

DELTA BLUES

Pilot Episode
"That's All Right, Mama"

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by

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FADE UP ON:

OVERLAPPING DISSOLVES in saturated tones evoke the feeling of of a memory, distant enough that it's faded around the edges:

A man's HAND buttons the sleeve of his white satin shirt. Light reflects off the RHINESTONES that stud the sleeve's seam.

An old-fashioned dressing room MIRROR is lined with lightbulbs and in the REFLECTION a HAND runs a comb through thick, jet-black hair.

The remnants of a half-eaten Peanut Butter and Banana SANDWICH. A HAND pouring WHISKEY into a tumbler, tapping a MICROPHONE to test it: thump, thump thump.

A CABLE is plugged into an AMPLIFIER. The KNOB is turned all the way to ten and we hear the anxious, static BUZZ of the thing as it comes to life.

White, satin, bell-bottomed LEGS as they stride down a linoleum-floored hallway, and through a door. A sign on the door reads: TO STAGE.

INT. STAGE - NIGHT

Through the darkness we're able to make out the silhouette of a MAN. Back facing the audience, hip cocked, mic in hand. What little light there is reflects off the scattered rhinestones on his JUMPSUIT.

The SPOTLIGHT comes to life cutting a sharp, dusty road of light through the darkness. We find his EYES, closed in deep concentration. A bead of sweat runs down his forehead.

Then the opening acoustic chords of "In The Ghetto" seep from the speakers. He opens his eyes, dark and already wet with emotion. He licks his lips, opens his mouth and releases a seriously beautiful, rich baritone.

On a cold and grey Chicago morning and a poor little baby child is born in the ghetto...

As he turns to face the audience, the CAMERA MOVES to peer over his shoulder. We see the dark contour of his mutton-chop sideburns, his combed-back, black hair. And past the darkened figures of the audience to the glowing STAGE LIGHTS hanging from the rafters.

And his mama cries...

As they sparkle and glisten and fill the frame, we BRING UP the TITLE CARD:

DELTA BLUES

CUT TO:

THE BLURRY SILHOUETTE OF A MAN

walking toward us. Same thick, jet-back hair, same mutton-chop sideburns. But as he comes into focus we realize this couldn't be the same man we just saw on stage, 'cause this ain't the King. But this is...

INT. EVERGREEN MOTEL LOBBY - NIGHT

DWIGHT HENDRICKS, 40s, the lead of our show. He strides into this seedy motel through the FROSTED GLASS DOORS wearing dark blue 50ls, beat-up boots, and a dark, worn-in blazer. He scans the lobby, then approaches a grizzled-looking guy in jeans and a windbreaker. This is CHARLIE WHITE aka WHITEHEAD (mid-50s, looks a decade older.) He hands Dwight a cup of COFFEE, and they fall into step, heading toward an exit door. They move out on to --

EXT. EVERGREEN MOTEL - POOL DECK - CONTINUOUS

Dwight takes in the scene: This place is in disrepair. Grass shoots up through holes in the cracked concrete. The lounge chairs have been tossed about. On a table, there's a knocked-over 40-ounce BEER, next to a half-eaten microwave BURRITO. The pool is drained.

And in the deep end there's BLOOD. Lots of blood. A dark pool of it shimmers by the clogged drain. Blood splatter paints a dark graffiti on the wall. A long smear up one side of the pool is punctuated by bloody handprints. And it makes a dark trail on the concrete deck, out through the chain link gate and off into the parking lot.

Dwight shakes his head.

DWIGHT
(to himself)
Have mercy.

BRING UP: "Green Onions" by Booker T. & the MG's.

Dwight begins barking out orders, and we PULL BACK as the place floods with crime scene activity. PHOTOGRAPHER, MEDICAL EXAMINER, UNIFORMS, DETECTIVES and they all defer to Sgt. Dwight Hendricks: Memphis Police Senior Detective of the General Assignment Division.

EXT. EVERGREEN MOTEL - PARKING LOT - LATER

SQUAD CARS are on scene. Dwight exits the pool deck followed by a knot of Uniforms. He refers to a sign posted next to the front doors of the place. "Hour special. 15 dollars."

DWIGHT

Gotta remember this place for my
next honeymoon.

The uniforms chuckle.

WHITEHEAD

Good one, Dwight.

Dwight stalks through the parking lot, scanning the ground, following the dark trail of blood, while Whitehead walks a few steps back, observing. Then, Dwight kneels, pokes at something in the dirt. It's a SHELL CASING. He points and a Uniform lays a marker. The blood trail changes here, bigger spots, darker color.

Dwight follows it all the way to the edge of the lot where there's a depressed area in the knee-high grass, a pool of blood at the center of it. BUT -- no body. He kneels and in the weeds finds an athletic SNEAKER (blue and white Nike high top) covered in blood.

DWIGHT

Got ourselves a shoe.

WHITEHEAD

(to the uniforms)
Got a shoe!

Everyone waits for Dwight to speak.

DWIGHT

Alright, guy's havin' himself a
gourmet meal, pool-side. Gets hit
once there. Then again out here
with a .38 where they leave him for
dead. But this guy's a fighter,
he's got nine lives, he gets away.

He does a complete 360 from where he stands, scans the area.

DWIGHT (CONT'D)

Let's pound sand. Bleedin' like
that, he couldn't 'a made it far.
He's still breathin', he tells us
our doer.

The uniforms snap into action.

DISSOLVE TO:

CRIME SCENE TAPE FLAPPING IN THE BREEZE.

WE MOVE to find the crime scene. Later now. The wind's kicked up. Lighting flashes in the distance. Just the skeleton crew now and everyone's heading home. Dwight's got his car trunk open. He stows his blazer in there. Checks his watch. He takes out his cell, flips it open. 'No Missed Calls.' He dials a number. It rings and rings and rings. No answer. A flicker of concern flashes across his face.

EXT. COTTAGE HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Dwight's car pulls into the driveway of this middle-class cottage house, and he climbs out. Checks the CAR in the driveway, the darkened windows-- no lights on inside. He moves up the front porch steps and stops when he finds that the front door is slightly ajar. Dwight puts his hand on his gun, nudges open the front door with his foot.

INT. COTTAGE HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - A BEAT LATER

Dwight stalks through the darkened living room.

DWIGHT

Hello?

No answer. The drawer of a bureau is open. Books are knocked over on the coffee table. A cabinet door hangs open and a glass is on its side on the countertop. Something's not right. And then he hears a NOISE from out back. He turns, cautiously approaches the back door, peeks out the window and sees a MAN wearing dark clothes, standing in the shadows on the back porch. Dwight's eyes go wide. He takes a breath, readying himself and then throws the door open--

EXT. COTTAGE HOUSE - BACK PORCH - CONTINUOUS

Dwight rushes the guy, clamps his arms around the guy's head and wrestles him down to the damp lawn, barking:

DWIGHT

Where is she? Whaddya' do with her?

Then there's a piercing scream.

PAULA ANN (O.S.)

Dwight!

Dwight, with the guy in a tight headlock, looks up to the front porch where PAULA ANN HENDRICKS, mid-60's, silver-haired and neatly-groomed has emerged. Paula's plus-sized and she wears it well.

DWIGHT
Mama, you alright?

PAULA ANN
Well, of course I am! Get up. Let go of him.

Paula Ann helps the guy to his feet.

PAULA ANN (CONT'D)
I am so sorry, Tony. Are you all right, honey?

Tony's had the wind knocked out of him. He's hunched over, wheezing. He manages to nod. Paula Ann rubs his back.

PAULA ANN (CONT'D)
Dwight, for god's sake. This is my new neighbor. Mr. Tony LaSalle from Massachusetts.

And it's only now that Dwight notices the bottle of WHITE WINE on the porch table, the two wine GLASSES, the lit citronella CANDLES, the half eaten APPLE PIE, the fact that TONY(50's) is really, really, really handsome.

DWIGHT
Oh.
(beat)
My mistake.

Dwight chuckles, tries to pick a hunk of grass off Tony's pants for him.

DWIGHT (CONT'D)
Mama...well, she dudn't normally have guests this hour. And down here... well, let's just say down here we look after our own. You know what I mean?

Dwight smiles broadly and slaps him hard on the back.

DWIGHT (CONT'D)
Welcome to Memphis.

END OF TEASER.

ACT ONE

INT. ARCADE RESTAURANT - KITCHEN - DAY

The Arcade is the oldest restaurant in the city and they make the best buttermilk biscuits this side of the Mississippi. It's hot in the kitchen and Dwight's sweating and talking with the dishwasher CHARLIE "DEE-DEE" BAKER (African-American, 18) who's a shy, skinny kid in glasses. Dwight holds a CASSETTE TAPE.

DWIGHT

I'm gonna put it in right away.
Lookin' forward to hearin' your
stuff. Now listen, you hear 'bout
what happened over at that
Evergreen Motel last night?

Dee-Dee shakes his head, 'no.'

DWIGHT (CONT'D)

Somebody got shot over there, Dee-
Dee.

DEE-DEE

Who?

DWIGHT

Don't know. They left the guy for
dead, but he got away.

Dee-dee pushes his glasses up on his nose, stares at the floor.

DWIGHT (CONT'D)

Dwayne Blacker, owns that J&L
liquor store 'cross the street from
there says he saw you walkin' right
'round the time.

Dee-Dee nods.

DEE-DEE

That's on my way home from here.

DWIGHT

Right. So, you see any type a fuss
over at the motel? Maybe out in the
parking lot? Maybe by that pool?

Dee-Dee looks over his shoulder at the young BUSBOY's down the line who are straining to hear. So Dwight steps in close. Quiet:

DWIGHT (CONT'D)

This is just between you and me,
Dee-Dee. Just like always. You know
that. Now you see somethin' goin'
down over there?

DEE-DEE

Didn't see nothin'.

Dwight studies Dee-Dee for a moment. Then:

DWIGHT

Okay. Well, you keep your eyes and
ears open for me. You got my
number. School goin' good?
(off his NOD)
Good. You kiss your granny for me.

Dee-Dee nods, watches Dwight as he leaves with his to-go bag
of a dozen biscuits.

EXT. FRONT STREET - DOWNTOWN MEMPHIS - LATER

Dwight leans out the window of his car. The traffic is at a
standstill because downtown is packed far as the eye can see
with TOURISTS.

Dwight puts Dee-Dee's tape in. And we hear the bluesy drawl
of a saxophone. Kid's really good. Really, really good.
Dwight stares at the tape deck, proud smile forming,
impressed. Dee-Dee's music CONTINUES OVER THE FOLLOWING:

EXT. MPD - MOMENTS LATER

A crusty, old, brown-brick building. Sign out front is
missing a few letters: MEPHI OLICE DEPATMENT.

On his way to the entrance, Dwight passes a pile of beat-up
FURNITURE put out to pasture. And included in the pile's
something that makes Dwight's jaw hang open. A LAMP, and not
just any lamp. This here is the sacred MPD "Boob- Lamp".
That's right, head of a lamp, torso of a nude woman, complete
with pert pink nipples. Dwight can't believe it. He picks it
up like it's a newborn.

