



LOVECRAFT



AMERICA'S
DEMONS
EXPOSED!

COUNTRY

EPISODE #101

"SUNDOWN"

WRITTEN BY

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BASED ON THE NOVEL BY

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STUDIO/NETWORK 05/22/18



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

1 **EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - KOREA - NIGHT**

...CHAOS. The D-Day version of the KOREAN WAR mashed up with every PULP NOVEL MONSTER in existence -- AMERICAN TROOPS fight KOREAN GUERRILLAS, "PRINCESS OF MARS"-like ALIENS, and LOVECRAFTIAN MONSTERS.

The VOICE OVER from "The Jackie Robinson Story" breaks through --

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

ATTICUS BLACK (MID 20'S) is on a RAMPAGE. Killing monsters. Dodging Guerillas. Badass. And SCARED OUT OF HIS MIND.

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

Atticus stops. Covered in BLOOD and monster VISCIOUS. Marvels at the carnage around him. Americans and Koreans doggedly fight each other despite the Monsters slaughtering them all.

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

A HALF-NAKED KOREAN-ALIEN HYBRID (MOON JI-AH) floats through the melee towards Atticus. 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-A

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."

BAM! The monster is hit by a baseball bat. A home run swing. From #42 himself -- JACKIE MOTHERFUCKIN' ROBINSON. *

#42

Hey kid, I got this. *

As Atticus watches his American hero pulverize the monster to save the day...**BAM! BAM! B--** *

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

--AM! Atticus wakes as the bus rumbles across a slatted 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 sign -- "**THIS PART OF THE BUS FOR THE COLORED RACE.**" Across the aisle a *

ROSA PARK'S LOOK-A-LIKE (60's) *

hums as she knits. She notices Atticus's eyes drift out the window. To the rolling **COUNTRYSIDE** --

ROSA PARK'S LOOK-A-LIKE
Just passed over another bridge named
after some dead slave owner. Finally
made it to the promise 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 --

BAM! A blown tire. The bus limps to the side of the road... *

3 **EXT. INDIANA COUNTRYSIDE - DAY**

The **SCORCHING SUN** beats down on the **BUS DRIVER** fretting over the shredded tire 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. 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. Bus Driver wears a TRIUMPHANT smile as he climbs from the cab with the DRIVER (LADS). Atticus is finally drawn from his book --

BUS DRIVER

Listen up everybody. Mister Lads here has kindly offered to drive us to the Glen Falls station.

Atticus does not share the FRUSTRATED RELIEF that rolls through the heat stroked Bus Riders as Bus Driver continues --

BUS DRIVER (CONT'D)

It'll be a tight fit with everyone, but the station's only six miles away. It should be an easy ride...

Lads spots Atticus. His eyes NARROW. Belying Bus Driver's promise of easy...

4

EXT. INDIANA COUNTRYSIDE - MOMENTS LATER

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

ATTICUS

Let me get those for you.

ROSA PARK'S LOOK-A-LIKE

Appreciate it...

ATTICUS

Atticus.

ROSA PARK'S LOOK-A-LIKE

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.

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 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.

MAYBELLE

If I have to walk, I'll be fine.

ATTICUS

You shouldn't have to be fine.

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? *

He waits as Lads considers, finally --

MISTER LADS

Hundred dollars.

ATTICUS

One hundred? 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

None I'mma give him.

Atticus gives her a look. Help him out here. She admits --

MAYBELLE (CONT'D)

My daughter gave me just enough to get to her in Chicago.

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

ATTICUS

I only have thirty dollars.

Lads eyes Atticus's Duffel at his feet --

MISTER LADS

What's in there? Anything worth anything?

ATTICUS

Just some 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, eager to end this uncomfortable show, 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**

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.

There's no way Atticus is going to let Maybelle carry anything. 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 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 --

ATTICUS (CONT'D)

Because of the lower gravity on Mars Carter has super human strength, which is why the Tharks, these six armed green martian warriors, respect him so much. And the Tharks, they kidnap Dejah Thoris. She's the princess of Helium. Which is a city of these red humanoid martians. And of course they fall in love --

MAYBELLE

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

Atticus hears the indictment in that --

ATTICUS

Ex-confederate, but yes.

MAYBELLE

Naw. He fought for slavery.

(MORE)

MAYBELLE (CONT'D)

You don't get to put an ex in front of that.

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

MAYBELLE (CONT'D)

Something about that funny?

ATTICUS

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. 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.
(MORE)

ATTICUS (CONT'D)

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.

OFF this black boy from the Southside of Chicago, our HERO,
destined for a life he never thought possible. A life of
adventures, defying odds, and saving the day...

SMASH TO TITLES:

L O V E C R A F T C O U N T R Y

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

DRIFT through the safe haven that is the black enclave of
the Southside -- black owned BUSINESSES, carefree black
CHILDREN, black COPS -- to the dope beat of the SONG Chicago's
own CHANCE THE RAPPER is going to write for us. *

Find an unassuming building. Once a mechanic's garage. Now
the home of SAFE NEGRO TRAVEL...

7 **INT. BEDROOM - APARTMENT ABOVE SAFE NEGRO TRAVEL - DAY** *

GEORGE BLACK (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 Black?

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 Black, 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 doesn't even consider it. Not even for a second --

GEORGE

The road is too dangerous for a woman traveling alone.

HIPPOLYTA

A woman or me?

GEORGE

Any woman. *

He separates from her. Turns on his back. His hand MASSAGING his right knee. A nervous tick activated by dark memories -- *

GEORGE (CONT'D)

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 sweet potatoes 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 Diana's up. How thin these walls are... (trying a different tact:)

If you distract me now, I'm going to need your help slicing those sweet potatoes. *

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...

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

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 PULL OUT SOFA, currently inhabited by *

DIANA "DEE" BLACK (12) *

sketching in her SPIRAL NOTEBOOK. Drawing a COMIC. BLACK SUPERHEROES. BLACK VILLAINS. She's good. The work similar to RONALD WIMBERLY'S, and if we're lucky, it will be. *

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.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Well I'll be damned...

