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AMERICAN GOTHIC

"Law & Order"  
(Eps.#7)

Written

by

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AMERICAN GOTHIC

"Law & Order"

TEASER

FADE IN

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Boone and Caleb sneak down the long driveway toward a  
businessman's house --

BOONE  
What time is it?

CALEB  
I don't know. 'Bout eight  
thirty.

BOONE  
Then we gotta hurry.

CALEB  
How come?

BOONE  
(duh)  
'Cause we don't wanna miss it.  
David Sharp said every night  
at eight thirty ... like old  
fateful...

(awe)  
He's an seventh grader and  
said we'd see everything.

CALEB  
What's everything?

BOONE  
I'm not exactly sure but I  
wanna see it, don't you?

CALEB  
(thinks a beat)  
I reckon I do.

They approach the house. Boone leads him up a small incline  
where they can peer into an empty second floor bathroom.

BOONE  
I don't see nothing.

CALEB

Maybe she didn't get dirty today?

BOONE

Come on.

They move down the hill and up to the wall of the house. As Boone is about to peek in the living room, there is a loud, terrified SCREAM and commotion.

Boone and Caleb freeze, staring wide-eyed. Then, Caleb moves to the window and inches his head up --

INT. HAWKINS HOUSE - CALEB'S POV - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

A HORRIBLE PIG FACE

is staring out the window. Caleb recoils. The PIG HEAD turns back to the room. Caleb inches a little higher.

IN THE LIVING ROOM

FIVE MEN in PIG MASKS with guns watch MR. AND MRS. HAWKINS, bound together with duct tape over their mouths.

PIG #1

There ain't no reason to complicate this. Either you folks pay us and go on livin' or you don't.

PIG #2 rips the duct tape covering Mr. Hawkins' mouth. Hawkins just stares with hatred. Pig 1 pumps the .12 gauge.

PIG #1 (CONT'D)

Hawkins you can rest easy that after you're dead there won't be no hanky panky with old Mrs. Hawkins. Have my word.

(re: Mrs. Hawkins)

I'm sorry to say that dog don't hunt.

The pigs laugh. Pig #1 swings the gun to Hawkins' head. He's about to splatter brains when PIG #3 sees movement --

PIG #3

Someone's outside --

**OUTSIDE THE HOUSE**

Caleb ducks down just as the window is **BLASTED** out. Caleb and Boone sprint from the house and disappear as --

**THREE MEN IN PIG MASKS**

burst from the back door and run after them.

**EXT. THE WOODS - NIGHT**

Caleb and Boone speeding through the woods. The **SOUNDS** of their pursuers fade away. They rest a moment. **SILENT** but for their **PANTING**.

Then -- Two deliberate shotgun **BLASTS** echoing in the woods.

Caleb and Boone stare at one another. Then commence running again.

**END TEASER**

ACT ONE

FADE IN

EXT. MISS HOLT'S DINING ROOM - NIGHT

BARRETT STOKES, 30's, clever, charming, brutal, not unlike Lucas Buck, and his younger brother, LOWELL STOKES, 20's, lumbering, mostly says, "Barrett says . . .," sit at the table eating sandwiches.

BARRETT  
(as if surveying)  
You know what I see, Lowell?

LOWELL  
What do you see, Barrett?

BARRETT  
Opportunity. Land of. Like those pilgrims must have felt at Plymouth Rock.

LOWELL  
Plymouth Rock?

BARRETT  
(dictionary def.)  
Plymouth Rock: the point from which a bunch of injuns gave away an entire country.  
(musing on history)  
They just stood there and said, "here, here's my country, I don't want it anymore. Tired to death of all this wealth. Take it off my hands, please."

LOWELL  
I don't like injuns.

Barrett happily claps his brother on the back.

BARRETT  
That's the spirit, Lowell.  
Trinity's gonna be real good for us.

TWO MORE MEN enter the dining room. The first is EARL, 30's, handsome ladies man, a Sears dandy. He argues with JUST EDDIE, 20's, hothead, crew cut, dishonorably discharged Marine.

EARL

If the sheets are polyester  
then what am I?

(beat)

I'm white trash, that's what.  
Just like Jughead Jarvis.

Barrett looks up long enough to say howdy to his friends.

BARRETT

Earl, Just Eddie.

They don't stop arguing.

EARL (CONT'D)

I might as well sleep on dirt.  
Like Jarvis did as a little  
baby scratching around with  
the poultry.

JUST EDDIE

Shut up about Jarvis. At least  
he don't complain' cause his  
sheets ain't made of silk.

EARL

I'm sorry, Just Eddie. You two  
bunking up again? I'm sure  
Miss Holt would bring in a  
rollaway.

JUST EDDIE

(pissed off)

I woulda loved to have seen  
you in the Storm. That's  
Desert Storm, Mister. Cryin'  
like a little girl. Well, old  
Saddam thought he knew a thing  
or two --

EARL

Yeah, yeah. The closest you  
came to that war, and I use  
the term loosely, was watching  
CNN in some redneck bar.  
Tradin' advice on how to help  
a sheep over a fence.

JARVIS, 20's, the youngest, country looking, nervous,  
enters the dining room. The five men eat together.

JARVIS

What're you sayin' 'bout  
sheep. I know somethin' 'bout  
sheep --

Earl bursts out laughing. Jarvis tenses, becomes mean like turning on a live wire --

JARVIS  
Don't ever laugh at me.

Earl takes him seriously.

JARVIS  
Next time I'll put your head  
on the wall and use it for  
finger paintin'.

BARRETT  
Shut the hell up. All of you.

LOWELL  
Yeah. Barrett says to shut the  
hell up.

Caleb comes tearing through the boarding house. Seeing the men, he stops.

BARRETT  
Where's the fire, little  
partner?

LOWELL  
Yeah. You look like you seen a  
ghost.

CALEB  
Who're you?

BARRETT  
(creepy)  
We're your new friends. I'm  
Barrett. This is Lowell, Earl,  
Just Eddie, and Jarvis.

CALEB  
You all livin' here, now?

JUST EDDIE  
That's what the man said.

Caleb just stares, spooked.

