

WALKER

Written by

Anna Fricke

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ACT ONE

EXT. TEXAS HILL COUNTRY - BACK ROAD - NIGHT

Texas sky. Crickets. Probably bats. CORDELL WALKER (but he goes by "Walker" because he's embarrassed by the name his mama gave him), late 30's, soulful and smart for a guy who could kick your ass with one arm tied behind his back, ambles on horseback. His vibe is Johnny Cash tough with a dash of Willie Nelson sweet. Hell, he might even be singing.

WALKER

(singing)

*Maybe I didn't love you/quite as
often as I could have...*

Walker straightens up and tightens the reins as a SEMI TRUCK with the headlights off crests over the hill, FOUR SQUAD CARS trailing behind it, sirens blaring. The truck spins to a halt on the shoulder, dust flying.

The DRIVER dives out of the truck and stumbles, then sprints into the ravine. Given the rough road, the police can't follow in their vehicles. This is where Walker comes in.

WALKER (CONT'D)

(singing)

*You were always on my mind. You
were always on my mind...*

And with that, Walker slaps on his white rancher hat and gently kicks the horse into a gallop.

EXT. RAVINE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Walker, on horseback, charges in the darkness after the suspect, whipping through bramble, leaping over creek beds, steadily gaining ground on the suspect. When Walker gets close enough to apprehend the guy, he doesn't just dismount his horse and cuff him. No. Anyone could do that. This is Walker, Texas Ranger. He's a bad ass who likes to have a little fun with his job. Walker hauls back and LASSOES the guy, dragging him to the ground.

WALKER

Tommy Hayes? You're under arrest.

HAYES

What the hell?!

WALKER
 Shoulda stopped running.
 (then)
 You have the right to remain
 silent...

Walker recites this with the pleasure of a nighttime story as Hayes screws his face up in misery.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

Hayes is pushed into a squad car. We pan away from the car to find Walker celebrating with the surrounding COPS (as they feed treats to Walker's horse).

HAPPY COP
 (laughing)
 A lasso, Walker? Really?

WALKER
 I saw no need to employ my firearm.

The cop laughs, fishing in his pocket for a sugar cube.

WALKER (CONT'D)
 Bessie's sugar free. Got any bacon?

HAPPY COP
 That seems wrong.

WALKER
 Why? She's not a pig. It's fine.

HAPPY COP
 But she probably knows a pig.

WALKER
 Happen to know a few pigs myself...

Jovial camaraderie. Walker's phone rings. As he steps away:

WALKER (CONT'D)
 (into phone)
 Baby? There you are. Kids good?

EMILY
 Abeline said they were out cold.

WALKER
 Aw. And you lay out my shirts like
 I told you to?

He's joking with the "traditional" husband bit. She plays.

EMILY
 Sure did, babe. Cleaned and ironed.

EXT. DESERT - NEAR THE TEXAS/MEXICO BORDER - NIGHT

INTERCUT Walker's wife EMILY and Walker. Emily (scrappy and capable with an Emily Blunt vibe) hauls survival supplies off the back of a truck.

WALKER
 Where you at?

EMILY
 Right about where I told you. If I'd told you anything. Because I'm a good citizen, Mr. Walker.

WALKER
 Yes you are, Mrs. Walker.

In the background, four or five other VOLUNTEERS unpack food and water, hauling it off the trucks. A YOUNG WOMAN clasps Emily's shoulder in friendly support. HELEN, Emily's friend.

EMILY
 Thanks, Helen.
 (into phone)
 I should go. You get your guy?

WALKER
 You had to ask?

EMILY
 You get huffy when I don't ask.

WALKER
 I got the guy. Go help yours.
 I love you.

EMILY
 And I love you. Stay safe.

EMILY (CONT'D)
 Could be a while. Shorthanded tonight. And oh -- we got stalled by a flock of turkeys on the way down. Damndest thing!

WALKER
 Is it a flock or a herd?

EMILY

Y'know, I think a group of turkeys
is actually called a rafter.

WALKER

(laughs)

That doesn't make any damn sense!
How many turkeys comprise a rafter?

He waits a beat for her answer. But no answer comes.

WALKER (CONT'D)

Em?

And then, Walker hears Emily SCREAM. The unmistakable POP POP
of gunfire. Walker grips the phone.

WALKER (CONT'D)

Emily? Emily!

The sound of the phone skittering on the ground. And then
nothing. Horrible silence. Walker slowly turns around. His
group of celebratory colleagues are like a bizarre circus
now. A few cops turn to Walker with smiles on their faces,
and their faces fall as they see Walker pale...

Chyron: TWO years later

INT. AUSTIN - BANQUET HALL - NIGHT

Low lights, beige carpets, limp salad. A corporate banquet.
This is a celebration of recent Texas Ranger achievements,
and we're right in the middle of an ode to Cordell Walker.
Walker's boss, CAPTAIN LARRY JAMES (40's, African American, a
trailblazer in his division), speaks about Walker:

CAPTAIN JAMES

Cordell Walker, Texas Ranger,
welcome home. We commend you on
your arrest of the murderous duo of
Anton Keller and Felicity James.
Your career as a Ranger embodies
the nature of our institution: when
hope is lost, when evil is rampant,
when local law has reached its
limit, the Texas Ranger is called
upon to bring justice home. Your
keen ability to see both sides of
the story has enabled you to
procure more confessions than any
Ranger in recent history.

(MORE)

CAPTAIN JAMES (CONT'D)

You are a true son of Texas, born to Bonham and Abeline Walker, third generation ranchers.

The Captain starts the slide show of Walker, and we are immersed in the images. The QB at Friday Night Lights, the ranch hand to his father, his Silver Star ceremony. Kissing his bride, holding his first born. The golden moments.

CAPTAIN JAMES (CONT'D)

Mr. and Mrs. Walker were kind enough to look after Ranger Walker's children, Stella and Arlo, while Walker completed his important mission.

We pan around the table where his family sits, up front. BONHAM WALKER, Walker's father, (50's), sturdy, conservative, would rather be ranching. He takes a sip of whiskey.

BONHAM

Everybody knows this, don't they? Keep it moving.

ABELINE

It's a nice thing, Bonham. Your son is being honored.

Bonham sighs, disgruntled. As he turns away, his Abeline steals a nip of his drink.

BONHAM

He ain't here, Abeline. How honorable is he?

Walker's younger brother LIAM (late 20's), born in a suit, a little smug, a lot brilliant, certainly not deigning to touch his subpar meal, clears his throat.

LIAM

Yes, the first born. The Great One.

ARLO (13) Walker's son, turns to Liam, anxious.

ARLO

Are you mad at Daddy?

Liam softens, a good uncle.

LIAM

No, Arlo. Just miss him. We all do.

From the other side of the table, we hear a SNORT. STELLA (15) insolent and brilliant, scrolls through her phone.

LIAM (CONT'D)
 (warning)
 Stella.

Abeline looks to her younger son.

ABELINE
 You don't think he would just skip
 it... do you?

Stella turns to them, always listening in.

STELLA
 Oh, I absolutely do.

LIAM
 Stella, honey, she didn't ask you.
 (then, stage whisper)
 I absolutely do.

As Captain James calls Cordell Walker up to accept his commemorative Ranger pin, it becomes awkwardly clear that Walker is not in the audience. Arlo turns to his Uncle Liam, anxious. *Where's dad?* Liam sighs, disappointed.

Away from the crowd, observing all of this, we see a FEMALE POLICE OFFICER. Late 20's, Mexican American, a powerful presence. She could be working security, but she seems more invested than that as she scans the room. Thoughtful.

