

"2-FACE"

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Pitch-black... until a MATCH flares to life. It ignites the end of an old-fashioned FUSE lying in the dirt. The fuse smokes and crackles and sprays an orange jet of flame.

We FOLLOW this fuse as it burns through a dark, narrow tunnel which stretches ahead of us. It's got a long way to travel.

Over this, a NARRATOR speaks. He has a wonderfully gravelly, Old South voice -- think Faulkner or Shelby Foote.

NARRATOR

In 1864, in Petersburg, Virginia, near the end of the Civil War, Union General Ambrose Burnside oversaw the mining of a five-hundred foot tunnel beneath the entrenched Confederate line. He packed it with four tons of black powder. The resulting explosion was tremendous. It blew a hole in the enemy nearly two hundred feet across and twenty-five feet deep. Unfortunately, Burnside's subsequent charge was a fiasco. Northern troops, unable to climb out of the crater they'd just created, were picked off like fish in a barrel.

(a beat)

General Burnside is also remembered for his contribution of the word "sideburns" to our language... as he was always distinguishable by the muttonchop whiskers that he wore.

Finally, the burning fuse hits its end with a TH-H-HHHPPPT!

A deafening EXPLOSION nearly jerks us out of our seats. Clods of red clay tumble down like rain.

Now, glimpsed through the smoke... UNION CAVALRY gallops straight at us. Thundering hooves kick up more red clay as the horses pass us left and right. Behind the cavalry, a line of blue INFANTRY comes charging.

Opposite them, gray caps rise. Dirty-faced CONFEDERATE INFANTRYMEN fire a smokey volley -- then scramble out of their trenches and charge us, screaming REBEL YELLS.

From a distance, we see the blue and gray waves crash together in hand-to-hand combat. Sun glints off swords and bayonets. Patches of white cannon smoke obscure our view.

A white-bearded CONFEDERATE GENERAL sits atop his skittery horse. He watches the distant fighting, his face impassive. Clanging steel and screams of pain drift his way.

Now... *dahdahdah-dahdah-duh--dahdahdah-dahdah-duh!* We hear a tinny "Dixie" -- but from where? Whoops, there it is again.

The General reaches into his saddle bag for his CELL PHONE. He checks its caller ID before he answers it.

GENERAL LEE
Y'all are late.

3 INT. MERCEDES - DAY - CONTINUOUS 3

We sit at a red light. Through the windshield, a road sign -- "Crater National Battlefield Park, 5 miles."

Expensive sedan. The driver, BOOTS LeBEAU, is a spotless Confederate officer. He speaks into his hands-free phone.

BOOTS
It's these stupid-ass cobblestones.
We'll be there in ten minutes,
alright? Don't you start without us!

Too late -- through the car's speakers, we hear BLAM!BLAM! KABOOOOM! coming from the other end of the phone.

BOOTS
Awww, god-DAMMIT!

His passengers all groan, disappointed. The three big guys crammed in the back seat are WHITEY, DUKEY and MEASLES -- picture Elvis's Memphis Mafia dressed as Confederate soldiers.

Riding shotgun is EARL THORNTON. More about him in a moment -- right now, he leans forward and yells in the air conditioner.

EARL
Goddammit Bobby, what kinda General
are you?! --

BOOTS
(points at the roof)
Microphone's up here, Earl.

EARL
 (now yells at the roof)
 How you gonna start without your
 field artillery! Huh?!

Boots jabs a button on his steering wheel, hangs up the call.
 As he and Earl shake their heads at each other, disgusted:

4 EXT. DOWNTOWN STREET - DAY - CONTINUOUS 4

The stoplight changes from red to green. This \$120K Mercedes
 S-Class slowly pulls through the intersection...

... Revealing that it tows a Napoleon FIELD CANNON behind it.
 A blaze orange safety flag hangs out of the cannon's muzzle.

The wheels of this antique cannon clatter over cobblestones.
 Boots can't drive much faster without wrecking them.

5 INT. MERCEDES - DAY 5

The City of Petersburg rolls past. Earl wears a HEARING AID --
 a behind-the-ear model. He's young to need one. Like his
 best friend Boots, he's 40-ish. Southside Virginia born and
 bred. He too is dressed as a Confederate officer... which
 means he and Boots outrank their buddies in the back seat.

WHITEY
 Boots? What kinda bullet you'd
 rather be shot with: old .52 caliber
 Sharps, or modern M-16?

Boots purses his lips, taking the question very seriously.

BOOTS
 Huh. Can't say as I've given it
 enough thought to form a preference.

DUKEY
 Definitely the Sharps. M-16 goes
 supersonic -- plus, them little two-
 two-threes tumble when they hit you.

WHITEY
 See, I tend to disagree. Fifty-two
 Sharps? Fat ol' hunka lead big
 around as your thumb? That's gonna
 inflict tons more suffering.

This discussion CONTINUES in b.g. In the front seat, Earl
 gazes out his window. Boots glances at him.

BOOTS
 How's my lil' Delilah coming along?
 (no response; louder)
 Earl? How's Delilah?

Earl fiddles with his hearing aid volume. He gives a shrug.

EARL
 Same, I guess.

Far more interested in discussing it, Boots gently presses on.

BOOTS
 Y'all hear anything new?

EARL
 Holly took her to some new doctor.

He shrugs again -- not much more to say. Behind them:

DUKEY
 -- Towelhead takes a two-two-three in
 the wrist, right? And it tumbles
 alla way up this artery in his arm
 and goes inside his head? And it's
 going ZUZZ-ZUZZ-ZUZZ around and
 around the inside of his head, and
 he's just standing there with this
 stupid look on his face. Then
 finally the bullet drops out his
nose, right? And all his brains pour
 out his nose like a Slurpy machine!

Boots looks from Dukey back to Earl.

BOOTS
 What new doctor?

EARL
 Calls hisself a... oto... rhino...
 rhine-ologist? Rhino-ologist?
 I dunno. Roman or sumpin'. I say
 "Shit, Dr. Fancypants -- whatever
 happened to 'ear, nose and throat?'"

BOOTS
 (grins; nodding)
 I tell you what.

EARL
 Talked about how he wants to put some
 kinda computer chip in her head.
 Make it so's she can hear.

BOOTS

Yeah?! Hey, that sounds kinda --

EARL

-- Kinda like one steamin' load of horsecrap, right? No kidding.

Actually, that's not what Boots was going to say at all. His hopeful grin fades. Meanwhile:

WHITEY

-- Northern boy catches a fifty-two Sharps in the jaw, right? And his jawbone goes flying out the other side of his head, it goes flying -- THUP-THUP-THUP-THUP! -- like a damn boomerang, right? Circles around and hits him in his very own eyeball before he even falls down dead!

Boots suddenly stands on the brakes, tossing everyone forward. The cannon's yoke CLUNKS the back bumper.

Thus, we narrowly miss the brown 280Z which CUTS US OFF -- having whipped a quick right-on-red off a side street.

BOOTS

Son of a --

Boots lays on the horn as he starts the Mercedes moving again.

BOOTS

Nobody drives worth a wet fart anymore. DMV done give up and surrendered to the Mexicans.

Whitey and Dukey nod -- *amen, brother*. Between them, Measles stirs. He speaks up for the first time.

MEASLES

That sumbitch was black.

Earl blinks. He leans forward, squinting out the windshield at the 280Z, which is still in sight ahead of them.

BOOTS

Figures. Holding a bucket of fried chicken between one's knees does tend to distract.

The other guys snicker -- all except for Earl, who keeps staring straight ahead. Now he slowly leans back in his seat.

EARL
 (dead quiet)
 He flipped us off, Boots.

The others look surprised. They all squint at the car ahead.

6 INT. DATSUN 280Z - DAY 6

Alone in his weathered old sports car, MALCOLM BLEVINS drives. He's a young guy, early 20s -- and yes, he's African-American. He's got a great smile. Pleasant. Downright likeable.

Also, he's got big muttonchop SIDEBURNS. Though on most guys these would come across a bit nerdy, Malcolm wears them well. Taken together with his soul patch, they actually seem hip.

On the seat beside him is a styrofoam cooler with freezer smoke wisping from the lid. A bright red sticker says "ATTENTION! HUMAN CORNEAS -- KEEP REFRIGERATED!" Malcolm chews his gum a mile-a-minute and glances at his watch.

We PULL OUTSIDE his window to reveal the magnetic sign on his door: "MEDICAL COURIER -- PERISHABLE ORGANS FOR TRANSPLANT." Now we get why he's driving so fast.

Something else is on his mind besides his job, however. Specifically, it's a very official-looking letter on the dashboard from HARVARD MEDICAL SCHOOL. It's addressed to Malcolm. It lies sealed. He keeps staring at it.

Malcolm suddenly grabs it up, tearing it open atop the wheel while he steers with his wrists. Just as abruptly, his nerves get the better of him. He sets it down again, unread.

7 EXT. DOWNTOWN STREET - DAY 7

The 280Z hustles along. Behind it, the Mercedes closes the gap between the two vehicles. The cannon bounces behind the speeding Mercedes, fishtailing slightly.

8 INT. MERCEDES - DAY - CONTINUOUS 8

All five Confederates stare hard at the Datsun ahead of them.

BOOTS
 (under his breath)
 No nappy-headed porch monkey gonna
 flip me the bird.

Earl shakes his head -- *damn right*.

WHITEY

When, uh..? Earl? When exactly did he flip us off?

EARL

Right after he made the turn.

WHITEY

You sure? I maybe saw him throw a little wave, but uh...

Earl taps at his hearing aid, still glaring forward.

EARL

This thing must not be working right. Kinda staticky... sounds like I'm being called a liar.

Whitey shrinks back in his seat. Boots drives faster still.

BOOTS

No porch monkey flips off Boots LeBeau.

Off Earl, unstrapping his sword belt:

9 EXT. QUIET INTERSECTION - DAY 9

The light is red. The Datsun slows to a stop. There are cars in the distance, but the immediate area is deserted.

The Mercedes slows to a stop behind Malcolm.

10 INT. DATSUN 280Z - DAY - CONTINUOUS 10

Malcolm chews his gum fast and stares up at the light. Steeling himself, he grabs the letter once more. There it is: Admissions Office... Harvard Medical School...

Malcolm holds his breath and opens the letter. MACRO-CLOSE on one sentence fragment: "... regret to inform you that your application for admission is denied."

Malcolm shuts his eyes. His head sinks. In his rearview mirror, we see the five guys climb out of their Mercedes and stride our way. Spurs JINGLE on the asphalt.

Crushed with disappointment, poor Malcolm is oblivious.

Suddenly, the Datsun ROCKS on its springs. Malcolm opens his eyes, startled to see five Confederate soldiers hunkered low along his passenger side.

What the hell?! Malcolm locks eyes with Earl just as Earl and his buddies strain to LIFT the sports car.

MALCOLM
H-Hey... HEY!!

The styrofoam cooler rolls across the seat toward him. The lid pops off and ice cubes shower Malcolm's lap. A clear plastic container falls out and tumbles through his window as the Datsun flips sideways.

11 EXT. QUIET INTERSECTION - CONTINUOUS 11

The container lies intact on the asphalt. We can see TWO HUMAN EYES inside it, staring back at us. Slowly at first, the container starts to roll.

The 280Z balances on its driver's side, a pile of ice glittering beneath it. Earl and Boots let out REBEL YELLS. The car rocks as Malcolm struggles inside, cursing fiercely.

The stoplight turns green. Earl and Boots jog back to the Mercedes behind their three giggling buddies. The sedan peels off, rattling the cannon as it speeds away.

CLOSE ON the Datsun's upturned passenger door -- the window rolls down and Malcolm sticks his head out.

MALCOLM
Come back here, you BITCHES!
YOU HEAR ME?! YOU'RE DEAD!

Gnashing his teeth, he works to shoulder himself up through the too-small window. His eyes suddenly root on something and he stops dead.

Very slowly, the jar of EYEBALLS is rolling in a beeline toward the storm drain in the curb.

Malcolm's blood runs cold. Hyperventilating, he wrestles his bulk up through the tight window, whamming the sheet metal with his fists and rocking the sports car back and forth.

Finally free, Malcolm drops to the pavement. He slips on the ice cubes and his feet go out from under him.

The jar of eyeballs rolls inexorably toward the sewer.

Sweat dripping, Malcolm crawls the asphalt on his belly, his feet frantically kicking up ice cubes. He extends an arm.

The jar reaches the storm drain... and lazily hangs on the edge of the abyss for a heartbeat. Just as it starts to fall, Malcolm slaps a finger on it, freezing it in place.

Malcolm, too, lies frozen. He sucks a deep breath and FLICKS the jar back toward himself with a single finger.

Victory! He rolls over on his back, hugging the eyeballs to his chest. As his heart rate gradually slows to normal...

12

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - AFTERNOON

12

CLOSE ON the muzzle of a Civil War cannon as it FIRES straight at us. The report is tremendous.

The cannon is one of many arranged in a long artillery line. Men dressed as CONFEDERATE SOLDIERS load and fire the big guns while hundreds of SPECTATORS flinch. Camera flashes wink like daytime lightning bugs.

Earl, Boots and their three comrades appear at the end of the firing line, hand-wheeling their cannon into place alongside the others. They rush to load it, speeding through this precision drill in an efficient, practiced manner.

A dozen SOUTHERN BELLES and their young CHILDREN stand nearby, watching. The belles are dressed for 1864, right down to their bonnets and parasols -- the children are costumed as well. Easily noticed in the midst of this group is HOLLY THORNTON and her four year-old daughter DELILAH.

Holly is an attractive woman in her thirties. She wears sunglasses, day-glo yellow shorts and a bright top that says "Unreformed Chocoholic." She holds her equally modern-dressed daughter on her hip, and a digital camera dangles from her wrist. She looks like she has a headache.

Over on the firing line, Earl gives Holly a little upward nod of his chin. He remembers to slip off his hearing aid before he yanks the firing lanyard. The cannon erupts with a BOOOOM!

Holly wears Nascar-style earplugs connected by a string -- still, she and the other women flinch at every single explosion. Many press their hands to their ears.

However, as we CREEP IN -- BOOOOOM! BOOOOOOM! -- on pretty little Delilah, no earplugs, no nothing...

... We notice this smiling child never so much as BLINKS.

Whitey, Dukey and Measles swab the smoking barrel and recharge the cannon. Earl pulls a fresh fuze from its box and clips it to the lanyard. Boots nudges Earl to look up.

A UNION GENERAL, a bald reenactor who looks very much like General Ambrose Burnside -- down to the muttonchop whiskers -- sidles up next to Holly. He says something, and Holly smiles politely and nods.

Earl's eyes narrow. He and Boots glare at the man.

BOOTS

Ol' Burnside sure thinks he's the
cock of the walk, don't he?

Earl doesn't hear. He just stares at Holly until she glances his way. They lock eyes for a beat. Earl frowns at her.

Earl jerks his lanyard much harder than he needs to -- his cannon ROARS, filling our frame with clouds of white smoke.

13 EXT. RESTAURANT - LATE AFTERNOON 13

The sun is low above the horizon. Boots' Mercedes -- complete with cannon -- is parked at an angle across two spaces.

We reveal we're at the CRACKER BARREL. It figures.

14 INT. CRACKER BARREL - MEN'S ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON 14

Earl and Boots stand shoulder-to-shoulder at adjacent urinals, their backs to us. As they do their business, they back away in an effort to see how far they can pee. Their spurs JINGLE against the tile floor.

These two Confederates look at each other to see who got the farthest. It's a draw. They both let out a WHOO-WHOOP!

15 INT. CRACKER BARREL - DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS 15

Their REBEL YELLS echo through the restaurant. WAITERS pause. DINERS at every table -- many dressed as Civil War soldiers -- look up from their meals.

Seated in a corner booth, little Delilah doesn't react, but Holly shades her face and turns red. PATSY LeBEAU -- Boots' wife who is currently dressed as an 1860s Southern belle -- wearily rolls her eyes.

PATSY

Sorry, General -- you were saying?

The man dressed as General Burnside stands beside the women's booth. His sword sheath keeps clinking against their table.

BURNSIDE

Orthodontics. That's my day job.
Cosmetic bonding, Invisalign braces.
Just so you know, I give a ten
percent discount to all reenactors
and their families. Keep that in
mind if you ladies ever find
yourselves in Front Royal.

While he talks, Earl and Boots step up behind him, eyefucking him hard. Holly grows uncomfortable.

BOOTS

Buddy, don't you know you ain't
s'posed to consort with the enemy?

BURNSIDE

Hi, fellas. Wow, nice uniforms.
Artillery, right?

The man's cheerful camaraderie is wasted on Earl, who slowly crowds him a little.

EARL

Ambrose Burnside murdered my Great-
Great-Great-Granddaddy. Whatcha
gotta say about that?

BURNSIDE

Uh. Come again..?

EARL

Great-Great-Great Granddaddy. He was
sleeping in his trench right over top
of that big ol' pile of gunpowder
y'all touched off.

(dead quiet)

Boom. Won't nothin' left.

Earl lifts Holly's hand for General Burnside to see, jiggling her wedding ring with his thumb. Holly snatches her hand back. General Burnside slinks away.

EARL

(shakes his head)

I tell you what...

BOOTS

Amen, Bubba.

He and Earl loosen their swords and slide into their booth. Holly sets down her fork, having lost her appetite. Using SIGN LANGUAGE, she tells Delilah to drink her milk.

Earl watches his wife and daughter sign to each other out of the corner of his eye. He speaks up with his mouth full.

EARL

Holly, I was kinda hoping you two'd get dressed up like Patsy here.

(points at her shirt)

What's this "chocoholic" business? Hell's that s'posed to mean?

HOLLY

(as if to a slow child)

It means... I like chocolate.

Earl shrugs to Boots and Patsy -- *see what I'm dealing with?*

BOOTS

Did they even have chocolate back in the Civil War?

PATSY

Well, I'm sure they did. Maybe not milk chocolate. I think maybe that came later.

EARL

Irregardless of the whole historical question... Honey, alls I'm asking is you show me just a little support. That's all. Not so hard.

Holly nods without looking up -- not a nod of agreement, but of "shut up about it already."

BOOTS

Hey, uh... so, Holly. What's this new doctor say about Delilah? Earl tells me he wants to put some kinda... chip inside her head..?

HOLLY

(nodding; enthused)

It's called a cochlear implant. It turns sounds into electric impulses that go straight into the brain. It's really amazing.

EARL
Buncha horsecrap.

HOLLY
It's proven technology, Earl.

EARL
(into his drink cup)
Proven horsecrap, you ask me.

BOOTS
(to Holly)
But what? They're saying they could
maybe give her back her hearing?

HOLLY
To a degree, yeah. She'd be able to,
yeah. It's pretty fantastic. And
they say it works best on children.
They adapt to it the best. So...

Boots, Holly and Patsy all look to Delilah, the subject of this conversation. The little deaf girl plays with her food, oblivious.

Annoyed by this rising tide of happy excitement, Earl rolls his eyes and slaps down his soda cup.

EARL
Sixty-two--thousand--dollars.
(to Boots)
That's right. That's the price tag.
That's the wee little detail this one
keeps leaving out. So yippie-doodle-
dandy, God bless modern science, and
let's drop the damn subject. Sick of
hearing about it.

Boots looks to Patsy, about to say something -- but she gives him a little shake of her head and he stops himself.

Browbeaten into silence, Holly helps Delilah with her sippy cup. Earl studies her a beat, pinched and frowning.

PATSY
So. Any plans for tonight?

Patsy's just making conversation, but Earl picks up on this.

EARL
(to Holly)
Yeah. So what's on for tonight?
Big plans? Big hootenanny?

HOLLY
Not that I know of.

EARL
No? Spaceman What's-His-Name ain't
gonna paint the town red?
(off her silence)
Ain't gonna climb down out his
rocketship and sing "Kumbaya" to a
buncha lil' pickaninnies?

Boots snorts. Under his breath:

BOOTS
Wouldn't put it past him.

HOLLY
The man does what he does -- alright
Earl? I'm not his keeper.

EARL
(baleful)
Just remember, it was me you married.

As Holly slow-burns, Boots tries to defuse the situation.

BOOTS
Well, this here is some really fine
Salisbury steak.

Patsy nods energetically, looking from Holly to Earl.

HOLLY
(low; to Earl)
How many times you gonna do this?
How can you possibly be jealous of
Rodeo Bob?

PATSY
Peas are quite good, too...

EARL
Well, pardon me being upset my wife
spends every night with another man!
Hell yeah -- why should I let that
bother me?!
(under his breath)
Goddamn, but you better not sleep
with him.

Holly's eyes dart around the restaurant. She clangs her fork
on the table and glares at Earl, her face turning red.

HOLLY
You watch your mouth around Delilah!

EARL
She can't hear nothing.

HOLLY
(venomous)
And whose fault is that?! --

Earl's face goes dark. Boots coughs and thumps at his chest. Patsy chews her lip. Earl leans close to Holly.

EARL
You just remember who you married --
it won't no goddamned Rodeo Bob.
(dead quiet)
I'll know if you slept with him.
I got my ways of finding out.

Struggling to keep her anger in check and not make a scene, Holly turns her attention to her daughter. As she wipes Delilah's mouth, the little girl smiles up at her and points.

Holly turns to look where Delilah is pointing -- out the window is a beautiful gold and orange SUNSET.

Holly relaxes a little, seeing it. She gives a subtle nod to her daughter. We sense this means something to both of them. Something special.

HOLLY
Sun's going down.

She announces it to the table, sounding as casual as she can -- but as she resumes eating her mashed potatoes, she's got a secret smile on her face. Earl simultaneously looks startled.

EARL
That ain't right. I'm s'posed to get
another half-hour!

He pulls out an antique gold POCKET WATCH. Winds it.

EARL
Damn watch is running slow...
(breathing faster)
Aw shit. SHIT! --

Boots reaches a hand to calm him down, but Earl bolts from his seat and hurries out of the restaurant. Boots chases him.

BOOTS
Hold up now, Earl!

Holly smiles down at her lap. Patsy watches her closely.

16 EXT. CRACKER BARREL PARKING LOT - SUNSET 16

Clouds are deep red. A sliver of sun peeks over the horizon.

Earl paces back and forth beside the Mercedes and its cannon. His shadow is long. Boots catches up to him.

EARL
I'm sick of this! I'm SICK of this!
It's not gonna happen this time! --

BOOTS
Amen, Bubba -- don't go. Fight it.
Fight it! Fight it, Earl!

Earl clenches his fists, wrings his hands. His breathing gets faster. Boots is right alongside him.

17 INT. CRACKER BARREL - DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS 17

Orange sunset streams through the plate glass. Four REENACTORS sit at a window booth, watching rapt as Earl and Boots pace outside in the parking lot.

