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Re-Contextualizing the Patriarch: Understanding Fathers and Sons

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Ashes Crossing Yellow Lines

By

Kevin J. Hathaway
Cast of Characters

Colin Ash: 31
Andrew Ash: 28

Scene

The road between Albuquerque, NM and Finlayson, MN

Time

Present day Spring
ACT I

Scene 1

COLIN, 31, sporting a five o’clock shadow and dressed in a black leather coat and trendy jeans, sets up four chairs in the shape of a car. He loads some refreshments in the back seat, lifts a rolling luggage case into the trunk, slams it, and gets in the driver’s seat.

Lights shift.

Colin works on his laptop as he waits. He checks his phone, and waits some more. ANDREW, 28, a tall, clean-cut, baby-faced man dressed in expertly cut homemade clothes, approaches the car and taps the trunk. Colin pops it and closes his laptop. Andrew sets his bag in nicely and gets in.

A moment of awkward tension between the two.

COLIN

Wasn’t sure if you bailed on me.

ANDREW

Give me a break. It’s four in the morning.

Colin notices the Bible in Andrew’s hand.

COLIN

Some light reading?

ANDREW

You still remember this book?

... 

COLIN

So.

ANDREW

So.

COLIN
Andrew looks around the car as if getting reacquainted with it as well.

ANDREW
I can’t believe you still have this old beater.

COLIN
Yep.

ANDREW
Yep. What’s that supposed to mean?

COLIN
Nothing. It’s a good car. It’s reliable.

ANDREW
Impalas are anything but reliable.

... 

ANDREW
Hey, I know more about cars than you do.

COLIN
...

ANDREW
It’s actually kind of funny.

What is?

ANDREW
It even smells the same.

Beat.

COLIN
I guess.

ANDREW
Isn’t that the same coffee stain from like fifteen years ago?

COLIN
Did we or did we not agree to take my car?

ANDREW
We did.
Then leave it alone.  

Alright.  

Some things don’t change.  

Some obviously do.  

What’s that supposed to mean?  

Come on, Colin. You look like you just got out of jail.  

Well, you would know.  

Don’t start with me.  

Then don’t start with me. You know a simple "it’s good to see you, brother" would have sufficed.  

...  

Like I said, some things don’t change.  

You still have an uncanny knack for not paying attention to details.  

I don’t follow.  

Look around you. Out of all the places we could meet, you pick a Walmart parking lot.  

I was trying to be nice. To be thoughtful. I figured in case you needed anything for-  

It’s a slap in the face, Colin. You knew Dad hated this place above any other.
Pause.

COLIN
I don’t want to talk about Dad.

ANDREW
Why not?

COLIN
Can we not start this trip off by arguing?

Pause.

ANDREW
How far is it to Kansas?

COLIN
(starting her up)
Far.

ANDREW
Wow. Thank you for that enlightening-

COLIN
I don’t know how far it is. A thousand miles or more. Happy?

ANDREW
I’ll be happy when this trip is over.

That makes two of us.

Colin yawns.

ANDREW
Want me to drive?

COLIN
I just need some coffee. You want some?

ANDREW
You got some?

COLIN
There’s a McDonald’s around the corner.

ANDREW
Hmpf. No thanks. I’ll be fine.

COLIN
It’s a long drive. Are you sure?
ANDREW
You go ahead and kill yourself with that crap.

COLIN
Suit yourself.

ANDREW
I’m fine. Let’s just go already.

Silence.

ANDREW
Mind if I roll the window down?

COLIN
Go ahead. Could use some air in here.

Beat.

ANDREW
Do you smell that?

COLIN
Smell what?

ANDREW
I don’t know. Smells like oil or something.

COLIN
I don’t smell anything.

ANDREW
Did you get this checked before we left?

COLIN
Two weeks ago.

ANDREW
Maybe somebody should look at it on the way out of town.

COLIN
I just said she’s fine.

ANDREW
...

COLIN
...

ANDREW
Dad always took it to Mr. Lomas. Remember him?
Yeah. He’s a thief.

Andrew checks a text on his phone. Colin notices.

He is not.

ANDREW

Is too. We did a piece about him in The Journal.

I don’t read that.

ANDREW

...

How long do you think it will take to get there?

ANDREW

Wow.

What? I’m just asking.

ANDREW

We haven’t even left New Mexico yet and you’re in such a hurry to get back. I guess I expected more of you.

ANDREW

I care more than you do.

Beaut.

ANDREW

If you say so.

I’d just like to get there and bring his body back as quick as possible. So if we have to drive through the night-

ANDREW

I got us a hotel.

ANDREW

Without checking with me?

ANDREW

It’s already paid for.
ANDREW
That’s not the point. You should have checked with me.

COLIN
What for? You don’t like staying in hotels?

ANDREW
I didn’t say that.

COLIN
Well I hope you don’t mind sharing a room.

ANDREW
Seriously?

COLIN
Is that such a terrible thing?

ANDREW
I just thought that—

COLIN
How the hell do you expect us to survive this trip if we can’t even share a hotel room?

ANDREW
Fifteen years is a long time, Colin. How the hell should I know who you are?

Pause.

COLIN
Relax. I’m not an axe murderer.

ANDREW
Well, that’s comforting.

COLIN
If you want to get a different room go ahead.

ANDREW
It’s fine. Let’s just drop it.

Beat.

COLIN
You don’t have to be afraid of me.

ANDREW
I’m not.
COLIN
We might be strangers but we’re still brothers.

ANDREW
...

COLIN
So we’re settled on the room?

Fine.

ANDREW
What kind of shifts work for you?

Shifts?

COLIN
Driving.

ANDREW
Doesn’t matter.

COLIN
How about four on four off?

Fine with me.

COLIN
And just so you know, his body’s not coming back. It’s being flown to Minnesota.

Beat.

ANDREW
Look I just want to get there, do whatever it is they need us to do, because Mom doesn’t care enough to do it herself, and get back so I can get on with my life as soon as possible. Can we do that?

Beat.

COLIN
Yeah. We can do that.

ANDREW
You don’t want to be here either so don’t pretend like you do.
COLIN

... 

ANDREW
While we’re at it, I think we should let out some ground rules.

COLIN
Isn’t that what we’re doing?

Beat.

ANDREW
Don’t try to save me. I won’t try to save you. Deal?

Silence.

COLIN
I don’t think that will be a concern on my end. *(Glancing at Andrew’s Bible)* You think you can handle that?

ANDREW
Don’t worry about me.

COLIN
I hadn’t planned on it.

ANDREW
I’d like to help with the gas money.

COLIN
Don’t worry about it.

ANDREW
No. I’d like to.

COLIN
Andrew, I said don’t worry about it. I know you’re probably strapped for cash.

ANDREW
The *church* would like to contribute any way we can.

COLIN
*(sarcasm)* Ahh. Gee. That’s swell of them considering...

ANDREW
Don’t be ungrateful. It’s not their fault.

COLIN
You’re right. It’s his.
ANDREW

Is this how you want to do this the entire trip?

Pause.

COLIN

Alright I’ve got one. I think that whoever is driving should get control over the radio.

That’s it?

Colin switches the radio on. A country song starts playing for a moment.

Andrew lowers the volume considerably.

ANDREW

Are you hard of hearing?

COLIN

Are you?

ANDREW

...

Colin adjusts the volume slightly.

ANDREW

You were always like this. Always had to have your way.

COLIN

It’s my car. And I’m driving.

Pause.

ANDREW

What makes you think I’m strapped for cash?

COLIN

When did the church ever have any money?

ANDREW

Were you listening to my phone call earlier?

COLIN

We’re in the same car. It’s kind of hard not to.

ANDREW

Doesn’t mean you have to spy on me.
I wasn’t spying.

Who was that you were talking to anyway?

Sarah.

Sarah. Is she your girlfriend or secretary or something?

Pause.

She’s my wife.

Silence.

Your wife?

Yeah. My wife.

Wow.

When, when did you get married?

Three years ago.

In Albuquerque?

Santa Fe.

Colin really wants to ask why he wasn’t invited but he knows why.

It’s nice up there.

Yeah. I guess.

Beat.

Any kids?

Pause.
ANDREW
Yes. We’ve got a baby girl. Evey.

COLIN
...

ANDREW
She turns three in April.

Pause.

COLIN
Does Mom-

ANDREW
No.

Dad met Sarah, once. But he couldn’t find time to meet Eve.

COLIN
That’s too bad.