EXT. VISTA POINT - NIGHT

Walker, a little more scruffy and somber since the last time we saw him, sits on the hood of his pickup looking out over a vista. Music plays, a female voice, sweet and haunted, sings an indie cover of *Deep In the Heart of Texas*. Walker's drinking whiskey. He doesn't bother putting the cap back on the bottle. In his hand, he turns a worn casino coin over and over. No name on the coin, just a design of a mountain range. He looks to the side, and we see what he sees:

Amidst the trees and the glittering stars, WALKER (a flashback version of him) slow dances with EMILY (a flashback version of her). Emily stretches out her left hand, admiring her new engagement ring. This is where he proposed. Present Walker looks away, the moment gone. He takes another pull from the bottle.

Down the road, a patrol car slowly approaches. Beat. The siren gives a warning WHOOP.

The red and blue lights flash, and the car pulls in next to Walker's truck. Walker readies himself.

The same police officer we saw at the banquet steps out of the car. She approaches Walker, showing her badge.

OFFICER
Sergeant Ramirez, APB. You have a plan for the night, sir?

WALKER
A plan? Not as such, Ramirez.

The officer scans her flashlight over Walker's open bottle.

OFFICER
Sergeant Ramirez.

WALKER
Yes, ma'am.

She smiles patiently; she's sadly used to getting shit.

OFFICER
What's your grand plan here?

WALKER
Glad you asked, Sergeant Ramirez. I have, in fact, prepared for your legal concerns. Packed a bedroll.

OFFICER
Sir, this is a public space. Can I see your license?

WALKER
You ask so nicely.

OFFICER
(pointedly)
Yeah, they train girls special.

Walker hands over his license. She considers it, giving no indication that she knows exactly who he is.

WALKER
You gonna run that?

OFFICER
I'm gonna drive you home. You can get your truck in the morning. Keys.

She holds out her hand. Walker stares at her; this is really putting a wrench in his plans. He lets out a resigned sigh and hands over the keys.

EXT./INT. PATROL CAR - MOVING - NIGHT

Walker leans his head against the window in the back seat while the police officer drives. Walker tries to get comfortable, but he's cramped.

WALKER

These seats go back at all?

She glances at him in the rearview.

OFFICER

It's not designed for comfort.

(then)

Most guys, when they're drinking with no intention of putting the cap back on, just do it at home. What are you skipping out on?

WALKER

I was supposed to get this award.

OFFICER

Congratulations.

Walker brushes that off; doesn't want the accolades.

WALKER

For doing my job. I've been out of town coming up on two years. Haven't seen my kids yet. I'm still carrying the work with me, y'know? I don't want the stink of it on them. Needed to visit a ghost instead.

(beat)

Not that you asked.

OFFICER

I did.

WALKER

Been a while since I had an actual conversation. I mean, as myself and not my cover. Because I was undercover. You don't need to know that. Although I guess it's over.

The officer smiles to herself.

OFFICER

Maybe do a couple practice rounds in front of the mirror before you go out in public again.

She pulls up to what looks to be Walker's house.

OFFICER (CONT'D)
This is you?

WALKER
I guess.

She unlocks the doors and Walker climbs out the back. He turns around and leans into the open passenger window.

WALKER (CONT'D)
I'll thank you for that in the morning, I bet.

OFFICER
Consider it my last good deed as a highway patrol officer. I just got promoted. New job starts tomorrow.

WALKER
Good on you.

And with that, he lets himself into his house.

INT. WALKER'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Walker walks in, closes the door behind him. It's a dark, empty house. Looks like he's barely been here. You can taste the dust. His eyes flick to the empty master bedroom.

Walker falls back onto the couch and closes his eyes.

EXT. WALKER'S HOUSE - MORNING

A bright, sunny Texas morning. A pair of early morning JOGGERS run by Walker's house. Walker opens his front door and stretches. He's in running gear. He hits the road.

EXT. ROAD - VISTA POINT - MORNING

Walker, sweaty but barely winded, runs up to his truck. He looks back at the trees where he danced with Emily. Just the whisper of trees in the morning breeze. The reverie broken. He gets in, starts the ignition, and drives away.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

A cop car rides up behind a battered panel truck on the highway. Red and blue lights flash; the truck pulls over.

SGT. JUSTIN OSTROWSKI (young but hardened and weary) exits his car and approaches the truck. TWO MEN (late 20's, spooked, hats pulled low), roll down the window.

OSTROWSKI

Y'all aware you're driving without a license plate? Where you headed?

DRIVER

Down by Bastrop.

OSTROWSKI

License and registration?

The driver pats his pockets.

DRIVER

Shoot. I'm sorry, officer. I believe I left home without it.

This isn't looking good. Ostrowski wrinkles his brow.

OSTROWSKI

This truck for business?

DRIVER

Yes, sir.

OSTROWSKI

Mind if I take a look?

The driver gets out of the truck and walks around to open the back. Ostrowski shines his flashlight on the contents in the back of the truck (we don't see).

OSTROWSKI (CONT'D)

What're y'all so nervous about?
(sensing something)
Lemme take a look at the manifest.

The driver glances at the passenger, who nods, reaching for his pocket as if to produce papers. Ostrowski tenses in anticipation, and turns to the passenger just as the driver draws a gun, slamming it against the side of Ostrowski's head. As Ostrowski falls to the ground...

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

Walker pulls up alongside a couple patrol cars and a sedan by the side of the road. He gets out of his truck, cleaned up and dressed in his Ranger gear. Captain James approaches.

CAPTAIN JAMES

One more drink and your mother would have taken over that slideshow last night, Cordell Walker. Don't you know you've gotten yourself into trouble with that woman, missing that banquet?

WALKER

Not as much trouble as you'll get using my given name, sir. I just got back into town the other night. Needed to pull myself together before I saw the kids.

CAPTAIN JAMES

So you were at a wellness retreat? Mud masks and meditation?

WALKER

Don't I smell like lavender?
(then)
What've we got here?

They start walking.

CAPTAIN JAMES

APB pulled a truck over early this morning. Missing plates. But they escaped questioning and left the officer pretty scared.

WALKER

Scared? Bless his heart.

CAPTAIN JAMES

They held him at gunpoint. Name's Sergeant Ostrowski. And he can't say what happened. Smells off, so they called us.

(then)

Here -- meet your new partner. Micki Ramirez, this here's Cordell Walker.

A FEMALE RANGER turns away from a group of COPS, revealing herself to be the female officer from last night. Walker tries not to look too shocked.

WALKER

Micki. Figured you'd be a guy.

MICKI

So did my dad. Pleasure.

She extends her hand. Walker smiles wryly as he takes it.

CAPTAIN JAMES

Would've introduced you two last night if you hadn't skipped out on your own banquet.

WALKER

(to Micki)

You were there?

MICKI

For a while. Then I had to go out and do my last patrol.

Walker nods, staring Micki down. She's not giving him an inch. The Captain clocks what feels like tension and shrugs it off as two new partners sizing each other up.

CAPTAIN JAMES

Okay. Ramirez, fill Walker in on where you're at.

As Captain James walks off...

WALKER

I'll try and keep up.

EXT. ROADSIDE STAND - DAY

At a roadside stand, Walker's mouth opens abnormally wide as he bites into a breakfast taco, salsa dribbling. Micki wipes her mouth as she finishes hers and looks at Walker, waiting for him to lay into her. Finally:

WALKER

Did you know we were going to be partners when you decided to hunt me down last night?

MICKI

Had to see what I was getting into.

WALKER

I don't want a partner I can't trust.

MICKI

That's what I was thinking.

(then)

Look, I've got a lot on the line. How many Mexican American women do you have in your office who aren't selling you *tingas*?

WALKER

I prefer the *migas*, but I take your point.

(then)

I get that you're in the spotlight. But you must like pressure if you wanted to do this.

MICKI

I needed to do this. Burned some bridges with my family, too, so--

WALKER

They're not proud you're a badass?