UNION OFFICER
So he's gonna... change into...
(confused)
What am I looking for?

CONFEDERATE SOLDIER
(big grin)
Just watch.

Holly, Delilah and Patsy pass these four guys on their way to the cashier. Patsy glares at them.

PATSY
You people mind your own business.

18 EXT. CRACKER BARREL PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS 18

Earl leans over the cannon, gritting his teeth and growling. He lowers his head and his hat falls off. Boots picks it up.

Earl hammers the cannon barrel with his fist, hard as he can.

EARL
I... WON'T... CHANGE!

Earl slowly lowers his head. Boots dances in place and punches Earl in the shoulder over and over again, hard.

BOOTS
That's it, that's it! Fight, fight,
fight, FIGHT! --

As Boots punches and cheers his friend on, CLOSE ON the SUN -- the last thin slice of it slips from view behind the horizon. The exact moment it does...

... Earl's face jerks back up into view. He slaps a hand to his aching shoulder.

EARL
OW! --

He looks Boots up and down, then examines his own Civil War attire as if seeing it for the first time. He tugs at a coat button and makes a face.

EARL
Ugh... what am I doing on F-Troop?

The color drains from Boots' face. He angrily drop-kicks Earl's hat across the lot.

BOOTS
Aww, SHIT! God-DAMMIT! --

Earl unhooks the HEARING AID from his ear and tucks it away in his pocket. He glances around, getting his bearings.

Earl looks different than he did just moments ago. He stands tall, where before he slouched. His movements and expressions are changed. He no longer has a Southern accent. His face is no longer pinched and grim.

He's no longer Earl, we'll come to learn. He's now RODEO BOB.

Rodeo Bob is relaxed. Jaunty, even. He's supremely sure of himself. In comparison, Earl looks unhappy and constipated -- like he sucks lemons or maybe has a strained back. We could tell the difference between Earl and Rodeo Bob even if the sound was turned off.

Boots kick-kicks the wheel of his cannon, aggravated as hell.

RODEO BOB
Careful, Toots, you'll hurt yourself.

BOOTS

Boots. You know perfectly damn well
my name is Boots.

RODEO BOB

You people sure dress fancy, Roots.
(taps the cannon)
Is this your gun? It's big.

BOOTS

Asshole.

19 INT. CRACKER BARREL - DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS 19

Holly, Delilah and Patsy finish paying up and exit the restaurant. Over in the window booth, the four reenactors still crane their necks to see Rodeo Bob.

UNION OFFICER

He just changed? That's it?

This guy shrugs, unimpressed.

20 EXT. CRACKER BARREL PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS 20

Rodeo Bob sees Holly approaching and his face lights up.

RODEO BOB

Ah. Bono vespero, Belulino.

HOLLY

Good evening, Rodeo Bob.

Holly is polite but formal -- aware that Boots is watching her every move. Rodeo Bob couldn't care less about that.

RODEO BOB

(points at her shirt)
Wow, you're a Chocoholic? Me, too!
Chocolate cures brain tumors. And
restless leg syndrome. But
scientists won't discover that till
2028, so keep it on the down-low.

Holly smiles shyly, vindicated. Rodeo Bob nods to Patsy...

RODEO BOB

Saluton. Greetings.

... Then he suddenly "notices" little Delilah, who peeks out at him from behind her Mom's leg.

RODEO BOB

Wait, what have we here? AAAH!

Delilah giggles wildly as Rodeo Bob scoops her up and blows a fart noise against her belly. He pretends to gnaw her arm.

RODEO BOB

Who's this little bug? Who's this little bug? Kiustas poka cimo?

Boots rolls his eyes -- *ugh*. Rodeo Bob couldn't be more different from Earl in the way that he interacts with Delilah, or in the way she responds to him. It's night and day.

Patsy clears her throat and fakes a smile.

PATSY

Boots, if we're gonna take these folks home, we'd best get going.

Her husband nods, grim. Rodeo Bob puts down Delilah and turns to the Mercedes. He CLAPS his hands once, expecting the passenger door to open automatically. It doesn't, of course.

He frowns and CLAPS again, confused. Boots shakes his head to himself as he steps around and pulls open the door for Bob.

BOOTS

Maybe next year's model, spaceman. Just get in the damn car.

21 EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DUSK 21

A beautiful country road fades into darkness. The Mercedes motors past, towing its cannon.

22 INT. MERCEDES - DUSK 22

The two families ride in silence. In the back seat, Rodeo Bob is fidgeting with his Confederate uniform. He digs inside his tunic and vigorously scratches under his arms, trying to get some relief. Boots frowns at him in the rearview.

BOOTS

Mind that uniform. That there was a gift from me to Earl.

RODEO BOB

I'm dying in this thing. Is this actual wool?

BOOTS

Yes, it's actual wool. What the hell else would it be? What the hell they wear on your planet?

RODEO BOB

The moon's not really a planet, Rube, but of course you know that from your sixth grade science. Holographic clothes, mainly... at least inside the dome.

Boots snorts and shoots a look to Patsy beside him.

BOOTS

Holographic clothes.

RODEO BOB

Yes indeed. They're extraordinarily comfortable, for of course...

(turns to Holly)

... They're not really there.

He smiles at Holly meaningfully -- Rico Suavé meets Captain Kirk. Holly can't help but grin to herself.

BOOTS

(under his breath)

Yeah, I'll send you to the damn moon, you freako son-of-a...

Patsy nudges Boots with her elbow. Also under her breath:

PATSY

Humor the man.

Boots chews his lip, trying his best -- it's really hard for him. Rodeo Bob peers at the clock in the dashboard.

RODEO BOB

Sankta merdu. Can't this antique go any faster?

(off Boots' angry look)

No offense. I'm supposed to be at work by oh-eight hundred.

Boots smolders.

BOOTS

I ain't speeding up so's you can get to no spook hospital.

RODEO BOB

"Spook" hospital? I don't follow.

BOOTS

Spooks! Jigaboos, junglebunnies,
porch monkeys... niggers. Christ...
what, you ain't got no niggers living
up there in the future with you?
Ain't no niggers on the Jetsons, or
wherever the hell you think you are?!

HOLLY

Boots. Stop it.

Rodeo Bob is gravely offended. Under his breath:

RODEO BOB

Primitiva stulta-pugo...

BOOTS

Oh what, you think I can't go Google
that shit? Speak English!

Bob tries to take the high road.

RODEO BOB

Certainly we have patients of African
heritage at our hospital, but it's
not an admission requirement.

(off his silence)

Maybe you should come down tonight.
I'm helping give cholesterol tests.
It's free. Maybe you'd like to --

Boots HAMMERS the steering wheel with his fist, startling
everybody. He looks over his shoulder at Holly.

BOOTS

When does Earl get better?! What do
the doctors say? Huh?! WHEN?!

(quiets down)

I want the old Earl back.

PATSY

(under her breath)

Don't talk about him like he's not
here.

Holly glances sidelong to Rodeo Bob, who speaks up flatly.

RODEO BOB

He's not.

23 EXT. EARL'S HOUSE - DUSK

23

In the last of the twilight, the Mercedes pulls up in front of a modest brick rancher. This isn't much of a neighborhood -- lots of flat, treeless land between blue-collar houses.

We notice that both houses on either side of Earl's place have "FOR SALE OR RENT" signs in their front yards.

Rodeo Bob climbs out of the car, hoisting Delilah on one hip. Holly gets out the other side and says her goodnights.

HOLLY

Y'all have a good one.

BOOTS

(sotto)

Darlin', you call us if you need anything. If he starts acting... you know? Crazier?

A BLACK LAWN JOCKEY stands guard in front of Earl's house. Offended by it, Rodeo Bob uproots it with his free hand. Boots sticks his head out his window.

BOOTS

Hey, that's Earl's! Put that back!

Ignoring Boots, Bob wanders off with it. Holly, the peacemaker, shrugs -- *what can you do?* Boots motions her closer. Holly hesitates, then leans down to his window.

BOOTS

Don't you sleep with Rodeo Bob.

Holly's mouth falls open. Patsy punches Boots in the arm.

PATSY

Booo-oooooots! --

Holly's eyes glow. She leans closer to him still.

HOLLY

I didn't hear what you just said. But if you ever say it again, I'll snatch you bald-headed.

(a beat)

Sorry, Patsy.

PATSY

Shoot, I'll hold him down for you.

BOOTS

I-I didn't mean nothing by it, Holly.
 Alls I meant was...
 (conspiratorial)
 ... Earl has a way of finding out.

Holly sighs in deep disgust and strides to her house. Boots and Patsy watch her go, then Patsy punches Boots' arm again. Boots peels away mad, rattling the cannon behind him.

24

INT. MERCEDES - DUSK

24

Patsy works at the knot in her bonnet ribbon, untying it. She takes off her bonnet and shakes out her hair.

PATSY

What's this... way of Earl's, anyhow?
 How's he supposed to know if Holly
 slept with Rodeo Bob?

A measured beat.

BOOTS

You gotta promise not to tell Holly.

Patsy considers, then nods. Boots tries to figure how to put this into words. He clears his throat and speaks bashfully.

BOOTS

He, uh... he initialled the underside
 of his best leg of three.

PATSY

Come again..?

BOOTS

He used a water-soluble marker. So,
 if his initials ain't there in the
 morning...
 (shrug)
 ... Ol' Rodeo Bob been up to no good.

Patsy blinks. They drive in silence.

PATSY

He initialled his penis? --

Boots frowns.

BOOTS

Watch your mouth, girl.

25 EXT. SKY - NIGHT 25

A huge full moon hangs just above the treetops.

26 EXT. COMMUNITY HOSPITAL - NIGHT 26

"Moton Community Hospital" is what it says on the lighted sign. Parked in a courier's space near the ER door is a familiar Datsun 280Z -- now all SCRATCHED and DENTED.

27 INT. HOSPITAL - ADMINISTRATION HALL - NIGHT 27

Doctors' offices. We focus on one particular door which is marked "Dr. Donald R. Blevins -- Chief of Surgery."

DR. BLEVINS (O.S.)
"Civil War?" Whaddya mean Civil War?

28 INT. HOSPITAL - DR. BLEVINS' OFFICE - CONTINUOUS 28

DR. BLEVINS sits on the edge of his desk -- white lab coat, stethoscope in his pocket. Mid-sixties. Upset. Talks fast.

DR. BLEVINS
Civil War like the War Between The
States? The Blue and the Gray and
all that shit?

Right down to their matching MUTTONCHOP SIDEBURNS, we see the resemblance between the Doctor and his son Malcolm, who lies on a leather couch with his feet hanging over the armrest.

MALCOLM
Yep. Uniforms and everything.

DR. BLEVINS
Cavalry or infantry?

Malcolm makes a face -- *excuse me?*

DR. BLEVINS
Did they come running out of nowhere,
or did they ride up on horseback?

Not sure if that's a serious question, Malcolm answers anyway.

MALCOLM
They were in a black Mercedes.
Pulling a cannon on a tow hitch.

DR. BLEVINS
 Black Mercedes pulling a cannon.
 (ponders this)
 I don't get it. Did you write down
 the license plate?

MALCOLM
 No, Pop. You see... their cannon
 blocked my view. So no, I didn't
 write down the license. Sorry.

DR. BLEVINS
 I'm just asking a simple question.
 No need to get your ass up on your
 shoulders.

MALCOLM
 I'm upset here! Okay, Pop? I've had
 an extremely shitty day!
 (a morose beat)
 Harvard. They rejected me.

He practically mumbles this, but his dad hears. Dr. Blevins
 thinks about it. He taps Malcolm's leg, getting him to move
 over... then sits on the couch beside his son.

MALCOLM
 Shoulda had more extracurriculars.
 A research project... something.

The Doctor slaps a hand on Malcolm's shoulder, massaging it.
 It's his way of saying "it's alright."

DR. BLEVINS
 Hell, I never got into Harvard.

MALCOLM
You didn't get into Harvard 'cause
 you were black.

DR. BLEVINS
 Well damn, that makes me feel better.

MALCOLM
 I'm just saying, alright? I'm not
 sure which is worse.

DR. BLEVINS
 I'm sure as hell sure. Look, forget
 Harvard. I say you've got some
 wonderful options. UVA, MCV...

Malcolm shakes his head. He's got his heart set.

MALCOLM
 Harvard. Next year. Harvard gives
 you two shots.

The Doctor opens his mouth, about to argue... then sees his son's determination and thinks better of it. Changing the subject, he jumps to his feet, getting angry all over again.

DR. BLEVINS
 Jeopardizing transplant organs!
 Goddamn redneck BASTARDS! --
 (waves at his son)
 Stand up here. C'mon, get up.

The Doc strikes a Joe Louis pose, fists out in front of him.

DR. BLEVINS
 Get up. I wanna see your stance.

MALCOLM
 You are not serious.

Malcolm lies down again. His dad dances, throwing punches.

DR. BLEVINS
 Look here -- feint with your left,
 then BIP! Nail 'em up under the
 septum, underneath the anterior
 ethmoidal nerve -- hurts like hell
 and bleeds like crazy. Just BIP!

MALCOLM
 Eyeballs were rolling in the sewer!
 I know how to punch, Pop!

A KNOCK sounds at the office door.

DR. BLEVINS
 BIP! Septum. Just like that.
 (calls out)
 Come in --

Now enters... RODEO BOB. He wears a white lab coat with a photo ID that says "Rodeo Bob -- Hospital Volunteer Staff." He smiles to father and son, friendly as can be.

RODEO BOB
 Ekskuzo. Just need your John
 Hancock.

Dr. Blevins studies Bob's clipboard. Meanwhile, Malcolm lies on the couch, staring up at the ceiling and brooding.

RODEO BOB
So, Dr. Blevins. You give any more
thought to the robots?

DR. BLEVINS
(half-listening)
The, uh... the robots. Refresh me on
that.

RODEO BOB
Surgical robots..? Nano-scale..?
They crawl into a given orifice and
do surgery from the inside? I'm
telling you, place your orders now.

Lying here listening to Bob (but not seeing him), Malcolm
frowns -- *what?* Dr. Blevins suppresses a smile. He signs
Bob's clipboard, hands it back to him.

DR. BLEVINS
Sounds pretty snazzy, Bob. What year
is that coming?

RODEO BOB
2038. It's gonna be a major step up
out of the darkness for you medical
practitioners. No offense.

DR. BLEVINS
Uhhh, yeah. None taken.

Malcolm sits up to get a look at this weird dude. Bob smiles
at him. Gives a polite little nod-slash-heel click.

RODEO BOB
Saluton. Rodeo Bob.

DR. BLEVINS
Bob, this is my son Malcolm. He's
home from Northwestern -- he'll be
helping out this summer.

We CREEP IN on Malcolm -- on the slow-dawning REALIZATION that
now spreads across his face. *Holy SHIT. It CAN'T be!*

DR. BLEVINS
(off Malcolm's silence)
He does know how to talk, I think.

RODEO BOB
Glad to have you aboard, Malcolm.

Innocent and unaware, Bob gives a wave and exits, closing the door behind him. Dr. Blevins grins big.

DR. BLEVINS

Wait till you hear about this one --

-- But Malcolm is on his feet and OUT THE DOOR.

29 INT. HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

29

Rodeo Bob walks the hall, humming the theme from "Star Trek." He's at peace with diversity. Black people? Gay guys? Mexicans? He's comfortable with them all.

RODEO BOB

(greeting folks he passes)

Saluton! My man! Stay away from the candy machine, DeShawn -- the artificial pancreas doesn't get invented for seventeen more years!

Behind him, Malcolm slams through set after set of swinging doors, keeping Bob in sight ahead. He's rising to a boil.

30 INT. HOSPITAL - LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

30

"Free Cholesterol Screening," it says on the sign. A couple dozen older LOCALS wait in a line that terminates at a row of folding tables. Two or three BLACK WOMEN, hospital volunteers like Rodeo Bob, draw blood samples. Bob takes his place alongside them, snapping on a fresh pair of nitrile gloves.

RODEO BOB

Miss me, Ladies?

They did -- these folks love the guy. All except for Malcolm, who cuts to the head of the line. He stands glaring at Rodeo Bob, momentarily frozen in fury.

RODEO BOB

I'm sorry, I believe these people were ahead of you.

(smiles; wags his finger)

Nobody likes a line-jumper!

BAM! -- Malcolm DECKS Bob, who hits the floor like a sack of manure. The Volunteer Ladies squeal and spring to his aid. Malcolm clutches his bruised knuckles and sees that people are all glaring at him like he's the world's biggest asshole.

Dr. Blevins steps into this aftermath, mouth agape.

DR. BLEVINS
The hell's wrong with you, boy?! --

31 INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - NIGHT - LATER

31

Rodeo Bob sits with his legs dangling off an ER table, holding a cold pack to his eye. A NURSE and a few of the Volunteer Ladies hover around, solicitously tending to him.

We TRACK past a couple of privacy curtains until we come to another treatment bay. Inside it, Malcolm ices his knuckles.

MALCOLM
Look, I was there, alright?! Plain
as day! He's one of the motherfff--
(he gets shushed)
That bastard flipped my car!

He's yelling at his dad and two younger SURGEONS, one black and one white. Dr. Blevins shushes his son -- *keep it down!*

DR. BLEVINS
We're not arguing what you saw.
We're just saying, at that particular
time? It wasn't him.

A beat. Malcolm frowns and shakes his head.

MALCOLM
What? --

DR. BLEVINS
Dissociative identity disorder.
During the day, he's a guy named Earl
Thornton. At night, he's a whole
other guy named Rodeo Bob.

WHITE SURGEON
One's a scumbag, and one's a saint.

DR. BLEVINS
As it so happens, you decked the one
that has the better chance of winning
the Nobel Peace Prize. Nice going.

Malcolm glares at his dad.

BLACK SURGEON
Look, look. Back up. The one you
punched? Now, he lives in the
future. See, Rodeo Bob thinks he
lives in the year 2525 --

WHITE SURGEON

-- Like the song, right?
 (demonstrates; singing)
In the ye-ear twenty-five twenty-five...

BLACK SURGEON

Yeah, yeah. On some kinda moon base. Nobody's sure exactly why. But he makes up all this crazy history that hasn't happened yet. Inventions and whatnot. And he speaks Esperanto.

MALCOLM

Esperanto.

DR. BLEVINS

Esperanto -- the universal language. Created to promote brotherhood and understanding.

MALCOLM

Brotherhood. On the moon base.

WHITE SURGEON

Apparently, everybody in the future speaks Esperanto. Anyway, Bob is like... this dude loves everybody. Big, big heart.

Dr. Blevins and the other surgeon both nod, in full agreement.

BLACK SURGEON

Oh, absolutely -- wonderful guy.

DR. BLEVINS

The best.
 (thinks about it)
 A bit condescending at times.

BLACK SURGEON

Little bit. Kind of a know-it-all.

WHITE SURGEON

(nodding)
 Mostly, I chalk that up to him being from the future.

Malcolm just stares at them like they're insane. His dad clears his throat and continues.

DR. BLEVINS

Anyway -- it's all because of the accident, see?

(a beat)

Couple years back, Earl Thornton -- that's the other guy, the original personality? Couple years back, Earl Thornton accidentally injured his little girl. Afterwards, Rodeo Bob started to appear.

BLACK SURGEON

Every night once the sun goes down. Bob is like... sublimated guilt.

WHITE SURGEON

Heavy psychological stuff.

DR. BLEVINS

You get it now? These are two different people. They share the same body, but they're different.

Malcolm is highly dubious.

MALCOLM

Dissociative identity disorder. Otherwise known as multiple personalities.

DR. BLEVINS

Exactly. You got it.

MALCOLM

Pop, multiple personality disorder has been completely discredited. There's not one legitimate therapist who believes it actually exists.

DR. BLEVINS

(to the other surgeons)

Damn. Four semesters of pre-med and the boy knows everything.

MALCOLM

I'm just saying, alright? It's a fairy tale!

DR. BLEVINS

How about you go tell that to Bob? 'Cause believe me... he's living it.

Malcolm can't help but take his father at his word. He sits here, trying to wrap his mind around this story.

DR. BLEVINS

Now, knowing what you now know...
are you gonna do the right thing?

Malcolm glances up -- notices the three surgeons staring at him expectantly. He snorts.

MALCOLM

Whoa, hold up. You can't seriously expect me to apologize!

DR. BLEVINS

Not to Earl Thornton, that racist prick. But to Rodeo Bob..?

BLACK SURGEON

(nodding; half to himself)
Great guy. I'm telling you...

Malcolm shakes his head -- *unbelievable*. Still, after thinking about it some more, curiosity gets the better of him. He drops down off the exam table. He stalks past the rows of privacy curtains, grumbling to himself.

He grabs the last curtain and yanks it aside. The steel table is EMPTY. Rodeo Bob has left the building.

Despite himself, Malcolm's interest is piqued. Off him:

32 EXT. EARL'S HOUSE - NIGHT 32

A ten year-old Chevy beater pulls into the drive. Rodeo Bob climbs out, carrying a dozen ROSES. The full moon glows.

33 INT. EARL'S HOUSE - DELILAH'S BEDROOM - NIGHT 33

A vertical slash of light cuts the darkness, widening to illuminate Delilah asleep in her little bed.

Rodeo Bob's shadow lies across the bedroom floor, motionless. Holly's shadow joins his in the doorway, hugging him tight until their two shadows reduce into one.

34 INT. EARL'S HOUSE - DEN - NIGHT 34

Holly's hands place the roses in a vase on the coffee table. She sits down into frame, smiling at them fondly.

Bob lifts a houseplant to reveal a hidden BARRY WHITE CD.

A Post-It Note is stuck to the front of the stereo -- it says "UNARTHORIZED HANDS KEEP OFF!!!! NOBODY TOUCH THIS BUT ME!!!! SIGNED EARL THORNTON!!" Rodeo Bob pulls it off and sticks it to the wall, then loads Barry White in the CD player.

Rodeo Bob claps his hands once. Behind him, Holly hurriedly clicks the remote control, making the CD player slide closed. Bob nods, satisfied -- never realizing Holly was responsible.

Barry White rumbles songs of seduction as Bob joins Holly on the sofa. Holly gently touches Bob's impressive BLACK EYE.

HOLLY

So? You gonna tell me about it?

RODEO BOB

Ask your Neanderthal husband.
Judging by what I hear of his racial
views, he probably had it coming.

Holly's eyes snap wide and angry.

HOLLY

A nigger did that?! --

The sad discomfort which shows in Bob's face makes Holly instantly regret saying it.

RODEO BOB

There's no room for that in the
future, Belulino.

Holly nods, chastened.

RODEO BOB

(a beat; softly)
You can get there. Keep trying.

She scratches at her neck, ashamed. Bob changes the subject.

