

The Money Tree

FROM BLACK: MUSIC UP - BLOWIN' IN THE WIND

EXT. SILK FALLS FOREST - IDAHO - EARLY MORNING

We're in a dense, spectacular forest, its denizen trees old, large, and stately. With nothing but Mother Nature's ambient sounds, it feels like we're a million miles from civilization.

A gust of wind shakes the limbs on the trees and we find a HUNDRED DOLLAR BILL falling - slowly - towards a carpet of pine needles and leaves, buoyed by the gentle breeze.

EXT. SILK FALLS, IDAHO - MORNING

We're still on the HUNDRED DOLLAR BILL, and we use its wind-driven path to explore the idyllic small town of Silk Falls --

The large, MAJESTIC MOUNTAINS, bisected by the TITULAR WATERFALLS. Two LAKES as clear as nature allows.

FARMS and their farmhouses sitting on loads of acreage.

Quaint residential streets. Kids playing in the street. The type of neighborhoods where no one locks their doors.

MAIN ST. and the commercial area: charming patio restaurants, Mom & Pop stores, local Credit Unions, Ag Biz. And the largest commercial building: BRAXTON & CO REAL ESTATE.

And we're still on Main Street --

INT. CAR/EXT SILK FALLS DOWNTOWN AREA - MORNING

We're following a BLACK IMPALA with KANSAS PLATES. Inside the car is BRICKELL (38) - a no-nonsense bearing, close-cropped hair, dressed like a traveling salesman.

Signs hang on the LAMP POSTS, flapping in the fall breeze; advert: JUNE 26-29, SILK FALLS 18th ANNUAL 'TATERS 4 TOTS' POTATO FESTIVAL, SPONSORED BY BRAXTON & CO FOR THE SILK FALLS CHILDRENS HOSPITAL.

Brickell parks outside the SILK FALLS GENERAL STORE.

Large, hand-drawn signs: FILL YOUR HEART & FILL YOUR BELLY!
EAT/DRINK/BOTH SHOP TIL YA DROP! BAIT & TACKLE INSIDE,
FISH OUT YONDER! TWO FOR ONE POTATO PEELERS!

ECU of Brickell's SHOE stepping on the \$100 BILL. End Music.

INT. SILK FALLS GENERAL STORE - CONTINUOUS

BRICKELL enters, takes in his surroundings, walks up to the register, where JOE (55, never been outside Idaho), the owner, smiles at him with a congenial grin.

JOE
Help you, sir?

BRICKELL
One stop shop you got here, huh?

JOE
Yes, siree. If you can't find it here, it don't exist in Silk Falls.

BRICKELL
I can see that. Well I'm a man of simple taste - just a pack of Marb Red Hundred's, please.

JOE
Yes, sir.

Joe reaches up and grabs the pack of MARB RED 100's from the rows of cigarettes. Puts them on the counter.

JOE (CONT'D)
What brings you to our fair town?

BRICKELL
(a practiced smile)
What gave it away? Just passing through.

JOE
Where from?

BRICKELL
Out of town.

A look makes it clear the conversation won't be continuing.

BRICKELL (CONT'D)
You know what? I'll take a pack of American Spirits, too. Seeing how the smokes are so cheap 'round here.

Joe turns away from Brickell, grabs the American Spirits.

Meanwhile, Brickell takes his OWN PACK OF MARB RED 100's from inside his suit sleeve, SWITCHES THEM out with the pack on the counter.

BRICKELL (CONT'D)
Actually...you can put these back.

Brickell hands him the pack MARB REDS.

JOE
Whatever you'd like, sir.

BRICKELL
Everyone here as friendly as you?

JOE
No reason not to be. We got our own
little slice of heaven.

Brickell issues a smile with a smirk tucked underneath.

BRICKELL
You certainly do.

INT. BUNDY'S BAR - EVENING

BRICKELL walks to the back, where DENNY BRAXTON (62, kinda hickish, eccentric, cocky) is posted up at a table by himself, holding court. Brickell sits down.

BRICKELL
Dennis Braxton.

DENNY
Can't tell if you're here to sell me
Amway products or put two in my chest.

BRICKELL
(thin smile)
Why not both?

DENNY
I've got half a mind to kill you
where you stand.

BRICKELL
Not so sure your fastball's still
goin' 90, Denny.

DENNY
You think this is the first time
they've sent a 'serious man' to darken
my doorstep?

BRICKELL
No, I do not.

Denny chuckles, pulls a BRAND NEW PACK OF MARB RED 100's OUT OF HIS SHIRT POCKET, taps the pack, pulls one out.

DENNY

Want one?

BRICKELL

Those things'll kill you.

DENNY

Could get killed walking my dog.

BRICKELL

You don't have a dog.

DENNY

I feel safer already.

Brickell gives a knowing smile as Denny lights his cigarette.

BRICKELL

I'm gonna go to your house, Denny.

DENNY

I know.

BRICKELL

Want to save me some time?

DENNY

Don't much have the inclination.

BRICKELL

What if I told you that in exchange for a safe, expedited return - no questions asked - certain people would give you 5 million for your trouble?

DENNY

I would say that anyone willing to part with 5 million for 'my trouble' would surely be able to part with 10.

BRICKELL

You're probably right. But it's not about the money for you, is it? Never has been.

DENNY

How very astute of you.

BRICKELL

It's funny - those for whom it *is* about the money can't find anyone to take it.

DENNY

And to those of us for whom it's *not* about the money - well, the irony is so thick you could choke on it -- like an errant bone in an otherwise delicious filet of *Alaskan Halibut*.

Brickell's face gives us the impression that this last remark was pointed.

BRICKELL

Well, if every YMCA closed its doors on Thursdays, then the winter equinox would be *inverted*.