MICKI

(ignoring him)

Don't mess it up for me.

WALKER

Why would I do that?

He takes another improbable bite of his taco. Micki sighs.

MICKI

What're you thinking on Sergeant Ostrowski?

WALKER

He's got convenient amnesia.

MICKI

If they had access to attack him, maybe he asked them to get out of the truck.

WALKER

Maybe open the back. And he saw something they didn't want him to.

As they throw away their trash and exit...

INT. WALKER'S TRUCK - MOVING - DAY

Walker drives and Micki sits in silence, considering him as he sings along to Dolly Parton (playing on the radio).

WALKER

*Islands in the stream, that is what
we are, no one in between, how
could we be wrong...*

She can't help but like the guy, at least a little bit. But she turns away towards the window so he can't see it. As they pull up to headquarters...

EXT. TEXAS RANGER HEADQUARTERS - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Micki and Walker get out of the truck to meet another local cop, LT. BILLY HUDSON (late 30's).

WALKER

Lieutenant Hudson. Ran out of kids to bully down at the comic shop?

LT. HUDSON/BILLY

Once Pete Lawson's mama stopped making him that brisket, kid's lunch wasn't worth stealing.

He appraises Micki in a not so subtle way.

BILLY

Who's this?

WALKER

Check the badge, Billy, that's my partner, Ranger Micki Ramirez.
(to Micki)

I apologize. Billy and I went to high school together and he's short on formalities.

MICKI

(to Billy)

Oh, so you did go to high school, then. Good for you.

Billy sees he's not going to get anywhere with Micki just now, so he turns to Walker, genuine.

BILLY

Welcome back, friend.
(as they hug)
How're the kids?

WALKER

Good, Mama says they're good.

If Billy's surprised that Walker hasn't seen the kids yet, he tries not to show it. Walker feels it.

WALKER (CONT'D)

Going out there in a bit.

BILLY

Oh, nice. You send my love. Let's have a catch-up soon? Down at The Half Step?

WALKER

Sounds good.

BILLY

Nice to meet you, Ms. Ramirez.

MICKI

Ranger Ramirez.

BILLY

Alright, then. Alright. You two have a good day.

As Billy departs, Walker looks at Micki.

WALKER

He's a big help on intel.

MICKI

You don't need to apologize for your friends, Walker.

She turns and starts to walk into headquarters.

WALKER

I wasn't apologizing. Just explaining.

(then)

How do you do that?

MICKI

Do what?

WALKER

You're making me doubt myself!

Off Micki's smile...

EXT. WALKER'S PICK UP - ROAD - EARLY EVENING

Walker makes the drive out to his parents' ranch. Magic hour, wide plains, he drives with the window down. We realize he's nervous about what he'll be walking into.

EXT. WALKER RANCH - EARLY EVENING

Walker arrives, gets out of his truck, sees his father first. Bonham is in the bullpen, supervising a couple COWBOYS horse training two mares. He leaves them to it when he sees Walker and approaches, shaking his son's hand.

BONHAM

He lives.

WALKER

Good to see you, Dad.

BONHAM

Might've been better to see you last night, at the appointed time at which we were meant to celebrate your great accomplishments for Texas law enforcement.

Walker tries to digest if this is a compliment or a dig.

WALKER

And I appreciate it.

BONHAM

Curious to me as to why they're celebrating something that took you so damn long to accomplish. 18 months on that job could've been spent with better efficiency here on the ranch.

WALKER

I respect what you're doing here, but, as previously mentioned many times over the past several years, I'm not a rancher.

BONHAM

Oh, I didn't say that you were. But you could be. If you tried. Harder work than catching tweakers, though, so I can see why you might be a little spooked.

WALKER

It's not tweakers, Dad, it's--

He catches himself falling into his father's trap and pulls back. He looks back out at the horses.

WALKER (CONT'D)

(re: the horses)

Morgans look beautiful this year.

Bonham nods. Finally, they're in agreement.

ABELINE

Bonham Walker, leave him be! Some of us would like a visit!

Abeline stands on the porch, a force to be reckoned with.

WALKER

Gotta listen to mama.

BONHAM

Yes, you do.

Walker approaches the home. Chickens scatter in his path.

INT. WALKER RANCH - CONTINUOUS

Walker enters the main room of the Walker Ranch, which is the wish fulfillment of cozy but tasteful Western chic. Two dutiful cattle dogs plod up to lick Walker. Then, Walker spots his son, Arlo, reading a book on the couch.

WALKER

Arlo, my boy!

ARLO

Daddy!

Arlo throws his book down and barrels into Walker. Abeline picks the book up and places it down on the table properly so that the spine won't get ruined.

WALKER

What're you reading?

ARLO

A Good Provider Is One Who Leaves:
One Family in Migration in the 21st
Century.

Beat.

WALKER
Sounds good, buddy.

Liam enters from the back, sweaty in workout gear.

WALKER (CONT'D)
My little brother knows I'm coming
for dinner, so he times his workout
to the minute, just to show me up.

LIAM
Are you narrating to someone I
can't see?

WALKER
Did you need to wear short shorts?

LIAM
I didn't need to, but I can.

WALKER
Good to see you, stinker.

They throw their arms around each other and start to wrestle.
Arlo laughs, watching them, and Walker eases off.

WALKER (CONT'D)
I need you in tact for your current
station. You look into that thing I
asked you about?
(then)
Oh, sorry. And congratulations on
the promotion, by the way.

LIAM
Congratulations to you on your
shiny pin, which I have collected
for you, you're welcome. I'll be
the best dressed assistant DA in
the land.

WALKER
I feel like you just wanted to say
your title out loud.

LIAM
I did, and it sounded really good.

ABELINE
(off camera)
Liam Edison, you need to shower
before you sit down at my table!

LIAM
I know, Mama!

WALKER
Have you been living here?

LIAM
I've got my place in town. I do
have a social life. Or, I did.
Turns out Bret doesn't share my
patience for kids.
(then)
Just been helping out. I'm an
excellent Manny.

Walker nods, absorbing that. He didn't realize.

WALKER
Thank you.

INT. MICKI'S BUNGALOW - NIGHT

Micki walks into her house, kicking off her boots.

MICKI
I'm home!

Micki's boyfriend, TREY BARNETT (late 20's), emerges from the kitchen. Trey is big, built, and has the slight edge of a war vet. As he hugs her:

TREY
Thought you'd be earlier.

MICKI
(gently)
Babe, I told you I was going to
stay late to catch up. I have to.

TREY
Don't let them bully you.

MICKI
That's the point. I don't want to
give them any cause.

She sinks onto the couch and we see her soften a little, let down the guard she's had to keep up at work.

MICKI (CONT'D)
Can I please have all the drinks?

TREY

You can have the one.

He hands her a tequila. She takes it gratefully.

TREY (CONT'D)

How's your partner?

MICKI

He's a lot. He's a legend. He's a mess. But I think I get it.

TREY

What's his story? He serve?

MICKI

Yes, actually. But also, he lost his wife.

Trey nods. Then, sitting next to Micki:

TREY

Don't feel sorry for him, though.

MICKI

I'm just trying to understand him. We have to be partners.

TREY

Exactly. You think he's home tonight, trying to figure you out?

MICKI

Oh, I'm one hundred percent positive he thinks he knows everything about me already.

She spots Trey's gym bag, ready to go by the door.

MICKI (CONT'D)

Didn't you already run ten miles this morning?

(then)

I know it's weird being back. Maybe check out that vet group I went to?

TREY

I will. Just gotta keep busy.

Micki nods, she knows. As he kisses her goodbye...

INT. WALKER RANCH - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

The Walker family passes around a gorgeous spread. The dogs await scraps. Walker looks up, realizing.

WALKER
Where's Stella?

Abeline shoots a look at Bonham.