RADIO DJ (PRELAP)

...in the high 90s. I already
stripped down to my birthday suit.
I can't take off nothin' else. City
says there's gonna be rollin' black-
outs.

INT. MPD DOWNTOWN PRECINCT - LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Inside it's burning hot. An AIR CONDITIONER REPAIR MAN stands on a ladder, messing with some wires. The place is shabby and broken down and overrun with people. UNIFORMS, HOMELESS PEOPLE, HOOKERS, and DRUNKS mill about, some handcuffed waiting to be processed, some waiting to file a report.

RADIO DJ (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I do not wanna see what happens to
100,000 Elvis Week tourists if
there's no air-conditioning, no
traffic lights, and none of them
jumbo drink blenders...

At the front desk, Sergeant JC LIGHTFOOT (a 6'5" white dude with a long braided black ponytail) turns down the volume on the transistor radio to deal with two frantic LOST TOURISTS. Behind the desk, a low wall with a saloon door separates the lobby from the BULLPEN.

The front doors fling open and Dwight walks in, Boob Lamp and biscuits in hand. Amid the chaos he notices TWELVE JAPANESE MEN dressed in Elvis costumes of various eras, sitting together on the long bench that flanks the room. He rolls his eyes. Elvis Week brings out the crazies. And then he sees her. Dwight stops in his tracks.

CHARLENE CAMPBELL, Dwight's ex-wife, beautiful and blonde(40's) in a low-cut shirt that reads 'Charlene's Lunches' in rhinestones, is selling a sandwich to a UNIFORM. She looks up at Dwight, sighs, heads his way.

CHARLENE

Hi, Dwight.

DWIGHT

What are you doin' here?

CHARLENE

Well, what's it look like?

Dwight hesitates.

CHARLENE (CONT'D)

Look, I am in no position to turn
down work right now. I know this
isn't gonna be easy for you but
you're just gonna have to suck it
up.

A look of dread washes over Dwight's face. But then he sees her looking at him, and he paints on a smile.

DWIGHT

Fine. Not a problem.

CHARLENE

Oh please. I know it's gonna be a big, fat problem for you. And you know I know.

DWIGHT

-- No, it ain't, Charlene. What's the big deal? People gotta eat, right?

Charlene shakes her head.

CHARLENE

Fine, Dwight.

They stand there in silence for a minute. Charlene looks him up and down. Then --

CHARLENE (CONT'D)

Bet you're just lovin' life. Bet every type of woman's probably comin' outta the woodwork, now that you ain't got a ring on your finger.

Dwight turns away from her, looks up to Lightfoot.

DWIGHT

Make like you're talkin' to me 'til she leaves.

Dwight swallows. Sweat forms on his forehead. Charlene shakes her head, pushes her way through the crowd.

LIGHTFOOT

New Lieutenant fired the old lunch truck guy, brought her in. Tried to tell her that was gonna wobble your canoe.

DWIGHT

New Lieutenant... Right. Well, I'm fine with it, Lightfoot. We're both grown ups, right?

Lightfoot eyes the boob-lamp, then Dwight.

LIGHTFOOT

New Lieutenant don't care too much for that boob-lamp neither.

Dwight looks up at him.

DWIGHT

Oh, really?

INT. MPD - BULLPEN - MOMENTS LATER

A space in transition. MOVING MEN are hauling out old furniture, beat-up file cabinets. Dwight strides in and holds the boob-lamp up.

DWIGHT

Whitehead, you oughta speak up when someone throws away your property...

But he stops when he realizes a staff meeting is in full swing. There are a dozen UNIFORMS and several detectives including Whitehead and REGINALD GREENBACK (African American, mid 40's, stout). Together they make a motley crew -- wrinkled uniforms, hats on backwards, a motorcycle jacket instead of dark blues -- and they all turn to look at Dwight. At the front of the room, LT. TANYA RICE (African-American, 40s, formidable and impossibly well put-together) pauses and sizes up Dwight and the boob lamp. Behind her, a dry-erase board reads 'RESOURCES. RENEWAL. EFFICIENCY.' She continues her speech --

LT. RICE

As I was saying, this is the apex of my personal achievement record: stepping into the late Lt. Morris's shoes at this precinct with you outstanding professionals.

Dwight sets the lamp down firmly on his desk, sits back and puts his feet up. He passes the bag of biscuits over to Greenback, who digs in. Whitehead leans over, whispers:

WHITEHEAD

She called it obscene.

LT. RICE

General Assignment, your record is extraordinary, but your burden is too heavy.

(indicating 'Resources' on the board)

I've managed to have a dozen new uniformed officers reassigned to our precinct.

With a flourish, she indicates a GROUP of fresh-faced UNIFORMED COPS sitting against the wall. (Under Lt.

Rice's speech, we notice that at one point or another, every member of the precinct sneaks a glance at Dwight. They all want to know what his reaction is going to be.)

LT. RICE (CONT'D)
They are here to help you.

DWIGHT
A'right, but who's gonna help them?

Some chuckles in the crowd. Lt. Rice ignores this and continues --

LT. RICE
(indicating 'Renewal')
From now on, no more than 12 hour shifts. No more all-day and all-night grind. Go home. A healthy officer of the law is a successful officer of the law.

DWIGHT
You think these peoples' husbands and wives actually want 'em at home?

Louder LAUGHS this time. Lt. Rice smiles mildly. She indicates the final word -- 'Efficiency.'

LT. RICE
And at the end of each shift, before you clock out you will upload what we call a daily status report to the server. With access to one another's information, you will not only continue to be great, you will be efficient.

We HEAR scattered grumbles from the crowd.

DWIGHT
You ever see Greenback type? That ain't exactly efficient.

BIG LAUGHS.

LT. RICE
That's all. Let's have a brilliant day, people. Detective Hendricks, can I speak with you in my office?

The crowd breaks out in -- Oooo-oooo.

WHITEHEAD

Give it to her, Dwight.

INT. MPD - LT. RICE'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Moving boxes are stacked up neatly. Lt. Rice shuts the door behind them, and moves to her desk.

LT. RICE

Is there something you'd like to talk to me about, Det. Hendricks?

DWIGHT

Nope.

LT. RICE

Okay, then.

DWIGHT

Word of advice, though. South Memphis ain't the same as it is in the East.

LT. RICE

Alright. Thank you.

DWIGHT

Reason we're so good 'round here is we know that. And we got a system. And it's inlaid and it's well-oiled and it makes for smooth operatin'. And if you go messin' around with it, I'm worried the whole thing's liable to just blow up in your face.

LT. RICE

Okay. I appreciate that.

DWIGHT

And there wuddn't nothin' wrong with the old lunch truck guy.

Lt. Rice gazes at him with a patient smile.

LT. RICE

Hmm.

DWIGHT

And...that boob lamp is the heart and soul of this precinct. Not to mention a collector's item.

Lt. Rice gestures to the chair in front of her desk.

LT. RICE

Have a seat, Det. Hendricks. Let me tell you a little bit about myself. Now, I am a cop, and I am your boss but do you know what I am before all of that? I am a mother. I have birthed, raised and taught five children. And each and every one of them is a successful and prosperous member of this community. Now there were times when they did not feel like doing what I asked them to. But do you know what? They did it. Do you know why? Because somewhere deep down inside of themselves, they knew I was right. And they learned. They learned to relax and listen to their Mother. And our family, Detective, it became greater than the sum of its parts.

Lt. Rice slaps a POST-IT on the desk in front of him.

LT. RICE (CONT'D)

Got a 10-15 at the Mid-south bank branch on First. I need you and Det. White down there.

DWIGHT

No, no, no. I'm workin' this Motel job. I'm already in it.

LT. RICE

We're handing that off to Organized Crime.

DWIGHT

Those guys? Are you kiddin' me?

LT. RICE

Evergreen Motel's Crip territory. From now on, gang-related goes to OC. Efficiency.

DWIGHT

OC's a buncha pumped-up jerkoffs don't see people as people. They see gangs and that's it. They ain't gonna bring in this case 'cause nobody down here'll talk to 'em.

Lt. Rice stands.

LT. RICE

10-15. Midsouth Bank. And there are women that work here, Dwight. That do not want their papers illuminated by plastic nipples.

Dwight scoffs.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. MIDSOUTH BANK - LATER

Dwight and Whitehead walk through the lobby.

WHITEHEAD

That woman's outta line, talkin' to you like that. You carry this precinct on your shoulders, Dwight. Server this server that. What does she think this is? Star Trek? Lt. Morris must be rollin' over in his grave.

Dwight nods. Then, reverential --

DWIGHT

Man really knew how to take a back seat.

Next to a closed office door stands a donut-shaped UNIFORM. This is DAVEY SUTTON, 27, who fancies himself Dwight's protege'.

SUTTON

Dwight, promise me, I ever become so old 'n vulnerable I forget my own address, you'll take me out and shoot me.

DWIGHT

Sure thing, Sutton.
(to Whitehead)
I got this.

INT. MIDSOUTH BANK - MANAGER'S CONTINUOUS

Dwight enters, closes the door behind him. An OLD LADY is sitting in a desk chair, gulping down cups of water. She's petite and fragile and elegantly dressed, in a wool suit, pumps and a fur coat. Mad considering the weather.

DWIGHT

Well, look at you. You are just all done up, aren't ya?

Dwight cocks his head at her.

DWIGHT (CONT'D)
You look familiar to me. What's
your name, sweetheart?

Nothin'. Dwight studies her. Her eyes are milky blue, unfocused. She's lost to this world. He kneels in front of her, and lays a gentle hand on her knee.

DWIGHT (CONT'D)
Alright. You don't got nothin' to
worry about. Everything's gonna be
just fine. We're gonna find a way
to get you home, sweetheart. Okay?

The old woman rears back and slaps Dwight hard in the face. He blinks.

DWIGHT (CONT'D)
Okay.

INT. DWIGHT'S CAR - A LITTLE LATER

Dwight's driving with one eye on the old lady in the rear view mirror. She's in the back seat. Whitehead looks down at the old lady's FUR COAT in his lap. He rifles through the pockets; nothing but mints, and a button.

DWIGHT
She look like somebody to you?

Whitehead shrugs, 'Nope', and pulls out his cell.

WHITEHEAD
(quiet)
Think the woman's a few sandwiches
short of a picnic. Should put in
some calls to nursing homes and
hospitals. See who's missin' her.

But then a crackle comes across the police radio.

DISPATCHER (V.O.)
10-41, trolley tracks north of Main
Street loop. Black male.

DWIGHT
That's our motel vic.

WHITEHEAD
Ours? You mean OC's?

But Dwight pulls a sharp u-turn. Whitehead laughs.

WHITEHEAD (CONT'D)

Thatta boy.

EXT. TROLLEY TRACKS - MOMENTS LATER

Dwight and Whitehead run up to the scene, first cops to arrive. Grass shoots up through the rusted trolley tracks where a TROLLEY CAR is stopped. In front of it, an AFRICAN-AMERICAN MALE (30s) lies dead in a pool of blood. Dwight kneels, clocks the guy's GUNSHOT WOUNDS. His eyes go to the man's feet. One's shoeless. The other's wearing a BLUE AND WHITE NIKE SNEAKER.

