

"ELM STREET" in East Grove, Long Island. Not an elm, not a grove, barely a tree in sight in this quiet blue-collar neighborhood of modest single-family homes, most dating from the '50s and '60s.

With a little sunshine and few people outside this neighborhood might look altogether different. But it's a gray fall day, sky's overcast, and right now Elm Street looks like an empty, lonely place. Except for --

A SOLITARY MAN walking down the sidewalk, there's not another soul in sight.

The man wears a nondescript blue suit. Carries a briefcase. He's 42, but looks younger somehow. The man's not handsome, but not unattractive either. A lot like Elm Street: A little sunshine would make a world of difference.

As the man walks down the street we watch his EXPRESSION TRANSFORM, like he's awakening to his environment and just now realizing where he is. Eyes darting, he takes in the homes, the cars parked in driveways, a look of bewilderment taking hold of his features.

He stops at the end of a driveway, stares at --

THE MAILBOX there. On it, the name "MILES" in metallic decals. The name "BARNES" added, with a hyphen, in faded black marker.

OFF the man, as he lifts his troubled gaze to the house, WE --

CUT TO:

INT. MILES HOME - BEDROOM - DAY

Where FINGERS rove over the keyboard of a laptop responding to an IM. Moving fast. Fingernails chewed, carelessly applied black nail polish all but gone. We pick up the last few lines of rapid-fire dialogue:

LostBoy66: can u escape the gulag?

DemonSeed13: hell ya - i'll make up something

LostBoy66: already hard

DemonSeed13: don't waste it

LostBoy66: better hurry

DemonSeed13: out

And we REVERSE TO SEE --

SHANNON MILES, angry teenage train wreck. Shannon's pretty looks are hidden behind a Goth mask, her body marred by piercings and tattoos. She smokes, has a drug habit, and uses sex to pour gas on the last embers of her self-esteem.

Shannon, 17, closes the laptop, exits her trashed room, past the MARILYN MANSON POSTER which guards the door.

Not a hint of a smile.

CUT TO:

INT. MILES HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

CHERYL MILES-BURKE, 46, a little overweight, makes dinner in a cramped kitchen of dated appliances. She moves without thought as she maneuvers through another part of the numbing routine of her day.

Cheryl's attractive, and at relative peace with her world, but her eyes are weighted by a tragedy that years ago robbed her of her girlish beauty.

SHANNON (O.S.)

I'm going out.

Shannon breezes in, opens a drawer, grabs a pack of cigarettes --

CHERYL

Where?

-- and a set of CAR KEYS from a hook next to the refrigerator.

No reply.

CHERYL (CONT'D)

Shannon, dinner will be ready in an hour. I want to know where you're going and when you'll be back.

Shannon exits the kitchen without even looking at her mother.

CHERYL (CONT'D)

Shannon...

CUT TO:

INT. MILES HOME - FAMILY ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Shannon steps through the room, completely ignoring her brother, MICHAEL, 13, who watches her, X-Box in hand, video game on the tube.

Michael is quiet, outwardly normal, the antithesis of his sister. His vacant expression shows none of her anger, none of his mother's sadness.

It really shows nothing at all.

Cheryl follows her daughter into the room.

CHERYL

Shannon, honey, please stop and talk to me.

SHANNON

What for?
(the naked truth)
You know I'll only lie.

Shannon reaches the front door, opens it --

And STOPS DEAD in her tracks, shocked to her very core. We can't see what Shannon's looking at.

But Cheryl does. She falls against the doorframe, catches herself, and screams out --

CHERYL

Oh my God. No. It can't be. You
can't be...

Michael drops the X-Box, stands and stares, eyes blinking on his impassive face.

SHANNON

Daddy?

And we REVERSE TO SEE --

RICHARD MILES, the man in the blue suit, standing there, looking as shocked as the family before him. He steps inside.

Shannon backs away, afraid.

RICHARD

(utterly mystified)
Shannon?

Cheryl, freaking out, lets go of the wall and staggers forward, trembling HANDS knotting then releasing, her EYES huge flooding pools of pain, features awash in a storm of conflicting emotions.

CHERYL

(words rushing from her
in a torrent)

I don't know who you are or what kind of sick joke this is, but get out of this house! Get the hell out of this house before I call the police. I swear to God I will. Get out. Get out!

(shrieks)

Get out!

Richard cringes, but doesn't move.

RICHARD

Cheryl, please tell me what's going on.

(looks around the room)

What happened here?

CHERYL

What happened here?

(can barely breathe)

What happened here?!

(almost laughs through her
tears)

You died, that's what happened here. Eight years to this very day, Richard Miles -- my Richard -- died!

Before Richard can reply, Michael attacks him, arms flailing, but the boy doesn't make a sound.

CHERYL (CONT'D)

Michael!

Richard fends off Michael's blows, looking at the boy with stunned, unrecognizing eyes.

RICHARD

Michael?

Cheryl pulls her son away. Trembling, staring at Richard.

CHERYL

What the hell do you want?

RICHARD

Nothing.

(helpless beat)

I just wanted to come home.

OFF Shannon, staring at Richard, tears dragging streaks of
ghoulish black makeup down her face, WE --

SLAM TO BLACK.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

EXT. MILES HOME - EVENING

Black & whites, unmarked police cars, an ambulance, and a gathering of neighbors clog the street in front of the home. Lights strobe. Radios SQUAWK. A couple uniformed patrolmen keep the crowd back.

A big Dodge pickup arrives. The truck parks on the crowded street and a man gets out --

TOM BARNES, 52, dressed in his East Grove Fire Department blues. Tom, a big man, and a long-time local, pushes his way through the crowd, a worried look on his face.

NEIGHBOR

Tom, what's going on?

TOM

I don't know.

Tom approaches the front door where CRAIG SMITH, one of the local patrolmen, and a friend of Tom's, stands guard. Craig lets Tom pass.

CRAIG

Go ahead in, Tom.
(shakes his head)
Weirdest thing ever.

TOM

What is?

CRAIG

Best see for yourself.

CUT TO:

INT. MILES HOME - FAMILY ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Tom enters and immediately SEES --

RICHARD MILES seated at the kitchen table being interviewed by a detective who we'll call BOYD.

TOM

Jesus Christ.

CHERYL (O.S.)

Tom!

Cheryl gets up from the couch and rushes to him, folding into Tom's big arms.

Tom holds her, but can't take his eyes off Richard, who looks over with the commotion and MAKES EYE CONTACT.

CHERYL (CONT'D)
I'm so glad you're here.

TOM
(looking at Richard in
total disbelief)
Everything's gonna be just fine.

CHERYL
I don't think it is.

CUT TO:

INT. MILES HOME - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Richard WATCHES Cheryl and Tom.

RICHARD
(realizes)
Miles-Barnes.

CUT TO:

INT. MILES HOME - FAMILY ROOM - CONTINUOUS

TOM
(to Cheryl)
Just tell me what's going on.

CHERYL
I wish I could.

Just then, another detective reaches them, a young female cop we'll call MAGETTI.

DET. MAGETTI
Mr. Barnes?

TOM
Yeah.

DET. MAGETTI
If you'll just have a seat here
with your wife--

TOM
(cuts her off)
I want to know what the hell's
going on here.

DET. MAGETTI
 So do we, sir. Now if you'll just
 have a seat.

Magetti leads he and Cheryl back to the couch. Michael is there, staring into space. A uniformed cop named MULLEN stands positioned in the doorway between the family room and kitchen. He acknowledges Tom.

MULLEN
 Hey, Tom.

Shannon is nowhere to be seen.

CUT TO:

INT. MILES HOME - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Detective Boyd and Richard, who's still shaken from seeing Cheryl and Tom Barnes together.

DET. BOYD
 Mr. Miles?

RICHARD
 (distracted)
 Sorry. I work for Gorman & Shaw.
 I'm an accountant there.

Richard reaches for his wallet, pulls out a BUSINESS CARD and hands it to Boyd.

ON THE CARD - Which Detective Boyd examines.

DET. BOYD
 This has a World Trade Center
 address.

RICHARD
 Yes.

DET. BOYD
 Gorman & Shaw doesn't have an
 office there anymore, Mr. Miles.

RICHARD
 Of course they do. I left there a
 little after five, like I always do.

Boyd absorbs this.

CUT TO:

INT. MILES HOME - FAMILY ROOM - CONTINUOUS

DET. MAGETTI

(to Cheryl)

When was the last time you saw him?

CHERYL

That morning.

(barely holding it
together)

He was wearing those same clothes.
I'm sure of it.

DET. MAGETTI

(makes a note on a pad of
paper)

And you've had no contact with him
since?

TOM

Wait a minute. You're saying that's
him? That's really him? Richard?