BONHAM
Well, she was prepared to greet you last night at your Ranger banquet, but you failed to show up, so--

ABELINE
She's out with a friend.

BONHAM (CONT'D)
Sofia. Some Mexican girl.

WALKER
American, dad.

BONHAM
You don't even know her friends.

WALKER
Well, I believe I left my daughter in good hands...

ABELINE
Stop it, Bonham. Stella is fine. I've got her over at Holy Family--

WALKER
--What? Since when?

ABELINE
Spot opened up last month. I thought you'd be pleased.

WALKER
I told you this summer we didn't want Catholic school for her.

ABELINE
And who is "we," sweetheart?

"We" is Walker and Emily. Who is gone.

BONHAM
And you should be thanking your mother for enrolling your daughter in a respectable school. "We didn't want that for her." To what are you referring? A decent education?

Abeline reaches for the wine bottle. Arlo slips a bit of scraps to the dogs.

WALKER

I'm referring to the fact that I'd like Stella to have a culturally diverse experience.

BONHAM

And she did, she found her Mexican friend.

LIAM

Mexican American. Cordi, it's one of the best schools in the city, it'll prep Stella well. Also, it's overwhelmingly white and Catholic, so she should do extracurriculars elsewhere. Art at the college, sports at the rec center...

WALKER

Soccer?

LIAM

She hates soccer now. Basketball. She's really good.

ABELINE

If you have so many questions that we can't answer to your satisfaction, perhaps you should have stayed around to raise your children yourself.

ARLO

I'm fine.

(then)

If anyone's asking, I'm fine.

Arlo looks down and starts pushing the food around on his plate. Walker wonders: Is he fine? Liam reads the room.

LIAM

I think we need more roast. Arlo, wanna help me carve?

Arlo perks up, grateful to help. Walker watches them leave the room, frankly jealous. Abeline notices.

ABELINE

We did good by Stella.

WALKER
I know. I'm sorry.

Walker's phone rings. He sees who it is and picks up.

WALKER (CONT'D)
(into phone)
Hey, Billy. Yeah, we were just...
okay... What? Yes. Yup. Okay.

Walker ends the call and looks back to his parents, who are watching him expectedly. He's somewhat stunned.

WALKER (CONT'D)
I gotta go pick Stella up.

ABELINE
From where?

WALKER
Police station.
(then)
Thanks for dinner, Mama.

Walker hustles out of the room, concerned.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

EXT/INT. WALKER'S PICK UP - ROAD - NIGHT

Walker drives, a little too fast. He turns on the radio, too loud, and instinctively looks to the passenger seat. EMILY is there, a calming force. She reaches forward and turns the radio down.

EMILY

Don't assume the worst, babe.

WALKER

She's in holding at the police station. When she was sewing buttons on socks and putting on puppet shows for us, did you ever think we'd be getting this call?

EMILY

I think all sorts of people can be drawn to puppet theater.

WALKER

You know what I mean. She was sweet. Innocent. What happened?

She gives him a sad smile. Her death is what happened.

EMILY

Listen, you didn't always know what I was up to all the time either. And most of the time I was trying to do something for the greater good.

WALKER

(laughs)

Don't gimme that. What about that night I couldn't find you? Turned out that you and Helen were skinny dipping down at the lake? So don't go acting like you're some kind of shining example to our daughter.

They both laugh, a happy memory. But when Walker turns to look at Emily again, she's gone.

INT. PRECINCT - NIGHT

Walker enters the precinct to find Billy waiting for him. As they walk down the hallway:

BILLY

I was about to head home for the night when two of the guys brought her in. Figured you'd rather find out from me.

WALKER

Thanks, Billy.

BILLY

From what I can tell, they were at a party -- yes, Stella. Bunch of kids were vaping but she and her friend got caught buying it.

Walker processes. His little girl's not so little anymore.

BILLY (CONT'D)

(gently)

You been gone a while.

INT. PRECINCT - CELL - NIGHT

Walker rounds the corner to find Stella and her friend SOFIA in holding (with a scattering of other UNSAVORY TYPES). The GUARD opens the door for Walker and lets him enter. Sofia, Stella's friend, is all sharp features and pride.

Walker stands there for a moment, in this oddly public space. Does he hug his daughter? He moves to her, crouching down to hold her, but her response is limp.

STELLA

You didn't need to get me.

WALKER

Hello to you, too.

SOFIA

We weren't the only ones. And we weren't the worst.

Cold comfort.

STELLA

This is Sofia. Can we take her home, too?

WALKER

I'm sorry -- minors need to be released by their parents.

STELLA

I'm not just leaving her here.

Walker's unsure of how to handle this headstrong daughter.

WALKER

You're staying here overnight,
then? Because that's the option.

Stella stares back at her father, unmoving.

Just then, a COUPLE walks in. A man and a woman, middle-aged, Latino, cautious. They show their emotions when they see Sofia, who is clearly their daughter. As the guard lets them in, Walker goes to greet them.

WALKER (CONT'D)

You must be Sofia's parents. I'm
Cordell Walker. I'm a Texas Ranger.

SOFIA'S FATHER

It's that serious?

WALKER

I'm here for my daughter. It's good
to meet you. I've been out of town,
so I don't really know Stella's
social life. We should maybe spend
some time--

STELLA

(wants to die)
Stop it, Dad.

WALKER

I'm just saying, I guess the girls
got into trouble. We could help
each other out, here.

Sofia's parents look at Walker, sort of stunned.

SOFIA'S MOTHER

Mr. Walker? My name is Aura Muñoz.
This is my husband, Lorenzo. Sofia
is our only daughter. Yes, she got
into some trouble. But no, we
aren't that "kind."

WALKER

That's not what I was saying.

A POLICE OFFICER appears and beckons Sofia's parents.

POLICE OFFICER
 Sir, Ma'am? We're gonna need to see
 you up front.

Aura and Lorenzo sag, but without surprise; they're used to
 this. They turn to hug Sofia.

AURA
 We'll see you in a little bit.

SOFIA
 I'm sorry, Mama.

LORENZO
 You know you're in such trouble.

But Lorenzo squeezes her one more time before he goes. Sofia
 slumps as her parents leave.

SOFIA
 Epic first meeting.

STELLA
 I'm sorry. This is so embarrassing.

WALKER
 For who?

Stella looks at Walker, giving him the withering death wish
 that only a teenager can express.

WALKER (CONT'D)
 Let's go.

Resigned, Stella turns to Sofia and hugs her.

STELLA
 (to Sofia)
 I'm sorry.

They hold onto each other; a deep bond.

EXT./INT. WALKER'S PICK UP - MOVING - NIGHT

Walker drives his truck with a silent Stella beside him.

WALKER
 That must have been scary.

STELLA
 Can we not do this part?

WALKER

Which part is that?

STELLA

You being stern and sorry and me pretending I didn't know what I was doing.

WALKER

So you were aware that you were doing an absolutely dumbass thing.

STELLA

(fuck you)
Yes, father.

WALKER

Well. It's good to see you anyway.
(beat)
Really good. Wish it weren't under these circumstances, but--

STELLA

Nope. This is the part I don't want to do.

WALKER

I'm not the one who got us here, sweetheart. You wanna tell me what you were thinking?

STELLA

I kinda think the point is, I wasn't. Dad.

Walker nods, keeps staring at the road.

STELLA (CONT'D)

Mom always said you'd never be gone on a case too long.

WALKER

And I called you every week. Came home whenever I could. Which wasn't enough, I know. Just...

(then)

Some things happened that we didn't expect.

He turns to look at her. She's silently, subtly, crying, but doesn't want him to see. He stops the car. They're in front of the ranch.

WALKER (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. I miss her, too.

