

INT. ROOM - DAY (EFX)

GIDEON, a strongly built elderly black man, is sitting at a table. On the table is a large bowl of fruit. A crocheted tablecloth hangs over the side of the table. Gideon is dressed in a white suit and wearing a pair of well-polished wing-tip shoes. His hat almost covers his eyes, which are two points of greenish coals. The fruit in the bowl is engulfed in flames.

The flames look as if they are DRIPPING from the tablecloth to the floor. Gideon's shoes start to SMOULDER. His shoes BURST INTO FLAMES which spread up his pants leg. His head falls forward as if he had suddenly fallen to sleep. He twiddles his thumbs very slowly in a circle. He crosses his legs as if to get comfortable.

The camera moves to a CLOSE UP of his burning shoes. The image of his feet begins to appear through his shoes; the flames fade; the background changes as we

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. GIDEON'S BACKYARD - DAY

Gideon's bare feet are resting on reddish dry earth. Gideon is sitting in his backyard under a fruit tree with a Bible resting in his hands.

His house is a small, neatly painted bungalow in South Central Los Angeles. Corn, tomatoes, other vegetables grow in the yard. Chickens scratch around.

He slowly awakens; his hands are trembling. He looks around and sees the chickens. He looks up at the sky and sighs, with some relief.

SUNNY, Gideon's grandson, five years old, has been watching him from the back window of the house. He leaves the window.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

DOLLY SHOT OF SUNNY

Sunny peeps in the workroom. Through the crack in the door, a Woman waves to Sunny.

INT. WORKROOM - DAY

The room is nearly filled with pregnant women and their husbands. SUZIE, Gideon's wife, late 60's or early 70's, a picture of health, is giving a last bit of instruction before the class ends. Some of the people are already preparing to leave.

SUZIE

Remember, especially you men, that

working together now will already
have formed a bond before the child
arrives. The woman is very
sensitive.

Somewhere in the room a Male Voice booms out.

VOICE (O.S.)

Tell me about it.

There is a bit of LAUGHTER as all start putting away their
things.

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

Gideon looks over at the chickens, scratching around in the
garden. He calls to them, but they don't respond. He puts his
shoes on and walks towards the back door of the house.
Entering the house, he stops and waits inside the door
peeping out. In a sort of devilish manner he talks to
himself.

GIDEON

Spoiling the little foxes that
spoil my vines.

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

Shot of the backyard. Nothing. Suddenly, with the grace and
suspicion of alley cats, kids jump over Gideon's back fence,
look around timidly, and start climbing up his fruit tree.

Gideon walks down the steps slowly while humming in a deep
voice. He turns the water on and walks over to the tree,
trapping the kids. Dangling legs, hanging from the tree, try
to scurry up the tree to safety. Gideon sprays the tree with
water. Wet kids fall out of the tree and in one motion leap
the fence. Gideon cuts the water off and slaps the dirt off
his hands. He is quite pleased with himself.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - DAY

One of the wet kids is watching Gideon as he goes back inside
the house. The boy signals the others who slowly follow in
single file. They jump the fence and climb back up the tree.
They let their half-eaten fruit fall to the ground.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Suzie opens a letter and a picture of a baby falls out. Suzie
looks at the picture before reading the letter.
She tries to find a place for it among the other baby
pictures that cover the entire mirror on the dresser. Gideon
comes in and starts to undress.

GIDEON

My mind plays tricks on me. Is it

okay if I take a bath now?

SUZIE

Everyone is gone. Rhonda is in the bathroom.

RHONDA, Gideon's granddaughter, 13 years old, comes out of the bathroom.

GIDEON

I was looking through my trunk and I can't find my toby.

RHONDA

What's that?

GIDEON

It is a charm that my great grandmother made me.

Everyone notices the worried look on Gideon's face.

SUZIE

It will show up.

RHONDA

If my daddy calls, tell him I walked home.

SUZIE

You be careful and thank you for looking after Sunny.

Sunny is asleep on the sofa with a half-eaten apple ready to fall out of his hand.

GIDEON

Babe Brother and his wife are taking advantage of a situation. I hate to be mean to people but picking Sunny up when they feel like it has to come to an end. Now I'm going to ask him how come he couldn't be at your birthday.

SUZIE

Don't bother the poor boy. It just takes some people a little longer to figure out who they are.

GIDEON

I don't know how two brothers can be so different.

EXT. MRS. BAKER'S BACKYARD - DAY

SKIP BAKER, who is thirteen, crawls out of his pigeon cage,

holding two birds that he throws up in the air. He climbs upon the garage roof and throws rocks at the birds to keep them flying. He WHISTLES and YELLS at them.

CLOSE UP OF BIRDS FLYING

As the birds circle Skip's house, they do backward rolls and death grips. Skip throws more rocks to keep them flying. The rocks land on Gideon's roof.

The SOUND of a person trying to learn how to play a TRUMPET breaks the pleasant SOUNDS of the pigeons popping their wings and flying in circles over the house.

INT. MRS. BAKER'S HOUSE, RODNEY'S BEDROOM - DAY

RODNEY BAKER is about nine. He stands next to a shaded window, trying to finger the right valves on his trumpet. He tries to hit a high note, but only succeeds in making an awful screeching sound.

EXT. MRS. BAKER'S HOUSE - DAY

A group of kids walking by Rodney's window shout insulting things about his horn playing.

KIDS

Shut up! Go help your mama wash dishes!

INT. GIDEON'S KITCHEN - DAY

Suzie is standing over an egg that just fell on the floor. The SCREECHING SOUND of the trumpet from next door is interrupted by the doorbell. Suzie cannot decide on what to do, to clean the egg up or answer the door. The doorbell keeps RINGING.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - DAY

Two uniformed Police Officers stand impatiently at the door.

INT. FRONT ROOM - DAY

Suzie invites OFFICER SCOTT and OFFICER DAVIS in. Both men are white and are in their mid-twenties. Officer Davis does most of the questioning.

DAVIS

We have a complaint from one of your neighbors about a rooster crowing in the mornings.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Gideon is shaving with a straight razor and humming to himself, obviously in a good mood. Suzie sticks her head in.

SUZIE

The police are here to talk to you about the chickens.

The good mood that Gideon was in dissolves quickly. Gideon wipes the soap off his face and throws the towel down. Suzie leaves. Gideon brushes his hair and adjusts his bathrobe.

INT. FRONT ROOM - DAY

Gideon comes in, still adjusting his bathrobe.

GIDEON

What can I do for you, Officer?

Suzie returns to the kitchen to clean the egg on the floor. Officer Scott keeps her in view.

DAVIS

You know it is against the city ordinance to keep chickens or live stock.

GIDEON

I always had chickens, ducks and whatnots.

DAVIS

Not anymore, not in the city.

GIDEON

We grow most of our own food. The money I get from social security, my pension and my wife's work, keeps us living on the edge. What choice do people like us have.

DAVIS

Well, you just have to move further out.

GIDEON

Now how far would further out be?

DAVIS

I'm not here to argue, sir.

SCOTT

You guys don't make anything illegal, do you?

GIDEON

Like what may I ask?

SCOTT

You might have a distillery pumping

out barrels of moonshine.

Suzie looks at Scott for a moment and goes into the kitchen. Gideon is about to lose control. Davis heads off the confrontation.

DAVIS

Look, just get rid of the chickens
and you all have a nice day.

Gideon stands in the doorway watching the Police go down the steps.

GIDEON

I'll be damned if I get rid of my
chickens. I ought to get some hogs
and put them out there.

INT. FRONT ROOM - NIGHT

There is soft knocking on the door. Suzie enter frame wearing a robe.

SUZIE

Who is it?

BABE BROTHER (V.O.)

Babe Brother.

Suzie opens the door. BABE BROTHER, Gideon's youngest son, about 31, handsome, wearing an expensive suit, comes in, beating the cold off of him and blowing in his hands.

BABE BROTHER

I was hoping you came to the door
instead of him. It gets cold at
night.

SUZIE

This doesn't make any sense; you
are going to drag that poor boy out
in the cold air.

BABE BROTHER

He will be alright.

The camera follows Babe Brother. He passes Gideon's room where Gideon is asleep, snoring loudly.

INT. GIDEON'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Suzie and Babe Brother enter the bedroom where Sunny is sleeping. Suzie gives Babe Brother a blanket to wrap Sunny up in.

BABE BROTHER

Thanks for taking care of him. I

will try not to be so long next time.

Babe Brother gives his mother a good-night kiss. Gideon comes to the door.

GIDEON

What time is it? Do you think you can just treat us like your slave? It's after one.

BABE BROTHER

I tried to call to let you know I was going to be late.

GIDEON

That's a lie.

SUZIE

Let us settle this tomorrow.

GIDEON

Look! Don't try to get ahead by riding our backs.

BABE BROTHER

(shouts)

I pay my own way.

GIDEON

Since when?

He reaches for Babe Brother but Suzie comes between them.

SUZIE

Take Sunny home, please.

She pushes Babe Brother away. Babe Brother walks away, staring back at his father.

INT. GIDEON'S BEDROOM - SAME NIGHT

Gideon is lying in bed. Suzie gets in beside him.

GIDEON

Your feet are cold.

SUZIE

Go back to sleep.

GIDEON

I asked you to wake me when Babe Brother comes.

SUZIE

You all act like two roosters.

GIDEON

I'm not going to let him get away with murder.

SUZIE

You and Babe Brother are so much alike...

GIDEON

He ain't nothing like me. How come a man has to have sons that are day and night apart? You ought to stop protecting him.

SUZIE

Hush.

GIDEON

You're always taking his side.

SUZIE

Hush.

GIDEON

I'm trying to make him a man but you keep babying him.

SUZIE

You're going to find yourself on the floor.

INT. BABE BROTHER'S BEDROOM - MORNING

The bedroom is tastefully furnished with modern art and paintings by Barns.

Babe Brother wakes up with Sunny standing in the doorway looking at him. It takes Babe Brother some time to fully wake up.

Finally he sits reluctantly on the side of the bed and Sunny comes over and sits next to him, trying to get his weary father interested in his remote-control racing car.

BABE BROTHER

I want you to be the richest man in the world so I can be the richest father in the world.

SUNNY

I don't want to be rich. I want to work on the railroad like grandfather.

BABE BROTHER

Son, if you are going to have a family, you can't always choose a

job just because you like it.

(beat)

I don't want you to shine anybody's shoes or be a porter. You let somebody else carry your bags.

Sunny quietly gets up and follows his car out of the room.

INT. BABE BROTHER'S HOUSE - DAY

Babe Brother, having showered but still wearing his pajamas, drags himself to the kitchen table where his wife LINDA has a huge coffee mug with the inscription, "I'm the boss", waiting for him.

Linda is about thirty years old and materially oriented like her husband. She is wearing a conservatively cut business dress.

Sunny stops playing with his car and gets himself an empty cup. Babe Brother is about to pour him some of his coffee when Linda objects.

LINDA

NO.

Sunny pleads with her in silence but Linda refuses to yield.

BABE BROTHER

He wouldn't want any if you didn't try to keep it away from him.

Linda leaves the table but stops for a moment and looks down at her husband.

LINDA

Because you were spoiled, don't try to spoil Sunny.

BABE BROTHER

My daddy never gave me anything without my having to sweat for it. Every summer, the way they kept me and Junior out of trouble was to send us to Big Daddy's farm. We would get up with the chickens. Every summer the fence had to be repaired. The barn needed a coat of paint. We had to pip all of Big Mama's hundred laying hens and go to church all day on Sunday. For Big Daddy, calluses and sweat were the mark of a man. Sunny will never have to bust his knuckles like we did.

LINDA

I want Sunny to have an advantage that you and I never had, but he needs discipline, and you are not helping when I tell him to do something and you allow him to get out of it.

BABE BROTHER

What is a sip of coffee going to do?

LINDA

Coffee is bad for anybody, especially for a child.

BABE BROTHER

I don't see you crying about my drinking it.

LINDA

How old are you?

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

A SLOW CLOSE UP DOLLY SHOT OF SUZIE'S HANDS DROPPING SEEDS IN THE GROUND.

Gideon is raking out the chicken coop. He puts the rake down and walks over to the garden and watches Suzie plant seeds for a while.

GIDEON

Instead of standing here doing nothing, I better give those chickens some scratch before they start cackling.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - DAY

OLD JOHN is pushing his cart up the alley. Old John's face is washed so clean that it shines. His pants are dirty and his cart is full of odds and ends of no value. He looks to be about seventy and fit. Old John throws a sack on Gideon's fence.

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

Suzie, is bent over a plant that she is tying to a stick. She looks up and sees the sack on the fence. A smile appears on her face. She goes over to the fence.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - DAY

Old John is about to take up his journey when Suzie sticks her head over the fence.

SUZIE

How are you?

OLD JOHN

Tolerably well. I brought you some more rabbit manure for your roses.

SUZIE

It is so considerate of you.

Gideon sticks his head over the fence.

GIDEON

Well, well, look who is taking up all the sunshine. Brother John, how are you doing?

OLD JOHN

I'm still here.

Suzie leaves the two men talking.

GIDEON

Tell me something. How do you get energy to stay on the move all day?

OLD JOHN

You couldn't sit on your rump under my daddy's roof. No sir. If you couldn't outwork his mule, you wasn't worth the salt you put in greens. You had to wake up looking for something to do. I was raised as a mule and now I'm a rolling stone.

Suzie sticks her head over the fence and hands a bag of red tomatoes to Old John.

OLD JOHN (CONT'D)

I didn't mean for you to pay me for that.

SUZIE

I know you didn't but you have been so thoughtful.

OLD JOHN

But when your sunflowers come up, I'll pay you for them.

SUZIE

I planted a row just for you and you don't owe me anything.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

HIGH ANGLE SHOTS

off in the distance, a man is cutting his lawn. Gideon and Suzie are working in their garden. Other couples working their gardens. Two young men are working on their car, which is creating a lot of smoke. A group of girls are sitting on a porch trying to sing while one of the smaller ones is trying to learn a step.

Skip is on the roof with his radio listening to rap music while his birds circle over head. From time to time he throws a rock at them.

INT. DELIVERY ROOM - DAY

THE CAMERA IS OUTSIDE OF THE ROOM. THE SCENE IS SHOT THROUGH THE PARTLY OPEN DOOR.

It is hard to see the woman giving birth. There are people blocking the view of the camera. Suzie is facing the camera and the woman has her back to the camera.