HIPPOLYTA (O.S.)

George Black, 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 his second son...

9 **INT. OFFICE OF - SAFE NEGRO TRAVEL - DAY**

The garage is lined on all sides by overflowing BOOKCASES. It's still not enough. There are BOOKS of all sizes tucked in every nook and cranny. Any space not occupied by a book is covered by MAPS, both TOPOGRAPHICAL and ASTROLOGICAL, or SCAVENGED METAL for the HALF-CONSTRUCTED ROBOT in the corner.

Atticus scans the books on a shelf. Pulls *THE OUTSIDER AND OTHERS* by H.P. LOVECRAFT. Looks at the ARKHAM HOUSE IMPRINT on the spine. His eyes DARKEN. This symbol troubles him.

GEORGE (O.S.)

Getting reacquainted with old friends?

George enters with COFFEE. Atticus sets the book down --

ATTICUS

Something like that.

GEORGE

Hippolyta's making you some breakfast. Just eggs. I know it's not the exotic Korean delicacies you're probably used to, or what is it down in Florida? Alligator...?

Atticus LAUGHS. They have an easy way between them. The kind no amount of distance or time can erode.

ATTICUS

"Just eggs" sounds perfect.

George picks up the Book --

GEORGE

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

ATTICUS

"On the Creation of Niggers".

GEORGE

Excuse me?

ATTICUS

It's a poem. One of Howard Phillips Lovecraft's you can't find in most libraries. Pop made me memorize it after he found me reading that. Thought it might turn me from the pulp trash I'd barrow from here to respectable literature.

*
*
*
*
*

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

GEORGE

He's been missing for about two weeks now.

ATTICUS

About? You're not sure.

GEORGE

I haven't seen him in months. Not since the first game of the season. We didn't even make it through the second inning.

*

ATTICUS

What were you fighting about?

GEORGE

You know your father. A difference of opinion that turned into character assassination.

George doesn't meet his gaze. There's more to it than that, but Atticus doesn't pry as his uncle continues --

*

GEORGE (CONT'D)

His landlady called when he didn't pay rent. I spoke to a few of his friends, but none of them have seen him. I don't know where he could have gone.

*

ATTICUS

I might have an idea. He wrote me.

He pulls out that WORN ENVELOPE. The one that's more than just a bookmark. George's non-reaction has Atticus realizing --

ATTICUS (CONT'D)

You knew.

GEORGE

He asked for your address awhile back.

ATTICUS

I haven't talked to pops in almost five years, and out of the blue he wants to write me, and you didn't think to mention it?

GEORGE

Last time I checked, arguably, you and Montrose are both adults. If you want to communicate it shouldn't have to go through me.

That's a fair point. Atticus pushes past it --

ATTICUS

He wrote about my mom.

George TENSES. But just ever so subtly. Atticus doesn't notice as he opens the letter and slips on his glasses --

*

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, huh? I thought he had given up when she passed.

Atticus 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. You cannot. The past is alive, a living, thing. You own -- owe it. Now I have found something about your mother's... forebears. You have a sacred -- a secret -- legacy, a birthright which has 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 yet. 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

Arkham? Home of the corpse re-animator and Herbert West? *

ATTICUS

And the university that sponsored the fossil-hunting expedition into the mountains of madness.

GEORGE

Lovecraft based it on Salem, but it's not real.

ATTICUS

Are 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

Positive. Let me see the letter.

Atticus hands it over. 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 he'd learn how to write clearly.

GEORGE

You didn't actually believe Arkham
really existed, did you?

Atticus laughs at himself --

ATTICUS

No. I guess I've just been reading
too many stories. Letting my
imagination run wild. You know, I
actually had a dream monsters were
real on the bus ride down here.

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

GEORGE

Well, this Ardham is a real place.
And I'm going to look into it. But
it might take me a bit, I'm helping
Hippolyta with her pies.

Atticus nods. Returns *THE OUTSIDER AND OTHERS* to the shelf --

ATTICUS

When you talked to pop's "friends",
any of them from Denmark Vesey's?

George cuts him a look --

GEORGE

I've been a family man for years, I
steer clear of that part of town...

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

Atticus walks his old neighborhood. Nothing and everything
has changed. Conflicting emotions bubbling as he takes in...

1) An **ARMY RECRUITMENT OFFICE** down the street from Safe Negro
Travel. **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...

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

..and is greeted by a six-foot-six BOUNCER (TREE) tossing a DRUNK out on his ass. The Drunk moves to come back at Tree, but the bouncer raises his shirt, REVEALING -- the GUN in his waistband. *
*
*

TREE

Man, try me.

The Drunk reluctantly backs off as Atticus heads inside -- *

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

Dimly lit. SMOKE filled. Occupied by ALL-DAY DRINKERS.

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.

TREE

You used to run into walls with your head always stuck in them books. Man, where your glasses --

Atticus notices it's EMPTY behind the bar --

ATTICUS

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. You can go right down that hall through the red door...

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

13

EXT. ALLEY BEHIND - DENMARK VESEY'S - DAY

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, but Atticus doesn't notice, he's too busy looking to the door -- *

ATTICUS

Should we go back inside?

SAMMY

Don't worry, ain't nobody going to get any ideas, you ain't my type. And Tree's supposed to keep people from coming back here anyway. *

Atticus REACTS. Tree played him. But he pushes past it -- *

ATTICUS

When's the last time you saw my father? *

SAMMY

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

Atticus is incredulous --

ATTICUS

A white man?

SAMMY

Yeah, I thought it was strange too. Half the nights he sitting at the end of that bar yelling about something or other the "white devil" has done. Never seen him with one.

ATTICUS

Maybe it was 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. Not even on the take like most of the cops around here. My guess he's a lawyer. 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...

