

THE BEAST WITHIN

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REVISED

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A1 A BLACK SCREEN

A1

A pit of darkness. The deepest of black, its silence suddenly shattered by the horrid SQUEAL of a trapdoor's metal and wood and by the SOUND of someone being thrust, resisting, into the darkness with us. Another VOICE, laughing maniacally, lords over; the figure tumbles down headlong; the trapdoor SQUEALS even farther open overhead; and the maniacal VOICE caws louder again:

VOICE

(taunting, in
singsong)Billy, Billy... somebody here to
see you...

And then, discernible by only the barest of light that filters momentarily in, something heavy, something horrible, comes falling, THUDDING toward us in the dark. The LAUGH overhead screeches hideously again, the trapdoor SLAMS, and the desperate figure in the dark scrambles toward the object to touch and find out.

It is a dead human body. And it is more than the figure can bear. From the depths of his being, a cry of pain, a howl of agony such as the world has never known, rises to heaven and splits the hellish darkness.

TITLES BEGIN.

And they CONTINUE OVER THE CONTINUING SOUNDS in the darkness, the WHIMPERS and GROANS turning to RAGE. The figure POUNDING futilely against the trapdoor's boards. The rage soon turning to GRUNTS, listlessness, shuffling, hunger. The SOUNDS OF EATING. The GNAWING OF FLESH. The CHEWING OF BONE. The RATTLE OF CHAIN. The GROAN OF WOOD. All the while, the SOUNDS on a far-off RADIO or TV marking the passing time... the Big Band sound of the forties on a distant RADIO giving way to the fifties reign of Uncle Miltie on an equally distant TV, which gives way in turn to the ringing, broadcast tones of JFK's inaugural, and then, finally, to the pious invocation of LBJ's "mah fella Americans."

The GRUNTS become more savage, the RATTLING and SHUFFLING more frenzied and deliberate, until there comes unexpectedly on the distant air, a high-pitched SOUND -- a haunting, SHRILL THRUMMING that rises and rises -- the SONG OF THE CICADAS.

The PANTING, hulking figure in the dark halts to listen, the CICADA CRY building, surging.

(CONTINUED)

A1 CONTINUED:

A1

The figure rears, responding. Chain stretches to limit. The CICADA CRY is deafening, calling. The figure ROARS, throwing himself against his fetters. Chain snaps, the trapdoor of wood and metal bursts, the CICADAS SCREAM in triumph, and the BEAST, finally, is free.

TITLES END and...

CUT TO:

1A A COUNTRY GAS STATION - MISSISSIPPI - NIGHT

1A

A hard, driving rain, and CAROLINE MacCLEARY, road map shielding her head, comes dashing from the lighted station office where a RADIO ELVIS croons back through it to the waiting car.

She's lovely, radiant, mid-twenties, and in the sort of high spirits that even a rain like this can't dampen. The traces of a painted "JUST MARRIED" sign still linger on the back window, and the car's a new '64 Chevy.

1B INT. 1964 CHEVY - NIGHT

1B

She hops in, shaking off the soggy map, as her husband ELI gets back in on the driver's side, having just pounded their left front hubcap back on. He's just as wet as she is and just as happy, although somebody's got to be the realist in the family. Suitcases and a floppy dog named Thor occupy the back.

CAROLINE

Another two miles, he says. The road to Jackson's just before the Nioba sign, on the right.

He plunks a dirty marble in her hand. She looks up, puzzling.

ELI

It was in the hubcap. Finally. That darn Henderson. I swear, I'm going to pack his shorts with itching powder when he gets married. If anybody's crazy enough to have him.

He sparks the ignition, getting them moving again.

1C EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

1C

Theirs are the only headlights for miles cutting a path through the rain.

2 INT. THE CHEVY - NIGHT

2

A BEATLES TUNE finally COMES IN on the shaky RADIO. Caroline tries to dry out. Thor tries to make himself adorable in the back seat, and Eli glances at his watch.

(CONTINUED)

ELI

Sixty-eight hours, forty-three
minutes and... twenty-six seconds.

(looks up, smiling

gently)

Still love me?

(CONTINUED)

2 CONTINUED: (2)

2

CAROLINE
What'll you offer?

ELI
Come here.

They kiss. A road sign flashes past: "NIOBA, Heart of Ole Miss."