DWIGHT

It's our guy, alright.

He digs in the guy's pocket, removes his WALLET, reads:

DWIGHT (CONT'D)

Rashard Thomas Cooper. 57 North
Teton Way.

He flips through the wallet. Not much. Some crumpled dollars. A TOYS R' US RECEIPT. And three wrinkled, folded PHOTOGRAPHS. He slips them out, unfolds them. Candid shots of three young African-American GIRLS. All elementary school aged. Dwight shakes his head.

DWIGHT (CONT'D)

Guy's got a family.

WHITEHEAD

Dwight.

Dwight looks up to see three huge black SUV'S with 'OC' emblems on the doors roll to a stop. Doors open and several large MEN climb out and head our way. They're all spit and polish, crew cuts, black utility pants.

DWIGHT

Jesus, lookit these ass clowns.

As they approach Dwight takes the photos from the wallet, slips them into his pocket. The head of this unit is THORPE (white, 40's, big).

THORPE

Hendricks, White.

DWIGHT

Thorpe. Good to see ya. I was startin' to die a little on the inside, been so long.

THORPE

So that's why you look like crap.
This my Evergreen Motel vic?

DWIGHT

Looks to be. Knock yourself out.

Dwight hands Thorpe the wallet.

THORPE

Perfect. We'll take it from here.
Thanks for keepin' the seat warm
for us.

DWIGHT

My pleasure, Thorpe. Anything to
help y'all out.

Dwight moves off, winks at Whitehead. WE PRELAP the sound of
a WOMAN CRYING.

INT. APARTMENT - A LITTLE LATER

Dwight holds RASHARD COOPER'S GIRLFRIEND's hand as she bawls.
She's white, 20s. Nearby, there's a FRAMED PHOTO of her and
Rashard at a fair. Through her tears --

RASHARD'S GIRLFRIEND

It's that damn motel. I told him
that place was no good.

DWIGHT

(gentle)

What was he doin' over there,
sweetheart? You two have a fallin'
out?

RASHARD'S GIRLFRIEND

No. Nothin' like that. He said this
place was too big 'cause he had got
used to just a cell. So he'd been
stayin' over there most nights
since he got out.

Dwight eyeballs the place. It's tiny. He nods slowly.

DWIGHT

What was he in for?

RASHARD'S GIRLFRIEND

It was nothin'. He just stole a car
when I lost my job, and we didn't
have no money. He --

(starts weeping again)

(MORE)

RASHARD'S GIRLFRIEND (CONT'D)

-- He was always doin' stuff like
that for me.

Dwight nods.

DWIGHT

You gonna be alright tellin' your
kids about this, sweetheart?

RASHARD'S GIRLFRIEND

We don't got kids.

She snuffles into her sleeve.

DWIGHT

So Rashard had some of his own?

RASHARD'S GIRLFRIEND

No. None.

Dwight cocks his head.

DWIGHT

He got any other family? Brothers,
sisters? Nieces? Anything like
that?

RASHARD'S GIRLFRIEND

No. Just his mama. But they ain't
been close the last few years.
We're both only child. That's why
we got on so well. We was...we was
all each other had.

And she breaks down crying. Dwight holds her hand tight,
comforting her but his wheels are turning. Something ain't
right here. Because...

INT. MPD - BULLPEN - A LITTLE LATER

DWIGHT

Why would this guy lie about havin'
kids?

WHITEHEAD

Don't know. Ain't no harm in havin'
a past.

Dwight and Whitehead try to get the old lady through the
crowded bullpen but find their path blocked by those twelve
Japanese Elvises gathered around Greenback's desk.

DWIGHT

Hey, make way, will ya? I'm gettin'
blinded by sequins.

The sea of Elvises parts, and they land at Whitehead's desk,
help the old lady into a chair.

DWIGHT (CONT'D)

Well, what if they ain't from the
past? This guy was a bullshit
artist, Whitehead. Tellin' his girl
he's gotta stay at a motel cause
that matchbox apartment's too big--

CRASH! Two MOVING MEN have overturned a FILING CABINET in the
middle of the bullpen and files are everywhere.

DWIGHT (CONT'D)

Oh come on! Jesus Christ.

(beat, he leans in:)

Okay, look here. Say this guy's got
somethin' on the side, right? Kids,
woman, the whole thing. Baby's
mama's got no idea 'bout this
girlfriend in the tiny apartment.
Girlfriend's got no idea 'bout
them.

WHITEHEAD

Would explain why he's stayin' at
the motel. Opportunity to eat his
cake.

DWIGHT

Right. Now the girlfriend's alibied
out, but say this baby mama finally
gets wind of the girlfriend and--

We HEAR her girlish laughter. Dwight turns to see that one
desk over, Charlene is doling out sandwiches to a male
UNIFORM. He stares at her. Whitehead's eyes dart between the
two of them. Then, trying to keep Dwight on track:

WHITEHEAD

And that don't always end too well
for the man. Right? Right, Dwight?

He turns back to Whitehead.

DWIGHT

Huh? Right. Right. Cause she's had
it up to here with this guy's
bullshittin' ways.

(MORE)

DWIGHT (CONT'D)

So she pays him a visit at the Evergreen Motel, does him in. Need to find that woman, Whitehead. She's our A-number one. We ID those kids--

Louder laughter from Charlene. Dwight clinches his jaw, tries to motor through.

DWIGHT (CONT'D)

-- If we ID those children in the photographs, Whitehead, we find--

But Dwight can't help but look back over to Charlene who plants her Jordache-ed behind firmly on said uniform's desk.

DWIGHT (CONT'D)

Alright you know what, on second thought, I'm gonna get outta here track down this Rashard's mama. See if she can't shed some light.

WHITEHEAD

Good idea, Dwight. You get some air.

Dwight moves toward the exit, having to squeeze past the Elvises. He leaves, but we stay with Greenback, who's devouring an ice cream sandwich. A JAPANESE MAN IN A BUTCHER'S UNIFORM (SAMMY) translates for the Elvises.

SAMMY

They in from Tokyo for Elvis Week contest. But rental van stolen. Everything in it - instruments, passport. They need it all before Sunday.

Greenback chuckles.

GREENBACK

You know how you find a stolen van in South Memphis?

(beat)

You don't.

Sammy translates the bad news.

EXT. HOLLYWOOD NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Dwight sits in his car. He stares out the window, up at the tall oak trees on the side of the road, the rows of modest shotgun family homes. He climbs out of the car.

CLOSE ON: DWIGHT as his eyes dart around the neighborhood. He swallows. Something about this place HAUNTS him. He hunches his shoulders and walks towards the front porch of:

EXT. 121 SPRING ST. - CONTINUOUS

He knocks on the door. A white WOMAN(20's) opens the door, an INFANT in her arms.

WOMAN

Yes?

DWIGHT

(badges her)

Oh, hi, ma'am, MPD. I was lookin' for a Ms. Eileen Cooper...

WOMAN

Oh. Ms. Cooper. She's the former resident. She passed on maybe six months ago, sorry.

A GIRL(5) runs to the woman's side, hangs onto her legs. She looks up at Dwight.

GIRL

Who's that, Mama?

WOMAN

This is a nice police officer, say hello now.

But the girl hides behind her mama's leg. Woman shakes her head.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

Sorry. She's still shy 'round strangers. Can't even get her to talk the other kids when we go to Overton Park.

Dwight stares at the woman a long beat. She shifts her weight.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

Is there anything else I can do for you?

DWIGHT

Listen, you be careful when you bring your kids over to that park. It ain't safe.

The woman is startled by Dwight's intensity. He walks off the porch toward his car. He scans the street -- seems like everywhere he looks there are KIDS playing in the sprinklers, riding their BIKES. He can hear his heartbeat in his head.

Then Dwight's cell rings. He blinks, climbs into his car --

INT. DWIGHT'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

And answers his phone.

DWIGHT
(into the phone)
Hendricks.

Dwight hears SINGING and LOUD VOICES on the other end.

INT. MPD - BULLPEN SAME TIME - INTERCUT AS NEEDED

Whitehead, on his cell, pushes through a packed bullpen. Everyone's gathered around watching The Japanese Elvises sing "Jailhouse Rock" a capella. They're great and the audience is loving it.

WHITEHEAD
The old broad took all her clothes
off.

Whitehead steps into --

INT. MPD - BREAK ROOM - CONTINUOUS

And shuts the door behind him. Through the one-way mirror we see that a FEMALE UNIFORM is in the interview room helping the old lady back into her clothes.

WHITEHEAD
And she's covered in bruises.
Dwight, it's serious. I called
every damn old folk's home in the
city. No one's missing an old lady.
I'm at a loss here.

And as the old lady puts her arms up we see that her back has hideous purple and black bruises, red slashes.

DWIGHT (O.S.)
Okay. On my way.

INT. DWIGHT'S CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Screeching up to a red light, Dwight grabs the old woman's fur coat from the back and rifles through the pockets. The mints, the hair pin, a button.

He picks the coat up by its bottom hem and SHAKES it. Nothing but dust. But then he feels SOMETHING inside the lining of the coat. Pulls the pocket out; it's empty, but it's got a hole in it. He uses his pocket knife to cut the lining, and an object falls from the coat. He picks it up:

It's a pewter KEYCHAIN. Four capital letters in script font: 'WHER.' PUSH IN on Dwight.

DWIGHT

My God...

The light turns green and the car behind him leans on the HORN. Dwight grabs for his cell phone, and dials while jamming his car in gear. We HEAR Whitehead answer on the other line.

DWIGHT (CONT'D)

(into phone)

It's Dottie Collins. The old lady's
Dottie Collins.

INT. MPD - BULLPEN - SAME TIME

Whitehead steps into a corner, puts a finger in his ear so he can hear over the Japanese Elvises raucous version of 'Suspicious Minds.' INTERCUT AS NEEDED.

WHITEHEAD

(into phone)

Who's that?

DWIGHT

Dottie Collins! "First lady of the airwaves?" WHER? Woman's a Memphis legend, Whitehead. Come on, "Delta Hits from 3 to 6"? Grew up glued to the radio 'cause'a that woman.

WHITEHEAD

Oh, yeah. She was huge. Shit, she ain't what she used to be, is she?

DWIGHT

Goddammit, just -- just get me her address!

Dottie watches the Elvises and taps her foot. We HEAR thunder rumble, and LIGHTNING flashes outside MPD windows.

EXT. CHAUSER STREET - A LITTLE LATER

Dwight gets out of his car. The power's out around here -- blackout. Wind's blowing, rain spits. He stops in front of a 1930s house with a wide porch, several stories.

Behind him, the headlights go on on a beat-up BLUE SEDAN parked on the street, catching Dwight's attention. He points his flashlight at it, but it pulls away.

EXT. CHAUSER STREET HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - CONTINUOUS

Dwight knocks on the door. No answer. He tries the knob and to his surprise the door creaks open.

INT. CHAUSER STREET HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Dwight enters.

DWIGHT

Hello? Anybody home? MPD.