MOTHER

It hurts.

SUZIE

Don't push too fast! Breathe! The hard part is over. You can see the top of the head.

MOTHER

It hurts. The pain.
(scream)
It's tearing me.

SUZIE

Father, give her a hand.

FATHER

Hey, this is too much.

SUZIE

You do your part.

MOTHER

Can you tell what it is?

SUZIE

Almost there.

FATHER

It's a junior.

MOTHER

Ah, I wanted a girl.

Suddenly the baby begins to SCREAM.

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

A sack appears on Gideon's fence. The sound of Old John's cart is heard rattling off.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Suzie, Gideon, JUNIOR (Gideon's elder son, 35 years old and dark skinned), PAT (Junior's wife, who is expecting, about 32) and Rhonda are all seated next to one another in the same row. The PREACHER is knee-deep in water. He is baptizing a group of young people. The members of the church are singing "Take Me To The Water". An Elderly Man who can hardly walk without help is being led down to the pool.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Suzie, Gideon, Junior, Pat and Rhonda are all seated at the table eating. Babe Brother is standing up. He looks in the pot but doesn't find it to his liking. Junior is irritated at his brother.

JUNIOR

When are you going to find time to help me fix the roof?

BABE BROTHER

You all don't believe me when I tell you I'm afraid of heights.

JUNIOR

You used that excuse to get out of the army.

BABE BROTHER

You always got something to say.

GIDEON

Your mother asked me not to mention it but your mother's birthday was last week.

BABE BROTHER

I hadn't forgotten. I ordered some cloth but it didn't come in and I felt so bad if I would have come to her birthday without that, I just stayed at home.

GIDEON

What did your wife get her?

BABE BROTHER

We got the same thing.

Junior laughs at Babe Brother's story.

GIDEON

Boy, go tell your wife to come in.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Babe Brother's car, a new Audi, is parked out front.

Linda is in the front seat reading a magazine while Sunny is asleep in the back seat. Babe Brother sticks his head in the window.

BABE BROTHER

Why don't you come in for a while?

LINDA

I would like to finish reading this. What would I talk about? I haven't read this month's almanac. I don't care to hear about how the corn was this fall or how to get rid of gophers by putting garlic in their holes. They pride themselves in making life hard and that's not my cup of tea.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Suzie, Gideon, Junior, Pat and Rhonda are still at the table eating.

SUZIE

You know, Babe Brother's wife just dumps greens in the pot without washing them.

GIDEON

Babe Brother is a poor boy.

JUNIOR

You all should have been hard on him like you were me and he wouldn't be the way he is.

SUZIE

Everybody got the same. I breast fed him like I breast fed you.

PAT

Junior, you are wrong.

INT. CAR - DAY

BABE BROTHER

Just for a minute.

A dirt rock HITS the front windshield. Linda lets out a little scream. Babe Brother looks around. Skip is on top of

the roof next door.

SKIP

I didn't mean to hit your car. I
was throwing at my birds.

INT. FEED STORE - DAY

Gideon is looking at the price of laying mash. He digs his hand into a barrel of scratch. Sunny also digs his hand in the barrel.

Suzie is looking at new young plants. She gives the vegetables a thorough going-over.

Gideon is standing in line waiting to place his order.

GIDEON

I need about five pounds of laying
mash and you better give me about
the same of scratch.

While at the counter, Gideon turns and looks around at the prices of different items. Suzie brings her plants and puts them on the counter.

GIDEON (CONT'D)

When are you going to have a sale
on weed killer?

CASHIER

You missed it. We had a two-day
sale last week.

GIDEON

What kind of a sale is a two-day
sale? I thought sales last a week
or two.

CASHIER

Every day we have something
different. Today's sale is hay. 25%
off. If you have a horse or cow,
you're in business.

INT. CAR - DAY

Sunny looks at the Little Girl in the next car; she has her mouth pressed against the window. She is missing a tooth. Gideon is behind the wheel while Suzie holds her new plants up to the sun, carefully looking at them.

Sunny, seated in the back, pokes a hole in the sack of feed. The mash trickles to the floor as if from an hour glass.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Suzie is sitting in front of a table full of jars. Each jar has a shoot and is half-filled with water. Gideon is on his knees trying to fix the hinge to a cabinet. Sunny is sitting almost under him listening to him tell stories. Sunny has a coffee can full of marbles.

GIDEON

All of the preachers were down in the basement of the church confessing their sins to one another. They were way down in the basement 'cause they figured no one would hear them. One of the preachers said, it makes me feel too shame to tell how bad I have been. You know them young gals that sit up in the first row. I can look at them and forget my text. I'm just lost when it comes to women, even them middle age sisters. Then another preacher said, I don't think I can tell you what my sin is 'cause it's bad. Another preacher said, Brother, we all amongst friends. Tell us what's troubling your soul. Clear your conscience.

Gideon takes a sip of water.

GIDEON (CONT'D)

So the preacher said, we all got a bond 'cause we confessed to one another. So let me tell you, my sin is corn liquor. I just acts a fool behind that spirit water. I loves it more than preaching. Now ain't that a sin, lord. So all the preachers went on confessing, each one worst than the last. Finally they came to the last preacher who had been very quiet and listening to every word that fell. One of the preachers said to him, it's your turn. Confessing will lift you burden, Brother. Bare us your soul. We did. The last preacher said, no, my sin is the worst among all of you. One of the preachers said, ah go on man and stop all this suspense. So the last preacher said, like I told you my sin is the lowest.

(beat)

My sin is gossipping and I can't wait to get out and tell what I heard.

Sunny does not get the humor of the story. He is more interested in picking up his marbles that Gideon's foot kicked over.

SUZIE

You oughtn't tell him stories like that.

SUNNY

Tell me another story.

GIDEON

I'll you a story about the terrapin and the rabbit. No, you tell me a story. Come on.

SUNNY

Once upon a time, my mommy and daddy lived in this big house that I bought for them. I got them this big car.

A strong wind causes the broom handle to knock against the china teapot, **KNOCKING IT TO THE FLOOR**. Suzie stops Sunny from trying to help pick up the pieces.

SUZIE

You stay back. You might cut your fingers.

Suzie looks down sadly at her broken tea pot.

GIDEON

I looked everywhere for my toby.

EXT. APPLE ORCHARD - DAY

The trees are barren, which gives them an unfriendly look. As we **LOOK** at the ground, a man's distorted shadow stops in the frame.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. FRONT PORCH - DAY

A shadow of a man appears on Gideon's porch. The camera tilts up to **HARRY MENTION**, a very dark-looking, ageless old man carrying several boxes held together by a cord. He looks exhausted from his journey. He looks in his address book and, satisfied that he reached the right house, he rings the doorbell.

INT. FRONT ROOM - DAY

Suzie comes to the front door; she recognizes Harry right away. She invites him in. Harry stumps his feet on the porch several times and then enters.

SUZIE

Harry, I can't believe it is you.
Gideon, look who is here.

Gideon comes in, wiping his hands. Sunny, carrying the broom, follows behind.

GIDEON

Harry, good God Almighty, man! It's been, what, thirty years or more. Suzie, we haven't seen Harry since we left home.

Harry is more interested in the boy, but Sunny doesn't want to come near Harry. It is Gideon's arm that is keeping him within close range of Harry.

GIDEON (CONT'D)

This is my grandson, Sunny. He is my youngest son's child.

HARRY

He kind of favors one of my boys when he was about his age.

Sunny, playing with the broom, accidentally touches Harry's shoe with it. Harry hides his anger about being touched with the broom. Harry takes the broom from Sunny and spits on the bottom of it.

HARRY (CONT'D)

Boy, that is bad luck to touch a fellow with a broom.

GIDEON

He knows better. Sunny, apologize to Harry.

SUNNY

I'm sorry.

GIDEON

What are you doing in these parts?

HARRY

I came all the way from Detroit by bus going to Oakland. The bus stopped in Los Angeles. I had to get off and take a rest. I'll catch the last bus leaving at midnight. I'm just too tired to go on.

GIDEON

Why didn't you catch a plane?

HARRY

My feet have never been on anything that wasn't directly attached to the ground.

GIDEON

Stay until you feel better? I would like to hear all the news.

HARRY

I'm worn out but won't you feel like you are taking in a stranger?

SUZIE

Stranger my foot, it was my grandmother who helped you into this world.

HARRY

Well, I don't want to put you out.

GIDEON

Man, put your boxes down and stay as long as you like. We have empty rooms since the boys got their own families and moved out.

HARRY

Well if you're sure, I won't be a bother. Oh, I don't sleep on no spring mattress. I always make myself a pallet on the floor.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

The bedroom door to Harry's room is cracked open. Peering through the cracked door, we SEE Harry asleep on his pallet. His back is turned to the camera. It is dead silent. There does not seem to be any sign of life. On the floor is a plate that has water in it. It looks like it is for a dog.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Suzie is peeling potatoes and Gideon is ironing.

SUZIE

Poor old Harry, he really must have been worn out. He has been asleep all day.

Without anyone being aware, Harry has been standing in the doorway for some time.

HARRY

Good evening. It must be all the different time zones I crossed that makes me feel this weary.

SUZIE

You should go back and rest.

HARRY

No, if I rest any longer, I won't sleep tonight. May I use your bathroom to wash up a bit?

GIDEON

Man, act like this is your home.

HARRY

That's awful generous of you. I always ask to keep from wearing out welcome.

SUZIE

One can tell you are from back home. These people nowadays don't know what manners are.

HARRY

Where we come from, you had to know how to act right. You had to know how to say yes sir and no sir. You had to know your place.

GIDEON

You had to tread softly.

The doorbell rings and Gideon goes to answer it.

SUZIE

Those days you could always find something redeeming about even the worst person.

HARRY

You remember that boy who lost his mind, Joe? You could hear him pitching horseshoes at night in the dark. He wouldn't miss a one. Make him mad and call yourself running in the house to be safe. He would pick up a brick and say "go on in there brick and hit somebody" and it would find its mark.

SUZIE

I was afraid to go to Marcus Bottom because of him.

HARRY

All those places that us coloreds lived, that we used to call Bottoms, have all been changed to Drives and Heights. Everything is

in what you call it, not in what it is.

Gideon comes back with Junior, Pal and Rhonda.

GIDEON

Harry, I would like for you to meet my oldest son, his wife and daughter.

JUNIOR

Pleased to meet you. So you're from back home, too.

Harry and Junior shake hands, but Rhonda gives Harry only a nod of her head and a smile.

Pat, who is pregnant, attempts to shake hands with Harry, but is forced to withdraw her hand because of a sudden pain in her stomach.

PAT

This boy must be turning over. Oh, he just kicked me again.

Junior feels her stomach. Pat again tries to shake Harry's hand and again gets a jolt from her stomach. She finds a chair to sit down in.

The SOUND of rocks hitting the roof causes everyone to look up.

GIDEON

It's the boy next door throwing at his birds. I'm just waiting on him to hit a pane in the window

HARRY

I'm going to wash up now. You all please excuse me.

INT. GIDEON'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - DAY

Harry is wiping off his face with a washcloth. He stares at himself in the mirror for a long time. The sudden sound of the boy next door starting to play his trumpet startles him. He smiles at the trumpeter's efforts.

He wrings the wash cloth out. A reddish oil-like liquid DRIPS into the face bowl.

EXT. GIDEON'S HOUSE - EARLY MORNING

A few of the houses have lights on. Suddenly, Gideon's rooster starts to CROW. A dog starts to bark and a garbage can is knocked over. Bedroom lights in almost all the houses in the neighborhood pop on. The voices of neighbors

complaining are heard.

INT. BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING

Harry is just waking up. He listens to the voices of Suzie and Gideon as they get ready for church.

INT. FRONT ROOM - MORNING

Gideon is paging through the Bible as he stands by the door, waiting for Suzie who is watering her plants. Harry comes in.

HARRY

Good morning.

GIDEON

You ought to come hear our preacher. Remember old Cat Iron? Well, our preacher is just as strong.

HARRY

Next time when I feel a little better perhaps.

GIDEON

I was going to get up and get a hen out there for dinner, but time got away.

HARRY

Oh, I would feel much at home if you let me get one for you. I haven't wrung a chicken's neck in a month of Sundays. You know, folks would call my daddy to kill their hogs. That used to be my trade from time to time.

GIDEON

Well, I would appreciate that.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Gideon and Suzie are stepping off the porch. Harry is standing behind the screen door.

Gideon and Suzie get in Junior's car. Junior, Pat and Rhonda wave to Harry as the car pulls away.

INT. LIVING HOUSE - DAY

IT IS A TRACKING SHOT, FOLLOWING HARRY THROUGH THE HOUSE.

Harry looks through Gideon's and Suzie's private things. He looks at the baby pictures that fill the mirror. He reads Suzie's letters that are dated years ago. In one of the

letters, he finds a picture of a man standing behind a plough. "Uncle Joe after Ella's death" is written on the back. A picture of a mule holds his interest. He looks at it for a long time and carries it with him as he continues his search.

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

Harry slowly walks along the rows in Suzie's garden. He stands by the chicken cage. Suddenly, the chickens start to run about and CACKLE as if a dog had gotten in.

Harry turns from the chicken coop. He stands still. Sunny is hiding behind a bush.

Sunny steps around the bush. Harry looks at Sunny with such concentration that Sunny takes a step backward as if getting ready to defend himself.

MRS. BAKER, a black woman in her early thirties, comes out on the back porch. She shakes out a rug. She stops shaking the rug and stares at Harry.

Harry becomes aware of Mrs. Baker's stare. He comes to himself and smiles at her.

INT. GIDEON'S KITCHEN - DAY

Harry and Babe Brother are playing cards while Linda watches and Sunny plays by himself on the floor. In the sink is a newspaper full of bloody feathers. A small flame is under a pot on the stove. Harry looks at the chicken in the pot and sits back down.

LINDA

You don't act like the rest of Gideon's friends. They believe if you are not hard at work, you are hard at sin.

HARRY

Oh, I'm more modern in my ways. I don't believe in sin, though there is good and evil.

(beat)

And evil is a thing you work at.

Harry takes his knife, a crab apple switch, out. It has a rabbit foot attached to it. Harry cleans his fingernail with the knife. Sunny is interested in the rabbit foot. He reaches for the knife.

HARRY (CONT'D)

Not you mustn't touch. Your mama might not like you handling knives.

LINDA

I think he wants to see your rabbit foot.

