

Exec. Producer: Sam Raimi
Exec. Producer: Robert Tapert

"AMERICAN GOTHIC"

PILOT

Written By
Shaun Cassidy

SECOND DRAFT
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AMERICAN GOTHICACT ONE

FADE IN:

EXT. EST. MANTIOKE, NORTH CAROLINA - DUSK

From above the sea, we take in this historic port town, glistening seductively beneath a full moon. As the dark waters of the Gulf stream and the Labrador Strait clash in turbulent fury beneath us, we SOAR toward the shoreline and beyond. Over WHISTLING pine woods and gabled rooftops, we descend into this community's all-too-pristine heart, PASSING:

Row after row of stately Antebellum homes...

Numerous parks and squares, manicured to perfection...

A sparkling new elementary school...

And a sign on the village green: "WELCOME TO MANTIOKE, Pop. 3,666". We'll linger here, then RISE UP to DISCOVER...

A GOTHIC MANSION

towering above us. As it looms ominously, we PUSH IN on:

A MAN WITH PIERCING EYES

surveying the countryside through a picture window. Standing before a raging fire, he glances at his watch, then pins on a sheriff's badge. As the sun sinks in his eyes, we leave him in darkness and SAIL below the tracks, REVEALING:

A small hospital, paint peeling from it's wounds...

A dock side jute joint...

A burned out warehouse with iron legend: "Mantioke Guardian"...

And a poor shantyland known as "Goat Town".

CONTINUING on, we FLY with the spirits over ancient cemeteries and Civil War battlegrounds, across miles and miles of white clapboard loneliness, beyond Heaven and Hell, until we finally reach...

A farm.

EXT. EST. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

A rambling, wood framed house, desolate and alone. As a weeping willow lurches malevolently against it's siding, we SLOWLY PUSH IN on a cracked window.

INT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

ON A MATCH STICK

as it ignites. PULL BACK TO REVEAL

A BOY

of dark features and sharp structure, hovered over a birthday cake. With great care, he lights ten tiny candles. Stuffing the matchbook in his pocket, he pushes a clump of hair from his face, lifts up the cake, and begins moving across a dimly lit room. We FOLLOW him to

A DELICATE GIRL OF SIXTEEN

seated at a formica table, slowly rocking back and forth. She wears an oversized taffeta dress and a white ribbon in her hair. Across from her, gripping the table's edge, is

GAGE TEMPLE

forties, weathered, drunk. The boy lowers the cake to the table and begins writing his name in the frosting: CALEB.

CALEB

What should I wish for, Daddy?

Gage is fixed on the window, anxiously twirling a glass in his hand.

CALEB

Daddy, what should I wish for?

GAGE

Salvation.

Gage rises, reaches for a bottle of Applejack perched on the sill. After refilling his glass, he starts to pace nervously. Caleb leans into the girl.

CALEB

Merlyn... What do you think I should wish for?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GAGE

Don't get her goin'.

Caleb stares into his sister's soulful eyes. She appears to be in a semi-catatonic state. He reaches for a locket that hangs from her neck.

ON THE LOCKET

A sterling silver heart.

CALEB

takes it in his hand and whispers softly to his sister.

CALEB

It's alright, you don't have to tell me... I know.

Then he closes his eyes, makes his wish, and calls to Gage.

CALEB

I'm blowin' out my candles now, Daddy.

No response. As Caleb prepares to mark his day, Merlyn suddenly... stops rocking.

MERLYN

(dead monotone)
Someone's at the door.

Gage spins from the window. There is a moment of silence.

MERLYN

Someone's at the door.

GAGE

Oh, Christ...

MERLYN

Someone's at the door.

GAGE

She ain't gonna do this again.

CALEB

(nervously)
It's okay, Daddy. Just give her a minute.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 2

The WIND outside begins to HOWL.

MERLYN
Someone's at the door.

GAGE
(moving toward her)
Shut-up.

MERLYN
(louder)
Someone's at the door.

GAGE
I said shut-up.

CALEB
Leave her alone. She can't help
it.

GAGE
Goddam retard.

CALEB
She ain't retarded.

MERLYN
(louder still)
Someone's at the door. Someone's
at the door. Someone's at...

GAGE
(screaming in her face)
Shut-up, dammit!

BLAM! The front door EXPLODES open and a torrent of wind engulfs the room. Caleb's candles blow out. Gage drops his glass and it SHATTERS on the floor. Merlyn's hair soars wildly about her face as she continues CHANTING...

GAGE
(yelling above the storm)
Tell her to stop it, boy. Make her
stop.

CALEB
(screaming)
It ain't her fault.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 3

GAGE

The hell it ain't. Every damn problem in our miserable lives been her fault.

Fighting the wind, Gage pulls himself out onto the front porch and disappears. Merlyn continues on, getting louder by the moment. After a beat, Gage returns to the doorway, gripping a shovel. His eyes are ablaze.

CALEB

What are you doin'?

Suddenly, Gage brings the shovel CRASHING down on the table. Caleb SCREAMS. Merlyn doesn't even blink.

CALEB

(terrified)
Daddy, don't...

Gage raises his weapon again... BAMB! It lands inches from Merlyn's head. Caleb throws his weight against the table and topples it over, temporarily blocking Gage's path. Grabbing Merlyn's hand, he pulls her into an adjoining room and SLAMS the door.

INT. MERLYN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Caleb pushes his sister to the edge of a bed. She's in perpetual CHANT now, almost in convulsion. Caleb jumps up to a small window above them, tries to open it... Won't budge. He glances at the thick, cloth ribbon in Merlyn's hair. Reaching down, he unties it, and begins wrapping it around his hand.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Gage stumbles forward, raises the shovel...

GAGE

I can still hear you, girl.

And RAMS it into the door.

INT. MERLYN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Caleb pulls back his now wrapped fist and SMASHES it through the window. Bleeding, he reaches for his sister.

CALEB

Come on, Merly. We gotta go.

But she's a million miles away. Caleb tries to lift her up. She won't move. He looks her right in the eye.

CALEB

Alright... You stay here. I'm gonna get help, but you can't open the door understand? Don't open that door.

Caleb jumps back up and pulls himself through the tiny hatch as we HEAR Gage's shovel mercilessly POUNDING on the door. The panels are beginning to SPLINTER.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

Emerging from the window, Caleb hits the ground running, past a hay loft and down a dirt road through tobacco fields. As he rounds a corner, he's suddenly hit by headlights...

CALEB

dives out of the way. A vehicle SCREECHES to a halt.

A TOWERING FIGURE

emerges from the passenger door. Caleb glances up and finds himself staring straight into the haunting eyes of

SHERIFF LUCAS BUCK

the most seductively charming law enforcement officer any man or boy ever bargained with... And the same man we saw in the Gothic mansion. Mid-forties, chiseled, Lucas carries the unflappable confidence of the most powerful man in town. He lifts Caleb to his feet.

LUCAS

No more runnin' son.

INT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

Gage is right where we left him, HAMMERING away at the door. Through it's ravaged panels, we can now see Merlyn, still CHANTING away.

GAGE

Ten long years, Merlyn. Ten long years a hell you've put us through...

