



LOVECRAFT COUNTRY



AMERICA'S
DEMONS
EXPOSED!

EPISODE #101
"SUNDOWN"

WRITTEN BY
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BASED ON THE NOVEL BY
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DIRECTED BY
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PRODUCTION DRAFT

FULL WHITE	06/25/18
REVISED WHITE	06/27/18
BLUE REVISION	07/19/18
PINK REVISION	08/04/18
YELLOW REVISION	04/10/19
GREEN REVISION	06/04/19
GOLDENROD REVISION	09/16/19
SALMON REVISION	10/18/19

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October 18, 2019

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SCRIPT REVISION HISTORY

<u>REVISION</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>REVISED PAGES</u>
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SALMON Revision	10/18/19	pp. 1, 1A and 1B

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CAST LIST

LETI LEWIS

ATTICUS FREEMAN

RUBY BAPTISTE

GEORGE FREEMAN

HIPPOLYTA FREEMAN

CHRISTINA BRAITHWHITE

DIANA “DEE” FREEMAN

MEEH JI-AH

SAMMY

TREE

DORA FREEMAN

MAYBELLE CROSS

BUS DRIVER

MISTER LADS

MARVIN BAPTISTE

COUNTER BOY - SIMMONSVILE

PORKPIE HAT CUSTOMER

SUSPENDERS FIREMAN

SHERIFF EUNICE HUNT

DEPUTY EASTCHURCH

DEPUTY DALTON

DEPUTY JIMMY

DEPUTY TALBOT

MONTROSE FREEMAN

MECHANIC

#42

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SET LIST

INTERIORS

Safe Negro Travel
Office
Apartment Above Safe Negro Travel
Bedroom
Living Room
Denmark Vesey's
Montrose's Apartment
Bedroom
Simmons ville Dinette
Marvin's House
Bedroom
Kitchen
Cabin in the Woods

EXTERIORS

Southside Chicago
Block Party
Denmark Vesey's
Alley Behind
Montrose's Apartment
Safe Negro Travel
*(Korean Mountainside - OMIT)
Highway out of Chicago
Indiana Countryside
Road
19 Cent Hamburger Hangout
City Street
Highway
Gas Station
Side of the Highway
Side of the Road
Bus Stop
Simmons ville
Fire Station
Country Road
Another Country Road
Marvin's House
Back Portch
Woods on the Edge of Devon County
Another part of the Woods
Road along the edge of the Woods
Gorge before the Cabin
Cabin in the Woods
Ardham Village
Ardham Lodge
*Korean Trench

VEHICLES

Silver Daimler
Woody the Packard
Bus
Sheriff's Patrol Car

The epic TITLE MUSIC from "**THE JACKIE ROBINSON STORY**" (1950) brings us into...

A1 **EXT. TRENCH - KOREA - NIGHT** A1 *

...CHAOS. AMERICAN TROOPS fight KOREAN GUERRILLAS in a muddy trench as EXPLODING MOTORS rain debris. The VOICE OVER from "The Jackie Robinson Story" breaks through -- *

"This is a story about a boy and his dream..."

ATTICUS FREEMAN (MID 20'S) fights for his life against a KOREAN SOLDIER. SCARED OUT OF HIS MIND. But he still manages to kill the soldier. He pauses to catch his breath. Covered in BLOOD and MUD. *

"But more than that, it is a story of an American boy and a dream that is truly American..."

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! FIGHTER JETS soar overhead dropping BOMBS. Atticus scrambles over the entrenchment to find himself in the middle of the D-Day version of the KOREAN WAR mashed up with LOVECRAFTIAN MONSTERS. *

"The year is 1928. The time spring. If you were a young man, your thoughts were undoubtedly turning to love..."

Atticus marvels at the carnage around him as a FLYING SAUCER approaches, and -- a HALF-NAKED KOREAN-ALIEN HYBRID (MEEH JI-AH) beams down, floating through the melee towards him. *

He's TRANSFIXED. Doesn't notice the LOVECRAFTIAN TENTACLED MONSTROSITY rising behind him.

Ji-ah wraps her arms around Atticus. Whispers in his ear in the LANGUAGE OF ADAM. We're not familiar with it yet, but in time we certainly will be --

JI-AH

Die.

"But if you were a young boy, your thoughts were of one thing..."

Atticus turns now. Eyes WIDENING as he takes in the Lovecraftian Monstrosity posed to strike --

"...Baseball."

SLOOSH! A BASEBALL BAT slices down the middle of the monster. Wielded by #42 himself -- JACKIE MOTHERFUCKIN' ROBINSON! He sends Atticus a megawatt smile -- *

#42

I got ya kid. *

The Lovecraftian Monstrosity starts to REFORM as Atticus
takes in his American hero with awe, and -- Jackie *
Motherfuckin' Robinson releases another home run swing! BA-- *

1 **OMITTED** 1

2 **INT. BUS ON A - BRIDGE NAMED AFTER A DEAD SLAVE OWNER - DAY** 2

--AM! Atticus WAKES as the bus rumbles across a bridge. He quickly grabs the open copy of **A PRINCESS OF MARS by EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS** on his lap, along with his GLASSES sitting on top of it before both slide off.

He blinks the nightmare away as **THE CREW CUTS "SH BOOM"** leaks from the radio -- "*Oh, life could be a dream...*"

A CHYRON tells us it's: **1955**

Which is why Atticus, one of two BLACK faces in a sea of WHITE, sits in the back of the bus under a "THIS PART OF THE BUS FOR THE COLORED RACE" sign.

Across the aisle MAYBELLE CROSS (60's) hums as she knits. She notices Atticus's eyes drift out the window --

MAYBELLE
Just passed over another bridge named after some dead slave owner. Finally made it to the promised land. Hallelujah. Amen.

ATTICUS
Good riddance to old Jim Crow...

He FLIPS OFF the confederate states receding in the rear view. She LAUGHS, entertained by this vibrant young man --

POP! A PLUM OF SMOKE erupts from the front of the bus...

3 **EXT. INDIANA COUNTRYSIDE - DAY** 3

The SCORCHING SUN beats down on the BUS DRIVER fretting over the SMOKING ENGINE with a group of concerned BUS RIDERS.

Atticus steps off the bus. Looks up and down the two lane road. DESOLATE. There's one TREE across the way. Just a slither of SHADE. He makes his way over. Sits. Puts on his GLASSES. Opens A PRINCESS OF MARS.

There's a WORN ENVELOPE wedged between the pages. Atticus stares at it. Meaningful. Strained. It's obviously more than just a bookmark. He finally removes it, and -- READS.

TIME MORPHS around Atticus as he loses himself in Edgar Rice Burroughs's words --

- 1) More frustrated BUS RIDERS have abandoned the bus. They fan themselves as they chat with each other. But not with Atticus. He's content to continue reading undisturbed...
- 2) A CAR slows as it comes across the stranded bus. The BUS DRIVER discusses with the DRIVER. Climbs in a moment later. The car pulls away. Atticus just continues reading...
- 3) The sun beams down. Bus Riders drenched in sweat cut looks at Atticus occupying the only shade. There's room to join him. They don't. And still, he continues reading...
- 4) A FLATBED FARMING TRUCK rolls up. The Bus Driver wears a TRIUMPHANT smile as he climbs from the cab with the DRIVER (LADS). Atticus is finally drawn from his book but does not share the FRUSTRATED RELIEF that rolls through the heat stroked Bus Riders as he eyes Lads...

4

EXT. INDIANA COUNTRYSIDE - MOMENTS LATER

4

Atticus is the last to pull his ARMY ISSUED DUFFEL from the bus's luggage compartment. He helps Maybelle struggling to drag her heavy SUITCASES to the flatbed --

ATTICUS
Let me get those for you.

MAYBELLE
Appreciate it...

ATTICUS
Atticus.

MAYBELLE
Maybelle Cross. You from Florida?

ATTICUS
No, ma'am. Just been working in a garage down in Jacksonville since I got out of the service.

Atticus slides one of Maybelle's suitcases onto the back of the flatbed. Ignoring the WHITE RIDER who slides further over at the prospect of being next to them.

MAYBELLE
You see any action?

ATTICUS
Two tours --

BUS DRIVER (O.S.)
Hold up just a second...

Atticus turns. Looking right past the flustered Bus Driver
to Lads watching them with crossed arms and a SNEER --

ATTICUS
Is there a problem?

BUS DRIVER

There is. Um...He's refusing you
and your mother a ride.

ATTICUS

She's not my...

Atticus glances to Maybelle. Decides on a different tactic.
Steers the Bus Driver away for a private moment --

ATTICUS (CONT'D)

You said it's six miles to the next
station, right? I'll walk, that's
fine. But there's no way she'll be
able to make that.

BUS DRIVER

Look, I'm real sorry --

ATTICUS

There's no need to be sorry. Now
you convinced him to drive out here
to help everyone, I know you can
convince him to let one more old
lady on that truck. Please...

BUS DRIVER

I'll try.

Bus Driver retreats to Lads. They exchange HEATED WHISPERS
as Maybelle does some whispering of her own with Atticus --

MAYBELLE

I ain't that old.

ATTICUS

I know, just playing to the crowd.

The Bus Driver looks to Atticus. Shrugs apologetically.
But Atticus isn't giving up. He approaches Lads --

ATTICUS (CONT'D)

How much?

MISTER LADS

What you say to me, boy?

Atticus's jaw tightens. But he keeps himself in check --

ATTICUS

How much to get her on this truck?

MISTER LADS

Fifty dollars.

ATTICUS

Fifty? Bus tickets from Florida
didn't cost that much --

Atticus catches himself. Swallows his exasperation. Checks
his WALLET. He turns to Maybelle. Lowers his voice --

ATTICUS (CONT'D)

You have any money?

MAYBELLE

My daughter sent me just enough to
to get to her in Chicago. Alt: None
I'mma give him.

Atticus turns back to Lads's shit eating grin --

ATTICUS

I have twenty-three dollars.

Lads eyes Atticus's Duffel at his feet --

MISTER LADS

What's in there? Anything worth
anything?

ATTICUS

Clothes. My army uniform. Books.

MISTER LADS

What kind of books?

ATTICUS

Science fiction mostly.

MISTER LADS

Science fiction? Dump it. Let me
see.

Atticus is keenly aware of all the WHITE EYES on him. And
how much Lads is enjoying making him jump. But Maybelle
needs to get on that truck, so -- he DUMPS his duffel.

Lads carelessly KICKS around the contents. Picks up a small
GREEN BOOK. **THE SAFE NEGRO TRAVEL GUIDE**. He thumbs through
it with CURIOSITY. Then PUZZLEMENT. Followed by AMAZEMENT --

MISTER LADS (CONT'D)

Hell is this? These addresses.
They're all places that serve niggers?

Atticus just stares back at him in response.

MISTER LADS (CONT'D)

Well hell, if that doesn't beat
everything. Not very thick is it?

He exaggeratedly squints at the Guide edge-on. CHUCKLING to himself. Bus Driver points to a PACKAGE wrapped in KOREAN GIFT WRAP half-hidden by Atticus's things --

BUS DRIVER
What's that there?

ATTICUS
It's a gift. A first edition book.

BUS DRIVER
That's got to be worth something.

Lads tosses aside the Guide. Picks up the Gift. And Atticus does not want to say it, but --

ATTICUS
It's yours if you want it.

Lads carelessly rips the paper off. Takes in the pristine copy of **ALEXANDER DUMAS'S COUNT OF MONTE CRISTO...**

5 **EXT. ROAD - INDIANA COUNTRYSIDE - DAY**

5

Atticus trudges. SWEATING. Duffel slung over his shoulder. Maybelle's heavy suitcases in hand. Maybelle by his side.

MAYBELLE
I ain't never seen no Negro man with all them books. No white one either. Must be they gettin' pretty heavy.

Cars filled with WHITE PASSENGERS pass. They don't slow down, and neither Atticus nor Maybelle try to get them to.