(then)

So much. I feel like I'm going crazy sometimes. I go to where I remember her, I see her. Talk to her. I go to that spot where I proposed. And so I get it, Stella, I do. But we can't just keep acting out like she'll come back and put us right. We gotta put us right.

STELLA

Do you want us to come home with you? Me and Arlo?

WALKER

Of course I do!

(then)

I just gotta fix the house up. Right now, it doesn't... it doesn't feel like the home we had.

Walker moves to hug Stella. But she's already gone.

INT. THE HALF STEP - NIGHT

Walker enters his local bar, a casual, jovial place. People are two-stepping in the background (think Broken Spoke in Austin). He sits at the bar where the bartender (late thirties, bronzed, sweet and bawdy), slides him a whiskey.

BARTENDER/AMELIA

Billy told me you were back in town. Thought you'd be by sooner.

WALKER

When I have an important job to do? Amelia, what kind of man do you take me for?

AMELIA

Same as when you were QB in high school. Took yourself too seriously to waste your time with me.

WALKER

Awww, don't break my heart.

Amelia grins at him; no hard feelings.

AMELIA

Good to have you back. Kids good?

WALKER

Depends on your definition. But they're definitely strong.

He's putting on a cheery face, and eager to numb his current headspace a little. Walker takes a swallow of his drink and turns to the dance floor. Looks like something appealing to get lost in. He stands up and walks into it.

Walker falls into the two-step, partnering up with a FLUSHED WOMAN who can't believe her luck.

They dance, and it starts to feel like they're the only ones there. Walker has a knack for this; the easy flirtation.

WALKER (CONT'D)

(over the music)

What's your name?

FLUSHED WOMAN/ADELAIDE

Adelaide.

WALKER

Damned if that ain't a beautiful name.

He grins at her and she just about dies. Walker's phone buzzes in his pocket.

WALKER (CONT'D)

(to Adelaide)

Sorry, I gotta take this. Work.

He softens the blow by slipping his arm around her waist. She's very happy.

WALKER (CONT'D)

(into phone)

Micki?

MICKI

(into phone)

Hey, I think I tracked down that panel truck.

(then)

Are you at a bar?

WALKER

Call you right back.

Walker ends the call and looks down at Adelaide, who is so sure she's about to leave with him.

WALKER (CONT'D)
Gotta take a rain check, Adelaide.
Ranger business.

ADELAIDE
(swoon)
You're a baseball player?

WALKER
(defensive)
Oldest law enforcement division in
the state of Texas!
(then)
Night.

He leans down and gives her the best damn kiss on the cheek she's had in her whole life. She watches him leave, crushed.

EXT. THE HALF STEP - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Walker calls Micki back.

WALKER
(into phone)
Sorry about that.

MICKI
(pointed)
No, sorry to interrupt your night.

WALKER
(glossing over it)
What'd you get on the truck?

MICKI
I found the owner registered with
the last known plates. Milo Clarke.
Owns a company called Green Thumb &
Grace out in Lubbock?

WALKER
The garden gnome guy?

MICKI
If Mother Mary looks like a gnome
to you, sure. Ex-con turned saint.

WALKER
Right. We'll go in the morning.
I'll bring donuts.

MICKI
Don't. We're not those people.

WALKER
Breakfast tacos?

MICKI
Text me when you wake up. Go home.

Micki hangs up. He smiles and continues on to his truck.

EXT. MICKI'S BUNGALOW - DAY

Micki's waiting for Walker the next morning when he comes to pick her up. He starts driving as she gets in the truck.

INT./EXT. WALKER'S TRUCK - MOVING - DAY

They drive through the residential streets for a moment. Walker turns up the radio. Micki turns it down.

WALKER
Where're my tacos?
(off her stare)
Y'know? Austin's finest?

MICKI
Where are your tacos? Same place your head is at. Up. Your. Ass. If this is the hazing part of our partnership, I'm here to tell you that we're done. I am done. In the Army, in the police force, I was always baby, honey, mama. They handed me dishes, they gave me their orders and they patted my ass. All of it peppered with *you're lucky to be here and if you wanna be one of us, you gotta get a thicker skin*. No one was trying to thicken my skin. They were trying to see more of it. I was top of my class in high school and college. I've been a black belt since I was ten. And breakfast tacos weren't invented in Austin, by the way. They're from San Antonio, where my family is from, and my family has been in Texas since before it was Texas. So if you want your tacos, drive your ass down there and ask my cousin Roberto to make you a batch.

(MORE)

MICKI (CONT'D)

But you'll be out of luck because I will have called ahead and told him not to serve you. No tacos!

Silence. Then, as he reaches into the middle console:

WALKER

I got you three bacon & cheese if you're hungry.

He hands Micki a small bundle of wrapped breakfast tacos. She holds them in her lap, looking down. She hides a smile.

MICKI

You're an epic jackass.

WALKER

(laughing)
That was really satisfying.

EXT. GREEN THUMB & GRACE - DAY

Micki and Walker pull up to the warehouse and get out of the truck. As they approach:

MICKI

So, the owner, Milo Clark, started Green Thumb & Grace a little over a year ago as a way to rehabilitate criminals and gang members.

Micki scrolls through the info on her phone.

MICKI (CONT'D)

He's helped a lot of people.

Then, Micki zooms in on a picture of one of the figurines and shows it to Walker.

MICKI (CONT'D)

I don't want that in my garden, though. That's scary clown creepy.

We see the IMAGE of a sickly sweet Virgin Mary cradling baby Jesus. Walker laughs as they push through the door.

INT. GREEN THUMB & GRACE - DAY

Walker and Micki enter the warehouse. It's full of the saccharine sweet religious figurines and garden statues. Various WORKERS (all ex-gang and ex-convicts, men and women) work on the molds, painting and packing.

It's a homey atmosphere; people seem happy. Walker picks up a small figurine from a side table and hands it to Micki.

WALKER
You're welcome.

MICKI
Stop it!

He refuses to take it back. Flustered, Micki pockets it as a burly but kind-faced man (40's) approaches them from the back. He extends his hand to shake. His prison tattoos are the only indicator of a previously rough life.

MILO
Milo Clark. I'm the owner here. Can I help you?

MICKI
Nice to meet you, Mr. Clark. I'm Ranger Micki Ramirez and this is Ranger Cordell Walker.

WALKER
Just Walker is fine.

MICKI
We'd like to discuss what happened the other night out on 84 with two of your employees.

Milo nods, upset but expecting this.

MILO
Of course. They told me they got into a spot of trouble.

Walker glances at Micki.

MICKI
So you're aware?

MILO
I didn't know how bad. But yes, we had a talk this morning. I just wanna say what a damn shame and embarrassment this is. I'm trying something new with this business, but it's not always easy, keeping folks on the right track.

WALKER
I can imagine.

Milo sighs, wiping a hand over his face. He seems paternal.

MILO

They know they messed up. They'll go in with y'all, pay their dues.

WALKER

We'll need to book them for the assault. Their cooperation will soften the blow. You've done a good thing.

MILO

Come, I'll walk you back to them.

INT. GREEN THUMB & GRACE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Milo leads Micki & Walker towards the back of the warehouse where we find GREG (the driver) and ALEX (the passenger), the two men from the beginning who assaulted Ostrowski. They're packing figurines into shipping boxes.

MILO

Greg, Alex, these Rangers stopped by about the incident with the officer. I told them you're glad to cooperate.

Alex, the younger one, seems scared and compliant. But Greg, is more hardened, straightens up when he sees -- and recognizes -- Walker.

GREG

Cordell Walker, been a while.

MILO

Watch yourself, Greg.

WALKER

I know you?

GREG

Probably better acquainted with my cousin. You put him away 'bout two years ago. Actually, 23 months and five weeks exactly. I know because he's counting down the time until he gets out and can drop in on you.

