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AMERICAN GOTHIC
"Eye Of The Beholder"

Written

by

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Story

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AMERICAN GOTHIC

"Eye Of The Beholder"

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

EXT. SELENA'S FRONT PORCH - DUSK

A FLY

lights on a bowl of melting ice cream and it sits there sipping and twitching until

A HUGE FLY SWATTER

suddenly pounds down on the fly -- BLAM -- and splatters the ice cream. Slowly pull back to reveal

SELENA

sitting in a porch swing on this sweltering late September day as LUCAS walks up to the porch with CALEB.

SELENA

So what's this I see? Old Mister
Grumpy Face standin' at my door?

LUCAS

I want the boy to stay the night...
Come tomorrow, he'll get settled in
with me.

SELENA

You hungry, sugar?

Caleb stares at her. He does not speak.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - SAME TIME

MATT, hot and bothered, halfmoons of sweat under his arms, breathlessly jogging down the dirt road and slowing to a trot when he SEES:

CALEB AND LUCAS

standing in front of the apartment building.

EXT. SELENA'S FRONT PORCH - SAME TIME

LUCAS
Now you go'n inside so Miss Coombs
can fix ya some't'eat. Know ya
hungry.

CALEB
No, I ain't.

SELENA
Come on, sugar, we're gonna have
some fun... I made you some
cupcakes.

LUCAS turns TO SEE:

MATT

jogging toward the building.

BACK TO LUCAS

LUCAS
Take 'im inside.

Selena and Caleb go inside. Matt approaches breathlessly.
Lucas steps toward him as Matt watches Caleb disappear
behind the closing door.

LUCAS
(sweet as pie)
Doc -- whatcha doin'?

MATT
Running.

LUCAS
From what? 'Round here, only time
a fella runs is when somebody's
chasin' him.

MATT
(ignoring him)
I'll just give Caleb a quick
check-up and be on my way --

Matt goes right; Lucas goes quickly left, blocking his way.

LUCAS
Why? He ain't sick.

A stalemate, then:

MATT
Is this your house?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

LUCAS
It's Miss Coombs house -- Caleb's
teacher. Best place for him now.

MATT
Except with his family.

LUCAS
Family? His family was no place
for him in the first place.

MATT
I'm talking about Gail Emory --
his cousin.

LUCAS
Oh, well, that woman's a basket
case -- and, frankly, I wouldn't
trust her with any child, let
alone Caleb.

MATT
That's your opinion.

LUCAS
Oh, come on now, Doc... you're a
father... Oh, my. Sorry... you
used to be a father...

There is a beat. Matt glares at him.

LUCAS
... point is, I only want what's
best for the boy.

MATT
That's for the court to decide.

Matt turns his back, then continues his run down the dirt
road. Lucas looks after him...and spits.

PRE-LAP SOUND of the WOMAN SINGING:

A WOMAN'S VOICE
Whatcha gonna do/when Death comes
creepin' in your room?

EXT. CHURCH - NIGHT

A GOSPEL CHOIR JOINS in SINGING this updated version of the
Old Spiritual as we MOVE IN CLOSE on a lighted billboard
that reads: TONIGHT'S SERMON: "The Devil's Funeral."

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

CHOIR

What you gonna do/when Death comes
creepin' in your room/when Death
comes creepin'/whatcha gonna do?

The music continues as the CHOIR HUMS.

The DOUBLE DOORS OF THE CHURCH open and we go

INT. CHURCH - NIGHT

A CLOSED CASKET

sits ominously below the pulpit. HOLD, then PAN

THE ROOM

It is packed. Black and white FACES listening intently to
REVEREND LOGAN, the minister, who raises his hands and...

REVEREND LOGAN

There is a heaven. And there is a
hell. But the fires of hell do not
burn with brimstone. They burn in
the souls of men.

ANGLE

DANIEL TRULANE, the anesthesiologist at Trinity Hospital,
sits in a back row pew next to his wife, SHERYL, a
marginally attractive woman in her late 20s.

REVEREND LOGAN

Children, Time is running out.

There is a flurry of APPLAUSE. Suddenly,

LUCAS

is standing in the door. He enters and takes a seat next to
Sheryl, who smiles and shakes his hand.

LUCAS

(whispering to Sheryl)
How's married life?

SHERYL

Couldn't be sweeter.

Daniel looks over and SEES: LUCAS, who puts his arm around
Sheryl and shoots a friendly nod in Daniel's direction.
Daniel's brow furrows.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

REVEREND LOGAN

Rise -- and see the face of your
Tormentor -- rise -- and look into
the face of the Temptor -- rise.

(then softer; in a
speaking voice to the
children)

Children, come on up here and see
Satan's face in the casket so you
can tell that devil goodbye.

The congregation stands. Terrified CHILDREN look into the
casket and SCREAM. Daniel goes up to the casket, followed
by Sheryl. Daniel looks inside and turns back to

LUCAS

who winks at Daniel, then Lucas' eyes go to

SHERYL

She looks into the casket, transfixed on what she sees.

MOVING IN CLOSE ON THE CASKET

We see what's inside:

A MIRROR -- SHERYL'S FACE staring back at her in horror.

CLOSER ON LUCAS

He grins, pops a stick of gum into his mouth... and leaves.

EXT. THE GREYSTONE HOTEL - EST. - NIGHT

Gail goes inside with a small suitcase.

INT. GREYSTONE HOTEL - NIGHT

Gail comes up to the front desk.

GAIL

I'd like a room, please.

LENNY GINNS is a native New Yorker -- a freak who wanted out
of the zoo. He is in his early 30s and sports a Fu Man Chu
moustache that compliments the dark circles under his eyes.

LENNY GINNS

With a view... or without?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

GAIL
What's the view of?

LENNY GINNS
That's up to you.

GAIL
(tired)
Just give me a room.

He pushes the register in Gail's direction.

LENNY GINNS
Sign.

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Pitch black darkness as a late model Jeep takes a curve.

INT. JEEP - MOVING - NIGHT

Daniel is behind the wheel. He's bursting with LAUGHTER.

SHERYL
It's not funny.

DANIEL
The devil's funeral? C'mon. Every
year, the kids pitch a hissy fit
when they have that program.

SHERYL
Not everyone likes what they see
when they look in a mirror.

Daniel looks over at her.

DANIEL
Come on, honey... don't start
puttin' yourself down again.

SHERYL
I know I'm not pretty.

