

A TIME TO KILL

by
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Based on the novel by John Grisham

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FADE IN ON:

EXT.-CLANTON GROCERY STORE - DAY

The kind of summer that makes even God move slow in the deep south. A few old black men sit on the porch of the one room shop. The same old stories pass. An afternoon like many.

MOVE IN through the screen door to find TONYA HAILY (9) filling a metal basket with groceries, a can of peas, three oranges, items selected carefully, a child who counts the value of money in sweat.

EXT.-CLANTON GROCERY STORE - MINUTES LATER

Tonya emerges, the brown paper grocery bag huge in her arms. The old men throw lazy smiles, rock, continue their ritual as she passes, starts on foot down the old dirt road.

A SQUIRREL-CLOSE. Upside down on the trunk of a tree. A beer can smashes INTO FRAME, just missing the critter as it skitters away.

WIDER.

EXT.-ROADSIDE - CLEARING

A yellow Ford pickup sits in a roadside clearing. Two men, BILLY RAY COBB (23) and PETE WILLARD (27), loll in the open bed, beer cans at their feet, passing a joint.

TONYA HAILY

passes the clearing, grocery bag in her arms. She glances nervously at the men, her step quickening as she passes the clearing. The two men exchange a look. One smiles.

EXT.-CLANTON ROAD

Tonya hurries down the road as suddenly the truck hurls out onto the dirt behind her, bearing down, HORN BLARING.

Tonya freezes as the truck barrels straight for her, at the last minute swerving past, a beer can flying, catching her in the side, her groceries spilling onto the old dirt road. The truck disappears around the bend ahead.

TONYA-CLOSE. Stares after the vanished truck in terror. A beat. Then she bends, begins to recover the spilled fruit and cans.

THE TRUCK SCREECHES back around the curve ahead, coming fast at her. Tonya looks up, eyes wide, a deer caught in the headlights.

EXT.-HAILY HOUSE

Small. Impoverished.

INT.-HAILY HOUSE

GWEN HAILY (35) is peering nervously out the window, working the strings of her apron like worry beads.

WILLIE HAILY (7) and SKIP HAILY (11) BANG through the screen door.

WILLIE HAILY

Can't find her, mama. She ain't out back nowhere.

Skip shows a broken orange.

SKIP BOY

Picked this up by the road down from the store.

GWEN HAILY

Oh Jesus.

Gwen lifts the phone, dials.

GWEN

Lord, please watch out for that girl. I know I shouldn't have sent her, she's just nine-.

(into phone)

I need to speak to Carl Lee Haily. He's a Foreman. This is his wife.

Just then the back door produces SLIM HAILY (14). Terrified.

SLIM THREE

Mamma, they found some girl down by the ravine.

EXT.-HAILY HOUSE

Cars and trucks crowd the lawn. Black men and women mill, exchange hushed, anxious words as a Buick SCREECHES into the driveway. All grow silent as CARL LEE HAILY (45) emerges from the car, walks towards the house, the crowd parting to let him through.

INT.-HAILY HOUSE

Gwen and the boy's kneel before the couch. As Carl Lee ENTERS they rise to reveal...

Tonya lays shivering under a blanket. Her lips are bloodied, her face bruised, her eyes swollen shut, blood from her tiny legs soaking into the thin cotton spread.

CARL LEE

Sweet Jesus.

He kneels before his child, leans in close, touches her hair.

CARL LEE

Baby? Baby can you hear me?

At first, no movement. And then....

TONYA

Daddy...?

CARL LEE

It's me, baby. Daddy's here.

TONYA

Daddy. I dropped the groceries in the road. ...I'm sorry.

He strokes her head as (OVER), a SIREN closes in the distance.

EXT.-HAILY HOUSE - DAY

Carl Lee Haily walks out his front door, his small, bloodied child limp in his arms as he passes the stunned crowd towards the arriving ambulance.

INT.-CLANTON HOSPITAL ER-DAY

The front doors HISS open. ENTER SHERIFF OZZIE WALLS (35). Big. Black. Not happy. DEPUTY MOSS JUNIOR TATUM (24), white, trailer-park tough, falls in step beside him as they head towards ICU.

OZZIE

Let me hear it, Junior.

MOSS

You know that boy, Carl Lee Haily? It's his daughter. Looks like a couple crackers grabbed her by Sloan's Road. Tied her up, beat her and raped her. Doc says they even tried to hang her.

OZZIE

She gonna make it?

Moss just shrugs. He doesn't know. They head into...

INT.-ICU - DAY

Crowded with the Haily family and friends. Carl Lee finishes talking to a doctor as Ozzie approaches.

OZZIE

How you doin, Carl Lee?

CARL LEE

She's busted up pretty bad, Ozzie. Said they gotta see what the night brings.

OZZIE

She say anything about who did it?

CARL LEE

There was two of em, drinking beer. They had a yellow pick-up. With a rebel flag in the window.

OZZIE

We'll get 'em.

Carl Lee turns, stares at his daughter's labored breathing through the ICU glass.

INT.-SQUAD CAR-DRIVING - NIGHT

Ozzie steers. Moss replaces the CB.

MOSS

Huey's Tonk. In the parking lot.

Ozzie turns the wheel, changing direction.

MOSS

Why you figure it's Cobb?

OZZIE

Last, because Cobb has a yellow pick-up. Second to last because he's got a godamn confederate flag in the back window. And first because he's a low life, scum-sucking, redneck asshole.

MOSS

That what they call police intuition, Sheriff?

OZZIE

Something like that. Radio for back-up.

PULL BACK AND UP as the car veers into the parking lot of...

EXT.-HUEY'S TONK - NIGHT

Rows of pick-up trucks. Men pissing in the parking lot. MUFFLED COUNTRY MUSIC. Ozzie and Moss emerge from their squad car.

OZZIE

Redneck heaven.

MOSS

Over there.

In the distance the shining bumper of a yellow pickup. They head towards it as a FIGHT explodes out the door, spills into the parking lot.

OZZIE

You white folks sure know how to have a good time.

They have come to the yellow pickup, the back now covered by an old army tarp. The rebel flag is visible through the back windshield. Ozzie peers in through the window. Then he draws his gun, SMASHES both back tail-lights.

OZZIE

Looks like this truck is in violation. Guess that means we get to take a closer look.

They hop into the back. Lift the tarp. There, on the truck-bed, several large stains of blood, red nylon cord and something else.

Ozzie lifts a single girl's shoe, turns it over in his hand.

INT.-HUEY'S TONK

Thick with smoke. A band plays FREEBIRD. Rednecks drink, dance, mate. Not pretty.

At a corner table, beer pitcher between them, sit Billy Ray Cobb and Pete Willard, their LAUGHTER rising over the music.

The BAND stops in mid-song. Conversation stills. A sudden silence.

Ozzie and Moss stand in the swinging doors, walk now to Willard and Cobb.

COBB
Sorry, sir, but we don't allow
niggers in here.

Folks LAUGH.

OZZIE
Hate to break things up, but you and
Mr. Willard need to come with me.

COBB
I ain't movin.

OZZIE
I'm placing you both under arrest.
Now get up.

COBB
I said I ain't goin to jail. Now why
don't you take your coal black ass
outta here before you lose it?

Moss hands Ozzie a nightstick. With a single stoke, Ozzie SMASHES
the center of the table, beer cans flying. Willard jumps upright.
Moss SLAMS him into the wall and cuffs him.

Ozzie taps his palm with his night-stick.

OZZIE
Now get up, Billy Ray.

COBB
Why don't you go to hell, nigger?

Ozzie moves fast, grabbing Cobb by the hair, lifting him from the
booth and driving his face to the floor. He jams his knee into his
spine, sliding his night-stick under his throat and pulling upward.

OZZIE
Boy, you got the right to remain
silent...

AN ALARM CLOCK-CLOSE. BUZZES. The worst sound of the day.

The clock sits on the counter in a modest bathroom.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL

INT.-BEDROOM - BEFORE DAWN

(OVER) the BUZZING continues. JAKE BRIGGANCE (32) lays in bed,
reaches towards a night table and swipes through thin air.

WOMAN'S VOICE (OVER)
Bathroom.

WIDER

Beside him sleeps his wife, CARLA (29). Lovely. Not willing to wake up.

Jake hoists himself out of bed, stumbles to the window, pulls open the curtains. It's still dark out.

JAKE
The first day of a new month. Rise and shine. Greet the world. Face the morning.

He pulls the covers off his wife, admires her slim, lithe body.

JAKE
Rise in dark, retire in dark, that's what I say.

HANNAH (4) appears in the doorway. She marches into the bathroom, shuts off the ALARM, grabs the spilled blanket, and climbs into bed with her mother, pulling the cover over them both.

HANNAH
Go to work, daddy.

Jake stares at his family with fond amazement.

JAKE
Women.

He heads into the bathroom.

EXT.-BRIGGANCE HOUSE - DAWN

A giant Victorian, only partially restored to classic beauty. Jake emerges as a Lexus pulls up. He climbs in to greet a smiling HARRY REX VONNER (34) eating a donut. By his size, not his first.

INT.-CAR-DRIVING - MORNING

HARRY REX
Never get over it. You don't got a pot to piss in, but you own the nicest house in Ford County.

JAKE

We bought it for a song, Harry Rex, you know that. We do all the work ourselves. It makes Carla happy.

HARRY REX

I've spent four marriages trying to figure out what makes women happy.

JAKE

I think you've spent four marriages trying to figure out what makes you happy.

HARRY REX

Oh yeah. Maybe that's it.

JAKE

Lord, please let my car be fixed today.

INT.-COFFEE SHOP - MORNING

Blue collar. All white. No fruit plates here. Jake sits at the counter, to one side TIM NUNELY, to the other, DEPUTY LOONEY. DELL, the waitress, sets Jake's regular breakfast before him.

DELL

There you go, hon. Two, easy.

NUNELY

The Saab'll be ready by lunch, Jake. Dirty plugs. I'll bring it by your office.

JAKE

I can come get it, Tim.

NUNELY

Hell, wasn't for you I'd probably be behind bars up Parchman by now with all them niggers. I'll bring it by.

LOONEY

Say, Jake, didn't you defend Billy Ray Cobb a few years back?

Folks grow quiet.

JAKE

Cobb? What kind of case was it?

LOONEY

Caught him selling dope. Spent time
in Parchman, got out last year.

JAKE

Nah. I remember now. Had some
Memphis lawyer I think.

Looney nods, goes back to his pancakes. Chat resumes.

JAKE

Why?

LOONEY

Picked him up for rape last night.
Him and Pete Willard.

JAKE

Jesus. Who'd they rape?

LOONEY

You know Carl Lee Haily?

JAKE

Sure. Represented his brother,
Lester.

LOONEY

Well, it was his little girl.

JAKE

You're kidding. How old is she?

LOONEY

Nine.

A beat. Jake pushes his food away.

EXT.-WILBANKS BUILDING - 6AM

Resplendent. On the town square. Jake opens the front the door.

INT.-WILBANKS BUILDING - LOBBY

Jake ENTERS to find his secretary ETHEL TWITTY (55), all southern
propriety save her wicked eyes, sitting behind her desk, facing off
an ELDERLY MAN (WILSON) and a SULTRY BIMBO (BUNNY).

ETHEL

I'm sorry, sir, but Mr. Wilbanks no
longer practices law.

WILSON

Hell, darlin' weren't you his, umm-

ETHEL

Secretary! I was his secretary.

JAKE

(entering)

Yes. She was his, "ummm--"

ETHEL

Mr. Wilson is one of Lucien's old clients. This callow youth is Jake Briggance. He inherited the practice from Mr. Wilbanks.

JAKE

Not to mention his doting old secretary.

ETHEL

Lucien believed somebody around here should know something about the law.

JAKE

How may I help you, sir?

WILSON

Me and Bunny here, we fallen head over heels, right sugar?

Bunny, unbelievably, GIGGLES.

WILSON

So I figure, my boys got enough. Thought I'd leave it all to Bunny.

Jake and Ethel exchange a look.

JAKE

Ethel, how's the schedule, today?

ETHEL

Packed. Couldn't squeeze in a fly.

INT.-JAKE'S OFFICE - DAY

Well appointed. Balconied windows overlooking the town square. Jake ENTERS, followed by Ethel.

JAKE

Any appointments?

ETHEL

Not a one. But it is the first of the month again and guess what?

JAKE

Checks have been pouring in. Fees, gratuities, offers to lecture. We have enough money to pay all our past debts and then some.

ETHEL

That will be your last drink.

JAKE

Just keep us no more than one month behind on any vendor.

(off her look)

Okay two months.

Jake sits at his desk. Ethel hands him a stack of checks to sign.

ETHEL

These are the most delinquent. The rent's in here.

Jake glances at a hanging oil portrait on the wall. An old man.

JAKE

I wonder how his highness is doing?

ETHEL

Ask him yourself. He's back. Don't ask me when because I don't know. But he's expecting you and Carla for dinner.

JAKE

But-.

ETHEL

Get a sitter. His words. Now in case this escaped your tiny mind, the grain briefs for the price-fixing suit were due at Clerk's yesterday.

JAKE

Could you bring them over for me?

ETHEL

Does this dress say messenger on it?

JAKE

Well then how about some coffee, if your arthritic hands can manage it?

ETHEL

Boy you are one pain in my behind.

Ethel heads for the door. Jake reaches for a file, fingers lingering on a framed photo of his daughter.

JAKE

You hear about the Haily girl?

INT.-POLICE PRECINCT-INTERROGATION ROOM - MORNING

Willard sits behind the table, hands cuffed before him. Ozzie ENTERS. Turns on a tape recorder.

OZZIE

Mr. Willard. My name is Sheriff Ozzie Walls.

WILLARD

Yap. I voted for you. Seen you play for the RAMS. Figured a nigger Sheriff's okay, he's been on TV and all. No offense.

OZZIE

Mr. Willard, you understand this tape recorder is on?

WILLARD

Uh-huh.

OZZIE

Okay, I'm gonna ask you some questions. What's your full name?

WILLARD

James Louis Willard. But folks call me Pete.

OZZIE

Where do you live, Pete?

WILLARD

With my momma. Down Bethel Road.

OZZIE

You with Billy Ray Cobb yesterday?

WILLARD

I don't think I wanna talk no more.

Ozzie pushes another button and the tape recorder stops.

OZZIE

You ever been to Parchman, Pete? You know how many niggers there are at Parchman? Bout five thousand. You know how many whites?

WILLARD

No.

OZZIE

Bout a thousand. Five years ago a white man over in the delta raped a black girl. They were waiting on him when he got to Parchman. First night about thirty tied him over an oil drum and climbed on. They got him every night for three months before it killed him.

WILLARD-CLOSE. The speech is having it's desired effect.

OZZIE

Look, Pete, you help us out on Cobb, there's a chance you could get off with just a few years in this jail.

WILLARD

I want a lawyer.

OZZIE

What's a lawyer gonna do, Pete? Get the niggers off you? I'm tryin' to help you, you're being a wiseass.

WILLARD

I don't know-

OZZIE

Choice is yours, Pete. You can stay here, maybe I'll even make you a trustee, or you can die at Parchman.

WILLARD

Okay, okay.

Ozzie hits a button, the recorder WHIRRING back into life.

OZZIE
Where did you find the girl?

WILLARD
Down some road. Don't know exactly.
I's smokin weed and drinkin.

OZZIE
Just you and Cobb?

WILLARD
Yeah.

OZZIE
Who raped her?

WILLARD
We both did. Billy Ray went first.

OZZIE
How many times?

WILLARD
I'll tell you about it. Just don't
tell Billy Ray. He gets awful mad.

INT.-COURTHOUSE DAY - AFTERNOON

Jake stands at the CLERK'S window. Hands across some briefs.

CLERK (OVER)
Jake, these were due yesterday.

Jake takes her extended hand, ---FAT--- leans over, kisses it.

JAKE
Bea, a girl pretty as you ain't
gonna hold that against me, are you?

CLERK (OVER)
Some folks are more snake than man,
I swear.

Jake lights his best smile when something catches his eye.

REVERSE ANGLE

A man emerges from the corridor marked JAIL ACCESS. Carl Lee. He paces the hallway, tries a broom-closet ---locked--- walks up the steps, and into the main courtroom, oblivious, a man on a mission.

Jake stares after him a beat. Then follows.

INT.-MAIN COURTROOM - DAY

Jake ENTERS. Carl Lee stands staring at the witness box.

JAKE

I'm truly sorry about Tonya, Carl Lee. How's she doin'?

CARL LEE

Made it through the night. Doctors say she ain't out the woods yet.

Carl Lee goes to the window, looks out at the setting sun.

CARL LEE

They worked her over something good, Jake. Some pieces I got from Tonya, some from the doctors. They tied her hands up over her head, took her out to some clearing. They took turns, one on her while the other watched and drank beers. Then they'd switch. Doc says it went on like that a while. They kept slapping her and telling her if she screamed they'd kill her. When they was all used up, they musta used her for target practice cause there's beer-can size bruises all over her. Then they pissed on her. After, they wrapped a rope around her neck, swung it over a branch, and tied the other end to the bumper of their truck. One of them boys got in and dragged my daughter across the dirt and up into the air until she was hanging from a branch. But the branch broke. So they put her in back of the truck, drove to Foggy Creek bridge and tossed her off.

Jake stares at Carl Lee. Speechless.

CARL LEE

I was in a jam, you'd help me out, wouldn't you?

JAKE

Sure, Carl Lee. What kind of jam?

CARL LEE
You got a daughter, Jake. What would
you do?

JAKE
I don't know.

CARL LEE
It was your baby, lyin' up in that
hospital bed, beaten and raped,
father to father, what would you do?

The two hold other's each eyes. A moment of unspoken understanding.

JAKE
Don't do anything stupid, Carl Lee.

Carl Lee walks to the door, turns, looks around the room.

CARL LEE
You're a good man, Jake. I get
myself in a jam, I figure you'll
help me out.

Carl Lee pushes out the doors. Jake just stares after him.

EXT.-RESTAURANT-NIGHT

Opulent. Jake pulls up his red Saab. Opens the door for Carla.

CARLA
I don't like to speak out of turn
but I do wish he'd give us some
notice. I had a roast all ready-

JAKE
He's my boss, Carla.

CARLA
Ex-boss.

JAKE
Honey, please don't start. Lucien
was a great lawyer. A great man.

They push through the doors into...

INT.-RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Lit by lanterns. All white except for the wait staff. Folks are
gathered around a LAUGHING silver haired man standing atop a table,
bottle of wine swinging in his hand. LUCIEN WILBANKS.