RODEO BOB

So. What would you like to hear
about tonight?
(snaps his fingers)
I know -- our system of government.
It's based on bedrock principles of
democracy, much like your
"Constitution." However, four
hundred years ago we did away with
the idea of a bicameral legislature
and instead --

Holly suddenly lunges at Bob, KISSING him hard. Shutting him up. As they recline out of frame, Holly on top...

... Rodeo Bob reaches up into frame and CLAPS his hands twice. This time, all by itself, a LAMP turns off. All is dark.

35 EXT. EARL'S HOUSE - NIGHT 35

Hours later. Crickets CHIRP. The moon has sunk to the horizon. One lone LIGHT burns in a far window of the house.

36 INT. EARL'S HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT 36

Holly sits naked on the edge of the bed, a notepad balanced on her crossed knees. She's writing something over and over. Rodeo Bob lies beside her with his hands behind his head, smiling up at the ceiling in post-coital satisfaction.

RODEO BOB

Just wish I could somehow figure out
a way to bring you back The Pill.

Holly glances back at him. Raises an eyebrow.

HOLLY

Oh, I've definitely got The Pill.
It's invented.

RODEO BOB

No, not that Pill. A different Pill.
A mind-reading pill. You swallow it?
It allows you to read people's minds.

HOLLY

(faint smile)
I can probably do without that.

RODEO BOB

Actually, I was thinking more for
Delilah.

Holly turns to face him. He shrugs.

RODEO BOB

Once you take it, you don't need to
hear. You just read minds along with
everybody else.

(troubled)

I can't ever seem to figure out how
to bring it back here with me.

Holly smiles at him, bittersweet... then resumes writing.

CLOSE ON Holly's notepad -- covering the page in blue felt-tip are the tiny initials "E.T." Holly practices them carefully.

HOLLY

You ready?

He nods. She sets her pad aside and peels the sheet off him.

RODEO BOB

Holly?

(she pauses)

This savage, backward, medieval world of yours... thank you for making it a little more tolerable.

Holly smirks.

HOLLY

"No offense."

RODEO BOB

Yeah, of course. No offense.

HOLLY

You're welcome.

(then, under her breath)

Right back at you, Bob.

Holly uncaps her felt-tipped marker and gets down to business.

RODEO BOB

Ow, ow, ow. Pressing too hard.

37 EXT. EARL'S HOUSE - BACKYARD - SUNRISE 37

The countryside is silent. The very edge of the sun's disk creeps over the horizon. In slight TIME-LAPSE, dawn's early light rises like thermometer mercury up the trunks of trees.

38 INT. EARL'S HOUSE - DEN - SUNRISE 38

Sun sneaks in underneath the curtains. It slides across the floor of this darkened room, stealing toward Rodeo Bob, who is fast asleep on the sofa.

Bob sleeps peacefully, cuddled solo under a decorative blanket embroidered with a hunting dog. But now, as the sunlight finally reaches him...

... A troubled look crosses his face. His expression turns pinched and frowning. In other words, he CHANGES.

EARL awakens. He sits up to glance at his surroundings, then drops his head back on the pillow. Oy.

His hearing aid lies nearby on the coffee table. He hooks it behind his ear, then throws off his blanket and rises.

Glancing down at his boxers, Earl works up his nerve... then pulls open his waistband. We TILT UP to his face as he checks inside his shorts. Finding what he's looking for...

... He shuts his eyes, breathing a big sigh of relief.

39 INT. EARL'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - MORNING

39

CLOSE ON a toothbrush marked "EARL." A hand grabs it.

Sleepy and yawning, Earl has dressed: blue Carhartt pants and a work shirt with his first name stitched on the breast patch. He loads his brush with Crest and scrubs his teeth. A second toothbrush, hanging in its holder, is marked "RODEO BOB."

Earl "accidentally" backhands it right into the TOILET.

EARL

Whoops.

Snickering to himself, he fishes it out of the bowl and hangs it back up, dripping. This makes him feel very clever.

A quick grin to himself in the mirror -- then a double-take as he finally notices his new BLACK EYE.

EARL

What the FFFF --

40 INT. EARL'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

40

The DOZEN ROSES are on the kitchen table. Delilah sits in her booster seat eating oatmeal. Holly stands at the stove frying bacon, half-asleep.

Earl storms into the kitchen. Pointing at his black eye:

EARL

How the hell did THIS happen?!

Holly startles -- her spatula hits the floor. She bends to pick it up, steeling herself for another long day with Earl.

HOLLY
Bob walked into a door.

Earl calms down some. He snorts and shakes his head.

EARL
Dumbass. Hope it hurt.

He fishes a strip of bacon from the skillet and blows it cool.

HOLLY
Just gimme two minutes, Earl.

EARL
Nah, I'm running late.
(quietly hopeful)
Miss me last night?

Holly nods, poking at the skillet. She never looks up. Delilah RAPS the table, getting their attention. The little girl signs something to her mother, who nods and turns away.

EARL
What?

HOLLY
She's asking for more milk.

Holly opens the fridge, getting it. Meanwhile, Earl notices the roses on the table.

HOLLY
You know Earl, sign language isn't that tough. I could teach you some right now if you want.

Holly looks up at Earl for an answer. She notices him staring at her roses.

EARL
Where'd those come from?

HOLLY
I bought them.
(prompted by his silence)
Food Lion had 'em on sale. We were running low on paper towels.
(more wary silence)
Wanna see the receipt?

No response. Earl eats more bacon from the skillet. Eager to change the subject, Holly sits down across from Delilah.

HOLLY

Earl, look here. This is how you say
 "I'll see you later, Delilah."
 (signing to the girl)
 "I will... see... YOU..."

EARL

-- Yeah, yeah. A wave says the same
 thing, right?

He waves to Delilah, gives Holly a quick buss on the cheek,
 then he's out the door and gone. Delilah drinks her milk, not
 missing him. Holly sits and stews.

41 EXT. EARL'S HOUSE - MORNING 41

CLOSE ON a trash can -- the BLACK LAWN JOCKEY sticks up out of
 it, jammed in there upside-down. Hands tug it free.

WIDE on the front yard. Here comes Earl, marching into view
 around the side of the house with the lawn jockey under his
 arm. Cursing Rodeo Bob under his breath, he jams it back into
 the ground in its original spot.

The lawn jockey rattles on its stake like a metronome. Earl
 climbs in his beater and backs out of the gravel driveway.

42 EXT. COUNTY LANDFILL - DAY 42

Great, sloping dunes of GARBAGE stretch far as the eye can
 see. Hundreds of seagulls circle overhead. In the distance,
 trash trucks take turns dumping their loads.

A huge yellow bulldozer with stud wheels rumbles into frame.
 Earl is in the operator's seat.

An old cassette player is tied to a roll bar with baling wire.
 Earl clicks it on and "El Paso" by Marty Robbins cranks up
 loud. Earl lowers the dozer's steel blade and goes to work.

Marty and Earl sing a duet as the bulldozer mixes up junked
 appliances and eggshells and coffee grounds into a stinking
 goulash. The stud wheels pop Hefty bags like bubble wrap,
 bursting them open with a dusty belch. Black smoke whistles
 out of the clanging exhaust flap.

Earl shoves his load over the edge of a gully. Tons of
 garbage rolls down the hillside, raising a cloud of flies and
 dust. He watches it tumble.

His singing trails off as he notices something. Far below, a bouquet of long-dead, wilted ROSES stands out amidst the darker refuse. Earl stares at it a long moment before he yanks the transmission into reverse and roars out of frame.

43 EXT. EARL'S HOUSE - DAY

43

Viewed from the road, all is quiet. The only thing moving is a fan sprayer, slowly arcing back and forth in the front yard.

A banged-up brown 280Z motors into frame, pulling to a stop. Here alone, Malcolm stares out his window at Earl's house.

Malcolm snorts and shakes his head. He yanks the gearshift into first and pulls away. The frame is empty for a beat.

The Datsun reverses back into frame, Malcolm having changed his mind yet again. There's a styrofoam cooler beside him -- another organ for transplant. Malcolm checks the cooler's thermometer and glances at his watch. Girding his loins, he climbs out of the car and strides toward Earl's house.

He pauses to frown at the lawn jockey, but keeps going.

44 INT. EARL'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

44

The doorbell CHIMES and a special LIGHT blinks on and off. Delilah scampers into the living room and stands on tiptoes, peeking out the bay window. Holly walks to the front door and peers through the spyhole.

Holly's spyhole POV -- seen through this fisheye lens, Malcolm looks even bigger and blacker. He glances back at his car.

Trying not to sound nervous, Holly calls through the door.

HOLLY

What do you want?

INTERCUT WITH:

45 EXT. EARL'S HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - CONTINUOUS

45

Malcolm notices Delilah staring at him from the corner of the bay window. He gives her a little wave.

MALCOLM

Ma'am, my name is Malcolm Blevins.
I'm uh... I'm studying medicine...
I mean, I intend to, and uh --

HOLLY (O.S.)
 (muffled)
 -- What?

MALCOLM
 Studying medicine. The human brain,
 specifically. I'm thinking.
 Neuropathology or psychiatry or --

HOLLY (O.S.)
 (muffled)
 -- I can't hear you! You say you're
 a psychiatrist?

Malcolm thinks about it. Ah, what the hell?

MALCOLM
Yes. Exactly. Pretty much.
 (a beat)
 I'm very interested in your husband.

HOLLY (O.S.)
 Which one?

MALCOLM
 (smiles at this)
Both.

Delilah's face is pressed to the window glass so that her
 breath leaves a fog spot. She pulls her eyelids back and
 makes a funny face at Malcolm.

Holly frowns and motions Delilah to get away from the window.
 The little girl giggles and keeps making faces.

HOLLY
 Look, we've seen enough psychiatrists
 to screw up a lightbulb -- or however
 yall's joke goes. In the first
 place, you people think what he's got
 ain't even a real condition!

MALCOLM
 Uh. Yeah. I know.

HOLLY
 Like he's making it up! Or like,
 "the power of suggestion," they say!
 Iagenic something or other.

MALCOLM
 "Iatrogenic." Therapist-induced.

HOLLY

I'm here to tell you, no therapist ever suggested to Earl that he lives part-time on the moon! I definitely think I'd have remembered that one!

(quieting down now)

He needs help.

Malcolm studies his shoes, thinking fast.

MALCOLM

Then let me try and help him.

He winces -- he truly has no idea how he's going to do that. Still, he keeps on winging it.

MALCOLM

Free of charge.

(off her silence)

Alright, it's a longshot. But maybe we can reduce your husband's two personalities into a single dominant.

HOLLY

(a beat; quiet)

Which one would be left?

MALCOLM

Ma'am?

Holly rubs a spot on the door with her thumb. She's troubled.

HOLLY

I'm sorry, but my husband Earl won't give you the time of day. You're...

(gingerly)

You're a black person, and Earl's got this little... idiosyncrasy.

MALCOLM

Ohhh, yeah. I'm familiar with it.

(a beat)

But I'd be willing to try.

There's something about the way he says this. It causes a realization to dawn on Holly.

HOLLY

Wait. YOU'RE the one that punched Rodeo Bob!

Oh, shit -- Malcolm scratches at his eyebrow.

MALCOLM

Uh. Yeah, that was me. I had good reason, if you'd care to hear it.

HOLLY

We're not interested! Go away!

MALCOLM

Mrs. Thornton...

HOLLY

Go -- away!

Malcolm sighs, disappointed. He turns to leave, glancing back at Delilah as he descends the front steps. She waves to him.

He pauses. Shooting a glance at the spyhole (and guessing that Holly is watching), he SIGNS to Delilah.

Delilah's eyes light up and she SIGNS a flurry right back at him. Malcolm nods, unsure. He waves goodbye and goes.

In the living room, Holly leans back from the spyhole. Surprised, she turns to Delilah and repeats Malcolm's SIGN to her. SUBTITLED, we read "Pretty... little... girl?"

Delilah beams and nods. Despite herself, Holly is intrigued.

46 INT. DATSUN 280Z - DAY

46

"Sign Language For Dummies" is the BOOK we notice in the back seat. Malcolm climbs behind the wheel and starts the engine. *Well, so much for that,* he's thinking.

The Datsun starts rolling. Earl's house slides out of view and the house next door comes into frame. Noticing something, Malcolm stops the car.

Malcolm's POV -- the house next door has a "FOR SALE OR RENT" sign on the lawn. Malcolm considers. Under his breath:

MALCOLM

Howdy, white folks...

Off Malcolm, with his sly grin and a big idea:

47 EXT. COUNTY LANDFILL - DAY

47

The black Mercedes is parked on a knoll overlooking acres of refuse. A bag of fast food rests on the sunroof. Boots leans against his car, waiting. He wears an expensive suit.

Earl's bulldozer idles in the distance. Earl, in rubber waders, slogs through knee-deep garbage as he makes his way toward lunch. Tripping over a child's rocking chair, he curses and stomps it flat.

BOOTS

Glad to have you back, Bubba!

Earl STOMPS once more, hard. He crests the knoll, sweating.

EARL

I tell you what...

The two men shake hands happy enough to make it seem like kissing. Boots' mouth falls open in surprise.

BOOTS

'Hell happened to your eye?!

Earl shakes his head in disgust as he peels off his waders.

48

INT. MERCEDES - DAY - LATER

48

Boots and Earl sit in air-conditioned comfort, noisily eating fast food burgers and fries. Country music plays softly. With the dump filling their windshield from pillar to pillar, it seems like the whole world is nothing but garbage.

Seagulls swoop around the Mercedes, occasionally landing on the hood. Boots taps the HORN and they take off again.

BOOTS

I dunno, Bubba. Every time you off and change into that rodeo faggot, it's like I don't know whether to shit or wind my watch.

EARL

I keep telling you -- kick his ass.

BOOTS

I-I... I'm not thinking that's the best solution, really. I just...

I worry, you know?

(swallow)

What if alla sudden one day, you don't change back?

Earl shakes his head -- *no way*. Both men eat in grim silence, not looking at one another.

Boots taps his horn at another gull. Earl ponders something.

EARL
 What kinda woman goes and buys
 herself flowers?

BOOTS
 Whatcha mean?

EARL
 I dunno. Woman buying roses for
 herself. That make sense to you?

Boots sips his milkshake, his eyebrows furrowed.

BOOTS
 Still have your initials this
 morning?

EARL
 (annoyed)
 Dammit -- yeah.

Boots shrugs. He chews his french fries with a look of deep concentration on his face. Earl fiddles with his hearing aid.

BOOTS
 Get Holly a ice cream machine.

Not hearing, Earl stares through the sunroof, chewing his lip.

EARL
 She always... she always got a
 headache. You know?
 (bashful)
 I uh... I show some interest, but she
 alla time got this headache. I mean,
 I know you ain't s'posed to make love
 while the sun is shining, but what
 choice do I got?

Boots blushes a little. Toots his horn at a gull.

BOOTS
 Get Holly a ice cream machine. I got
 one of them computerized, Eye-tie
 deals where all you gotta do is pour
 the ingredients and hit the go
 button? Makes good ice cream, and
 shoooot, I tell you what -- speaking
 personally? Patsy goes nuts anytime
 I buy her a new appliance.
 (a beat)
 Hell, boy -- let's go right now.

Earl looks uncertain. Boots dangles the car keys.

BOOTS
I'll even let you drive.

Earl cocks his head and grins.

49 EXT. COUNTY LANDFILL - DAY 49

CLOSE ON the rear plate of the Mercedes -- it says "REBLWYR." The tires SQUEAL as the car pulls a sharp U-turn and guns it out of frame, scattering seagulls.

50 INT. EARL'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - AFTERNOON 50

CLOSE ON a fancy new ICE CREAM MAKER. The top is see-through glass. Earl, Boots, Patsy and Holly stand around it, watching vanilla ice cream get mixed and churned. Earl is mesmerized.

EARL
Lookit that. It's really going to town.

BOOTS
Them Eye-ties. Can't field a decent army and their music ain't nothing but a buncha fat people caterwauling... but goddamn, them lil' dago bastards know their food.

EARL
(nods; respectful)
I do enjoy "The Olive Garden."

Earl is cleaned up from work, dressed casually. Regarding her new ice cream machine, Holly pats his arm and smiles.

HOLLY
Thank you, Earl. It's real nice.

PATSY
It sure is.
(to Holly, re: Earl)
I'd say he's a keeper.

Earl beams and gives Holly a little hug and a peck on the lips. She stiffens ever so slightly, but he doesn't notice.

Boots looks to Patsy -- who nods and gives him the go-ahead. Boots clears his throat. He's about to say something momentous, and he's excited.

BOOTS

Well, now... we got a present for y'all, too. Patsy and I. Kinda a surprise-kinda thing. We been talking it through, and uh...

(off their silence)

We're gonna pay for Delilah's surgery. Get her back her hearing.

Holly blinks. She can't believe her ears. Boots nods.

BOOTS

How-you-call-it? The coke --

HOLLY

-- Cochlear implant. Oh my God. Boots... Patsy..? Oh my God!

Holly is tearing up. We've never seen her ecstatic before. Not even close -- and it brings big smiles to Boots' and Patsy's faces as one by one, she hugs them both tight enough to squeeze the air out of them. Patsy laughs.

PATSY

We can't have our lil' goddaughter a deaf-mute, now can we? Ain't no future in that!

HOLLY

Oh, this is just so, so very generous of you! Earl? Isn't it generous?

Boots' grin lowers a notch as he notices Earl doesn't look all that thrilled. Earl shrugs, nods.

EARL

Shit, yeah. That's real money.

In fact, Earl is a little pissed that his thunder has just been stolen. While Holly continues to glow with happiness, hugging Boots a second time, Earl turns his attention back to the ice cream machine, grinding away atop the counter.

EARL

(to no one in particular)

Well, now how 'bout that? You can make frozen yogurt.

Off Earl, engrossed in reading the instruction manual:

51 EXT. EARL'S NEIGHBORHOOD - AFTERNOON 51

The sun sinks. Boots' Mercedes is parked in Earl's driveway. A mere one door down from the Thornton residence...

... There's that "FOR SALE OR RENT" sign in the yard of the house next door. Only now, a woman's hands WAGGLE IT LOOSE.

This is a LADY REALTOR in a gold blazer. Hugging the uprooted sale sign, she smiles to somebody just out of frame.

REALTOR

You're gonna love it here.

52 EXT. EARL'S HOUSE - SIDE YARD - AFTERNOON 52

Out back, a patio table is set for dining *al fresco*. Carrying a steaming casserole in her oven-mitted hands, Patsy backs out the screen door. She calls into the kitchen.

PATSY

There's a real estate car next door.
Maybe you got you some new neighbors.

HOLLY (O.S.)

Oh yeah?

Patsy carefully heads for the patio table, glancing once more at the neighboring house. We PUSH IN on her as her head snaps back around in a horrified double-take.

CLOSE ON the tuna casserole as it falls in slow-motion, EXPLODING on the grass like the 1812 Overture.

Patsy's POV -- in the overgrown front yard next door, the lady Realtor shakes hands with Malcolm. Large... black... MALCOLM.

Patsy stands frozen. Holly exits the screen door and slowly joins her, neither woman taking their eyes off Malcolm. Holly's got a secret -- she knows who this man is.

Across the way, Malcolm signs some paperwork, then accepts his house keys from the Realtor. Carrying her "FOR SALE OR RENT" sign, the lady heads for her car.

Holly glances from Malcolm to her own house behind her. Her look draws our camera to her kitchen window... through which Earl and Boots STARE bug-eyed.

53 INT. EARL'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS 53

Boots and Earl crowd side-by-side on tiptoes, leaning way over the sink to stare out the window. Flabbergasted silence.

EARL

Oh God, please let him be the mover.

54 EXT. MALCOLM'S HOUSE - FRONT YARD - CONTINUOUS 54

Malcolm waves as the Realtor drives off. His banged-up Datsun is parked in the driveway. Taking his time, he turns to face the folks next door. He watches them as they watch him.

INTERCUT WITH:

55 INT. EARL'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS 55

A queasy look of recognition crosses Earl's face. He turns away from the window.

EARL

Shit. He's the one from yesterday.

Boots nods, still staring. He has no idea what to do.

Malcolm holds eye-contact. Doesn't blink. Not challenging, but not intimidated, either. He gives them a little nod. Guardedly friendly.

Off Malcolm, standing in his new front yard... tossing and catching, tossing and catching his house keys:

DISSOLVE TO:

56 EXT. EARL'S HOUSE - BACKYARD - LATE AFTERNOON 56

An hour later. The SUN blares through a grate of pine trees.

Earl, Holly, Boots and Patsy sit at their outdoor table, picking at their food. Their dinners remain largely uneaten. Although Malcolm is no longer in sight, all four of them eye his house as if they half expect it to blow up.

The only thing moving is Delilah -- she drives around and around the foursome in a little pink, battery-powered monster truck. She zips in and out of frame, her motor whining.

The sound of tires on gravel. The foursome's attention shifts to a shiny MERCEDES which pulls into Malcolm's driveway. Though it's a different color, it's pretty much the same model as the sedan which belongs to Boots.

And DR. BLEVINS is driving it. For Boots, seeing a black man behind the wheel of his car takes matters from bad to worse.

BOOTS
S-Class. He's a drug dealer!

Dr. Blevins climbs out, already unhappy to be here -- and more so now that he sees Boots and Earl giving him the stink-eye. Giving as good as he gets, he stares right back at them, then strides for Malcolm's front door.

57 INT. MALCOLM'S HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

57

The place is dusty and bare. A couple of cardboard boxes of essentials are on the floor, as is a rolled-up sleeping bag.

There's no furniture -- instead, Dr. Blevins and Malcolm squat on plastic milk crates, their knees nearly level with their chins. Father and son stare at each other. Eventually...

DR. BLEVINS
So. You rented a house.

Malcolm nods. More silence.

DR. BLEVINS
Next to the Southside chapter of the
Ku Klux Klan.

Malcolm shrugs. Nods.

DR. BLEVINS
On purpose.

Malcolm sighs. Waits for it.

DR. BLEVINS
Boy, is there something seriously
wrong with you? 'Cause this ain't
your typical low-grade stupid.

MALCOLM
Pop, this guy next door... he sounds
like some kinda psychological marvel.
(off his Dad's reaction)
Nah, c'mon -- he's fascinating. You
as much as said so yourself.

DR. BLEVINS

Yeah, you know what? All kinds of people in this world are fascinating. Push come to shove? Shit, Hitler and Charles Manson hold my interest pretty well -- I'll give you that. But you don't see me moving next door to 'em! Don't see me go "Hey Adolf! Can I borrow your lawnmower?"

MALCOLM

You let this man work at your hospital!