EXT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

Lucas' car SKIDS to a halt. He throws open the passenger door and Caleb scrambles off his lap to the ground. We then REVEAL the man behind the wheel: Lucas' deputy, BEN HEALY, a former high school football star extinguished by too much gut and too little spine. As Ben starts to exit, Lucas grabs his arm.

LUCAS

I'll handle this.

INT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

Gage PUNCHES through Merlyn's door, RIPS it aside, and stumbles into the room. She's going at warp speed now.

MERLYN

Someone's at the door... Someone's at the door... Someone's at...

Gage pulls back the shovel...

GAGE

This is for your mama.

...and lets it rip. We HOLD ON GAGE, as the shovel COLLIDES with it's target... and then there is silence. Gage lifts the shovel once more, but hesitates. In this moment, a flash of sanity crosses his face: The horrible reality of what he's done. He takes a halting step forward. Suddenly

LUCAS BUCK

is upon him. Coming from behind, he lifts Gage off his feet and hurls him back into the living room. As Gage's body CRASHES O.S., Caleb rushes in. Lucas restrains him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LUCAS

Call an ambulance.

Torn, Caleb reluctantly backs out of the room. Lucas turns and we finally REVEAL

MERLYN

sprawled on the bed, her party dress strewn violently about her waist.

BACK WIDE

As Lucas comes closer, staring at the girl's angelic face. Her eyes flutter. She is still alive.

LUCAS

Merlyn? Merlyn, honey... Can you hear me?

Merlyn's eyes open slightly.

MERLYN

(barely audible)

Someone's...at...the...door.

Lucas sighs, gently lifts her head into his hands.

LUCAS

Yes, darlin'. But we won't have to worry 'bout that no more.

And then, as we HOLD ON LUCAS, he suddenly, inexplicably... BREAKS her neck.

MERLYN'S HEAD

drops to the mattress with a dull THUD.

BACK TO LUCAS

who checks her pulse. Satisfied with his handiwork, he rises and turns toward the living room. It is only then that he notices the horrified expression of

BEN HEALY

staring at him through the broken window. As he meets the sheriff's deadly gaze we

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT BEDROOM - NIGHT

ON A STRIKING YOUNG WOMAN

who bolts up in bed, terrified. Though we don't know it yet, her name is GAIL EMORY, and she's in one serious cold sweat. She snaps on her bedside lamp. There's an open Powerbook at her side, various newspapers and magazines at her feet, books, letters, half a pizza...

GAIL

reaches for a bottle of water on the end table. A framed photo gets our attention:

ON THE PHOTO

A man and a woman are standing proudly before a printing press, holding up a newspaper. The paper, "The Mantioke Guardian" reads: "Gail Emory to Lead Bicentennial Parade." Pointing at the headline with a smile is a little girl wearing a paper crown. As

GAIL

stares at the photo pensively, we

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT - LATER

ON MERLYN'S BODY

as two paramedics lift it into a Rescue Squad vehicle. Flanked by a couple cameramen, the red and blue truck takes off, followed by an ambulance. We then PICK UP

BEN

exiting the house, carrying the shovel. In the b.g.

GAGE

watches from the rear of a patrol car. As Ben gets closer, he pushes his face up against the glass, and SCREAMS...

GAGE

Deputy!

Ben spins around with a start.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GAGE

Keep that monster away from my boy.

And the car ROARS off. Clearly unnerved, Ben watches Gage disappear into the night, then slowly turns and sees

LUCAS BUCK

surrounded by what passes for the local media. We PUSH IN on him.

LUCAS

The body of the victim, Merlyn Ann Temple, was discovered at...

Lucas catches sight of some cameramen attempting to focus.

LUCAS

You folks see me in back?
(to a black newswoman)
Danielle, let's give these boys
some room.

DANIELLE, and a few others down front, start to clear.

LUCAS

(aside to Danielle)
How's the job workin' out, D?

DANIELLE

I don't know what you said, but the station's offered me a helluva deal.

LUCAS

There any other kind?
(then re: his appearance)
Hat on or off?

DANIELLE

(smiles)
On. Much more heroic.

Lucas winks at her, adjusts his "Smokie", and with the cameramen now in position, gets back to business.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 2

LUCAS

Alright, then... The body of Merlyn Ann Temple, a sixteen year old child, beautiful child, was discovered this evening at approximately nine fifty-five P.M. Though unconfirmed, cause of death appears to be a blunt instrument to the head. I have the sad duty of reporting that the victim's father, Gage Temple, is our prime suspect.

There is a clamoring among the reporters.

LUCAS

We have no motive at this time, but we do have...

Lucas glances around, catches

BEN

hovering in the b.g., nervously rapping a pen in his hand, watching him darkly.

BACK TO LUCAS ON A TELEVISION SCREEN

LUCAS

... We do have a witness: Caleb Temple, the surviving child. As he has now been left without a family, I'm hoping our community...

INT. APARTMENT BEDROOM - NIGHT

PULL BACK TO REVEAL GAIL

watching Lucas on TV, hanging on every word.

LUCAS

...will support me in shepherding him through the dark days ahead.

Gail thinks for a moment, then moves to a closet and pulls out a duffel bag.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

DANIELLE
Sheriff, where is the child now?

LUCAS
We have him safely in custody. As soon as we're able to...

Ben approaches Lucas, whispers something in his ear. Lucas' reaction speaks volumes.

LUCAS
Uh... It seems the boy was slightly injured in the melee and has been taken to the hospital.
(shooting daggers at Ben)
He won't be there long.

EXT. EST. FULTON COUNTY HOSPITAL - NIGHT

A small, three story brick structure. The emergency vehicles from the crime scene are now visible in the garage.

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - NIGHT

ON CALEB - MOVING

strapped to a gurney, pushed in by an attendant. The room is partitioned into three areas: The first two are empty. The third bustles. The boy cranes his neck to SEE

A GAGGLE OF NURSES

male and female, hovered over a body in the distance. We HEAR comments like "Poor thing", "I knew that man was crazy", "Look at the mother", etc.

BACK TO CALEB

forced to digest this perverse gossip.

MATT (O.S.)
Folks?

Caleb, and all the nurses, turn to discover

DR. MATT CROWER

standing in the doorway. Thirties, offbeat, battle weary.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MATT

Bar's closed.

A couple of nurses immediately try to look busy. A few more file sheepishly out the door. Matt looks down at Caleb.

MATT

Let's get you out of here.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Caleb is seated on a bed, staring into space, a wall of emotion. Matt's beside him, chewing gum, wrapping the boy's hand in gauze.

MATT

You have any other relatives in town?

Caleb shakes his head.

MATT

Child Welfare talk to you yet?

Negative.

MATT

Want a piece of Black Jack?

Caleb glances at him. Matt's holding out a stick of gum.

MATT

I'm a Doctor. Gotta ask these questions.

Caleb turns away. Matt drops the gum back in his pocket.

MATT

Your hand's going to be fine, Caleb... And nothing else that happened is your fault.

He waits for a response. Doesn't come. Rises.

MATT

I'm at the end of the hall if you need me.

As he turns to go...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CALEB

(softly)
That my sister down there?

Matt holds.

MATT

Yes.

CALEB

I want to see her.

