

BLACK SNAKE MOAN

Written by
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Only one kind of blues...
And that consists between male and female.
- Son House

EXT. RONNIE'S TRAILER - EARLY DAWN

RAE is naked.

that
strawberry
skin.
She is beautiful without trying.

small
She stares at the distant trees. This is the South; the
town of FISHERVILLE, TENNESSEE.

Soon Rae will be alone.

CUT TO:

INT. RONNIE'S TRAILER - EARLY MORNING

military
RONNIE is 25 years old. His hair is cropped in a
issue buzz.

love to
Rae's face is wet with tears as Ronnie gently makes
her. She touches his face and sobs like a child.

CUT TO:

INT. RONNIE'S TRAILER - LATER THAT MORNING

packing up

RONNIE is dressed in his National Guard fatigues,
his gear.

with a
at the
GILL

Rae is now wearing a short jeans skirt and a T-shirt
gray wolf print ironed on the front. There is a knock
door. Rae flinches. Ronnie opens the door revealing
MORTON, Ronnie's buddy from high school.

GILL

Still need a lift?

RONNIE

Yeah. Transmission's shot.

Gill and Rae's eyes meet. Gill sees that Rae is crying.

GILL

Gonna have a smoke.

nausea. He

Ronnie shuts the door and feels a wave of sudden
rushes past Rae.

RONNIE

Shit...

INT. RONNIE'S TRAILER - BATHROOM - MORNING

head.

Ronnie is vomiting into the toilet as Rae rubs his
Each painful dry heave makes Rae comfort him more.

RAE

Baby...

EXT. RONNIE'S TRAILER - MORNING

begins to

Ronnie places his duffle bag in Gill's truck. Rae
cough.

GILL

You sick?

Rae doesn't answer.

The
embrace.
expression

Gill backs away, allowing Ronnie and Rae some privacy.
two lovers stare into each others eyes and then
Rae peeks over Ronnie's shoulder at Gill with an
of dread. Anger seizes her.

RAE

This ain't gonna work.

RONNIE

Rae...

RAE

I don't see why we gotta lie 'bout
it when you and I know this ain't
gonna work.

RONNIE

(holds her face in
his hands)
Rae don't do this now...

RAE

It's stupid... It's so fucking stupid!

RONNIE

Rae!

Silence. Rae melts. Tears stream down her face.

RONNIE

(reaches in his pocket)
Look it. I got somethin' for us.
This is gonna help, okay.

GILL

You gonna miss your bus.

around

Ronnie removes a small digital watch and fastens it
her wrist.

RONNIE

This watch here is gonna beep at
midnight. Every night. That's when
it comes up on you the hardest, right?

identical

Ronnie holds out his own wrist to show her his watch.

RONNIE

And wherever I'm at, my watch'll beep, too. We'll be thinkin' bout each other at the same time. Wherever we are.

and

Rae is shaking. He grips her by the back of her neck and pushes their faces inches away. Eye to eye.

RONNIE

I gotta believe we can do this or I ain't gonna make it, Rae.

anxiety

Rae sees the fear in his eyes. She swallows her own anxiety and nods.

RAE

Okay... Okay.

They kiss passionately.

RONNIE

I love you.

away

Afraid of his swelling emotion, Ronnie quickly breaks away from her.

Compelled

Rae watches as her love leaves in Gill's pick-up.

gravel

to follow, she absently walks after the truck, down the gravel drive.

She stops. Silence. She is alone.

She

An intense wave of sorrow hits, like a kick to her gut.

flood of

gasps for breath as she struggles to hold back the flood of her tears.

drive. Her

Rae drops to her knees, right there in the gravel drive. Her hair falls in front of her face, masking her grief.

Her shoulders shudder.

repeatedly --
burning Her middle finger begins to scratch at her thigh
a nervous habit that has always accompanied this
sensation that consumes her.

RAE

Shit.

it. Tears come to her. She's not going to be able to stop

RAE

Goddammit, Ronnie...

(shouting in
frustration)

GODDAMMIT!

Her Rae is gripping the watch around her wrist for comfort.
is breathing is already out of her control. The dizziness
already upon her. The familiar burning.

knees. She inhales in gasps, rocking back and forth on her
The late morning cicadas chirp in an undulating frenzy.

RAE

(shaking her head)

Mm-mm

(meaning "no")

Mm-mm... Mm-mm...

dizzy The scratching at her leg leaves a red mark. She is
flush. with anxiety. Her teeth are clenched, her face is

RAE

MM-MM! MM-MM! MMMMMMMMMMMM!

CUT TO:

INT. MOTEL ROOM - AFTERNOON

TEHRONNE is fucking Rae from behind.

late
small
stark
him

Tehronne is a muscular, dark-skinned, black male in his twenties.
Rae's face is crammed up against the mirror in the bathroom. Tehronne gets faster and pushes harder -- a contrast to her lovemaking with Ronnie.
Rae comes. A severe coughing fit hits her. She pushes away with her ass.

RAE

We're done, right?

CUT TO:

EXT. FISHERVILLE SQUARE - AFTERNOON

wearing
his
fedora. He

Walking with his hands shoved deep into his pockets, his only suit and tie, is LAZARUS WOODS (LAZ). He is in late fifties, black, a strong face under his old stares across the street into Dunn's Cafe.
ROSE WOODS, black, early forties, stands in the cafe. She looks confident and resolute in her new green skirt.
A brown Delta Olds pulls up into a parking space in front of Laz. Stepping out is REVEREND R.L., Laz's longtime friend.
He is also black and in his late fifties.

R.L.

You ain't gonna make a fuss, are you?

(no answer)

Nothing a man can do when a woman make up her mind.

LAZARUS

I never laid a hand on her in anger. Not a day. Not even when I's drinkin'. But this business got me wonderin' what a good shake and slap would do

for her.

R.L.

That kind of talk is between us.
Don't you go in there with that shit
on your tongue.

LAZARUS

I didn't start this, R.L.

Laz tries to stop his lip from quivering: the man is
hurting.

R.L.

You wanna pray with me 'fore you go
in? Laz?

(R.L. touches Laz's
arm and bows his
head)

Heavenly Father...

CUT TO:

INT. DUNN'S CAFE - AFTERNOON

R.L.'s prayer is heard as Laz opens the front door to
the
cafe. He looks ill. Each step is painful.

R.L. (V.O.)

We do not question your divine plan
for us, Oh God. But in these times,
when our spirit lies in shadow. When
we are lost.

Laz crosses to Rose's booth -- the distance seems to
stretch
out into eternity.

R.L. (V.O.)

We ask that you give us strength.
Give us strength that surpasses all
understanding. In your name we pray.
Amen.

Laz sits across from his wife.

ROSE

Can't remember the last time I saw
you in that suit.

LAZARUS

Your mother's funeral. I's a
pallbearer, remember?

The waitress is kind and twangy as she asks for their
order.

WAITRESS

Can I start you both off with some
coffee 'fore I take your order?

ROSE

We won't be stayin' long. Coffee'll
be fine.

The waitress leaves. The sounds of the cafe fill the
silence.

ROSE

We leavin' this weekend. Deke got a
friend in Mobile gonna get him a job
at the water company...

LAZARUS

(interrupting)

If you come to talk about that
muthafucka, I'm gonna get up and
leave you sittin' pretty in that new
suit he bought'cha.

ROSE

Think this about money still, ya old
fool?

LAZARUS

Say what you gotta say, but I ain't
gonna hear you speak his name to me.
Not never. You hear?

ROSE

How many times we been over this,
Laz? How many times?

The waitress places the coffee between them and leaves.

ROSE

Thought we was gonna be friendly
about this.

LAZARUS

Carryin' on behind my back. Make me
out to look like a fool to all our

people. Tell me, what's friendly about that?

ROSE

I'm not ready to grow old, Laz. Livin' with you. I feel it. Like I'm one foot in the dirt. Saw it happen to my momma. And that's not gonna happen to me. I got living to do.

LAZARUS

And you gonna live it with him?

Rose doesn't answer. Lazarus softens, touching her hand.

LAZARUS

Rose. Folks get sick. But you do what you can to get on the mend. Our marriage... it just got sick. That's all.

ROSE

Talk to me about sick. Ain't been right since I moved into that drafty house.

LAZARUS

I keep the heat on.

ROSE

That damned, rusty, radiator, bout burned the skin off my legs each time I passed.

LAZARUS

Kept us warm for twelve years.

It's over. Laz has lost her for good.

ROSE

I deserve better than this.

LAZARUS

Better'n me?

ROSE

Better than what you give.

LAZARUS

Rose... please...

ROSE

Laz... You can't say nothin'...

LAZARUS

If we get with a counselor. At the church, maybe they's...

ROSE

(the final interruption)

I don't love ya no more.

The words are daggers. Laz is wounded beyond concealment.

Rose picks up her purse, preparing to leave.

ROSE

I'm sorry you hurtin'. But, like I say, this the only life I got.

(waits for him to respond)

I said my piece.

She stands and attempts to walk away. Laz grips her tightly by the wrist.

LAZARUS

God forgive you, for how you done me...

ROSE

Let go...

LAZARUS

My Daddy told me that a younger woman would bleed me dry. And that's what you did. Ya bled me.

ROSE

Let go of my arm...

LAZARUS

Would'a chopped my arm off if you asked. And this how you do me!

ROSE

LAZ, I said let...!

LAZARUS

You better pray, gal. You better pray...

ROSE

(yanks free)

Don't you lay a CURSE ON ME!

The whole cafe is silent. All eyes are on Rose.

ROSE

(to customers)

Yeah, go'on! Look! See if I give a
shit about any of you people!

And she's gone, right out the front door.

CUT TO:

INT. MOTEL ROOM - AFTERNOON

Tehronne is taking his time hanging his ice around his
neck
and wrists as he stands shirtless before the mirror.
Rae is
lying on the bed.

RAE

You got any money?

TEHRONNE

Thought you had a man for that.

RAE

(a heavy cough)

I said we wasn't gonna talk about
him.

TEHRONNE

What we just did, you askin' for
money, make a man stop. I ain't
callin' you no ho. But I ain't gonna
be played like no trick, neither.
Remember... you called me.

RAE

Save that hustle talk to them field
ballers you sell crack to.

TEHRONNE

What'd I tell you?

(kicks the bed)

I don't do none of that shit no more.
I'm in communications now.

RAE

Stolen phone cards and two-ways is what you sayin'.

Rae starts coughing.

TEHRONNE

Mobile technology is the new fix for these niggaz, I'm tellin' you. I'm just lookin' ahead.

(takes out his wallet)

Anyways, ain't no money in drugs no more with these rednecks popping cough pills like they's Skittles. Hey, that's what you need, girl. Get you some cough medicine. What, you sick?

RAE

Just a cough. Sugar and a spoonful of Jack'll do it.

TEHRONNE

(takes out money)

Alright. How much you need, ho?

RAE

The hell you call me?

TEHRONNE

Eh, if the bootie fits...

quickly
shoving
and

Tehronne catches Rae's wrist as she goes to slap. He yanks her arm behind her back and bends her backwards, his face close to her own. He grips the money in a fist cocks it to punch -- all in jest.

TEHRONNE

You gonna get rough? Is that what you doin'?

looks

Rae's chest begins to heave with deep breaths. Tehronne looks down at her legs as she anxiously rubs them together.

TEHRONNE

(shakes his head)

I swear, I seen some buck-wild bitches in my time, but you the illest I

ever seen.

Rae gets control of the burning. She takes the money.

RAE

Just got a cough.

CUT TO:

EXT. FISHERVILLE SQUARE - DAY

men
Rae is prancing up the walkway on the square. Two young
dressed for construction pass Rae.

MAN

It's already noon, Rae. You think
that skirt should still be on?

RAE

(flips them off)
If it weren't you could kiss my rebel
cootch, ya faggot.

the
The men keep walking as Rae coughs. She turns toward
Fisherville Grocery.

SANDY

Cough drops or condoms?

mother,
Sandy
forties:
Rae stops in her tracks, looking up at her estranged
SANDY, smoking a cigarette outside the grocery store.
has bleached hair with dark roots. She is in her late-
once a sexy girl, now she's lost all her tread.

RAE

(surprised to see her)
Didn't know you was workin' here
now?

SANDY

I just like dressin' up in these
goddamn blue vests.
(takes a drag)
Your money ticket get shipped today?

Rae walks away -- deeply affected by Sandy's presence.

SANDY

(calling after her)
You let me know if I can be of any
assistance.

CUT TO:

EXT. MELVIN'S FEED STORE - DAY

Laz drives an old green Ford pick-up. He pulls the
truck up
to the front of the feed store and kills the engine.

LINCOLN, a 13-year-old black boy, comes out of the open
loading door.

LINCOLN

You won't at the square this mornin'.

LAZARUS

Get me ten bags of mulch.

LINCOLN

Yes'sir.

Lincoln runs off. Laz yanks off his black tie.

EXT. MELVIN'S FEED STORE - LATER

Laz's
Lincoln slaps the last bag of mulch into the bed of
truck. Laz hands Lincoln a twenty.

LAZARUS

Keep the change on that.

LINCOLN

Naw... I got it, Mr. Lazarus.
(makes change)
You wanna tip me, best do it in butter
beans. Momma say she need a bag 'a
yours, none of that store-bought
junk. That's what she said.

Laz smiles. He takes the change. Climbs in his truck.

LAZARUS

Alright, Lincoln. You come on by,
I'll load you up.

CUT TO:

EXT. LAZARUS'S BARN - LATE DAY

sea of
the
nose
it:
Lazarus steers his tractor toward his small home in a lush green kudzu. He kills the engine and looks beyond the nose of his tractor. He lights a cigarette. Below the is the head of a rose garden with a painted sign under it:
Rose's Roses.

shreds.
Laz inhales smoke and exhales hate. The tractor lunges forward, trampling the garden, ripping the flowers to

CUT TO:

INT. BOJO'S - EARLY EVENING

blue
her
selection.
MAYELLA is a heavy, forty-year-old black woman. Her neon tube top matches her short pants stretched across her healthy ass. She is flipping through the juke box selection.

MAYELLA

You gonna put some Luther Vandross in here? Shit, he black ain't he?

stout,
BOJO is reading a paper behind the bar. He's short and looking like a sad bull dog.

BOJO

He black alright, he just ain't blue.

MAYELLA

Why you stop havin' dancin' on Saturday? Used to have bands... all kind's live shit. Like a wake up in here, now.

BOJO

Folks can dance when they want. Didn't buy that mirror ball for nothin'.

MAYELLA

You seen my snake-skin shoes?

with

Mayella lifts up her leg and stretches it over the bar
a provocative flourish. Her shoe is bright blue.

MAYELLA

They're from New York. My niece gets
'em on the computer.

LAZARUS

They got blue snakes up north?

bar.

Mayella turns to Laz sipping a beer at the end of the

MAYELLA

Naw. They got some blue dye, though.
You think them boots you got on come
from a black cow?

BOJO

Wanna get on somebody 'bout live
music, get on ol' Laz, there. He the
one got this place shakin' back in
the day.

MAYELLA

Don't gotta tell me. Me and my
girlfriends use-ta talk 'bout them
hard fingertips he got pickin' that
guitar.

LAZARUS

Got'em pickin' peas, not strings.

touching

Mayella moves in close, with the tips of her tits
his arm.

MAYELLA

They still hard?

LAZARUS

Mayella. It ain't happened yet. Ain't
happenin' tonight.

MAYELLA

(retreating with a
glare)

I know you hurtin', Laz. I got ears,

you know. But you should know more'n
me... ain't no better cure for them
blues than some good pussy.

others. Mayella saunters over to the pool table with the

BOJO

Whole lotta woman, right there.

LAZARUS

She can still spread it around.

The door opens behind Laz. Bojo sees the man entering.

BOJO

Laz. We friends and all but... promise
me you'll keep yo cool in my joint.

WOODS. Laz turns to see the door shut behind his brother, DEKE
Bojo. He is younger than Laz and a bit smaller. Laz turns to

LAZARUS

I'm gonna finish my beer.

Deke slowly approaches Laz at the bar.

DEKE

Mind if I sit?

(no answer)

Rose said... it didn't go too well
this afternoon. See, that's not how
we wanted this to go down. I told
her, I said, Rose, we ain't leavin'
till we make peace with Laz. And
that's God's truth. I laid it down.

LAZARUS

You laid it down.

DEKE

I did.

LAZARUS

Funny. Layin' it down... for my wife.

DEKE

We're not gonna get through this
clean. But it don't need to get dirty.
All this... it just come together

unexpected. You think I want to hurt you? I... I'd take a bullet for you, Laz.

The dry look on Laz's face could cool the sun.

LAZARUS

You wanna give that a try?

(to Bojo)

Bo. You still got that .22 behind the tap? My little brother say he'd take a bullet for me.

(into Deke's eyes)

You come here to ease your heart.

Well, I ain't gonna give it to you.

You took her into your bed, now you gotta lie in it.

Laz turns back to the bar. Deke begins to turn but stops.

DEKE

I'll always love you, Laz. Till the end of my...

In one quick movement, Laz grips Deke by the throat and smashes the bottom of his bottle into jagged shards.

BOJO

LAZ!

Laz pushes Deke back through the joint and slams him onto the pool table. He grips Deke's throat and holds the broken bottle up to his face.