HARRY

I let this rabbit foot do in place of my toby that I lost years ago.

LINDA

What's a toby?

HARRY

You don't want to be at crossroads without one. It's a charm that old people teach you how to make. I had one for a long time that belonged to my grandmother who had it ever since she was a child.

(beat)

In my travels I misplaced it. I have been looking over my shoulder ever since.

LINDA

I thought you weren't old fashioned.

HARRY

In some things. When we were children, there used to be an old man that came around and would snatch your soul if you didn't have something on you that didn't make a **X**.

Harry is aware that Babe Brother is interested in the knife. After cleaning his last fingernail, he hands the knife to Babe Brother.

Harry looks at the cards in his hand. He smiles to himself.

HARRY

Did you have your child at home?

LINDA

No. No. No. No. I had my Child at Cedars and Sinai. And that ain't no county hospital. You have to have cash or check before you come in the door.

HARRY

Some folks take that natural stuff too far.

LINDA

Junior's wife kept her afterbirth' in the refrigerator. That's why I

do not eat over there now.

HARRY

Country people got so many strange ways,

Harry looks again at the chicken that he is boiling.

BABE BROTHER

Did you ever have to use this thing?

HARRY

That is called a crab apple switch. It's for those bad acting monkeys and just the thing for a mean dog. Now I don't know if I actually did what I did or got my life and story mixed in with other folk's stories but I seem to recall that I had to use my crab apple on a boy from back home. I was up in Memphis working on the railroad, like your daddy who had an easy job. He would sing a song that had a cadence and we would lay track. Anyway I was coming down Beale Street and I heard this music coming from a saloon. Sure enough it was Emory. My daddy taught both of us to play but Emory was natural at it. Got in a blues band and what not. He and another boy had killed a boy named Hocker sometime back and they balled the Jack leaving town. Emory had lost one eye and had a scar running down his face. Bad luck I would say. He got to drinking that corn liquor. We went to his girl's room and he wouldn't stop drinking. He started talking about the old days and he went mad. He pulled his knife and I got to mine first. The lights went out.

Linda picks up a card and looks at it. There is a naked woman on the back.

BABE BROTHER

Don't pick up the cards if you are not in the game. Did he die?

HARRY

I don't know what happened to him. He just ran out into the streets.
(beat)
I got some old records I want you

to hear. I like the blues sung simply, man and a guitar. Or sung by a woman who had bad luck all her life. Don't ever let anyone tell you his life's story if it is of a weary life full of sadness. When I was a boy, a man told me a story of how he lost all of his sons and I'll be damned if the same thing didn't happen to me.

Sunny is busy playing in the curtains.

The SOUND of Gideon and Suzie arriving makes them scurry to get the cards put away. Harry puts his knife away just as Suzie and Gideon enter. Linda feels a little embarrassed.

LINDA

How was church?

Gideon and Suzie are surprised to see Linda. They don't know what to say.

EXT. MRS. BAKER'S BACKYARD - DAY

Rodney walks around in the yard BLOWING his trumpet as loud as he can. The SOUND of the trumpet frightens Skip's birds.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Gideon is repairing the pipes under the face bowl. Harry is leaning against the door.

HARRY

How often is your wife called to help delivery?

GIDEON

It was slow. Now it seems like everyone is having births at home.

Gideon takes the pipe off. It has rotted. Gideon cannot believe it.

GIDEON (CONT'D)

What could have caused this? I just changed this damn thing.

HARRY

Everything these days is made overseas.

GIDEON

You and Babe Brother hit it off so well.

HARRY

Course, it is your business, but I feel obliged to tell you that maybe you have not been fair with the boy.

GIDEON

I tried to teach him right from wrong just like I did his Junior.

HARRY

Everyone has to follow his own plough. A man doesn't have to know how to cut a wick and clean a chimney nowadays. City people don't give a hoot and a holler about the shape of the moon nowadays. You don't plant old ways...

(beat)

... but, at the end, you find yourself doing what your father did but you have to have the land in you.

(beat)

It's when you want to give the house or farm to the kids and they don't want it. You sell it to a stranger. You worked your whole life, for what?

(beat)

I doubt if people nowadays have knowledge of a victory garden or seen an inch worm. All what we've experienced has no meaning.

GIDEON

You're suppose to teach your children what you know. Junior, I don't have to worry about. Babe Brother is a different story.

HARRY

You still call him boy. You call Babe Brother boy in front of his wife and son.

GIDEON

My daddy called me boy up to the time he died. I was always boy to him.

HARRY

'Course, you could be right. Your sons are alive. All my sons are dead.

Off-screen, Rodney starts to practice on his HORN.

INT. BABE BROTHER'S LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Babe Brother is sitting with Sunny by the screen door blowing giant bubbles. The bubbles drift past Linda, who is sitting at the table with real estate papers all over the table. She is talking on the phone with a client and signals them to stop disturbing her.

Babe Brother sends more bubbles floating by, causing her to shake the water off her papers while she talks to a first time buyer.

LINDA

It has three bedrooms, one and a half baths. Well, yes, that means two toilets and one bath. Well... Yes, by appointment... Call me back if you decide.

She hangs up the phone.

LINDA

You would think people never lived in a house if they have to ask what does 1 1/2 baths mean.

BABE BROTHER

Will you still get the money from your father?

LINDA

I told him we might not need it, if you can talk your parents into giving you your share of the property.

BABE BROTHER

Pops put Big Daddy's farm in Rhonda's and Sunny's name and fixed it so no one can borrow on it.

LINDA

We could borrow on that land and put the money to work.

BABE BROTHER

I preached to Mom and Dad about it but they are stuck in their ways, it's like talking to a brick. But if there is a way...

Babe Brother is lost in his thoughts. He stares down at his hands resting on his knees. He picks up the telephone.

INT. JUNIOR'S HOUSE - DAY

Junior is on the phone with Babe Brother. Pat crosses in

front of the camera shaking her head in a negative manner. Babe Brother's voice is just audible.

JUNIOR

You want me to mortgage my house to invest in a scheme of yours? You know the last time we went into something together Daddy had to go in his savings to keep us from ending on the street.

BABE BROTHER (O.S.)

Why are you always afraid to get somewhere?

JUNIOR

This is not a good time to take chances. Your best friend, Robert, an accountant, lost his home and is out on the street. We see him from time to time. He comes down to church for a free meal.

BABE BROTHER (O.S.)

This is what it is all about, trying to keep from being out on the street.

JUNIOR

Robert asks about you. When are you going to do something to help him?

BABE BROTHER (O.S.)

Maybe I can get down there next week.

Junior turns to his wife, who is off-camera.

JUNIOR

Babe Brother always acts like a gambler who is in the biggest game of his life and don't know about playing cards.

EXT. RAILROAD TRACKS - HOT AFTERNOON

Harry and Gideon are walking along a railroad track. The sun is blinding. The heat makes the asphalt appear to turn into a lake off in the distance. Gideon appears exhausted; beads of sweat continually form on his forehead. He fans himself with his hat. Harry is unaffected by the hot temperature.

HARRY

I can sit here and look at train tracks all day. We laid enough of them, didn't we? So many memories are stretched along tracks like

these.

Gideon looks down the tracks. A bowl of dust stirs off in the distance. The hot temperature makes the tracks appear liquid.

EXT. RAILROAD TRACKS - HOT AFTERNOON (EFFECT)

The tracks begin to twist and bend. Off in the distance, faint images of men laying track to a song.

EXT. RAILROAD TRACKS - HOT AFTERNOON

Gideon is standing with his hat in his hand. His posture is that of an extremely old man.

GIDEON

In weather like this, you cannot walk around bare-headed.

He wipes the sweat from his hat band.

HARRY

We'll go a little farther. The walk will do us some good.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Suzie is peeling apples while Sunny, standing next to her, catches peelings in his mouth. Pat is sitting next to the window. She is uncomfortable. She loosens her pants, giving her stomach more room. Rhonda is leaning over the back of the chair with her arms around Pat's neck. They are in silhouette.

PAT

Did you do your homework?

RHONDA

Yes.

(beat)

Mama?

PAT

What?

RHONDA

Can I name the baby?

INT. HARRY'S BEDROOM - DAY

Suzie knocks on the door. Harry comes to the door still buttoning his shirt.

SUZIE

I have someone I want you to meet.

HARRY

I'll be right there.

INT. FRONT ROOM - DAY

Gideon in the background in the kitchen washing off the vegetables. Suzie and HATTIE are sitting at the table. Harry comes in and is surprised to see Hattie. Hattie is in her late sixties but looks well. She makes a conscious effort to dress plainly.

HATTIE

I couldn't believe it when Suzie called and said you were staying here. How have you been?

HARRY

Girl, do you still sing and dance?

HATTIE

No, I'm a different person now, Harry.

Hattie has a nervous condition that causes her to squint from time to time. Gideon comes in from the kitchen.

GIDEON

Haven't the years been good to Hattie?

HARRY

It hasn't been the years; it's been the men in her life.

HATTIE

Harry, that's not nice. I'm in church now.

HARRY

Why run out and close the barn door when the horse is gone? I remember when you weren't saved. That was way back yonder when the Natchez Trace was just a dirt road.

HATTIE

Some people grow up and change their ways.

HARRY

I know your mother ain't still operating that house of hers.

HATTIE

My mother passed on years ago.

EXT. STREET IN FRONT OF HOUSE - DAY

M.C. slams the door to his car and hurries up the steps, leaving HERMAN, in spite of his bad condition, to get out of the car the best he can. The car door almost knocks poor Herman over. M.C. seems rather youthful because of his energy and awkwardness. He is a large muscular man.

Herman is a dried-up man with nothing, not even a shadow. He has a racking COUGH.

INT. FRONT ROOM - DAY

M.C. gives Gideon a bear hug, lifting him off his feet. On seeing Suzie, he drops Gideon and rushes over to lift her up off her feet.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Herman is still trying to get out of the car.

INT. FRONT ROOM - DAY

M.C. lifts Suzie off the ground twice. He runs over to Hattie who does not want to be handled, tries to withdraw but M.C. forces her to her feet and gives a big bear hug. Hattie has a series of squinting attacks. M.C. squints in return.

HATTIE

M.C., you still ain't house broken.

GIDEON

Good God Almighty, if it ain't like a parade of people from out of the past. M.C., where did you come from?

M.C.

I live here.

There is a TAPPING on the door.

M.C. (CONT'D)

That's old Herman.

HATTIE

Harry, what did you do, rob the graveyard?

Herman hobbles in and, after a minute of COUGHING, a smile forms on his face.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Suzie, Gideon and Hattie are seated at the table while M.C. bounces from one end of the table to the other. One moment he is on his knees and next moment he is leaning over someone to flick his ashes in the ashtray on the table. Hattie hates it when he comes near her.

Harry and Herman sit together in the corner chewing on starch.

M.C.

Hattie, do you still dance?

HATTIE

I'm in church.

M.C.

What does that got to do with it?

HATTIE

Suzie, you still have Joe's number?

SUZIE

I will have to look for it.

M.C.

Who's Joe?

HATTIE

None of your business.

HARRY

That is a boy from home, Lulla's brother.

Suzie is surprised.

SUZIE

Harry, you know everything.

HARRY

You got to know everything, do everything, and be everything.

Gideon brings a fresh pot of coffee. Gideon tries to signal M.C. to stop harassing Hattie. M.C. leans over Hattie again to use the ashtray.

Harry is helping Herman to his feet. Herman starts to cough. They come over and join the rest of the crowd at the table. Harry seats Herman next to Gideon and pours Herman a cup of coffee. He puts the sugar and cream in the coffee for Herman. Suzie comes back with Joe's number and hands it to Hattie.

HERMAN

M.C., I'm worn out. You ready to go?

M.C.

If you are tired, go sit in the car.

HERMAN

Suzie, do you have any Swamp Root?

SUZIE

No, but I might have some Indian Chief Tonic.

HATTIE

I haven't heard anyone mention Swamp Root since button-up shoes went out.

HARRY

You can certainly tell how old you are, my dear.

Hattie is angered.

HATTIE

You know the saying, "your heart is in your left hand."

HARRY

Now I was trying to be nice, to make conversation, since we go back some.

HATTIE

I was quoting from the Bible. If the shoe fits, wear it.

HARRY

"Out of weariness, I spoke to my own heart; to leave it all and to die. And I gave my heart to know madness and folly."

M. C.

You ain't going to win playing the dozens with Harry.

HERMAN

You all ought to get along.

HATTIE

Harry, you know you remind me of so much that went wrong in my life. When I heard you were here, I made a special effort to come and see you. I see you are still a pile of wet chicken feathers.

HERMAN

Oh Lord.

HARRY

My sister, women can get away with so much. I don't have any enemies

'cause I don't live in the past. As Pushkin, you don't know him, said, "In the hope of glory and good, I look without fear ahead."

M.C.

Harry has got your number.

HATTIE

An empty wagon makes a lot of noise and you, tappy head, you ain't worth the salt you put in greens.

HARRY

Speaking of tappy heads, we ought to have an old fashion fish fry.

HERMAN

I don't have too many fish fries left.

HARRY

We can have it here next week.

HATTIE

Is this your house?

HARRY

Oh. I'm sorry. Gideon, what do you say?

GIDEON

Well, it's up to Suzie.

SUZIE

It would be nice.

HATTIE

In the meantime Harry can slaughter us a hog.

HARRY

I already have, my dear.

HERMAN

Please, M.C., take me home.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

The children of the women in Suzie's natural birth group are huddled together SINGING "Ashiine Ca Chew". The voices of the women in the next room are audible. The kids go outside to sit on the porch.

INT. HOUSE, WORK ROOM - DAY

Most of the women have their newborns with them and are

engaging in talk about how their other children had to adjust and etc.

A young white mother, REBECCA WILSON, with both her children, a four year old and one just a few months old, talks with a deep southern accent.

WILSON

No one in my family ever been to a hospital to give birth. My sister has four children and all were born at home. My mother and her mother, it just goes on and on.

EXT. FRONT YARD - DAY

A mother leaves with her baby wrapped in a blanket. The kids surround her, wanting to see the baby.

INT. GIDEON'S BEDROOM - DAY

Pat is looking at a book of baby names. Harry passes the door and stops.

HARRY

A woman in family way just reminds of spring and my younger days.

PAT

That's nice.

HARRY

Well, you and your husband are special. Ya, Gideon tells me you do volunteer work to help feed the poor.