ANDREW
Don’t act like you care.

COLIN
No. I mean it. That’s too bad.

ANDREW
So. I imagine you have a girlfriend.

COLIN
It’s complicated.

ANDREW
What relationship isn’t?

They both chuckle.

ANDREW
You’re not happy are you?

COLIN
I didn’t say that.

ANDREW
Yeah you did.

COLIN
Don’t start that psychoanalytical crap that Dad always pulled.
ANDREW
You ever wish you could go back and change things with Emily?

Pause.

COLIN
The past is the past. It was a long time ago.

ANDREW
When does the past ever stay where it belongs? It’s like a dog that doesn’t listen.

...

COLIN
But I get it. We don’t have to talk about her.

ANDREW
Good. Thank you.

Beat.

ANDREW
So you’re a big time fiction writer. Novelist or something.

COLIN
 Actually journalist. Non-fiction.

ANDREW
Doesn’t surprise me.

COLIN
What’s that supposed to mean?

ANDREW
(jealous)
I just remember dad bragging about all the letters you’d write him.

COLIN
I’m not going back there so just leave it alone.

ANDREW
Are you ashamed of how we grew up?

COLIN
I told you to stop.

ANDREW
Stop what? It’s just a question.
COLIN
Just stay out of my head.

ANDREW
Touchy subject I guess.

COLIN
I shouldn’t have had to write letters to my own father for him to know how I was doing when we lived in the same house.

ANDREW
Maybe if you knew the difficulties of being a leader. His house was greater than our living room.

COLIN
How is the church handling all of this?

Beat.

ANDREW
I’m not at liberty to say what action the church is taking.

COLIN
Why not? You brought them up to begin with.

ANDREW
Yeah well, now I’m taking them off the table.

COLIN
What are you so afraid of?

ANDREW
Are you gonna write about us?

COLIN
...

ANDREW
Story like dad’s could really make you a chunk of change; really make you somebody.

COLIN
What are you getting at, Andrew?

Nothing.

COLIN
It’s not like that.

Beat.
ANDREW
Good. This family’s dealt with enough shame.

COLIN
I’ll say.

ANDREW
Then why don’t you do something about it?

COLIN
...

ANDREW
You know you really should defend him. Put your God-given talent to good use.

COLIN
Maybe I will, Andrew. Maybe I’ll let the world know what he really was.

ANDREW
And what was that, Colin?

Colin turns the radio up.

Andrew begins reading his Bible to himself.

The stage fills with a bright, pinkish-orange light. The top of Sandia Crest in Albuquerque, NM. The wind whistles. Andrew stands on his chair.

EZEKIEL (ANDREW)
Separation time! The called out called up! He that loveth the world has NO part of me. But, if ye love me, keep my commandments. This is not my word but the word of Him who sent me. The time is at hand, brothers and sisters. Therefore watch and be sober. I have gathered you together to the place wherewith I was called. On top of this mountain did the Lord your God penetrate my heart with a great fire that shall burn like a fever and consume your hearts. Only cling steadfastly unto me. Do not waver in your faith for the Lord your God shall reject those filled with unbelief. Behold the wonders of My hands. The mountains and hills, once barren, do sprout trees from the petrified rocks. But remember Lot’s wife. Who, looking back with unbelief, was turned into a pillar of salt as a sign and a wonder in the midst of-

Abrupt blackout.
Watch out!

Lights shift back to the car. Colin swerves, and corrects his driving.

Jesus. What was that?

Honking.

What are you daydreaming? You nearly took that pickup’s bumper off.

I wasn’t daydreaming.

Do we need to switch?

I’m fine. Let’s just get there safely.

In one piece would be nice.

Silence.

...

...

I wasn’t daydreaming.

...

Would you quit eyeballing me. You sitting there, clinging to that armrest, only makes me uneasy.

Silence.

Thank you.

Do you remember that day Dad taught you how to drive?
COLIN

Don’t remind me.

ANDREW

We were out on Gronigen Road. You were going way too fast around the corner and you put us in the ditch.

COLIN

I was not going too fast. That road was pure ice. And thanks but that’s a memory I could’ve lived without.

ANDREW

You were going too fast.

It took over an hour to get this out of there. Remember the license plate was imprinted in the snow bank. Haha. God, Dad was pissed.

COLIN

It’s not my fault. That deer jumped out of nowhere.

ANDREW

Don’t blame the deer.

COLIN

I’m just saying, you didn’t see it. He didn’t either.

Yeah he did.

ANDREW

No he didn’t.

COLIN

Don’t you remember that lecture the whole way back on the need for peripheral vision?

ANDREW

Hmpf. A lot of good that did him.

What’s that supposed to mean?

COLIN

And it wasn’t Gronigen. It was Old Finlayson Road.

Beat.

ANDREW

Whatever. My point still stands.
COLIN
Why don’t you stare out the window and count clouds or something.

ANDREW
Just trying to make conversation.

COLIN
Well stop.

ANDREW
(muttering as he looks out the window)
This should have been mine you know. If you hadn’t stolen it out from under me.

COLIN
You’re still so obnoxious. Don’t you ever shut up?

ANDREW
You went and bought it without Dad’s permission and only because you knew I wanted it first.

COLIN
Do you want the piece of shit? Take it.

Nah, you keep it.

ANDREW
Then shut up about it already. Please.

Pause.

ANDREW
We got anything to eat?

... 

COLIN
What? I’m hungry.

ANDREW
There’s some snacks in that backpack.

Andrew digs in the pack, opens a bag of trail mix and munches away.

COLIN
Are you gonna eat that whole bag?

Andrew sets the bag between them.
ANDREW
Actually I don’t even like driving. Too many dangerous people on the road that aren’t paying attention if you ask me.

Colin rolls his eyes.

ANDREW
You don’t believe me? When we get home just cruise up and down Central for a mile or two. Half those people are too focused on their cell phones...

Andrew’s phone begins ringing. Lights down.

Scene 2

Colin stretches his legs outside the car. Andrew, on his phone, enters from off stage. He hangs up, pauses, and approaches looking shell shocked.

What is it?

COLIN

Andrew gets in the driver’s seat. Colin, taken aback, enters the car. Colin looks to Andrew.

Well are you gonna tell me or do I have to beat it out of you?

...

ANDREW

I’m kidding.

COLIN

You’re not very funny.

ANDREW

So...what’s going on?

COLIN

Pause.

ANDREW

The elders voted. They want me to run the church.

Profound silence as Colin hands over the keys.
Like officially?

Yeah.

(sarcasm)

Wow. That’s great.

What’s wrong?

Nothing. I guess.

Not what you were expecting?

No. I mean. It’s what we’ve— you’ve, always wanted.

I guess so.

What? It’s not?

It just doesn’t feel real. It’s too soon.

We knew one of us would lead someday once he was gone.

Except I always figured it would be you.

Me?

Yeah. You always had a way with people. Like dad. You had the same charisma.

Don’t compare me to him.

What’s the matter? Don’t you want to make people’s lives better?
Not like that.

Andrew drives.

You’re pretty quiet.

Colin starts coughing.

What’s wrong?

Colin reaches for a water and takes a good pull.

Not that one— that’s my— never mind.

Colin regains control of himself.

So you still have those awful coughing spasms, huh?

What?

You used to cough like that all the time growing up.

It comes and goes.

Maybe holding all of that negative emotion inside has gotten the best of you.

Maybe those twelve hour days he made us work on the farm and in the shop—

He didn’t push you any harder than he pushed me.

He was a control freak.

So you blame Dad for your cough along with everything else?
... COLIN

Maybe you’re just weak. ANDREW

You want to find out? COLIN

Would you relax. I’m kidding. Geez. But seriously, I don’t get sick. A good diet like Dad taught us, and my faith, I’m as healthy as a horse. ANDREW

Good for you. COLIN

It was a real problem when it came to Emily though wasn’t it? Beat.

Mind your own business. ANDREW

I really thought you were gonna marry her. Beat.

Yeah well. COLIN

You should have stayed. If not for you then for her. ANDREW

... COLIN

She was really crushed after you left. ANDREW

I did what I had to do. COLIN

Did you? ANDREW

I would have become just like him. COLIN

A motorcycle cruises by.
COLIN
Someone’s in a hurry.

ANDREW
And...

COLIN
I said mind your own business didn’t I? Just forget it.

A cop siren blares and red and blue lights flash.

ANDREW
Uh oh.

What are you speeding?