LAZARUS

Cain slew Able. Slew him out of envy.

And God put his mark on Cain for his sin. You want that mark, Deke? Give you that peace you come here for?

I'll give it to you, just say that shit again. Say you love me. Go'on! Say YOU LOVE ME, NIGGA!

Lazarus slams the bottle down on the pool table, shattering it. Laz lifts his hand. His own blood leaks from between his fingers.

He wipes the blood across Deke's face.

LAZARUS

I'm through wit'cha both.

Laz releases Deke and exits. Deke calls after him.

DEKE

What'chu gonna do? Nothin'. YOU AIN'T
GONNA DO NOTHIN'!

Laz slams the door behind him.

CUT TO:

EXT. FISHERVILLE HIGH SCHOOL - FOOTBALL FIELD - NIGHT

The bleachers are packed with three generations of fans
and
family cheering their boys on the high school football
field.

--
Rae is sitting with her two girlfriends, JESSE and KELL
two girls who graduated five years ago.

JESSE

(hands Rae a beer)
Ronnie ship out this mornin'?

RAE

It's so stupid. Says to me that he
don't want nothin' to do with no
military career. Says he wants to
move. Open up an auto shop with his
uncle up in Knoxville. I said, okay.
How about now? Let's go.

KELL

He'd be good for that. Shit, Ronnie
knows cars.

RAE

He get stubborn. Starts talkin' 'bout
obligation and duty and all that...
Shit. I just want him to come home...
I swear, if somethin' happens to
him...

KELL

He fixed up that Buick for my uncle

Dale. He say it purrs like a kitten every morning.

JESSE

Nothing's gonna happen. Not like everybody over there is in the line of fire with them Arabs blowin' themselves up.

RAE

Can't be thinkin' bout him every second of my day. I'll go outta my gourd.

JESSE

Why should you waste your life waitin' and wonderin'. Not like you're married.

RAE

(takes a healthy swig)
I begged him not to go. And he did.

KELL

(screaming at the field)
PUNT YOU FUCKERS!

CUT TO:

EXT. CONNER'S HOUSE - THE KEGGER - NIGHT

a
up
friend
Dirty South rap pounds the ears from a hoopty Olds with backseat full of bass. Rae, Kell, and Jesse are walking to the rowdy party through the variety of parked cars. A girl rushes past the trio, vomiting on herself as a friend comes to her aid.

JESSE

These baby chicks just can't hold their Jello shots. I'm tellin' ya.

CUT TO:

INT. CONNER'S HOUSE - THE KEGGER - NIGHT

Dusters. CONNER is one of the linebackers for the Fisherville

A wasted girl sits on his lap as Kell rolls a joint.

CONNER

Tennessee Vols gotta practice indoors
just so those Florida State sons-a-
bitches don't spy on their plays
with satellites and shit.

KELL

Satellites... You mean in space?

CONNER

Uh-huh.

KELL

Good thing you can block, Conner,
cuz you're dumb as a sack of shit.

Conner Jesse notices Rae coughing. She pulls her aside as
rambles.

JESSE

You wanna go home?

RAE

It gets worse there. Leavin' me to
my own mind. That's just not good.

JESSE

(pours a shot of vodka)
Here. Pound this and I'll join you.

Rae and Jesse take a strong shot. It burns.

JESSE

One more. Fuck the chaser.

friend, As they pound one more, Rae notices Gill, Ronnie's
staring at her from across the room.

JESSE

Better?

RAE

Yeah.

BATSON and MARK approach Jesse and Rae. They are both
sophomores, both skinny and harmless.

BATSON

Hey, Jess.

JESSE

Boys.

BATSON

You robotrippin' tonight?

JESSE

I'm just gonna smoke.

Rae peeks at Gill maneuvering through the room.

BATSON

(rummages in his
pockets)

Got eight packs of DXM. Oxycontin.
Got a shit load of Coricidin if you
want to get out-a-body, n'all.

JESSE

You just trying to get me outta my
clothes.

RAE

Be right back.

Gill. Rae pushes through the crowd of drunken kids to get to

RAE

It's not like I can't go out and
have fun with my friends.

GILL

You think I'm Ronnie's spy or
somethin'? Come tomorrow that dumb-
ass gonna be halfway round the world
tryin' to keep his head on his
shoulders. You think he's gonna be
thinkin' about you?

RAE

You go to hell.

Rae pushes through the crowd, back toward the others.

RAE

(to Batson)

How many to fuck me up?

Rae
Conner's
echoes and

QUICK CUTS of: Batson popping out five red cough pills.
swallowing all five and chasing them with vodka.
girl falls off his lap. Kell laughs. The laughter
grows as we:

CUT TO:

**EXT. CONNER'S HOUSE - THE KEGGER - HIS PARENT'S
WATERBED - NIGHT**

implied.
pleasure as
finishes

CLOSE ANGLES: We never quite see the whole of what is
Rae's eyes, Jesse's mouth, a boy's shoulder.
The room is packed with bodies. Rae laughs with
her eyes attempt to focus. The kid on top of her
and rolls off.

JESSE

What's so funny?

and
football
behind.

Jesse is straddling a guy in an arm chair, Chinese-eyed
bouncing. Rae tries to respond coherently as another
player rolls her over on all fours and takes her from

RAE

(laughing)

Oh... I'm just on a water bed... And
it's just... so... Goddamn... funny!

at

A few coughs. Rae focuses to see a younger guy sitting
her eye level.

RAE

Hi.

BRYAN

Hey.

RAE

You ain't the kicker, are you?

BRYAN

No, ma'am.

RAE

Cuz let me tell you, you boys gotta run the ball more. You get into a kicking game, ya'll gonna lose.

BRYAN

Can I put it in your mouth?

RAE

Okay.

CUT TO:

INT. LAZARUS'S HOME - THE BEDROOM - NIGHT

Laz kills the rest of his whiskey. He squeezes his eyes closed as the liquor burns his throat. He tosses the bottle into a trash bag he is holding.

Laz continues throwing out all of Rose's make-up and hair products. With one broad sweep, he cleans off her vanity.

INT. LAZARUS'S HOME - NIGHT

Laz opens the front door and tosses the two bags outside. Stumbling, he kneels next to the coiled radiator against the wall opposite the door. He talks to it like an old friend.

LAZARUS

Seem like you and me... we drove her away. That's what we did. Now we...

(singing softly)

Drinkin' muddy water... a'sleep in a hollow log...

A thought.

INT. LAZARUS'S HOME - THE BEDROOM - NIGHT

wipes a

Laz pulls out a guitar case from under the bed. He
layer of dust off and opens it.

INT. LAZARUS'S HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT

at
eyes,

He gently cradles the guitar in his big hands and sits
his kitchen table. Tunes the strings. He closes his
swimming in drunken sorrow.

LAZARUS

You gonna do this?

guitar,

Laz plays the blues, Mississippi, Bentonian style: one
one voice, a mess of pain.

LAZARUS

(singing, his eyes
closed)

Just like a bird without a feather,
you know
I'm lost without your love.
Just like a bird without a feather,
you know
I'm lost without your love.
You know I need your love just like
the angels need heaven above.

The music continues as we:

CUT TO:

**EXT. CONNER'S HOUSE - THE KEGGER - THE WOODS OUT BACK -
NIGHT**

through
football

Lazarus's blues is all we hear as four guys chase Rae
the woods. She is in her shirt and panties, wearing
shoulder pads.

and

She is completely wasted. Lost. The ground rocks back
forth with each step. Trees pass in a slow-motion haze.

LAZARUS

(singing)

Well I sure did shot my baby, but I

did it because she did me wrong.
Well I sure did shot my baby, but I
did it because she did me wrong.
You know the judge called it murder
now the penitentiary is my home.

tackles
with
Rae grips a tree to steady herself, but a team member
her. The woods spin and distort as someone mounts her
ease.

LAZARUS

(singing)

I loved that woman, she said she
didn't love no one but me.
I loved that woman, she said she
didn't love no one but me.

passing
could
the
Rae smiles as she lifts her hand up to the stars,
the writhing back of the guy on top of her. If she
just grab a star she would feel safe again.
She tries to snatch one. She can't. Her hand drops as
the
boy stands and takes off after his friends tossing the
football.
Rae lies motionless on the ground.

LAZARUS

(singing)

Yeah but I caught my baby cheating.

CUT TO:

INT. LAZARUS'S HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT

A tear rolls down Laz's cheek.

LAZARUS

(singing)

Now my home ain't where it used to
be.

His guitar groans its last for the night.

CUT TO:

THAT

**EXT. CONNER'S HOUSE - THE KEGGER - FRONT YARD - LATER
NIGHT**

and

Rae is wasted. She is still wearing her shirt, panties
shoulder pads as she steps over passed-out teenagers.

RAE

Jes? Jesse?
(trips over a sprinkler)
Oh shit... Wait... Wait... STOP!

GILL

Stop what?

Rae doesn't look up. The Coricidin is tripping her out.

RAE

(coughing)
The ground is... turnin' upside down.
I'm gonna...
(coughing)
I'm gonna fall off...

Gill reaches down and pulls off the shoulder pads. The
coughing fit passes.

RAE

Oh. That feels so much better.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

Gill's truck flies down the dark road.

INT. GILL'S TRUCK - NIGHT

Rae is looking out the window, drifting in and out.

GILL

Thought you had a skirt earlier.

RAE

I got others.

engine. He

Gill pulls to the side of the road and kills the
watches Rae tilt her head from side to side.

GILL

This thing you got... I've heard people say, you'd fuck a tree if it was handy. I can see that.

(shakes his head)

But that nigger Tehronne. Thinks he's some player cuz he hustles dope and stolen hubcaps. I mean, I can see a tree. But that piece of shit?

RAE

(lost in hazy sorrow)

I begged him. Don't see why he had to go...

GILL

I bet you did. Just had to get that black cock up in you. I swear to God. What Ronnie sees... you disgust me.

resistance. Her
unzips
Gill grabs her legs and spreads them with no
head rolls from side to side on the truck seat as Gill
his pants.
Rae starts giggling.

GILL

The fuck you laughin' at?

RAE

(giggling)

You don't got half what Tehronne got.

Gill flinches upright. A rage builds in his eyes.

EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

Rae
From outside the steamed truck window, we see Gill beat
repeatedly.
Silence.

GILL

(muffled from the
inside)

Get up! I ain't playin'! OPEN YOUR

GODDAMN EYES!

Silence.

moving. He opens the truck door, fear in his eyes. Rae isn't
Blood is on her face.

GILL

Oh, Jesus...

to A hasty idea. He pushes her out of the truck. She falls
the dark pavement in a tangle of her own limbs.

motionless The door slams. Gill floors the gas. Rae lies
alone under the stars.

beep. Her watch alarm goes off: Beep-beep. Beep-beep. Beep-

CUT TO:

INT. A BUS - NIGHT

alarm in Ronnie is asleep on the bus, unaware that his watch
beeping at him.

A Guardsman sitting next to him shakes Ronnie awake.

GUARDSMAN

Hey.

sadness Ronnie silences the alarm. He regards the watch with
and affection.

EXT. FREEWAY - NIGHT

night. The bus roars past. The red brake lights fade into

FADE TO

BLACK:

INT. LAZARUS'S HOME - KITCHEN - EARLY MORNING

His Lazarus has fallen asleep sitting at his kitchen table.

the eyes open. Standing is difficult. The guitar falls to floor.

up The phone rings. Dizziness hits, but he manages to pick the receiver.

LAZARUS

Huh?

INT. CHURCH OF GOD / LAZARUS'S HOME - EARLY MORNING

back R.L. is on his cell phone. He is placing hymnals in the racks of the church pews.

R.L.

Bojo called. Said you got to see your brother at the long end of a broken bottle.

LAZARUS

You gonna preach 'bout turnin' the other cheek?

R.L.

I think you did alright by God under the circumstances.

(R.L. pauses)

Your people are here for you, Laz. This is your home. No shame in showing your face.

LAZARUS

Don't know if God wanna see me.

R.L.

He knows where ya at. Just answer the door if he come knockin'.

Laz hangs up the phone.

CUT TO:

EXT. LAZARUS'S HOME - LATE MORNING

bags Lazarus steps out onto his porch. He picks up the trash full of Rose's things and walks down the gravel drive to the

road.

LATE

**EXT. LAZARUS' HOME - WHERE THE DRIVE MEETS THE ROAD -
MORNING**

shut,

Laz tosses the bags inside his trash cans.
He's really hung over this morning. His eyes squeeze
he grips his neck in pain.

LAZARUS

Mmmmmmmmmmm... Mm!

his

His eyes open. They remain fixed beyond us. The pain in
face is replaced with grave confusion.

Rae lies on the side of the road.

mist,

white,

Her T-shirt and panties are damp from the early morning
her face caked with dried blood. Her skin is deathly
her mouth open, her eyes shut and swollen.

her

Lazarus carefully steps toward her. He leans down over
face.

LAZARUS

Sweet... Jesus...

Rae coughs. Laz flinches.

CUT TO:

INT. LAZARUS' HOME - LATE MORNING

is

The door slams against the wall as it swings open. Laz
carrying Rae, unconscious and limp, in his arms.

a

He lays her down on the couch by the radiator. He pulls
quilt over her cold skin. With a twist of the valve the
radiator moans to life.

to

Laz takes out his bandana and cleans her face. He tries

wake her.

LAZARUS

Little lady? Miss? You need to open
your eyes for me. Could ya do that?

Her eyes open slightly -- just slits of white.

LAZARUS

There we go. There we go. Just like
you doin'. Go'on.

She whispers as she touches her fingers to his cheek.

RAE

(a raspy inhale)
Teh... Tehronne?

LAZARUS

Tehronne? Tehronne done this?

fit. Laz
looks
followed

A labored breath followed by the most pitiful cough
tries to calm her as her lungs fight for oxygen. Laz
scared as the coughing stops in a desperate wheeze
by silence.

INT. LAZARUS'S HOME - KITCHEN - MORNING

flips

Laz pulls the phone off its cradle on the wall and
through the phone book.

His fingers scan down the listings and stops on POLICE
DEPARTMENT. He dials and listens.

OPERATOR

(a recorded voice)
You've reached the Fisherville Police
Department. Your call will be answered
in the order it was received. If
this is an emergency, please, hang
up and dial 9-1-...

over at
seen

Slam! Fingers hit the phone cradle. Lazarus dials 911.
As soon as he places the phone to his ear, he looks
Rae sprawled out on his couch. Her bare legs can be

peeking out from under the quilt.

Fear hits him. He slams the phone down again.

Laz crosses to the couch and gently touches her head.

LAZARUS

(softly)

I'm'a go into town. Get you some
medicine to fix you up. You just
rest, okay, gal? You just sleep. Get
that chill out'cha.

Laz touches the radiator. It burns him.

LAZARUS

God... damn...

EXT. ROAD - AFTERNOON

Laz's Ford roars down the shaded street towards town.

CUT TO:

EXT. FISHERVILLE SQUARE - MACON DRUGS - AFTERNOON

Laz parks his truck in front of MACON DRUGS and heads
inside.

An old black man named RED sits on a bench next to an
older
white man in his early eighties holding a cane. RED is
the
paid caretaker of MELVIN.

MELVIN

How's the squash this year?

LAZARUS

It's good, Mister Melvin. I'll bring
ya some.

Laz rushes inside.

INT. MACON DRUGS - AFTERNOON

The variety of cough medicine confuses Laz as he
examines
them.

dress
her
manner.

ANGELA approaches Laz. She is dressed in a floral print
with a white lab coat. Angela has a few extra pounds on
but she wears it well with her caring face and sweet

ANGELA

Lazarus?

LAZARUS

(startled)

Oh! Gave me a start.

ANGELA

I'm sorry. It's these soft shoes I
wear for my back.

LAZARUS

You hurt it?

ANGELA

I'm standing most of my day. They're
for support.

(a smile)

Didn't see you in church this mornin'.

LAZARUS

(tries to lie)

Been on the crop. May need to get
some extra hands if I don't want to
work on Sundays.

ANGELA

Well. It's good to see you.

remains

Angela wants the conversation to continue but Laz
silent. She smiles awkwardly.

LAZARUS

Angela?

ANGELA

Yes?

LAZARUS

I need to uh...

ANGELA

Go on, Laz. You can talk to me.

LAZARUS

My little niece... she got this deep cough.

ANGELA

You take her to a doctor?

LAZARUS

(struggles to lie)

No. No, she can't go. Mean to say... they's just no money fo'a doctor.

Her daddy left for a job, and uh... give her to me to look on. I just...

(a pitiful pause)

I don't know what to do.

Angela thinks for a moment.

ANGELA

You wait right here.

CUT TO:

INT. LAZARUS' HOME - DAY

her

Snot and spittle has run down the side of Rae's face -- eyelids stick together as she tries to open them.

aware

There is a creak, followed by another. Rae has become that someone is slowly walking up the front porch.

is a

The door opens. Silhouetted in the day's blinding light white man in his 40's. His face is indistinguishable to affected gaze.

Rae's

Is this a dream?

lighter

He stands above her and lights a cigarette. The Zippo clasps shut. The man lowers it to his side where Rae it clearly. A bald eagle is printed on the side, a sight that makes Rae's eyes open wide in horror.

can see

sight

Her breath grows deeper -- a girlish plea. This is no

dream --

it's a nightmare.

