

**BLACK SNAKE MOAN**

Written by  
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Only one kind of blues...  
And that consists between male and female.  
- Son House

**EXT. RONNIE'S TRAILER - EARLY DAWN**

RAE is naked.

that  
strawberry  
skin.  
She is beautiful without trying.

small  
She stares at the distant trees. This is the South; the  
town of FISHERVILLE, TENNESSEE.

Soon Rae will be alone.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. RONNIE'S TRAILER - EARLY MORNING**

military  
RONNIE is 25 years old. His hair is cropped in a  
issue buzz.

love to  
Rae's face is wet with tears as Ronnie gently makes  
her. She touches his face and sobs like a child.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. RONNIE'S TRAILER - LATER THAT MORNING**

packing up

RONNIE is dressed in his National Guard fatigues,  
his gear.

with a  
at the  
GILL

Rae is now wearing a short jeans skirt and a T-shirt  
gray wolf print ironed on the front. There is a knock  
door. Rae flinches. Ronnie opens the door revealing  
MORTON, Ronnie's buddy from high school.

**GILL**

Still need a lift?

**RONNIE**

Yeah. Transmission's shot.

Gill and Rae's eyes meet. Gill sees that Rae is crying.

**GILL**

Gonna have a smoke.

nausea. He

Ronnie shuts the door and feels a wave of sudden  
rushes past Rae.

**RONNIE**

Shit...

**INT. RONNIE'S TRAILER - BATHROOM - MORNING**

head.

Ronnie is vomiting into the toilet as Rae rubs his  
Each painful dry heave makes Rae comfort him more.

**RAE**

Baby...

**EXT. RONNIE'S TRAILER - MORNING**

begins to

Ronnie places his duffle bag in Gill's truck. Rae  
cough.

**GILL**

You sick?

Rae doesn't answer.

The  
embrace.  
expression

Gill backs away, allowing Ronnie and Rae some privacy.  
two lovers stare into each others eyes and then  
Rae peeks over Ronnie's shoulder at Gill with an  
of dread. Anger seizes her.

**RAE**

This ain't gonna work.

**RONNIE**

Rae...

**RAE**

I don't see why we gotta lie 'bout  
it when you and I know this ain't  
gonna work.

**RONNIE**

(holds her face in  
his hands)  
Rae don't do this now...

**RAE**

It's stupid... It's so fucking stupid!

**RONNIE**

Rae!

Silence. Rae melts. Tears stream down her face.

**RONNIE**

(reaches in his pocket)  
Look it. I got somethin' for us.  
This is gonna help, okay.

**GILL**

You gonna miss your bus.

around

Ronnie removes a small digital watch and fastens it  
her wrist.

**RONNIE**

This watch here is gonna beep at  
midnight. Every night. That's when  
it comes up on you the hardest, right?

identical

Ronnie holds out his own wrist to show her his watch.

**RONNIE**

And wherever I'm at, my watch'll beep, too. We'll be thinkin' bout each other at the same time. Wherever we are.

and

Rae is shaking. He grips her by the back of her neck pushes their faces inches away. Eye to eye.

**RONNIE**

I gotta believe we can do this or I ain't gonna make it, Rae.

anxiety

Rae sees the fear in his eyes. She swallows her own and nods.

**RAE**

Okay... Okay.

They kiss passionately.

**RONNIE**

I love you.

away

Afraid of his swelling emotion, Ronnie quickly breaks from her.

Compelled

Rae watches as her love leaves in Gill's pick-up.

gravel

to follow, she absently walks after the truck, down the drive.

She stops. Silence. She is alone.

She

An intense wave of sorrow hits, like a kick to her gut.

flood of

gasps for breath as she struggles to hold back the her tears.

drive. Her

Rae drops to her knees, right there in the gravel hair falls in front of her face, masking her grief.

Her shoulders shudder.

repeatedly --  
burning Her middle finger begins to scratch at her thigh  
a nervous habit that has always accompanied this  
sensation that consumes her.

**RAE**

Shit.

it. Tears come to her. She's not going to be able to stop

**RAE**

Goddammit, Ronnie...

(shouting in  
frustration)

**GODDAMMIT!**

Her Rae is gripping the watch around her wrist for comfort.  
is breathing is already out of her control. The dizziness  
already upon her. The familiar burning.

knees. She inhales in gasps, rocking back and forth on her  
The late morning cicadas chirp in an undulating frenzy.

**RAE**

(shaking her head)

Mm-mm

(meaning "no")

Mm-mm... Mm-mm...

dizzy The scratching at her leg leaves a red mark. She is  
flush. with anxiety. Her teeth are clenched, her face is

**RAE**

**MM-MM! MM-MM! MMMMMMMMMMMM!**

**CUT TO:**

**INT. MOTEL ROOM - AFTERNOON**

TEHRONNE is fucking Rae from behind.

late

Tehronne is a muscular, dark-skinned, black male in his twenties.

small

Rae's face is crammed up against the mirror in the bathroom. Tehronne gets faster and pushes harder -- a stark contrast to her lovemaking with Ronnie.

stark

him

Rae comes. A severe coughing fit hits her. She pushes away with her ass.

**RAE**

We're done, right?

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. FISHERVILLE SQUARE - AFTERNOON**

wearing

Walking with his hands shoved deep into his pockets, his only suit and tie, is LAZARUS WOODS (LAZ). He is in late fifties, black, a strong face under his old fedora. He stares across the street into Dunn's Cafe.

his

fedora. He

She

ROSE WOODS, black, early forties, stands in the cafe. looks confident and resolute in her new green skirt.

front of

friend.

A brown Delta Olds pulls up into a parking space in Laz. Stepping out is REVEREND R.L., Laz's longtime friend. He is also black and in his late fifties.

**R.L.**

You ain't gonna make a fuss, are you?

(no answer)

Nothing a man can do when a woman make up her mind.

**LAZARUS**

I never laid a hand on her in anger. Not a day. Not even when I's drinkin'. But this business got me wonderin' what a good shake and slap would do

for her.

**R.L.**

That kind of talk is between us.  
Don't you go in there with that shit  
on your tongue.

**LAZARUS**

I didn't start this, R.L.

Laz tries to stop his lip from quivering: the man is  
hurting.

**R.L.**

You wanna pray with me 'fore you go  
in? Laz?

(R.L. touches Laz's  
arm and bows his  
head)

Heavenly Father...

**CUT TO:**

**INT. DUNN'S CAFE - AFTERNOON**

R.L.'s prayer is heard as Laz opens the front door to  
the  
cafe. He looks ill. Each step is painful.

**R.L. (V.O.)**

We do not question your divine plan  
for us, Oh God. But in these times,  
when our spirit lies in shadow. When  
we are lost.

Laz crosses to Rose's booth -- the distance seems to  
stretch  
out into eternity.

**R.L. (V.O.)**

We ask that you give us strength.  
Give us strength that surpasses all  
understanding. In your name we pray.  
Amen.

Laz sits across from his wife.

**ROSE**

Can't remember the last time I saw  
you in that suit.

**LAZARUS**

Your mother's funeral. I's a  
pallbearer, remember?

The waitress is kind and twangy as she asks for their  
order.

**WAITRESS**

Can I start you both off with some  
coffee 'fore I take your order?

**ROSE**

We won't be stayin' long. Coffee'll  
be fine.

The waitress leaves. The sounds of the cafe fill the  
silence.

**ROSE**

We leavin' this weekend. Deke got a  
friend in Mobile gonna get him a job  
at the water company...

**LAZARUS**

(interrupting)

If you come to talk about that  
muthafucka, I'm gonna get up and  
leave you sittin' pretty in that new  
suit he bought'cha.

**ROSE**

Think this about money still, ya old  
fool?

**LAZARUS**

Say what you gotta say, but I ain't  
gonna hear you speak his name to me.  
Not never. You hear?

**ROSE**

How many times we been over this,  
Laz? How many times?

The waitress places the coffee between them and leaves.

**ROSE**

Thought we was gonna be friendly  
about this.

**LAZARUS**

Carryin' on behind my back. Make me  
out to look like a fool to all our

people. Tell me, what's friendly about that?

**ROSE**

I'm not ready to grow old, Laz. Livin' with you. I feel it. Like I'm one foot in the dirt. Saw it happen to my momma. And that's not gonna happen to me. I got living to do.

**LAZARUS**

And you gonna live it with him?

Rose doesn't answer. Lazarus softens, touching her hand.

**LAZARUS**

Rose. Folks get sick. But you do what you can to get on the mend. Our marriage... it just got sick. That's all.

**ROSE**

Talk to me about sick. Ain't been right since I moved into that drafty house.

**LAZARUS**

I keep the heat on.

**ROSE**

That damned, rusty, radiator, bout burned the skin off my legs each time I passed.

**LAZARUS**

Kept us warm for twelve years.

It's over. Laz has lost her for good.

**ROSE**

I deserve better than this.

**LAZARUS**

Better'n me?

**ROSE**

Better than what you give.

**LAZARUS**

Rose... please...

**ROSE**

Laz... You can't say nothin'...

**LAZARUS**

If we get with a counselor. At the church, maybe they's...

**ROSE**

(the final interruption)

I don't love ya no more.

The words are daggers. Laz is wounded beyond concealment.

Rose picks up her purse, preparing to leave.

**ROSE**

I'm sorry you hurtin'. But, like I say, this the only life I got.

(waits for him to respond)

I said my piece.

She stands and attempts to walk away. Laz grips her tightly by the wrist.

**LAZARUS**

God forgive you, for how you done me...

**ROSE**

Let go...

**LAZARUS**

My Daddy told me that a younger woman would bleed me dry. And that's what you did. Ya bled me.

**ROSE**

Let go of my arm...

**LAZARUS**

Would'a chopped my arm off if you asked. And this how you do me!

**ROSE**

LAZ, I said let...!

**LAZARUS**

You better pray, gal. You better pray...

**ROSE**

(yanks free)

Don't you lay a CURSE ON ME!

The whole cafe is silent. All eyes are on Rose.

**ROSE**

(to customers)

Yeah, go'on! Look! See if I give a  
shit about any of you people!

And she's gone, right out the front door.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. MOTEL ROOM - AFTERNOON**

Tehronne is taking his time hanging his ice around his  
neck  
and wrists as he stands shirtless before the mirror.  
Rae is  
lying on the bed.

**RAE**

You got any money?

**TEHRONNE**

Thought you had a man for that.

**RAE**

(a heavy cough)

I said we wasn't gonna talk about  
him.

**TEHRONNE**

What we just did, you askin' for  
money, make a man stop. I ain't  
callin' you no ho. But I ain't gonna  
be played like no trick, neither.  
Remember... you called me.

**RAE**

Save that hustle talk to them field  
ballers you sell crack to.

**TEHRONNE**

What'd I tell you?

(kicks the bed)

I don't do none of that shit no more.  
I'm in communications now.

**RAE**

Stolen phone cards and two-ways is what you sayin'.

Rae starts coughing.

**TEHRONNE**

Mobile technology is the new fix for these niggaz, I'm tellin' you. I'm just lookin' ahead.

(takes out his wallet)

Anyways, ain't no money in drugs no more with these rednecks popping cough pills like they's Skittles. Hey, that's what you need, girl. Get you some cough medicine. What, you sick?

**RAE**

Just a cough. Sugar and a spoonful of Jack'll do it.

**TEHRONNE**

(takes out money)

Alright. How much you need, ho?

**RAE**

The hell you call me?

**TEHRONNE**

Eh, if the bootie fits...

quickly  
shoving  
and

Tehronne catches Rae's wrist as she goes to slap. He yanks her arm behind her back and bends her backwards, his face close to her own. He grips the money in a fist cocks it to punch -- all in jest.

**TEHRONNE**

You gonna get rough? Is that what you doin'?

looks

Rae's chest begins to heave with deep breaths. Tehronne looks down at her legs as she anxiously rubs them together.

**TEHRONNE**

(shakes his head)

I swear, I seen some buck-wild bitches in my time, but you the illest I

ever seen.

Rae gets control of the burning. She takes the money.

**RAE**

Just got a cough.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. FISHERVILLE SQUARE - DAY**

men  
Rae is prancing up the walkway on the square. Two young  
dressed for construction pass Rae.

**MAN**

It's already noon, Rae. You think  
that skirt should still be on?

**RAE**

(flips them off)  
If it weren't you could kiss my rebel  
cootch, ya faggot.

the  
The men keep walking as Rae coughs. She turns toward  
Fisherville Grocery.

**SANDY**

Cough drops or condoms?

mother,  
Sandy  
forties:  
Rae stops in her tracks, looking up at her estranged  
SANDY, smoking a cigarette outside the grocery store.  
has bleached hair with dark roots. She is in her late-  
once a sexy girl, now she's lost all her tread.

**RAE**

(surprised to see her)  
Didn't know you was workin' here  
now?

**SANDY**

I just like dressin' up in these  
goddamn blue vests.  
(takes a drag)  
Your money ticket get shipped today?

Rae walks away -- deeply affected by Sandy's presence.

**SANDY**

(calling after her)  
You let me know if I can be of any  
assistance.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. MELVIN'S FEED STORE - DAY**

Laz drives an old green Ford pick-up. He pulls the  
truck up to the front of the feed store and kills the engine.

LINCOLN, a 13-year-old black boy, comes out of the open  
loading door.

**LINCOLN**

You won't at the square this mornin'.

**LAZARUS**

Get me ten bags of mulch.

**LINCOLN**

Yes'sir.

Lincoln runs off. Laz yanks off his black tie.

**EXT. MELVIN'S FEED STORE - LATER**

Laz's Lincoln slaps the last bag of mulch into the bed of  
truck. Laz hands Lincoln a twenty.

**LAZARUS**

Keep the change on that.

**LINCOLN**

Naw... I got it, Mr. Lazarus.  
(makes change)  
You wanna tip me, best do it in butter  
beans. Momma say she need a bag 'a  
yours, none of that store-bought  
junk. That's what she said.

Laz smiles. He takes the change. Climbs in his truck.

**LAZARUS**

Alright, Lincoln. You come on by,  
I'll load you up.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. LAZARUS'S BARN - LATE DAY**

sea of  
the  
nose  
it:

Lazarus steers his tractor toward his small home in a lush green kudzu. He kills the engine and looks beyond the nose of his tractor. He lights a cigarette. Below the is the head of a rose garden with a painted sign under it:  
Rose's Roses.

shreds.

Laz inhales smoke and exhales hate. The tractor lunges forward, trampling the garden, ripping the flowers to

**CUT TO:**

**INT. BOJO'S - EARLY EVENING**

blue  
her  
selection.

MAYELLA is a heavy, forty-year-old black woman. Her neon tube top matches her short pants stretched across her healthy ass. She is flipping through the juke box selection.

**MAYELLA**

You gonna put some Luther Vandross in here? Shit, he black ain't he?

stout,

BOJO is reading a paper behind the bar. He's short and looking like a sad bull dog.

**BOJO**

He black alright, he just ain't blue.

**MAYELLA**

Why you stop havin' dancin' on Saturday? Used to have bands... all kind's live shit. Like a wake up in here, now.

**BOJO**

Folks can dance when they want. Didn't buy that mirror ball for nothin'.

**MAYELLA**

You seen my snake-skin shoes?

with

Mayella lifts up her leg and stretches it over the bar  
a provocative flourish. Her shoe is bright blue.

**MAYELLA**

They're from New York. My niece gets  
'em on the computer.

**LAZARUS**

They got blue snakes up north?

bar.

Mayella turns to Laz sipping a beer at the end of the

**MAYELLA**

Naw. They got some blue dye, though.  
You think them boots you got on come  
from a black cow?

**BOJO**

Wanna get on somebody 'bout live  
music, get on ol' Laz, there. He the  
one got this place shakin' back in  
the day.

**MAYELLA**

Don't gotta tell me. Me and my  
girlfriends use-ta talk 'bout them  
hard fingertips he got pickin' that  
guitar.

**LAZARUS**

Got'em pickin' peas, not strings.

touching

Mayella moves in close, with the tips of her tits  
his arm.

**MAYELLA**

They still hard?

**LAZARUS**

Mayella. It ain't happened yet. Ain't  
happenin' tonight.

**MAYELLA**

(retreating with a  
glare)  
I know you hurtin', Laz. I got ears,

you know. But you should know more'n  
me... ain't no better cure for them  
blues than some good pussy.

others. Mayella saunters over to the pool table with the

**BOJO**

Whole lotta woman, right there.

**LAZARUS**

She can still spread it around.

The door opens behind Laz. Bojo sees the man entering.

**BOJO**

Laz. We friends and all but... promise  
me you'll keep yo cool in my joint.

WOODS. Laz turns to see the door shut behind his brother, DEKE  
Bojo. He is younger than Laz and a bit smaller. Laz turns to

**LAZARUS**

I'm gonna finish my beer.

Deke slowly approaches Laz at the bar.

**DEKE**

Mind if I sit?

(no answer)

Rose said... it didn't go too well  
this afternoon. See, that's not how  
we wanted this to go down. I told  
her, I said, Rose, we ain't leavin'  
till we make peace with Laz. And  
that's God's truth. I laid it down.

**LAZARUS**

You laid it down.

**DEKE**

I did.

**LAZARUS**

Funny. Layin' it down... for my wife.

**DEKE**

We're not gonna get through this  
clean. But it don't need to get dirty.  
All this... it just come together

unexpected. You think I want to hurt you? I... I'd take a bullet for you, Laz.

The dry look on Laz's face could cool the sun.

**LAZARUS**

You wanna give that a try?

(to Bojo)

Bo. You still got that .22 behind the tap? My little brother say he'd take a bullet for me.

(into Deke's eyes)

You come here to ease your heart. Well, I ain't gonna give it to you. You took her into your bed, now you gotta lie in it.

Laz turns back to the bar. Deke begins to turn but stops.

**DEKE**

I'll always love you, Laz. Till the end of my...

In one quick movement, Laz grips Deke by the throat and smashes the bottom of his bottle into jagged shards.

**BOJO**

**LAZ!**

Laz pushes Deke back through the joint and slams him onto the pool table. He grips Deke's throat and holds the broken bottle up to his face.