DR. BLEVINS

I let the GOOD one work at my hospital! The nasty one, that one over there now? You don't catch me going near that son of a bitch!

MALCOLM

Look... there's an opportunity here.

DR. BLEVINS

Hell yes there's an opportunity here. Opportunity to get your ass kicked. Big opportunity.

MALCOLM

There's a research opportunity.

(leaning closer)

A research project. One I create for myself. Dissociative identity disorder, multiple personalities -- that right there's a page-turner. And a black man studying a white racist? That's one hell of a hook. If I'm on the admissions board and that one comes across my desk... well, shit.

His voice is low, but passionate. He can't help but grin.

DR. BLEVINS

All this. This is about you getting into Harvard Med.

Malcolm nods, his smile slowly fading.

MALCOLM

I only get one more shot at it. One more, then I'm done. Pop...

Dr. Blevins can see how very important this is to his son.

Malcolm looks past his dad. Noticing something, he glances at his watch, then rises and crosses to the window. It's bare -- no curtains. Visible through it, the SKY is red and gold.

MALCOLM

Sun sets in four minutes.

They both know what this means.

58

EXT. EARL'S HOUSE - BACKYARD - SUNSET

58

CLOSE ON the sun. It's up, but sinking fast.

BOOTS

Fight it, Earl! Fight it, boy!

Boots stands behind Earl, who is seated in his patio chair. Like a coach, Boots grips him by the shoulders.

EARL

I ain't going. I ain't going! --

Earl grabs his FORK and grinds it into his leg, hoping the pain will distract him.

HOLLY

For God's sake, Earl. Stop that!

BOOTS

Nah, Bubba, that's the spirit!
Hold the line! --

Holly sighs into her dinner plate, secretly counting the seconds until Rodeo Bob arrives. She looks up, notices Patsy watching her closely.

All eyes go to the sound of a SCREEN DOOR opening. It's Malcolm stepping out of his new house, eager to witness Earl's impending transformation. Dr. Blevins reluctantly joins him.

MALCOLM

Hi.

(a beat)

How y'all doing?

No response from the white folks. His hands in his pockets, Dr. Blevins shakes his head to himself... *stupid, pointless...* he's thinking as he stubs his heel at the dirt.

PATSY

(under her breath)

Well, they look like a couple of
black General Burnside's, don't they?
Them big lambchop whiskers...

Earl glares at these two men -- momentarily forgetting everything but his knee-jerk hatred of them. However, Delilah, sitting at the table sipping juice through a crazy straw, sees Malcolm and brightens. She SIGNS to him.

EARL

Girl. Girl, stop it.

Earl brusquely pats at his daughter, getting her attention. Delilah looks between her father and Malcolm, confused.

Malcolm stares at Earl a moment... then SIGNS back to Delilah: "pretty little girl." Unseen by the others, Holly silently mouths these words to herself.

Malcolm and Delilah both smile. Earl, Boots and Patsy look to one another -- *what the hell was THAT?!*

Before they know it, Delilah is out of her chair and into her little pink monster truck, driving it across the yard toward Malcolm. Earl jumps to his feet, chasing after her.

EARL

Dammit! DELILAH! --

Boots follows. Earl manages to grab the truck's roll bar, bringing it to a halt a few feet from the Blevinses. Delilah keeps the pedal down, chewing up the grass with her tires.

EARL

I got some sign language for BOTH
y'all!

He FLIPS OFF Malcolm and the Doctor. Dr. Blevins scowls and edges forward, but Malcolm puts up a hand to stop him.

HOLLY

Earl, c'mon back here, would you
please? Don't start nothing!

MALCOLM

Let's just everybody stay friendly,
alright? Neighbor?

EARL

Kiss my white ass "*neighbor.*" Ain't
no neighbor of mine, Kunta Kinte --

DR. BLEVINS

-- Whoa!

EARL

-- With your jungle high-signs. I dunno what you just told that girl, but I don't like it!

Malcolm is offended, of course... but more than that, he's fascinated. He stares at Earl as he would an autopsied corpse, or a petri dish brimming with virulent scum -- it's grotesque, but it's science. Much can be learned from it.

Dirt spins onto Earl's shoes as he struggles to drag Delilah's little truck backward towards his house. Boots strides up and FLIPS OFF the black men with both hands.

BOOTS

That goes double for me.

(as Dr. Blevins advances)

Uh-UH! Step one foot on this property, that's trespassing! I know the judge, I know the sheriff, I'll have both y'all arrested inside of fifteen minutes! I'll swear out a civil complaint!

Way in the b.g., Patsy calls out, concerned for her husband.

PATSY

Boots, you come away from there!
They might have knives!

Malcolm frowns at Patsy -- knives?!

DR. BLEVINS

Psychological marvels. Uh-huh.

Boots stands his ground like the last true Confederate.

BOOTS

I am Jefferson Lighthorse LeBeau, Attorney--AT--Law! Probably ain't seen my TV commercial, as I don't advertise on your B.E.T. But rest assured, I will put you in a WORLD of legal hurt!

DR. BLEVINS

I'll put my foot in your ass.

BOOTS
 (backing off)
 Ah-HAH, and that there's a bodily
 THREAT! And I got WITNESSES! Earl!
 (looks behind him)
 Earl?! --

We ADJUST to reveal that behind him stands... not Earl, but
 RODEO BOB. Bob hoists a giggling Delilah and blows a FART
 NOISE on her belly -- paying no attention to anyone else.

Malcolm sees this. He's amazed by the sudden mood change.

Boots shoots a quick glance at the SUN -- catches the last
 thin SLIVER of it as it sinks out of sight below the horizon.

BOOTS
 Aw, son of a...

RODEO BOB
 Saluton.
 (noticing)
 Oh, hey. Dr. Blevins!

As much of a pleasant surprise as it is to see the Doctor, the
 sight of Malcolm brings Bob up short.

RODEO BOB
 ... Malcolm.

BOOTS
 (outraged)
 You KNOW them?! --

DR. BLEVINS
 Evening, Rodeo Bob.

BOOTS
 D-Don't you call him that! That
 ain't his name!

RODEO BOB
 Of course it's my name. C'mon
 already -- day, him; night, me --
 it's not that tricky.

Rodeo Bob looks from Boots to Malcolm and his dad, taking
 notice of the thick silence. A master of understatement:

RODEO BOB
 I'm sensing tension here.

BOOTS

Just stay outta this, alright?!
Go... contact the moon or something.

MALCOLM

I'm, uh... I'm sorry about last
night, Rodeo Bob.

BOOTS

Don't you egg him on, you sons of
bitches! This here is a sick man!

For the sake of the child that's present, Dr. Blevins stifles
his impulse to punch Boots in the nose. Instead:

DR. BLEVINS

He was a sick man not thirty seconds
ago. Seems to me he just got better.

BOOTS

Oh, well ah-hah-hah! We Are The
World! Let's all hold hands!
(turns to Malcolm)
Wait a minute. What'd you mean by
that? "Sorry about last night."
What's that mean?

Whoops. Silence. Holly steps in, desperately trying to keep
an already bad situation from getting worse.

HOLLY

Boots, Patsy, why don't we just...
go in the house, alright?

Ignoring her, Boots puts two and two together. Suddenly he
takes hold of Bob's chin, angling his face for a closer look
at Bob's fresh BLACK EYE.

BOOTS

He did that to you? --
(then, to Malcolm)
You did that?!

Considering Malcolm for a beat, Bob forgives and forgets.

RODEO BOB

Don't get a kink in your airhose,
muchacho. It's over and done with.

BOOTS

"Over and done with."

Boots stands here, eyes glowing. His jaw working. Seething.

BOOTS

Yeah, okay. We'll see about that.
 (turns to Holly)
 Thank you for dinner, it was
 delicious as always. Patsy and I
 gon' take our leave now... but I
 shall return.

Directed at Malcolm -- a not-so-veiled threat. Dr. Blevins
 doesn't like the sound of this.

Malcolm isn't even listening. All he can do is stare at Rodeo
 Bob-slash-Earl. The transformation he just witnessed is the
 damndest thing he's ever seen. He is hooked.

59 EXT. EARL'S HOUSE - FRONT YARD - TWILIGHT

59

Moments later, Boots goes flying across the spotty front lawn,
 half-dragging Patsy by the hand behind him.

PATSY

OWW! Dammit! Boo-oooots! --

BOOTS

(calling to Bob)
 I'll be back!

RODEO BOB

No hurry.

Rodeo Bob ambles across the yard after them. While Boots
 cranks his Mercedes and peels out of the driveway, Bob uproots
 the BLACK LAWN JOCKEY and carries it away, whistling.

Holly stands watching him, arms folded tight. As she glances
 to Delilah, it's clear that she's got even more to lose now.
 Worry lines crease her forehead.

CLOSE ANGLE: the lawn jockey gets chucked head-first into a
 gooey compost pile. Off this...

60 EXT. EARL'S HOUSE - BACKYARD - NIGHT

60

Hours later. The big, yellow FULL MOON dominates the sky.

Rodeo Bob sits alone on the back porch, stargazing.

Across the way, a yard light snaps on. Bob glances over as
 Malcolm steps out onto his own matching porch.

MALCOLM

Saluton.

Bob nods. Gives a noncommittal wave. He returns his attention to the heavens. Fresh out of Esperanto, Malcolm tries to get a conversation going.

MALCOLM

So. What's it like up there?

Rodeo Bob glances over. Malcolm points up at the MOON.

MALCOLM

I always wanted to go.

RODEO BOB

You wouldn't want to go now.

(elaborates)

There's no domes yet. They won't build the first one for another... hundred and forty-two years. Nothing up there now but rocks and dust.

MALCOLM

Huh.

Bob stares up at it.

RODEO BOB

I guess it does look kinda pristine.

Malcolm watches Bob while Bob watches the bright moon.

MALCOLM

Bob... can I ask you something?
Why do you visit us here?

Bob sighs a little, shakes his head -- he doesn't know.

RODEO BOB

That is the question...

MALCOLM

(pointing heavenward)

That's an awfully long trip to make every single night. You don't know why you do it?

RODEO BOB

It's not me doing it. Not up to me.

MALCOLM

How do you mean?

Rodeo Bob shrugs.

RODEO BOB

Somehow, I keep getting teleported against my will. Suddenly I find myself in this whole other body. It's very disorienting. Sankta merdu, the gravity here -- it's oppressive. Everything's so much heavier than I'm used to.

With both hands, Bob tugs at his thick head of HAIR.

RODEO BOB

All this hair you people have! Aagh! I feel like I've got a dead bush baby stuck to the top of my head.

MALCOLM

People don't have hair where you come from?

RODEO BOB

(duh!)
No! It would clog the ventilators. I keep wanting to shave this entire body, but Earl's wife won't let me.
(creeped out)
Ugh. Uh-hhhh.

Bob pulls down his shirt neck, running his fingers through his chest hair. A cringe of revulsion shudders through him.

MALCOLM

So, I take it you don't like coming here.

RODEO BOB

Do I enjoy being shanghaied to a steaming, primitive backwater where the population is hopelessly ignorant and the mosquitos suck your blood like it was Tang? Nope -- can't say as I do! But I try and make the best of it.

(catching himself)
No offense about the hopelessly ignorant part.

Malcolm nods distractedly. Hypotheses are busy forming.

RODEO BOB
I wasn't thinking specifically of you
and your... enormous fists.

MALCOLM
Bob, there's got to be some reason
you come here. Why you're being
sent. I mean...
(shrug)
... What if it's to put things right?

RODEO BOB
(a wary beat)
What things?

Malcolm doesn't offer a guess. Silence, then...

MALCOLM
Something important.

He leaves it for Rodeo Bob to consider. Bob thinks about it.

61 INT. EARL'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS 61

The back of Rodeo Bob's head is visible out there on the porch. We WIDEN off of the screen door to reveal, here inside the darkened kitchen...

... Holly sits at the table, sipping from a long-neck beer bottle. Silhouetted by the moonlight. She's hunkered here silently listening to every word.

We can't see her expression in the dark... but she lowers her chin a little. Off Holly, thinking too:

62 EXT. EARL'S HOUSE - NIGHT 62

A LIGHT clicks off in the front window. It's later still. The neighborhood is silent.

63 INT. EARL'S HOUSE - DELILAH'S BEDROOM - NIGHT 63

Delilah is tucked in her little bed in her nightlight-lit room. We CREEP IN on her face as she stirs in her sleep.

Trouble furrows her brow. She murmurs something soft and unintelligible. As we MOVE CLOSER...

64 EXT. SWIMMING POOL - SUNSET (DREAM SEQUENCE)

64

The SKY is the first thing we notice -- there's a most amazing SUNSET which fills it. Deep scarlet and blaze orange and blinding gold, it's a few heightened degrees past beautiful and edging into scary. It looks like the west is on fire.

We're surrounded by BRILLIANT BLUE WATER. We dip beneath its surface, then dog-paddle along right at nose-level.

We're DELILAH -- or her POV, at least. She swims alone in this outdoor pool, her inflatable water wings holding her up. She's smiling and giggling and having a great time... but we don't hear anything at all other than her HEARTBEAT.

We're at some kind of downscale country club. Not fancy. Plenty of ADULTS sit and stand poolside above us, but they're abstract glimpses -- white knees and ankles. Delilah is completely alone in this pool.

Now, behind Delilah we notice as... a white SHARK FIN breaks the surface of the deep end. It knifes through the water, gaining on us. Delilah smiles and paddles along, oblivious to the danger behind her.

The big white FIN plows closer and closer. Just as it reaches the little girl...

... BOOOM! Water EXPLODES around us, obliterating the frame.

65 INT. EARL'S HOUSE - DELILAH'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

65

Delilah jerks and cries out in her sleep. Her whimpering quickly brings her sleepy mom into the room. Holly caresses the little girl awake.

HOLLY

Shhhhh Honey, it's okay. It's okay.

She signs to Delilah, who reaches up to hug her. With her daughter clinging around her neck, Holly slowly wanders the room, patting the girl and comforting her.

Only now do we notice a faint GLOW flickering across Holly's cheek. It brightens, throwing windowpane shadows across the wall behind her.

Holly notices it just after we do. Stepping to the bedroom window, she's stunned, then horrified to see...

... A FLAMING CROSS, ten feet tall, burning in her side yard.

Holly slowly backs away from the window, not turning around -- not letting Delilah see it. Holly carries Delilah out of the room and out of sight.

66 EXT. SIDE YARD - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

66

The burning cross is reflected in a side window of Malcolm's new house. Dr. Blevins appears, numbly staring out.

BOOTS (O.S.)
WELL HOWDY, NEIGHBOR!

Malcolm appears in the window beside his dad.

BOOTS (O.S.)
YEAH, WE SEE Y'ALL IN THERE! HOW
'BOUT YOU COME ON OUT, NEIGHBORS?
SHARE SOME OF OUR HOSPITALITY!

67 INT. MALCOLM'S HOUSE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

67

Half-scared, half-pissed, Malcolm steps away from the window and rummages through his belongings, searching for something.

MALCOLM
Son of a bitch --
(looking all around)
Where the hell did I put my..?

Malcolm comes up with his CELL PHONE, flips it open and dials 911. Putting it to his ear, he glances back at his father.

MALCOLM
Pop, get away from the window.

Dr. Blevins doesn't respond. He stares outside, the fire reflecting red in his eyes.

MALCOLM
(into his phone)
Yes, I want to report a, uh... a, a,
a hate crime. We need someone out
here to uh...
(listening)
Yeah, hang on a second --

More rummaging as he tries to find his rental paperwork.

MALCOLM
What the hell's the address..?
Pop, get away from the window!

Dr. Blevins abruptly turns away. He beelines for his overnight bag, which sits across the room on the floor.

Inside it, he's got a change of clothes, a shaving kit... and underneath all that, an old five-shot .38 REVOLVER. Malcolm double-takes as he sees his dad tuck the gun in the back of his waistband and stride out the front door.

MALCOLM
 (alarmed)
 POP, HOLD UP! --
 (into the phone)
 I-I'll call you back.

Malcolm flips his phone shut and runs outside, giving chase.

68

EXT. MALCOLM'S HOUSE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

68

Dr. Blevins marches around to the side yard, headed for Earl's house. He looks nervous... but mostly, he looks outraged. The cross blazes away on the line between Malcolm's property and Earl's. Around it stand four robed and hooded KLANSMEN. Three are in basic white, while Boots wears pale green satin. His hood is open-faced.

Malcolm catches up to his dad and yanks at his elbow.

MALCOLM
 Whoa, whoa, POP! Uh-uh!

But Dr. Blevins isn't having it. He shrugs free as --

DR. BLEVINS
 Get OFF this goddamned property, you
 hillbilly piece of SHIT!

REBEL YELLS and CATCALLS from the three other Klansmen (our old friends Dukey, Whitey and Measles are hidden under those sheets) as Boots throws his arms open wide -- *bring it!*

BOOTS
 Whoooooooooooo! Big man!

Malcolm struggles with his dad, barely holding him back. Meanwhile, he yells at Boots and his boys.

MALCOLM
 You better listen to what he says!
 Police are on the way!

BOOTS

Let 'em come! I'm within my rights.
This here is protected speech!

DR. BLEVINS

The HELL it is! --

Dr. Blevins yanks away from Malcolm and storms out of sight around the back of the house. Malcolm stands his ground, not sure where his dad is going. Boots yells after the Doctor.

BOOTS

Virginia V. Black et al, 2003 --
Supreme Court of the YOU-nited States
says cross burning is protected!

MEASLES

It's called political discourse, you
uppity bastards!

MALCOLM

Not on MY property, it ain't!

BOOTS

I got news for you, Bosco. I ain't
ON your property. I have, in point
of fact, erected this proud symbol of
heritage one foot SOUTH of your
property... on MY property!

Malcolm's eyes narrow. Boots grins nastily and throws a hand back at Earl's house, indicating it.

BOOTS

Yeah, that's right -- I own that
house! I am the landlord! And there
ain't not one damn thing stopping me
from exercising my First Amendment
rights and burning a cross out here
every goddamned night of the year!
I got me about, ohhhh, eight hundred
little wily Jew lawyers up at the
ACLU gonna make sure I'm allowed to
do just that. And I will!

Behind him, his robed henchmen HOOT and HIGH-FIVE (completely unaware of the cultural irony).

Back into view storms Dr. Blevins, unspooling an old GARDEN HOSE behind him. It's got a pistol-grip spray nozzle on it. Before the Klansmen can react...

... WHOOOOSH! The Doctor SPRAYS the fire. The cross hisses and steams as it goes out.

WHITEY
Hey, goddammit!

BOOTS
Stop him! --

Things happen fast. Boots and his cronies run at the Doctor -- who holds them at bay by spraying them, too. The Klan hood gets power-washed right off of Boots' head. Smart enough not to try another frontal assault, Boots instead grabs the garden hose and gets into a tug-of-war with the Doctor.

BOOTS
You son of a BITCH! Gimme that!

Measles manages to grab hold of Dr. Blevins -- but just as he rares back to punch him, Malcolm flings him around by the collar, bowling him into the mud. Malcolm then tackles Dukey, plowing both of them to the ground. Whitey piles on.

Seeing his son about to get pounded, the Doctor lets go of his hose, which sends Boots falling backward on his ass.

Dr. Blevins draws the REVOLVER from the back of his waistband. Boot's eyes go wide.

BOOTS
GUN! --

Measles and Dukey fumble underneath their robes, pulling a couple of fancy semi-autos. Instantly it turns into a three-way draw-down, with Dr. Blevins at the apex of the triangle.

MALCOLM
Whoa--whoa--WHOA! FELLAS!

Malcolm interjects himself between his dad and the Klansmen, who pull their hoods off so they can aim better. Dr. Blevins sidesteps, trying to remove Malcolm from his gun sights.

DR. BLEVINS
Get outta the way, boy!

BOOTS
Whitey. Whitey! Film it!

Nervous Whitey yanks off his hood and produces a tiny CAMCORDER. He powers it up and starts taping as Boots rises to his feet and puts himself in the video frame. Ever the lawyer, Boots talks for the benefit of the camera.

BOOTS

This man here? He has drawn a gun on us in the course of trying to deny us our rights. He is forcing us to act in self-defense!

MALCOLM

No, he's not. No, he is NOT!
Everybody calm down, alright? --

DR. BLEVINS

Boy, shut up and get out the way.

BOOTS

Gentlemen? You with me on this?

Dukey and Measles both manage a nod, but they're scared. Dr. Blevins is, too. Everybody is in a state of constant flinch, afraid to get shot.

The Doctor's revolver trembles. Still, his voice is steady.

DR. BLEVINS

Lemme tell y'all something.
(to Whitey and camcorder)
Zoom in here, Richie Cunningham --
make sure you get this loud and clear.
(we zoom in)
I grew up in Detroit. Cass Corridor.
I did two tours in Vietnam. And if
you four Triscuits think you can
scare me or my son with your
bedsheets and your burning crosses?
You got another thing coming.
(meaning his gun)
THIS other thing.

Silence. Measles stirs a little.

MEASLES

"Triscuit?" Hell's that mean?

DR. BLEVINS

It means you ain't even a proper
cracker.

PISTOL HAMMERS slowly get clicked full back -- one, two, three. The four dripping wet Klansmen square off opposite Malcolm and his dad. Things are looking grim.

Just then...

HOLLY
BOB! Be careful! --

Boots glances over his shoulder. Malcolm looks, too. We now realize that Holly stands in her darkened front yard fifty feet behind them... and that Rodeo Bob is headed our way.

Bob pads into the midst of this Mexican standoff, his hands in his pockets. He glances up at the smoldering cross, then checks out the various Klan robes. He shakes his head at Boots, beyond disgusted with him.

HOLLY
(easing closer)
Bob, come back here!

BOOTS
Listen to her and get on outta here,
now. This ain't your concern.

The three men with guns stand frozen in place, tracking Rodeo Bob with their eyes. Moving nice and easy, Bob places himself in front of Dukey and Measles, blocking their aim. One by one, he carefully removes their pistols from their hands.

Relieved for it to be over, they let him. Bob then turns to Dr. Blevins -- as does everyone else. A beat. The Doctor hands Bob his pistol and stares at the ground.

Rodeo Bob unloads the two semi-automatics, pezzing rounds out of each magazine with his thumb. Shiny bullets scatter in the grass. As he takes the time to do this:

RODEO BOB
You know, where I come from...
there aren't any black people.

BOOTS
Well, hallelujah.

Bob eyes him coolly.

RODEO BOB
There aren't any white people either.
You see, in the future we've become
so genetically intertwined that we're
all just kind of...
(shrug)
... Peanut butter-colored.

DUKEY
"Peanut butter?" --

MEASLES

(to Boots)

The hell's he talking about?!