DANIEL
To me... you're the most beautiful
woman in the world.

SHERYL
You have to say that.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

DANIEL

I mean it, baby.

She smiles and takes his hand.

SHERYL

Can't b'lieve I found you, Daniel.
When my daddy was alive, I used to
tell him 'bout my dreams, but he'd
cuss me out an' say I wudent gon
'mount to nothin' more'n a
washwoman up at the Motel Six...
Me myself, I would be dreamin'
'bout someday marryin' me a rich
doctor an' livin' fine as wine in a
fancy brick house somewhere far,
far away from him an' that ol'
shotgun shack...

DANIEL

(teasing)

You wanted to marry a rich doctor?
Too bad you got an anesthesiologist
with a pile of medical school bills
to pay off.

Sheryl kisses him and squeezes his hand.

SHERYL

You know you're the man.

DANIEL

I'd better be -- or I'm gon get
that marriage license annulled.

SHERYL

Oh, it still feels like a dream.

She sighs happily and kisses him again.

DANIEL

It's no dream, honey.

There is a loud THUD. Daniel grips the wheel tightly, but
the car careens out of control.

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

THE CAR spins around several times, then swerves -- heading
backwards -- and whirls into a ditch.

Momentarily, Daniel gets out of the Jeep holding a flash
LIGHT, followed by Sheryl.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

SHERYL

What happened?

DANIEL

Tire's down to bits.

Sheryl looks around the dark woods with dread.

SHERYL

Daniel...

DANIEL

Relax.

SHERYL

We're in the middle of nowhere.

DANIEL

(a little too confident)
I'll get the spare, change the tire
and we'll be home in no time.

SHERYL

I don't like this...

Daniel goes to the back of the Jeep for the spare tire. He starts to remove it, then:

DANIEL

Oh, great.

SHERYL

What?

DANIEL

The spare's flat. I knew I
shouldna traded in my Dodge Dart.
(a look to Sheryl)
But we had to have a new car.

CRICKETS HUM an eerie night song, then:

HEADLIGHTS

hit the couple. Daniel turns TO SEE:

LUCAS

He gets out of his car with a friendly smile.

LUCAS

You folks need a ride?

EXT. DANIEL'S HOUSE - NIGHT

LUCAS' CAR prowls up the driveway of this modern red brick home. Sheryl gets out first, laughing happily.

SHERYL
Sheriff, you're a screamin' hoot.

LUCAS
Just call me Lucas.

SHERYL
Would you like to come in for a cup of coffee and some Seven Up Cake?

Daniel gets out, then reacts quickly.

DANIEL
No -- I'm sure he has things to do.

Lucas reads the situation perfectly.

LUCAS
Matter of fact, I'm kinda busy tonight, Miz Trulane, but I do thank ya for askin'.

SHERYL
Thank you, Sheriff.

LUCAS
Please. Call me Lucas.

As Daniel and Sheryl start for the house --

LUCAS
-- oh, Dr. Trulane, before you go, could I speak to you in private?

Sheryl goes inside.

FAVORING LUCAS

He stares after Sheryl.

LUCAS
Lovely girl, just lovely. Glad you finally settled down, Trulane. Marriage grounds a man, doesn't it... Gives him the opportunity to see things in a different light.

DANIEL
What sorta things, Sheriff?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

LUCAS
 Priorities, loyalties, who your
 friends are...

DANIEL
 Kinda late for philosophizin'.

LUCAS
 That's right, you got a four a.m.
 call at the hospital, don't you?

Daniel just eyes him.

LUCAS
 Look here, I might as well lay it
 out... I heard a terrible story
 about your friend Doctor Crower.

DANIEL
 I don't have time to listen to
 gossip, Sheriff.

LUCAS
 Oh, I think it's more than that --
 maybe you already know about it...
 how he helped some poor old lady
 cross the chilly Jordan.

DANIEL
 If anyone in the hospital had done
 somethin' like that, I'd have heard
 about it.

LUCAS
 Hope it's just a rumor, but if he's
 pullin' the plug on folks he's got
 to git.
 (brightening)
 Well, I'd better git myself on down
 this road -- goodnight, Doctor
 Trulane. Oh...

Lucas snaps open a woman's MIRRORED COMPACT that glares even
 in the dark of night. Daniel flinches, then looks at Lucas.

LUCAS
 Your wife left this in my car.

As Daniel takes the compact, Lucas eyes him.

LUCAS
 Give my best to your beautiful
 bride.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED 2

Lucas opens the car door and gets into the car.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

INT. CLASS ROOM - MORNING

Selena points to a wall map of the United States.

SELENA

Who knows the capital of South Carolina?

THE CLASS

The capital of South Carolina is Charleston.

SELENA

And what's the most beautiful town in South Carolina?

THE CLASS

The most beautiful town in South Carolina is Trinity.

SELENA

Population?

THE CLASS

Eight thousand five hundred ten.

CALEB

Eight thousand five hundred and eight.

A pall of silence fall on the class. Selena puts the pointer on the desk and looks at Caleb.

SELENA

Caleb... stand up.

Caleb stands. She goes to put an arm around him.

SELENA

Now I'd like us all to give Mister Temple a big hand to show him how happy we are to have him back in school with us.

Selena starts APPLAUSE. The class joins in.

THE LUNCH BELL RINGS.

ANGLE CALEB AND JOSH

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

They are the first to scurry out. Noisily, the rest of the class follows as Selena yells --

SELENA
After lunch, ya'll need to write me
a composition entitled, "What I
Love Best About My Hometown."

INT. HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

As they walk down the hall --

CALEB
Can I stay at your house tonight?

JOSH
You ain't stayin' with Miss Coombs?

CALEB
That was just for one night... on
account an emergency... Can I come
stay with you?

Josh looks very uncomfortable. Then quietly:

JOSH
Maybe my parents won't like it.

CALEB
How come?

There is a beat. Caleb studies Josh, then looks crushed.

CALEB
Them crazy Temples... that, it?

JOSH
Naw, 'course not, it's only...

CALEB
Only what?

A mountain of pain hides behind Caleb's eyes... and he walks away. Stopping at the exit door, he looks back as Josh goes into the cafeteria, then slips outside.

INT. TRINITY NEWSPAPER OFFICE - MORNING

Gail looks out on the glorious Indian Summer morning, a burst of SUN LIGHT hitting her face. She is standing at the window, holding a telephone receiver several inches away from her ear as she listens to her editor's harsh VOICE BLARING in the receiver.