**LAZARUS**

Cain slew Able. Slew him out of envy. And God put his mark on Cain for his sin. You want that mark, Deke? Give you that peace you come here for? I'll give it to you, just say that shit again. Say you love me. Go'on! Say YOU LOVE ME, NIGGA!

Lazarus slams the bottle down on the pool table, shattering it. Laz lifts his hand. His own blood leaks from between his fingers.

He wipes the blood across Deke's face.

**LAZARUS**

I'm through wit'cha both.

Laz releases Deke and exits. Deke calls after him.

**DEKE**

What'chu gonna do? Nothin'. YOU AIN'T  
**GONNA DO NOTHIN'!**

Laz slams the door behind him.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. FISHERVILLE HIGH SCHOOL - FOOTBALL FIELD - NIGHT**

The bleachers are packed with three generations of fans  
and  
family cheering their boys on the high school football  
field.

--  
Rae is sitting with her two girlfriends, JESSE and KELL  
two girls who graduated five years ago.

**JESSE**

(hands Rae a beer)  
Ronnie ship out this mornin'?

**RAE**

It's so stupid. Says to me that he  
don't want nothin' to do with no  
military career. Says he wants to  
move. Open up an auto shop with his  
uncle up in Knoxville. I said, okay.  
How about now? Let's go.

**KELL**

He'd be good for that. Shit, Ronnie  
knows cars.

**RAE**

He get stubborn. Starts talkin' 'bout  
obligation and duty and all that...  
Shit. I just want him to come home...  
I swear, if somethin' happens to  
him...

**KELL**

He fixed up that Buick for my uncle

Dale. He say it purrs like a kitten every morning.

**JESSE**

Nothing's gonna happen. Not like everybody over there is in the line of fire with them Arabs blowin' themselves up.

**RAE**

Can't be thinkin' bout him every second of my day. I'll go outta my gourd.

**JESSE**

Why should you waste your life waitin' and wonderin'. Not like you're married.

**RAE**

(takes a healthy swig)  
I begged him not to go. And he did.

**KELL**

(screaming at the field)  
**PUNT YOU FUCKERS!**

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. CONNER'S HOUSE - THE KEGGER - NIGHT**

a  
up  
friend  
Dirty South rap pounds the ears from a hoopty Olds with backseat full of bass. Rae, Kell, and Jesse are walking to the rowdy party through the variety of parked cars. A girl rushes past the trio, vomiting on herself as a friend comes to her aid.

**JESSE**

These baby chicks just can't hold their Jello shots. I'm tellin' ya.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. CONNER'S HOUSE - THE KEGGER - NIGHT**

Dusters. CONNER is one of the linebackers for the Fisherville

A wasted girl sits on his lap as Kell rolls a joint.

**CONNER**

Tennessee Vols gotta practice indoors  
just so those Florida State sons-a-  
bitches don't spy on their plays  
with satellites and shit.

**KELL**

Satellites... You mean in space?

**CONNER**

Uh-huh.

**KELL**

Good thing you can block, Conner,  
cuz you're dumb as a sack of shit.

Conner Jesse notices Rae coughing. She pulls her aside as  
rambles.

**JESSE**

You wanna go home?

**RAE**

It gets worse there. Leavin' me to  
my own mind. That's just not good.

**JESSE**

(pours a shot of vodka)  
Here. Pound this and I'll join you.

Rae and Jesse take a strong shot. It burns.

**JESSE**

One more. Fuck the chaser.

friend, As they pound one more, Rae notices Gill, Ronnie's  
staring at her from across the room.

**JESSE**

Better?

**RAE**

Yeah.

BATSON and MARK approach Jesse and Rae. They are both  
sophomores, both skinny and harmless.

**BATSON**

Hey, Jess.

**JESSE**

Boys.

**BATSON**

You robotrippin' tonight?

**JESSE**

I'm just gonna smoke.

Rae peeks at Gill maneuvering through the room.

**BATSON**

(rummages in his  
pockets)

Got eight packs of DXM. Oxycontin.  
Got a shit load of Coricidin if you  
want to get out-a-body, n'all.

**JESSE**

You just trying to get me outta my  
clothes.

**RAE**

Be right back.

Gill. Rae pushes through the crowd of drunken kids to get to

**RAE**

It's not like I can't go out and  
have fun with my friends.

**GILL**

You think I'm Ronnie's spy or  
somethin'? Come tomorrow that dumb-  
ass gonna be halfway round the world  
tryin' to keep his head on his  
shoulders. You think he's gonna be  
thinkin' about you?

**RAE**

You go to hell.

Rae pushes through the crowd, back toward the others.

**RAE**

(to Batson)  
How many to fuck me up?

Rae  
Conner's  
echoes and

QUICK CUTS of: Batson popping out five red cough pills.  
swallowing all five and chasing them with vodka.  
girl falls off his lap. Kell laughs. The laughter  
grows as we:

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. CONNER'S HOUSE - THE KEGGER - HIS PARENT'S  
WATERBED -  
NIGHT**

implied.  
pleasure as  
finishes

CLOSE ANGLES: We never quite see the whole of what is  
Rae's eyes, Jesse's mouth, a boy's shoulder.  
The room is packed with bodies. Rae laughs with  
her eyes attempt to focus. The kid on top of her  
and rolls off.

**JESSE**

What's so funny?

and  
football  
behind.

Jesse is straddling a guy in an arm chair, Chinese-eyed  
bouncing. Rae tries to respond coherently as another  
player rolls her over on all fours and takes her from

**RAE**

(laughing)

Oh... I'm just on a water bed... And  
it's just... so... Goddamn... funny!

at

A few coughs. Rae focuses to see a younger guy sitting  
her eye level.

**RAE**

Hi.

**BRYAN**

Hey.

**RAE**

You ain't the kicker, are you?

**BRYAN**

No, ma'am.

**RAE**

Cuz let me tell you, you boys gotta run the ball more. You get into a kicking game, ya'll gonna lose.

**BRYAN**

Can I put it in your mouth?

**RAE**

Okay.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. LAZARUS'S HOME - THE BEDROOM - NIGHT**

Laz kills the rest of his whiskey. He squeezes his eyes closed as the liquor burns his throat. He tosses the bottle into a trash bag he is holding.

Laz continues throwing out all of Rose's make-up and hair products. With one broad sweep, he cleans off her vanity.

**INT. LAZARUS'S HOME - NIGHT**

Laz opens the front door and tosses the two bags outside. Stumbling, he kneels next to the coiled radiator against the wall opposite the door. He talks to it like an old friend.

**LAZARUS**

Seem like you and me... we drove her away. That's what we did. Now we...

(singing softly)

Drinkin' muddy water... a'sleep in a hollow log...

A thought.

**INT. LAZARUS'S HOME - THE BEDROOM - NIGHT**

wipes a

Laz pulls out a guitar case from under the bed. He  
layer of dust off and opens it.

**INT. LAZARUS'S HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT**

at  
eyes,

He gently cradles the guitar in his big hands and sits  
his kitchen table. Tunes the strings. He closes his  
swimming in drunken sorrow.

**LAZARUS**

You gonna do this?

guitar,

Laz plays the blues, Mississippi, Bentonian style: one  
one voice, a mess of pain.

**LAZARUS**

(singing, his eyes  
closed)

Just like a bird without a feather,  
you know  
I'm lost without your love.  
Just like a bird without a feather,  
you know  
I'm lost without your love.  
You know I need your love just like  
the angels need heaven above.

The music continues as we:

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. CONNER'S HOUSE - THE KEGGER - THE WOODS OUT BACK -  
NIGHT**

through  
football

Lazarus's blues is all we hear as four guys chase Rae  
the woods. She is in her shirt and panties, wearing  
shoulder pads.

and

She is completely wasted. Lost. The ground rocks back  
forth with each step. Trees pass in a slow-motion haze.

**LAZARUS**

(singing)

Well I sure did shot my baby, but I

did it because she did me wrong.  
Well I sure did shot my baby, but I  
did it because she did me wrong.  
You know the judge called it murder  
now the penitentiary is my home.

tackles  
with  
Rae grips a tree to steady herself, but a team member  
her. The woods spin and distort as someone mounts her  
ease.

**LAZARUS**

(singing)

I loved that woman, she said she  
didn't love no one but me.  
I loved that woman, she said she  
didn't love no one but me.

passing  
could  
the  
Rae smiles as she lifts her hand up to the stars,  
the writhing back of the guy on top of her. If she  
just grab a star she would feel safe again.  
She tries to snatch one. She can't. Her hand drops as  
the boy stands and takes off after his friends tossing the  
football.  
Rae lies motionless on the ground.

**LAZARUS**

(singing)

Yeah but I caught my baby cheating.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. LAZARUS'S HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT**

A tear rolls down Laz's cheek.

**LAZARUS**

(singing)

Now my home ain't where it used to  
be.

His guitar groans its last for the night.

**CUT TO:**

THAT

**EXT. CONNER'S HOUSE - THE KEGGER - FRONT YARD - LATER  
NIGHT**

and

Rae is wasted. She is still wearing her shirt, panties  
shoulder pads as she steps over passed-out teenagers.

**RAE**

Jes? Jesse?  
(trips over a sprinkler)  
Oh shit... Wait... Wait... STOP!

**GILL**

Stop what?

Rae doesn't look up. The Coricidin is tripping her out.

**RAE**

(coughing)  
The ground is... turnin' upside down.  
I'm gonna...  
(coughing)  
I'm gonna fall off...

Gill reaches down and pulls off the shoulder pads. The  
coughing fit passes.

**RAE**

Oh. That feels so much better.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. ROAD - NIGHT**

Gill's truck flies down the dark road.

**INT. GILL'S TRUCK - NIGHT**

Rae is looking out the window, drifting in and out.

**GILL**

Thought you had a skirt earlier.

**RAE**

I got others.

engine. He

Gill pulls to the side of the road and kills the  
watches Rae tilt her head from side to side.

**GILL**

This thing you got... I've heard people say, you'd fuck a tree if it was handy. I can see that.

(shakes his head)

But that nigger Tehronne. Thinks he's some player cuz he hustles dope and stolen hubcaps. I mean, I can see a tree. But that piece of shit?

**RAE**

(lost in hazy sorrow)

I begged him. Don't see why he had to go...

**GILL**

I bet you did. Just had to get that black cock up in you. I swear to God. What Ronnie sees... you disgust me.

resistance. Her  
unzips  
Gill grabs her legs and spreads them with no  
head rolls from side to side on the truck seat as Gill  
his pants.  
Rae starts giggling.

**GILL**

The fuck you laughin' at?

**RAE**

(giggling)

You don't got half what Tehronne got.

Gill flinches upright. A rage builds in his eyes.

**EXT. ROAD - NIGHT**

Rae  
From outside the steamed truck window, we see Gill beat  
repeatedly.  
Silence.

**GILL**

(muffled from the  
inside)

Get up! I ain't playin'! OPEN YOUR

**GODDAMN EYES!**

Silence.

moving.  
He opens the truck door, fear in his eyes. Rae isn't  
Blood is on her face.

**GILL**

Oh, Jesus...

to  
A hasty idea. He pushes her out of the truck. She falls  
the dark pavement in a tangle of her own limbs.

motionless  
The door slams. Gill floors the gas. Rae lies  
alone under the stars.

beep.  
Her watch alarm goes off: Beep-beep. Beep-beep. Beep-

**CUT TO:**

**INT. A BUS - NIGHT**

alarm in  
Ronnie is asleep on the bus, unaware that his watch  
beeping at him.

A Guardsman sitting next to him shakes Ronnie awake.

**GUARDSMAN**

Hey.

sadness  
Ronnie silences the alarm. He regards the watch with  
and affection.

**EXT. FREEWAY - NIGHT**

night.  
The bus roars past. The red brake lights fade into

**FADE TO**

**BLACK:**

**INT. LAZARUS'S HOME - KITCHEN - EARLY MORNING**

His  
Lazarus has fallen asleep sitting at his kitchen table.

the eyes open. Standing is difficult. The guitar falls to floor.

up The phone rings. Dizziness hits, but he manages to pick the receiver.

**LAZARUS**

Huh?

**INT. CHURCH OF GOD / LAZARUS'S HOME - EARLY MORNING**

back R.L. is on his cell phone. He is placing hymnals in the racks of the church pews.

**R.L.**

Bojo called. Said you got to see your brother at the long end of a broken bottle.

**LAZARUS**

You gonna preach 'bout turnin' the other cheek?

**R.L.**

I think you did alright by God under the circumstances.

(R.L. pauses)

Your people are here for you, Laz. This is your home. No shame in showing your face.

**LAZARUS**

Don't know if God wanna see me.

**R.L.**

He knows where ya at. Just answer the door if he come knockin'.

Laz hangs up the phone.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. LAZARUS'S HOME - LATE MORNING**

bags Lazarus steps out onto his porch. He picks up the trash full of Rose's things and walks down the gravel drive to the

road.

**LATE**

**EXT. LAZARUS' HOME - WHERE THE DRIVE MEETS THE ROAD -  
MORNING**

shut,

Laz tosses the bags inside his trash cans.  
He's really hung over this morning. His eyes squeeze  
he grips his neck in pain.

**LAZARUS**

Mmmmmmmmmmm... Mm!

his

His eyes open. They remain fixed beyond us. The pain in  
face is replaced with grave confusion.

Rae lies on the side of the road.

mist,

white,

Her T-shirt and panties are damp from the early morning  
her face caked with dried blood. Her skin is deathly  
her mouth open, her eyes shut and swollen.

her

Lazarus carefully steps toward her. He leans down over  
face.

**LAZARUS**

Sweet... Jesus...

Rae coughs. Laz flinches.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. LAZARUS' HOME - LATE MORNING**

is

The door slams against the wall as it swings open. Laz  
carrying Rae, unconscious and limp, in his arms.

a

He lays her down on the couch by the radiator. He pulls  
quilt over her cold skin. With a twist of the valve the  
radiator moans to life.

to

Laz takes out his bandana and cleans her face. He tries

wake her.

**LAZARUS**

Little lady? Miss? You need to open  
your eyes for me. Could ya do that?

Her eyes open slightly -- just slits of white.

**LAZARUS**

There we go. There we go. Just like  
you doin'. Go'on.

She whispers as she touches her fingers to his cheek.

**RAE**

(a raspy inhale)  
Teh... Tehronne?

**LAZARUS**

Tehronne? Tehronne done this?

fit. Laz  
looks  
followed

A labored breath followed by the most pitiful cough  
tries to calm her as her lungs fight for oxygen. Laz  
scared as the coughing stops in a desperate wheeze  
by silence.

**INT. LAZARUS'S HOME - KITCHEN - MORNING**

flips

Laz pulls the phone off its cradle on the wall and  
through the phone book.

His fingers scan down the listings and stops on POLICE  
DEPARTMENT. He dials and listens.

**OPERATOR**

(a recorded voice)  
You've reached the Fisherville Police  
Department. Your call will be answered  
in the order it was received. If  
this is an emergency, please, hang  
up and dial 9-1-...

over at  
seen

Slam! Fingers hit the phone cradle. Lazarus dials 911.  
As soon as he places the phone to his ear, he looks  
Rae sprawled out on his couch. Her bare legs can be

peeking out from under the quilt.

Fear hits him. He slams the phone down again.

Laz crosses to the couch and gently touches her head.

**LAZARUS**

(softly)

I'm'a go into town. Get you some  
medicine to fix you up. You just  
rest, okay, gal? You just sleep. Get  
that chill out'cha.

Laz touches the radiator. It burns him.

**LAZARUS**

God... damn...

**EXT. ROAD - AFTERNOON**

Laz's Ford roars down the shaded street towards town.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. FISHERVILLE SQUARE - MACON DRUGS - AFTERNOON**

Laz parks his truck in front of MACON DRUGS and heads  
inside.

An old black man named RED sits on a bench next to an  
older  
white man in his early eighties holding a cane. RED is  
the  
paid caretaker of MELVIN.

**MELVIN**

How's the squash this year?

**LAZARUS**

It's good, Mister Melvin. I'll bring  
ya some.

Laz rushes inside.

**INT. MACON DRUGS - AFTERNOON**

The variety of cough medicine confuses Laz as he  
examines  
them.

dress  
her  
manner.

ANGELA approaches Laz. She is dressed in a floral print  
with a white lab coat. Angela has a few extra pounds on  
but she wears it well with her caring face and sweet

**ANGELA**

Lazarus?

**LAZARUS**

(startled)

Oh! Gave me a start.

**ANGELA**

I'm sorry. It's these soft shoes I  
wear for my back.

**LAZARUS**

You hurt it?

**ANGELA**

I'm standing most of my day. They're  
for support.

(a smile)

Didn't see you in church this mornin'.

**LAZARUS**

(tries to lie)

Been on the crop. May need to get  
some extra hands if I don't want to  
work on Sundays.

**ANGELA**

Well. It's good to see you.

remains

Angela wants the conversation to continue but Laz  
silent. She smiles awkwardly.

**LAZARUS**

Angela?

**ANGELA**

Yes?

**LAZARUS**

I need to uh...

**ANGELA**

Go on, Laz. You can talk to me.

**LAZARUS**

My little niece... she got this deep cough.

**ANGELA**

You take her to a doctor?

**LAZARUS**

(struggles to lie)

No. No, she can't go. Mean to say... they's just no money fo'a doctor.

Her daddy left for a job, and uh... give her to me to look on. I just...

(a pitiful pause)

I don't know what to do.

Angela thinks for a moment.

**ANGELA**

You wait right here.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. LAZARUS' HOME - DAY**

her

Snot and spittle has run down the side of Rae's face -- eyelids stick together as she tries to open them.

aware

There is a creak, followed by another. Rae has become that someone is slowly walking up the front porch.

is a

The door opens. Silhouetted in the day's blinding light white man in his 40's. His face is indistinguishable to affected gaze.

Rae's

Is this a dream?

lighter

He stands above her and lights a cigarette. The Zippo clasps shut. The man lowers it to his side where Rae it clearly. A bald eagle is printed on the side, a sight that makes Rae's eyes open wide in horror.

can see

sight

Her breath grows deeper -- a girlish plea. This is no

dream --

it's a nightmare.