ATTICUS
I've lugged around more weight in the army. And books are too sacred to toss on the side of the road.

MAYBELLE
Let me at least carry one of my bags.

He just keeps walking. So she lets it go --

MAYBELLE (CONT'D)
Alright, then tell me what's that book you been readin' about?

ATTICUS
A Princess of Mars? It's about a man named John Carter who goes from being a captain in the army of Northern Virginia to becoming a
(MORE)

ATTICUS (CONT'D)

Martian warlord. It starts with him running from Apaches, and hiding in this magical cave that transports him to the red planet. And that's where it starts to get good...

It's clear by the fervor in which Atticus speaks he doesn't just love these stories. He loves loves them, but --

MAYBELLE

Hold on, did I hear you say the hero is a confederate officer?

ATTICUS

Ex-confederate, but yes.

MAYBELLE

He fought for slavery. You don't get to put an ex in front of that.

A wan smile comes to Atticus's lips. Wistful and painful.

ATTICUS

That sounds like something my father would say. Has said. He doesn't care much for pulp stories either.

Atticus loses his smile now. The pain associated with his father winning out.

ATTICUS (CONT'D)

But the way I see it, stories are like people. Loving them doesn't make them perfect. You just try and cherish them and overlook their flaws.

MAYBELLE

But the flaws are still there.

ATTICUS

Yeah. They are.

Maybelle studies Atticus. Feels like this conversation has moved beyond books for him.

MAYBELLE

We got too much walkin' left to do with you mopin'. Tell me what it is you cherish 'bout your stories.

ATTICUS

"My" stories. That's it, I guess.

(MORE)

ATTICUS (CONT'D)

They're not mine. I love that the heroes get to go on adventures to different worlds, defy insurmountable odds, defeat the monsters, and save the day. Little Negro boys from the Southside of Chicago don't notoriously get to do that.

MAYBELLE

Unless they join the army.

Again, we see the EMOTION in Atticus's eyes --

ATTICUS

I didn't join for adventure. I joined to get away from my father. Which is the real funny part, because he's also now the reason I'm coming home.

MAYBELLE

He sick?

With great import, that tells us this is what it's all about --

ATTICUS

He's gone missing.

6

INT. BEDROOM - APARTMENT ABOVE SAFE NEGRO TRAVEL - DAY

6

GEORGE FREEMAN (Mid 40's) sits up in bed, marveling at his sleeping wife HIPPOLYTA (Mid 40's). There's a quiet intensity about him. His stare is both loving and invasive. She stirs --

HIPPOLYTA

What are you looking at George Freeman?

GEORGE

My wife.

She smiles sheepishly --

HIPPOLYTA

And why are you looking at your wife? Are you waiting for her to fix you breakfast?

GEORGE

I'm leaving tomorrow.

HIPPOLYTA

I'm aware...

GEORGE

And I'm looking at my wife because
it feels like I've been spending too
much time on the road and not enough
time in bed with her.

He pulls her into him. KISSING. Spooning. Hippolyta is
fully awake now, her cheeks a rosy red --

HIPPOLYTA

George Freeman, you've got me blushing
before God.

GEORGE

If he's watching, then we should
give him a show.

HIPPOLYTA

What has gotten into you lately?
You're only going to be gone a few
days. Used to be you couldn't wait
to go off on some grand adventure.

A sadness clouds George's features. And even though Hippolyta
can't see his face, she can feel the change in him.

HIPPOLYTA (CONT'D)

You know I could go. Make the trip
instead of you.

That elicits an INCREDULOUS EXHALE from her husband.
Hippolyta STIFFENS. George turns her face to him --

GEORGE

You're serious?

Hippolyta looks away. Both affronted and self-conscious --

HIPPOLYTA

Is that idea so crazy? I've written
more than my share of reviews for
the guide...

GEORGE

Arguably the best ones.

HIPPOLYTA

All based on your notes. Imagine
how good they could get if I was
able to take a few notes of my own.

George turns on his back. His hand MASSAGING his right knee.
A nervous tick activated by dark memories --

GEORGE

The road is too dangerous for a woman
traveling alone. You know the shit
I have to deal with out there.

Hippolyta's not satisfied by that response. For a moment it
seems like she might press, but she moves to get up instead --

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Where you going?

He pulls Hippolyta back to him. She lets him, but --

HIPPOLYTA

The block party starts at noon. And
those pecans in the kitchen are not
going to turn themselves into pies.

GEORGE

Stay with me.

His hand drifts down between her legs. He STROKES her. And
Hippolyta is thoroughly scandalized. Even as the pleasure
courses through her --

HIPPOLYTA

What are you...You know Dee's up.
How thin these walls are...

GEORGE

Hippolyta...I can't remember the
last time we made love in the light
of day. I want to see my wife.

She looks to him. Longing and desire flares. He pulls the
covers back. He's already naked. She lets him pull off her
modest nightgown. Then he's on top of her. Inside of her.

Their lovemaking is sensual but also ravenous. Like young
lovers discovering each other for the first time...

7

INT. LIVING ROOM - APARTMENT ABOVE SAFE NEGRO TRAVEL - DAY

7

DRIFT from the closed bedroom door, down a hallway lined in
FRAMED FAMILY PHOTOS -- a long lineage aware of the power of
preserving LEGACY -- to find a messy living room.

In one corner, next to a bookshelf filled with COMICS, sits
a SOFA made up like a bed, currently inhabited by DIANA "DEE"
FREEMAN (12) sketching in her SPIRAL NOTEBOOK. Drawing a
COMIC. BLACK SUPERHEROES. BLACK VILLAINS. She's good.

Diana is lost in the world she's creating, until -- MOANS
drift from the bedroom. It takes her a moment to realize
what she's hearing. Her tongue juts out in disgust --

DIANA

Gross.

She grabs some colored pencils. Carries her notebook towards the window to the fire escape. Shoves the TELESCOPE in front of it aside, throws open the curtains, and -- SCREAMS BLOODY MURDER at the sight of the BLACK MAN right on the other side!

GEORGE (O.S.)

Diana!

A boxer-clad George stalks from the bedroom with a LOUISVILLE SLUGGER in hand. Menace in his eyes. Only to break out in a SMILE a mile wide when he recognizes the black man --

It's Atticus.

HIPPOLYTA (O.S.)

George Freeman, what's going on? Is Dee okay?

George opens the window so Atticus can crawl in --

GEORGE

She's fine. Just got surprised is all.

DIANA

I wasn't scared. Not really...

ATTICUS

I know you weren't.

Diana pushes Atticus. Atticus pushes her back. Playful sibling aggression. George calls to Hippolyta --

GEORGE

Your nephew's back.

Hippolyta responds to that with an ECSTATIC SCREAM --

HIPPOLYTA (O.S.)

Tic's back!

As George bear hugs Atticus...

A8 **EXT. SAFE NEGRO TRAVEL - DAY**

A8

Atticus exits the apartment entrance. Eyes the worn sign for SAFE NEGRO TRAVEL nestled in the store front window as he ducks inside...

8 **INT. SAFE NEGRO TRAVEL - DAY**

8

...to find PHIL HODGES (40'S), the key maker/shoe repairman, finishing up with a COSTUMER at the front counter.

PHIL HODGES
Welcome home, Tic...

They trade a familiar smile as Atticus moves into the makeshift workspace wedged between a LOCKSMITH'S OFFICE and a MECHANIC'S STATION.

George converses with the MECHANIC tinkering under the hood of a CAR. Motions for Atticus to "give him a second".

Atticus takes in the workspace. There are BOOKS of all sizes tucked in every nook and cranny. Any area not occupied by a book is covered by MAPS, both TOPOGRAPHICAL and ASTROLOGICAL, or SCAVENGED METAL for a HALF-CONSTRUCTED ROBOT. Atticus fiddles with it, then his attention turns to one of the bookshelves as George finishes up with the Mechanic --

GEORGE
I'll be heading through that part of the country in a few months, I'll vet it then --

MECHANIC
The tip's solid. My cousin bought smokes from there just last week...

GEORGE
I believe it, but I still have to triple check. A bad tip in the guidebook could get someone killed...

Atticus pulls "**THE OUTSIDER AND OTHERS**" by **H.P. LOVECRAFT** from the bookshelf. Looks at the ARKHAM HOUSE IMPRINT on the spine. His eyes DARKEN. This symbol troubles him.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
Getting reacquainted with old friends?

ATTICUS
Something like that.

GEORGE
Surprised that ones' caught your interest. Horror's usually my thing.

ATTICUS
"On the Creation of Niggers".

That same knowing washes over his uncle that washed over Atticus when Maybelle questioned the racism in John Carter --

GEORGE

That's one of Lovecraft's you don't hear mentioned often.

ATTICUS

Pop made me memorize that poem word for word after he caught me reading this. Thought it might turn me from the pulp trash I'd borrow from here to respectable literature.

The mention of his brother shadows George's features --

GEORGE

He's been missing for about two weeks.

ATTICUS

About? You're not sure.

GEORGE

You know how he can get on the sauce. Didn't think anything of it until his landlord dropped by when he didn't pay rent. I don't know where he could have gone.

ATTICUS

I might have an idea. He wrote me. About momma.

George TENSES. But just ever so subtly. Atticus doesn't notice as he pulls out that WORN ENVELOPE. The one that's more than just a bookmark.

ATTICUS (CONT'D)

He says he found out where her family came from. He wanted me to come home so I could go there with him.

George RELAXES. Whatever he fears Montrose might have revealed about Atticus's mother is still a secret.

GEORGE

He's still obsessing over her ancestry? I thought he had given all that up when she passed.

Atticus slips on his GLASSES. Struggles to read his father's TERRIBLE HANDWRITING --

ATTICUS

"I know that, like your mother, you think you can forgive -- *forget* the past. You can't.

(MORE)

ATTICUS (CONT'D)

The past is a living thing. You own -- owe it. Now I have found something about your mother's forebears. You have a sacred -- *secret* legacy, a birthright that's been kept from you..."

GEORGE

That's strange. Doesn't really sound like your father, does it?

ATTICUS

And I haven't even gotten to the real strange part. The place he wants me to go with him? It's in Lovecraft Country.

Atticus turns the book to display the Arkham Imprint --

ATTICUS (CONT'D)

The letter says mom's ancestors are from Arkham, Massachusetts.

GEORGE

Home of the corpse re-animator and Herbert West? Lovecraft based it on Salem, but it's not real.

ATTICUS

You sure?

Atticus's conviction gives George pause. There's something in his nephew's eyes. The look of somebody who now knows something he can't unknow.

GEORGE

Let me see the letter.

Atticus hands it over. George takes it to his design desk. Uses the MAGNIFYING LAMP, and after some careful discernment --

GEORGE (CONT'D)

It's a "d". It's not Arkham with a "k" it's Ardham with a "d".

Atticus squints at the words over George's shoulder. Annoyed --

ATTICUS

That's a "d"? You know, for someone who talks so much about the importance of being educated, you'd think Pop would learn how to write clearly.

George rummages through Books and Maps. In RESEARCH MODE --

GEORGE

I'll look into this Ardham. See if
I can glean any clues as to what
this "secret legacy" Montrose is
going on about...

Atticus nods. As he returns **"THE OUTSIDER AND OTHERS"** to
its place on the shelf, his mind turning...

9 **EXT. SOUTHSIDE OF - CHICAGO - DAY**

9

Atticus moves through BLOCK PARTY PREPARATION to take a walk through his old neighborhood. Nothing and everything has changed. Conflicting emotions bubble as he takes in...

1) An **ARMY RECRUITMENT OFFICE**. FADED POSTERS line the window enticing young Negro men to serve their country. Atticus catches eyes with the RECRUITMENT OFFICER smoking outside. Pained recognition passes between them...

2) Dilapidated Tenements loom over a **VACANT LOT** littered with trash. A group of CHILDREN play "Cowboys & Indians" in this makeshift playground. Their unbridled joy bringing light to the bleak landscape...