FRANK LINDLEY'S VOICE

I don't give a cold witch's teet
about some small-town sheriff -- I
can't afford to lose you for
another week, Emory.

A LITTLE OLD MAN, about 70, gives Gail a cup of steaming coffee. She nods her thanks and takes a sip. He goes.

GAIL

One week, that's all.

LUCAS' IMAGE flashes into her mind. She looks over her shoulder quickly, sensing something in the room.

GAIL

Look, there's something here,
Frank... I can feel it.

FRANK LINDLEY'S VOICE

There'd better be.

We hear the DIAL TONE.

THE ROOM

Gail looks around cautiously. The Little Old Man is setting type. As she watches him, LUCAS' IMAGE flashes in her mind again. She closes her eyes to stop it, then hangs up.

GAIL

Thank you, sir.

The Little Old Man nods and waves. Gail heads out.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL AREA - AFTERNOON

CALEB walks down this quiet street kicking a rock. It looks like a blast from the past -- sprawling old houses, mostly Victorian -- with fresh coats of paint and manicured lawns, but several houses are worn and shabby, beaten down by weather and years. He stops at

MISS HOLT'S HOUSE

Shadowed by weeping willow trees and proudly boasting its thousandth coat of paint, it has seen better days.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

MERLYN

appears on the front porch.

Merlyn!

CALEB

THE FRONT DOOR creaks open...

What's in there?

CALEB

Then, Merlyn vanishes.

Merlyn?

CALEB

Caleb sighs wearily... and steps into PITCH BLACK DARKNESS.

INT. MISS HOLT'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

CALEB'S BACK is to us, closing the door. He turns TO FIND:
MISS HOLT

is an exotic-looking African American woman in her 30s with a distinct southern accent standing in the shadows glaring at Caleb unflinchingly. She wears afrocentric clothing.

CALEB

I hear you let folks stay here.

Miss Holt just looks at him, then turns and goes into another room. We TRACK Caleb as he follows her into

THE KITCHEN

where she sets a bowl of soup on the table.

MISS HOLT

Sit down and eat, Caleb.

CALEB

How you know my name?

MISS HOLT

Sit down and eat.

CALEB

I ain't hungry.

She eyes him sternly, then gets a glass from the cabinet and pours him milk. Caleb looks around, taking in

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

THE ROOM

It is much brighter in here, but it is still bombarded with artifacts -- strange AFRICAN MASKS line the walls, statues with MONSTROUS FACES are propped in every corner.

CALEB

Where all this stuff come from?

MISS HOLT

Africa.

CALEB

You been there?

MISS HOLT

Several times.

ANOTHER ANGLE

as Caleb moves in for a closer look, staring at a large mask with hundreds of little GROTESQUE FACES.

CALEB

Them faces... they almost real.

MISS HOLT

They are real... within them lie the souls of my dead ancestors.

Caleb turns and looks at the woman -- huge earrings dangle from her ears like two medals, bangles of silver up her arms, her feet bare.

CALEB

You ever see 'em?

MISS HOLT

Who?

CALEB

Dead people.

MISS HOLT

Sometimes.

CALEB

They scare you?

MISS HOLT

Never.

CALEB

I seen my sister.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED 2

MISS HOLT
Where?

CALEB
At your door.

She looks around as though checking for eavesdroppers, then leans into Caleb's ear and whispers:

MISS HOLT
I'm not surprised. I hear The Dead creepin' out there all the time... out in the yard... walkin' up and down the street... I've even seen The Dead walkin' around like a natural man.

Caleb turns his attention back to the mask, then:

CALEB
You know the sheriff?

MISS HOLT
Seen him around.

CALEB
He ever come 'round here?

She breaks off a piece of homemade bread and offers it to him. He shakes his head no. She eyes him, then:

MISS HOLT
Man named Andrew Vantage built this house one hundred and fifty years ago. This house and seven others. Got the land cheap. Know why?

CALEB
Why?

MISS HOLT
This used to be the graveyard, Caleb... This is holy ground.
(then)
Sit down and eat.

This time, Caleb obeys.

INT. DANIEL'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - AFTERNOON

HOT R&B PLAYS on the radio as Sheryl strips off her white silk blouse to reveal a flimsy black slip that falls down her shoulders as she wiggles her way toward Daniel on the bed and falls atop him with perfect ease.

HER EYES

are wide open -- and looking up at something we do not see as she lowers her torso and buries her lips in his mouth.

HIS EYES

are closed, but he opens them to see Sheryl staring up at AN ANTIQUE MIRROR

It is large, ornate and quite exquisite, hanging above them between the bedposts.

DANIEL

Didn't know you were into voyeurism, baby.

SHERYL

Don't tell the Reverend.

He grins, flips her over and gazes at them in THE MIRROR.

DANIEL

Where'd you get it?

SHERYL

It's a wedding present.

DANIEL

From who?

SHERYL

Lucas Buck.

He freezes.

DANIEL

What?

SHERYL

He sent it over today. Wasn't that nice of him? And it's so beautiful...

Daniel gets out of bed and puts on his shirt.

SHERYL

What's going on?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

Send it back. DANIEL

What? SHERYL

I want it out of here now. DANIEL

Why? SHERYL

Lucas Buck does not give gifts
without expectin' somethin' in
return. DANIEL

Don't be silly. SHERYL

Get rid of it, Sheryl. DANIEL

I will not. SHERYL

Do as I say. DANIEL

What is this? A dictatorship or a
marriage? Come on, Daniel. SHERYL

Lucas Buck is... he's... DANIEL

Lucas Buck is a very important man
'round here and knowin' him could
mean movin' up the social ladder.
Just imagine. We'd be invited to
all the parties, every social
function in town... SHERYL

But you don't understand -- some
things are comin' down at work. DANIEL

Like what? SHERYL

CONTINUED

CONTINUED 2

DANIEL
Look, honey, please just do like I
say, okay? Return the mirror and
let me worry about work.

SHERYL
Please, Danny...

She moves in closer, tugging at his pants.

SHERYL
Lemme keep it...

She nibbles at his lips.

SHERYL
Nobody has ever given me anything
so beautiful before... can I keep
it?

He looks at her, softening.

DANIEL
Sheryl...

SHERYL
Please...

Daniel just sighs... she dives into his mouth passionately,
turning him ever-so-gently...