RAE

Mm-mm... Mm-mm...

eyes
cigarette. A
blanket off

A massive hand slaps down over her mouth. Her crusted
peer above the hairy knuckles. He sucks on the
red cherry blazes at the end. The man pushes the
of her and grips her panties.

clenched

Rae's eyes close. She knows what is next. In his
fist, the panties are ripped off.

RAE

NOOOOO!

falls
shaking,
Her
guitar on
trembling

Rae flinches awake from the fever-induced nightmare and
to the wooden floor, drenched in sweat. Weakened and
she scampers away, finally collapsing in the kitchen.
hand reaches out and lands on the strings of Laz's
the floor. She grips the steel strings with her
fingers.

A single bass note twangs as she passes out.

CUT TO:

INT. MACON DRUGS - AFTERNOON

approach,

Angela stands between the aisles, motioning Laz to
away from the girl at the counter.

ANGELA

Is your niece older than 12?

LAZARUS

Oh, she older than that.

She hands him a white box with cough syrup inside.

ANGELA

My sister got a bad cough with her pneumonia. I just copied her prescription. You don't need to pay anything... just take it. But if she gets worse, you give me a call. I wrote my number on the box.

LAZARUS

This gonna get you in trouble?

ANGELA

Not if no one finds out.

Laz doesn't know what to say. He puts the box in his pocket.

LAZARUS

Thank you.

(suddenly awkward)

Oh. My wife. She had a card here for her migraine pills. She ain't gonna be around no more... So if you...

ANGELA

I already tossed that out.

(takes a step closer)

Somethin' you should'a done to that woman long ago... how she treated you. Of course, that's none of my business.

LAZARUS

(smiles)

Don't make it less true.

Angela returns the smile.

EXT. MACON DRUGS - AFTERNOON

Laz opens his truck door and stops. At the pool-hall across the square, Laz sees a green Cutlass with chrome rims.

CUT TO:

INT. POOL HALL - AFTERNOON

Laz enters the empty pool hall. Tehronne is playing a game with a skinny playa-wanna-be dressed in flea-market Fubu.

CHARLIE, the owner, approaches Laz from the bar.

CHARLIE

Hey, Lazarus. We closed up on Sunday.

LAZARUS

Need a word with Tehronne.

CHARLIE

(calling to the back)

Yo, T! Laz wanna holla at cha.

TEHRONNE

Come on back, Cuz.

as Charlie nods Laz on. He crosses to the back pool table
Tehronne sinks the 8. Tehronne looks at his friend.

TEHRONNE

Do you call it a game when only one
man win each time? I think you call
it a damn shame.

LAZARUS

Word wit'cha. In private.

few Tehronne hands his friend the pool cue. The two take a
steps away to talk.

TEHRONNE

You need some weed?

LAZARUS

Been years since I fooled with that.
(tries to find the
words)

You know a white girl? Dirty blond
hair, split down the middle like?

TEHRONNE

(smiles)

That ain't up to me to hook you up.
Naw what I mean? She her own, you
know?

LAZARUS

Huh?

TEHRONNE

I don't pimp that.

(silence)

You talkin' about who I think you talkin' about, you mean Rae. Rae Doole. Sexy little split tail, like you say. I can't hook you up with that. I got two girls. One ain't in town, the other one pregnant. So... you on your own.

LAZARUS

This Rae... you get with her?

TEHRONNE

Shit. Who hasn't?

LAZARUS

Why you say that?

TEHRONNE

She got a spare minute she'll snatch up anyone... but me, I'm different. Sometimes she need the real deal, so she call me up. Girl got an itch. You know... what's a nigga to do?

LAZARUS

She like it rough? You like beatin' on her?

TEHRONNE

That ain't my scene. If that's somethin' you into...

LAZARUS

Now, hold up.

TEHRONNE

See, that girl is in my favor. You heard me, nigga? You fuck with her rough, and you got me to fuck wit.

LAZARUS

You collar that dog, boy. I ain't gonna hurt nobody. Just wanted to know who she was.

TEHRONNE

Like I say, you wanna hook that up... I ain't in ya way. That switch of hers been all over this town. Got that sickness, you know.

LAZARUS

What'chu sayin'?

TEHRONNE

She a freak. Got what you call a sexual addiction.

Lazarus looks at him with a furrowed brow. Confused.

LAZARUS

What'chu sayin'?

TEHRONNE

What I'm tellin' you. Girl gotta get dick or she go crazy.

CUT TO:

INT. LAZARUS' HOME - DAY

Rae
rushes
Laz opens his own door with caution. He turns to see
sprawled in his kitchen in her panties and T-shirt. He
to her side.

LAZARUS

Gal? Miss Rae? Rae, you hear me?

her
Lazarus lifts her sweaty body off the floor and moves
back to the couch.

haze.
Consciousness briefly returns to Rae in her feverish

FLASH TO:

CLOSE UP - FLASHBACK

The white-knuckled hand clutched around her mouth.

FLASH

BACK TO:

INT. LAZARUS' HOME - DAY

Rae flinches and flails. She falls to the floor.

LAZARUS

Hold on, now. Hold on!

to Rae's eyes are open and filled with fear. She struggles
flee as Laz holds her in place, trying to reassure her.

LAZARUS

Now, I ain't gonna hurt'cha. Calm
down, Miss.

(she fights, coughs)

Listen... Listen... LISTEN NOW, GAL!

(Rae settles in his
grip)

I ain't gonna hurt ya, hear? Gotta
get you well. Now, look me... HEY!
Look me in the eye.

face Rae is too weak to talk or move. Laz clutches her small
in his dark hands.

LAZARUS

Open your eyes. Go'on, now. You need
to see, ain't no harm here. Ain't no
harm.

(Rae calms)

My name is Lazarus Woods. And I ain't
gonna let you die.

Rae's eyes roll back.

Lazarus looks terrified as she cranes her head back and
forward. Her mouth opens.

and In her sickened state, with the force of something evil
shriek deep inside, Rae clasps her open mouth over Laz's. A
the sounds in his brain as he holds her tighter, allowing
Laz kiss to grow in intensity. Rae falls to her stomach as
sees abruptly stands and stumbles across the room. What he
chills him to the bone.

a Rae is writhing on the floor as if she is possessed --
rant of raspy words pour from her mouth.

RAE

...you don't... touch me... s'no...
NO! Mm-mm... Mm-MMMMMMMMMMMMMM! N-
N'you FUCK!

the
picks
to
Lazarus gets spooked by what he is seeing. He looks to
mantle. His weathered Bible lies in a coat of dust. He
it up as a wave of the burning hits Rae.
She clutches her breast and crotch, rolling from side
side.

RAE

Mm-mm... mm-mm... Ma-muh... Ma-MUH!
(sudden anger, shouting)
See... S... See if 'I GIVE... GIVE'A...
SHIT...

FLASH TO:

INT. DUNN'S CAFE - MORNING - FLASHBACK

are
Rae.
Rose is shouting at the customers in the cafe. Her eyes
white like Rae's. Her voice is not her own but that of

ROSE/RAE

(screaming)
'BOUT ANY OF YOU PEOPLE!

FLASH

BACK TO:

EXT. LAZARUS' HOME - DAY

door
still
drive,
cough
dark
Laz runs out of his own home, not even shutting the
behind him. He gets half way down his drive, the Bible
clutched in his hand. He stops.
In a panic, Laz opens his Bible, places it down on the
face up, creating a barrier to evil. He hears a choking
inside the house. Rae is fighting for breath beyond the
door.

Silence. Laz reaches down and picks up his Bible.
A passage catches his eye. As he reads, the fear
vanishes
He
looks back at his house, his faith is renewed.

CUT TO:

INT. LAZARUS'S HOME - THE BATHROOM - DAY

The Bible is slammed down on top of the toilet tank.
The
bathtub faucet coughs as Laz twists the cold water
knob.

INT. LAZARUS' HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

The freezer door opens. He snatches four trays of ice.

INT. LAZARUS' HOME - THE BATHROOM - DAY

The trays crack. The ice cubes bounce into the tub.

INT. LAZARUS' HOME - DAY

Rae's lips are dried and split as she pants, lost in
dizzying
fever. Laz lifts her.

INT. LAZARUS' HOME - THE BATHROOM - DAY

Laz kneels on one knee to put her into the tub.
A horrible cry from Rae as Laz wrestles with her,
keeping
her submerged in the ice cold water.

LAZARUS

I know, child, I know. Gotta break
that fever now.

(Rae sobs, struggles)

Don't mean to hurt'chu. But I ain't
lettin' you die.

(holding her down)

I AIN'T LETTIN' YOU DIE!

Rae is motionless. Exhausted. Her eyes are open but
blind.

Her lip trembles. Her body shakes from the freezing
water.

Laz rubs the hair from her face gently. He reaches over
to
the Bible on the toilet and opens it to read.

LAZARUS

Put fear of the Devil in me, gal.
Got me spooked like I's a kid, I
tell you.

(flips through the
pages)

But the good Lord, He showed me what
to do. He come knockin' like my man
R.L. say... listen here...

(Rae sobs like a child)

This here Matthew. He talkin' on how
Jesus was healin' the sick. And a
man come up to the disciples and he
say...

(reads deliberately)

Have mercy on my son, for he is a
lunatic, and sore vexed...

(to Rae)

He got the devil in his mind and
sores on his skin.

(reads)

And he brought the boy to the
disciples, but they could NOT cure
him.

Rae's shivering is abating. Her eyes fight to stay
open. Laz
touches her forehead to test her temperature.

LAZARUS

(reading)

Then Jesus answered and said, O
faithless and perverse generation...
how long shall I suffer you? Bring
the boy hither to me. And Jesus
rebuked the devil.

(to Rae)

You hear that?

(reads)

Then the disciples say... Why could
not we cast the devil out? And Jesus
said unto them...

Rae's eyes begin to close. Laz gently touches her head
to

rile her awake.

LAZARUS

Listen now... This what he sayin' to us. He say...

(reads)

If ye have faith... if ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto a mountain, remove hence... and it... shall... move. And nothin'... nothin' shall be impossible to you.

(to Rae)

You hear that? You just need a bit of faith. You just gotta believe you gonna get well, like I do.

He touches her forehead again. Her eyes close.

LAZARUS

That's better. You coolin' down. Okay. You rest. Okay. You rest.

Laz leans against the wall, spent.

EXT. LAZARUS' HOME - SUNSET

fade
The cicadas sing in a rising chorus as the clouds above from copper to crimson.

FADE TO

BLACK.

INT. LAZARUS' HOME - NIGHT

The faint echo of Rae's fevered panting.

Her
has
She lies on the couch wrapped in a quilt, shivering. eyes remain closed, her face drenched with sweat. Laz cleaned her facial wounds, using a few Band-Aids.

BOOM!

Rae
fire
An explosion ignites the windows surrounding the cabin. jolts awake, terror pervades her as she gasps at the ball outside the window.

can be She struggles to her feet and listens. A faint sound heard through the roar of the flames. beep beep... beep beep... beep beep... beep beep...

RAE

(a whisper)

Ronnie...

door Rae stumbles to the door, weak and dizzy. She grips the knob and pulls the door open.

EXT. LAZARUS' HOME - NIGHT

She Rae races outside, tripping down the front porch steps. frantically looks off at the blaze in the squash field. She races toward the fire, the beeping increases.

RAE

Ronnie... RONNIE!

BEEP BEEP... BEEP BEEP... BEEP BEEP... BEEP BEEP...

the At the center of the blaze is an upside down Humvee. To scattered. left of the vehicle, a few soldier's bodies lay across Rae's legs lose all strength, she collapses and crawls the squash plants.

A far away voice is heard over the roaring flames.

LAZARUS

Gal? Gal?

of Rae crawls across a fallen soldier, following the sound faints. Ronnie's alarm. She struggles to breathe, she almost

she She finds a soldier face down. With all her strength turns him over. It is Ronnie, wide-eyed and lifeless. She An awful groan comes out of Rae -- crippling sorrow. pulls on his vest trying to wake him.

RAE

(sobbing)

Nn-nn... Nn-nn... no... N'RONNIE!

LAZARUS

GAL! YOU HEARIN' MY VOICE?

pulling
plant.

Rae looks up. The flaming humvee is gone. She is not on Ronnie's vest, but the tangled vines of a squash

moonlight.

Laz stands at a safe distance, silhouetted in

LAZARUS

You travelin' right now, gal. You asleep and you don't even know it.

(extends his hand)

Now... come on inside with me.

tears

Rae looks like a terrified child. Her eyes well with as she shakes her head. Laz takes a step toward her.

RAE

Mm-mm... Mm-mm...

LAZARUS

Come on, gal...

after

She turns and runs away as best she can. Laz chases her. He's much older than her and a bit slower, but her balance betrays her.

Laz wraps his arms around her. Rae screams to the sky.

RAE

NO! NOOO! NOOOOOOOOOO!

unconscious.

And then, stillness. Rae lies limp in Laz's arms,

green

He reaches down and lifts her wrist to his face. The screen of the digital watch pulsates with the alarm. He pushes the side button. The beeping stops. Silence.

CUT TO:

INT. LAZARUS' HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Laz lays Rae back onto his couch. Her eyes open into slits. She can see Laz's form over her like the man in her nightmare.

Rae grabs Laz's wrist. He flinches with her force.

RAE

(the whisper of a child)

Is'okay... Is'okay...

Struggling with exhaustion, Rae moves Laz's hand to her bare stomach. She rubs it slowly up and down her form, suggestively.

Laz slips his hand away and claps it tight over her eyes.

Rae holds her breath, waiting to be molested, her lip quivering.

LAZARUS

(singing deep and soft)

Goin' over that hill. Goin' over that hill. Well, I ain't gonna stop until I reach my God's top. I'm goin' over the hill. Well I went to the valley, I didn't go to stay. Soul got happy, I stayed all day. I'm goin' over that hill.

Rae relaxes and falls into a deep sleep.

The Laz backs away from her, a touch of fear in his heart. voice of Tehronne is heard from earlier in the day.

TEHRONNE (V.O.)

She a freak. Got what you call a sexual addiction.

LAZARUS (V.O.)

What'chu sayin'?

TEHRONNE (V.O.)

What I'm tellin' you. Girl gotta get dick or she go crazy.

FLASH TO:

INT. POOL HALL - EARLIER THAT DAY - FLASHBACK

Lazarus looks at Tehronne with a furrowed brow,
confused.

TEHRONNE

First hooked up with that bitch when
she was 16. Girl was fuckin' the
principal and two of her teachers.
You know coach Reynolds?

LAZARUS

Uh-huh.

TEHRONNE

He tapped that.

LAZARUS

Naw!

TEHRONNE

Go ask him.

FLASH

BACK TO:

INT. LAZARUS'S BARN - NIGHT

Lazarus opens his barn, slicing through the darkness
with
his flashlight.

TEHRONNE (V.O.)

She been bumpin' around all her life,
hookin' up with whoever keep her fed
and fucked.

He crosses to the other side, pulls on a beaded chain
turning
on the single bulb above his work table.

TEHRONNE (V.O.)

I seen her give it up on park benches,
back of trucks, hoopty hoods, you
name it.

Laz opens an old wooden box on his work table. He looks
inside.

FLASH TO:

INT. POOL HALL - MORNING - FLASHBACK

Laz looks ill. Tehronne checks his pager briefly.

TEHRONNE

You ever seen a train run on a woman?

LAZARUS

Nuh-uh.

TEHRONNE

Meanin' like a team of fellas go to work on her and she don't even break a sweat.

(puts his pager away)

She into football, you know. You got a letter on your jacket you get that pussy in ya lap. I ain't playin'.

Tehronne's friend breaks on the pool table with a sharp crack.

Lazarus is genuinely disturbed.

LAZARUS

How a girl get like that?

TEHRONNE

Like I told you.

FLASH

BACK TO:

INT. LAZARUS'S BARN - NIGHT

Lazarus reaches inside the box and pulls out the end of an old chain.

TEHRONNE (V.O.)

Girl got a sickness.

The chain rattles as Laz walks backwards, pulling the long chain from the box. The shouting of his brother can be heard.

DEKE (V.O.)

What'chu gonna do? Huh? Nothin'. YOU

AIN'T GONNA DO NOTHIN'! NOTHIN'!

The end of the chain snags, yanking the box over.

CRASH!

CUT TO:

EXT. LAZARUS' HOME - THE VEGETABLE GARDEN - LATE MORNING

Lazarus is bent over, harvesting his tomatoes.

LAZARUS

(singing to himself)

Tell me who's that writin'? John the Revelator. Wrote the book of the seven seals.

CUT TO:

INT. LAZARUS' HOME - AFTERNOON

pours
Laz enters his home. He crosses to the kitchen and
himself a glass of water.

downing
Dripping with sweat, he steps back into the room,
Rae
the last of his water. He lowers the glass, noticing
looking at him.

LAZARUS

Hey.

side and
Rae lifts her head off the pillow. Laz comes to her
helps her sit up.

LAZARUS

Take it easy now. Don't rush it.

RAE

(a scratchy whisper)

How long... how long I been out?

LAZARUS

You been in and out goin' on two...
maybe two days.

