

"To Pay The Price"

An Original Screenplay
by
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FADE IN:

EXT. FOSTER HOME -- DAY

The front yard is sparsely covered in grass, but littered with playing CHILDREN. All different ages, shapes, colors.

In the corner, a group of kids are immersed in a game of basketball. GRAY (15), a bony kid with curly red hair, kicks up dirt as he dribbles towards the hoop.

The children stop playing as a police car sputters up the driveway. Its lights spinning the familiar red and blue.

Miss Wilder (47), who is perched on the front porch, gets up from her seat and marches to meet the oncoming visitor.

The police car slows to a halt. A POLICE OFFICER slides from his automobile, walks around and opens the back door. ROB (18), a stern-faced boy in a black suit, steps from the back.

Gray and the other kids watch with fascination as the officer chats with Miss Wilder and Rob.

CHARLIE (10), a chubby fellow with freckled cheeks, steps up.

CHARLIE

They're back early. That's gotta
be good. Right?

SUSIE(14), a tom-boy in overalls, crosses her arms.

SUSIE

Or they've come to get his things.
Take him away.

GRAY

That don't mean nothing. Now shut
up. The both of you. Let's finish
our game.

The group complies. They spread out and prepare to restart their game of basketball. Gray picks up the basketball from the ground, bounce passes it to a boy on the other team.

GRAY (cont'd)

Check it.

The boy passes the ball back to Gray. Gray turns his head, looks over at Rob. Across the yard, Rob stands there, stares straight at Gray.

Their glance lingers for a moment. Gray finally passes the ball to a teammate and the game begins.

INT. DINNING ROOM, FOSTER HOME -- NIGHT

All the kids sit around a long wooden table. There is only one empty seat -- the one beside Gray.

The children shove the last bits of food into their mouths. Miss Wilder moves around the table and removes empty plates.

MISS WILDER

Last call for seconds. You better get it now because their won't be any snacking later on.

The children just sit quietly.

A side door opens. Rob strolls into the room, now changed into a more comfortable t-shirt and jeans. Behind him enters MISTER WILDER (50).

Mister Wilder looks over at his wife, shakes his head "no."

MISTER WILDER

(to Miss Wilder)

The kid is shut up. He won't talk for nothing.

Rob takes a seat beside Gray. They say nothing.

MISS WILDER

(to Rob)

I'm afraid you're a little late for dinner.

ROB

I'll just take whatever's left.

Miss Wilder places a plate in front of Rob. It is covered in broccoli and squash. Rob turns his nose up at it but grabs his fork and begins to eat.

Miss Wilder takes the rest of the dirty dishes and exits to the kitchen. Mister Wilder turns to the kids.

MISTER WILDER

You've got five minutes. Then I want this table cleaned and everyone ready for bed.

He also disappears to the kitchen.

The children watch Rob shove the food into his mouth.

CHARLIE

So...did he make you tell him what
you did?

Rob clenches his jaw.

CHARLIE (cont'd)

Is the cop gonna make you tell
them?

Susie elbows him. Charlie grabs his side in pain.

ROB

I'm a grown man. I don't have to
tell anyone anything.

SUSIE

I think Charlie just wanted to ask
how things went today.

ROB

I'm kinda eating right now. I
don't want to talk about it.

CHARLIE

It couldn't have been bad. They
didn't get your stuff and take you
away like Susie said --

Rob SLAMS his fists onto the table. Everyone freezes in
shock.

ROB

Shut your trap, fat ass!

Gray places a hand on Rob's back to console him.

GRAY

Take it easy, man --

Rob smacks his hand away.

ROB

That stands for you too!

Gray is taken back. His mouth hangs open, astounded.

Rob shoves his plate away and jumps from the table.

ROB (cont'd)
I sat in that court room all day.
Some bitch lawyer calling me a
'danger to society.' Everybody
looking at me like I'm some kinda
freak. How the fuck do you think
it went?!

And with that, Rob stomps into an adjacent room. The kids
sit there flabbergasted. The pant of their nervous breathing
is the only sound.

INT. BEDROOM, FOSTER HOME -- NIGHT

Small cots are positioned around the perimeter of the room.
The children sleep.

Gray stirs awake and sits up in his bed. He looks to the cot
beside him. It is empty.

He pushes himself out of bed and tip-toes out of the room.

EXT. FOSTER HOME -- NIGHT

Rob sits on the front steps, stares at the stars. Gray opens
the door.

GRAY
You better come back in. If they
catch you out here, they'll --

ROB
Punish me with extra chores. Yeah,
I know...

Gray steps onto the porch and takes a seat beside Rob.

ROB (cont'd)
I've got bigger stuff on my mind.

GRAY
Why did you have to act like that
at dinner? Charlie is just a kid.