HER EYES

look up and stay there so she can see herself in

THE MIRROR

And even as Lucas' face appears in the reflection, she still
can't tear her eyes away from the thing hanging so ominously
on the wall...

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

EXT. WATERFRONT PARK - LATE AFTERNOON

CROWS light all around Selena's Corvette as she feeds them bread crumbs from a brown paper bag. Lucas snatches the brown bag from her hand.

LUCAS
What do you mean he's gone?

SELENA
You're scarin' the birdies.

She takes the bag back.

LUCAS
All you had to do was keep an eye on him -- and the first thing you know he's playin' hooky on you.

SELENA
On me, Sheriff Buck?

LUCAS
What're you signifyin'?

She sticks her hand in the bag of bird food, pulls out a hand full of crumbs, without taking her eyes from him.

SELENA
It's you he's runnin' from, darlin'.

LUCAS
Is that so? An' who told ya that?

SELENA
A little birdy.

She tosses the crumbs to the crows.

LUCAS
What else that bird tell ya?

SELENA
That Doctor Matt Crower's requested a custody hearin' with Judge Halpern for bright an' early tomorrow mornin'.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

LUCAS

Just like a Yankee... sneaky and self-righteous. Damn it.

She eyes him as a BLACK CROW lights near her.

SELENA

Well, the thing is, darlin', your fishin' buddy is presidin' over the hearin', but just in case he starts gettin' confused about justice and impartiality...

LUCAS

(grinning)

Just don't give him a heart attack.

She runs her fingers through his hair.

SELENA

My ambitions don't include becomin' ya fishin' buddy. Don't worry.

LUCAS

'Preciate it, sugar.

SELENA

What time can I expect ya tonight?

LUCAS

Ask your birdies.

And he goes.

CROWS scramble like hell to get out of his way.

INT. DANIEL'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

SHERYL'S FACE IN THE MIRROR: an amazing transformation has taken place -- her once flawed skin has cleared, her eyes are further apart, her harsher features more defined -- yes, she's gorgeous.

ANGLE THE DOOR

where Daniel enters and watches his wife admiring herself.

DANIEL

I'm on my way to work, Sher.

She does not respond, engrossed by her beauty... touching her lips... her nose... her hair...

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

DANIEL

Hear me?

He comes up behind her and nibbles the back of her neck.

DANIEL

You're beautiful, my love.

SHERYL

(dreamily)
Yes, I am.

Her quick answer takes him aback.

DANIEL

Although, to be honest, I like you better when you don't wear all that make-up.

SHERYL

I'm not wearing make-up.
(then)
Hand me my brush.

Daniel looks at his wife, and an uneasy feeling creeps over him. He turns her around to face him.

DANIEL

I think maybe you oughta spend a little less time gawkin' at yourself in that mirror.

SHERYL

(walking away)
And you need to chill.

DANIEL

(snaps)
I don't like that thing hangin' over our bed at night.

SHERYL

(anger mounting)
I do, so get used to it.

DANIEL

I'm gettin' rid of it --

Daniel makes steps toward the mirror. Sheryl turns and --

SHERYL

(explodes)
Touch that mirror and I'm walkin'.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED 2

Daniel stops in his tracks. He looks at her, trying to keep a level head, but inside he's about to burst.

DANIEL

(quietly)
I'll be at the hospital.

He goes, and no sooner than he does, Sheryl turns back to her beloved mirror. She can't get over the change in her looks.

INT. COUNTY CLERK'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Matt comes up to the CLERK, a grey-haired woman wearing thick glasses. She looks pleased to see him.

CLERK

Hello, Doc Crower.

MATT

Hello again, Selma.

CLERK

Ya got that custody application all filled out for me?

MATT

Typed and ready to go.

He hands her a typed document which she looks over.

CLERK

Seems everybody in town's been in here askin' 'bout this hearin' on that poor Temple boy.

MATT

Oh?

ANOTHER ANGLE

A door marked "JUDGE'S CHAMBERS" opens and JUDGE HALPERN, a white-haired man in his 60s, comes out laughing -- followed by Lucas.

JUDGE HALPERN

Oh, Sheriff -- you know Doctor Crower, don't you?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

LUCAS

Indeed, I do, Dusty. And a fine addition to our little town he is -- applyin' for full-time residency, Doc?

MATT

In a way.

JUDGE HALPERN

Lucas, you better get that angler ready, 'cause tonight I'm gonna show ya howta catch some bass.

LUCAS

Lookin' forward to it, Dusty -- you and me got some cud to chew.

Lucas shoots Matt a sly smile and leaves.

ANOTHER ANGLE

The Judge turns to Matt.

JUDGE HALPERN

The sheriff and I are goin' fishin' this evenin' -- best time to catch them sleepy bass is when the sun goes down.

MATT

(cheery)
Well, get all the fishing in that you can -- we've scheduled your surgery for next week.

JUDGE HALPERN

Yeah, you know, Doc, 'tween you and me, I'm a little shaky about goin' under the knife.

MATT

That's only natural, but Doctor Price has a lot of experience.

The Judge looks stricken.

JUDGE HALPERN

Doctor Price? Don Price?

MATT

Yes, is there a problem?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED 2

JUDGE HALPERN

Damn right there is -- Don Price
wouldn't know a gall bladder from a
plate of hush puppies. He's half
blind.

(then)

Aw, hell. I'm going to die.

MATT

(chuckling)

I love the way you folks down here
exaggerate.

JUDGE HALPERN

They said you'd be operatin' on me.

MATT

They were mistaken, unless...

Judge Halpern studies Matt a moment, then it dawns on him.

JUDGE HALPERN

Is this about the Temple boy?

MATT

I'm sorry. Yes, it is.

JUDGE HALPERN

You can't put me in the middle of
this -- Lucas Buck wants what he
wants.

MATT

So what -- you should be thinking
about Caleb, not the sheriff.

ANGLE

Matt walks away. He waves to the Clerk as he goes.

MATT

Thanks for looking after my
application, Selma.

Selma smiles and waves.

CLERK

Pleasure's all mine, Doc.

Matt exits. On the Judge's face, a mass of frowns,

INT. HOSPITAL - LATE AFTERNOON

Gail comes down the hall and stops Daniel.

GAIL
Excuse me -- is Doctor Crower here?

DANIEL
He should be back any minute -- can I help you with anything?

GAIL
No -- no, I'll just wait.

Daniel smiles and walks away. Gail watches him go, but as she does, she sees LUCAS' IMAGE walking toward Daniel.