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

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 pitches a game of STICK BALL with DIANA and her FRIENDS (EMMETT, GIL, LUCY). Diana takes a big whiff...

As we revel in all this BLACK JOY...

- 15 **EXT. BLOCK PARTY TO END ALL BLOCK PARTIES - SOUTHSIDE - NIGHT** *
- Sun's setting. Streetlights illuminating. As a "COLORED ONLY" CAB pulls to the curb. In the back *
- LETITIA "LETI" DANDRIDGE (MID 20'S) *
- takes in the BLOCK PARTY still raging. A smile comes to her lips. *It's good to be home.* She raises a weathered CAMERA to her eye. Scans for the perfect angle, and -- SNAP! *
- CABBIE (O.S.)
It's gonna be 19.73.
- Leti opens her PURSE. Pulls out money with confidence --
- LETI
Here you go.
- CABBIE
This is only five...and a penny.
- Leti pops the door open --
- LETI
I'm going to get you the rest, plus a nice tip. You just wait here, and I'll be back before you know it...
- The CABBIE barely has time to react as she disappears into the crowd of black bodies... *
- 16 **EXT. STAGE - BLOCK PARTY TO END ALL BLOCK PARTIES - NIGHT** *
- ...and snakes her way to a makeshift stage, eyes on -- *
- RUBY DANDRIDGE (MID-30's) *
- is SINGING centerstage. She's PHENOMENAL, but it doesn't seem like her heart is in it. Her eyes keep drifting to the TIP BUCKET. As she brings the song to a THUNDEROUS close -- *
- 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?
(MORE)

RUBY (CONT'D)
 (mockingly singing:)
*Oh, life could be a dream. Sh-boom.
 If only my precious plans would come
 true. Sh-boom...*

She bleeds the last 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
 MOMMA HE TREATS YOUR DAUGHTER MEAN...

*
 *

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...

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

...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. Faking UPTOWN --

RUBY

Dress that short. You should be
wearing some pantyhose.

LETI

It's too hot for all that.

RUBY

You can't even afford pantyhose --

LETI

Who said I couldn't afford 'em?

Ruby counts her TIPS as she walks --

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 -- *

RUBY

Cabroncita. *

LETI

I'm sorry, just, 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 looks back. Her heart strings tugging at her little sister's reaction, but she covers it with an eye roll --

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. And I've got more sales experience than you, even took those numbers courses over on the Eastside, hell, I've got pantyhose to wear --

LETI

Ruby, I'm just saying if I get the job, it'll be enough money for both us to move. 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.

And with that, she's off again. Leti moves to go after her half-sister, but spots the angry Cabbie searching through the crowd for her. As she ducks away...

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

Atticus, soaking wet, pulls dry clothes from his duffel in "Diana's room". He accidentally drips on some Comics.

As he wipes them off, he notices an open

ROAD ATLAS

on the pull out. It's illustrated with BRIGHT COLOR DRAWINGS --

Major Negro population centers are represented as shining FORTRESSES. Smaller neighborhoods and enclaves are marked with TOWERS or OASES. 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, EVIL SORCERERS, and HOODED WHITE KNIGHTS.

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 purposefully tosses a TOWEL at Atticus's head. 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...

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

Atticus steps out on the stoop with his duffel slung over his shoulder as he spies a

SILVER DAIMLER

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

Atticus moves through the crowd towards it. The Daimler's lights blink on. The engine REVS. A challenge.

Atticus picks up the pace. Half-shoving friendly neighbors out the way. Trying to get to the Daimler, but -- it pulls off. Turning the corner seemingly faster than 0 to 60.

When Atticus finally makes it to where it was parked, the only evidence left that it wasn't just a figment of his imagination is the SKID MARKS on the pavement...

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

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 picks an ALBUM. Places it on the Victrola. Drops the needle.

As the record PLAYS, he browses his father's 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...

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

Atticus enters, angling towards the far left wall, focusing in on -- a DENT. Gouged out of the plaster. 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 dusts it off. Places it on his father's nightstand. Regards it. Then he 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.

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

Atticus has his duffel once again slung over his shoulder as
he approaches

"WOODY"

George's SERIES 22 PACKARD parked in the open mechanic's
garage. A pair of pantyhoseless legs hang out the open trunk.
Atticus 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 as Atticus
startles from his impure thoughts --

ATTICUS
Leti Dandridge...?

LETI
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...

LETI

Yeah, but my mom made me quit, remember?

ATTICUS

No such thing. It's a lifetime membership.

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

LETI

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?

LETI

I've been a little bit of everywhere.

ATTICUS

Doing...?

LETI

Everything.

They stare at each other for a moment. A charged moment. Crackling with possibility.

ATTICUS

It's a nice coincidence we both find ourselves back home at the same time.

LETI

There isn't a such thing as coincidence. The Lord has a plan for all of us. Even if it's just that I needed a ride to my brother's.

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)

Letitia's brother's place gets us within fifty miles of Devon County. And Marvin's working for the Springfield African 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?

Diana points to the MATTRESS leaned on Woody -- *

DIANA

Check. *

HIPPOLYTA

Pillows and blankets?

DIANA

Check and check. *

HIPPOLYTA

Spare tire?

DIANA

Check. *

HIPPOLYTA

Jack?

GEORGE

(faux outrage:)

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. Extra gas? *

DIANA

Check. *

HIPPOLYTA DIANA *

Flares? Check. *

HIPPOLYTA DIANA *

First-aid kit? Check. *

HIPPOLYTA DIANA *

Food and water? 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 his 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, Diana'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?*

DIANA

I did something different this time.

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. I just got bored with the other character. I'm going to go hang with Emmett and Lucy. 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 darkness, where the scope of the monster that is Jim Crow creeps its way into the Norman Rockwell picture-perfect Americana we all know --

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

"This means, in the case of an American Negro, born in that glittering republic..."

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 MOTHER and her DAUGHTER wait patiently at the "COLORED" window...