DET. MAGETTI

Right now we have to assume so, Mr.
Barnes.

Cheryl buries her head in Tom's chest.

CHERYL

Oh God.

OFF Tom, synapses misfiring with the realization, WE --

CUT TO:

INT. MILES HOME - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Shannon, face a smeared mask, sits on her bed, knees pulled up under her chin, staring at a PHOTOGRAPH, when there's a KNOCK on the door. She doesn't respond. Doesn't even hear it.

Another of the uniformed patrolmen, TIM CONNELLY, 26, stands in the doorway. Connelly is a local kid who wasn't always on the right side of the law. A TATTOO mostly hidden by his collar gives us a hint. But Connelly paid his dues, straightened out his life -- with a little help from the U.S. Army and a tour in Iraq.

CONNELLY

You okay?

Shannon doesn't answer.

Connelly checks out the grim space, notices the Marilyn Manson poster, when the laptop CHIMES. He glances at the screen, reads the incoming IM.

ON THE SCREEN

LostBoy66: i waited - BITCH!!

Connelly closes the laptop. Steps into the room --

CONNELLY (CONT'D)
I brought you some water.

-- setting a BOTTLE OF WATER on the nightstand.

Still nothing from Shannon.

CONNELLY (CONT'D)
This is all pretty messed up, isn't it?

Still nothing. He moves some dirty clothes off a chair and sits down next to the bed.

CONNELLY (CONT'D)
It's Shannon, right?
(beat; nothing)
Sometimes it's good to be alone with our thoughts, Shannon. Kinda lets the world slow down until we're ready to deal with whatever it is we have to deal with. This may be one of those times for you.
(beat)
But I know what it's like being in a place you've never been before, facing things you never dreamed you'd have to face. It's a scary thing.
(beat)
And I wish I hadn't been alone at the time.

Connelly looks at Shannon, his gaze trying to draw her out. But she hasn't even acknowledged him. Hasn't looked up from the photo.

CONNELLY (CONT'D)
So I don't want you to be alone, Shannon... Unless of course it's one of those times.

Another beat.

Shannon finally looks up, her tortured expression that of a vulnerable young girl, not the angry teen we first met. She shows Connelly --

THE PHOTOGRAPH

A picture of Shannon and her father, the man we know as Richard Miles. Shannon is a fresh-faced, happy 9 year-old girl, nearly unrecognizable.

Richard looks exactly the same.

SHANNON
(voice childlike)
He hasn't aged a day.

CUT TO:

INT. MILES HOME - FAMILY ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Tom, Cheryl and Magetti.

TOM
(to Magetti)
How is that possible?

DET. MAGETTI
It's not.

Tom's emotions are rising.

TOM
And where's he been all this time?

Michael has begun to rock back and forth on the couch, the energies inside showing what his expressionless face cannot.

Detective Magetti looks from the troubled boy to a PHOTO on a shelf of the family that was: Cheryl, Richard, and their two young kids. In the photo Michael is just a child, but a smiling, outgoing happy child.

CUT TO:

INT. MILES HOME - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Richard and Detective Boyd.

RICHARD
I've been here. Going to work,
coming home. Like I do everyday.
Ask anybody.

DET. BOYD

We have, Mr. Miles. And that's the problem. Until tonight, you hadn't been seen or heard from for eight long years -- to the day. You were missing and presumed dead. Along with a lot of other people.

RICHARD

That's crazy.

DET. BOYD

(considers)

What's today's date, Mr. Miles?

RICHARD

The date? The eleventh of September, two-thousand one.

Boyd SPIES a copy of the "*New York Times*." Gets it. Places it on the table and slides it to Richard.

ON THE PAPER

The date reads: "September 11, 2009."

RICHARD (CONT'D)

I don't understand.

DET. BOYD

Join the crowd. Imagine how your family feels, you showing up here after all that time?

(beat)

A lot can happen in eight years.

Richard stares into his thoughts, utterly lost.

DET. BOYD (CONT'D)

Mind if I take a look at your wallet, Mr. Miles?

Richard hands it to him without a word.

Boyd goes through the plastic, looks at his DRIVER'S LICENSE and CREDIT CARDS, etc.

DET. BOYD (CONT'D)

(discovers)

License expired four years ago.

Richard suddenly stands, disoriented, overwhelmed.

RICHARD

I think I need to lie down for a while.

He turns to walk away, but Boyd grabs his arm.

DET. BOYD

I'm afraid you can't do that, Mr. Miles. Not here anyway.

RICHARD

What are you talking about? I live here.

DET. BOYD

Not anymore, sir.

RICHARD

That's ridiculous. I paid for this house.

DET. BOYD

Relax, Mr. Miles.

RICHARD

Relax, hell.

(tries to pull away)

Get your hands off me.

(struggles)

Leave me alone. I want to talk to my wife.

DET. BOYD

Take it easy, Mr. Miles.

Mullen steps in to help Boyd restrain Richard.

CUT TO:

INT. MILES HOME - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

RICHARD (O.C.)

(shouts)

I just want to talk to my wife!

Shannon and Officer Connelly hear the commotion downstairs.

CONNELLY

I better see what's going on.

He pulls a CARD and a pen from his pocket. Writes a number on the back of the card --

CONNELLY (CONT'D)
This is my cell number.

-- and sets it on the nightstand.

CONNELLY (CONT'D)
You get in any trouble, or just
want to talk -- about anything --
you can call me, Shannon. Anytime.
Night or day. Okay?

She nods.

CONNELLY (CONT'D)
Okay.

And he exits.

OFF Shannon, as she watches him go. She stares at the empty doorway for a beat, then her eyes fall back onto the photo of she and her dad, and WE --

CUT TO:

INT. MILES HOME - FAMILY ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Connelly arrives downstairs to FIND Richard, hands cuffed behind his back, being led through the family room by Boyd. Everyone's standing but young Michael who continues to rock, faster and faster, using his breath to HUM, trying to drown out the voices in the room.

CONNELLY
Jesus.

RICHARD
Cheryl, please. Tell them to let me go. Tell them. Please.

CHERYL
(to Det. Boyd)
Where are you taking him?

DET. BOYD
We're gonna finish this downtown, ma'am.

DET. MAGETTI
(to Cheryl)
We've already called in for a psych consult. He'll get all the help he needs.
(to Tom)
(MORE)

DET. MAGETTI (CONT'D)
 We'll get to the bottom of this, I
 promise you.

RICHARD
 What I need is to be allowed to
 stay in my home. My home. Cheryl.

Tom holds Cheryl tight.

TOM
 It's okay.

RICHARD
 It's not okay, Tom. That's my wife.

Cheryl can't take it.

TOM
 That was a long time ago, Richard.

Richard's led out the door.

MULLEN
 Need anything, Tom?

TOM
 Maybe an exorcist.

CUT TO:

EXT. MILES HOME - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Richard Miles is led to a black & white in the driveway. A
 last glance at an UPSTAIRS WINDOW where SHANNON watches, and
 he's put inside the car.

Various NEIGHBORS in the crowd react to the sight of him with
 an unexpected air of contempt:

NEIGHBOR #1
 Is it really him?

NEIGHBOR #2
 Seeing is believing.

NEIGHBOR #1
 I thought he was dead.

NEIGHBOR #3
 Jesus, eight years...

NEIGHBOR #4
 To the day.

NEIGHBOR #3
Where's he been?

NEIGHBOR #1
Musta been a scam. That'd be like
Richard.

NEIGHBOR #2
Yeah. Never liked that guy.

NEIGHBOR #1
Who did?

NEIGHBOR #2
Poor Cheryl.

NEIGHBOR #3
God, it looks just like him.

NEIGHBOR #4
Because it is him.

CUT TO:

INT. MILES HOME - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Shannon takes it in all from her bedroom window.

SHANNON
Daddy.

And WE --

SLAM TO BLACK.

END OF FIRST ACT

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

INT. POLICE STATION - INTERVIEW ROOM - NIGHT

Richard sits at the table in the small stark room.

Standing facing him is DR. KEVIN STERN, 39, a psychiatrist brought in by the police. Stern has the relaxed intelligence of an academician and looks the part with his trimmed beard, peppered with gray, wool blazer, jeans, and rumpled oxford. But it's his EYES that draw you in. Deeply set and dark. Eyes weighted with a secret burden.

ON THE TABLE is a plastic EVIDENCE BAG.

RICHARD

Do I look like a ghost?

DR. STERN

I don't know, Mr. Miles, I've never actually seen one. But these are the facts. Tell me what we should believe.

(beat)

Eight years ago, on September eleventh, passenger airliners hijacked by terrorists crashed into the World Trade Center. Suicide attacks witnessed by the whole world. Within hours, both towers had collapsed, resulting in the deaths of thousands of innocent men and women.