LUCIEN

(spotting Jake and Carla)

The prodigal son returns.

Lucien raises his bottle, slips, ends up sitting on the tabletop.

INT.-RESTAURANT-LATER

Plates are cleared. Lucien pours himself another glass of wine.

LUCIEN

You're sure I can't convince you?

CARLA

We try not to drink on weeknights.

LUCIEN

Ah the purifying influence of a good southern woman, eh Jake?

CARLA

Lucien, if you hate the South so, why do you keep coming back?

LUCIEN

Hate the South? On the contrary. I cleave to the South with the passion of a lover. How else could I stand her bigotry, her sexism, her constant racial violence? I love my lady home and so must be fearless in rooting out the cancer that courses through her precious veins.

JAKE

Come on Lucien. We've come a long way. We've desegregated. We've-

LUCIEN

Ah, yes. The veneer of equality. Now the racists don't even know they're racists.

CARLA

If you two are going to argue, I'm gonna have myself a Coke at the bar.

LUCIEN

Fear not. Two months of Jamaican beaches have taken the last fight out of this old liberal. Not that this town couldn't use some help.

JAKE

You heard about the Haily Case.

CARLA

What will they get, Lucien?

LUCIEN

Come, Jake. Show us why I gave you my practice to you alone. Dazzle us with your judicial prowess, wow us with some legal legerdemain.

JAKE

Lucien, you didn't give me your practice. You were disbarred, remember? And everyone else quit.

LUCIEN

Technicalities. Tell us, my boy, what will they get?

JAKE

Well, if she doesn't die, they can get life for rape. I assume they'll be charged with kidnapping and aggravated assault. That's conceivable parole in thirteen years. Seven for the rape, three for the kidnaping, three for the aggravated assault.

LUCIEN

Assuming they're convicted on all charges and sentenced the maximum.

CARLA

What about Cobb? Doesn't he have a record? Dope or something?

JAKE

Yes, but he's not habitual unless he has two prior convictions. He's only got one. Truth is, they get an all white jury, these boys could get off scott free.

LUCIEN

Hypothetical: what if they were black and the girl white?

JAKE

The Klan would've broken them out of jail and hung them by now. But they're white and the girl's black, so they won't get over eleven years.

LUCIEN

And that, my dear friends, is Southern Justice. Ain't home grand?

(shouting)

Who's gonna bring me a drink?

INT.-JAKE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Jake checks on his sleeping daughter, walks the hallway, joins Carla in their bedroom.

JAKE

I look at her, I can't help thinking...

CARLA

Don't.

She stills his lips with her fingers. She begins to undress. Jake walks to the window, stares out.

CARLA

What's wrong? You've been tense all night.

JAKE

I ran into Carl Lee today. ...He sounded to me like he was thinking of killing those boys.

CARLA

What? Was he serious?

JAKE

I don't know. Could have been just the hurt talking. But...

CARLA

Jake, you better call Ozzie.

Jake nods, more understanding than affirmation. Just then the family mutt, MAX, pads in, a piece of molding in his mouth. Carla retrieves the plaster...

CARLA

Attaboy, Max, I know just where this goes.

(drops the molding on a shelf)
We're never going to finish this house, Jake. What about asking Lucien for a loan? The way the bills are piling up...

JAKE

Since the disbarment, Lucien's only income is the office rent I pay him. He's basically poor as we are.

CARLA

So what are we supposed to live on, counselor? Love?

Jake pulls her to him. Kisses her. Smiles.

JAKE

Maybe that's not such a bad idea.

They fall to the bed.

EXT.-MEMPHIS BRIDGE - NIGHT

A black Buick crosses the bridge towards the lights of Memphis

EXT- BROWN SUGAR BAR -MEMPHIS

The Buick pulls up and Carl Lee emerges. Stares a beat at the flashing neons promising beer, live girls. He heads inside.

INT.-BROWN SUGAR BAR - NIGHT

Dark. Smokey. Naked black women dance on small glass tables around the room. Carl Lee sits at the bar, faces the approaching BARTENDER.

CARL LEE

Lemmie get a beer. Is Cat in?

BARTENDER

Who wants to know?

CARL LEE

Carl Lee Haily. From Mississippi. We served together.

The Bartender slides him the suds. Disappears. Carl Lee drinks. The Bartender re-emerges, motions for Carl Lee to follow...

INT.-CAT'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Gold carpet on the floor, red on the walls, green on the ceiling. Rising from behind his desk, a giant black man wearing an eye patch. CAT BREWSTER. He and Carl Lee hug. Old friends.

CAT

Carl Lee Hailly. My man. So good to see you. How are you my friend?

CARL LEE

Doin fine, Cat. Just fine. And you?

CAT

Great. Great. How's the leg.

CARL LEE

Tightens up some when it rains but it's all right.

CAT

Good thing you could run on that leg, brother, even with a bullet in it, or I'd left more than this old eye back in country.

CARL LEE

Ain't read about you lately, Cat.

CAT

Been three years since my last trial. Tax evasion. Feds spent weeks puttin' on proof, jury stayed out twenty minutes, returned with the two most precious words in the Afro-English language. Not-Guilty. Can I get you a beer?

CARL LEE

I'll pass thanks. Got a long drive.

CAT

Damn, Carl Lee. Why don't you move down to Memphis, come work for me?

CARL LEE

No thanks Cat, I'm fine where I am. I just need a favor is all.

CAT

Anything, man. Anything you want.

CARL LEE

You remember those M-16's we used in 'Nam. I need one. Quick as possible.

CAT

That's a bad gun. What kind of squirrels you boys hunting down there?

CARL LEE

It ain't for squirrels.

Cat holds his eyes a beat. Then he reaches for the phone.

EXT.-CLANTON JAIL - MORNING

Sunlight breaks amber hues on the old stone building.

INT.-CLANTON JAIL - DAY

Ozzie approaches the cage where Cobb and Willard are held. Cells on either side are jammed with black prisoners. None friendly.

OZZIE

Alright boys, rise and shine, today's your big day. We're gonna take us a ride over to the courthouse, judge is gonna arraign you, set your bail and we're gonna come back here all nice and peaceful like. I get any trouble out of you, I swear to God, I'm gonna integrate this jail.

Smiles from the black prisoners as Ozzie unlocks the cell.

INT.-JAKE'S OFFICE - MORNING

Jake stands talking to Ethel.

ETHEL

How did Lucien look? Has he gained any weight? Did he ask about me?

JAKE

Ethel you were his secretary twenty years. Did he ever ask about anyone?

ETHEL

Good point.

Harry Rex bursts in.

HARRY REX

What, no clients?

JAKE

We're just waiting to pick up yours on appeal.

ETHEL

And you? On vacation?

HARRY REX

Miss Ethel, as a divorce attorney, my services are in great demand here in Ford County. One wealthy farmer keeps me on retainer just so his current wife can't hire me for the next divorce. And yet not a single case I have is as interesting as the one Mr. Briggance and I are about to watch begin across the square.

Jake rises.

HARRY REX

Word has it your old boyfriend's back in town.

ETHEL

I am an upstanding, God-fearing, respectable, southern woman with unimpeachable morals who has been happily married for twenty seven years. I have never had nor will I ever have any boyfriend and if I did he certainly would not be that old pickled scoundrel Lucien Wilbanks.

JAKE & HARRY REX

Right.

Jake and Harry Rex head out the door.

INT.-COURTHOUSE CORRIDOR - WALKING

Billy Ray Cobb and Willard, hands cuffed before them, walk the long Prisoner Access corridor to the courthouse, Deputies Moss and LOONEY walk behind them, Ozzie in front. All silent.

EXT.-TOWN SQUARE - DAY

Jake and Harry Rex are crossing the square.

HARRY REX

Cobb's mother got the boys some Memphis lawyer. Judge Noose will set bail at 350 grand and bind them over to the Grand Jury for indictment.

JAKE

Is there anything that goes on in this town you don't know about?

HARRY REX

Not that I know about.

Jake smiles. They continue on towards the courthouse.

INT.-COURTHOUSE - DAY

The prisoners and their escorts pass the metal detector at the mouth of the access corridor. Ozzie pauses to sign for the weapons.

OZZIE

Take em up. I'm right behind you.

The prisoners cross the lobby, Moss leading, Looney taking the rear. The group passes the Janitor's Closet, starts up the stairs towards the courtrooms above.

FRANK MURPHY, the building janitor, crosses the lobby towards the Janitor's Closet, reaches for the doorknob.

THE DOOR flies open, sending Frank sprawling onto the floor. In the portal stands Carl Lee Haily, M-16 in his hands. He begins to FIRE.

EXT.-COURTHOUSE

(OVER) sounds of GUNSHOTS. SCREAMING folks spill from the doors.

JAKE

What the hell?

He begins to sprint towards the doors.

INT.-COURTHOUSE

Carl Lee is still FIRING.

MEN AND WOMEN on the upper landing, in the wings, stand fixed, mouths wide, immobilized by the sudden explosion of violence.

WILLARD is struck, spins, is struck again by a shower of bullets.

AN OLD WOMAN (CORA COBB) tries to SCREAM. No sound.

MOSS dives for cover across the landing at the top of the stairs.

LOONEY reaches for his gun. Not there. His knee explodes.

A BOY (HINKEY) gapes, fascinated, like watching good TV.

OZZIE, still at the metal detector, grabs his gun, hits the wall, begins sliding towards the GUNSHOTS and SCREAMS.

CARL LEE keeps FIRING.

BILLY RAY COBB gets the next burst, his body twisting in mid air, flying towards Willard's.

A LAW STUDENT (ELLEN ROARK) shuts her eyes. The face of a woman who's seen death before.

JAKE bursts through the front doors.

CARL LEE keeps FIRING, hammer finally hitting empty chambers. He stops, tosses the gun at the corpses, races out a side access door.

OZZIE swings around the corner just as Jake barrels into the foyer. Moss rises atop the stairs. Looney sits on the steps, WHIMPERING.

Jake pushes through the dazed crowd, kneels over Looney, using his own jacket to stem the blood pouring from the deputy's knee.

Ozzie stretches his arms wide, holding back the now closing crowd, in it's center the rapists, painted in blood, finally spent, locked together in a grizzly embrace.

EXT.-JAKE'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Hannah is chasing Max around the yard as Jake pulls up.

HANNAH
(shouting)

Daddy's home! Daddy's home!

Carla comes onto the porch, drying her hands.

CARLA
You're early. Where's your jacket?
(off his silence)
Jake, what's wrong?

Jake moves, wordless, into her arms. She holds him.

EXT.-HAILY HOUSE - SUNSET

The four cruisers arrive in a line, park across the road from the Haily house as Ozzie's car pulls into the driveway. Ozzie steps out alone. Walks towards the door.

The front door opens. Carl Lee emerges, followed by Gwen and the three boys. Tear shined faces.

Ozzie and Carl Lee stand across the yard from each other. A long beat. Then Carl Lee walks towards the Sheriff.

CARL LEE

You wanna cuff me, Ozzie?

OZZIE

Naw, Carl Lee. Just get in the car.

Carl Lee obeys. In the fading day, his family watches him go.

EXT.-CLANTON POLICE STATION - MORNING

Newsvans and reporters crowd the parking lot. Deputy Moss fields QUESTIONS.

REPORTER

Will you make a statement?

MOSS

Yes, after you move those vans.

Jake pushes through the crowd into...

INT.-POLICE STATION - MORNING

Ozzie is watching the press through the window.

OZZIE

Morning, Jake. Carl Lee said you'd be coming.

INT.-HOLDING CELL - MORNING

Jake ENTERS. Carl Lee is sitting on the bed.

CARL LEE

Didn't think I'd do it, did you?

JAKE

How you holding up?

CARL LEE

Well, I feel better. I don't feel good about the whole thing. I wish it didn't happen. But I wish my girl was okay too. I didn't have nothin' against those boys til they messed with her. I feel sorry for their mommas and daddies but I ain't sorry for what I done. How's Looney?

JAKE

You blew his knee right off his leg. Doctors are still working on him.

CARL LEE

Shit. What's going to happen to now?

JAKE

We'll they'll be a preliminary hearing, probably tomorrow. After, Buckley'll push for a fast trial.

CARL LEE

Who's Buckley?

JAKE

Rufus Buckley. District Attorney.

CARL LEE

Pretty mean, huh?

JAKE

Mean and ambitious and he'll eat this up because of the publicity.

CARL LEE

You've beat him, ain't you?

JAKE

Yeah. And he's beat me.

CARL LEE

Can I win Jake?

JAKE

It all depends on the jury. You pick the right jury and you walk. DA picks the jury you get the gas.

CARL LEE

How much a case like this cost?

JAKE

Probably fifty grand.

Carl Lee just stares at him a beat.

CARL LEE

I could pay ten. I got a thousand now. Figure I could borrow another nine off my land.

Jake says nothing.

CARL LEE

You got Lester off. Not a lot of white lawyers woulda taken his case. I figure they're folks out there, tired of all the raping and killing. They'd be sympathetic to someone took the law into their own hands. Even a black man. You said you'd help me out of a jam. Well, I'm in one now. What do you say, Jake? Will you be my lawyer?

EXT.-POLICE STATION - DAY

Jake emerges to find his Saab blocked by a news van around which several REPORTERS wait and smoke.

REPORTER

Are you with the police department?

JAKE

No, I'm a lawyer.

REPORTER

Are you Mr. Hailey's attorney?

JAKE

As a matter of fact, I am.

That gets everyone's attention. A battery of microphones and cameras swing in Jake's direction.

INT.-MUNICIPAL BUILDING - DAY

BRENT MUSGROVE, assistant DA, hurries down a corridor, pushes into...

INT.-BOARD ROOM - DAY

A man stands, back to us, staring out the window.

MUSGROVE

Hailey's hired an attorney. Jake Briggance.

MAN (OVER)

Goddamn, and today ain't even my birthday.

The man turns, smiling. Rugged. Smart, mean eyes. DA RUFUS BUCKLEY.

BUCKLEY

Briggance couldn't even tie his tie without that old drunk Wilbanks.

MUSGROVE

He's telling the press he's never lost a murder case.

BUCKLEY

He's never tried one against me. We have a date for the preliminary?

MUSGROVE

Tomorrow at three. Moose presiding.

BUCKLEY

Good. Briggance will file for a change of venue.

MUSGROVE

Why?

BUCKLEY

Simple statistics. This county is twenty six percent black. Every other county is at least thirty. Blacks are more sympathetic to blacks. If he gets it moved he has a better chance of color in the jury box. The trial stays here, it's an all white jury for sure.

MUSGROVE

Without blacks on the jury, Hailey doesn't have a hope in hell.

BUCKLEY

Isn't Moose up for re-election this year?

MUSGROVE

November.

BUCKLEY

Good. Reach out to our friends in the legislature. Have them call Judge Noose. Let's help him decide to keep the case in Clanton.

MUSGROVE

Got it, boss.

BUCKLEY

Also, send Wilbanks a case of scotch. I want that old drunk to stick to the sidelines. Brent, this is the one we've been praying for.

EXT.-WILBANKS ESTATE - DAY

Jake drives through the giant wrought iron gates, past fields grown wild, towards a sprawling plantation house beyond.

EXT.-WILBANKS HOUSE - DAY

Jake finds Lucien on the porch nursing a julep and a hangover.

LUCIEN

You took that Haily Case.

(off his expression)

Nothing in the world travels fast as news in a small town.

JAKE

What do you think?

LUCIEN

Case'll make you rich if you win. Probably break you if you lose. Which is far more likely.

JAKE

I take it you're not thrilled with my chances for an acquittal.

LUCIEN

Looks premeditated, Like he planned the whole thing meticulously.

JAKE

Say he did, still seems to me the moral definition of justifiable homicide. Scum rape your daughter-

LUCIEN
Justifiable homicide will never
stand up in court. I taught you
better than that.

Jake looks away, frustrated.

JAKE
If the jury wants to acquit, if they
think he was right in what he did...

LUCIEN
Then they need an excuse. A legal
peg to hang their consciences on.

JAKE
Insanity.

LUCIEN
Now you're thinking.

JAKE
But I'd have to find a shrink who'd
testify Carl Lee was insane when he
shot them. Stress of the rape and
all that. And one who'll work cheap.

LUCIEN
Might know a man owes me a favor.
I'll give him a call.
(shouting)
Sallie!

JAKE
Who's Sallie?

LUCIEN
My nurse.

A beautiful young black woman (SALLIE) emerges from the house.

LUCIEN
Jake this is Sallie. Sallie, my
glass is empty.

SALLIE
Pleasure, Mr. Briggance. Lucien
talks about you all the time.

JAKE
He does? You do?

LUCIEN
(holding up his glass)
My glass is empty.

She stares at him a beat, disappears without taking his glass, reappears with a bottle in her hand, SLAMS it own.

SALLIE
So fill it up. What are you, crippled? Nice meeting you Jake.

She disappears inside. Jake grins.

JAKE
I bet she's gives one hell of a sponge bath.

LUCIEN
Don't be pedestrian.

Lucien fills his glass. Stands. Checks his watch.

LUCIEN
Well, it's after noon. Let's see how this hangover feels about a walk.

EXT.-WILBANKS ESTATES - WALKING

Jake and Lucien tour the lush fields, now overgrown.

LUCIEN
You'll file for a change in venue?

JAKE
Of course.

LUCIEN
But if Moose denies it, you'll get an all white jury and you'll lose.

JAKE
Thanks for the encouragement.

LUCIEN
Always keep in mind that Mr. Haily is guilty as hell. He took the law into his own hands and murdered two people. Our legal system does not permit vigilante violence. Now, you can win the case, and justice will prevail. But lose and justice will also prevail. A strange case.

JAKE

I could use your help.

LUCIEN

I've been disbarred remember.

JAKE

Lucien, you're the best lawyer I've ever seen. I know how much it hurt when they took your license away. But they can't take your mind unless you let them.

(a beat)

Remember when I came to you out of law school?

LUCIEN

That ridiculous blue suit.

JAKE

You said to me, I can't promise you riches. All I can offer is a chance to save the word, one case at a time. I guess I'm saying those words back to you now.

Lucien stares at him.

LUCIEN

Good speech.

JAKE

I had a good teacher.

LUCIEN

Maybe you will amount to something after all. Despite the yuppie car.

Lucien tries to drain his glass. Empty.

LUCIEN

What the hell.

The two clasp hands.

INT.-JAKE'S HOUSE - DEN -NIGHT

Carla sits before the TV, scratching Max behind the ears.

CARLA

(shouting)

Hurry up!