CALEB  
You all family?

BARRETT  
You ask a lot of questions.  
What's your name?

CALEB  
 It's Caleb Temple.  
 (nervous)  
 I have to go. I'm not supposed  
 to be up this late.

BARRETT  
 Nobody here'll tattle on you.  
 We don't tell. We keep our  
 secrets. Ain't that right?

His four companions all nod in assent, muttering yeses.  
 Caleb backs carefully out of the room.

BARRETT  
 Trinity's virgin ground. I can  
 feel it.

LOWELL  
 (snickers)  
 You said virgin.

EARL  
 Tobacco and hog auctions.  
 Tourism. People relocating for  
 the quality of life.

JUST EDDIE  
 And one measly little sheriff  
 who don't even carry a gun.

BARRETT  
 It's all about quality of  
 life.

LOWELL  
 Quality of life.

They raise their glasses and clink to relocation and  
 quality of life.

CUT TO:

EXT. HAWKINS HOUSE - DAY

A crime scene. Cops, criminalists and few onlookers mill  
 around. Ben and Lucas watch a body bag being hauled out.

LUCAS  
 (angry)  
 This does not happen in  
 Trinity.

BEN  
 Didn't used to, anyhow.

Lucas shoots Ben a look. A COP with a fingerprint kit comes out of the house; he looks spent, almost nauseous.

LUCAS  
Get anything?

COP  
No prints, no fibers, nothing.  
Been wiped clean.  
(sighs)  
The Hawkins were friends of  
mine.

Lucas pats him on the back.

LUCAS  
Bud Hawkins didn't have any  
enemies.

The cop walks away.

BEN  
You never know --

LUCAS  
(sharp)  
Yes, I do.

BEN  
Probably someone just passing  
through. Some kinda druggy  
type.

LUCAS  
We'll see about that.

Lucas goes back inside the house.

CUT TO:

INT. SHERIFF'S STATION RECEPTION - DAY

Lucas and a glum Ben, return to the station. Businessman  
CECIL PERKINS, 40's, is waiting for them.

CECIL  
Morning, Sheriff.

LUCAS  
Always glad to see you, Cecil,  
but this is not a good time.

CECIL  
I ain't here for the checkers,  
Lucas.

CECIL (CONT'D)

I want to know when you let a company called Stokes Security start operating in Trinity. And then I want to know if I have to pay these rattlesnakes.

LUCAS

Cecil, I don't know what you're talking about.

CECIL

I'm talkin' about a shakedown operation. Ten percent of sales and nothing will happen to my business. Well, nothing was already happening to my business. My business is just fine.

LUCAS

Why am I just finding out about this now?

CECIL

Everyone else took the deal, Lucas. They said Bud Hawkins was like a warning shot.

LUCAS

Did you take the deal, Cecil?

CECIL

If Sheriff Buck ain't involved with this "Stokes Security" then bring 'em on is what I say.

Lucas smiles. Pats him on the back.

LUCAS

You keep me up to date on this, you hear.

Cecil nods and leaves, walking right by Gail who is talking to Ben --

LUCAS

Ms. Emory, I believe you're aware of the proper channels of journalistic inquiry here in Trinity.

BEN

She's just asking questions,  
Lucas.

GAIL

Sheriff, you know it's you  
I've been waiting for all  
morning.

LUCAS

Flattery will get you  
somewhere.

GAIL

Do you have time to answer a  
question or two?

LUCAS

Well, maybe one.

GAIL

Have you ever seen a gangland  
execution, Sheriff?

LUCAS

(droll)

Why don't you describe one for  
me and I'll try and remember.

GAIL

Execution style. Single shot  
to the back of the head.

SHERIFF

Let me think ... single shot  
... You know, I think I have  
seen it ... but it was in the  
movies.

(imitating)

"Godfather, I come to you on  
the day of your daughter's  
wedding to ask a favor."

GAIL

If organized crime has come to  
Trinity, does Trinity have the  
resources to handle it?

LUCAS

We have resources you've never  
even dreamed of.

(beat)

And, now, I have work to do.

Lucas starts away.

GAIL  
You never answered my  
question, Sheriff.

He pauses.

LUCAS  
What question is that, Ms.  
Emory?

GAIL  
Has organized crime come to  
Trinity?

Chuckling under his breath as he walks away.

LUCAS  
Not for long, Ms. Emory, not  
for long.

CUT TO:

INT. JUKE JOINT - NIGHT

Same one from the pilot. Same crowd, too, with five new  
additions: Lowell, Barrett, Just Eddie, Earl and Jarvis.

AT THE BAR, Earl, woos a slatternly woman, LURLENE.

EARL  
(singing)  
Pretty woman, walkin' down the  
street, pretty woman, the kind  
I'd like to meet --  
(beat)  
Elvis Presley hisself told me  
I should pursue a career in  
professional singing.

LURLENE  
That's a Roy Orbison song.

EARL  
Of course it is. Matter of  
fact, Roy called me up last  
week, invited me over to the  
house.

LURLENE  
You gonna be visitin' him in  
heaven?

EARL

No ma'am, we're going the other way 'cause I am the devil himself.

LURLENE

(warming a bit)

You do a pretty good Roy Orbison. Maybe I don't miss them so much anymore.

EARL

There is one thing I know for certain.

LURLENE

What's that, darlin'?

EARL

None of them dead guys are gonna be nearly as much use to you tonight as I am.

AT THE EDGE OF THE DANCE FLOOR

Just Eddie stares at the people dancing. You get the sense he'd like to dance but is too uptight. Maybe he'll just tear someone's head off instead.

AT THE POOL TABLES

Ben sinks the last two balls, then drops the eight. Jarvis is wasted and weaving.

BEN

That's ten, right?

JARVIS

I'm too drunk. Ten what?

BEN

C'mon, you make a bet around here, you pay it off.

JARVIS

I remember now, but ...

He acts like he's going for his wallet, then SMASHES Ben with a pool cue.

JARVIS (CONT'D)

... what if I'm a poor sport?

Ben goes down and Jarvis stomps him mercilessly with his boots.