ANDREW
What do I do? He’s got his lights on. Colin, what do I do?

COLIN
Well pull over. Just, just move over.

ANDREW
Alright. Alright. I’m moving over.

Andrew starts mumbling a prayer.

Just relax.

ANDREW
Oh God. Oh God.

The cop cruises by.

ANDREW
Whew. Oh thank you, God. Thank you.

What the hell was that?

COLIN
What?

ANDREW
That freaking out back there.

I wasn’t freaking out.
COLIN
Yes you were. You could have caused an accident. Don’t you know the road procedure for emergency vehicles?

ANDREW
I panicked alright. Sorry. I’ve never been pulled over.

Colin shakes his head and stares out the window.

COLIN
Well pay attention to the road. Where are we anyways?

ANDREW
I’ve just been going the same way we have been.

COLIN
Wait a minute! This isn’t Texas. Did that sign say Ft. Collins?

I don’t know.

ANDREW
Next exit Denver? Jesus, what the hell are we doing in Colorado, Andrew?

I don’t know.

COLIN
What is this road? 25 North. We’re supposed to be heading East on I40.

ANDREW
We’ve been going the same way the whole time.

COLIN
There are no mountains in Texas, Andrew! You told me you set the GPS.

ANDREW
I did! I put Mom’s address in like you said. See.

COLIN
No. No! NO! Andrew. I told you. Put the hotel in first, as a via point, then do Mom’s address as the final destination.

ANDREW
Well how should I know. I don’t use these things.
I’m not blaming you.

Well it sure sounds like blame to me.

Don’t argue with me.

I’m not arguing. You should have brought a map.

This is hardly the time.

You could have double checked.

Alright. I’m sorry.

You don’t sound sorry.

I’m SORRY!

Silence.

What we had back there was a simple case of operator error.

Right.

All I’m saying is next time, if you’re not sure on how something works, then ask. There. That should do it.

Is it working?

Recalculating.

What does that mean?

It’s figuring out where we are.
ANDREW
Well can it figure it out faster because I don’t know if I should turn off or-

COLIN
Make a u turn.
In 300 feet
make a u turn.

ANDREW
Are you kidding me? To where? The bottom of that ravine?

COLIN
Recalculating.

ANDREW
What’s wrong with your machine?

COLIN
Nothing’s wrong with her. Just give her a minute.

ANDREW
...

COLIN
In two hundred and seventy-six miles, keep left.

Andrew and Colin exchange fuming glances.

ANDREW
Is that what time we’re supposed to get to the hotel?

COLIN
Great. Just great.

ANDREW
We lost four hours! Four. Hours. Count them, Colin. One. Two. Threeee. Four. FOUR!

COLIN
Calm down. It’s not my fault.

ANDREW
Don’t tell me to calm down, Colin.

COLIN
Well if you were paying attention to the road instead of being all chatty-
ANDREW
Well if you hadn’t gone and had a coughing spell—

COLIN
Well you’re driving is beginning to scare me so would you please calm down?!

ANDREW
I AM CALM!

Silence.

COLIN
Just, look for the nearest gas station or something.

ANDREW
We should have brought a map. Dad always used a map.

COLIN
I heard you the first time.

Pause.

COLIN
You know if you’re going to be a leader you should know where you’re going and how to get there.

Andrew scowls at Colin.

Lights shift. The brothers, fifteen years ago, sitting on the riverbank throwing sticks into the water.
Andrew, 13, scowls at Colin, 16.

ANDREW
Do you even know where you’re going?

COLIN
Do you mean are Mom and I moving back to Minnesota?

Are you?

ANDREW
I don’t know. Andrew, Dad’s not well.

He’s fine.

ANDREW
He’s not fine.

COLIN
ANDREW
That’s it. I’m not talking to you.

COLIN
Well at least listen to me.

You don’t believe in him.

ANDREW
Don’t do this.

Then don’t leave with her. Don’t go back to her vomit.

COLIN
Where did you learn to talk like that about Mom?

She’s a bitch.

ANDREW
Colin rushes at Andrew and shakes him.

Watch your mouth!

COLIN
Andrew crosses his arms defiantly.

You’ll miss her, you know.

I don’t care if I never see her again.

ANDREW
You don’t mean that.

COLIN
Colin tries to comfort him. Andrew swats his hand away.

Alright, if that’s what you want-

ANDREW
Why don’t you just get lost, you coward!

COLIN
Don’t call me a coward, you little shit.
You’re a bad son.

ANDREW

Andrew lunges at Colin. They tussle. A slap fight occurs. After a while, Andrew breaks away in tears.

ANDREW

She’s a liar, Colin.

COLIN

No. She’s not.

ANDREW

Just tell him you don’t believe her and he’ll let you stay.

COLIN

That won’t fix anything.

ANDREW

Then pretend it can.

Andrew stares at Colin with confusion and pain brimming his eyes.

COLIN

Brother...

Mom’s not the liar here.

ANDREW

I don’t care what she said he did. I love, Dad. You and Mom can burn in hell if you want to.

Andrew turns his back on his brother.

COLIN

Goodbye, Andrew.

Lights shift. It’s dark. Stars fill the night sky. Colin drives. He rubs the sleep from his eyes. He looks over at Andrew, asleep against the window.

COLIN

Hey, Andrew?

Silence.
Are you still awake?

No.

...

You’ve got to talk to me sometime.

I’m not talking to you.

Pause.

You kind of just did.

(rolling over)

WHAT do you want?

Beat.

How come you didn’t leave when Mom and I did?

Pause.

You abandoned him. You abandoned the faith.

Pause.

I didn’t leave the faith.

What else would you call it?

What was happening was no longer the faith.

Oh and you’re qualified to make that call. Who died and made you God?
COLIN
I’m just saying it didn’t have to be like this.

ANDREW
You’re telling me. Where were you fifteen years ago?
Pause.

COLIN
Arriving at destination. On right.

ANDREW
Is that our hotel? It’s a dump.

The brothers exit the car and grab their luggage.

COLIN
Faith isn’t just doing what somebody says, Andrew.

ANDREW
Dad wasn’t just somebody.

Lights down.

Scene 3

The sound of a shower running. Two hotel beds. Andrew, in pajamas, stares coldly at Colin’s open laptop on a table. He glances between the bathroom and screen.

ANDREW
What are you up to?

He listens for the shower before clicking the mouse. He reads.

ANDREW
What is this?

Shower turns off. Andrew quickly closes the computer and lays down on one of the beds. Colin enters in pajamas and flips open the laptop.

COLIN
Shower’s open.

ANDREW
I’m tired. I think I’ll turn in.
COLIN
I’ve got some work to do. Will that bother you?

ANDREW
No. *(sitting up)* You want some help?

What?

ANDREW
With the article about Dad. I thought maybe we could go over some ideas. Outline or whatever it is you do.

COLIN
*(closing the laptop)*
I work alone.

Pause.

ANDREW
You’re still going to defend him aren’t you?

COLIN
I never said I would or wouldn’t write about him.

Then who’s Terry?

ANDREW
Beat.

COLIN
Were you reading my emails?

ANDREW
Who is she? And why’s she so interested in Dad?

COLIN
She’s my editor.

ANDREW
She sounds like more than that. You must have some *professional* relationship.

COLIN
I told you. It’s complicated.

ANDREW
I see what’s going on here.

COLIN
You don’t see anything you little snoop.
ANDREW
Then why won’t you let me help? You think I’m biased?

COLIN
Everyone’s biased, Andrew. For Chrissake. The fact is I don’t know what I’m going to write okay?

ANDREW
Oh I bet you got a real good idea already. But you don’t trust me.

That’s not true.

COLIN
You’re a hypocrite, Colin.

And what are you?

I’m going to sleep.

ANDREW
Fine! Goodnight!

Andrew flicks the lights out. Darkness. Colin stares at Andrew angrily laying on his bed.

COLIN
Andrew, I need to tell you something.

I thought you had work to do.

COLIN
What Dad did to Lily—

ANDREW
I don’t want to talk about her.

COLIN
We need to talk about her. He destroyed her family. And ours.

Pause.

ANDREW
Fine. (Andrew flicks the lights back on) Let’s talk about who destroyed who.
COLIN
What he did to her...

ANDREW
...was a fabrication that she made up! She lied! You fell for it! She couldn’t stand our way of life and wanted out. He was a scapegoat so she could leave with a good conscience while he got raked over the coals. She knew what happens to backsliders so she persecuted him for it.