Jake ENTERS, carrying lemonade in two crystal champagne flutes.

JAKE
To the big time.

CARLA
To our family's TV debut.

ON SCREEN-Newsfootage of Ozzie leading Carl Lee to Jail.

CARLA
I'll never get why Ozzie didn't stop
him when he had the chance.

Jake glances away. Then...

JAKE
...We're on.

ANCHOR (ON SCREEN)
And in a case that is quickly
gathering national attention, Carl
Lee Bailly will be arraigned for
murder tomorrow in Clanton.

Suddenly the TV screen fills with Jake's press conference.

JAKE (ON SCREEN)
Some folks say a black man cannot
receive a fair trial in the south.
Well, I intend to show that the good
men and women of the south look past
color, and see the truth. That in
the south, justice is colorblind.

The phone RINGS. Jake grabs the receiver.

JAKE
Hello. Yeah? We saw it. Thanks.
(hanging up)
Harry Rex.

The PHONE RINGS again.

JAKE
Maybe I should get a press agent.

CARLA
Put it on speaker.

JAKE
F. Lee Bailly's office.

PHONE

Briggance you nigger loving son of a bitch. You won't live if the nigger walks. That's a promise.

The line DISCONNECTS. Jake and Carla stare at the phone.

DIRT.HITS A COFFIN. An empty, hollow SOUND.

WIDER

EXT.-PENTECOSTAL CHURCH CEMETERY - MORNING

White mourners huddle amidst ivy covered headstones.

A minister stands over two freshly dug graves. FREDDIE COBB, Billy Ray's brother, supports his WEEPING mother, Cora.

FREDDIE

Alright Momma, it's alright.

Freddie leaves his mother to the ministrations of the other women.

FOLLOW Freddie as he walks to a giant elm where a small group of MEN, including Tim Nunely, stand, chewing Red Man. One hands Freddie a bottle of whiskey.

NUNELY

Sure am sorry about your brother and ol' Willard. Good boys, both.

FREDDIE

Ten years ago we'd strung that nigger up, put his balls in his mouth by now. What's happening to the world?

NUNELY

Klan would know what to do.

FREDDIE

Our Grampa was Klan.

MAN

I got a friend used to be active. I could give him a call.

Cobb takes a long swig. Swallows. Spits some tobacco juice.

FREDDIE

You go ahead and do that. We need us some Klan down here in Clanton

INT.-OZZIE'S OFFICE - DAY

Photos of Ozzie in his RAMS uniform. No few football trophies. Ozzie and Moss stare out the window at a mob of reporters.

OZZIE

Kinda reminds me of a bunch a vultures waitin for a dead dog beside the highway.

MOSS

Rudest bunch a folks I ever saw. And that's only half of em. The rest's waiting at the courthouse. Now how the hell we Gonna get Carl Lee through that mess?

OZZIE

Old Curtis Todd still due to get out tommorow?

EXT.-POLICE STATION - MINUTES LATER

A black PRISONER emerges from the jail in dark sunglasses, flanked by deputies front and rear. Reporters descend.

REPORTER #1

Mr. Haily, how will you plead?

REPORTER #2

Do you feel justice has been served?

Just then the Prisoner shoves back one of the deputies and bolts across the parking lot, out towards the forest.

THE PRESS begin racing after him, leaving the jail untended.

EXT.-FOREST - MINUTES LATER

A GROUP OF PRESS pass, obviously having lost the trial.

THE PRISONER slips from behind a tree. Pulls off his sunglasses.

PRISONER-CLOSE. Not Carl Lee at all. CURTIS TODD, smiles, shakes his head, looks down at a car leaving the police station.

CAR-CLOSE

Ozzie, Carl Lee, and Moss drive towards the courthouse.

EXT.-COURTHOUSE - DAY

A sea of reporters. Buckley and Musgrove stand on the steps.

REPORTER

Mr. Buckley, do you have any sympathy for the defendant?

BUCKLEY

Of course. What father wouldn't? But our society cannot condone men who take the law into their own hands.

REPORTER

If you get a conviction, will you ask for the gas chamber?

BUCKLEY

Yes. I will ask for the death penalty for Mr. Haily.

REPORTER

What do you think of Mr. Briggance?

BUCKLEY

Isn't that boy still in Law School? See y'all after the show.

And with a lethal smile, Buckley heads into court.

INT.-COURTROOM - DAY

Full. Blacks on one side, whites on the other. Press jam the gallery. At the defense table, sit Jake and Carl Lee. On the prosecution side, Buckley and Musgrove.

BAILIFF

All rise. Court is in session, the honorable Omar Noose presiding

BUCKLEY

(hushed)

You plead him guilty today, I'll ask for life. Otherwise he dies.

JAKE

(hushed)

You drop your case now, I won't bury you before the entire county.

From chambers, a tall, be-spectacled, large featured man ENTERS. JUDGE OMAR NOOSE takes his seat at the bench.

NOOSE

Good afternoon ladies, gentlemen, council, members of the third estate. And you sir. Are you Carl Lee Haily?

CARL LEE

Yes.

NOOSE

Mr. Haily, I am holding here a copy of an indictment returned against you by the grand jury.

(reading)

The grand jurors of the state of Mississippi present that Carl Lee Haily did murder Billy Ray Cobb, a human being, and Pete Willard, a human being, and did attempt to kill DeWayne Looney, a peace officer, against the peace and dignity of the State of Mississippi. Do you understand the charges against you?

CARL LEE

Yes.

NOOSE

Do you wish to plead guilty or not guilty?

CARL LEE

Not guilty, your honor.

JAKE

The defense enters a plea of not guilty by reason of insanity, your honor.

NOOSE

Your trial is set for July 22. All pretrial motions and matters must be filed by July 8. Anything further?

BUCKLEY

In response to the insanity plea, the State requests the defendant be examined by it's own doctors.

NOOSE

Granted.

BUCKLEY

Additionally, The State opposes any request for bail.

JAKE

Your honor, we have not yet asked for bail. Mr. Buckley cannot oppose a request until it's made. He should've learned that in Law School

BUCKLEY

Your honor, even Mr. Briggance's meager legal experience requires him to request bail. The State opposes any such request.

NOOSE

Well, in the future, why don't we wait until he makes his request?

JAKE

Thank you, your honor. We would like to request bail. Mr Haily has no record of criminal activity and-

NOOSE

Denied. I have never allowed bail in a capital murder case. I don't feel an exception is called for today.

JAKE

Good enough. Your honor, we will be filing a motion for change of venue.

NOOSE

I anticipated this. Let me save you some time, Mr. Briggance. Your motion is denied.

JAKE

If it pleases the court, we are simply alerting your honor of our intent to file in writing by-.

NOOSE

I said, request denied.

JAKE

Your honor, how can you summarily deny this request? It is clear that Carl Lee Haily cannot receive a fair trial here in Clanton. We feel-

NOOSE

Enough. Sidebar. Now.

Jake and Buckley approach the bench.

JAKE

Your honor, I have the right to-

NOOSE

Mr. Briggance, I will not tolerate grandstanding in my courtroom. If I chose to deny the request without reading your motion, that is in my purview. Now lets get back to work.

Jake and Buckley head back to their tables.

BUCKLEY

Excellent technique, counselor.

A YOUNG WOMAN is leaning over the front pew, scribbling on Jake's pad. She looks up. Flashes Jake a stunning smile before slipping back into her seat. This is ELLEN ROARK.

Jake returns to his chair, puzzled. Reads his pad.

JAKE

Your honor...um...we feel it would be remiss not to remind the court that on two occasions...Jon Vs. Clip, Memphis, and...Tim Vs Will, Oxford, failure to properly consider a change of venue motion has been a reversible violation on appeal to the State Supreme Court.

Noose stares at Jake a beat. Then, a grudging smile.

NOOSE

Well, no trial judge wants his rulings overturned. I guess you'll get to submit that brief after all. Have it on my desk Monday morning.

(rises)

Mr. Haily, you are hereby ordered to remain in custody of the Ford County Sheriff until trial. Dismissed.

Noose SLAMS his gavel.

INT.-COURTHOUSE LOBBY - MINUTES LATER

Jake walks with Carl Lee as he is escorted through the lobby towards a throng of waiting press.

JAKE

Right here looks good.

Jake stills Carl Lee, signals, and Harry Rex appears from the wings, Gwen Haily and her boys in tow. The group fall quickly into a family tableau of photo-op perfection. Cameras flash.

REPORTER

Mr. Haily, why the insanity plea?

REPORTER

Mr. Haily, are you remorseful?

REPORTER

Mr. Haily, how do you feel?

Jake and Carl Lee exchange a look. A slight nod from Jake.

CARL LEE

How do I feel? Last week I was a man with a wife, children, a good job, a little money in the bank, church every Sunday. Then two men took my life away. I guess I snapped. Now I've lost everything, I live in a cage like an animal. How do I feel?

(a beat)

I'll tell you. I have faith. Faith in God, in the people of this county, faith that our system will look me square in the eye, judge me for the man I am and the acts I've committed and set me free.

Impressed silence from the reporters. Jake smiles. Score.

JAKE

That will be all.

VOICE (OVER)

Well orchestrated. Effective.

Jake looks around. Roark stands smiling at him.

JAKE

Excuse me?

ROARK

The staged press conference. The media is a necessary component of the modern American justice system.

JAKE

Who said that?

ROARK

I did.

OZZIE (OVER)

You comin, Jake?

Ozzie passes, leading Carl Lee out. Jake nods. When he looks back, the girl is gone.

INT.-BUCKLEY'S CAR-DRIVING - DAY

Buckley and Musgrove sit in the back seat.

BUCKLEY

Get that state doc, what's his name, Rodeheaver, down here to interview Haily. Then find out who Briggance is using for a shrink. I want him discredited.

MUSGROVE

Professional conduct or personal dirt?

BUCKLEY

Whatever it takes. Just get me enough to shatter him in court.

INT.-HOLDING CELL - AFTERNOON

Carl Lee has just handed Jake nine hundred dollar bills.

JAKE

That's nine hundred. We said a thousand down.

CARL LEE

Kids gotta eat.

JAKE

When do I get the rest?

CARL LEE

Them folks down at the bank. They won't loan me no money on my house.

JAKE

Why not? It's ten acres and a house that's almost paid for. You borrowed on it before, for Lester's trial.

CARL LEE

Said I wasn't in jail before. They said to Gwen, how's he gonna pay, sittin on death row?

JAKE

Remind me to thank them for the vote of confidence.

CARL LEE

I lost my job at the mill. They called Gwen. Twenty years, I'm out five days and they fire me.

JAKE

Carl Lee, I can't try a capital murder case for nine hundred dollars. I need to live.

CARL LEE

Me too, Jake. Me too.

EXT-CABIN - SUNSET

Buried deep in the woods. Freddie Cobb, eager as a prom date, sits with several white STRANGERS on the front porch.

STUMP SISSON

Mr. Cobb I am Stump Sisson, Imperial Wizard for Mississippi.

COBB

Sure is an honor to meet you sir.

SISSON

You were right to call us, Mr Cobb. That nigger killed your brother in cold blood. But that don't mean he won't get off. Niggers have plenty of protection nowadays. The NAACP, ACLU, even government. Hell, white folk ain't got a chance, 'cept the Klan. Now who's the nigger's lawyer?

COBB
Briggance. Local boy. Young but a
good reputation.

SISSON
He have family?

COBB
Yeah. Wife and a daughter.

SISSON
Good.

COBB
So, will y'all will get involved?

SISSON
I was told your grandfather was a
member of the Klan.

COBB
Yessir.

SISSON
Well then, we must get involved.

COBB
I want to help.

SISSON
Tell you what. You get five, six
friends of similar thinking, we'll
initiate the Ford County Klavern.
Even make you leader. We'll raise so
much hell no juror will even
consider acquitting the nigger.

COBB-CLOSE. His eyes shine. A couple men walk him to his car.

MAN
That is one stone-dumb redneck.

SISSON
Yeah. But membership is way down.
This Haily case'll bring God fearing
nigger haters out of the woods all
over the country. Haily'll be our
new war cry. Start calling the boys.

INT.-CARL LEE'S CELL - NIGHT

Carl Lee sits playing cards with Moss. Ozzie ENTERS. Grim.

OZZIE
I got some bad news.

CARL LEE
Sweet Jesus, is it Tonya?

OZZIE
Nah. It's Looney.. The doctors took
his leg below the knee.

CARL LEE.
Shit, no. I known Looney all my
life. You gotta let me see him, Oz.

OZZIE
What?

CARL LEE
You know I ain't goin nowhere. You
gotta let me see him.

Ozzie just stares at him.

INT.-HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

The door opens. Ozzie ENTERS with Carl Lee who approaches the bed.

CARL LEE
Looney. Looney you wake?

Looney turns to face him.

CARL LEE
Looney, what they done to you, I
want you to know it's my fault. No
matter what gets said in court I
knew what I was doing and I sure
wasn't trying to hurt you, just them
boys. I'm sorry. Real sorry.

Looney stares at him a beat. Then he turns his head away.

INT.-HOSPITAL-HALLWAY -WALKING

CARL LEE
Lemme check on my girl.

They have come to the ICU. Carl Lee looks in. His eyes widen.
Tonya's bed is empty, freshly made.

CARL LEE
...Oh no.

GWEN (OVER)

Sugar?

Carl Lee turns and his wife is there before him, moving into his arms, their faces close now, streaked with tears.

CARL LEE

Where's the baby?

GWEN

She's here. Doctors released her an hour ago. She can come home.

From behind Gwen, Tonya steps forward. Carl Lee kneels before his daughter. His eyes shine.

CARL LEE

Hi there, Tanny-girl.

TONYA

Hi daddy. Momma said you sent the bad men away.

CARL LEE

Yeah. Guess I did.

She leans in, kisses his cheek.

TONYA

Thank you, daddy.

OZZIE

Come on, Carl Lee, we gotta go now.

Carl Lee spins, a man ready to fight. A beat. Then he nods.

CARL LEE

You're my girls.

TONYA

Daddy, when are you coming home?

But Carl Lee has no answer. Before his watching family, he heads back to jail.

EXT.-FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH - DAY

Jake and Carla are heading to church. A band of reporters see them, start dogging them with shouts of MR. BRIGGANCE, MR. BRIGGANCE.

JAKE

That's CNN. That's Dan Rather.

CARLA

Jake, we're on our way to church.
This isn't the time....

JAKE

Maybe just a few questions.

CARLA

Jake...

But Jake doesn't hear her. He's too busy smiling for the cameras.

CARLA-CLOSE. Watching her husband. Not sure she likes what he sees.

INT.-MT. ZION CHURCH - DAY

Packed with black men, women and children. A handsome preacher, REVEREND AGEE stands at the pulpit. Women sway and sing.

REV AGEE

And what of sin? The white man
bathes in our sweat. Feeds off our
toils. Drinks of our blood. But we
must be strong. We must rise up
against oppression.

That's when the doors swing open and Gwen ENTERS, little Tonya by her side. The crowd goes WILD. The choir begins to SING louder, women standing fast and SHOUTING with the spirit of Jesus.

FAVOR REVEREND AGEE as he leaves the service to the CHOIR, walks off the pulpit, behind the stage and down a narrow stair into..

INT.-CHURCH BASEMENT

A small group of suited black men. All stand. One steps forward. Ancient. Dignified. REVEREND ISAIAH STREET.

STREET

Rev. Agee, I am Isaiah Street.

AGEE

It's an honor to meet you, Reverend.
I saw you march with Doctor King.

STREET

The struggle continues. Today, here
in Clanton. Carl Lee Haily is on
trial because he is black. No other
reason. These men are with the
NAACP.

(MORE)

STREET (CONT)

Rev. Agee you chair the local council of ministers, do you not? We need to organize support for Carl Lee Haily. We would like a special offering to be taken at all local churches. Half the proceeds to the Haily family, the other half to his legal defense fund. Demonstrations and marches will be important, perhaps even boycotts of local businesses. Do you understand?

AGEE

Times are hard for folks around here.

REV STREET

Obviously, we would expect you to take a modest administration fee. For your troubles.

AGEE

What's the defense fund money for?

STREET

The black community is concerned that Mr. Haily's attorney is not sensitive to the needs of the movement. The NAACP wishes to provide him with a new lawyer.

EXT.-WILBANKS BUILDING - NIGHT

Jake is leaving his office, carrying a manilla envelope.

ROARK (OVER)

I assume that's the infamous change of venue motion under your arm.

He turns to face a slender figure, sitting cross-legged on the hood of his parked Saab drinking a beer from a fresh six.

ROARK

Nice night. Beer?

Jake comes down the steps to face her.

JAKE

Finder of precedents, mystery woman of the court house.

ROARK

(extending her hand)

Ellen Roark. R-o-a-r-k. That's Roark in Boston and Row Ark in Mississippi.

JAKE

Boston, huh?

ROARK

I was born there. My dad is the notorious Sheldon Roark.

JAKE

Attorney to the stars. I'm duly impressed. What brings you to Mississippi, Row-Ark. Slumming?

ROARK

Law School at Ole Miss. Family tradition. Mom was a sweet little sorority girl there till she married my father.

JAKE

I married a sweet little sorority girl from Ole Miss.

ROARK

They have an excellent selection.

JAKE

What brings you to Clanton? I can't believe they don't have cars to sit on on campus.

ROARK

Carl Lee Haily. I'd like to help you with the trial.

JAKE

What makes you think I need help?

ROARK

You're trying the largest capitol murder case in recent history. You work alone. No paralegals, no researchers, no clerks, nor can you afford to hire any. So if Noose doesn't accept that motion in your hand, you go to trial in less than two weeks. Trust me, you need help.

JAKE

And how do you know all this?

ROARK

I'm an excellent researcher. Genius runs in my family. I've played gopher in seven capital murder trials, witnessed two executions and written briefs for the ACLU. I'm twenty five and when I grow up I'll spend a glorious career stomping out the death penalty. You're getting me on the way up and you need me.

JAKE

I see. That all?

ROARK

No. My dad's filthy rich so I'll work free. Research. Typing. I'll even make the coffee.

JAKE

Sure you don't want to be partner?

ELLEN

No. I'm a woman in the south. I know my place. What do you think?

JAKE

I think I'm going to drop this off in Noose's night slot, go home and see my wife and daughter. Thanks, but I can handle the case myself.

Roark hops down. Jake climbs in his car. Roark TAPS his window. Drops a slip of paper on the dash. Her phone number.

ROARK

(leaning in)

You'll change your mind.

Jake watches Roark saunter off, sixer hung over her shoulder. He shakes his head, starts for home.