No answer. He casts his flashlight on the wall. And sure enough, hanging right there is a Sears portrait of Dottie. Dwight notes that she wears a distinctive necklace: a delicate gold chain with a charm that's a tiny .45 record.

INT. CHAUSER STREET - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Dwight makes his way through the old fashioned kitchen. His flashlight picks up STACKS OF MAIL, and a FRAMED PHOTO on the wall. He approaches. It's a BLACK AND WHITE photo of a Young Dottie posed outside a radio station. In the background, we see the mighty radio tower and the call letters 'WHER.' Off the kitchen there's another room. The door, which is cracked, has THREE LOCKS on it. Dwight approaches, enters.

INT. CHAUSER STREET HOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

He steps in. A smell hits his nose. Dwight cringes. The flashlight finds a pot full of shit and piss with crazed flies hovering. There's an old-fashioned iron bed with no sheets, all kinds of dirty stains on the mattress. ROPES are tied to the bedposts, and an ancient wheel chair with handcuffs attached to the armrests sits, facing the windows, which are boarded up and nailed shut. We PUSH IN on Dwight as he goes pale, horrified as he computes what he's seeing: Dottie Collins, First Lady of the Memphis Airwaves, was a prisoner in her own home.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. CHAUSER STREET HOUSE - KITCHEN - MORNING (DAY THREE)

Got ourselves a crime scene now. UNIFORMS circulate through the house. Whitehead consults with a tired lookin' Dwight (in the same clothes as yesterday).

WHITEHEAD

A son's the only family far as we can tell. Last address was New Orleans, pre-Katrina. Old job had a cell phone. Left a message. Eastside Convalescent took Dottie in 'til he shows.

DWIGHT

Listened to that woman every day, Whitehead. She was a...she was a big deal to me and now she's in a goddamn city home.

(beat)

Alright, so, if it wuddn't her family, it's what -- some kinda caretaker doin' the abuse.

WHITEHEAD

Could be. They ain't all saints.

Dwight looks out the window and sees that Lt. Rice has arrived, bearing a TRAY OF COFFEES and BOX OF PASTRIES.

DWIGHT

Hospital says Dottie wudn't gettin' her Alzheimer's meds, but we found the empty Medicaid envelopes. So-- means whoever's doin' this is cashin' the checks, not botherin' with the meds.

WHITEHEAD

Good news is they didn't get her nest egg. She's got it in a trust fund and the monthly interest checks go straight to the son.

DWIGHT

So he's livin' high on the hog in The Big Easy, while his mama's in hell. Hell of a son.

Dwight sees that outside, Lt. Rice is distributing the coffee and pastries to the grateful uniforms, along with gentle pats on the back. He slams a drawer, peers in another one to find it empty.

DWIGHT (CONT'D)

This don't add up. Too much trouble for just some government checks and a drawer a silverware.

Dwight looks up to find Lt. Rice is now standing on the front porch. She crooks a finger at him.

WHITEHEAD

Oh, boy.

EXT. CHAUSER STREET HOUSE- FRONT PORCH - A BEAT LATER

LT. RICE

Det. Hendricks, you did not check in throughout the course of the day. You did not file your daily update, and you neglected to inform me that you'd come across a crime scene.

DWIGHT

I woulda called when there was a breather.

LT. RICE

You are not a single-celled organism, Det. Hendricks. We all live together on this coral reef, do you understand?

DWIGHT

Look, I --

LT. RICE

-- If you allow the flow of communication to stagnate, the reef dies. You will call me every three hours today.

DWIGHT

I'm doin' my job. I don't check in with no babysitter. And I don't --

LT. RICE

-- I ain't the babysitter, Dwight. Mama's home. Now, act right.

She turns on her heel and leaves. Dwight's fuming. He watches as she gets in her car and drives away. Dwight looks at his uniforms, who laugh, stand around, drinkin' their coffees. None of 'em doin' a lick of work.

DWIGHT

Alright, everybody stop what you're doin'!!

They all look up at Dwight on the porch.

DWIGHT (CONT'D)

Now you all know how we work down here. And I ain't gonna let that woman come in here and screw the whole goddamn thing up. So if the way I run things don't suit you no more and you wanna spend your day sippin' your goddamn lattes instead, you stand up right now and you tell me you're done. G'ahead. Let's hear it.

Dwight looks out over the team. Some of them glance down at their coffees with shame. Sutton is so moved that he pours his coffee out on the sidewalk.

DWIGHT (CONT'D)

Good. Now y'all claim you care 'bout Memphis. Well, Dottie Collins IS Memphis, so y'all better keep that fire under your asses. Now come on, let's go!

Whitehead leads them in a smattering of applause. Dwight stomps off the porch, and the uniforms snap into action.

START MUSIC: "ORANGE BLOSSOM SPECIAL", Johnny Cash

EXT. CHAUSER STREET - MOMENTS LATER

START MONTAGE: Dwight and Whitehead talk to a SERIES of NEIGHBORS: a skinhead-lookin' guy with a 40, a hot girl in a bikini, two elderly identical twins, a bookish guy in gardening gear, and ALL OF THEM SHAKE THEIR HEADS 'NO.' Until, finally, a LITTLE GIRL (TAMARA, African-American, 8) UP IN A TREEHOUSE nods, 'Yes.' But then her FATHER yanks her out of the treehouse and carries her inside. She and Dwight keep eye contact until she's carried inside and the door slams shut.

MAN'S VOICE (PRELAP)

Sure, I know Dottie from way back.

EXT. 2245 CHAUSER STREET - LATER

Dwight, Whitehead and Sutton are on the porch talking to a blind African American man in his sixties, MORRIS TISDALE.

MORRIS

Guess her son musta' hired that nurse what was lookin' after her.

Whitehead looks to Dwight: OK. We got a nurse.

SUTTON

What's this nurse look like?

Dwight and Whitehead turn to Sutton. Dumb ass. Morris laughs.

MORRIS

Well, can't help you there, son.
Had some kind of accent though.
What's it called... It's, ah--
dammit... Sounded something like...

Morris does his best at duplicating the nurse's dialect.

MORRIS (CONT'D)

"Good morning, how are you?"

WHITEHEAD

What's that? Spanish?

MORRIS

No, not Spanish...it's ah... "Good morning, how are you?"

SUTTON

That's New York, --

WHITEHEAD

That's not New York. It's what?
Italian?

MORRIS

No..."Good morning, how are you?"

SUTTON

I dunno, I hadda cousin from New
york. I mean, it could be New
Jersey, maybe, but--

Whitehead turns to Sutton --

WHITEHEAD

-- It's not Jersey, Jesus. It's...
German?

Thank God for Dwight.

DWIGHT
Haitian. Nurse was Haitian.

MORRIS
That's it. Haitian. Right!

Which excites Sutton cause:

SUTTON
Oh, Dwight. Found a Bible upstairs.
Written in some funny language. Had
a girl's name on the inside cover.

WHITEHEAD
Bible could be Creole. Girl could
be our nurse.

DWIGHT
It's somethin'. Somethin's better
than nothin'.

EXT. MUD ISLAND - AFTERNOON

The SUN moves across the sky in fast-motion over The Pyramid Sports Complex. The grass wilts in the heat.

INT. MPD BULLPEN - LATER THAT DAY

PAN PAST the poor Elvis impersonators, who are splayed out on empty desks, lying on the floor in the holding cell, down-right blue. Which is why they're singing "DON'T CRY, DADDY" in perfect four-part harmony.

Greenback rounds the corner eating an egg roll, and the Elvises perk up hopefully when they see him, so he abruptly changes direction, makes a beeline to the --

INT. MPD - BREAK ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Shuts the door quick. Behind him, Lt. Rice leans against the counter, sipping a cup of tea.

LT. RICE
You know what I find truly
inspiring, Det. Greenback?

Greenback whirls around. Shit.

LT. RICE (CONT'D)
Those men out there traveled all
the way from Japan for honor.
(MORE)

LT. RICE (CONT'D)

The lead singer, his late father was a passionate Elvis fan. This performance in Memphis is to honor his memory. Provided there is a performance. They're counting on you. And I know you won't let them down.

GREENBACK

Sure. Sure. I'm already workin' several hot leads.

Then the POWER GOES OUT. Another blackout. In the darkness, we HEAR the door open and shut, and when the lights FLICKER BACK ON, Lt. Rice finds herself alone. She purses her lips.

INT. MPD - BULLPEN - A BEAT LATER

While Dwight talks on the phone at his desk, he studies RASHARD'S WALLET PHOTOS.

DWIGHT

(into phone)

None of your nurse's are Haitian, and you're 100% sure about that? Yeah, alright.

He hangs up. His gaze is fixed on one of the photos in which an EIGHT YEAR-OLD GIRL stands in front of a painted mural backdrop. Dwight picks it up. Whitehead approaches.

WHITEHEAD

No hits on the name from the Bible. Chlotilde Basquie. But there's only one Creole-speakin' church in Memphis, and a lotta of 'em are illegals.

Dwight stands, grabs for his jacket.

DWIGHT

Alright, you get down there with that Bible.

(indicates mural photo)

Think I found a way to ID these lil' girls.

EXT. CENTRAL ELEMENTARY - A LITTLE LATER

We START ON the same mural as in the photo and MOVE TO FIND Dwight as he strides up to the main entrance.

INT. CENTRAL ELEMENTARY - FRONT OFFICE - A FEW BEATS LATER

Dwight talks to the school secretary, SHEILA (40's, attractive). She scans the photos from Rashard's wallet.

SHEILA

Well, first off, these girl's ain't sisters.

She holds up the picture of the girl in front of the mural.

SHEILA (CONT'D)

Tiffany D'angelo's the only one I know. But she's an only child.

Dwight wrinkles his brow.

SHEILA (CONT'D)

Second off, I got a voicemail from this girl's mama just last night sayin' Tiffany wouldn't be attendin' our school anymore. Just outta the blue, like that. And now you're askin' 'bout her. Somethin' bad happen, Dwight?

DWIGHT

Whaddya know about this mama?

SHEILA

(quietly)

Well, just between the two of us Dwight, I think she's kinda a piece of work. She got into it with one of our teachers last year and it took that big ole' security guard to pull her offa him. Troubled's what I'd say.

Dwight nods.

DWIGHT

Alright. I Need your help, Sheila. I gotta talk to this woman, right away.

He puts his hand on hers. Sheila stares at it a beat. Then, blushing...

SHEILA

Well, you know I ain't supposed to officially give that up without a warrant, but...

INT. CLAPBOARD HOUSE - A LITTLE LATER

Dwight consults the PINK POST-IT in his hand. Flowery letters spell out: 'TIFFANY D'ANGELO' and an address. He lowers it and we see we're in an EMPTY HOME. There's odds and ends, dust bunnies and a FORGOTTEN DOLL in a corner. PUSH IN on Dwight...

DWIGHT (PRELAP)

They beat it the hell outta there
real quick.

EXT. BEALE STREET - A LITTLE LATER

Dwight and Whitehead push through the thick crowd of ELVIS TOURISTS on Beale Street.

DWIGHT

Neighbor said in the middle last
night. Day after Rashard gets shot.
Got an APB out. Hopefully this
woman ain't half way to Key West
yet.

