

SUNDOWN

Written by

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Logline: A law-abiding, Southern father must make a difficult decision after his estranged black sheep son returns home looking for help.

EXT. HOLDER HOUSE - NIGHT

It's dark out. A small, well-manicured house on a quiet street in the Atlanta area. From outside the house, we can see the lights turning off. The sounds of a helicopter can be heard overhead.

INT. HOLDER HOUSE - MAIN BEDROOM - NIGHT

Inside the bedroom, JAMES HOLDER (60, stern, set in his ways) is on his laptop in bed as Etta James PLAYS on the speaker. Across the room, James' wife, ANGELINE (58, chatty, religious) puts on a regimen of face creams.

JAMES

You know, my coworker said he found out, he's gonna be a grandpa this week.

ANGELINE

Oh really? What a blessing!

JAMES

Yes it is, but I'll admit I was a little surprised to hear his son isn't married.

ANGELINE

You know how kids are these days days. They're still finding their way.

JAMES

Hmm I guess, I just hope they get married before the baby comes. A child needs a good foundation to grow up right.

ANGELINE

Well, the Lord says, "Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it."

JAMES

Amen. It depends a bit on the child though.

ANGELINE

Well, sometimes there is some wandering in the wilderness but I believe children are always-

Suddenly, a CRASH is heard from downstairs.

ANGELINE (CONT'D)

Oh my goodness, what was that?

James tosses his laptop to the side and stands up.

JAMES

I'll check on it. Might just be those dogs from next door.

Slipping into his shoes, James heads for the door. He grabs a baseball bat from the corner and nods to Angeline.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Stay here, alright?

Angeline nods, clasping her hands in prayer.

INT. HOLDER HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

James walks into the living room. It has all the homey, vaguely Christian decorations you'd expect. The only thing out of place is the door to the back porch, which stands wide open.

James looks around the room again, then walks over to the door. Checking the door, he sees that the outside handle has been broken off to force the door open. Turning away, he lifts the bat.

JAMES

Whoever you are, you better come out now.

(beat)

I have a weapon and I know how to use it.

From the kitchen, a LAUGH is heard and FOOTSTEPS come closer. JT (30, smart, argumentative), James and Angeline's son appears in the doorway, eating from a package of lunch meat. He's in a dirty, torn set of prison coveralls with a ratty t-shirt pulled over them.

JT

I don't know if a bat counts as a weapon, Pop. 'Specially not with your batting skills.

JAMES

What the hell? How are you even-

Shaking his head, James points the bat at JT.

JAMES (CONT'D)

I don't care. Take your smelly, lying ass and get the fuck outta my house.

JT

Don't let Mom hear you doing all that cussin'. You supposed to be saved, big man.

JAMES

I mean it boy, get out.

James looks serious but his hands shake around the bat. JT LAUGHS but the sound is mirthless. He sets the lunch meat down on a side table and steps forward, taking the baseball bat from his father's hands.

JT

Just chill bruh.

Shouldering around his father, JT closes the back door before turning around. Pointing with the bat, he motions toward the couch. James complies, sitting down.

JAMES

What are you gonna do to us?

JT

I go to prison for a couple years and when I comes back, y'all start acting like I'm dangerous.

JAMES

Last I checked, you're not supposed to be out for another 5 years, JT.

JT

What if I said, I got out early on good behavior?

JAMES

You? Yeah right!

JT

See I knew you'd say that shit.

JAMES

If I call the police, are they gonna be looking for you?

JT falters, looking at his father with real emotion in his eyes.

JT
You wouldn't.

JAMES
Why wouldn't I? People gotta face
the consequences of their actions.
I thought I got that into your head
when you were a kid.

JT
I didn't kill nobody, Pop!
(beat)
I just wanted some extra money. I
thought I could unload the stuff
and get along with my life.

JAMES
But you didn't! You got caught
because bad people always get
caught.

JT
Do you really think I'm a bad
person, Dad?

JAMES
You knew it was wrong.

JT
Don't play with me man, that's not
an answer.

James opens his mouth to reply.

ANGELINE (O.S.)
Son? Is that you?

JT stills and James stands up. Angeline steps down the
stairs, quickly coming into view.

JT
Mama?

JAMES
Honey, just go back upstairs.

Angeline ignores him, going to hug JT. She pulls back and
takes in his appearance.

ANGELINE
Oh my baby. Glory, look at you! You
wanna take a shower? Wash off all
that dirt?

JT

Yes ma'am, I'd like that.

ANGELINE

Good, go on upstairs. Everything's still how you left it. Might have to borrow a shirt from your father with how you've filled out. I'll bring you something, alright.

JAMES

Angeline, he can't stay.

Angeline fixes James with a hard stare. He sits down, sighing.

ANGELINE

Go shower, JT.

JT nods, leaving the room. His FOOTSTEPS fade away as he goes up the stairs.

JAMES

He did a bad thing. We can't harbor a criminal.

ANGELINE

He's not a criminal, he's our son. He made some mistakes but I think we're just as bad if we turn him away in his hour of need.

JAMES

He's a fugitive! Any minute now the police are gonna come knocking, asking if we've seen him. What do you want us to do? Lie?

ANGELINE

The Lord said 'For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat. I needed clothes and you clothed me.' While God is on the throne, I'll let Him judge and I'll do my best to take care of His people.

James makes a face and begins to speak. Angeline holds up her hand.

ANGELINE (CONT'D)

He isn't the same man who made those mistakes, James. You haven't seen the changes he's made in his life since then.

JAMES

And you have?

ANGELINE

He's my only son, I know his heart.

(beat)

Besides, i've been to see him every Tuesday since he went to prison.

James looks shocked.

JAMES

I thought we agreed that-

ANGELINE

He's our child, James. If you've let go of all your vices, go ahead and tell the police whatever you want but I won't judge JT.

INT. HOLDER HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - LATER

James stand in the doorway of the living room. JT kneels, clean-shaven by the couch in new clothes.

Angeline packs a sandwich into his duffle bag before kneeling beside him. She looks at James, but he shakes his head.

ANGELINE

Dear God, please be with JT...

The SOUND fades away as James watches as Angeline and JT pray together, his face conflicted.

EXT. HOLDER HOUSE - DAY

It's a sunny day in the neighborhood, a few dogs BARK from their backyards. A police car pulls up to the house, breaking the peace of the day. Two officers step out and make their way to the door.

INT. HOLDER HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

James finishes putting a new doorknob on the back door. He checks it and smiles, satisfied. He closes the door and picks up his tool-bag as the doorbell RINGS.

INT. HOLDER HOUSE - FOYER - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Going to answer the door, James sets the tool-bag down on the side table. He looks through the peephole and takes a deep breath as he sees the officers.

James opens the door.

JAMES

Hello?

OFFICER GAGE (40s) steps forward, flashing his badge.

OFFICER GAGE

Hello sir, I am Officer Gage and this is my partner, Officer Hardy. Is this the Holder residence?

JAMES

Yes sir, it is.

OFFICER GAGE

Would you be Mr. James Holder?

JAMES

Yes, my name is James Holder.

OFFICER GAGE

Mr. Holder, where is your son, Mr. James Timothy Holder?

JAMES

He's in prison, sir. At Wilcox State.

OFFICER GAGE

Mr. Holder, your son has been missing from Wilcox since yesterday morning.

James feigns a look of surprise.

JAMES

Jesus Christ, he'll be the death of me.

OFFICER GAGE

I'm going to ask you again, Mr. Holder. Where is your son?

JAMES

I don't know.

CUT TO BLACK.