24 **INT. WOODY - DAY**

"And the moment you are born, since you don't know any better, every stick and stone and every face is white. And since you have not yet seen a mirror, you suppose that you are, too..."

Windows down. But hair too laid to to be whipping in the breeze. Leti leans her head out the window as Atticus speeds on a back country road. George cautions him to "slow down"...

25 **EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT**

"It comes as a great shock around the age of 5, or 6, or 7, to discover that the flag to which you have pledged allegiance, along with everybody else, has not pledged allegiance to you..."

The AMERICAN FLAGS lining the store fronts ripple in the breeze. The neon sign designating the "COLORED ENTRANCE" to the MOVIE THEATRE is on the fritz as a flood of BLACK MOVIEGOERS exit, Atticus and Leti among them. They walk side by side down the street to meet up with...

George sits outside a store with a handwritten sign -- "THIS STORE IS OWNED AND OPERATED BY NEGROES" -- chatting with the BLACK OWNER as he gets his shoes shined by a BLACK SHOESHINER.

Beside them, underneath a giant advert for AUNT JEMIMA pancake mix -- "DEE-LICIOUS!" -- the SHOESHINER'S SON shines a WHITE BOY'S shoes...

26 **EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY**

"It comes as a great shock to discover that Gary Cooper killing off the Indians, when you were rooting for Gary Cooper, that the Indians were you..."

The looming TREES allow only a few sunrays 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?"

27 **EXT. GAS STATION - NIGHT**

"It comes as a great shock to discover that the country which is your birthplace and to which you owe your life and your identity, has not, in its whole system of reality, evolved any place for you..."

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!

28 **EXT. CHURCH - DAY**

"The disaffection, the demoralization, and the gap between one person and another only on the basis of the color of their skin, begins there and accelerates - accelerates throughout a whole lifetime..."

Service is getting out. BLACK FAMILIES in their Sunday's best mill about. Atticus, George, and Leti right in the mix, welcomed like regular parishioners.

In the distance -- EMPTINESS as far as the eye can see. Just a decrepit, unwelcoming sign that reads -- "FOR SALE. LOTS FOR COLORED. CALL 555-5555."

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

"To the present when you realize you're thirty and are having a terrible time managing to trust your countrymen..."

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...

30 **INT. WOODY - NIGHT**

"By the time you are thirty, you have been through a certain kind of mill. And the most serious effect of the mill you've been through is..."

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...

31 **EXT. BUS STOP - NIGHT**

"Again, not the catalog of disaster, the policemen, the taxi drivers, the waiters, the landlady, the landlord, the banks, the insurance companies, the millions of details, twenty

four hours of every day, which spell out to you that you are a worthless human being..."

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, and we're left with that unfinished thought from Baldwin -- *

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

Woody is pulled over. Leti sits on the open trunk's edge. Flips a SWITCHBLADE open and closed in rapid succession. George leans against the passenger side consulting his NOTES and a MAP. He yells into the woods --

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 emerges from the trees post-bathroom break --

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 cattle-devouring 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. *

The GUITAR TWANG in B.B. KING'S "YOU UPSET ME, BABY" drags us to...

33 **INT. WOODY - DAY**

...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 baby."

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. *

Atticus turns down the radio. George and Leti are so into the moment they don't even notice. 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...

34 **EXT. SIMMONSVILLE - DAY**

A one horse town. Literally. There's a BIG BROWN MARE fenced into a tiny locked CORAL across from some empty STOREFRONTS. It's running in circles. Clearly too wild to be locked up.

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, and it's the only brick building I see. Don't judge a book by its cover.

ATTICUS

A book can't refuse you service.

LETI

Or spit in your water glass.

George blows off their concern --

GEORGE

I'm starving. You two are welcome to wait in the car if you choose.

35 **INT. SIMMONSVILLE DINETTE - DAY**

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.

He ignores the warning look from Atticus and takes a booth. Atticus reluctantly joins. Leti heads past the table --

ATTICUS

Leti...

LETI

Just visiting the ladies room.

She disappears in back as the Counter Boy brings MENUS over.

GEORGE

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. Atticus watches as he fumbles with the coffee pot, nearly dropping it when the phone RINGS. As Counter Boy disappears to answer it --

ATTICUS (CONT'D)

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

GEORGE

The tip was from a few months ago. The place is obviously under new management.

ATTICUS

You think so?

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. I'm a citizen.

(MORE)

GEORGE (CONT'D)

You're a citizen -- and a veteran,
for God's sake. Our money spends as
good as anyone else's.

Atticus is quiet. Feeling for his uncle. The weight of Jim
Crow can't always be carried with grace...

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

Leti exits the bathroom. Pauses when she spies through the
cracked kitchen door --

An antsy COOK stands by as the Counter Boy listens with dread
to the voice on the other end of the phone line --

COUNTER BOY

There's three of them. I know.
Yeah. Okay.

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

COUNTER BOY (CONT'D)

They're coming.

Leti REACTS. That does not sound good for our heroes. And
the Cook agrees --

COOK

I'm not going to be here when they
do.

He moves to get out of dodge. Coming Leti's way. She ducks
back into...

37 **INT. BATHROOM - SIMMONSVILLE DINETTE - DAY**

...and quickly shuts the door. Her mind racing. *Shit shit
shit shit shit.* They're in trouble...

38 **INT. SIMMONSVILLE DINETTE - DAY**

...and Atticus and George have no idea as they peruse the
menus in silence. George ventures --

GEORGE

Those biscuits and gravy that man
was eating smelled pretty damn good.

ATTICUS

I think that's what I'll order...

He looks around the dinner. Noticing it's just been him and
his uncle for a minute now --

ATTICUS (CONT'D)

...if the waiter ever comes back.

And he can't quite put his finger on it, but something just feels... OFF.

39 **EXT. SIDE OF - SIMMONSVILLE DINETTE - DAY**

Leti climbs out the small bathroom window. Rounds towards the back of the diner. Heading for Woody, but --

Porkpie stands guard in front of the Packard with a RIFLE!