3) Underneath a **L TRAIN OVERPASS** the shady part of the shady part of town is mixed in with respectable businesses. The Southside isn't big enough to have it any other way...

Atticus approaches the front door of a squat building with a neon sign proclaiming it's...

10 **INT. DENMARK VESEY'S - DAY**

10

Dimly lit. SMOKE filled. Occupied by ALL-DAY DRINKERS. Atticus is greeted by a six-foot-six BOUNCER (TREE) --

TREE

We're closing early for the block party...

Tree's indifferent scowl turns into vague recognition --

TREE (CONT'D)

Holy shit...Tic is that you? Man, almost didn't recognize you without them coke bottle glasses. Remember me? Tree?

ATTICUS

Yeah, I remember...

And it's clear those memories are not fond. One could imagine Tree was the jock who bullied Atticus the geek. Atticus notices it's EMPTY behind the bar --

ATTICUS (CONT'D)

Listen, what was the bartender's name with all the earrings? He still work here?

Tree takes a beat. Knows when he's being blown off.

TREE

Sammy. Yeah, he's out back...

Atticus heads off, missing Tree's MISCHIEVOUS smirk...

11 **EXT. ALLEY BEHIND - DENMARK VESEY'S - DAY**

11

Atticus pushes out the back door to the sounds of GRUNTS and EXERTION. *Somebody fighting?* Wouldn't be surprising in this neighborhood. But Atticus is surprised to find -- a YOUNG MAN going down on BARTENDER SAMMY (40's)!

ATTICUS

Shit. I'm sorry --

The Young Man springs off his knees. Takes off down the alley. Atticus tries to escape back into the bar, but --

ATTICUS (CONT'D)

I...the door's locked.

Sammy's not fazed. He just casually pulls up his pants --

SAMMY

You here about your father?

Atticus looks to him. *How did he know?*

SAMMY (CONT'D)

I remember plenty of nights you dragging him off of one of my barstools, and he hasn't been perched on one in weeks.

Sammy adjusts one of the many EARRINGS in his ear. The move meant to mask the CONCERN washing over him.

ATTICUS

When's the last time you saw him?

SAMMY

About two weeks ago. He left here one night with a white man.

Atticus is incredulous --

ATTICUS

Was he a cop?

SAMMY

Doubt it. He looked like one of Bill Haley's Comets. Can't get the clothes he was wearing on a pig's salary. My guess he's a lawyer.

(MORE)

SAMMY (CONT'D)

Would explain how he could afford
the car too.

Atticus straightens up. A possible clue --

ATTICUS

You saw what he was driving?

SAMMY

Tree did. Said it was a silver sedan.
Something foreign. Shot off so fast
it had to be expensive...

12 **EXT. BLOCK PARTY TO END ALL BLOCK PARTIES - SOUTHSIDE - DAY** 12

The vibe is EXPLOSIVE. Despite the HEAT WAVES dancing off
the black top, the street, sidewalks, and stoops are jam-
packed with BLACK FACES for at least six blocks. FOOD,
ALCOHOL, a LIVE BAND has everybody living their best lives.

DRIFT through the festivities checking in with FAMILIAR FACES --

1) HIPPOLYTA sits with a gaggle of CHURCH LADIES among the
picnic tables, feigning modesty as they praise her PIES...

2) GEORGE, wearing his FREEMASON HAT, plays dominoes on a
stoop with other members of the PRINCE HALL FREEMASONS...

3) ATTICUS tinkers with a FIRE HYDRANT as DIANA and her
FRIENDS wait in anticipation...

As we revel in all this BLACK JOY, the sun begins to set...

13 **EXT. BLOCK PARTY TO END ALL BLOCK PARTIES - SOUTHSIDE - NIGHT** 13

...as a "COLORED ONLY" CAB pulls up. LETITIA "LETI" LEWIS
(MID 20'S) climbs out. She takes in the BLOCK PARTY still
in full swing. Pulls a weathered CAMERA from her purse.
Scans for the perfect angle, and -- SNAP!

She continues taking photos as she snakes her way to the
MAKESHIFT STAGE where RUBY BAPTISTE (MID-30's) SINGS. She's
PHENOMENAL, but it doesn't seem like her heart is in it.
Her eyes keep drifting to the TIP BUCKET --

RUBY

Alright, I've got time for one more,
then Slick Willy's coming up with
his guitar. What y'all want to hear?

The Crowd ERUPTS. SHOUTING SONGS. Leti remains quiet on
the fringes, amused by her half-sister's antics.

RUBY (CONT'D)

Come on, y'all don't really like
that lily white shit they play on
the radio, now do you?
(mockingly singing:)
Oh, life could be a dream. Sh-boom...

She bleeds the Sh-boom into SNORING sounds, before --

RUBY (CONT'D)

Let me hear something that's going
to wake me up.

The Crowd yells more SUGGESTIONS. And Ruby pantomimes falling
asleep, not hearing anything that's catching her attention --

LETI (O.S.)

WHOLE LOTTA SHAKIN' GOING ON...

Ruby wakes all the way up now. SURPRISE washing over her as
she locks eyes with Leti in the back of the crowd.

GUITARIST

Is that Letitia?

BASSIST

Ruby, it's your sister --

RUBY

Thank you, Floyd. I have eyes.

A SHOCKWAVE rolls through the Crowd. They recognize Leti
too. Soon they're voicing APPROVAL of Leti's song choice --

RUBY (CONT'D)

Alright, alright. A little bit of
blues it is then.

Ruby swallows her annoyance, which only gets harder to do as
the Crowd URGES Leti to join her on stage.

RUBY (CONT'D)

Now, now. I'm sure my sister's tired
from traveling from wherever she
just magically appeared from.

The edge in Ruby's voice blows right over the Crowd, but not
Leti. She takes it as a challenge. Pushes towards the stage
to the Crowd's ENTHUSIASM.

RUBY (CONT'D)

Y'all are gonna have to bare with
us, we haven't sang together since
our church days --

Leti grabs a MIC --

LETI

And it's no secret that those are
long gone.

The crowd ROARS. And the band starts up. Ruby starts up. Then Leti joins in. Leti's not a better singer than Ruby, just a better showman. But Ruby's irritation fades as the familiarity of singing with her half-sister takes over. Both of them coming alive in each other's presence.

They fall into the steps of a DANCE. Having clearly performed it many times. Leti messes up the choreography first, but Ruby starts up the song again in a smooth transition.

As they finish big with matching SMILES on their faces...

14

EXT. BLOCK PARTY TO END ALL BLOCK PARTIES - MOMENTS LATER

14

...they now wear matching expressions of AGITATION as they push through the crowded street. Ruby's demeanor has changed. On stage she was playing to the DOWNTOWN crowd. Now she's back to her default as she counts her TIPS, faking UPTOWN --

RUBY

Dress that short. You should be
wearing some stockings.

LETI

It's too hot for all that.

RUBY

You can't even afford stockings --

LETI

Who said I couldn't afford 'em?

RUBY

You don't have to say it. I know
you only here cause you need money.
And don't think cause you got up
there and sang with me you're getting
any of these tips.

LETI

I don't need a handout. Just a place
to stay for awhile...

That garners a DERISIVE CHUCKLE from Ruby. Leti slows as the crowd parts and her eyes fall on a

SHIRTLESS ATTICUS

drenched in water, acting like a goofy kid as he plays in the HYDRANT spray with Diana and her Friends. Let's be clear, if you have ovaries, they're melting right now.

LETI (CONT'D)

Wait, who's that?

Leti brings her Camera to her eye. Takes a few quick SNAPS of Atticus.

RUBY

Who? Tic?

LETI

That's Tic? Skinny, glasses kid who was too smart for his own good, Tic?

RUBY

Yeah. He's grown up. Which is more than I can say for you.

Leti rolls her eyes at her half-sister as Ruby keeps it moving --

RUBY (CONT'D)

I'm over in the boarding house on McCarthy --

LETI

Ew, that place is a shithole. What happened to the room on Linden?

RUBY

Momma's funeral happened.

And that slows Leti way down. A flash of VULNERABILITY --

LETI

Ruby...

RUBY

There's nothing to read into me bringing it up. It's just facts. You can stay with me two nights --

Leti's irritation increases. It's hard to tell if it's the mention of her mother's funeral, or her sister's indifference to her plight, or both.

LETI

What job am I supposed to find in two days?

RUBY

You could work on the Northside --

LETI

I'm not cleaning house --

RUBY

What then? You think you're going to go downtown and get a job in one of the department stores?

LETI

Maybe.

And that stops Ruby dead. She levels her half-sister with a cold stare --

RUBY

You think it's that easy, huh? You know I've been applying for years.

LETI

And if I get the job, it'll be enough money for both us to move --

RUBY

I'm fine where I am --

LETI

Have our own rooms for once. Maybe even a house. There's a lot of colored folks pioneering into all white neighborhoods these days --

RUBY

Then maybe you should ask one of them to put you up. Two nights, Leti. That's it.

15 **INT. LIVING ROOM - APARTMENT ABOVE SAFE NEGRO TRAVEL - NIGHT** 15

Atticus, soaking wet, pulls dry clothes from his duffel in "Diana's room". He notices an open ROAD ATLAS on the pull out. It's illustrated with BRIGHT COLORED DRAWINGS --

Major Negro population centers are represented as shining FORTRESSES. Isolated hotels and motels are INNS with SMILING KEEPERS. Less friendly parts of the country are populated by OGRES, TROLLS, VAMPIRES, WEREWOLVES, WILD BEASTS, GHOSTS.

Atticus flips the pages and lands on OKLAHOMA -- a great WHITE DRAGON coils around TULSA breathing fire on it.

GEORGE (O.S.)

The kid has an imagination like you. Terrifying ain't they?

He grimaces as he lowers himself onto the sofa.

ATTICUS

Your knees still acting up?

GEORGE

It's a blessing they're doing anything
at all after two shattered knee caps.

George massages his right knee. That same dark look in his eyes from when he was in bed with his wife earlier --

GEORGE (CONT'D)

And now Hippolyta's got this crazy idea in her head to go out on the road. I can't imagine what would've happened if those crackers had caught her outside of Anna instead of me.

Atticus hands George Diana's Road Atlas. An attempt to pull his uncle away from his worry --

ATTICUS

Well that's why you publish the guide, right? To keep us Negroes safe. Now show me where I can find Ardham.

GEORGE

That's going to be a little tricky. The last mention of it in any census I could find is from over two centuries ago. Which puts it somewhere around Devon County, Massachusetts.

Atticus frowns. Each new piece of info on his father's disappearance is more troubling than the last. He flips through Diana's Atlas...

ATTICUS

So what we know is pops disappeared with a white man in an expensive silver car to a town that doesn't exist anymore.

...and studies the page he lands on. George sees the DETERMINATION wash over his nephew --

GEORGE

You're going after him.

Atticus looks to his uncle. Set to purpose --

ATTICUS

I'm going to need a car. Woody still running?

GEORGE

Woody will out last us all. That's the only thing I'm sure of. Other than that I'm going with you...

Atticus goes to protest, but --

GEORGE (CONT'D)

I was heading out on a guide trip anyway. Devon County'll be a good addition.

ATTICUS

You might not be so sure of that after you look at this...

He shows his uncle where he landed in Diana's Atlas -- DEVON COUNTY is marked with a SUNDIAL. A GRIM TEMPLAR holds a noose next to it. The HOLLOW EYES of the Templar's armor seem to stare right through them...

A16 **EXT. MONTROSE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT**

A16

Atticus lugs his duffel towards a squat apartment building next to the L Train tracks. Doesn't notice the

SILVER BENTLEY

parked at the end of the block matching the description bartender Sammy gave him. It's sleek and vaguely sinister. The windows are TINTED midnight black.

We can't see the driver, but we can *feel* they're watching...