Boots sighs raggedly. He lowers his head and shakes it to himself -- made heartsick by this crazy talk.

RODEO BOB

I'm talking about your great-great-great-great grandkids.

Done unloading the Klansmen's guns, Bob opens Dr. Blevins' revolver -- but finds the cylinder EMPTY. Not one bullet. He raises an eyebrow to the Doctor... who knew it all along.

Seeing his dad's unloaded gun, Malcolm looks queasy.

MALCOLM

Oh, Jesus Christ...

Boots glowers at the two black men, then turns to Rodeo Bob.

BOOTS

Shoulda stayed outta this, Earl.
In the morning you'll understand.

RODEO BOB

Look. I know this a difficult concept for your caveman mind to grasp... but I am not "Earl." I will never be "Earl." Alright? And if this "Earl" of yours is even half the scumwad degenerate you are? Then I should do the world a favor and march this body of his right off the nearest cliff.

(off the stunned silence)

Now pack up your cross and get out.

Boots is struck dumb. He can't believe what he's hearing.

He looks to his henchmen, not sure what to say. He puts a hand over Whitey's camcorder lens -- Whitey's been TAPING all this by the way, but now he stops.

Dukey, Whitey and Measles listlessly go to work, batting out the last few flames on the cross and carrying it away. Boots retrieves his sopping Klan hood. He wrings it out and picks a few blades of grass off it as he heads for his Mercedes.

He passes Holly, who still has Boots' surgery offer in mind. Holly almost says something soothing -- but stops herself.

69 INT. MERCEDES - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

69

Alone here inside his fancy car, Boots rubs his eyes hard with the back of his hand. His eyes are tearing up.

He tries not to let them. Clearing his throat, he guns the ignition and ROARS off.

70 EXT. EARL'S HOUSE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

70

The Mercedes speeds away, taillights shrinking into the night. Holly wanders over to join Rodeo Bob, who stands with Malcolm and Dr. Blevins. They all watch the three white stooges load their scorched cross into the bed of an old pickup truck.

Seeing them watching, Measles hollers back at them.

MEASLES

South's gonna rise again! --

DR. BLEVINS

Shut the fuck up!

Measles scowls -- but without Boots here to goad them on, the fight's gone out of the Klan. Measles falls down backward into the truck bed as it lurches off down the street.

The neighborhood is quiet again. Holly studies Bob closely.

HOLLY

Don't let me catch you talking that way anymore.

RODEO BOB

What? Peanut butter?

HOLLY

Killing yourself.

Bob rolls his eyes. It's apparent to Malcolm, watching this, how much Holly worries for Bob. How much she loves him. Yet it's not clear whether Rodeo Bob fully reciprocates.

Holly takes Bob by the arm, steering him toward the house. She pauses to look at Malcolm and Dr. Blevins.

Though she can't quite bring herself to say it, she's embarrassed. Sorry. But finally, all she can manage is...

HOLLY

'Night.

Malcolm gives her a little nod. His dad just stares.

Holly and Bob go home. Malcolm and his dad look to one another. Dr. Blevins tiredly shakes his head to himself and wanders on back to his son's house.

Malcolm hesitates. Off him, staring after Rodeo Bob and the stressed-out woman who loves him...

71 EXT. PETERSBURG - MORNING 71

VARIOUS SHOTS: a jet contrail rumbles across a deep blue sky; an old HIGHWAY HISTORICAL MARKER stands lonely amidst a bright scrum of Wal-Marts and Taco Bells; boxcars rust on a siding. Their faded paint says "SOUTHERN SERVES THE SOUTH."

72 EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY 72

Most folks are at work, so the subdivision is quiet. The sun is out. It's a nice time for a walk.

Little Delilah squats by the side of the road, searching for interesting rocks. She picks one up and shows it to her mom. They talk purely through SIGN LANGUAGE, which we SUBTITLE.

HOLLY

Pretty!

DELILAH

From up there?

HOLLY

I don't know. I don't know much about rocks.

Delilah hands it to her mom to keep for her. We see that Holly has a fat pocketful already.

Scanning the ground, Delilah finds another rock -- a big one. She hoists it in both hands, meaning to give it to Holly.

HOLLY

Honey, Momma's not carrying all that. Too heavy. Wait till Bob comes -- he'll find you a moon rock.

Delilah considers, then tosses the rock away with an OOF and a thud. She rubs her dirty hands on her shirt.

We hear a car approach. Behind them, the battered 280Z heads their way. Holly stiffens as Malcolm pulls alongside them.

MALCOLM

Good morning.

Holly gives him a tense little nod. No such lack of enthusiasm on the part of Delilah -- who, noticing Malcolm, scampers over and hoists herself up into his open car window. She grins at him. He grins back and SIGNS "Hello, Delilah!"

HOLLY

Sweetie, come on down from there.

(lifting her away)

You're gonna scuff up the man's nice car.

MALCOLM

Way too late for that.

Holly takes her daughter firmly by the hand and gets her walking again. Delilah's eyes stay on Malcolm, who creeps along in his Datsun, keeping pace beside them.

MALCOLM

Nice day.

HOLLY

(without looking)

Uh-huh.

MALCOLM

Might be in for some rain, though.

Holly keeps walking. The longer Malcolm sticks around, the more antsy she becomes. He, on the other hand, seems relaxed.

MALCOLM

Weatherman said maybe Friday.
Saturday, maybe.

Holly finally stops and turns to him. Under her breath:

HOLLY

Look, haven't we had enough excitement for one week?

MALCOLM

I've had me enough to last the whole summer.

HOLLY

Then why can't you just --

She doesn't actually say "go away," but she indicates it with a motion of her hand. Malcolm stares up at her intently.

MALCOLM

It's not about me being black, is it?
 (zeroing in)
 You really don't want him cured.

He says it with quiet conviction. It takes Holly by surprise. Her first reaction is to shake her head, denying it.

HOLLY

W-What do you mean? Of course I do.

MALCOLM

No. Curing Earl means Rodeo Bob disappears forever -- and you don't want that.
 (off her silence)
 I wouldn't either.
 (a beat)
 But it can't go on like this.

Holly doesn't argue. She stares off down the road at nothing in particular, chewing her lip and knowing that he's right.

Delilah looks from one adult to the other, curious.

Holly turns back to Malcolm. She's finally ready to talk.

73

EXT. EARL'S HOUSE - BACKYARD - DAY

73

The borderline unthinkable, at least during daylight hours -- Malcolm is a guest in Earl's backyard. He sits beside Holly on her back steps, listening. Holly keeps tabs on Delilah, playing on her jungle gym across the way.

Speaking quietly...

HOLLY

It was this really beautiful sunset. I mean, particularly. I remember staring up at it right before.
 (a beat)
 Anyhow, Earl used to be part-owner of this... well, they called it a country club, but it wasn't much more than a swimming pool and some barbecue pits. Nine holes of golf that looked more like a Putt-Putt. Boots got him into it. Both of 'em, they loved that place. And they, uh... as you might imagine... they didn't want any black people.

Malcolm sips an iced tea. Holly's eyes return to Delilah.

HOLLY

Well, the state judiciary had something to say about that. Boots, who's a lawyer --

(catches herself)

-- Yeah, you heard that. Boots thought he had some kinda loophole, but court said no, gotta take, uh... gotta take African-Americans. And so they did. For a while.

Malcolm glances sidelong at her.

HOLLY

One family signed up. He worked in... "I.T.?" What does that stand for? Something to do with computers. Anyway, it didn't... it honestly didn't really bother anybody else at the club. But Earl and Boots, they started talking about closing the place down.

(a beat)

But before they could do it, there was that... African-American family, swimming in the swimming pool. And Earl, he started drinking ten a.m. that morning and just never quit.

74

EXT. SWIMMING POOL - SUNSET (FLASHBACK)

74

The red, half-set sun ripples on the surface of the water.

HOLLY (V.O.)

... And then came that beautiful sunset.

This is one of those great, late summer evenings. Two or three dozen CLUB MEMBERS, various ages and all of them white, sit on loungers around the pool.

A pleasant-looking black family -- DAD, MOM and two young GIRLS -- walk to the water's edge. They're self-conscious but trying not to show it. The whites all around them act nonchalant. Yet they shoot a few surreptitious glances.

Dad is first to take the plunge, jumping into the shallow end. One at a time, he lifts his daughters down into the water. Though they make no show of noticing it, it's not lost on this family that they're the only ones in the pool.

Holly sits on a lounge top-side with all the other whites. She's here with Delilah, who's impatient to get in the water.

Patsy lies nearby, frowning into a romance novel. She peeks over the top of it at the black family. Her skin is tan-in-a-bottle burnt orange.

DELILAH

Mommmeeee...

Delilah (who can hear) whines and tugs at Holly. The little girl doesn't understand the hold-up. With a glance at Patsy, Holly sighs and relents.

HOLLY

Alright Honey, hold still.

Holly tops off a water wing that needs a little more air. Ignoring the disfavor of her fellow whites, she helps Delilah into the shallow end. Wide-eyed Patsy tips down her sunglasses for a better look.

Elsewhere, Boots stands behind the pool's chain-link fence, glaring at the black family. His fingers clench the links.

HOLLY (V.O.)

I believe Boots when he tells me he didn't know what Earl had planned that day. But God help him if I ever find out otherwise.

As Boots stares at the black family, something catches his eye. His pissed-off expression changes to one of surprise.

CLOSE ON two bare feet. They're smick-smacking along the wet concrete in a pair of rubber flip-flops. The hem of a white robe skims the tops of them.

One by one, swim-suited club members notice this hooded KLANSMAN wandering through their midst. Mouths hang open. Conversations dry up. The whole place gets quiet.

Holly is among the last to notice. She walks the pool's edge keeping watch over Delilah, who is happily dog-paddling along. Upon seeing this Klansman, Holly gets that same *What the FUCK?!* look on her face everyone else has. But she doesn't immediately recognize who this is.

The Klansman stumbles up onto the diving board, dead drunk. He stands here wobbling up and down, his eyes showing through his hood like two pissholes in the snow.

In the pool, the black family is certainly paying attention. Dad and Mom slowly pull their daughters close.

Dead silence. Only the faint *wunka-wunka* of the diving board. Then the Klansman calls out:

KLANSMAN

So, you buncha monkeys wanna swim
in MY pool!

Across the way, Holly recognizes the voice, and is horrified.

HOLLY

Ohmigod. Earl?! --

She heads for him, momentarily leaving Delilah alone. But Earl's got big plans. He fumbles in his robe, quickly pulling out a stick of DYNAMITE. With a short fuze and a blasting cap shoved through it, it's ready to go.

In his other fist is a Bic lighter. FLICK! The fuze starts HISSING. It leaves a comet trail of smoke as Earl underhands it into the center of the pool.

Chaos. Folks flee in every direction. Holly gets swept up and knocked aside by them. The black husband and wife toss their girls out of the pool and clamber up after them.

UNDERWATER SHOT -- in the b.g. the black man hauls himself out. In f.g. the dynamite lazily sinks. Its UNDERWATER FUZE (yes, these do exist) strobes away, boiling out smoky bubbles.

Up on the end of the diving board, Earl's eyeholes are crooked and he can't see. He tugs at his hood, straightening them. We PUSH IN on his bloodshot eyes as they manage to focus...

... On DELILAH, happily paddling away in the shallow end.

Horror cuts through the Jack Daniels. Earl dives toward his daughter, and things go SLOW-MOTION. He hangs in the air for a moment, his white robe fluttering around him.

Bowled aside by fleeing club members, Holly regains her footing and runs for the shallow end.

Delilah grins and paddles, unaware of her father swimming for his life behind her, getting closer. His Klan hood knifes up out of the water like an albino shark fin.

Holly jumps into water to her waist, wading through it toward her daughter. It's like one of those bad dreams where you can't make any headway.

Behind Delilah, Earl is almost here. His hands are reaching toward us. But right then Delilah puffs out her little cheeks and holds her breath, submerging.

UNDERWATER SHOT -- the stick of dynamite clunks softly against the drain grate. It comes to rest beside some lost barrettes. The last inch of its FUZE sizzles and disappears. Then --

BOOOOOOM! What looks like a navy depth charge goes off in the middle of the pool. A wall of water obliterates the frame.

Seen from a hundred yards away, a spray like Old Faithful jets up out of the little pool and into the evening sky. Chlorinated water rains down for long moments afterward. Then, all is silent.

75 EXT. EARL'S HOUSE - BACKYARD - DAY 75

Back to the present. Holly watches Delilah running around.

HOLLY

Water carries sound better than air.
Delilah was under, so she got the
worst of it. Lost her hearing.

Malcolm nods sadly. He looks from Holly to the little girl, who is playing some kind of game known only to herself.

76 EXT. SWIMMING POOL - SUNSET (FLASHBACK) 76

We're in Holly's POV, looking up out of the pool. The black Dad kneels on the edge above us, lifting Delilah limp out of the water. Her ears bleed. Waves slap over the man's legs.

HOLLY (V.O.)

Ask Earl, he won't remember it this
way... but it was that black man who
pulled us out.

Running to join the black man is a white teenaged LIFEGUARD. He reaches to us with a long shepherd's crook. He wears an old t-shirt. On it is a cartoon of an Apollo astronaut surfing through space toward a big FULL MOON.

"RODEO BOB'S -- Cocoa Beach, Florida" it says. "Best surf shop in the GALAXY!"

77 EXT. EARL'S HOUSE - BACKYARD - DAY 77

Once again, the present. Finished, Holly turns to Malcolm.

He studies her for a long moment.

MALCOLM

I really have to ask -- why would you ever marry somebody like that?

HOLLY

What kind of psychiatrist question is that? That's very judgemental.

MALCOLM

Yeah? Well, I'm sorry, but come on.
 (wilting beneath her gaze)
 And I'm not... actually... a psychiatrist. Not yet, anyway.

There -- he's finally come out with it. Holly doesn't blink.

HOLLY

Bob told me you're a college student.

MALCOLM

(busted; sheepish)
 Ah.

HOLLY

Not that the '83 Datsun ain't a giveaway. Got enough Bondo on that thing to make a bass boat. I can't exactly picture Sigmund Freud tooling around in one of those.

Malcolm braces himself to get yelled at. He prepares to be told to leave. After a while, Holly surprises him yet again.

HOLLY

I married Earl because I was young and stupid. And because I knew him pretty much my entire life, I guess. I guess if you grew up around somebody who had two heads and six eyes each, you wouldn't even notice after awhile.

(softer now)

Takes somebody from outside to tell you... that that's not normal.

Malcolm nods. He's seeing this woman in a whole new light.

MALCOLM

What happened after the explosion?

HOLLY

I served Earl divorce papers while he was in the county lockup. I didn't even want him getting visitation rights. The judge agreed.

(a beat)

Earl was loading up the U-Haul the evening Rodeo Bob first appeared. He came crawling out on his belly saying the "gravity" was too much for him. Well, I dunno what you say to that.

(eyes lowered)

I wound up falling in love with him. The only way for us to have him those few hours each night is to let Earl stick around. So...

Her fingers worry her iced tea glass, picking at the design. This is good for her. It's helpful to be able to talk about this with someone -- even if he's not Sigmund Freud.

HOLLY

So, that's the cure I'm looking for: the one that keeps Rodeo Bob and gets rid of Earl completely.

(with a smirk)

How do we go about that, Doctor?

She says it like it's a joke... but of course, it's not. Malcolm smiles a little, shakes his head. His smile fades.

MALCOLM

I don't think it works that way.

Holly figured as much. Off the two of them, in glum silence:

78 EXT. BOOTS' MANSION - AFTERNOON

78

We recognize this place by the familiar Mercedes out front. Several trucks are here, too. This is one palatial spread -- but tacky. It puts us in mind of Graceland.

Earl's Chevy pulls into the big circular driveway and parks. Out climbs Earl, back to his usual, lemon-sucking self. He heads up the walkway to the house, passing a black lawn jockey much like his at home. This one, however, is LIFE-SIZED.

79 INT. BOOTS' MANSION - KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

79

Earl lets himself in and heads for the bar. He reaches behind the cheap stuff and goes straight for the small-batch bourbon.

Patsy wanders in wearing a thick robe and a towel on her hair, and green cucumber beauty mask on her face. She's not surprised to see Earl, but she doesn't seem happy, either.

EARL

Hey there, girl. Say, you got any
mint sprigs for my julep?

Patsy opens the bank vault-size Sub-Zero, working to keep her face rigid. She hands him Tupperware with mint in it.

EARL

That'll do 'er. Hey, I been thinkin'
more and more about appliances --
out in the car I got me one of them
computerized bread-making machines?
Makes bread automatically. Makes
pound cake, uh... olive loaf. Cheese
bread. Regular bread. You name it.
Pretty got-damn cutting-edge.
(guardedly hopeful)
Think Holly might like that?

Patsy starts to say something, but her cucumber mask cracks. She nods instead. Earl smiles a little, gaining confidence.

EARL

Yeah, she gon' love it, right?
(a beat; ragged sigh)
Oh, Christ Almighty -- coons for
neighbors. It's almost like I'm Job,
being tested or sump'n.

He finishes assembling his julep and knocks most of it back in one gulp. He scratches his nose with the back of his hand.

EARL

I didn't see Holly this morning. She
was out the house 'fore I woke up.
What'd I miss last night?

Patsy answers reluctantly, pausing when bits of mask start dropping off her face and onto the floor.

PATSY

Maybe you better just. Ask Boots.

Earl wonders at the way she says this. He wanders out of the kitchen, intent on doing just that.

80

INT. BOOTS' MANSION - DEN - AFTERNOON

80

A huge plasma TV hangs on the wall of this expensive man-cave. Boots, Whitey, Dukey and Measles sit around on rich leather sofas and club chairs, sullenly watching it. Earl pops his head in the door.

EARL
There's my boys! --
(no one responds)
Whatsa matter?

Boots shoots him a cold glance, then returns his attention to the TV. Earl steps deeper into the room, double-taking when he sees what's on television. Puzzlement turns to surprise.

It's the footage Whitey shot last night. Dr. Blevins, Dukey and Measles hold guns on each other. Earl drags a footrest up close and plunks himself down, riveted to the TV.

EARL
OhmiGOD! How come I always miss the
good stuff?! --
(eagerly watching)
Ohhh, please, PLEASE tell me you shot
that bastard.

BOOTS
Nope. You wouldn't let us.

Earl frowns at his buddy -- *say what?* But now he sees Rodeo Bob wander into the frame and take away everyone's guns.

Earl can't take his eyes off this strange person who looks exactly like him. He's transfixed.

Seeing Bob berate Boots, his eyes widen. It's a disorienting, out-of-body experience. We CREEP IN on Earl as he listens to his alter-ego call Boots a "scumwad degenerate."

Boots thumbs the remote, freezing the image of Rodeo Bob's face. A beat or two of thick silence.

EARL
Well... t-that ain't me.

Boots' lip twitches a little. He runs a hand through his hair, unable to bring himself to look at his friend.

EARL
Boots, that ain't me! You know me,
you know I'd never say those things!

BOOTS

You just saw it with your own two eyes! Defending those niggers? Telling me my own great-grandchildren gonna be mixed-breed octoroons?
 (his voice cracking)
 Calling me names, saying I ain't worth nothing... and I known you since third grade.

Earl shakes his head, stunned. He looks to the others for support, but finds none. Hard stares from the boys.

BOOTS

Think about it, Earl.
 (points to the screen)
 That's you in there somewhere. All this time, I didn't wanna believe it... but way down deep, that's you. Gotta be. It don't take no Carl Jung to figger that one out.

Boots pronounces the J in "Jung." Nobody notices.

EARL

Look, nobody blames the Wolfman when he turns into the wolf. I mean, he got bit by another wolfman -- it's not his fault!
 (swallows hard)
 I-I can't explain this. But I need your help. All y'all. I need watching over. I need you to be the Better Angels of my Nature.

MEASLES

(hard-eyed)
 What, you quotin' Lincoln now?

EARL

Well, he said a few good things. Not counting the slavery stuff. Aw, c'mon fellas, y'all just gonna give up on me?! Huh? Boots..?

Boots softens a little. To seal the deal, Earl shuffles over to the sound system and picks out a particular CD. He loads it into the player.

BOOTS

Aw naw, Bubba. Not Hank Snow...

Earl nods solemnly. Up comes a wailing old hillbilly song about the death of a favorite hunting dog. The boys stir in their seats. Boots is tearing up.

He slowly rises to face Earl, who extends his hand to shake. A beat... then Boots HUGS him instead.

The boys get all misty. Patsy -- still in her cucumber mask -- peeks into the den. Staring deadpan, she shakes her head and exits.

81 EXT. EARL'S HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON 81

Half an hour till sunset. There's no car in the driveway. From inside the house, we hear the faint RING of a telephone.

82 INT. EARL'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - LATE AFTERNOON 82

A LAMP blinks as the phone rings. Holly answers it.

HOLLY

Hello.

INTERCUT WITH:

83 CLOSE - EARL - CONTINUOUS 83

Earl has a cell phone to his ear. The frame is so tight, we don't know where we are. All we see is a textured blue wall.

EARL

Hey Sugar, it's me. Just wanted to tell you not to wait up. Boots and the boys are gonna take a stab at curing me of my mental disorder. Might take all night, we figger.

Holly blinks and frowns.

HOLLY

Earl, what the hell are you talking about?

EARL

Long story. But look, I don't want you worrying about nothing, alright? Everything's gonna be fine. Bye now.

Alarmed, Holly starts to argue, but Earl gently hangs up. Boots leans into frame and takes Earl's phone, turning it off so that it won't ring again.

BOOTS

Everybody, turn your phones off.
She knows y'all's numbers.
(then, to Earl)
Tell me if I'm going too tight.

EARL

Shoot, Buddy -- tighter, the better.

They're referring to the fact that Boots is TYING UP Earl with a coil of yellow rope. We PULL BACK to reveal we are...

EXT. SWIMMING POOL - LATE AFTERNOON

The club is long shut down. The pool is empty. We're here in the DEEP END, beneath the diving board. Earl sits in an old vinyl deck chair as Boots industriously ties him to it.

EARL

Go around the midriff once or twice.
Yeah, thattaway.

Up above us, Measles throws down an extension cord to Dukey, who sets up a couple of fancy SUNLAMPS on either side of Earl. Noting Boots' quizzical look, Dukey explains.

DUKEY

Doctor perscribed me these for my
seasonal affected disorder. I'm
thinking maybe they'll keep Earl from
changing once the sun goes down.

BOOTS

Well goddamn, boy. That's using your
noodle!
(taps his head)
Scientific!

Dukey smiles proudly. Whitey strings still more extension cord, setting up a portable TV opposite Earl. He erects a tripod and screws his camcorder to it.