Denny looks offended.

DENNY

And if the speed limit in Delaware was raised to 85, midnight mass would happen on *Thursday evenings*.

Brickell is angry.

BRICKELL

Well, I once knew an astronomer who said that all peaches in Melbourne are built from the pit out before being *modified*.

Denny is mortified.

DENNY

When I was in seventh grade, I had a love affair with a *Nerf football*.

Brickell is livid. Things are escalating...

BRICKELL

I was in fifth grade when I started taking *Spanish lessons*.

DENNY

There are three patios for every home on an entire island of *sea creatures*.

BRICKELL

My fifth grade teacher told me that
if tortoises were better rock climbers
there would be a *fourth moon in orbit*.

DENNY

For every platypus in the Western
hemisphere, there are sixteen unsmoked
cigarettes sitting on a dining room
table in *East Memphis*.

By now, we realize they've been speaking in some sort of
strange code. And this last line from Denny seems to have
satisfied whatever needed to be cleared up.

Brickell shrugs, stands up, walks out of the bar.

EXT. BUNDY'S BAR - LATER

DENNY is walking through the parking lot, smoking a cigarette,
when he grabs his chest. His eyes withdraw. Purses his
lips - expectant, resigned. And falls to the pavement -

DENNY'S POV - Stares up at a parliament of clouds, which
begin to blur, and we're soon staring at ALL BLACK.

EXT. FARM - DAY

Find CLIVE GROMER (mid 60's), tending to his potatoes.

KYLE (O.S.)

Mr. Gromer?

CLIVE

Who's asking?

KYLE (O.S.)

Silk Falls Sheriff's Department.

Clive turns to find KYLE BRENNAN (33, wholesome), a Sheriff's
Deputy, but doesn't seem to react any which way to the lawman.

CLIVE

Would you toss me that bag of
fertilizer down by your feet? Damn
knees are killin' me.

Kyle reaches down, grabs the bag and hands it over to Clive.
An awkward silence ensues. Kyle is - for now, at least -
the type of lawman who feels bad enforcing the law, lest he
jam anyone up.

KYLE

Don't you want to know why I'm here?

CLIVE

Reckon I got a pretty good idea.

KYLE

I'm sorry, Mr. Gromer, but you can't grow marijuana inside county lines.

CLIVE

Well, what would you have me do?
Kill all them plants?

KYLE

What you do with the plants is your business, but we can't have --

CLIVE

All right, all right. Warning received, son. Mission accomplished. You can check me off your troublemakers list.

Clive gives Kyle a jovial smile and goes back to his farming.

KYLE

So I have your word that I won't have to come back out here?

CLIVE

My pops used to say, 'a man's word and a dollar will get you a cup of coffee'. But yes, you got my word.

Kyle chuckles. Clive points to a potato.

CLIVE (CONT'D)

What do you think?

KYLE

Pardon?

CLIVE

My taters. These fellas right here? They got the Gold Ribbon with their name on 'em.

KYLE

At the festival, then?

CLIVE

No, at the Grammy's.

(beat)

Lighten up, son.

(MORE)

CLIVE (CONT'D)

If the worst thing you gotta deal with is some old-timer growin' a little reefer, you got a good go of it. When I was your age, I was watchin' my buddies get their arms and legs blown off.

KYLE

(for lack of anything)

Well...thank you for your service.

CLIVE

Same to you, son. Same to you.

As Kyle walks back to his car, Clive takes out his cell phone, dials a number as he watches Kyle get in the car.

CLIVE (CONT'D)

(into the phone)

Yeah, we got a problem. Constabulary just stopped by.

(beat)

No, they think it's just an old fella growing some pot. But they start pokin' around and, well...

(beat)

Roger that.

Clive hangs up, Kyle drives away.

INT. COUNTY MORGUE - DAY

KYLE enters, where the CORONER, WYCK LIMEHOUSE (46) is standing over DENNIS BRAXTON'S dead body. SHERIFF DOLBY (53), Kyle's superior, is also on hand.

KYLE

How'd he go?

WYCK

Heart attack.

(shrugs)

Pack-a-day smoker for most his life, so no big surprise.

SHERIFF DOLBY

You knew Denny, didn't ya?

KYLE

Yeah, back in the day.

Wyck doesn't have much of a bedside manner, even for someone who deals with more dead people than live ones. Shrugs.

WYCK
Rich people and their hard living.
Spend all that time getting wealthy
and for what?

SHERRIF DOLBY
(smiles)
Wouldn't know.

WYCK
Money solves a lot of problems, but
it sure as hell doesn't give you any
common sense.

Kyle just stares at Denny's body. Memories coming back.

INT. SILK FALLS NURSING HOME - DAY

Find IAN BRAXTON (33, boyish good looks, Eddie Haskell charm/mischievous streak) in a small office across from BETH, one of the managers of the place.

A group of young orderlies look at Ian as they pass by.
People are always looking at Ian. They're drawn to him.

BETH
Mr. Braxton --

IAN
Ian. Mr. Braxton was my dad.

BETH
I thought your dad was still alive?

IAN
A matter of perception, I guess.

BETH
(confused)
I see.
(back to business)
Well, Ian, I sympathize with your
plight. But - and I know this may
sound harsh, but we're running a
business here. We can't afford to
operate on layaway.

IAN
I'm just asking for a little latitude.

BETH
I'm looking at the payment schedule
right here, and it seems you've been
given quite a bit of latitude.

IAN
I understand. I'll have the money
to you by tomorrow, latest.

INT. NURSING HOME - ROOM - LATER

IAN sits by a WOMAN (late 50's), watching FAMILY FEUD. Her staid, placid demeanor and glazed eyes give us the impression that she's swimming with one fin.