16 **OMITTED**

16

17 **INT. MONTROSE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT**

17

Atticus lets himself in. Takes in the space both familiar, yet unfamiliar at the same time. He moves to the FRANKENSTEIN VICTROLA his father built himself. ALBUMS line the bookcases around it. Mostly speeches, lectures, and audio plays.

Atticus places an ALBUM on the Victrola. As the record PLAYS, he browses the books. Political theory and serious fiction. He pulls a WELL-WORN copy of **THE COUNT OF MONTE CRISTO** from a shelf. Opens it, and -- a FAMILY PORTRAIT falls out.

A 10 YEAR OLD ATTICUS with his mother DORA and MONTROSE. His parents are small in stature, but know how to take up space in a room. That's evident even in this snapshot.

Atticus is smiling in the photo, but not in real life as he stares at it with MIXED EMOTIONS...

18 **INT. BEDROOM - MONTROSE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT**

18

Atticus enters, focusing in on -- a DENT on the far left wall. Something about this blight strikes a deep chord in him. Similar DENTS mark all four walls in various places.

Atticus opens the closet. Pulls out a SHOE BOX. And from that, he pulls a -- .45 COLT.

He spins the barrel to make sure it's loaded. Stuffs it into his duffel.

He pulls out that 1st edition of *THE COUNT OF MONTE CRISTO*. It's not in perfect condition anymore after being carelessly handled by the flatbed driver. Atticus places it on the nightstand. Regards it. Then grabs the PHONE. Dials.

OPERATOR (ON PHONE)
Where can I direct your call?

ATTICUS
555 438 520 3093 2915

OPERATOR (ON PHONE)
South Korea?

Atticus hesitates. He doesn't want to make this call, but he's COMPELLED to --

ATTICUS
Yes.

The line RINGS and RINGS and RINGS. Atticus grows more agitated with each trill, finally --

JI-AH (ON PHONE)
(in Korean:)
Hello... ?

Atticus's heart seizes. His mouth dries up. He can't speak. A TANGIBLE SILENCE reaches across the line, then --

JI-AH (ON PHONE) (CONT'D)
You went home...

Accusation. But also a deep sadness. Thick with FOREBODING. And how does Atticus respond? He hangs the fuck up.

19 **EXT. SAFE NEGRO TRAVEL - DAY**

19

Atticus has his duffel once again slung over his shoulder as he approaches George's SERIES 22 PACKARD (WOODY) parked in the open mechanic's garage. A pair of stockingless legs hang out the open trunk. He appraises Leti with an admiring eye as she organizes TRAVEL ITEMS in the back of the Packard.

LETI
You just going to stand there, Tic,
or are you going to help me?

She straightens up with a challenging SMILE --

ATTICUS
Leti Lewis...?

LETTI

Only my friends get to call me that.
We still friends?

ATTICUS

Well, considering you were the only
female member of the South Side
Futurists Science Fiction Club...

They HUG. The gesture lingers just a bit longer than needed.

LETTI

I heard you were down in Florida
hiding out. How was it?

That puts a little hitch in Atticus's swag. *Hiding out.* It
was a joke. But it hit a little too close to home.

ATTICUS

Segregated. And you? Where have
you been?

LETTI

I've been a little bit of everywhere.

ATTICUS

Doing...?

LETTI

Everything.

They stare at each other for a moment. A charged moment.

ATTICUS

Wait, you're coming with us?

GEORGE (O.S.)

Part way.

George comes out with a clutch of CANTEENS in hand, Hippolyta
with a TRAVEL CHECKLIST and Diana in tow --

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Marvin's working for the Springfield
Afro American these days. He's going
to look into this mysterious town of
Ardham for us.

HIPPOLYTA

Are we checklist ready?

Diana climbs into Woody as Hippolyta refers to the Checklist --

HIPPOLYTA (CONT'D)

Mattress and blankets?

Diana points to the MATTRESS leaned on Woody --

DIANA
Check. And check.

HIPPOLYTA
Spare tire and jack?

GEORGE
Who's this Jack, Diana?

DIANA
Come on Pop, let mom finish --

GEORGE
Sounds like somebody from one of
Dumas's swashbucklers. Will I have
to duel him for your mother's honor?

George picks up the JACK. Uses it as a sword against Diana.
She can't help but LAUGH as she feigns her corny father off.

HIPPOLYTA
Alright, alright. Flares and first
aid kit?

DIANA
Double check.

HIPPOLYTA
Reading material?

ATTICUS
I've got that covered.

Atticus clocks Leti watching this time honored family
tradition of sending George off. LONGING in her eyes.

HIPPOLYTA
Then the travel checklist is complete.

ATTICUS
Leti, help me with the mattress?

They move to do that, giving the family a moment for goodbyes.

GEORGE
Anything we're forgetting?

HIPPOLYTA
Nope. I believe that's everything.

Diana shakes her head. The exasperation of a preteen too
cool for her parents anymore --

DIANA

Mom, pop, you don't have to do this every time.

They ignore her. Continuing to play it up --

GEORGE

Oh yeah, we almost forgot the most important thing.

HIPPOLYTA

That's right, Dee's travel comic.

Diana hands a collection of folded up PAGES to her father.

GEORGE

I've been patiently waiting to see what happens to Panther Man...

George trails off. Struck by the COVER of Diana's comic. He throws a wild look to his wife. Her brow scrunches up quizzically. *Why's he looking at her like that?*

George shows Hippolyta the Cover. She GASPS --

HIPPOLYTA

Oh pumpkin... what made you decide to change it?

ON DIANA'S TRAVEL COMIC -- *THE INTERPLANETARY ADVENTURES OF ORITHYIA BLUE*. ISSUE #1. A BLACK WOMAN in a SPACE SUIT shoots a LASER GUN at a MONSTER. The black woman looks exactly like Hippolyta.

DIANA

It's no big deal, mom. See you when you get back Pop. And don't forget to look for robot parts.

And with that, she takes off. Hippolyta's caught in the moment, then she hands the comic back to her husband --

HIPPOLYTA

Be safe.

He gives his wife a KISS. Atticus and Leti have wrangled the mattress into Woody. It's time to get on the road...

FADE TO:

Our Heroes make their way from Chicago to Springfield as BALDWIN'S words from his 1965 DEBATE with BUCKLEY narrates this journey into the heart of American darkness --

20 **EXT. HIGHWAY OUT OF - CHICAGO - DAY** 20

Chicago's SKYLINE dots the horizon as Woody picks up speed on the open road...

21 **EXT. 19 CENT HAMBURGER HANGOUT - DAY** 21

Atticus and Leti eat cold chicken and drink Cokes at a picnic table as George pours over his ROAD ATLAS while referencing the SAFE NEGRO TRAVEL GUIDE. He's mapping their trip...

In the BACKGROUND -- at the "WHITE" service window a POLICE OFFICER buys a group of WHITE KIDS ice cream. A BLACK FATHER and SON wait patiently at the "COLORED" window...

22 **EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT** 22

AMERICAN FLAGS lining storefronts ripple in the breeze as Woody coasts through. Leti notices a BLACK MOTHER and DAUGHTER waiting under a NEON SIGN designating the "COLORED ENTRANCE" to the MOVIE THEATRE. As she SNAPS a photo...

23 **EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY** 23

The looming TREES allow only a few sun rays to reach the pavement of this isolated road. Woody blasts down it with purpose. Right past a BILLBOARD half-hidden by OVERGROWTH --

"NIGGERS, DON'T LET THE SUN SET ON YOU HERE, UNDERSTAND?"

24 **EXT. GAS STATION - NIGHT** 24

George fills up at the pump. Atticus pulls out a BANANA. Peels and bites into it. The ape noises draw his attention to the WHITE ATTENDANTS making fun of him with APE GESTURES.

Atticus's fists curl, but a hand on his arm stops him. It's Leti. Her expression imploring him to let it go. She aims her camera at the White Attendants like a gun. SNAP!

25 **EXT. SIDE OF THE - HIGHWAY - DAY** 25

A POOR BLACK WOMAN with her BABY strapped to her body and a BOUQUET of FLOWERS in hand. Atticus buys one. Returns to Woody parked on the side of the road --

George stands at the open driver's side door. Arms folded over his chest. Leti sits in the driver's seat. Arms also folded over her chest. They're ARGUING about her driving. Leti finally relents. Slides over into the middle seat...

26 **INT. WOODY - NIGHT** 26

George drives. Atticus reads aloud by flashlight. Leti (now wearing Atticus's flower in her hair) sleeps between

them. She tips over onto Atticus's shoulder. Just an accident. But Atticus notices. George too. He throws his nephew an amused look. Which Atticus ignores...

27 **EXT. BUS STOP - DAY**

27

Morning light illuminates a SMILING WHITE FAMILY looming over a long line of BLACK WORKERS waiting to catch the bus. The billboard tagline exclaims -- "WORLD'S HIGHEST STANDARD OF LIVING. THERE'S NO WAY LIKE THE AMERICAN WAY..."

As Woody rolls past the exhausted black faces...

28 **EXT. SIDE OF THE - ROAD - DAY**

28

Leti sits on Woody's hood. Flips a SWITCHBLADE open and closed in rapid succession. George leans against Woody consulting his NOTES and a MAP. Atticus does a "quick wash" a little into the woods, the ODD-SHAPED BIRTHMARK on his left shoulder blade exposed.

GEORGE

There's a diner called Lydia's I got a tip on near here. Won't take us too far off course to have lunch there. What do you say to a detour?

ATTICUS

Where is it?

GEORGE

(pointing it out:)
In Utica.

ATTICUS

You know what that area would be populated by on Diana's Atlas? A bunch of trolls who pick their teeth with unwary motorists.

GEORGE

Funny. I need to add some entries to the guide. I'm on deadline.

LETI

Aren't you the publisher?

GEORGE

Exactly. Which is why I know how much of a hardass I can be.

Leti slams the trunk. Moves to climb into Woody --

LETI

Well not that either of you asked my opinion but I could use a hot meal.

GEORGE

You heard the girl.

LETI

And since this "girl" is not allowed to drive, I'm picking the radio station.

B.B. KING'S "YOU UPSET ME, BABY" drags us to...

29

INT. WOODY - DAY

29

...where Atticus drives. George navigates with a MAP. And Leti reaches over the seat from the back to TURN UP THE VOLUME. George reaches to turn it back down...

GEORGE

Turn off the highway up here.

...but Leti SLAPS his hand away. SINGING and DANCING along with B.B. -- *"You upsets me, baby. Yesssss, you upsets me..."*

Leti's seducing George with her enthusiasm. Soon she's got him PANTOMIMING B.B.'s guitar. Atticus can't help the smile that comes over him. But it FADES as he clocks the

FIRE STATION

they're nearing. A BULKY FIREMAN in SUSPENDERS sits on a bucket outside it. Everything about him screams TROUBLE.

Suspenders stands. Eyes narrowing on the Packard as it rolls past. He does a SLOW BURN on seeing the black faces inside. Atticus watches him in the side mirror. Until he's out of sight, but definitely not out of mind...

30

EXT. SIMMONSVILLE - DAY

30

Woody coasts past empty SIDEWALKS and STOREFRONTS --

GEORGE

We're looking for a red brick building. Should be on the left-hand side on the far end of town.

Atticus's eyes keep drifting to the rear view mirror. The street behind them remains EMPTY. Leti senses his tension --

LETI

What's the matter?

Before Atticus can answer --

GEORGE
That must be it.

He points to a WHITEWASHED brick building up ahead.
"SIMMONSVILLE DINETTE" in lettering across the windows.

ATTICUS
Didn't you say it was called Lydia's?

GEORGE
It's in the right place. Don't judge
a book by its cover.

ATTICUS
A book can't refuse you service.

LETI
Or spit in your water glass.

31 **INT. SIMMONSVILLE DINETTE - DAY**

31

PEE WEE KING'S "SLOW POKE" warbles from a RADIO. Just a
COUNTER BOY and one customer at the counter in a PORKPIE HAT
slopping up the gravy on his plate with a biscuit.