**RAE**

Mm-mm... Mm-mm...

eyes  
cigarette. A  
blanket off

A massive hand slaps down over her mouth. Her crusted  
peer above the hairy knuckles. He sucks on the  
red cherry blazes at the end. The man pushes the  
of her and grips her panties.

clenched

Rae's eyes close. She knows what is next. In his  
fist, the panties are ripped off.

**RAE**

**NOOOOO!**

falls  
shaking,  
Her  
guitar on  
trembling

Rae flinches awake from the fever-induced nightmare and  
to the wooden floor, drenched in sweat. Weakened and  
she scampers away, finally collapsing in the kitchen.  
hand reaches out and lands on the strings of Laz's  
the floor. She grips the steel strings with her  
fingers.

A single bass note twangs as she passes out.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. MACON DRUGS - AFTERNOON**

approach,

Angela stands between the aisles, motioning Laz to  
away from the girl at the counter.

**ANGELA**

Is your niece older than 12?

**LAZARUS**

Oh, she older than that.

She hands him a white box with cough syrup inside.

**ANGELA**

My sister got a bad cough with her pneumonia. I just copied her prescription. You don't need to pay anything... just take it. But if she gets worse, you give me a call. I wrote my number on the box.

**LAZARUS**

This gonna get you in trouble?

**ANGELA**

Not if no one finds out.

Laz doesn't know what to say. He puts the box in his pocket.

**LAZARUS**

Thank you.

(suddenly awkward)

Oh. My wife. She had a card here for her migraine pills. She ain't gonna be around no more... So if you...

**ANGELA**

I already tossed that out.

(takes a step closer)

Somethin' you should'a done to that woman long ago... how she treated you. Of course, that's none of my business.

**LAZARUS**

(smiles)

Don't make it less true.

Angela returns the smile.

**EXT. MACON DRUGS - AFTERNOON**

Laz opens his truck door and stops. At the pool-hall across the square, Laz sees a green Cutlass with chrome rims.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. POOL HALL - AFTERNOON**

Laz enters the empty pool hall. Tehronne is playing a game with a skinny playa-wanna-be dressed in flea-market Fubu.

CHARLIE, the owner, approaches Laz from the bar.

**CHARLIE**

Hey, Lazarus. We closed up on Sunday.

**LAZARUS**

Need a word with Tehronne.

**CHARLIE**

(calling to the back)

Yo, T! Laz wanna holla at cha.

**TEHRONNE**

Come on back, Cuz.

as Charlie nods Laz on. He crosses to the back pool table  
Tehronne sinks the 8. Tehronne looks at his friend.

**TEHRONNE**

Do you call it a game when only one  
man win each time? I think you call  
it a damn shame.

**LAZARUS**

Word wit'cha. In private.

few Tehronne hands his friend the pool cue. The two take a  
steps away to talk.

**TEHRONNE**

You need some weed?

**LAZARUS**

Been years since I fooled with that.  
(tries to find the  
words)

You know a white girl? Dirty blond  
hair, split down the middle like?

**TEHRONNE**

(smiles)

That ain't up to me to hook you up.  
Naw what I mean? She her own, you  
know?

**LAZARUS**

Huh?

**TEHRONNE**

I don't pimp that.

(silence)

You talkin' about who I think you talkin' about, you mean Rae. Rae Doole. Sexy little split tail, like you say. I can't hook you up with that. I got two girls. One ain't in town, the other one pregnant. So... you on your own.

**LAZARUS**

This Rae... you get with her?

**TEHRONNE**

Shit. Who hasn't?

**LAZARUS**

Why you say that?

**TEHRONNE**

She got a spare minute she'll snatch up anyone... but me, I'm different. Sometimes she need the real deal, so she call me up. Girl got an itch. You know... what's a nigga to do?

**LAZARUS**

She like it rough? You like beatin' on her?

**TEHRONNE**

That ain't my scene. If that's somethin' you into...

**LAZARUS**

Now, hold up.

**TEHRONNE**

See, that girl is in my favor. You heard me, nigga? You fuck with her rough, and you got me to fuck wit.

**LAZARUS**

You collar that dog, boy. I ain't gonna hurt nobody. Just wanted to know who she was.

**TEHRONNE**

Like I say, you wanna hook that up... I ain't in ya way. That switch of hers been all over this town. Got that sickness, you know.

**LAZARUS**

What'chu sayin'?

**TEHRONNE**

She a freak. Got what you call a sexual addiction.

Lazarus looks at him with a furrowed brow. Confused.

**LAZARUS**

What'chu sayin'?

**TEHRONNE**

What I'm tellin' you. Girl gotta get dick or she go crazy.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. LAZARUS' HOME - DAY**

Rae  
rushes  
Laz opens his own door with caution. He turns to see  
sprawled in his kitchen in her panties and T-shirt. He  
to her side.

**LAZARUS**

Gal? Miss Rae? Rae, you hear me?

her  
Lazarus lifts her sweaty body off the floor and moves  
back to the couch.

haze.  
Consciousness briefly returns to Rae in her feverish

**FLASH TO:**

**CLOSE UP - FLASHBACK**

The white-knuckled hand clutched around her mouth.

**FLASH**

**BACK TO:**

**INT. LAZARUS' HOME - DAY**

Rae flinches and flails. She falls to the floor.

**LAZARUS**

Hold on, now. Hold on!

to Rae's eyes are open and filled with fear. She struggles  
flee as Laz holds her in place, trying to reassure her.

**LAZARUS**

Now, I ain't gonna hurt'cha. Calm  
down, Miss.

(she fights, coughs)

Listen... Listen... LISTEN NOW, GAL!

(Rae settles in his  
grip)

I ain't gonna hurt ya, hear? Gotta  
get you well. Now, look me... HEY!  
Look me in the eye.

face Rae is too weak to talk or move. Laz clutches her small  
in his dark hands.

**LAZARUS**

Open your eyes. Go'on, now. You need  
to see, ain't no harm here. Ain't no  
harm.

(Rae calms)

My name is Lazarus Woods. And I ain't  
gonna let you die.

Rae's eyes roll back.

Lazarus looks terrified as she cranes her head back and  
forward. Her mouth opens.

and In her sickened state, with the force of something evil  
shriek deep inside, Rae clasps her open mouth over Laz's. A  
the sounds in his brain as he holds her tighter, allowing  
Laz kiss to grow in intensity. Rae falls to her stomach as  
sees abruptly stands and stumbles across the room. What he  
chills him to the bone.

a Rae is writhing on the floor as if she is possessed --  
rant of raspy words pour from her mouth.

**RAE**

...you don't... touch me... s'no...  
NO! Mm-mm... Mm-MMMMMMMMMMMMMM! N-  
N'you FUCK!

the  
picks  
to

Lazarus gets spooked by what he is seeing. He looks to  
mantle. His weathered Bible lies in a coat of dust. He  
it up as a wave of the burning hits Rae.  
She clutches her breast and crotch, rolling from side  
side.

**RAE**

Mm-mm... mm-mm... Ma-muh... Ma-MUH!  
(sudden anger, shouting)  
See... S... See if 'I GIVE... GIVE'A...  
**SHIT...**

**FLASH TO:**

**INT. DUNN'S CAFE - MORNING - FLASHBACK**

are  
Rae.

Rose is shouting at the customers in the cafe. Her eyes  
white like Rae's. Her voice is not her own but that of

**ROSE/RAE**

(screaming)  
**'BOUT ANY OF YOU PEOPLE!**

**FLASH**

**BACK TO:**

**EXT. LAZARUS' HOME - DAY**

door  
still  
drive,  
cough  
dark

Laz runs out of his own home, not even shutting the  
behind him. He gets half way down his drive, the Bible  
clutched in his hand. He stops.  
In a panic, Laz opens his Bible, places it down on the  
face up, creating a barrier to evil. He hears a choking  
inside the house. Rae is fighting for breath beyond the  
door.

Silence. Laz reaches down and picks up his Bible.  
A passage catches his eye. As he reads, the fear  
vanishes  
He  
looks back at his house, his faith is renewed.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. LAZARUS'S HOME - THE BATHROOM - DAY**

The Bible is slammed down on top of the toilet tank.  
The  
bathtub faucet coughs as Laz twists the cold water  
knob.

**INT. LAZARUS' HOME - KITCHEN - DAY**

The freezer door opens. He snatches four trays of ice.

**INT. LAZARUS' HOME - THE BATHROOM - DAY**

The trays crack. The ice cubes bounce into the tub.

**INT. LAZARUS' HOME - DAY**

Rae's lips are dried and split as she pants, lost in  
dizzying  
fever. Laz lifts her.

**INT. LAZARUS' HOME - THE BATHROOM - DAY**

Laz kneels on one knee to put her into the tub.  
A horrible cry from Rae as Laz wrestles with her,  
keeping  
her submerged in the ice cold water.

**LAZARUS**

I know, child, I know. Gotta break  
that fever now.

(Rae sobs, struggles)

Don't mean to hurt'chu. But I ain't  
lettin' you die.

(holding her down)

**I AIN'T LETTIN' YOU DIE!**

Rae is motionless. Exhausted. Her eyes are open but  
blind.

Her lip trembles. Her body shakes from the freezing  
water.

Laz rubs the hair from her face gently. He reaches over  
to  
the Bible on the toilet and opens it to read.

**LAZARUS**

Put fear of the Devil in me, gal.  
Got me spooked like I's a kid, I  
tell you.

(flips through the  
pages)

But the good Lord, He showed me what  
to do. He come knockin' like my man  
R.L. say... listen here...

(Rae sobs like a child)

This here Matthew. He talkin' on how  
Jesus was healin' the sick. And a  
man come up to the disciples and he  
say...

(reads deliberately)

Have mercy on my son, for he is a  
lunatic, and sore vexed...

(to Rae)

He got the devil in his mind and  
sores on his skin.

(reads)

And he brought the boy to the  
disciples, but they could NOT cure  
him.

Rae's shivering is abating. Her eyes fight to stay  
open. Laz  
touches her forehead to test her temperature.

**LAZARUS**

(reading)

Then Jesus answered and said, O  
faithless and perverse generation...  
how long shall I suffer you? Bring  
the boy hither to me. And Jesus  
rebuked the devil.

(to Rae)

You hear that?

(reads)

Then the disciples say... Why could  
not we cast the devil out? And Jesus  
said unto them...

Rae's eyes begin to close. Laz gently touches her head  
to

rile her awake.

**LAZARUS**

Listen now... This what he sayin' to us. He say...

(reads)

If ye have faith... if ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto a mountain, remove hence... and it... shall... move. And nothin'... nothin' shall be impossible to you.

(to Rae)

You hear that? You just need a bit of faith. You just gotta believe you gonna get well, like I do.

He touches her forehead again. Her eyes close.

**LAZARUS**

That's better. You coolin' down. Okay. You rest. Okay. You rest.

Laz leans against the wall, spent.

**EXT. LAZARUS' HOME - SUNSET**

fade  
The cicadas sing in a rising chorus as the clouds above from copper to crimson.

**FADE TO**

**BLACK.**

**INT. LAZARUS' HOME - NIGHT**

The faint echo of Rae's fevered panting.

Her  
has  
She lies on the couch wrapped in a quilt, shivering. eyes remain closed, her face drenched with sweat. Laz cleaned her facial wounds, using a few Band-Aids.

**BOOM!**

Rae  
fire  
An explosion ignites the windows surrounding the cabin. jolts awake, terror pervades her as she gasps at the ball outside the window.

can be She struggles to her feet and listens. A faint sound heard through the roar of the flames. beep beep... beep beep... beep beep... beep beep...

**RAE**

(a whisper)

Ronnie...

door Rae stumbles to the door, weak and dizzy. She grips the knob and pulls the door open.

**EXT. LAZARUS' HOME - NIGHT**

She Rae races outside, tripping down the front porch steps. frantically looks off at the blaze in the squash field. She races toward the fire, the beeping increases.

**RAE**

Ronnie... RONNIE!

**BEEP BEEP... BEEP BEEP... BEEP BEEP... BEEP BEEP...**

the At the center of the blaze is an upside down Humvee. To scattered. left of the vehicle, a few soldier's bodies lay across Rae's legs lose all strength, she collapses and crawls the squash plants.

A far away voice is heard over the roaring flames.

**LAZARUS**

Gal? Gal?

of Rae crawls across a fallen soldier, following the sound faints. Ronnie's alarm. She struggles to breathe, she almost

she She finds a soldier face down. With all her strength turns him over. It is Ronnie, wide-eyed and lifeless. She An awful groan comes out of Rae -- crippling sorrow. pulls on his vest trying to wake him.

**RAE**

(sobbing)

Nn-nn... Nn-nn... no... N'RONNIE!

**LAZARUS**

**GAL! YOU HEARIN' MY VOICE?**

pulling  
plant.

Rae looks up. The flaming humvee is gone. She is not on Ronnie's vest, but the tangled vines of a squash

moonlight.

Laz stands at a safe distance, silhouetted in

**LAZARUS**

You travelin' right now, gal. You asleep and you don't even know it.

(extends his hand)

Now... come on inside with me.

tears

Rae looks like a terrified child. Her eyes well with as she shakes her head. Laz takes a step toward her.

**RAE**

Mm-mm... Mm-mm...

**LAZARUS**

Come on, gal...

after

She turns and runs away as best she can. Laz chases her. He's much older than her and a bit slower, but her balance betrays her.

Laz wraps his arms around her. Rae screams to the sky.

**RAE**

**NO! NOOO! NOOOOOOOOOO!**

unconscious.

And then, stillness. Rae lies limp in Laz's arms,

green

He reaches down and lifts her wrist to his face. The screen of the digital watch pulsates with the alarm. He pushes the side button. The beeping stops. Silence.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. LAZARUS' HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT**

Laz lays Rae back onto his couch. Her eyes open into slits. She can see Laz's form over her like the man in her nightmare.

Rae grabs Laz's wrist. He flinches with her force.

**RAE**

(the whisper of a child)

Is'okay... Is'okay...

Struggling with exhaustion, Rae moves Laz's hand to her bare stomach. She rubs it slowly up and down her form, suggestively.

Laz slips his hand away and claps it tight over her eyes.

Rae holds her breath, waiting to be molested, her lip quivering.

**LAZARUS**

(singing deep and soft)

Goin' over that hill. Goin' over that hill. Well, I ain't gonna stop until I reach my God's top. I'm goin' over the hill. Well I went to the valley, I didn't go to stay. Soul got happy, I stayed all day. I'm goin' over that hill.

Rae relaxes and falls into a deep sleep.

The Laz backs away from her, a touch of fear in his heart. voice of Tehronne is heard from earlier in the day.

**TEHRONNE (V.O.)**

She a freak. Got what you call a sexual addiction.

**LAZARUS (V.O.)**

What'chu sayin'?

**TEHRONNE (V.O.)**

What I'm tellin' you. Girl gotta get dick or she go crazy.

**FLASH TO:**

**INT. POOL HALL - EARLIER THAT DAY - FLASHBACK**

Lazarus looks at Tehronne with a furrowed brow,  
confused.

**TEHRONNE**

First hooked up with that bitch when  
she was 16. Girl was fuckin' the  
principal and two of her teachers.  
You know coach Reynolds?

**LAZARUS**

Uh-huh.

**TEHRONNE**

He tapped that.

**LAZARUS**

Naw!

**TEHRONNE**

Go ask him.

**FLASH**

**BACK TO:**

**INT. LAZARUS'S BARN - NIGHT**

Lazarus opens his barn, slicing through the darkness  
with  
his flashlight.

**TEHRONNE (V.O.)**

She been bumpin' around all her life,  
hookin' up with whoever keep her fed  
and fucked.

He crosses to the other side, pulls on a beaded chain  
turning  
on the single bulb above his work table.

**TEHRONNE (V.O.)**

I seen her give it up on park benches,  
back of trucks, hoopty hoods, you  
name it.

Laz opens an old wooden box on his work table. He looks  
inside.

**FLASH TO:**

**INT. POOL HALL - MORNING - FLASHBACK**

Laz looks ill. Tehronne checks his pager briefly.

**TEHRONNE**

You ever seen a train run on a woman?

**LAZARUS**

Nuh-uh.

**TEHRONNE**

Meanin' like a team of fellas go to work on her and she don't even break a sweat.

(puts his pager away)

She into football, you know. You got a letter on your jacket you get that pussy in ya lap. I ain't playin'.

Tehronne's friend breaks on the pool table with a sharp crack.

Lazarus is genuinely disturbed.

**LAZARUS**

How a girl get like that?

**TEHRONNE**

Like I told you.

**FLASH**

**BACK TO:**

**INT. LAZARUS'S BARN - NIGHT**

Lazarus reaches inside the box and pulls out the end of an old chain.

**TEHRONNE (V.O.)**

Girl got a sickness.

The chain rattles as Laz walks backwards, pulling the long chain from the box. The shouting of his brother can be heard.

**DEKE (V.O.)**

What'chu gonna do? Huh? Nothin'. YOU

**AIN'T GONNA DO NOTHIN'! NOTHIN'!**

The end of the chain snags, yanking the box over.

**CRASH!**

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. LAZARUS' HOME - THE VEGETABLE GARDEN - LATE MORNING**

Lazarus is bent over, harvesting his tomatoes.

**LAZARUS**

(singing to himself)

Tell me who's that writin'? John the Revelator. Wrote the book of the seven seals.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. LAZARUS' HOME - AFTERNOON**

pours  
Laz enters his home. He crosses to the kitchen and  
himself a glass of water.

downing  
Dripping with sweat, he steps back into the room,  
Rae the last of his water. He lowers the glass, noticing  
looking at him.

**LAZARUS**

Hey.

side and  
Rae lifts her head off the pillow. Laz comes to her  
helps her sit up.

**LAZARUS**

Take it easy now. Don't rush it.

**RAE**

(a scratchy whisper)

How long... how long I been out?

**LAZARUS**

You been in and out goin' on two...  
maybe two days.

**RAE**

(can't believe it)  
Two days?

**LAZARUS**

After your fever broke, you'd wake  
up in spells... long enough to get  
that medicine in ya.

Rae sits up on the couch, the quilt wrapped around her  
waist.  
She looks at the cough syrup bottle on the side table.