INT.-JAKE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

HANNAH'S EYES-CLOSE. Reflect the glow of flickering flames.

HANNAH

Mommy, look. It's pretty.

WIDER

Hannah is staring out her parents bedroom window. Carla blinks awake. Gets up. Moves towards her daughter.

CARLA

Honey what is it?
(looking out)
Oh dear God.

INT.-JAKE'S SAAB-DRIVING - NIGHT

Jake turns onto his street. Bubble lights sweep the night. He clears the fire trucks to find firemen spraying water on a giant burning cross impaled in his front yard.

Hannah and Carla stand huddled in the doorway, watching.

INT.-JAKE'S HOUSE - LATER

Jake closes the door after the FIRECHIEF. Carla turns away from the window as the bubble lights recede.

CARLA

What does it mean?

JAKE

It's a warning. Stop what you're
doing or next time we'll do more
than burn a little wood.

Carla crosses the dining room, stares at a table set for a candlelit dinner, candles never lit, food never eaten.

JAKE

Carla, I'm sorry.

CARLA

About what? That you missed Sunday
dinner? That you weren't here when
someone practically burned down our
house? That we can't pay the bills?
Or that they're calling Hannah a
nigger lover at school? What are you
sorry about, Jake?

Jake looks away. A beat. Then Carla gets it.

CARLA

Oh my God, you never called him did
you? You never told Ozzie what Carl
Lee said.

JAKE

I didn't think he'd really..... I.....

CARLA

What's wrong with you? Look at all that's happened. Why didn't you stop him when you had the chance?

HANNAH (OVER)

Mommy?

Hannah is standing in the doorway.

HANNAH

Are you and daddy fighting?

Carla stares at her daughter a beat. Scoops her up in her arms.

JAKE

I promise, if it gets too dangerous, I'll quit.

CARLA

What's too dangerous? How much is this crusade of yours going to cost?

Carla carries Hannah out. Jake stands in the living room. Alone.

EXT.-JAIL YARD - MORNING

Family visiting hour. Prisoners mill with their relatives or shoot hoops in the fenced lawn. Carl Lee sits with Gwen while Tonya plays jacks with the boys on the grass.

CARL LEE

Jake says we'll know in a couple days if the judge is gonna move the trial.

GWEN

They made a collection for us at church. Rev Agee did a good service.

CARL LEE

What did that Memphis doctor say?

GWEN

She's doin' good. Her jaw's healin'. She can't run and jump yet, but it won't be long.

CARL LEE

What about the other?

GWEN

There was too much damage. She ain't never gonna have kids.

Carl Lee looks away.

CARL LEE

I think about those two boys. Dead and buried. Flesh probably rottin' by now. I remember them walkin' into court. One proud, the other scared, remember the way they fell, one on top of the other, screamin' and twistin' goin' nowhere. God forgive me Gwen. It's the only thought I have that gives me comfort.

GWEN

We need some money round the house, Carl Lee. For groceries and bills.

CARL LEE

How much you got?

GWEN

Less than fifty. Maybe you could ask Jake to lend you some.

CARL LEE

No. I'll figure out a way.

GWEN

How you think you gonna get money while you're stuck here in jail?

Carl Lee raises his eyebrow, points at her.

CARL LEE

Don't back talk me, woman. I am still man of this family.

GWEN

Sorry.

CARL LEE

Now tell me what Agee said when he passed round that collection plate.

ETHEL-CLOSE. And SHOUTING.

ETHEL

I don't care what your records say.
We are dealing with life and death,
toad! Life and death! Understand?

WIDER

INT.-WILBANKS BUILDING-DAY

Ethel stands in the open doorway facing the target of her ABUSE, a meek looking MAN in a electric company uniform.

ETHEL

You wanna pull the plug, mister, you
have to go through me.

The man looks at her. No match. He turns and walks away.

JAKE (OVER)

The IRS?

Jake is coming down the steps.

ETHEL

No, Jake. Not the IRS. The damned
electric company. That's the second
time I've held them off this week.

JAKE

How much do we owe?

ETHEL

Two thousand dollars.

JAKE

How much do we have in the bank?

ETHEL

Two hundred. Nothing came in this
week.

JAKE

What about the settlement on the
Lifford cattle theft?

ETHEL

Mr. Lifford has not signed the
release, remember?

JAKE

Well what about Buck Britt's
retainer? That's two grand.

ETHEL

His check bounced.

JAKE

Bounced?

ETHEL

(flaring)

Yes, bounced, it's been sitting on your desk for a week, not that you'd notice. Since you've taken this case you've stopped seeing clients. You don't return phone calls. You're obsessed. And, boy, your obsession is going to break us.

Jake looks at her, her eyes red.

JAKE

What's up, old woman? We've had tough times before.

ETHEL

We've been getting calls at home. They say if Haily's acquitted they'll dynamite our house. Bud's had two strokes already. I'm scared he's due for a third.

JAKE

Ethel, why didn't you tell me?

The phone RINGS.

ETHEL

Jake Briggance's office. Right.

(hanging up)

That was Ozzie. Carl Lee's got a cell full of NAACP lawyers. They want to take over his case.

INT.-OZZIE'S OFFICE

Carl Lee sits surrounded by Rev Agee, Isaiah Street, a bearded white man (NORMAN REINFELD), and several black-suited cronies.

JAKE

What's going on here, Carl Lee?

STREET

I am Isaiah street, I believe you know Reverend Agee and this is-

JAKE

Norman Reinfield. I've seen your picture in the paper. I assume these boys carry your briefcase.

REINFIELD

My legal defense team.
(taking his hand)
A pleasure, Mr. Briggance.

JAKE

If this is a party where's the chips and beer? Otherwise, your being here seems a bit like Champerty, what with Carl Lee already having a lawyer and all.

AGEE

Carl Lee invited us here, Jake.

Jake shoots a look at Carl Lee. He just nods.

STREET

Mr. Briggance, let me be frank. Mr.. Haily's case has far reaching ramifications. Carl Lee's acquittal for the killings of two white men will do more for the black folks of Mississippi than any event since we integrated the schools. His conviction, on the other hand, would be another slap at us; a symbol of deep seated racism; of old prejudices, old hatreds. Perhaps enough to ignite a nation. You see how important this case is?

JAKE

Enter Mr. Reinfield's death squad.

REINFIELD

An unfortunate nickname. But apropos. My lawyers handle only capital murder cases, Mr. Haily.

JAKE

And just how many of your cases are supposed to be lost? So you can martyr the victim.

REINFIELD

Now Mr. Briggance-.

CARL LEE

How much a defense like that cost?

Jake looks at Carl Lee. Something unspoken passes between them.

JAKE

Yeah, a hundred thousand?

REINFIELD

Actually, we are prepared to accept seven thousand in fees.

JAKE

Carl Lee doesn't have seven thousand, do you Carl Lee?

STREET

The NAACP has raised five thousand for Carl Lee's legal defense fund.

AGEE

We've raised the other two from local churches.

CARL LEE

I see. Well let me ask you something? How much of the money have you offered my wife and kids?

AGEE

The money is gonna be spent on lawyers fees and stuff like that.

CARL LEE

That ain't what you told the church, is it? You almost cried when you talked about how my family might starve if the folks didn't donate all they could, didn't you Reverend?

AGEE

The money's for you, Carl Lee. Right now we think it's better spent on...

CARL LEE

And how 'bout that defense fund? Can I use it for any lawyer I want?

REINFIELD

Well it's not that simple Carl Lee-.

JAKE

Actually it is. Unless the NAACP wants to go on record as soliciting funds under false pretenses.

STREET

Listen boy, we raised that money so these men could get you off, not for this cracker to-

CARL LEE

Now, hold on a minute.

Carl Lee turns to Rev. Agee.

CARL LEE

Let's make it real simple, preacher. You raised that money from black folk with the promise that it would go to my family. So if you don't give my wife that cash, I'll tell everyone I know you're a lyin crook.

JAKE

I'm sure your congregation would be interested to know that Gwen and the kids can't eat because you want to get in good with the NAACP.

CARL LEE

When I get through with you, you won't be able to raise two cents on Sunday mornin'.

JAKE

We'll expect the check for the Haily family this afternoon Reverend Agee.

CARL LEE

Now Rev. Street, I sure do admire your good work but I'm gonna take my chances with my friend Jake here. So thanks for coming down Mr. Reinfield and we hope to have that check for Jake's legal fees round same time this afternoon.

JAKE

Or Carl Lee and I just might have to have us another press conference.

Carl Lee looks at Jake. He smiles.

INT.-JAIL CELL - LATER

All have gone. Only Carl Lee and Jake remain.

JAKE

You set that all up, didn't you?

CARL LEE

Couldn't have done it without you.

JAKE

We make a pretty good team.

CARL LEE

You're out there, Jake. I'm in here.
We ain't no team.

EXT.-FIELD - MIDNIGHT

Six men in white robes, cowls down, kneel before a huge burning cross, their faces hidden in shadows. Six fully suited Klansmen watch on.

Sisson, in dragon regalia, walks before them. Pulling their cowls over their heads one by one.

SISSON

The Ford County klavern of the Ku
Klux Klan has been formed. Let all
who defy justice fear our name.

Firelight burns bright on eyes shining through the slitted cowls.

EXT.-CLANTON PHONE BOOTH - NIGHT

A figure, hidden in shadows, cradles the phone. On his bicep, the tattooed face of a smiling Mickey Mouse.

MAN

(in whispers)

I need the sheriff. Well get him up.
Someone's gonna die tonight.

INT.-HAILY HOUSE-NIGHT

Tonya lays asleep in her bed. Her eyes spring open. There, in the corner, a figure pulls itself free from the darkness. Willard. Another shadow coalesces into Billy Ray Cobb. The two close on her bed. Tonya SCREAMS.

INT.-JAKE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jake awakens as if from Tonya's SCREAMS. Looks around disoriented. Carla lays, sound asleep. A SOUND again. His DOORBELL.

He climbs out of bed, grabs his robe and heads downstairs.

INT.-JAKE'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Jake pulls open the door to find...Ozzie and Moss.

OZZIE

Evening, Jake.

JAKE

Uh, little late for a social call isn't it?

OZZIE

Fraid so. 'Bout a half hour ago we got a call from a man calling himself Mickey Mouse. Said the Klan was planning to blow up your house.

EXT.-JAKE'S STREET - NIGHT

A dark green pickup rolls down the street. A single man emerges and the truck drives off. The man heads down the block, a small suitcase in his hand.

FAVOR the man as he leaves the street, cutting fast now through lawns to the side of Jake's house.

THE SUITCASE-CLOSE. Placed gingerly under Jake's bedroom window.

THE MAN turns to run when suddenly a nightstick CRASHES across his face, sending him sprawling.

WIDER

Ozzie grabs the man by the neck, shoves him hard so he is sitting up against the side of the house.

OZZIE

I got him.

Moss jumps up from the shrubs. Jake's door swings open and Jake runs out, still buttoning his pants.

OZZIE

What's your name?

MAN

I ain't saying, nigger.

Like lightening Ozzie drives the nightstick against the man's ankle. Bone CRACKS. The man HOWLS in pain.

JAKE (OVER)

It's ticking.

JAKE is leaning over the briefcase, listening. Ozzie rests his nightstick against the man's nose.

OZZIE

What's in the box?

No answer. Ozzie raises his nightstick again. Another blow. His other ankle CRACKS. The man HOWLS, begins to WHIMPER.

MAN

Dynamite.

OZZIE

Carla gone?

JAKE

Yeah. I told her to drive Hannah around for an hour.

Ozzie nods, cuffs the man's wrist to the gas meter. Kicks his broken legs wide and slides the suitcase between them.

OZZIE

Open it.

The man just stares. Ozzie raises his nightstick. A beat. Then the man dials the combination latch. The cover flips open.

CASE-CLOSE. Five sticks of dynamite.

OZZIE

Oh my God. Diffuse it.

The man stares up at him.

MAN

Go to hell, nigger.

Ozzie backhands him once, twice, three times in the face. Jake has to pull him off.

MAN

Least I'll take you and the nigger
lovers to hell with me.

JAKE

Nothing more dangerous in this world
than a fool with a cause.

OZZIE

I'll call the bomb squad in Memphis.

JAKE

I don't think there's gonna be time.

CLOCK CLOSE. One minute to twelve. No time even to run.

OZZIE

Oh, man.

Jake lifts the bomb in his hand.

JAKE

Carla loves this house. Put every
bit of her heart into it.

(touching the fuse plug)

Shit. Shit. Shit.

(begins pulling)

Saw this on TV once.

And with that he pulls the plunger out of the dynamite just as the
clock hits twelve. The ALARM RINGS in his hand.

JAKE

I'll be damned.

MOSS

Ah, Chief... Why's he still smiling?

THE TERRORIST-CLOSE. A shit-eating grin.

Jake turns the disconnected clock over in his hand. Another smaller
timer and charge. A tiny light flashes from green to red.

JAKE

Secondary charge.

Jake whips the clock over his shoulder into the air and it EXPLODES
in a white ROARING flare.

HANNAN-CLOSE.

HANNAH

Are you coming to grampa's too?

WIDER

INT.-AIRPORT - MORNING

Jake stands with Carla by the gate.

JAKE

No, baby. Now go get your book.

Carla scurries to retrieve her picture book from the bench.

CARLA

You said you'd withdraw if it became too dangerous.

JAKE

I've got a client facing the gas chamber. He's counting on me.

CARLA

What about us? We're counting on you too. If something were to happen...

JAKE

I'll be fine. I promise.

CARLA

I'm not sure your promises are much good anymore.

A PLANE-CLOSE. ROARS overhead.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL

EXT-HIGHWAY - DAY

Jake's Saab EXITS the airport. (OVER) we hear a phone conversation.

ETHEL (OVER)

Noose called. He wants to see you at his house. Around noon.

JAKE (OVER)

Tell him I'm on my way.

EXT.-NOOSE'S HOME- BACK LAWN - DAY

A black woman walks Jake out to meet Judge Noose who is sitting at a lawn table over a tray of sandwiches.

NOOSE

Good to see you, Jake. Thanks for coming over.

JAKE

Beautiful place, Judge.

NOOSE

I'll get right to the point. I've thoroughly reviewed your brief requesting change of venue. With all the press nowadays, everyone knows the details of a crime long before trial. I agree with you, I think it's impossible to find a fair and impartial jury here in Clanton.

Noose takes a sandwich. Offers one to Jake. He shakes his head.

NOOSE

In fact, I think it's impossible to find a fair and impartial jury anywhere in Mississippi. As such, a jury here would be as fair as a jury anywhere else. I've decided to deny your request for change of venue.

Jake is stunned, tries to recover.

JAKE

...Well I guess that gives me something to bring out on appeal.

NOOSE

Actually no. I spoke to Judge Dent. He led me to believe the Supreme Court would uphold my ruling.

JAKE

You've certainly covered all your bases. By the way, is that legal?

NOOSE

You're a good lawyer. Bright. Ambitious. Talented. But you're not cut out for the big time. Talk to your client. He pleads guilty, I'd recommend Buckley accept a plea of manslaughter. He'd be out in twenty.

JAKE

And how's his wife supposed to raise his family alone?

NOOSE

It's better than being a widow. Think about it, boy. There's no future for you in this case.

And with that, Noose goes back to his lunch.

EXT.-LUCIEN'S HOUSE- DAY

Jake gets out of his Saab. Lucien sits on the porch, drinking.

JAKE

No change of venue. Which means an all white jury. Which means we lose. I wonder why Noose was so ardent.

LUCIEN

He was pressured.

JAKE

By who?

LUCIEN

By whom. Buckley thinks this case is his chance at the Governorship. His friends have been offering to help Noose get reelected to the bench, if the trial stays in Clanton.

JAKE

I don't believe it.

LUCIEN

Welcome to the big time, kiddo.

JAKE

So where is he?

Lucien gestures over his shoulder. A man lays passed out on the porch swing. W.T. BASS

LUCIEN

For an alcoholic, the man cannot hold his liquor. Meet Dr. Bass.

JAKE

Your kidding.

LUCIEN

Relax. When he's sober, he's terrific.

(off Jake's look)

Boy, in the first place it's not easy to get a shrink to testify Carl Lee was insane. He was right as rain and we both know it.

JAKE

But...

LUCIEN

Second, Dr. Bass owes me so won't he cost a dime. He has his license and his credentials are impeccable.

Suddenly the doctor GRUNTS, rolls to his side. The swing jerks sideways, throwing Bass onto the porch, head CRASHING into the floor, foot still lodged in the swing. Still out cold.

Lucien grabs an ice cube from his drink and slides it down the porch, just missing the doctor's head.

JAKE

I need a drink.

LUCIEN

At three in the afternoon. What about your wife?

JAKE

She doesn't tell me what to do. I'm my own man. I'm the boss. If I want a drink, I'll have a drink and she'll say nothing.

LUCIEN

When did she leave town?

JAKE

This morning.

Jake pours himself a bourbon as Lucien sends another cube down the slatted boards. The ice lands perfectly on the tip of Bass nose.

LUCIEN

Perfect shot.

JAKE
(shaking his head)
W.T. Bass, psychiatrist, witness for
the defense.

INT.-JAKE'S OFFICE - MORNING

Sunlight. A tremendously LOUD BUZZING. Jake, having obviously slept on the couch, is trying to blink himself awake.

He stumbles upright, past a few empty beer cans and a pile of open law books on the floor. The BUZZING continues. He heads downstairs.

INT.-JAKE'S OFFICE'S -MORNING

Jake opens the door, shielding his eyes from the sun. Ellen Roark.

ROARK
Nice parking job. Out late?

Jake looks over her shoulder. The Saab, parked half in the street.

ROARK
I hear Moose turned down your change
of venue. I think it's time you let
my buy you lunch.

INT.-JAKE'S OFFICE

Jake is changing while Roark waits, looking around.

ROARK
Your wife lets you sleep in the
office?

JAKE (OVER)
My wife left town.

Roark adjusts the framed picture of Carla and Hannah on his desk,
PICTURE-CLOSE. Reflected in the glass, Jake can be seen through the
slightly open bathroom door, dressing in the steam.

ROARK
Too bad.

She looks over the papers on his desk. Lifts a couple of photos.

ROARK
Trying to keep the jury from seeing
pictures of the murder scene?

JAKE (OVER)

If I can find a precedent.

Roark nods, approves of the strategy. Jake emerges, freshly scrubbed but only slightly healed.

JAKE

There's a little cafe around the corner where the specialty is grease and fried cornmeal. What do you say?