The bell over the door JINGLES as Our Heroes enter. Counter
Boy's eyes go wide as if they were Green Martians teleported
from Barsoom. Porkpie's eyes turn to slits.

GEORGE
Good afternoon. We were just driving
by and thought we'd stop in to have
some lunch --

Porkpie SLAMS his fist on the counter. Storms past them out
the door. Counter Boy just gapes. A beat, then --

GEORGE (CONT'D)
I suppose we'll just seat ourselves.

The Counter Boy brings MENUS over as they take a booth.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
Thank you. What's good here?

The Counter Boy tries to STAMMER out an answer. Can't.

ATTICUS
Why don't we just start with coffees?

He nods and quickly retreats. They watch as he fumbles with
the coffee pot, nearly dropping it when the phone RINGS.

As Counter Boy disappears to answer it --

LETI
Doesn't look like the Simonsville
Dinette is making the guide.

GEORGE
Yeah, okay, but we're here now.

ATTICUS
Doesn't mean we have to stay. We
get back in the car we're only what?
Two? Three hours from Marvin's --

George SNAPS --

GEORGE
We're here. And we have every right
to be. We're citizens. You're a
veteran, for God's sake. Our money
spends as good as anyone else's.

Atticus and Leti go quiet. Feeling for George. The weight
of Jim Crow can't always be carried with grace. Leti rises...

LETI
I'm going to visit the ladies room.

...and disappears down the back hallway. Atticus and George
peruse their menus in silence for a long moment, then --

ATTICUS
Those biscuits and gravy smelled
pretty damn good. I think that's
what I'll order...

He looks around the EMPTY diner. Can't quite put his finger
on it, but something just feels...OFF.

ATTICUS (CONT'D)
..if the waiter ever comes back.

32 **INT. BACK HALLWAY - SIMMONSVILLE DINETTE - DAY**

32

Leti exits the bathroom, pausing when she spies through the
CRACKED KITCHEN DOOR -- an antsy COOK stands by as the Counter
Boy listens with dread to the other end of the phone --

COUNTER BOY
I know. Yeah. Okay.

He hangs up. Looks to the Cook, his heart in his throat --

COUNTER BOY (CONT'D)
They're coming for 'em.

Leti REACTS. Trouble is coming their way. The Counter Boy and Cook move to get out of dodge. Coming Leti's way. As she ducks back into the bathroom...

33 **INT. SIMMONSVILLE DINETTE - DAY**

33

Atticus looks towards the back hallway. Leti's been gone too long now too. His spider sense really starts to TINGLE as he gets up, and --

SQUEECH! He's stepped on a piece of loose linoleum. He notices -- the floor in the entire diner is new!

ATTICUS
Uncle George...

GEORGE
Yeah.

Atticus looks to the ceiling. Bright new wood.

ATTICUS
Remind me why the white house is white?

GEORGE
War of 1812. British soldiers put the executive mansion to torch. Then later when the slaves rebuilt it, they had to paint the walls to cover up...

Atticus touches the brick wall behind their booth -- it's covered in the same WHITEWASH as outside.

ATTICUS
...the burn marks.

And just as he says that -- a FIRE TRUCK SIREN rises in the distance. Trouble is coming their way. Atticus's ANXIETY rockets as Leti sprints from the back...

LETI
We need to get the fuck out of here --

...and doesn't slow down, blasting out the door as Atticus helps George out of the booth --

34 **EXT. SIMMONSVILLE DINETTE - DAY**

34

Leti's already climbing into the driver seat and starting Woody up as Atticus and George burst from the diner --

GEORGE
Let me drive --

A FIRE TRUCK and PICK UP are coming their way. Suspenders drives the Fire Truck. Porkpie & THREE FIREMEN hang off the Pick Up. Menace and grimace in their expressions. Atticus shoves his Uncle towards the passenger side --

ATTICUS
Just get in --

35 **EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY**

35

Leti blasts down the road, George next to her, then Atticus. Out the rear window -- the Pick Up is coming fast! Porkpie leans off the side. A RIFLE in his grip -- **BANG!**

Atticus flips into the back. Pulls his father's COLT out of his duffel. Pops the back window open -- **BANG!**

It's MAYHEM as he TRADES FIRE with the Fire Truck, ADRENALINE racing, everyone TALKING OVER each other --

GEORGE
Don't kill anyone just get them off
our backs.

ATTICUS
I'm trying --

GEORGE
Go faster --

LETI
I'm going as fast as I can --

BANG! BANG! BANG!

ATTICUS
We've got to get off this road.

George grabs his MAPS. Leti SWERVES to avoid bullets --

GEORGE
Damn it girl, keep her steady.

LETI
We're being shot at --

BANG! BANG! BANG! She SWERVES again --

GEORGE
There's a turn off coming up. You
see it?

LETI
On the left?

GEORGE
Right.

Our Heroes can only watch as the distance closes. Hearts in their throats. George folds under the pressure --

GEORGE

Let up.

LETI

I let up, that truck's back in shooting range.

The Bentley gets closer. And CLOSER. Atticus folds now too --

ATTICUS

Leti...

She still doesn't let up.

ATTICUS (CONT'D)

Leti.

And just when it looks like a crash is inevitable --

The Bentley lets up. Cuts in behind Woody. Cutting off the Pick Up. And just as it's about to smash into the silver car -- it juts sideways as if by some external FORCE!

The Pick Up TUMBLES off the road. Firemen FLY as it flips end over end in a cloud of DUST.

Atticus REACTS. What he's just seen is impossible. The Bentley should have been crushed on impact.

Leti doesn't slow down to see the aftermath. But the Bentley skids to a halt sideways. The driver's door pops open. And out climbs a

WHITE WOMAN IN AN IMPECCABLY TAILORED MEN'S SUIT (MID 20's)

who we'll come to know as CHRISTINA BRAITHWHITE. An exotic and electric presence. She sends Atticus a devilish grin before she's engulfed by the DUST CLOUD from the crash...

37 **INT. MARVIN'S HOUSE - NIGHT**

37

MARVIN BAPTISTE (EARLY 30'S) holds the door open for Our Heroes as they enter his cozy home --

MARVIN

Let me get those for you.

Leti lets him take her BAGS. Still in the wake of what happened on the road. Atticus and George too. Marvin notices they're all uncharacteristically quiet --

MARVIN (CONT'D)
How's the trip been so far?

Our Heroes look at each other. *What is there to say?* The absurdity of it all has them bursting out LAUGHING. Dispelling their nervous energy. They continue LAUGHING...

38 **INT. KITCHEN - MARVIN'S HOUSE - NIGHT**

38

...like it's going out of style as they break bread --

LETI
The way those white boys went flying...

ATTICUS
It was surreal.

GEORGE
Reminded me of a scene out of a Bradbury novel.

Marvin shakes his head in disbelief. It's a wild story --

MARVIN
Wait, what was it actually that caused the crash?

Atticus darts a look to the others. An unspoken agreement...

ATTICUS
Your sister's precision driving. They couldn't keep up.

..the Bentley and White lady will stay between them. George cosigns by admitting --

GEORGE
She did save the day.

LETI
Wait a minute, did I hear that right? Say that again. Who saved your asses?

George eats crow with good humor --

GEORGE
Letitia fuckin' Lewis did.

More LAUGHTER. Atticus hates to spoil the moment, but --

ATTICUS
It's getting late. Marvin, why don't you tell us what you've discovered about our next stop.

Marvin grabs a box of FILES off the counter --

MARVIN

I'd heard a few tales about Devon County before, but once I started really digging in, it just kept getting stranger and stranger.

Atticus, George, and Leti clear the table as Marvin continues --

MARVIN (CONT'D)

You see the county seat, Bideford, was named after a town in England where they had one of the last witch trails. They hung a woman for fornicating with the devil who appeared to her as a Negro man.

GEORGE

You're saying Bideford was founded by witches?

MARVIN

The witch hunters. They've been inbred, insular, and clinging to the past tooth and nail ever since.

ATTICUS

So I'm guessing they don't like Negroes.

Marvin opens a File. Spreads out CLIPPINGS --

MARVIN

They don't like outsiders period. I found more than a few stories in our morgue about travelers getting attacked in the surrounding woods.

LETI

By what?

MARVIN

Grizzlies. Wolves. Who knows? There's been lots of missing persons reports too. Some of which might have to do with the county sheriff.

Marvin hands a THICK FILE to Atticus. He flips through it --

ATTICUS

Eustice Hunt. Ex-Marine. This is his NAACP complaint file.

MARVIN

It's only a 3rd of it. Between the wild animals and this guy? I'm not sure which one I'd rather run into.

That sinks in. Things just got a lot more dangerous.

ATTICUS

What about Ardham? What did you dig up on that front?

MARVIN

It was settled around the same time as Bideford. Local histories don't say by who, or who lives there now. I couldn't even find any clippings on it at all.

Marvin lays a MAP out on the table --

MARVIN (CONT'D)

I tried calling the county registry of deeds to get property records. No one answered. But from what I could pull together, it should be somewhere around here...

(pointing on map:)

But I don't know what roads to take to get there, or if there even are any.

Atticus studies the map. Mind churning. He can feel everyone's eyes on him --

GEORGE

What do you want to do?

It seems like Atticus is going to give up the search, then --

ATTICUS

We need to go to the registry. Maps of the property lines will clearly delineate a route into Ardham...

39 **INT. BEDROOM - MARVIN'S HOUSE - NIGHT**

39

CLOSE ON the pages of *THE INTERPLANETARY ADVENTURES OF ORITHYIA BLUE* ISSUE #1 -- Orithyia is in a heated battle with a ROBOTIC COMPUTER with SEVEN ARMS.

DIANA (ON PHONE)

This is just the first issue, but the plan is she'll be called to repair faulty telescopes or malfunctioning
(MORE)

DIANA (ON PHONE) (CONT'D)
computers on different planets and
inevitably find bigger danger...

George sits on the bed. Phone to ear. Travel Comic in lap.
Half-listening to his daughter. His mind elsewhere.

DIANA (ON PHONE) (CONT'D)
Like unrest between the fire and
shadow tribes of Mercury, or the
cousin of the Loch Ness monster
rampaging across Saturn's moons...

She sounds just like Atticus describing the Barsoom series
to Maybelle earlier. Pure unencumbered glee --

DIANA (ON PHONE) (CONT'D)
And guess what? She zips from planet
to planet in her trusted Buick
Spacewagon named Stoney.

An expectant pause on the line. George doesn't notice, until --

DIANA (ON PHONE) (CONT'D)
Pop, you there?

GEORGE
Yeah, I'm here. That all sounds
great. But I should go, I don't
want to run up Mister Baptiste's
bill. Put your mother back on.

40 **INT. APARTMENT ABOVE SAFE NEGRO TRAVEL - NIGHT**

40

Hippolyta has her eye to her Telescope at the window as Diana
hands her the phone --

HIPPOLYTA
I was just heading up to the roof.
It's such a clear night, I might be
able to finally see Orion.

She cradles the phone against her shoulder as she adjusts
dials on the Telescope.

GEORGE (ON PHONE)
Okay. I won't keep you. I was just
thinking, maybe the next guide trip...
what do you say to us going together?

That gets Hippolyta's full attention. She sits back on the
edge of the sofa. Her heart seizing...

41 **INT. BEDROOM - MARVIN'S HOUSE - NIGHT**

41

Silence on the other end of the line. Enough for George to second guess himself. Then, softly --

HIPPOLYTA (ON PHONE)

I'd like that.

George exhales deeply. The EMOTION filling him. Even if they don't say the words "I love you" it's clear the love is there. Even across the telephone lines.

HIPPOLYTA (ON PHONE) (CONT'D)

Goodnight, George Freeman.

GEORGE

Goodnight.