**LAZARUS**

Found you on the side of the road.  
Someone took to beatin' on you pretty  
bad. You know who done that to you?

Rae touches the cut over her eye. That evening is still  
a  
blur.

**RAE**

Where's Ronnie?

**LAZARUS**

Well I don't...

**RAE**

(remembering)  
Wait. He left.

Rae lifts her head, revealing tears in her eyes. She  
gets  
mad at herself and wipes them away.

**RAE**

I don't got any money... for fixin'  
me up and all.

**LAZARUS**

Don't need none.

**RAE**

Then I better be on my way. Don't  
wanna put you out no more.

**LAZARUS**

Think it'd be best if you stayed put  
while we talk.

**RAE**

Naw'sir... I gotta be on my way.

**LAZARUS**

Best try gettin' ya wits about you  
'fore you try to...

quilt  
thuds

Rae struggles for balance as she attempts to stand. The  
falls away as a heavy chain slides off the couch and  
on the floor by her feet.

Rae feels a tug.

thin  
locked

She looks down to see a dark chain locked around her  
waist and coiled on the floor. The opposite end is  
around the side coil of the radiator.

She is chained to the house, a prisoner.

**LAZARUS**

Let me say somethin' first...

**RAE**

Why you got me chained?

**LAZARUS**

Way I see it, it's gonna take a while  
for you to get right.

**RAE**

The fuck you been doin' to me?

**LAZARUS**

I ain't laid a hand on ya but to  
ease yo fever... Remember like I  
say, I found you in the road...

**RAE**

(yanks at the chain  
around her waist)  
Get this Goddamn thing off me!

reassure

Rae stumbles as she moves away from Laz. Laz tries to  
her.

**LAZARUS**

Now, no harm's come to you... and I

aim to keep it that way. Ain't gonna... gonna run a train over ya... or however you call it... see... you was runnin' wild on me... these fever dreams you was havin'... these fits. I'd be chasin' you all night.

**RAE**

Well I'm woke now... you can take this off.

Rae waits.

**LAZARUS**

Gal, you ain't right yet.

**RAE**

I'm right enough to stand on my own two feet. Now take this Goddamn chain off...

**LAZARUS**

How you let men treat ya like they do?

**RAE**

What?

**LAZARUS**

These men you up under. How you let them do ya like that?

**RAE**

(grips the chain)  
Do me? Do me like this, you mean?  
Like chainin' me up?

**LAZARUS**

You know what I'm talkin' about.  
(beat)  
All that mess with ya teachers and...  
boys in the backs of trucks.

**RAE**

(shocked)  
The hell you know about me?! You got no right to talk to me about that shit! The hell you think you are?

**LAZARUS**

(interrupting)  
I've saved ya life, gal. I can do

and say whatever the fuck I want.

chain  
times.  
Rae begins to feel a pang of panic. She goes to the  
locked around the radiator. She yanks on it a few

**LAZARUS**

I give ya enough chain so's you can  
get about the house. Get you to the  
kitchen. You need the bathroom, it'll  
reach.

**RAE**

What do you want?

**LAZARUS**

We got everything we need. Plenty of  
food. Ya medicine still got a few  
good swallows in it...

**RAE**

**WHAT DO YOU WANT FROM ME?!**

(Laz can't answer)

**WHATEVER YOU GONNA DO TO ME, JUST DO  
IT! AND LET ME GO!**

**LAZARUS**

God saw to it to put you in my path.  
And I aim to cure ya of your  
wickedness.

her  
floor.  
This statement terrifies Rae. The fear can be seen in  
eyes. She backs away -- the chain scrapes across the

**RAE**

You some kind'a pervert?

**LAZARUS**

No ma'am.

**RAE**

Some crazy Jesus freak, gonna fuck  
the spirit into me...

**LAZARUS**

In my house, you watch that lip...

**RAE**

(furious, near tears)

Look it, mister... you wanna have  
your way, you take it. I'll do  
whatever you want. But you gotta let  
me go. You can't do this! You can't  
**KEEP ME HERE!**

**LAZARUS**

You sick. You got a sickness... we  
broke that fever... we gonna break  
that hold the devil got on ya.

back  
Rae pushes Laz back and bolts for the door. Laz falls  
against the side table by the couch, toppling the lamp.

**EXT. LAZARUS' HOME / INT. LAZARUS' HOME - AFTERNOON**

her  
her.  
The door slams against the house as Rae rushes out in  
wolf shirt and panties -- the chain trailing behind

**RAE**

(screaming)

**HELP!**

yanking on  
the old radiator.

watches  
Clank! The chain whips Rae down to the ground. Laz  
as dust flies off the radiator with each tug.

**RAE**

**SOMEBODY!**

**CLANK!**

watches  
The fear in Laz's face is replaced with a grin as he  
his radiator hold firm.

**RAE**

**SOMEBODY HELP ME!**

like a  
fresh  
Outside, Rae bucks and screams, yanking on the chain  
wild mustang. Her bare feet and legs are soiled with  
mud and grass as she claws at the ground.

parent -- Laz crosses to the radiator and pats it like a proud his wedding ring clicks against the iron.

**LAZARUS**

(to the radiator)  
Ain't gonna be moved.

the He steps outside with resolve and strength. He picks up chain and wraps it around his fist.

**LAZARUS**

GAL! I ain't gonna be moved on this!

the Laz yanks her back, dragging her towards him. He grips taut chain with his other hand and yanks her closer.

**RAE**

**LET ME GO!**

**LAZARUS**

You can holla y'self hoarse. Ain't gonna bend my will.  
(pulls her closer)  
Right or wrong, you gonna mind me.  
(Pulls her again)  
Gonna suffer you like Jesus say, to the FAITHLESS and the PERVERSE **GENERATION.**

wrangles Rae is spent. She turns to look at her captor as he her back to the porch.

**LAZARUS**

Now you get up! And you get in my house!

**RAE**

Or what?

Rae spits at Laz. Bad idea.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. LAZARUS'S HOME - LATER THAT AFTERNOON**

kitchen, Rae is screaming and grunting as Laz, standing in his

water tugs on the chain around the door-jam like he's drawing  
from a well.

pulls Outside Rae struggles to hold onto the porch post. Laz  
hard, lifting her lower torso off the ground.

**RAE**

Stop it! Stop it! IT HURTS!

**LAZARUS**

Whose doin' is that?

Laz yanks. Rae loses her grip and slams onto the porch.

**RAE**

Okay... OKAY! I'M COMIN' IN! NOW  
**QUIT IT!**

hands The pulling stops. Rae picks herself up. Her knees and  
are scraped and bleeding. The two stare at each other.

**LAZARUS**

Say we talk. Just take a seat on the  
sofa. I'll get us somethin' cool to  
drink.

Laz crosses to the kitchen. Rae sits down on the couch,  
noticing the fallen lamp on the floor.

**LAZARUS**

You may not remember. But you spent  
a whole half day in my tub, tryin'  
to cool down. Melted four ice trays.

the He finishes preparing the two waters. He crosses into  
front room. Rae is not there.

glasses CRASH! Rae smashes the lamp on Laz's head. The water  
shatter as Laz falls to the floor.

back. Rae picks up a wooden chair and breaks it over his

wrists Before she can do any more damage, Laz grabs her by the  
and throws her to the couch.

Rae falls to the floor. Laz stumbles on his feet as he

clutches his bleeding head. He loses his cool.

**LAZARUS**

Wicked little bitch... gonna cut  
me...

**RAE**

You gonna get a lot more a'that, you  
keep me locked up like this!

breath  
Rae freezes as she sees Laz undo his belt buckle. Her  
starts to quiver as she deeply inhales and exhales.

**LAZARUS**

Think I'm gonna let you do me like  
that...

fist.  
Laz whips his belt off and wraps the buckle around his

middle  
He stops in his tracks. Rae is panting and shaking. Her  
finger is scratching at her own thigh.

**LAZARUS**

(regaining his cool)  
Okay, now... I ain't gonna hit'cha.  
(the burning is  
starting)  
Just lost my cool there.  
(he throws the belt  
away)  
Now take that look out'cha eye.

teeth as  
inner  
Her anguished hum can be heard through her clenched  
she rocks back and forth. Her hands wander down to her  
thighs.

**LAZARUS**

No, ma'am. You stop that foolishness.

**RAE**

(shaking her head)  
Hm-mm... Hm-mm...

**LAZARUS**

I said... STOP!

**RAE**

(on the verge of crying)

**I CAN'T!**

floor  
door.  
Rae gets dizzy. She rests the top of her head on the  
and sways back and forth. Laz rushes out the front

chain  
rests  
As the wave hits, Rae twists and turns, wrapping the  
around her. She grips the radiator with both hands and  
her face against the side.

**RAE**

Hmmmmmm... Stop-it!... STOP-IT!

gasps  
The wave is about to build in to a powerful climax. Rae  
for breath.

cold  
Laz  
The door slams open. Laz drenches her with a gallon of  
well water from a tin bucket. Rae inhales and freezes.  
waits and watches.

The burning is gone.

from  
Laz kneels next to her and gently frees her bare ankle  
the tangled chain.

**LAZARUS**

You hungry?

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. LAZARUS' HOME - ON THE PORCH - LATER THAT DAY**

plates in  
into her  
They are both seated on the front porch with paper  
their laps. Laz watches with amusement as Rae tears  
chicken and gobbles up the vegetables.

**LAZARUS**

I put some back ache into growin'  
them greens. You should slow down  
and see how they taste.

Rae remains under Lazarus' intense gaze as the cicadas sing.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. LAZARUS' HOME - THE VEGETABLE GARDEN - SUNSET**

Rae stares off at orange clouds and purple sky. She takes a step to her left, walking through the parallel rows of squash.

The chain gently rattles behind her. Laz has given her about 20 feet of slack. He holds the chain tight around his fist.

Rae grins, standing proud in her wolf shirt and panties.

**RAE**

You like this? Walkin' me through this field like I's your mule?

**LAZARUS**

Can't sit all day on that sofa. Need to get your legs strong.

**RAE**

(sassy)

If I break one you gonna shoot me?

Rae teases Laz by adjusting her panties. She turns back to the sunset and stretches.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. LAZARUS' HOME - NIGHT**

Rae's smoldering eyes don't leave Laz as he chains her to the radiator. Laz nervously preaches, trying to avoid the sight of her bare legs curled up on his couch.

**LAZARUS**

My Daddy was one of the first mens to organize soil conservation in these parts. That's a group of

farmers, you know, each season they'd rotate the crop. Know why it's best to rotate em like that?

**RAE**

Uh-uh.

cream Laz moves in close and starts applying antibacterial to the cut above Rae's eye.

**LAZARUS**

Cuz once in a while soil need a change. Corn take up a lot of nitrate in the fertilizer. So next crop what ya do is plant ya some soy beans. That give off a lot of nitrate. Change keeps it all growin' and growin' strong.

(regarding the eye)

Sting a bit?

**RAE**

Itches.

**LAZARUS**

Means ya healin'.

(a nod)

So all this farmin' make me think on Matthew. Matthew 13. The parable of the sower? Man toss seed on rock, on the wayside, some fell in thorns... you know the story?

**RAE**

Uh-uh.

rubs Laz starts putting the cream on her scabbed knees. He them gently.

**LAZARUS**

The seed that land on good soil is for them who hear the word of God... and understand the word of God. Not enough for you to hear what I'm sayin', you gotta understand.

**RAE**

I know. I get it. What's Matthew doin'?

**LAZARUS**

Gal... Matthew ain't doin' shit...  
this just a story...

(quelling his  
frustration)

Look it. I've seen it in nature,  
I've seen it in men. Ya got to change  
up your crop. Cuz that seed ain't  
gettin' in.

(Rae remains silent)

Ya gotta cut this shit out. Got no  
cause to be up under these fools,  
ruttin' on ya like you a bitch. Like  
you somebody's dog. No woman... who  
joins in union with Almighty God...  
or man... in the sanctity of  
marriage... should degrade herself...  
and bend to ANOTHER MAN'S WILL!

someone  
rubs  
Rae is aware that Laz is somewhere else, talking to  
else other than her. There is anger in his tone as he  
ointment on her bare, scabbed knees.

**LAZARUS**

(shouting)

My God, gal, don't you got no SENSE?  
I ain't sayin' I ain't weak? Shit.  
Playin' guitar in the blood-bucket  
jukes all ya life... a nigga learn  
how to sin, let me tell you!

(grips her by the  
legs)

**I GOT SIN IN ME! I AIN'T GO'N LIE!  
BUT I GOT RESPECT! AND ALL YOU GOT  
IS BILE, GAL!**

**RAE**

Let go of me...

**LAZARUS**

**GIVIN' UP THAT SWITCH LIKE A TRAMP!  
BEHIND MY BACK AND KILL MY BABY...!**

Rae yanks free of Laz's grip, recoiling on the couch.

**RAE**

**GET OFF ME!**

sudden  
Laz awakens from his rant. He blinks and stands. A

hide by

shame overtakes him. He crosses into the kitchen to  
the sink.

He pours Rae a glass of water and returns to her side.

**LAZARUS**

(offering her the  
glass)

Didn't mean to go off on a tear like  
I did. I just got to thinkin' about  
things...

touching

Rae leans up into his face. The glass of water is  
her chest. Laz remains hypnotized by her eyes.

**RAE**

Why is it you old men gotta talk so  
much? Like little boys, gotta talk  
yourself into fuckin' me.

(his knuckles touch  
her skin)

We can take our time. I'm grown. I  
get it.

(she leans even closer)

You wanna give me 'nother bath?

Laz stands and backs away. He quickly leaves the room.

**INT. LAZARUS'S HOME - THE BEDROOM - NIGHT**

Laz looks at himself in the reflection of Rose's vanity  
mirror, listening to Rae stir in the next room.

**INT. LAZARUS' HOME - NIGHT**

breathe

The cicadas are screaming outside. Rae is beginning to  
deep, the burning is coming on.

**RAE**

(under her breath)

Goddammit.

rolls

She folds her arms over her chest, her middle finger  
scratching her elbow. The anxiety is too much. She  
over until the chain pulls taut against the radiator.

breathing

Rae has wrapped herself in a tangle of chain. Her

relaxes. Her eyes close. She sleeps.

**FADE TO**

**BLACK.**

**EXT. FISHERVILLE SQUARE - EARLY DAWN**

A train rumbles past in the blue hue of dawn.

vegetable  
Laz pulls his truck next to two other fruit and  
vendors: ARCHIE and GENE.

is a  
Archie is an old black man in his early seventies. Gene  
short white man closer to Laz's age.

**GENE**

There goes our fortune. We been doin'  
good for ourselves since you been  
away.

Laz sets up his folding table and uncovers his produce.

**LAZARUS**

Y'all know when Ella Mae's open up?

**ARCHIE**

You needin' to buy some pantyhose?

**LAZARUS**

Just some dresses.

Gene looks at Archie and shrugs.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. LAZARUS' HOME - MORNING**

heat.  
Rae snaps awake. She is wet with sweat from the morning

**RAE**

Hello? Hey!

front  
Rae drags the chain behind her as she crosses to the  
door and looks outside. No truck.

**RAE**

I don't believe this shit.

the  
Rae  
eggs,  
She folds her arms and looks into the kitchen. There on  
table is a covered plate and a small bottle of milk.  
reads a note on top of the plate: BE BACK FOR SUPPER.  
She pulls off the top plate and finds sausage links,  
biscuits, sliced tomatoes, and sliced peaches.

**RAE**

Enough to choke a Goddamn horse.

She yanks her chain. It rattles across the floor as she  
sits.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. ELLA MAE'S WOMEN'S CLOTHING - EARLY AFTERNOON**

by  
Laz looks out of place in his faded overalls surrounded  
bright colors of Ella Mae's dress shop.

fifties.  
ELLA MAE is a wide woman with white hair in her late

**LAZARUS**

I'm needin' some women's clothes. A  
few dresses. Maybe some shoes. But  
they gotta be nice. They gotta be  
proper. Clothes a woman would want,  
where she could feel and look like a  
woman without... you know, lookin'  
like a tramp or a hussy or somethin'.

19-year-  
proceed.  
Ella Mae turns to her assistant, Rhonda. Rhonda is a  
old black girl. She turns back to Laz, unsure how to

**ELLA MAE**

And, sir... do you have a size in  
mind for what you're lookin' for?

**LAZARUS**

(points to Rhonda)  
That young lady's size, right'cher.

**ELLA MAE**

Well, that makes it easier.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. LAZARUS' HOME - THE BATHROOM - AFTERNOON**

Rae sits down in the tub, still wearing her T-shirt and  
panties. Looking up at the shower head above she turns  
on  
the cold water and yanks up on the shower knob.  
Cold water sprays down over her. She gasps and then  
relaxes,  
laying back in the tub.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. ELLA MAE'S WOMEN'S CLOTHING - AFTERNOON**

Laz is at the counter. Rhonda is putting the shoes and  
clothes  
in two shopping bags while Ella Mae rings him up.

**ELLA MAE**

Well... I hope these will work for  
your niece. She can always come back  
in and swap sizes.

Lazarus points to a small display of fine lotions.

**LAZARUS**

Mind I ask, what's all this business  
here?

**ELLA MAE**

These are whipped body creams. It's  
like a lotion.

**LAZARUS**

For your hands?

**ELLA MAE**

Some women prefer not to scent their  
bodies with perfume. So now they  
have scented creams. They help  
moisturize a woman's skin.

(unscrewing a jar)

This one's my favorite. It's called  
Ginger Souffle. I recommend...  
applying the cream while the skin is

still damp. So... perhaps just after  
a shower.

**LAZARUS**

(likes what he smells)  
I'll take a jar of that, too.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. LAZARUS' HOME - KITCHEN - AFTERNOON**

Rae rattles into the kitchen, her damp clothes clinging  
to  
her form. She picks up Laz's guitar off the table and  
places  
it in her lap.

She plucks a few random strings out of boredom and  
smiles.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. MACON DRUGS - AFTERNOON**

The same apathetic girl is working the front counter as  
Laz  
enters the drug store with a basket of arranged  
vegetables.

**LAZARUS**

Lookin' for Miss Angela.