WALKER

You'll have to be more specific. I've got so many people just waiting to drop in on me.

MILO

Tommy Hayes.

(scoffs)

Is it true you pulled him in with a damn lasso?

The guy Walker put away the night Emily died. Micki clocks Walker's reaction, curious.

WALKER

Tommy Hayes. Of course. Your cousin. Active family, aren't you?

GREG

You, too. Think I've seen your daughter around.

MILO

(warning)

Greg.

GREG

Stella, wasn't it? What is she, 15 now? Mmm. Perfect age.

With that, Walker jumps on Greg. Greg takes a swing at him, but Walker blocks him, pummeling him in the ribs. We hear a meaty crack. Greg cries out in pain. Micki grabs onto Walker's arms.

MICKI

Walker! Use your head!

MILO

Greg! Stop this!

But Walker wrests free from Micki and hauls back his arm one last time, sending his fist flying into Greg's face. Blood sprays. Micki grabs Walker with more force now.

MICKI

(fiercely)

Enough!

(to Milo)

Our back-up will be in to take in the guys. Thank you for your time, Mr. Clark.

Milo shakes his head, distressed. He turns back to tend to Greg, who is writhing on the floor. Alex looks white as a sheet. Micki forces Walker out of the warehouse.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

INT. MICKI'S BUNGALOW - DAY

Micki, pissed and on a mission, opens the door to her bungalow and pulls Walker in. He's holding on his right hand, which is opened and bloody.

MICKI

Let's just clean you up here. I don't need to explain this at headquarters.

She points to the couch as she marches towards the bathroom.

MICKI (CONT'D)

I have antiseptic somewhere. Not sure. I'm not prepared for jackass disasters.

As she ducks into the bathroom, Trey comes out of the kitchen, wiping his hands with a dish towel. He shoots an uncertain look to Walker.

TREY

Babe?

Micki pops back out of the bathroom. This isn't how she wanted Trey and Walker to meet.

MICKI

Trey! I didn't know you were home. Um. This is Cordell Walker, my idiot partner.

WALKER

Just Walker is fine.

MICKI

Shut up. This is Trey Barnett, my boyfriend.

TREY

(to Walker)

You need more than antiseptic.

MICKI

(to Walker)

Listen to him, not me. He works as an army medic.

WALKER
You just home from tour?

MICKI
(to Trey)
Don't make small talk with him.
He's in trouble.

TREY
Roger that.

Trey inspects Walker's hand.

TREY (CONT'D)
I'll get my kit.

Trey exits. Micki glares at Walker.

WALKER
Why exactly are you so mad?

MICKI
I'm realizing how stupid you are
and it's making me very depressed
about my prospects as a Texas
Ranger.

WALKER
But aside from that.

Trey re-enters with his kit. He reads the vibe between Micki and Walker, sees it's tense. He works in silence.

MICKI
Aside from that? We're partners.
Correct? You were there when
Captain James announced that.

WALKER
I was. I wrote it down in my diary.
I applied sparkly stickers and
everything.

MICKI
Back there, Greg was being a dick.
Absolutely. No one should talk shit
about your daughter, ever.

WALKER
See, I knew we were a good match.

MICKI

And I know you're 6'4 and can crush a man just by sneezing, but you don't need to.

WALKER

Except when I do.

MICKI

No. When someone is already cooperating with us, we don't need to apply force just because we feel like it.

WALKER

Look, I know you had a dream about being a Ranger and whatnot, but I have a certain way of doing things--

MICKI

--And that way is going to evolve. Right now. Because I'm on your team. The notion of partners is that we teach each other, right?

WALKER

I thought it was in case one of us got shot, but go on.

MICKI

My theory is, they put us together because you always break the rules and they know I need to follow them.

WALKER

Why do you need to?

MICKI

Because life's different for women.

WALKER

That sucks.

MICKI

Thank you! Look, I'm the new one, I'm the woman. Literally, the woman. They treat this like a favor, not like I've earned it. Most elite division in the state -- I've got to earn it every day. You feel that way? I've served my time with the macho crap.

(MORE)

MICKI (CONT'D)

I'm not interested in playing
Florence Nightengale to you every
time someone pisses you off.

Walker takes that in.

WALKER

To be fair, it's your boyfriend
who's dressing my wounds, not you.
So, you're not really Nightengaling
here...

Trey lets out a low whistle. He glances at Walker.

TREY

Man, you do not want to piss her
off. Trust me.

Micki smiles at Trey in spite of herself.

MICKI

I love you, baby.
(then, to Walker)
I see how everyone walks on
eggshells around you. You've got a
sad story. I get that. And I have
your back. That's my job. But I
need to know you have mine.
(then)
I'm going back to work.

With that, Micki turns and leaves the room. Trey finishes
wrapping Walker's hand and squeezes a little too hard as he
secures the bandage.

WALKER

Ouch.

Trey smiles and packs up his kit.

INT./EXT. WALKER'S TRUCK - MOVING - DAY

Walker drives away from Micki's house. His cell rings with a
call from Liam. He answers.

WALKER

Yes, brother?

EXT. CAPITOL BUILDING - DAY

Liam sits on the steps as he talks to Walker. INTERCUT.

LIAM

Stella didn't come home on the bus.
I called school and they said she
wasn't at her afternoon classes.

WALKER

Okay, well, is that normal for her?
I don't know--

LIAM

It's not normal.

WALKER

I guess you'd know better...

LIAM

(impatient)

This isn't about who knows her
better, Cordi, it's about where the
hell is she?

Walker nods, snaps back to it.

WALKER

You track her phone?

LIAM

I think she put it on airplane mode
so we couldn't.

WALKER

Do me a favor? Call Billy at the
station. Put him on it, too.

(then)

And thank you.

LIAM

Of course.

EXT. SOFIA'S HOUSE - MORNING

Walker pulls into the driveway of a small but tidy house. He
gets out of his truck and knocks on the door. Sofia's mother,
Aura, answers the door.

AURA

Mr. Walker.

WALKER

Mrs. Muñoz, sorry to bother you.

AURA

They called the Rangers in already?

WALKER

(confused)

What? No... I'm looking for Stella. She never came home from school. I was hoping Sofia would know where she was.

Aura lets out a breath. She shakes her head.

AURA

She's not here. We haven't heard from her. I'm sorry, Mr. Walker. I thought you were here for us.

WALKER

What do you mean?

Aura's flustered. She doesn't even really want to talk to Walker. But he's an imposing presence.

AURA

When they brought Sofia in the other night, the police had to pull up our records. We don't have our papers yet. Any criminal activity...

WALKER

(realizing)

You could be deported.

AURA

We've done nothing, Mr. Walker. Nothing. All we've done is honest work in this country. And then our daughter...

(collecting herself)

She didn't even know. She was born here. She didn't even know.

WALKER

I'm sorry, Mrs. Muñoz. I'll do whatever I can to help.

AURA

We'll let you know if Stella calls.

With that, she closes the door. Off Walker, concerned.

INT. TEXAS RANGER HEADQUARTERS - DAY

Walker enters the Ranger office. He spots Micki across the room and beelines to her. She straightens as he approaches, still tense from before.

WALKER

Hey. I just got a call my daughter's missing.

MICKI

(concerned)
What can I do?

WALKER

My family's helping, thanks. And I checked at her friend's house, but they're handling a different situation. Turns out they might be deported because their daughter broke the law. Kid didn't even know they were illegal.

Micki shakes her head, upset.

MICKI

This is why they don't want this for me. My family. Because even Rangers, what can we really do? Back in the day, especially Rangers.

Walker looks at Micki, curious. They've been through some stuff by now, so Micki decides to tell him something.

MICKI (CONT'D)

You know how I said my family had been in Texas longer than most Texans? My great-grandfather was killed by a Texas Ranger in the Porvenir Massacre of 1918.