He hangs up. Folds Diana's Comic delicately. Places it safely in his WALLET. A special place. So it's always close. He considers for a beat. Then pulls a photo from that same special place. It's a photo of Atticus's mother Dora.

As a pained, wistful smile comes over George, hinting at a SECRET HISTORY between these two...

42 **EXT. BACK PORCH - MARVIN'S HOUSE - NIGHT**

42

Atticus sits. Glasses on. A BOOK open in his lap. But he's staring off into nothing. Disturbed by Leti and Marvin's RAISED VOICES leaking through the open screen door --

MARVIN (O.S.)

What'd you do with the money I wired to DC?

LETI (O.S.)

I saved it. That's what I used to get the bus to Ruby --

MARVIN (O.S.)

Not all of it, you didn't. I'm not stupid, Letitia --

Leti's tired of being chastised. Her voice raises sharply --

LETI (O.S.)

Fine. Okay, I used it to bail some friends out of jail. But it's not what you think --

MARVIN (O.S.)

Somehow it never is with you --

LETTI (O.S.)

We were protesting the school
segregation --

MARVIN (O.S.)

It doesn't matter what you were doing --

LETTI (O.S.)

Yes it does. The work I'm apart of
now is changing lives --

MARVIN (O.S.)

You told me you needed that money to
come home for momma's funeral.

George slips out the screen door. Joins his nephew. Trying not to listen to the family drama that Atticus is clearly affected by.

MARVIN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
How could you miss your own momma's funeral --

LETTI (O.S.)
I'm sick of you and Ruby acting like she was a goddamn saint --

The ARGUMENT [SEE APPENDIX A] continues in the b.g. as --

GEORGE
That's not sounding good.

ATTICUS
I've heard worse. Been apart of worse. I ever tell you what happened the last time I was home?

GEORGE
No. Though I did wonder why you'd rather deal with Jim Crow then come back after you finished your service.

Atticus starts slow, but gets more agitated with every word --

ATTICUS
A reporter wanted to interview me on what it was like to be a Negro soldier. Pop lost it. Said it was bad enough I was throwing my life away for a country that hates me, and now I was going to inspire others to make the same stupid mistake. I finally decided to give as good as I got for once. You can still see the cracks in the plaster where we slammed into the walls.

Nothing in his nephew's story surprises George --

GEORGE
Just because your father didn't agree with the decision, doesn't mean he didn't care.

ATTICUS
He never wrote me. Not one letter until he needed help --

GEORGE

The first year you were in Korea
he'd come over for dinner almost
every night. He wouldn't ask about
you, but he'd wait for me to volunteer
the information. And if I didn't,
he wouldn't go home. He'd stay until
ten, eleven, midnight if that's what
it took, waiting for me to bring up
the subject of you. Drove Hippolyta
crazy --

ATTICUS

Of course it did. It's just another
example of how hard headed he was --

The conversation outside is starting to mirror the TENSION
of the one inside. George tries to temper Atticus --

GEORGE

Montrose has done the best he can.
He didn't have it easy with our father --

ATTICUS

Why are you always defending him?
You grew up in the same home and
turned out fine --

GEORGE

Your Pop was...

ATTICUS

Was what?

George chooses his words very carefully --

GEORGE

Younger and smaller. He took the
brunt of it. I should have protected
him more. And that's something I'll
always regret --

ATTICUS

I was younger and smaller too. And
you didn't do shit to protect me.
Do you regret that?

That lands hard on George. But before he can reply, DISHES
SHATTERING inside draws attention back to the drama inside --

LETI (O.S.)

Let go of my arm, you're hurting me.

Atticus rises. Moving for the door. Fire in his eyes. But
George steps in the way --

GEORGE

That's family business, not ours.

Atticus is about to protest, but it sounds like the argument inside has quickly de-escalated. A door SLAMS somewhere in the house. Now it's QUIET. Atticus moves around his uncle...

A43 **OMITTED**

A43

43 **OMITTED**

43

44 OMITTED

44

AND

AND

45

45

46 **OMITTED** 46

47 **EXT. WOODS ON THE EDGE OF - DEVON COUNTY - DAY** 47

The sun's setting. Woody coasts aimlessly down the dirt road surrounded on both sides by THICK WOODS...

48 **INT. WOODY - DAY** 48

Atticus has a MAP open in his lap. George has one open across the steering wheel. Leti is pressed back into the seat. WILDLY ANNOYED as Atticus and George argue back and forth over her as if she doesn't exist --

GEORGE

We've passed this area ten times now --

ATTICUS

The map at the registry said there's a bridge over a river to Ardham.

GEORGE

I know what it said --

ATTICUS

It exists, we just have to find the road to it.

GEORGE

We've been driving around these woods all day. There's no goddamn road. Letitia, you see one?

Leti stays out of this as Atticus shoves his map aside --

ATTICUS

Stop the car. I'll get out and look --

GEORGE

For the road none of us have spotted ten goddamn times now --

ATTICUS

Maybe it's grown over, you ever think of that? Maybe that's why we've missed it.

George slams the brakes --

GEORGE

You're just as stubborn as your father --

Atticus opens the door, and...

49 **EXT. WOODS ON THE EDGE OF - DEVON COUNTY - DAY**

49

...SLAMS it behind him. Cursing under his breath as he searches for any signs of a road. A beat later, Leti climbs out of Woody. Atticus doesn't even look her way as he snaps --

ATTICUS

What are you doing?

LETI

Helping you look.

Oh. That takes some of the wind out of his sails. They get to looking.

Neither they nor George, still pouring over the maps in Woody, notice -- the PATROL CAR creeping down the road towards them!

LETI (CONT'D)

I keep thinking about what my brother said. The animal attacks. I don't think we want to be out here after dark.

And that Patrol Car just keeps creeping and creeping as Atticus sighs. Heavy. The weight of the world and what not --

ATTICUS

I know. It's just... We've come all this way...

LETI

This isn't giving up. We're going to find your father. Just not today.

Atticus absorbs that. Nods. They turn back for Woody, but just before they spot the Patrol Car -- a NOISE deep in the trees steals their attention.

LETI (CONT'D)

What was that?

The STILL UNNOTICED Patrol Car edges to a stop behind Woody as they stare into the woods in front of them.

ATTICUS

It's a shoggoth.

LETI

A what?

Atticus laughs at his wild imagination --

ATTICUS

A monster from one of Lovecraft's stories. They're massive bubble blobs with hundreds of eyes --

LETI

Oh well that's not scary, we can outrun a blob --

ATTICUS

Uncle George can't. But right now I wouldn't mind leaving him behind...

WROOOOROOOO WROOOOROOOO! RED and BLUE LIGHTS highlight the surprise on their faces as SHERIFF EUSTICE HUNT (40's) climbs from the Patrol Car. SHOTGUN in hand.

SHERIFF HUNT

You in the car. Get out. And everybody come around to the back of the vehicle. Slowly now.

Our Heroes wrestle with their SHOCK and FEAR as they do what they're told. Once they're lined up at Woody's bumper --

SHERIFF HUNT (CONT'D)

Who are you?

GEORGE

My name's George Freeman, sir, and this here's my nephew Atticus and his friend Letitia.

SHERIFF HUNT

Where are you all from?

GEORGE

Chicago.

SHERIFF HUNT

You're a long way from home.

GEORGE

We're just passing through, sir. Taking a little bathroom break.

Hunt turns. The barrel of his Shotgun landing on George. He's not pointing it at him, but he's pointing it at him.

SHERIFF HUNT

Any of you all know what a sundown town is?

Just the mention of it has Our Heroes ANXIETY spiking --

GEORGE

Yes sir we do.

SHERIFF HUNT

Well this here is a sundown *county*. If I had found you pissing in my woods like animals after dark, it'd be my sworn duty to hang every single one of you from these trees.

ATTICUS

It's not sundown yet.

George and Leti stop breathing. Hunt moves in front of Atticus now. The Shotgun barrel pointing but not pointing at him. Their look holds. Aggressive and combative.

SHERIFF HUNT

Sunset is at 7:09 today. That's seven minutes from now.

ATTICUS

Then we'll be out of the county in six.

SHERIFF HUNT

Now that's impossible heading south on the road you're currently on. Not unless you speed. And if you speed, I'd have to pull you over.

ATTICUS

Then we'll head north.

Hunt considers. For a good. Long. Beat. Knowing he's wasting precious time.

SHERIFF HUNT

That might work. Why don't you give it a try.

Our Heroes move to get into Woody. Atticus walks backwards. Just in case Hunt's fixing to shoot them in the back. He gets to the driver's side --

ATTICUS

Move over. I'm driving.

Neither George or Leti question that as they slide over. Atticus is about to climb in, when something occurs to him --

ATTICUS (CONT'D)

Is it legal for me to make a U-turn here?

SHERIFF HUNT

Well aren't you a smart one. Ordinarily I'd consider a U-turn a violation, but if you ask me real nice, I might just let this one go.

Atticus grits his teeth --

ATTICUS

Please.

SHERIFF HUNT

You can do better than that. Say "pretty please will you let this smart nigger make a U-turn here."

It really takes Atticus a moment this time, then --

ATTICUS

Pretty. *Please*. Will you let this smart nigger, make a U-turn here.

Hunt considers. Running some more of the clock out. Finally --

SHERIFF HUNT

Alright. Just this one time. Since you asked so nicely.

Atticus climbs into Woody. Hunt climbs into his Patrol Car. U-turn's are made. Hunt riding Woody's bumper the entire time. And an unbearably slow "chase" sequence ensues...

50

INT. WOODY - DAY

50

...for the ENTIRETY of the five minutes they've got till the sun goes down. Atticus drives just a hair under the speed limit. Itching to speed up. Leti keeps watch out the rear window. George pulls out his MAPS. Pours over them --

GEORGE

We've got two kilometers till the county line.

LETI

Can we make that?

GEORGE

Wait, I'm sorry, it's actually three, pass the railroad tracks...

His hands SHAKE. He's terrified. They all are. Atticus eyes the SPEED LIMIT SIGN --

ATTICUS

What time is it?

GEORGE

7:05.

LETI

We can make it, right?

A DREAD SILENCE. Neither Atticus or George can muster up enough to lie right now. Leti spies the Sheriff's Patrol Car behind them --

LETI (CONT'D)

Here he comes.

ATTICUS

Shit...

GEORGE

Oh lord...

George checks his watch again --

GEORGE (CONT'D)

We still got two and half minutes...

As the Patrol Car GAINS, Leti nervously taps Atticus's shoulder, needing him to speed up --

LETI

Can you go faster?

ATTICUS

Naw we can't go faster, he's gonna pull us over.

He eyes the speedometer, dangerously close to the speed limit.

LETI

He's speeding up --

GEORGE

What is he doing?

LETI

I don't know --

BANG! The Sheriff BUMPS Woody with his Patrol Car.

GEORGE

Crazy bastard --

LETI

Son of a bitch --

As Leti watches the Patrol Car speed up again --

LETI (CONT'D)

He's coming again --

The Patrol Car rams into them, but this time the Sheriff doesn't let up. The Patrol Car rides Woody's bumper as Atticus watches the speedometer climb.

He puts his foot on the gas, speeding up just enough to get the Patrol Car off their ass. Looks in the rearview mirror --

Sheriff Hunt WHISTLES as he drives, not a care in the world. Enjoying every second of this.

ATTICUS

Leti, get the gun.

Leti maneuvers to get the GUN from under the seat beneath her. George eyes his Watch. Looks to his nephew --

GEORGE

We got a minute...

That washes over them all. Time's running out, but there's nothing to do now but drive. And they drive in SILENCE for a very long time -- Leti grips the gun in her lap. Dreading having to use it. George's eyes stay glued on his watch. Atticus looks from the rearview to the road in front of them.

It's unbearably TENSE, until -- the RAILROAD TRACKS come into view! A surge of HOPE --

ATTICUS

There's the tracks...

GEORGE

Watch your speed.