**GIRL**

She in the back.

Laz makes his way to the back of the store. He spies  
Angela  
in the back pharmacy, sorting pills for a pick-up. He  
watches  
her work for a moment until, finally, she sees him.

**ANGELA**

Wait right there.

Laz waits as Angela rounds the corner.

**LAZARUS**

I brung you a little basket of  
goodies. Fresh squash, tomatoes,  
some okra, butter beans.

**ANGELA**

(taking the basket)  
You didn't have to do this.

**LAZARUS**

Just wanted to say how much I appreciate you helping me the other day. My niece, she's cured up, and I got you to thank.

**ANGELA**

Well that's good. I'm happy to hear it.

the  
Angela smiles. There is tension and attraction between  
two.

**LAZARUS**

Look here. I got somethin' special for you.

been  
Angela is flush as Laz moves closer than he has ever  
before. He reaches in the basket for the jar of cream.

**LAZARUS**

This here is a whipped... body cream. And it's got a smell to it. Tell me what you think.

eyes and  
Laz holds the jar up to her nose. Angela closes her  
smells. Her expression says enough -- she loves it.

**LAZARUS**

They call this Ginger Souffle. Best if it... if it go on your skin just after you been in a hot tub... or shower.

and  
Angela takes the lotion from his hand. She is subtle  
demure, but the woman is deeply affected. She smiles.

**ANGELA**

This was very sweet of you.

**LAZARUS**

Well. Hope you enjoy it.

apathetic

Angela watches Laz as he walks out the door. The girl moves up behind Angela.

**GIRL**

Oooooo.

**ANGELA**

Hush up.

**EXT. FISHERVILLE SQUARE - MACON DRUGS - AFTERNOON**

Melvin is

Laz opens his truck and waves goodbye to Old Red, holding a healthy squash.

**RED**

You gonna be on the square later on?

**LAZARUS**

Got all my honey-do's done with. I'm headin' home.

**RED**

Stay cool. It's a hot one.

as

Laz pulls away in his truck and rounds the corner just as R.L. crosses the street. He steps over to talk to Red.

**R.L.**

Hey, Red. Was that Laz just left?

**RED**

Yes'sir, Rev'rend.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. LAZARUS'S HOME - KITCHEN - AFTERNOON**

playfully.

Rae occasionally strums an awful chord as she sings

**RAE**

(trying to sing)

You are my sunshine. My only sunshine.  
You make me happy when skies are gray.  
You'll never know dear how much I love you.  
Please don't take my sunshine away.  
A voice from outside spins her around.  
The guitar barks

as Rae slams it down on the table.

**LINCOLN (O.S.)**

Mister Lazarus?

Lincoln  
basket.

Rae stays hidden as she peeks out the front window.  
is standing before the house holding an old picnic  
Rae's middle finger begins scraping against the wall.

**LINCOLN**

Mister Laz... I come for the butter  
beans.

she

Rae fights her dizziness. She crawls to the radiator as  
hears each creak of Lincoln crossing to the front door.

**FLASH TO**

**QUICK CUTS**

cigarette.

The Zippo with the bald eagle closes. A smoldering

**FLASH**

**BACK TO:**

the

Rae flinches and grits her teeth as Lincoln knocks on  
door: Knock, knock.

**LINCOLN**

Ain't seen you on the square. Mister  
Laz, can you hear me?

The burning has started: deep gasps, itching, anxiety.

**LINCOLN**

(worried now)

Mister Lazarus?

door.

Rae watches the shadows of Lincoln's shoes under the  
They wait patiently and walk away.

**EXT. LAZARUS' HOME - AFTERNOON**

Lincoln walks down the porch steps and stops. Thinks.

**INT. LAZARUS' HOME - AFTERNOON**

she  
Rae inches upward, pulling herself up the radiator so  
can stand. Her panting has waned.  
Suddenly the front door swings open.

**LINCOLN**

Mister Laz, I'm comin' inside...

around  
Lincoln  
Lincoln can't believe what he sees. Rae is chained  
the waist, damp and barely clothed. Her eyes bore into  
like an owl zeroing in on a helpless jackrabbit.  
She rips her shirt off in one tug over her head.  
Lincoln can't move. The picnic basket hits the floor.  
His  
lays  
mouth hangs open in shock as Rae steps towards him and  
her open mouth on the boy.

**EXT. LAZARUS' HOME - AFTERNOON**

SLAM! Rae shuts the door.  
Laz steers his Ford truck up the drive and parks. He  
takes  
opens  
his time getting out and removing the shopping bags. He  
the door and goes inside.  
His curses can be heard from outside.

**LAZARUS**

**SHIT BOY! WHAT THE HELL YOU...!**

overalls.  
Lincoln is tossed off the porch, clinging to his

**LAZARUS**

**CAN'T LEAVE YOU ALONE FOR ONE...**

the  
running  
Tears and fear come to Lincoln as Laz steps out onto  
porch, fuming with rage.  
Lincoln backs away expecting a good beating. He starts

drive. up the drive but stops as R.L.'s Olds rolls up the

**LAZARUS**

Lincoln, come on back.

clutching his Lincoln darts past Laz and runs into the barn,  
steps overalls. R.L. stops the car halfway down the drive and  
out.

**R.L.**

Was that Lincoln James I seen run  
off?

**LAZARUS**

He's fine. Just had a bad fall.

**R.L.**

Why's his britches round his knees?

**LAZARUS**

R.L., you gonna have to get on. I  
can't have nobody round my place.

R.L. starts walking up the drive.

**R.L.**

You get a call from Rose?

**LAZARUS**

This ain't got nothin' to do with  
that woman. Just don't want nobody  
around me now.

**R.L.**

Somethin' wrong with ya phone? Been  
callin' the last few days.

hunting R.L. stops in his tracks as Lazarus pulls out his  
rifle from the rack behind his seat in his truck.

**R.L.**

Goin' dove huntin'?

**LAZARUS**

You gotta go, R.L.. I ain't foolin'  
this time.

**R.L.**

You sayin' that gun's for me if I don't?

**(LAZ CAN'T ANSWER)**

Spell it out, Laz. Man big enough to pull a gun best have a tongue in his mouth if he ain't got a brain in his head.

him. Laz is struggling. The rifle feels suddenly strange to

**LAZARUS**

You ain't gonna talk me outta shit no more. I got my mind made up and I ain't gonna be moved on this.

**R.L.**

(amused)  
Ain't gonna be moved?

**LAZARUS**

Got no place for preachin' here. Not now. So you do as I say...

**R.L.**

(still stepping closer)  
Or what?

**LAZARUS**

I told you to TURN BACK!

back. R.L. pushes his chest up against the rifle and shouts

**R.L.**

**YOU GO'ON AND SHOOT ME, KILLA!**

only Laz's heart is breaking. He is pointing a gun at his friend.

R.L. snatches the rifle out of Laz's hands.

**R.L.**

Ought'a stomp yo ass pointing this at me.

(unloads the rifle)  
Always gotta bring up the preachin'. Like you just a sheep in my flock and all I'm good for is poundin' on a pulpit.

(gets in Laz's face)  
Dammit, Laz... we may not be blood.  
But we sucked off the same old nurse  
since the day we was slapped on the  
ass. And you gonna point a gun at  
me?

A tear rolls down Laz's cheek. The shame is unbearable.

**R.L.**

If you in some trouble, than WE gonna  
figure somethin' out. You and me.

(hands him a bandana)

Wipe your face!

Laz takes the bandana and wipes the tears away.

**R.L.**

Now... this got anything to do with  
Rose?

(Laz shakes his head)

Then what?

**CUT TO:**

**INT. LAZARUS' HOME - AFTERNOON**

The door creaks open. R.L. carefully steps inside. Rae  
is sitting on the couch, looking out the window.

**RAE**

(on the verge of tears)

I didn't want to.

Rae doesn't respond. R.L. quickly steps outside  
shutting the door behind him.

**EXT. LAZARUS' HOME - AFTERNOON**

R.L. shakes his head as Laz follows him off the porch.

**R.L.**

Are you outta ya GODDAMN MIND?

**LAZARUS**

Man like you ought not take the Lord's  
name like you just done.

**R.L.**

A naked woman, chained in ya house?

**LAZARUS**

I'm tellin' you the truth, dammit. I found her beat. Left for dead. So I brung her home.

**R.L.**

Laz, I know about that girl.

(beat)

Good number of this town's sinners got my ear, you know.

(shakes his head)

Oh, Laz. She's had a mess of crabs and them STD's. What'chu thinking?

**LAZARUS**

I haven't laid a hand. On my life, R.L., my wick is dry on this.

**R.L.**

You say she was beat on. You call the sheriff on that?

**LAZARUS**

Put yo'self in my shoes. Say you out here, alone, with a beaten, half naked, white woman loves to fuck. I been toe to toe with the law in this town for no more than being black and nearby.

**R.L.**

What's that chain around her for?

Laz briefly looks off at the barn, knowing Lincoln is there.

**LAZARUS**

Why don't you go'on and ask her. She need to talk wit somebody with sense. Folks been ruttin' and beatin' on this gal all her days. And this is how I'm handling it.

**R.L.**

**THIS IS HOW YOU HANDLING IT? THIS IS HOW YOU HANDLING IT?**

Silence.

**LAZARUS**

Go in and talk to her. Please.

R.L. nods. Lazarus smiles.

**LAZARUS**

Good. Makin' steaks for supper. I expect you to come.

**R.L.**

You mean with you and that woman chained to ya radiator?

**LAZARUS**

You treat folks special when they company. It's just supper, R.L., shit.

**R.L.**

One thing at a time, Laz.

Laz walks toward the barn and turns back to R.L..

**LAZARUS**

Watch y'self in there. That girl'll jump on ya junk like a grasshopper.

**EXT. LAZARUS' BARN - AFTERNOON**

afternoon  
Laz opens the door to his barn wide, allowing the light to find Lincoln sitting on an old tire, weeping.

**LAZARUS**

Did I hurt'chu?

him.  
Lincoln shakes his head. Laz carefully sits next to

**LAZARUS**

What happened in there... that won't your fault. Ain't a young man alive could keep they britches on with that girl being in heat like she is.

**LINCOLN**

Why she got a chain on her?

**LAZARUS**

That's between her and me. It's private. And I don't want you goin' off and tellin' ya daddy.

**LINCOLN**

(in a panic)  
Please don't tell my daddy.

**LAZARUS**

My mouth is shut, boy. And that's  
how we gonna keep it. Don't go  
braggin' to ya buddies, ya heard me?

Lincoln nods. Laz hands him the bandana R.L. gave him.

**LAZARUS**

So...  
(a bonding smile)  
That your first time?

**LINCOLN**

Yes'sir.

**LAZARUS**

You struck some gold, didn't ya?

Lincoln grins as he wipes the snot from his nose.

**LAZARUS**

Shit. My first time was with my second  
cousin behind my uncle's barn. She  
weighed two tons, if a pound. Could'a  
done a lot better for myself. You  
sho'nuf did.

**INT. LAZARUS' HOME - AFTERNOON**

sofa,  
R.L. hands Rae a glass of water. She is seated on the  
wrapped in a quilt.

**RAE**

Thank you.

**R.L.**

(sits next to her)  
I gotta ask you. Why do you think  
Laz is keepin' you chained like this?

**RAE**

(shrugs at first,  
then:)  
You know how, like they say, you  
save someone's life, you responsible  
for them. Guess he just don't think  
it's safe for me.

**R.L.**

So he got it into his head that the only thing gonna keep you from endin' up bleedin' on the side of the road again, without a stitch of clothing on is...

(R.L. yanks on the chain)

You think he's crazy for thinkin' that?

Rae struggles to answer. Something is on her mind.

**RAE**

You a preacher?

**R.L.**

That's right.

**RAE**

Can I ask you a question?

(R.L. nods)

People always say, you gotta get good with Jesus, if you want not to go to hell. That you say sorry for all you done and... and Jesus would let you go on to heaven.

**R.L.**

You could put it that way.

**RAE**

But that's so fuckin' stupid.

(she catches herself)

I'm sorry. Didn't mean to curse.

**R.L.**

What's on your mind?

**RAE**

You can't hurt people... and then just say, I'm sorry, and then everything just gets washed away. Why would heaven want people like that. People who... do what they want and then... switch.

**R.L.**

I'm gonna tell you somethin', and it's just gonna be between you and me.

(Rae anxiously nods)  
I think folks carry on about heaven too much. Like it's some all-you-can-eat buffet up in the clouds. And folks just gonna do as they're told so they can eat what they want behind some pearly gates. I can go to Shoney's for that.

Rae grins. R.L. leans closer.

**R.L.**

There's sin in my heart. There's evil in this world. But when I got no one... I talk to God. I ask for strength. I ask for forgiveness. Not for peace at the end of my days when there's no more life to live and no more good to do, but today. Right now.

Rae has never had anyone talk to her like this. She is listening. She is understanding.

**R.L.**

What's your heaven? What gives you peace?

Rae looks at her bare feet. She tries to respond but the pain in her chokes back the words. Tears come to her.

**RAE**

(struggling to speak)  
Ronnie.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. GREYHOUND BUS STATION - LATE AFTERNOON**

A bus stops at the station. The doors swing open. A few passengers exit the bus followed by Ronnie.

He is not wearing his uniform.

**EXT. GREYHOUND BUS STATION - PHONE BOOTH - LATE AFTERNOON**

He drops his duffle bag and pops a few quarters in the phone.

He waits, allows the phone to ring.

**RONNIE**

(into the phone)

This is Ronnie again. Don't know if you been gettin' my messages but... I'm down at the bus station and...

(struggles)

I just need you come get me. You get this message, I'm on the interstate headin' downtown toward the square.

(sadness hits)

Rae. I really need you to... come find me. Please.

fearful  
Ronnie hangs up the phone. He remains motionless,  
and alone.

He picks up his duffle and walks down the interstate.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. LAZARUS' HOME - SUNSET**

over  
Lincoln stands over the barbecue spraying lighter fluid  
the coals while R.L. peels back the corn husks.

**LINCOLN**

We gonna eat with her?

**R.L.**

That's what I was told.

**LINCOLN**

She still gonna have that chain on?

**R.L.**

Well... I'm working on that.

(trying to change the  
subject)

So... what's goin' on in your life,  
Lincoln?

**LINCOLN**

I ain't no virgin no more?

flame.  
Lincoln tosses a match on the coals. They ignite with

**INT. LAZARUS' HOME - KITCHEN - SUNSET**

the  
behind  
  
arms,

Laz is humming to himself as he finishes chopping up potatoes. He wipes his hands and catches Rae standing behind him.

She looks classic in the floral sundress. She folds her arms, feeling awkward under Laz's approving gaze.

**LAZARUS**

Now that's sharp. That is sharp.  
Chain give you any trouble?

**RAE**

Uh-uh.

**LAZARUS**

Good. Now I got the steaks on,  
potatoes at a boil, and biscuits  
ready to pop in the oven. R.L. and  
Lincoln out yonder grillin' up the  
corn. What do you know how to make?

**RAE**

I don't fuckin' cook.

**LAZARUS**

(a look of  
disappointment)  
Gal, I been around hard-cursin' folk  
all my life. And let me tell you...

**RAE**

Look it... I put the Goddamn dress  
on, didn't I? I think I'm handlin'  
myself with some... fuckin' restraint  
here... how you got me locked up  
like a dog on a...

**LAZARUS**

If all you got is filth comin' out'cha  
mouth... people just gonna tune ya  
out.

(interrupting her)

Rae. RAE! I'm not fightin' with ya.  
I just know you got more in you than  
junk.

(a breath)

Now, you sayin' you don't know how  
to cook anything at all?

(Rae shrugs)  
You know how to boil water?

**RAE**  
I can handle that.

**LAZARUS**  
(hands Rae a pot)  
Well, get to it.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. LAZARUS' HOME - KITCHEN - AT THE TABLE - NIGHT**

The four of them (Rae, Laz, Lincoln, and R.L.) are all seated at the kitchen table, holding hands as R.L. says grace. Rae peeks at the others with their eyes closed tight. She follows their example.

R.L. We ask that you bless this meal put before us. May the food nourish our bodies and this fellowship nourish our spirit. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

**LAZARUS & LINCOLN**  
Amen.

There is a sudden flurry of activity at the table as the four begin piling up their plates.

**R.L.**  
Pass them potatoes, Lincoln.

**LAZARUS**  
Y'all let me know if these steaks are too dry.

**R.L.**  
This all looks wonderful.

**LINCOLN**  
I skipped lunch.

**LAZARUS**  
Well, dig in, son. Got plenty to eat.

egg.  
gives

Rae's eyes are fixed on R.L. as he picks up a devilled  
She looks over at Laz who is aware of her anxiety. He  
her a wink.

R.L. bites into the egg and moans with delight.

**R.L.**

(to Laz)

Mm. MM. Now these eggs got some kick  
to it. What'chu got in this?

**LAZARUS**

(motions to Rae)

Ask the chef.

rush of

Everyone looks at Rae, surprised. She feels a sudden  
fear as she struggles to answer R.L.'s question.

**RAE**

Cayenne pepper.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. LAMPLIGHTER BAR - NIGHT**

stops

Ronnie is walking by the bar along the interstate. He  
when he sees Gill's truck.

**INT. LAMPLIGHTER BAR - NIGHT**

enters

Ronnie adjusts his duffle bag over his shoulder as he  
the mid-sized bar.

with a

Gill is seated at the bar. He turns to Ronnie along  
few other locals, one being HERMAN, age 40.

**GILL**

(surprised)

Holy shit.

**RONNIE**

(understanding)

Yeah.

**GILL**

Sit down, man. Need a beer?

**RONNIE**

Sure.

**GILL**

(to the bartender)

Marv, let's get Ronnie set up here.

Ronnie sits next to Gill. Herman leans in wanting to be  
a part of the conversation.

**RONNIE**

Hey, Herman.

**HERMAN**

They buy you that big chicken dinner?

Ronnie stiffens. Gill is confused.

**GILL**

What?

**HERMAN**

They got little names for everything in the corps when they trying to get rid of ya. Don't know what it's like in the guard. There's what you call a bad conduct discharge, a BCD... we all called it the big chicken dinner. It ain't the brig but it'll fuck ya for life if you wantin' to work for the government.