She smiles at Ian and he smiles back. She is his life.

INT. NURSING HOME - LATER

IAN is chatting it up with NADIA, a NURSE.

IAN
How about Thursday?

NADIA
You just don't give up, do you?

IAN
Only on Tuesdays.

NADIA
Let me think about it.

IAN
All I can ask for.

He follows her into a ROOM marked NURSES STATION.

IAN (CONT'D)
You're not still in a...thing...with
that cheesy banker, are you?

Ian furtively opens a couple drawers behind him, takes out a bunch of BOTTLES OF PILLS, slips them into his coat pockets.

NADIA
Don't you have somewhere to be?

IAN
Are you asking that as a way of
telling me to fuck off, or to see if
I actually have a job?

NADIA
Both?

IAN
(smiling)
Hint taken. See you Thursday.

NURSE
Maybe. Hard maybe.

IAN
Better than a soft no...

Ian winks, leaves the room as Nadia rolls her eyes.

EXT. NURSING HOME BACK PARKING LOT - DAY

Ian slips out the back door, walks up to a SILVER BENZ, where a black man named SHADES (38, thinks he's Iceberg Slim) is sitting behind the wheel. Ian takes the bottles out of his pocket, throws them on Shades's front seat.

SHADES
You on some morally whack shit, boy.
You best get right with God on Sunday.

IAN
I'll put that in my I-Cal.
(at the pills)
How much?

SHADES
I'll take two thou' off your tab
cause I'm in a good mood.

IAN
I appreciate that. But...I kinda
really need the cash.

SHADES
You kinda really need to pay us back.
You take COD on these, interest keeps
goin' and you still underwater.

IAN
I know.

Shades sighs, takes out a wad of hundreds.

Ian's eyes go to the Holiday Inn Express beyond the Benz, where he sees a WOMAN and a MAN circumspectly walking through the parking lot to the man's car.

SHADES
I got people to do and places to
see.

IAN
Sorry. Sorry.

Shades tracks Ian's eyes.

SHADES

You know them? That lady kinda fine.

IAN

No, I...thought she was someone else.

SHADES

Hey - just bein' real...you don't start making a dent in the payments, and this don't end good for you.

IAN

Nothing ever has.

INT. NURSING HOME - DAY

IAN raps on the door, walks in, sees BETH at her desk.

IAN

You guys take cash?

INT. MELLOW MUSHROOM RESTAURANT - DAY

IAN jogs by his manager, TODD (47, takes his job too seriously). Todd holds out his arm for Ian to stop.

TODD

Ian, coming in at 11:15 on a regular basis doesn't re-establish the baseline of when you're *supposed* to arrive.

IAN

Todd, I'm sorry, I'll stay late and help close up tonight.

TODD

You're already doing that.

IAN

I am? Wow. Talk about commitment. You can send my Employee Of The Month certificate to my home address.

Ian jogs back into the kitchen before Todd can give him further shit. He regularly banks on the idea that people like him, and thus, won't fire him or leave him.

EXT. KANSAS CITY - ESTABLISHING SHOTS

INT. NEWSPAPER OFFICE - ESTABLISHING - DAY

INT. HAROLD'S OFFICE - DAY

The office of HAROLD BECKER (53, overworked, overtired, and understaffed), Managing Editor of the Kansas City Gazette.

Across from Harold is CLAIRE BRAXTON (33, a go-getter, well put-together but tired, has a nervous energy) watching on as Harold reads from her Pitch List.

HAROLD

Japanese Artist to build life-size
Origami Panda.

(beat)

That's a headline, Claire, not a
story. That's an Instagram photo.

CLAIRE

What about the Royals third baseman
who may or may not have --

HAROLD

The A.P. already has three people in
town. Unless you have some source
that they don't...

He puts down the pitch list and meets Claire's tired eyes.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

Listen, Claire. Here's the long and
short of it - the middle class of
journalism no longer exists. There's
top-of-the-line narratives, and then
there's your cousin's little sister
who has sixty thousand followers.

CLAIRE

I guess I wish someone had told me
that before school...but I guess
they were too busy saddling me with
unresolvable student loans to tell
me that journalism was dying slowly.

HAROLD

You'll find that story that everyone
wants, Claire, the one that only you
can tell. But you can't force it.

CLAIRE

I don't need a Pulitzer, Harold.
Just a steady paycheck and health
insurance would be nice.

HAROLD

Everyone freelances at the beginning.

CLAIRE
That's the problem. I'm too old to
have a beginning.

EXT. DOWNTOWN KANSAS CITY STREET - DAY

Walk with CLAIRE, who looks to be stifling tears, as she
heads towards the bus stop.

BREAKNECK (O.S.)
Hey, yo, I got the *fire* right here.

Claire turns to see BREAKNECK (26, black, ripped to shreds),
selling - or trying to sell - Mix-Tape CD's to passersby.

BREAKNECK (CONT'D)
Only 5 bones, Miss. I gots mad bars.

Claire is about to politely decline and keep walking but
pauses. Looks down at the CD - Prize Fighter by Breakneck.

CLAIRE
Why do you look so familiar?

BREAKNECK
Mighta caught my flows on SnapChat.

CLAIRE
No, I don't think that's -- wait a
second. Are you...

BREAKNECK
Coby Powers, in the flesh.

CLAIRE
I knew it! Holy shit, you were like,
a big deal in the UFC, right?

BREAKNECK
In a different life.
(sheepish)
Ran into some trouble with the law.
Decided to eschew hand-to-hand combat
and put my life between the margins.

CLAIRE
(intrigued)
Would you be willing to do an
interview? A real human interest
story. A *redemption* story.

BREAKNECK
Aight. Hit me up. My IG, Snapchat,
and Twitter on the back of the CD.