RAE

(can't believe it)
Two days?

LAZARUS

After your fever broke, you'd wake
up in spells... long enough to get
that medicine in ya.

Rae sits up on the couch, the quilt wrapped around her
waist.
She looks at the cough syrup bottle on the side table.

LAZARUS

Found you on the side of the road.
Someone took to beatin' on you pretty
bad. You know who done that to you?

Rae touches the cut over her eye. That evening is still
a
blur.

RAE

Where's Ronnie?

LAZARUS

Well I don't...

RAE

(remembering)
Wait. He left.

Rae lifts her head, revealing tears in her eyes. She
gets
mad at herself and wipes them away.

RAE

I don't got any money... for fixin'
me up and all.

LAZARUS

Don't need none.

RAE

Then I better be on my way. Don't
wanna put you out no more.

LAZARUS

Think it'd be best if you stayed put
while we talk.

RAE

Naw'sir... I gotta be on my way.

LAZARUS

Best try gettin' ya wits about you
'fore you try to...

quilt
thuds

Rae struggles for balance as she attempts to stand. The
falls away as a heavy chain slides off the couch and
on the floor by her feet.

Rae feels a tug.

thin
locked

She looks down to see a dark chain locked around her
waist and coiled on the floor. The opposite end is
around the side coil of the radiator.

She is chained to the house, a prisoner.

LAZARUS

Let me say somethin' first...

RAE

Why you got me chained?

LAZARUS

Way I see it, it's gonna take a while
for you to get right.

RAE

The fuck you been doin' to me?

LAZARUS

I ain't laid a hand on ya but to
ease yo fever... Remember like I
say, I found you in the road...

RAE

(yanks at the chain
around her waist)
Get this Goddamn thing off me!

reassure

Rae stumbles as she moves away from Laz. Laz tries to
her.

LAZARUS

Now, no harm's come to you... and I

aim to keep it that way. Ain't gonna... gonna run a train over ya... or however you call it... see... you was runnin' wild on me... these fever dreams you was havin'... these fits. I'd be chasin' you all night.

RAE

Well I'm woke now... you can take this off.

Rae waits.

LAZARUS

Gal, you ain't right yet.

RAE

I'm right enough to stand on my own two feet. Now take this Goddamn chain off...

LAZARUS

How you let men treat ya like they do?

RAE

What?

LAZARUS

These men you up under. How you let them do ya like that?

RAE

(grips the chain)
Do me? Do me like this, you mean?
Like chainin' me up?

LAZARUS

You know what I'm talkin' about.
(beat)
All that mess with ya teachers and...
boys in the backs of trucks.

RAE

(shocked)
The hell you know about me?! You got no right to talk to me about that shit! The hell you think you are?

LAZARUS

(interrupting)
I've saved ya life, gal. I can do

and say whatever the fuck I want.

chain
times.
Rae begins to feel a pang of panic. She goes to the
locked around the radiator. She yanks on it a few

LAZARUS

I give ya enough chain so's you can
get about the house. Get you to the
kitchen. You need the bathroom, it'll
reach.

RAE

What do you want?

LAZARUS

We got everything we need. Plenty of
food. Ya medicine still got a few
good swallows in it...

RAE

WHAT DO YOU WANT FROM ME?!

(Laz can't answer)

**WHATEVER YOU GONNA DO TO ME, JUST DO
IT! AND LET ME GO!**

LAZARUS

God saw to it to put you in my path.
And I aim to cure ya of your
wickedness.

her
floor.
This statement terrifies Rae. The fear can be seen in
eyes. She backs away -- the chain scrapes across the

RAE

You some kind'a pervert?

LAZARUS

No ma'am.

RAE

Some crazy Jesus freak, gonna fuck
the spirit into me...

LAZARUS

In my house, you watch that lip...

RAE

(furious, near tears)

Look it, mister... you wanna have
your way, you take it. I'll do
whatever you want. But you gotta let
me go. You can't do this! You can't
KEEP ME HERE!

LAZARUS

You sick. You got a sickness... we
broke that fever... we gonna break
that hold the devil got on ya.

back
Rae pushes Laz back and bolts for the door. Laz falls
against the side table by the couch, toppling the lamp.

EXT. LAZARUS' HOME / INT. LAZARUS' HOME - AFTERNOON

her
her.
The door slams against the house as Rae rushes out in
wolf shirt and panties -- the chain trailing behind

RAE

(screaming)

HELP!

yanking on
Laz watches as the coil unravels and snaps taut,
the old radiator.

watches
Clank! The chain whips Rae down to the ground. Laz
as dust flies off the radiator with each tug.

RAE

SOMEBODY!

CLANK!

watches
The fear in Laz's face is replaced with a grin as he
his radiator hold firm.

RAE

SOMEBODY HELP ME!

like a
fresh
Outside, Rae bucks and screams, yanking on the chain
wild mustang. Her bare feet and legs are soiled with
mud and grass as she claws at the ground.

parent -- Laz crosses to the radiator and pats it like a proud his wedding ring clicks against the iron.

LAZARUS

(to the radiator)
Ain't gonna be moved.

the He steps outside with resolve and strength. He picks up chain and wraps it around his fist.

LAZARUS

GAL! I ain't gonna be moved on this!

the Laz yanks her back, dragging her towards him. He grips taut chain with his other hand and yanks her closer.

RAE

LET ME GO!

LAZARUS

You can holla y'self hoarse. Ain't gonna bend my will.
(pulls her closer)
Right or wrong, you gonna mind me.
(Pulls her again)
Gonna suffer you like Jesus say, to the FAITHLESS and the PERVERSE **GENERATION.**

wrangles Rae is spent. She turns to look at her captor as he her back to the porch.

LAZARUS

Now you get up! And you get in my house!

RAE

Or what?

Rae spits at Laz. Bad idea.

CUT TO:

INT. LAZARUS'S HOME - LATER THAT AFTERNOON

kitchen, Rae is screaming and grunting as Laz, standing in his

water

tugs on the chain around the door-jam like he's drawing from a well.

pulls

Outside Rae struggles to hold onto the porch post. Laz hard, lifting her lower torso off the ground.

RAE

Stop it! Stop it! IT HURTS!

LAZARUS

Whose doin' is that?

Laz yanks. Rae loses her grip and slams onto the porch.

RAE

Okay... OKAY! I'M COMIN' IN! NOW
QUIT IT!

hands

The pulling stops. Rae picks herself up. Her knees and are scraped and bleeding. The two stare at each other.

LAZARUS

Say we talk. Just take a seat on the sofa. I'll get us somethin' cool to drink.

Laz crosses to the kitchen. Rae sits down on the couch, noticing the fallen lamp on the floor.

LAZARUS

You may not remember. But you spent a whole half day in my tub, tryin' to cool down. Melted four ice trays.

the

He finishes preparing the two waters. He crosses into front room. Rae is not there.

glasses

CRASH! Rae smashes the lamp on Laz's head. The water shatter as Laz falls to the floor.

back.

Rae picks up a wooden chair and breaks it over his

wrists

Before she can do any more damage, Laz grabs her by the and throws her to the couch.

Rae falls to the floor. Laz stumbles on his feet as he

clutches his bleeding head. He loses his cool.

LAZARUS

Wicked little bitch... gonna cut
me...

RAE

You gonna get a lot more a'that, you
keep me locked up like this!

breath

Rae freezes as she sees Laz undo his belt buckle. Her
starts to quiver as she deeply inhales and exhales.

LAZARUS

Think I'm gonna let you do me like
that...

fist.

Laz whips his belt off and wraps the buckle around his

middle

He stops in his tracks. Rae is panting and shaking. Her
finger is scratching at her own thigh.

LAZARUS

(regaining his cool)
Okay, now... I ain't gonna hit'cha.
(the burning is
starting)
Just lost my cool there.
(he throws the belt
away)
Now take that look out'cha eye.

teeth as

Her anguished hum can be heard through her clenched
she rocks back and forth. Her hands wander down to her
inner
thighs.

LAZARUS

No, ma'am. You stop that foolishness.

RAE

(shaking her head)
Hm-mm... Hm-mm...

LAZARUS

I said... STOP!

RAE

(on the verge of crying)

I CAN'T!

floor
door.
Rae gets dizzy. She rests the top of her head on the
and sways back and forth. Laz rushes out the front

chain
rests
As the wave hits, Rae twists and turns, wrapping the
around her. She grips the radiator with both hands and
her face against the side.

RAE

Hmmmmmm... Stop-it!... STOP-IT!

gasps
The wave is about to build in to a powerful climax. Rae
for breath.

cold
Laz
The door slams open. Laz drenches her with a gallon of
well water from a tin bucket. Rae inhales and freezes.
waits and watches.

The burning is gone.

from
Laz kneels next to her and gently frees her bare ankle
the tangled chain.

LAZARUS

You hungry?

CUT TO:

EXT. LAZARUS' HOME - ON THE PORCH - LATER THAT DAY

plates in
into her
They are both seated on the front porch with paper
their laps. Laz watches with amusement as Rae tears
chicken and gobbles up the vegetables.

LAZARUS

I put some back ache into growin'
them greens. You should slow down
and see how they taste.

Rae remains under Lazarus' intense gaze as the cicadas sing.

CUT TO:

EXT. LAZARUS' HOME - THE VEGETABLE GARDEN - SUNSET

Rae stares off at orange clouds and purple sky. She takes a step to her left, walking through the parallel rows of squash.

The chain gently rattles behind her. Laz has given her about 20 feet of slack. He holds the chain tight around his fist.

Rae grins, standing proud in her wolf shirt and panties.

RAE

You like this? Walkin' me through this field like I's your mule?

LAZARUS

Can't sit all day on that sofa. Need to get your legs strong.

RAE

(sassy)

If I break one you gonna shoot me?

Rae teases Laz by adjusting her panties. She turns back to the sunset and stretches.

CUT TO:

INT. LAZARUS' HOME - NIGHT

Rae's smoldering eyes don't leave Laz as he chains her to the radiator. Laz nervously preaches, trying to avoid the sight of her bare legs curled up on his couch.

LAZARUS

My Daddy was one of the first mens to organize soil conservation in these parts. That's a group of

farmers, you know, each season they'd rotate the crop. Know why it's best to rotate em like that?

RAE

Uh-uh.

cream Laz moves in close and starts applying antibacterial to the cut above Rae's eye.

LAZARUS

Cuz once in a while soil need a change. Corn take up a lot of nitrate in the fertilizer. So next crop what ya do is plant ya some soy beans. That give off a lot of nitrate. Change keeps it all growin' and growin' strong.

(regarding the eye)

Sting a bit?

RAE

Itches.

LAZARUS

Means ya healin'.

(a nod)

So all this farmin' make me think on Matthew. Matthew 13. The parable of the sower? Man toss seed on rock, on the wayside, some fell in thorns... you know the story?

RAE

Uh-uh.

rubbs Laz starts putting the cream on her scabbed knees. He them gently.

LAZARUS

The seed that land on good soil is for them who hear the word of God... and understand the word of God. Not enough for you to hear what I'm sayin', you gotta understand.

RAE

I know. I get it. What's Matthew doin'?

LAZARUS

Gal... Matthew ain't doin' shit...
this just a story...

(quelling his
frustration)

Look it. I've seen it in nature,
I've seen it in men. Ya got to change
up your crop. Cuz that seed ain't
gettin' in.

(Rae remains silent)

Ya gotta cut this shit out. Got no
cause to be up under these fools,
ruttin' on ya like you a bitch. Like
you somebody's dog. No woman... who
joins in union with Almighty God...
or man... in the sanctity of
marriage... should degrade herself...
and bend to ANOTHER MAN'S WILL!

someone
rubs
Rae is aware that Laz is somewhere else, talking to
else other than her. There is anger in his tone as he
ointment on her bare, scabbed knees.

LAZARUS

(shouting)

My God, gal, don't you got no SENSE?
I ain't sayin' I ain't weak? Shit.
Playin' guitar in the blood-bucket
jukes all ya life... a nigga learn
how to sin, let me tell you!

(grips her by the
legs)

**I GOT SIN IN ME! I AIN'T GO'N LIE!
BUT I GOT RESPECT! AND ALL YOU GOT
IS BILE, GAL!**

RAE

Let go of me...

LAZARUS

**GIVIN' UP THAT SWITCH LIKE A TRAMP!
BEHIND MY BACK AND KILL MY BABY...!**

Rae yanks free of Laz's grip, recoiling on the couch.

RAE

GET OFF ME!

sudden
Laz awakens from his rant. He blinks and stands. A

hide by

shame overtakes him. He crosses into the kitchen to
the sink.

He pours Rae a glass of water and returns to her side.

LAZARUS

(offering her the
glass)

Didn't mean to go off on a tear like
I did. I just got to thinkin' about
things...

touching

Rae leans up into his face. The glass of water is
her chest. Laz remains hypnotized by her eyes.

RAE

Why is it you old men gotta talk so
much? Like little boys, gotta talk
yourself into fuckin' me.

(his knuckles touch
her skin)

We can take our time. I'm grown. I
get it.

(she leans even closer)

You wanna give me 'nother bath?

Laz stands and backs away. He quickly leaves the room.

INT. LAZARUS'S HOME - THE BEDROOM - NIGHT

Laz looks at himself in the reflection of Rose's vanity
mirror, listening to Rae stir in the next room.

INT. LAZARUS' HOME - NIGHT

breathe

The cicadas are screaming outside. Rae is beginning to
deep, the burning is coming on.

RAE

(under her breath)

Goddammit.

rolls

She folds her arms over her chest, her middle finger
scratching her elbow. The anxiety is too much. She
over until the chain pulls taut against the radiator.

breathing

Rae has wrapped herself in a tangle of chain. Her

relaxes. Her eyes close. She sleeps.

FADE TO

BLACK.

EXT. FISHERVILLE SQUARE - EARLY DAWN

A train rumbles past in the blue hue of dawn.

vegetable
Laz pulls his truck next to two other fruit and
vendors: ARCHIE and GENE.

is a
Archie is an old black man in his early seventies. Gene
short white man closer to Laz's age.

GENE

There goes our fortune. We been doin'
good for ourselves since you been
away.

Laz sets up his folding table and uncovers his produce.

LAZARUS

Y'all know when Ella Mae's open up?

ARCHIE

You needin' to buy some pantyhose?

LAZARUS

Just some dresses.

Gene looks at Archie and shrugs.

CUT TO:

INT. LAZARUS' HOME - MORNING

heat.
Rae snaps awake. She is wet with sweat from the morning

RAE

Hello? Hey!

front
Rae drags the chain behind her as she crosses to the
door and looks outside. No truck.

RAE

I don't believe this shit.

the
Rae
eggs,
She folds her arms and looks into the kitchen. There on
table is a covered plate and a small bottle of milk.
reads a note on top of the plate: BE BACK FOR SUPPER.
She pulls off the top plate and finds sausage links,
biscuits, sliced tomatoes, and sliced peaches.

RAE

Enough to choke a Goddamn horse.

She yanks her chain. It rattles across the floor as she
sits.

CUT TO:

INT. ELLA MAE'S WOMEN'S CLOTHING - EARLY AFTERNOON

by
Laz looks out of place in his faded overalls surrounded
bright colors of Ella Mae's dress shop.

fifties.
ELLA MAE is a wide woman with white hair in her late

LAZARUS

I'm needin' some women's clothes. A
few dresses. Maybe some shoes. But
they gotta be nice. They gotta be
proper. Clothes a woman would want,
where she could feel and look like a
woman without... you know, lookin'
like a tramp or a hussy or somethin'.

19-year-
proceed.
Ella Mae turns to her assistant, Rhonda. Rhonda is a
old black girl. She turns back to Laz, unsure how to

ELLA MAE

And, sir... do you have a size in
mind for what you're lookin' for?

LAZARUS

(points to Rhonda)
That young lady's size, right'cher.

ELLA MAE

Well, that makes it easier.

CUT TO:

INT. LAZARUS' HOME - THE BATHROOM - AFTERNOON

Rae sits down in the tub, still wearing her T-shirt and
panties. Looking up at the shower head above she turns
on
the cold water and yanks up on the shower knob.
Cold water sprays down over her. She gasps and then
relaxes,
laying back in the tub.

CUT TO:

INT. ELLA MAE'S WOMEN'S CLOTHING - AFTERNOON

Laz is at the counter. Rhonda is putting the shoes and
clothes
in two shopping bags while Ella Mae rings him up.

ELLA MAE

Well... I hope these will work for
your niece. She can always come back
in and swap sizes.

Lazarus points to a small display of fine lotions.

LAZARUS

Mind I ask, what's all this business
here?

ELLA MAE

These are whipped body creams. It's
like a lotion.

LAZARUS

For your hands?

ELLA MAE

Some women prefer not to scent their
bodies with perfume. So now they
have scented creams. They help
moisturize a woman's skin.

(unscrewing a jar)

This one's my favorite. It's called
Ginger Souffle. I recommend...
applying the cream while the skin is

still damp. So... perhaps just after
a shower.

LAZARUS

(likes what he smells)
I'll take a jar of that, too.

CUT TO:

INT. LAZARUS' HOME - KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

Rae rattles into the kitchen, her damp clothes clinging
to
her form. She picks up Laz's guitar off the table and
places
it in her lap.

She plucks a few random strings out of boredom and
smiles.