MATT

That's not a good idea.

CALEB

Why not?

MATT

Because it won't help.

Beat.

CALEB

You know it's my birthday?

MATT

Uh... No. No, I didn't.

CALEB

Well, it is. And I think I gotta
right to see my sister on my
birthday.

Before he can respond, a nurse, RITA BARBER, pops her head
in the door. Mid-forties, permed hair, she wears an "I've
been to Graceland" tee shirt beneath her smock.

RITA

Dr. Crower? Sheriff's here.

MATT

(to Caleb)
Give me two minutes.

EXT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Matt is pacing on the sidewalk in front of the entrance.
Lucas is fuming. Ben listens from the car in the b.g.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LUCAS

On who's authority is he with you?

MATT

Situations like this, Child Welfare grants the doctor in charge temporary custody.

LUCAS

These folks seen your drivin' record?

(off Matt's reaction)

Forgive me... Alcoholism's just a "disease" now right? Like the common cold, only more... colorful.

MATT

(taut)

What do you know about me?

LUCAS

Yankee blue blood, Harvard Med, came to Mantioko last fall and been makin' trouble ever since: "Let's build a new hospital, let's clean up Goat Town, let's drown the poor in biscuits and gravy..." Ain't exactly been shy, Doctor.

MATT

And I thought the Southern Sheriff was just a cliché.

LUCAS

I want the boy.

MATT

Question him tomorrow.

LUCAS

This ain't about questioning. I'm family.

MATT

Not according to his file.

Lucas glares at him.

LUCAS

You're a good man, aren'tcha?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 2

MATT

I don't know what that means.

LUCAS

Anything happens to that child, you will.

Matt starts back up the steps. Lucas slips into the car, calls after him...

LUCAS

You got him 'till noon tomorrow.

And the car ROARS off.

EXT. GAIL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Dressed in sweats and leather jacket, Gail hurriedly exits her building and makes her way to an old Mustang across the street. Tossing her duffel in back, she hops into the driver's seat and REVS up the car.

INT. MATT'S OFFICE/ SECOND FLOOR HOSPITAL HALL - NIGHT

Matt is studying Caleb's file. He picks up the phone and punches in a number.

MATT

Dan? See if you can track down some files on Caleb Temple's parents for me, will ya? We got twelve hours to find a long, lost Uncle... Thanks, Danny.

Matt hangs up, moves out into the hall.

MATT

Sorry, Caleb. I...

He reaches Caleb's door. The room is empty.

MATT

Caleb?

INT. FIRST FLOOR HOSPITAL HALL - NIGHT

Peering out from a stairwell, Caleb watches the "Emergency Room" door. A couple of nurses exit, giving him the opportunity he's been waiting for. He dashes inside.

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - NIGHT

Empty and foreboding. Cautiously, Caleb makes his way toward the gurney in the back of the room. Reaching Merlyn's body, he notes her toe tag. Touches her hair. Then slowly, grimly... pulls back the sheet.

ON MERLYN'S FACE

Frosty white, but somehow beautiful nonetheless. We are granted the side that did not see the shovel.

CALEB

stares at his sister for a long beat, then reaches into his pocket and pulls out the white ribbon. He begins tying it back in her hair. As he works diligently, his eyes well up, and a single tear falls down his cheek.

CALEB

I'm sorry, Merly. I should have been there to look after ya.

CLOSE ON MERLYN

Lying in grace. A CHILLING SOUND begins to fill the room. A DISSONANT, HAUNTING SOUND...

CALEB

Takes a step back, glancing around nervously... Nothing but the SOUND. He looks back to his sister.

ON MERLYN

As a tear begins to emerge from her eye: A tear of blood.

CALEB

looks on in disbelief as

A CRIMSON TEAR

slowly inches it's way across Merlyn's icy flesh.

CALEB

reaches out and touches the bloody trail crossing his sister's face. Suddenly

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THE DOOR SWINGS OPEN REVEALING MATT
and everything immediately becomes silent.

MATT

Caleb...

Caleb looks at Matt, then returns to Merlyn. The blood on her face has vanished. Reaching the gurney, Matt pulls the sheet back over her head.

MATT

You don't need this.

As he leads the boy from the room, Caleb sneaks a glance downward; Merlyn's blood is still on his hand.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. LUCAS' CAR - MOVING - NIGHT

Ben's driving, Lucas is shotgun. They're gliding through "Goat Town" and there's heavy tension in the air.

BEN

Lucas... I'm having a hard time.

LUCAS

That so.

BEN

(haltingly)

You've done an awful lot for me...
And I figure I owe you...

LUCAS

Got your lucky pen?

BEN

Yeah...

LUCAS

Write that down.

BEN

(sighs)

What I'm tryin' to say is...

Ben's throat tightens.

BEN

I saw you... I saw what you did to
that girl. I didn't mean to, I...
I thought you might need help,
so...

Suddenly, Lucas lurches across the seat, rams his foot down on the brake and

THE CAR

CAREENS off the road.

LUCAS

whips out his gun and presses it into Ben's forehead.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LUCAS
What color is this gun?

BEN
(terrified)
What?

LUCAS
What color is the gun?

BEN
I... I...

LUCAS
Answer's plain as the nose on your
face.

BEN
It's, uh... It's gray. It's a gray
gun.

LUCAS
A ray gun?

BEN
No, no, no.... A gray gun. It's a
gray gun, Lucas.

LUCAS
That's right, Ben... It's grey.
But isn't it possible that my idea
of grey, and your idea of gray,
might differ?

BEN
I... I guess so.

LUCAS
All depends on your perception,
right?
(then)
Get out of the car, Ben.

BEN
No... No Lucas, please...

LUCAS
(firmly)
Get out of the car.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 2

Ben falls out his door. Lucas slides over to the driver's seat and addresses him through the window.

LUCAS

Now...

Ben stares at him, terrified.

LUCAS

I believe you need a drink.

Lucas pulls out his wallet, tosses Ben a twenty.

LUCAS

Have a bottle on me. And while you're sippin', you think about what you "saw" tonight.

BEN

(with great relief)
Alright, Lucas. I'll do that.

LUCAS

The world can be a beautiful place, Ben. You just gotta know how to look at it.

Lucas REVS up the car and leaves Ben gratefully in the dust.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Caleb is seated on the bed, Matt's at his side.

MATT

You got water, phone, extra blanket... and a genuine Elvis pillowcase.

Caleb turns... Sure enough, Elvis' mug is on his pillow.

MATT

Nurse's idea. Make you sleep like a king.

Caleb cringes. Matt reaches into his pocket.

MATT

Got something else for you, too.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He pulls out Merlyn's locket. Caleb's eyes widen. He reaches for it with the hand that did not touch Merlyn's blood; the other remains hidden beneath the covers.

CALEB

stares at the locket with reverence... then opens it.

ON A PHOTOGRAPH INSIDE

A picture of a beautiful young woman, seated in a rocking chair.

MATT

That your Mom?

Caleb nods, stares at the photo a beat longer, then...

CALEB

You know a lotta folks that's died?

MATT

Guess I have.

CALEB

Family?

Matt reaches for Caleb's water...

MATT

My wife and daughter.

Caleb reacts. Matt takes a long swig.