CLAIRE
Awesome. I'll do that.

Claire is excited. Takes out her purse, looks down.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)
Ummm...can I Venmo you?

BREAKNECK
Black people don't use no Venmo.
But tell you what - you get my story
out there, we can call it even.

CLAIRE
(smiling, for once)
Deal.

BREAKNECK
Which paper you work for?

CLAIRE
I'm with...I'm actually a freelancer.

BREAKNECK
(disappointed)
Oh.
(shrugs)
If you ain't got the cash, can I get
the CD back?

EXT. COLLEGE CAMPUS - ESTABLISHING SHOTS

A small, quaint school; kids playing frisbee on the quad,
walking to and from class.

INT. THE BERNAUD FLAUBINGER SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING - DAY

Find RICHARD BRAXTON (35, nerdish, quiet but excitable) wiping
sweat from his brow. He's in a sport coat and khakis, his
thinning hair parted to the side. Time for exit interviews.

An older man, PROFESSOR LINK (64, jowly), opens the door to
his office. Link speaks in a manner so academic and patrician
it almost sounds British.

PROFESSOR LINK
Come in, Richard.

INT. PROFESSOR LINK'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

RICHARD takes a seat across PROFESSOR LINK. The office is
dark, and despite the big size, somehow feels claustrophobic.

RICHARD

How are you, Dr. Link?

PROFESSOR LINK

Fin De Siecle, at last. Still, I have seven more exit interviews to do, and then my niece's sixth birthday - as if remaining alive for six years calls for a jubilee. Now - shall we both smile as we think fondly on the year past and go on our respective merry ways?

This is clearly what the Professor wants, but Richard, who has been preparing for this moment, and is nervous about it -

RICHARD

Actually, Dr. Link, I was -- well, I've been thinking and I feel as though my...station? Here? Doesn't feel entirely...commensurate?

PROFESSOR LINK

Commensurate with what, Richard? You're a fine teacher and your research is serviceable, but journals don't phone me to discuss your work.

RICHARD

Were you able to read my submission to the Iowa Scientific Journal on --

PROFESSOR LINK

I am positive that the ISJ's circulation of seventy six readers found it nothing short of spectacular.

Richard looks like he wants to press his case, but now isn't the time. With Richard, it's never quite the right time.

RICHARD

Well. Thank for your time, sir, and I look forward to next semester.

A beat.

PROFESSOR LINK

Quite the pussy, aren't you?

RICHARD

I -- excuse me, sir?

PROFESSOR LINK

You want full professorship and you're too scared to ask me.

RICHARD

Well, I sort of thought I was asking --

PROFESSOR LINK

If you had asked me, you would have
an answer, would you not?

RICHARD

Yes, sir, I suppose so.

(beat)

Would you and the committee be
gracious enough to consider me for
full professorship?

PROFESSOR LINK

(chuckling)

No, no, no. Certainly not.

Richard just sits there like wat.

INT. RICHARD'S HOME - DAY

RICHARD walks in, exhausted. His DOG, NIELS, comes up to
his feet, in Niels's mouth is a pillow shredded to lace.

We see remnants of a female's touch, but no female. PHOTOS
on the Mantle show RICHARD, JESS, and ALEXA as one happy
family. But photos can be deceiving.

RICHARD

That's a good boy, Niels!

ALEXA (O.S.)

Daddy?!

RICHARD

There's my princess!!

ALEXA (6, precocious and adorable), his daughter, walks over
and gives Richard a hug.

ALEXA

I started experimenting with square
roots. Do you know what the square
root of 6,561 is?!

(can't wait for his
answer)

It's 81, daddy!

RICHARD

81! I would've never known that.

ALEXA

Now I'm gonna go practice Spanish!
Hasta luego, padre!

RICHARD
Hasta luego, my little polymath.

ALEXA
What's a polymath, daddy?

RICHARD
It's someone who knows *everything*!

ALEXA
Like you?

RICHARD
Like *you*!

ALEXA
Oh! Guess what! My Extended Studies teacher told me that a spot opened up at the Boise State Advanced Mathematics Summer Program! She even gave me the brochure!

Alexa hands Richard the brochure, runs back to her room.

Richard looks down at the brochure: \$12k for the July Program.

ALEXA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Daddy?

RICHARD
Yes, my darling angel?

ALEXA
When's mommy coming back?

RICHARD
Soon, sweetheart. Real soon.

EXT. MELLOW MUSHROOM RESTAURANT - NIGHT

As IAN is walking to his car, TWO COPS - DEVIN & MADISON (both late 20's) come up behind him.

DEVIN (O.S.)
Ian?

Ian turns around.

IAN
Yo, Dev. Madison. What's up?

DEVIN
We were told to come get you.

IAN

Hey, whatever it is, my mouth is shut, snitches get stitches, you know I got love for y'all but...

MADISON

Uhh...we've come to see you because you're listed as Next of Kin.

IAN

To who?

CUT BETWEEN:

-RICHARD talking to Ian on the phone.

-IAN talking to the cops.

-CLAIRE on the phone in her apartment.

IAN (CONT'D)

How?

COP 2

Heart attack. The cigarettes, the fixation with those milkshakes at Mickey Dee's...

IAN

The McFlurries.

COP 1

Maybe it was Wendy's. Frosties?

RICHARD

Wow.

IAN

When did it happen?

IAN (CONT'D)

Time of death, 9:58 a.m. this morning.

CLAIRE

When's the funeral?

COP 1

Tomorrow.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

The whole damn town is here as the Priest reads Last Rites.

ON THE SIBLINGS - CLAIRE is bawling her eyes out. RICHARD is tearing up, but it's unclear how much of that is Denny's

death and how much is his other shit going on - and the same could be said for IAN, who looks somber but not sad.