Richard quakes with information he seems to be hearing for the very first time.

RICHARD

Dear God.

Dr. Stern sits down facing him.

DR. STERN

You worked on the eightieth floor of the south tower, Mr. Miles. And neither you nor any of your twenty-three coworkers were ever found.

(lets it sink in)

You were listed as missing, and ultimately declared dead.

Richard is shaken with the incomprehensible news.

DR. STERN (CONT'D)

There was a memorial service for you. Three years later your wife remarried.

RICHARD

Tom Barnes.

DR. STERN

Yes. And there was a modest life insurance policy.

(off Richard)

One-hundred thousand dollars, which of course the police believe may have been the motive for your disappearance. Nine-eleven providing the pretext for an elaborate hoax.

RICHARD

That's not true.

DR. STERN

I grant you the timing would have been remarkable.

(then)

Their theory as to why you suddenly showed up after all this time? That you needed money. Missed your children. Could no longer deal with the fact that your wife was sleeping with another man.

(shrugs)

All of the above.

Richard opens his mouth to speak, but nothing comes out.

Dr. Stern studies him. It's clear that Richard's either as clueless as everyone else -- or one hell of an actor.

Dr. Stern opens the evidence bag --

DR. STERN (CONT'D)

But then there's this.

-- pulls out Richard's WALLET. Goes through the contents.

DR. STERN (CONT'D)

Your expired driver's license. Credit cards, never used.

(goes through the cash)

Eighty-four dollars. Every bill printed before two-thousand one.

(MORE)

DR. STERN (CONT'D)

(eye contact)

What are the odds? And your clothes. According to your wife, you wore that very same suit the day you disappeared.

(beat)

Are you that clever, Mr. Miles?

Richard doesn't know what to say.

DR. STERN (CONT'D)

I don't think so.

(hands him back his wallet)

I think you truly believe that the last eight years never happened. But where did you go? What did you do? How did you live?

(shakes his head)

Who disappears like that?

(sits back)

Maybe you really are a ghost.

TIME DISSOLVE - AN HOUR LATER

Richard drinks a cup of coffee.

DR. STERN

In the broadest sense, a dissociative memory disorder of some kind. A condition characterized by an interruption of, or dissociation from, fundamental aspects of one's everyday life, such as personal identity and personal history. A fugue state where an individual forgets who they are and takes leave of his or her usual physical surroundings. In a minority of cases, the individual can assume a new identity.

RICHARD

Like a form of amnesia?

DR. STERN

Yes. Usually triggered by a traumatic life event. During this fugue state the retrieval of memories associated with the event is somehow prevented. We don't know how or why. But the fugue state is obviously psychogenic.

RICHARD
Psychogenic?

DR. STERN
A term that refers to the fact that psychological factors, not physical ones, are impinging upon the neurobiological bases of memory retrieval.

RICHARD
Do these memories ever return?

DR. STERN
I'd say yours have. You've emerged from the fugue state. You know who you are, where you lived. You remember the details and those involved in the life you once led.

RICHARD
What about the time in-between? The traumatic event and these last eight years?

DR. STERN
I can't say. I've never heard of a case like this. Hours, days, months, yes. But years? Eight years? No, this is new territory.

Richard thinks for a beat, then reaches into his pants pocket and empties the contents onto the table: some CHANGE, a COMMUTER PASS, and a LOTTERY TICKET.

RICHARD
Why would I keep all this? An eight year-old commuter pass, lotto ticket, some change -- every coin dated two-thousand one or before.
(touches his lapel)
Like these clothes and my wallet, everything untouched for all that time.
(agonizes)
How is that possible? I'm a human time capsule. To what end?
(exhausts a breath)
In my mind today was an ordinary day. I left work, got off the bus, and was simply walking home.
(eyes pleading)
Explain this to me.

DR. STERN

I can't.

(beat)

But I promise I'll try and help you
find the answers.

OFF Richard, wanting to believe in something, WE --

CUT TO:

EXT. MILES HOME - NIGHT

The crowds have gone. A single light remains on downstairs.

CUT TO:

INT. MILES HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Tom enters, finds Cheryl at the kitchen table. An unopened
BOTTLE OF VODKA and an EMPTY GLASS in front of her. She looks
like hell.

Tom sits down, slides the bottle and the glass away, and
takes one of her small hands in his.

TOM

We're not going back there.

Cheryl nods, ever so slightly, without looking at him.

Tom gently squeezes her hand, bringing her back. Her tragic
eyes finally meet his.

CHERYL

How's Michael?

TOM

I think he's finally asleep.

CHERYL

Shannon?

TOM

(shakes his head)

I don't know. I never go in there.
But it looked like her light was
out.

Cheryl averts her eyes, looks at the bottle of vodka, then at
the empty table in front of her.

CHERYL

What are we gonna do, Tom?

TOM
What do you mean?

Cheryl's lost bloodshot eyes immediately well with tears.

CHERYL
He's "back."

TOM
(an edge of defiance)
Not to me he's not. Not to this
family either.

Cheryl shakes her head. The tears fall.

TOM (CONT'D)
You hear me? Cheryl?
(she hesitates, then meets
his gaze)
Richard died eight years ago. He
did. And when he died he killed a
little of you and your kids, too.
More than a little.
(fire simmers)
And I'll be damned if I'm gonna let
him do anymore harm.
(gathers both her hands
in his)
I promise you.

CHERYL
It's not that simple, Tom.

Cheryl's BOTTOM LIP begins to quiver.

CUT TO:

INT. MILES HOME - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Michael lies in bed, on his side, facing away from the door.
He rocks gently, his EYES open, staring sightlessly into the
darkness.

CUT TO:

INT. MILES HOME - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Shannon's room. It's empty.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAR - NIGHT

A dented, primer-coated shitbox sits parked in the shadows next to a dumpster behind a strip mall. Camera moves in. Close enough to SEE a fog of condensation reflected on the filthy passenger-side windows.

And movement inside.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

In the darkened back seat, a couple having sex. We can't make out the GUY, his face turned away, coat and boots on, pants pulled down to his ankles. The only visible identifying feature is a TATTOO on the top of his left hand, a large crudely etched "66."

GUY

Yeah...yeah...yeah...

But the girl we see. Her FACE illuminated by a sliver of gray light from the rear side window. It's --

Shannon, lying on her back.

Taking it. Not enjoying it. Barely participating. Her sad, tragic GAZE sightless, somewhere else, as she stares into a darkness all her own.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. MOTEL - MORNING

Richard steps from the door of a room at a small roadside motel, the kind that always has a vacancy. His clothes are a little baggy, but all in all not a bad fit.

He steps to a silver Toyota Prius. And gets in.

CUT TO:

INT. TOYOTA PRIUS - CONTINUOUS

Dr. Stern at the wheel. He hands Richard a cup of coffee.

RICHARD

(subdued)

Thanks.

DR. STERN

How's the room?

RICHARD

It's a room.

DR. STERN

Best I could do at short notice.
But we'll do better. Get you some
proper clothes, too.

Richard peels back the top of the coffee. Takes a sip.

RICHARD

It's okay. I'm grateful.

Dr. Stern puts the car in gear.

Richard observes the gas-to-electric DASHBOARD DISPLAY in the
hybrid vehicle. He's never seen anything like it.

CUT TO:

INT. MILES HOME - KITCHEN - MORNING

Cheryl, still in her robe, nurses a cup of coffee. Michael
sits next to her at the kitchen table, eating his breakfast.

Tom, once again in his fire department blues, grabs his
bagged lunch, takes a last sip of coffee and puts the empty
cup in the sink.

TOM

(truly caring, protective)
You gonna be okay?

CHERYL

Yeah.
(she looks at Michael,
gently brushes his hair
with her hand)
I'm going to keep him home from
school today. I think he had a
tough night.

TOM

I think we all did.
(kisses her on the top of
the head)
I'll give you a call at lunchtime,
okay?

CHERYL

Okay.

Tom pats Michael on the back --

TOM
Take care of your Mom, buddy.

-- and exits.

Michael keeps eating.

CUT TO:

INT. TOYOTA PRIUS - DRIVING - MORNING

Dr. Stern and Richard driving through town.

RICHARD
I need to see them. I need to see
my family.

DR. STERN
You will. Just give it a little
time. You've waited eight years,
Richard. What's another few days?

He watches Richard for a reaction.

RICHARD
(thinking)
Why Tom Barnes? We weren't even
friends.

DR. STERN
A lot changed after that day, for a
lot of people. In ways they never
expected.

RICHARD
I'd give anything to go back.

DR. STERN
We all would. Unfortunately life
doesn't come with a reset button.

Richard looks out the window, troubled expression reflecting
off the glass.

DR. STERN (CONT'D)
Are you ready?

