

Thank You, Soldier

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INT. COURTROOM - DAY

JUDGE ATWOOD, 60s, sits behind his bench, his brow furrows.

JUDGE ATWOOD
Petty theft and breaking and entering.
Son, this is the third time you've been
in front of me, is it not?

JAKE PETERS, 17, boy next door looks, stands in front of
Judge Atwood's bench next to his PUBLIC DEFENDER.

JAKE
Yes, sir.

JUDGE ATWOOD
And where is your poor mother?

JAKE
She's probably going from her refinery
job to the diner, sir.

PUBLIC DEFENDER
She's sorry she couldn't be here, Judge
Atwood.

JUDGE ATWOOD
I'm sure Carol Ann is.

Judge Atwood removes his wire rim glasses.

JUDGE ATWOOD
Jake, juvenile hall is not a place for a
young man like you who is more than
capable of making better decisions for
himself.

Judge Atwood picks up his pen and scribbles on a piece of
paper.

JUDGE ATWOOD
Jacob Peters, I hear by sentence you to
report to the Court Annex, Room three.

Judge Atwood holds out the paper to him.

Jake steps forward and takes the paper.

JUDGE ATWOOD
It is my hope and the hope of this court
that I won't ever see you standing here
again, understand?

JAKE

Yes, sir.

Judge Atwood wraps his gavel.

JUDGE ATWOOD

Court is adjourned.

INT. COURT ANNEX ROOM THREE, DAY

AL TURNER, 60s, sits at the computer at his desk. Someone KNOCKS on his door.

AL

Come in.

Jake opens the door. Al gets up from his desk.

AL

You must be the young man Carl sent over.
Jack?

Al extends his hand toward Jake.

JAKE

Jake Peters, sir.

Jake shakes his hand.

AL

Jake. I'm Al Turner. Have a seat, son.

Al sits back down. Jake sits across from him.

AL

You've got quite a nice little rap sheet
going for you.

JAKE

Thank you.

AL

Trust me, son, that wasn't a compliment.

JAKE

So lemme guess, I'm gonna be cleaning up
the side of the highway, right?

AL

Oh, you're much too good for that. I want
to see you tomorrow at oh-nine-hundred on
my front porch on Fifth Street.

JAKE

Oh-nine-hundred? What kind of address is that?

AL

You've got a lot to learn, son. That's nine in the morning, 1280 Fifth Street is the address. Now get out of my office.

JAKE

Yes, sir.

Jake leaves.

EXT. FIFTH STREET - DAY

Jake walks to Al's house.

DANNY, 17, devil may care type, rides up next to Jake on his bike.

DANNY

What's up, Jakey? I heard Atwood let you walk.

JAKE

No, he sentenced me to hard labor. Some mentor program crap, but it beats juvie.

DANNY

So that means you're not getting paid.

JAKE

Obviously. Why?

DANNY

I know you're trying to do the right thing at the moment, but I need you to start coming through with that money you owe me.

JAKE

I haven't forgotten.

DANNY

And neither have I. Put some thought on it. I'll catch up with you later.

JAKE

Yeah, later.

Danny rides away.

EXT. AL'S HOUSE - DAY

Al waits on his front porch for Jake. He looks at his watch. Jake trudges up the three steps onto the porch.

AL
Good morning, young man.

JAKE
Morning, Mr. Turner.

AL
Al is just fine, Jake. How good are you at painting?

JAKE
Okay, I guess. I helped my mom paint our living room once, like when I was twelve.

AL
This isn't that crazy. We're doing trim work around my windows. But first.

Al holds up a five gallon bucket.

AL
We're gonna clean the windows.

MONTAGE - JAKE AND AL WORK ON AL'S HOUSE

-- Jake stands on a ladder and cleans out gutters while Al supervises from the ground.

-- Al lays a sheet of plywood on top of some saw horses and supervises Jake as he cuts the plywood with a circular saw.

-- Jake paints the trim around the window while Al stands back and admires his work.

EXT. AL'S BACKYARD - DAY

The sun beats down on Jake as he pushes a rusty, old fashioned lawnmower around the yard.

Al sits on a lawn chair, newspaper in hand and a lemonade on the side table. He folds his paper and lays it aside.

AL
Jake, I think we both deserve a break.

Jake stops.

AL

Why don't you come inside?

INT. AL'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Jake sits on the couch and looks around the modest room. A few old family pictures adorn the walls. One certain picture catches his eye of a young man in an Army dress uniform.

Al walks back in with two glasses of lemonade. He sets one in front of Jake and he sits down on the other side of the couch.

JAKE

So, is that your kid in that picture over there?

AL

That kid is me.

JAKE

Was that World War two?

AL

No, that was taken after I came back from Basic. I enlisted in Vietnam, two tours.

JAKE

Thank you for your service. And now you're mentoring punks like me.