OVER TO BRICKELL, watching from afar.

EXT. DENNY BRAXTON'S HOUSE - PATIO - DAY

The Memorial Service for Denny.

Find IAN smoking a joint, checking his phone. EZEKIEL SALT (54, elbow patches on his corduroy sport coat, bald, a goatee) approaches Ian, takes out a tobacco pipe, lights it.

IAN
(at his phone)
Do you get reception here?

EZEKIEL
(chuckling)
Reception? Oh, no, no, no, no.

Ian cocks a brow - *why is this dude laughing like that?*

EZEKIEL (CONT'D)
You're Ian, are you not?

IAN
I am...not...not.

EZEKIEL
Ezekiel Salt. I was a colleague of your father's. I offer you condolences and love.

IAN
Ummm....thank you. For....both.

Ian looks back down at his phone, as if to signal to this weird dude that he isn't interested in talking.

EZEKIEL
Would you mind shutting that down?

IAN
Huh?

EZEKIEL
(at Ian's phone)
I don't want anyone listening in.

IAN
Uh...listening to what?

Ian looks at him strangely, but curious enough or bored enough, Ian shuts it off.

EZEKIEL
What I want to know, is
(sotto)
Can you be trusted?

IAN
(whispering)
Why are we whispering?

EZEKIEL
Yes or no, Ian?

IAN
Yeah, you can trust me.

Ezekiel looks around circumspectly.

EZEKIEL
Son, not every conspiracy is a theory
and not every theory is a conspiracy.
That's why the term 'conspiracy
theorist' is both ludicrous and
reductive, understand?

IAN
You lost me like, three words in.

EZEKIEL
Ian, I believe your father was onto
something, something big...and...
(beat; whispers loudly)
I believe they killed him for it.

IAN
I'm sorry, *what?* Who is *they*?

Ian looks around, as if to see if someone is playing a joke
on him or to see just how high he really is.

EZEKIEL
Ian, I worked with your father for
22 years, 3 months, and 8 days.

IAN
That's a...long, precise...time.

EZEKIEL
He turned our small laboratory into
the *NUMBER ONE-RANKED* crypto-financial-
replicatory-insulation-modulation
facility in the entire midwest!

Ian just stares at Ezekiel like he has three heads. Ezekiel
stands there proud as a peacock.

IAN
(for lack of anything
else)
Who got ranked second?

ON CLAIRE

Who is checking her phone, smoking a clove.

KYLE (O.S.)
Claire?

Find Kyle Brennan in his Sheriff's Department uniform.

CLAIRE
Kyle?! Holy shit!

They hug warmly.

KYLE
I was hoping I'd see you. I mean,
not under these circumstances, but...

CLAIRE
You're a cop!

KYLE
A sheriff's deputy, actually, but
yes ma'am, a lawman in full!

CLAIRE
I feel safer already.

KYLE
How's the big city treatin' ya?

CLAIRE
Only because you were my first kiss,
my first prom date, my first,
yeah...I'll be honest with you and
tell you that it's kicking my ass.

KYLE
Sorry to hear that. It'll be good
to have you back.

CLAIRE
Oh, I won't be back for long. Once
all the --
(beat)
But let's grab a drink. Or dinner.

KYLE
I'd like that. I gotta get back to
it, but...sorry about your pops.

CLAIRE

Thanks, Kyle. It's really good to see you.

INT. RENTAL CAR - DAY

RICHARD is driving to the lawyer's place, CLAIRE in the front seat, IAN in the back. NPR plays on A.M. radio.

IAN

So Jess couldn't make it, huh?

RICHARD

Jess is in Boston with her sisters. They do it every year. I didn't find it incumbent that she fly back.

CLAIRE

Will you switch it to the radio, please? I'm doing a profile on this musician in St. Louis and he's supposed to be getting a ton of air time this week.

RICHARD

Look at you. And for whom are you writing the profile?

CLAIRE

The highest bidder, bitches.

IAN

Speaking of bidding...what do you think we're gonna get?

RICHARD

We? I think *I'll* get the house, Claire'll get the stamp and coin collections, and we'll split whatever other assets need to be --

IAN

Are you *kidding* me?

RICHARD

I know parents aren't supposed to have favorites, Ian, but while you were watching *Planet Earth* in HD with your friends, I was *actually* getting a higher education.

CLAIRE

Both of you shut up, *please*.

IAN
Oh! Casper chimes in.

RICHARD
Ian, come on...

IAN
We're still not talking about it?

CLAIRE
Go ahead, Ian. Knock yourself out.

IAN
I'm sorry, I shouldn't. I mean, it's totally normal for someone to *disappear for five years and not tell anyone where they are or what they're doing and then come back like nothing happened.* And dad just welcomes her back.

CLAIRE
Got it all out of your system?

IAN
All I'm trying to say is...none of us is any better than the other.

The car is silent, but it's clear that Richard and Claire - and even Ian - have their own feelings on that statement.

INT. ARTHUR FABLE'S OFFICE - DAY

Sign on the door: ARTHUR FABLE, ESQ.

The SIBLINGS all enter.

A framed diploma from UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH DAKOTA AT PIERRE;

Another diploma from THE DEWITT CLINTON SCHOOL OF LAW;

A TOP 500 LAWYERS IN IDAHO award.

Find ARTHUR FABLE (47, a million dollar smile and knockoff suits), a bus stop-billboard lawyer.

ARTHUR
The Braxton's! Come on downnnnnn,
you've won...

They stand in place, look at one another, back at Arthur.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)
Sorry. Too soon.

They follow Arthur towards the back office.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)
My condolences to y'all. Your daddy
was a man among men. A titan. A --

CLAIRE
All due respect, Mr. Fable, I have a
flight back to Kansas City in like
four hours, so if we could...