INT.-CLAUDE'S DINER - LUNCHTIME

Mostly black. Jake and Roark sit facing each other across a small, checker clothed table. Jake pours a headache powder into a glass.

ROARK

Come on, Briggance. Jury selection starts in two days. Let me help. Or do you just like making women beg?

JAKE

A job like this is dangerous.

Roark pulls a handgun from her purse, lays it on the table.

JAKE

Snub nosed .38. I'm impressed.

ROARK

Daddy gave it to me for my fifteenth birthday. I have a license.

JAKE

Must be a hell of a guy.

The food arrives. Two Claudeburgers and fries. She removes the lettuce and tomato from hers, begins cutting the patty with knife and fork. Jake shakes his head, mauls his.

JAKE

You said the other night you were opposed to the death penalty. Why?

ROARK

And you're not?

JAKE

Actually, I'm very much in favor of it. I'd like to go back to hangings on the courthouse lawn.

ROARK

Tell me you're kidding.

JAKE

The only problem with the death penalty is we don't use it enough.

ROARK

Have you explained that to Mr. Haily?

JAKE

Mr. Haily does not deserve the death penalty. But the two men who raped his daughter did.

ROARK

I see. And how do you determine who dies and who doesn't?

JAKE

Simple. You look at the crime and the criminal. If it's a dope dealer who guns down an undercover cop, he gets the gas. A drifter rapes a ten year old girl, then kicks her head in with his silver-toed cowboy boots, you strap him into a chair, hook up the wires, pull the switch.

ROARK

Christ I thought you were a liberal.

JAKE

I am. What I am not is a card carrying, ACLU radical. I do not believe in forgiveness. Nor in rehabilitation. I believe in safety. I believe in justice.

ROARK

Ever witnessed an execution?

JAKE

Not that I recall.

ROARK

Well you go watch a man die, see him beg, see his life kick and spit out of his body till he pisses and shits and then is gone. Then you come back and sing this crap about justice.

ROARK (CONT)
(cooling down)

Well, I guess that's not exactly the best way to apply for a job is it?

Jake slides a pen across the table.

JAKE

I don't want the jury to see those pictures of the dead rapists. Too prejudicial. Can we keep them out of court? Also, it's vital I admit the rape. I want the jury to know details. I'll need briefs on both.

She stares at him in disbelief.

JAKE

I don't like your politics. But you've got passion. Something Carl Lee Haily sorely needs right now. And maybe so do I. Now write.

Roark smiles, puts pen to napkin.

ROARK

I'm writing, boss. I'm writing.

EXT.-CLANTON COURTHOUSE - DAY

A REPORTER shows an envelope marked CONFIDENTIAL to the camera.

REPORTER

It's official. The trial of Carl Lee Haily will be held in Clanton. Today presiding Judge Moose issued 150 summonses for potential jurors. In order to prevent tampering, the list will be kept strictly confidential with not even the attorneys in the case knowing the identities of the potential jurors until selection begins on Wednesday. With testimony set to begin next week, this case has garnered national-

INT.-BUCKLEY'S OFFICE DAY

A TV runs the NEWS. Musgrove sits working a computer keyboard. Buckley stands over his shoulder.

BUCKLEY

Way I see it, anything in the State DataBase is State business. We are State officials. Therefore, we should have access.

MUSGROVE

Bingo.

SCREEN-CLOSE. Jurors List for the Trial of Carl Lee Haily.

INT.- JAKE'S OFFICE - MORNING

Jake is talking to Harry Rex.

HARRY REX

You know Buckley's managed to get his hands on that list already.

JAKE

If he has two extra days to profile the potential jurors, we're sunk. Where the hell are all your shady sources when I need them?

(OVER) a the doorbell RINGS, followed by WOMAN'S VOICES.

HARRY REX

What's that?

JAKE

My secret weapon.

The door flies open to produce Roark, Ethel close on her heels.

ETHEL

Sorry. She insists she works here. I'll call Sheriff Walls.

JAKE

It's alright. Ethel, meet Row Ark my new ACLU card carrying, ERA clerk.

Ethel peers at Roark's sweatshirt.

ETHEL

Not to mention bra-burning. Didn't you forget something dear?

ROARK

Jake said I could forget it. He told me you hadn't worn yours in years.

ETHEL

(to Jake)

Keep dreaming sweetheart.

(to Roark)

I imagine you're just the kind of girl who would have booked passage on the Titanic, Miss Row Ark.

Ethel EXITS.

JAKE

She grows on you. Row-Ark this is Harry Rex Vonner, the meanest divorce lawyer in Ford County and a man you cannot trust.

HARRY REX

(taking her hand)

Jake. A female law clerk. What would Carla say?

ROARK

Have something against females, sir?

HARRY REX

No ma'am. I've married four of them. I'm inclined to think you might make an excellent wife number five.

ROARK

Well, you are cute. Although I have a feeling the attraction is purely physical.

JAKE

Watch it. There's been no sex in this office since Lucien left.

HARRY REX

Ah, for the good old days.

JAKE

Alright, enough chatter. Roark, to work. The library's downstairs. You'll find the books behind the mountain of dust. H.R., with me.

HARRY REX

(eyeing Roark)

Maybe I'll stay a while. Show old Row-Ark the ropes.

ROARK

I love ropes.

JAKE

You kids can pitch woo later. Harry Rex we've got to figure out how to get our hands on that list.

Harry Rex CLAPS Jake on the back.

HARRY REX

Jake, old buddy, grab a bottle of scotch. I know a certain court recorder with a tremendous thirst.

They head for the door.

EXT.-TANK'S TONK - AFTERNOON

Cinderblock. Deep in the woods. Jake pulls off the old road. (OVER) JUKEBOX MUSIC, CRASHING BOTTLES. A few blacks eye him suspiciously.

INT.-TANK'S - TONK

All black. Forty sets of eyes focus on Jake as he opens the door. The room grows quiet. Jake tries a smile. No one smiles back.

VOICE (OVER)

Jake! Jake!

From behind the bar, a giant black man (TANK) emerges, wiping his hands on his apron,

TANK

Damn, you sure a long way from home, boy. What brings you here?

JAKE

Just business. We talk a outside second, Tank?

Tank looks at the men. Still staring.

TANK

Sure, Jake. Sure.

EXT.-TANKS - DAY

Jake hands Tank a copy of the jurors list.

JAKE

Look at each name. See how many of these folks you know.

TANK

You mean how many are black?

JAKE

Yeah. And what you know about them. Married. Kids. That kind of thing.

TANK

Okay, man. Why don't you come back in? Have a drink? Whites allowed.

JAKE

Nah, Tank. I don't think so.

Tank looks at him. SLAPS his back. LAUGHS.

TANK

Guess that's the difference between allowed and welcome.

EXT.-RURAL PORCH -SUNSET

A JURY-SUMMONS-CLOSE

WIDER

JOE PERRYMAN sits chewing RedMan, spitting carefully through a small hand-carved hole in the porch. Nunely climbs up the steps.

JOE

Evenin' Tim.

NUNELY

Evenin' Joe Frank. Gimmie a chew.

JOE

What brings you 'round here?

NUNELY

Just passing by. Hadn't seen you in a while.

The two sit for a beat, chewing, listening to the crickets.

NUNELY

Say, Joe Frank, I hear you got one of those jury summonses.

JOE
'Fraid so. Who told you?

NUNELY
It's that nigger's trial, you know.

JOE
That's what I figured.

NUNELY
Tell you what bothers me. This insanity crap. A pure lie. What that nigger did was cold blooded murder.

JOE
It was your daughter, Tim, what would you have done?

NUNELY
Let the courts handle it. And suppose this nigger gets off. Niggers will go crazy. Every time somebody crosses a nigger, he'll just kill him, then say he was insane, and get off.

JOE FRANK
You gotta keep the niggers under control.

NUNELY
Better believe it. Haily gets off none of us is safe.

JOE
I hadn't really thought about that.

NUNELY
I hope you'll do the right thing, Joe Frank. I surely do.

EXT.-ROADSIDE

Nunely's climbs into his car, parked out of sight on the shoulder.

VOICE (OVER)
How'd it go?

TIM
Good. Fine, I guess.

WIDER

Stump Sisson sits in the passenger seat, holding a jurors list, several names marked. Checks off Joe Frank's as the car pulls out.

EXT.-PRISON YARD - EVENING

A handball SLAPS against a cement wall.

JAKE (OVER)

We got the checks. Three grand for me. Three for Gwen. Said the rest went for administration fees.

WIDER

Carl Lee stands SLAPPING the handball repeatedly. His shoulders gleam with sweat, muscles tight.

CARL LEE

Tell you, Jake, if I wasn't crazy when I got here, likely to be by the time I get out. Sometimes at night I can't even breathe.

JAKE

How's the family?

CARL LEE

Gwen heard you been asking about black folks on that jurors list.

JAKE

Yeah.

CARL LEE

You figure black folks make a better jury for me?

JAKE

Ethnic bias is common practice in jury selection. People are more sympathetic to their own race. It's the law of nature.

CARL LEE

It's the law, alright. But I don't think it has much to do with nature.

Carl Lee SLAMS the ball hard and it flies up over the wall, hits a mesh ceiling, falls back down again. No escape.

CARL LEE

Get me outta here, Jake.

EXT.-TWITTY PORCH- NIGHT - POV

Someone is watching BUD TWITTY (65), as he sits listening to the CARDINALS GAME, shelling peanuts. Ethel appears from the house, deposits a soda, a kiss to her husband's head, goes back inside.

A RUSTLING (OVER) catches Bud's attention. He lowers the RADIO. Listens. The RUSTLING again. He stands, walks to the edge of the porch, puzzled.

A FIGURE springs from the darkness. Dressed in black, face smeared with war paint. He grabs Bud, yanks him savagely off the porch.

ANOTHER WARRIOR grabs Bud while the first POUNDS his gut, his face.

ETHEL comes from the house. Before she can speak a third Savage has his arm around her neck, choking off breath, forcing her to watch, soundless, as the other two take turns on her husband.

LAWN-CLOSE. Three figures step from the darkness, each garbed in flowing white robes and pointed headdresses, silent, watching.

SISSON
(finally)

Enough.

The savages let Bud and Ethel fall, disappear into the darkness, followed by the three white robed figures. Ethel rushes to her husband. Hardly breathing. Perfectly still.

INT.-HOSPITAL - ICU - NIGHT

Jake looks his question to Ethel as she comes away from the doctor.

ETHEL
He may have had another stroke. They don't know yet.

JAKE
I'm so sorry, Ethel.

ETHEL
You put that black man's case in front of all of our lives. Now look what's happened. Is it worth it?

With that she turns and goes back to husband.

INT.-JAKE'S OFFICE

Jake sits at his desk, staring at the framed photo of his family. He lifts the phone. Starts to dial. Checks his watch. Too late.

He goes into his pocket. Stares at the paper with Roark's phone number. A beat. Drops the number. Lifts a bottle of scotch instead.

A SINGLE BLACK MAN-CLOSE. Young. Angry. Fist punching in the air.

BLACK MAN

Free Carl Lee.

(OVER) A TREMENDOUS CHORUS OF VOICES: FREE CARL LEE!

WIDER

EXT.-CLANTON SQUARE - MORNING

Transformed. Crowds of militant blacks are gathering around the court house, CHANTING. School busses issue the more elderly.

REVEREND AGEE climbs to the small podium. The crowd grows hushed.

AGEE

Brothers and sisters we are here today to talk about freedom. The white man walks free while our brother Carl Lee suffers the bonds of incarceration. But he is not alone. We too are in chains. We pray, yes, but today we demand his freedom. His freedom and ours.

(OVER) CRIES of NO JUSTICE, NO PEACE.

AN ENORMOUS BLACK WOMAN climbs the court steps, her body raining in the sweltering heat. The crowd grows silent. Suddenly, her VOICE rises over the square. WE SHALL OVERCOME.

FACES-CLOSE. Young. Old. Strong. Weak. All join together in song.

JAKE (OVER)

I'll be damned.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL

EXT.-WILBANKS BUILDING - BALCONY

Jake, Roark, and Harry Rex stand looking out at the square.

ROARK

Beautiful, isn't it?

HARRY REX

Not the word I would have chosen.

JAKE

Where the hell is Lucien?

They head back into...

INT.-JAKE'S LAW LIBRARY-MORNING

At the conference table, donuts, fresh coffee, a pile of index cards and several marked jurors lists.

HARRY REX

Any word on Bud?

JAKE

No. Ethel's still with him.

Lucien ENTERS. Eyes Harry Rex.

LUCIEN

If it isn't the Pillsbury Dough Boy.
Still practicing exploitative law?

HARRY REX

At least I'm still practicing.

Lucien fixes his gaze on Roark.

LUCIEN

And who do we have here?

JAKE

Row-Ark, I'd like you to meet-

ROARK

(wide-eyed)

Lucien Wilbanks. Third white man in Mississippi to join the ACLU. Permanently disbarred by the Supreme Court for attacking police officers who busted a picket line in the 1993 Epso Oil strike. It's an honor to meet you, sir.

HARRY REX

Gotta love America. Only country where you can be fired in disgrace and still be a hero.

LUCIEN

Finally, a woman with solid values.
A pleasure, Ms. Row Ark.

Jake gathers up the jurors lists.

JAKE

Okay, to win this case, we need a sympathetic jury, a jury who will want to acquit and who can use the insanity plea as an excuse to do so.

LUCIEN

I need a drink.

JAKE

No drinking. Each name on the list gets a rating, zero for the worst possible juror, ten for the best.

LUCIEN

What do you mean, no drinking? This is my building, built by my grandfather, leased to you for a reasonable rent and I want a drink.

(to Roark)

Row Ark, I have all the respect in the world for you. I believe in your right to equal pay for equal work, your right to have a child or abort. You should be treated just like a man. And since you are a law clerk, genderless in my eyes, I think you should be the one to go by the beer.

JAKE

No, Lucien. Please.

ROARK

He's the boss.

LUCIEN

Philistines.

He pulls a bottle from his jacket. Pours bourbon into his coffee.

JAKE

Okay, let's settle on the ideal juror.

HARRY REX
(facetiously)

Black. Preferably an acquitted murderer.

JAKE

Buckley will strike the blacks.
Let's concentrate on whites.

LUCIEN

Women. Always pick women for
criminal trials. They have bigger
hearts. Ask Row Ark. She has
sympathy for criminals, aliens,
pornographers, don't you Row Ark?

ROARK

Right Lucien.

HARRY REX

And sympathy for dead rednecks, too.
Women don't understand blowing
people away. You need young fathers
who want to do what Haily did.

JAKE

Agreed. Young men with families. I
would prefer no one over fifty. Less
bigotry, as a rule, with youth.

ROARK

So we stay away from women, rednecks
and old men.

JAKE

Exactly. Let the games begin.

ROARK

(lifting the jurors list)
Victor Oznell.

HARRY REX

I know him. He's married. About
forty. Two kids. From up North so
less racist. I'd give him a seven.

Roark notes his information and rating on an index card.

ROARK

John Tate Aston.

LUCIEN

Zero. Dead. Been dead three years.

ROARK

Why's he on the list?

LUCIEN

They don't purge voter registration.
Bet a good twenty percent of these
folks have died or moved away.

ROARK

Gerald Ault.

JAKE

When Ault was a kid his house caught
fire. A stranger rescued him. Fellow
was black. Ten.

ROARK

Milliard Sills.

LUCIEN

Owns a pecan orchard. Seventy if
he's a day. Nephew was shot in the
head by two blacks during a robbery.
He will not be on the jury. Rating,
zero.

ROARK

What the hell is going on?

(OVER) the CHANTS AND SONG have given way to SHOUTS OF RAGE.

EXT.-LIBRARY BALCONY - DAY

Jake, Roark, Harry Rex and Lucien stare out across the town square.

HARRY REX

My friends, this is trouble.

REVERSE ANGLE

North of the rally in the square, a band of maybe fifty men are
approaching on foot. Klan.

OZZIE AND HIS MEN move out strategically, position themselves
between the two groups.

The men drop a speakers box. STUMP climbs on, pulls off his cowl.

STUMP

My name is Stump Sisson. And I'm
proud to be the Imperial Wizard for
the Invisible Empire of the Ku Klux
Klan. I'm here to say law abidin'
white folks of Mississippi are sick
and tired of niggers stealin, rapin,

STUMP (CONT)

killin' and gettin' away with it. We demand justice. We demand this Haily nigger be convicted and his black ass sent to the gas chamber.

A BLACK WOMAN steps forward.

WOMAN

Who the hell you calling nigger, you pointy hat, white faced, no good, wife beaten, son of a whore? You step your sorry ass down here, I'll show you some justice.

STUMP

Shut up you wild nigger. Shut up you animal.

WOMAN

Animal. You're the damn animal.

Ozzie and his deputies form a brave line between the two groups.

STUMP

Sheriff do your job. We got the right to assemble in peace-

WOMAN

I get through with you you'll be in pieces. Have to assemble you, you-

STUMP

Can't you control your own people? See what you get when you elect niggers to public office...

INT.-COURTHOUSE - DAY

The rally seen through from a high window. A hand lights a fuse.

EXT.-RALLY - DAY

Stump stands RAGING as the firebomb EXPLODES at his feet. Stump is suddenly engulfed in ROARING flames. He begins to SCREAM.

A GANG OF BLACKS draw sticks and knives, rush the Klan.

THE KLANSMEN pull small nightsticks from beneath their robes.

WIDER

The courthouse lawn is a battlefield. Rocks. Sticks. Black against white. PRESS duck and weave through the melee, bearing cameras.

OZZIE is blindsided by a Klansman. Another raises his baton over the black Sheriff's head.

KLANSMAN

Die, nigger.

JAKE leaps the railing. Races across the field, and smashes into the Klanner who's about to crush Ozzie's skull. Drags Ozzie back.

PULL BACK AND UP as around them, the battle rages on.

INT.-JAKE'S OFFICE-NIGHT

TV-CLOSE. Footage of the rally turned riot.

ANCHOR

...number of casualties is unknown. The most serious injuries are believed to be burns suffered by a Mr. Sisson, who identified himself as Imperial Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan. He is listed in critical condition. With jury selection scheduled to begin tomorrow...

WIDER

Jake TALKS on the phone, juror cards spread on the desk before him.

JAKE

I swear, Carla, I'm fine. Yes I was there. I was wearing one of those funny white robes. I love you too.

ROARK has been standing at the door, listening. She ENTERS.

ROARK

Guess she misses you pretty bad.

JAKE

No accounting for taste.