WALKER

Oh, god. I'm sorry.

MICKI

My mother hasn't spoken to me in three months, ever since she found out I was up for this job. To her, it's a personal betrayal. But for me, it's a way to set things right.

They both relax a little, the earlier tension dissolving.

MICKI (CONT'D)

I followed up on the intake interviews with Greg and Alex. Judging from the transcripts, Greg's statement tracked with what Milo said. But Alex was different.

WALKER

How so?

MICKI

He seemed scared. Remember he was jumpy back at the warehouse? He was in a panic by the time they brought him in. He was asking for extra protection. Very worried about disappointing Milo.

WALKER

That guy? Seems like Mr. Rogers. If Mr. Rogers did hard time.

MICKI

Maybe the Mr. Rogers thing is all an act. Could be Alex was protecting a secret.

WALKER

A charitable business could be a pretty good cover.

They both think, then:

WALKER (CONT'D)

You still have that figurine?

INT. TEXAS RANGER HEADQUARTERS - LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Micki stands beside Walker (and some curious RANGERS in towels) as he submerges the figurine in the sink. Sure enough, the shell of the figurine dissolves in the water, leaving a small baggie.

MICKI

Heroin.

WALKER

That's why Alex was spooked. He didn't want to blow Milo's cover.

MICKI

Ostrowski saw the figurines in the back of their truck.

(MORE)

MICKI (CONT'D)

They figured they were caught. And he didn't want to talk, because the one thing that scares a cop the worst is--

WALKER

Cartel.

MICKI

Alright. I'll take care of Milo.

WALKER

Yeah, we'll go together, right now.

MICKI

Your daughter's missing.

(then)

I haven't talked to my mom in three months and it's just about killed me. Your daughter hasn't really had you around in, what, two years? I get that our jobs are important. But nothing beats being her father.

Micki's words land on Walker.

WALKER

Thank you. I think I needed that.

MICKI

Yeah, I know you did.

(then)

I ran off a few times when I was a kid. But always somewhere I wanted to be found. She's probably thinking about where you would go. My guess is she wants you to be there, Walker. Whether she's ready to admit that or not.

Walker nods, thinking.

WALKER

If I find her, I'll meet you--

MICKI

Walker, go!

And so he grabs his Ranger hat and goes.

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

EXT. VISTA - DAY

Walker, following Micki's hunch, finds Stella sitting on a rock overlooking the vista where he proposed to Emily. As relieved as he is to find her, he's also pissed.

WALKER

Hey.

Stella turns, and is immediately exasperated.

WALKER (CONT'D)

What, you were hoping I'd somehow be Shawn Mendes?

STELLA

What? Ew. No.

WALKER

Do you know how worried we've been?

STELLA

Well, you showed up, so this must be a super big deal for you.

Walker recoils at her tone.

WALKER

Are you forgetting the part where I picked you up from jail last night? And now you're out here? What are you playing at, Stella?

STELLA

It's not a game.

WALKER

Then tell me what the hell it is so we can end it. Because I gotta tell you right now, we can't keep on like we are. Me trying to figure where you'll be next, you scaring the crap out of everyone. We don't have time for this.

STELLA

You don't have time.

WALKER

No, as a matter of fact, I don't.
I'm in the middle of a case--

STELLA

When aren't you?

WALKER

Never! That's my job.

STELLA

Thank you for being so important.

WALKER

Why are you doing this?

Stella has lost her patience, whatever was left.

STELLA

To get you. To see. THAT I AM NOT
OKAY. WE. Are not. OKAY!

WALKER

I see that! What do you want me to
DO, Stella? I am here. I am trying!

STELLA

When you're forced to.

WALKER

When are you gonna give me a break?
Huh? I just got back. I am trying
to make this work. Be here for you,
protect you, and yes, do my job. I
can't just do it all--

STELLA

She did.

That stops Walker. It's knife in the back. Stella knows.

STELLA (CONT'D)

Mom did. And it's not like she was
eating nachos and watching Fixer
Upper. She worked.

WALKER

I know.

STELLA

But somehow you're more important?

WALKER

Of course not! Listen. You think it sucks, having just me. But it's not just me. You've got Grammy and Pop Pop and Liam, who is apparently a better dad than I am--

STELLA

Stop listing family members! I needed you! Arlo and I needed you!

WALKER

Well, we gotta find some way to find a balance, sweetheart, because when I get a call, I have to go.

STELLA

(furious)

Do ya? Do ya just HAVE to? You can't just call your boss and say, oh, whoops, turns out I'm supposed to actually pay attention to my kids now?

WALKER

What am I supposed to say, here?
How can I fix this?

But he's not asking Stella. He's asking the trees, the place. He's asking Emily, who we now see standing there. She shakes her head sadly. She doesn't have the answer.

STELLA

I don't know! The only one who could have fixed anything is gone!

It lands. When Walker desperately looks to where Emily was, there's just some movement in the trees. He and Stella stare at each other, the fury between them.

WALKER

Get in that truck. Get in, right now. You're stuck with me, and you're right, I suck at this. But you're getting in that truck, and I'm driving you to Grammy's, because yes, I'm in the middle of case, and if I can fix one thing today it's gonna be that.

Overcome, Stella turns and gets into Walker's truck, slamming the door. He leans against it, emotion overcoming him.

INT. GREEN THUMB & GRACE - DAY

Micki enters the warehouse floor to find the workers hard at work. She beelines to the back to find Milo.

MILO
Ranger Ramirez, twice in one day!

MICKI
Yeah, my partner and I had a second
to think about a few things.

MILO
Partnership. That's what it's all
about.

MICKI
Yeah. We had some laughs, shared
some stories, washed one of your
figurines in the sink and
discovered a bag of heroin....

Micki trails off as Milo exudes disbelief.

MICKI (CONT'D)
Mr. Clark. When you started this
business, did you really have any
intention of doing any good?

MILO
How can you ask me that? Look at
the statistics. The people out
there... they're turning their
lives around.

MICKI
And do they know how they're doing
it? Well, Greg and Alex must have.

MILO
Like I said, those two were a
special case. Maybe not quite ready
for the program.

WALKER (O.S.)
So that's why you had them on such
a heavy packing and shipping
rotation?

Micki and Milo turn to see Walker. Micki's glad. Milo's not.

WALKER (CONT'D)

We saw their files.

(then)

Oh. And the aforementioned heroin.

Milo rubs his hand over his face and for a moment seems like that same concerned paternal figure. But then, he quickly reaches inside his desk drawer for a gun. Micki saw this coming. She advances and deftly kicks the gun out of Milo's hand! He springs up and starts running. Not losing a beat, Micki and Walker give chase.

Milo runs through the warehouse, knocking figurines and anything he can think of to thwart them. Two loyal WORKERS understand what's happening, and attempt to tackle Micki, who they think is the easy target. She kicks them off, barely breaking her stride. She looks back just as THREE MORE workers rush at her. But Walker's on them in an instant, leaving Micki free to chase Milo.

Milo bursts outside the warehouse. Micki follows.

EXT. GREEN THUMB & GRACE - DAY

Milo runs for his truck, parked past a section of large shelves holding figurines. Micki is on his heels. She looks back just as Walker emerges from the warehouse. They lock eyes. Micki looks at the shelves. Walker nods. As Micki turns back to Milo, gaining ground, Walker pushes with all his might on the furthestmost shelf. It teeters, and then falls, sending the shelves down like dominos. The last shelf crushes Milo's truck as he approaches it, and Micki tackles Milo to the ground! He cries out. As she cuffs him:

MICKI

You know, maybe no one would have even noticed if your product wasn't so specifically ugly.

Milo drops his head onto the ground, defeated. Micki looks back at Walker and they share a smile. Partners.