GAIL
Watch it.

Daniel turns back to her.

DANIEL
Excuse me?

The IMAGE disappears.

GAIL
Sorry.

Gail turns away, confused and embarrassed. Daniel looks at her oddly, shrugs and turns the corner where he finds

ANGLE

MATT walking in through the main doors.

DANIEL
Mrs. Mitchell's blood pressure's up again, T.J. Watkins wants to be released and Dan Miller's screamin' for another shot of demerol.

MATT
(dry)
Anything else?

DANIEL
Yeah, buddy. You got a fox waitin' for you in your office.

As Matt reacts, Daniel grabs his arm.

DANIEL
Say, Matt --

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

MATT

Yeah?

DANIEL

You and this Emory chick -- two of you gettin' tight?

MATT

She's Caleb's cousin. Other than that, I don't know anything about her.

DANIEL

Exactly. You don't.

MATT

Is something on your mind, Dan?

DANIEL

Look, man, I know you're tryin' to help Caleb, but you're hookin' up with some weird folks.

Matt studies him closely.

MATT

What's up with you, man?

DANIEL

(sighs, then:)

It's Sheryl... she's been trippin' lately. Just some newlywed stuff, I guess.

MATT

Maybe she's having buyer's remorse.

DANIEL

I don't know, man. It's deep.

MATT

It'll pass.

DANIEL

On top of that... Lucas has been sending you messages through me.

MATT

I'm flattered. Would you give him one for me? Tell him to go to hell.

Matt goes.

INT. MATT'S OFFICE - MINUTES LATER

Matt pours Gail a cup of coffee and hands it to her. There is a moment of uncomfortable silence. Then:

GAIL

At least now he's safe.

MATT

Yeah, for now, although I shudder to think what he's learning at that teacher's house.

GAIL

So what do you think is best for him?

MATT

To make the transition easier, we should get him settled as soon as possible.

GAIL

That's why I'm here.

MATT

Good -- then after the hearing, you should take Caleb home to Charlotte with you.

GAIL

Take him away?

MATT

Absolutely -- get him out of Trinity. He's seen more than his share here. Best thing is a total change of scenery.

GAIL

(firmly)

No.

(then; softer)

Please don't try and tell me what's best for Caleb in this situation. I've been there.

MATT

And so have I.

There is a beat. Their eyes meet for a moment... and they are joined by some unspeakable moment in their pasts.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

GAIL

Look, Matt... I was taken from here when I was about his age and I left with a shroud of questions dangling over my life. Questions that still need answers. I can't run. Not anymore.

MATT

It could be dangerous.

GAIL

And he could get hit by a big rig in Charlotte, but we have a saying down here in the south. "I don't care if the devil moves in next door. I was here first."

He smiles... and she smiles back. Then, suddenly, he is lost in her eyes.

GAIL

What time is the hearing?

MATT

Ten in the morning.

GAIL

I'll be there.

As she goes, he stops her with --

MATT

Gail?

GAIL

Yes?

MATT

This is embarrassing, but...I don't drive... do you mind giving me a ride home?

Gail smiles warmly.

GAIL

Ten cents a mile.

MATT

Better than the bus.

Matt gathers his things. They laugh and head out.

EXT. MISS HOLT'S HOUSE - DUSK

A DOG HOWLING... A CROW CACKLING... The red orange sun is setting behind the willow trees and casting eerie shadows around the house.

INT. MISS HOLT'S KITCHEN - DUSK

Caleb and Miss Holt are setting the table for dinner.

CALEB
Why you settin' three plates?

MISS HOLT
I got other boarders, you know.

CALEB
Who?

MISS HOLT
Don't you worry about the who, just get me those cloth napkins outta the drawer over there.

Caleb goes to the cabinet and takes out the napkins.

CALEB
Are you rich or somethin'?

MISS HOLT
Poor as a church mouse.

CALEB
How come we eatin' so fancy?

MISS HOLT
The gentility of the south requires the setting of a table for dinner, young man.

CALEB
Ain't never ate with no napkins before.

MISS HOLT
You do in my house -- get the silverware.

Caleb gets the silverware and starts to set the table.

CALEB
You got a job?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

MISS HOLT
Had one. Used to be a teacher. In fact, I woulda been your teacher this year, but I lost my job to Selena Coombs.

CALEB
Causin' you black?

MISS HOLT
No.

CALEB
Then why?

There is a beat. Miss Holt looks at him a moment, then:

MISS HOLT
The forks go on the left.

As she moves the forks to the appropriate place --

MISS HOLT
You know, Caleb... it's no shame to lose someone you love. It happens. All the time.

Caleb eyes her blankly.

CALEB
Can you make punkin pie?

Miss Holt smiles. A MAN'S VOICE calls out:

VOICE
Miss Holt?

MISS HOLT
(yells off)
In the kitchen!

CALEB
Who's that?

MISS HOLT
My other boarder.

ANGLE ON THE DOOR

where Matt enters the kitchen carrying a bag of groceries, followed by Gail. Both stop in their tracks when they see Caleb standing there.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED 2

MATT
Caleb --

GAIL
-- how are you?

CALEB
'Cuse me.

Caleb eyes them, then moves past and exits.

MATT
Caleb, wait a minute --

MISS HOLT
Let him go, Matt.

Gail looks at Miss Holt, then goes after him. We TRACK her into the

HALLWAY

where she finds him sitting in a darkened corner with his head tucked. She studies him a moment, then:

GAIL
I won't be here long. I just came to drop Doctor Crower off, but...
(a beat)
If you need anything...

CALEB
Don't need nothin'.

There is a beat. Gail crosses to him and kneels.

CLOSER ON GAIL AND CALEB

Light from the sunset flows from a stained glass window.

GAIL
You know something? Once, the same kind of feelings were inside me... I didn't want anyone's help... I just wanted to be left alone.

She waits, but he does not look up, or move an inch.

GAIL
No one can ever take the place of your mother, Caleb... I would never try to do that... but if the time comes that you need me... please know I'm here for you.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED 3

Still no response. Gail aches for him, knowing all too well his feelings of isolation. She takes a seat beside him in the corner and puts her head back against the wall... and she doesn't say another word. She just wants him to know she's there.

BACK TO THE KITCHEN

MATT
So how'd you get him here?

MISS HOLT
Just showed up on my doorstep today hungry as a horse and dirtier than a sow's behind.

MATT
Just showed up?