JARVIS  
 (counting the blows)  
 Seven, eight, nine, and that  
 would make ten.

He drops a ten spot on the unconscious Ben.

JARVIS (CONT'D)  
 So I guess we're even.

Jarvis staggers away, laughing at his own cleverness.

AT THE DANCE FLOOR

Just Eddie picks up a PRETTY GIRL at random and throws her over his shoulder, spinning around. She's screaming.

Ben has gotten up from the floor and stumbles over --

BEN  
 Put her down.  
 (louder)  
 I said, put her down.

Jarvis sees this and comes over.

JARVIS  
 Hey, it's my pool buddy. You  
 causing trouble on the dance  
 floor?

BEN  
 I'm ordering you both out of  
 here.

JUST EDDIE  
 (still spinning with  
 girl)  
 Ordering? I'll have this here  
 filly -- medium rare -- to go.

Just Eddie carries the girl right past Ben and out of the bar. Ben starts to chase after them. Jarvis trips him. He sprawls at Barrett's feet. Barrett looks down at Ben.

BARRETT  
 This ain't your night, is it,  
 Son?

Barrett slowly empties his beer on Ben's head.

BEN  
 (mumbling, trying to  
 rise)  
 I'm a sworn deputy.

BARRETT

You're a what? I can't hear  
you up here.

Barrett kicks him three times rapidly.

BARRETT (CONT'D)

If you're gonna lie on the  
floor you'll have to speak up.

Ben tries to rise but Jarvis kicks his legs out from under  
him. Earl arrives and smashes his beer glass over Ben's  
head. Ben falls flat in the puddle of beer.

CU on BEN'S FACE in the dirty bar floor puddle --

BEN

Wait'll the Sheriff finds out  
about this. Sheriff Buck ...

Barrett acts like he's twirling a six-shooter, then putting  
it back in a holster.

BARRETT

There's a new sheriff in town.  
(beat)  
And his name's Barrett Stokes.

He kicks Ben one more time for good measure while from  
outside WE HEAR a woman's SCREAMS.

FADE OUT

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

CLOSE on Cecil Perkins, whose face is covered with bruises. His chest is wrapped and one arm is in a sling.

MATT

Now, listen to me, Mr. Perkins, you can tell your wife you fell down some stairs or got hit by a truck or whatever you want, but I'm your doctor ...

CECIL

(still all business)

Get to the point, doc.

MATT

Whoever did this could have easily killed you.

(beat)

You've got cracked ribs, any one of which could've been a compound fracture putting your heart at risk. Your kidneys are badly bruised.

CECIL

I appreciate the advice.

MATT

It's not advice. You're lucky to be walking out of here. Next time, who knows.

Cecil does not want to elaborate. Matt leans out the door and ushers Lucas into the room.

MATT

Thank you for coming down, Sheriff. Why don't you tell--

LUCAS

I can handle this, Doctor.

(to Cecil)

So what happened, Cecil?

CECIL

I took a little spill, that's all. The doctor here is way out of line.

LUCAS

This doesn't have anything to do with Stokes Security, does it, Cecil?

CECIL

No, it doesn't. I'm getting along with them fine.

(beat)

It ain't any of your business. And you can tell that to the doc, also.

Cecil limps out of the room. Lucas sees Matt looking at him.

LUCAS

What're you looking at?

CUT TO:

EXT. BOARDING HOUSE - NIGHT

On the porch we see the glowing tips of cigarettes and hear LAUGHTER. We hear a voice clearly, but from distance.

JARVIS

I turned her head so's she'd watch her husband die.

Lucas and Ben pull into the driveway in the Crown Vic. They approach the porch. Ben is a couple of feet behind Lucas.

LUCAS

I understand there's somebody around here who'd like to apply for my job.

Sniggering from the peanut gallery. Barrett Stokes steps to the edge of the porch.

BARRETT

That would depend on the total package: salary, clothes, cars, houses and whores. I hear you're pretty well taken care of, Sheriff, but I might be more ambitious than you.

LUCAS

You're feeling your oats, aren't you?

BARRETT

(re: Ben)

Plus, I'd need a different  
Jiminy Cricket backing me up.

LOWELL

Jiminy Cricket. He's funny.

BARRETT

So how you doin' there, Bar  
Buddy?

BEN

I'm all right.

BARRETT

Is this a social call? I do  
hope so.

LUCAS

This is all about opportunity.  
I'm here to offer you boys a  
chance to turn yourselves in.  
Orderly. Like we do things  
here in Trinity.

More laughter from the men on the porch.

BARRETT

Turn ourselves in. Whatever in  
the world for?

LUCAS

I could say it's for shaking  
down local businesses; or I  
could say it's for the murder  
of Bud Hawkins and his wife,  
but mainly it's because I'm  
asking you to.

The men laugh louder. The noise brings Matt and Caleb out  
of the house. They stand on the porch away from the men.

JUST EDDIE

Ain't that sweet.

EARL

Thanks for the invite.

BARRETT

(amused)

I don't know how you're used to doing business, Sheriff, but things have changed out there in the world. You need little things like evidence. And you need to be strong. And I don't think either one applies here.

Lucas sees Caleb up on the porch and smiles at him.

LUCAS

(to Caleb)

Howdy there, son.

(to Barrett)

I just don't want to ever hear you say, nobody warned me. So consider yourself warned.

Barrett steps down off the porch and toward Lucas. As he does this the other men stand up and move to the edge of the porch.

On the other side of the porch, Caleb turns to Matt and asks quietly --

CALEB

Is Sheriff Buck gonna take those men away?

MATT

I don't know.

ACROSS THE PORCH, Barrett is right up in Lucas's face.

BARRETT

(quietly)

Where I grew up I pissed on little monkeys like you every day.

Barrett begins tapping on Lucas's chest for emphasis. Lucas calmly looks into his eyes.

BARRETT (CONT'D)

Think the sun sets on your plastic badge, ruler of all you see ... all forty acres and a couple of dusty mules. Well, you've just been made obsolete. This town is now my town. And if you work at all, you work for me. Do you get it?