WHITEHEAD

Wouldn't worry 'bout that. 'Tween a
woman and a little girl they'll be
stoppin' every twenty minutes for a
pee break. We'll get 'em Dwight.

Whitehead heads into a RESTAURANT. But Dwight doesn't follow, 'cause he's distracted by something. Sitting in the window of a bar, is Tony from Massachusetts. A pretty younger WOMAN sits across from him, holding his hand.

WHITEHEAD (CONT'D)

Dwight?

Dwight snaps out of it. Enters -

INT. GUS'S FRIED CHICKEN - A LITTLE LATER

Black, white, fat and skinny. Everybody comes to Gus's 'cause it's the best. Dwight and Whitehead stand by the kitchen with CHLOTILDE BASQUIE, 24, who clutches her BIBLE, and the restaurant MANAGER.

MANAGER

Listen, she's here shift and a half
every day and she's got a little
baby at home. I got my eye on her,
and I'm tellin' you, she's a real
good girl.

CHLOTILDE

I...I don't know nothing about old lady.

Dwight looks between them. Studies Chlotilde.

WHITEHEAD

Priest who pointed us here said you had a big family. Any of 'em a nurse?

Chlotilde shakes her head, 'no.'

DWIGHT

No? How 'bout somebody might do dark things 'cause they're in a bad way? You know anybody like that?

CHLOTILDE

No, I don't.

Her eyes are wide though and Dwight notices the sweat on her brow. He steps into her.

DWIGHT

Listen, you might not've done this. But there's a reason why your Bible ended up over there. So you best let all your friends know we're gonna be all over Little Haiti tonight, lookin' under every rock 'til we find this scumbag. And when we do they're gonna be sorry. 'Cause that old lady, she may look like a helpless nobody, but she's big time to a whole lotta people.
(hands over his CARD)
Thanks for your time, Chlotilde.

Chlotilde swallows. Dwight turns to the MANAGER expectantly, who hands over a TO-GO BAG.

INT. DWIGHT'S CAR - LATER

Dwight and Whitehead are watching the employee entrance and eating the chicken.

WHITEHEAD

It's lucky you and Charlene never had kids. You coulda knocked her up 'fore she revealed herself as a crazy bitch, and then what.

DWIGHT

I'll let you take that back.

WHITEHEAD

Okay, fine, I take it back.

DWIGHT

Thing is, she may have her particular...traits. But, ah... now that the dust's settled I can see how it must've been... could've been hard on her. Not every woman wants to take second place to the job.

WHITEHEAD

I see that. Well, hell, only been four months. Maybe she'll change her mind.

Dwight looks out the window, works his jaw.

WHITEHEAD (CONT'D)

Ann Marie surprised me. Don't know how she found it in her heart to love me again. Not even sayin' I need to know - just, women are... whaddya call it - mercurial, right?

DWIGHT

Look here.

Chlotilde flies out the back door and into her beat-up Chevy Nova. She pulls out onto the street, and they follow.

EXT. SOUTH MIDTOWN NEIGHBORHOOD - LATER

Dwight's car rolls to a stop. Across the street, Chlotilde has pulled into the driveway of a small rundown cottage house. She gets out and on her way in, glances at the other side of the street.

INT. DWIGHT'S CAR/EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Dwight and Whitehead try to duck down in their seats but it's too late. They've been spotted. Shit. Chlotilde rushes into the house.

WHITEHEAD

That girl's scared to the bone.

DWIGHT

'Cause whoever's in there's our doer.

The front door bursts open and another YOUNG HAITIAN WOMAN (scrawny, junkie-looking) comes flying out, runs down the sidewalk. Dwight throws his door open, bursts out of the car.

EXT. SOUTH MIDTOWN NEIGHBORHOOD - CONTINUOUS

DWIGHT
Stop! Wait! MPD!

He takes off after her. Whitehead follows. The girl's got a good twenty yards on Dwight, but he's running hard. She dashes across an intersection. Dwight screams after her.

DWIGHT (CONT'D)
Stop! Stop!

But she doesn't stop and a CITY BUS PLOWS RIGHT INTO HER at full speed. The bus flies wild, out of control, crashes into a phone pole and comes to a smoky stop.

Dwight runs to her, hovers over her broken body, shocked. And he notices something: Around the dead Haitian's neck is that unusual necklace with the .45 record charm Dottie wore in the Sears Portrait at her house. This is... was their perp.

EXT. SOUTH MIDTOWN NEIGHBORHOOD - LATER

Dwight's talking to UNIFORMS on the scene when he sees -- A BLUE SEDAN idles down the street. It's the same car that was parked outside of Dottie's house. Dwight waits as it pulls out, then hustles to his car. Bangs out a u-turn, FOLLOWS IT.

MULTIPLE SHOTS: Dwight continues to follow the blue sedan, trying to make out the Temp License Plate in the window, until the car pulls into:

EXT. BUILDING - PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Dwight idles a safe distance away, across the street. The sedan sits in the lot, no one emerging. Then Dwight looks up, sees that the building sign reads: EASTSIDE CONVALESCENT HOME. Holy shit. Dwight throws his door open and hand on his gun, books it towards the sedan. But before he can get to it it peels out.

INT. EASTSIDE CONVALESCENT HOME -- CONTINUOUS

Dwight runs like hell through the halls of this dingy place. He screeches to a halt in front of the NURSE'S STATION. Slaps down his badge.

DWIGHT
Where's Dottie Collins?

INT. EASTSIDE CONVALESCENT HOME - PATIENT ROOM - A BEAT LATER

Dwight stuffs Dottie's shoes and suit into a bag. Dottie, in a hospital nightgown, smiles at him mildly from her bed.

DWIGHT

You ain't gotta worry, Dottie.
You're safe with me.

INT. EASTSIDE CONVALESCENT HOME - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Dwight carries Dottie in his arms toward the exit. As he does, an ORDERLY shouts something to a NURSE. Dwight picks up the pace. Then, from down the hall, a SECURITY GUARD comes jogging toward them. Dwight turns a corner, looks over his shoulder to see the GUARD and two NURSES comin' after them. So Dwight takes off in a sprint, Dottie in his arms. He kicks the double doors open and they sail outta there.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. CHAUSER STREET HOUSE (DOTTIE'S HOUSE) - DOTTIE'S ROOM - MORNING (DAY FOUR)

Gentle rain on the windows. Dottie sleeps peacefully in her room, which has been cleaned up.

INT. DOTTIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - A BEAT LATER

Dwight, unshaven and still in the same clothes from DAY 1, examines a HOLE in the wall where the COPPER PIPING's been twisted and pried loose. We hear -- PLINK! Dwight turns around to see that there's water dripping from the ceiling. Leaky roof. He places a POT on the floor to catch the drips.

Then -- a NOISE from the front room. And in an instant:

INT. DOTTIE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM- CONTINUOUS

Dwight's got a 12 GAUGE SHOTGUN in his hands. The doorknob on the front door is turning. He raises the gun, takes aim at the door.

It opens to reveal... Lt. Rice. She sees the gun and in a flash her .9mm is out of its holster and pointed at Dwight.

LT. RICE.

Put the weapon down. Put it down!

DWIGHT

All right. Okay.

LT. RICE.

Down!

He lowers the shotgun, so Lt. Rice re-holsters her gun.

DWIGHT

Some people woulda knocked.

LT. RICE

You need to take the weekend.

DWIGHT

(laughs)

What? What're you talkin' about?

(moving on)

Listen, Dottie's not safe. That dead Haitian wuddn't actin' alone. I tailed somebody from her house to the nursing home last night. Somebody's tryin' to get Dottie. And it's a male.

(MORE)

DWIGHT (CONT'D)

There's holes all over the house where the plumbing's been pried loose. There's layers of plywood on each of her windows, gotta be twenty nails in each of 'em. Ain't no way that 95-pound girl coulda done all that.

LT. RICE

Okay, you're right. We'll make sure she's safe. While you take the weekend.

DWIGHT

I'm not takin' the weekend. I'm in the middle'a this.

LT. RICE

Detective Hendricks, I, too, have experienced divorce. And I know it feels like a massive personal failure.

DWIGHT

What? I'm -- WHAT?

LT. RICE

You chased a suspect into traffic, stole an elderly woman from state's care and pointed a shotgun at my face. I think you may be unraveling.

DWIGHT

Lady, this is me. This is how I do what I do. It ain't always pretty but it works. Didn't anybody warn you?

LT. RICE

Anybody warn you about the dangers of heart attack? Colon cancer? Brain aneurysm? This job can kill you if you let it. She will love you, and then she will eat you up. And I WILL NOT let that happen to you, Det. Hendricks!

DWIGHT

Lady. Just please let me. Do. My. Job.

LT. RICE

Bring Dottie back right now. We'll post security outside her room. Don't work this case, Dwight. Not over the weekend.

(beat:)

Rejuvenate.

DWIGHT

Goddammit! You're tryin' to fix something that ain't --

LT. RICE

Dwight. It's an order.

Dwight sets his jaw, then paints on an agreeable smile for her benefit.

DWIGHT

Fine. The weekend.

INT. PAULA ANN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - A LITTLE LATER

Paula watches Dwight pace around the kitchen. Dottie sits at the kitchen table, out of earshot.

DWIGHT

Couple hours, Mama. We got a bead on the son. Be no time 'fore he takes over.

PAULA ANN

Honey, sit. Lemme make you a sandwich.

DWIGHT

Nah, I ain't got time. Be back later, take care of them mouse traps, take a look at that humidifier.

PAULA ANN

Oh, you don't gotta worry 'bout that. Let me whip you somethin' quick up. My God, I can't believe Dottie Collins is in my house!

Dwight watches her take sandwich items from the fridge. Then:

TONY (O.S.)

Hello?

Paula straightens up, smooths her blouse.

PAULA ANN

Oh, here I am, Tony!

Paula Ann moves into the foyer, where Tony, in a crisp polo shirt and khakis, stands with a BOUQUET OF ROSES. His mother takes the flowers, smiles and blushes. Dwight stares as the two of them laugh and stand real close. Then, Tony shouts from the foyer --

TONY

Hey, Dwight! Gotta run! See ya
'round!

Dwight nods and Tony's out the door. Paula re-enters with a spring in her step, and finds a VASE.

PAULA ANN

Isn't he just a sweetheart? Can you believe he went and did this?

DWIGHT

What's the occasion?

PAULA ANN

Just a thank you. I wrote Tony a check 'cause he was havin' trouble with his bank.

DWIGHT

You sure that's a good idea?

PAULA ANN

Oh, Dwight, the man hadda pay his movers.

DWIGHT

He know about Dad's pension?

PAULA ANN

Dwight!

She shakes her head and moves to Dottie.

PAULA ANN (CONT'D)

I bet these're nothin' compared to what you got in your day, Dottie.

Paula plunks the roses in the vase. Dwight looks at his mother, the new blush in her cheek.

EXT. PAULA ANN'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Dwight sits in his car, spying on Tony as he leaves his house in a dapper sports coat.