Tied up like Houdini, Earl's attention drifts to a small CRATER in the concrete not far from his feet. It's damage left by the dynamite. Earl stares at it, subdued.

The sky above us reddens moment by moment. CLICK! Dukey's sunlamps blast on, snapping Earl out of his reverie and making him squint. Whitey aims his camcorder at him.

WHITEY
You ready, Earl?

EARL
(grim nod)
Let's do it.

Leaving us to wonder what exactly "it" is...

84 INT. EARL'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - LATE AFTERNOON 84

Delilah tears around underfoot. Holly is back on the phone.

HOLLY
Alright. If they're not over there,
can't you just --
(listens a beat)
-- Well, how about a guess, then?
How about a --
(listens; losing it)
Tell you what, Patsy -- how about,
better still? How about the minute
you hear something like that, you
call me up and say, "Hey, lemme tell
you what our idiot husbands have
planned!" How's that?!

CLICK. Patsy hangs up on the other end. Holly slaps her phone back in its cradle. She stands here stewing.

She gives a sigh as she reluctantly settles on her next move.

85 EXT. MALCOLM'S HOUSE - FRONT YARD - LATE AFTERNOON 85

HANDHELD, we FOLLOW Holly as she hurries across the yard. Delilah struggles to keep up with her, practically getting towed along by the hand. Up the front steps of Malcolm's place they go. Off Holly, knock-knock-knocking:

86 INT. DATSUN 280Z - DRIVING - LATE AFTERNOON 86

Delilah has the back seat to herself. Holly rides shotgun as Malcolm drives. Fast. Mid-conversation...

MALCOLM
-- But you don't know where they are.

HOLLY

Not for sure. Dukey's is the best bet -- he's got ten acres and lives by himself, so maybe we start there.

Malcolm mulls it over.

MALCOLM

You know, if it were me...

(shrug)

I might think about going back to the place where it all started.

Holly frowns, surprised. Off her, studying Malcolm as she considers this:

87

EXT. SWIMMING POOL - SUNSET

87

The last sliver of SUN sinks below the horizon. Earl clenches tight against the ropes which bind him to his deck chair.

EARL

Ain't gonna CHANGE! Uh-UH!

His voice echoes off the concrete. Boots and the boys sit around him in the bottom of the pool, just outside the glare of the sunlamps. Boots checks his watch, nodding.

BOOTS

Yeah, Bubba -- Come on now. Forty seconds past...

MEASLES

Keep fighting it, Earl!

The guys drink beer and root for their friend.

BOOTS

Forty-five seconds!

WHITEY

Shit, that's a record!

BOOTS

(grins; nodding)
Forty-eight... fifty...

EARL

(through gritted teeth)
It's working! It is WORKING!

He strains and jumps, clacking his chair against the concrete. He bows his head low, growling until he runs out of breath.

BOOTS

Almost a minute now! 54 Mississippi,
55 Mississippi, 56 Mississippi, 57
Mississippi, 58 Mississippi...
(off the sudden silence)
Earl..?

Nope. It is now RODEO BOB who raises his head.

RODEO BOB

What's that -- the countdown for the
hillbilly space shuttle?

Shit. The men glance to one another. Dukey shakes his head.

RODEO BOB

Oh, look! And I'm tied up. Yeah,
nothing to worry about here. Just me
and the boys from "Deliverance."

Boots rubs his mouth and turns to the others.

BOOTS

Alright, then. Plan B.

He nods to Whitey, who presses "play" on the camcorder. Suddenly, Rodeo Bob finds himself face-to-face with...

... EARL, who stares out at him from the portable TV screen.

Bob's eyes widen a little. On TV, Earl is tied to the chair, sunlamps on either side of him. Clearly, this was shot just a few short minutes ago.

For a moment, television and real life reflect one another like a man studying himself in a mirror. Then, Earl speaks.

EARL (TV SCREEN)

Hello, Wolfman.

(a beat)

That's right, boy. I'm talking to
you. You are the Wolfman. And
tonight, you are gonna get a stake
through the ol' ticker. How you like
them apples?

Rodeo Bob frowns. Off-camera, on TV, we hear Whitey mumbling.

WHITEY (TV SCREEN)
 Silver bullet. Stake's for vampires.
 (off Earl's glare)
 Sorry, Earl.

EARL (TV SCREEN)
 Can I finish my goddamn thought,
 please? Thank you. Very much.
 (back to Rodeo Bob)
 Bet you don't like this place, do
 you? Bet it makes you re-e-eal
 uncomfortable, being here.

Rodeo Bob rolls his eyes. On TV, Earl sweats and squints.

EARL (TV SCREEN)
 Get used to it -- you'll be here all
 night. These men here? They are the
 Better Angels of my Nature. They
 gon' help me get shut of you for good
 and all. That man on your right?
 He's my best friend in the world.

Boots quickly sidesteps from Rodeo Bob's left to his right.

EARL (TV SCREEN)
 He's put up with a whole lot from
 you. Tonight, he gonna get hisself
 some payback.
 (nasty grin)
 Yeah, we did some research on the
 world-wide internet -- found a
 article in an old back-issue of
 Argosy Magazine. "Outlawed Medical
 Procedures." Boots figgers a little
 shock therapy'll turn the trick.

Bob glances up at Boots, who pulls an evil-looking STUN GUN
 out of his jacket. It CRACKLES to life as a big blue SPARK
 jitters between its steel prongs. Rodeo Bob swallows hard.

EARL (TV SCREEN)
 Seeing as it's my body, I hereby
 give him my legal permission.
 (a beat)
 Adios, Wolfman.

Whitey turns off the TV. Everyone stares down at Rodeo Bob,
 sitting helpless in his deck chair. The silence is heavy.

RODEO BOB
 D-Don't do this. Guys. Boots..?

BOOTS
 (sly smile)
 Well goddamn, fellas. For once, he
 got my name right.

Boots and his cronies close in around a squirming Rodeo Bob,
 blocking him from our view. Off the CRACKLE of the STUN GUN:

88 EXT. CLUB PARKING LOT - DUSK

88

Weeds poke up through the neglected asphalt. The 280Z pulls
 off the highway and races across the lot straight at us. It
 squeals to a stop nose-on with the chainlink fence.

Boots' Mercedes is here, as is Earl's beater -- so Malcolm and
 Holly know they're in the right place. From this spot, the
 pool is fifty yards away. They can't see down into it, but
 there's that GLOW of sunlamps coming out of the deep end.

Holly quickly signs something to Delilah, then climbs out of
 the Datsun. Over on the driver's side, Malcolm gets out, too.

HOLLY
 Whoa, where you going?

MALCOLM
 Are you kidding? With you.

HOLLY
 We don't need a repeat of last night.
 I've known these guys my entire life.
 I can handle myself.
 (sees he won't comply)
Pretty please? With sugar on it?
 Keep an eye on Delilah for me..?

Malcolm reluctantly gives in. Holly mouths "thank you" and
 hurries off. Malcolm leans against the hood of his car, arms
 folded, grumbling to himself as he watches her go.

Behind him, Delilah raps on her back window, getting his
 attention. Smiling, she SIGNS a flurry at him.

Malcolm sighs and reaches for his "Sign Language For Dummies"
 book. Referring to it for translation...

89 EXT. SWIMMING POOL - DUSK - CONTINUOUS

89

Rodeo Bob SHAKES soundlessly, every muscle clenched tight.
 Boots watches the sweep hand on his watch as he applies the
 STUN GUN to Bob's ribs. The other men stand close.

Holly appears above them on the rim of the deep end. Her jaw drops when she sees what's going on. She almost loses her balance, swinging her arms to keep from falling.

HOLLY
STOP IT! --

The boys all look up. Holly bangs down the pool ladder, dropping the last four feet into the deep end. She runs at Boots, grabbing at the stun gun. He holds it up out of reach.

BOOTS
Calm down now, Sugar. This ain't as bad as it looks.

Holly stops jumping for the stun gun. Glaring at Boots, she balls up her fist and nails him in the gut. Boots folds in half as the stun gun goes sliding across the concrete.

Holly sprints to pick it up, beating out the others. She briefly menaces them with it, keeping them at bay. She turns it around when she realizes she's holding it backward.

Screw this. She turns and HURLS the stun gun with all her might. It sails high over the cabana and fence.

90 INT. DATSUN 280Z - DUSK - CONTINUOUS 90

Malcolm is back behind the wheel of his parked car. Delilah sits up front with him in the passenger seat. They're signing to one another when --

-- BAM! The STUN GUN lands on the WINDSHIELD, startling us. It lies there on the hood, cracked and SPARKING furiously. Holly's angry voice comes drifting in like a distant yodel.

HOLLY (O.S.)
You ASSHOLES!

Oh shit. Malcolm motions to Delilah -- *wait RIGHT here!* He climbs out of the car, dialing his cell phone on the move.

91 EXT. SWIMMING POOL - DUSK - CONTINUOUS 91

Boots hugs his stomach and winces.

BOOTS
Dammit, girl -- this here's tough love! Like a exorcism, understand? It ain't s'posed to be pleasant!

Holly hurries to untie Bob, who is barely conscious. As soon as she gets one wrist untied, Boots ties it back tighter.

HOLLY
Let him GO! --

BOOTS
No! This is what Earl wants!

HOLLY
I don't CARE what Earl wants! I
don't want him BACK! Earl isn't
worth KEEPING! UNDERSTAND?! --

The boys are silent. Boots stares at Holly, thunderstruck. Wounded.

MALCOLM (O.S.)
Excuse me...

Heads whip around. Boots is outraged to see Malcolm standing here staring down at him from the rim of the pool. Cool as a cucumber, Malcolm has his cell phone open in his hand.

MALCOLM
You fellas do realize you're a half a
mile from a police station?

A beat. As if on cue... *weeeeeeoooooo-weeeeeeeeEEEEEEEEEEEE*. Here come distant SIRENS, speeding our way. Boots' evening is rapidly going from bad to worse.

Bob's head lolls around. He grins like a drunken sailor.

RODEO BOB
HA! --

Stomping his feet in delight, he winds up accidentally kicking his chair over backwards. He lies here groaning as Holly kneels to untie him. The SIRENS are getting LOUDER.

Boots turns on Holly, struggling to keep his voice even.

BOOTS
What kinda gratitude you call this?
Huh? That house you live in -- I
rent that to you for practically
nothing. Every nice thing y'all have
was a gift from Patsy and me!

Holly hates where this is headed... but she keeps untying Bob.

BOOTS

I offer your child back her HEARING.
Sixty thousand dollars out-of-pocket.
Is this how you repay me?

Holly finally pauses. Sits there. Boots squats down beside her, breathing faster.

BOOTS

If you want what's best for that little girl -- like I do -- you're gonna get out of here right now. You're gonna take that soul brother with you, and tell the police ain't nothing going on here. And you're gonna leave me and Earl...
(points at Rodeo Bob)
... EARL. To finish what we started.

Holly has a huge choice to make -- and it's not an easy one. She looks from Malcolm back to Boots. Off Holly, eyes aglow:

92 INT. COUNTY LOCKUP - NIGHT 92

BUZZZZZZZ! A barred door slides closed on Boots, bolting with a CLANG. He, Dukey, Whitey and Measles are all locked here together inside a tank cell.

Boots stands at the bars, staring out. He shares this facility with inmates every color of the rainbow -- but mostly black. We hear lots of YELLING and CATCALLS.

Boots' tie has been taken. He straightens his collar, buttons his jacket and shoots his cuffs. Bewildered, disoriented... he still struggles to keep his pride.

93 INT. COMMUNITY HOSPITAL - RECEPTION DESK - NIGHT 93

Little Delilah sits behind the counter, drawing with crayons. A young black AIDE smiles at her, babysitting while she files insurance claims.

94 INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - NIGHT 94

Rodeo Bob sits on the same treatment table he occupied two nights ago. He winces as he lifts his arms over his head. Dr. Blevins helps him off with his shirt.

Tiny STUN GUN BURNS pock Bob's side. The Doctor examines them, dabbing ointment as he mutters under his breath.

DR. BLEVINS
 Ridiculous. Ridiculous. Buncha
 cross-burning yay-hoos. Need their
 asses kicked flat, every damn one.
 (glancing over)
 Malcolm --

We reveal Malcolm standing here, arms crossed and watching.

MALCOLM
 I'm not moving, Pop. Just forget it.

Holly is here, too. Staring pained at Rodeo Bob's injuries,
 she notices him smiling at her. She manages a weak smile in
 return, but her heart's not in it.

Bob nods at the hospital around them.

RODEO BOB
 How do you like my office?

Holly nods, looks around. The place bustles with efficient
 activity. DOCTORS and NURSES come and go, treating PATIENTS.
 A RECEPTIONIST fills out paperwork.

Everyone in sight happens to be black or brown. Watching them
 all, Holly seems very sad.

95 EXT. FAMILY RESTAURANT - NIGHT 95

This is one of those "Fun for the Whole Family!" chain-joints
 that spring up like kudzu throughout Southern suburbia.
 Malcolm's 280Z and Earl's beater are parked out front.

96 INT. FAMILY RESTAURANT - GAME ROOM - NIGHT 96

A crane machine grabs at a stuffed animal. Delilah is at the
 controls, assisted by Rodeo Bob.

We RACK FOCUS off Delilah to Holly, who sits watching her
 daughter from across the restaurant.

97 INT. FAMILY RESTAURANT - BOOTH - CONTINUOUS 97

Four place settings and a booster seat. Holly and Malcolm are
 currently here alone, waiting for dinner to arrive.

HOLLY
 Guess tonight I really planted my
 flag.

She's morose. Malcolm is sympathetic.

MALCOLM

What about insurance? Won't it cover the surgery?

HOLLY

What, our shitty HMO? Not a chance.

Grim silence. Holly and Malcolm watch as, across the room, Delilah SIGNS a flurry to Bob. Without missing a beat, Bob answers back, SIGNING fluently. Holly translates.

HOLLY

"Someday... when you grow up... something-something the future."
 God, I can't even keep up with him.
 (turns to Malcolm)
 How does that happen? How can the one personality know sign language, and the other one doesn't?
 (half to herself)
 They're so different, it's amazing.

MALCOLM

What's more amazing is that deep down, there is no "they."

Holly shakes her head. Sometimes, she can't quite believe it.

MALCOLM

Not to complicate things further... but if Delilah were to get her hearing back... have you given any thought to what happens then?
 (off her confusion)
 What happens to Bob?

HOLLY

What do you mean? What happens?

MALCOLM

Maybe nothing. On the other hand...
 (shrugs)
 Put it this way: Bob seems to exist because of Earl's guilt over deafening his daughter. But what happens once his daughter is, strictly speaking, no longer deaf?

Holly listens intently, her eyes fixed on Malcolm.

MALCOLM

At that point, does Bob go away?
Does he cease to exist?

Seeing her reaction to this, he regrets it and backtracks.

MALCOLM

I shouldn't... I mean, it's not a
theory, really. Just a question.

Holly's eyes lower. Just a question... but somehow she senses
that it's true. And it leaves her more miserable than ever.

98 EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - NIGHT 98

Earl's old Chevy putters past like a motorboat, headed home.

99 INT. EARL'S BEATER - NIGHT 99

Rodeo Bob drives. He keeps his hands in a weird position on
the wheel -- as if accustomed to flying some spacecar from
"The Jetsons." Delilah sleeps in her car seat behind him.

Holly rides shotgun. She has a brand new, boxed BREAD MACHINE
on her lap. It's got a big red bow atop it.

Dismayed by this "antique" he's driving, Bob suddenly holds
forth, breaking the silence.

RODEO BOB

So, lemme get this straight: you
people gather every dead prehistoric
animal you can find... you brew them
into this insanely toxic potion with
which you power your vehicles... then
you take still more dead animals and
adorn your seats and dashboards with
their flayed skin. Wow. Wow.

(a beat)

Holly, you listening?

Holly barely stirs.

HOLLY

Flayed skin. Yeah.

RODEO BOB

It's just so... primitive. You're
like some tribe of death fetishists.

HOLLY
 First off, these seats are vinyl.
 Earl, could we maybe take a short
 break from talking, please?

Rodeo Bob frowns, affronted.

RODEO BOB
 "Earl?"

HOLLY
Bob. I'm sorry. Bob. I-I...

She squeezes his leg. They both lapse back into silence.
 Holly turns her attention to the bread machine in her lap.
 The card reads "*From you're Lover-Man! XXXOOO, Earl.*"

Staring out the windshield again, Holly makes up her mind.

100 EXT. EARL'S HOUSE - MORNING 100

The rising sun glints off the windows. Several big SUITCASES
 sit at the end of the driveway. A car pulls in beside them,
 filling the frame BRIGHT YELLOW.

101 INT. EARL'S HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - MORNING 101

Earl sleeps alone under the rumpled covers of the queen bed.
 A car door SLAMS outside, stirring him. He rises, wincing and
 pressing a hand to his injured side. He realizes where he is.

EARL
 'Hell I'm back here for..?

He finds his hearing aid and plants it in his ear. Hearing
 faint VOICES outside, he pads over to the window.

What he sees gets his eyes open fully. It wakes him up quick.

102 EXT. EARL'S HOUSE - MORNING - CONTINUOUS 102

Out here on the street, a CAB DRIVER loads suitcases into the
 trunk of a taxi. Holly hurries toward it, weighted down with
 still more bags and holding Delilah firmly by the hand.

Earl hurries -- *ouch, ouch, ouch* -- barefoot down the gravel
 driveway behind them, wearing only his boxers and undershirt.

EARL
 Wait a minute! Where y'all going?

HOLLY

I left a note for you. Go read it.

Holly puts Delilah into the back seat, sliding in after her. Earl reaches for the door, meaning to hold it open, but Holly is quicker -- she yanks it shut and slaps the lock.

The cabbie rounds to his driver's door, eyeing Earl curiously.

EARL

(rapping at the window)

Holly? Holly?! HOLLY! --

Holly sets her jaw and rolls down her window a crack.

HOLLY

I don't love you, Earl. I don't even like you.

(off his confusion)

If you have to ask why, you'll never understand.

Earl doesn't know how to respond. He slowly shakes his head, his face going numb. Delilah peeks up at him past her mom.

EARL

I-I thought we were getting better.

(off the silence)

What happened last night..?

Holly softens, just a little. She stares up at her husband, sad and wistful.

HOLLY

Be Rodeo Bob... night and day.

With that, she nods to the cab driver. The taxi motors off, leaving Earl behind. He takes a couple of steps into the street, watching it get smaller.

Earl stands motionless, not knowing what to do. He absently snaps his fingers, his arms dangling at his sides. After a moment, he turns and slowly wanders back to the house.

103 INT. EARL'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - MORNING

103

A NOTE lies on the table. Earl shuffles zombie-like into frame, picking it up. Reading aloud:

EARL

... "Don't love you and don't like you, neither."

He sets down the note, staring into space. He notices the bread machine he bought for Holly. Still in its box with the red bow atop it, it rests on the counter.

Earl blinks, remembering the INITIALS. Glancing down at his boxers, he pulls open his waistband. We TILT UP to his face as he checks inside his shorts. Hunting... searching... panicking now...

104 EXT. EARL'S HOUSE - MORNING - CONTINUOUS 104

All the way out here, a heartbroken YELL splits the silence.

EARL (O.S.)
NO-OOOOOOOOOOO!! --

105 EXT. COUNTY LANDFILL - DAY 105

RUMBLING BULLDOZERS drown out Earl's *cri de coeur*. In f.g., the enormous machines plow back and forth.

Over near the parking lot of this hundred-acre sea of garbage, Earl's own bulldozer sits motionless, tiny in the distance.

CLOSE - EARL'S BULLDOZER

The engine idles, its exhaust flap CLANG-CLANGING like a drowsy heartbeat. Earl sits on the bottom step, his elbows on the knees of his rubber waders and his cell phone to his ear.

Earl listens a moment... then hangs up and hits speed-dial. He listens, then hangs up again. He's getting frustrated.

INTERCUT WITH:

106 INT. BOOTS' MANSION - DEN - CONTINUOUS 106

Boots is still wearing his rumpled clothes from last night. He lies here on the leather sofa, massaging his temples. Nearby, the desk phone RINGS.

Patsy stands over it, ready. Scowling, she snatches up the receiver and SLAMS it down again. A beat of silence.

RI-IIING -- there it goes once more. Boots growls and bolts off the couch. He reaches around Patsy and snatches it up.

BOOTS
YOU PEED IN YOUR OWN WELL!

BAM! He hangs up and yanks the phone jack right out of the wall. He flops back onto the sofa, glaring up at the ceiling.

Earl stares open-mouthed at the cell phone in his hand, looking vaguely ill. *What in HELL is going on with everybody?*

Noticing something, Earl stands up and shades his eyes against the sun. He waves both arms high over his head.

EARL
Hey DUKE! DUKEY! --

Over in the employee parking lot, DUKEY (just arrived) exits his pickup truck. Dukey shoots one withering glance our way, then makes it a point not to look at Earl again.

Late for work, he heads for his very own waiting EARTHMOVER. Earl wades a few steps closer through the knee-deep garbage.

EARL
DUKEY! WHAT HAPPENED?!

No answer -- Dukey climbs aboard and ROARS off. Earl bites his lip and spins around, scrambling up into the cab of his dozer. He stomps the throttle, giving CHASE.

Thick smoke pours out of the exhaust. Hydraulics hiss as Earl raises his huge steel blade into RAMMING POSITION. He pours on the coal, grinding up everything in his path.

Dukey glances over his shoulder. He veers right, trying to shake Earl but acting nonchalant about it. In true NASCAR fashion, Earl dogs Dukey's tail, closing the gap.

CLOSE ANGLE - LANDFILL OFFICE

Windows RATTLE. The two dozers thunder past, reflected in the glass of a door marked "Supervisor." Earl's Joe Don Baker-ish BOSS appears, his eyes narrowing.

ON THE MOVE - THE BULLDOZERS

It's like "Ben Hur" with V-8 diesels. Earl's blade CLANGS the back of Dukey's machine as he makes his move alongside him. The two trade paint, Dukey desperate to get away.

He hits the brakes, letting Earl overshoot him. Dukey rotates one-eighty on his treads. But Earl -- in his faster, wheeled unit -- loops back around and steams straight at him.

Earl PLOWS into Dukey's side like the Titanic. Dukey hangs onto his roll cage for dear life as Earl dozes him thirty feet sideways, gouging a deep red rut in the clay.

They both cut their engines. Earl sits here breathing hard and glaring at Dukey... who gives him a big, pissy shrug.

DUKEY

What?

EARL

What HAPPENED... last NIGHT?!

DUKEY

Ohh, let's see -- you got us all thrown in jail. Swore out complaints against us for false imprisonment. Torture. Yeah, that about does 'er.