Richard nods his head, and WE --

CUT TO:

EXT. GROUND ZERO - DAY

Richard and Dr. Stern at one of the viewing areas overlooking the site. Familiar images to us, but completely foreign, and incomprehensible, to Richard Miles.

Construction cranes, equipment and workers spread out over the vast 16-acre footprint once taken up by the World Trade Center. The damaged Deutsche Bank building neighboring the site still wrapped in black netting, a grim reminder of the destruction of that day.

Dr. Stern is still moved by it all.

DR. STERN
Welcome to Ground Zero.

RICHARD
My traumatic life event?

DR. STERN
A traumatic life event for the whole world.

RICHARD
(can't imagine)
It's all gone.

DR. STERN
All of it.

He watches Richard closely.

RICHARD
Why?

OFF Dr. Stern, shaking his head, unable to answer, WE --

CUT TO:

EXT. GROUND ZERO - MEMORIAL - MOMENTS LATER

At the makeshift memorial of mementos and personal remembrances constructed around a LIST of those who died that day. Richard takes it all in, moved beyond words by the emotions on display before him.

He FINDS A NAME on the list of victims.

RICHARD
Patty Keene.

DR. STERN
Someone you worked with?

Richard nods, his eyes glazing.

Then Dr. Stern points to another name --

"RICHARD S. MILES."

RICHARD
Right now I wish it was true.

Richard steps back and looks up at the empty sky where the twin towers once stood. And WE --

CUT TO:

INT. DOWNTOWN DINER - DAY

Richard and Dr. Stern having lunch.

Richard doesn't touch his food.

DR. STERN
You really don't know any of it,
do you?

RICHARD
(shakes his head)
No.

Dr. Stern takes another bite of sandwich. Thinks for a bit.

DR. STERN
So what do you remember about two-
thousand one?

Richard thinks, looks out the window.

HIS POV - A GAS STATION, where the posted price for a gallon of economy unleaded is \$4.05.

RICHARD
I remember that gas was a dollar,
seventy-one a gallon.
(flashes a weak smile)
That the Yankees were the defending
World Series champs, having beaten
the Mets in the Subway Series in
two-thousand. Derek Jeter was the
series MVP. Was looking forward to
a repeat in two-thousand one.

DR. STERN
Yanks lost to the Arizona
Diamondbacks in seven games.

RICHARD
Arizona? You kidding me?

DR. STERN
Wouldn't kid about a thing like
that. What else?

RICHARD
(emotions rise as he looks
into his memories)
I remember that Shannon had joined
the Girl Scouts. She was nervous
about it for some reason. And that
Michael was in kindergarten and
having a difficult time with his
multiplication tables.
(shakes his head)
He didn't liked math. And his dad
was an accountant.
(smile fades)
And I remember Cheryl and I were
having problems. More than usual.
Had been for a while. Money was
tight. She'd started drinking.

Richard falls silent.

DR. STERN
In some ways you're lucky, you
know -- I mean you're not, you've
lost so much. But the pain from
that day, eight years ago, was and
remains so great. It effected so
many. Still does. The world was
changed. We were changed. All of
us. And surely not for the better.

Dr. Stern seems to wilt a little with those words.

Richard now observes Dr. Stern. We NOTICE A SUBTLE SHIFT in
Richard's expression: calm, compassion, and a certain control.

RICHARD
You counsel victims, relatives of
victims. You're a grief counselor.
To this very day.

DR. STERN
 (how did he know that?)
 Yes, I am.

RICHARD
 You've absorbed all their anguish,
 pain and anger. It's there within
 you like a tumor. And you've never
 been able to let it go.

Dr. Stern looks at Richard with mild astonishment. But it's true. We see it in his EYES, the eyes of a much older man. In the tiny TREMORS IN HIS HANDS and the small TIC that causes the muscles in his cheek to pulse like an electric current is running through it.

Things we never noticed before.

DR. STERN
 Guilty.

He tries to smile it away, but the smile doesn't take.

RICHARD
 I can't imagine your pain. There
 are some places you just can't go
 without experience. And I've never
 experienced the collective burden
 that you bear.
 (eyes looking into Dr.
 Stern's very soul)
 But I do know this. That you've
 been trying desperately to hold
 these people's lives together. At
 the expense of your own. But you
 can't. You can't save everybody.
 Some things are just meant to fall
 apart. You do your best. Then you
 have to let go.
 (beat)
 So you can grieve. Because you
 never have.

We watch as the tic leaves Dr. Stern. The tremors cease. His eyes find peace and well with tears, the tension and pain easing before our eyes. Something is happening. Something Dr. Stern can feel but not explain.

And WE --

SLAM TO BLACK.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

EXT. MOTEL - DAY

Richard gets out the key to open the door to his room, when a car pulls up behind him. Richard turns as Detective Boyd gets out of the vehicle.

DET. BOYD
Hello, Mr. Miles. Got a minute?

CUT TO:

INT. MOTEL ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Richard sits on the bed. Boyd takes the room's only chair.

RICHARD
Am I under arrest?

DET. BOYD
I've got nothing to arrest you for,
Mr. Miles. I'm just thinking it's
time you and I had a little come-to-
Jesus before this thing gets too
far down the road.

RICHARD
What are you talking about,
detective?

Boyd hands him a NEWSPAPER.

Richard looks at the front page.

ON THE COVER

A HEADLINE: "LOCAL MAN RETURNS FROM THE DEAD."

DET. BOYD
You're a regular D. B. Cooper.

RICHARD
What do you want from me?

DET. BOYD
The truth, Mr. Miles, so we can
save that family of yours any
further suffering.

Richard says nothing.

DET. BOYD (CONT'D)

Hear me out.

(collects his thoughts)

Sometimes people just get in over their heads. It's like taking a wrong turn and ending up in a really bad part of town. You have no idea how you got there, but suddenly you're in a world of trouble. With no way out.

(moves closer)

I think that's what happened to you, Mr. Miles. You never intended it to go this far. But it's not too late. I think we can get you out of this -- if you level with me.

RICHARD

I have, detective. I wish I could fill in the blanks -- more for me than you. But I can't. I don't know why I'm alive, where I was, or what I've been doing. It's like I died and woke up, given a second chance to do God knows what.

(beat)

But I'm telling the truth.

A beat. Then Boyd stands. Not pleased.

DET. BOYD

I'm going to figure this out.

And he exits, without closing the door. Richard hears the vehicle start and peel away, headlights slashing across the curtained window.

CUT TO:

EXT. MOTEL - NIGHT

NEON VACANCY SIGN about the only light, until the window to Richard's room pops aglow.

CUT TO:

INT. MOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Richard in bed, unable to sleep.

He lies there for a beat, then gets up, shuffles to the bathroom, splashes cold water on his face and stares at his REFLECTION in the mirror.

CUT TO:

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

Elm Street in East Grove, where this all began.

Richard walks down the quiet street, households asleep, following the same path he took that day. He stops at the end of the driveway, glances at the now familiar --

MAILBOX: "Miles-Barnes."

Then up the drive to the darkened home. He stands there for a moment, just looking, head swirling with so many thoughts and feelings.

Then turns and walks silently away.

CUT TO:

INT. MILES HOME - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Shannon wakes from a fitful sleep. Goes to the window and looks out to SEE someone walking down the sidewalk. The figure disappears into the night.

OFF Shannon, wondering, WE --

CUT TO:

INT. DR. STERN'S OFFICE - DAY

Dr. Stern looks different today, like the weight removed the other day at lunch has been put away, at least for a while. He wears a relaxed smile. The darkness that shadowed his eyes no longer there.

Richard sits before him.

DR. STERN

I heard you had a visit from the police.

RICHARD

Detective Boyd.

DR. STERN

What did he want?

RICHARD

What I want, the last eight years.

DR. STERN

Just so you know, there's no evidence that you've done anything illegal. No evidence that anyone has. And that includes your ex-wife. You are in no legal jeopardy, Richard. Nobody is. So let me know if the harassment continues.

RICHARD

It wasn't harassment. He was doing his job.

DR. STERN

All right.

RICHARD

So what did you want to see me about?

DR. STERN

Your ex-wife.

Richard stiffens.

DR. STERN (CONT'D)

She's agreed to meet with you.

RICHARD

When?

DR. STERN

Tomorrow morning.

RICHARD

That's good. Thank you. And my kids?

DR. STERN

One step at a time.

Richard nods his understanding.

RICHARD

Where am I meeting her?

CUT TO:

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Richard walks through a cemetery toward Cheryl, who stands with her back to him, facing a gravestone. When he gets within a few feet he gently, and nervously, calls her name.

RICHARD

Cheryl?

She doesn't answer. He reaches her side.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

Cheryl.