Lucas sees the men on the porch, hands under their jackets like they're packing heat. He notices Caleb is no longer on the porch.

LUCAS

Thank you for your advice,  
Stokes. Now, would you mind  
some from me?

BARRETT

Whatever.

LUCAS

Don't slip up. Don't make any  
mistakes. Don't even jaywalk.  
(under his breath)  
In Trinity the punishment  
almost never fits the crime.

Lucas turns and walks away.

BARRETT

You threatening me, Sheriff.  
Isn't that against some kind  
of cop code. They never do  
that on Matlock.

LUCAS

Come on, Ben.

The men on the porch begin making CHICKEN SOUNDS.

EARL & LOWELL

Pock Pock. Pock Pock.

JARVIS & JUST EDDIE

Chicken. Pock. Pock. I smell  
something fryin'. Might be  
bacon?

LOWELL

Might be chicken? Pock, pock.

INT. SHERIFF'S CROWN VICTORIA - CONTINUOUS

Lucas and Ben get in the car. All of a sudden --

CALEB POPS UP

on the backseat, startling both of them.

LUCAS

Don't pop up on people like  
that, son. Unless you're  
trying to intimidate them.

CALEB

How come you're not takin'  
them away?

BEN

Yeah, Lucas, I'll bet we could  
get Cecil Perkins to file a  
complaint.

LUCAS

I'll only say it once. There's  
the legal way and there's the  
right way.

CALEB

I'm scared of those men.

LUCAS

With good reason, Son. They're  
dangerous men.

(beat)

Maybe you oughta reconsider my  
offer and come stay with me at  
my place.

Caleb considers this.

CALEB

Nah, I can't do that. Who'd  
look after Miss Holt?

Caleb lets himself out of the car, then pauses and looks  
back at Lucas.

CALEB

You're not scared of them, are  
you?

LUCAS

I'm scared of what's going to  
happen to them. And, you,  
young man, don't have anything  
to worry about.

Caleb slips away into the shadows and Lucas drives off.

CUT TO:

INT. BOARDING HOUSE - NIGHT - LATER

Caleb just turned off his light to go sleep. His door  
suddenly swings open and three big men enter. Caleb bolts  
upright in the dark.

CALEB  
 Who is it?  
 (no answer)  
 What do you want?

The men fan out across the room. Caleb is blinking to clear his eyes against the strange shadows.

CALEB  
 Who's in here?

Out of the darkness, Barrett's voice --

BARRETT  
 You seem like a pretty smart little kid. An adventurous kid.

CALEB  
 Get outta my room.

We hear the SOUND of a pistol cocking.

BARRETT  
 But you know what curiosity did, don't you, kid? It killed the cat.

CALEB  
 I'm gonna yell for Miss Holt.

BARRETT  
 (calmly)  
 Then, you're gonna have a dead Miss Holt.

Caleb is slowly reaching for the bedside light.

BARRETT (CONT'D)  
 Stay outta our business. Or we'll visit again --

Caleb hits the light switch. All three of the men are wearing PIG MASKS. Caleb SCREAMS. The men begin making pig snorts and grunts as they leave the room.

CUT TO:

EXT. JUKE JOINT PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Jarvis, very drunk, carrying a pool cue, stumbles out of the bar. He swings at a Chevy, dents a Dodge. He sees a black Crown Victoria and swings at the hubcap -- THWONGG -- and is staggering by when the window slides down and we see Lucas Buck slumped down in the seat, waiting --

LUCAS

You have committed an act of vandalism in the presence of a police officer.

JARVIS

What?

LUCAS

Drop the cue.

Jarvis drops the cue.

LUCAS

Get in the car.

Jarvis gets in the Crown Vic with Lucas.

INT./EXT. CROWN VIC/PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Jarvis tries the passenger door. He can't get it open. He starts to panic a bit. Thrashing around uncomfortably.

JARVIS

Open the door. I can't be cooped up.. I need air.

LUCAS

Don't tell me ... you're one of those claustrophobic types.

JARVIS

I just don't like being in here.

LUCAS

You're special, Jarvis, so I've decided to make you a special offer.

JARVIS

I feel sick. Drank too much.

LUCAS

You know what'll happen if you go down for that murder. They restrain you in a chair, your arms and legs tied tight. You can't move. Then, they shave a little patch on your head, and another on your right leg.

JARVIS

I'm not innerested in deals.

LUCAS

They smear conductive jelly on the shaved spots. It's dark. You're all alone and you can't move. The metal touches your skin. It's cold.

Lucas pulls the seat belt around Jarvis and clamps it down tight.

LUCAS (CONT'D)

You can hardly breathe. Then, they pull the black hood down over your face, blocking out all the light.

(beat)

Then you wait and wait and wait.

Jarvis, drunk and lulled by Lucas's voice, passes out.

LUCAS

That's right. You settle down for a nice long nap. We've got a big day tomorrow.

Jarvis is out cold and snoring. Lucas drives away.

EXT. COUNTRY GRAVEYARD - DAY

Trees and grass. Blue tearless skies. Two fresh graves. Matt, Gail, Ben, Lucas, Cecil Perkins, many others. Lucas walks over to Cecil Perkins.

LUCAS

Haven't heard from you in a while, Cecil. How's it going?

Cecil won't make eye contact.

CECIL

Fine, Lucas. I'm hangin' in there. Excuse me.

Cecil slips away from Lucas to Barrett and Lowell who are wearing dark funereal suits while speaking with local businessmen. Lucas realizes he's being blown off. The service starts --

MINISTER

We are gathered here to dedicate to the earth the mortal remains of Bud and Myra Hawkins ...

The service continues. Barrett and Lowell are joined by Earl and Just Eddie. They drop back. Earl's cellular phone goes off --

EARL

I said sixty on the four in  
the eighth. Sixty, you  
hayseed. Six. Zero.

One old lady shoots a nasty look, but nobody says anything to them directly.

MINISTER

... ashes to ashes, dust to  
dust. Our father, who art in  
heaven ...

The first casket is lowered into the ground. Lucas watches keenly as the casket is lowered --

MINISTER

... forgive us our trespasses  
as we forgive those who  
trespass against us. Lead us  
not into temptation, and  
deliver us from evil.