MISS HOLT
Big as day.

MATT
There's something you're not telling me.

MISS HOLT
Always. Ready to eat?

MATT
I don't know... This southern cooking is dangerously high in cholesterol.

MISS HOLT
Roast beef and potatoes.

MATT
And potatoes?

MISS HOLT
With carrots and brown gravy.

Matt sits down at the table.

NEW ANGLE

As she prepares his plate, we hear A CROW CACKLING... Miss Holt cocks her head toward the window. The sound of CACKLING CROWS fill the air. Her brow furrows.

MATT
What is it?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED 4

MISS HOLT

Nightfall.

More CACKLING, and then...

INT. DANIEL'S HOUSE - NIGHT

SHERYL saunters down the stairs in drop-dead black. She is quite a stunning beauty, looking nothing like herself as a tired Daniel comes through the door.

SHERYL

(venomously)

Where the hell have you been?

DANIEL

Why... why're you dressed like that, baby?

SHERYL

You've been with some woman, haven't you?

DANIEL

You know better than that.

SHERYL

Some ugly slut -- I can smell her.

DANIEL

Sheryl, what's wrong with you?

SHERYL

Who do you think you are, treatin' me this way? I'm beautiful. I'm the most beautiful woman in the world.

DANIEL

That mirror talkin' back to ya now?

SHERYL

(taunting)

That's right, shore is...

DANIEL

Damn you, Lucas.

Daniel heads out of the door as --

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

SHERYL

(sing-song)
If you mess with Lucas Buck...
you're a dead man.

Daniel stops and turns slowly. He can't believe his eyes...

ANGLE SHERYL

slithering down the stairs... caressing her body... swaying her hips... touching her breasts... to her young groom, she has become a vision of horror.

SHERYL

You see, Lucas is a real man. Not
no limp peckerwood... he ain't
nothin' like you, homeboy.

DANIEL

What... what're you saying?

SHERYL

Are you stupid -- or do you just
look that way? You know damned
well what I'm saying.

It hits him like a ton of bricks. At once, he is a madman and a speeding bullet. He races up the stairs, past Sheryl, who tries to stop him, but he's too fast. He runs into the

INT. BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The DOOR SPLATS open and Daniel leaps to the bed and starts to take down the mirror. Sheryl is hot behind him.

SHERYL

Don't!

She leaps to the bed after him and pulls him down -- but he's back up again in a flash, reaching for the mirror.

Sheryl grabs him and pulls him back down on the bed. But he pushes her back -- and yanks the mirror from the wall.

THE MIRROR

tumbles to the floor in SLOW MOTION... and breaks.

DANIEL

stands on the bed, breathless, satisfied.

SHERYL

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

She is face down on the bed, CRYING into the sheets.

DANIEL

It's over now, baby...

He falls to his knees on the bed, puts his hand on her back, and rubs it, stroking peace back into her soul. After a moment, he looks down at the

BLOOD

oozing onto the snow white sheets.

DANIEL

He touches the blood, then turns Sheryl over on her back -- and when he does, what he sees terrifies him.

HER FACE

Deep cuts engulf her... blood gushes down her face and neck... severe lacerations cover her face and body.

DANIEL

Nooooooo!

Like the mirror, her face is cracked.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

INT. GREYSTONE HOTEL - GAIL'S ROOM - NIGHT

GAIL is tossing and turning in bed, sweat beading off her forehead. We SEE what she's dreaming about:

DISSOLVE THROUGH TO: A PARADE - JULY 3, 1979

A little girl on a wagon float covered with American flags waving at the crowd...Lucas' face...flags...Lucas' face...

SPLASH CUT TO:

GAIL, who bolts up, breathing heavily.

GAIL

Lucas.

Sensing someone in the room, she slowly turns to face

HIM

standing in the shadows at her window, watching her. There is a moment, and in that moment, he smiles seductively and walks over to the bed.

LUCAS

Yes, ma'am?

He tries to cover her with the bedsheet, but an angry Gail gets up and starts to put on her robe.

GAIL

What're you doing in my room?

LUCAS

You called me. Sure did surprise me, but you called out my name again. So in I came.

GAIL

(horrorified)

You've been watching my room?

LUCAS

Not really, ma'am. I live upstairs, just above ya.

She shudders, somewhere deep in her bones, then goes to the door and opens it for him.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

GAIL

Goodnight, Lucas.

He stares at her a moment, then:

LUCAS

As you wish.

ANGLE

He moves to the door and is about to leave.

GAIL

She stops him with --

GAIL

Wait.

LUCAS

He turns back with a smile and slowly closes the door.

LUCAS

Wish you'd make up your mind.

(then:)

What can I do for you?

NEW ANGLE

Their eyes lock momentarily. Lucas is staring at her, digging into her soul. Recalling Matt's words of precaution, Gail walks away.

GAIL

I want to ask you something.

LUCAS

About your parents.

GAIL

You were the man who found them dead, Lucas -- what do you know?

LUCAS

Well, now, if I was a heartless man, I'd tell ya, but...

GAIL

Tell me anyway.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED 2

LUCAS

(let the games begin)
I ache for you... in a part of me
people never see, I ache for you.

GAIL

(tougher than nails)
How did the fire start?

FAVORING LUCAS

He takes a moment to study this woman, seeming reluctant to speak as he leans back against the door and blows out air.

LUCAS

That old warehouse was nothin' but
soot an' cinders bout time I got
there, but what I saw tore me up
inside...

FAVORING GAIL

And Gail studies him, uncertain whether he is sincere, but extremely interested in anything he might have to say.

LUCAS

It was awful, comin' up on
somethin' like that...

She braces herself.

GAIL

Like what?

CLOSER ON LUCAS

He closes his eyes.

LUCAS

Ever smelled the scent of burnin'
flesh, Gail? Human flesh? The
stench is foul... sweet, but
disgustingly so... like orchids
left too long in the vase... an'
it never, ever leaves you...

He has her now. Gail looks away, sick to her stomach. He opens his eyes and watches as she sinks to the bed, then starts moving toward her.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED 3

LUCAS

There were two bodies... a man and a woman... they was layin' on top of each other... clingin' like dew berry vines... took me a minute to get aholda myself cause it seemed like they didn't even try to get outta there... like they'd just decided to lay down and die...

Now he is standing next to her... and he sits down, his hand reaches for her shoulder and rests there. She falls back onto the pillow easily and looks up at him.

GAIL

Was it arson?