She ducks back. *Shit shit shit shit shit.* Porkpie is making sure they can't escape before whoever was on the other end of that phone line gets here...

40 **INT. SIMMONSVILLE DINETTE - DAY**

Atticus looks towards the bathroom. Leti's been gone too long now too. He gets up to check on her, and --

SQUEECH! He's stepped on piece of loose linoleum. New linoleum. He notices now that -- the floor in the entire diner is new. His spider sense really starts to TINGLE --

ATTICUS

Uncle George...

GEORGE

Yeah.

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

ATTICUS

You remember that time I was little and you, me, and Aunt Hippolyta took that trip to DC.

GEORGE

Of course. Right before Diana was born. What makes you think of that?

Atticus looks to the ceiling. Bright new wood.

ATTICUS

Why is the white house 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

...the burn marks. Maybe your tip was good. Maybe "Lydia" was friendly and someone had a problem with that.

And just as he says that -- SIRENS fill the air. The FIRE TRUCK blasts up outside. Suspenders and THREE FIREMEN climb out with FIRE AXES and BATS. They form a skirmish line in front of the diner as Porkpie joins them with his rifle. *

George gets to his feet. ANXIETY rocketing -- *

GEORGE

The back door?

ATTICUS

It'll be better to make a stand here as they funnel in than be caught out in the open. Get Leti...

Atticus moves behind the counter. Searching for anything that can be a weapon. George BANGS on the bathroom door --

GEORGE

Letitia. Girl we've got trouble.

There's no answer. And no time. Atticus has found the KNIVES --

ATTICUS

Uncle George...

He slides a KNIFE over. The biggest he could find. They square up. The Firemen advancing on the diner, then --

Something DISTRACTS them.

Something Atticus and George can't see off to the left. Porkpie runs out of view. Followed by three of the others. Then a forth. Suspenders is the only one left in front, but his attention is on whatever's happening out of view.

Atticus and George move to the window. Straining to see what's going on -- the Brown Mare's somehow gotten free!

It's going WILD as Porkpie and the Firemen try to corral it. It REARS up. KICKS one of the Firemen in the face --

HOOOONK!

Woody pulls up to the door. Leti behind the wheel. She waves at Atticus and George to get their asses in the car...

41

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

Leti blasts down the road, George next to her, then Atticus.

LETI

I came out of the bathroom to hear that chicken shit son of a bitch telling somebody on the phone about us before he ran out the back. Thought we might need a distraction.

LETI (ALT) (CONT'D)

That chicken shit counter boy set us up. Thought we might need a distraction.

*
*
*
*
*

GEORGE

We may need another one.

Out the rear window -- the Fire Truck is coming fast! Porkpie leans off the side. The Rifle in his grip -- BANG!

*

ATTICUS

Get low and stay low.

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

Damnit 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.

LETI

Are you agreeing with me, or --

GEORGE

It's on the right.

BANG! The Colt clicks EMPTY. Atticus RELOADS --

ATTICUS

They're gaining on us.

GEORGE

Slow down or we'll
miss it --

LETI

I'm not going to miss it --

BANG! BANG! BANG! The turn's coming up fast --

GEORGE

Woody'll spin out --

LETI

Shut up and let me drive --

GEORGE

Goddamn it girl, you're going to
crash us --

LETI

My name's not girl. It's Letitia
fucking Dandridge...

Leti cuts a hard right, FISHTAILING onto...

42 **EXT. ANOTHER COUNTRY ROAD - DAY**

...without letting up on the gas. Navigating Woody like a Formula 1 racer. The Fire Truck has to slow to make the turn. Leti's created just a bit of distance between them. They're out of shooting range.

But there's little time to celebrate as Atticus catches a

BLUR OF SILVER

out the corner of his eye. The DAIMLER. On a parallel road that's merging with theirs up ahead --

ATTICUS

Leti...

LETI

I see it.

Woody bears down on the point where the two roads meet. The Daimler neck and neck with it. A DRAG RACE.

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 fire truck's back in shooting range.

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

The Fire Truck 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 Daimler should have been crushed on impact. *

Leti doesn't slow down to see the aftermath. But the Daimler 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... *

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

MARVIN DANDRIDGE (EARLY 30'S) holds the door open for Our Heroes as they enter his cozy home. A bout of polio in his childhood has left him WHEELCHAIR-BOUND but he'll never let that get in the way of his impeccable manners -- *

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...

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

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

LETI

That horse was kicking the shit out of them white boys.

MARVIN

Letitia, watch your mouth, please.

She ignores her half-brother's chastising --

LETI

When I let it out, I thought it was just going to run. I had no idea it was going to do all that --

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

How'd you all finally get away?

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

ATTICUS

Your sister again. More of her quick thinking.

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

GEORGE

She did save the day. It was like having our own Indian scout.

LETI

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

MARVIN

Language please...

George eats crow with good humor --

GEORGE

Letitia fuckin' Dandridge did.

Marvin throws George an exasperated look. Not him too. 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. A number of the families who settled it are descendent of the prosecutors in the case, and proud of it. 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

Bears. Wolves. Who knows? There's
been lots of missing person 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...

(MORE)

MARVIN (CONT'D)

(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.

LETI

And what happens if you run into the friendly neighborhood sheriff? He won't be happy to see you.

ATTICUS

That's why we're not going to let him see us. We'll head out just before dawn while it's still dark. Roll through Bideford while the witch hunters are all tucked in their beds, make it to the county registry two towns over right as it opens, and hopefully be in Ardham reunited with pop, and asking what the hell is going on by early afternoon...

He made it sound so easy. George doesn't seem convinced...

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

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 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 the moons of
Saturn...

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.

There's an expectant pause on the line. George doesn't even
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 Dandridge's
bill. Put your mother back on.

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

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
with my telescope. 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 from the
cosmos. 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... *

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

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 Black.