**RONNIE**

That's not what this is about.

**HERMAN**

They got another little name called ad-sep. That sound about right?

Ronnie looks away. He takes a sip of his beer.

**HERMAN**

Ad-sep. Administrative separation.

**GILL**

(to Ronnie)

How do you get one of those?

**HERMAN**

Blowin' boys in the head, for one.

him  
Ronnie loses his cool. He lunges at Herman. Gill holds  
back.

**HERMAN**

Whoa, son! I ain't sayin' shit about  
you. I'm just talkin'.

**RONNIE**

Well, you don't know what you're  
talking about so why don't you shut  
the fuck up?

**GILL**

Hey, it's alright, man. It's alright.  
(to Herman)  
Herman. Come on. He just got back.

Herman gets up to leave with his beer.

**HERMAN**

To get back ya had to've gone  
somewhere.

of the  
story.  
Ronnie glares at Herman as he moves to the other side  
bar. Gill moves closer to Ronnie to get the whole

**GILL**

What happened?

**RONNIE**

They been keepin' a folder on me cuz  
of my stomach. Like how it was just  
before we'd play ball back in school.  
Thought it was just some tic I got,  
or ulcers like my daddy had.

(takes a drink)

I can't... shoot. Target practice  
I'm a pro. I tag between the numbers  
each time but...

(feels a stomach cramp)

But when there's really loud noises  
around me... somethin' happens. I  
get shaky and... I lose my breath.  
They called it anxiety. Severe  
anxiety. It can be fixed and all...  
just not in time for....

(another drink)

It's a long process but... they sent me home.

**GILL**

I guess it could be worse. You could be comin' back in a body bag.

Gill doesn't know what to say next.

**RONNIE**

I can't get Rae on the phone. She's not at home... none of her friends seen her anywhere.

**GILL**

She's around. Always is.

**RONNIE**

I don't know. She's gettin' crazy, like she gets. Begged me not to go. Got real down. I just think somethin's happened. Like she run off with someone. You'd tell me if you knew somethin', right?

**GILL**

You been home yet?

**RONNIE**

Uh-uh. I's hitchin' up the interstate when I seen your truck outside.

**GILL**

You need a ride?

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. RONNIE'S TRAILER - NIGHT**

leading Gill's truck rounds the bend and up the gravel drive up to Ronnie's trailer.

The headlights scan across the porch as Gill parks.

**INT. RONNIE'S TRAILER - NIGHT**

Rae Ronnie is the first through the door, calling out for before he can turn on the lights.

**RONNIE**

Rae?

was

Gill enters. He sees that the trailer is the same as it  
the day he picked up Ronnie, nothing is different.

**RONNIE**

This don't feel right. Kitchen looks  
just like I left it. I know, cuz I  
cleaned it.

**GILL**

She ever tell you she was thinkin'  
of taking off?

**RONNIE**

I just been so mixed up lately, Gill.  
And, you know, with her history, I  
can see how she could get scared...  
(tears)  
...and run.

and

Gill is disturbed by Ronnie's sudden flood of emotion  
tears. He crosses to the pantry, already knowing which  
cupboard to pull the liquor out of.

He pours two drinks. He hands one to Ronnie.

**GILL**

Drink. Come on, drink some.

Ronnie manages a few swallows.

**RONNIE**

Her momma works down at the grocery,  
down on the square. Maybe she seen  
her.

face.

Gill stands over Ronnie, looking down on his pitiful

**GILL**

Ronnie. You can't see cuz you're too  
close to it.  
(Ronnie waits)  
These nervous spells you get. You  
never had that shit back in school...

**RONNIE**

That's not right, really, cuz I...

**GILL**

(continuing)

You joined up in that monkey troop cuz you had a plan for yourself. Army'd pay for school. You were gonna get a degree, maybe somethin' in business or agriculture and you were gonna make somethin' of yourself.

His words are painful to Ronnie. Gill doesn't hold  
back.

**GILL**

And then you had to fall in love with the school slut.

**RONNIE**

Now wait...

**GILL**

(continuing)

With all she was doin'. With all the shit she kept doing! You stayed stuck to that bitch's ass and you wouldn't let go.

**RONNIE**

I know about how she was like. But we was different. I's the only person she talked to about it. How she's abused. Terrible things, Gill, just terrible...

Rage suddenly fills Gill. He grabs Ronnie and throws  
him  
against the wall.

**GILL**

**YOU HAD A PLAN! YOU HAD A GODDAMN LIFE! AND SHE JUST FUCKED THE GUTS OUT OF YOU!**

**RONNIE**

It's not her fault, Gill. She's had to take care of me all this time, cuz I'd just start throwin' up... choking. Just losin' my grip. And she listened. She listened to me.

(Gill releases Ronnie

and walks away)

And... I got better. I don't get

nervous like I used to. And since we been together... she been faithful to me. Put all that junk behind her...

**GILL**

The only thing that cunt's had behind her is me and half the town fuckin' her.

(Ronnie can't believe it)

Your first night away, I come over and drop off the spare keys like you wanted me to. You weren't gone two hours and she was aching to get me inside her. Like she was havin' some kind'a fit.

holds  
Ronnie can't respond. Tears roll down his face. Gill  
up the whiskey bottle.

**GILL**

(pours a drink)

Don't you think it's funny how I know where everything in your house is?

(moves in close)

I don't care if that hurts you or not. Truth is I don't know who you are anymore. So fuck it.

up  
Gill turns away. Ronnie grips Gill around the neck from behind. He bends him back painfully and throws his head  
against the wall.

**EXT. RONNIE'S TRAILER - NIGHT**

front  
The front door burst open as Gill goes flying down the  
porch. Ronnie cocks a .45 and shoves it into his belt.  
the  
Ronnie pins Gill's elbow behind his back and retrieves  
keys from his front pocket.

**GILL**

You gonna steal my truck?

**RONNIE**

Make yourself at home. You done it already.

Gill watches Ronnie tear down the drive in his own truck.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. LAZARUS' HOME - NEAR THE BARN - NIGHT**

Lincoln  
and  
Laz and R.L. are smoking. Laz smiles as he watches and Rae through the kitchen window as they wash dishes talk about football.

**R.L.**

Gotta get that chain off her, Laz. Somethin' like this gets out, you could land in a heap of trouble.

**LAZARUS**

I'm dealin' with what God put before me.

**R.L.**

You believe He wants this? A woman chained to ya radiator?

**LAZARUS**

Not like that.

**R.L.**

Then what?

**LAZARUS**

She's tied to me, R.L.. We tied to each other.

Laz is silent.

**R.L.**

I can't leave unless I get your word.

Laz looks down at his shoes. He surrenders. He nods.

**R.L.**

Laz. I got some news you need to hear. It's about Rose and your brother.

(this is not easy for

**R.L.)**

She's pregnant. She gonna have a

baby.

(silence)

Her sister told my wife. You know how them sewing circles go. Just a matter of time till you got word. Thought that's why you been keepin' to yourself out here.

(Laz conceals his pain)

I don't know how much of this is to make her happy or to hurt you. But it is what it is.

Laz struggles with his emotions. He turns to R.L. stone  
faced  
and cold.

**LAZARUS**

I'm through with them both.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. LAZARUS' HOME - THE FRONT DOOR - NIGHT**

Laz and Rae wave to Lincoln as he climbs into R.L.'s  
car.  
They pull away, up the drive, and disappear into the  
night.

The cicadas sing as the two stand in silence: Rae, at  
peace,  
feeling genuine contentment; while Laz looks lost in  
silent  
pain.

**RAE**

They sure liked them devilled eggs.

**LAZARUS**

You drink whiskey?

**CUT TO:**

**INT. LAZARUS' HOME - NIGHT**

A bottle of whiskey is removed from a top cabinet above  
the  
refrigerator. Two small glasses each get a healthy  
swallow.

**LAZARUS**

You take it straight?

**RAE**

Sure.

struggles  
He hands her a glass. Laz then looks at his as if he  
with a decision.

**LAZARUS**

(holding up the glass)  
To my baby brother. Gonna be a daddy.

Rae nods and downs the whiskey with Lazarus.

**RAE**

Well, that's good news. So you're  
gonna be someone's uncle.

Laz pours another swig for himself and downs it.

**LAZARUS**

Want another?

**RAE**

We drinkin' buddies now?

**LAZARUS**

(pours two more glass)  
To freedom.

Laz pounds back his third shot.

**RAE**

Still makin' jokes?

**LAZARUS**

(pulls out his keys)  
No joke.

her  
Laz pulls Rae closer to him by the chain wrapped around  
waist. He opens the old lock with a key.

**LAZARUS**

Not my place to change your mind, or  
anybody else's. People gonna do how  
they please. You only get one life...  
should be lived the way you wanna  
live it.

looks

The chain falls to the floor with a hollow thud. Rae  
confused.

**LAZARUS**

If you want... I can take you back  
to town now.

**RAE**

I ain't in a hurry.

The two stare at each other in silence.

**RAE**

Could you do somethin' for me?

**LAZARUS**

Anything.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. LAZARUS' HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT**

guitar,

Rae watches with intense curiosity as Laz tunes his  
sitting at the table.

**LAZARUS**

(takes another drink)  
Ain't played 'fore nobody in years.

spurring  
chair.

Laz slides his calloused fingers across the strings,  
the old guitar into an impressive wail. Rae grips the

**LAZARUS**

(plays as he remembers)  
Funny how a sound just speak to ya  
heart.

A haunting slide guitar riff barks. Rae has a physical  
reaction to the music. She is fascinated and fearful.

**LAZARUS**

(thinks)  
Wanted me some kids. A whole mess of  
'em. But Rose, my wife... chil'ren  
was for another time.  
(takes a drink)  
They's this one spring... I saw a

change in her. Her breasts start  
swellin' up. Come a few mornings I  
hear her heavin' in the bathroom. I  
seen it with women before. I knew.

Laz thinks for a moment. Continues playing.

**LAZARUS**

Come a day, Rose say she had to go  
visit her folks in Jackson. Didn't  
want me to come... so I stayed put.

(remembers)

When she come back...

(hesitates)

They talk about a woman havin' that  
glow. Couldn't see it no more. She...  
took it away. Cut it out.

the  
The guitar's song turns dark. Laz slides his fingers up  
guitar strings, lingering on low growns.

**LAZARUS**

One night... While she sleepin'.  
Held a pillow in my hands. I could  
see myself killin' her. What evil in  
my heart make me wanna kill her, I  
don't know? It's that voice in me.  
Each time I think it's gone, he come  
howlin' back. Devil or no, I don't  
know. But I am a haunted man.

something  
Fear spreads across Rae's face. Laz is talking about  
all too familiar.

**LAZARUS**

Calls me when I'm ailing. When I  
can't find my home, lost in the pines.  
I calls it the Black Snake Moan.

(he closes his eyes

and sings)

Mm-mm... Got no momma now.Mm-mm...  
Got no momma now.It's over late last  
night, don't need no momma now.

closed. Rae  
front  
Laz stops. He sways back and forth with his eyes  
hears the swell of the cicadas. Her eyes dart to the  
door as the familiar creek of footsteps are heard.

**RAE**

Sing, Lazarus.  
(kneels next to him  
in fear)  
Please keep singin'.

around The door swings open. A white calloused hand appears  
Rae's mouth.

hand is She gasps in terror, clutching Laz's leg. The white  
gone. Tears come to her. She trembles as Laz sings.

**LAZARUS**

(singing)  
Mm-mm... Black snake crawlin' in my  
room.Mm-mm... Black snake crawlin'  
in my room.Some pretty momma better  
come and get this black snake soon.

Rae rests her head against his knee.

**LAZARUS**

(singing)  
Black snake is evil, black snake is  
all I see.Black snake is evil, black  
snake is all I see.Woke up this  
mornin', black snake moved in on me.

facing Laz concludes the song. Rae raises up to her knees,  
eyes. Laz. Tears have run down his dried face. He opens his

**LAZARUS**

My life is gone. Only life I was  
livin'. And I lost it.

**RAE**

I'm here with you.

**LAZARUS**

I had love in my heart. And I gave  
it to one woman. And she gone now.  
(his lip quivers)  
Where am I gonna put all this love?

outside. Rae gently touches his cheek. The wind picks up

**RAE**

You can give it to me.

to  
the  
Rae kisses Laz. He is motionless at first, allowing it  
happen. His hand moves from the neck of his guitar to  
bend in her neck.

between  
The passion intensifies as they squeeze the guitar  
them.

hands.  
Laz pulls his lips away and holds her head in his  
They are so close, they are breathing into each other's  
mouths.

**RAE**

You can't start this and not finish.  
Not with me.  
(kisses him)  
Please...

arms.  
against the  
face up  
it  
The guitar clangs to the floor as Laz lifts Rae in his  
They kiss, ravenous for each other. He knocks up  
side table, causing his Bible to fall to the floor,  
and open. The wind pushes the front door open, slamming  
hard against the wall.

Rae in  
his  
pages,  
They turn together, kissing, Laz slowly spinning with  
his arms. But Laz is soon distracted by the pages of  
Bible fluttering on the floor. The wind is blowing the  
turning them with an unseen hand.

**LAZARUS**

Wait... I gotta stop...  
(Rae's kisses get  
more aggressive)  
Rae stop...  
(she can't hear, the  
burning has her)  
Dammit, Rae... GET OFF!

falls  
It takes a considerable effort to pull Rae away. She

to the floor, dizzy and sucking in air.

**LAZARUS**

This ain't the way for me. I'm sorry.

Laz. Rae is struggling for breath. She desperately grabs at

**RAE**

Not gonna lie to you, Laz...

(labored breath)

This one's a doozy. I don't think...

I don't think I can stop this.

consciousness. Her eyes roll back briefly, almost losing Laz

catches her and holds her tightly.

**LAZARUS**

Tell me what to do.

**RAE**

(Barely able to speak)

The... chain helps.

Laz grips the chain and wraps it around Rae.

his As the burning increases. Laz holds Rae tight across

lap, his back up against the radiator.

**RAE**

I seen a man die. He couldn't breathe... his heart was... was givin' out.

**LAZARUS**

You just havin' a fit. You ain't goin' nowhere.

**RAE**

He told me... get help. I just stood there and watched him... I watched him die, Laz. Oh God! GODDAMMIT!

is Her legs itch like they are covered in ants. The wave hitting her hard. Laz holds her face up to him.

**RAE**

(like a little girl)

Oh, Laz... he hurt me. He... hurt me

so many times.

**LAZARUS**

No one's gonna hurt you no more.

**RAE**

You think God forgives people like that?

(crying like a child)

You think God forgives people like me?

Suddenly aware of the rising burn, Rae grits her teeth.

**RAE**

Hold me. Oh God...

bites  
mouth.

Rae turns away as Laz holds her head in his lap. She  
down on his middle finger as his hand moves over her

She is gasping, screaming into his hand.

It hits. Laz holds her.

shoulders

Rae's open mouth quivers as the sensation peaks. Her  
slump, her chest vibrates. She is crying softly.

**LAZARUS**

We'll just stay here. Wait till it passes.

wind.

The pages of the Bible flip to the final pages in the

**BLACK.**

**FADE TO**

**EXT. FISHERVILLE SQUARE - MORNING**

Rae is

Laz's truck pulls into his usual spot on the square.  
riding shotgun.

**RAE**

Where you gonna be?

**LAZARUS**

Right here. Be here all afternoon.  
(waits)

You ready for this?

**RAE**

I'm gonna just get some girl stuff,  
like make-up and... stuff.

Rae looks out the window, a touch of fear.

**LAZARUS**

This town ain't goin' nowhere. You  
take the time you need.

Rae's  
incredulous.  
They both step out of the truck. Gene and Archie watch  
ass as she walks by. They then look back at Laz,

**LAZARUS**

Friend of mine.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. FISHERVILLE GROCERY - MORNING**

tight. A  
more  
uncomfortable.  
Rae enters the modest grocery store holding herself  
few harmless shoppers look at her making her feel even

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. FISHERVILLE SQUARE - AFTERNOON**

unaware  
a  
small basket.  
Laz is selling vegetables to a young woman. He is  
that Angela has moved up behind him, grinning, carrying

**ANGELA**

I bet you have loyal customers.

**LAZARUS**

(turns and grins)  
You liked what I brung ya?

**ANGELA**

Been eatin' like a princess all week.  
Even got enough for us to take a

picnic under the gazebo.

**LAZARUS**

That'd be nice.

**ANGELA**

I put on the lotion you got me. Can you smell it?

Angela steps forward and pulls away her hair from her neck.

She cranes, offering her neck for Laz to smell.

**LAZARUS**

(smells)

That's nice, too.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. FISHERVILLE GROCERY - AFTERNOON**

Rae is looking at herself in the provided makeup counter mirror. She looks at the compact in her hand and decides against the purchase.

She rounds the corner and stops. She sees Sandy on her knees in the center of the aisle, building a display of tuna cans.

Rae thinks to leave, but stops. She makes a decision to talk to her. She walks up the aisle and stands above her mother.

**RAE**

Hey.

Rae kneels down next to her. She's trying to make a connection.

**SANDY**

What happened to your face?

**RAE**

Got in a little accident.

**SANDY**

(not believing her)

Yeah.

Sandy stands and wipes her brow.

**RAE**

Since you workin' on the square now,  
maybe we could get some coffee in  
the morning, if you want.

**SANDY**

You need money again?

**RAE**

No. That's not why...

(a frustrated breath)

Why we always gotta do this? I mean,  
you and me been at each other as far  
back as I can remember. Wasn't no  
love between us. And I'm your  
daughter. I'm the only family you  
got.

**SANDY**

You never needed nobody. Always made  
that clear to me.

**RAE**

Yeah. I know I did. But...

(struggles with tears)

I'm tryin' to be dif'rent. I'm tryin'  
to... get some peace, you know?

**SANDY**

I'm workin' here, Rae. Can you see  
that?

**RAE**

I just wanted some make-up.

**SANDY**

All that shit's on aisle 5.

Rae starts walking away. She quickly turns.

**RAE**

I just think you should'a kept him  
off me, that's all.