LUCAS

Yes ma'am, I do think it was.

GAIL

Did anyone try to find out who was responsible?

LUCAS

No ma'am, nobody ever took time... even after we found some of them sparklers back over in a corner.

GAIL

Sparklers?

LUCAS

You know, Fourth of July sparklers...

Gail looks off, as though faintly recalling something...

LUCAS

From that, you just had to figure somebody set the blaze on purpose.

GAIL

(anger building)
Then why didn't you do anything?

LUCAS

Me?

GAIL

You were the sheriff, weren't you?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED 4

LUCAS

(rises, moves away)

No ma'am, I was just a greenhorn back then, but I talked to Sheriff Bates till I was blue in the face tryin' to get him to call in the county fire marshal, but he made it plain an' clear he didn't 'preciate no cocky youngster tellin' him what to do so I backed off. Yeah, maybe I shoulda done somethin', but when poor Sheriff Bates had a heart attack, I let it alone.

GAIL

Somebody killed them.

LUCAS

I b'lieve so.

Gail falls back on the bed again limply, hurting.

FAVORING LUCAS

He is quiet for a moment, then he gets a handkerchief from his pocket and crosses back to the bed and sits beside her. He gives her the handkerchief to wipe her eyes.

LUCAS

Guess that's why I feel responsible for Caleb. I don't wanna let him down, not like I let you down.

GAIL

You let me down?

LUCAS

Day after the fire... it was me who brought the child welfare lady to your auntie's house an' when I saw your pretty little face all wet with tears... mommy, daddy, you kept on sayin', mommy, daddy... saddest day of my life.

He takes the handkerchief and wipes sweat from her brow.

LUCAS

Even now... your face still haunts me... awake, asleep... it stalks my dreams... can't get you outta my mind, Gail...

CONTINUED

CONTINUED 5

And he pours into her eyes with a white hot stare... moving in closer until he is merely inches from her face.

LUCAS

It hurts...

Now he is close enough to kiss. At first, she lets his breath whisper on her face, but, then, with all that is within her, she tears away from his gaze and sits up.

GAIL

Goodnight, Lucas.

LUCAS

Look at me, Gail.

She does not. He does not move an inch, but his voice seems to change, become deeper, almost sounding in echo.

LUCAS

Look at me.

She does.

LUCAS

I'm gonna leave ya now, but don't you worry none, sugar... the time will come.

GAIL

For what?

A CROW CACKLES.

Lucas turns his attention to the opened window where a huge BLACK CROW sits, staring. His eyes stay with the crow a moment, then he looks back at Gail.

LUCAS

You'll see.

With his gaze locked into hers, he slowly rises.

LUCAS

Evenin'.

And he leaves. She watches the closing door, then takes a deep breath, not sure what she's feeling, but it feels damned good.

INT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Matt comes out of the emergency room greeted by Daniel.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

DANIEL

How is she?

MATT

She's resting now -- I need to know what happened to her, Dan.

DANIEL

You're gonna ask me that? After I told you about Lucas?

MATT

You're saying Lucas did this?

DANIEL

He made it happen. Just like he makes everything happen around here.

MATT

If he's assaulted your wife, you can have him arrested.

DANIEL

Arrested? Who's gonna arrest Lucas Buck? Forget it. As soon as Sheryl's better, we're both outta here anyway.

MATT

You can't be serious.

DANIEL

Just mind your own business, man.

Daniel starts to go. Matt grabs him.

MATT

I can't believe you're going to let him run you out of town.

DANIEL

Did you see my wife's face? Hell, yeah, I'm runnin'. Fast as I can.

MATT

I understand how you must be feeling now, but --

CONTINUED

CONTINUED 2

DANIEL

How could you understand? You're on your high Harvard horse lookin' down most of the time. Half the time you don't even know what's going on.

MATT

That's probably true, but if Lucas has threatened you, maybe I can help.

DANIEL

Don't you get it, man? It's not me he wants. Lucas wants you.

Daniel glares at him and storms out.

INT. MISS HOLT'S HOUSE -- CALEB'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

CAACKLING CROWS wake Caleb from a fitful sleep. He rushes to the window and looks out. He HEARS the crows, but he can not see them.

MERLYN

appears and walks over to the window with Caleb.

MERLYN

Do you see what the crows see?

CALEB

What do they see?

MERLYN

Darkness.

CALEB

Darkness?

CALEB

It's lookin' for ya, Caleb... an' it wants to swallow you up.

Caleb starts to climb out of the window.

MERLYN

Don't -- that's what Lucas wants.

CALEB

I ain't scared-a him.

Caleb climbs out of the window.

EXT. MISS HOLT'S HOUSE - NIGHT

When Caleb hits the ground, the CACKLING grows LOUDER. He walks out into the yard, looking up into the night sky, but sees no crows. Someone grabs him from behind. It is only MISS HOLT, who turns him around to face her.

MISS HOLT
Back in the house -- now.

CALEB
But I wanna see the --

MISS HOLT
Do like I say before --

Suddenly, we HEAR fierce GROWLING.

CALEB AND MISS HOLT turn TO SEE:

A RED-EYED PIT BULLDOG

a few feet away from them, teeth glistening in the dark.

MISS HOLT
In the house, Caleb.

CALEB
No, I --

She quickly spins Caleb behind her, then snaps at the dog:

MISS HOLT
Get outta here.

The dog does not budge. He GROWLS, ready to attack. His bloodshot eyes are bulging as he makes his approach and heads straight for Caleb. Miss Holt picks up a brick, whirls around and throws --

MISS HOLT
I say git!

The animal scurries off.

MISS HOLT
Hellhound.

Miss Holt turns to Caleb.

MISS HOLT
You better listen to me an' listen good. Get your behind back in that house an' don't you come out till the sun comes up, y'hear me?

Caleb nods and runs inside.

EXT. CHURCH - NIGHT

Daniel stares up at the lighted church steeple.

A HAND

rests on Daniel's shoulder. He looks over his shoulder and

MATT

is standing there.

MATT

You can't leave, Dan. I need you here. The hospital needs you.

DANIEL

Know why I went into medicine, ace? Cause I grew up in Trinity... used to be a perfect little town, man... a gen-u-wine piece of Americana... friendly folks... good schools... lotsa trees... babbling brooks... fields of flowers graced with the colors of the rainbow... I wanted to make a contribution, ya know? Do somethin' to preserve that pretty picture forever...