ELI
(continuing)
Oh, shit!
(brakes, slowing)
You said it was before the sign,
right?

He grips the wheel, stepping on the gas and going into a sharp U.

3 EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

3

Too sharp. The front left hubcap pops off. Eli veers to avoid it, widening arc, but the wheels have nothing to grip into and the car skids, sideways on the slick macadam, coming to a sinking halt on the soft shoulder.

4 INT. CHEVY - NIGHT

4

ELI
(shaken)
You all right?

She nods ok. He regroups, shifting gears and sharting up again.

5 EXT. CHEVY - NIGHT

5

The rear wheels don't obey, spinning, digging into mud, right up to their hubcaps. Eli jumps out of the car to check. A quick glance, and he doesn't have to be convinced. Then continues down.

ELI
That damn Henderson. I'll kill
him!

He kicks at the guilty hubcap. Caroline sticks her head out the window.

(CONTINUED)

CAROLINE

Want me to help?

ELI

No, I gotta go back to that gas station for a tow. I won't be long.

(CONTINUED)

5 CONTINUED: (2)

5

CAROLINE

But you'll get wet.

ELI

I already am wet. You be all right?

CAROLINE

Sure.

(smiles)

It'll give me time to practice my singing in the shower.

He leans closer, giving her a tender kiss.

ELI

Lock up anyway.

CAROLINE

I will.

Another kiss to fortify, and he slips off into the headlights and then the drenching darkness.

6 INT. CHEVY - NIGHT

6

Alone, she locks the doors like she promised and turns off the headlights to wait. Thor WHINES for attention. She scratches him. It only encourages.

CAROLINE

Oh, Thor, honestly. This is the last honeymoon I'm taking you anywhere on.

7 EXT. PINES - NIGHT

7

Blood -- great smears of it -- follow a looming shadow pushing its way through the forest. It is the Beast, and it's huge and wounded badly. Unseen for now, its presence registers only with its SOUNDS, its jagged BREATHING and the fleeting glimpse of its partial shadow. The rain slows to mist.

8 INT. CHEVY - NIGHT

8

Thor goes wild, catching the scent. Caroline, dozing, jerks awake. Misinterpreting, she thinks it's just time to let him out.

(CONTINUED)

8

CONTINUED:

8

CAROLINE

Oh, for pete's sake. But stay close...

The windshield's fogged, but now the rain's stopped. No sooner does she crack open the door, than he's out like a shot, plunging deep into the piney woods.

CAROLINE

(continuing)

Thor!

9

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

9

She goes after, but the woods are too deep, drizzly and dark to go any farther than roadside.

CAROLINE

Thor!

10

EXT. PINES - NIGHT

10

The eerie shadow lifts its massive head as her yell ECHOES. The Beast hesitates, sniffing her scent. The faint evening light catches its yellow eyes, and for a moment, they blaze with unspeakable horror. It turns in her direction, as Caroline's CRY FADES. Suddenly, Thor bounds out of the darkness, leaping and SNARLING at him.

The Beast snags him in mid-air, easily.

11

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

11

The dog SHRIEKS, YELPING a dying cry. She hears.

CAROLINE

Thor!

And plunges into the woods after him.

12

EXT. PINES - NIGHT

12

She hurries on, an unearthly SCREAM starting slowly to rise around her as she goes. It is sustained, one-note, familiar to us as the Cicada Song, but not to her. Glancing wildly about for the source, she stumbles and puts a hand against a tree trunk.

(CONTINUED)

The bark writhes beneath her touch. She whips her hand back. The entire length of the pine is covered with insects: spit-brown caterpillars, millions of them, crawling upward. On the branches above they hang upside down and shuck their dull coats. They step out hued with rainbow colors, two-inch bugs that beat their wings in a blinding blue across their thoraxes. The scream is theirs. They are the cicada. Shuddering, wiping her hand clean on her dress, Caroline stumbles on.

She jerks to a halt. There, ahead of her, Thor lies on the damp earth, a welter of blood, his neck bent at an impossible angle. Then she hears it, labored BREATHING, close, heavy, and now closer still. She searches the blackness with her eyes. Nothing. An inhuman limb, filthy and snagged, reaches and brushes her hair.

With a scream she whirls. A monstrous, massive shadow rears above her, and she runs, falling, stumbling, branches whipping her face, briars catching at her clothes, a run for her life. She trips. She plunges forward and hits her head. She lies still.