ROB
I'm sick and tired of getting
treated like a felon. First the
court, then I've got Mister Wilder
breathing down my neck all the
time. Is there one person who
thinks I'm innocent?

GRAY

How can we? You won't say what you're in trouble for. Not even to our parents.

ROB

They aren't my parents.

GRAY

You'd be on the street if it wasn't for them. Give them a little credit.

ROB

Yeah, whatever...

Rob stands and walks off the porch. He picks up a rock and tosses it across the yard.

GRAY

I believe you.

ROB

No you don't.

GRAY

Yes I do. I swear.

Rob looks over his shoulder towards Gray.

ROB

You serious?

Gray nods "yes."

ROB (cont'd)

Thanks. But I'm gonna need more than your support to get out of this one.

GRAY

There has to be something you can do.

Rob shakes his head and chuckles.

ROB

They've thought I was guilty the moment I walked in the door. I never held a shit's chance.

He takes a deep breath and pushes it out.

ROB (cont'd)
Forget about me, Gray. Just go on
with your puny little life. And
when you turn eighteen, run away
from this place. Far far away.

The porch light turns on, casting Rob and Gray in the yellow light. Miss Wilder steps onto the porch in her night gown.

MISS WILDER
Do you know what time it is?! Get
inside! Right now!

She grabs the boys and pulls them towards the door.

INT. BATHROOM, FOSTER HOME -- DAY

Gray and Rob lay on the floor of this tiny, grime-infested bathroom. They are scrubbing away mildew with brillo pads and sponges.

ROB
I told you to stay away. You mess
with me, you face trouble.

Gray drops his brillo pad to the ground, sits back.

GRAY
I'm not going anywhere, Rob. I'm
your friend. I don't care if I get
in trouble.

Rob nods.

ROB
I think I have a way out of this.

GRAY
How?

He reaches to his pants pocket, slowly pulls out a small hand gun.

GRAY (cont'd)
Where did you get that?

ROB
Before I came here. I've hid it.
Never thought I would need it --
until now.

Gray is stricken. He watches the light dance off the weapon's metallic surface.

GRAY

What are you going to do with it?

ROB

Are you dense? What the hell do you think I'm going to do with it?

Rob realizes he's too loud. He softens his voice.

ROB (cont'd)

I can buy myself some time.
This...is my ticket to freedom.

Rob puts the hand gun back in his pocket.

ROB (cont'd)

But you gotta promise me you ain't gonna squeal.

GRAY

(nods)

Yeah. I ain't telling nobody.

ROB

Good. Now finish cleaning. I don't want to be in this stink hole all day.

Gray picks up his tool and continues cleaning.

Footsteps approach. Mister Wilder appears in the doorway.

MISTER WILDER

House meeting in the dinning room.

INT. DINNING ROOM, FOSTER HOME -- DAY

Rob and Gray enter the room where the other kids are already waiting.

MISTER WILDER

We wanted everyone to know that dinner will be served an hour earlier tonight, which means that lights are out at nine instead of ten.

The kids moan. Charlie SNICKERS.

CHARLIE

This is stupid.

MISS WILDER

We are taking everyone to church in the morning. We haven't been in a while and it will good for us. Now go get ready for supper.

Everyone stomps off in disappointment.

INT. VAN -- DAY

Mister Wilder drives as Miss Wilder rides shotgun. The kids, dressed in their Sunday best, sit scattered around the van.

Rob and Gray sit in the back.

CHARLIE

Why do we have to go to church anyway? This is completely stupid.

ROB

Cause of me...

SUSIE

It's your fault?

Gray leans in between the feuding kids.

GRAY

Leave him alone. He's just talking.

ROB

So it doesn't matter that I'm wrapped up in some court case? Probably going to the slammer for the rest of my life. Maybe the folks think I'll take on religion or something.

CHARLIE

For life? You must have done something really bad.

Rob grits his teeth.

ROB

Yeah...I took a fat kid, stuck a pin into his back rolls and...

Rob holds his hands together. He opens his hands, mushrooms his fingers. A demonstration of something exploding.

ROB (cont'd)

Pop!

CHARLIE

Liar!

GRAY

Leave him alone, Rob.

Rob leans over to Charlie, right in his face.

ROB

In fact, that kid kinda looks like you.

Charlie slaps at Rob. Rob GROWLS and tries to grab at Charlie.

MISS WILDER

Knock it off back there! We're going to church for God's sake! Jesus...

Rob falls back into his seat, CHUCKLES.

INT. SANCTUARY, CHURCH -- DAY

The service is in full swing. The pews are filled with religious patriots. A ROBED PASTOR stands at the pulpit.

The Wilder's sit on the front row flanked by the children on the first two rows.

Rob is flinching in his seat. Sweat rolls down his forehead.

ROBED PASTOR

Romans six and twenty-three. 'For the wages of sin is death.'