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...

48

EXT. BACK PORCH - MARVIN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

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, and this isn't the first time you've lied to me. *

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. We were protesting the school segregation --

MARVIN (O.S.)

It doesn't matter what you were doing.

George slips out the screen door. Trying to be extra quiet. He spots Atticus. By way of explanation -- *

GEORGE

Hippolyta, that woman's got me
obsessed with star gazing now too.

*
*

He joins his nephew. Trying not to listen to the Dandridge family drama that Atticus is clearly affected by.

MARVIN (O.S.)

You used the money for yourself.
And manipulated me into sending it
by claiming you needed it to come
home for momma's funeral.

*
*
*

LETI (O.S.)

The work I've been doing lately is
changing lives --

*
*
*

MARVIN (O.S.)

You missed your own momma's funeral.
You should be ashamed of yourself --

*
*

LETI (O.S.)

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

MARVIN (O.S.)

I'm not going to tell you again to
watch your mouth in my house...

The DANDRIDGE'S ARGUMENT 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 came by. 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
other young men to make the same

*

(MORE)

ATTICUS (CONT'D)

stupid mistake. Things went from words to blows quicker than usual. And 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. All he can muster is --

GEORGE

Tic...

The sound of DISHES SHATTERING inside draws attention back to the Dandridge drama --

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...

49

INT. KITCHEN - MARVIN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

...to find Leti picking up plate SHARDS. She looks up. EMOTION welling. And Atticus staring at her with those "I care more than Jesus" eyes isn't helping quell it --

LETI

You heard that, huh? Of course you did. The white folks all the way across town probably heard it.

Atticus bends to help with the shattered dishes --

ATTICUS

You don't have to be embarrassed. Everybody's family fights.

LETI

I'm not embarrassed about the fighting. I'm embarrassed that the stuff he said about me is true.

ATTICUS

Leti...

He touches her shoulder. The smallest of gestures. But it's almost too much. Leti moves away from him. Dumping the shards in the trash --

LETI

No. It's fine. I know I can be better, I just need to catch a break.

ATTICUS

I don't know if it's a break, but you're welcome to ride on with us. At least it'll save you the bus fare back to Chicago.

She stops now. Looks at him. His eyes shining behind those glasses. Kind eyes. She could fall in love with this man.

LETI

A lot of the boys I knew who went to war, they're different now. But not you. You're still all heart.

They're looking right into each others eyes now. The moment ELECTRIC. Atticus breaks it first --

ATTICUS

We're heading out early...

LETI

Yeah, we should both get some sleep.

50 **EXT. BIDEFORD - NIGHT**

George drives, Leti in between, Atticus riding passenger as Woody rolls through. Not a soul in sight. They roll up to a RED stop light -- right across from the POLICE STATION!

The tension is THICK. Any moment Sheriff Eustice Hunt or one of his deputies could come out and spot them. No one breathes until...

GREEN LIGHT. It takes everything in George not to slam the gas pulling off...

51 **EXT. DEVON COUNTY REGISTRY - DAY**

An unassuming building on an unassuming block. George and Atticus get out of Woody as Leti slides to the driver's seat --

GEORGE

Keep it...

LETTI
Runnin'. Yep.

52 **INT. DEVON COUNTY REGISTRY - DAY**

Rows and rows of FILE CABINETS. The lone FEMALE REGISTRAR behind the counter eyes Atticus and George -- *

REGISTRAR
I'm afraid that's not going to happen. *

GEORGE
The records are public. You can't refuse to show --

REGISTRAR
I don't want any trouble --

ATTICUS
And we don't want to be any ma'am. *
We'll be quick -- *

REGISTRAR
Am I going to have to call the sheriff?

That blew up fast. George's ready to retreat, but Atticus notices a PICTURE of a SOLDIER hanging behind the woman. A BLACK RIBBON tied on the frame.

ATTICUS
Is that your son?

Registrar says nothing. Her silence speaking volumes. Atticus points to the SERVICE PIN on his lapel --

ATTICUS (CONT'D)
I served with the 24th Infantry.
I'm sorry for your loss.

Registrar is affected, but unflinching. Atticus goes, but --

REGISTRAR
His name was Timothy. He was with the 27th. Died in Luzon. Tell me you made a lot of them good and dead.

Atticus swallows uncomfortably --

ATTICUS
I did.

REGISTRAR
Good. Damn gooks murdered a lot of our fine American boys. *

Atticus and George catch eyes. Neither missing how she transformed her hatred towards them into their mutual hatred.

REGISTRAR (CONT'D)

We should have just let them wipe each other out in that jungle.

This exchange is not sitting right with Atticus. He's about to say as much, but George cuts him off, playing to the crowd --

GEORGE

I've been saying the same. It's a damn shame...

53 **INT. WOODY PARKED OUTSIDE - DEVON COUNTY REGISTRY - DAY**

Leti taps the wheel as she waits. A WHITE WOMAN crosses the street with her TODDLER. He locks eyes with her. Sticks his tongue out. Innocent fun. Leti sticks out her tongue back. The Boy giggles as he disappears down the street.

The odd moment is broken as both front doors open. Leti slides back to the middle as George and Atticus climb in --

ATTICUS

We weren't even fighting in the jungle. She has no idea what happened over there or why it happened --

George starts up the car --

GEORGE

We got what we needed, didn't we? Be glad racism worked in our favor for once...

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

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

55 **INT. WOODY - DAY**

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 been driving around these woods all day --

ATTICUS

I think the road is coming up --

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 shoves his Map aside. Gestures out the window --

GEORGE

There's no goddamn road. You see one? This is where you said it is, right?

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

Fine. Get out. But I'm staying right here. You're just as stubborn as your father --

*

Atticus opens the door, and...