RICHARD
Maybe a little tact, Doe?

ARTHUR
Sorry... 'Doe'?

CLAIRE
(sighs)
When I was a kid, my mom wouldn't
let them call me Weirdo...so they
took the technicality and started
calling me ClaireDoe instead.

ARTHUR
Siblings. Nothing like 'em. Don't
have any myself, but, well, maybe
that'll change one day.

ON IAN's cocked brow - *how exactly would that change...?*

ARTHUR (CONT'D)
I have your father's will and
testament right here - so let's get
to the white meat.

Arthur takes out three copies of a file, passes them around.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)
Most of this is legal mumbo-jumbo...

RICHARD
I'm no lawyer, but all I'm seeing
here is...land?

ARTHUR
Boom! Hit the hammer right on the
nail. Land indeed! A whole lot of
it! That works both ways, don't it!
A lot of land, a lot of it!

CLAIRE
What about...

ARTHUR

Everything else? Well, your father donated the majority of his assets to...

(down at the paper)

Some foundation that I can't even pronounce, along with various businesses around town. As you know, he was a very philanthropic fellow.

IAN

I'm sorry, do you mean to tell us that he left us *land* and that's it?

ARTHUR

That's about the size of it, Ian, yes sir.

CLAIRE

Wait, what about the house?

ARTHUR

Donated to the Historic Society of --

IAN

This is just like him. What a fucking joke.

(at his siblings)

I don't know about you guys, but I'm sure as shit contesting this.

CLAIRE

Ian!

ARTHUR

I'll let you three talk things over. Then I'll meet you out front in ten.

CLAIRE

For what?

ARTHUR

Don't you wanna see the land your father so kindly bequeathed to you?

Arthur winks at her.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

Don't worry, Doe, I'll have ya back 'fore you turn into a pumpkin.

INT ARTHUR'S CAR/EXT RURAL (VERY RURAL) IDAHO - DAY

The car pulls to a stop. Nothing but trees, grass, foliage, far as the eye can see.

The SIBLINGS get out of the car, followed by ARTHUR. They all look around -- all nature, far as the eye can see.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

And we're here!

The siblings look at one another - we're...where?

CLAIRE

Did dad's firm buy all this up?

ARTHUR

Your father acquired all this land for personal use, not commercial.

RICHARD

Use for what?

Arthur holds up a sheet of paper.

ECU of the paper - it has exact degrees of *LATITUDE* and *LONGITUDE*, as well as a *SIX DIGIT NUMBER: 248039*.

ARTHUR

If one of you would be so kind as to enter these numbers here...

RICHARD

Enter them on what?

CLAIRE

What is this, the Dharma Initiative?

Arthur begins to speak, but Ian cuts him off -

IAN

Oh, shit.

We see Ian looking down at a KEYPAD on a large ROCK right beside where he is standing.

ARTHUR

2,4,8,0,3,9.

Ian enters the numbers and --

A TRAIL EMERGES by way of STONES becoming ALIT.

CLAIRE

Holy shit.

IAN

I mean, dad was a Grade-A, limited edition douchebag...but he was kind of a boss, right?

We WALK WITH THEM through the DENSE FOREST.

And when they stop, their jaws are all on the ground.

We pan around and see what they see -

THE MONEY TREE. A big, elm-like tree, that, instead of leaves, growing HUNDRED DOLLAR BILLS from its limbs.

On ARTHUR'S FACE - he is JUST AS SHOCKED AS THE SIBLINGS - he had NO IDEA. He quickly wipes the surprise off his face.

IAN (CONT'D)
Holy fuck. Are those --

Ian walks over and rubs his hand over one of the Benjamins.

EXT. THE MONEY TREE - DAY

The SIBLINGS are just walking around the tree in awe.

ARTHUR
Don't take any now! There's still
a...discussion to be had about...the
future of...all this.

IAN
You knew about this the whole time...

ARTHUR
Well, of course I did!

RICHARD
How long has this...existed?

ARTHUR
Your father told me it was planted a
dozen years ago.

CLAIRE
And no one else knows about it?

ARTHUR
Not a soul.

The siblings don't think much of that comment, but it'll come to mean a whole lot.

Ian, Claire, and Richard all look at the tree, at one another, at the sky, as if answers are being held in the clouds.

INT. BRAXTON HOUSE - IAN'S CHILDHOOD BEDROOM - NIGHT

IAN's posters are *Goodfellas*, *Blow*, some video games, a couple Playboy centerfold type shots.

INT. BRAXTON HOUSE - RICHARD'S CHILDHOOD BEDROOM - NIGHT

RICHARD walks around his old childhood bedroom, which is spartan and clean as fuck, for someone of any age. Very little on the walls besides some Science/Math Awards.

INT. BRAXTON HOUSE - CLAIRE'S CHILDHOOD BEDROOM - NIGHT

CLAIRE is on her Princess Bed, looking at the various collages posted around her childhood room - Clippings from *17*, *Cosmo*, *Vogue*, etc. A *Notebook* poster.

Claire also seems to be wondering, as she takes it all in, same as what the other siblings seem to be wondering in their respective rooms...how much have I actually grown up...?

INT. DINER - EVENING

The siblings are at a table. Food is half-eaten (or in Richard's case, has been nibbled on).

RICHARD

Listen, here's where I land. I think it's imperative that we tell no one, talk to no one, and just overall not tell anyone about it or do anything about it, not until we know more.

(beat)

Right now, Arthur Fable is bound by attorney-client privilege. The...

(sotto)

The *tree* falls under that. Unless one of us voluntarily lets something slip.