But the sun seems to be disappearing on the horizon faster than they're closing the distance.

LETI

How much time we got?

GEORGE

Thirty seconds...

The distance left between them and the tracks feels like an eternity...

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Fifteen seconds... ten seconds...

Finally -- they sail over the train tracks.

Leti looks back to see the Patrol Car stopping at the tracks, and -- they all go weak with RELIEF. They made it.

DARKNESS falls as Atticus navigates a turn, and -- he's BLINDED by the HIGH BEAMS of PATROL CARS blocking the road!

Atticus slams the brakes. Woody whines to a halt inches from impact. And in the next instance --

Both the station wagon's doors are thrown open. Our Heroes are dragged out by HUNT'S DEPUTIES (EASTCHURCH, TALBOT, DALTON, JIMMY) at SHOTGUN point. They were lying in wait. Hunt had no intention of letting them go...

51 **EXT. WOODS - NIGHT**

51

Pervasive BLACKNESS. Our Heroes are marched through the woods. Single file. Hands on their heads. A Deputy with a Shotgun and a FLASHLIGHT at each of their backs.

Sheriff Hunt leads the way. DREAD and TENSION increases with each step. It's dead quiet except for their heavy breathing and the sound of their footsteps.

Hunt stops in a CLEARING. His Deputies force Our Heroes onto their stomachs in the dirt as he walks the line, shining the BRIGHT flashlight in each of their faces.

SHERIFF HUNT

What I tell you, Eastchurch? I knew they'd strike again tonight.

EASTCHURCH

You said they'd be gypsies, Sheriff.

Our Heroes quake with FEAR and ADRENALINE as Hunt continues --

SHERIFF HUNT

They're travelers that's for sure.

TALBOT

Unless the car's stolen.

Atticus discreetly surveys the area. Trying to find some way out of this. But they're outnumbered and outgunned.

SHERIFF HUNT

That's a fair point Talbot. How about it? You all really from Illinois?

GEORGE

Sir, I don't know who you were lying in wait for here, but this is a misunderstanding --

Hunt cuts him off. Intent on playing judge, jury, and most of all executioner tonight --

SHERIFF HUNT

Of course it is. Let me finish the rest for you. When I ask you about a burglary in Bideford last night, or two others in Bucks Mill last week, you're going to say, "What burglaries, Sheriff? We're just passing through."

ATTICUS

Sheriff Hunt...

All Shotguns angle towards him slightly. Atticus keeps talking. Stalling --

ATTICUS (CONT'D)

My uncle is right. This is just a misunderstanding. We aren't burglars. Or car thieves. You can go ahead and check the car for stolen goods --

SHERIFF HUNT

Dalton, tell me I didn't just hear that. Did this nigger just give me *permission* to search his car?

DALTON

I believe he might have, Sheriff.

SHERIFF HUNT

This one thinks he's smart. But tell me, if you're just passing through, why do you know my name?

Our Heroes TENSE. Atticus slipped up. Hunt grabs him by the collar, pressing his Shotgun barrel under Atticus's chin --

SHERIFF HUNT (CONT'D)

Answer me.

LETI

Please don't shoot --

She cries out as Talbot grabs her hair and pulls her head back into the cold barrel of his Shotgun. Dalton does the same to George. Just in case he's getting any ideas.

BRAAAAAUAAACCCCK! An UNNATURAL SOUND. Somewhere between a GROWL and a WHALE'S MATING CALL. GUTTURAL. HARSH. HUNGRY.

It came from the woods to the left. Jimmy swings the flashlight around to search the shadows between the trees.

JIMMY

What was that?

SHERIFF HUNT

Keep your guns on them. Probably just wolves --

BRAAAAAUAAACCCCK! BRAAAAAUAAACCCCK! BRAAAAAUAAACCCCK!

From every direction. The Deputies turn in circles. Not knowing which way to point their Shotguns. Our Heroes are paralyzed with fear. Not knowing which way to run.

SUDDENLY -- everything goes QUIET. Calm-before-the-storm type quiet, and -- something SNATCHES Dalton up by his head in the BLINK OF AN EYE!

His BLOOD and VISCOUS rains down on Our Heroes. His SEVERED arm still gripping his FLASHLIGHT the only thing left of him. Whatever got him was fast. INHUMANELY FAST.

ATTICUS

Go -- RUN.

BANG! BANG! Hunt and his Deputies fire at whatever's attacking them as everyone hauls ass to get away.

In the melee, George is **KNOCKED DOWN**, landing in the glow of the severed hand's Flashlight...

52 **EXT. ANOTHER PART OF THE - WOODS - NIGHT**

52

Atticus blazes a path. Leti right behind him. Hunt and his remaining Deputies bring up the rear. The **FLASHLIGHTS** in their hands bob wildly. Creating a **STROBE-LIKE** effect in the darkness that provides glimpses of the "**SHOGGOTHS**" chasing them -- massive, razor sharp teeth, unnaturally pale skin.

BANG! BANG! BANG! The Shotguns are barely keeping the "Shoggoths" at bay. Atticus spots a **CABIN** in the distance --

ATTICUS

We need to get out of the open...

He takes off in that direction, and without warning -- he DROPS out of sight! *What the fuck?*

53 **EXT. GORGE BEFORE THE CABIN IN THE - WOODS - NIGHT**

53

Atticus **TUMBLES** down. Splashes into a small inlet. The wind knocked out of him. As Leti slides down, followed by Hunt and his Deputies, Atticus is finally struck by -- the ABSENCE. **PANIC** riots his features --

ATTICUS

Where's Uncle George!?!

"Shoggoths" have reached the gorge now. Leti grabs Atticus's arm, pulling him toward the cabin as Hunt and his Deputies fire everything they've got at the unrelenting monsters.

Talbot is **SPEARED** from behind by a "Shoggoth", and -- the stray blast from his Shotgun takes half of Jimmy's head off!

As Sheriff Hunt is **BITTEN** by another, and Eastchurch turns his Flashlight and Shotgun on the monster to save his boss...

54 **EXT. CABIN IN THE - WOODS - NIGHT**

54

Dilapidated. Rotting wood. Clearly abandoned for some time. Atticus and Leti scramble onto the porch, and...

55 **INT. CABIN IN THE - WOODS - NIGHT**

55

...bust inside, slamming the door behind them. They barely have a traumatized beat, before -- **BANG! BANG! BANG!**

SHERIFF HUNT (O.S.)

Let us in --

Atticus and Leti have no intention of doing that, but --

KA-BLAM! A shotgun shell BLASTS through the door right between them!

Hunt, a big chunk of his shoulder gone from the "Shoggoth" bite, shoves his Shotgun in Atticus face --

SHERIFF HUNT (CONT'D)

Move --

As he busts down the door and bounds in with Eastchurch...

56 **EXT. WOODS - NIGHT**

56

All's QUIET. George is on full alert. Moving as silently and as fast as his injured knees will allow. He's got the blood covered severed hand Flashlight. The only source of light in the pitch black. It's unbearably TENSE as he scans the trees all around him for any signs of "Shoggoths"...

57 **INT. CABIN IN THE - WOODS - NIGHT**

57

Hunt wraps a makeshift TOURNIQUET around his shoulder as Eastchurch boards up the door with a manic intensity. Atticus is staggered by the loss of his uncle. Leti can see the desperate wheels turning in his head --

LETI

You can't go back out there.

ATTICUS

He could still be alive.

He moves with purpose, but finds Hunt's Shotgun in his face --

SHERIFF HUNT

I'm not going to risk you leading any of those things back here.

58 **EXT. GORGE BEFORE THE CABIN IN THE - WOODS - NIGHT**

58

George splashes through the inlet. Scanning all around with his Flashlight. He SMELLS it a beat before he comes upon it -- a trail of BLOODY VISCOUS, then -- TALBOTS EVISCERATED BODY!

59 **INT. CABIN IN THE - WOODS - NIGHT**

59

Shotgun to head stand off. Atticus doesn't back down --

ATTICUS

You can't shoot me. The gunshot'll bring those things right to you.

Hunt knows Atticus is right. And it just pisses him off more. Leti's on edge as the moment stretches, finally --

EASTCHURCH

There's someone coming...

Atticus and Leti's hearts leap. *Could it be...?* Atticus looks through the blast hole in the door --

ATTICUS

Uncle George...

RELIEF floods his body. He pushes shit out of the way to get the door open. Leti embraces a shaken and stirred George as he stumbles in --

LETI

Are you okay?

GEORGE

Depends on your definition of okay.

Eastchurch could care less about this reunion. He dives into boarding up the door again.

ATTICUS

I thought you were right behind us --

GEORGE

I got knocked down and stayed down until the coast was clear.

Hunt adjusts his injured arm as he interjects --

SHERIFF HUNT

Well aren't you a lucky nigger. Those things got four of my men --

LETI

What are those "things"? It tore that man's head off, like...

...nothing she's ever seen. That question hangs until George says what nobody else can bring themselves to say --

GEORGE

They're monsters. Ripped right out of the pages of a pulp novel.

SHERIFF HUNT

Monsters don't exist.

ATTICUS

It doesn't matter what they are. We need to fight them. We need weapons --

EASTCHURCH

Our shotgun shells barely grazed
them --

BRAAAAAUAAACCCCK! The unnatural growls echo through the
trees around them. Could be coming from anywhere.

GEORGE

*"Listen to them, the children of the
night. What music they make..."*

SHERIFF HUNT

What's he muttering about?

ATTICUS

It's a quote from Dracula.

George's mind is turning. A hypothesis formulating. He is
the horror buff in the family after all --

GEORGE

None of them attacked me and all I
had was this flashlight...

LETI

You think these things are like
vampires?

Both Atticus and George are surprised Leti picked up the
genre ball and ran with it.

LETI (CONT'D)

I've read some books too.
(off their skepticism:)
Okay fine, I saw the movie. Go on...

GEORGE

If I'm right, and light hurts them,
it would also explain why we've been
driving around these woods all day
and didn't encounter one until the
sun went down.

Atticus takes his uncle's ball and runs with it --

ATTICUS

So we just need to survive until
sunup. And find more light til then.

LETI

There's flares in Woody.

GEORGE

And the headlights would help too.

Atticus turns to Hunt --

ATTICUS
Where are the cars from here?

Hunt's being petulant, but Eastchurch's fear is pushing past his racism --

EASTCHURCH
They're parked about fifty feet
through the woods behind this cabin.

BRAAAAAUAAACCCCK! BRAAAAAUAAACCCCK! BRAAAAAUAAACCCCK!

GEORGE
Those were closer.

BIG NEW URGENCY now. Atticus steps up like the motherfucking hero that he is --

ATTICUS
I'll go. I'll make a run for the
car.

SHERIFF HUNT
No you won't. You're too smart for
your own good. Might get the idea
in your head to leave us behind.
(pointing his Shotgun
at Leti:)
She'll go.

Atticus and George step between Leti and the barrel --

ATTICUS
Not a chance in hell.

GEORGE
It's too dangerous.

SHERIFF HUNT
I wasn't askin' --

Hunt cocks his shotgun. But Leti steps between the men --

LETI
I can do it. I was all-star track
in high school, remember? Plus Tic,
I know you say you don't need those
glasses to drive at night, but I
don't think this is really the time
to test it.

She swallows hard. Terrified, but trying to hide it. Hunt motions to George with the Shotgun --

SHERIFF HUNT

I'll take that flashlight. Just in case your theory's correct.

As George hands the Flashlight over, Atticus pulls Leti to the side, lowers his voice --

ATTICUS

You run as fast as you can. No looking back. And if you hear gunshots, don't come back. You drive for help.

She's SHAKING like a leaf. PRAYING under her breath --

LETI

Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me...

ATTICUS

Leti, you hear me?

LETI

I'm fucking terrified. You don't even seem scared. Is that something they teach you in the army?

Atticus takes her by the shoulders. Locks eyes with her --

ATTICUS

I'm not scared because fear isn't going to save us. You are.