56

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

...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)

You know, I just keep thinking about what my brother said. All 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 so far. Turning back now feels like --

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... *

WROOOOOROOOO WROOOOOROOOO! RED and BLUE LIGHTS highlight the surprise on their faces as *

SHERIFF EUSTICE HUNT (40's)

climbs from the Patrol Car with a SHOTGUN in hand. He has a US MARINE TATTOO on the back of his neck. To give the enemy something to aim at.

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 Black, 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. 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

No, it's not. Key word there being "yet". 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...

57

INT. WOODY - DAY

...for the ENTIRETY of the five minutes they've got til the
sun goes down. Atticus drives just a hair under the speed
limit. Itching to speed up and get Hunt off their ass.

LETI

Watch your speed.

ATTICUS

I know.

George pulls out his MAPS. Pours over them --

GEORGE

We've got 2 kilometers til the county
line.

LETI

Can we make that?

GEORGE

Wait, I'm sorry, it's actually 3...

His hands SHAKE. He's terrified. They all are.

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.

BANG! The Sheriff BUMPS Woody with his Patrol Car.

LETI (CONT'D)

Son of a bitch --

ATTICUS

Get the Colt. It's under the seat beneath you.

Leti maneuvers to get the Colt. George's eyes are glued on his Watch --

GEORGE

2 minutes.

It's unbearably TENSE. Atticus sees Hunt grinning in the rear view. Enjoying every second of this. The sign for the

COUNTY LINE

comes into view. A surge of HOPE hits them all --

ATTICUS

There's the sign.

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?

GEORGE

We have a minute left.

Leti grips the Colt in her lap. Dreading having to use it. The distance left between them and that sign feels like an eternity, finally...

They sail past it.

Leti and George go weak with RELIEF. Atticus doesn't relax until he sees Hunt stop at the county line in the rear view.

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) at SHOTGUN point. They were lying in wait. Hunt had no intention of letting them go...

58 **EXT. WOODS - NIGHT**

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

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. And HUNGRY.

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

TALBOT

What was that?

SHERIFF HUNT

Keep your guns on them. Probably
just wolves --

Something BOUNDS through the woods on the right. Something
BIG. Breaking branches and QUAKING the ground with every
step. Hunt swings the flashlight to the right now.

EASTCHURCH

Jesus Christ. That sounded too big
to be a wolf.

Everyone's attention is on the surrounding woods. Atticus
takes this moment of distraction to reach for a HEAVY LOG
near him. Slowly. Very aware of the shotgun barrel in the
hands of a spooked Deputy pointed right at him --

BANG! Our Heroes jump out of their skins. Terrified one of
them just got shot. Until they realize Dalton fired into
the woods to the South --

SHERIFF HUNT

Dalton, what'd you see?

DALTON

Nothing. But whatever it is, I
probably just scared it away --

BRAAAAAUAAACCCCK! BRAAAAAUAAACCCCK! BRAAAAAUAAACCCCK!
BRAAAAAUAAACCCCK! BRAAAAAUAAACCCCK! BRAAAAAUAAACCCCK!
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. Dalton inches towards the tree line, and --
something LASHES out at him. His SCREAM just an echo
because -- HE'S GONE IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE!

Whatever got him was fast. INHUMANELY FAST. And now it's
TEARING him to pieces in the cover of the woods.

EASTCHURCH

What was that? What the hell was --

Something BOUNDS through the trees to the right. Atticus
doesn't need another clue...

ATTICUS

Go -- RUN.

...and black or white, nobody needs to be told twice. George grabs Dalton's dropped flashlight as CHAOS erupts --

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

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

Atticus blazes a path. Leti right behind him. Talbot, a yard back, brings up the rear. The FLASHLIGHT in his hand bobs wildly. Creating a STROBE-LIKE effect in the darkness.

SCREAMS, SHOTGUN BLASTS, and WHALE GROWLS echo through the trees. A soundtrack straight out of a nightmare.

SUDDENLY -- Talbot is taken down by a "SHOGGOTH", BLOOD and VISCIOUS flying!

Atticus and Leti don't look back as he spots a CABIN up ahead --

ATTICUS

We need to get out of the open...

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

Dilapidated. Rotting wood. Covered in overgrowth. Clearly abandoned for some time. Atticus pushes on the front door, but -- it won't budge. Leti joins him, they put their backs into it, and...

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

...finally get it open. Surprised to discover the resistance was the result of Eastchurch trying to board up the door --

EASTCHURCH

Move. Shut the door --

He shoves them out of the way, slamming the door with the MANIC INTENSITY of someone whose mind has snapped. Atticus and Leti barely have a second to catch their breaths, but --

It's enough for Atticus to finally feel -- the ABSENCE. PANIC riots his features --

ATTICUS

Where's Uncle George?

62 **EXT. WOODS - NIGHT**

George is on full alert. Moving as silently and as fast as his injured knees will allow. The Flashlight in his hands the only source of light in the pitch black.

His breath catches as SOMETHING MOVES through the trees to his left. He plasters himself against a thick tree trunk. Burying the flashlight beam against his body. *

HIDING.

A Shoggoth stalks through the trees in the distance. It's too far away to get any details other than it's MASSIVE... *

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

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 is fucking considering it as Hunt steps out of the shadows. SWEATY. BLOODY. One of his arms wrapped from a SERIOUS INJURY. But it's not preventing him from holding his Shotgun on Atticus and Leti -- *

SHERIFF HUNT *

Yes he can. And you're going with him because there's no more room at the Inn. Get out -- *

LETI *

And if we don't? *

SHERIFF HUNT *

I'll shoot you both. *

Atticus steels himself. George is gone, but he can still save himself and Leti. He squares off with Hunt -- *

ATTICUS *

And those gunshots are going to bring those things right to you. *

EASTCHURCH *

No no no no no. We can't make any noise. Sheriff please -- *

SHERIFF HUNT *

Damnit Eastchurch, keep it together. *

Hunt keeps his Shotgun pointed right between Atticus's eyes... *

64 **EXT. WOODS - NIGHT** *

George is on the move again. It's unbearably TENSE as he scans the trees all around him for any signs of "Shoggoths". *

He SMELLS it a beat before he comes upon it -- a trail of BLOODY VISCOUS, then -- TALBOTS EVISCERATED BODY!