IAN

That could've been one nice, short sentence. You talk like you get paid by the word.

CLAIRE

That's the question, though. How can we *know* more when the only people who knew about it were Fable and dad, and one of them is dead?

RICHARD

I say we search the house for information.

IAN

You think dad left behind some treasure map?

RICHARD

No, Ian, I don't think there's a *treasure map*. But you can't build and sustain something like...like *that* without any trace.

IAN

You know what? There might be someone else who knows something.

(beat)

This guy at the memorial service, he was one of dad's colleagues and...actually, nevermind.

CLAIRE

What?

IAN

Dad wouldn't have told any of his work buddies about this.

RICHARD

Can we *please* all agree that we don't discuss with anyone, or ask anyone any questions, until we're all on the same page?

Richard looks directly at Ian.

IAN

Why are you looking at me?

CLAIRE

Richard, will you drive me back to dad's. That feels weird...saying that...

RICHARD

Sure. I'm actually gonna spend the night there, too. Too tired for the drive home.

IAN

The twenty minute drive home...?

RICHARD

(caught)

Okay, yes, I want to look through some of dad's old things and see if --

IAN

I'm in.

RICHARD

You're in for what?

IAN
I'm in. Let's do it. Let's all
bunk up. For old time's sake.

EXT. BRAXTON HOUSE - NIGHT

ECU of a LEAF. From a maple tree. A regular old leaf.
IAN'S fingers are running through it, as if the idea of a
normal leaf seems foreign to him now.

INT. CORONER'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Find the WYCK LIMEHOUSE eating Chinese take-out. The SHERIFF,
DEXTER DOLBY (43), enters, with KYLE by his side.

SHERIFF DOLBY
Evening, Wyck.

WYCK
Sheriff Dolby. Sorry for waking
you, I just...I thought you might
want to see this.

Wyck picks a file up from his desk.

SHERIFF DOLBY
What is it? Forgot my reading glasses.

WYCK
Dennis Braxton's autopsy report.
Now, not to toot my own horn, but a
lesser coroner might've missed it.

SHERIFF DOLBY
Missed what, exactly?

WYCK
Trace amounts of batrachotoxin in
his system. It's a poison, extracted
from food eaten by a genus of venomous
frogs in the Colombian Rainforests.

SHERIFF DOLBY
The fuck you tellin' me? Denny Braxton
ingested frog poison?

WYCK
I'm telling -- sorry, *asking* you --
to bring his body back above ground.

SHERIFF DOLBY
His grave was only lowered yesterday!

WYCK
We can keep it between us.

Sheriff Dolby winces, knowing he's got a tough decision. Looks over at Kyle, who seems to be collapsing under the weight of what this discovery portends.

INT. IAN'S CHILDHOOD BEDROOM - NIGHT

IAN in the twin size bed, staring at the ceiling, where the relics of glow-in-the-dark planetary stickers remain.

He reaches down toward his clothes, pulls a crumpled HUNDRED DOLLAR BILL from the back pocket of his jeans.

Turns on the bedside lamp, holds the bill under it, like a jeweler examining a diamond.

INT. CLAIRE'S CHILDHOOD BEDROOM - NIGHT

CLAIRE in her childhood room, restless.

Gets up, walks over to the window, opens it, leans out, examining the night, watches the branches of the TWO LARGE TREES in the front yard lope to and fro, conducted by the breeze of the night.

Goes over to her desk, where her laptop sits.

ON THE COMPUTER: Types in 'Money Tree'. The search results come up - mostly articles that use the 'money doesn't grow on trees' aphorism. Some payday loan advertisements. Clicks on IMAGES, finds some Malvaceae trees.

Claire lights up a cigarette, blows the smoke out the window.

ON THE COMPUTER: Claire pulls up her Word Processor program, types in *MONEY TREE FOUND IN IDAHO*. Deletes. *WHAT IF MONEY DOES GROW ON TREES?*

Sits back. Thinks. Deletes again.

INT. RICHARD'S CHILDHOOD BEDROOM - NIGHT

RICHARD can't sleep, either. He gets out of bed in his flannel pajamas, quietly opens the door, creeps across the tentative wooden floorboards, sees both of his siblings' doors closed, walks over to Denny's room and gently closes the door behind him.

INT. DENNY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Denny's bed is still unmade. His nightstands are lined with empty Diet Coke cans, half-finished books.

The room itself is a monument to pre-apocalyptic informational hoarding, a fever dream of strange, pseudo-conspiratorial ideology.

Like Denny, it's all both targeted and utterly unfocused at once.

A quick scan of the books, which gives us some insight/clues on Denny: *A Retrospective on the Classical Gold Standard. Currency Convertability. The Kondratiev Wave & Agricultural Commodities. Occult Chemistry. Capital Markets Handbook. Treasury's War: Unleashing of a New Era.*

Richard lies on Denny's bed, picks up one of the books, opens it to find a bookmark:

RULES OF THE LAND - Theodore Braxton, 1948. And beneath the header are some pictures, some equations...promising stuff...

CLAIRE (O.S.)

Comfy?

Richard quickly SHUTS the book.

RICHARD

Don't guys dad's age read Tom Clancy or something?

CLAIRE

Guys dad's age also didn't own land on which a tree grows money.

RICHARD

Touche.

CLAIRE

What's going on with you, Richard? You can talk to me.

Richard quickly pivots.

RICHARD

All right, don't tell Ian, or make a big thing, but...I got awarded full professorship.

CLAIRE

WHAT! That's amazing! Why are you keeping it a secret?

RICHARD

It's just a lot of added pressure. I'm nervous, to be honest.

CLAIRE

It's well-deserved. And you're gonna do great. I'm proud of you.

RICHARD
Thanks, Doe.

