

ABSENT

Written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. CADDO BAYOU LAKE PIER - DAY

Jake [8] sits on the edge of the pier dangle his feet in the murky brown water kicking and splashing them back and forth. His father, David [29], sits next to him. Both are fishing with cane poles along the pier. The lure begins to bob in the water.

JAKE  
Dad! Dad! I got one.

DAVID  
Pull it up son. Pull it up.

Jake struggles to raise the pole high.

DAVID  
Now, pull out.

David cups his hands around Jake's. He helps him raise the pole high and pull out to catch the fish. The fish lifts out of the water.

JAKE  
We caught it, Dad. We caught it.

David high fives his son. Jake hugs his dad.

Excited, Jake drops the fish in the ice chest that already has a couple of fish in it. Hours pass and Jake's head falls on David's shoulder, asleep. David lies Jake's fishing pole down on the pier and he gently lays his son's head on his lap.

David continues fishing a little longer and begins to daydream. He rest back on an elbow while he wraps his other arm around Jake as he sleeps. David's mind travels back in time.

TWENTY YEARS AGO

INT. LOCAL SMALL TOWN BAR - DAY

The town drunk, TURK [40], brash and very obnoxious, sits at the bar. Empty cocktail glasses are lined up in front of him. He gulps down the last drop of the brown liquid he so fondly enjoys. Turk turns the glass up and squints one eye looking to ensure it is empty. He finger wipes the sides to get one more taste. He adds the empty glass to the lineup.

TURK  
 (speech slurred)  
 One-two-three-four-r-r-r-r. Five,  
 six, seven-n-n-n. I need three  
 more, then I'll have ten.  
 Bartender, three more.

The YOUNG BARTENDER takes the last glass from his hand.  
 Annoyed and curt.

YOUNG BARTENDER  
 Looks like you got your ten. No  
 more. You've had your last drop.

TURK  
 I got money.

Turk fist slams several balled up bills, various  
 denominations, he pulls from his shirt pockets on the bar.

TURK  
 Now serve me. Three. I stop at  
 ten.

The Young Bartender counts out the empty glasses as he tosses  
 each one into the plastic wash tub behind him sitting in a  
 sink.

YOUNG BARTENDER  
 One, two, three, four, five, six,  
 seven, eight, nine, and--

Turk grabs the tenth glass and stuffs it in his armpit.

TURK  
 --see, I told you. I-I-I'm still  
 due one more. I haven't got to ten.

YOUNG BARTENDER  
 And today is your lucky day. You're  
 going to stop now, so you can still  
 walk out that door on two feet.

Turk leans over to tap the GUY sitting on the stool next to  
 him but his drunken stupor causes him to slide off of the  
 stool. The Guy braces Turk's fall and helps him sit back up.

GUY  
 Man, you've had enough.

TURK  
 Fuck you. Get out of my head and  
 mind yo' own business.

YOUNG BARTENDER  
Old man, you've had too much.

TURK  
Fuck you, too.

Turk throws the empty glass he hid at the Young Bartender but he misses. The glass smashes into a mirror behind the Young Bartender.

YOUNG BARTENDER  
Get the hell out of here. You old drunk. Clean up. You have a child.

TURK  
Keep my son out of yo' mouth. He can take care of himself.

The Guy sitting next to him, so disgusted with Turk's obnoxious behavior takes his drink and moves away to a booth.

TURK  
Bartender, gimme another drink. Please.

The Young Bartender rings the bell. TWO BOUNCERS, strongarm types, come to each side of the Young Bartender.

TURK  
Alright. Alright. Alright. I'll take my money somewhere else.

Turk grabs the balled up bills from the bar. He stuffs a couple in his pocket. Some drop on the floor.

EXT. LOCAL SMALL TOWN BAR FRONT WINDOW - EARLY EVENING

A YOUNG DAVID [8] watches Turk, his father, through the window with utter disappointment and sadness.

INT. LOCAL SMALL TOWN BAR

Turk spins around on the bar stool and sees Young David at the window. His speech slurs and stumbles over his words and feet.

TURK  
Come on in, son. Come drink with yo' papa.

He slides off the bar stool down to the floor and crawls on all fours toward the door. Turk staggers and stumbles to standup.

He chuckles at a LADY sitting in a booth with her MALE COMPANION. Turk unzips his pants and pulls his penis out.

EXT. LOCAL SMALL TOWN BAR FRONT WINDOW - EARLY EVENING

Young David startled, shamed and scared dashes off running away. Tears stream down his cheeks.

INT. LOCAL SMALL TOWN BAR

Turk proceeds to relieve himself on the floor in front of the Lady and Male Companion.

Angry, the Male Companion jumps up.

MALE COMPANION  
Bastard!

The Male Companion grabs Turk by the back of his collar and throws him out the door.

EXT. LOCAL SMALL TOWN BAR - EVENING

FRONT DOOR

Turk lands on his knees. Turk stumbles as he tries to standup. His shirt hanging out and pants barely hanging on. MAN 1 and MAN 2 help him to stand. They carry him, each one under his arms.

ALLEY

Down in the alley, MAN 1 plows his fist into Turk's right jaw. Man 2 plows his fist into his left jaw. They kick, stomp, and plaster his face beating him to a bloody pulp. Turk falls to the ground. The men rob him, emptying his pockets of all the money and scurry off. Turk lying face down in his bloody puddle moans.

COUPLE HOURS LATER IN ALLEY

A POLICEMAN stands over Turk, lying face down in his blood. The Policeman's partner, a POLICEWOMAN, presses two fingers against Turk's carotid artery. She looks up at the Policeman and shakes her head. He's dead.

POLICEMAN

He was a miserable man. Horrible  
to his son.

POLICEWOMAN

Yep, that kid practically raised  
himself after his mother died.

BACK TO TWENTY YEARS LATER

EXT. CADDO BAYOU LAKE PIER - EARLY EVENING

David swoops sleepy Jake up into his arms and carries him to the house on the other end of the pier. He loves his son and tucks his head into his shoulder as he carries him up to the house a short distance from the pier.

INT. HOUSE - EVENING

David tucks Jake, still asleep, in the bed under the covers. He kisses him on the forehead and quietly whispers.

DAVID

Goodnight son.

As David eases off the bed to leave, Jake awakens.

JAKE

Dad, we caught a lot of fish,  
didn't we?

DAVID

Yep. Now, go back to sleep.

JAKE

Did my grandfather, your dad...was  
he always around for you, like you  
are for me?

David sits back down on the bed. He pauses before responding. Then smiles.

DAVID

Let's just say, I will never be  
absent from you.

David hugged Jake. Tucked him again. He got up and turned the lights off as he exited the room.

FADE OUT.