CUT TO:

INT. MACON DRUGS - AFTERNOON

The same apathetic girl is working the front counter as
Laz
enters the drug store with a basket of arranged
vegetables.

LAZARUS

Lookin' for Miss Angela.

GIRL

She in the back.

Laz makes his way to the back of the store. He spies
Angela
in the back pharmacy, sorting pills for a pick-up. He
watches
her work for a moment until, finally, she sees him.

ANGELA

Wait right there.

Laz waits as Angela rounds the corner.

LAZARUS

I brung you a little basket of
goodies. Fresh squash, tomatoes,
some okra, butter beans.

ANGELA

(taking the basket)
You didn't have to do this.

LAZARUS

Just wanted to say how much I appreciate you helping me the other day. My niece, she's cured up, and I got you to thank.

ANGELA

Well that's good. I'm happy to hear it.

the
Angela smiles. There is tension and attraction between
two.

LAZARUS

Look here. I got somethin' special for you.

been
Angela is flush as Laz moves closer than he has ever
before. He reaches in the basket for the jar of cream.

LAZARUS

This here is a whipped... body cream. And it's got a smell to it. Tell me what you think.

eyes and
Laz holds the jar up to her nose. Angela closes her
smells. Her expression says enough -- she loves it.

LAZARUS

They call this Ginger Souffle. Best if it... if it go on your skin just after you been in a hot tub... or shower.

and
Angela takes the lotion from his hand. She is subtle
demure, but the woman is deeply affected. She smiles.

ANGELA

This was very sweet of you.

LAZARUS

Well. Hope you enjoy it.

apathetic

Angela watches Laz as he walks out the door. The girl moves up behind Angela.

GIRL

Oooooo.

ANGELA

Hush up.

EXT. FISHERVILLE SQUARE - MACON DRUGS - AFTERNOON

Melvin is

Laz opens his truck and waves goodbye to Old Red, holding a healthy squash.

RED

You gonna be on the square later on?

LAZARUS

Got all my honey-do's done with. I'm headin' home.

RED

Stay cool. It's a hot one.

as

Laz pulls away in his truck and rounds the corner just as R.L. crosses the street. He steps over to talk to Red.

R.L.

Hey, Red. Was that Laz just left?

RED

Yes'sir, Rev'rend.

CUT TO:

INT. LAZARUS'S HOME - KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

playfully.

Rae occasionally strums an awful chord as she sings

RAE

(trying to sing)

You are my sunshine. My only sunshine.
You make me happy when skies are
gray. You'll never know dear how
much I love you. Please don't take
my sunshine away. A voice from outside
spins her around. The guitar barks

as Rae slams it down on the table.

LINCOLN (O.S.)

Mister Lazarus?

Lincoln
basket.

Rae stays hidden as she peeks out the front window.
is standing before the house holding an old picnic
Rae's middle finger begins scraping against the wall.

LINCOLN

Mister Laz... I come for the butter
beans.

she

Rae fights her dizziness. She crawls to the radiator as
hears each creak of Lincoln crossing to the front door.

FLASH TO

QUICK CUTS

cigarette.

The Zippo with the bald eagle closes. A smoldering

FLASH

BACK TO:

the

Rae flinches and grits her teeth as Lincoln knocks on
door: Knock, knock.

LINCOLN

Ain't seen you on the square. Mister
Laz, can you hear me?

The burning has started: deep gasps, itching, anxiety.

LINCOLN

(worried now)

Mister Lazarus?

door.

Rae watches the shadows of Lincoln's shoes under the
They wait patiently and walk away.

EXT. LAZARUS' HOME - AFTERNOON

Lincoln walks down the porch steps and stops. Thinks.

INT. LAZARUS' HOME - AFTERNOON

she
Rae inches upward, pulling herself up the radiator so
can stand. Her panting has waned.
Suddenly the front door swings open.

LINCOLN

Mister Laz, I'm comin' inside...

around
Lincoln
Lincoln can't believe what he sees. Rae is chained
the waist, damp and barely clothed. Her eyes bore into
like an owl zeroing in on a helpless jackrabbit.
She rips her shirt off in one tug over her head.
Lincoln can't move. The picnic basket hits the floor.
His
lays
mouth hangs open in shock as Rae steps towards him and
her open mouth on the boy.

EXT. LAZARUS' HOME - AFTERNOON

SLAM! Rae shuts the door.
Laz steers his Ford truck up the drive and parks. He
takes
opens
his time getting out and removing the shopping bags. He
the door and goes inside.
His curses can be heard from outside.

LAZARUS

SHIT BOY! WHAT THE HELL YOU...!

overalls.
Lincoln is tossed off the porch, clinging to his

LAZARUS

CAN'T LEAVE YOU ALONE FOR ONE...

the
running
Tears and fear come to Lincoln as Laz steps out onto
porch, fuming with rage.
Lincoln backs away expecting a good beating. He starts

drive. up the drive but stops as R.L.'s Olds rolls up the

LAZARUS

Lincoln, come on back.

clutching his Lincoln darts past Laz and runs into the barn,
steps overalls. R.L. stops the car halfway down the drive and
out.

R.L.

Was that Lincoln James I seen run
off?

LAZARUS

He's fine. Just had a bad fall.

R.L.

Why's his britches round his knees?

LAZARUS

R.L., you gonna have to get on. I
can't have nobody round my place.

R.L. starts walking up the drive.

R.L.

You get a call from Rose?

LAZARUS

This ain't got nothin' to do with
that woman. Just don't want nobody
around me now.

R.L.

Somethin' wrong with ya phone? Been
callin' the last few days.

hunting R.L. stops in his tracks as Lazarus pulls out his
rifle from the rack behind his seat in his truck.

R.L.

Goin' dove huntin'?

LAZARUS

You gotta go, R.L.. I ain't foolin'
this time.

R.L.

You sayin' that gun's for me if I don't?

(LAZ CAN'T ANSWER)

Spell it out, Laz. Man big enough to pull a gun best have a tongue in his mouth if he ain't got a brain in his head.

him. Laz is struggling. The rifle feels suddenly strange to

LAZARUS

You ain't gonna talk me outta shit no more. I got my mind made up and I ain't gonna be moved on this.

R.L.

(amused)

Ain't gonna be moved?

LAZARUS

Got no place for preachin' here. Not now. So you do as I say...

R.L.

(still stepping closer)

Or what?

LAZARUS

I told you to TURN BACK!

back. R.L. pushes his chest up against the rifle and shouts

R.L.

YOU GO'ON AND SHOOT ME, KILLA!

only Laz's heart is breaking. He is pointing a gun at his friend.

R.L. snatches the rifle out of Laz's hands.

R.L.

Ought'a stomp yo ass pointing this at me.

(unloads the rifle)

Always gotta bring up the preachin'. Like you just a sheep in my flock and all I'm good for is poundin' on a pulpit.

(gets in Laz's face)
Dammit, Laz... we may not be blood.
But we sucked off the same old nurse
since the day we was slapped on the
ass. And you gonna point a gun at
me?

A tear rolls down Laz's cheek. The shame is unbearable.

R.L.

If you in some trouble, than WE gonna
figure somethin' out. You and me.

(hands him a bandana)

Wipe your face!

Laz takes the bandana and wipes the tears away.

R.L.

Now... this got anything to do with
Rose?

(Laz shakes his head)

Then what?

CUT TO:

INT. LAZARUS' HOME - AFTERNOON

The door creaks open. R.L. carefully steps inside. Rae
is sitting on the couch, looking out the window.

RAE

(on the verge of tears)

I didn't want to.

Rae doesn't respond. R.L. quickly steps outside
shutting the door behind him.

EXT. LAZARUS' HOME - AFTERNOON

R.L. shakes his head as Laz follows him off the porch.

R.L.

Are you outta ya GODDAMN MIND?

LAZARUS

Man like you ought not take the Lord's
name like you just done.

R.L.

A naked woman, chained in ya house?

LAZARUS

I'm tellin' you the truth, dammit. I found her beat. Left for dead. So I brung her home.

R.L.

Laz, I know about that girl.

(beat)

Good number of this town's sinners got my ear, you know.

(shakes his head)

Oh, Laz. She's had a mess of crabs and them STD's. What'chu thinking?

LAZARUS

I haven't laid a hand. On my life, R.L., my wick is dry on this.

R.L.

You say she was beat on. You call the sheriff on that?

LAZARUS

Put yo'self in my shoes. Say you out here, alone, with a beaten, half naked, white woman loves to fuck. I been toe to toe with the law in this town for no more than being black and nearby.

R.L.

What's that chain around her for?

Laz briefly looks off at the barn, knowing Lincoln is there.

LAZARUS

Why don't you go'on and ask her. She need to talk wit somebody with sense. Folks been ruttin' and beatin' on this gal all her days. And this is how I'm handling it.

R.L.

THIS IS HOW YOU HANDLING IT? THIS IS HOW YOU HANDLING IT?

Silence.

LAZARUS

Go in and talk to her. Please.

R.L. nods. Lazarus smiles.

LAZARUS

Good. Makin' steaks for supper. I expect you to come.

R.L.

You mean with you and that woman chained to ya radiator?

LAZARUS

You treat folks special when they company. It's just supper, R.L., shit.

R.L.

One thing at a time, Laz.

Laz walks toward the barn and turns back to R.L..

LAZARUS

Watch y'self in there. That girl'll jump on ya junk like a grasshopper.

EXT. LAZARUS' BARN - AFTERNOON

afternoon
Laz opens the door to his barn wide, allowing the light to find Lincoln sitting on an old tire, weeping.

LAZARUS

Did I hurt'chu?

him.
Lincoln shakes his head. Laz carefully sits next to

LAZARUS

What happened in there... that won't your fault. Ain't a young man alive could keep they britches on with that girl being in heat like she is.

LINCOLN

Why she got a chain on her?

LAZARUS

That's between her and me. It's private. And I don't want you goin' off and tellin' ya daddy.

LINCOLN

(in a panic)
Please don't tell my daddy.

LAZARUS

My mouth is shut, boy. And that's
how we gonna keep it. Don't go
braggin' to ya buddies, ya heard me?

Lincoln nods. Laz hands him the bandana R.L. gave him.

LAZARUS

So...
(a bonding smile)
That your first time?

LINCOLN

Yes'sir.

LAZARUS

You struck some gold, didn't ya?

Lincoln grins as he wipes the snot from his nose.

LAZARUS

Shit. My first time was with my second
cousin behind my uncle's barn. She
weighed two tons, if a pound. Could'a
done a lot better for myself. You
sho'nuf did.

INT. LAZARUS' HOME - AFTERNOON

sofa,
R.L. hands Rae a glass of water. She is seated on the
wrapped in a quilt.

RAE

Thank you.

R.L.

(sits next to her)
I gotta ask you. Why do you think
Laz is keepin' you chained like this?

RAE

(shrugs at first,
then:)
You know how, like they say, you
save someone's life, you responsible
for them. Guess he just don't think
it's safe for me.

R.L.

So he got it into his head that the only thing gonna keep you from endin' up bleedin' on the side of the road again, without a stitch of clothing on is...

(R.L. yanks on the chain)

You think he's crazy for thinkin' that?

Rae struggles to answer. Something is on her mind.

RAE

You a preacher?

R.L.

That's right.

RAE

Can I ask you a question?

(R.L. nods)

People always say, you gotta get good with Jesus, if you want not to go to hell. That you say sorry for all you done and... and Jesus would let you go on to heaven.

R.L.

You could put it that way.

RAE

But that's so fuckin' stupid.

(she catches herself)

I'm sorry. Didn't mean to curse.

R.L.

What's on your mind?

RAE

You can't hurt people... and then just say, I'm sorry, and then everything just gets washed away. Why would heaven want people like that. People who... do what they want and then... switch.

R.L.

I'm gonna tell you somethin', and it's just gonna be between you and me.

(Rae anxiously nods)
I think folks carry on about heaven too much. Like it's some all-you-can-eat buffet up in the clouds. And folks just gonna do as they're told so they can eat what they want behind some pearly gates. I can go to Shoney's for that.

Rae grins. R.L. leans closer.

R.L.

There's sin in my heart. There's evil in this world. But when I got no one... I talk to God. I ask for strength. I ask for forgiveness. Not for peace at the end of my days when there's no more life to live and no more good to do, but today. Right now.

Rae has never had anyone talk to her like this. She is listening. She is understanding.

R.L.

What's your heaven? What gives you peace?

Rae looks at her bare feet. She tries to respond but the pain in her chokes back the words. Tears come to her.

RAE

(struggling to speak)
Ronnie.

CUT TO:

EXT. GREYHOUND BUS STATION - LATE AFTERNOON

A bus stops at the station. The doors swing open. A few passengers exit the bus followed by Ronnie.

He is not wearing his uniform.

EXT. GREYHOUND BUS STATION - PHONE BOOTH - LATE AFTERNOON

He drops his duffle bag and pops a few quarters in the phone.

He waits, allows the phone to ring.

RONNIE

(into the phone)

This is Ronnie again. Don't know if
you been gettin' my messages but...
I'm down at the bus station and...

(struggles)

I just need you come get me. You get
this message, I'm on the interstate
headin' downtown toward the square.

(sadness hits)

Rae. I really need you to... come
find me. Please.

fearful
Ronnie hangs up the phone. He remains motionless,
and alone.

He picks up his duffle and walks down the interstate.

CUT TO:

EXT. LAZARUS' HOME - SUNSET

over
Lincoln stands over the barbecue spraying lighter fluid
the coals while R.L. peels back the corn husks.

LINCOLN

We gonna eat with her?

R.L.

That's what I was told.

LINCOLN

She still gonna have that chain on?

R.L.

Well... I'm working on that.

(trying to change the
subject)

So... what's goin' on in your life,
Lincoln?

LINCOLN

I ain't no virgin no more?

flame.
Lincoln tosses a match on the coals. They ignite with

INT. LAZARUS' HOME - KITCHEN - SUNSET

the
behind

arms,

Laz is humming to himself as he finishes chopping up potatoes. He wipes his hands and catches Rae standing behind him.

She looks classic in the floral sundress. She folds her arms, feeling awkward under Laz's approving gaze.

LAZARUS

Now that's sharp. That is sharp.
Chain give you any trouble?

RAE

Uh-uh.

LAZARUS

Good. Now I got the steaks on,
potatoes at a boil, and biscuits
ready to pop in the oven. R.L. and
Lincoln out yonder grillin' up the
corn. What do you know how to make?

RAE

I don't fuckin' cook.

LAZARUS

(a look of
disappointment)
Gal, I been around hard-cursin' folk
all my life. And let me tell you...

RAE

Look it... I put the Goddamn dress
on, didn't I? I think I'm handlin'
myself with some... fuckin' restraint
here... how you got me locked up
like a dog on a...

LAZARUS

If all you got is filth comin' out'cha
mouth... people just gonna tune ya
out.

(interrupting her)

Rae. RAE! I'm not fightin' with ya.
I just know you got more in you than
junk.

(a breath)

Now, you sayin' you don't know how
to cook anything at all?

(Rae shrugs)
You know how to boil water?

RAE
I can handle that.

LAZARUS
(hands Rae a pot)
Well, get to it.

CUT TO:

INT. LAZARUS' HOME - KITCHEN - AT THE TABLE - NIGHT

The four of them (Rae, Laz, Lincoln, and R.L.) are all seated at the kitchen table, holding hands as R.L. says grace. Rae peeks at the others with their eyes closed tight. She follows their example.

R.L. We ask that you bless this meal put before us. May the food nourish our bodies and this fellowship nourish our spirit. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

LAZARUS & LINCOLN
Amen.

There is a sudden flurry of activity at the table as the four begin piling up their plates.

R.L.
Pass them potatoes, Lincoln.

LAZARUS
Y'all let me know if these steaks are too dry.

R.L.
This all looks wonderful.

LINCOLN
I skipped lunch.

LAZARUS
Well, dig in, son. Got plenty to eat.

egg.
gives
Rae's eyes are fixed on R.L. as he picks up a devilled
She looks over at Laz who is aware of her anxiety. He
her a wink.

R.L. bites into the egg and moans with delight.

R.L.

(to Laz)

Mm. MM. Now these eggs got some kick
to it. What'chu got in this?

LAZARUS

(motions to Rae)

Ask the chef.

rush of
Everyone looks at Rae, surprised. She feels a sudden
fear as she struggles to answer R.L.'s question.

RAE

Cayenne pepper.

CUT TO:

EXT. LAMPLIGHTER BAR - NIGHT

stops
Ronnie is walking by the bar along the interstate. He
when he sees Gill's truck.

INT. LAMPLIGHTER BAR - NIGHT

enters
Ronnie adjusts his duffle bag over his shoulder as he
the mid-sized bar.

with a
Gill is seated at the bar. He turns to Ronnie along
few other locals, one being HERMAN, age 40.

GILL

(surprised)

Holy shit.

RONNIE

(understanding)

Yeah.

GILL

Sit down, man. Need a beer?

RONNIE

Sure.

GILL

(to the bartender)

Marv, let's get Ronnie set up here.

Ronnie sits next to Gill. Herman leans in wanting to be
a part of the conversation.

RONNIE

Hey, Herman.

HERMAN

They buy you that big chicken dinner?