COLIN
He brought it on himself.

ANDREW
How will we ever know? It was her word against his and he died because of it. She killed him and you stood-

COLIN
Don’t you dare finish that sentence.

ANDREW
No one else came forward. So why did you take her side over his and set mom against him? You ruined-

COLIN
Because I saw it!

Silence.

COLIN
I know exactly what happened because I saw what he did.
I saw it, Andrew. I was there. I saw.

Colin paces as he tells his story.
Lights shift.

COLIN
I’m out for a walk. By the lodge. Dad’s spending all his time there while working on his book.

ANDREW
So?

COLIN
I’m walking by and I hear him speaking with Lily.

ANDREW
He spoke with people there all the time. No big deal.

COLIN
Did I do something wrong?
ANDREW

What?

COLIN

That’s what she said.

Did I do something wrong?

ANDREW

...

COLIN

I keep walking but I don’t get too far before I hear a bunch of movement. Like furniture being shuffled around. And footsteps. Then I hear it. A quick stifled scream. It’s so quick I think maybe it’s an owl or something in the pine trees.

Andrew shakes his head.

COLIN

But then I listen a little bit longer and I hear crying. I’m sure of it.

Give me a break.

ANDREW

I got really scared, Andrew. You know like when you don’t know what happened but yet at the same time you do?

ANDREW

Maybe you let your emotions and that imagination of yours get the best of you. Feelings are no guarantee for truth, Colin.

COLIN

This isn’t just a feeling. I’m telling you this is real! This is happening! So I want to run away but I turn around and start walking toward the lodge. Then I pick up my pace, maybe it’s adrenaline, but I get to the door, open it. I freeze in the kitchen. They’re in his bedroom. I can hear the bed springs creaking. I can hear her crying.

ANDREW

No. This isn’t true.

COLIN

You know what he told her? Our loving father. Our minister, that Great Shepherd of the Sheep. You know what he said next?
ANDREW
Don’t do this. Don’t go any further.

COLIN
Don’t be nervous. This is natural. It’s right. Spiritually. God has called you here, Lily, for a special purpose.

Please stop!

Colin starts to tear up.

COLIN
I’m holy. I can make. You. Holy. This is sacred. You understand? You can’t tell anyone. Not even your parents.

I’m warning you!

Andrew starts to pace. He picks up the TV remote.

COLIN
I get to the door, it’s slightly cracked. I push it open some more and I see him. On top of her.

Stop it! I SAID STOP IT!

COLIN
She’s crying and he’s got her hands pinned back above her head. Like this. Then he sees me. With those eyes. Full of rage. He forces her under the covers and then screams at me to-

Get out! GET OUT! Now!

Andrew hurls the TV remote at Colin.

COLIN
I should have helped her. I should have done something.

Andrew grabs Colin by the shirt and shoves him into the bathroom (an imagined space on stage) and slams the door. Colin pounds on the door.

COLIN
Andrew! Andrew, open this damn door now!
ANDREW
I hate you! I hate you. You-

COLIN
Open this door right now!

ANDREW
You and her are the worst kind of liars! Dad saved her and her family’s life. You backstabbers go and cut him to the heart.

COLIN
How do you think she felt? He was supposed to bring her closer to God-

ANDREW
Didn’t he?!

Pause.

COLIN
Instead she had to tell her own family that her pastor was raping her. Do you know what that’s like?

ANDREW
Dad would never do that!

COLIN
He did! For three years!

ANDREW
You’re a liar! If she was telling the truth then why didn’t anyone stand up for her? Why didn’t they leave too?

COLIN
You know that as well as I do. Where would they go? We burned our bridges. Remember?

ANDREW
She threw so much away over nothing!

COLIN
It’s NOT nothing!

ANDREW
She was a coward!

COLIN
She has more guts than you or I may ever have.

ANDREW
Dad loved her. With the love of Christ! She was a firstborn daughter. Consecrated to God. Wasn’t she?
COLIN

ANDREW
That’s why he kept them separate. Because that’s how God wanted it. She was blessed. But she let a misunderstanding destroy her and her family.

COLIN
Oh, Andrew? Do you really believe that’s how God wanted it?

She didn’t believe!

ANDREW
Or is that just some lie Dad required.

Both brothers slide to the floor along the door.

ANDREW
The Torns wanted to stay. At least Janet and the girls did. They knew she was wrong and they knew what God does to backsliders. If you don’t believe me then just ask them. Cause they’re still there! Making a stand for God. Lily and that weak minded father of hers can burn in hell.

Andrew starts to cry.

That’s what he said.

COLIN
Who?

ANDREW
Dad.

COLIN
He told her Hell is full of demons who tell secrets! And their families.

... 

ANDREW
Come on. Let me out.

COLIN
Andrew relents. Both men sit on the beds and face each other.

COLIN
I wanted to tell you all these years but-
ANDREW
But you were a coward!

COLIN
I couldn’t live with myself any other way.

ANDREW
Why couldn’t you just forget it? He didn’t do it to you.

COLIN
I couldn’t lay awake on my bed at night with that in my head and on my heart.

ANDREW
Do you think you’re the only one who’s lost sleep over this?

... 

ANDREW
I can’t believe that all these years you let me think it was Mom. That she started this. That she hated him so much that she would rather see him as a criminal than be together with us. You both let me believe that.

COLIN
This doesn’t change how Mom feels about him.

ANDREW
It changes everything! Can’t you see that? YOU saw. You’re the no good Judas. You’re responsible for all of this.

Silence.

Andrew...

ANDREW
You should have told me.

COLIN

ANDREW
Thunder rumbles in the night sky. Lightning flashes.

Don’t talk to me. Don’t even look at me. You and Lily. You’re nothing to me.
The brothers stare at each other before going to sleep for the night. Lights out. Both brothers asleep. Lights shift revealing the silhouettes of Colin and Ezekiel. Colin is ten.

EZEKIEL (ANDREW)
What are you doing out here, son? It’s late.

COLIN
They’re pretty aren’t they? The stars.

EZEKIEL (ANDREW)
God sure knows how to paint a moment.

I guess so.

EZEKIEL (ANDREW)
Alright. What’s bugging you? Are you mad cause I took your bike away?

...

EZEKIEL (ANDREW)
Colin, you understand why I did it don’t you? You’ve got to be an example for your brother.

I understand.

EZEKIEL (ANDREW)
You can’t go making up stories to people.

But I-

EZEKIEL (ANDREW)
Things aren’t always black and white in life. You don’t always see clearly. It takes spiritual perception to know the difference.

See that bright one up there? I wished I lived there.

EZEKIEL (ANDREW)
You just feel homesick.

(putting his arm around Colin’s shoulder)

Hey, where have I always said we’re going?
COLIN

Home.

EZEKIEL (ANDREW)
That’s right. To that place far beyond this world. One day. But our hope is fragile you see. Like this wheat out here. If we’re not careful the devil will come in and blow us to the four corners of the world. He’ll play you like a puppet on a string from place to place, making a mockery of all this that we have. And we’d never be able to find each other. So we got to stick together. You don’t have to struggle, Colin. Just believe. If you don’t, then what about your brother? Who will he believe? He follows you. You gotta be the truth for him. No matter what.

COLIN
But I’m not strong enough.

EZEKIEL (ANDREW)
Come hell or high water you gotta be. You know when I look at storm clouds hovering between the earth and sky. I see myself in those clouds, being poured out in that rain. For all of you. And then life springs up. There are times when all I can do is wait and hold on when the winds start to blow because I feel like drifting away from everything I’ve been called to do. That scares me. But if you hold fast to me, I’ll hold fast to you. Alright?

COLIN
Alright.

EZEKIEL (ANDREW)
Your birthday’s coming up isn’t it? How old are you gonna be? 11?

COLIN
Yeah.

EZEKIEL (ANDREW)
About time for a new bike?

Colin hugs Ezekiel.

Lights down.

Scene 4

Colin drives. Rolls of thunder storm outside. Two cups of coffee sit between him and Andrew. Colin sips his. Andrew’s is untouched.
COLIN
...
ANDREW
...

How’d you sleep?

ANDREW
...

(COLIN offering a danish to Andrew)
I saved you a danish.

ANDREW
...

Andrew takes the danish and throws it out the window.

COLIN
...

Colin and Andrew pull into the Kansas State Mental Hospital for the Criminally Insane. They look cautiously around. Another blast of thunder rattles them both.

ANDREW

Is this it?

COLIN
I guess so. This place is weird.