AL

And sometimes it's just as challenging as war. But you're doing really well, Jake.

JAKE

My mom always says any job worth doing is worth doing well.

AL

Your mom is a smart woman.

JAKE

She works a lot. I do what I can to help, but it's hard on her.

AL

And your father?

JAKE

Mom doesn't talk about him at all. I barely remember him myself. I have this though.

Jake pulls out a St. Michael medallion that he wears around his neck.

Al puts on his glasses to look at it.

AL

Saint Michael, the Archangel, defend us in battle, be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the devil.

Jake tucks it back underneath his shirt.

JAKE

A lot of good it does, huh?

AL

Don't be so hard on yourself, kid. You'll find your way.

EXT. JAKE'S PORCH - NIGHT

The glow of the bug zapper casts a pale light onto Jake who sits on the porch swing.

He stares out into the night.

FOOTSTEPS on the stairs break his concentration. Danny flops next to him onto the swing.

DANNY

Jakey.

JAKE

Danny.

DANNY

Got anything for me?

JAKE

I'll get it to you. Lemme finish my work at Al's first.

DANNY

Jake, I've been patient. I didn't have to bail your mom out of a jam but I did. I need that money, man.

JAKE

And you'll get it. I just need more time.

DANNY

Jake, you gotta do better than that.

Danny pulls out a switch blade.

DANNY

I'm sure I can get it off your mom. But she'd probably be a little upset when she finds out how you got the money in the first place. No one wants to hear their baby boy is a thief and a dealer.

JAKE

Your mom doesn't seem to mind.

DANNY

My mom is way different than yours, we both know that. Look, you're a good friend, but it's time to pay up. I saw you walk to that old dude's house today but there wasn't much done outside. Unless you did all your work inside.

Jake falls silent.

DANNY

Anything worth it in there or is it an episode of Hoarders? Come on, Jake. There's gotta be something. Pills even?

JAKE

He's got some old military stuff. Some coins, a small pistol.

DANNY

Think it's worth two grand?

JAKE

I don't know. Probably.

DANNY

Show me.

EXT. AL'S BACKYARD - NIGHT

Jake unlatches the gate and Danny follows him. The screen patio door separates them from the living room.

Danny tries the screen door but it doesn't budge. He gets out his switch blade and cuts a hole in the screen. He reaches through it to unlock the door.

DANNY

Ladies first.

Jake slides the door back with just enough room for them to step through. Jake tip toes over to a roll top desk. He pulls out a bottom drawer and extracts a metal box.

Danny busies himself with a shadow box on the wall that contains some medals.

JAKE

That's not what we're here for.

Danny ignores him and lifts the latch on the shadow box.

Jake launches himself at Danny and a scuffle between the two ensues.

DANNY

What the hell is wrong with you?

Danny shoves Jake off of him and Jake comes back harder.

INT. AL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Al's eyes pop open. He grabs his gun from the nightstand.

INT. AL'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The hall light comes on and Danny and Jake freeze.

DANNY

Come on!

Danny grabs Jake and they run out of the house.

EXT. AL'S BACKYARD - NIGHT

Al rushes onto the patio to the CLANG of the back gate.

AL

Damn it!

Al walks back inside.

INT. AL'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Al slams the desk drawer. Something shiny reflects in the hallway light on the floor. He bends down and retrieves a St. Michael medallion.

AL

Aw, kid.

EXT. AL'S FRONT PORCH - DAY

Al leans against the porch post. Jake stops at the bottom of the three steps to the porch.

AL

You're early.

JAKE

Uh, yeah, I guess I am.

Jake starts up the steps.

AL

Don't. You're done here, kid.

JAKE

What?

AL

You think I'm some dumb old man?

Al pitches Jake's necklace at him.

AL

All that hard work and to steal from me.
I bring you into my house and give you my
time that no one else would and this is
how you repay me.

JAKE

Al, I--

AL

I've wasted enough time on you. Do the
right thing and make something of
yourself or I swear I'll turn you in and
make sure you never see the light of day.
Now get the hell off my porch.

Jake stands there.

AL

Go!

Jake jumps and retreats down the street.

INT. AL'S FRONT DOOR - DAY - MONTHS LATER

The door bell CHIMES and someone KNOCKS. Al answers the door.

Jake stands before him in his Army dress uniform.

AL
Jake? Jake Peters?

JAKE
Hello, Mr. Turner.

Al smiles.

AL
Al is just fine. Come in, son.

Al steps aside as Jake enters. Al shuts the door.

INT. AL'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

AL
I wondered what happened to you. Look at you.

JAKE
Well, I wanted to come by to show you that I made something of myself and I did the right thing.

Jake produces a metal box and Al takes it.

AL
Is this?

JAKE
Yes, sir. Everything's there too. I made sure of it.

AL
Son, I'm proud of you. Thank you.

JAKE
No. Thank you, sir.