Pat beams with joy because Harry recognizes the important work she is doing.

HARRY

How many people do you all feed?

PAT

Last Saturday we handed out over two hundred meals.

HARRY

Good God Almighty, bless your bones.

(pause)

But the problem grows.

PAT

Week by week the crowds at the door keeps getting larger. We can't feed all the hungry.

HARRY

Of course not. Have you ever heard of a man jumping in the river to save five hundred drowning people? No you ain't.

(pause)

You have to take just one and fatten him up. When you spread help too thin, you , you just nickel and dime the situation. If you try to save all, all die but if you save one life, life goes on. You just have to remember, medicine that works leaves a bitter taste.

Harry looks at the baby picture pasted over the mirror. He takes the picture of his children from his old black dusty wallet and compares the faces of his kids with those on the mirror. He talks to himself more than to Pat.

HARRY (CONT'D)

You just take one; you thaw out the cold and hunger in his bones from sleeping on the bare ground.

Pat watches him and loses herself in what he is doing. She responds automatically

PAT

I don't know if we could take one in with Rhonda and me at home alone at times.

HARRY

Oh, I wasn't pointing my finger at you. Hey, you have to think of yourself. A lot of them have all kinds of diseases and will cut your throat while you sleep. There are too many bad people out there.

EXT. GIDEON'S BACK PORCH - DAY

Junior is taking the back door off to paint. Harry helps him carry the door and lay it on a saw horse.

JUNIOR

I appreciate you lending me a hand. That lazy ass brother of mine was suppose to help me.

HARRY

Well some folks are still waiting for their comeuppance. Don't take me wrong but you can't judge people by how you act. You're a caring

person.

JUNIOR

He should be caring. That is not too much to ask.

HARRY

Ya, but you can't do the shuffle with one leg. You and your wife, in your spare time, work with the less fortunate. Now I'm not talking about you and what you do but some folks that always run to help the victim, deep down are attracted to pain and suffering and love to be near the dying.

JUNIOR

All the people working with us are really doing it 'cause they hate to see suffering.

HARRY

You never know what's in the heart and just because you can cry doesn't make you human.

INT. JUNIOR'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Rhonda is in the background washing dishes. Pat and Junior are sitting at the dining room table, arguing.

JUNIOR

We can't really bring another family in here with us.

PAT

Why not? Harry says that's the only way to do good.

JUNIOR

When did you talk to Harry?

PAT

Don't shout!

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

Gideon and Sunny are in the garden digging for worms. The chickens

GIDEON

I think we have enough. So now tell me a story.

EXT. BALDWIN HILLS LAKE - LATE AFTERNOON

Gideon is sitting on a rock by the lake. His image is reflected in the lake. He is asleep. Sunny is putting new bait on one of the reels and with a whip of the pole, he casts to the center of the lake. He leans against a tree. Sunny looks at his sleeping grandfather. Gideon has his pant legs rolled up. His socks have lost their elastic. His head is resting on his chest.

Sunny goes near the water.

GIDEON

Be careful of the water.

Sunny looks back at his grandfather, who appears to be asleep.

DISSOLVE TO:

There is one fish in the bucket.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. LAKE - SUNSET

WIDE ANGLE SHOT FROM HIGH ANGLE

Gideon and Sunny are sitting next to each other. The lake reflects the sky: a deep red. The eerie sound of a long train whistle breaks the silence.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Harry, Babe Brother and Linda come in after staying out all night. Linda looks as though she is about to fall asleep standing up. She awakes and looks at Harry. There is dislike in her stare. Suzie and Gideon notice Linda fading away.

SUZIE

Are you feeling well?

LINDA

I've never been so tired in my life. Where is Sunny?

SUZIE

He is getting his things together. Babe Brother, you ought to take your wife home so she can get some rest.

BABE BROTHER

In a minute.

Sunny comes in carrying his night-clothes folded neatly. He stands next to Linda. Harry, in a mild but demanding way, ushers Babe Brother out of the door.

HARRY

Take your wife and child home, boy.

Babe Brother seems all too happy to obey Harry. After Harry closes the door behind Babe Brother, he turns with a wide smile.

HARRY (CONT'D)

I got a surprise for you tonight.

Harry flops down on the couch and kicks his shoes off.

HARRY (CONT'D)

This old buffalo has been in the sun too long.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Suzie and Gideon are getting the food ready while Harry, wearing a shirt that looks like it is made of shiny snakeskin, sits in a darkened corner of the room, cutting his fingernails with his knife.

The door bell rings and Harry slowly walks over to answer the door. Suzie puts the punch bowl down and hurries over to meet the first guests, FRED JENKINS, an elderly black man whom she hasn't seen in years, and Esme Jenkins, his wife.

SUZIE

Fred Jenkins.

JENKINS

Suzie, you haven't changed and you, Gideon, if you don't look like John Henry. Oh, this is my wife, Esme. My first wife Lulie died.

More people arrive, bottle-necking the doorway. Gideon helps the Jenkinses to a chair. Hattie comes with her brother MARSH, who is not too pleased to see Harry. OKRA TATE, an elderly black man with dark circles under his eyes, comes in limping badly with an old Polaroid camera hanging from his neck.

Babe Brother, Linda, Junior, Pat and Rhonda, who is holding Sunny's hand, all come in together. M.C. drags Herman through the door coughing. FLIM ANDERSON and his son DOUG are followed by the twins, WILLIAM and LOVIRAY NORWOOD, who are in their late 70's.

Babe Brother leaves Linda standing by herself to be next to Harry.

Zenia Dent, an elderly white woman with a strong Southern accent, arrives with her husband, Howard Dent, a black man, who is in a wheelchair. The Twins and Howard are the center of attention.

Okra comes over and whispers into Harry's ear. Okra leaves through the front door. Okra comes back in with a bag. Harry, Babe Brother, M.C. and Herman follow Okra to the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Okra sets the bag on the table and steps back to allow Harry to unveil the bottle of corn liquor.

BABE BROTHER

What is that?

HARRY

Boy, that is the real South. That is real corn liquor.

A crowd starts to gather around.

FLIM

What is in the bottle?

M.C.

It ain't Geritol.

M.C. starts to hand out tea cups while Harry pours everyone a drink.

HERMAN

There is a fight in every bottle.

GIDEON

You tappy heads better not tear down my house.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

An attractive Woman, in her younger days a knockout, puts on a record and starts to pop her fingers to the music as she moves towards the center of the floor dancing by herself, inviting anyone bold enough to join her.

A group of Men who haven't seen each other in years are asking questions about news of old friends.

Okra is trying to get his camera working.

Herman is following M.C. through the crowd with his hand resting on M.C.'s shoulder as if he were a blind person. His racking COUGH is frightening.

An older couple dancing attract the attention of the crowd. The man is wearing Stacy Adams shoes polished to see one's face in them. He gives expression to his moves as if he and the woman are talking with their bodies.

Junior and Pat try to bring in something more modern to outdo

the older couple.

Herman corners Hattie, trying to get her to sing.

HATTIE

Look, you better get out of my face
before I slap the living daylights
out of you.

Harry stops the music.

HARRY

You folks excuse me but you know we
have a celebrity from out of the
past, our own nightingale. If you
had any good times in your life,
you remember Hattie. She use to
keep those juke joints steaming. If
Ma Rainey and Bessie Smith were the
stars, she was the sun. Let's get
Hattie to sing something from the
old days.

Hattie has started her nervous twitch again. She is so mad
that she bites her lip to keep from exploding.

HATTIE

Harry always tries to be the king
fish. I told him I'm a new person.
I'm saved.

Harry signals an old man, PERCY, to start playing his guitar.
Percy starts to play but Hattie doesn't join him. He looks to
Harry for a sign of what to do. Hattie walks away.

Percy starts to SING by himself but someone puts a record on,
interrupting his singing. People are back to dancing.

A YOUNGER WOMAN is dancing with an OLDER MAN with such vigor,
forcing the old man to try to keep up, that people grow
concerned. People near him try to make him slow down but his
pride forces him to be ridiculous.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Linda sits with Sunny and Rhonda watching TV.

INT. FRONT ROOM - NIGHT

The noise has gotten louder, everyone talking at the top of
his voice.

Gideon is busy going around to everyone seeing if everything
is okay. Gideon and Suzie have worked up a sweat trying to
attend to everyone's needs.

Linda rejoins the party. She moves through the crowd and sees

Babe Brother standing next to Harry. She is disappointed and stays at a distance.

Harry is with a group of people. Marsh tries to get Harry's attention.

MARSH

Harry, you will not remember me but we go back quite a ways. I'm glad Hattie told me that you will be here 'cause there is a matter that has been troubling me all these years that maybe you can help me clear it up.

Harry stares into Marsh's eyes, then looks him over from head to toe.

HARRY

Man, I can't talk to you now. I'm filling in the gaps with these folks.

Harry turns his back on Marsh. Marsh stands there looking at Harry's profile. He turns and walks away.

The record ends. The Younger Woman and the Older Man wait for the next record.

YOUNGER WOMAN

How do you manage to keep in step and move around so like one of them young boys?

OLDER MAN

Get yourself a pace-maker like me.

Linda is standing by herself. She watches Babe Brother and Harry walk towards the kitchen. Pat comes to talk to her.

PAT

These old folks can dance better than I can. Get rid of that long face. Get one of these old farts to show you how to do the Black Bottom.

Okra, holding his camera, all of the attachments in one hand and a glass in his other hand, tries to offer Hattie a drink.

OKRA

Don't be so stand-offish.

Hattie pushes him away. The drink spills on him. She turns and walks away. He follows her.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Marsh sits in a chair opposite Harry. Babe Brother stands behind Harry. Harry, knowing that Marsh is going to bring up unpleasant things of the past, feels the need to get rid of Babe Brother.

HARRY

Son, you haven't danced with your wife all night.

Babe Brother is reluctant to leave, but Harry gives him a nudge. He goes looking for Linda.

MARSH

There is something that I always wanted to know. Tell me, how did those boys die?

HARRY

Now who are we talking about?

MARSH

Miss Clara's boy, Emory, to start with. The Johnson's Hocker was another one...

HARRY

Wasn't Hocker lynched?

MARSH

You know as well as I do that it was made to look like he was lynched. Now who would hang someone from a persimmon tree?

HARRY

What difference does it make if it's persimmon, oak tree or huckleberry bush?

INT. FRONT ROOM - NIGHT

Gideon, Babe Brother, and Linda go outside.

EXT. FRONT YARD - NIGHT

The sounds of the party drift out from the house as Gideon, Linda and Babe Brother talk.

GIDEON

Tell me, how come me and Suzie have to be mother and father to your child? You never take the boy to the park, circus or anything. If we did not take him to church, he wouldn't have any sense of religion.

LINDA

I think forcing him to go to church when he really doesn't understand is not saving his soul. When he gets old enough to make up his own mind about religion, that will be better. It will be his intellectual decision.

GIDEON

Is that the way your parents raised you?

BABE BROTHER

Why, you don't want us to bring him over?

GIDEON

No, it's that when do you have time to be parents to him? You guys don't pick him up until nine, ten at night. You are into yourselves, as the saying goes. Spend some time trying to be parents. Take him to the mountains, fishing. You ought to let him get to know nature.

BABE BROTHER

Well, you are his grandfather. He is supposed to spend some time with you. You're supposed to show him those woodsy things and this and that.

GIDEON

Junior spends time with his child.

BABE BROTHER

Oh here we go with that.

INT. FRONT ROOM - NIGHT

Okra is trying to get enough light for his old Polaroid camera. M.C. takes a shade off a lamp and holds it next to the Twins, nearly blinding them.

WILLIAM

Hurry up and take this picture.

FRED

If it wasn't for the NRA, colored people would have been the lost tribe.

FLIM

Remember what they use to call the

NRA? Negro Raggedy-ass Army.

M.C. is still holding the naked lamp while Okra tries to take pictures.

INT KITCHEN - NIGHT

MARSH

Hocker's death almost caused a race riot. A lot of innocent people could have been hurt behind that.

HARRY

Strange as it may seem, it might have cleared the waters. Sometimes the right action comes from the wrong reason.

EXT. FRONT YARD - NIGHT

Gideon, Babe Brother and Linda are just standing, facing one another. Suzie comes out on the porch.

SUZIE

Do you want your coat? It's cold out here.

GIDEON

No, I'm too hot now.

SUZIE

You better be careful. You'll get a stroke arguing.

GIDEON

I wouldn't care if I drop dead if he learn something from it.

(beat)

Son, you make me wish I was dead.

SUZIE

Gideon, don't say things like that.

BABE BROTHER

Why does he always pick on me?

LINDA

He is just being like all parents, concerned about the ones they love.

BABE BROTHER

I don't need that kind of love. And I don't want to be reminded all the time that Big Mama's grandmother was born in slavery. If you really care about me, just tell me how I can make money.

SUZIE

Babe Brother, I'm going to take my hand and hit you across your mouth.

LINDA

He doesn't mean what he says.

GIDEON

Let us go back in before the night of celebration becomes a night of me killing my son.

SUZIE

No. Before anyone moves, you two shake hands and don't carry it any further.

Linda gives Babe Brother a jab with her elbow. His hand reaches out to Gideon.

INT. FRONT ROOM - NIGHT

M.C. and Herman put the unshaded lamps next to Hattie so Okra can get a better picture. Percy starts to play his guitar. Herman stands behind Percy.

HATTIE

Don't make me say something nasty now.

Percy starts to play an old religious number and Hattie STARTS TO SING. Everything stops for a moment as her VOICE fills the room.

Then most of the guests pick up and join in. M.C. moves the lamp next to Percy so Okra can take his picture.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Marsh and Harry are getting quite loud in their argument. It has become a kind of controlled anger.

HARRY

I think if anybody had a hand in killing Hocker, you ought to ask or you should have asked Emory and Chick.

MARSH

Chick was outright killed by a mob. He killed a white man that owed him some money and when they caught up with him, they tied him behind a car and dragged him from out of the hills back to town.

HARRY

Those boys never did have good luck.

MARSH

You damn right they didn't, especially Emory, my cousin.

HARRY

Emory had made a lot of enemies. He had a big mouth.

M.C. and Okra come in wanting to take pictures. Marsh is pretty mad about them intruding. M.C. sets the naked lamp in front of Marsh, on the floor, almost between his legs.

Before Okra can get his camera set to shoot, Marsh leaves. Harry smiles as if he had won a major victory. Herman flops down in the empty chair and starts to COUGH.