MATT

Things have changed all over the country, Dan.

DANIEL

Not like here. Nothin' pretty about this place no more.

MATT

All in the eye of the beholder...

Finally, he turns and looks at Matt with tears in his eyes.

DANIEL

Why'd this happen?
(then louder; to the heavens)
Why'd this happen?

Dan covers his face with his hands to keep from crying.

MATT

Dan, listen to me --

DANIEL

(at the top of his lungs)
Lucas did this, man!

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

MATT

(topping)
Get a hold of yourself. Listen!

DANIEL

(frustrated)
What, what is it?

MATT

You and the people in this town are consumed in fear by a psychopath -- a manipulative, scheming psychopath.

DANIEL

Extra, extra, read all about it -- I'm scared, everybody's scared. That's just the way it is.

MATT

Don't let him win, Dan. He has no power -- not unless you give it to him. Don't you see? We've got to stand up to him -- and after we've done that, we have to stand up to him even more. Make a stand with me, Dan. Please. If we don't... who will?

Dan looks at him, then looks up at the CHURCH STEEPLE, which seems to glow by the light of the moon.

INT. COURTROOM - MORNING

CALEB is playing with a yo-yo seated between MATT and MISS HOLT on the front row. LUCAS enters. He is the picture of optimism as he waves to SELENA and goes where Caleb sits.

LUCAS

Ready to go fishin', boy?

Caleb looks at him, then turns back to the yo-yo. Lucas roughs up his hair and moves to sit next to Selena.

ANGLE THE DOOR

GAIL comes in and sits on the back row. Lucas sees her. His eyes stay with her a moment. Gail meets his gaze. Selena notes this with peaked interest.

ANGLE THE BENCH

JUDGE HALPERN comes in and sits down.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

JUDGE HALPERN

Pardon my tardiness. That's unusual for me, but I had a restless night. Crows.

He looks over at Lucas, who nods right friendly and sits.

JUDGE HALPERN

After reviewing statements from various places and weighing the sundry offers of help -- very generous offers, I might add -- from townsfolk, both kin and strangers...

The Judge's eyes go to Caleb and stay there a moment. Then:

JUDGE HALPERN

... I've decided to grant temporary custody of Caleb Temple to Miss Loris Holt.

Lucas stares at the Judge in disbelief as he BANGS his gavel and dashes out of the side door. Lucas makes a bee-line going after him, but Selena stops him.

SELENA

Don't worry, darlin'... I've still got him at school.

IN THE HALLWAY

The JUDGE turns a corner to FIND:

LUCAS

is already there.

LUCAS

What the hell was that about?

JUDGE HALPERN

I'm goin' under the knife next week, Lucas. Doc Crower is operatin' on me.

Lucas laughs. The Judge relaxes, but it's short-lived.

LUCAS

You'd better hope you die on that operatin' table cause if you don't, I'll not only be your judge, but your jury and executioner.

Lucas goes.

INT. MISS HOLT'S HOUSE - DAY

Matt, Caleb and Miss Holt are eating lunch. Caleb picks at his food. Matt and Miss Holt exchange looks.

MATT
Aren't you hungry, Caleb?

CALEB
I don't like bein' cooped up.

MATT
You feel cooped up?

Caleb rises and goes out of the back door.

MISS HOLT
Hard to be a child when you're
faced with grownup problems.

Matt wipes his mouth with a napkin and moves to the door.

SHOOTING PAST MATT THROUGH THE SCREEN DOOR:

We see CALEB sitting on the steps. He's CRYING. Matt opens the screen door. It echoes a sad refrain.

MATT

sits beside Caleb, who turns his face and backhands tears.

MATT
My grandmother used to say I had
big ears because I'm a good
listener.

Caleb rises and moves away.

CALEB
Decided I ain't gonna stay here.

MATT
When did you decide that?

CALEB
While ago.

MATT
Where do you think you'll go?

CALEB
I was thinkin' 'bout movin' wit' my
cousin up to Charlotte, but if she
don't want me...

His eyes fill with tears. He wipes them away quickly.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

MATT

I know you're feeling alone right now, Caleb. But if you let me, I could be sort of a father to you.

CALEB

(tearfully)

You cain't be my father. I don't have no father. He's dead. My mama's dead. My sister's dead. Everybody's dead... wish I was dead, too.

And he cries like a baby. Matt takes the boy in his arms and holds him tightly, blinking to hold back tears.

MATT

One day, it won't hurt so much.

CALEB

When's that day gonna come?

MATT

Soon, I hope...

Matt wipes his own tears. Caleb kicks the ground and drops down to the step again. A brief moment passes and their eyes meet. Matt smiles weakly... Caleb just looks away.

MATT

Look... what if I promised not to be anything but a friend to you? Would that be okay?

There is a beat, and Caleb nods and turns back to Matt.

CALEB

That'd be fine.

Caleb looks over Matt's shoulder and SEES: MERLYN standing there, watching them with a satisfied smile.

MERLYN

You got angels all around you, Caleb... angels hidin' in the hearts of men.

Merlyn vanishes.

INT. TRINITY NEWSPAPER - DAY

Gail comes into the newspaper office where the Little Old Man is working alone at the worktable pasting headlines.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

Back again? LITTLE OLD MAN

GAIL
I was wondering if I could take a
look at some of your back issues.

LITTLE OLD MAN
Fine with me, but you might have a
time findin' anythin' down there.

GAIL
I've got all day.

LITTLE OLD MAN
Lookin' for anything in particular?

GAIL
July, 76.

LITTLE OLD MAN
Help yourself.

GAIL
Thanks.

He watches as Gail opens the basement door and disappears.
He immediately picks up the phone and dials someone.

LITTLE OLD MAN
She's here.

INT. HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - DAY

Daniel is WHISTLING as he checks a medical chart at a desk
in this abandoned hallway. He turns to FIND: LUCAS there.

LUCAS
Surprised to see you.

DANIEL
Thought I'd run?

LUCAS
Your kind usually does.

DANIEL
My kind?

LUCAS
How's that pretty wife of yours?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

DANIEL

Excuse me.

Daniel moves past him and heads down the hall.

LUCAS

Matt Crower's going down cause he pulled the plug on that old lady, Mister... and you're going down with him.

Daniel turns back to face him.

DANIEL

Guess we'll just have hell to pay.

Daniel disappears around the corner.

LUCAS

Now you're right about that.

On Lucas' smile,

FADE OUT

THE END