It's then he SEES the GRAVESTONE --

RICHARD STEVEN MILES

APRIL 9, 1959 - SEPTEMBER 11, 2001

-- his own.

Side by side the two hardly look like a couple. Cheryl appears nearly ten years older than Richard. She exerts herself to look at him, her own face red and puffy from the emotion and all the tears she has shed.

CHERYL

(like she's seeing him for
the first time)

Shannon was right. You haven't aged a day. Not a day. How's that possible? How is any of this possible, Richard?

(a plea)

And why did you come back?

RICHARD

I don't know, Cheryl. Any of it. Right now all I know is that I'm so sorry for what I've obviously put you through.

(beat)

Before I stood in that doorway, I had no idea. No idea. I swear.

Cheryl turns away. Gaze fixed once again on the gravestone.

A silence stretches between them.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

What is it?

CHERYL
All the things I'm feeling.

RICHARD
Tell me.

CHERYL
I feel lost, lousy, angry, guilty,
embarrassed, scared to death. You
name it.
(beat)
After all these years my life was
finally close to being in some kind
of balance. I can't say I was
happy, and the kids are a mess, but
I was okay. I was coping.
(tragic smile)
One day at a time.

RICHARD
And Tom?

CHERYL
That's the guilty part. Because in
truth, we'd been having an affair.

RICHARD
(oddly not shaken by this)
How long?

CHERYL
Almost a year before that day.

RICHARD
Do you love him?

CHERYL
I didn't then. But love can be
earned, Richard. And over the years
Tom has certainly earned it. He's
been good to me.

RICHARD
(somewhat grudgingly)
I'm glad. I am.

Cheryl stares at the gravestone.

CHERYL
I never stopped grieving for you.
Never. It used to come at me in
waves. Like the tide after a storm.
(MORE)

CHERYL (CONT'D)

Reaching high up the beach to come crashing down on me. Thundering and hard.

(staring into her thoughts)

It just wears you down. The grief. Exhausts you 'til you just don't care. About anything. If it hadn't been for Tom...

Richard puts his arm around her.

CHERYL (CONT'D)

I'm sorry.

RICHARD

You've nothing to be sorry about.

Tears fill Cheryl's eyes.

CHERYL

I loved you once.

(we can see she did, and deep down always will)

But toward the end I didn't like you very much, Richard. We didn't like each other.

(bitter sideways glance)

You made that part easy. Real easy.

Richard feels the painful sting, and the dawning realization of the kind of man he used to be. But what is there to say?

RICHARD

(then)

What about Shannon and Michael?

CHERYL

I just can't do that now. I can't.

RICHARD

Okay.

CHERYL

(almost afraid to ask)

What are you going to do...now that you're back?

RICHARD

Get a job. Try and rebuild my life.

CHERYL

Where?

RICHARD

Around here, somewhere. If it's all right with you.

She doesn't know what to say.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

Look, I know I wasn't the best husband or father. And I know there's no place for me in your life now. I know that. And that's okay. It is.

(emotions rising)

But these past couple of nights, when I try to sleep but can't, I see all the people I've loved in my life. Those I've cared for. And those I've hurt.

(beat)

It's then that I know some things will always be. Like my feelings for you, Cheryl. I will always love you. And regret I never showed you how much.

CHERYL

(fragile)

The memories hurt, Richard.

RICHARD

I know. The good ones most of all.

Richard kisses her cheek --

RICHARD (CONT'D)

Thanks for meeting me.

-- and turns and walks away.

Taking Cheryl's pain and tears with him. We SEE it in her face. A change. Like Dr. Stern, a weight lifted. Something she clearly feels but cannot define.

She turns and watches him go, and WE --

CUT TO:

INT. MILES HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Tom is there as Cheryl enters. She looks okay. Relieved. Maybe even a little younger.

TOM

Where you been?

CHERYL
 (hesitates)
 I saw Richard.

TOM
 (a quiet anger flares)
 And?

CHERYL
 And nothing. It's okay. We're okay,
 Tom. You and me.

She comes to him, kisses him and leans into him. Murmurs,
 almost to herself.

CHERYL (CONT'D)
 He's different.

OFF Tom, not so sure, WE --

CUT TO:

INT. MOTEL ROOM - DAY

Richard has coffee and a donut, goes through the CLASSIFIEDS,
 circling a few HELP WANTED ADS.

CUT TO:

EXT. GAS STATION - DAY

A full service shop. A few old cars waiting for repairs. One
 vehicle up on the lift in one of the two service bays,
 MECHANIC under it. A WRECKER sits parked next to the building,
 "AAA" in bold red type on the door.

A "HELP WANTED" SIGN on the office window.

OFF Richard, standing there, folded classified in his hand.

CUT TO:

EXT. FIRE STATION - DAY

FIREFIGHTERS doing chores around the station. Fire truck's
 washed. Various pieces of equipment cleaned. Hoses, stretched
 out to dry, re-rolled for storage.

Tom's lugging one of the heavy rolled hoses, when --

TONY CASCIANO, 34, a young member of the company reaches him.

TONY

(heavy New York accent)
 Here, let me take that, Tom.
 (grabs the hose)
 Heard about the mystery man showing
 up at your door.
 (off Tom)
 You ask me, guy oughta be locked up.
 Seriously. Gotta be some law against
 it, right? For faking it, I mean.

TOM

I dunno.

TONY

Dishonors those who really died.

Tom doesn't comment.

TONY (CONT'D)

So how you doin', anyway?

TOM

Okay. But it's tough on Cheryl and
 the kids.
 (shakes his head)
 They thought he was gone.

TONY

It's creepy, man. Me, I'd send him
 back to wherever the hell he
 was hidin' all these years. Honest
 truth. Back under that friggin' rock.
 (throws the hose over his
 shoulder)
 You hang in there.

And Tony steps away.

OFF Tom, looking up at a small BRONZE PLAQUE on the brick
 facade dedicated to the members of the company who lost their
 lives on September 11th.

Something more than loss here.

CUT TO:

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - NIGHT

A wrecker pulls up to a stranded motorist, vehicle's hood open
 to indicate he needs help. Richard, in his new service station
 uniform, gets out of the wrecker.

He approaches the motorist, a uniformed EMT, name visible over his left breast pocket: DOMINIC FUENTES. Richard shows a glimmer of RECOGNITION, but keeps it to himself.

RICHARD

What seems to be the problem?

Fuentes is Hispanic, 35. Black hair, intense eyes, forehead creased with impatience. He's wired tight. Everything about him's a little amped.

He makes no eye contact.

FUENTES

Battery's shot.

Richard pulls a portable BATTERY CHARGER out of the truck --

FUENTES (CONT'D)

(notices the charger)

Trust me, it won't hold a charge.

Just gimme a new battery.

-- then steps to the vehicle, a '94 Camaro Z28, and leans over the engine compartment.

FUENTES (CONT'D)

(temper flares)

You hard of hearing? I said I needed a damn battery.

RICHARD

(stays calm)

Gotta see what size.

Fuentes exhausts a breath, grimaces, steps away, rakes his fingers through his hair.

Richard glances at him.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

You okay?

FUENTES

Fine. Just do what you have to do.

RICHARD

(checks the battery)

Battery's got plenty of juice.

Fuentes turns back. No way.

Richard checks the LEADS to the battery, finds one loose.

RICHARD (CONT'D)
 Think I found the problem.
 (takes a pair of pliers
 and tightens the lead)
 Try it now.

Fuentes hesitates, then gets in. Turns the key. Engine starts right up. Headlights flash on.

Richard closes the hood. Fuentes gets out of the running car, fishes for his wallet, hands Richard his AAA card. No thanks, only fleeting eye contact.

And lingering hostility.

RICHARD (CONT'D)
 Don't worry. Happens all the time.

FUENTES
 I'm not worried, okay? Just cut the chatter and let's get this finished. I'm late for my shift.

Richard fills out a ticket for the road service. As he does, Fuentes looks at him more closely.

FUENTES (CONT'D)
 Well I'll be... Richard Miles.
 (raw contempt)
 I remember you. You did some work for my mother. Tax stuff. Yeah. Didn't do her no favours either.

Something Richard clearly doesn't remember. He hands Fuentes the ticket to sign, ignoring the comment, not wanting any part of this. Fuentes scribbles his signature, slaps it back.

Richard hands him his copy, starts to step away --

RICHARD
 Have a good night.

FUENTES
 Read about your "return" in the paper, Richard.
 (beat)
 So how long you gonna keep it up?

-- then stops and turns.

RICHARD
 Keep what up?

FUENTES

The hoax. That's what it is, right?

Richard looks at Fuentes, who holds his gaze for the very first time, and realizes --

RICHARD

You lost someone.

Fuentes is caught completely off-guard, which only stokes his anger.