The casket settles into the bottom of the grave.

Little Jenny Hawkins, eighth grader, steps up to throw the first shovel of dirt. Several others shovel dirt onto the casket.

Lucas steps up and dumps a heaping shovelful directly onto the head of the casket --

CUT TO:

INT. CASKET - DAY

CLOSE ON Jarvis's face.

The RUMBLING of DIRT SPRINKLING OVER WOOD.

Jarvis's eyes pop open -- and see seven feet of pine ceiling. He tries to move and can't. He starts to thrash around, but he's wedged in by something --

He rolls slightly to his left and stares into the headless torso of Bud Hawkins --

He SCREAMS --

FADE OUT

END ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN

INT. BOARDING HOUSE - DUSK

The four baddies play mumbly-peg with a switchblade in Miss Holt's living room. Just Eddie flips the knife off his thumb --

THE KNIFE

THWACKS through the eye of Alexander Hamilton on a ten dollar bill.

LOWELL (V.O.)

Doggonit. You must have some kinda' radar on that thumb.

Just Eddie swipes up the knife with the ten dollar bill pierced on the end of it.

JUST EDDIE

Double or nothin'?

- LOWELL

Yessir.

Caleb walks past the living room. Barrett sees him.

BARRETT

Hey, boy, come on in here.  
Wanna show you something.

Caleb hesitantly enters the living room.

CALEB

What do you wanna show me?

Barrett reaches inside his jacket and pulls out a long switchblade --

BARRETT (CONT'D)

You ever seen one of these?

CALEB

It's a knife.

BARRETT

Not just any knife. C'mere.

Caleb moves a bit closer --

BARRETT

C'mon boy, I'm not gonna bite.

Caleb is right next to Barrett who holds the closed knife in front of Caleb's eyes. He FLICKS it open --

GAIL (V.O.)  
Caleb Temple, what are you doing?

Caleb looks up guiltily.

CALEB  
Nothing. Playing. He's just showin' me somethin'.

Caleb goes to Gail's side. She takes his hand and as they leave the room --

BARRETT  
Can't let girls tell you what to do.

EARL  
Looks like there might be some woman under there.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BOARDING HOUSE - NIGHT

Gail is leaving. A voice comes off the porch.

EARL  
See ya later.

Gail turns and peers into the shadows.

GAIL  
Who's up there.

EARL  
A friend ...

Earl moves out of the darkness.

EARL (CONT'D)  
... A friend with some information.

Earl looks around furtively like he expects spies everywhere.

GAIL  
What kind of information?

EARL

Oh, let's say some dirt. Real  
dirty dirt on a mutual friend.

Earl comes down off the porch. Stares nervously back up at  
the house.

GAIL

I'm not in the mood for this.  
What are you talking about?

EARL

Let's just say I know where  
that Sheriff, Sheriff Buck I  
believe it is, keeps the  
bodies.

This captures Gail's attention.

EARL (CONT'D)

You don't like him much, do  
you?

(beat)

I heard about him all the way  
over in HotLanta. That's what  
we call Atlanta G-A ...

GAIL

(interested)

What have you heard?

EARL

Just some rumors ... 'bout a  
crooked little town called  
Trinity.

(reeling her in)

And some unexplained fires ...  
I'd be glad to tell you what I  
know ...

GAIL

You have my attention.

He looks around again --

EARL (CONT'D)

... Only, I can't talk about  
it here. This old place is  
nothin' but ears.

GAIL

What do you know about fires?

EARL  
 (looking around)  
 C'mon back here. I'll tell  
 you. But, you can't let on  
 where you found out.

Gail reluctantly follows him around the side of the house.

EXT. SHADOWS BEHIND BOARDING HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Earl looks back at the lights of the house. He lures her deeper into the foliage.

GAIL  
 Now, what do you know about  
 Lucas Buck?

Earl moves further into the gloom. Gail follows. He suddenly grabs her, throwing a hand over her mouth, stifling a scream.

Earl wrestles her to the ground and crouches over her, his weight pinning her down --

EARL  
 What do I know about the  
 Sheriff?  
 (beat)  
 I know he ain't here.

Gail struggles, but he's too strong. Earl runs his hand down the side of her face and over her body. With his free hand, he pulls a switchblade and flicks it open.

EARL (CONT'D)  
 We're gonna take a little  
 trip, just you and me and the  
 ol' Blue Moon --

Suddenly, there's a thud and Earl topples over onto Gail, completely unconscious. Gail registers mute surprise --

LUCAS (V.O.)  
 That is one trip I would not  
 want to be on.

Lucas steps out of the shadows. Gail jumps to her feet. She kicks the unconscious Earl.

GAIL  
 You jerk. Bastard. How stupid  
 can I be?  
 (to Lucas)  
 He lured me ... he was going  
 to --

Gail shivers at the memory.

LUCAS  
(sarcastic)  
A murderer you can't trust. My  
my, what is the world coming  
to?

Lucas looks Gail in the eye.

LUCAS (CONT'D)  
You know, Ms. Emory, I don't  
want to tell you your job, you  
being the big city reporter  
and all, well ... never mind.

GAIL  
What?

Lucas throws the unconscious Earl over his shoulders and  
starts away. He turns back briefly.

LUCAS  
When you have questions about  
your faithful public servant,  
you can get answers without  
consortin' with known  
hoodlums.

GAIL  
I'll keep that in mind,  
sheriff.

Lucas disappears into the night. We follow him, hearing him  
say under his breath --

LUCAS  
C'mon Earl, we're late for  
dinner.

Lucas carries Earl past the porch, where Barrett, Lowell  
and Just Eddie are gathered.

BARRETT  
Where're you takin' Earl?

LUCAS  
Down to the jail.

BARRETT  
On what charges?

LUCAS  
For now -- assault and  
attempted rape.

(beat)  
But there could be more later.

JUST EDDIE  
More what?

LUCAS  
I had a nice long talk with  
your buddy Jarvis last night.

BARRETT  
Where is Jarvis?