He's partially obscured by a hedge as he gets his mail, then comes back into view as he gets in his Mazda. Dwight watches him as he combs his hair in the rearview mirror. NOTE: Dwight's view of Tony is through a dusty windshield, and the darkened back window of Tony's car. Dwight suddenly stiffens. He's still for a beat, thinking, then he jerks open his glovebox and takes out the PHOTOS from Rashard's wallet. Dwight studies them with a new intensity. Then, suddenly looks up, mind racing.

EXT. MPD - SVU UNIT BULLPEN - LATER

In a quiet corner, Dwight looks on, focused, as SGT. HANK TAYLOR (mid 40's, pony-tailed buddy from the academy.) studies the Rashard Cooper wallet photos.

TAYLOR

You're right, Dwight. These pictures ain't kosher. They've got classic predatory elements.

He indicates the pic of TIFFANY D'ANGELO in front of the school.

TAYLOR (CONT'D)

These shadows by her feet - see how the edges are pixilated - that's 'cause this was taken by a high power zoom from way far away.

PIC OF ANOTHER GIRL OUTSIDE A SUBURBAN HOUSE

TAYLOR (CONT'D)

And this kid's smiling, but look at her hands. Way she's squeezin' em tight. She's scared. Whoever's takin' this picture's makin' her uncomfortable.

Taylor moves to the THIRD PIC, OF THE YOUNGEST GIRL AT THE TOP OF A SLIDE AT A PLAYGROUND.

TAYLOR (CONT'D)

This one-- Huh.
(beat)
Dwight. I know this one.

Off Dwight...

INT. OPEN CASE FILE ROOM AKA "THE DUNGEON" - MOMENTS LATER

Dwight stares over Taylor's shoulder as he furiously flips through a thick BINDER until he finds A LITTLE GIRL'S 'MISSING CHILD' BULLETIN. Pulls it from the binder.

Holds it up to the third little girl PIC. Girl on the bulletin, there's no doubt about it, this is her.

TAYLOR

Jessica-Ann Murphy. Missing since August of last year. I dunno where you got these, Dwight, but whoever took 'em, he ain't just lookin'.

Off Dwight...

INT. DWIGHT'S CAR - MOMENTS LATER

DEE-DEE'S MUSIC plays loud on the stereo. Dwight drives fast, tight grip on the steering wheel, his mind racing, working his jaw. And then suddenly-- his head swivels to the stereo. His eyes lock on it, the blood drains from his face. And in a squeal of tires, he yanks his car over to the side of the road. He sits there, breathing hard. Then flings open the door.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

The trunk raises. Dwight scans the contents, and then quickly pushes away items, retrieves a BROWN PAPER ACCORDION FILE. He handles it with reverence. The outside reads 'BAKER, ELLA.' Slams the trunk and spreads the contents of the file out. The first thing we see is a STUDIO PHOTOGRAPH of a little girl (African-American, 10) posing with her brother. Her brother is Dee-Dee, a few years younger in this photo. Then a CRIME SCENE PHOTO of Ella, dead. Face covered with her skirt. Body laying in grass. Dwight works his jaw.

Then he finds what he was looking for-- a MAP. It's several pages taped together. All the homes are arranged around a HUGE PARK. A spot in the park bears a RED X. On each home -- dozens of them -- Dwight has written the last name of the person who lives there. Next to 90% of the names he's written 'CLEARED' in pencil. He scans these names until he reaches the very edge of the map, where one last home reads:

"COOPER. E. 121 Spring St. CLEARED."

Dwight punches the trunk of his car.

INT. SHOTGUN HOUSE - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Humble place, but comfortable. We see photos on the mantle of little Ella, Dee-Dee and their grandmother, RUBY BAKER (African-American, 60s). Dwight wipes sweat off his forehead and leans in to RUBY.

DWIGHT

What do you know 'bout a guy named
Rashard Cooper?

RUBY

Ain't never heard that name.

DWIGHT

He molests little girls, 'round
Ella's age and his mama lived a
mile from Overton Park. Somebody
shot and killed him up at that
Evergreen motel and Dee-Dee was put
two blocks from the scene by a
witness. Now you tellin' me you
don't know nothin' about that?

A long pause. She stares at him defiantly. Dwight moves to --

INT. SHOTGUN HOUSE - DEE-DEE'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Messy teenage boy's room. Posters of jazz greats on the
walls. QUICK CUTS as Dwight tears around, searching this
place, opening drawers, the closet.

RUBY

What're you doin'?

Until finally, he finds it in a cigar box under the bed: A
.38 CALIBER HANDGUN. He stares at the gun, breathless. Dwight
hangs his head. When he speaks it's quiet and steady.

DWIGHT

Where is he?

A long beat.

RUBY

In God's eyes where my grandson'll
be judged, way I see it. That son
of a bitch went braggin' to his
cell mate. Braggin'. 'Bout rapin'
and murderin' my only
granddaughter.

Dwight shakes his head. Quiet --

DWIGHT

You shoulda come to me when you
heard that.

RUBY

We came to you for three damn years askin' who did this. And you couldn't figure it out.

DWIGHT

I never stopped workin' this case. You know that.

RUBY

Some point a family don't got no other choice 'cept to take matters into it's own hands.

DWIGHT

Where's Dee-Dee?

She shakes her head at him.

RUBY

The hell that man caused in our lives. She was ten years old. And now you wanna know where Dee-Dee is? Well, you go on ahead and try to find him and take him in, Detective. You take him away from me and the rest a' his family forever. But you listen here. You do that, and by God you're gonna live every last day on this earth hurtin' from someplace dark inside a' you, knowin' this is all your fault.

Off Dwight, profoundly rattled...

EXT. ARCADE RESTAURANT - A LITTLE LATER

Dwight speeds out of the restaurant, grim-faced. Gets into his car.

EXT. STAX MUSIC SCHOOL - A LITTLE LATER

STUDENTS with instrument cases linger outside. Dee-Dee is nowhere to be seen. Dwight flips down his visor, and peers at a WORN POSED PHOTOGRAPH of Ella in front of a RED HOUSE.

INT. DWIGHT'S CAR - A LITTLE LATER

Dwight pulls up to the same RED HOUSE. As he approaches, a MIDDLE-AGED AFRICAN-AMERICAN WOMAN sitting on the porch sees his car, and suddenly RUNS INSIDE. Dwight accelerates, pulls up out front in time to see the CURTAINS PULLED CLOSED.

Then -- he sees that in a small top floor window, a CURTAIN SWAYS like it's just been moved. Dwight stares. PUSH IN on the window. It's Dee-Dee hiding up there. He knows it. He puts his hand on the door handle, about to get out. But he stops. He can't get out. He glances at Ella's photo, flips his visor up. He throws the car into gear, peels out. As he pulls away, his cell rings and he picks up.

DWIGHT
(into phone)
What?

INT. MPD - BREAKROOM - SAME TIME/ INTERCUT AS NEEDED

Whitehead talks to Dwight low on his cell phone.

WHITEHEAD
(urgent; into phone)
Dwight, Tiffany's mama ain't the one did in Rashard Cooper. Couple guys from East tracked her and the kid down in Germantown. Hauled 'em in. Dwight, this little girl started shaking when I pulled out his ID. Turns out, few days ago he molested her in the school parking lot.

Dwight breathes heavy for a minute.

WHITEHEAD (CONT'D)
Hear me, Dwight? The guy was a ped.

Dwight's in turmoil, then -- he decides on the fly that he's gonna have to lie. Faking incredulity --

DWIGHT
What?

WHITEHEAD
Yep. Freaked Tiffany's mama out so bad, she pulled her outta school moved 'em cross town to live the grandmother. Meantime OC's way off, circling two gangbanger cousins for this. I'm gonna call em and clue 'em in on this molester angle. Gut says it'll be somebody gunnin' for payback with this guy.

DWIGHT
No, no, no... I'll do it. Don't worry 'bout it, Whitehead, I'll key 'em in myself.

WHITEHEAD

Fine by me. Also Dottie Collins' son finally called. He's on his way in. Now I heard you're 'taking the weekend' but I figured that ain't gonna happen, so --

DWIGHT

-- You take him 'round the corner. I'm there in ten.

Dwight hangs up, breathing hard.

EXT. MPD - ACROSS THE STREET - TEN MINUTES LATER

Dwight squeals up. His mind's still on Dee-Dee. Whitehead approaches. Waves to someone O.C.

WHITEHEAD

C'mon. He don't bite.

Dottie's son, CLAYTON COLLINS (redhead, disheveled, 40s) approaches. Dwight looks him up and down, narrows his eyes.

DWIGHT

You Dottie Collin's son?
(off the guy's NOD)
Well, get in.

INT. DWIGHT'S CAR - A LITTLE LATER

Dwight takes a fast turn and the force slams Clayton up against the backseat window.

DWIGHT

How'd you find Sabine?

CLAYTON

Huh? Oh, the nurse, yeah, yeah. Um, she had a flyer up in the grocery store.

Up ahead, the traffic in his lane is stopped, so Dwight yanks the car into the lane of oncoming traffic.

DWIGHT

You check her references?

CLAYTON

Uh...should we be...I had to get back to New Orleans and she was really good with -- Watch it!

At the last moment, Dwight swerves hard, barely missing an ONCOMING CAR. Clayton is tossed around hard in the back.

DWIGHT

So you just left your mama with that crack-head, while you were livin' it up off her money and never checked in, or nothin'?

CLAYTON

I...I called her, 'course I did, but she didn't say somethin' was wrong.

DWIGHT

Sabine say anythin' 'bout a man stayin' over there with her?

CLAYTON

A man? No.

Dwight slams on the breaks in an alley, throwing Clayton forward. They're near an ABANDONED BUILDING.

CLAYTON (CONT'D)

This where they're keepin' her at?

But Dwight's outta the car.

INT. WHER BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

The door opens, and Dwight shoves Clayton inside the long-abandoned building.

DWIGHT

You realize our mamas, there ain't nothin' we don't owe 'em. Stairs.

Dwight pushes the guy towards the collapsing stairs at the far end of the room.

EXT. WHER BUILDING - ROOF - CONTINUOUS

The door bursts open and Dwight pushes Clayton out. He drags him by the collar over to the roof's ledge. The city spreads out beneath them.

DWIGHT

'I was growin' up, this was the highest point in Memphis, and your mama, she stood on top of this town.

Dwight yanks the guy up so he can see -- the WHER radio tower is still intact, though now it's neon letters are faded.

DWIGHT (CONT'D)

Look at it. She's a part a us. So when you left her to the wolves, y'almost killed all'a us, too. You get that?

CLAYTON

Yes! Okay!

Dwight yanks Clayton around so they're face to face.

DWIGHT

Some people, they kill for their families, Clayton. Now, you neglect that woman again, so help me I will hunt you down and I will make you pay. Y'understand?

CLAYTON

Yes, yes, okay! I'm sorry.

Dwight releases him and Clayton crumples to the ground.

EXT. PAULA ANN'S HOUSE - BACK PORCH - A LITTLE LATER

Clayton buries his face in his mother's neck and murmurs APOLOGIES to her. Dottie's hand pats his back idly.