Ronnie stiffens. Gill is confused.

GILL

What?

HERMAN

They got little names for everything in the corps when they trying to get rid of ya. Don't know what it's like in the guard. There's what you call a bad conduct discharge, a BCD... we all called it the big chicken dinner. It ain't the brig but it'll fuck ya for life if you wantin' to work for the government.

RONNIE

That's not what this is about.

HERMAN

They got another little name called ad-sep. That sound about right?

Ronnie looks away. He takes a sip of his beer.

HERMAN

Ad-sep. Administrative separation.

GILL

(to Ronnie)

How do you get one of those?

HERMAN

Blowin' boys in the head, for one.

him
Ronnie loses his cool. He lunges at Herman. Gill holds
back.

HERMAN

Whoa, son! I ain't sayin' shit about
you. I'm just talkin'.

RONNIE

Well, you don't know what you're
talking about so why don't you shut
the fuck up?

GILL

Hey, it's alright, man. It's alright.
(to Herman)
Herman. Come on. He just got back.

Herman gets up to leave with his beer.

HERMAN

To get back ya had to've gone
somewhere.

of the
story.
Ronnie glares at Herman as he moves to the other side
bar. Gill moves closer to Ronnie to get the whole

GILL

What happened?

RONNIE

They been keepin' a folder on me cuz
of my stomach. Like how it was just
before we'd play ball back in school.
Thought it was just some tic I got,
or ulcers like my daddy had.

(takes a drink)

I can't... shoot. Target practice
I'm a pro. I tag between the numbers
each time but...

(feels a stomach cramp)

But when there's really loud noises
around me... somethin' happens. I
get shaky and... I lose my breath.
They called it anxiety. Severe
anxiety. It can be fixed and all...
just not in time for....

(another drink)

It's a long process but... they sent me home.

GILL

I guess it could be worse. You could be comin' back in a body bag.

Gill doesn't know what to say next.

RONNIE

I can't get Rae on the phone. She's not at home... none of her friends seen her anywhere.

GILL

She's around. Always is.

RONNIE

I don't know. She's gettin' crazy, like she gets. Begged me not to go. Got real down. I just think somethin's happened. Like she run off with someone. You'd tell me if you knew somethin', right?

GILL

You been home yet?

RONNIE

Uh-uh. I's hitchin' up the interstate when I seen your truck outside.

GILL

You need a ride?

CUT TO:

EXT. RONNIE'S TRAILER - NIGHT

leading Gill's truck rounds the bend and up the gravel drive up to Ronnie's trailer.

The headlights scan across the porch as Gill parks.

INT. RONNIE'S TRAILER - NIGHT

Rae Ronnie is the first through the door, calling out for before he can turn on the lights.

RONNIE

Rae?

was Gill enters. He sees that the trailer is the same as it the day he picked up Ronnie, nothing is different.

RONNIE

This don't feel right. Kitchen looks just like I left it. I know, cuz I cleaned it.

GILL

She ever tell you she was thinkin' of taking off?

RONNIE

I just been so mixed up lately, Gill. And, you know, with her history, I can see how she could get scared...
(tears)
...and run.

and Gill is disturbed by Ronnie's sudden flood of emotion tears. He crosses to the pantry, already knowing which cupboard to pull the liquor out of.

He pours two drinks. He hands one to Ronnie.

GILL

Drink. Come on, drink some.

Ronnie manages a few swallows.

RONNIE

Her momma works down at the grocery, down on the square. Maybe she seen her.

face. Gill stands over Ronnie, looking down on his pitiful

GILL

Ronnie. You can't see cuz you're too close to it.
(Ronnie waits)
These nervous spells you get. You never had that shit back in school...

RONNIE

That's not right, really, cuz I...

GILL

(continuing)

You joined up in that monkey troop cuz you had a plan for yourself. Army'd pay for school. You were gonna get a degree, maybe somethin' in business or agriculture and you were gonna make somethin' of yourself.

His words are painful to Ronnie. Gill doesn't hold back.

GILL

And then you had to fall in love with the school slut.

RONNIE

Now wait...

GILL

(continuing)

With all she was doin'. With all the shit she kept doing! You stayed stuck to that bitch's ass and you wouldn't let go.

RONNIE

I know about how she was like. But we was different. I's the only person she talked to about it. How she's abused. Terrible things, Gill, just terrible...

Rage suddenly fills Gill. He grabs Ronnie and throws him against the wall.

GILL

YOU HAD A PLAN! YOU HAD A GODDAMN LIFE! AND SHE JUST FUCKED THE GUTS OUT OF YOU!

RONNIE

It's not her fault, Gill. She's had to take care of me all this time, cuz I'd just start throwin' up... choking. Just losin' my grip. And she listened. She listened to me.

(Gill releases Ronnie

and walks away)

And... I got better. I don't get

nervous like I used to. And since we been together... she been faithful to me. Put all that junk behind her...

GILL

The only thing that cunt's had behind her is me and half the town fuckin' her.

(Ronnie can't believe it)

Your first night away, I come over and drop off the spare keys like you wanted me to. You weren't gone two hours and she was aching to get me inside her. Like she was havin' some kind'a fit.

holds
Ronnie can't respond. Tears roll down his face. Gill
up the whiskey bottle.

GILL

(pours a drink)

Don't you think it's funny how I know where everything in your house is?

(moves in close)

I don't care if that hurts you or not. Truth is I don't know who you are anymore. So fuck it.

up
Gill turns away. Ronnie grips Gill around the neck from behind. He bends him back painfully and throws his head
against the wall.

EXT. RONNIE'S TRAILER - NIGHT

front
The front door burst open as Gill goes flying down the
porch. Ronnie cocks a .45 and shoves it into his belt.
the
Ronnie pins Gill's elbow behind his back and retrieves
keys from his front pocket.

GILL

You gonna steal my truck?

RONNIE

Make yourself at home. You done it already.

Gill watches Ronnie tear down the drive in his own truck.

CUT TO:

EXT. LAZARUS' HOME - NEAR THE BARN - NIGHT

Lincoln
and
Laz and R.L. are smoking. Laz smiles as he watches and Rae through the kitchen window as they wash dishes talk about football.

R.L.

Gotta get that chain off her, Laz. Somethin' like this gets out, you could land in a heap of trouble.

LAZARUS

I'm dealin' with what God put before me.

R.L.

You believe He wants this? A woman chained to ya radiator?

LAZARUS

Not like that.

R.L.

Then what?

LAZARUS

She's tied to me, R.L.. We tied to each other.

Laz is silent.

R.L.

I can't leave unless I get your word.

Laz looks down at his shoes. He surrenders. He nods.

R.L.

Laz. I got some news you need to hear. It's about Rose and your brother.

(this is not easy for

R.L.)

She's pregnant. She gonna have a

baby.

(silence)

Her sister told my wife. You know how them sewing circles go. Just a matter of time till you got word. Thought that's why you been keepin' to yourself out here.

(Laz conceals his pain)

I don't know how much of this is to make her happy or to hurt you. But it is what it is.

faced Laz struggles with his emotions. He turns to R.L. stone and cold.

LAZARUS

I'm through with them both.

CUT TO:

EXT. LAZARUS' HOME - THE FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

car. Laz and Rae wave to Lincoln as he climbs into R.L.'s night. They pull away, up the drive, and disappear into the

peace, The cicadas sing as the two stand in silence: Rae, at silent feeling genuine contentment; while Laz looks lost in pain.

RAE

They sure liked them devilled eggs.

LAZARUS

You drink whiskey?

CUT TO:

INT. LAZARUS' HOME - NIGHT

the A bottle of whiskey is removed from a top cabinet above swallow. refrigerator. Two small glasses each get a healthy

LAZARUS

You take it straight?

RAE

Sure.

struggles
He hands her a glass. Laz then looks at his as if he
with a decision.

LAZARUS

(holding up the glass)

To my baby brother. Gonna be a daddy.

Rae nods and downs the whiskey with Lazarus.

RAE

Well, that's good news. So you're
gonna be someone's uncle.

Laz pours another swig for himself and downs it.

LAZARUS

Want another?

RAE

We drinkin' buddies now?

LAZARUS

(pours two more glass)

To freedom.

Laz pounds back his third shot.

RAE

Still makin' jokes?

LAZARUS

(pulls out his keys)

No joke.

her
Laz pulls Rae closer to him by the chain wrapped around
waist. He opens the old lock with a key.

LAZARUS

Not my place to change your mind, or
anybody else's. People gonna do how
they please. You only get one life...
should be lived the way you wanna
live it.

looks

The chain falls to the floor with a hollow thud. Rae
confused.

LAZARUS

If you want... I can take you back
to town now.

RAE

I ain't in a hurry.

The two stare at each other in silence.

RAE

Could you do somethin' for me?

LAZARUS

Anything.

CUT TO:

INT. LAZARUS' HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT

guitar,

Rae watches with intense curiosity as Laz tunes his
sitting at the table.

LAZARUS

(takes another drink)
Ain't played 'fore nobody in years.

spurring
chair.

Laz slides his calloused fingers across the strings,
the old guitar into an impressive wail. Rae grips the

LAZARUS

(plays as he remembers)
Funny how a sound just speak to ya
heart.

A haunting slide guitar riff barks. Rae has a physical
reaction to the music. She is fascinated and fearful.

LAZARUS

(thinks)
Wanted me some kids. A whole mess of
'em. But Rose, my wife... chil'ren
was for another time.
(takes a drink)
They's this one spring... I saw a

change in her. Her breasts start
swellin' up. Come a few mornings I
hear her heavin' in the bathroom. I
seen it with women before. I knew.

Laz thinks for a moment. Continues playing.

LAZARUS

Come a day, Rose say she had to go
visit her folks in Jackson. Didn't
want me to come... so I stayed put.

(remembers)

When she come back...

(hesitates)

They talk about a woman havin' that
glow. Couldn't see it no more. She...
took it away. Cut it out.

the
The guitar's song turns dark. Laz slides his fingers up
guitar strings, lingering on low growns.

LAZARUS

One night... While she sleepin'.
Held a pillow in my hands. I could
see myself killin' her. What evil in
my heart make me wanna kill her, I
don't know? It's that voice in me.
Each time I think it's gone, he come
howlin' back. Devil or no, I don't
know. But I am a haunted man.

something
Fear spreads across Rae's face. Laz is talking about
all too familiar.

LAZARUS

Calls me when I'm ailing. When I
can't find my home, lost in the pines.
I calls it the Black Snake Moan.

(he closes his eyes

and sings)

Mm-mm... Got no momma now.Mm-mm...
Got no momma now.It's over late last
night, don't need no momma now.

closed. Rae
front
Laz stops. He sways back and forth with his eyes
hears the swell of the cicadas. Her eyes dart to the
door as the familiar creek of footsteps are heard.

RAE

Sing, Lazarus.
(kneels next to him
in fear)
Please keep singin'.

around The door swings open. A white calloused hand appears
Rae's mouth.

hand is She gasps in terror, clutching Laz's leg. The white
gone. Tears come to her. She trembles as Laz sings.

LAZARUS

(singing)
Mm-mm... Black snake crawlin' in my
room.Mm-mm... Black snake crawlin'
in my room.Some pretty momma better
come and get this black snake soon.

Rae rests her head against his knee.

LAZARUS

(singing)
Black snake is evil, black snake is
all I see.Black snake is evil, black
snake is all I see.Woke up this
mornin', black snake moved in on me.

facing Laz concludes the song. Rae raises up to her knees,
eyes. Laz. Tears have run down his dried face. He opens his

LAZARUS

My life is gone. Only life I was
livin'. And I lost it.

RAE

I'm here with you.

LAZARUS

I had love in my heart. And I gave
it to one woman. And she gone now.
(his lip quivers)
Where am I gonna put all this love?

outside. Rae gently touches his cheek. The wind picks up

RAE

You can give it to me.

to
the
Rae kisses Laz. He is motionless at first, allowing it
happen. His hand moves from the neck of his guitar to
bend in her neck.

between
The passion intensifies as they squeeze the guitar
them.

hands.
Laz pulls his lips away and holds her head in his
They are so close, they are breathing into each other's
mouths.

RAE

You can't start this and not finish.
Not with me.
(kisses him)
Please...

arms.
against the
face up
it
The guitar clangs to the floor as Laz lifts Rae in his
They kiss, ravenous for each other. He knocks up
side table, causing his Bible to fall to the floor,
and open. The wind pushes the front door open, slamming
hard against the wall.

Rae in
his
pages,
They turn together, kissing, Laz slowly spinning with
his arms. But Laz is soon distracted by the pages of
Bible fluttering on the floor. The wind is blowing the
turning them with an unseen hand.

LAZARUS

Wait... I gotta stop...
(Rae's kisses get
more aggressive)
Rae stop...
(she can't hear, the
burning has her)
Dammit, Rae... GET OFF!

falls
It takes a considerable effort to pull Rae away. She

to the floor, dizzy and sucking in air.

LAZARUS

This ain't the way for me. I'm sorry.

Laz. Rae is struggling for breath. She desperately grabs at

RAE

Not gonna lie to you, Laz...

(labored breath)

This one's a doozy. I don't think...

I don't think I can stop this.

consciousness. Her eyes roll back briefly, almost losing Laz

catches her and holds her tightly.

LAZARUS

Tell me what to do.

RAE

(Barely able to speak)

The... chain helps.

Laz grips the chain and wraps it around Rae.

his As the burning increases. Laz holds Rae tight across

lap, his back up against the radiator.

RAE

I seen a man die. He couldn't breathe... his heart was... was givin' out.

LAZARUS

You just havin' a fit. You ain't goin' nowhere.

RAE

He told me... get help. I just stood there and watched him... I watched him die, Laz. Oh God! GODDAMMIT!

is Her legs itch like they are covered in ants. The wave hitting her hard. Laz holds her face up to him.

RAE

(like a little girl)

Oh, Laz... he hurt me. He... hurt me

so many times.

LAZARUS

No one's gonna hurt you no more.

RAE

You think God forgives people like that?

(crying like a child)

You think God forgives people like me?

Suddenly aware of the rising burn, Rae grits her teeth.

RAE

Hold me. Oh God...

bites
mouth.

Rae turns away as Laz holds her head in his lap. She
down on his middle finger as his hand moves over her

She is gasping, screaming into his hand.

It hits. Laz holds her.

shoulders

Rae's open mouth quivers as the sensation peaks. Her
slump, her chest vibrates. She is crying softly.

LAZARUS

We'll just stay here. Wait till it passes.

wind.

The pages of the Bible flip to the final pages in the

BLACK.

FADE TO

EXT. FISHERVILLE SQUARE - MORNING

Rae is

Laz's truck pulls into his usual spot on the square.
riding shotgun.

RAE

Where you gonna be?

LAZARUS

Right here. Be here all afternoon.
(waits)

You ready for this?

RAE

I'm gonna just get some girl stuff,
like make-up and... stuff.

Rae looks out the window, a touch of fear.

LAZARUS

This town ain't goin' nowhere. You
take the time you need.

Rae's
incredulous.
They both step out of the truck. Gene and Archie watch
ass as she walks by. They then look back at Laz,

LAZARUS

Friend of mine.

CUT TO:

INT. FISHERVILLE GROCERY - MORNING

tight. A
more
uncomfortable.
Rae enters the modest grocery store holding herself
few harmless shoppers look at her making her feel even

CUT TO:

EXT. FISHERVILLE SQUARE - AFTERNOON

unaware
a
small basket.
Laz is selling vegetables to a young woman. He is
that Angela has moved up behind him, grinning, carrying

ANGELA

I bet you have loyal customers.

LAZARUS

(turns and grins)
You liked what I brung ya?

ANGELA

Been eatin' like a princess all week.
Even got enough for us to take a

picnic under the gazebo.

LAZARUS

That'd be nice.

ANGELA

I put on the lotion you got me. Can you smell it?

Angela steps forward and pulls away her hair from her neck.

She cranes, offering her neck for Laz to smell.

LAZARUS

(smells)

That's nice, too.

CUT TO:

INT. FISHERVILLE GROCERY - AFTERNOON

Rae is looking at herself in the provided makeup counter mirror. She looks at the compact in her hand and decides against the purchase.

She rounds the corner and stops. She sees Sandy on her knees in the center of the aisle, building a display of tuna cans.

Rae thinks to leave, but stops. She makes a decision to talk to her. She walks up the aisle and stands above her mother.

RAE

Hey.

Rae kneels down next to her. She's trying to make a connection.

SANDY

What happened to your face?

RAE

Got in a little accident.

SANDY

(not believing her)

Yeah.

Sandy stands and wipes her brow.

RAE

Since you workin' on the square now,
maybe we could get some coffee in
the morning, if you want.

SANDY

You need money again?

RAE

No. That's not why...

(a frustrated breath)

Why we always gotta do this? I mean,
you and me been at each other as far
back as I can remember. Wasn't no
love between us. And I'm your
daughter. I'm the only family you
got.

SANDY

You never needed nobody. Always made
that clear to me.

RAE

Yeah. I know I did. But...

(struggles with tears)

I'm tryin' to be dif'rent. I'm tryin'
to... get some peace, you know?

SANDY

I'm workin' here, Rae. Can you see
that?

RAE

I just wanted some make-up.

SANDY

All that shit's on aisle 5.