ANDREW
What’s the address she gave you?

COLIN
23002 Valley View Road.

ANDREW
But this can’t be right.

COLIN
Maybe there was some kind of mix up.

ANDREW
Colin, it’s a mental hospital! Of course there was a mix up.
Calm down.

ANDREW
What are you doing? Don’t park.

COLIN
We have to find out what’s going on, Andrew.

ANDREW
He’s not a criminal and he’s certainly not insane. He wouldn’t come to a place like this. Did she put you up to this?

COLIN
What are you talking about?

ANDREW
Is this your and Mom’s idea of a sick joke?

COLIN
Don’t be ridiculous.

ANDREW
Well, I’m not going in there.

COLIN
Then what are we going to do, huh? Where you wanna go, Andrew? You want to look up and down the roadside in the rain for his body? Huh?

ANDREW
Better than in there. It’s probably full of spirits. People get killed in places like that you know.

COLIN (exiting the car)
Fine. Stay here.

ANDREW
I hope you don’t get raped or murdered!

COLIN
Lock the door.

Andrew nervously looks around before another blast of thunder startles him and he quickly exits the car.
ANDREW

Wait up!

Andrew and Colin walk into a new space and look around.

COLIN

This place feels sterile.

ANDREW

(startled)

Did you hear that?

COLIN

Hear what?

ANDREW

Someone screaming.

Andrew and Colin look around nervously.

COLIN

It’s probably just the storm.

ANDREW

Colin, someone’s dying. Can you feel it?

COLIN

I’m really not in the mood for your antics right now.

ANDREW

We’re in trouble. They’re gonna kill us. Colin, they’re gonna kill us. Let’s get out of here.

COLIN

Get a grip for crying out loud.

ANDREW

Sorry. I’m sorry. I’m fine.

COLIN

There. The desk. Come on.

The brothers disappear off stage for an uncomfortable time. When they return, it’s as if they’d seen a ghost. Andrew holds an urn full of their father’s ashes.

Shell shocked, they enter the car. Maybe, eventually, they look up at the storm clouds.
Well. That’s that.

Andrew caresses the urn in his lap.

It’s so cold.

I hope this storm lets up soon. Not much shelter out on that road.

Andrew and Colin stare at the urn.

Are you okay?

No I’m not okay! Colin, this is not okay! This is wrong. Everything about this place is wrong! That quack Dr. What’s-Her-Name-

At least we got to know what his last days were like.

Andrew scoffs.

That’s another thing. You and your stupid notepad. You looked like some jerk journalist-

I am a journalist.

I would have punched you out if you weren’t my brother.

I’m sitting right here, Andrew.

That’s all our father was to you. Just a story.

That’s not fair and you know it.
ANDREW
Can we just get the hell out of here? Please.

COLIN
Gladly. The sooner we get to Minnesota the better.

Colin drives.

ANDREW
So you believe her story? That he came there to die.

COLIN
I don’t have much of a choice.

ANDREW
You always have a choice, Colin.

COLIN
Well I can’t really ask the guy can I.

ANDREW
I don’t care how smart she is or how many Ph. D’s she’s got. All that baloney about checking in under a false name, and altering his face-

COLIN
You think that was beyond Dad? He’d do anything he had to to survive and you know it.

ANDREW
Then why’d he go and hang himself?

Silence. Andrew starts to cry.

ANDREW
Why’d he do that?

COLIN
His time was up and he knew he couldn’t pull the wool over God’s eyes.

ANDREW
Oh fuck you! God wasn’t punishing Dad for anything. Next thing she would have told us is that the Devil flew out of his asshole!

COLIN
You’re out of control. You know we’re lucky she didn’t call security.

ANDREW
I don’t care if she would have or not.
COLIN
I seem to remember someone crying like a big baby not wanting to go in there to begin with.

ANDREW
How much do you think they paid her?

COLIN
What?

ANDREW
Dr. Sumerset. How much do you think the FBI paid her to go along with this charade?

COLIN
Now you really do sound insane.

ANDREW
This vase is not my father!

Pause.

COLIN
You’ve gone over the edge haven’t you.

ANDREW
They’re going go after the church. They’ll be coming for me next.

COLIN
That’s nuts.

Andrew recklessly sets the urn on the floor.

COLIN
Watch it!

ANDREW
I don’t know who this person is but it’s not Dad.

COLIN
You’re in shock, Andrew. You have to get a hold of yourself.

ANDREW
No! He’s alive. He needs me.

COLIN
Why don’t you take a nap or something.

ANDREW
I’m not tired.
Andrew starts fidgeting, looking over his shoulder. Colin panics at Andrew’s antics.

COLIN
You’re scaring me! Alright.

Colin pulls the car over on the side of the road.

ANDREW
What are you doing? Why are we stopping?

COLIN
You’re dangerous.

Colin grabs the keys and the urn before exiting the car.

ANDREW
Get back in this car!

Andrew exits the car.

ANDREW
What do you think you’re doing?

COLIN
Listen to yourself. You’re delusional.

ANDREW
That’s easy for you to say. You just run away from your problems.

COLIN
He’s dead, Andrew. He’s dead. I’m sorry. (Looking at the urn) But what other proof do you need?

ANDREW
But he can’t be.

COLIN
What did you think this whole trip was about?

ANDREW
I thought he’d be waiting for us. That we could be...together again.

COLIN
Together again?
ANDREW
I thought maybe he had this plan. To...

COLIN
Oh, Andrew. This is something that you can’t control. Neither could Dad.

ANDREW
But how could he die...

COLIN
Like any other man.

ANDREW
With a sweater? In a cell? Who does that?

COLIN
This isn’t anyone’s fault.

ANDREW
We already know who’s fault it is. Don’t we.

COLIN
You’re lucky I didn’t ask her to commit you back there.

ANDREW
God knows you would have the gall to commit your own brother. After all you stabbed your father in the back.

COLIN
You’re an asshole you know that.

ANDREW
He tried. He tried so hard to help people-

COLIN
Too bad he couldn’t help himself.

ANDREW
He still loved you. Even though you hated him. Why else do you think he was clinging to that picture?

COLIN feels for the picture in his shirt pocket.

ANDREW
The three of us. At the grape stomping. You remember? It was one of the best days of our lives. The new wine.

COLIN
He could make you believe anything, Andrew. Mom and I used to say he could sell a one bristled tooth brush to a dentist.
ANDREW
That’s because she was just jealous that she could never
love us like he did.

COLIN
If he loved us so much, then why did he run?

ANDREW
Have you ever been scared before?

COLIN
...

ANDREW
Fear makes people do just about anything.

Andrew takes the urn and cradles
the ashes like a precious
possession.

ANDREW
It doesn’t matter anymore what he did or didn’t do. The real
question is how we’ll remember him. This (indicating the urn) changes things.

COLIN
What are you going to do?

ANDREW
I’m taking him back to New Mexico. It’s where he would have
wanted to be.

Colin approaches Andrew and tugs at
the urn.

COLIN
You don’t know that.

Andrew tugs back.

ANDREW
I know he died before leaving the church.

Colin yanks the urn away from
Andrew.

COLIN
They belong to Mom.

ANDREW
Give him back.

Andrew makes another attempt but
Colin shields it.
ANDREW
For what? So she can bury his ashes in the Ash family plot? Give me a break. He and I were never your family.

DON’T SAY THAT.

ANDREW
Why? It’s true. Home is 1,000 miles back that way! That’s where his home was. Among his own people. His family.

COLIN
He programmed you to think like that.

ANDREW
You’re such a righteous son of a bitch, Colin.

COLIN
I’m the righteous son of a bitch? Look who’s talking, pal. Newsflash, Andrew. Your pedophile father is dead! As far as I’m concerned he got what’s coming to him.

ANDREW
Impulsively, Andrew punches Colin. Colin nearly drops the urn. He sets it down and checks his face for blood. The brothers stare each other down.

COLIN
Get off of me.

ANDREW
You turned your back on us!
COLIN

Did not.

ANDREW

Did too.

Colin’s phone rings.

COLIN


They stop fighting, and, after a moment, lean against each other while catching their breath. Andrew gives one final elbow to Colin. Colin returns the blow as he answers his phone.

COLIN

Hello, Mom. *(He glances at Andrew)* We’re fine. We’re just outside of Topeka. Yeah. We saw him.

Colin looks at the urn.

COLIN

Mom. Mom. Listen.