FUENTES

Around here everybody has.

RICHARD

(somehow knows)

But not on that day.

Fuentes just stands there, struggling, unable to speak, so many emotions suddenly battling for release. Things he wants to say, but cannot.

He abruptly turns, gets back in the car, where he --

INT. CAMARO - CONTINUOUS

-- grips the wheel and stares at Richard for a beat, before finally forcing himself to look away. Fuentes puts the car in gear and speeds off.

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY STREET - CONTINUOUS

Richard walks back to the wrecker. Stores the battery charger, steps to the cab. Stands there for a moment processing what just happened. When he NOTICES --

A BEATER OF A CAR drive by, the interior ILLUMINATED for a nanosecond by an oncoming vehicle.

IN THE PASSENGER SEAT, it looks like --

RICHARD

Shannon.

OFF Richard, worried, WE --

CUT TO:

EXT. BEACH - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Deserted lot, except for the familiar primered shitbox.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

Shannon in the back with a guy we'll call DEREK, like Shannon ornamented with piercings and tattoos. We RECOGNIZE the "66" on his left hand. He's kissing her, pawing her, Shannon once again detached, when --

The driver's door and the one to her immediate right suddenly open, and two more young punks get in: LUCAS next to her; dude in the front is EDDIE.

Shocking Shannon to attention.

SHANNON
What's goin' on?

DEREK
(twisted grin)
Thought you might like to share.

Lucas sneers, reaches for her top and rips it toward him.

SHANNON
Easy.

LUCAS
Shut the hell up, you want it.

Derek tugs at her pants.

SHANNON
Take it easy. Stop it.

Shannon cries out, first angry, then afraid, and fights to free herself. Hands all over her --

SHANNON (CONT'D)
No! Let me go! I said no!

-- when HEADLIGHTS flash through the rear window.

EDDIE
Whoa.

LUCAS
Someone's here.

The headlights stop right behind the car.

I mean right behind the car. The HIGH-BEAMS filling the vehicle with blinding light.

All three have to cover their eyes.

DEREK

Jesus.

EDDIE

(squints to see)

I think the dude's gettin' out. We oughta bounce, man.

Suddenly, the back passenger-side door is pulled open --

LUCAS

What the hell?!

-- by RICHARD, shocked senseless by what he sees.

RICHARD

Leave her alone.

He drags Lucas from the car --

EXT. BEACH - PARKING LOT - INTERCUT

-- sends him spinning onto the ground.

Derek shoves Shannon at Richard, kicking her toward him.

DEREK

Take the bitch, man!

Richard takes Shannon in his arms, but Lucas jumps him from behind, slugging him hard in the kidney. Richard goes down. Shannon runs away, toward the beach, disappearing into the darkness of the dunes.

Derek jumps out of the car, piles on Richard, who swings wildly, like a man possessed. He whirls, connects with an elbow, shattering Derek's nose.

Then spins away, bull-rushing Lucas to the ground, hammering him with a punch to the face, before getting to his feet and racing for the dunes.

RICHARD

Shannon!

Eddie shouts from the car to Derek and Lucas --

EDDIE
Let's go, let's go!

-- but there's nowhere to go. Richard's pinned them against a log with the wrecker.

LUCAS
(realizes)
Oh, man.

CUT TO:

INT. BEACH - DUNES - CONTINUOUS

Richard searches the darkness, shouting out Shannon's name --

RICHARD
Shannon! Shannon!

-- until he finds her in the swale of a dune, curled up in the fetal position, sobbing, partially naked and bleeding.

Richard, out of breath, takes off his shirt, kneels down in the sand, drapes the shirt over her and holds Shannon in his arms.

RICHARD (CONT'D)
It's okay, honey. It's okay.

And WE --

SLAM TO BLACK.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

EXT. BEACH - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Black & whites and an ambulance. Lights flash. Radios SQUAWK. Shannon's three attackers in custody.

AT THE BACK OF THE AMBULANCE

Richard with Shannon. There's an abrasion on Richard's cheek, a band-aid above his left eye. Shannon's face is bruised, body covered by a blanket. One of her bare arms is visible.

ON HER BARE ARM - A train track of CUTS, new and old, evidence of self-mutilation. God, this is one messed up girl.

Shannon notices Richard's attention, covers it up.

Officer Connelly reaches them.

CONNELLY

How we doing over here?

Shannon doesn't lift her head.

RICHARD

I think she's going to be okay.

CONNELLY

How about you, Mr. Miles?

RICHARD

I'm fine.

(indicates the attackers
in the black & whites)

What's going to happen to them?

CONNELLY

We'll hold them on the assault charge. They'll probably be arraigned in the morning.

(indicates Shannon)

But we're going to need a statement.

RICHARD

(nods)

I'll let her mother know.

CONNELLY

Can you see that she gets home?

Richard looks at Shannon. She nods her head.

CONNELLY (CONT'D)

Good.

(then)

I'm awful glad you showed up when you did, Mr. Miles.

RICHARD

Me too.

CONNELLY

'Night, Shannon. I'll check in on you tomorrow.

Nothing from Shannon. Officer Connelly steps way.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. WRECKER - DRIVING - NIGHT

Driving in silence. Shannon still wrapped in the blanket, her gaze out the window. Richard glances at her, wants to talk, but doesn't know how or where to begin, or what he can possibly say to this tragic girl.

SHANNON

(not looking at him)

Did you even recognize me?

RICHARD

What's that?

SHANNON

When you showed up at the house.
Did you recognize me?

RICHARD

You've grown up, Shannon.

SHANNON

So that's a "no."

(beat)

Not daddy's little girl anymore.

RICHARD

I'm sorry.

A beat of silence. Shannon's mind working.

SHANNON

How did you know where to find me tonight?

RICHARD

I don't really know. But I saw you drive by. And somehow I knew you needed me.

SHANNON

I needed you a long time ago. You didn't find me then.
(hard sideways glance)
And it wouldn't have been that hard.

RICHARD

No.
(beat)
I can't explain anything, Shannon. And even if I could I doubt it would change anything. But I'm here now. And the only way I'll ever leave again is if you want me to.

Shannon meets his gaze, anger there, but hurt too, eyes pooling. A look that says what words cannot.

Richard reaches for her HAND.

But Shannon pulls it away.

SHANNON

Why did you come back now?

RICHARD

Maybe I was sent.

SHANNON

By whom? For what?

RICHARD

You.

OFF Shannon, absorbing this, WE --

CUT TO:

EXT. MOTEL - DAY

Richard, out of his gas station uniform, walking away from the motel, when a familiar car pulls up. Dominic Fuentes inside. He opens the passenger door. Anger gone, but much of the frustration still there.

FUENTES

Get in... Please.

Richard looks around, considers for a moment. Then, without a word, gets in. And Fuentes drives away.

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

You were right.

(beat)

It was a year ago. Afghanistan. My kid brother.

RICHARD (V.O.)

Joey.

FUENTES (V.O.)

(beat)

Yeah, Joey.

CUT TO:

INT. CAMARO - MOMENTS LATER

Fuentes driving, offering the occasional self-conscious sideways glance. Words coming in spite of himself, almost against his will.

Richard watching, listening.

FUENTES

We were supposed to enlist and go together.

(thinking back)

I wanted to go -- I did. But my girlfriend Gina was freaking out. I told her I had to.

(grips the wheel harder)

I'd promised.

RICHARD

But you didn't.

FUENTES

(shakes his head)

No.

(then bitterly admits)

And Gina's been paying for it ever since.

Richard looks at Fuentes' anguished face, his own expression changing. He feels the connection now --

RICHARD

You both have.

-- and realizes he has an effect on this man.

FUENTES

(pain replacing
frustration)

He was my brother. I wanted to go.
Wanted to be with him. To look
after him, ya know? Like always.
(emotional beat)
Like always.

RICHARD

You were there. Like always. Every
day. Like he's with you.

Fuentes meets Richard gaze.

FUENTES

But if he just knew.

RICHARD

He does. He did then. You were
brothers...

(beat)

And some things you just don't need
to say.

Fuentes' pain eases before our eyes, replaced by a sad,
slightly bewildered smile, a peacefulness magically
transforming his rigid features.

His death grip on the wheel relaxes.

FUENTES

Maybe you're right.

And WE --

CUT TO:

INT. MOTEL ROOM - DAY

Richard enters, tosses his jacket on the bed and turns on the
TV, when there's a KNOCK on the door. Richard opens the door,
and there stands Tom.

TOM

I think it's time you and me had a
talk.

CUT TO:

INT. DINER - LATER

Richard and Tom share a booth, each nursing a cup of coffee. Tom's animosity an almost visceral thing.