But it's clear by his expression he misses her too.

ROARK

That was pretty stupid what you did out there. And pretty brave.

JAKE

Ozzie's my friend, Row-Ark.

Roark lifts the juror cards.

ROARK

So how's it look?

JAKE

They're a lot more folks we don't want on the jury than folks we do.

She nods. Deposits two typed documents on the desk.

ROARK

Here are the briefs you wanted. In summary, the pictures of the dead men have almost invariably been ruled admissible during trial. I'd say there's no way to keep the jury from seeing them. As for telling them about the rape, it's debatable. Your best chance for admission is if Buckley brings it up first.

Jake thumbs through the documents.

JAKE

You're beautiful, Row-Ark.

ROARK

Thanks.

The two hold eye contact a beat too long.

JAKE

Okay, enough of that. Here's your new assignment. Find out everything you can on the State's Doctor. Rodeheaver. It's going to be battle of the shrinks in that courtroom and I need some ammunition.

ROARK

Got it. What now?

JAKE

Jury Selection doesn't begin for another sixteen hours.

ROARK

What the hell do you do around this burb to blow off steam?

A beat. Then Jake smiles.

JAKE

Row-Ark, let's you and me go to Hollywood.

INT.-SAAB-DRIVING - SUNSET

Jake and Roark are in the Saab, top down. Roark lifts a cigar off the dash. Turns it over in her hand. Her smile says, predictable.

ROARK

If we're headed for Los Angeles I need to stop and get a bikini.

JAKE

The Hollywood restaurant is in Robinsinville Mississippi. It was once in Hollywood Mississippi but it burned down and they moved it.

ROARK

Of course. They have especially good grease, there?

JAKE

Great food, great atmosphere, and it's an hour and a half from Clanton so no one will see me having dinner with a strange and beautiful woman.

ROARK

I'm flattered.

JAKE

Please. This dinner is strictly business. So don't get any lustful ideas in your ERA, sexually liberated brain.

ROARK

Sorry. You must be confusing me with someone who finds you irresistible.

JAKE

Just keep your hands to yourself.

Roark removes the cigar band, hands it to Jake.

ROARK

Here. Now we're engaged. Does that make it okay for us to have dinner?

Jake takes the band. Smiles. Puts it in his pocket.

JAKE

Sorry I'm taken.

And by his look, for just a second, he is.

ROARK

I have a radical idea. Let's pretend to be friends. Just two friends having dinner together.

JAKE

That doesn't work in the south.

ROARK

Why not?

JAKE

Because married men in the south don't have female friends. I think it goes back to the civil war.

ROARK

More like the dark ages.

JAKE

Why would I want female friends? They can't talk about football, or politics, or lawsuits. They talk about kids, clothes, recipes. Nope, Don't want any.

ROARK

That's what I love about the south. People are so tolerant. Have any Jewish friends?

JAKE

Had one in Law School. I don't think there are any in Ford County.

ROARK

How about homosexuals?

JAKE

No thanks. Truth is down here folks know-.

ROARK

They're place?

JAKE

No. Folks know they're different from each other and that being different, they may not all get along. You're allowed to have your dislikes. And at the end of the day that makes for a much more accepting and equal society than the forced co-existence of your ACLU, Affirmative Action North.

ROARK

You really believe that, don't you?

Jake nods. He does. Roark just shakes her head.

ROARK

Well at least you're cute.

EXT.-KLAN CABIN-NIGHT

Cobb, Sisson, several others hoist cans of kerosine onto the back of an old pick-up. The grins of men doing devil's work.

EXT.-HOLLYWOOD RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Small. Ramshackle. A flashing neon sign reads HOLLYWOOD.

INT.-HOLLYWOOD RESTAURANT

Small tables. Raucous. Folks having fun. A black woman on stage sings RAINY NIGHT IN GEORGIA. The WAITRESS arrives with wine.

WAITRESS

Fried dill pickles?

JAKE

Yeah. And two dinner specials.

ROARK

That wasn't sexist. Really. I never order my own food. Do you people fry everything?

JAKE

Everything worth eating.

Roark pours the wine. Raises her glass.

ROARK

To Carl Lee Haily.

JAKE

May we chose a jury tomorrow who will find him looney as the proverbial fruitcake.

The pickles arrive. Roark tastes them. Slides hers towards Jake.

ROARK

I would have no trouble loosing weight in the south. Do you think he was crazy? When he shot them?

JAKE

No. I watched him plan it. He told me he was going to do it.

ROARK

What?

JAKE

I try to tell myself I didn't think he was serious. But deep inside, I wonder if I didn't really want him to do it. That night I went home, I kept looking at Hannah. At how tender she is. I kept thinking of all the monsters in the dark, hiding around corners, waiting for her as she grows up. How at any moment one could come and steal her innocence, her beauty, her life. And I wanted those boys dead. In a way, I helped kill them. When we get into court tomorrow, Maybe it won't be just Carl Lee I'm trying to get off. Maybe I'm looking for a pardon too.

Roark reaches across, takes his hand.

WAITRESS (OVER)

I hope you two lovebirds are hungry.

The Waitress stands, two plates of fried catfish in her hands.

JAKE

We're not, we're just...

ROARK

Yes, counselor. What are we?

But Jake doesn't know what to say.

A STACK OF WOODEN CROSSES-CLOSE

WIDER

EXT.-PICKUP TRUCK - MOVING

Klansmen ride the open back truck, feet resting on the crosses, burning torches in their hands. The truck SCREECHES around a bend, heading for the lights of Clanton.

EXT.-HOLLYWOOD RESTAURANT

Jake and Roark emerge from the restaurant. A flashing MOTEL sign illuminates their faces.

What now?
ROARK

Good question.
JAKE

Jake wipes a bit of sauce off her check. She stills his hand.

This doesn't feel like pretend
anymore.
ROARK

They hold each other's eyes a moment. Jake is sorely tempted. Finally, he looks away.

We've got a long day tomorrow. I'm
going home to feed my daughter's
dog, call my wife, sleep in our bed.
I'll drop you off.
JAKE

A long beat. Finally, Roark nods. They head for the car.

EXT.-CLANTON-NIGHT - NIGHT

The klan truck barrels down the street. Hooded figures toss a burning cross onto the hospital lawn.

PAN UP

INT-BUD TWITTY'S HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

His EKG goes flat. Ethel rushes forward. Her husband is dead.

EXT.-OFFICE ROOF-DAWN

Jake, Harry Rex, and Lucien sip coffee, watch the sun rise.

HARRY REX

Nervous?

JAKE

As a whore in church. The first day is always the hardest.

HARRY REX

You hear about the National Guard?

Jake just stares blankly.

HARRY REX

Klan burned crosses on the lawns of six of the perspective jurors last night. Ozzie convinced the Mayor to call out the Guard.

LUCIEN

Welcome to occupied Clanton.

Roark pushes out onto the roof. Conservatively dressed. All stare.

ROARK

Morning boys.

JAKE

You look nice.

ROARK

So do you.

A long look between Jake and Roark. Harry Rex breaks the silence.

HARRY REX

Forgive us, Row Ark. We are impressed. We apologize for admiring you as we know how much this infuriates your liberated heart. Yes, we are sexist pigs, but you chose to come to the South where we drool over well dressed, attractive females, liberated or not.

Roark kisses Harry Rex on the head. Grabs some coffee.

JAKE

If the love fest is over, we've got a case to try.

INT.-WILBANKS BUILDING - DAY

The group head down the steps to the lobby.

ROARK

What's the strategy, boss?

JAKE

Okay, first you do not sit at counsel table. Just me and Carl Lee.

ROARK

Lawyer and defendant, surrounded by the forces of evil, facing death alone.

JAKE

Something like that.

HARRY REX

What about me?

JAKE

Noose doesn't like you. It'd be best if you pretended we never met.

ROARK

But we appreciate your assistance.

HARRY REX

Up yours, Ellie Mae.

ROARK

How about, Lucien?

A moment of awkward silence. Then...

HARRY REX

At his disbarment, Lucien swore he'd never set foot in court again.

LUCIEN (OVER)

Alright, let me remind you children of something.

WIDER. Lucien has remained on the small balcony at the top of the spiral steps. Addresses them from above.

LUCIEN

I know you're scared. But fear is an ally. Every lawyer is afraid when he stands before a new jury and presents his case. It's okay to be afraid. Just don't show it. Jurors will not follow the lawyer with the quickest tongue or prettiest words. They will not follow the sharpest dresser. They will not follow the court jester. Jurors follow the lawyer who makes them see the truth, regardless of his looks, his words, or superficial abilities. Thoreau said it takes two to speak the truth. One to speak. The other to hear. Go now. Make them hear.

They all stare a beat. Jake checks his watch.

JAKE

Alright, kids. Let's go to work.

They head out the door.

EXT.-CLANTON COURTHOUSE -DAY

A circus. National Guard trucks line the perimeter of the square. Guardsman direct traffic. Onlookers crowd the streets.

A BOY (HINKEY) sells T-shirts from a make-shift stand. Half read FREE CARL LEE. The other half read: FRY CARL LEE.

A GROUP OF BLACK MARCHERS, approach, SINGING, and Moss guides them to one side of the lawn.

A GROUP OF KLANSMAN near. Ozzie steps before them as they cross the front lawn.

KLANSMAN

We got a right to be here.

OZZIE

This is your spot for the trial.
Stay here and stay quiet.

A LARGE BLACK WOMAN walks up to the Klan, begins to SING.

A GROUP OF BLACK PROTESTORS CHANT

BLACK PROTESTERS

Free Carl Lee. Free Carl Lee.

PRO KLAN WHITES CHANT

KLANSMAN

Fry Carl Lee. Fry Carl Lee.

A PRESS MOB surround Buckley and Musgrove on the courthouse steps.

BUCKLEY

I assure the good folk of Mississippi, when we are done here, justice will be served.

JAKE, HARRY REX AND ROARK jog up the courthouse steps. Press swarm.

REPORTER #1

Mr. Briggance, is it true you've been threatened?

REPORTER #2

Who's the girl?

ROARK

(to the boys)

Am I the only one here who feels like the Mod Squad?

They push through the swinging doors into the courthouse.

INT.-COURTROOM-DAY

The gallery and balconies are packed. Six pews on the right side of the aisle are empty. Six on the left seat potential jurors.

Jake and Carl Lee sit at the defense table, Harry Rex and Roark in the pew right behind them. Buckley and Musgrove man the prosecution. Noose is on the bench.

NOOSE

Now ladies and gentlemen, this trial will be a long and arduous ordeal. I want no outbursts or demonstrations in my court room. We have enough of that outside. Any such disturbances and I will clear this court. As for you, Mr. Briggance and Mr. Buckley, I detect a certain amount of ill will between you. That's certainly not uncommon and I will not ask you to be friends. But I will insist that when you're in my courtroom shouting be held to a bare minimum. Do each of you understand what I'm saying?

JAKE

Yes sir.

BUCKLEY

Yes your honor.

NOOSE

Good. We will now seat the panel.

The clerk spins a barrel, selects a piece of paper at random.

NOOSE

Carlene Malone, juror number one.

A fat, white woman walks to the empty row, takes her seat. Jake checks his card. A three.

CARL LEE

What's going on?

JAKE

He's seating the jury panel. We have to pick them in order. Too many bad candidates up front and we're sunk.

NOOSE

Marcia Dickens, juror number two.

White. Fat. Unforgiving. Jake checks her card. Zero.

NOOSE

Jo Beth Mills, juror number three.

White. fifty. Abusive. A one on his card. Jake and Roark exchange looks. Not good.

JAKE

This is incredible.

NOOSE

Juror number five. Gerald Ault.

Finally Jake's number one juror. A ten.

JAKE

Finally.

NOOSE

Alex Summers, number six...

THE SEATED PANEL-CLOSE - LATER

The first rows are all older white women, save a couple of white men and a young white girl. No blacks at all until the fourth row.

HARRY REX (OVER)
We got a terrible draw.

WIDER

Jake, Harry Rex, and Roark watch as Buckley paces before the potential jurors.

BUCKLEY
Have any of you ever served on a jury before?

Several hands go up. Defense and Prosecution scribble wildly.

BUCKLEY
Have any of you ever been victims of a violent crime?

Several more hands.

JAKE
Here it comes.

BUCKLEY
Are any of you opposed to the death penalty?

Hands go up. Several blacks and a couple of the white men, including Jake's secret weapon, Gerald Ault.

JAKE
Damn.

NOOSE
Thank you. Those of you with your hands raised are now excused.

AULT
May I ask why, your honor?

NOOSE
Under the law, the court is required to excuse any potential juror who cannot consider the death penalty. Like it or not, the death penalty is legal punishment in Mississippi. Therefore, it is unfair to elect jurors who cannot follow the law.

CARL LEE

They don't want me to die, they
can't be on the jury?

HARRY REX

God Bless America.

INT:-COURTROOM-LATER

The jury looks exhausted. Buckley is taking his seat.

NOOSE

Questions, Mr. Briggance?

Buckley sits. Jake rises. Roark leans over to Harry Rex.

ROARK

Buckley asked every one of our
questions. What's he going to do?

JAKE

Hello, ladies and gentlemen. Long
day, huh? Old Rufus sure can talk.

Many smile.

JAKE

Ladies and gentlemen, do any of you
believe the insanity defense should
not be used under any circumstances?

A few squirm. No hands.

JAKE

No further questions your honor. The
panel looks fine to me.

MURMURS. Roark looks at Harry Rex. Puzzled.

ROARK

I didn't get it. I'm not even sure I
understood the question.

HARRY REX

He got all he needed from Buckley's
questions. Now he's the nice guy
going to let 'em get home early.
More important, he's already got one
word ringing their ears. Insanity.

INT.-COURTROOM -LATER

The bailiff has placed standing placards in front of each potential juror. The first twelve have red cards on them.

NOOSE

Gentlemen as you know you each have twelve challenges. Mr. Buckley, you begin. When we have twelve red placards and challenges are exhausted, the jury is selected.

BUCKLEY

Your honor, the state will accept jurors number one, two, three, four, challenge number five...

As Buckley SPEAKS, the jurors who are struck flip their placards to white. The new accepted jurors turn their placards to red.

BUCKLEY

Accept six, seven eight, nine, challenge ten, accept eleven, twelve, thirteen, use our third challenge on fourteen and accept number fifteen.

THE NEW JURY. Buckley has struck the remaining white males and younger female.

NOOSE

Mr. Buckley has used three challenges. Mr. Briggance?

JAKE (OVER)

Defense will strike jurors number one, two, three, accept four, six...

DISSOLVE TO:

THE NEW JURY. The most heinous whites have been struck. Red cards now stretch into the second row, including a few more men.

NOOSE

That's eight of your challenges, Mr. Briggance. Mr. Buckley?

BUCKLEY (OVER)

The State accepts sixteen, use our forth challenge on seventeen...

DISSOLVE TO:

THE NEW JURY. Red cards now spread into the third row. No men.

JAKE

Son of a bitch is reading my mind.

(louder)

Your honor we will strike number
twenty two and number twenty eight.

Two fat white men flip their cards to white.

NOOSE

Back to you Mr. Buckley. Twenty nine
and thirty.

The men at the end of the line flip their cards to red. Also fat
and white.

BUCKLEY

The state will take both.

JAKE

Will strike both.

The two men flip their cards to white.

NOOSE

You're out of challenges. Thirty
one, thirty two.

Both jurors at the end of the row flip theirs to red. Slim white
women. Next up, the first black.

BUCKLEY

The State accepts both.

NOOSE

Ladies and Gentlemen thank you.
Those not chosen are dismissed.

Carl Lee eyes the remaining group. His jury consists of ten women.
Two men. All white. Folks MUMBLE in disbelief.

NOOSE

Ladies and Gentlemen you have been
carefully selected to serve as
jurors in this case. You will be
sequestered until this trial is
over. In a few moments we will
recess until morning and you will be
given a chance to call home and
order toiletries and whatever else
you need. Thank you.

CARL LEE

That's a jury of my peers?

Jake has no answer.

INT.-KLAN CABIN-NIGHT

The Ford County Klavern sit around a raging hearth. The door bangs open. Cobb ENTERS.

COBB

Stump's dead.

KLANSMAN

This trial's been way too quiet.

They reach for their robes.

INT.-JAKE'S OFFICE-NIGHT

Jake sits at his desk, working late over a pad with trial notes. He circles a line that says ROARK'S RODEHEAVER BRIEF.

(OVER) he hears a NOISE downstairs. Silence. More NOISE. Jake opens his drawer. A handgun. He shuts out the light.

INT.-JAKE'S OFFICES - NIGHT

Jake slips down the stairs. A figure skulks across the lobby.

JAKE

(hitting the lights)

Freeze.

A familiar face smiles up at Jake's drawn weapon. Ozzie.

OZZIE

Why'd they put the light all the way over there? Don't point that thing.

JAKE

Jesus, Ozz.

OZZIE

You better come on with me.

JAKE

What's up?

Ozzie opens the front door. An orange column of smoke is spiraling high on the horizon.

EXT.-JAKE'S HOUSE

Folks have gathered. Fire engines and cop cars surround Jake's lovely colonial. Or what's left of it. The house is an inferno. The boiler BLOWS, windows brightening then EXPLODING in flame.

JAKE
(calling)

Max! Here boy. Max! Shit.

OZZIE
That your Rabbit under the carport?

Jake just shakes his head as the FIRE CHIEF joins them.

OZZIE
Looks like somebody loaded it with gasoline, parked it, set her going.

FIRECHIEF
House is empty, right?

JAKE
I don't suppose I could go in and look for my dog.

FIRECHIEF
No, man. It's too involved. My men couldn't even go in if folks were trapped inside. Look at the way she's burning. Even throughout the whole house. It's a good fire.

JAKE
A good fire. I'll be sure to tell my wife. She'll be pleased to know.

Just then a creature scampers around the corner. Max, a piece of molding in his mouth. Jake crouches, pets him, fighting tears.

JAKE
(takes the molding)
Attaboy, Max, I know just where this goes.

Jake stands, side-arms the molding into the blaze. Ozzie puts his arm around Jake, and the two stare as the house is swallowed by ROARING flames.

INT.-JAKE'S OFFICE - DAWN

Jake is on the phone, Max curled at his feet.

JAKE

...Max is okay too. I am so sorry. God, Carla, what an idiot I am. I was going to save Carl Lee. I was going to win the case of the century. To show Lucien he was right to have faith in me. I wanted to make you and Hannah proud. I wanted-

EXT.-CARLA'S PARENT'S BEACH HOUSE DECK - DAWN

Carla sits, on the phone, looking out at the water.