CALEB

Where do you think they are now?

MATT

I don't know... I keep forgetting they're gone.

Caleb looks at him questioningly. Matt puts down the glass.

MATT

Family stays with you, Caleb. You think about them, dream about them... That keeps them alive.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 2

CALEB
 (very difficult)
 I dream 'bout my Mama a lot. Never
 met her, but...
 (glancing at the locket)
 Made a wish about her tonight... A
 wish to have her back.
 (off Matt; reflectively)
 Maybe I didn't have to.

Matt touches the boy's shoulder.

MATT
 Try to get some sleep, huh?

Caleb nods. Matt turns off the light and exits. Caleb lies there a moment... Then pulls his blood tinged hand from beneath the covers. As he stares at it pensively, we go

EXT. HIGHWAY - ON AN OLD RED MUSTANG - NIGHT

Racing down the interstate.

INT. MUSTANG - MOVING - NIGHT

Gail's at the wheel, sipping hot coffee from a Sinclair mug. She pulls out a cellular phone and punches in a number. We hear a voice mail response, then a BEEP.

GAIL
 Dina, it's Gail... I won't be in
 the office today, I've... There's
 something I've got to do. Tell
 Arthur not to worry about the
 welfare piece, I'll still make
 deadline... And when I know where
 I'm at... I'll call.

She hangs up, let's out a deep sigh. As the WIND HOWLS all around her, we go

EXT. EST. JUTE JOINT - NIGHT

More like a bait shop than a club, this is a dry county's ramshackle version of a speakeasy. We HEAR MUSIC within...

INT. JUTE JOINT - NIGHT

Makeshift bar, couple of pool tables, lots of illegal booze. People of every color are swaying to the SEDUCTIVE SOUNDS of the juke box. PANNING across this ocean of sweat we find

BEN HEALY

shooting pool, alone, looking every inch the death of the party. A bottle of Jack Daniels rides the corner pocket. Meanwhile, across the room...

THE SEXIEST LEGS THIS SIDE OF HEAVEN

are moving toward him with cool authority. We FOLLOW at thigh level as we are led through traffic and right back to

BEN

who glances up from his cue... and almost rips the felt.

SELENA COOMBS

is hovering over him. Smart, sexy, and much too dangerous in a strapless dress.

SELENA

Hello, Ben. Conducting a raid?

Ben just stares at her.

SELENA

I wasn't aware they allowed Law Enforcement in places like this.

BEN

I'm off duty.

SELENA

Lucky me. Rack your balls?

Selena lounges on the edge of the table, takes a slug of booze. Ben shakes his head.

BEN

Whatta you doin' here, Selena?

SELENA

Trollin'.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN
You can do that in a nicer
neighborhood.

SELENA
I have certain needs that can't be
fulfilled... uptown.

Ben shoots... Scratches. Tries to gloss over it.

BEN
This ain't my game.

SELENA
I can see that.

She smiles lasciviously.

SELENA
Need a teacher?

INT. MATT'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Matt's at his desk, stirring coffee with a stick of gum.
Rita pops her head in the door.

RITA
Dan said you wanted some files?

MATT
Oh, right... Thanks.

She places them in front of him. Notes his worn expression.

RITA
That boy'll survive, you know...
(gently pointed)
We all do.

Matt surrenders half a smile, opens a folder.

MATT
Were you here when his mother died?

RITA
Right on the floor.

MATT
What happened?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RITA

Day after Caleb was born, she started actin' crazy; convinced somebody was gonna steal her baby. We tried gettin' holda the father, but that little girl was throwin' a fit and he couldn't get away.

MATT

Merlyn?

RITA

(nods)

She'd been traumatized by somethin' earlier that year. No one knew why, but she'd just go off sometimes... Any rate, Mama was makin' such a fuss we had to call the sheriff...

(sighs)

He barely made it to her room before she threw herself out the window.

MATT

My God...

RITA

Yeah. After that, Caleb's Daddy was never the same. Blamed himself... Really blamed that girl.

MATT

Is this why the sheriff is so interested in Caleb?

Rita looks away, a trace of melancholy in her eyes...

RITA

Lucas is interested in everyone.

EXT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE AND JAIL - NIGHT

Lucas' car pulls up out front and he emerges. Standing majestically beneath the moonlight, he takes in his dominion, then moves toward the entrance.

INT. JAIL - NIGHT

A mulatto jailer, CAMMALOUS FRY, is seated behind a desk watching "The Andy Griffith Show". As Lucas enters, Cammalous snaps off the TV and pats down his hair.

CAMMALOUS

Hey, sheriff.

LUCAS

Evenin' Cammalous. How's the family?

CAMMALOUS

Picture perfect.

Lucas reaches behind the desk for a set of keys.

LUCAS

Your daughter get into that school?

CAMMALOUS

Sure did. And don't you worry, I'll be payin' you back as soon...

Lucas silences him with a paternal hand.

LUCAS

I ain't worried.

INT. CELL BLOCK - NIGHT

A rotting, nineteenth century lockup. Lucas makes his way down a dark hall, passing a number of empty cells encased in stone. Running his keys along the bars like a sadistic schoolboy, he whistles the theme from "The Andy Griffith Show". At the end of the corridor lies

GAGE

backed into a cell, staring out from the abyss.

GAGE

Where's my boy?

LUCAS

Almost home.

GAGE

You made this happen, didn't you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LUCAS

Me?

GAGE

You make everythin' happen.

Lucas pulls a document from his pocket.

LUCAS

This form grants me sole custody of Caleb. I'd like you to sign it.

GAGE

I ain't signin' nothin'.

LUCAS

You care about his future?

Lucas pushes the document through the bars and holds a pen out like a carrot. With great reluctance, Gage takes the pen, slowly raises it aloft... Then holds. He'd like to shove it straight into Lucas' heart...

LUCAS

Too late for salvation, my friend.

GAGE

Not for me.

And Gage lowers the pen to his side. Lucas sighs.

LUCAS

You know... You may have a point.

Gage studies him warily.

LUCAS

You miss your wife, Gage?

(beat)

She was quite a woman, wasn't she?
Some would say a Saint...

GAGE

Get out of here.

LUCAS

But I guess she just wasn't cut out
for motherin'...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 2

GAGE

Get out.

LUCAS

So she did the honorable thing;
she took her life. Which spared
her family her pain... And set her
son free.

(the coup de grace)

Must be some salvation in that.

Tears are running down Gage's face. Lucas stuffs the document back in his pocket and starts down the hall.

LUCAS

Goodbye, Gage.

As he leaves, we PUSH IN on the pen still dangling from Gage's hand and

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Lucas' car slithers into an alley alongside the hospital. After a beat, he emerges and gazes intently at a window on the second floor.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Caleb is sleeping. We HOVER above his bed, slowly PUSHING IN on his face... and the DISSONANT SOUND begins. The same CHILLING SOUND we heard in the emergency room. Caleb's eyes open. He looks around nervously, reaches to turn on his bedside lamp.... CLICK. Nothing happens.

INT. HOSPITAL ADMITTING ROOM - NIGHT

An elderly black orderly, DAN, is seated behind the desk doing a crossword. Lucas enters and surreptitiously slips by him, moving toward the stairs. As he's almost out of sight...