Said without an inch of doubt. And damnit, if she doesn't BELIEVE him. She could kiss him right now, but --

60 **EXT. WOODS - NIGHT**

60

Leti RUNS like Jackie Joyner. Full out. Vaulting over fallen trees. Branches whipping at her face. No looking back...

61 **INT. CABIN IN THE - WOODS - NIGHT**

61

Atticus and Eastchurch are at windows. Eyes between the board slats. Keeping a look out. Poised for a fight.

George is supposed to be doing the same, but his eyes are on Hunt in the corner with that Shotgun and Flashlight. The Sheriff's stifling a COUGH. PALE. SWEATING. Worse for the wear. *Blood loss from his wound, or is it something more?*

George moves to Atticus. Keeps his voice low --

GEORGE

What happens when you get bitten by
a vampire?

Atticus looks to his uncle. Answers that question in his head. Which has his gaze warily turning to the radically DETERIORATING Hunt...

62 **EXT. ROAD ALONG THE EDGE OF THE - WOODS - NIGHT**

62

Leti blasts from the trees. Slows to get her bearings. Spies the COUNTY LINE SIGN down the road. Woody parked just beyond it.

A FAMILIAR BEAT FADES UP and even before VINCENT PRICE'S voice pipes in we recognize the king of pop's ode to genre --

"The foulest stench is in the air, the funk of forty thousand years..."

Leti senses something behind her. She turns to an empty dark road. But something is off. She squints at the STARRY NIGHT SKY in the distance, and it MOVES because -- the stars are really the "Shoggoth's" eyes!

"And grizzly ghouls from every tomb are closing in to seal your doom..."

Leti takes off for Woody. The "Shoggoth" in HOT PURSUIT...

63 **INT. CABIN IN THE - WOODS - NIGHT**

63

"And though you fight to stay alive your body starts to shiver..."

Hunt sets the flashlight down. Overtaken by COUGHS. Vicious hacks that wrack his body. Eastchurch moves towards him --

EASTCHURCH

Sheriff, you okay...

Atticus and George keep their distance. Atticus pulls out Leti's SWITCHBLADE. Motions for George to move for the Flashlight when he has a chance.

"For no mere mortal can resist the evil of the thriller..."

Hunt's eyes ROLL back into his head. His spine WRITHES. His limbs CONVULSE and shoot straight out like iron. HOLY SHIT. Atticus and George might have suspected it, but actually seeing Hunt TRANSFORMING into one of those things --

ATTICUS

Shoot him --

EASTCHURCH

I can't --

ATTICUS

Fuckin' shoot him --

EASTCHURCH

He's my boss --

ATTICUS

Give me the gun --

Atticus reaches out, but Eastchurch turns the Shotgun on him --

EASTCHURCH

Shut up, or I'll shoot you --

SUDDENLY -- Hunt attacks Eastchurch, RIPPING his head off!

As Atticus and George SCRAMBLE to fight, "THRILLER" will drive us through the following BEDLAM --

64 **EXT. ROAD ALONG THE EDGE OF THE - WOODS - NIGHT**

64

Leti runs all out towards Woody. The "Shoggoth" closing the distance between them FAST. She wrenches the door open. Breathless from fleeing. Dives into the Packard. The KEYS are still in the ignition. She turns the car over --

LETI

Come on. Goddamnit come on...

The "Shoggoth" is almost upon her. She reaches into the back seat. Comes back with -- her camera. *SNAP!* The FLASH.

The "Shoggoth" is illuminated through the windshield for half a second. Just a GLIMPSE of its GROTESQUE FEATURES, then -- it DISAPPEARS into the shadows.

Leti turns the car again. It finally catches. The headlights BLINKING on, and -- a "SHOGGOTH" lands right on the hood!

Leti SWERVES off. As the "Shoggoth" goes flying...

65 **INT. CABIN IN THE - WOODS - NIGHT**

65

Atticus and George are a strong team but "Shoggoth" Hunt fights with a psychotic disregard for his deformed body.

George moves for the abandoned FLASHLIGHT as Atticus attempts to wrestle the Shotgun from "Shoggoth" Hunt's grip --

BOOM! The shotgun shell blows a hole through the ceiling as "Shoggoth" Hunt twists the barrel away from Atticus, and -- WHIRLS on George just as he aims the Flashlight --

SMACK! "Shoggoth" Hunt KNOCKS OUT George with the Shotgun!

As he goes down for the count -- Atticus STABS "Shoggoth" Hunt in the neck from behind, but it might as well have been a pin prick as "Shoggoth" Hunt stays on task -- CRUSHING the fallen Flashlight.

He whirls at Atticus, snapping at his neck with all his new teeth. Atticus struggles to keep from being bitten as "Shoggoth" Hunt's jaw unhinges past the normal human limit --

BRAAAAAUAAACCCCK! The unnatural noise coming from Hunt's HALF-HUMAN FORM is terrifying. Things are not looking good for Atticus --

HOOOOOOONK! A FLOOD OF LIGHT breaks through the cracks of the boarded up cabin. Atticus hits "Shoggoth" Hunt with a HAYMAKER, and dives out of the way just as --

CRASHHHHHH! Woody slams through the front of the cabin and right into "Shoggoth" Hunt!

He rolls onto the hood, and -- Atticus is there -- WRESTLING him down into the glare of Woody's HIGH BEAMS --

Vincent Price's ICONIC EVIL LAUGH at the end of "THRILLER" punctuates the moment as -- "SHOGGOTH" HUNT DARTS OUT A HOLE IN THE CABIN WALL, DISAPPEARING!

A frozen beat. George is still unconscious. Woody's half in the cabin, half out, definitely not driving anywhere soon. Leti's dazed from hitting her head in the crash. And Atticus is dazed because he just battled the asshole racist sheriff that turned into a monster. And speaking of monsters --

BRAAAAAUAAACCCCK! BRAAAAAUAAACCCCK! BRAAAAAUAAACCCCK!

They're still coming.

ATTICUS

Get the flares --

He's already reaching through the shattered passenger window to grab -- his father's COLT. Leti, every muscle in her body screaming, climbs into the back. Shit's everywhere. *Where the fuck are the flares?*

BLAM! BLAM! BLAM! Atticus shoots at the "Shoggoths" attacking from all sides as he drags his unconscious Uncle towards the safety of Woody's high beams.

FSSSH! Leti's finally found the flares. Lights one just in time to scare the "Shoggoth" at Woody's rear window away.

CLICK! Atticus is out of bullets, George now safely in the glow of the headlights. Leti tosses him the Flares.

FSSSH! FSSSH! He lights them up as she climbs from Woody. Tossing them around the cabin to create a HALO of light...

66 **EXT. CABIN IN THE - WOODS - NIGHT**

66

The "Shoggoths" have the cabin surrounded on all sides. Their HUNDREDS OF BLINKING EYES and SHARP TEETH just inches outside of the light. Creeping forward every time the flares dim. Waiting. Ready. For the moment they go out.

IN THE CABIN

Atticus and Leti are ready too. So fucking ready. They're going to take all of these motherfuckers with them to the grave if they go --

A HIGH PITCH WHISTLE from some far away, unseen place...

OUTSIDE THE CABIN

...and the "Shoggoths" disperse. Just like that. All the menace in them gone as they causally saunter off.

INSIDE THE CABIN

Atticus and Leti can't believe what they're seeing. They remain with their Flares out like swords. Still on high alert even though it seems the danger has passed...for now.

67 **EXT. WOODS - DAY**

67

VAMPIRE MORNING. A misty predawn bled of color. Our Heroes, beyond EXHAUSTED, clearly changed forever, crest the top of an embankment to take in the RIVER snaking around

ARDHAM.

It's storybook picturesque. A Hobbit shire surrounds a GRAND LODGE on a hill overlooking it all...

68 **EXT. ARDHAM VILLAGE - DAY**

68

Our Heroes trudge through the PROVINCIAL TOWN -- quaint COTTAGES with smoke coming from the chimneys, CHICKENS clucking around free, what looks like QUAKERS going about their morning routines through open shutters.

No one pays Our Heroes any mind as they climb the hill to...

69 **EXT. ARDHAM LODGE - DAY**

69

A lavish fortress. Our Heroes wind the gravel driveway towards the massive front doors. Atticus notices first the

SILVER DAIMLER

parked in one of the many parking stalls, then the

GOLD SUNDIAL

engraved above the front doors to the lodge, just like the one from Diana's Atlas.

George KNOCKS. And they wait. Exhausted, but ready. Ready for whatever's waiting to greet them behind this door. They've made it this far, they're ready for anything.

The heavy doors open, REVEALING --

THE PERFECT MALE SPECIMEN FOR THE ARYAN RACE (20'S).

We'll come to know him as WILLIAM. And the astute viewer will notice he's wearing the same IMPECCABLY TAILORED SUIT as Christina Braithwhite.

His cold blue eyes take in our BEAT UP, BRUISED, and BLOODIED black Heroes, and...

He SMILES. Warmly. Genuinely. Looks to Atticus --

WILLIAM

We've been expecting you Mister
Freeman, welcome home...

SMASH TO BLACK.

TO BE CONTINUED...

APPENDIX A

INT. KITCHEN - MARVIN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Leti clears the table as Marvin washes dishes. There's a tangible vibe between the two. They're no longer keeping up appearances for company --

MARVIN
You seen Ruby?

LETI
Yes.

MARVIN
So I'm the second stop this time.
How'd I get so lucky?

Leti tries to laugh off his disdain --

LETI
The way you and Ruby talk, makes it
seem like a crime to visit family.

She hands him dirty dishes with a smile. He doesn't soften --

MARVIN
So how long's this "visit" supposed
to be?

LETI
I was hoping a few weeks. Enough to
get a job and on my feet again. And
I can help you around here. Do some
cooking, cleaning --

MARVIN
What'd you do with the money I wired
to DC two months ago?

Leti pauses. She knew he'd bring this up. Treads lightly --

LETI
I saved it. That's what I used to
get the bus to Ruby --

MARVIN
Not all of it, you didn't. I'm not
stupid, Letitia --

Leti's tired of being chastised. Her voice raises sharply --

LETI
Fine.
(MORE)

LETI (CONT'D)

Okay, I used it to bail some friends out of jail. But it's not what you think --

MARVIN

Somehow it never is with you --

LETI

We were protesting the school segregation --

MARVIN

It doesn't matter what you were doing --

LETI

Yes it does. The work I'm a part of now is changing lives --

MARVIN

You told me you needed that money to come home for momma's funeral.

Leti swallows that. *Here we go again.* Marvin can't believe his half-sister's callousness --

MARVIN (CONT'D)

How could you miss your own momma's funeral --

LETI

I'm sick of you and Ruby acting like she was a goddamn saint --

MARVIN

Watch your mouth when you speak to me --

Leti shakes her head in exasperation --

LETI

You're both impossible...

MARVIN

We're impossible? You only show up when you need something --

LETI

So did momma, but y'all forgive her for everything --

MARVIN

That's not true --

LETI

Yes it is. At least I get it with you, you didn't really have to grow up with her --

MARVIN

I spent summers in Chicago --

LETI

Barely. And then you got to come back here to this nice big house with your father. Ruby and I didn't have that option.

MARVIN

And how's that my fault?

LETI

I'm not saying it is. Just that I don't need a fucking lecture from you on momma --

Marvin SLAMS a dish into the sink in frustration --

MARVIN

I told you to watch your mouth --

Leti rolls her eyes to that. Done with this conversation --

LETI

Goodnight, Marvin.

She turns to leave, but Marvin GRABS her arm --

MARVIN

Don't you walk away from me --

She TWISTS her arm in his grip. Pushes him away --

LETI

Let go of my arm, you're hurting me...

A tense beat. This could escalate physically, but -- Marvin lets her go. Stalks past her. Leti stares at the Shattered Dish in the sink, EMOTION welling as a door SLAMS somewhere in the house...