Rae starts walking away. She quickly turns.

RAE

I just think you should'a kept him
off me, that's all.

SANDY

The hell are you talkin' about?

RAE

Now see? Don't do that. I'll go along with all you say about me. But that... you can't pretend no more on that. Cuz I was just a kid, Momma.

(a terrible silence)

I didn't know about any of that stuff he was doin' to me.

(tears well up)

And you let him do it. Some big nobody in your life... and you let him do as he wanted... with the only SOMEBODY you had.

telling
It is clear from Sandy's reserved anguish that Rae is the truth.

Rae
for a
Sandy firmly grips her by the arm and walks her out. winces in pain like a toddler being led off to a car good whipping.

RAE

I'm sorry... I didn't mean to shout...

SANDY

All my life I been puttin' out your fires, with you givin' out your snatch to every waggin' dick in this town. And you gonna lay the blame at my feet? Well, I ain't gonna take that.

RAE

But... Momma... just tell me... not gonna be mad... we can just talk about it... Be eye to eye on this... You don't even got to say you're sorry... Just say how you knew...

SANDY

Only thing I'm sorry for is listenin' to my parents and having you instead of doin' what I should'a done.

tuna.
Sandy walks back up the aisle returning to her canned

And then the rage hits Rae.

a
With each breath Rae grits her teeth tighter. She grabs

pricing

mop off the side aisle and turns around. Sandy is
cans, down on her knees. She doesn't see Rae coming.

RAE

...tell me you don't know... goddamn
LIAR!

display

screaming

Rae clocks her over the head, sending Sandy into the
of cans. Rae hits her again with the mop. She is
in short anguished breaths.

Bags

Rae grabs everything she can and dumps them onto Sandy:
of flour, cans, entire shelves of ketchup.

RAE

SAY IT! JUST FUCKING SAY IT!

Mark comes running to the aisle followed by two other
employees. Stunned customers watch in amazement.

MARK

Rae! Rae! What are you doin'?

RAE

(hysterically screaming
and thrashing the
mop)

**GET OFF ME! GET OFF ME! GET...
HIM...OFF!**

CUT TO:

EXT. FISHERVILLE SQUARE - AFTERNOON

gazebo.

Laz and Angela are seated next to each other under the

ANGELA

I's thinkin' about singing in the
choir.

LAZARUS

At church?

ANGELA

Mm-hm. I don't know if I got a good
voice or not but... practice is only

on Mondays and Wednesdays, so...

LAZARUS

(grinning)
You gonna sing me somethin'?

ANGELA

When? Now? Oh. No.

LAZARUS

Come on, just a little somethin'.
Right here. Go'on now, don't be shy.

close to
Angela blushes. She looks around and then leans in
Laz. She sings softly, sweetly, with all her soul.

ANGELA

(singing)
There is a balm in Gilead to make
the wounded whole.

doesn't
store.
Laz is falling in love. She is so beautiful to him, he
see the people running to the front of the grocery

ANGELA

(singing)
There is a balm in Gilead to save my
sick, sick soul.
(opens her eyes, speaks)
So. You think I should be in the
choir?

but
attention. His
smile fades.
Laz is grinning from ear to ear. He is about to speak
the commotion outside the grocery catches his

ANGELA

What? What is it?

Laz bolts toward the grocery as fast as he can.

INT. FISHERVILLE GROCERY - AFTERNOON

aisle.
Laz rushes past the gawking customers at the end of the
A few male workers, including Mark, stand at a distance
watching Rae weep on the floor.

Sandy is being helped up by a co-worker -- her head is bleeding.

dust,
Rae rocks back and forth, her face spotted with flour
the mop held tightly in her grip.

with
Mark tries to step closer but Rae cries out, thrashing
the mop handle. They retreat.

LAZARUS
RAE? GAL? YOU HEARIN' MY VOICE?

Rae lifts her eyes.

FLASH TO:

QUICK CUTS

clanking
she
The chain pulling around Rae's waist. The radiator
as it is pulled. Laz's hand holding her head to him as
cries.

FLASH

BACK TO:

INT. FISHERVILLE GROCERY - AFTERNOON

eyes to
Laz slowly crosses to Rae. She lifts her tear-soaked
him. He kneels next to her.

LAZARUS
I'll take you home now.

he
He lifts her up in his arms. She sobs into his chest as
carries her through the onlookers.

Angela is there. She looks confused and shocked.

ANGELA
This your cousin?

leaves
Laz can't lie anymore. His gaze falls to the floor. He
the store without saying anything to Angela.

EXT. FISHERVILLE SQUARE - AFTERNOON

Ronnie has parked Gill's truck on the square. He starts walking up to the grocery store.

into
shock

He sees Laz carrying Rae in his arms. She is sobbing his chest, blind to all around her. Ronnie freezes in as Laz approaches.

LAZARUS

Move, son.

(Ronnie is unable to
move)

Goddammit, kid, get outta my way!

the

Laz pushes Ronnie causing him to fall backwards on to pavement.

A

Ronnie watches Laz put Rae in his truck and drive away. A wave of nausea hits. He turns over and heaves.

CUT TO:

EXT. LAZARUS' HOME - SUNSET

The

The wooden chimes are deathly still above the porch. evening cicadas have begun their chorus.

INT. LAZARUS' HOME - THE BATHROOM - SUNSET

sits
washing

Rae is holding her knees to her chest in the tub. Laz next to her, dipping the sponge in the water, gently her back and shoulders.

wash
sponge

Laz moves her head back into the palm of his hand to her hair. She stares into his eyes as he squeezes the on her forehead.

RAE

You took care of your wife, like you do me?

LAZARUS

I tried.

CUT TO:

EXT. LAZARUS' HOME - NIGHT

is
Rae is wrapped in the quilt, laying on the couch. She
awake and motionless, helpless to her depression.

INT. LAZARUS' HOME - THE BEDROOM - NIGHT

mind.
Laz sits on the side of his bed. Something is on his

under
We CUT TO him on his stomach searching for something
his bed.

then
Another old guitar case comes out, followed by another,
another. Finally, Laz stands, an old maroon case in his
grip.

lid,
He opens the latches on the side and lifts the thin
revealing a gorgeous cream colored electric guitar.

INT. LAZARUS' HOME - NIGHT

entering
Rae has not fallen asleep yet. She turns to see Laz
the dark room with the maroon guitar case.

LAZARUS

You and me, we night owls. No use
fightin' this shit.

(tosses her a dress)

Get up.

CUT TO:

EXT. BOJO'S - NIGHT

parking
Laz's truck groans as it bounces into the crowded
lot of Bojo's.

slams
the door to his truck, guitar case in hand.
They begin walking inside. Rae's watch goes off. She
quickly turns it off. But a faint echo of the alarm can be
heard behind her. She stops and turns toward the truck. The
sound is gone.

LAZARUS

What is it?

RAE

Nothin'.

They go inside.

back
Ronnie's hand appears from under the blue tarp in the
of Laz's truck. He pulls himself out and looks around.

INT. BOJO'S - NIGHT

is
Laz and Rae stand like strangers by the door. The place
wall to wall -- people at the bar, people playing pool.
Bojo,
Laz sees the culprit of this show. R.L. is gabbing with
a beer in his hand.

LAZARUS

Get'chu at that table up yonder.

RAE

By myself?

LAZARUS

You can handle it.

marches
As Rae makes her way through the crowd of people, Laz
over to R.L.

LAZARUS

The hell is this shit?

R. L.

What? I called Bojo, like you say.

Called up the fellas in the band...

LAZARUS

The fuck are all these people doin' here? Been drinkin' in this shit hole for years ain't seen this many people since I don't know...

BOJO

Shit hole... Hey kiss my ass, Laz.

LAZARUS

Nigga, you go'on kiss my ass. Ya both called everybody, didn't ya?

Bojo turns away to another customer. R.L. grins as he removes a flask. He offers it to Laz. Laz snaps it away.

LAZARUS

There you go, preacher man. Get me drunk so I don't stick my foot up yo ass.

R.L.

I just know how you get. Good to know, them butterflies still in ya gut.

Laz and R.L. look over at Rae seated alone at a small table near the stage.

R.L.

Heard about this morning.

LAZARUS

We ain't here to talk about that shit.

Laz surprises R.L. by walking away and up onto the stage.

Rae watches as Laz, shakes hands with some of the band members. A few whistles from the crowd.

Laz sits down at a chair off to the right of a short mic stand.

He plugs in.

of

Rae watches curiously as Laz tunes his guitar -- moans electric distortion.

R.L. sits next to her.

R.L.

You in for it, now. He gonna nail it to the wall tonight. I done pissed him off.

entire
the

The drummer kicks in. Laz tears into the strings. The place begins to undulate and bounce as Laz returns to blues.

LAZARUS

(singing)

I don't know, but I been around,
tell me them women shake 'em on down.

like
might
safety

Cheers. Rae watches in awe. She's never seen anything like it. She is surrounded by couples dancing so close they as well be naked. But there is also a great sense of safety as Laz controls the room with his music.

LAZARUS

(singing)

Yes, I'm goin' Georgia line.
See if them women sweet like mine.

HERSHEL, a black man in his 30's, asks Rae to dance.

HERSHEL

You wanna cut it up, baby?

RAE

(shrugging)

Well...

man's
seated

Rae looks up at Laz. Laz smiles and nods. Rae takes the man's hand and moves out onto the dance floor. R.L. can't be seated anymore. He stands and stomps his foot.

R.L.

(shouting at Laz)

Yeah, you know you home, old man.
You just walked through the door.

LAZARUS

(singing)

I don't know, but I been told, them
Georgia women sweet jelly roll.

Her
the
Rae allows Laz's voice and guitar to take hold of her.
face gets wet with sweat as she moves, making love to
current in the air.

control.
Men are dancing all around her, but now she is in
She turns to a young man and shakes, then an old man.
She is free, herself, and above all, safe.

behind
watches
Laz smiles, unaware of Ronnie watching from the window
him. There is rage and confusion in his face as he
Rae surrounded by dancing limbs.

CUT TO:

EXT. LAZARUS' HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT

tall
Both Laz and Rae are drinking water from the sink in
glasses like they've been stranded in a desert.

RAE

Are you drunk?

(Laz shrugs)

Keep drinkin' water and you won't
get a headache in the mornin'.

LAZARUS

Yeah, gal I been here before.

RAE

(smiling)

I guess you have.

INT. LAZARUS' HOME - THE BEDROOM - NIGHT

the
Laz is taking off his shoes, getting ready to crash for

off his

night. He sits down on the side of his bed and takes shirt, leaving his T-shirt on.

Rae is standing in his doorway.

RAE

Laz? Can I sleep with you tonight?

LAZARUS

Don't think that'd be wise.

RAE

I didn't mean it nothin' dirty.

LAZARUS

I know you didn't. But you a grown girl. You can handle it. I got to.

the

Rae understands. She crosses to Laz and kisses him on cheek.

room.

Rae then walks down the hall to her couch in the front

Laz turns off the light.

CUT TO

BLACK:

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

her.

Rae enters the dark bathroom and shuts the door behind

blond.

Her hair is shorter, a shaggy bob, bleached platinum

Rae

ARTY, always behind the door, attempts to enter, but

pushes the door closed and locks it.

ARTY

Baby, where you goin'?

RAE

I'm gonna pee. I gotta take a break and go pee.

ARTY

Now, this isn't fair. You said I could do it, too.

RAE

Eat shit and die, Arty. A girl can
change her fuckin' mind.

Ronnie

Rae finds the light switch. She yelps upon seeing
crouched by the tub.

to

Suddenly feeling violated Rae yanks down on her shirt
hide the fact that she's not wearing anything else.

RAE

Hey.

RONNIE

Hey.

RAE

You don't gotta get up but... I gotta
go...

already

the

coming

Ronnie attempts to get up but it's too late, Rae has
squatted on the commode, pinning Ronnie between her and
bathtub.

Rae is breathing heavy, her focus is scattered. She's
up or coming down from a big burn.

RAE

(waiting for pee)
I think if I just piss... I'll be
okay.

RONNIE

You feelin' sick?

RAE

I'm just in one of my moods. You
know how I get.

RONNIE

Yeah, I know.

moment

Ronnie tries to look away, trying to make an awkward
less awkward. Rae's anxiety is hitting her.

RAE

I think it'd be better if you talk to me.

RONNIE

Yeah?

RAE

Just about anything, you know. It can be funny or... not. Just tell me somethin'.

his Ronnie nervously considers this before agreeing to open mouth. He points into the tub.

RONNIE

Well. That's my vomit. I came in here to get sick. I thought I'd make the toilet but... anyway, I got sick.

RAE

Are you wasted?

RONNIE

No. I just got a messed up stomach.

RAE

(remembering)
Holy shit!

RONNIE

What?

RAE

Holy shit, Ronnie!
(smacks him on the arm)
You're a fuckin' rock star.

RONNIE

I'm a what?

RAE

All them people shoutin' your name like they were doing tonight! Shit! That arm you got'll get'chu on a box of cereal...

painful. Ronnie leans over and dry heaves into the tub. It is
Rae leans forward and touches his back, comforting him.

RAE

Hey? You okay, Ronnie?

Ronnie falls back, gripping his stomach, there are tears in his eyes from the dry heaving. Suddenly emotion hits him.

RONNIE

(through tears and clenched teeth)

Box of cereal... well, Goddamn...

(looks at his trembling fists)

Everybody keeps sayin' things to me take make me feel great. But I don't feel great at all. I feel like I'm comin' outta my skin. Like I'm losin' control of my mind.

(looks into Rae's eyes)

I'm not like this. I'm not usually so... afraid.

(really starts crying)

I don't know what's... wrong...

Rae pulls Ronnie to her. He cries into her shoulder. She gently rubs his wet face and sings her words of comfort.

RAE

Is'okay... Is'okay...

Ronnie begins to calm down. The sobbing abates. The metal music from the party outside is muffled through the door. The two hold onto each other in silence. Rae pees. They both giggle, a welcome release of tension.

RAE

I feel better. Do you?

RONNIE

Yeah, I do.

EXT. LAZARUS' BARN - NIGHT

has
Ronnie lifts his head from sleep - his memory of Rae
vanished.

in his
He is leaning against the corner of the barn, his .45
house.
grip. His gaze slowly turns toward Laz's darkened

His hand begins to shake.

BLACK. **FADE TO**

EXT. LAZARUS' HOME - EARLY MORNING

A crow squawks in the rows of corn. A bright morning is coming.

INT. LAZARUS' HOME - THE BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING

playing,
Laz is still asleep. The sound of clumsy guitar
accompanied by a tiny voice, can be heard.

RAE

(plucking, trying to
find the right note)
You... are my... sunshine.

Laz opens his eyes.

INT. LAZARUS' HOME - EARLY MORNING

struggle
Laz quietly creeps into the doorway to watch Rae
with the guitar playing. He could stay there for hours
watching this little girl play his guitar.

Rae looks up and sees Laz. She stops playing.

RAE

Sorry.

LAZARUS

Looks like you know a song.

RAE

Don't know where I learn't it, but...
it's there in my head.

Laz sits next to her and takes the guitar from her.

LAZARUS

(playing a tune)
How you feelin' today?

RAE

You know how you feel when you come
out of a bad hangover? Like your
eyes can open a little bit more.

LAZARUS

I know that.

RAE

Woke up real early. Sun was shining.
Just thought I'd mess around, try to
learn a song.

LAZARUS

Go'on and sing it, I'll play.

RAE

No, you do it. I can't sing.

LAZARUS

Stop that foolishness. Just do as I
say and close your eyes.

(Rae closes her eyes)

Close your eyes. And think about...
well, for a song like this, I'd say
you think about what you love.

RAE

What I love.

LAZARUS

Get a good picture in your mind.

Rae's playful smile turns serious. Laz continues
playing.

LAZARUS

Think on that. And sing wit me.

(Laz comes in singing)

You are my sunshine. My only sunshine.

RAE & LAZARUS

You make me happy when skies are
gray.
You'll never know dear, how much I
love you.
Please don't take my sunshine away.

continues
Rae opens her eyes with a delightful giggle. Laz
playing.

LAZARUS

Good. I know another. It go like
this.

(sings)

Last night dear, as I lay sleeping.
I dreamed I held you in my arms.
When I awoke dear, I was mistaken.
So I hung my head and I cried.

(to Rae)

Close your eyes Rae... sing it.

Laz
kitchen
Rae doesn't hesitate to obey. With her eyes closed and
playing, neither can see Ronnie creeping up from the
with his gun.

RAE

(singing)

You are my sunshine. My only sunshine.
You make me happy when skies are
gray.

the
Ronnie looks sick with pain as he points the barrel at
back of Laz's head.

RAE

(singing)

You'll never know dear, how much I
love you.
Please don't take your sunshine away.
(opens her eyes)

RONNIE!

gun
Laz spins around knocking away Ronnie's arm. BAM! The
fires into the wall. The guitar cracks on the floor.
Rae screams.

RAE

RONNIE STOP! RONNIE!

around
Laz lunges at Ronnie but Ronnie is faster. He spins Laz

face. and slams him to the floor, pushing his gun into Laz's

RAE

NO!

rage. Ronnie looks up at Rae, his eyes red with sorrow and
He pushes the gun to the side of Laz's head. Rae cries.