INT. PAULA ANN'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - SAME TIME

Dwight and Paula Ann watch this scene through the open back door. She pats his arm.

PAULA ANN

You did a good job, Dwight.

But Dwight's squinting at Clayton.

DWIGHT

Nothin' 'bout this feels right, Mama. Not yet.

Off Dwight, determined...

INT. MPD - BULLPEN - SAME TIME

Greenback's at his desk playing online poker and chomping away on a corn dog, when he notices Sammy the Butcher and the lead singer of the Japanese Elvises heading his way. He looks for a way to escape, but it's too late --

SAMMY

Detective Greenback. They are very worried. Want to know what is happening? Only one day left, now. Is anything they can do to help?

GREENBACK

You tell them I'm workin' on it.

Sammy translates to the lead singer who replies with a long monologue full of animated gesticulation.

SAMMY

Detective Greenback. If Tokyo Elvises win first prize in contest, they get \$15,000. He will give you 10% if you find van.

Greenback puts down his corndog real slow. Stares at them.

GREENBACK

That some kinda bribe?

Sammy turns back to the lead singer. They have a tense exchange. Sammy swallows, turns back to Greenback.

SAMMY

Yes.

Greenback nods.

GREENBACK

Fifteen.

Sammy translates, then:

SAMMY

Twelve.

GREENBACK

Fifteen.

The lead singer runs a hand over his face. Then finally he gives Sammy the nod. Greenback breaks into a smile.

GREENBACK (CONT'D)

You got yourself a deal, my man.

He grabs his coat, badge and gun.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - LATER THAT DAY

Establishing. A seedy, stucco place with a warped second story balcony. We HEAR:

DWIGHT (PRELAP)

I'm sorry for your loss, Chlotilde.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - HALLWAY - SAME TIME

Chlotilde Basquie, puffy-eyed and angry, tries to shut the door on Dwight, but he catches it, holds it open.

DWIGHT

Listen to me. I ain't gonna let this rest with your sister takin' all the blame. 'Cause I think she was a good girl, in over her head. And somebody was puttin' her up to it, somebody who had power over her. Who could it'a been? Was there a guy she was goin' around with?

CHLOTILDE

Leave me alone.

DWIGHT

It ain't fair to your family, Chlotilde. I don't want your sister's memory to be tainted with this evil and this guy's scot free.

Chlotilde begins to cry. Dwight digs a wad of 20 DOLLAR BILLS outta his pocket, presses it into her hand.

DWIGHT (CONT'D)

Look, please. Take it. Take it all. It ain't much but I wanna ease your all's burden any way I can.

Chlotilde relents, pockets the money. Finally looks up to Dwight.

CHLOTILDE

She had a boyfriend. Frosty, okay? I don't know his real name. I never meet him but he was bad, he's the one got her into crack.

Off Dwight, zeroing in...

INT. TREEHOUSE - LATER

We START on A BARBIE DOLL.

GIRL (O.S.)

Well, Ken, I did see somebody over at Miss Collin's house.

MOVE TO FIND Tamara, the little girl whose father wouldn't let her talk to Dwight, holding the doll and making it "talk". REVERSE ON: Dwight, cramped and cross-legged in this ramshackle structure. He's holding a KEN DOLL.

DWIGHT

(doll's voice)

You remember what he looked like?

TAMARA

(doll's voice)

Ken, he was a white man with red hair and I saw him make like this with that black lady.

Tamara makes her Barbie kiss with another Ken doll.

DWIGHT

No, no, you're thinkin' of Dottie's son, 'cause he's got red hair.

TAMARA

(doll's voice)

Uh-uh. Not the son, he don't come around anymore. I'm tellin' you about the ugly, red haired man who drives the blue car and kisses the black lady.

Dwight squints at her, then turns to look across the street to Dottie's house...

START MUSIC: "And then I see a darkness" by Johnny Cash

EXT. CHAUSER STREET HOUSE- FRONT PORCH - A BEAT LATER

Dwight knocks loudly on the door. No answer. He turns the knob, and finds it unlocked. He enters.

INT. CHAUSER STREET HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The lights are off, and it's dead quiet.

DWIGHT

Hello? Anybody home? MPD.

No response. Dwight puts a hand on his gun, and moves to --

INT. CHAUSER STREET - DOTTIE'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Dwight finds Dottie's door LOCKED. He slides back the bolt, and enters the bedroom to find Dottie sitting on the bed.

DWIGHT
Dottie? Y'alright?

Dottie turns and stares at him. Her eyes are blank, face slack. Completely tuned out. Dwight exits into --

INT. CHAUSER STREET HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

DWIGHT
Hello?

Nothing. But then -- PLINK! Dwight stops and listens. We hear it again - PLINK!

INT. CHAUSER STREET - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Dwight looks at the ceiling where water drips into the POT he put on the floor.

INT. CHAUSER STREET HOUSE - SECOND FLOOR - A BEAT LATER

Dwight goes up the stairs, sees the drips falling from the second floor ceiling. He looks around. There's a HEAVY BUREAU pushed against the wall. He gets down on the floor. From that vantage point, he can see that it's covering a short DOOR.

QUICK SHOTS OF: Dwight pushing the bureau aside to reveal the door's got plywood nailed over it. Wrenching the plywood off with a crowbar. Door off, he's inside a storeroom, looking up at the ceiling entrance to an attic. But there's no way up. Dwight moves a ladder into frame, props it up, and begins his climb.

INT. CHAUSER STREET HOUSE - ATTIC - A BEAT LATER

Dwight comes up the ladder and looks around. He notices an extension cord, and follows it with his gaze to where it plugs into an appliance cord. The appliance cord is attached to A LARGE RECTANGULAR STRUCTURE wrapped in layers and layers of duct tape. It leaks water. Dwight saws through the duct tape with a rusty saw. Tugs at what we begin to realize is a FREEZER DOOR. Finally, he pries it open. Reacts to the smell.

We see: A DEAD MAN. White, 40s. And on his shoulder we see a faded TATTOO. A heart that says 'Dottie', and two little birds hold a banner that reads: 'I love you, Mama.'

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

CLOSE ON: Darkness, and a sliver of Dwight's profile lit, as if from footlights. WIDER to find we're in:

DWIGHT (PRELAP)
What did your mama do to you?

INT. MPD - INTERVIEW ROOM - LATER

Dwight sits across from Clayton, whose eyes are wide. Clayton swallows.

CLAYTON
Nothin'. Dottie was the best.

DWIGHT
Not Dottie. Your real mom. 'Cause we found Dottie's son. Stuffed in a freezer.

INT. MPD - BREAKROOM - SAME TIME

Lt. Rice watches the interrogation through the 2-way mirror, her arms folded. It's first thing in the morning, so she's wearing a magenta velour warm-up suit, but is no less commanding-looking.

INT. MPD - INTERVIEW ROOM - SAME TIME

Clayton blinks at Dwight.

DWIGHT
You murdered Clayton Collins and you stole his identity so you could get those interest checks. But that wuddn't enough, was it? You're such a piece of shit you hadda take the Medicaid money, the forks, the knives. You and your crackhead girlfriend couldn't just torture her, no, you hadda steal the woman's goddamn plumbin'!

Dwight gets in close. Clayton swallows.

DWIGHT (CONT'D)
What kinda radioactive shit puddle d'you fall into made you so warped, huh, Frosty?

CLAYTON
I ain't warped.

DWIGHT

Bullshit. You ain't worth the sweat
it took to make ya. You can g'ahead
and kiss your scabby, nothin' life
goodbye 'cause you're gettin' the
long needle, son.

Clayton stares at Dwight and doesn't blink. A long pause,
then a crooked sneer forms on his face--

FROSTY

You think you got it all figured
out? Well, joke's on you, cause I
mighta pretended to be him but I
didn't lay a hand on that guy. He
OD'd in fronta us! Your precious
Dottie ain't so great after all
'cause her son wuddn't nothin' but
a junkie.

DWIGHT

Well, thanks, Frosty. I'll round up
all the evidence I can possibly
find on that.

Dwight moves toward the door.

DWIGHT (CONT'D)

I brought you to my mama's house.

FROSTY

That some kinda sacred area?

Dwight turns around, fuming:

DWIGHT

Yeah, it is.

FROSTY

Just 'cause you're born to somebody
don't mean nothin'. My folks
treated the dog better than me. So
what? I raised myself up, so I'll
never be weak. 'Cause it's love'll
make you soft. Ain't no drug catch
you off-guard so bad as lovin'
somebody. It's like that old lady.
Smilin' at me with her bony wrist
out as I'm handcuffin' her. 'Cause
she just loves her son.

Frosty laughs, and Dwight heaves the table over. Frosty
disappears under it. Dwight stalks out of the room --

INT. MPD - BULLPEN - CONTINUOUS

Dwight slams the door shut, slides the bolt in place. Shoulders heaving with his ragged breath. He looks up to see Lt. Rice standing there. She extends a long-nailed index finger at him.

LT. RICE

Short weekend, Det. Hendricks.

She turns and stalks away. Dwight sighs deep: Jesus Christ. Turns to Whitehead for some commiseration, but Whitehead's lookin' stern as hell.

WHITEHEAD

You said you'd fill OC in 'bout Rashard Cooper. But you didn't tell 'em shit 'cause they hauled in those two gangbanger cousins. Now, it's one thing, us shuttin' them out, and the Loot, but you don't lie to me, son. What the hell's goin' on here?

Dwight looks around to make sure no one's listening. Then:

DWIGHT

He's the one killed Ella.

WHITEHEAD

What?

Dwight nods. Whitehead watches Dwight's face, and his wheels are spinning. Then --

WHITEHEAD (CONT'D)

What? -- What, Dee-Dee?

Dwight doesn't need to say anything. It's on his face.

WHITEHEAD (CONT'D)

Aww, shit.

Dwight averts his gaze. Low --

DWIGHT

Look, way I see it -- What good's it gonna do...puttin' a kid like Dee-Dee away?

WHITEHEAD

What?...No, no, no... That's -- You gotta be crazy.

DWIGHT

They were countin' on us. We failed those people.

WHITEHEAD

This ain't our fault. We worked the hell outta that job. This kid did murder. Plain and simple. No matter the reason, he's gotta be brought in. You know that. You're a good cop, Dwight. You know what's right.

But Dwight shakes his head.

DWIGHT

Ain't that simple down here. You of all people oughta know that.

Whitehead tenses up. His eyes narrow.

WHITEHEAD

What?

DWIGHT

Sometimes, down here, you gotta take the best choice outta two bad ones. Ain't that right, Whitehead?

Whitehead gets right in Dwight's face. Low --

WHITEHEAD

You don't talk about that, son. You don't bring that up. You want somebody to hear? Huh? You wanna ruin my life? Besides, this ain't the same thing. So you best get your head outta your ass, Dwight, 'cause you're screwin' up big-time.

But Dwight's already walking away.

EXT. PAULA ANN'S - BACK PORCH - THAT EVENING

The breeze kicks up, and the windchimes go into a frenzy. Dwight and Paula sit on the porch, lookin' out at the garden. Dwight's holding a MANILA ENVELOPE.