Suddenly Suzie and Gideon burst into the kitchen holding up one of the twins, Loviray. They carry the twin towards Herman's seat. Herman is slow to react. Herman gets up very slow. Finally, they are able to seat the twin.

HARRY (CONT'D)

What's the problem here?

SUZIE

She has a fish bone caught in her throat. Could all of you go in the other room? Gideon, get some bread and toast it quickly and find me the cod liver oil.

The twin is holding her throat and PANTING like a fish out of water. She is in a lot of pain. William, the twin brother, is standing at the door with a tragic face.

INT. GIDEON'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Gideon is trying to get out of bed. He sits on the side of the bed and starts to COUGH.

INT. HARRY'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Harry has his back to the camera, sitting in a chair facing a wall. He is naked from the waist up. An empty plate is placed not too far from where he is sitting. He is cutting an apple. He licks the blade of his knife.

INT. BABE BROTHER'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Babe Brother is asleep. Linda is dressed to go to work. She throws his suit on the foot of the bed.

LINDA

Are you going to work or sleep all day?

He snores louder. She opens the window and pulls back the cover. The cold air makes him draw up. On walking out, Linda says in a rather hurt voice:

LINDA

Remember, you promised to take Sunny to Magic Mountain today.

Babe Brother slowly gets up holding his chest as if his heart is bothering him.

INT. GIDEON'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Gideon tries to put his pants on. He is too weak and sits back on the bed with his pants only up as far as his knees.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Suzie gets up to turn off the coffee kettle. When the kettle WHISTLE dies away, the sound of Gideon's VOICE is heard calling Suzie for help. The sound of his voice frightens her.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Suzie bursts into the room and then moves very slowly to Gideon, who is sitting on the bed out of breath.

GIDEON

I'm worn out.

SUZIE

Just stay in bed and rest.

GIDEON

I have to feed the chickens before they wake everybody up.

SUZIE

You stay inside. I will see to them.

GIDEON

I will appreciate that.

INT. DINING ROOM - EVENING

Suzie and Junior are sitting at the dining room table. Harry, looking like he has just gotten out of bed, drags himself in.

HARRY

How is everybody?

SUZIE

Tolerable well.

JUNIOR

How did you sleep last night?

There is obvious hostility in Junior's tone. Harry senses Junior's hostility and chooses to ignore it.

HARRY

Ah, you young folks don't know how it is. How is Gideon today?

SUZIE

He wasn't able to get out of bed today.

HARRY

I hope that it's nothing serious.

SUZIE

He has never gotten rid of the malaria. He is usually up and at it the next day. I'm going to make him fresh chicken broth.

HARRY

Let me earn my keep. I'll go out and get a hen and have it picked and ready for the pot. Try to make him some cow tea next time.

Junior stares at Harry. Harry returns Junior's stare and Junior finds himself embarrassed. Junior looks down at his pants leg and attempts to fix the crease in his pants by making a wedge with his fingers and running his fingers along the old crease.

As Harry walks towards the back door, he looks back at Junior.

EXT. BACKYARD - EVENING

The pigeons take to the air like an explosion. The chickens start to CACKLE and run about as Harry reaches for one with his cane. The SOUND of the boy next door practicing with his trumpet adds to the bedlam.

Suzie is standing on the steps, shouting to Harry. The noise of the panicked chickens and the boy playing the trumpet next door drown out Suzie's voice. Not getting Harry's attention, she hurries down the steps.

Harry has caught a hen that is SCREAMING her head off. He looks around and finds Suzie hurrying towards him.

SUZIE

Can you watch Gideon for a while?
One of the girls is going into

labor. Junior is going to drive me over.

HARRY

You just run along. I'll fix him his soup. He will be all right.

INT. ROOM - NIGHT

Suzie and another woman who will be helping her are asleep. Suzie is in the chair and the woman is asleep on the floor. The woman who is in labor is reading a magazine and seems somewhat bored.

INT. GIDEON'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Harry opens the door and slowly walks in. Gideon is asleep. Harry picks up Gideon's pants from the back of the chair. Gideon's false teeth fall to the floor.

INT. ROOM - NIGHT

There is a flurry of activity; the woman is contracting.

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

The untouched chicken broth sits on the night stand. Gideon is TALKING in his sleep. Morning light filters through the window shade. The room takes on a brownish tint. Gideon has dark rings under his eyes and looks like he has aged considerably.

INT. HARRY'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Harry is reading the Bible. He runs his finger over the print of the Bible. After reading the passage, he stares at the empty plate on the floor for what seems like a long time. He claps the Bible shut, causing a loud NOISE to ECHO through the house.

EXT. FRONT OF HOUSE - MORNING

Suzie is walking slowly up the steps.

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

Suzie raises the window shade and is shocked to see the state that Gideon is in.

SUZIE

Oh my Lord!

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

The room is crowded with people. Suzie is putting Gideon's shirt on. Harry is leaning against the door. After having put his shirt on, Suzie puts his house shoes on and directs Babe

Brother and Junior to hold him up while she tucks his shirt in and puts on his suspenders.

It takes almost everyone to hoist Gideon. Linda and Pat push the bed and night-stand out of the way as Babe Brother and Junior struggle to lift Gideon. They almost stumble at the door. Harry is left standing in the room alone.

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

Harry, Okra and Herman are trying to catch another chicken. Herman is COUGHING badly and Okra is out of breath.

OKRA

You think old Gideon is going to live to see this month out?

HARRY

When I came upon the valley of bones, the serpent said, "Make this your home. Dry as my soul be, heaven is lost to thee." We all got to make way.

Harry puts the rooster face to the ground and draws a straight line. Harry lets the rooster go, but the rooster stays motionless, unable to move.

HARRY (CONT'D)

A chicken hates to see the preacher coming to dinner.

Herman hands Harry the ax. Harry is poised over the chicken with the ax, appreciating the moment. Harry raises the ax. The SOUND of Rodney starting to practice his trumpet brings the rooster out of the trance.

Before Harry can react, the rooster jumps away.

OKRA

Herman, you will have to catch the next one 'cause I'm out of breath.

HERMAN

If I have to chase after one, we won't eat.

A sack drops over the fence. Okra limps over to see what is in the bag. He uses a stick to open the bag. He doesn't like what he sees and throws the bag back over the fence.

INT. VETERAN'S HOSPITAL, WARD - DAY

Suzie, Junior and Pat are standing around Gideon's bed. He is in a room full of old veterans who are apparently nearing the end.

Two old veterans, one white and the other black, sitting opposite each other wearing medals, sit in silence staring into each other's eyes.

A nurse empties an old man's urine bag. The old man doesn't show any embarrassment about his predicament. Gideon looks at how the patients are treated.

GIDEON

I don't want to stay here.

(beat)

Where is Babe Brother?

INT. HERMAN'S ONE ROOM HOUSE - DAY

M.C. is sitting on the bed, reading the job section of the paper. Herman is putting Vicks Vapo-Rub in a bowl of boiling water. He covers his head over the bowl with a towel. Okra is sitting at the table examining his gun. He points it at the floor, seeing if the sight is straight.

Harry is sitting at the table with Babe Brother. Harry is showing him how to cheat at cards.

HARRY

Never play with someone's else's cards. You always get a new deck. Look at this card. See anything?

BABE BROTHER

It is just a regular card.

HARRY

Son, I can take everything you got with that deck. It is marked. Now I'm going to show you how to make some money in case you get stuck somewhere.

INT. FRONT ROOM - NIGHT

A moth flies around the light casting a shadow that floats over everything. Suzie turns out the kitchen light and then turns out the dining-room light. She goes to her room and closes the door, leaving the room dark. A car headlight passing outside casts a moving pattern that moves along the wall.

The light reveals Harry's presence standing in the hall doorway.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Gideon is being helped up the steps by his sons.

INT. FRONT ROOM - DAY

Suzie is holding the door open while Gideon is carried in by

Junior and Babe Brother. Gideon is led to a chair. He still looks awful.

BABE BROTHER

Doesn't he look a whole of lot better?

SUZIE

Well, you look better than you did yesterday.

GIDEON

Next time, I don't care how sick I'll be, don't take me back to the Veteran's Hospital.

Harry comes out of the bathroom, having just taken a bath. Harry seems delighted to see Gideon again.

HARRY

Boy, I thought you were about to cross the river.

GIDEON

I tell you, I feel like a ghost.

Harry signals Babe Brother to come over to him.

HARRY

Son, would you do me a favor and see if you could turn off that tap in the bathroom. My hand is too weak. And would you do me another favor? I don't like asking this but would you clean the tub for me? I have trouble bending over.

BABE BROTHER

Anytime you need someone to do something for you, just let me know.

Harry flops down on the couch. Suzie sets a cup of coffee on the table for Gideon. Harry looks up from sharpening his knife on a hand sharpening stone. He spits on it.

HARRY

That smells like fresh coffee.

SUZIE

Let me get you a cup?

HARRY

Only if you can spare it.

Junior stands over Harry's shoulder looking at him sharpening his knife. Harry feels uncomfortable with Junior standing

behind him. Harry looks up at him.

HARRY (CONT'D)

Son, would you get me an old piece
of newspaper?

Suzie sets a cup of coffee in front of Harry.

HARRY (CONT'D)

Lord if you ain't an angel.

Junior hands Harry the newspaper. Harry puts the paper under
his foot and trims his toenails with it. Harry is aware of
Junior standing over him.

HARRY (CONT'D)

I will leave you something in my
will.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Junior looks in but Babe Brother is too busy trying to clean
the bathtub to notice anyone. Babe Brother complains to
himself.

BABE BROTHER

What in the hell...

INT. FRONT ROOM - DAY

Gideon and Suzie are in silhouette against the window.

The SOUND of the boy trying to play his horn next door
startles Gideon. Gideon turns to look out of the window
towards Mrs. Baker's house.

GIDEON

It's good to be able to hear that.

SUZIE

You must have been really sick.

GIDEON

How is the garden doing?

SUZIE

I need to get out there and get
those weeds out.

GIDEON

How is that hen doing? I was
meaning to pip her before I fell
sick.

He takes a deep breath and blows it out.

GIDEON (CONT'D)

I'm going to lie down. Take my,
hand and help me up, lest I fall.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Suzie helps Gideon to undress. Gideon loses his balance but catches himself on the side of the bed.

GIDEON

Oh, I couldn't have last another day in that hospital. You get weary being in the old soldiers home, old soldiers and war stories. They wait to tell you their last story; the next morning the nurse pulls a sheet over their face.

INT. DINING ROOM, JUNIOR'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Junior is putting up a new light fixture. Pat hands him a tool. Rhonda is washing dishes in the kitchen.

PAT

He just leeches off your parents.
He is a master at wearing out
welcome.

JUNIOR

Harry is the kind of guy you would
love to take out in the woods and
leave under a rock.

PAT

Where does he get the power to
summon all his old raffish friends?
They all smell of moth balls.

Junior slips on the ladder and the wires touch. There is a big spark. All the lights in the house go out.

INT. BABE BROTHER'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Linda is standing over the stove, sweating as she stirs a hot pot of boiling soup.
Babe Brother and Harry are seated at the table playing cards. Sunny is on the floor near his mother. Every time she moves, he follows her. Harry notices Sunny has his shoes on the wrong foot and adds in a sarcastic way:

HARRY

How old is that boy?

Babe Brother looks at Sunny's shoe.

BABE BROTHER

Linda, how come you don't see that
Sunny puts his shoes on right?

LINDA

Why in the h...

Close to tears, she turns and with exaggerated care, puts the spoon down and gently puts Sunny in a chair. She starts to untie his shoes. Sunny stares at her while she keeps wiping her eyes.

HARRY

Let's give Dry Bones a call to see if he is coming or not. Okra likes to exaggerate, keep you waiting all night.

Harry slowly gets to his feet and goes in the other room to use the phone. Linda watches him go. She is deep in thought.

Babe Brother, attempting to cut the roast before it is ready, is pushed aside by Linda, who is almost out of control with rage.

LINDA

Why don't you wait?

Babe Brother, attempting to forcibly cut a piece of roast, slings Linda's arm away. His hand accidentally hits her in the eye.

Linda grabs the fork, poised to strike, but gains control of herself. She looks like a person who is on the verge of having a breakdown. She goes back to putting the shoes on Sunny.

Babe Brother, feeling sorry, doesn't know what to do. He automatically picks up the fork and washes it off. Linda picks up Sunny.

INT. DINING ROOM - BABE BROTHER'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Linda is standing at the door, with a red eye, welcoming Harry's friends, which seem to be a long line of sickly people.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Linda is busy serving everyone, running in and out of the kitchen bringing more things, and removing used plates, etc. Linda's eye is swollen and discolored. The guests look at Linda's eye and then cast a naughty-boy glance at Babe Brother.

Linda stops serving to pay attention to an elderly man, who deliberately bends one of her spoons. She catches another man putting a fork in his pocket and an elderly lady putting a cigarette out in one of her plates.

As she is about to confront the man about pocketing her spoon, a peal of LAUGHTER forces her to turn around only to witness a lady knocking over a glass filled with a green drink with her elbow. The stain spreads across the table cloth in an even manner like a single wave. She watches it move from one end of the table to the other.

Harry is seated in the middle. The composition hints at The Last Supper.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Linda is reading a book to Sunny, who has his coffee can of marbles emptied on the bed. The NOISE from the party in the next room is clearly heard. Every time she hears something CRASHING to the floor, she wrenches. Babe Brother comes in and stands in the doorway. Linda's eye is still swollen.

BABE BROTHER

You okay?

LINDA

I'm okay. Go back to your friends.

Babe Brother closes the door and leaves Linda reading stories of Brer Rabbit to Sunny. She stops reading to look at him playing marbles on the bed. She smiles.

EXT. GIDEON'S HOUSE - DAY

Five weighty Women, dressed in church robes, and the Preacher walk up Gideon's steps.

Suzie invites the church members in.

PREACHER

Sister, we've come to see how you were doing. We came to ask if we could pray over Gideon.

INT. GIDEON'S BEDROOM - DAY

Gideon is asleep. The church members gather around his bed. The Preacher puts his hand on the foot of the bed and discovers that there is something strange under the covers. Suzie looks at him and lifts the covers at the foot of the bed. Gideon's feet are resting on dead leaves.

SUZIE

I put some Plummer Christian Leaves under his feet to draw the fever out.