CARLA

You wanted to be a big time lawyer. I know, Jake. Well you're not. What you are is a good husband. A good father, a fine attorney, a good friend. And you know what? That's big time enough. It always has been. Maybe, when you learn that, we can try rebuilding.

JAKE (OVER)

I love you, Carla.

Carla hangs up. Looks out at the water, fighting back the tears.

CARLA

Just stay alive, you son of a bitch.
Just stay alive.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT.-COURTHOUSE - DAY

More press. More Klansman. More protesters. A powder keg.

INT.-COURTHOUSE - DAY

Everybody is in position. Lawyers, defendant, crowd, jury. Noose removes his glasses, cleans them, replaces them on his nose.

NOOSE

Mr. Buckley, you may begin.

Buckley rises, turns to face the jury.

BUCKLEY

Thank you your honor. Ladies and Gentlemen, my name is Rufus Buckley. I am what is called the people's lawyer. Your lawyer. You elected me and I've served as your prosecutor for nine years now. Today I have an awesome responsibility. To protect the people of this county. But this responsibility is not mine alone. For it is charged upon you twelve to join me in this search for the truth. A fierce and difficult task. But one over which, together, I know, we will shall triumph.

JAKE-CLOSE. Cleans his nails with a paper clip.

BUCKLEY

Yes, the rape of Tonya Haily was a terrible deed. I am a father, I have a daughter the same age as Tonya. I grieve for Gwen Haily and her child. And yes, thoughts of my little girl did give rise in my mind to thoughts of retribution.

JAKE-CLOSE. Smiles at Roark. Taps her brief on the admissibility of the rape. She nods.

BUCKLEY

But there is a mighty distinction between wanting revenge and taking revenge. I have sent a score of rapists to Parchman with the help of good juries such as yourselves. Our system works because we make it work. But all this will change if Carl Lee Haily has his way.

Buckley turns now, walks towards the defense table.

BUCKLEY

Imagine a lawless society where vigilantes roam at will. No police, no courts, no juries. That is the society Carl Lee Haily and his attorney are asking you to condone.

Buckley walks to Carl Lee, points directly at him.

BUCKLEY

The State will prove that this man, Carl Lee Haily, carefully planned to kill, and then, in cold blood did kill Billy Ray Cobb and Pete Willard and wound Deputy Looney. Once you hear our evidence, I am confident you will have no choice but to render a verdict of guilty.

Buckley offers the jury a solemn nod of thanks. Sits.

NOOSE

Mr. Briggance.

Jake stands.

JAKE

Hello ladies and gentlemen I'm Jake Briggance. I'm not the public defender and you didn't elect me. I'm just a lawyer. Oh, and one other thing. I'm a father. I also have a daughter. If you don't have a daughter, you can only imagine the kind of bond that forms between daughter and father. We all grow up hoping for the future, and daughters become a repository of that hope. I admire Mr. Buckley for his ability to be so compassionate and forgiving to a drunken pervert who might rape his child. He is a big man indeed. But could you, as jurors, as parents, be so tender and indulgent if your daughters had been raped by two drunk, stoned animals who tied her hands and feet-

BUCKLEY

Objection, your honor, the alleged rape is not on trial here.

JAKE

Your honor, by mentioning the rape in his opening, Mr. Buckley has paved the way to it's introduction.

NOOSE

Overruled. Proceed, Mr. Briggance.

JAKE

Thank you your honor. Can a man be driven insane? The law says he can. So let me ask each of you, what would happen if that which you most cherished was stolen from you? Beaten. Urinated on. Raped so viscously that she could never have children. Then hung and tossed away for dead. If that isn't enough to drive a man insane, what is? We will show that Carl Lee Haily, a good husband, father, a decorated war veteran, was temporarily insane at the time of the murders. We will demand the only verdict your consciences will allow. Innocent.

Jake sits.

NOOSE

Mr. Buckley. You may call your first witness.

BUCKLEY

The state calls Cora Cobb.

Cobb's mother takes the stand.

BUCKLEY

You are the mother of Billy Ray Cobb, the deceased?

CORA

Yes, sir.

BUCKLEY

How old was your son at the time of his death?

CORA

Twenty three.

BUCKLEY

Where were you when your son was murdered?

CORA

In court, waiting for his hearing.

BUCKLEY

Did you see your son killed?

CORA
(starting to cry)
Yes. Yes I did.

BUCKLEY
Can you identify the man that killed
your son, Mrs. Cobb?

CORA
(off Carl Lee)
He's the one that killed my baby.

BUCKLEY
No further questions your honor.

THE JURY-CLOSE. Tugged heart-strings.

JAKE
(to Carl Lee)
She's been coached. And well. Look
at those tears.

NOOSE
Cross Examination, Mr. Briggance?

JAKE
Just a few questions. Mrs. Cobb, is
it true your son was convicted of
selling Marijuana?

BUCKLEY
Objection! The criminal record of
the victim is inadmissible.

NOOSE
Sustained.

JAKE
You say your son was twenty three
when he died?

CORA
Yes.

JAKE
In his twenty three years, how many
other children did he kidnap-

BUCKLEY
Objection. Objection.

NOOSE

Sustained. You are out of order Mr. Briggance.

NOOSE

He should be admonished, your honor.

JAKE

Withdraw the question.

NOOSE

The jury will disregard the last question by Mr. Briggance.

JAKE

Mrs. Cobb, in his twenty three years, how many other children did he rape-

BUCKLEY

Objection, your honor. Objection.

NOOSE

Sustained. Mr. Briggance. In my chambers. Now.

INT.-LAWYERS DINING ROOM - DAY

Harry Rex and Roark sit over sandwiches.

ROARK

I don't get it. He must have known Noose would call him in chambers.

HARRY REX

He did. Jake drew first blood. He wanted to show everyone that the court is a battlefield and on it he's scared of nothing. It's aggressive, unconventional and what makes Jake a great lawyer.

Buckley and Musgrove pass, lunch trays in hand.

BUCKLEY

How you doin, sweetheart? Wanna come play with the winning team?

ROARK

How's that impotence thing, Rufus?

Buckley blanches, walks off. Roark smiles at Harry Rex.

ROARK

Girls talk. Jake gonna eat with us?

HARRY REX

No. He had something he had to take care of.

EXT.-ETHEL'S HOUSE - DAY

Ethel comes out of her house with friends. All in mourning black.

Jake is standing on the sidewalk. Ethel stares at him a beat. Motions her friends ahead. Walks to Jake.

ETHEL

We're gonna take Bud home to Oxford.
Always missed it up there.

JAKE.

Old woman, I just want to say-

ETHEL

Nothing you can, say. I know you
didn't want any of this to happen.
But it happened all the same.

JAKE

Ethel...

She leans in, kisses his head.

ETHEL

You're still one royal pain in my
behind, Jake Briggance

Something catches her attention over his shoulder. Lucien, emerging from Jake's car, and coming towards them.

The two hold each other's eyes a beat. Then Lucien wraps her tight in his arms. Ethel begins to SOB. Jake watches on.

INT.-COURTROOM-AFTERNOON

Ozzie is on the stand. Buckley hands him a stack of color glossies.

BUCKLEY

Sheriff Walls, can you identify
these photographs?

OZZIE

These are pictures of Cobb and
Willard. After they died.

BUCKLEY

After they were murdered, you mean.

Ozzie just stares at him.

BUCKLEY

Your honor, we would like to introduce these as exhibit S-30.

JAKE

Objection, your honor. Those pictures are highly prejudicial.

NOOSE

And according to the Supreme Court, highly admissible. Overruled.

Buckley passes the photos to the jury. GASPS, looks of horror, many directed at Carl Lee.

Buckley lifts an M-16, hands it to Ozzie.

BUCKLEY

Can you identify this, Sheriff?

OZZIE

It's the weapon found at the scene.

BUCKLEY

And have you retrieved fingerprints from the gun?

OZZIE

Yes.

BUCKLEY

And how were they identified?

OZZIE

The prints on the gun match those of Carl Lee Hally.

BUCKLEY

Your honor, the State would offer this weapon, exhibit S-13. We have nothing further of this witness.

Jake rises.

JAKE

Sheriff, did you arrest Billy Ray Cobb and Pete Willard?

OZZIE

Yes I did.

JAKE

For what reason?

OZZIE

For the rape and attempted murder of
nine year old Tonya Haily.

JAKE

And is it true that Pete Willard
signed a written confession to that
rape before he-

BUCKLEY

Objection. That's inadmissible and
Mr. Briggance knows it.

NOOSE

Question shall be stricken from the
record. Mr. Briggance, I have spoken
to you before. We are not trying the
rape of Ms. Haily today, but the
murders of two young men. If you
continue this performance, I will
hold you in contempt. Understood?

JAKE

Withdraw the question.

OZZIE

Yes.

NOOSE

Excuse me, Sheriff.

OZZIE

Yes. He did sign a confession.

Noose glares at the witness.

NOOSE

Court is adjourned until tomorrow.

EXT.-TEMPLE INN - EVENING

At ten bucks a night, no bargain. A Greyhound buss sits out front.

INT.-TEMPLE INN -DINING ROOM

The jury is gathered around the table. A man (SISKO) glances at the GUARD who snoozes at the door. Addresses another man (ACKER).

SISKO

So, we gonna talk about it?

WOMAN

Judge said we ain't supposed to.

SISKO

And that judge ain't stuck here away from his wife and kids. Sooner we start talkin' about it, sooner we get it done with and get home.

WOMAN

I don't know. They only started-

SISKO

An informal vote. What harm can it do? Guilty?

Sisko raises his hand. Six others follow.

SISKO

Undecided?

Four hands rise.

SISKO

Not Guilty.

Acker's is the only hand.

SISKO

Looks like that nigger's gonna die.

INT.-KLAN CABIN - NIGHT

(OVER) A CARDINALS GAME. A box of bullets and a six of Bud rest atop a blueprint of the courthouse.

VOICE (OVER)

Hurry up with them brews!

A MAN'S HAND sets down a portable phone, grabs the sixer, heads towards the SOUNDS of the TV, face unseen, a familiar mouse visible on his upper arm.

INT.-COFFEE SHOP-MORNING

Jake sits over breakfast with Harry Rex.

HARRY REX

Mark my words, Lucien loves widows.
I represented him in two divorces.
You gonna eat that?

Harry Rex grabs some bacon off Jake's plate. In the b.g., Tim Nunely gets his breakfast to go from Cora. Passes Jake's table.

TIM

How's the car running, Jake?

JAKE

Great, Tim. Thanks. I owe you.

Tim heads for the door, actually collides with Ozzie. A startled beat. Nunely slips past. Ozzie ENTERS, followed by a Guardsman who stands just inside the door.

Ozzie walks to Jake. The only black man in the place. Folks stare.

OZZIE

(sitting)

You know sometimes I think the New
South is just some face paint the
Old South wears to look respectable.

Jake looks around at the gaping folks. He can say nothing.

JAKE

What brings you in here, Ozzie? I
know it ain't the grits.

OZZIE

They're gonna kill you today.

JAKE

Who?

OZZIE

The Klan. Mickey Mouse called. Guy's
your guardian angel or something.
They buried Stump Sisson this
morning and I guess it's time for
their eye for an eye routine.

JAKE

Why me? Can't they kill Buckley? or
Noose. They're far more deserving.

OZZIE

This is serious Jake.

OZZIE

(off the Guardsman)

Officer Mackenvale. He's your new bodyguard. Luck in court today.

Ozzie leaves.

HARRY REX

Eat up, Sahlman Rushdie, we've got a date on the stand with a doctor.

JAKE

Where the hell is Row Ark?

EXT.-WHITFIELD MENTAL HOSPITAL- MORNING

Tall. White. Institutional.

INT.-WHITFIELD - MORNING

Sitting in the lobby, a Roark we've never seen. Silk blouse. Long skirt. Gold broach. A girl who screams: rich. As she speaks to the ADMINISTRATOR before her, her accent is now remarkably Southern.

ROARK

Daddy was such a reformer. I'm sure he would have wanted to build a whole new wing. But I'd need to know exactly what kind of maniacs --is that the word-- you treat here. Daddy's will was so exacting-

DIRECTOR

Of course our patient's records are strictly confidential.

She unfolds her hands from her lap. Rises as if by magic.

ROARK

I'm so sorry to have troubled you-

ADMINISTRATOR

But in the case of such a large donation, I'm sure we can make an exception. Excuse me.

Roark flashes her best smile. The Administrator departs. Roark frowns at her watch. Time's running out.

INT.-COURT -MORNING

BUCKLEY

The State calls Deputy DeWayne
Looney.

The door opens and Looney ENTERS. On crutches. One leg missing below the knee. The courtroom grows silent. Jake and Harry Rex exchange a look. Not good.

INT.-COURTROOM-MINUTES LATER

Looney is on the stand.

LOONEY

You could hear the bullets bouncing off the walls. The boys just thrashed and screamed. They was handcuffed, you know?

BUCKLEY

Yes, sir. And what happened to you?

LOONEY

Like I said, I never made it past the landing. I think one of the bullets ricocheted off the wall, caught me in the leg.

BUCKLEY

And what happened to your leg?

LOONEY

Doc cut it off. Just above the knee.

BUCKLEY

Did you get a good look at the man with the gun?

LOONEY

Yessir. That's him. Carl Lee Haily. He's the one shot me.

Buckley smiles. Sits. Jake rises.

JAKE

Do you believe Mr. Haily was trying to shoot you, Deputy, or that you were simply in the wrong place at the wrong time?

BUCKLEY
Objection. Asks for a conclusion.

NOOSE
Sustained.

JAKE
No further questions.

Jake heads back towards his table. Carl Lee catches his eyes.

CARL LEE
Ask if he wants me to go to jail.

JAKE
Carl Lee. They amputated his leg because you shot him. He's a witness for the prosecution-

CARL LEE
You're my attorney. Ask him.

Jake stares at him a long beat. Finally, he speaks.

JAKE
Your honor, one more question.

NOOSE
Make up your mind, Mr. Briggance.

JAKE
Deputy Looney. You are a peace officer. A witness to the crime. A victim of the crime. You can speak to this situation with as much authority as any of us. Do you think Carl Lee Hally should be punished for shooting you?

LOONEY
...I gotta little girl. Somebody rapes her, he's a dead dog. I'll blow him away, just like Carl Lee did. No sir, I don't blame him none.

JAKE
Do you think the jury should convict Carl Lee?

BUCKLEY
Objection. Objection.

NOOSE
Don't answer Mr. Looney.

LOONEY
He's a hero. Turn him loose.

NOOSE
Jury will disregard.

LOONEY
Turn him loose!

The courtroom ERUPTS. Noose slams the gavel. Folks quiet.

NOOSE
Another outburst like that and I
will clear this courtroom. Mr..
Briggance, in chambers. Now.

INT.-COURTROOM - LATER

Jake returns to Carl Lee. Harry Rex sits behind.

CARL LEE
How was it?

JAKE
Proctological. Row Ark here yet?

HARRY REX
No sign of her.

BUCKLEY (OVER)
The State Calls Dr Frank Rodeheaver.

JAKE
Where is she? I need that brief.

INT.-COURTROOM-DAY

DOCTOR RODEHEAVER is on the stand. Middle aged. Silver haired. The
very picture of clinical competence.

RODEHEAVER
...as well as Chair of psychiatry at
Mississippi State University and
Clinical Director of the Whitfield
Facility for the criminally insane.

BUCKLEY
Dr. Rodeheaver, please explain the
McNaghten rule to the jury.

RODEHEAVER

Certainly. The McNaghten rule states that a person must be unable to tell right from wrong and/or be unaware of the consequences of his actions to be termed legally insane.

BUCKLEY

Did you examine Mr. Haily, Doctor?

RODEHEAVER

Yes. I examined Mr. Haily on three occasions. Once in my office, and twice in his cell.

BUCKLEY

And what was the purpose of these examinations?

RODEHEAVER

My job was to determine wheather or not Carl Lee was sane or insane at the time of the murders.

BUCKLEY

Could you describe these interviews?

RODEHEAVER

Mr. Haily and I spoke about his childhood. His family. Education. Experiences during the war.

BUCKLEY

And the rape of his daughter?

RODEHEAVER

Yes. We talked about that quite a while. He explained how angry he was, how much he wanted revenge, how he inspected the court house before the shooting, picked a good place to attack. He said he didn't remember the actual killings, though I suspect otherwise.

JAKE

Objection. Speculation. The witness can only testify to what he knows.

BUCKLEY
Your honor these are not
speculations. They are professional
opinions offered by an expert.

NOOSE
Overruled.

BUCKLEY
Thank you your honor. Now, Doctor,
were you able to arrive at a
diagnosis of Mr. Haily's mental
condition on the day he shot Billy
Ray Cobb and Pete Willard?

NOOSE
Yes.

BUCKLEY
And what was your diagnosis?

RODEHEAVER
At the time of the murders, his
mental condition was without defects
of any nature. Mr. Haily was sane.

BUCKLEY
But the defense contends he was
insane. Do you disagree?

RODEHEAVER
Yes. In fact I find such a
supposition preposterous. Mr. Haily
admitted to planning the murders.
I've never heard of someone
admitting to planning the murders,
then claiming he didn't know what he
was doing. Further he stated that he
wished to exact revenge, an
acknowledgement of the consequences
of his actions. Carl Lee Haily knew
very well what he was doing. He
slaughtered those men in cold blood.

BUCKLEY
Thank you, Doctor. No further
questions.

NOOSE
Cross-examination, Mr. Briggance?

Jake looks at the door. Still no Roark.

JAKE
Your honor, we would request a
recess until-

THE DOORS swing open. Roark rushes in, a brief in hand. CONFERS
quietly with Jake.

NOOSE
Mr. Briggance? If you and Della
Street are ready...

Jake approaches the stand, holding Roark's brief.

JAKE
Just a few questions. Who do you
work for, Doctor?

RODEHEAVER
The State of Mississippi.

JAKE
And who is prosecuting Mr. Haily?

RODEHEAVER
The State of Mississippi.

JAKE
And in your eleven years working for
the State, how many times have you
testified in trials where the
insanity defense was used?

RODEHEAVER
Think this is my forty third trial.

JAKE
(off his brief)
Not your forty-sixth?

RODEHEAVER
It could be. I'm not certain.

JAKE
And in your forty six trials, how
many times have you testified that a
defendant was insane?

RODEHEAVER
I can't remember.

JAKE

Can you name one trial in which you found a defendant legally insane?