TOM

Shannon's a lost cause. Drugs, sex, disrespectful of her mother. Smart but doesn't give a damn about school. The whole nine yards. She's a troubled kid. Taken her to a dozen shrinks, but she never lasts.

(glances at Richard's battered face)

Last night was bound to happen. The tattoos, the damn studs everywhere. Putting out for everything that walks. Christ, she can't find enough ways to hurt herself. Just doesn't care. Hasn't for a long damn time.

RICHARD

Since I died.

TOM

Since you disappeared.

(sips his coffee)

Another year, when she's eighteen, she's probably gone. Just trying to survive 'til then.

RICHARD

And Michael?

TOM

(shrugs)

Other side of the coin, but just as screwed up. Hardly speaks. It's not that he's slow, he's a pretty bright kid. Polite. A good boy, just withdrawn. No spark. Not an emotion in him. Doesn't smile. Doesn't get pissed off. Don't think I've ever even seen him cry.

(another sip of coffee)

We've tried everything.

RICHARD

He attacked me the other day when I came in the door.

TOM

I heard, but wouldn't have believed it. Not like Mikey.

(beat)

Look, Richard, there is no easy button for this.

RICHARD

Say what's on your mind, Tom.

TOM

Okay.

(fearful of losing the woman he loves and the family he's worked so hard to keep together, Tom let's it fly)

You were gone, Richard. Out of our lives. And I want you to stay that way. I want you to leave my family alone. And it is my family now.

(off Richard, realizing this, maybe for the first time)

You gave up title when you left. And your showing up here eight years later is just plain cruel.

(battles for control)

When you didn't come back that day Cheryl battled hard to keep it together. Coulda ended up a lot different. But somehow she found a way to find her way. I did everything I could. I did. It wasn't perfect. But eventually she was okay. We were okay. Things were settling a little.

(beat)

Then you rise from the friggin' dead in this second coming of yours. Jesus.

RICHARD

I didn't mean for this to happen, Tom. Any of it.

TOM

That's a load a crap.

RICHARD

I mean it. I don't want to hurt them. Don't want to hurt you.

TOM

Then leave. And this time don't
come back.

RICHARD

I can't do that. I'm not supposed
to do that.

TOM

Not supposed to? That the word from
God Almighty?
(he stands)
You're a dick, Richard. Always were.

Tom turns and leaves.

OFF Richard, watching him go, WE --

CUT TO:

EXT. EAST GROVE POLICE STATION (ESTABLISHING) - DAY

Federal-style building in downtown East Grove. Not the small
town digs we might've expected. Four black & whites out front.
Parking lot's nearly full. A pretty busy place.

CUT TO:

INT. EAST GROVE POLICE STATION - BULLPEN - DAY

Detective Boyd, in his shirt sleeves, necktie tugged loose,
enters, tosses a LARGE ENVELOPE on Detective Magetti's desk,
which faces his.

DET. MAGETTI

What's this?

She opens the envelope, pulls out a stack of photos. On top
is a PHOTO OF RICHARD MILES.

DET. BOYD

Photograph from his former
employer, Gordon & Shaw. They used
it as part of a memorial for the
employees lost at their World Trade
Center office.

Magetti looks it over. Shrugs: So? Quickly checks out a
couple others -- one of which is a PHOTO OF "PATTY KEENE."
Pays little attention.

Goes back to Richard's photo.

DET. BOYD (CONT'D)
Photo was taken a month before the
attack. Notice anything different
about him?

DET. MAGETTI
Not a thing. Looks exactly the same.

DET. BOYD
Not a wrinkle, not a gray hair on
his head, after eight years.

DET. MAGETTI
Been over this. All it proves is
the guy's got good genes.

DET. BOYD
I also tracked down company phone
records. The morning of the attack
there were five calls from Richard
Miles' extension.

DET. MAGETTI
(this gets her attention)
Now we're talking odd. Still, it's
something that could be explained.

DET. BOYD
One of the calls was to his home.

DET. MAGETTI
Let me see that.

Boyd hands her the RECORDS. The CALLS IN QUESTION are
highlighted in yellow.

DET. MAGETTI (CONT'D)
Call only lasted a minute.

DET. BOYD
So nobody was home. But he made the
call. He was there at his desk.

DET. MAGETTI
Somebody was.

DET. BOYD
He was.

DET. MAGETTI
Jesus.

CUT TO:

INT. WRECKER - DRIVING - NIGHT

Richard pulls out of the station. As soon as he does he spots a YOUNG GIRL on the side of the road, thumb out, hitchhiking.

RICHARD
What the hell?

THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD - It's Shannon.

Richard pulls over, leans and opens the passenger-side door.

RICHARD (CONT'D)
What are you doing out here?

SHANNON
Waiting for you.

She climbs in, closes the door. There's no smile, but her face has less of the Goth makeup, REVEALING a pretty girl we haven't seen before.

CUT TO:

EXT. WRECKER - LATER

Richard secures a car for a tow on the back of the wrecker, then gets back into the cab.

INT. WRECKER - CONTINUOUS

Shannon tosses a cigarette out the window as he gets in.

SHANNON
You can actually do all this stuff?

RICHARD
(smiles)
Competent until proven otherwise.

Richard starts the engine, puts it in gear.

JUMP TO:

INT. WRECKER - DRIVING - NIGHT

Richard and Shannon. Shannon's words resonate with attitude.

SHANNON
Heard you and Tom had it out.

RICHARD
Where'd you hear that?

SHANNON

He and Mom were talking about it.
Arguing actually.

RICHARD

They do that a lot?

SHANNON

I could be a real tool and say,
"Yeah, all the time. And Tom's beats
the hell out of all of us."

(off Richard's look)

But that'd be a lie. He's a pretty
good guy. He loves Mom, and I guess
that's all that matters.

(beat)

But he's got his demons like the
rest of us.

RICHARD

What demons?

SHANNON

Don't know exactly. But a bunch of
guys from his firehouse were killed
on that day. They went into the
north tower. Never came back.

RICHARD

That's a tough thing.

SHANNON

Tougher if you were supposed to be
with them.

RICHARD

Why wasn't he?

SHANNON

(shrugs)

Dunno. He's never talked about it.

OFF Richard, thinking, WE --

CUT TO:

INT. WRECKER - MINUTES LATER

Richard pulls up in front of the house.

RICHARD

I appreciated the company tonight,
Shannon.

SHANNON

Yeah? Then maybe you'll see me
hitching again some time.

And she gets out of the wrecker. Doesn't look back.

CUT TO:

INT. MILES HOME - FAMILY ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Michael at the window, watches as Shannon turns up the
driveway to the house.

CUT TO:

INT. WRECKER - CONTINUOUS

Richard SEES Michael in the window. Michael ducks away as
Shannon enters the house.

Richard drives away.

CUT TO:

INT. MILES HOME - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Shannon enters, sees an IM on her open laptop.

ON THE SCREEN

LostBoy66: u there?

Shannon quickly TURNS OFF the computer.

CUT TO:

EXT. MOTEL - DAY

Richard exits his room to find a TV crew outside in the
parking lot. A FEMALE REPORTER, CAMERAMAN and VAN from the
"TV 5 NEWS."

REPORTER

Mr. Miles? Richard Miles?

The reporter thrusts a microphone at him --

RICHARD

Yeah?

-- the cameraman films. Richard keeps walking.

REPORTER

How does it feel to back among the living?

RICHARD

Please leave me alone.

REPORTER

There are a lot of rumors swirling around about where you were and what you were doing the last eight years, Mr. Miles. Don't you want to set the story straight?

RICHARD

I have nothing to say.

REPORTER

Have you had any further contact with your family, Mr. Miles?

Richard keeps walking.

REPORTER (CONT'D)

What happened at the beach, Mr. Miles?

Richard startles.

REPORTER (CONT'D)

The police say they responded to an incident involving your daughter and a number of young men. They say you were involved.

(beat)

Care to comment, Mr. Miles?

RICHARD

I do not. Now please, just leave me alone.

The reporter finally lets him go, and turns to the cameraman.

REPORTER

Did you get all that?

The cameraman lowers the camera.

CAMERAMAN

All of it.

CUT TO:

INT. GAS STATION - NIGHT

Richard enters the office, where a young GAS JOCKEY is sitting, feet up behind a desk, watching a small TV while waiting for a gas customer to drive up.

GAS JOCKEY
Hey, man. You're on the tube.

Richard steps behind the desk so he can see.

ON THE BLACK & WHITE SCREEN

The reporter dogging him. Richard trying to get away.

RICHARD
I have nothing to say.

REPORTER
*Have you had any further contact
with your family, Mr. Miles?*

Richard keeps walking.

REPORTER (CONT'D)
What happened at the beach, Mr. Miles?