PREACHER

What else have you been giving him?

SUZIE

I crossed his stomach with cold oil
and gave him some cow tea.

PREACHER

Suzie, I would think you would
depend on prayer rather than these
old fashion remedies. Let us read
from the Bible.

The Preacher opens his Bible and reads silently. The choir
HUMS and begin to sway. Gideon's SNORING is very competitive.
The choir becomes louder. Gideon starts to TALK in his sleep.
Suzie is alarmed.

CLOSE UP GIDEON'S EAR.

THE SOUND OF A TRAIN WHISTLE IS HEARD.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. PHOTO STUDIO, 1930 - DAY (DREAM EFX)

A lady steps upon the stage which has different backdrops.
She is the same lady in a photo that Gideon has hanging in
one of the kid's rooms. The photographer, who is off-screen,
asks about the background.

PHOTOGRAPHER (O.S.)

What scene would you like in the
background?

LADY

Something pleasant.

PHOTOGRAPHER (O.S.)

We have plantations.

The woman shakes her head.

PHOTOGRAPHER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Natchez, cotton fields, Harlem,
sunflowers, the Mississippi River.

LADY

Put the river behind me.

A large picture of the Mississippi appears behind the lady.
It changes from a painted backdrop to a moving picture. There
is a storm developing off in the distance. The SOUND of
thunder is heard. The picture in the background then changes
to a boy on a mule.

EXT. WET DIRT ROAD - DAY (RAINING) (DREAM EFX)

The boy on the gray mule doesn't have a shirt on. A light
mist like rain covers him. Gideon walks along the picket

fence towards the boy on the mule.

Ahead of Gideon seems to be a puddle but as he approaches, he discovers that it is an abyss. The boy and the mule on the other side fade away. Everything FADES TO BLACK.

INT. GIDEON'S BEDROOM - DAY

The Preacher turns a page in the Bible. Gideon has his mouth open like a fish trying to get air. The Choir continues to SING. The Preacher gets down on his knees and holds Gideon's hand; he bows his head. The Choir stops singing. The Bessie Smith recording of "Muddy Water" is coming from somewhere in the house. The Preacher looks around. Suzie is more puzzled. She goes to find where the music is coming from.

INT. HARRY'S BEDROOM - DAY

Suzie knocks on the door. No one answers. She peeps in. No one is in the room.

INT. GIDEON'S BEDROOM

The Preacher and the choir all have their hands on Gideon. Suzie enters the room.

SUZIE

I don't know where that music is coming from.

INT. JUNIOR'S HOUSE - DAY

Junior and Pat are helping Linda carry her baggage inside as Sunny reluctantly follows. It is obvious that Linda has left Babe Brother.

SUNNY

I want my daddy.

JUNIOR

Boy, hush that noise and get in this house. Make haste.

SUNNY

I want my daddy; I told you.

JUNIOR

Rhonda, drag him in here. If you be nice, I will take you to Disneyland.

Pat, Linda and Junior put the suitcases down.

PAT

Now you don't have to say anything if you don't want to.

JUNIOR

I want to hear what happened. My brother is a jackass and a damn fool. The both of you have been as scarce as hen's teeth.

Linda looks down, embarrassed.

PAT

Rhonda, take Sunny in the backyard. Take a bowl so you can pick some strawberries. Sunny will enjoy it.

Rhonda and Sunny leave. Pat turns on Junior about talking bad about Babe Brother and Linda in front of Sunny.

PAT

You shouldn't talk about the boy's father in front of him. This is family business and we have to pull together.

JUNIOR

Whether the boy hears it or not, the man is still a jackass. Everyone should have some mother wit.

LINDA

Something just took control of him. He stays out all night and comes home with a pocket full of money.

PAT

It's probably Harry, but I hate to mention his name, because every time we say something about him something bad happens.

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

Rhonda and Sunny are looking under a strawberry plant. Sunny has strawberry stains around his mouth and on his shirt. Rhonda is putting her strawberries in the bowl. After getting a bowl full, they lay on the grass, eating strawberries while looking up at the clouds slowly drifting by.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

Babe Brother is driving along a country road while Harry, sitting in the front seat next to him, yawns. Harry is tired.

HARRY

Let us walk awhile. I grow weary when I sit still too long.

Babe Brother's car stops in an orchard-like area.

EXT. ORCHARD - DAY

Babe Brother and Harry get out of the car. They walk on a path that takes them under low hanging tree limbs. It gets darker as they go deeper into the orchard. Babe Brother finds the going rough and loses his footing.

HARRY

Give me your arm lest you fall.

Harry has to help him stay on his feet. Babe Brother finds it necessary to take Harry's arm. Babe Brother stops and Harry walks a few more steps ahead and waits for Babe Brother. Just ahead sitting on a branch is a huge white owl camouflaged by tree branches.

BABE BROTHER

I could swear I heard my son call me.

HARRY

You probably heard the wind stirring up those dead leaves over there.

BABE BROTHER

I heard his voice as clear as day. I better get back. Maybe something is wrong.

Babe Brother turns and starts hurrying back before Harry can object. He walks slowly after Babe Brother who is doubling the distance between himself and Harry as he runs through the orchard to his car. Harry stops and looks around.

INT. FRONT ROOM - DAY

Pat, Linda and Junior are seated at the table. The suitcases are in the middle of the floor.

LINDA

I told Babe Brother that if Harry sets foot in our house again, I'm taking Sunny and leaving. Just as I said that, here come Harry and his old resurrected friends, hobbling up the steps.

JUNIOR

Is that how you got that black eye?

PAT

Don't ask that.

LINDA

No, this was an accident.

JUNIOR

Sure.

LINDA

It was unintentional.

JUNIOR

Babe Brother reminds me of the story of the man who wanted to be sizable. He wanted to be tall but what he was really short on was brains. There was a time when people had moon fever were treated with leeches.

The phone rings and Junior goes to pick it up. Linda's and Pat's attention is focused on the phone. Junior hands the phone to Linda.

JUNIOR (CONT'D)

It's that nut of yours.

Linda hesitates but Pat takes the phone from Junior and puts it in her hand.

LINDA

What do you want?

(beat)

No. Nothing happened to him.

Sunny and Rhonda enter. Linda turns to look. Sunny's hands and face look bloody from eating strawberries. She puts the phone down and examines his dirty face. Pat brings Linda a wet towel.

INT. THE BAKERS' GARAGE - NIGHT

MR. BAKER, a well built black man in his late 40's, is making a new fishing pole. He is very involved. Mrs. Baker is standing beside him with her arms folded. She stares at him. Mr. Baker glances at her.

MR. BAKER

What are you doing?

MRS. BAKER

Counting the gray hairs in your head.

MR. BAKER

Counting the what? What does that have to do with the price of butter?

MRS. BAKER

I was just trying to make

conversation.

MR. BAKER

Where is Skip?

MRS. BAKER

He is in his pigeon cage.

MR. BAKER

I'm sorry he got those birds.

MRS. BAKER

You know the man next door is near death.

Mr. Baker doesn't answer. He pauses for a moment of thought. Mrs. Baker sees that she is not going to get a response from her husband. She picks up an eyelet and Mr. Baker looks at her as if to say, keep your hands off. She gets the message and lays the eyelet back on the work bench.

MRS. BAKER (CONT'D)

He must have gotten rid of those chickens. You don't hear them crowing anymore... I kind of miss it now.

Mr. Baker admires his pole. He looks very closely at the details of his work.

Rodney comes in, polishing his horn. Mr. Baker's expression changes as he watches Rodney out of the corner of his eye. Mrs. Baker gives Rodney a motherly pat on the head. Rodney puts the trumpet to his mouth.

MR. BAKER

Don't blow that thing in here. You blow that thing when I'm at work.

EXT. STREET - DAY

There is a man lying on a bus bench with his belongings. A spotted dog is standing guard next to the bench. The dog's reflection is caught in a puddle of water. The dog has circles and sixes painted over his body.

Old John taps on the bench with his pipe. The man lying on the bench stirs and gives Old John a wave to indicate that he is alright. Old John slowly gets his cart moving again.

EXT. JUNIOR'S HOUSE - DAY

Babe Brother drives around the block past Junior's house.

INT. JUNIOR'S HOUSE - DAY

Junior is at the window, looking out.

JUNIOR

Why doesn't he just park his car
and come in and apologize?

EXT. JUNIOR'S HOUSE - DAY

Babe Brother sits in his car with the windows up. Junior
tries to talk to him but Babe Brother will not roll down the
windows. He just stares at Junior, who is getting angry.

JUNIOR

Roll down the window and let me
talk to you.

Babe Brother only stares at him. Junior gets more violent and
starts to shake the car.

Pat calls from the doorway.

PAT

Stop it Junior!

INT. PREGNANT WOMAN'S ROOM - DAY

A woman is in a squatting position. Suzie and her aide are
holding the woman by the arms.

EXT. JUNIOR'S HOUSE - DAY

Rhonda is painting her fingernails. Sunny watches her. She
looks around to see if any adult is watching. She tries to
talk Sunny into letting her paint his nails. He refuses but
she tries to pull his hand towards her. He fights his way
free and stands up and kicks the bottle of nail polish over.

RHONDA

Mama, come see what Sunny did.

INT. GIDEON'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Suzie is sitting in a chair; her head is bent forward. Gideon
is TALKING in his sleep. She awakes and nods off again. Harry
sticks his head in.

HARRY

How is he doing?

SUZIE

As long as he keeps his throat
clear, he is able to get some rest.

HARRY

I made a fresh pot of coffee. Okra
and I thought you need a rest. I'll
stand guard. Okra wants to talk to
you anyway.

Harry helps Suzie to her feet.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Okra is painfully standing on his bad feet. He is in his security-guard uniform, holding a bouquet of greens. As Suzie comes in, Okra tries to stand upright at attention.

OKRA

I brought you these greens and some salt meat.

SUZIE

That is very thoughtful of you. I haven't had time to tend to my garden like I should.

Suzie takes the greens and puts them on the counter. She squeezes Okra's hand as a thank you. She pours him a cup of coffee. Okra eases down into the chair. He crosses his legs and starts massaging his feet.

Suzie get herself a cup of coffee and sits opposite him. She stretches and tries to hold back a yawn. Okra looks at her in a slightly desirous way.

OKRA

You know Gideon and I are lodge brothers and it has always been a policy to take care of the wives if something happens to our brother.

SUZIE

You are very sweet, but Gideon has already taken care of everything in case something happens to him. He has a policy.

OKRA

If you become a widow, you will need someone around to fix the whatnots. We like for the widow to marry someone in the lodge. I know Gideon ain't gone yet, but there will be a lot of his old friends coming around to get in line. I just want you to consider this as a kind of a conditional proposal, to be first in line so to speak.

Suzie keeps herself under control; she tries to find words to say. She stands up.

SUZIE

Excuse me. I have to go feed my dog.

She turns the fire out from under the coffee pot and exits the back door.

Okra unties his shoes and begins to massage his feet.

INT. BEDROOM / EXT. YARD - NIGHT

Harry is sitting by the bed, just visible through the window. He seems restless.

EXT. GIDEON'S BACKYARD - DAY

There is only one hen left in the coop. The garden is full of weeds. The sunflowers are bent by the force of the wind. A bag is thrown over the fence.

The shadows of pigeons flying overhead race along the ground.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Two shadows on the wall are facing each other. The shadows are the heads of two women, Suzie and Hattie.

HATTIE

You know Harry lied about how that boy Hocker got kilt. And it was Harry who saw Emory last before they found him hanging over a levee like someone would hang a hog.

SUZIE

I remember Harry always trying to help someone. He got Lulla's daughter out of trouble. He was always running to the store for someone who couldn't leave the house.

HATTIE

Harry always shows his good side and, like the moon, the other side is black. Back home he always did try to act like the colored gentleman. I'm telling you Harry is nothing but evil. I'm warning you -- you can't keep a wild animal as a pet around children.

INT. HARRY'S ROOM - DAY

Harry has a plate of food in his hand. He stands facing himself in the mirror, staring at himself while he eats. He opens the door to leave but Sunny is in the hallway with his back turned sweeping. Harry stares at him and decides to go

back in his room.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

SUZIE

You know Okra asked me to marry him the other evening.

HATTIE

Rush your mouth, girl. No, he didn't. He cannot be that big of a damn fool.

SUZIE

I asked Harry about it. He didn't own up to it. He said he didn't know what got into Okra.

HATTIE

He's just raffish. Harry put him up to it. Before evening sun sets, I would have his belongings back on Route 55, that old fox.

SUZIE

I can't accuse him just dry long 80.

HATTIE

Everybody who have been associated with Harry end up with pennies over their eyes.

SUZIE

What must I do?

HATTIE

If it was left up to me, I would poison him.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Harry sees that it is safe to leave. He sees Sunny sweeping in Gideon's room. Gideon is sound asleep. Sunny is sweeping around the bed.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Harry comes in and Hattie and Suzie stop talking. Harry is aware that he was the subject. The SOUND of the boy next door playing his horn is heard.

HARRY

Good afternoon, ladies.

SUZIE

Good afternoon to you.

Harry waits for Hattie to respond but it is obvious that Hattie isn't about to speak to him.

HATTIE

I'm going to check on Gideon.

Harry moves out of her way to let her go by. Hattie doesn't even give him a glance. Harry continues to look at her as she disappears into Gideon's room.

HARRY

As God is my witness, I have never done anything to that woman.

SUZIE

You must have done something to her.

HARRY

Since she has repented, all she does is throw stones.

SUZIE

Hattie is a different person now.

HARRY

I don't make no bones about where I'm going to spend eternity. I have always been wild and you know that. If you are made to feel half a man, what do you think the other half is?

SUZIE

I'm glad you brought that up as to who you are. I have to know who is in my house.

HARRY

You invited me.

SUZIE

Only if you are a good man, a friend. Are you a friend?

Harry takes his time in looking for an answer.

HARRY

Like that boy next door playing that his horn. If he was a friend, he would stop irritating people, but if he stops practicing, he wouldn't be perfect in what he does someday.

INT. HARRY'S BEDROOM - DAY

Hattie enters Harry's room. She goes through his things. She reads one of his letters. As she walks over to the window reading his letter, she steps on the plate, cracking it.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

SUZIE

I want you to leave.

Harry looks sad and suddenly a lot older as if what she said has taken away some of his life.

HARRY

Okra, M.C. and Herman want to go back home with me.