INT. TEXAS RANGER HEADQUARTERS - CAPTAIN JAMES'S OFFICE - DAY

Walker and Micki enter the Captain's office as he looks over their intake report. The Captain looks up.

CAPTAIN JAMES

Good work, you two.

(to Walker)

(MORE)

CAPTAIN JAMES (CONT'D)

Looks like it was a quite a takedown. And with minimum collateral. Well handled.

WALKER

Well, that was Ranger Ramirez. She took the lead.

The Captain nods, thinking Walker's being generous.

CAPTAIN JAMES

Of course.

WALKER

No, really. She was there before me, she set the trap. Disarmed him, got him outside, dodged his backup. I just helped.

MICKI

Okay, don't lay it on too thick.
(then)
But yeah, it was mostly me.

WALKER

(fondly ribbing)
I expected more from you, Captain.

The Captain smiles, enjoying them.

CAPTAIN JAMES

A promising start.
(then)
Taking down Milo's ring, you two uncovered a bigger link to the Jalisco New Generation cartel. Special Operations Group is setting up a team down there.
(to Walker)
You're well acquainted with border activity.

Micki shifts; she's well acquainted as well, but she'll be patient. Walker senses her.

WALKER

I am. How soon?

CAPTAIN JAMES

Effective immediately. Walker, you've had success with SOG before.
(MORE)

CAPTAIN JAMES (CONT'D)

The Chief appreciates your particular tenacity when it comes to the tough nuts. You're being recommended.

WALKER

Thank you, sir. I'm honored

The Captain nods and dismisses them. As they walk out:

MICKI

Does that mean you're heading down to Mexico? Could be a long stay.

WALKER

Looks like.

She watches him as he considers, turning the coin from his pocket over in his hand.

END OF ACT FIVE

ACT SIX

EXT. WALKER RANCH - PORCH - NIGHT

Walker approaches the ranch and finds Liam sitting on the porch, sitting under the twinkle lights and looking out over the ranch. Walker joins him.

WALKER

Stella inside?

(off Liam's nod)

When did this happen? Me, asking my brother where my daughter was. And if she was okay.

LIAM

It's just what happened.

WALKER

Arlo has a question, he asks you. Stella's missing, you're the one who notices.

LIAM

You're talking like you're picking a fight. You're mad at someone, it shouldn't be me. All I did was be here. No one said I did a better job. I just showed up.

WALKER

I should've been here.

Liam looks at his brother. He doesn't disagree.

LIAM

Well. I had a good day at work.

(clarifying)

I got access to the border patrol files from the night Emily died.

Walker takes notice, focuses.

LIAM (CONT'D)

You were right. There was no call recorded from the rescue beacon. And Emily's friend she was there with that night, she said she called after the shots?

WALKER

Helen. Yeah, that's what she said.

LIAM

Either someone wiped the records,
or someone lied. Any way you skin
that cat, you weren't wrong. Have
you talked to Helen?

WALKER

Ghosted me. She said it was too
hard. But maybe...

LIAM

Maybe she knows something. And
that's what's hard.

(then)

I don't want to give you hope. I
don't know what we're getting into.

WALKER

The point is you think we're
getting into something. What about
this coin they found out there that
night -- have you seen that symbol
anywhere else yet?

He takes the coin out of his pocket and shows it to Liam.
Liam shakes his head.

LIAM

Still looking.

WALKER

I keep thinking about it. Her eyes,
they were closed when they found
her. Like someone took the time to
lay her to rest.

LIAM

If someone overrode the call box,
wiped those records... You know
what kind of power they must have?
What kind of danger they'd be?

WALKER

What could be worse? What could be
worse than what's already happened?

Liam nods. They'll find out. The brothers sit in solidarity.

INT. WALKER RANCH - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Walker goes inside, looking for Stella but finding his
mother. Abeline sits at the kitchen table preparing
vegetables to pickle, the jars lined up in front of her.

ABELINE
You looking for your daughter?
(off Walker's nod)
She's exhausted. I put her to bed.

WALKER
Thanks, Mama.

He sits down across from her at the table.

ABELINE
Can I give you some advice?

WALKER
Not like you to ask.

ABELINE
Parenting doesn't necessarily
happen automatically. Of course
you're their father, but it's going
to take a minute for you to get to
know them again.

WALKER
I'm starting to figure that out.

ABELINE
She's feisty and smart as hell.
(chuckles)
Best revenge I can think of. You
raising yourself.

Walker smiles at that.

WALKER
Arlo, though. He's good.

ABELINE
Oh, he sure is. Like his life
depended on it.

WALKER
How do you mean?

ABELINE
That boy is working so hard to keep
anyone from worrying about him,
he's twisted into bits. Don't take
him for granted. Not for a second.
(then)
You need to stay. I don't just mean
Austin. I mean here. On the ranch.

WALKER

I told Dad, I'm not taking this business.

ABELINE

I'm not talking about that. I mean being here. For your family. That house in town, it's not a home anymore. Not with her gone. But here, this could be.

Walker looks up at his mother, listening.

ABELINE (CONT'D)

That farmhouse on the edge of the property? I fixed it up last year to be my painting studio. But it's better suited for you.

(then)

Think about it.

Walker considers his mother.

WALKER

You've already arranged the whole thing, haven't you?

ABELINE

Well, I wanted you to put on your own personal touches, of course.

(then)

Stella says she won't sleep there.

WALKER

(deadpan)

I am shocked to the core.

(then)

It's a tricky time. There's a task force I'm recommended for. Down south. It's important.

Abeline holds his gaze.

ABELINE

Well, love. I trust you to make the right decision.

Walker nods, those words sinking in.

Abeline puts her hand on top of her son's for a moment, and then goes back to her pickling.

ARLO (O.C.)

Daddy?

Walker turns to see Arlo standing in the doorway, sleepy in his pajamas. Walker stands to go hug him, noticing another door closing down the hallway. Stella, in retreat.

EXT. WALKER RANCH - FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

Walker approaches the farmhouse with Arlo. The cattle dogs trot after them. Father and son look up at the house.

WALKER
Looks nice, doesn't it?

ARLO
Grammy did a good job.

Walker looks back at the farmhouse. He sees Emily standing there. She leans against the doorway, inviting them in.

EMILY
Well? You two just gonna stand out there all night?

Walker smiles sadly, looking back down at his son.

WALKER
Let's go in.

They walk to the door and open it. Emily's gone.

INT. WALKER RANCH - FARMHOUSE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Walker and Arlo step inside. It looks cozy. Inviting, though not fully furnished yet. Like it's waiting for someone.

ARLO
I picked out the rug.

Walker looks down at his son, really seeing him.

WALKER
You've shouldered a lot, haven't you? I never meant to make you grow up so fast.

Arlo looks down, touched but not ready to talk about it.

ARLO
Can we sleep out here?

WALKER
It's not even set up yet.

ARLO

Yet.

INT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT - LATER

Later that night, Arlo is curled on the couch in the as of yet unfurnished farmhouse. The dogs snore in front of a dying fire. Walker sits up on the couch, his arm slung around Arlo.

The door opens. It's Stella. She stands uncertainly in the doorway, watching her brother and father. She holds a quilt in her arms and tentatively walks in.

WALKER

What are you doing up?

STELLA

I heard you. Before.

Walker nods, and Stella hands him the blanket. Walker spreads it out over Arlo, and pats the couch beside himself. Stella considers the couch, but sits on the floor. A beat.

WALKER

I'm not gonna take that job. I'll call the Captain in the morning.

STELLA

You might feel different in the morning.

WALKER

No. I'm not gonna feel different about you. And being here.

STELLA

For now.

WALKER

I'm learning, now's all we got.

Stella leans against the couch, looking younger than she has this entire time. She exhales. Walker closes his eyes. Together, the family sleeps.

END OF PILOT