CLAIRE
(at Denny's books)
Anything good to help put me to sleep?

RICHARD
I was preparing my syllabus for next semester...

CLAIRE
On second thought, I'll just take an Ambien.

Richard smiles. Claire leans in and gives him a kiss on the cheek.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)
Get some sleep.

INT. SILK FALLS BANK - DAY

RICHARD is seated across from MIKE (33), a loan officer.

MIKE
A full professor? That's terrific!

RICHARD
Thank you, thank you.

MIKE
Listen, Richard, we've known each other for a spell, and I do have some discretionary power...but I'd have a much easier time defending this loan to my bosses if I had Jess's signature on it.

RICHARD
Well, to be honest, I kind of wanted to surprise her with something.

MIKE
(unconvinced)
I know this isn't kosher of me, but, with your dad's untimely passing..

RICHARD
Yep. Getting money from that, too. My cup runneth over.

MIKE
15 grand, then?

RICHARD
If you'd be so kind.

EXT. BANK PARKING LOT - LATER

RICHARD takes out his phone, calls JESS, puts it on speaker.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. OFFICE - SAME

See JESS (33, attractive) - Richard's wife, the same one Ian saw with that other guy who wasn't Richard.

JESS
Hi, Richard.

RICHARD
Guess who's a newly minted full professor?

JESS
Wow. I would've been every dollar to my name that you --
(beat)
I shouldn't say that. Congratulations are in order.

RICHARD
And the first thing I'm doing with my new salary bump? Sending Alexa to that camp in Boise.

JESS
Richard, that camp is twelve thousand dollars.

RICHARD
I figure, it'll be great for her, and it'll be great for us. We'll have the whole summer to spend with each other, and I -

JESS
Richard --

RICHARD
I don't have any expectations. But I think having some time to ourselves to...sort through everything...will be just what the doctor ordered.
(beat)
I love you, Jess. I always have, and I always will.
(MORE)

RICHARD (CONT'D)
Let me show you that I can still be
the man you fell in love with.

As they continue talking, and we END INTERCUT, we see -
BRICKELL, in his car, watching.

INT. NURSING HOME - ROOM - DAY

IAN walks in to the same room, with the same WOMAN, who looks
over at him.

WOMAN
Dennis?!

IAN
No, no. Not Dennis. It's...it's
Ian. Your son.

WOMAN
We don't have any children, Dennis.

IAN
You're right. You caught me.

Ian smiles at his senile mother, leans in, kisses her.

IAN (CONT'D)
We're gonna be okay, mom.

He squeezes her hand.

IAN (CONT'D)
We're gonna be better than okay.
We're gonna be *great*.

WOMAN
(no idea what's going
on, but catches the
vibe)
Well, that's wonderful, dear!

IAN
Yeah. It is, isn't it?

EXT. NURSING HOME PARKING LOT - LATER

IAN walks over to his car. And we see -
BRICKELL, in his car, watching.

INT CARS/EXT RURAL IDAHO ROADS - EVENING

BRICKELL is following ARTHUR FABLE.

EXT. SILK FALLS FOREST - EVENING

ARTHUR FABLE walks up to the rock, punches in the code on the KEYPAD.

See BRICKELL hiding behind a set of trees, watching on.

The PATH lights up, and ARTHUR ventures down it. After a couple moments, BRICKELL begins to follow -

But the LIT PATH is no longer alit - at least the parts that Arthur has walked down. And Brickell is super confused.

EXT. MONEY TREE - EVENING

ARTHUR walks up to the tree, rolls his hands over some BENJAMINS.

Steps back, looking at the tree in awe.

ARTHUR
Jesus, Denny Braxton. Who the hell
were you?

EXT. SILK FALLS GENERAL STORE PARKING LOT - NIGHT

We follow JOE towards his car as he whistles Yellow Submarine.

BRICKELL (O.S.)
Lennon had a pretty gnarly trip,
went over to McCartney's house, and
became convinced it was actually a
submarine and he was the captain.
Or the Walrus, as it were.

Joe turns to see Brickell.

JOE
You're back! Good to see you again,
feller. Couldn't get enough of that
rhubarb pie down at the diner?

BRICKELL
You remember me...

JOE
Well, yes, sir. I know too many
faces by heart to forget new ones.

BRICKELL
I thought that might be the case.

Brickell takes out his PISTOL, SHOOTS JOE twice in the chest.

EXT. CEMETERY - NIGHT

A large PLOW. A CRANE going down...

BLACK

And then coming up...with Denny Braxton's GRAVE.

EXT. SILK FOREST - NIGHT

We're roaming through the Southern part of the forest, passing by all sorts of exotic animals, and we settle on:

THE MONEY TREE in all its splendor. We hold on it.

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - MORNING

KYLE, carrying a cup of coffee, walks into SHERIFF DOLBY'S office.

KYLE

You wanted to see me, sir?

SHERIFF DOLBY

Well, Kyle, after...the revelations of last night...

Dolby puts his coffee down, grabs Kyle's.

SHERIFF DOLBY (CONT'D)

Mine tastes like dog shit. ANYHOW, I think we both know that our little operation ain't equipped to handle a potential homicide investigation.

KYLE

Well, sir, we don't know exactly what --

SHERIFF DOLBY

I know you wanna do your job, and I do too, and this ain't gonna stop either of us.

KYLE

What...isn't going to stop us?

SHERIFF DOLBY

I brought in a man who *is* experienced with homicide investigations. Comes from Chicago. With the highest recommendations.

A knock on the door.

SHERIFF DOLBY (CONT'D)

There he is now!

Kyle turns to see BRICKELL.

BRICKELL

You must be Kyle. I'm Detective
Sargeant Alister McGrath. And I
look forward to working with you.

FADE OUT