The pastor grips the podium. He looks down at the group. Rob sees the glance. He shifts nervously.

ROBED PASTOR (cont'd)

Let the world know that unless you confess your sins and turn from your wicked ways, you shall perish in hell fire. Now I must ask you, is there someone in our presence who would like to admit their sins?

There is an uneasy silence among the congregation.

Rob leans over to Gray.

ROB
(whisper)
You see what their doing. He's talking to me.

GRAY
(whisper)
He's reading from the Bible. He's talking to everyone.

ROB
(whisper)
Bull shit. He's looking right at me. This is probably some plan to make me admit what I did. Even the church thinks I'm guilty.

Miss Wilder smacks Rob on the leg. She puts a finger to her mouth and "SHHH'S" him.

ROBED PASTOR
Please, for your soul's sake, do not leave this room with darkness in your heart. You would only be a dead man walking.

Rob bites his nails.

ROB
(whisper)
Fuck this.

Rob stands and slides into the isle. He quickly walks out of the door. Everyone turns to watch him leave.

Gray also stands and chases after Rob.

Mister Wilder stands to go after the two but his wife grabs him.

MISS WILDER
(whisper)
They probably have to go to the bathroom.

Mister Wilder nods, settles back into his seat.

ROBED PASTOR
Anyone?

INT. HALLWAY, CHURCH -- CONTINUOUS

Gray comes out of the sanctuary. He looks to see Rob down the hallway as he enters the men's room.

INT. MEN'S ROOM, CHURCH -- CONTINUOUS

Gray walks in. Rob stands at the sink, staring at himself in the mirror. He turns to look at Gray.

ROB

You shouldn't be here. You don't want to be here.

GRAY

Yes I do. I don't want to leave you.

ROB

Why? Cause you're scared of what I might do?

Rob laughs as he reaches into pocket and pulls out the pistol. He lays it on the sink top.

ROB (cont'd)

Maybe you know me too well.

GRAY

What are you going to do with the gun?

ROB

I've already told you. I'm going to take care of all the obstacles standing in my way.

Gray takes a step forward, keeps his eyes on the gun.

GRAY

Are you going to kill them? The foster parents?

ROB

The foster parents, the cops... whoever. I've thought about doing off a lot of people.

GRAY

You're eighteen. You can just run away from the home. They couldn't stop you.

ROB

The old lady would have the dogs on me before I got a mile up the road. This is the only way. I need my freedom.

Rob grabs the gun, cocks it. Gray takes a step back, holds up his hands.

GRAY

Listen, Rob. Don't do anything drastic. Wait till the trial is over. Wait to see if they do find you guilty.

ROB

Are you listening, retard? I'm already guilty.

Rob realizes what he has just said. His eyes grow in desperation.

ROB (cont'd)

I...I mean...I'm innocent.

A beat of silence hangs between them.

GRAY

Rob...what did you do?

Rob's lip starts to quiver.

ROB

(panic)

It's all a set-up. They're out to get me.

He leans on the sink for support. Tears run down his shaking cheeks.

Gray takes a step towards Rob, who pulls the gun up and points it at Gray.

ROB (cont'd)

Don't stand in my way, Gray! I'll do it! I'll take you out if you try to stop me!

GRAY

Dude, just calm down...

ROB

I thought you were different. I
thought you actually understood me.
But you are just like them! You
know I'm guilty! You judge me like
they do!

GRAY

Rob, just tell me what you did.

Rob breaks down. He cries profusely.

ROB

I had to. I had to, man.

Gray slowly takes a step forward. The whole time he is
staring down the gun's barrel.

Rob pants through his tears.

ROB (cont'd)

I killed him. I took this gun and
I pulled the trigger and his blood
and his brains spilled all over the
floor.

GRAY

Who did you kill?

Rob wipes the tears on his sleeve. He looks up as, strangely
enough, a smile creeps across his crazed face.

GRAY (cont'd)

Rob, answer me.

A small chuckle begins to grow until it is a fit of
uncontrollable laughter.

GRAY (cont'd)

WHO DID YOU KILL?!

ROB

ME!

Rob raises the pistol to his own temple.

INT. SANCTUARY, CHURCH -- CONTINUOUS

BANG!

A shot rings out from somewhere in the building. Members scream, gasp and some stand.

Mister Wilder stumbles to his feet. Miss Wilder turns to the children.

MISS WILDER
Stay here.

She leaps up and follows.

INT. MEN'S ROOM, CHURCH -- DAY

The door creaks open. Miss Wilder places her hands over her mouth and GASPS. Mister Wilder's eyes grow huge.

MISTER WILDER
Oh my god...

Gray sits on the blood soaked floor, cradles the dead corpse of Rob.

Gray turns to look at his foster parents. He MOANS.

GRAY
He's free now. Finally free.

FADE OUT.