LUCAS  
Oh, you'll find out soon  
enough. He's gone, though.  
Gone away for a nice, long  
stretch.

Lucas throws Earl into the Crown Vic, drives away.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PUBLIC GOLF COURSE - NIGHT

Ground fog. A wooden bench for the gallery abuts a small  
lake. There is a cardboard box sitting on the bench.

Earl's wrists are lashed to the legs of the bench where  
they sink into concrete. Earl's legs are held apart, duct-  
taped to the flag for the 18th green.

Lucas is taking practice cuts with a pitching wedge.

Earl struggles --

EARL  
Don't hit me. Please, Sheriff.  
I didn't do anything wrong.  
I'm just a good --

LUCAS  
Quiet there, Earl, you're  
breaking my concentration.

Lucas drops a golf ball to the ground. It glows eerie white  
in the darkness. More practice cuts --

LUCAS (CONT'D)  
This is a very difficult shot.

EARL  
(whining)  
What are you doing? What're  
you gonna do? Don't hurt me.

LUCAS

If there is one thing I can't stand, Earl, it's whining.

Lucas lines up his shot. Swings the club. Hits the ball. A pause, then we hear a splash.

LUCAS

Shoot. Water hazard.

Lucas drops another ball. He looks off in the direction of the lake.

LUCAS (CONT'D)

Well, would you look at that.

LUCAS'S POV

of the reeds surrounding the small lake. They are strangely swaying. Slowly, a huge alligator slithers out of the water and onto the fairway.

LUCAS (CONT'D)

We've got another type of hazard here, Earl.

(beat)

Alligator hazard.

Earl struggles more furiously.

EARL

What? What are you talking about?

Lucas walks over to the cardboard box on top of the bench. He opens the box and pulls out a big hunk of sirloin sealed in plastic. Unwraps it. Then hurls it in the direction of the alligator.

THE ALLIGATOR

GOBBLING the sirloin, GRUNTING, THRASHING.

Earl is in a state of complete terror trying to see what's making those SOUNDS.

Lucas unwraps another piece of bloody sirloin. Holds it above Earl, then drops it right on his crotch.

LUCAS

Don't worry, they always go for the soft tissue first.

(cheery)

Bon appetit.

Earl begins SCREAMING.

Lucas walks away, whistling and swinging the club. WE HEAR the same grunting and thrashing and lots more SCREAMING.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SHERIFF'S STATION RECEPTION - DAY

Cammalous Fry sits behind the reception desk. His head is back and he's SNORING. The door SLAMS. Cammalous starts.

Just Eddie strides into the reception. He's angry and leans threateningly toward Cammalous.

JUST EDDIE

You got my friend in here and I want him out, now! What's bail?

Cammalous is slow waking up and has no idea what Just Eddie is talking about.

CAMMALOUS

I'm sorry. What's this about, again?

Just Eddie slams his fists on the desk. Cammalous slides his chair backwards out of harm's way.

JUST EDDIE

You're gonna let my friend outta here. Who do I pay?

CAMMALOUS

Calm your ponies down, sir. I don't know what you're talking about.

LUCAS BUCK enters the room --

LUCAS

You're way out of line here, boy.

Just Eddie turns on the Sheriff --

JUST EDDIE

I'm here to make bail on Earl McKeever.

LUCAS

Don't think you can bail him out.

JUST EDDIE

I got plenty of money.

He reaches into his wallet and pulls out a wad of bills.

LUCAS

Oh yeah? How much?

JUST EDDIE

Five thousand.

LUCAS

Seven and you got a deal.

(winking at Fry)

Cammalous, write the man a receipt.

Just Eddie pulls out a huge wad of cash and peels off seven grand in hundreds.

JUST EDDIE

Let him out!

Cammalous pockets the money.

LUCAS

You know, I would love to do that. Really. There's nothing like money well spent, but --

Just Eddie starts to get the impression he's getting messed with. He moves threateningly toward Lucas --

JUST EDDIE

What're you saying?

LUCAS

It's simple: I'd love to release your friend, but he isn't here.

Just Eddie's anger goes up a notch --

JUST EDDIE

I paid you, now let him go.

LUCAS

And I told you, he ain't here.

(beat)

He escaped.

JUST EDDIE

I think you're lyin'.

LUCAS

I think you better keep your opinion to yourself.

(beat)

He was layin' up like a possum  
in the back of my car. When I  
slowed for a red light, out he  
went. Too fast for me.

JUST EDDIE

You're a lyin' sack of --

LUCAS

Careful.

Just Eddie simmers. Realizes he's getting nowhere --

EDDIE

Gimme back my money.

Lucas catches Cammalous's eye, smiles sweetly at Eddie.

LUCAS

No, I don't think so, but your  
money will be donated to a  
good cause. Don't forget to  
take a tax deduction.

Just Eddie is confused. He's never done business in  
Trinity.

JUST EDDIE

What?

LUCAS

It's simple. You leave. We  
keep your money. Now leave.

JUST EDDIE

Nobody talks to me --

LUCAS

I do. Now, scoot on out of  
here before you get hurt. It's  
been a pleasure --

Just Eddie snaps. He swings at Lucas who side-steps and  
catches his hand mid-air.

LUCAS

Well, well, assaulting an  
officer of the law is a felony  
in South Carolina. Suddenly,  
it seems like we've got all  
the evidence we need. Ain't  
that right, Cammalous?

Cammalous just smiles and opens the door leading back to  
the jail cells.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JAIL CELL - LATER

Lucas sits on the bench in a corner of the cell. He's talking into a portable phone --

LUCAS

Mm. Hmm. I will. I'd love to.  
Thank you, Ma'am.

Lucas listens. As he does, WE HEAR a muffled struggling in the corner of the cell.

LUCAS

To even be considered for the  
position of Chief Judge of the  
Daughters of the Confederacy  
Fall Rose Pageant ...

The CAMERA PANS around Lucas so that WE SEE what is causing the commotion --

It's Just Eddie flopping around on the floor like a trout out of water.

His belt is pulled tight around his neck and he's suffocating. His head starts BANGING into the wall with a loud thud. Lucas makes eye contact with him and motions for him to shush --

LUCAS

... is both a privilege and an honor.