They cremated him. Are you sure they didn’t tell you? *(Colin rubs his jaw and begins pacing)*

Mom, Mom, calm down. It’s doesn’t matter now. It’s done. Yeah. Yeah I was gonna drive the rest of the way to see you anyways. *(Colin looks over at Andrew)* No. He wants to bring them back to New Mexico. Mom. Calm down. No. I’d just like to forget New Mexico.

Andrew gets to his feet and walks off a pace.

COLIN

Alright. I’ll cancel it. Yeah he’s here. She wants to talk to you.

While giving Colin the finger, Andrew tries to shake the shooting pain out of his hand.

ANDREW

If I knew you two were going to strong arm me about this you could have made the trip yourself.

COLIN

Don’t be a prick. Mom still loves you if you’d give her the chance.
Andrew takes the phone. He hangs it up and instead of handing it back to Colin...

COLIN

No. No! No! No! No!

Andrew hurls it into the grass.

ANDREW

You owe me! You owe Dad too.

COLIN

(searching for the phone)

Jesus. Andrew. That’s an expensive phone. You’re such a child.

Colin finds the phone and checks to see that it works.

COLIN

Why did you even come on this trip?

ANDREW

I came for YOU! I came to save YOU.

Silence.

COLIN

(rubbing his jaw)

You pack quite a punch.

ANDREW

(shaking the pain out of his hand)

I think you sprained my finger.

Good.

COLIN

ANDREW

Come with me, Colin. Come back to the fold.

Beat.

COLIN

Andrew. I love you. Can’t you see that I want what’s best for you. Mom does too.

ANDREW

Then let me take you and Dad back to New Mexico.
COLIN
You know I can’t do that.

ANDREW
Why? She hated him.

COLIN
She did not. And she needs us.

ANDREW
She kicked him out of the house!

COLIN
And he kicked her out of the church.

ANDREW
She was weak, Colin.

He should have just let her kill herself. Then none of this would have happened.

Silence.

COLIN
What? What are you talking about?

ANDREW
She didn’t tell you?

COLIN
...

ANDREW
Figures. I’d be ashamed to mention it too. Do you remember how they met?

COLIN
She was nineteen and a student at Wichita State. She met him and that group of kids at a social club thing.

ANDREW
They were from the Bible college up in Emporia. Remember how Grandma and Grandpa didn’t go to church except for Easter and Christmas? But ol’ Mom, she had some sort of seeking in her. It didn’t take long for Dad to sell whatever he was selling to her. She bought it and not long after dropped out and took off with them to Emporia. Gram and Gramps were even sort of proud of her that she’d found Jesus until she stopped coming home.

COLIN
Thanks to Dad. It took Mom and I two years to rebuild that bridge between us and them. What’s your point?
ANDREW
Steadfastness. God said for believers to associate with other believers and that fellowship with darkness was a sin. They couldn’t handle that and neither could she. She tried to call them to come pick her up. But the phone jacks didn’t work where she was being housed. She got so desperate that she took that cord, tied it to a closet rod and would have killed herself if Dad hadn’t knocked on the door. It’s the truth, Colin.

COLIN
Don’t you think we’ve all had doubts at one time or another? Do you think living like that was easy? Dad didn’t understand how much that separation hurt her. And everyone else that loved her. You see it as a test of loyalty and faith that she failed but it’s actually the opposite of what Jesus commands. Isn’t it? God would that all men and women be saved. Not just who you pick and choose, Andrew! How do you expect to do that if you’re too busy hating those that God is trying to save?

ANDREW
If you’re not with us then you’re against us. That’s what it says, that’s what I believe.

COLIN
Because from birth that’s how he raised us. I hated people outside, nice people...even my own family, because I didn’t know any different. And I was wrong. And so was he. And so are you. Andrew, look around you. Some people don’t want gay marriage, some don’t want drugs legalized, some people don’t want the sky to be blue. You think they care about your loyalty? They can’t care and they won’t until they know you care. About them. That’s what this life is about. When it’s all said and done, what people remember will be your kindness and what you did to make this world better. I don’t fault Mom for being human.

ANDREW
She should have fought to stay and helped him through it. Then you would have stayed.

COLIN
Sometimes you have to walk away.

ANDREW
She’ll pay the price. When we stand before the judgment seat. She’ll pay. You all will.

COLIN
What if you’re wrong? What price will you pay then?
ANDREW
But what if I’m right? I’m willing to take that chance.

Andrew glances at the urn.

ANDREW
Are you?

COLIN
What about Dad? What price will he pay now?

ANDREW
That’s different.

COLIN
(sarcasm)
Because he had a godly reason to kill himself?

ANDREW
...

COLIN
Is that what you think? That he regretted not seeing me like she said and killed himself because of me?

ANDREW
Wouldn’t you want to see your son one last time if you were dying? Suicide starts in the heart, Colin. His was broken.

...

COLIN
You were so mad at him. All he wanted was to look on you once more. You didn’t give him the chance.

COLIN
And I have to live with that burden.

ANDREW
What do you want me to say, Colin? He was searching for anything to replace you. To fill that hole you left.

Pause.

COLIN
He wasn’t the same. He changed.

ANDREW
Dad didn’t change. You did.
COLIN
Me?

ANDREW
Yeah, Colin. You changed everything. When are you gonna realize you were his pride and joy? You kept him alive. But when you didn’t show up...

...

He just gave up.

ANDREW
Dad always surveyed the room for the weakest sheep and took him under his wing.

Colin looks left, right, then straight in Andrew’s face.

Didn’t he?

...

ANDREW
Come back with me. You would be a great leader. Make him proud. Don’t let his death be in vain. Together we can make the Shepherd’s Corps something great. We could fulfill his dream. We can change the world instead of just writing about it like you do. You think journalism amounts to anything? You’ve got to act. Now is your chance. You can have it all back. Just return to the Church.

COLIN
I don’t want it all back. I just want to be a family again.

Silence.

ANDREW
I don’t see how that’s possible anymore.

COLIN
If you’d just try-

ANDREW
Why don’t you try? For me. Do something for me this time, Colin. Just this once.

COLIN
Andrew-
ANDREW
You can make this right. But you have to choose. It’s her or me.

COLIN
Why?!

ANDREW
Because right can’t be wrong. So choose.

COLIN
I can’t go back.

ANDREW
Then what do we do?

Colin pulls a coin out of his pocket.

ANDREW
You can’t be serious.

COLIN
It’s all I’ve got. Do you have a better idea?

ANDREW
You agree to let the coin decide? No backing out?

COLIN
Agreed. It’s in God’s hands.

ANDREW
Alright then. Winner takes the ashes.

Call it.

Colin flips the coin.

ANDREW
Heads.

They both look at the coin.

COLIN
It’s tails.

ANDREW
Let me see that.

Andrew is stunned.
I’ll drive.

No. I’ll drive.

Lights down.

Scene 5

Andrew drives. Colin, lost in thought, cradles the urn on his lap. A semi-truck roars by. Colin coughs.

ANDREW

You remember that smell? Just like those old diesels we used on wood days.

Colin looks up for a moment first at the odometer then at the semi-truck ahead of them.

COLIN

Did he just pass you?

So?

COLIN

You’re really gonna slow us up. I hate following these guys.

ANDREW

Truck drivers have a right to the road too.

COLIN

Why didn’t you speed up? You never let one of these guys get ahead of you, Andrew. Not on a two lane-

ANDREW

What’s your hurry? Besides, the last thing we need is another cop following us.

Colin tries to see around the truck.

ANDREW

Would you knock it off?

COLIN

We’re never gonna get there like this.
ANDREW
Would you like to drive?

COLIN
Now. Go for it. You’ve got a shot.

ANDREW
What if there’s oncoming traffic over that hill?

COLIN
I doubt it.

ANDREW
One death in the family at a time, Colin.

COLIN
Ugh.

ANDREW
Turn on the radio or something.

Colin reaches into the back seat and grabs his laptop. He sets the urn between his legs and the laptop on the urn. He begins writing. Andrew notices but chooses to focus on the road. A car zooms by.

COLIN
...

ANDREW
...

Another car zooms by.

COLIN
Andrew, the world is passing you by. I’m telling you. It’s now or never.

ANDREW
I don’t like passing trucks.

COLIN
You want to be stuck behind this guy forever?

ANDREW
Patience is a virtue in case you’ve forgotten.