DAN (O.S.)

Sheriff?

Lucas turns, caught like a rat.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAN

What's a five letter synonym for
intelligent?

Lucas pauses for a moment, then...

LUCAS

Alert.

DAN

Oh... Right. Thanks.

And Dan goes back to his puzzle. Lucas shakes his head...
and starts up the stairs.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

As the CHILLING SOUND grows, Caleb pulls himself from the
bed and moves toward the door. He reaches for the knob...
It's FREEZING COLD. He jumps back with a start and SEES

HIS BLOODY FINGERPRINTS

now visible through an icy frost on the doorknob.

INT. HOSPITAL STAIRWELL - NIGHT

Lucas approaches the second floor. Suddenly

A NURSE

crosses at the top of the stairs.

LUCAS

ducks down, and waits for her to clear. After a healthy
pause... he rises, and continues his ascent.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Caleb is looking on in terror as

HIS FINGERPRINTS

begin to come alive. To re-liquefy and move, spreading
beyond the knob to the door and the wall itself... Creating
new forms... Letters... Letters of blood:

O E S T E O

INT. SECOND FLOOR HOSPITAL HALL - NIGHT

Lucas surveys the hall. Matt's office door is closed. With clear intent, he starts toward Caleb's room.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Caleb can't believe his eyes. He takes a wary step back as

HIS BLOODY FINGERPRINTS

continues their eerie transformation. More letters materialize:

O E O E S T H E O O

And then finally:

S O M E O N E S A T T H E D O O R

And as this ominous warning registers on Caleb's face...

INT. SECOND FLOOR HOSPITAL HALL - NIGHT

Lucas reaches for Caleb's door knob... and suddenly into FRAME shoots

MATT'S HAND

grabbing his wrist and spinning him around. Though the SOUND RAGES in Caleb's room, not a trace is heard out here.

GO WIDE

MATT

What do you think you're doing?

Lucas is thrown... but quickly recovers.

LUCAS

Oh... Doctor. I was lookin' for ya.

MATT

I'll bet you were.

Lucas reaches into his pocket...

LUCAS

Would you give this to Caleb?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He pulls out a toy police car and hands it to Matt.

MATT

What's this for?

LUCAS

(smiles)

I forgot to give him his birthday present.

MATT

Really.

LUCAS

Yeah, well... I figured in light of what he's been through tonight... it was the least I could do.

Matt just stares at him. Not buying. And Lucas knows it.

LUCAS

(coldy)

Maybe I'll just...

(taking the car back)

...leave it at the front desk.

MATT

I'll walk you out.

And as they leave FRAME, we go

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Caleb is frozen in fear, as

SOMEONES AT THE DOOR

begins to face, dissolving into these two final words:

G O H O M E

And now, the message is clear.

CALEB

stumbles backward, this last salvo hitting it's mark, and as the CHILLING SOUND reaching MAXIMUM PITCH we

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

EXT. MANTIOKE TOWN SQUARE - THE NEXT MORNING

A bright, sunny morning and all is seemingly well. From the air we SLOWLY PUSH IN on

A COIF OF LADIES

gathered on the village green for a breakfast tea. Beneath mulberry parasols, the silk-skirted set listen raptly as a handsome African-American man, HENRY DAVENPORT, addresses them. Looking on proudly is DANIELLE DAVENPORT, his spouse and our newscaster from the previous evening. Above hangs a banner: "Pirate Days Frolic: June 10 - 27". We PUSH IN...

DAVENPORT

...And finally, I'd like to thank the Ladies Auxiliary for their generous support. To kick off this celebration...

(mock scary)

...Of our blood thirsty heritage...

(laugh among the ladies)

...We have two of Mantioko's most notorious swashbucklers: Betty Dee and Lovey Lee Holland.

A pair of eighty year old twins emerge from the crowd and are met with rich applause. They are led to a couple of microphones and they take stage.

BETTY DEE

Thank you, Mr. Mayor. My sister and I are most happy to be here.

LOVEY LEE

I ain't happy.

The crowd laughs.

BETTY DEE

(to Lovey)

We are both very proud.

ANOTHER ANGLE - ON GAIL IN THE MUSTANG

As she pulls up to a stop light. She glances out her window, taking in this spectacle from her car.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BETTY DEE
 (reaching into her purse)
 I have prepared a short speech...

LOVEY LEE
 I don't need no speech. I had a
 vision this mornin'. A vision of
 evil...

BETTY DEE
 Lovey, you promised...

Betty looks around nervously. The Mayor takes the mike,
 smiles with discomfort.

DAVENPORT
 Uh... We all know Miss Lovey has
 the "second sight", so I'm sure we
 can indulge her...

Lovey Lee pulls herself to her feet.

LOVEY LEE
 Don't patronize me, Henry. We're
 honorin' the devil here...
 (coughs)
 And ya'll know it.

Gail reacts.

BETTY DEE
 (truly frightened)
 Lovey, please don't do this...

LOVEY LEE
 (to the crowd)
 Sittin' there in your finery...
 (coughs)
 Pretendin' you don't know...
 (more coughing)
 Who I'm... I'm...

Lovey points skyward and begins coughing violently. The
 Mayor rushes to her side, as Betty looks on through tears.

BETTY DEE
 She's havin' a seizure.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 2

DAVENPORT

(to an aide)
Call an ambulance.

THE CROWD

reacts in dismay as

GAIL

sticks her head out the window to SEE what Lovey had been pointing at:

THE GOTHIC MANSION

is directly above her, but what's most unsettling is that we can just make out Lucas' shadowy form, standing before the fireplace, watching everything from his picture window.

GAIL

gazes at this mysterious figure with curious trepidation... HONK! She jumps in her seat, reacting to the impatience of the driver behind her. Hitting her gas pedal, Gail takes off down the road and we

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOSPITAL - MATT'S OFFICE - MORNING

Matt's pacing, chewing gum, downing coffee, reading a file. Rita enters in street clothes.

RITA

I'm goin' home, Matt.

MATT

Help me a sec... Caleb's mom died from massive head injuries...

RITA

You ever sleep?

MATT

But her body was filled with puncture wounds.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RITA

I thought you were looking for relatives.

MATT

Why was she so cut up?

RITA

Glass from the window.

MATT

Right. But if you're gonna kill yourself by jumping out a window... Don't you open it first?

(beat)

Was the sheriff the only one in the room when this happened?

RITA

Careful, Matt... Mr. Buck's been around a lot longer than you have.

Matt grabs the phone and punches in a number.

MATT

Dan? What time they coming to pick up the Temple girl for autopsy?... Too late to cancel?... Because I'd like to send her up to Chapel Hill...

(off Rita)

Yeah, I know the sheriff prefers Jacksonville, but I want to go another way...

GAIL (O.S.)

Excuse me...

Rita spins around. Gail's standing in the doorway.

GAIL

Are you Doctor Crower?

RITA

Uh... No.

MATT

(off Gail)
Dan? I'll call you back.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 2

Matt hangs up the phone, stares at this attractive young woman lingering in the hall.

MATT

Can I help you?

GAIL

I'm Gail Emory... Caleb Temple's cousin.