George gags at the sight. The hairs on the back of his neck standing on end. He's being watched. Through the trees ahead a

"SHOGGOTH"

opens its mouth. Rows and rows of bone white TEETH the only part of it reflecting in the moonlight.

As it BOUNDS straight for George, he raises his arms on instinct -- his Flashlight as well by default -- protecting himself, bracing for impact --

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

Shotgun to head stand off. Atticus doesn't back down. Nobody moves. The moment stretches. Finally Hunt ruefully lowers his gun. A collective beat of relief all around, then --

SHERIFF HUNT

What the hell are all of you standing around for? Finish getting that damn door boarded up before one of those things finds us.

Atticus, Leti, and Eastchurch move to do just that, but --

ATTICUS

Shhhhhh! You hear that?

MOVEMENT outside of the cabin. Everyone FREEZES. Atticus is the only one that dares to move. He peeks through a slat, and -- RELIEF floods his body as he pulls the door open --

ATTICUS (CONT'D)

Uncle George...

A shaken and stirred George stumbles in. Still alive! As Atticus embraces his uncle --

ATTICUS (CONT'D)

Are you okay?

GEORGE

Depends on your definition of okay.

Eastchurch could care less about this family reunion. He dives into boarding up the door. Leti's happy George is alive, but there's another pressing matter --

LETTI

What happened? Did you see what those "things" are? *

Hunt adjusts his injured arm as he interjects -- *

SHERIFF HUNT

I saw teeth before the one bit me. Had to be some kind of rabid animal -- *

GEORGE

Those weren't wolves. What I could see... It was unnatural -- *

SHERIFF HUNT

What are saying? What else could it be -- *

ATTICUS

It doesn't matter. Whatever they are, we're not going to be able to hold up in here forever. We need weapons. *

EASTCHURCH

I shot one. Didn't even slow it down. They don't have any weaknesses... *

BRAAAAAUAAACCCCK! BRAAAAAUAAACCCCK! 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

One was coming right at me. I knew I couldn't outrun it, so I closed my eyes, raised my hands to protect myself, and waited for it to strike. But it didn't. When I opened my eyes again it was gone. *

ATTICUS

What did you do to it?

GEORGE

Not a damn thing.
(holding up the
flashlight:)

But I was holding this. The beam
had to have hit it when I raised my
arms.

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 did you leave our car?

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

EASTCHURCH

On the side of the road near the
county line. 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 allstar 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. Scared, 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.

George levels him with a cold stare as he hands the flashlight over. This asshole is reinventing the meaning of asshole.

EASTCHURCH

We can take the boards off one of the back windows so she can get out.

George helps him while 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. Eyes glued on the pitch black beyond the window George and Eastchurch are prying boards from. Repeating a PRAYER 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 --

66 **EXT. WOODS - NIGHT**

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

Just. Get. To. Woody...

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

Atticus and Eastchurch are at windows. Eyes between the board slats. Keeping 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...

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

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. Turns to see a

"SHOGGOTH"

in the middle of the road. Too far away to see any real details. Just its MASSIVE undulating shape. But you can practically feel its mouth watering. *

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

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

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

"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. Eastchurch scrambles back, but it's too late -- Hunt attacks him, RIPPING Eastchurch's head off! *

Atticus and George exchange bewildered looks. HOLY SHIT. They might have suspected it, but actually seeing Hunt TRANSFORMING into one of those things is a whole different story. As they SCRAMBLE to fight... *

"THRILLER" will drive us through the following *BEDLAM* --

70

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

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. She hits the gas. Swerving off...

71

INT. CABIN IN THE - WOODS - NIGHT

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.

Atticus comes at "Shoggoth" Hunt with the Switchblade again, but -- he lunges at Atticus, snapping at his neck with all his new teeth.

As Atticus struggles to keep from being bitten, "Shoggoth" Hunt's jaw unhinges past the normal human limit and like a gathering storm reverberating from the back of his throat --

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, and Atticus understands the horn warning -- hits "Shoggoth" Hunt with a HAYMAKER that separates them, then -- 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 DIES HORRIBLY, MELTING IN THE LIGHT!

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 killed the asshole racist sheriff that turned into a monster. And speaking of monsters --

SMASH! A "Shoggoth" breaks through the cabin wall AND driver's side window in one terrifying motion!

It's sharp teeth inches from chomping down on Leti's face --

BOOM! Its head EXPLODES from the shotgun blast!

Atticus shot through the passenger window. They lock eyes for the briefest of seconds, because --

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 -- BASHING against the walls of the cabin and boarded up windows -- 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! FSSSH! He lights them up as she climbs from Woody. Tossing them around the cabin to create a HALO of light...

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

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... *

73 **INT. CABIN IN THE - WOODS - DAY** *

VAMPIRE MORNING. A misty predawn bled of color. The last *
spark of the FLARE in Atticus's hand goes out. He sits *
against Woody. Exhausted from keeping watch all night. *

Leti is asleep next to him. George, now covered in a blanket, *
is still in the light of Woody's headlights. He starts to *
STIR. Leti rouses a beat later. *

They all just sit there. Next to the demolished Packard. *
In a dazed silence. Clearly changed forever. *

74 **EXT. WOODS - DAY** *

Our Heroes, beyond EXHAUSTED, crest the top of the embankment *
to take in -- the BRIDGE leading over a RIVER into ARDHAM! *

It's bucolic and a little sinister in the dawn light. A *
GRAND LODGE on a hill overlooks what Atticus's fantasy brain *
might describe as a hobbit shire... *

75 **EXT. ARDHAM - DAY**

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...

76 **EXT. ARDHAM LODGE - DAY**

A palatial 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 Black. Welcome home...

SMASH TO BLACK.