**SANDY**

The hell are you talkin' about?

**RAE**

Now see? Don't do that. I'll go along with all you say about me. But that... you can't pretend no more on that. Cuz I was just a kid, Momma.

(a terrible silence)

I didn't know about any of that stuff he was doin' to me.

(tears well up)

And you let him do it. Some big nobody in your life... and you let him do as he wanted... with the only SOMEBODY you had.

telling  
It is clear from Sandy's reserved anguish that Rae is the truth.

Rae  
for a  
Sandy firmly grips her by the arm and walks her out. winces in pain like a toddler being led off to a car good whipping.

**RAE**

I'm sorry... I didn't mean to shout...

**SANDY**

All my life I been puttin' out your fires, with you givin' out your snatch to every waggin' dick in this town. And you gonna lay the blame at my feet? Well, I ain't gonna take that.

**RAE**

But... Momma... just tell me... not gonna be mad... we can just talk about it... Be eye to eye on this... You don't even got to say you're sorry... Just say how you knew...

**SANDY**

Only thing I'm sorry for is listenin' to my parents and having you instead of doin' what I should'a done.

tuna.  
Sandy walks back up the aisle returning to her canned

And then the rage hits Rae.

a  
With each breath Rae grits her teeth tighter. She grabs

pricing

mop off the side aisle and turns around. Sandy is  
cans, down on her knees. She doesn't see Rae coming.

**RAE**

...tell me you don't know... goddamn  
**LIAR!**

display

Rae clocks her over the head, sending Sandy into the  
of cans. Rae hits her again with the mop. She is  
screaming  
in short anguished breaths.

Bags

Rae grabs everything she can and dumps them onto Sandy:  
of flour, cans, entire shelves of ketchup.

**RAE**

**SAY IT! JUST FUCKING SAY IT!**

Mark comes running to the aisle followed by two other  
employees. Stunned customers watch in amazement.

**MARK**

Rae! Rae! What are you doin'?

**RAE**

(hysterically screaming  
and thrashing the  
mop)

**GET OFF ME! GET OFF ME! GET...  
HIM...OFF!**

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. FISHERVILLE SQUARE - AFTERNOON**

gazebo.

Laz and Angela are seated next to each other under the

**ANGELA**

I's thinkin' about singing in the  
choir.

**LAZARUS**

At church?

**ANGELA**

Mm-hm. I don't know if I got a good  
voice or not but... practice is only

on Mondays and Wednesdays, so...

**LAZARUS**

(grinning)  
You gonna sing me somethin'?

**ANGELA**

When? Now? Oh. No.

**LAZARUS**

Come on, just a little somethin'.  
Right here. Go'on now, don't be shy.

close to  
Angela blushes. She looks around and then leans in  
Laz. She sings softly, sweetly, with all her soul.

**ANGELA**

(singing)  
There is a balm in Gilead to make  
the wounded whole.

doesn't  
store.  
Laz is falling in love. She is so beautiful to him, he  
see the people running to the front of the grocery

**ANGELA**

(singing)  
There is a balm in Gilead to save my  
sick, sick soul.  
(opens her eyes, speaks)  
So. You think I should be in the  
choir?

but  
attention. His  
smile fades.  
Laz is grinning from ear to ear. He is about to speak  
the commotion outside the grocery catches his

**ANGELA**

What? What is it?

Laz bolts toward the grocery as fast as he can.

**INT. FISHERVILLE GROCERY - AFTERNOON**

aisle.  
Laz rushes past the gawking customers at the end of the  
A few male workers, including Mark, stand at a distance  
watching Rae weep on the floor.

Sandy is being helped up by a co-worker -- her head is bleeding.

dust,  
Rae rocks back and forth, her face spotted with flour  
the mop held tightly in her grip.

with  
Mark tries to step closer but Rae cries out, thrashing  
the mop handle. They retreat.

**LAZARUS**  
**RAE? GAL? YOU HEARIN' MY VOICE?**

Rae lifts her eyes.

**FLASH TO:**

**QUICK CUTS**

clanking  
she  
The chain pulling around Rae's waist. The radiator  
as it is pulled. Laz's hand holding her head to him as  
cries.

**FLASH**

**BACK TO:**

**INT. FISHERVILLE GROCERY - AFTERNOON**

eyes to  
Laz slowly crosses to Rae. She lifts her tear-soaked  
him. He kneels next to her.

**LAZARUS**  
I'll take you home now.

he  
He lifts her up in his arms. She sobs into his chest as  
carries her through the onlookers.

Angela is there. She looks confused and shocked.

**ANGELA**  
This your cousin?

leaves  
Laz can't lie anymore. His gaze falls to the floor. He  
the store without saying anything to Angela.

**EXT. FISHERVILLE SQUARE - AFTERNOON**

Ronnie has parked Gill's truck on the square. He starts walking up to the grocery store.

into  
shock

He sees Laz carrying Rae in his arms. She is sobbing his chest, blind to all around her. Ronnie freezes in as Laz approaches.

**LAZARUS**

Move, son.

(Ronnie is unable to  
move)

Goddammit, kid, get outta my way!

the

Laz pushes Ronnie causing him to fall backwards on to pavement.

A

Ronnie watches Laz put Rae in his truck and drive away. wave of nausea hits. He turns over and heaves.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. LAZARUS' HOME - SUNSET**

The

The wooden chimes are deathly still above the porch. evening cicadas have begun their chorus.

**INT. LAZARUS' HOME - THE BATHROOM - SUNSET**

sits  
washing

Rae is holding her knees to her chest in the tub. Laz next to her, dipping the sponge in the water, gently her back and shoulders.

wash  
sponge

Laz moves her head back into the palm of his hand to her hair. She stares into his eyes as he squeezes the on her forehead.

**RAE**

You took care of your wife, like you do me?

**LAZARUS**

I tried.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. LAZARUS' HOME - NIGHT**

is  
Rae is wrapped in the quilt, laying on the couch. She  
awake and motionless, helpless to her depression.

**INT. LAZARUS' HOME - THE BEDROOM - NIGHT**

mind.  
Laz sits on the side of his bed. Something is on his

under  
We CUT TO him on his stomach searching for something  
his bed.

then  
Another old guitar case comes out, followed by another,  
grip.  
another. Finally, Laz stands, an old maroon case in his

lid,  
He opens the latches on the side and lifts the thin  
revealing a gorgeous cream colored electric guitar.

**INT. LAZARUS' HOME - NIGHT**

entering  
Rae has not fallen asleep yet. She turns to see Laz  
the dark room with the maroon guitar case.

**LAZARUS**

You and me, we night owls. No use  
fightin' this shit.

(tosses her a dress)

Get up.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. BOJO'S - NIGHT**

parking  
Laz's truck groans as it bounces into the crowded  
lot of Bojo's.

slams

Rae steps out, looking beautiful in her sun dress. Laz  
the door to his truck, guitar case in hand.

quickly

They begin walking inside. Rae's watch goes off. She  
turns it off. But a faint echo of the alarm can be  
heard  
behind her. She stops and turns toward the truck. The  
sound  
is gone.

**LAZARUS**

What is it?

**RAE**

Nothin'.

They go inside.

back

Ronnie's hand appears from under the blue tarp in the  
of Laz's truck. He pulls himself out and looks around.

**INT. BOJO'S - NIGHT**

is

Laz and Rae stand like strangers by the door. The place  
wall to wall -- people at the bar, people playing pool.  
Laz sees the culprit of this show. R.L. is gabbing with  
Bojo,  
a beer in his hand.

**LAZARUS**

Get'chu at that table up yonder.

**RAE**

By myself?

**LAZARUS**

You can handle it.

marches

As Rae makes her way through the crowd of people, Laz  
over to R.L.

**LAZARUS**

The hell is this shit?

**R. L.**

What? I called Bojo, like you say.

Called up the fellas in the band...

**LAZARUS**

The fuck are all these people doin' here? Been drinkin' in this shit hole for years ain't seen this many people since I don't know...

**BOJO**

Shit hole... Hey kiss my ass, Laz.

**LAZARUS**

Nigga, you go'on kiss my ass. Ya both called everybody, didn't ya?

Bojo turns away to another customer. R.L. grins as he removes a flask. He offers it to Laz. Laz snaps it away.

**LAZARUS**

There you go, preacher man. Get me drunk so I don't stick my foot up yo ass.

**R.L.**

I just know how you get. Good to know, them butterflies still in ya gut.

Laz and R.L. look over at Rae seated alone at a small table near the stage.

**R.L.**

Heard about this morning.

**LAZARUS**

We ain't here to talk about that shit.

Laz surprises R.L. by walking away and up onto the stage.

Rae watches as Laz, shakes hands with some of the band members. A few whistles from the crowd.

Laz sits down at a chair off to the right of a short mic stand.

He plugs in.

of

Rae watches curiously as Laz tunes his guitar -- moans electric distortion.

R.L. sits next to her.

**R.L.**

You in for it, now. He gonna nail it to the wall tonight. I done pissed him off.

entire  
the

The drummer kicks in. Laz tears into the strings. The place begins to undulate and bounce as Laz returns to blues.

**LAZARUS**

(singing)

I don't know, but I been around,  
tell me them women shake 'em on down.

like  
might  
safety

Cheers. Rae watches in awe. She's never seen anything it. She is surrounded by couples dancing so close they as well be naked. But there is also a great sense of as Laz controls the room with his music.

**LAZARUS**

(singing)

Yes, I'm goin' Georgia line.  
See if them women sweet like mine.

HERSHEL, a black man in his 30's, asks Rae to dance.

**HERSHEL**

You wanna cut it up, baby?

**RAE**

(shrugging)

Well...

man's  
seated

Rae looks up at Laz. Laz smiles and nods. Rae takes the hand and moves out onto the dance floor. R.L. can't be anymore. He stands and stomps his foot.

**R.L.**

(shouting at Laz)

Yeah, you know you home, old man.  
You just walked through the door.

**LAZARUS**

(singing)

I don't know, but I been told, them  
Georgia women sweet jelly roll.

Her  
the  
Rae allows Laz's voice and guitar to take hold of her.  
face gets wet with sweat as she moves, making love to  
current in the air.

control.  
Men are dancing all around her, but now she is in  
She turns to a young man and shakes, then an old man.  
She is free, herself, and above all, safe.

behind  
watches  
Laz smiles, unaware of Ronnie watching from the window  
him. There is rage and confusion in his face as he  
Rae surrounded by dancing limbs.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. LAZARUS' HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT**

tall  
Both Laz and Rae are drinking water from the sink in  
glasses like they've been stranded in a desert.

**RAE**

Are you drunk?

(Laz shrugs)

Keep drinkin' water and you won't  
get a headache in the mornin'.

**LAZARUS**

Yeah, gal I been here before.

**RAE**

(smiling)

I guess you have.

**INT. LAZARUS' HOME - THE BEDROOM - NIGHT**

the  
Laz is taking off his shoes, getting ready to crash for

off his night. He sits down on the side of his bed and takes shirt, leaving his T-shirt on.  
Rae is standing in his doorway.

**RAE**

Laz? Can I sleep with you tonight?

**LAZARUS**

Don't think that'd be wise.

**RAE**

I didn't mean it nothin' dirty.

**LAZARUS**

I know you didn't. But you a grown girl. You can handle it. I got to.

the Rae understands. She crosses to Laz and kisses him on cheek.

room. Rae then walks down the hall to her couch in the front

Laz turns off the light.

**CUT TO**

**BLACK:**

**INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT - FLASHBACK**

her. Rae enters the dark bathroom and shuts the door behind blond. Her hair is shorter, a shaggy bob, bleached platinum

Rae ARTY, always behind the door, attempts to enter, but pushes the door closed and locks it.

**ARTY**

Baby, where you goin'?

**RAE**

I'm gonna pee. I gotta take a break and go pee.

**ARTY**

Now, this isn't fair. You said I could do it, too.

**RAE**

Eat shit and die, Arty. A girl can change her fuckin' mind.

Ronnie

Rae finds the light switch. She yelps upon seeing crouched by the tub.

to

Suddenly feeling violated Rae yanks down on her shirt hide the fact that she's not wearing anything else.

**RAE**

Hey.

**RONNIE**

Hey.

**RAE**

You don't gotta get up but... I gotta go...

already

the

coming

Ronnie attempts to get up but it's too late, Rae has squatted on the commode, pinning Ronnie between her and bathtub.

Rae is breathing heavy, her focus is scattered. She's up or coming down from a big burn.

**RAE**

(waiting for pee)  
I think if I just piss... I'll be okay.

**RONNIE**

You feelin' sick?

**RAE**

I'm just in one of my moods. You know how I get.

**RONNIE**

Yeah, I know.

moment

Ronnie tries to look away, trying to make an awkward less awkward. Rae's anxiety is hitting her.

**RAE**

I think it'd be better if you talk to me.

**RONNIE**

Yeah?

**RAE**

Just about anything, you know. It can be funny or... not. Just tell me somethin'.

his Ronnie nervously considers this before agreeing to open mouth. He points into the tub.

**RONNIE**

Well. That's my vomit. I came in here to get sick. I thought I'd make the toilet but... anyway, I got sick.

**RAE**

Are you wasted?

**RONNIE**

No. I just got a messed up stomach.

**RAE**

(remembering)  
Holy shit!

**RONNIE**

What?

**RAE**

Holy shit, Ronnie!  
(smacks him on the arm)  
You're a fuckin' rock star.

**RONNIE**

I'm a what?

**RAE**

All them people shoutin' your name like they were doing tonight! Shit! That arm you got'll get'chu on a box of cereal...

painful. Ronnie leans over and dry heaves into the tub. It is  
Rae leans forward and touches his back, comforting him.

**RAE**

Hey? You okay, Ronnie?

Ronnie falls back, gripping his stomach, there are tears in his eyes from the dry heaving. Suddenly emotion hits him.

**RONNIE**

(through tears and clenched teeth)

Box of cereal... well, Goddamn...

(looks at his trembling fists)

Everybody keeps sayin' things to me take make me feel great. But I don't feel great at all. I feel like I'm comin' outta my skin. Like I'm losin' control of my mind.

(looks into Rae's eyes)

I'm not like this. I'm not usually so... afraid.

(really starts crying)

I don't know what's... wrong...

Rae pulls Ronnie to her. He cries into her shoulder. She gently rubs his wet face and sings her words of comfort.

**RAE**

Is'okay... Is'okay...

Ronnie begins to calm down. The sobbing abates. The metal music from the party outside is muffled through the door. The two hold onto each other in silence. Rae pees. They both giggle, a welcome release of tension.

**RAE**

I feel better. Do you?

**RONNIE**

Yeah, I do.

**EXT. LAZARUS' BARN - NIGHT**

has  
Ronnie lifts his head from sleep - his memory of Rae  
vanished.

in his  
He is leaning against the corner of the barn, his .45  
house.  
grip. His gaze slowly turns toward Laz's darkened

His hand begins to shake.

**BLACK.**

**FADE TO**

**EXT. LAZARUS' HOME - EARLY MORNING**

A crow squawks in the rows of corn. A bright morning is coming.

**INT. LAZARUS' HOME - THE BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING**

playing,  
Laz is still asleep. The sound of clumsy guitar  
accompanied by a tiny voice, can be heard.

**RAE**

(plucking, trying to  
find the right note)  
You... are my... sunshine.

Laz opens his eyes.

**INT. LAZARUS' HOME - EARLY MORNING**

struggle  
Laz quietly creeps into the doorway to watch Rae  
with the guitar playing. He could stay there for hours  
watching this little girl play his guitar.

Rae looks up and sees Laz. She stops playing.

**RAE**

Sorry.

**LAZARUS**

Looks like you know a song.

**RAE**

Don't know where I learn't it, but...  
it's there in my head.

Laz sits next to her and takes the guitar from her.

**LAZARUS**

(playing a tune)  
How you feelin' today?

**RAE**

You know how you feel when you come  
out of a bad hangover? Like your  
eyes can open a little bit more.

**LAZARUS**

I know that.

**RAE**

Woke up real early. Sun was shining.  
Just thought I'd mess around, try to  
learn a song.

**LAZARUS**

Go'on and sing it, I'll play.

**RAE**

No, you do it. I can't sing.

**LAZARUS**

Stop that foolishness. Just do as I  
say and close your eyes.

(Rae closes her eyes)

Close your eyes. And think about...  
well, for a song like this, I'd say  
you think about what you love.

**RAE**

What I love.

**LAZARUS**

Get a good picture in your mind.

Rae's playful smile turns serious. Laz continues  
playing.

**LAZARUS**

Think on that. And sing wit me.

(Laz comes in singing)

You are my sunshine. My only sunshine.

**RAE & LAZARUS**

You make me happy when skies are  
gray.  
You'll never know dear, how much I  
love you.  
Please don't take my sunshine away.

continues  
Rae opens her eyes with a delightful giggle. Laz  
playing.

**LAZARUS**

Good. I know another. It go like  
this.

(sings)

Last night dear, as I lay sleeping.  
I dreamed I held you in my arms.  
When I awoke dear, I was mistaken.  
So I hung my head and I cried.

(to Rae)

Close your eyes Rae... sing it.

Laz  
kitchen  
Rae doesn't hesitate to obey. With her eyes closed and  
playing, neither can see Ronnie creeping up from the  
with his gun.

**RAE**

(singing)

You are my sunshine. My only sunshine.  
You make me happy when skies are  
gray.

the  
Ronnie looks sick with pain as he points the barrel at  
back of Laz's head.

**RAE**

(singing)

You'll never know dear, how much I  
love you.  
Please don't take your sunshine away.  
(opens her eyes)

**RONNIE!**

gun  
Laz spins around knocking away Ronnie's arm. BAM! The  
fires into the wall. The guitar cracks on the floor.  
Rae screams.

**RAE**

**RONNIE STOP! RONNIE!**

around  
Laz lunges at Ronnie but Ronnie is faster. He spins Laz

face. and slams him to the floor, pushing his gun into Laz's

**RAE**

**NO!**

rage. Ronnie looks up at Rae, his eyes red with sorrow and  
He pushes the gun to the side of Laz's head. Rae cries.