OFF A CLOSE-UP of Richard's startled reaction, WE --

CUT TO:

A TELEVISION SCREEN in the --

INT. MILES HOME - FAMILY ROOM - CONTINUOUS

-- where Cheryl and Michael are watching.

ON THE SCREEN

REPORTER
*The police say they responded to an
incident involving your daughter
and a number of young men. They say
you were involved.
(beat)
Care to comment, Mr. Miles?*

RICHARD
*I do not. Now please, just leave me
alone.*

ON CHERYL

 CHERYL
 (feeling for him)
 Richard.

Michael gets up and leaves the room.

CUT TO:

INT. MILES HOME - BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Michael reaches under his bed, retrieves a METAL BOX. He sits there on his knees, holding the box a beat before opening it. INSIDE, treasured KNICKKNACKS, all with great meaning to him. He takes out a few, finally reaches and carefully removes an ordinary --

FIVE DOLLAR BILL.

Michael holds it with reverence, like it's the Holy Grail, seeing something that we do not. His features remain impassive, but not his EYES. They glaze, losing a SINGLE TEAR of pure emotion, and WE --

SLAM TO BLACK.

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

FADE IN:

INT. WRECKER - DRIVING - ANOTHER NIGHT

Richard pulls out of the station. Looks for Shannon. But she's not there. Disappointed, he drives on, mind churning.

CUT TO:

INT. VEHICLE - CONTINUOUS

POV - FROM A CAR PARKED ACROSS THE STREET

Someone watches Richard and the wrecker disappear into the night. As soon as Richard's gone, the car's ignition turns over and car pulls away.

CUT TO:

EXT. MOTEL - LATE NIGHT

Richard approaches the motel. The parking lot illuminated by police lights. A black & white is there. Officer Mullen interviews the NIGHT MANAGER, a gaunt balding man in his 60's. While Officer Connelly takes photos of --

GRAFFITI splashed across the side of the motel on either side of, and covering, Richard's door. Red paint. There are undecipherable signature TAGS, but the underlying message is spelled out with bold clarity --

"YOU SHOULD HAVE STAYED DEAD!!!"

-- over and over again.

Richard stares at the vandalism, stunned.

Connelly sees him, approaches.

CONNELLY

Hello, Mr. Miles. Any idea who might've done this?

RICHARD

No. Hardly anyone knows I'm here.

CONNELLY

After the piece on Channel Five, everybody knows.

Dr. Stern drives up. Gets out of his car --

DR. STERN

I got here as soon as I heard.

-- reaches Richard. SEES the sprawl of graffiti.

DR. STERN (CONT'D)

I think it's time to move.

OFF Richard, taking it all in, WE --

CUT TO:

INT. DINER - DAY

Richard alone with his thoughts, drinking a cup of coffee. In front of him, a sandwich, untouched, when --

CHERYL (O.S.)

Richard?

Richard startles back to reality, SEES Cheryl standing there. She looks rested, better.

She's also nervous.

CHERYL (CONT'D)

That Dr. Stern said I might find you here. Mind if I sit down for a second?

Surprisingly, Richard isn't.

RICHARD

Of course not.

CHERYL

(sits)

I heard about the vandalism at the motel. I'm sorry. They have any idea who did it?

RICHARD

No. But I haven't made many friends this week.

CHERYL

More than you think.

(a nervous look around)

Look, I can't stay. But after what you did for Shannon the other night, I owe you this much.

She hands him a plain white ENVELOPE.

CHERYL (CONT'D)

Open it.

He does. Inside is an old FIVE DOLLAR BILL.

RICHARD

What's this?

CHERYL

It's from Michael. He gave it to me this morning.

(beat)

Apparently, the day before you disappeared he took it from your wallet. Doesn't know why. He just did.

Richard looks at the bill.

RICHARD

Why give it to me now?

CHERYL

The next day on TV he saw the buildings fall. And thought you died, like we all did. That was traumatic enough.

(beat)

But he was a little boy. And he'd just stolen from his father.

(emotions build)

Somehow he blamed himself -- thinking you died because of him, or just lived with the guilt because he could never give it back and say he was sorry. I don't know which. I doubt he does. But he kept the bill all this time. Never spent it.

(off Richard)

No one can hurt like a child.

(deep breath)

Anyway, he wanted me to give it back.

Cheryl gets up. Emotions on the brittle edge.

CHERYL (CONT'D)

That's all. I really have to go.

She abruptly turns and leaves.

OFF Richard, staring at the bill, wondering, WE --

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

Richard walks, not really knowing where he's going, just walking, absorbing the town. Until he reaches the --

"ST. FRANCIS CATHOLIC CHURCH."

He stops and stands before it, looks up at the bell tower.

CUT TO:

INT. ST. FRANCIS - NAVE - DAY

Richard sits in a pew in the deserted church. Hands not folded in prayer. Face expressionless, he just sits there taking in the ICONOGRAPHY and the STAINED GLASS WINDOW behind the altar, when --

PRIEST (O.S.)
I wondered when I'd see you.

-- a PRIEST, appears at his side.

Richard looks at him, not a hint of recognition on his face.

PRIEST (CONT'D)
Welcome back, Richard.
(gestures)
Inside the chapel and the church is still standing. Imagine.

The priest, maybe 40, sits down next to him.

RICHARD
I'm sorry, but do I know you?

PRIEST
No one alive has known you longer.

Richard just looks at him, not a clue.

PRIEST (CONT'D)
So your memory hasn't made as miraculous a return as you have?

There's a rueful edge to the priest's words.

RICHARD
Apparently not.

PRIEST
Interesting.

RICHARD
 (mystified)
 What's going on here, Father?

PRIEST
 If you can't remember me, then I
 suppose you don't remember the last
 time we spoke, do you? Or what we
 spoke about?

RICHARD
 No.

PRIEST
 It was two days before nine-eleven.

RICHARD
 I'm sorry. But I don't know what
 you're talking about.

PRIEST
 Some might call that convenient.
 (appraises him with a
 thin, disquieting smile)
 I'd heard you'd changed, Richard.
 That you were a different man than
 the one who disappeared on that
 terrible day.
 (smile evaporates)
 I'm not so sure. But something
 brought you here. So maybe there's
 hope.

The priest looks from Richard to the figure of the CRUCIFIED
 CHRIST above the altar, bows his head and crosses himself.
 Then turns and gives Richard a hard, almost condemning stare.

PRIEST (CONT'D)
 Only God knows why -- and to you of
 all people -- but you've been given
 an extraordinary gift, Richard. A
 second chance.
 (stands)
 Now what are you going to do with it?

The priest steps away. Richard watches him disappear behind
 the altar.

CUT TO:

INT. ST. FRANCIS - RECTORY - CONTINUOUS

The priest opens a door, enters, closes the door behind him.

ON THE DOOR - A NAMEPLATE reads: "FATHER DAVID MILES."

BACK TO:

INT. ST. FRANCIS - NAVE - CONTINUOUS

Unsettled by the priest's visit, Richard's gaze drifts to --

THE FIGURE OF CHRIST, then to the --

STAINED GLASS WINDOW behind it, the LIGHT seeping through it building in intensity. Brighter and brighter, until it coalesces into a single point of hazy incandescence, and WE --

FLASH TO:

A BRILLIANT SUN over --

EXT. BATTERY PARK - DAY

Where we REVERSE CLOSE ON - RICHARD, eyes staring ahead sightlessly, thoughts filled with a storm of so many emotions, so many unanswerable questions.

Richard's at the water's edge, hands on the railing, Staten Island Ferry pulling away. The sound of CHILDREN LAUGHING pulls him from his reverie and brings him back to the present.

He turns, takes in the scene in the park: FAMILIES with YOUNG CHILDREN; COUPLES holding hands, sharing intimacies, as they stroll along the walkway; and a short distance away, sitting on a bench, unaware of Richard's presence --

DOMINIC FUENTES with his girlfriend, GINA, talking, smiling, all the previous torment lifted.

When he HEARS in his mind --

FATHER DAVID (V.O.)

You've been given an extraordinary gift, Richard...

(beat)

Now what are you going to do with it?

Richard looks at Fuentes, so different from their first encounter, and wonders. Then lets his gaze drift to absorb all the hope and happiness around him, the perfect blue sky above.

As he does, a fragile smile breaks through the tenseness to relax his features -- just a little.

Then he lifts his gaze.

And the smile fades.

RICHARD'S POV - THE SKYLINE of New York City, so different from the one he remembers.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BATTERY PARK - PARKING LOT - MOMENTS LATER

Richard stands on a curb as a city bus drives by.

IN ONE OF THE WINDOWS --

A WOMAN stares at him. He recognizes her. But it can't be.

It's Patty Keene.

OFF Richard, stunned and bewildered, as the bus drives away,
WE --

SLAM TO BLACK.

END OF EPISODE