DWIGHT

Did some checkin' up on your neighbor. Credit report, criminal record.

PAULA ANN

Tony?...What? What's he done?

Dwight hesitates.

DWIGHT

Don't have to have a hard record to
be off. There's just somethin'
about that guy.

Dwight opens the envelope.

PAULA ANN

Dwight, don't --

DWIGHT

(reading)

March, 1989. DUI. He's got serious
credit card debt, evicted from --

She grabs the papers from his hands.

PAULA ANN

Just stop this.

DWIGHT

Mama, there's people out there
lookin' to take advantage of
widows. I've seen it too many
times. Now --

PAULA ANN

Dwight! It has been 24 years since
your dad died! Now, don't I deserve
some happiness?

This stops Dwight. He's silent for a beat.

PAULA ANN (CONT'D)

Honey, you and me, the world's
turnin' and we've been standin' on
the edge tryin' to hold it in
place. And I'm sick of that.

Dwight closes his eyes. He doesn't want to say this, but:

DWIGHT

The man's been married and divorced
four times, Mama.

This hurts her. We see it on her face that she didn't know
that. Dwight watches her. Quietly --

DWIGHT (CONT'D)

Now, I don't mean to hurt you. I'm
sorry. But this is part of my job.

Paula stands up, shakes the papers at Dwight.

PAULA ANN

This -- this is not your job. Just --
just go home, Dwight. And don't --
I don't want to see you for a few
days, okay? Now just -- just go.

She turns and goes inside. Slams the door behind her,
leaving Dwight all alone on the back porch with a pained look
in his eyes.

START MUSIC: SWEET MAMA, Sleepy John Estes.

INT. CREST HEIGHTS ASSISTED LIVING - A LITTLE LATER

Dwight's moving around Dottie's new room in a bluster,
peeking around the new curtains, opening drawers. He looks
like a man who is barely keeping it together.

DWIGHT

Nice, nice. This is good, they got
a potpurri thing.

Dottie's eyes follow him, and she smiles mildly.

DWIGHT (CONT'D)

Look, I -- in a lotta ways, I think
-- I think I am who I am 'cause of
you, Dottie. 'Cause of your show.

(beat)

Brought you something from the
library.

Dwight hooks up a radio/cassette player, pops in a tape. We
HEAR sirens rising.

EXT. STREETS - MEMPHIS - SAME TIME

An MPD ESCORT comes to a halt at the sidewalk. Greenback,
trying on the role of rock n' roll manager, jumps out and
opens the back seat. The Japanese Elvises start to pile out.

EXT. W.C HANDY PARK - BEALE STREET - A BEAT LATER

Greenback leads the charge of Japanese Elvises through the
thick crowd, and they make it to the BANDSTAND. They climb
up, recovered instruments in hand.

M.C.

All the way from Japan, let's give
a king's welcome to Yoshi Yakamura
and the Tokyo Elvises!

The lead singer grabs the mic as the opening chords of "BURNING LOVE" kick in. Greenback makes emphatic gestures to a SOUND GUY, then grins as the crowd goes crazy, proud as hell. We MOVE TO:

INT. CREST HEIGHTS ASSISTED LIVING FACILITY - SAME TIME

Where the Elvis version of "Burning Love" plays from the clock/radio. It ends, and we hear the voice of young Dottie the DJ.

YOUNG DOTTIE

(from the radio)

...I almost lost myself in a day
dream about a young man sweepin'
the floors at Sun Records, nothin'
but a dollar and a dream and he
grewed up to be King of the World.

Dwight is enraptured listening to her. Dottie's gaze turns to the radio. She stares at it, and a smile grows on her face. Off Dwight, moved...

EXT. MISSISSIPPI RIVER - DAYBREAK

The sun rises and cuts through the mist on the river.

START MUSIC: "Stack O'Lee" by MISSISSIPPI JOHN HURT

EXT. CEMETARY - SAME TIME

START ON Dwight's car, parked on an access road. MOVE TO FIND Dwight leaning against it, staring at a gravestone. It's ELLA BAKER'S. There are plastic daffodils stuck in the dirt. Dwight is in turmoil. In b.g., dark clouds gather. THUNDER rumbles. PUSH IN on Dwight.

EXT. MIDTOWN STREET - A LITTLE LATER

We're high above this street. Rain pours down. ON-LOOKERS scream and jeer as Dwight exits the red house, and cuts through the crowd with Dee-Dee in cuffs. His FAMILY follows after them.

Dwight clenches his jaw. He has to hold Ruby away as he gently eases Dee-Dee into the back seat.

INT. MPD - LOBBY - A LITTLE LATER

Much less crowded. Dwight enters, drenched, with Dee-Dee. He puts a hand on his shoulder, passes him off to a UNIFORM. Dee-Dee looks back at Dwight, and it pains him incredibly to see the kid slouch down the hall, and away from view. From the bullpen, Whitehead looks on as Dwight hangs his head, spent.

Then Charlene rounds a corner, storms up to him with her basket of breakfast burritos.

CHARLENE

I heard you're singin' again. Don't you be up there singing about me, Dwight Hendricks.

DWIGHT

What?

CHARLENE

You hide behind that man. Y'always have. Just leave me outta it.

She pushes past him. Dwight is rooted in place.

WHITEHEAD (O.S.)

You didn't tell me you were singin'.

Dwight turns to find Whitehead's overheard.

DWIGHT

S'nothin'. Just a weekly, open mic night type a thing.

WHITEHEAD

Well, I'll bet it's a heckuva thing, Dwight.

Whitehead pats his shoulder. Dwight looks at him a beat, then moves upstairs.

INT. MPD - LT. RICE'S OFFICE - A BEAT LATER

START ON a FRAMED PHOTO of Lt. Rice and her FIVE grown children. We find her on the phone at her desk. A BEEP, then--

LT. RICE

Hi, honey. It's me. Just callin' to check in... Call me back. No big thing. Just a hello, just missin' you... I worry. I am your mother. ... I think I deserve a phone call, right? I think that's only fair. And I know you're not that busy, so there's really no excuse. And it has been nearly a month so I don't see what the problem is! I don't know what I --

Lt. Rice cuts herself off. There's a long beat, and then she speaks softly.

LT. RICE (CONT'D)

(into phone)

I was just tryin' to raise y'all up
right, and I -- I chased y'all
away. I don't know.

Lt. Rice pulls the phone away from her ear. Looks at it a beat, then hangs up. Turns to her computer and stares at it. Then, a KNOCK and Dwight enters. Lt. Rice takes a composing breath.

LT. RICE (CONT'D)

Detective Hendricks.

DWIGHT

I pulled some strings, got Dottie
in a place that's real nice. And I
know I wuddn't 'sposed to, but I
brought in that Evergreen Motel
job. Vic was a pedophile. Connected
him to two open jobs, got SVU
followin' up on more. His doer was
a Charlie 'Dee-Dee' Baker.
Brother'a one of his victims. A --
a eight year old girl. I know Dee-
Dee, he's a real -- real good kid,
so I-- I hope we can --

Dwight swallows and averts his gaze.

DWIGHT (CONT'D)

Listen... I haven't, ah, had time
to -- to write up those updates and
do all that other stuff that you
wanted... But maybe -- maybe you're
right, and I -- need to start --
to...

Dwight trails off. Lt. Rice stares at him, confused and alarmed 'cause Dwight looks like someone has just turned off the switch. He looks tired. Bone tired.

After a beat, she stands up. She moves toward him and puts both hands on his arms and guides him into a chair.

LT. RICE

Shh. Okay now.

She hovers over him a beat, searching for the words. Then:

LT. RICE (CONT'D)

You don't worry about that. Don't
worry about any of it. You did
great. Just great.

(MORE)

LT. RICE (CONT'D)

You just keep operating the way you
do and I'll just... I'll just be
right here, Dwight.

Then she kisses the top of his head.

And we HEAR the opening chords of Elvis Presley's "If I Can Dream." The proud, distant call of the trumpet, and the driving rat-a-tat-tat of the high-hat. We GO SLOW on Dwight's eyes opening. It's like a spell's been lifted. He sits up.

DWIGHT

Alright then. Back to work.

LT. RICE

What you could use, Det. Hendricks,
is some type of therapeutic outlet.

DWIGHT

I'm, ah -- I'm workin' on that.

She nods. Dwight exits, and the MUSIC RISES, CONTINUES OVER:

INT. STAGE - LATER THAT NIGHT

A single spotlight comes to life illuminating a striking silhouette. Hip cocked. Mic in hand. Back facing the audience. Eyes clamped shut. It's just like what we saw in the opening. But now, as the music builds, he turns to face the audience and we see his face in the light for the first time.

It's Dwight. He's wearing an iconic Elvis outfit -- black leather pants, black leather jacket. Scarlet silk scarf tied tight around his neck. He opens his mouth. And sings in that same gorgeous baritone we heard in the opening sequence.

DWIGHT (CONT'D)

*There must be lights burning
brighter, somewhere/ got to be
birds flying higher in a sky more
blue..*

DWIGHT'S SINGING CONTINUES OVER THE FOLLOWING:

INT. MPD- BULLPEN - LATER - INTERCUT

Lt. Rice is leaving for the night. She shuts her office door, and turns around to see that the BOOB LAMP is on Dwight's desk. Only now it's wearing a BRA. She smiles, shakes her head.

"If I can dream of a better land where all my brothers walk hand in hand... / tell me why (oh why, oh why)/ can't my dream come true..."

INT. BAR - INTERCUT

Dwight is down on one knee at the edge of the stage now, tendons popping in his neck. His eyes glimmer with tears. There's a straight line from the bottom of his soul to the microphone, and it's the kinda thing gives you goosebumps.

"There must be peace and understanding sometimes/ strong winds of promise that will blow away that doubt and fear..."

The audience in this small bar is enraptured with Dwight. A table of WOMEN stare at him lustily.

"If I can dream of a warmer sun where hope keeps shining on everyone tell me why (oh why, oh why) won't that sun appear..."

INT. DWIGHT'S HOUSE - ELVIS ROOM - LATER - INTERCUT

Dwight turns on a lamp with a RED BULB. We follow him to his bar, where he pours a glass of bourbon. Takes his blazer off. Sits down on his couch, satisfied smile on his face, puts his feet up on the coffee table. We start to PULL BACK.

"We're lost in a cloud with too much rain..."

And as we pull back we see that the wall behind Dwight is covered in framed ELVIS PARAPHERNALIA. Records. Photographs.

"We're trapped in a world that's troubled with pain..."

Further -- Autographs. Magazines. Shelves with old tickets, headshots, set lists, concert programs. Posters.

Even further -- A guitar mounted behind plexiglass. A leather cowboy hat. And the other walls, too, covered. We pull back until Dwight is small in the frame, until he's another piece of paraphernalia.

"But as long as a man has the strength to dream/He can redeem his soul and fly..."

INT. BAR - INTERCUT

Dwight, in close-up, in the silence right after the song has ended. The sweat runs in streaks down his cheeks. We HEAR his breathing, ragged and loud, and his eyes open slowly and twinkle in the light.

THE END.