BUCKLEY

Your honor the State objects. Dr. Rodeheaver cannot be required to recall all his the previous trials.

NOOSE

Overruled.

JAKE

Could it be, Doctor, that the reason you can't remember is that in eleven years and forty six trials you have never seen a defendant whom you have found insane?

RODEHEAVER

I can't recall at this time.

JAKE

Who is Danny Booker?

RODEHEAVER

Danny Booker?

JAKE

Let me refresh your memory. Didn't you testify in Mr. Booker's trial. A rather brutal double homicide?

RODEHEAVER

Yes.

JAKE

And what was your diagnosis?

RODEHEAVER

That he was legally sane.

JAKE

But dissenting psychiatrists disagreed with you, as did the jury, and Mr. Booker was found insane and institutionalized. Where is he currently housed, Doctor?

RODEHEAVER

At Whitfield.

JAKE

At Whitfield. And who is the chief psychiatrist at Whitfield, Doctor?

RODEHEAVER

I am.

JAKE

Now, doctor, help me make this clear for the jury. In 1985 you testified that Danny Booker was legally sane. The jury disagreed with you and found him guilty. Since that time he has been a patient in your hospital, under your care as a Paranoid Schizophrenic, is that correct?

RODEHEAVER

Yes.

JAKE

So, do you normally admit patients, keep and treat them for ten years if they are of sound mind and body?

RODEHEAVER

Of course not.

JAKE

So it would be fair to say that you find insane people sane for the purposes of trial would it not?

BUCKLEY

Objection. Argumentative.

JAKE

I withdraw the question. Nothing else, your honor.

EXT.-COURTHOUSE STEPS - AFTERNOON

A long day's end. Jake and his escort press through the throng of SHOUTING reporters. A distant CRACK.

JAKE-CLOSE. His chest is sprayed with blood. (OVER) Folks SCREAM.

VOICE (OVER)

He's hit! He's hit.

WIDER

The Guardsman grabs him, pulls him down. Chaos.

JAKE

I'm okay. I'm-

The Guardsman has his hand to his throat. He tries to speak. No sound. His mouth fills with blood. More blood begins to spray through the boy's clenched fingers.

JAKE

I need an ambulance! Somebody get an ambulance!

Folks crowd as Jake cradles the boy.

INT.-MOTEL - HALLWAY

Sisko and Acker are opening the door to their room.

ACKER

Still think that nigger's guilty?

SISKO

Not so sure. What the hell was all the commotion at the courthouse?

ACKER

Earth could stop spinning they wouldn't tell us. Go on in. I'm gonna get a soda.

Sisko disappears into the room. FOLLOW Acker down the hall to the soda machine.

Two figures step from the darkness. One grabs him by the throat, shoves him hard against the wall.

MAN

You listen here, Barry Acker.

Acker's assailant uses his free hand to unsheathe a gleaming hunting knife, presses it against Acker's nose.

MAN

We know you're married. You live on Forest Drive. We know where your kids play. That nigger walks, you'll be sorry, understand?

Acker nods.

MAN

Breathe any of this, you lose a kid.

A final shove and they walk away. Acker slumps to the floor.

INT.-JAKE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

The lights are out. Jake is staring at his empty glass, a spent scotch bottle on the desk in front of him. Roark ENTERS, pulls a fresh fifth from a paper bag, fills his glass, then hers.

ROARK

Any word?

JAKE

He's in the hospital. Ozzie says he may be paralyzed. Where's Harry Rex?

ROARK

Out cold in the law library. I think that kid's blood all over you scared him worse than it scared you.

Jake's look says, don't be so sure.

JAKE

Some stranger, someone's husband, someone's son, put himself in harm's way for me.

ROARK

That's his job. Same as it is yours.

He turns to face her.

ROARK

When I saw all that blood. I was so scared. I thought that you-.

He stills her lips with his finger. Their faces are close. Too much moonlight.

ROARK

Do you want me to stay?

JAKE

Yes. ...So please go.

They hold each other's eyes, a beat. She turns, heads out.

INT-CAR-NIGHT

Roark is driving home. Blue bubble lights flash in her mirror.

ROARK

Damn.

She slows, pulls over onto the shoulder. Two men in plainclothes approach her window.

MAN

Limit's 45 not 70. You drunk, Ma'am?

ROARK

No, I guess I wasn't paying atten-

Her door flies open. One of the men jerks her out. Wrenches her arm behind her. Her purse falls, gun spilling. The other SLAPS her.

MAN

Be still. bitch.

A third man appears, a gas can in his hands, begins soaking the inside of Roark's BMW and tosses a match.

The car EXPLODES in flame. The men as drag her into...

EXT.-CLEARING-NIGHT

Klansmen stand in a circle, illuminated by a giant, burning cross.

ROARK

Oh, God, don't-

A Klansman steps forward, SLAPS her mouth again. Hard.

KLANSMAN

Nigger loving bitch.

The kluxers drag her now to a pole, staked several feet from the burning cross. Bind her to it with ropes. Then the leader unsheathes a large bowie knife, cuts her blouse from her body.

KLANSMAN

You nigger loving bitch.

He cuts her skirt now, slow, down it's length, tears it off. SLAPS her on the butt, hard.

KLANSMAN

Nice. Very nice.

He runs the knife along her face, then presses his body close to hers, like a lover, begins to cut out clumps of her hair.

He steps back now, the silent semi-circle of Klansman watching, reaches under his robe and pulls out a bullwhip.

A tall man steps before him, shakes his head. The tall man walks towards Roark. He grabs her stubbled hair, looks at her tenderly, then SLAMS her head into the poll. She goes out cold.

The Klansmen disappear, one by one, leaving Roark unconscious.

BUSHES-CLOSE

A dark figure emerges, unties her, hoists her unconscious form atop his back. His face is impossible to make out, but on his shoulder, visible through his tank top, a small tatoo of Mickey Mouse.

INT.-COURTHOUSE - MORNING

A YELLOW PAD-CLOSE

A hand completes the message: WHERE IS ROW ARK? Another hand picks up the pencil. Writes a large question mark.

NOOSE (OVER)

The defense may call its first witness.

WIDER

Jake finishes his scribbled communication with Harry Rex.

JAKE

Defense calls Dr. Arthur Bass.

Dr. Bass ENTERS. Dapper. Sober. Lizard skin boots.

JAKE

Dr. Bass, please list your qualifications for the jury.

BASS

My specialized training consisted of a residency in psychiatry at the Texas State Medical Hospital. I engaged in clinical work with psychoneurotic and psychotic patients.

(MORE)

BASS (CONT)

I studied psychology, psychopathology, psycho and physiotherapies as well as the behavioral aspects of adolescents and adults. I am a diplomate of the American Board of Psychiatry and a member of both the American Medical and Psychiatric Associations.

JAKE

How long have you been engaged in the practice of psychiatry?

BASS

Twenty-two years.

JAKE

Did you examine Mr. Haily?

BASS

Yes. At the Ford County Jail.

JAKE

Could you summarize your findings?

BASS

The central event in Mr. Haily's past that differentiates him from most of us is his war experience. During his tour he was exposed to events of extreme violence which resulted in a condition known as Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome. This condition results in a dissociation from reality. The condition was temporary and healed after the war.

JAKE

And what effect did the rape have on Mr. Haily's condition?

BASS

His daughter's rape caused a relapse. A temporary break with reality.

JAKE

But Dr. Rodeheaver suggested his act of calculation was the very definition of sanity.

BASS

Ridiculous. Many of the most famous schizophrenics are often calculating. David Hinkley for example. Calculating. And legally insane.

JAKE

So, Dr. Bass, how would you diagnose Mr. Haily at the time of the murder?

BASS

Mr. Haily experienced a recurrence of a dissociative condition as a result of the trauma caused by the rape of his daughter. This can be likened to a walking dream state. Since Mr. Haily was unaware of the reality of his actions, he could not tell right from wrong, nor could he understand the consequences of his actions. He was legally insane.

JAKE

Thank you, Doctor. No further questions.

THE JURY-CLOSE. Impressed.

Buckley stands. Musgrove hands him a file.

BUCKLEY

Dr. Bass, what is your full name?

BASS

William Tyler Bass.

BUCKLEY

Did you ever use the name Tyler Bass when you were a medical student at the University of Texas?

BASS

No.

BUCKLEY

Are you positive?

BASS

I certainly am.

BUCKLEY
Dr. Bass, have you ever been
convicted of a felony?

BASS
Of course not!

BUCKLEY
You're certain?

BASS
Yes.

BUCKLEY
As certain of that as the rest of
your testimony before this jury?

BASS
Of course.

BUCKLEY
You're telling this jury that on
October 17 1975, you were not
convicted of statutory rape?

No answer.

JAKE
Objection. Dr. Bass is not on trial-

BUCKLEY
This goes to the witness'
credibility, your honor.

NOOSE
Sustained. Proceed, Mr. Buckley.

BUCKLEY
Were you convicted of statutory
rape?

BASS
You've got the wrong man.

Buckley takes a stack of photos from Musgrove.

BUCKLEY
Well, Dr. Bass, I've got some
photographs of you taken by the
Dallas Police Department on
September 11, 1975. Would you like
to see if they refresh your memory?

Bass just shakes his head.

BUCKLEY

Your honor, the State would introduce into evidence these records showing that on October 17, 1975, this man, one Tyler Bass, plead guilty to statutory rape. Now, Doctor, were you or were you not convicted for Statutory Rape?

A long beat. Finally...

BASS

Yes. ...Yes, I was.

(OVER) SOUNDS of SHOCK and OUTRAGE.

NOOSE

Order. Order.

BUCKLEY

No further questions, your honor.

Jake sits, stunned. Faces on the jury mirror his expression.

NOOSE

Any re-direct Mr. Briggance?

But Jake sits speechless, unable to answer.

INT.-COURTROOM HALLWAY - DAY

Jake stands talking to Carl Lee, his guard watching in the b.g..

CARL LEE

What the hell was that crap? No one's going to believe him now.

JAKE

Carl Lee, I'm sorry. I didn't know-

CARL LEE

Sorry is bullshit. Them NAACP lawyers coulda done a better job. Put a criminal on the stand. What kind of lawyer are you?

JAKE

I....

But Jake has no answer. Suddenly, Harry Rex appears.

HARRY REX

Jake. I just got a call from the hospital. It's Row Ark.

EXT.-COURTROOM ROOF - DAY

Jake stands looking out across Clanton, her miniature geography spreading towards the horizon. Lucien emerges, unseen.

LUCIEN

They're threatening to start without you.

JAKE

It looks so peaceful from here. You can hardly see the cancer growing underneath.

(turning)

You said you knew him. You said he was credible.

LUCIEN

I thought he was credible, Jake. I didn't know about the conviction. The record was expunged. Buckley really out did himself this time.

JAKE

I was counting on you. I-.

LUCIEN

Don't. No time for self pity. You wanted this case, now you've got it. Things never work out the way we think they will, Jake. It doesn't mean you can just give up. Saving the world isn't easy. Even one case at a time. But stick with it. You might have a knack for it after all. Don't do what I did. Don't quit.

JAKE

Quit? What are you talking about? You were a hero. You-

LUCIEN

Hero, my ass. Do you think the world needed me beating cops' heads on that picket line? No, I was needed here. In the courtroom.

(MORE)

LUCIEN (CONT)

But I gave up. I couldn't take the battles, day after day, so I pushed so hard they had to kick me out. It's the same as quitting. I made a mistake. Now, I can never walk these halls again. But you can. Be proud. You're an attorney. It's your job to find justice, no matter how hard she hides from you. Go do your job.

INT.-COURTROOM - LATER

Carl Lee is on the stand.

JAKE

And how did you feel?

CARL LEE

I felt. I don't know, like I was watching myself. Like it was a movie. And all the while I kept hearing my baby saying, I called for you Daddy, when those men were hurting me, I called for you over and over but you just didn't come.

JAKE

Thank you, Mr. Haily.

Jake sits. Buckley stands.

BUCKLEY

Before you shot Mr. Cobb and Mr. Willard were you aware that, if convicted, they might be freed from jail in only ten years?

HAILY

I heard folks say it. Yes.

BUCKLEY

Do you believe men who kidnap a child should be free in ten years?

HAILY

No.

BUCKLEY

Do you believe two men who rape a child should be free in ten years?

HAILY

No.

BUCKLEY

Do you believe two men who hang a child should be free in ten years?

HAILY

No.

BUCKLEY

What should happen to them, Mr. Haily? What's a fair sentence?

JAKE

Objection.

BUCKLEY

Do you think they deserved to die Mr Haily? Do you? Answer the question.

JAKE

Your honor, please.

BUCKLEY

Didn't you simply carry out the sentence you believed they deserved? Didn't you!?

CARL LEE

Yes. Yes, I hope they burn in hell.

BUCKLEY

No further questions, your honor.

NOOSE

Court is adjourned. We will begin summations tomorrow.

The guards come to lead Carl Lee off.

CARL LEE

I didn't so well, huh Jake?

JAKE

You did fine, Carl lee.

Both men know it's a lie. Jake watches him go.

INT.-HOSPITAL -ICU -NIGHT

Jake stands staring through the same glass Carl Lee observed Tonya.
The young Guardsman lies unconscious.

NURSE (OVER)

Can I help you?

JAKE

I'm here to see Row-. Ellen Roark.

NURSE

Visiting hours are over. Are you family?

JAKE

I'm-.

He reaches into his pocket. Finds something. Jake removes a small cigar band.

JAKE

I'm her fiance.

INT.-HOSPITAL ROOM

Even in sleep, Roark looks bad. Beaten. Bald. Jake sits bedside.

JAKE

Ellen?

ROARK

...Don't.

(opens her eyes)

Don't call me Ellen. It sounds weird. How do I look?

Jake tries to find a witty comeback. No luck. Fights back tears.

ROARK

Don't sweat it. They didn't hurt me any way that won't heal. Doctors said I'll be out in a couple of days. Assuming I can find a sensible hat. How did we do?

Jake looks away.

ROARK

That good, huh?

JAKE

Bass turned out to be a felon. Buckley trapped Carl Lee on the stand. People have been terrorized, beaten, killed. Ethel was right. It's not worth it.

ELLEN

It's only not worth it if you lose.

He leans down, kisses her head softly. Might as well be her lips.

JAKE

I'll stay in touch.

ELLEN

No you won't. No woman friends. It's the South, remember?

Jake smiles. Sad. He sets the cigar band on her night-table.

JAKE

Win or lose, we made a pretty good team, didn't we Row Ark?

ELLEN

We might have, Jake. We sure might have.

INT.-JAIL-NIGHT

Moss lets Jake into the cell. Carl Lee is sitting there.

JAKE

How you doin'?

CARL LEE

I've had better days.

Jake nods. They both have.

JAKE

Carl Lee, we're gonna lose the case. There are no points of law left. I want your permission to make a plea. Maybe Buckley will let us cop to second degree murder, get you life in prison.

CARL LEE

I can't do life in prison. You gotta get me off. If it was you-

JAKE

It's not me. We're not the same. A jury has to identify with the defendant. They look at you, they see a factory worker, they look at me they see an attorney, I live on the hill, you live in the barrens-

CARL LEE

You're white and I'm black. See, Jake, you think just like them. It's why I picked you.

Jake stares at him. Puzzled.

CARL LEE

You're one of them. Don't you see? You tell yourself you're not 'cause you eat at Claude's, 'cause you're out there trying to get me off, talking 'bout black and white on TV. But fact is you're the same as the rest. When you look at me, you don't see a man. You see a black man.

JAKE

Carl Lee, I'm your friend-

CARL LEE

We're not friends. Never gonna be. Our daughters are never gonna play together. We're on different sides of the line.

JAKE

What are you talking about?

CARL LEE

The south is a war and you're on the other side. Now how's a black man ever gonna get a fair trial with the enemy on the bench, in the jury box, my life in white hands? You, that's how. You're my secret weapon. Cause you're one of the bad guys. You don't mean to be, but you are. It's how you were raised. Nigger, colored, negro, black no matter how you see us you see us as different.

(MORE)

CARL LEE (CONT)

You see me the way that jury sees me. So forget your points of law. If you were on that jury, what would convince you to set me free? That's how you'll save my ass. That's how you'll save us both.

INT.-HOTEL-NIGHT

The informal deliberations have convened again.

Undecided? SISK0

No hands.

Not guilty? SISK0

No hands.

Guilty? SISK0

Twelve hands. Carl Lee is doomed.

INT.-KLAN CABIN -KITCHEN - NIGHT

In the b..g, a group of Klansmen watch the Cardinals game. Tim Nunely opens the fridge, going for another beer.

A HAND SMASHES Nunely's face into the refrigerator, snapping his nose, spilling blood. He is dragged into the living room, the entire group setting upon him with their boots.

Enough. COBB

Cobb grabs a can of kerosene, dousing the furniture, the floor, spilling the gas now onto Nunely's face. As Tim tries to roll away, a small tatoo is visible on his upper forearm. Mickey Mouse.

Cobb lights a match.

EXT.- KLAN CABIN - NIGHT

The Klan cars leave. Flames light the windows as the cabin burns.

EXT.-JAKE'S HOUSE - FIRST LIGHT

JAKE-CLOSE. Eyes full of loss.

JAKE

Rise and shine. Greet the day.

WIDER

Jake stands with Max in the rubble. He reaches down. A melted silver box. Within, a couple of photos. First Carla. Then a snapshot of Hannah, the edges charred. He stares at the picture.

EXT.-CLANTON COURTHOUSE - MORNING

The circus has reached it's crescendo.

INT.-COURTHOUSE

The gallery is packed for final arguments. Buckley faces the jury.

BUCKLEY

Is Carl Lee Haily insane? Of course not. It is a notion so outrageous the only witness the defense could produce to support it was a felon. No, ladies and gentlemen, the man sitting before you, Carl Lee Haily, is a confessed murderer. A man who has admitted to carrying out the sentences he believed the alleged rapists of his daughter deserved. He has taken justice into his own hands and then, with those hands, taken the lives of two young men. Yes we feel terribly about what happened to his daughter. But feeling terribly does not give us a right to kill. Ladies and gentlemen your duty is clear. All in the courtroom know the truth. Now you need only speak the words. Carl Lee Haily is guilty.

Buckley sits. Jake stands. He is about to speak when the doors open. Lucien ENTERS, stands just inside the courtroom.

JAKE

First let me apologize. I am young and inexperienced and the truth is, I'm not ready for the big time. I know that now. But you can't hold Carl Lee Haily responsible for my failings. You see in all the legal wrangling and maneuvering something has gotten lost. And that's truth.

(MORE)