

FATHER TO SON

written by

Alexander Jones

After his town is taken over by a ruthless gang in 1870s Arkansas, sheriff Lincoln Harris leads an exodus and attempts to gather all the help he can to reclaim the town for his people, a seemingly impossible mission. The stress builds until finally, he hits his breaking point and almost loses all hope, something his father couldn't bear to see.

EXT. WATERFALL GRAVES

It's sunset, as LINCOLN sits atop a steep cliff with a waterfall only fifteen feet in front of him. He's right in front of two graves, belonging to his wife, EVELYN and his daughter, CHLOE. The beautiful orange glow of the sun beams through the trees, projecting onto Lincoln and his family's graves.

WALTER approaches from the treeline, limping with his cane. He stops and watches his still son for a few seconds.

WALTER

He's watchin' over them, you know.

Walter approaches Lincoln and sits down beside him, grunting in pain as he does.

LINCOLN

Yeah...

WALTER

What's weighin' on you, son?

LINCOLN

I... I don't know that I'm doin' this right. Thought I was stronger than this. Thought I could lead and inspire folks, same as you... but I don't know anymore...

WALTER

Your heart is pure, always has been, I promise you that much. Maybe a little too pure for this world, but that ain't a bad thing. Not entirely.

Walter sighs, and considers his words carefully.

WALTER (CONT'D)

You may be right, about taking the higher path. I certainly wish I could, but life ain't always kind to those men. Gotta be willing to make the hardest choices-

Lincoln cuts him off, almost as if he's deeply offended.

LINCOLN

Killing a man ain't ever right.
Good men don't kill.

WALTER

A *perfect* man don't. But this ain't a perfect world, son. Being a good man ain't about keeping your hands clean. The Lord gives us the heaviest burdens so that nobody else has to bear 'em. We don't get to choose the weight of 'em, we just do what must be done. We make ugly choices so others can live in peace. Can't be a leader if you ain't willing to give all you got to protect those you love.

LINCOLN

(Tearfully)

I did. It wasn't enough.

WALTER

I know, son. I know...

LINCOLN

It ain't right. It shoulda' been me, not...

Lincoln begins to tear up even more and can't finish his sentence.

WALTER

Son, being your father is the greatest joy of my life. And my heart breaks every day knowing that my boy was robbed of that same joy. And it'll never stop, I know that...

Walter composes himself as he too begins to tear up.

WALTER (CONT'D)

But you got a chance to do right by someone, even if you don't owe it to 'em. They might be hurting now, but these people look to you. Not because you ain't killed anyone, but because you're kind to them. You're honest, you treat 'em fair, you listen. You choose to try, choose to be good. *That's* what makes you a great man... And son... Your ma and I couldn't be prouder of you...

Walter breaks and begins to softly cry, and he gestures to the graves in front of the two men.

WALTER (CONT'D)

And you know they'd say the same.

Lincoln's face steels as he continues to cry, but as he stares at his wife and daughter, he looks to have a renewed sense of resolve.

CUT TO BLACK