RONNIE

Ain't been a week and you already
some nigger's whore? Gill told me.
Told me how you and he... you and
everybody...

RAE

Ronnie. Please, baby...

RONNIE

(to Laz)

Did 'ya have fun with her? Sweet as
a peach, I bet. Huh? Huh?

Laz glares back, not saying a word.

RONNIE

Goddamn it, I ask you a question,
you better answer it, or I'm gonna
blast a hole in ya!

RAE

Ronnie...

screams. Rae moves closer. Ronnie points his gun at her and

RONNIE

YOU SHUT UP!

LAZARUS

Careful how you point that gun, boy.

RONNIE

(points gun back at
Laz)

Or what? OR WHAT?

LAZARUS

Boy? You here to make a point, or
you here to kill somebody?

RONNIE

Ain't gonna be callin' me boy when I
blow your face off.

LAZARUS

You sayin' you'll do what?

RONNIE

You heard me, mother-fucker. I'll
fuckin' kill..

LAZARUS

(cutting him off)

BOY! You so green you couldn't stomp
a baby duck.

because Ronnie can't believe what was just said -- mostly,
it's true. The gun begins to shake in his hand.

RONNIE

You testing me? Huh? You testin' me,
old man?

LAZARUS

Test. Shit. What kind'a test you
thinkin'? You mean like, if you a
man or not? If you a killer? Only
one way to prove that. You just look
me in the eye, boy, and you squeeze
that trigger back.

rise Ronnie grips the shaking gun. A severe attack is on the
as he listens to Laz.

LAZARUS

Ain't that easy, is it? I been in
some scraps, son, I know. First
there's that loud crack. Always louder
than you think. Like it just come-up-
a-cloud and clapped a mess thunder
right in ya hand. BAM!

Ronnie flinches. He tries to control his breathing.

LAZARUS

White light. Smell of smoke. Taste
of my blood and brains in your mouth,
stingin' ya eyes.

Ronnie almost vomits, but he holds it back.

RAE

Oh, baby... just let me...

stops
her
Rae moves closer to him, wanting to comfort him but she
as Ronnie points the gun at her. His eyes pleading for
to stay back.

RONNIE

GODDAMMIT, RAE!

LAZARUS

**BOY! YOU KEEP THAT GUN POINTED AT
ME!**

(Ronnie obeys)

You need to kill a man, all you gotta
have is a good reason.

(watches Ronnie fight
his attack)

You know she been here with me, don't
cha? Been all over town, givin' up
that switch you thought was your
own.

RONNIE

SHUT UP! SHUT UP!

LAZARUS

Put all your love and dreams into
one woman... she turn around and
give it all to another man. That's a
good reason to paint the wall with
me, kid. She'd fear ya then. Cuz
there won't be no more question in
her mind. She with a real man now. A
real KILLER!

gun
A flood of tears are streaming down Ronnie's face. The
is shaking furiously in his hand.

RONNIE

Don't... don't say that to me...

LAZARUS

(getting fed up)

Son, I'm grown. Don't got patience
to suffer you children and this monkey
junk. I'm too old to play house...

(looks at Rae and

then back at Ronnie)
...and cowboys. So let's have it.
End me or get out of my face!

asthma
Ronnie looks like a scared five year old having an
attack. Laz barks at him one last time.

LAZARUS

Go'on. Do it.
(silence)

DO IT!

is
The last shout from Laz completely destroys Ronnie. His
shoulders slump. The gun lowers in his grasp. A low sob
heard as he falls to his knees.

Laz snatches the gun from his hand and stands.

RAE

Ronnie?

weeps. She
face to
Rae inches closer to Ronnie as he kneels over and
gently touches his shoulder. He turns his anguished
her and tries to speak.

RONNIE

I can't stop... I can't stop... being
scared. What am I gonna do...

around
Ronnie hides his face in his hands. Rae throws her arms
him and holds him tight.

RAE

I got you, baby... I got you...

slams
wall
Laz removes the clip and crosses to the kitchen. He
the gun on the sink, opens a drawer and removes the
phone.

RAE

(seeing Laz plug the
phone in)
What are you doing?
(Laz dials a number)
You gonna call the cops? You think

they gonna help this? They ever help
you, Laz? Huh?

(Laz listens on the
phone)

DAMMIT LAZ PUT THE PHONE DOWN?

Laz looks at Rae. There is hurt in his eyes.

LAZARUS

Thought you knew me better, gal.

(into the phone)

I need you at my house... right now.

CUT TO:

INT. LAZARUS' HOME - NIGHT

R.L. crosses from the kitchen. He hands a glass of
water to
seated
the
Rae seated on the couch. He hands another to Ronnie
next to her. R.L. sits before them as Laz lingers in
doorway.

R.L.

(to Ronnie)

I imagine there's a lot of good
between you two. But I want you to
tell me what's bad. Go'on. And don't
hold back.

Ronnie is very uncomfortable. He looks at Rae seated
next to
him and then back at R.L..

RONNIE

I hate this town. You can't round
the corner without bumping into
someone who's got your number.

(a brief look at Rae)

We did a lot of dreamin', me and
Rae. Makin' plans to get out. I'd do
my tour and... we'd move outta here.
Go to Chattanooga. And I'd work for
my uncle.

(looks down, tears

come to Ronnie)

But... when Rae gets like she does.
And she does the things that she
always done. Makes me feel like she

loves this place more'n me.

Rae starts shaking her head, tears come to her eyes.

R.L.

raises a hand to silence her.

R.L.

Go on, Ronnie.

RONNIE

All my life people called me shit like, sissy and... nervous and... I got few things in my life that make me feel like... like...

LAZARUS

Like a man.

RONNIE

(surprised)

Yes. I mean that's it. I wanna feel like a man with her. I wanna feel like the only man with her.

Ronnie wipes the tears from his eyes with his shirt sleeve.

R.L. turns to Rae.

R.L.

(looks at Rae)

Now, Rae, we're not here to fix you or judge you. Only you and the Almighty can do that. But I want you to tell me about these spells you get.

Rae takes a deep breath. She looks up at Laz. He encourages her with a nod.

RAE

It starts like this... fire... that spreads. Starts in my head. Then moves to my stomach. Then it goes lower. I can stop it sometimes but mostly I just jump on and ride it out... then everything'll go back to normal, you know. Only thing ever took that feeling away was... was... when I met Ronnie.

(the emotion really hits hard)

Cuz I love him so much. He's all I got in my life that's special. And I like taking care of him and helping him when he gets nervous. When I can do that for him... it's like I'm givin' somethin' of myself that I haven't givin' nobody else.

R.L.

Rae, look at Ronnie. And tell him how you feel.

away
Rae turns to Ronnie. Her nose is running as she wipes her tears.

RAE

I think... I think we're fucked up. Both of us. I know I am. But... that don't mean what I feel ain't true. It don't mean I can't love. And I know, how I been is... is... REALLY BAD! So if you want to quit on me... I understand. But please... please... don't.

and
Ronnie is very moved by Rae's plea. He touches her face wipes away a tear.

R.L.

So. What'chu two gonna do about this?

CUT TO:

EXT. ANGELA'S HOME - DAY

is
The door opens. Angela looks surprised to see Laz. She dressed in jeans, a T-shirt, wearing rubber gloves from cleaning.

ANGELA

Hey.

LAZARUS

Hey. You wasn't at'cha work but that nosey gal up at the counter give me your home address. Hope you don't mind me comin' over.

ANGELA

What do you need?

LAZARUS

I need ya help again.

Angela notices Rae and Ronnie seated in Laz's truck.

ANGELA

More cough syrup?

LAZARUS

Can I come in?

Angela takes a breath and opens the door wider.

INT. ANGELA'S HOME - DAY

It is a small house, but tidy. Angela motions for Laz
to sit.

LAZARUS

I lied to you. It was wrong. But at
the time... I didn't know what to
do. Imagine you got an earful from
folks about that gal I's carryin'...

ANGELA

Laz... you don't need to explain
yourself to me...

LAZARUS

Yes, I do. Cuz I feel for you. Mean
to say...

(long pause)

I got feelings for you. And I didn't
want you to think... I didn't...

(how to say?)

I don't want you to go away. There's
better ways to say what I'm trying
to say, but... they it is. Don't go
away.

Angela thinks on this. She rises out of her seat and
crosses to Laz, sitting next to him on the love seat.

ANGELA

Laz. I'm gonna put my trust in you.
I'm gonna do it knowin' all too well
I can get hurt like this. And I have

been hurt. Just like you.

(beat)

Woman like me, I got a lot of livin'
to do. But my days are precious to
me. They all I got left. Don't want
no more fuss. I want love in my life.
You understanding me, Laz?

LAZARUS

I do. God's truth. I do.

They stay locked in each others' sight.

Then, the slowest, most gentle kiss happens between
them.

When they separate, Laz is lost in her eyes.

ANGELA

Now what'chu need me to do? Cuz I'm
gonna go do it.

CUT TO:

INT. POOL HALL - MORNING

Laz enters the pool hall and spots Tehronne. Tehronne
motions
him back. Next to Tehronne is an old black man named
PINETOP.

TEHRONNE

Yo, this here Pinetop. I think he
got what you lookin' for.

Pinetop grins and produces a black velvet cloth. He
opens it
gently and spreads it out, revealing a long, thin, gold
chain.

Laz nods, approvingly.

LAZARUS

That'll do.

EXT. POOL HALL - BACK DOOR - MORNING

Tehronne leads Laz down the back steps.
They both round the corner, revealing an old Chevy
Caprice.

however
that

It is light brown except for one door that is gray,
the chrome rims on the car are impressive -- worth more
the entire car by a long shot.

TEHRONNE

It got some miles on it, but my boys
say she run good. Got fresh 22's on
her. Ain't my doin'. That's just how
it came to me. Don't worry. Nobody
gonna come lookin' for it. I got the
pinks... got no problem.

(hands Laz the keys)

Ain't gonna have my girl ridin' no
bus.

LAZARUS

(moved, impressed)

Don't see generosity much these days.
Everything always got a catch. Guess
I'm tryin' to say... thank you.

TEHRONNE

Nobody ever asks me to do shit like
this for people. And you know what?
I'm good at it. Naw what I mean?

alone.
Tehronne walks back into the pool hall, leaving Laz

CUT TO:

INT. ELLA MAE'S WOMEN'S CLOTHING - DAY

hurries
in
Rhonda has three white dresses over her arm as she
past Ronnie, seated next to the back dressing rooms.
The door doesn't close all the way. He stands and moves
for a peek. Angela pokes her head out and grins.

ANGELA

What are you doing?

RONNIE

(shrugs)

Just wanted to see.

ANGELA

You know the rules.
(vacant look from
Ronnie)
You do know the rules, don't you?

RONNIE

Yeah, I know.

ANGELA

Then start taking them seriously.

RONNIE

Yes, ma'am.

INT. ELLA MAE'S WOMEN'S CLOTHING - DRESSING ROOM - DAY

Rae is standing in bra and panties up on a small
platform in
dresses
front of a tri-divided mirror. Ella Mae takes the
from Rhonda.

Angela sees that Rae is nervous.

ANGELA

It's okay to breathe, honey.

RAE

Yes, ma'am.

CUT TO:

EXT. RONNIE'S TRAILER - LATE DAY

Ronnie is wearing a brown corduroy jacket. He is
attempting
to tie his neck tie in the side mirror of Laz's truck.
Lincoln, also wearing his Sunday best, steps up behind
him.

LINCOLN

You Ronnie?

RONNIE

Yeah.

LINCOLN

I'm Lincoln. Guess I'm gonna be your
best man.

RONNIE

(ultimately accepting)
Okay.

LINCOLN

You havin' trouble with that tie?
Cuz I'm pretty good at it.

Ronnie nods. Lincoln steps behind him to tie the tie.

LINCOLN

Gotta do it like this or I get all
turned around.

INT. RONNIE'S TRAILER - LATE DAY

Rose.
bedroom
Laz is wearing the same suit he wore at the cafe with
He is seated in Ronnie's trailer, outside the back
door.

Angela steps out from the bedroom with a grin.

ANGELA

She's ready for you.

INT. RONNIE'S TRAILER - BACK BEDROOM - LATE DAY

doorjam. He
Laz opens the door, carefully looking around the
sees her standing before the dresser mirror. She looks
beautiful, simple, and elegant.

Rae desperately searches Laz's eyes for approval.

LAZARUS

Now that's sharp. That's real sharp.
Miss Ella Mae set you up, didn't
she? You like it?

RAE

I've had nice things before but I
always ruined 'em somehow.

LAZARUS

Well, this one's yours now. You ready
to take care of it?

Rae bows her head. She fights back tears.

RAE

I want to. More'n anything. But I...

Laz holds her face in his hands. He speaks softly.

LAZARUS

Now... let's stop that.

(smiles)

You and me... we can handle this.
You hear me, gal? We gonna be just
fine. Now live ya life. Pull your
shit together and live your life.

His words are piercing and true. Rae nods, decides.

RAE

Okay.

and R.L.'s words are heard as Rae wraps her arms around Laz
rests her head on his chest.

RAE

I don't want you to let go.

LAZARUS

Maybe I won't.

R.L. (V.O.)

When I was a child, I talked like a
child. I thought like a child, I
reasoned like a child.

CUT TO:

EXT. RONNIE'S TRAILER - LATE DAY

standing Ronnie turns toward the trailer. He is in his suit,
to the in his front yard -- Lincoln at his side. R.L. stands
side with a Bible in his hands.

R.L. (V.O.)

When I became a man, I put childish
ways behind me.

Rae Ronnie is amazed with what he sees. Laz leads beautiful
down the steps as Angela tends to her side.

R.L. (V.O.)

Now we see but a poor reflection as
in the mirror; then we shall see
face to face. I know in part; then I
shall know fully, even as I am fully
known.

the
Rae holds firm to Laz's arm as they come together on
green grass to witness and perform this union.

R.L. (V.O.)

And now these three remain: faith,
hope and love. But the greatest of
these is love.

(Looks to Laz)

Who gives this girl in marriage?

LAZARUS

I do.

Lazarus takes a few steps with Rae, offering her arm to
Ronnie. Ronnie and Laz stay locked in each other's
gaze.

LAZARUS

You got her now?

Laz stands next to Angela as Ronnie and Rae face R.L.
together.

R.L.

Ronnie. Rae. I want you to look at
each other and listen to me carefully.
Do you understand?

RAE & RONNIE

Yes. Yes, sir.

They both obey -- each with a serious expression.

R.L.

I require and charge you both as you
stand in the presence of God to
remember that love and loyalty alone
will avail as a foundation of a happy
and enduring home.

(to Lincoln)

Go on, hand it to him.

Lincoln steps toward Ronnie and holds up the black
velvet.

around
Ronnie takes the gold chain and carefully wraps it
Rae's waist.

R.L.

No human ties are more tender. No
vows more sacred than those you now
assume.

Laz looks on -- a conflicted emotion of joy and loss.

R.L.

If these solemn vows be kept
inviolate, the home which you are
establishing will abide in peace and
your life will be filled with joy.

Angela reaches over and takes Laz's hand in hers.

CUT TO:

EXT. FREEWAY / INT. RONNIE & RAE'S NEW CAR - DAY

silently
Ronnie is at the wheel of the Chevy Caprice. Rae sits
next to him.

on
Rae looks out the window as a huge 18 wheeler rolls up
her side. She tries to ignore it and the tension it
brings.

is
She turns to see that Ronnie is sweating. Another truck
on his side sandwiching them in. An attack is coming
over
Ronnie.

over
His breath is short. His chest tightens. Rae reaches
and gently strokes the back of his neck.

RONNIE

I gotta pull over.

to the
side of
the road.
He breaks. The two trucks zoom ahead as Ronnie breaks
side. Dust flies as the Chevy skids to a stop on the
the road.

control

Trucks zip by shaking the car, as Ronnie tries to get of his breathing.

as he

Rae tries to stay calm, stroking the back of his neck struggles for breath. He puts his forehead against the wheel to stave off the building nausea.

wheel

RONNIE

(through clenched teeth)

FUCK!

finger

Fear comes to Rae's face as she notices her middle scratching at the back of Ronnie's neck. She pulls it away and shoves her hand between her thighs.

away

gold

Her eyes close as the burning builds. She grips the chain around her waist.

FLASH TO

QUICK CUTS

panting

The chain, tight around Rae as she struggles. Rae and sweating on Laz's floor. She reaches out. Her hand lands on the strings of his guitar. A single string is plucked.

lands

plucked.

FLASH

BACK TO:

EXT. FREEWAY/ INT. RONNIE & RAE'S NEW CAR - DAY

her

Rae opens her eyes -- the low note still sounding in her head. She places her hand back on his neck. And then, as a prayer:

soft

RAE

(singing)

You are my sunshine. My only sunshine.
You make me happy, when times are

gray.

resting
starts
Ronnie slowly turns and looks at Rae, his head still
on the steering wheel. The panting has slowed. Color
returning to his cheeks.

RAE

(singing)

You'll never know dear, how much I
love you.

Please don't take, my sunshine away.

Rae,
The anxiety is gone. Ronnie takes a breath and looks at
humbled and thankful of her power to soothe him.

RAE

See. We're okay.

Rae is smiling.

CUT TO

BLACK:

THE END