Earl is stunned. It takes real effort for him to speak.

EARL

It ain't me. I keep saying it, over and over. It ain't me!

Dukey snorts in disgust.

DUKEY

You know, I seen where they can hypnotize people into thinking they're chickens, or Fred Astaire. Hypnotize some guy that he's a woman, he'll give hisself a breast exam right there on national teevee.

(intense)

But they always say -- you can't hypnotize a law-abiding person to murder someone. Can't make somebody do what's not in 'em, deep down.

Dukey glances at their angry BOSS. He picks through knee-high garbage, beelining their way as fast as he can.

DUKEY

It's in you. Bearing witness against your friends. Pallin' around with that black sonafabitch. It's you.

Earl swallows and shakes his head, his eyes going unfocused. Below them, the Boss trips and cusses. He brushes filth off his trouser leg and scowls up at Dukey's wrecked bulldozer.

BOSS

Boy --

EARL

-- Yep. Fired. Got it.

Earl climbs down and walks past the man without so much as a look. Off him, wandering through the crud toward his car...

107 EXT. MALCOLM'S HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

107

The waning sun lights just the tops of the pine trees.

Malcolm stands out here, watering his side yard with the garden hose. It's just pretense, of course. He glances at the impending sunset, checks his watch.

He keeps a close eye on Earl's house. All's quiet over there.

108 INT. EARL'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - LATE AFTERNOON

108

An empty BEER BOTTLE thuds and rolls across the Congoleum.

Up above, we find Earl slumped low at the table, dead drunk. He stares through half-closed eyes at his new BREAD MACHINE. It hums softly, wisps of steam rising from it.

Earl's been busy: scattered amongst the dozen empty beer bottles are loaves and loaves of fresh-baked, unsliced BREAD.

He extends his fingers... slo-owly impaling them through the side of the nearest loaf. He shoves his entire hand in there, feeling around. Link by link, he withdraws a GOLD CHAIN.

On the end of it, baked inside, is his antique POCKET WATCH.

Earl holds it to his ear. Still ticking. He thumbs it open and checks the time. He sees he doesn't have much left.

Rising unsteadily, he wanders to the window. Standing unseen, he glowers out at Malcolm. Softly, under his breath:

EARL

I know who I am. I'm me. I am me.
Ain't friend to no sneaky, nosy...
carpetbagging into my neighborhood
with your, with your, with your
sideburns! Looking like some kinda
African goddamned...

Earl glances to a nearby calendar of famous Civil War scenes. It shows the month of July, and the BATTLE OF THE CRATER.

Prominently displayed is GENERAL AMBROSE BURNSIDE -- he of the bushy muttonchops to which he lent his name.

EARL
... Ambrose Burnside.

Earl leans closer. His eyes drift from the General himself to a cutaway of "BURNSIDE'S TUNNEL." There above are the hapless Confederates. There below is the four tons of BLACK POWDER.

Earl is riveted. He murmurs to himself.

EARL
I give as good as I get, Ambrose.
Yes, I do.

A big idea is forming. He turns away from the rendering of the TUNNEL, leaving us to linger on it a moment more.

A box of THUMB TACKS gets grabbed from a drawer. Sunset is almost here as Earl seats himself at the table. He kicks off his shoes and strips off his socks so that he's barefoot.

CLOSE ON Earl's BARE FEET. All around them, Earl spreads TACKS on the floor. Emptying the entire box, he folds his arms and sits here, waiting. He smiles to himself.

With that, his head slowly lowers. The transformation begins.

109 EXT. EARL'S HOUSE - SUNSET - CONTINUOUS 109

The last sliver of SUN submerges behind the horizon.

RODEO BOB (O.S.)
Saluton! Hello..?

We hear a chair SCRAPE backward as Bob rises. And then...

RODEO BOB (O.S.)
Ow!-Ow!-Ow!-Oww! OWWW! --

110 INT./EXT. VARIOUS LOCATIONS - DAY/NIGHT 110

What follows is a MONTAGE set to MUSIC. In various CUTS:

The midday sun blazes over a hardware store. Earl's beater smokes into the lot and parks sideways across two handicapped spots. A man on a mission, Earl limps/runs into the store.

Earl loads up on supplies -- a hundred yards of EXTENSION CORD, an electric JACKHAMMER. He hefts it with a mean grin.

Earl limps up the steps of the COUNTY COURTHOUSE. Alone in the elevator, he shuts the doors on an ELDERLY BLACK LADY. This tickles him.

In the Office of Water and Sewerage, Earl pores over old civil engineering plans. CLOSE ON a schematic of DRAINAGE PIPING.

Earl shoves the blueprints onto a photocopier. The bright light from its scanner leaks between his fingers and scrolls across his smirking face. MATCH-CUT to...

... A time-lapse SUN scrolling across the sky behind Earl's house. BLIP! The lawn jockey DISAPPEARS at sunset.

Now, a series of linked BOOBY TRAPS: Rodeo Bob walks through the house wearing a man's silk kimono. Very metrosexual. CLOSE ON a thread of FISHING LINE strung across the bottom of a doorway. Bob trips and falls on his face.

In the kitchen, Bob reaches in the freezer for the frozen peas, pressing them to his aching forehead. But then -- BAM! A BOWLING BALL drops out onto his toes.

Hopping into the bathroom on his one good foot, Bob lands in a slick patch of GREASE. His leg goes completely out from under him and he lands flat on his back with a house-shaking THUD!

Lying here motionless, wondering if he's crippled, he glances to the open can of CRISCO that rests on the edge of the tub.

That tears it. Battered and bruised, Rodeo Bob is pissed. Rising to his feet and peering hard at himself in the mirror, he runs a hand through his thick head of hair. *I'll show YOU*, he's thinking as he grabs for the electric CLIPPERS.

Out in the yard, night DISSOLVES into day. CLOSE ON the lawn jockey as it gets chunked into the ground, back in its usual spot. We TILT UP to find Earl, bruised and battered...

... And as BALD as Daddy Warbucks. Only, he doesn't know it yet. Freshly risen and still half-asleep, he yawns and scratches at his chest... gradually coming to realize something is amiss. He pulls up his t-shirt to reveal his chest is SHAVED CLEAN. Smooth as a Moroccan peg-boy.

AAHHH! Horrified, he puts a hand to his forehead... then realizes there's no hair up there, either. SHIT! SHIT!!

ZOOOOOM! CUT TO a DUMP TRUCK roaring past us, towing a yellow BACKHOE on a trailer. It speeds through traffic, weaving dangerously and wailing its AIR HORN. Cars scatter.

Earl drives this truck with one hand, rubbing his cue ball head with the other and scowling. He keeps blowing his HORN.

CLOSE ON the steel bucket of this rental backhoe as it knifes into Earl's lawn. Earl is at the controls, expertly scooping up red clay. He glares across the yard at Malcolm, who sits on his own back steps, watching with growing curiosity.

We PUSH IN ON the LAWN JOCKEY as it disappears and reappears, disappears and reappears. Off time passing...

END OF MONTAGE.

111 EXT. EARL'S HOUSE - BACKYARD - EVENING

111

A few days later. The backhoe is still and silent, its arm extended deep into one corner of a big HOLE Earl has dug. Into frame wanders Delilah, headed for the edge.

HOLLY

Honey, no --

Holly grabs her daughter by the hand and backs her off. Malcolm is here, too. All three of them stand pondering this excavation. It's maybe fifteen by twenty, and six feet deep.

RODEO BOB (O.S.)

Hey, guys. Saluton.

Holly turns, and her eyes go wide. She stifles a sob.

Rodeo Bob exits the house, limping toward them. He looks like he's been used for punching practice by the entire UFC. He holds an ice pack to some fresh wound on the back of his head.

RODEO BOB

You can come inside, if you like.
I just found the last booby trap.

His every step pains him. He hoists Delilah -- but as he tries to blow his signature fart sound on her belly, his back twinges and he has to set her down fast.

RODEO BOB

Arghh. Ah. Sorry.

He smiles and signs to Delilah, who isn't even "listening." She stares up at Bob, bewildered and troubled. What with his bald head, his cuts and bruises, she hardly recognizes him.

It hurts Holly deeply, seeing Bob like this. She wills herself not to cry as he kisses her hello. Bob doesn't seem to notice as he turns his attention to the hole.

RODEO BOB

Yeah, so what's up with this, huh?
(ponders it, frowning)
Why would he build a pool..?

Seeing Holly is too choked up to respond, Malcolm steps in.

MALCOLM

Uh. That's what we were wondering ourselves, Bob. I was thinking you might possibly... have some insight?

RODEO BOB

Mmm. Wow, you're definitely asking the wrong guy.

All of a sudden, his nose starts to BLEED.

RODEO BOB

Ah, dammit. Again?!

Holly fumbles for a Kleenex and holds it to his face.

MALCOLM

Tilt your head back. Tilt it back.
C'mon, let's sit you down.

He and Holly guide Bob into a nearby patio chair. Holly gently pinches his nose.

HOLLY

Just sit still and relax, okay?
(very quietly; to Malcolm)
I've gotta go back to Earl.

RODEO BOB

What? NO! What, are kidding?!

MALCOLM

Keep your head tilted --

RODEO BOB

He's an asshole! That's rewarding bad behavior, is what that is!

HOLLY

What choice do I have? You're gonna... he's gonna... at this rate he'll wind up killing himself! And then where will you be?!

(swallows hard)

It's either that, or I have him committed.

RODEO BOB

Well, there you go! Do that!

Holly throws up her hands to Malcolm, who gives it a try.

MALCOLM

Bob... committing Earl means committing you. Understand?

RODEO BOB

Please. They can't hold me. I'm completely sane.

(off Holly's reaction)

What? So they let me out at night.

HOLLY

I need to, uh...

(clears her throat)

Need to get more tissues.

It's a good excuse -- as her eyes fill with TEARS she doesn't want anyone to see. Malcolm notices, however. He stares after her as she walks to the house, silently weeping.

With his head craned back to stanch the nosebleed, Bob's eyes are on the waning MOON overhead. He studies it thoughtfully.

RODEO BOB

Hey, Malcolm?

MALCOLM

Yeah.

RODEO BOB

The other evening you said that I'm here to put something right.

MALCOLM

Yeah. Maybe. Why?

Bob lowers his head so he can look his friend in the eye.

RODEO BOB
 If you've got any ideas, I'm all
 ears.

Malcolm thinks about this, debating with himself. Finally...
 meaningfully... he looks from Bob to Delilah.

Following Malcolm's eyes, Bob looks at her, too. The little
 girl sits in a chair, slowly kicking her legs as she studies
 both adults. She's not too sure about them at the moment.

Off Rodeo Bob, who realizes what Malcolm is getting at:

112

INT. BOOTS' MANSION - ENTRY HALL - NIGHT

112

The DOORBELL echoes through the house, chiming the first
 twelve notes of "Dixie" like a lugubrious carillon. Boots
 clicks across the marble floor, on his way to answer it.

He swings open the tall front door... and his expression
 darkens immediately. A nervous Rodeo Bob stands before him.

RODEO BOB
 Salut --
 (catches himself)
 Uh. Hi.

Boots frowns up at Bob's bald head. He squints at his bruises
 and Band-Aids. Still, he says nothing. From its hiding place
 beside the door, Bob picks up Earl's familiar LAWN JOCKEY.

RODEO BOB
 Brought you a peace offering.

Patsy appears over Boots' shoulder. She's just as pissed off
 as he is. She can't believe the nerve of this guy.

RODEO BOB
 Hi, Patsy.
 (off the stony silence)
 Well, you're both very busy, so I'll
 make it brief. I'm hoping you'll
 find it in your hearts to put aside
 any past unpleasantness between us
 and, uh...
 (sounding breezy)
 ... And pay for Delilah's cochlear
 implant.

Never once taking his eyes off his visitor, Boots addresses
 his wife, matter-of-fact as can be.

BOOTS
 Sugar, fetch me my twelve-gauge
 Mossberg, wouldja please?

PATSY
 Sure thing. Whatcha want for a load?

BOOTS
 Mmmm. Not rock salt... not dove.
 Let's go with double-aught buck.

PATSY
 Buckshot it is.

Patsy climbs their "Gone With The Wind" staircase behind him.
 Off Boots, glaring at Bob ice-cold...

113 EXT. BOOTS' MANSION - DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

113

Moments later. Tripping into frame over a flower bed, Bob
 backs toward his car. He's being run off by Boots -- who has
 a shotgun in one hand and Earl's lawn jockey in the other.

RODEO BOB
 Hear me out, will you?! It's in your
 best interest!

BOOTS
 YOUR best interest is me not blowing
 hole number two in your ass. Which I
 will if you don't get off my land!
 (hurls the lawn jockey)
 And take that with you! Mine's
 bigger anyhow!

Bob ducks the jockey -- which CRASHES off of Earl's beater,
 breaking in half against the hood.

RODEO BOB
 I-I'll drop the false imprisonment
 charges. You won't go to court!

BOOTS
 Hell, boy -- I LIVE for court! I eat
 court for breakfast! Bring it on!
 (realizes; snorts)
 YOU ain't gonna be there regardless!
 Ain't no night court in Prince George
 County, you moon-living weirdo FREAK!

With that, Boots racks the pump on his shotgun -- *CHHH-CHIK!*
 Rodeo Bob raises his palms, trying to get him to listen.

RODEO BOB
 You want Earl back, don't you?! Day
 AND night? This may be the way.

Boots takes aim... but then frowns.

BOOTS
 The hell you talking about?

RODEO BOB
 I've got it on sound medical
 authority that if Delilah gets back
 her hearing... you might just get
 back your friend.

BOOTS
 What "medical authority" says this?

Bob considers lying... but instead, he answers courageously.

RODEO BOB
 Malcolm Blevins.

Boots makes a face like he's sniffing sour milk.

BOOTS
 Ah-hah. Jungle Jones says it's in
 the voodoo -- so lemme just break out
 my checkbook, huh? Piss on that.

Bob's eyes flash with anger -- he really hates this guy.

RODEO BOB
 It's about lessening the guilt Earl
 feels for deafening his daughter.
 It's... I dunno. Psychological.
 (bitter)
 Of course, you could do it simply
 because Delilah's your goddaughter,
 and you love her.

They stare at one another. Bob's irate sincerity isn't lost
 on Boots, who desperately wants to believe.

Boots lowers the shotgun. He stands here nervously tapping it
 with his fingers -- trying to figure out what to do.

BOOTS
 Shit, boy -- you been shaving with a
 putty knife?
 (softening)
 Go on home now. Lemme think.

Having spoken his peace, Rodeo Bob gives in and slowly heads for his car. We linger on Boots, who watches him go.

114 EXT. EARL'S HOUSE - NIGHT 114

CLOSE as -- CHUNK! -- the old plaster lawn jockey gets jammed into his usual spot in the yard. Now, however, all that's left of him is his body, standing there jaunty with his hands on his hips. The black minstrel-faced head is gone.

We RACK to Rodeo Bob. Hands in his pockets, he wanders away from us, headed for Earl's front door. The waning moon glows yellow overhead.

115 INT. EARL'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT 115

Holly sits at the table with the cordless phone to her ear. She's turned away from us slightly. Her head is in her hand, and she speaks softly.

HOLLY

Yeah. Yeah.

(listening)

Yeah, he told me that, too. I've heard it.

(listening)

Alright. I guess we'll be in touch. And, uh... thank you.

She hangs up and turns to face Rodeo Bob, who stands here in the doorway behind her.

HOLLY

I was wondering where you went.

(a beat)

Boots. He says he'll pay.

RODEO BOB

Good.

Nodding, he goes to the sink to pour himself a glass of water. Certainly, this is wonderful news... yet Holly is restrained. Something's eating at her. Finally:

HOLLY

You should have talked to me first.

RODEO BOB

What's there to talk about?

HOLLY
 (surprised; a beat)
 You going away.

RODEO BOB
 It's about time, isn't it?

This isn't something she wants to hear, and he knows it. Eventually, feeling her eyes on him, he turns to face her.

RODEO BOB
 Look, don't get sentimental about this. Me being here was a mistake. I don't belong here. I never did.

He's very casual about it. Nonchalant. This throws Holly. Blinking and frowning, she studies him closely.

RODEO BOB
 No offense. It's just that in the future, we're not big on personal attachments.

HOLLY
 Ah.

She rises to her feet, some of her hurt now turning to anger.

HOLLY
 We'll get out of your way, then.

RODEO BOB
 Yeah, it's pretty late, isn't it. I'd better get you back.

She exits the kitchen. As she goes, Bob's devil-may-care attitude ebbs away.

His eyes stay on her into the distance, down the short hall to the other end of the little house. In Delilah's bedroom, Holly gently lifts the sleeping girl into her arms.

Judging by his expression as he watches, we realize Bob is lying. He does care... but he's trying to break it off clean.

As he stands here in the kitchen, once more his nose begins to BLEED. Ah, *shit*. He pulls open a low cabinet, but finds only an empty paper towel dispenser.

Quickly fumbling for something to sop up the blood, he grabs the nearest paper he can find -- a crumpled sheet atop a pile of unpaid bills and junk mail.

CLOSE -- this is an invoice from a demolition supply firm, with merchandise signed received by Earl Thornton. It's for "DYNAMITE, stick form, one 48-count case."

We alone read this. As it gets held against Bob's face... BLOOD from his nose soaks through, blotting out the words.

Off this image:

116 INT. DRAIN PIPE - DAY 116

All is darkness. We hear a muffled grind of heavy machinery -- then BOOOM! Bright sunlight pierces the top of the frame. Chunks of concrete fall, torn loose by the shiny steel teeth of a BACKHOE BUCKET. It roots around down here with a ROAR.

117 EXT. EARL'S HOUSE - BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS 117

Earl, sitting in the operator's seat of the backhoe, has finally hit what he's digging for. In short order, he reams out a man-size breach in the pipe, then pulls the digging arm up out of the hole. He kills the engine, ready for phase two.

About to descend down into the excavation, Earl suddenly has a thought. Examining the grimy t-shirt and jeans he's wearing, he finds them lacking. He glances to his house.

118 INT. DRAIN PIPE - DAY - A HALF-HOUR LATER 118

The pipe is dry, and maybe four feet in diameter. Through the ragged hole above, knee-length LEATHER BOOTS drop into frame. It's Earl, now dressed head-to-toe in his CONFEDERATE UNIFORM.

He lowers a few supplies into the pipe: flashlight, tape measure, compact jackhammer. Last comes a crate stencilled "DANGER! DYNAMITE." He sets this down carefully.

The tape measure is one of those huge spool-type deals good for a couple hundred feet. Earl anchors the end of it here at the hole. Then, referring to his copy of the drainage plans, he duckwalks down the tunnel, tape reeling out behind him and his flashlight lighting his way. He hums "Dixie" as he goes.

As Earl works his way smaller and smaller into the distance, we CRANE UP past the dynamite... up, up, up through the deep clay pit. Once we crest into the overgrown grass of Earl's backyard, we immediately sight where he's headed.

He's aimed in a perfect beeline straight for MALCOLM'S HOUSE.

And what timing! Because just now, the beat-up 280Z pulls into its driveway. Malcolm climbs out. Glancing around for Earl but not seeing him, Malcolm heads for his own backyard.

119 INT. DRAIN PIPE - DAY 119

Earl shines his flashlight on the tape measure, studying the footage he's spooling out. A moment's uncertainty as he does the math in his head. *Yeah, yeah, that's right*, he concludes. He chalks a fat red X on the concrete above.

120 EXT. MALCOLM'S HOUSE - BACKYARD - DAY 120

Malcolm backs out of his tool shed, pulling an old LAWNMOWER into view. Plugging earbuds in his ears, he turns on his iPod and clips it to his belt. He hunkers down and gives his mower's rope-start a jerk. Then another. Then another.

121 INT. DRAIN PIPE - DAY 121

BRR-RUB-BUB-BUB-BUB! The sound of the MOWER sputtering to life can be heard way down here, faint and echoing. Earl pays it no heed as he finishes dragging his electric JACKHAMMER the hundred or so feet to where X marks the spot. The yards of extension cord trailing behind make the job tougher.

Earl lies flat on his back and dons protective goggles. Jamming the hammer into the center of the red X, he lets her rip. It's as loud as a boiler factory down here. The jackhammer chatters away, chiselling bits of concrete that rain into Earl's mouth. He spits them out and keeps going.

122 EXT. MALCOLM'S HOUSE - SIDE YARD - DAY 122

As seen in profile: Malcolm mows a strip of grass, entering frame on our left, then exiting on our right. After a beat or two of empty frame, back he comes from right to left.

He bops along, singing to the music on his iPod. Occasionally he shoots a glance toward Earl's place. Idle curiosity.

123 INT. DRAIN PIPE - DAY 123

Earl makes headway. Putting his back into it, he manages to break through the pipe. He spits out a mouthful of dust and shines his light, poking around up there. RED CLAY patters onto his uniform. Seeing this, he gives a mean grin.

EARL

Yeah, I'm coming, you sonofabitch.

The earth above is soft. Probing it, Earl gradually manages to get his arm through the hole all the way up to his elbow.

124 EXT. MALCOLM'S HOUSE - SIDE YARD - DAY 124

Malcolm mows back and forth, sweeping closer and closer to the side of his house. As he progresses...

... We ADJUST to a patch of lawn one mere mower-width away. While we watch, this ground visibly SINKS a couple of inches, as if compressed beneath an invisible footstep.

It's three feet short of Malcolm's house -- just missing it.

125 INT. DRAIN PIPE - CONTINUOUS 125

Down below, Earl reaches... reaches... forcing his arm all the way to the shoulder. A beam of SUNLIGHT falls upon him now. Earl frowns, not expecting this. *SUN? What the hell?!*

The MOWER is louder, too. Tongue stuck in the corner of his mouth for leverage, Earl shoves his arm one... more... inch.

126 EXT. MALCOLM'S HOUSE - SIDE YARD - CONTINUOUS 126

Like a redneck version of that great shot in "The Third Man," one single FINGER rises in macro closeup, reaching up out of the lawn. Meanwhile, out of focus in the b.g...

... Malcolm's MOWER is headed directly for it.

Malcolm's head is turned sideways, his eyes on Earl's house. *Where is he today?* Malcolm wonders.

Over the buzz of the mower we hear a TING, like the sound of the blade hitting a twig. Something zips inside the grass bag, smacking the perforated fabric with a little dab of RED.

Malcolm takes one more step before his leg abruptly SINKS into the ground up to his thigh. He yells out in surprise.

The mower keeps rolling. With no one's hand on the safety bar, the engine goes dead. Out of the sudden silence comes a bellow of PAIN -- faint at first, but growing LOUDER.

Malcolm looks around, wide-eyed. He manages to free himself.