COLIN
So is speed. Andrew, this road goes on for like 300 miles and at this rate we’re getting nowhere. Sometimes you’ve got to throw it in gear.
ANDREW
Would you quit pressuring me?! I’m not gonna be able to pass him if I’m all tense.

COLIN
Alright, loosen up. I’m not pressuring you. Loosey goosey. That’s it. That’s it.

You feel loose?

COLIN
Now we’re coming up to a bend. It’s a clear shot. After that next car passes us you throw on your blinker, smash the pedal to the floor and gun it. Alright? Andrew?

Alright.

Colin closes the laptop.

You ready?

COLIN
I’m ready.

You can do this.

Wait for it.

Wait for it.

Now. Gun it. Gun it!

Andrew cuts the wheel and floors it.

ANDREW
OooooooOOOOH!

Go! Go! Go!

COLIN
He cuts back to the right lane.

COLIN
Yes! Way to change it up. I knew you had it in you.

The semi blares his horn.
COLIN
See you sucker!!!
Andrew is exhilarated.

COLIN
Well done! That’s what I call driving.

ANDREW
That was some driving alright.

COLIN
Thank you, Andrew. Don’t you feel free?

ANDREW
That was...amazing.

COLIN
That’s my brother. Fearless.

Fearless.

ANDREW
We’re moving now.

COLIN
Colin pats Andrew on the back and goes back to writing.

ANDREW
What’s that?

COLIN
Oh, just a story I’m working on.

ANDREW
(glancing repeatedly between the road and Colin’s laptop)
Is that...

COLIN
Colin averts the screen from Andrew’s view but it’s too late.

ANDREW
WHAT?!

The car wavers. Colin tries to brace the computer but forgets the urn.

COLIN
Jesus, Andrew, watch the road.
ANDREW
That’s not what you wrote in the hotel!

You read my article?

Andrew slams on the breaks and the car skids to a halt along the side of the road. The ashes fly forward and sputter up Colin’s shirt and on his lap.

COLIN
You FUCKER!

The semi roars by blaring his horn.

Jesus! Are you crazy?

ANDREW
You’re the crazy one! Give me that laptop.

Get your hands off of me.

Look what you’ve done. Gross!

Colin tries to clean himself up and scoop the ashes back into the urn.

ANDREW
How can you write that about him? He was not having sex with other married women. That’s a boldfaced lie!

It is not!

ANDREW
This is too much, Colin. Even for you.

Andrew exits the car.

COLIN
Shit. Andrew.

Colin exits the car, wipes the ashes off.

Andrew!

Andrew is already walking back down the road.
COLIN
Andrew? Come back here. Where are you going?

ANDREW
Nobody understood dad. You’re the one person who could change all that and what do you do? You crucify his memory by jabbing the nails in further.

COLIN
When are you gonna accept that he wasn’t the man you built him up to be? That he was just a man.

ANDREW
I don’t know who he was anymore. But you sure seem to. You and all these damn secrets. What else you got up your sleeve? Huh?

COLIN
When are you going to stop worshiping him like some god?

... 

COLIN
I loved our father, Andrew. I missed him all those years and I never got to tell him goodbye. I still miss him. But he was far from the saint you make him out to be. You’ve got to believe me and you’ve got to take the good with the bad.

ANDREW
You can’t serve two masters, Colin.

COLIN
I’m not.

ANDREW
You are too! You always have.

COLIN
What’s that supposed to mean?

ANDREW
Why do you always choose everything over me?

I don’t.

ANDREW
Then how could you leave me when I needed you the most? How could you go with her? How can you write that garbage when you know I want you to defend him? I mean, do you have this goal of trying to hurt me as much as you can or what?
What was I supposed to do, Andrew?

Stay with me! Be my older brother. I needed you!

I had to leave.

The price of the field are the goats. Sometimes you have to sacrifice for the good of the group.

It’s not my fault our family fell apart.

Try saying that like you mean it.

I wasn’t his savior. I’m sure as hell not yours.

What people remember will be your kindness. Right?

... You’re nothing more than a spiritual hitchhiker.

He hurt me in ways you can’t possibly fathom. So don’t accuse me of being the hitchhiker. I left because if I stayed that life would have killed me.

Silence.

He did nothing but love you and still your heart was so hardened you couldn’t even see how much you hurt him with your unbelief. Just like that ungrateful...bitch...that caused all this.

This isn’t about her alright!

Colin turns his back on Andrew.

Then tell me what it’s about?
COLIN
Do you remember this scar?

Beat.

ANDREW
Yeah. You were like ten. A tree branch ricocheted and hit you chopping wood.

COLIN
That’s not what happened.

ANDREW
Yes it is. That’s what you said. I remember because the elders bought those helmets with face masks after that.

COLIN
That’s what Dad told me to say.

Oh, great. More-

COLIN
LISTEN TO ME!

You ever remember seeing him angry? I mean real angry?

ANDREW
Yeah.

COLIN
He was upset that I’d caught him kissing one of the ladies, one of the married ladies. He got that look where his eyes squint, his brow furrows, and he bites his lower lip. Then I saw my own fear reflected in his angry eyes. He tried to get me to shut up, I told him Mom wouldn’t like that and before I could react he pushed me. I don’t think he meant to, but he lost his cool and pushed me.

ANDREW

COLIN
He didn’t know the door to the basement was open and I went tumbling down the stairs.

Silence.

ANDREW
No...
COLIN
He ran down the stairs and held me. He apologized over and over but he told me Mom could never find out. So he made up the woods story and told me to never speak about it again.

ANDREW
...

COLIN
He wasn’t everything you thought he was, Andrew. I was terrified of him after that. I have been ever since.

ANDREW
Colin. Colin. I’m sorry. I’m so sorry. I don’t know what to think. Or say. I know you’re not lying. But Goddamn it I wish you were. Everything I know...is a lie. Everything. It’s all unraveling.

...

ANDREW
What do I do, Colin? What do I do?
He wasted our lives.

Andrew howls into the sky the most anguished cry of a soul. Colin hugs his little brother tightly.

COLIN
It’s okay, Andrew. It’s gonna be okay.

ANDREW
Why couldn’t our lives have just been normal?

Pause.

COLIN
And what is that?

The brothers stare at each other for a moment and laugh before separating.

ANDREW
I don’t know. Going to Prom or going on dates in high school. Not getting beaten for telling the truth.

COLIN
Happens all the time, Andrew. Even in a normal world.
ANDREW
We missed so much because of him. I wish I could just erase it all and be somebody else.

COLIN
My whole life I’ve tried to run from him. I wish he’d never been called to begin with. But who would we be without our broken memories?

ANDREW
...

COLIN
Besides, it wasn’t completely worthless. We gained some things that are way greater than some watered down punch and a shitty hangover the next day.

ANDREW
Hmpf. What’s that?

COLIN
How about the ability to forgive each other and find a way to love when there is no way. To see through all the bullshit that this world can throw at us. How about that?

Cars zoom by as they walk back to the car.

ANDREW
We should get off the side of the road.

COLIN
Help me clean these (the ashes on the seat) up?

Lights down.

Scene 6
Andrew drives. Colin stares out the window. Subway wrappers on the floor of the car. It’s late afternoon and both men are tired.

ANDREW
What is this? Iowa

COLIN
I think we crossed the Minnesota border a few hours ago.

ANDREW
Can we pull over?
COLIN

Now?

ANDREW

I’ve got to go to the bathroom.

COLIN

I told you to go when we stopped.

ANDREW

I did. I have to go again.

Colin sighs and stares out the window.

COLIN

Fine. I guess let’s look for the next gas station.

ANDREW

We’ll get to Mom’s. Don’t worry.

COLIN

I just don’t want to get there too late.

ANDREW

We won’t.

Pause.

ANDREW

Colin, you know if I would have known...I...I’m sorry.

COLIN

You don’t have to be sorry, Andrew. That was the world we lived in. We didn’t talk about the ugly stuff.

ANDREW

We should have. It’s just there was nothing anyone could do but submit under his thumb. That’s what was wrong with his teaching. He built it that way didn’t he?

COLIN

Did he ever come clean with any of the elders?

ANDREW

No.

COLIN

Figures.

ANDREW

Well. Yes. One person. He told Craig.
Of course.

ANDREW
If you’re gonna expose yourself you pick the closest person to you—someone you know you can control.

COLIN
He did whatever dad wanted without question.

ANDREW
I never liked him. He was always praising us, and "Oh, Ezekiel’s boys can do no wrong."

COLIN
...

ANDREW
What? Why are you looking at me like that?