Matt's eyes light up...

GAIL

Our mothers were sisters.

Matt checks his file... and breaks into a smile.

MATT

The long, lost Uncle...

GAIL

Excuse me?

Matt moves toward her, shakes her hand warmly.

MATT

Welcome to the front, Ms. Emory.

GAIL

How's Caleb?

MATT

Why don't we find out.

Matt leads Gail out the door. We STAY with Rita, a look of deep concern on her face. She sighs... and picks up the phone.

INT. SECOND FLOOR HOSPITAL HALL - MORNING

Matt and Gail are moving toward Caleb's room.

MATT

When did you see him last?

GAIL

Actually, we've never met.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MATT

(surprised)
Oh... Well, he's a great kid. He's
been through a lot, but he seems
pretty resilient. He's bright,
sensitive...

GAIL

You don't have to sell me, Doctor.

MATT

Sorry. It's just that you may be
all he's got left.

Matt eases open the door...

MATT

(sotto)
He was up pretty late...

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

ON CALEB'S SLEEPING FORM - MATT AND GAIL'S P.O.V.

All we SEE is the top of a head protruding from the covers.

ON GAIL AND MATT

As she turns to him, whispers...

GAIL

Don't wake him.

MATT

Can you come back later? Say...
noon?

Gail nods and Matt closes the door. We STAY IN THE ROOM and
SLOWLY PUSH to the opposite side of the bed, REVEALING

ELVIS' FACE

just popping out from beneath the covers.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Caleb is walking through the forest, obviously exhausted
from a long night's journey.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

There's little sunlight here, and the dense trees cast eerie shadows all around him. He reaches a country road, starts to cross, then HEARS an approaching car. He ducks down.

A WHITE CORVETTE

races by. We STAY WITH THE CAR.

INT. CORVETTE - MOVING - DAY

A very hung over Ben Healy's at the wheel. His hair's a mess, he's unshaven... And a familiar strapless dress lies provocatively on the passenger seat.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

ON A WOMAN'S BACK

as she draws a happy face on a blackboard, then turns...

SELENA COOMBS

is revealed, looking the antithesis of strapless in her conservative schoolmarm disguise. She smiles...

SELENA

Who's feelin' happy today?

ON THE CLASS OF FOURTH GRADERS

As every hand in the room goes up... except one: That of a nerdy, African-American kid, JOSS, seated by an empty desk.

SELENA

looks at him with faux concern.

SELENA

What's the matter Joss?

JOSS

I miss Caleb.

SELENA

Well, I'm sure we all do. But can't you put on your happy face for our special guest?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Joss makes a halfhearted grin.

SELENA

That's better.

(calling)

We're ready for you, special guest.

LUCAS BUCK

enters, carrying a big greeting card and a bigger smile.

LUCAS

Howdy, kids.

THE CLASS

Hello, Sheriff Buck.

Selena applauds her student's well rehearsed greeting.
Lucas tips his hat to the teacher and moves toward Joss.

LUCAS

Mind if I sit next to you?

Joss shakes his head. Lucas takes the empty desk.

LUCAS

I heard what you said, 'bout
missin' your friend? That's why
I'm here.

(to the class)

I'm sure ya'll know 'bout what
happened last night. Caleb Temple
needs our support. So...

(holding up a gold star)

Who wants to be deputized?

Every hand in the room shoots up.

LUCAS

Alright, then...

Lucas pulls a bag of plastic stars from his pocket, hands
them to Joss with the greeting card.

LUCAS

Mayor's your daddy, right?

Joss nods.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 2

LUCAS

Then you're a natural born leader. I'd like you to see that everyone signs this for Caleb... And after they do, you may deputize them as "Junior Bucks". Handle that?

JOSS

Yessir.

LUCAS

Good man.

Lucas pats Joss' head and rises.

LUCAS

Miss Coombs... May I see you in private?

INT. TEACHER'S LOUNGE - DAY

Lucas is spinning a giant globe. Selena's behind him, massaging his shoulders.

LUCAS

How much did he tell you?

SELENA

Everything.

LUCAS

Son-of-a-bitch... Where's he now?

SELENA

Droppin' off my car.

LUCAS

You let him drive your car?

SELENA

It needed a wash.

Lucas looks at her pointedly.

SELENA

Well, I wasn't going to take him to my apartment.

He snorts, turns away from her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LUCAS

How was he?

SELENA

Short.

LUCAS

I told you to test his loyalty, not his endurance.

SELENA

You work your way, I'll work mine. Besides, that deputy ain't your problem.

LUCAS

What do you mean?

SELENA

How much do you love me?

LUCAS

Depends.

SELENA

Well... This little information machine's got more news: Caleb's cousin's in town.

LUCAS

What?

SELENA

Little bird told me she popped into the hospital this morning "very concerned" about her kin.

LUCAS

Oh, Hell...

SELENA

Looks like you left some food on your plate, darlin'....
(smiles insidiously)
Want me to clean it up for ya?

Lucas dismisses Selena with a wave and opens the door.

LUCAS

(patronizingly)
Put on your happy face, Miss Coombs... And get outta mine.

INT. JAIL CELL BLOCK - DAY

Cammalous is leading Matt down the long, rat infested hall.

CAMMALOUS

You expected?

MATT

No.

CAMMALOUS

Then he may not talk. He was in a foul mood last night. Sheriff told me to hold his breakfast.

They reach Gage's cell. He's seated, back to us on the bed.

CAMMALOUS

Got a visitor, Mr. Temple.

MATT

Gage? I'm Doctor Crower. I was wondering if I could ask you some questions about your wife...

Gage doesn't move. Matt looks at Cammalous. He shrugs.

MATT

Open the cell.

Cammalous reaches for the keys, pulls out his gun... And cautiously unlocks the door. Matt swings the old gate aside and enters. He takes a few steps, rounds the bed...

MATT

If you'll just give me a...

And then he SEES

GAGE'S HORRIFIC FACE

Mouth agape, eyes popping from their sockets... And the pen, jutting out of his throat. As a steady DRIPPING of blood continues to service the massive death pool between his legs

MATT

reacts with repulsion, and we

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

EXT. TOBACCO FIELDS - DAY

Miles of copper colored leaves are swaying in the WIND. As dark storm clouds gather overhead, we PICK UP

CALEB

trudging through the tall plants. Tired and hungry, he reaches a clearing and stumbles onto a dirt road. Looking ahead, he SEES:

THE FARMHOUSE

about a mile away. An Andrew Wyeth nightmare, it sits ragged and alone against a blackening sky.

CALEB

stares at it with trepidation. A gust of WIND hits him in the face, he touches Merlyn's locket... and continues on.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

ON LUCAS' CAR

Lucas is at the wheel. Ben's tense as ever. Because of the clouds, it's quite dark now, and throughout this scene we'll hear intermittent rolls of THUNDER. Ben's just hanging up the radio receiver.

BEN

Cammalous said it looked like
Gage'd been dead for hours.

LUCAS

Pity.

BEN

You got no conscience about
anything, do ya?

LUCAS

Conscience is just the fear of
gettin' caught, Ben.

Ben shifts his eyes. They ride in silence a moment, then...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN
I can't be part of this no more.