(beat)

Suzie, I'm not a bad fellow; I just like to have a good time.

(beat)

M.C. is coming by to pick me up tonight. I'll come back to get my things. Well, I hope Gideon recovers. You know I have an extra picture of one of my sons that I would like for you to put with those baby pictures over your dresser. It's better than being in my dusty wallet with addresses and names of people who are no longer on this earth.

Suzie takes the picture. She seems as if she has doubts about having asked Harry to leave.

HARRY (CONT'D)

I'll say my so-longs to Gideon before I leave and I truly wish that he will get well.

Suzie continues to look at the picture.

INT. HARRY'S BEDROOM - DAY

Hattie is reading Harry's letters when he appears behind her. Hattie turns but is not surprised or concerned about Harry. She hands him back his letters, looks at him for a moment and goes. Harry looks down at the cracked dish.

INT. HERMAN'S HOUSE - EVENING (RAIN)

M.C. and Herman are packing. Okra is all dressed up with a pair of Stacy Adams shoes that make his feet look exaggeratedly long. Babe Brother and Harry are sitting at a table playing blackjack. Okra picks up one thing at a time, making the packing much harder. There is a stack of old dusty 78 record; Okra, trying to step over the records, kicks over

a box of mothballs that roll across the floor. Okra has to step over boxes of toilet paper.

OKRA

Why did you buy so much toilet paper?

M. C.

I got that on the job when I was a janitor. They didn't pay me.

Harry picks up an old cigar box that falls opens. Dice, shotgun shells, some spent .38 slugs and an old rusty knife, a crab apple switch, land on the floor. Harry picks up the knife.

HARRY

Whose old piece of knife is this?

HERMAN

That was my brother's knife.

Harry gives the knife to Babe Brother and signals him to put it in his pocket.

The SOUND of the thunder has an unreal violence to it.

HARRY

I don't want to wear out welcome, but you can stay in someone's heart longer than you can stay in their house. Come with us, boy. We are going to have a good time.

BABE BROTHER

This would be a bad time for me to leave.

HARRY

We are going where the action is. Ain't that right, Okra?

(then back to Babe Brother)

Let's play for a couple of bucks unless you want to start off with two bits and work our way up.

(beat)

What would you give to be rich?

Babe Brother humps his shoulder. Babe Brother looks at his hand.

BABE BROTHER

Had Moms and Pops given me my share of what was mine, I could have been rich by now. Linda and I had it all worked out.

Harry wins the first hand.

HARRY

I know your mind is on your wife
but you should never treat a woman
as an equal. You want to get your
wife back, get another woman, one
of those big hip women that will
ride you till you sweat.

Harry wins another hand. M.C. and Okra are still packing
while Herman is eating Argo Starch.

HARRY (CONT'D)

Double the stakes?

Babe Brother agrees but his thoughts are obviously somewhere
else. Harry studies his hand and looks at Babe Brother; he
puts down his hand. Babe Brother wins and is quite pleased.
The next series of hands are won by Babe Brother.

HARRY (CONT'D)

M.C., you ever heard of a real man
having one woman?

M.C.

No, lord!

HARRY

When one woman puts you out, you
have another to take you in. You
don't drive around without a spare
tire, do you? The more mules you
have hitched, the easier it is to
plough.

Harry loses another hand and Babe Brother suddenly has a pile
of money.

HARRY

Herman, let me borrow a few bucks.

Herman stand over him with a roll of bills and peels off
several.

HARRY (CONT'D)

Bless you. Bless you.

Herman is standing behind Babe Brother, SINGING to himself.

HERMAN

In the ground there is a hole and
green grass growing around the
hole. Now in the hole there is tree
and green grass growing all around
the tree. Now there is a hole in

the ground, a tree in the hole and green grass growing around the hole.

HARRY

Let me share something with you.

Harry stops and thinks for a while.

HARRY (CONT'D)

Hattie is a snake. That woman broke up so many homes and caused a lot of misery and because she calls herself getting religion everything is put right.

Okra is taking several shotguns out of the closet.

OKRA

These damn things are unloaded, ain't they?

HARRY

It's important to know the difference between the incoming fire and the outgoing fire. As Amos and Andy might say, "We is the outgoing fire." Come with us, son. We'll show you some steaming hot juke joints, steaming hot women.

M.C.

A pot full of chitlins and a good time.

BABE BROTHER

Let me go by the house first.

HARRY

We will wait for you as long as we can. I got to get my things from your mother's house.

Babe Brother hurries out. M.C., Herman and Okra flop down in chairs and on the bed and look at their watches.

Harry sits at the table tapping out a rhythm on the table and WHISTLING very softly to himself. Suddenly Harry sees that Babe Brother left the pile of money on the table. A look of concern comes over his face.

EXT. GIDEON'S HOUSE - NIGHT (RAIN)

It is raining hard. Babe Brother gets out of the car. Running to get out of the rain, he slips and falls; he tries to get up but slips and falls again. He gets up and walks slowly up the steps as if he doesn't care whether he gets wet or not.

INT. FRONT ROOM - NIGHT (RAIN)

Suzie helps him to take his wet coat off. She goes into the kitchen, puts his coat in front of the stove. The knife falls out. She picks it up and looks at it like she would throw it away but Babe Brother takes it.

BABE BROTHER

I need to get my suitcase out of the garage.

SUZIE

What for?

BABE BROTHER

I'm going back home with Harry.

SUZIE

I've heard some foolish things in my life.

BABE BROTHER

Harry is coming to pick me up.

SUZIE

Have you lost your mind? Have you thought about your wife and child, not to mention your sick father? And I need your help to move his bed from under the leak in the ceiling.

BABE BROTHER

I'm busy.

SUZIE

Don't make me raise my hand to you. You have to see for yourself that you are going in the wrong direction.

BABE BROTHER

Can't I be myself without you jumping in with your right and wrong? The world is not black and white. Show me one perfect person. If you can't, don't ask me to be.

SUZIE

I do have a right to ask you to be a little bit better than me and your father because we gave you a better head start. You have no right to complain to us about your not having enough.

(forcefully)

You sit right there with your no
manners self.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT (RAIN)

Junior is carrying a roll of roofing paper. Pat, Rhonda, Linda and Sunny run to the porch to get out of the rain. Junior stacks the roofing paper in the corner of the porch and stamps the mud off his shoes.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT (RAIN)

Junior, Pat, Linda and Rhonda come in to help Suzie move the bed from under the rain dripping through the hole in the ceiling.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT (RAIN)

Sunny stands in the doorway watching his father sharpen his knife that he got from Harry. Babe Brother is unaware that his son is watching him.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT (RAIN)

JUNIOR

Where is Babe Brother?

SUZIE

Brother is in the kitchen.

JUNIOR

How come you didn't ask Babe
Brother to help you?

SUZIE

He said he was busy. He is mad
'cause he wanted to get in the
garage to get his things so he
could go with Harry.

Linda has a surprised look on her face.

JUNIOR

So he is busy?

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT (RAIN)

Babe Brother is preoccupied sharpening his knife with a sharpening stone. He is almost in a trance. Junior comes in rather angrily. Sunny goes and sits in the shadows in the dining room.

JUNIOR

Why in the hell didn't you help
mama?

BABE BROTHER

I told her I would if she would give me time.

JUNIOR

I bet you if your master would have told you to fix the hole in the roof, you would have rebuilt the whole damn house.

BABE BROTHER

You always got the best of it around here and when Dad always talks about my son, it is always you, so you fix the roof.

JUNIOR

That is a damn lie and you know it. Every time father asks you to do something, you either half-ass do it or run off and hide. Mama asked you to turn the dirt in her garden and you told her, with your smart ass self, that you weren't a farmer; get Junior to do it. Every time someone asks you to do something, you always say, tell Junior to do it. Boy, you ought to grow up.

BABE BROTHER

I told you about calling me boy. I ain't no boy. See, you and Dad got a bad habit of calling me boy. You call me boy in front of my wife. You think I'm going to fix the roof? I hope the wind blows the whole damn thing off and it pours down rain.

JUNIOR

I ought to break your damn neck.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT (RAIN)

Sunny is sitting in a chair listening to his father and uncle argue in the kitchen. A car outside passes and the lights from the car form a crochet-like moving pattern on the wall behind him. Sunny is only lit for a moment.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT (RAIN)

Babe Brother starts gathering up his things to leave.

BABE BROTHER

I'm leaving and don't even call me when the shoe falls 'cause all he did for me was to try and run my

life. I'm tired of people saying
Babe Brother this, Babe Brother
that. What's my name?

JUNIOR

You dumb ass, it's Babe Brother.

BABE BROTHER

My name is Sam. Samuel.

Babe Brother attempts to get up but Junior pushes him down.

JUNIOR

Sit down!

Babe Brother hits Junior on the jaw, driving him backwards,
causing the overhead lamp to sway violently.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT (RAIN)

Suzie, Pat and Linda hear the noise coming from the kitchen
and rush to see what is going on.

INT. KITCHEN - RAINY NIGHT

Babe Brother and Junior are both reaching for the knife.
Junior is on top of Babe Brother, who is stretched out on the
table trying to reach the knife. Junior grabs the knife first
and Babe Brother flips over to defend himself. Babe Brother
grabs Junior's wrist as Junior tries to push the knife
against his throat.

Suzie comes in and grabs part of the knife with her hand and
Junior's wrist with her other hand. Pat and Linda try to pull
the two men apart while pleading with Junior.

Blood drips from Suzie's hand to the table, forming a pool
under Babe Brother's head.

PAT

Stop it! Stop it! Look what you are
doing!

Babe Brother's eyes are rolled to the back. Junior's eyes are
huge; he has an animal look on his face. The SOUND of
struggling people breathing heavily is amplified. The pool of
blood on the table grows larger.

Junior slowly becomes aware of the blood and his body
relaxes. He calmly releases the knife.

Junior takes his mother's hand.

JUNIOR

Someone get some lard out of the
ice box.

Pat attempts to get the lard but pain in her stomach forces her to sit down. Linda gets the lard out and hands it to Junior. Babe Brother raises himself. The blood from Suzie's dripping from his head. Rhonda is trying to hold Sunny back.

Junior holds his mother's hand under the faucet. It is a deep cut. The bleeding won't stop.

Pat is sitting at the blood-stained table unable to move. She is PANTING, sweating, and holding her stomach. Linda is caught between trying to help Suzie and attending to Pat.

Babe Brother helps to make a wad of cloth to press in her hand to Stop the bleeding.

LINDA

You are going to need some stitches. We better take her to the emergency hospital.

Babe Brother is shamefully calm now and very humble.

BABE BROTHER

I'll drive her to the hospital.

JUNIOR

We will take her. You all stay here and watch Dad.

LINDA

What about Pat?

PAT

I'm okay now.

Suzie attempts to go see Gideon but Babe Brother and Junior turn her to the door. Going through the kitchen door, Junior intentionally turns his back to Babe Brother. Babe Brother stares at Junior's back as he walks ahead.

INT. HOSPITAL, EMERGENCY RECEPTION ROOM - NIGHT (RAIN)

The automatic doors open and Junior, Babe Brother and Suzie enter. There is a long line of people waiting at the registration window as well as groups of people filling out forms. Other patients are seated and waiting patiently to see the doctor.

Suzie finally gets to the registration window. A NURSE, white, 25, with extremely long fingernails that curve back around, is surprisingly sympathetic.

NURSE

What sort of emergency are you here for?

SUZIE

I cut my hand.

NURSE

Let me take a look at it.

Suzie puts her hand through the window. The Nurse stands up to get a better look. The Nurse takes the wad out of her hand. The bleeding has stopped. The Nurse takes a deep breath. The Nurse glances up to notice the blood stains on the back of Babe Brother head.

NURSE (CONT'D)

Are you all together?

JUNIOR

Yes.

NURSE

The bleeding has stopped but it will need stitches. You will have to fill out this form. How will this be covered, insurance, cash or check?

JUNIOR

Don't worry about it. It will be paid. Just let her see a doctor.

SUZIE

I have Medicare.

The Nurse hands Suzie a form, but Babe Brother takes the form. The Nurse looks again at Babe Brother's head.

NURSE

Do you need to see the doctor too?

BABE BROTHER

No, just my mother.

Babe Brother fills out the form with Suzie's help and hands the form back to the Nurse.

They find a seat all together.

DISSOLVE:

INT. HOSPITAL, EMERGENCY RECEPTION ROOM - NIGHT (RAIN)

The room slowly fills with people and Babe Brother and Junior offer their seats to those there for medical care.

DISSOLVE:

INT. HOSPITAL, EMERGENCY RECEPTION ROOM - NIGHT (RAIN)

Two Police Officers bring in a man handcuffed to a bed. The

woman officer carries a shotgun. The male police officer carries a clip board. The Prisoner is obviously in no condition to escape or cause trouble. They are allowed to go directly to the emergency room without waiting.

DISSOLVE:

INT. HOSPITAL, EMERGENCY RECEPTION ROOM - NIGHT (RAIN)

More injured people come but in spite of their condition they are told that they have to wait. There is only standing room.

Junior and Babe Brother are standing next to the wall.

On the other side of the room, Suzie is looking quietly at them as if she is in deep thought.

Junior walks over to the reception desk.

JUNIOR

Why is it so crowded?

NURSE

Well, it is Friday night and a full moon.

Junior whispers to Babe Brother. They both start to laugh.

Suzie looks up and finds them in a fit of laughter. A faint smile appears on her face.

INT. GIDEON'S BEDROOM - NIGHT (RAIN)

Gideon is slowly getting up. He looks around. He calls for Suzie. He slowly gets to his feet.

GIDEON

Suzie, I'm hungry.

INT. FRONT ROOM - NIGHT (RAIN)

He walks by Linda, Pat, Rhonda, and Sunny, who are sleeping in chairs, on the floor and on the sofa.

GIDEON

Suzie.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT (RAIN)

Gideon opens the refrigerator and starts taking out bowls of food and placing them on the table. He puts on a pot of coffee.

GIDEON

Suzie.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT (RAIN) (LATER)

Gideon is busy eating almost everything in sight. A group of mystified and sleepy faces appear at the door. Pat, Linda, Rhonda and Sunny are all looking rather dumbfounded.

EXT. BACKYARD - MORNING

Everything is wet from the night's rain. The garden looks more like a graveyard. Moisture drips from the sunflowers.

Gideon's nervous looking rooster jumps the fence and starts to CROW.