Savage CURSING echoes up out of the small hole at his feet. He drops to his knees and peers down into it, breathing fast. Sounds of grunting and scraping recede into the distance.

Malcolm blinks. *What--the--FUCK?!* As if following the sounds, he slowly swivels his head toward Earl's backyard.

Sure enough... WHAAAAHH!! Across the way, rising up out of his backhoe excavation, Earl materializes in full Confederate regalia. He stands there filthy, panting and swaying, gritting his teeth and clutching his hand tight.

Outraged, he glares daggers at Malcolm. Finding his voice:

EARL

You cut off my damn FINGER! --

Malcolm's eyes narrow. He turns and looks at his mower.

MALCOLM

Ah, shit.

Malcolm yanks loose the grass bag. Off him shaking out the clippings and beginning a frantic search...

127 INT. MALCOLM'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY 127

CLOSE ON the styrofoam cooler as he dumps in a bag of ice. Onto this bed of cubes, he gingerly sets Earl's FINGER. Blades of grass still stick to it. The lid gets slapped in place -- "ATTENTION! HUMAN CORNEAS!" it says.

128 EXT. MALCOLM'S HOUSE - DRIVEWAY - DAY 128

Malcolm rushes the cooler out to his Datsun and sets it in the back seat. Earl stands by, clutching his hand. His eyes are starting to glass over.

EARL

I don't want no help from YOU!
Gimme back my finger!

Malcolm holds open the passenger door, glaring at him.

EARL

Hell, no! I ain't riding in no
spook-mobile! Call a ambulance!

Oh, that does it. Malcolm suddenly snatches hold of Earl and SWINGS him around by his lapels. The way he stuffs him into the 280Z is a thing of beauty. Earl barely has time to YELP.

129 EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY 129

WHHHAAAAAUGH! The old sports car whips past, losing a hubcap.

INTERCUT WITH:

130 INT. DATSUN 280Z - DRIVING FAST - DAY 130

Earl squeezes his four-fingered hand under his armpit, wincing in pain. Overcome with fear and loathing, he leans as far from Malcolm as the width of the car will allow.

MALCOLM

You wanna tell me what the hell you were doing underneath my lawn?

EARL

Oh, you gonna find out!

MALCOLM

I'm gonna find out?

EARL

Yep, uh-huh. Ohh, yeah.

(nods to himself)

Soon as I get my hand tended.

You are gonna find out BIG-time.

Malcolm stares at him flatly.

MALCOLM

You do realize you've pretty much lost the element of surprise.

Earl frowns, sullen. He hadn't thought of that.

EARL

That's one opinion.

MALCOLM

What was it you were planning to do? Blow my house up?

EARL

Who told you that?! --

(outraged)

You devious black bastard! You knew

I was down there the entire time!

You mowed at me on purpose!

Malcolm rolls his eyes -- *unbelievable*.

EARL

Who told you? Was it that faggoty
Rodeo Bob?! Astro-faggot --

MALCOLM

(hides his interest)
How would Rodeo Bob know? What's he
got to do with you?

EARL

He stole away my entire goddamned
life! That's what!

MALCOLM

How so?

EARL

"How so?" He took away EVERYTHING,
that's how so! He took my wife, took
my child! Lost me my best friend! I
got NOTHING now! --
(softer)
Nothing.

He glares out his window, furious. He struggles hard not to
choke up. Malcolm watches him from the corner of his eye.
Ever the good therapist, he waits for Earl to speak.

EARL

And you helped him.
(sneering)
What is this -- the Negro's Revenge?
Calling it science now, calling it
medicine... saying "Oh, he hates
black people. Well obviously, he's
sick! Something wrong with him!"

Malcolm squashes down his own anger -- tries not to let this
get personal. Tries to rise above. His voice is calm.

MALCOLM

You feel you're healthy?

EARL

I'm fine. I'm me. I am fine.

MALCOLM

Living broken in half? So full of
hatred that you need to flee from it
every night? You need to escape all
the way to the moon..?

EARL

You don't even got us straight, do you you dumb bastard? I'm me, I'm Earl! Right here! I ain't nobody else!

MALCOLM

You're Rodeo Bob.

Earl's face flushes red.

EARL

FUCK you! --

MALCOLM

You're Rodeo Bob.

Earl reaches with his good fist to swing at Malcolm -- but Malcolm is quicker. He SLAMS on the brakes.

The Z goes SLIDING to a stop on the edge of a tobacco field. It raises a fat cloud of dust which lazily rolls past, beams of sun filtering through. There's nobody around for miles.

Malcolm GRABS Earl's collar -- gives him one firm shake to let him know who's boss. Cowed, Earl slowly lowers his fist.

MALCOLM

You are Rodeo Bob. I didn't make him up. Your wife didn't make him up. You did. Isn't it time you admit it?

EARL

Get me to the hospital...

MALCOLM

Why do you hate black people?

EARL

Oh, Jesus Christ! Are you serious?

MALCOLM

Sooner you answer, the sooner we get moving. What is it about us?

(off Earl's silence)

C'mon! Man up and say it to my face, you feel it so strongly! I'm in no hurry. I can sit here all day.

Over a barrel and hurting, Earl finally growls and gives in.

EARL

Shit, I don't know! I don't hate you anymore'n I hate the Jews or the gays or the Arabs or... Chinese or...

MALCOLM

... Just anyone who's different.

EARL

Anybody who's trying to take over!

(a beat)

There's a natural order here! Least, there used to be -- but NO, now the whole world's gone crazy and me and mine are getting left behind!

Wetbacks crawlin' across the border like roaches! Feminists yellin' for a woman president! Blacks like you who don't know their place -- and me, I'm expected to just suck it up, right?! Suck it up and disappear! HELL, no! Hell, no!

MALCOLM

So, you're scared.

(off Earl's look)

Yeah. You're scared.

Earl snorts and stares at Malcolm. He shakes his head.

EARL

What the hell kinda doctor are you, anyway? I'm sitting here bleeding to death and you're asking me why the sky is blue.

(full of contempt)

You ain't my kind, and I hate you. Period. Enda story.

Malcolm considers. It makes no sense, but at least it's honest. Finally, he starts the car. Earl smirks at him.

EARL

What, you gonna cure me of that?

MALCOLM

I wish I could. But that's for you.

(faint smile)

Either way, you're about to get one hell of an attitude adjustment.

Earl's eyes narrow -- he doesn't follow. Off him, wondering at this as Malcolm drives them away:

131 INT. COMMUNITY HOSPITAL - ER LOBBY - DAY 131

Electric doors slide open. Malcolm enters, carrying the styrofoam cooler. Earl stumbles in behind him clutching his hand and dripping little droplets of blood on the floor.

Earl looks around, wide-eyed. Quickly, he becomes aware that he's the ONLY WHITE MAN in sight.

Plus, he's the center of attention -- and not just because he's dressed in a Confederate uniform. Three black women, hospital EMPLOYEES, step up and take him by the elbows.

RECEPTIONIST

Oh my goodness, Bob! What happened?!

Clearly, they think they know him. Earl is stunned into docility. He meekly lets the women guide him into the ER.

132 INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS 132

Earl's POV: we pass DOCTORS and NURSES, all of them BLACK or INDIAN. We head toward an empty treatment bay. In it, waiting for us in his green surgical scrubs, stands...

... Malcolm's dad, DR. BLEVINS. We note the grim and ironic SATISFACTION in his eyes. His Dominican NURSE prepares a tray of surgical instruments. Razor-sharp and shiny, they send bright reflections dancing off the ceiling.

Saucer-eyed Earl looks from the scalpels to the familiar doc.

EARL

Oh, God.

He swoons. Many hands catch him, keep him from falling as we:

FADE TO BLACK.

133 INT. OPERATING ROOM - DAY 133

Bright, cold lights... a vitals monitor... trays and trays of instruments. At first, we think we're still in the community hospital, watching Dr. Blevins at work on Earl's hand.

Actually, we're not. "Tampa General Hospital," we notice on a screensaver (Tampa is, in fact, one of the premier facilities in the country for CI surgery). This place is The Ritz of operating rooms. Every high-tech medical gadget is here.

The patient is out of sight beneath a layer of blue sterile fabric. A large, plastic-wrapped microscope is poised above. The seated SURGEON presses her eyes to it as she works.

SURGEON

Number seven suction.

(a beat; under her breath)

Alright, Delilah. Looking good...

This is weeks later, and we're watching DELILAH receive her new COCHLEAR IMPLANT. (If you wish, you can watch this entire surgery on YouTube -- from start to finish, it's not even an hour. Truly amazing.)

SURGEON

Let's have the implant, please.

A NURSE carefully passes it to her. Off this unit, the size of a quarter, held in the surgeon's gloved fingers...

134 EXT. CENTRAL STATE HOSPITAL - AFTERNOON 134

White clouds. Blue sky. A LEGEND says "*One Month Later.*"

We TILT DOWN to find a series of formidable old buildings surrounded by high fences and razor wire. Signs warn against trespassing and picking up hitchhikers. The place looks like a prison. It pretty much is.

A familiar MERCEDES pulls up to the guard gate. After a quick check, it gets waved through.

135 EXT. CENTRAL STATE - GROUNDS - AFTERNOON 135

The sedan motors past PATIENTS wearing scrubs and slip-on canvas shoes. Here behind the tall fencing, they plod on their walkers or talk to themselves or sit staring into space.

The Mercedes parks by a day-release exit. An ATTENDANT sticks his head out of the building and waves -- *gimme a minute.*

136 INT. MERCEDES - AFTERNOON - CONTINUOUS 136

Boots nods to the man and waits. He's alone here in his car. Nervous. Remembering something, he reaches in the glove box and pulls out a particular CD -- *Hank Snow's Greatest Hits*. He loads it in the player as he looks up to see...

... Earl being led outside, shoulders slouched, eyes downcast. A huge BLACK ORDERLY brings him to Boots' car.

137 EXT. PETERSBURG STREET - AFTERNOON

137

Whether we remember it or not, this is the place where Earl and Boots rolled Malcolm's car. The Mercedes drives past it.

EARL (O.S.)

I tell you what -- it ain't right.
Keep me locked up all day and goddamn
Rodeo Bob gets to go free as a bird?
What kinda justice is that?

BOOTS (O.S.)

I know. It's insurance bullshit.
Just keep your nose clean, is all.
Prove you won't try to hurt yourself.

138 INT. MERCEDES - AFTERNOON - CONTINUOUS

138

Earl wears a plain dress shirt and trousers -- no belt, necktie or shoelaces. His hand is in a fiberglass cast with his reattached finger extended. The hair on his head is growing back, and the cuts and bruises are healed.

All in all, he looks okay -- save for the haunted expression in his eyes. Boots has their favorite HANK SNOW SONG playing, though Earl doesn't seem to notice.

EARL

Shit, I can't even grow a beard.
I been trying to grow a beard every
day, and every night he shaves it
off. Leaves hairs in the sink. I
leave a note: "I'm trying to grow a
beard." He don't care.

(soft)

Comes back smellin' like Holly...

Earl stares out the window. Boots eyes him hopefully.

BOOTS

We got the Battle of Sharpsburg
coming up in a month... you wanna be
out and ready for that.

(upbeat)

I think today's the day you lick it,
Bubba. Whaddya say -- you with me?

Earl manages a faint smile and a nod. Boots grins big and gives him a playful slug in the shoulder.

139 EXT. AUDIOLOGY CENTER - AFTERNOON

139

A mirrored glass building in an upscale medical park. Boots and Earl climb out of the Mercedes. On their way inside, Earl notices a familiar brown 280Z in the lot. *Oh, no.*

BOOTS

Yep. Your "neighbor" is here.

(sour)

I don't know what it is with Holly, having him around. I truly don't.

Earl shakes his head in disgust. As they keep walking...

... Earl sees something else. It's the blue-sky FULL MOON that hangs above the horizon. He lingers, staring up at it.

BOOTS

Whassa matter?

EARL

(a beat)

Nothing. I dunno.

As he stands here, we see TWO EARLS from head-to-toe. There's the real one... and then there's his dark REFLECTION that's cast by the smoked and mirrored glass of the building facade.

Earl snaps out of it and heads inside. Glancing from the moon back to his friend, a flicker of concern crosses Boots' face.

140 INT. EXAMINATION ROOM - AFTERNOON

140

Delilah sits on a exam table in this warm and cheerful pediatric suite. It's been weeks since her surgery, and the little girl has healed up fine. Right now, she's the center of attention and she's not sure why.

Holly smiles at Delilah, holds her hand -- nervous and excited. Patsy stands by, arms folded. She sneaks the occasional, disapproving glance at Malcolm.

Despite their personal animosities, all present are anxiously waiting for something big to happen. You can feel it in the air. They watch as an AUDIOLOGIST prepares his equipment.

AUDIOLOGIST

Okay. I think we're ready to start.

He says this to Holly, but it's Patsy who responds.

PATSY

Can we just give 'em a couple more minutes? It's real important her husband be here to see this.

Holly shares a look with Malcolm -- both of them resigned to the thought that today, Rodeo Bob is headed for oblivion.

The audiologist doesn't know any of that... but just then, Boots and Earl arrive. Tension and cold stares at Malcolm. Knowing that starting a race riot won't get him in good with his wife, Earl tries to focus on Holly, instead.

EARL

Hey.

She nods and turns back to their daughter. No love here. Earl gives a smile and a wave to Delilah... who shows only vague interest in him before her attention drifts elsewhere.

Chastened, Earl puts on a brave face for Patsy -- who gives him a quick hug and a thumbs-up.

AUDIOLOGIST

Is this everybody?

Holly nods and the man goes to work. Behind Delilah's right ear is a pink suture scar. The audiologist places a round PICKUP SENSOR atop it -- which magnetically stays in place.

Delilah wonders at this, but Holly gently stops her from pulling at it. Attached to the sensor by a thin wire is a tiny SPEECH PROCESSOR BOX. Holding it in his hand, the audiologist smiles at everyone momentarily.

AUDIOLOGIST

Alright, this is it. Who gets to say the first words?

Holly and Earl look to one another. A beat.

EARL

You go ahead.

Sounds good to Holly -- but Boots CLEARS his throat, getting their attention. Patsy speaks up, smiling but intense.

PATSY

Holly, I think maybe Earl should go first. If that's okay with you.

Not happy about it, Holly nonetheless gives in. These folks paid for the operation, after all.

With a frown and a flourish, she steps aside. Earl shuffles forward, as nervous as if this were open-mike night at the Grand Ol' Opry. He lowers his face toward the processor.

AUDIOLOGIST

Just speak in your normal voice.
It's sensitive enough, you don't have
to... yeah, just relax.
(said with a smile)
No "testing one-two-three" either,
alright? I can't tell you how many
people do that. Just say hello.

Earl nods and swallows. The others edge a little closer, just as antsy as he. The audiologist loves this part of the job.

AUDIOLOGIST

You ready? Here goes.

He softly clicks the switch. A tiny green light goes on. Earl finds that his mouth is bone-dry. But finally...

EARL

Hello, Delilah. How you doing,
Sweetheart?

Delilah blinks, and her eyes narrow. Surprise and confusion as she reacts to an entirely new SENSE.

A thrill goes through the room. Lots of quick inhalations. Earl breaks into a grin. This is the happiest we've seen him.

EARL

It's me, Sweetheart, it's your Daddy.
I'm talking to you, see? You hear me
talking to you..? Yeah..?

She does, but she can't quite make sense out of the sounds.

HOLLY

Hey Delilah, it's Mama. It's Mama.
See? My lips are moving, and you're
hearing the sounds!

Everybody finds this far more fascinating than Delilah does. To her it's somewhat interesting, but she's not too sure what to make of it. Boots and Patsy chime in.

BOOTS

Well hey there, goddaughter! --

PATSY

Hey girl, remember me? It's Patsy!

AUDIOLOGIST

Multiple voices won't work too well.
Let's try and keep it one at a time.

Boots and Patsy shut up. Everybody looks again to Earl.

EARL

Delilah, I uh... I love you. I love
you, Honey. Okay?

Not comprehending, Delilah reaches for her ear to fidget with the sensor. Holly gently stops her and the little girl SIGNS something. The two of them silently "talk" for a moment.

AUDIOLOGIST

(to Earl; kindly)

Of course, you realize it's going to
take training for her to interpret
what you're saying. Right now these
sensations inside her head aren't
"language" as far as she's concerned.
But no worries. It'll come.

Earl notices Delilah signing to MALCOLM now... and Malcolm fluently signing back. While Earl isn't able to communicate with his daughter, Malcolm has no problem at all.

Boots and Patsy watch, too. They don't like it.

BOOTS

What are they saying?

Holly hesitates, then gives them the short version.

HOLLY

She's just... she wants to go play.
She's getting tired. That's all.

EARL

No. That's not all.

Holly frowns at Earl, who is staring intently at Delilah's HANDS as they sign. His lips move a little... as if he's silently READING ALONG. Could he be? We CREEP IN on him as:

EARL

"I want Rodeo Bob." That's what she
keeps saying.

Holly turns and stares at Earl, amazed. Malcolm does, too.

BOOTS

What? How do you know that?

Earl doesn't answer. As he stands here watching his daughter, he looks so very miserable. So... lost.

Suddenly, he's headed for the door.

EARL
I gotta get some air.

BOOTS
Whoa! Earl!

Earl doesn't look back. Boots turns to the others, not sure what to do -- then follows. Holly looks to Malcolm, both of them wondering what this could mean.

141 EXT. AUDIOLOGY CENTER - AFTERNOON

141

Earl shoves open the door and strides into the parking lot, breathing fast. Boots comes jogging after him.

BOOTS
C'mon back now, Earl! This here's the moment of truth!

EARL
What "moment?" There is no "moment."

BOOTS
Whoa, talk to me, Bubba. Hold up.

Earl slows to a stop. His hands on his knees, he struggles to catch his breath. Boots takes him by the elbow.

BOOTS
Calm down before you get a cardiac. Just come over here and sit down.

He guides him to his Mercedes, where they both sit against the hood. Earl runs a hand through his short, returning hair.

EARL
I can't keep living like this.
(his voice cracking)
I am so... tired of it.

BOOTS
Of course you are. Of course. This other half -- it's gotta go away.

EARL
That's... that's not it, though.
That's not it. T-That's just...

BOOTS

What, Buddy? Tell me. What?

EARL

(a beat; realizes)

It's the hate. I'm so tired of the hate. It's just... exhausting. Boots, don't you ever feel that way?

BOOTS

What do you mean, "hate?"

Earl shrugs -- *c'mon!*

EARL

The blacks, the Jews, the this, the that! The, the...

BOOTS

(wary)

I don't go around "hating" everybody, Earl. The world is screwed up. It doesn't work right. I am... aware of that fact. I identify it, I never forget it. I do my best to keep my family safe from it. But that don't mean I'm full of hate.

Earl stares at him like he's a stranger. He shakes his head.

EARL

Well, I am. And I can't be. Not anymore. I-I...

(a beat)

This can't be all that I am.

Boots studies his friend closely, not sure where he's headed with this. Boots checks the sun, then his watch.

BOOTS

Look Buddy, I don't know about all that, but we got bigger fish to fry. We got sunset coming in half an hour and I need for you to get your head on straight. You gotta get ready for the fight of your life here!

EARL

He's not coming back, Boots.
(off Boots' stare)
Rodeo Bob isn't coming back.

BOOTS
How can you tell?

EARL
I just can.

BOOTS
Well pardon me for callin' bullshit,
but you're sitting here talkin' like
him! I mean goddamn, if I closed my
eyes and just listened to you I'd --

Boots stops short. *Oh, no.* Scared, he peers into his eyes.

BOOTS
What's your name?

EARL
Earl Thornton. I'm Earl.

This makes Boots feel a little better. But now there's something odd about the way that Earl is staring at him.

EARL
Boots, I love you like my brother.
We go back. We do go back. And you
payin' for my daughter's surgery... I
can't tell you how grateful I am.
(finding courage)
But right now, I'm going back inside.
And that fellow Malcolm? Seeing as
he's a friend of my wife? I'm gonna
find a way to be friends with him,
too. And I'm gonna do it... for me,
mostly. 'Cause this shit inside me
ain't doing me no good. And it hurts
the two people I love the most.
(wistful smile)
I'm gonna find a way to get rid of
it. I hope you can, too. So that
you and me can keep on being friends.

This isn't Earl being noble or politically correct. This is painful for him. But he feels deep down that it's right.

He starts back toward the building. Boots can't believe his ears -- he can't believe any of this. He calls out.

BOOTS
You don't know whether you're coming
or going, do you, boy?
(louder)
You don't even know who you ARE! --

EARL
 (glancing back)
 Yeah. I guess I do.

Earl keeps on walking, leaving him behind. Off Boots, alone:

142 EXT. BUILDING/EXAM ROOM - MINUTES LATER 142

The SUN is just above the horizon. We're looking at its REFLECTION, seen in the mirrored side of this office building. We PUSH INTO it, into one particular window, until we're peering through this mirroring to find...

... We're looking into the exam room where the audiologist continues to work with Delilah. As we can't hear any dialog through this glass, the scene before us is like a silent movie (along with rising, end-credits MUSIC).

Patsy looks on with mounting shock and dismay as Earl stands here talking to Malcolm. We can tell by the body language -- Earl is apologizing. He's making amends. It's not easy for him, but he tries his best.

Malcolm is receptive, not to mention amazed. Both men look to Holly, who blinks in wonderment. *Can this be true?*

Earl sheepishly offers his hand. Malcolm accepts it, and they shake. It's not like they're suddenly best buddies... but it's a start. Earl smiles at his daughter, who clearly senses something unusual is going on.

Earl swallows and gingerly reaches for his wife. Holly allows it. Off the two of them hugging and holding one another and Holly breaking into a wide, thankful smile...

The last of the red, rumbling SUN sinks beneath the horizon, leaving nothing but beautiful SUNSET... which FADES TO BLACK.

That's pretty much the end of the movie. The MUSIC swells and the first few CREDITS roll. But then, everything abruptly pauses for one last, short SCENE:

143 EXT. MALCOLM'S HOUSE - DAY 143

It's a beautiful new day one year later. Malcolm plops down into frame on the steps of his back porch. He's long-since shaved off his muttonchop sideburns. Filled with hope and anxiety, he clutches an unopened LETTER in his hands.

It looks very official. Its return address is ADMISSIONS OFFICE... HARVARD MEDICAL SCHOOL.

This is the moment. Malcolm shuts his eyes and steels his nerves. *Oh, God... oh, God...*

He tears open the envelope, rapidly scanning the letter, crinkling the edges in his fists. And then... a big GRIN.

As Malcolm lets out a huge, joyful SHOUT, we CUT TO BLACK.

THE END