LUCAS
That so...

BOOM! The car suddenly bolts...

BEN
(nervously)
What was that?

BOOM! Happens again...

LUCAS
Radiator.

WIDE ON THE CAR

As it lugs to the side of the road... And stops.

LUCAS

twists the key in the ignition, tries to turn it over...

LUCAS
Damn...
(sighs)
Open the hood.

Ben looks at him warily.

LUCAS
Come on, Ben... Ain't got all day.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

We FOLLOW Ben as he cautiously makes his way toward the front of the car.

LUCAS

calls to him through the open driver's side window.

LUCAS
We may have popped a hose. Check it out.

Ben hesitates...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN

Why don't you come out here and help me?

LUCAS

(condescendingly)
Because someone's got to start the engine.

Keeping one cautious eye on Lucas, Ben gingerly reaches across the hood, unlatches it, and pulls it up... All from the side of the car. Lucas shakes his head.

LUCAS

What are you doin'? Get in there and find out what's wrong.

Ben looks at the engine... but keeps his distance.

BEN

I don't see any hose.

LUCAS

Oh, Hell...

Lucas leaps from the driver's seat, moves to the front of the car, and grabs something beneath the hood.

LUCAS

What's this?
(then)
Probably clogged. Gimme your pen.

Ben reaches into his pocket... Feels around...

LUCAS

Come on, Ben...

BEN

I... can't find it.

Ben continues to search with growing concern...

LUCAS

Your lucky pen's missin'?

BEN

Yeah...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 2

LUCAS

Gee...
 (all innocence)
 Wonder where it went?

Ben freezes... and the horrible realization hits.

BEN

Oh, my God...

LUCAS

Hey... You didn't have anything to do with Gage's death... did ya?

BEN

Lucas...

LUCAS

No... Not you. Not my trusty deputy... My faithful sidekick. You'd never do anything like that.

BEN

Please, don't do this...

LUCAS

You're much to loyal, aren'tcha? Just because it was your pen... Your lucky, gold, monogrammed pen... That was rammed into Gage's throat... That still don't mean you did it...

(smiles)

Right?

BEN

(panicking)

I... I was with Selena Coombs. All night long.

LUCAS

Miss Coombs? That sweet little school teacher? But I saw her today and she said she'd spent a quiet evenin' at home gradin' papers...

(pointedly)

And everybody knows, she wouldn't lie.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 3

BEN

(breaking)
Why are you doing this to me?!!!

Lucas casually adjusts the hose, slams down the hood, and hops back into the car.

LUCAS

Just another lesson in perception,
Ben: All guilt is relative,
loyalty counts, and never let
your conscience be your guide.

As a great FLASH OF LIGHTING explodes above him, Lucas DRIVES off... leaving Ben framed and mounted.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Gail stands before two headstones in an ancient cemetery. After a reflective moment, she bends down, places a single rose between them...

PETER MARK EMORY
3/5/27 - 7/4/76

CHRISTINE ALICE EMORY
3/31/34 - 7/4/76

...and wrestles with her emotions.

GAIL

I'm here, Mom... Dad... Bet you're surprised to see me... I've always wanted to come back... Guess I was just too afraid...

Gail sighs. The rain begins to fall...

GAIL

There's a little boy here... who's in the same situation as I was. He's going to have a lot of questions... and I don't know if I can answer them. Maybe if I understood what happened to you... it would help.

(struggling)

I need to know the truth... Please help me find it...

(with great resolve)

'Cause this time... I'm not leaving 'til I do.

We HOLD on Gail's determined face and go

INT. SECOND STORY HOSPITAL HALL - NOON

ON LUCAS' BOOTS

marching down the hall. With great purpose, they LEAD us to

DAN

who's seated outside Caleb's room, crossword in hand.

LUCAS (O.S.)

Caleb Temple in there?

Dan glances up.

DAN

Yessir.

LUCAS

I'm here to retrieve him.

DAN

(rising)

Sorry sheriff, but Doctor Crower called and said that no one's to see the patient until...

INT. CALEB'S HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Lucas throws open the door, moves toward the bed. Dan's right on his heels.

LUCAS

Caleb? You awake?

DAN

Hey...

Lucas keeps coming, checks his watch...

LUCAS

What kind of drugs they give you, boy?

Reaching the opposite side of the bed, he pulls the covers aside and SEES

ELVIS' HEAD

staring at him mockingly.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LUCAS

grabs the stuffed pillow case, rips the blankets aside...

LUCAS

(enraged)
Where is he?

DAN

(panicking)
I... I don't know.

Lucas moves forward... hesitates. He glances at the wall that carried Merlyn's bloody message... and touches it. A look of apprehension crosses his face. He takes a deep breath... A dog, tracking it's prey.... And something registers.

LUCAS

(seething)
Bitch.

Lucas suddenly races past Dan out the door. As the old orderly stares at the bed in dismay we

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HOSPITAL - DAY

ON THE RESCUE SQUAD VEHICLE - MOVING

Rounding a corner, and SCREECHING to a halt in the garage.

MATT

leaps out the passenger door and races inside the building.

MATT (V.O.)

You check the emergency room?

INT. MATT'S OFFICE - DAY

Matt is grilling Dan as Gail looks on.

DAN

Been all over, Matt. He's gone.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MATT

And you have no idea where the
sheriff went?

DAN

No... He just shot outta here like
wildfire.

Matt looks at Gail with deep concern...

MATT

We've got to find Caleb before he
does.

GAIL

Well...

(sighs)

Someone here thinks he may have
gone home...

Matt looks at her. She points out the door, and we follow
Matt's gaze to REVEAL

LOVEY LEE

staring hauntingly out a window at the end of the hall.

GAIL (O.S.)

...to see his sister.

INT. FARMHOUSE - DAY

The front door swings open REVEALING

CALEB

in silhouette, standing on the threshold. The WIND is
whipping at his clothes. He hits a light switch. Nothing
happens. Ripping aside a piece of yellow crime tape, he
steps into the room and looks around.

THE LIVING ROOM - DAY - CALEB'S P.O.V.

The carnage from the night before is frighteningly evident:
Gage's broken glass... The overturned table... every dish in
pieces... and the pathetic remains of Caleb's birthday cake.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CALEB

moves forward, picks up the cake and a few broken candles, and carries them to the foot of a staircase. Sitting down, he SEES:

THE DESECRATED REMAINS OF MERLYN'S DOOR

directly across from him, barely hanging from the frame.

CALEB

stares at the splintered wreckage, begins replacing the candles in his cake... And starts to cry.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

ON THE MUSTANG - MOVING

The RAIN is pouring now as Gail and Matt race toward the surrounding farmland. He's got a map in his hand.

GAIL

How much further?

MATT

About five miles.

GAIL

You really think the sheriff is dangerous?

MATT

Let's just say he's got a great propensity for showing up just before people die.

Gail looks at him apprehensively... then puts the pedal to the metal and we go

INT. FARMHOUSE - DAY

Caleb is right where we left him, just placing the last candle in his cake. We can HEAR THE RAIN POUNDING on the tin roof as he reaches into his pocket, pulls out his matchbook... and STRIKES.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AN EXPLOSION OF LIGHT

suddenly shoots out of Merlyn's bedroom.