Skip is out early throwing rocks at his birds. The rocks land on Gideon's roof.

EXT. HOUSE - MORNING

Babe Brother and Junior help Suzie out of the car. She has her left hand bandaged. They are extremely exhausted. They walk up the porch to find Harry holding the door open.

HARRY

I can't believe what I heard took place.

INT. FRONT ROOM - DAY

On seeing Suzie, Sunny jumps up, knocking the can of marbles over the kitchen floor. He runs to give Suzie a hug. Sunny wants to touch her bandaged hand, but Linda stops him.

SUZIE

How is Gideon doing?

RHONDA

He is asleep now, but he was up all night eating.

As Suzie goes to Gideon's room, she comes face to face with Harry. She doesn't say anything.

HARRY

I came to pick up my things.

INT. GIDEON'S BEDROOM - DAY

Gideon is SNORING loudly. On the night-stand is a plate with food left on it. Suzie feels his forehead.

INT. FRONT ROOM - DAY

Harry sadly gets up. He looks at Babe Brother. Linda steps in front of Babe Brother.

LINDA

You ought to go see how your father

is doing and then wash that blood
off you and change shirts.

Babe Brother is surrounded by Linda and Sunny who has his
eyes fixed on Harry. They move as one heading for the
bedroom.

Harry seems a lot older. He sadly walks towards the kitchen
with his coffee cup.

LOW ANGLE SHOT: Harry is slowly walking towards the MARBLES
that are scattered over the kitchen floor.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Pat, Linda, Junior, Rhonda, Babe Brother, Sunny and Suzie are
all standing around waiting for Gideon to wake up.

SUZIE

Gideon.

Gideon's only response is to SNORE louder.

PAT

How long is Harry going to hang
around?

Babe Brother is in a corner all by himself. He looks down
when Pat asks the question about Harry.

A loud CRASHING SOUND comes from the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Harry is trying to raise himself from the floor. He pauses
for a moment and then collapses. Harry is in a lot of pain.
Harry's body contorts and then remains still.

Babe Brother, Junior, Pat, and Linda, Suzie run in. Suzie
tries to see if he is alive. Babe Brother tries to give him
mouth to mouth resuscitation but Linda pulls him away. Junior
tries to push down on Harry's chest.

Babe Brother stares down at Harry and then goes slowly back
into the living room. Pat is on the phone dialing the
paramedics. Everyone stands around Harry.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Two PARAMEDICS work on Harry. One of the paramedics is a
young Asian. The other is white with red hair. They listen
for a heart beat and shake their heads in a negative manner.
They pack up their medical case. The Asian's accent is very
difficult to understand.

WHITE PARAMEDIC

There is nothing we can do for him.

The Paramedics start to leave without the body.

JUNIOR

Well, aren't you going to take him with you?

ASIAN PARAMEDIC

If he had died in our care, we would be required to take him. Since we found him dead, you will have to wait for the county to pick him up.

JUNIOR

How long will that take?

WHITE PARAMEDIC

That would depend on how busy it is. I'm sorry.

DISSOLVE:

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Harry is stretched out on the floor. A blanket covers everything except his shoes.

INT. FRONT ROOM - DAY

Hattie, Marsh, Okra, Herman, and M.C. all come in. Marsh looks cheerful.

MARSH

What happened?

JUNIOR

He slipped on some marbles that were on the floor. Then his heart gave out.

LINDA

(to Sunny)

I told you to always put those marbles up and not to leave them just anywhere.

PAT

The poor thing is not to blame. Rhonda, take Sunny for a walk.

Marsh hands Rhonda several dollars.

MARSH

Here, go around to the store and buy what you want.

HATTIE

Would anybody object if I take a look at him?

HERMAN

I don't think Harry would like it.

Hattie goes over and pulls the blanket back. Okra, M.C. and Herman hurry over to take a quick glance. They huddle behind Hattie, peeping over her shoulder.

HATTIE

I never noticed how big his eyes were.

DISSOLVE:

INT. BATHROOM - EVENING

Linda is helping Babe Brother wash Suzie's blood out of his hair. She dries his hair with a towel. Sonny hands Babe Brother a clean shirt, Gideon's shirt. He puts it on.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Gideon is sitting on the edge of his bed looking through the scraps of leftovers on his plate. He puts his pants on. As he moves about, his joints SNAP and POP. He picks up the empty plate.

INT. FRONT ROOM - NIGHT

Babe Brother is on the phone with the county morgue. He gets into an argument with the people on the other end of the phone.

BABE BROTHER

Mister... Mister... Excuse me for cutting you off but we pay taxes too. We should not have to pay you to take a 24-hour lunch break.

Babe Brother hands the phone to Linda.

BABE BROTHER (CONT'D)

The coroner said that he was out here, and knocked on the door and no one was here.

Junior steps over the body, holding a pot of coffee in his hand.

The Preacher is sitting with Suzie talking in a low voice.

Pat, Rhonda and Sunny come in with boxes of chicken snack.

Linda hangs up the phone.

LINDA

He doesn't know when he will be out this way again. Somebody downtown is going to hear about this.

M.C.

They just do that in the colored neighborhood. If he had been white, they would had him on his feet and out of here.

PAT

I got white meat and I got dark meat. I know it sounds cruel but we have to eat.

Gideon comes in walking very slowly, holding his plate out. Everyone is shocked. Gideon is completely unaware of the period that he has been sick.

GIDEON

What, are you having another party?

SUZIE

You better come sit down. You are still sick.

GIDEON

Gal, you're talking to John Henry. When was I sick?

JUNIOR

You have been out for almost three weeks.

The Preacher gives him a pat on the back and shakes Gideon's hand.

PREACHER

We had long conversations with the Lord about you. Didn't we, Sister Suzie? I said we need him down here, Lord.

Gideon smiles in appreciation. He pushes his plate out to Pat, indicating that he wants it filled with chicken. Gideon is about to bite into the chicken when he notices Harry's feet sticking out. He points with the chicken in his hand. He has a mystified look on his face.

OKRA

That's our friend Harry.

GIDEON

Not our Harry?

OKRA

I wish it wasn't.

Gideon seems to weaken for a moment.

GIDEON

What happened to him?

HATTIE

He dropped dead.

HERMAN

Hattie, you can be so mean.

GIDEON

How long has he been dead?

SUZIE

Since this morning.

GIDEON

What happened to your hand?

SUZIE

I cut it on an old rusty knife.

Gideon is deeply concerned.

GIDEON

What did you put on it?

SUZIE

It's healing now.

Gideon looks over at his two sons as if to ask them about it.

GIDEON

I hope you will take care of your
mother better than that when I'm
gone.

Junior and Babe Brother both have their heads down. Linda and
Sunny move closer to Babe Brother.

GIDEON (CONT'D)

Babe Brother, is that my shirt that
you're wearing?

BABE BROTHER

Yes.

GIDEON

How come you're not wearing my
shoes?

BABE BROTHER

They're too big.

Gideon stares at Babe Brother and then looks around towards Harry.

GIDEON

When is the undertaker coming?

LINDA

They can't say. I'll try calling them again.

Hattie moves closer to Herman and speaks so only he can hear.

HATTIE

Why don't M.C. and you drag him to your house?

Herman moves away with a look of disdain.

MARSH

Harry didn't have any relatives living, did he?

M.C.

Harry was in the world by himself.

MARSH

Somebody has to take responsibility for him.

PAT

Why don't you look through his things to see if you can find a number?

Okra, Marsh, Hattie, Herman, and M.C. go to Harry's room, leaving Suzie and Gideon sitting opposite each other with the door to the kitchen separating them. Junior, the Preacher and Pat are eating chicken. Linda is on the phone trying to get through to the morgue.

LINDA

How do you like that? They hung up in my face. I'll fix them. I'll show them just how mean I can get.

She rapidly dials the number. There is a BUSY SIGNAL.

LINDA (CONT'D)

This has been a nightmare.

INT. BEDROOM - RIGHT

M.C. and Marsh are going through Harry's boxes. They take out old blues records, books, a big Bible, and books on Dunbar.

MARSH

These are letters to his son.

Hattie reads the letters in a corner by herself. She stops reading for a moment.

HATTIE

I still don't know if I was right about Harry.

She seems frustrated with herself not being able to come to terms about who was Harry.

EXT. FRONT YARD - NIGHT

A crowd of people are standing around looking at Gideon's house.

INT. FRONT ROOM - NIGHT

The Preacher is sleep in his chair, SNORING loudly. Babe Brother and Linda are sitting together, talking in almost a whisper. Sunny is asleep in his lap. Babe Brother is finding it difficult to apologize for his recent behavior.

BABE BROTHER

I have more sense than to give up everything, my family, you and Sunny. It wasn't me, I mean the real me inside my body. I'm glad it's over. It's like a veil has been lifted.

LINDA

Like a veil has been lifted?

BABE BROTHER

It's like I've been swimming in muddy waters.

LINDA

Like muddy waters?

BABE BROTHER

It was like all those things old country people try to tell you what hell is like.

LINDA

You were in hell?

BABE BROTHER

I couldn't believe the things I was doing. It was like an internal struggle going on inside my body.

LINDA

Do you think you won?

BABE BROTHER

It was nip and tuck.

LINDA

And what lesson have we learned
from all of this, Babe Br... Sam...
I mean Samuel?

BABE BROTHER

I guess it proves you really care
about me. You hung in there.

Linda looks at Babe Brother for a length of time.

GIDEON

When are you boys going to fix that
roof?

BABE BROTHER

Soon as I rest a bit.
(beat)
I meant as soon as we are back to
normal again, anytime.

GIDEON

Here I am thinking about myself
when poor Harry is resting on the
floor of the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Harry's body lies there motionless.

INT. FRONT ROOM - DAY

The Preacher is SNORING violently.

Babe Brother is asleep on the floor. Sunny is asleep sitting
on Linda's lap. Linda's feet rest on Babe Brother's chest.

Junior and Pat are looking at the baby pictures. Pat is
holding her hand across her stomach feeling the baby kick.
Rhonda is asleep in a chair.

Suzie and Gideon are sitting at the dining room table. Suzie
is cutting the dead leaves off of a small potted plant.

SUZIE

It feels like a storm has passed...
Hattie read some of Harry's letters
to a woman he had a child by. The
child had died and he was writing
to give her some comfort. Hattie
didn't know that deep down at the
bottom of Harry's hate, there was
some love.

The SOUND of Rodney's trumpet is heard but is no longer irritating.

GIDEON

Did I ever tell you the story about the man who wanted to make his own mind up about heaven and hell? He didn't want nobody's opinion but his own.

Suzie doesn't pay any attention; she is involved with her potted plant. Gideon looks over at the Preacher, who is still asleep.

GIDEON (CONT'D)

He's going to check out heaven first. He gets a round trip ticket to heaven. He gets in heaven and finds it just like back home. People dripping with sweat, working in the fields, hardly surviving. He asked a man who was getting a drink of water, "I thought the streets were paved with gold." "They are but you won't see them," he said. "Boy, you got to work day and night cause idleness is sinfulness." So he takes the other half of his ticket and takes the express to hell. He sees people stretched out on their backs kicking back, picking their teeth. "Man, this is a dream." He asked, "What's you'll doing?" They all hollered back, "Sinning." The devil was shaking hands with everyone and came up to him and said, "Please to meet you." He asked, "I thought you'll was supposed to be burning in fire." Someone said, "Man, ain't no fire down here except under that pot of chitlins." The man was going go ask the preacher back on earth...

SUZIE

I don't want to hear any joke about colored people being in hell. You're being irreverent.

GIDEON

I'm almost finished. I'm about to come to the punch line.

SUZIE

I don't want to hear any tales about colored people...

GIDEON

But these are white people,
anybody. The punch...

SUZIE

I don't care to hear any jokes
about people being in hell. This
cut on my hand reminds me that it
is nothing to laugh at.

GIDEON

It's only a tale.

The RATTLING of pots and dishes starts suddenly. Harry's body starts to sway gently as if he were about to get up. Everyone is frozen. Babe Brother and Linda remain asleep. The rocking caused by the earthquake doesn't wake them.

M.C., Herman, Okra and Hattie and Marsh enters the dining room. Harry's feet are seen in the kitchen still swaying.

M.C

Is that an earthquake?

HERMAN

It's something.

Babe Brother wakes in a sweat and sits next to Linda like a child needing protection.

BABE BROTHER

I'm cold. I need to get out into
the sunlight.

JUNIOR

What is it, noontime?

PREACHER

I wonder how they going to bury
this man.

HATTIE

Plant him in Potter's Field. He
doesn't need a marked grave.

HERMAN

Hattie, your true colors are
unbearable. You got some mean ways.
Don't worry about the boy getting a
burial. He still has some friends
left on this earth.

HATTIE

His winter has come and gone and I
know right now he is answering for
a lot of things.

M.C., Okra and Herman move away from Hattie.

PREACHER

It is my job to pray for his soul
and I would like to do that.

EXT. GIDEON'S HOUSE - DAY

Rhonda is sitting next to Sunny on the front porch. She has an angry expression. Sunny is trying to please her by offering her his airplane.
He pushes the airplane near her and she pushes it back with a violent shove. He persists in offering her his airplane.

A crowd of people is still standing around in front of Gideon's house.

MAN

Hey boy, you still got that dead
man in your house.

Sunny and Rhonda don't respond. A middle-aged woman, VIRGINIA, one of Gideon's neighbors, passes Sunny and Rhonda, knocks on the screen door and goes in.

INT. FRONT ROOM - DAY

VIRGINIA

I know you all haven't had a chance
to cook or do anything with that
dead man in your kitchen. You must
be starved to death. Some of your
neighbors have got together and we
set up a picnic table in my
backyard with food and everything
to feed all you all.

SUZIE

Virginia, that is so wonderful of
you all!

MARSH

If the dead wagon comes, we ought
to leave a note telling them we'll
be down the street at a picnic.

Gideon comes back in with Suzie, who is helping tie his tie. They all line up and file out the front door with Suzie and Gideon leading the way. Pat is holding her stomach with a thoughtful look on her face.

PAT

I think we better be ready.

Junior looks concerned as he follows Pat out the door. Sunny follows Rhonda, who is still mad at him. Babe Brother and

Linda are the last ones out. Babe Brother takes a long look in the direction of Harry as Linda pulls him out. She slams the door.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Harry's body lies on the floor. On the kitchen sink are Suzie's jars of cuttings, which have developed a maze of roots.

THE END