**RONNIE**

Ain't been a week and you already  
some nigger's whore? Gill told me.  
Told me how you and he... you and  
everybody...

**RAE**

Ronnie. Please, baby...

**RONNIE**

(to Laz)

Did 'ya have fun with her? Sweet as  
a peach, I bet. Huh? Huh?

Laz glares back, not saying a word.

**RONNIE**

Goddamn it, I ask you a question,  
you better answer it, or I'm gonna  
blast a hole in ya!

**RAE**

Ronnie...

screams. Rae moves closer. Ronnie points his gun at her and

**RONNIE**

**YOU SHUT UP!**

**LAZARUS**

Careful how you point that gun, boy.

**RONNIE**

(points gun back at  
Laz)

Or what? OR WHAT?

**LAZARUS**

Boy? You here to make a point, or  
you here to kill somebody?

**RONNIE**

Ain't gonna be callin' me boy when I  
blow your face off.

**LAZARUS**

You sayin' you'll do what?

**RONNIE**

You heard me, mother-fucker. I'll  
fuckin' kill..

**LAZARUS**

(cutting him off)

BOY! You so green you couldn't stomp  
a baby duck.

because Ronnie can't believe what was just said -- mostly,  
it's true. The gun begins to shake in his hand.

**RONNIE**

You testing me? Huh? You testin' me,  
old man?

**LAZARUS**

Test. Shit. What kind'a test you  
thinkin'? You mean like, if you a  
man or not? If you a killer? Only  
one way to prove that. You just look  
me in the eye, boy, and you squeeze  
that trigger back.

rise Ronnie grips the shaking gun. A severe attack is on the  
as he listens to Laz.

**LAZARUS**

Ain't that easy, is it? I been in  
some scraps, son, I know. First  
there's that loud crack. Always louder  
than you think. Like it just come-up-  
a-cloud and clapped a mess thunder  
right in ya hand. BAM!

Ronnie flinches. He tries to control his breathing.

**LAZARUS**

White light. Smell of smoke. Taste  
of my blood and brains in your mouth,  
stingin' ya eyes.

Ronnie almost vomits, but he holds it back.

**RAE**

Oh, baby... just let me...

stops  
her  
Rae moves closer to him, wanting to comfort him but she  
as Ronnie points the gun at her. His eyes pleading for  
to stay back.

**RONNIE**

**GODDAMMIT, RAE!**

**LAZARUS**

**BOY! YOU KEEP THAT GUN POINTED AT  
ME!**

(Ronnie obeys)

You need to kill a man, all you gotta  
have is a good reason.

(watches Ronnie fight  
his attack)

You know she been here with me, don't  
cha? Been all over town, givin' up  
that switch you thought was your  
own.

**RONNIE**

**SHUT UP! SHUT UP!**

**LAZARUS**

Put all your love and dreams into  
one woman... she turn around and  
give it all to another man. That's a  
good reason to paint the wall with  
me, kid. She'd fear ya then. Cuz  
there won't be no more question in  
her mind. She with a real man now. A  
real KILLER!

gun  
A flood of tears are streaming down Ronnie's face. The  
is shaking furiously in his hand.

**RONNIE**

Don't... don't say that to me...

**LAZARUS**

(getting fed up)

Son, I'm grown. Don't got patience  
to suffer you children and this monkey  
junk. I'm too old to play house...

(looks at Rae and

then back at Ronnie)  
...and cowboys. So let's have it.  
End me or get out of my face!

asthma  
Ronnie looks like a scared five year old having an  
attack. Laz barks at him one last time.

**LAZARUS**

Go'on. Do it.  
(silence)

**DO IT!**

is  
The last shout from Laz completely destroys Ronnie. His  
shoulders slump. The gun lowers in his grasp. A low sob  
heard as he falls to his knees.

Laz snatches the gun from his hand and stands.

**RAE**

Ronnie?

weeps. She  
face to  
Rae inches closer to Ronnie as he kneels over and  
gently touches his shoulder. He turns his anguished  
her and tries to speak.

**RONNIE**

I can't stop... I can't stop... being  
scared. What am I gonna do...

around  
Ronnie hides his face in his hands. Rae throws her arms  
him and holds him tight.

**RAE**

I got you, baby... I got you...

slams  
wall  
Laz removes the clip and crosses to the kitchen. He  
the gun on the sink, opens a drawer and removes the  
phone.

**RAE**

(seeing Laz plug the  
phone in)  
What are you doing?  
(Laz dials a number)  
You gonna call the cops? You think

they gonna help this? They ever help  
you, Laz? Huh?

(Laz listens on the  
phone)

**DAMMIT LAZ PUT THE PHONE DOWN?**

Laz looks at Rae. There is hurt in his eyes.

**LAZARUS**

Thought you knew me better, gal.

(into the phone)

I need you at my house... right now.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. LAZARUS' HOME - NIGHT**

R.L. crosses from the kitchen. He hands a glass of  
water to  
seated  
the  
Rae seated on the couch. He hands another to Ronnie  
next to her. R.L. sits before them as Laz lingers in  
doorway.

**R.L.**

(to Ronnie)

I imagine there's a lot of good  
between you two. But I want you to  
tell me what's bad. Go'on. And don't  
hold back.

Ronnie is very uncomfortable. He looks at Rae seated  
next to  
him and then back at R.L..

**RONNIE**

I hate this town. You can't round  
the corner without bumping into  
someone who's got your number.

(a brief look at Rae)

We did a lot of dreamin', me and  
Rae. Makin' plans to get out. I'd do  
my tour and... we'd move outta here.  
Go to Chattanooga. And I'd work for  
my uncle.

(looks down, tears

come to Ronnie)

But... when Rae gets like she does.  
And she does the things that she  
always done. Makes me feel like she

loves this place more'n me.

Rae starts shaking her head, tears come to her eyes.

R.L.

raises a hand to silence her.

**R.L.**

Go on, Ronnie.

**RONNIE**

All my life people called me shit like, sissy and... nervous and... I got few things in my life that make me feel like... like...

**LAZARUS**

Like a man.

**RONNIE**

(surprised)

Yes. I mean that's it. I wanna feel like a man with her. I wanna feel like the only man with her.

Ronnie wipes the tears from his eyes with his shirt sleeve.

R.L. turns to Rae.

**R.L.**

(looks at Rae)

Now, Rae, we're not here to fix you or judge you. Only you and the Almighty can do that. But I want you to tell me about these spells you get.

Rae takes a deep breath. She looks up at Laz. He encourages her with a nod.

**RAE**

It starts like this... fire... that spreads. Starts in my head. Then moves to my stomach. Then it goes lower. I can stop it sometimes but mostly I just jump on and ride it out... then everything'll go back to normal, you know. Only thing ever took that feeling away was... was... when I met Ronnie.

(the emotion really hits hard)

Cuz I love him so much. He's all I got in my life that's special. And I like taking care of him and helping him when he gets nervous. When I can do that for him... it's like I'm givin' somethin' of myself that I haven't givin' nobody else.

**R.L.**

Rae, look at Ronnie. And tell him how you feel.

away  
Rae turns to Ronnie. Her nose is running as she wipes her tears.

**RAE**

I think... I think we're fucked up. Both of us. I know I am. But... that don't mean what I feel ain't true. It don't mean I can't love. And I know, how I been is... is... REALLY BAD! So if you want to quit on me... I understand. But please... please... don't.

and  
Ronnie is very moved by Rae's plea. He touches her face wipes away a tear.

**R.L.**

So. What'chu two gonna do about this?

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. ANGELA'S HOME - DAY**

is  
The door opens. Angela looks surprised to see Laz. She dressed in jeans, a T-shirt, wearing rubber gloves from cleaning.

**ANGELA**

Hey.

**LAZARUS**

Hey. You wasn't at'cha work but that nosey gal up at the counter give me your home address. Hope you don't mind me comin' over.

**ANGELA**

What do you need?

**LAZARUS**

I need ya help again.

Angela notices Rae and Ronnie seated in Laz's truck.

**ANGELA**

More cough syrup?

**LAZARUS**

Can I come in?

Angela takes a breath and opens the door wider.

**INT. ANGELA'S HOME - DAY**

It is a small house, but tidy. Angela motions for Laz  
to sit.

**LAZARUS**

I lied to you. It was wrong. But at the time... I didn't know what to do. Imagine you got an earful from folks about that gal I's carryin'...

**ANGELA**

Laz... you don't need to explain yourself to me...

**LAZARUS**

Yes, I do. Cuz I feel for you. Mean to say...

(long pause)

I got feelings for you. And I didn't want you to think... I didn't...

(how to say?)

I don't want you to go away. There's better ways to say what I'm trying to say, but... they it is. Don't go away.

Angela thinks on this. She rises out of her seat and  
crosses to Laz, sitting next to him on the love seat.

**ANGELA**

Laz. I'm gonna put my trust in you. I'm gonna do it knowin' all too well I can get hurt like this. And I have

been hurt. Just like you.

(beat)

Woman like me, I got a lot of livin'  
to do. But my days are precious to  
me. They all I got left. Don't want  
no more fuss. I want love in my life.  
You understanding me, Laz?

**LAZARUS**

I do. God's truth. I do.

They stay locked in each others' sight.

Then, the slowest, most gentle kiss happens between  
them.

When they separate, Laz is lost in her eyes.

**ANGELA**

Now what'chu need me to do? Cuz I'm  
gonna go do it.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. POOL HALL - MORNING**

Laz enters the pool hall and spots Tehronne. Tehronne  
motions  
him back. Next to Tehronne is an old black man named  
PINETOP.

**TEHRONNE**

Yo, this here Pinetop. I think he  
got what you lookin' for.

Pinetop grins and produces a black velvet cloth. He  
opens it  
gently and spreads it out, revealing a long, thin, gold  
chain.

Laz nods, approvingly.

**LAZARUS**

That'll do.

**EXT. POOL HALL - BACK DOOR - MORNING**

Tehronne leads Laz down the back steps.  
They both round the corner, revealing an old Chevy  
Caprice.

however  
that

It is light brown except for one door that is gray,  
the chrome rims on the car are impressive -- worth more  
the entire car by a long shot.

**TEHRONNE**

It got some miles on it, but my boys  
say she run good. Got fresh 22's on  
her. Ain't my doin'. That's just how  
it came to me. Don't worry. Nobody  
gonna come lookin' for it. I got the  
pinks... got no problem.

(hands Laz the keys)

Ain't gonna have my girl ridin' no  
bus.

**LAZARUS**

(moved, impressed)

Don't see generosity much these days.  
Everything always got a catch. Guess  
I'm tryin' to say... thank you.

**TEHRONNE**

Nobody ever asks me to do shit like  
this for people. And you know what?  
I'm good at it. Naw what I mean?

alone.  
Tehronne walks back into the pool hall, leaving Laz

**CUT TO:**

**INT. ELLA MAE'S WOMEN'S CLOTHING - DAY**

hurries  
in  
Rhonda has three white dresses over her arm as she  
past Ronnie, seated next to the back dressing rooms.  
The door doesn't close all the way. He stands and moves  
for a peek. Angela pokes her head out and grins.

**ANGELA**

What are you doing?

**RONNIE**

(shrugs)

Just wanted to see.

**ANGELA**

You know the rules.  
(vacant look from  
Ronnie)  
You do know the rules, don't you?

**RONNIE**

Yeah, I know.

**ANGELA**

Then start taking them seriously.

**RONNIE**

Yes, ma'am.

**INT. ELLA MAE'S WOMEN'S CLOTHING - DRESSING ROOM - DAY**

Rae is standing in bra and panties up on a small  
platform in  
dresses  
front of a tri-divided mirror. Ella Mae takes the  
from Rhonda.

Angela sees that Rae is nervous.

**ANGELA**

It's okay to breathe, honey.

**RAE**

Yes, ma'am.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. RONNIE'S TRAILER - LATE DAY**

Ronnie is wearing a brown corduroy jacket. He is  
attempting  
to tie his neck tie in the side mirror of Laz's truck.  
Lincoln, also wearing his Sunday best, steps up behind  
him.

**LINCOLN**

You Ronnie?

**RONNIE**

Yeah.

**LINCOLN**

I'm Lincoln. Guess I'm gonna be your  
best man.

**RONNIE**

(ultimately accepting)  
Okay.

**LINCOLN**

You havin' trouble with that tie?  
Cuz I'm pretty good at it.

Ronnie nods. Lincoln steps behind him to tie the tie.

**LINCOLN**

Gotta do it like this or I get all  
turned around.

**INT. RONNIE'S TRAILER - LATE DAY**

Rose.  
bedroom  
Laz is wearing the same suit he wore at the cafe with  
He is seated in Ronnie's trailer, outside the back  
door.

Angela steps out from the bedroom with a grin.

**ANGELA**

She's ready for you.

**INT. RONNIE'S TRAILER - BACK BEDROOM - LATE DAY**

doorjam. He  
Laz opens the door, carefully looking around the  
sees her standing before the dresser mirror. She looks  
beautiful, simple, and elegant.

Rae desperately searches Laz's eyes for approval.

**LAZARUS**

Now that's sharp. That's real sharp.  
Miss Ella Mae set you up, didn't  
she? You like it?

**RAE**

I've had nice things before but I  
always ruined 'em somehow.

**LAZARUS**

Well, this one's yours now. You ready  
to take care of it?

Rae bows her head. She fights back tears.

**RAE**

I want to. More'n anything. But I...

Laz holds her face in his hands. He speaks softly.

**LAZARUS**

Now... let's stop that.

(smiles)

You and me... we can handle this.  
You hear me, gal? We gonna be just  
fine. Now live ya life. Pull your  
shit together and live your life.

His words are piercing and true. Rae nods, decides.

**RAE**

Okay.

and R.L.'s words are heard as Rae wraps her arms around Laz  
rests her head on his chest.

**RAE**

I don't want you to let go.

**LAZARUS**

Maybe I won't.

**R.L. (V.O.)**

When I was a child, I talked like a  
child. I thought like a child, I  
reasoned like a child.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. RONNIE'S TRAILER - LATE DAY**

standing Ronnie turns toward the trailer. He is in his suit,  
to the in his front yard -- Lincoln at his side. R.L. stands  
side with a Bible in his hands.

**R.L. (V.O.)**

When I became a man, I put childish  
ways behind me.

Rae Ronnie is amazed with what he sees. Laz leads beautiful  
down the steps as Angela tends to her side.

**R.L. (V.O.)**

Now we see but a poor reflection as  
in the mirror; then we shall see  
face to face. I know in part; then I  
shall know fully, even as I am fully  
known.

the  
Rae holds firm to Laz's arm as they come together on  
green grass to witness and perform this union.

**R.L. (V.O.)**

And now these three remain: faith,  
hope and love. But the greatest of  
these is love.

(Looks to Laz)

Who gives this girl in marriage?

**LAZARUS**

I do.

Lazarus takes a few steps with Rae, offering her arm to  
Ronnie. Ronnie and Laz stay locked in each other's  
gaze.

**LAZARUS**

You got her now?

Laz stands next to Angela as Ronnie and Rae face R.L.  
together.

**R.L.**

Ronnie. Rae. I want you to look at  
each other and listen to me carefully.  
Do you understand?

**RAE & RONNIE**

Yes. Yes, sir.

They both obey -- each with a serious expression.

**R.L.**

I require and charge you both as you  
stand in the presence of God to  
remember that love and loyalty alone  
will avail as a foundation of a happy  
and enduring home.

(to Lincoln)

Go on, hand it to him.

Lincoln steps toward Ronnie and holds up the black  
velvet.

around  
Ronnie takes the gold chain and carefully wraps it  
Rae's waist.

**R.L.**

No human ties are more tender. No  
vows more sacred than those you now  
assume.

Laz looks on -- a conflicted emotion of joy and loss.

**R.L.**

If these solemn vows be kept  
inviolate, the home which you are  
establishing will abide in peace and  
your life will be filled with joy.

Angela reaches over and takes Laz's hand in hers.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. FREEWAY / INT. RONNIE & RAE'S NEW CAR - DAY**

silently  
Ronnie is at the wheel of the Chevy Caprice. Rae sits  
next to him.

on  
Rae looks out the window as a huge 18 wheeler rolls up  
her side. She tries to ignore it and the tension it  
brings.

is  
She turns to see that Ronnie is sweating. Another truck  
on his side sandwiching them in. An attack is coming  
over  
Ronnie.

over  
His breath is short. His chest tightens. Rae reaches  
and gently strokes the back of his neck.

**RONNIE**

I gotta pull over.

to the  
side of  
the road.  
He breaks. The two trucks zoom ahead as Ronnie breaks  
side. Dust flies as the Chevy skids to a stop on the  
the road.

control

Trucks zip by shaking the car, as Ronnie tries to get of his breathing.

as he  
wheel

Rae tries to stay calm, stroking the back of his neck struggles for breath. He puts his forehead against the to stave off the building nausea.

**RONNIE**

(through clenched  
teeth)

**FUCK!**

finger  
away

Fear comes to Rae's face as she notices her middle scratching at the back of Ronnie's neck. She pulls it and shoves her hand between her thighs.

gold

Her eyes close as the burning builds. She grips the chain around her waist.

**FLASH TO**

**QUICK CUTS**

panting  
lands  
plucked.

The chain, tight around Rae as she struggles. Rae and sweating on Laz's floor. She reaches out. Her hand on the strings of his guitar. A single string is

**FLASH**

**BACK TO:**

**EXT. FREEWAY/ INT. RONNIE & RAE'S NEW CAR - DAY**

her  
soft

Rae opens her eyes -- the low note still sounding in her head. She places her hand back on his neck. And then, as a prayer:

**RAE**

(singing)

You are my sunshine. My only sunshine.  
You make me happy, when times are

gray.

resting  
starts  
Ronnie slowly turns and looks at Rae, his head still  
on the steering wheel. The panting has slowed. Color  
returning to his cheeks.

**RAE**

(singing)

You'll never know dear, how much I  
love you.

Please don't take, my sunshine away.

Rae,  
The anxiety is gone. Ronnie takes a breath and looks at  
humbled and thankful of her power to soothe him.

**RAE**

See. We're okay.

Rae is smiling.

**CUT TO**

**BLACK:**

**THE END**