CALEB

falls back against the wall as

THE GREAT SHAFT OF LIGHT

cuts through the room like a knife.

INT. MERLYN'S ROOM - DAY

We face the door as Caleb appears in FRAME, cautiously moving toward us, into the light. The CHILLING SOUND is emanating from within. Caleb reaches the door way, looks into the room... and gasps.

THE IMAGE OF MERLYN

is standing before him like a surreal Goddess, wrapped in a gown of white ribbon, holding a cake of a thousand candles. Though beautiful, her movements and voice project an eerie staccato quality, not unlike a ballerina on broken legs.

CALEB

(awe struck)

Merlyn...

She smiles softly.

MERLYN

Happy Birthday.

CALEB

Are you... a ghost?

MERLYN

No.

CALEB

Angel?

She looks deep into his eyes.

MERLYN

I'm your family.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CALEB
(in absolute wonder)
You're... talkin'.

MERLYN
In life you were my voice... Now
you must hear me.
(with powerful intent)
Your father is coming.

CALEB
Daddy? But I thought he was...

MERLYN
You have the locket?

CALEB
Yes...

MERLYN
Open it.

CALEB
Why?

MERLYN
Because you need to know the truth,
Caleb.

Caleb hesitates...

MERLYN
Turn around... and open the locket.

Caleb stares at her a beat longer... then slowly turns and
opens the tiny, silver heart. Suddenly... FLASH!

INT. FARMHOUSE LIVING ROOM - DAY

A muted image appears in the room:

CALEB'S MOTHER

is now seated before the fireplace in a rocking chair. She
has a book in hand and has just posed for a photograph.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SIX YEAR OLD MERLYN

runs up with a camera and jumps into her lap.

LITTLE MERLYN

Got your picture, Mama.

CALEB'S MOTHER

Sure did, Merlyn... Now, listen to the rest of the story.

CALEB

is stunned. He looks back to the image of Merlyn... She's watching along with him.

CALEB'S MOTHER

starts to read:

CALEB'S MOTHER

...So on he went, deeper and deeper into the woods, until the Wolf finally arrived at Grandmother's house...

LITTLE MERLYN

That where Daddy is?

CALEB'S MOTHER

Daddy'll be home soon, honey.

The mother smiles, rubs Merlyn's head, and continues reading...

CALEB'S MOTHER

When he reached the door, the Wolf scanned the forest to make sure he hadn't been seen, then...

KNOCK, KNOCK.

CALEB

jumps, glances into the entry way, as

LITTLE MERLYN

leaps off her mother's lap and scurries toward the front door. Swinging it open, she REVEALS

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 2

LUCAS BUCK

smiling brightly on the stoop.

LUCAS
Hello, darlin'. Mother here?

LITTLE MERLYN

calls to her mother innocently...

LITTLE MERLYN
Mama?... Someone's at the door.

As Merlyn's final words register, we SLAM IN on

CALEB'S FACE

watching Lucas cross the threshold.

CALEB'S MOTHER (O.S.)
What do you want?
(with trepidation)
Stay away from me...
(then)
No!!

WE HOLD TIGHT ON CALEB

As we HEAR the rocking chair CRASH to the floor and Caleb's mother SCREAM IN PROTEST.

LITTLE MERLYN'S EYES

widen in horror as

CALEB

turns away, unable to watch... and unsure how to stop it.

LITTLE MERLYN

begins to shake violently as

CALEB

forces his eyes to return to the horror, suddenly WAILING...

CALEB
NOOOOOOOOOOOO!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 3

He slams the locket shut... erasing his mother's AGONIZING CRIES and the tragic vision that surrounded him. Once again, there is only the SOUND of the RAIN outside. He turns to the vision of Merlyn, the reality of his violent conception now all too clear, and one tiny word escapes from his lips...

CALEB

Why?...

Merlyn's image begins to fade away...

MERLYN

Be careful, Caleb...

(a whisper)

Someone's at the door.

CRASH!

The front door flies open and

LUCAS

appears on the threshold.

CALEB

spins around, meets his gaze, and we

GO WIDE

LUCAS

No more runnin'... Son.

Caleb SCREAMS and races across the room, bolting up the stairs. Lucas enters, deeply inhales... and follows him.

LUCAS

(calling)

Listen to me, boy: There's only two roads in this world, and if you're listenin' to anyone but me, you're on the wrong one.

Reaching the top of the staircase, Lucas SEES:

A WALL LADDER

at the hall's end, leading to a trap door in the ceiling.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - DAY

ON GAIL'S MUSTANG

As it sloses to a stop out front, right next to Lucas' car. They both leap from the car and we go

INT. FARMHOUSE ATTIC - DAY

Caleb is hurriedly moving through the cobwebs toward an old sea chest beneath a broken window. Throwing the lid open, we REVEAL

A CASE OF APPLEJACK

Gage's secret stash. Caleb pulls out one of the bottles as

LUCAS

pops his head through the trap door.

LUCAS

Caleb... I'm only doin' this 'cause
I care.

Caleb clears the glass from the window, then rips the top off the whiskey and begins pouring it across the floor. Lucas moves toward him...

LUCAS

That's good liquor you're wastin',
son.

Caleb looks Lucas right in the eye... And pulls out his matchbook.

CALEB

I ain't your son.

With that, he STRIKES a match and tosses it onto the floor, igniting A WALL OF FIRE between them. In that instant, he leaps through the window... And disappears.

LUCAS

start to move after him, when...

GAIL (O.S.)

Hey!

He spins around and SEES

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GAIL

standing behind him, as Matt pulls himself up into the room.

GAIL

What do you think you're doing?!

LUCAS

is thunderstruck. He looks deep into Gail's eyes...

LUCAS

You...

GAIL

Where's Caleb?

LUCAS

(in amazement; to Gail)
You've... You've come back...

Gail looks to Matt with confusion. He picks up the ball.

MATT

Yeah, she's come back. Now,
where's the boy?

Lucas just keeps staring at Gail, as if he's in a trance. Matt grabs him by the collar.

MATT

(screams)
Where's Caleb?!!

Matt's outburst suddenly breaks Lucas' daze. Regaining his purpose, he pulls away, leaps through the wall of fire... and pushes his head out the window.

EXT. REAR OF FARMHOUSE - DAY

ON CALEB - LUCAS' P.O.V.

two stories below, just pulling himself from the hay loft. The boy takes off on a dead run, racing through the rain into the tobacco fields, leaving

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LUCAS

surrounded by flames. As the veins in his neck begin to pulsate, his mouth opens and the voice of a monster EXPLODES from his gullet...

LUCAS

CAAAALEEEEEEEB!!!

And that's where we leave him, as we BLAST across the countryside toward

THE GOTHIC MANSION

looming in the distance. FLYING toward it at warp speed, we zero in on the picture window. The fire is ROARING inside as we hit the glass, REVEALING

A GREAT PORTRAIT

hanging above the fireplace. A man and woman are dressed in Eighteenth century wedding garb, but it's their faces that stop us dead: Lucas... and Gail. As this prophetically horrifying image blinds us in anticipation of darker things to come, we slowly

FADE OUT.

THE END