COLIN
I never thought I’d hear you say that. I couldn’t stand Craig. He was such an ass.

Colin and Andrew chuckle. Suddenly a tire POPS and goes flat.

What was that?

COLIN
Hang on, hang on.

ANDREW
They pull over and look at one another.

Well. We’re stopped.

COLIN
Shit!

ANDREW
We should have gotten it looked at when I said. We weren’t listening to the spirit.

COLIN
Don’t start with me, Andrew.

They both exit the car. Colin looks at the tire while Andrew takes a piss on the side of the road.
ANDREW
(returning)
Got a spare?

COLIN
In the trunk. Should do until we get to the next town. Winona can’t be too far. Hopefully someone can patch a tire.

Andrew gets to work changing the tire.

Need any help?

COLIN
Sure.

Colin sits next to Andrew and helps with the tire.

COLIN
You remember when Emily and I were out for a drive and we ran out of gas?

ANDREW
Yeah. I snuck away on the four wheeler and brought you a gallon without Dad knowing.

COLIN
Thanks for not telling on us.

What are little brothers for.

ANDREW
Do you miss her?

COLIN
I’ve wondered how she was for so long.

ANDREW
How come you didn’t ever contact her after you left?

COLIN
I guess I was afraid of what she thought of me.

ANDREW
That she wouldn’t talk to you anymore?

COLIN
You wouldn’t.
ANDREW

Good point.

COLIN

I don’t mean it like that.

ANDREW

She left the church a few years ago. I think maybe to the East Coast.

COLIN

She’s probably moved on from me long ago.

Did you love her?

Beat.

COLIN

Our concept of love was so skewed at the time. Like you remember when Dad took off his wedding ring in front of the whole church as a symbol to show he was married to the Lord?

Andrew looks deeper into his brother’s heart. Colin stares at him.

ANDREW

You think Dad touched her don’t you.

...

You gotta ask her.

ANDREW

I can’t just ask her if my father...

COLIN

Look her up. And talk to her. You’re a brave man, Colin. Way braver than me. You said something to Mom. And you had the guts to set me straight. Don’t stop speaking the truth now. Who knows what doors will open up?

ANDREW

Thanks, Andrew.

COLIN

Andrew finishes the tire.

ANDREW

That about does it.
I hope it’s enough.

Further down the road. Colin drives. Andrew stares at his brother.

What are you thinking about?

Oh. You know. About life. How it changes so fast. In the weeks after Mom and I left, I wondered who would follow. Who would last, in that slumber, and who would awake to what he really was. You’re like a phoenix out of the fire.

Do you ever regret it?

Silence.

Sometimes.

Maybe if I’d done things differently we’d still be a family.

Pause.

It wouldn’t have changed what he did, Colin. You’ve got to stop blaming yourself. It wasn’t your fault.

Colin starts to cry. He tries to clear his eyes.

Truth always surfaces.

Sometimes it’s awful heavy to carry.

Pause.

That’s why we have the Lord. And each other. You did the right thing.

Colin breaks down. The tears flow now.
Andrew reaches out and grasps his brother’s hand as if making a new bond. They exchange a knowing glance.

ANDREW
He never should have done what he did. You and Mom, and Lily, shouldn’t have ever been put in that position. None of us should have been.

And he never should have left. That was a coward’s mistake to run. He should have stayed and got the help he needed and maybe Mom would have taken him back. He should have been honest. He owed that to her and to us.

COLIN
I’m glad we can finally be honest with each other.

ANDREW
We owe that to each other.

COLIN
Yeah. We do.

Pause.

COLIN
Are you still going back to the church now?

Silence.

ANDREW
I’m not like him, Colin. His demons are his. So are his sins. I won’t ever be like him. But the church is who I am. And they need me more than ever now.

COLIN
Can I offer you some advice? Let go of everything he taught that the simplest child couldn’t understand. God’s Word was a love letter written from a father to little children. I don’t think it was ever meant to be difficult to understand.

Silence.

ANDREW
I want you to meet Sarah and Evey when we get back.

Pause.

COLIN
Andrew, I’m not going back to Albuquerque.
ANDREW

What?

Mom needs family.

...

COLIN

I don’t expect you to stay.

ANDREW

Just when I’m really going to need you, like really need you, like I used to, you’re going again.

Colin and Andrew pull into their hometown.

ANDREW

I told them about you you know.

COLIN

You did?

ANDREW

Yeah. Well, I told Sarah. But we keep your picture on the refrigerator. At the top. Right corner. Evey likes to point at it.

Colin starts to tear up.

COLIN

I bet Mom would love to meet her granddaughter?

ANDREW

Colin-

COLIN

She needs this, Andrew. I need this. The three of us...need to be a family again.

ANDREW

You know it’s the first time we’ll all be under one roof in quite a while.

COLIN

Her world has always been wrapped up in us.

Pause.
ANDREW
I don’t think I’m ready to face her.

COLIN
She needs you, Andrew. She misses you so much.

ANDREW
Look, we’re doing so well now. Let’s not spoil it.

COLIN
Some things are worth spoiling over.

I’m scared.

COLIN
She’s your mother.

ANDREW
What if we get there and all those old feelings I have about her just take over?

COLIN
It’s been a long time. People change.

Have I?

ANDREW
...

COLIN

ANDREW
Colin, I’ve treated her so disrespectfully. The things I’ve said to her, and thought about her, they’re awful.

COLIN
You can do this, Andrew.

What Andrew says next he stares straight ahead at the audience as if speaking to the windshield or the road.

ANDREW
I don’t hate her, Colin.

As much as I tell you or myself that I do, I don’t.

It’s just, somebody had to stand up for him, you know? Even if he was wrong, somebody had to be on his side.

He was our dad.
ANDREW
I couldn’t let the entire world make a mockery of him and destroy everything he worked so hard for because of one terrible mistake.

I thought that I was loving him by protecting him. But I wasn’t. I wasn’t loving anyone.

COLIN

ANDREW
You know when we were little, and I was afraid of the dark. Or if I wasn’t feeling good, Mom would sit with me in my bed, and I’d rest my head on her shoulder or her lap, and she’d read my favorite poem to me. Do you remember Pray Don’t Find Fault?

Colin shakes his head.

ANDREW
Pray Don’t Find Fault.

Pray don’t find fault with the man who limps,
or stumbles along the road
Unless you have worn the shoes he wears
Or struggled beneath his load.
There may be tacks in his shoes that hurt,
Though hidden away from view,
And the burden he bears placed on your back
Might cause you to stumble too.
Don’t sneer at the man who’s down today,
Unless you have felt the blow that caused his fall,
Or felt the same as only the fallen know.
You may be strong but still the blows that were his,
If dealt to you in the selfsame way at the selfsame time,
Might cause you to stagger too.
Don’t be too harsh with the man who sins,
ANDREW
Or pelt him with words or stone,
Unless you are sure, yea, doubly sure,
That you have no sins of your own.
For you know perhaps if the tempter’s voice,
Should whisper as soft to you
As he did to him when he went astray,
’Twould cause you to falter too.

COLIN
That’s beautiful.

Silence.

COLIN
The town still looks the same doesn’t it.

Beat.

ANDREW
You know what my biggest fear was?

...

ANDREW
That things would never go back to the way they were.

COLIN
Who knows? Maybe they won’t be exactly like they used to be. But we can keep this.

ANDREW
Maybe I could stay a few days and talk to Mom.

COLIN
You mean it?

Colin pulls into the drive and puts the car in park. They both stare at the house.

ANDREW
The end of the road.
COLIN
I don’t want to go through life without you anymore.

ANDREW
Me neither. I’m glad I’m here with you.

COLIN
At the very least Dad gave us a chance to start over.

They both did.

Pause.

ANDREW
So how does it end?

COLIN
How does what end?

ANDREW
The article you’re writing.

COLIN
With the truth. Both sides of it.

ANDREW
I’m sorry, Colin. For all those years that fell through our fingers. Like ashes from a fire.

COLIN
That’s all we are. Just ashes crossing yellow lines. You ready?

They exit the car for the last time and face each other.

ANDREW
Promise me. From this moment forward. We’ve got to see beyond today and live each moment like it’s our last.

COLIN
Okay.

Andrew hugs his brother.

ANDREW
I love you, Colin. I love you.

COLIN
I love you too, Andrew.
Andrew picks up the urn. A door opens off stage and they both look at their mother.

ANDREW

Hello, Mom.

Lights down.

END PLAY