A door down the hallway SLAMS and Ben calls out --

BEN (V.O.)

Lucas? Lucas? You back here?

Disappointment etched across Lucas's face --

LUCAS

Ma'am, something's come up and I'm going to have to call you back. Thank you for your patience.

Lucas shuts off the phone. He calls out to Ben as he starts for the now-unconscious Just Eddie.

LUCAS

(utterly bored)

Help, help. Ben, this man's  
trying to commit suicide in  
our jail --

FADE. OUT

END ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN

INT. HOSPITAL EMERGENCY ROOM - DAY

Paramedics race in with an unconscious Just Eddie on a stretcher. Matt jams his fingers into the patient's mouth, clears a breathing passage, then jams an oxygen mask on his face.

MATT

How long's he been out?

PARAMEDIC

Eight minutes, at least.

MATT

Come on, buddy, breathe. Get his shirt off.

A nurse cuts off Just Eddie's shirt. His torso's covered with tattoos. Matt pounds his chest. No breathing.

The door to the emergency room bursts open. It's Barrett and Lowell.

MATT

Who are these guys?

Barrett flashes a gun under his jacket.

BARRETT

We're from the H.M.O. Gonna make sure Just Eddie gets the best care fear can provide.

LOWELL

Yeah, doc. The best care.

This is too much for Matt.

MATT

You want him to get any care, you get the hell out of here.

Matt shoves them both out of the emergency room without missing a beat.

MATT

Forty cc's of adrenalin.

Dan prepares an injection, hands it to Matt.

DAN

Adrenalin.

Matt jabs the needle straight into Just Eddie's heart.  
Injects it. He waits.

MATT

All right, don't die on me  
now. Come on --  
(yelling)  
Breathe!

Silence. Looks hopeless. Then ... Just Eddie COUGHS.  
He's still unconscious.

DAN

All right!

MATT

Get some fluids into him.

More emergency room chaos.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - DAY

Matt, looking beat, comes out of the emergency room,  
peeling off his gloves. Lowell and Barrett are waiting in  
the hall.

BARRETT

Doc?

MATT

The good news is you don't,  
have to kill me.

BARRETT

How is he?

MATT

He's alive. Now we wait. And  
you stay out of the way.

Matt, furious, disappears down the hallway.

CUT TO:

INT. INTENSIVE CARE UNIT - NIGHT

Machines that go "BEEP" provide the only illumination.  
Tubes and wires keep Eddie alive. He's unconscious, but  
breathing.

A medic-looking fellow, in scrubs and a surgical mask, carrying a medical bag, enters and examines the chart.

LUCAS

As I suspected, Just Eddie, we have a perfect opportunity here ...

He puts the chart back.

LUCAS (CONT'D)

... to try a bit of alternative medicine.

Lucas sets the medical bag on a table.

LUCAS (CONT'D)

That I.V.'s dripping, what? Saline, some nutrients, and you're still not getting any better.

(tsk tsk)

He pulls a bottle out of the medical bag. It's labeled "LIQUID DRAIN CLEANER."

LUCAS (CONT'D)

Here's a hypothetical question for you: what would happen if that solution was replaced with liquid drain cleaner?

Lucas cuts open the I.V. bag. Fills it with liquid drain cleaner. Lucas stands back and watches calmly. Just Eddie begins to convulse.

LUCAS

Now I'm no medical doctor, but I don't believe this is helping your condition.

He puts away the drain cleaner and leaves. Just Eddie twitches a few more times before expiring.

INT. BOARDING HOUSE - NIGHT

Ms. Holt opens the door and lets Lucas in. He's in unusually good spirits. Carries a cardboard box.

LUCAS

Evenin' Ms. Holt. You look prettier every day.

(beat)

May I come in?

MS. HOLT

You didn't come all this way just to flatter me, Sheriff Buck. So what do you want?

LUCAS

Unfortunately, I'm here on police business. I need to speak with your new tenants.

MS. HOLT

You'll find them in the dining room.

INT. MRS. HOLT'S DINING ROOM - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

Barrett and Lowell are eating. Lucas enters.

BARRETT

What do you want, Sheriff?

LUCAS

(obviously enjoying this)

I hate to be the bearer of bad news, but it is part of the job.

Lucas drops the box on the table.

LUCAS (CONT)

Just Eddie's things. You know, that is a strange name. I don't like it much. Anyway, he's dead.

LOWELL

No.

(looks to his brother)

Barrett? The Doc said he fixed 'em up. He ain't dead!

LUCAS

Yes. He is. And I'm assuming a man like Just Eddie doesn't have any next of kin.

(off their grief)

How do I express my grief. Oh, I remember. One less scumbag.

Lucas turns and starts to leave. Pulls a Columbo --

LUCAS

Speaking of which ... if something should happen to either of you -- God forbid -- who should I contact?

BARRETT

(without much conviction)

Nothing's gonna happen to Lowell or me. You should worry about yourself, Sheriff.

LUCAS

Is that a fact.

Lucas shuts the door to the dining room.

LOWELL

(nervous)

What're you doin'?

LUCAS

Since it's just us men in here. I've got something I need to get off my chest.

He leans close and whispers.

LUCAS

I never thought you two'd be the last to go. But you are. And I'll give you a chance.

(beat)

There's one major highway out of Trinity. And for you, it runs north.

Lucas leaves.

INT. BARRETT & LOWELL'S ROOM - NIGHT

They're both worked up.

LOWELL

He killed 'em Barrett. Sure as you're standing there.

BARRETT

Don't let him get at you. It's a head game.

LOWELL

He's got at me.

BARRETT

Me too.

They start packing.

LOWELL

He said to leave north.

BARRETT

We'll see about that.

LOWELL

I don't care where we go as long as it's outta here.

CUT TO:

INT. BEN'S CAR - NIGHT

Ben drives. Lucas rides. Lucas turns off the police radio and tunes in a country station.

BEN

Where're we goin'?

LUCAS

Up ahead. Not to far.

They drive a little further. Trees and a steep hill on both sides of a blind curve.

LUCAS

Here we are. Park across both lanes.

BEN

We'll be in the middle of the road.

LUCAS

If we weren't, it wouldn't be much of a road block.

Ben turns the car and parks it so that it blocks both lanes, right in the middle of the curve, perpendicular to traffic.

Lucas gets out of the car.

EXT. NARROW COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

Country music still plays. It's something catchy and mindless; maybe George Jones's "The King is Gone, and So Are You."

Lucas stands astride the double yellow, beside the car, whistling along with the tune.

Ben is very nervous.

LUCAS  
What's the problem?

BEN  
What're we doin' out here,  
Lucas?

LUCAS  
Perfectin' justice.

Ben reluctantly stands in front of the car ... on the edge of the road.

CUT TO:

INT. BARRETT & LOWELL'S CAR - NIGHT

Barrett drives fast. Lowell rides. Same song plays on their radio as on Lucas's.

-LOWELL  
What're we gonna do now?

BARRETT  
I don't know.

LOWELL  
Get a job?

BARRETT  
Are you kidding?

LOWELL  
I don't know.

BARRETT  
Damn.

They pass a "Road Narrows" sign.

LOWELL  
Barrett?

BARRETT  
What, Lowell?

LOWELL  
Barrett, I wanna be a barber.

BARRETT

A barber?

LOWELL

I want to cut hair.

BARRETT

I heard you. I just didn't believe it.

They pass a "BLIND CURVE" sign and continue to talk.

CUT TO:

LUCAS AND BEN

Lucas is still humming. Ben points to the distance. Headlights skim across trees.

BEN

A car's coming, Lucas.

LUCAS

I can see that.

BEN

We're in the middle of the road.

LUCAS

Hold your ground.

The headlights get closer --

INT. BARRETT & LOWELL'S CAR - NIGHT

They're exceeding the maximum legal speed limit.

LOWELL

It's a sure thing. Everyone's gotta get their hair cut.

(playing barber)

"How do you want it today, Mr. Johnson?"

BARRETT

Lowell, you and me gotta have a talk.

Barrett takes the curve at speed; Ben's cruiser is squarely in their headlights. Barrett slams on the brakes.

CUT TO:

BEN

dives off the road.

LUCAS

never flinches, calmly tapping his foot, as the car lights come right at him. We hear SCREECHING, then CRASHING, then MOANS.

Lucas walks to the side of the road.

LUCAS

Ben! Come out of the bushes  
and move the car.

Ben crawls out of the bushes.

Lucas pops the trunk, gets flares. He follows the black skid marks to the edge of the road; down the hill, into the trees, to --

BARRETT'S CAR

-- which is upside down, wheels still spinning. Gas leaks all around it.

Lucas kneels down and looks -- Lowell is pinned under the car.

LUCAS

Howdy Lowell. Nice night.

Lowell moans.

LOWELL

Help me.

LUCAS

Where's your brother?

LOWELL

Help me.

LUCAS

Hmm. Let me think about it.

Lucas walks away from the car; soon enough he finds Barrett, badly injured, crawling away from the wreckage.

LUCAS

Now, where do you think you're going?

Lucas acts like he's going to help Barrett. Barrett reaches out his hand; Lucas slaps handcuffs on his wrist and yanks him back toward his brother.

Lucas drags Barrett to the overturned car. He handcuffs him to Lowell.

BARRETT

What are you doing? Help us.

Gasoline drips from the overturned car and forms an ever-expanding puddle around the Stokes brothers.

LUCAS

(surveying the scene)

I've been thinking about the evidence we have here and I'm nearly certain I could get a conviction on the reckless driving charge ...

Lucas lights one of the flares. Sticks it right into the pool of gasoline. When it burns down far enough, the car will explode.

LUCAS (CONT)

... But, I'm only gonna issue a warning.

Lucas begins making his way back up the hill --

BARRETT/LOWELL

Sheriff? What're you doin'?  
Sheriff. Come back here. We did it. We're guilty. Take us to jail. Arrest us, Sheriff--

CUT TO:

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Lucas approaches Ben's cruiser. The same country song is still playing.

LUCAS

There's nothing I could do for them.

BEN

Shouldn't we call an ambulance?

LUCAS  
Nope. I believe I'd try the  
fire department first.

BEHIND LUCAS

A fireball illuminates the woods as the last murdering Bad  
Boys are blown to bits.

CUT TO:

EXT. BOARDING HOUSE - DAY

Matt, Gail, Caleb, Ms. Holt, and a couple of their friends  
are having a barbecue. Matt's grilling steaks.

MATT  
My dad used to say, just lean  
the cow against the radiator.

CALEB  
You mean he liked 'em bloody?

MATT  
Still kickin'.

GAIL  
I'll take mine medium-well at  
least.

MATT  
That's a crime, but all right.

Ms. Holt packs an old-fashioned ice cream maker with ice.

MS. HOLT  
Caleb, you want to turn this  
for me. I made it with Mrs.  
Carter's fresh peaches --

Caleb grabs the handle. Suddenly everyone is quiet -- Lucas  
Buck approaches carrying a pie.

LUCAS  
(sensing the change)  
I didn't mean to rain on  
anybody's parade.

Miss Holt steps forward.

MISS HOLT  
You're not. It's just ...  
we're just having a private  
get-together.

LUCAS

(suddenly a bit  
awkward)

I see. Well, I just brought a  
pie. For the boy.

(to Caleb)

Here you are, son. It's apple.

Caleb looks around uncomfortably.

MATT

Go ahead and take it, Caleb.

Caleb steps forward and takes the pie.

LUCAS

I'll be on my way. Enjoy.

Lucas quickly turns away from the group and walks back  
toward his car.

Gail runs after him. She catches up. He turns.

GAIL

Sheriff Buck. I wanted to say  
something. I want to say,  
thank you. For the other  
night.

(beat)

I was really scared and you  
... well, thank you.

And before anyone can react, Gail leans forward and kisses  
him on the cheek. Lucas is taken by surprise. Gail quickly  
turns and hurries back toward the gathering.

Lucas looks at the gathering for a long beat before  
leaving.

THE END