Blackness separates from darkness and the Beast steps out of the shadows to loom over her prostrate form. Blood drips on her yellow blouse and white skin, splats off her cheek and dribbles down her neck. A long, clawlike arm probes, tearing her blouse away; then her dress.

The unconscious Caroline is mounted. Her head rocks gently back and forth in time to the Beast's efforts. Joining the INSECT CHORUS now is a different song, akin but different, almost human. It is the Beast singing to its new bride.

13 EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

13

Eli, frantic at her absence, yells into the woods. Behind him, the ATTENDANT from the gas station hooks the front of the Chevy to the back of his tow truck. The INSECT SONG GROWS.

ELI

Caroline! Caroline!

He steps into the forest, following the trail of broken branches and crushed pine needles.

14 EXT. PINES - NIGHT

14

He breaks into a run as he spots her on the path ahead. She is naked, filthy with blood, spittle and ochre.

ELI

Oh, god. Caroline -- !

He gathers her up, catching a glimpse as he rises of their dog's broken body nearby. He stares about, suddenly alert for danger. But only the CICADA SONG surrounds. He runs for the road, his wife's head lolling in his arms.

15 OMITTED

15

16 INT. CAB OF TOW TRUCK - NIGHT

16

He cradles her blanketed body on the seat. The Attendant pumps the pedal, moving them the hell out. Her eyes are open, staring blankly, her face rigid with fear.

ELI

(in tears)

Caroline. I'm sorry. I'm sorry...

ATTENDANT

Don't worry, we can get her there. We'll get her to the hospital quick.

She lapses into unconsciousness, without reaction. Around them, the CICADA'S SONG rises relentlessly, maddeningly, until neither Eli or the Attendant can take it anymore.

(CONTINUED)

ATTENDANT

(continuing; shaken)

Shouldn't be, it's winter.
Cicadas. Locusts. Every
seventeen years. Gotta attract
the female before they die...

17 EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

17

The twin taillights of their truck disappear into the darkness, as GUNSHOTS RING OUT in the surrounding woods. First one, a couple, then more, many more, so sharp and fierce they stop the cicada singing. The gunshots fade, and once more, fog, darkness and peace cover the land.

18 EXT. JACKSON, MISSISSIPPI - NIGHT

18

OVER A SHOT OF JACKSON late at night:

"SEVENTEEN YEARS LATER"

19 SISTERS OF MERCY HOSPITAL - NIGHT

19

A new, expansive structure, cold and sterile.

20 INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - NIGHT

20

At corridor's end, the MacClearys huddle with DR. ANNE KOBLIN, a tough, homegrown pathologist in her late fifties and also chief of staff.

It is the present, and Eli and Caroline are now that many years older.

(CONTINUED)

20 CONTINUED:

20

The years have been more or less kind to Caroline, a striking woman, assured and responsive as most seemingly contented people are. The fight for survival and struggle in the world, however, have left their mark on Eli, tempering his essential decency with the bitter wisdom of experience, and a deep, almost overwhelming sense of protectiveness. But if the years have treated them well, the last few weeks haven't. They both look like hell, drained by the immediate worry and turmoil.

21 INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

21

Their seventeen-year-old son lies in bed asleep. Tubes punch into his arm, viscous liquid draining into him from bottles slung overhead.

MICHAEL MacCLEARY is small for his age, fragile, dark and sensitive. His cheeks burn with the high flush of a killing fever. His skin is translucent, not an extra ounce of flesh in his face. Skull-like.

In the grip of nightmare, his features contort, his fingers twisting sweat-soaked bedsheets. A SONG calls to him in his dream, a beseeching song startlingly like that of the cicada, but this one born of human lips.

MICHAEL

No, no...

22 EXT. VICTORIAN HOUSE (IN HIS DREAM)

22

The house is formidable, impressive in a small town 1930's way, pale, and strangely, totally isolated within an expanse of endless field. Large, its three stories looming up, obviously the home of a substantial citizen, yet cold and forbidding, with none of the warmth a substantial hearth should offer. A black oaken door, thick and immovable, seems to burn within the shadows of the columned porch.

Michael approaches, facing that door, the CICADA SONG rising in intensity, ordering him to follow it. He walks up the porch, past the columns to the imposing entrance. It opens for him, a yawning black mouth, and he steps inside.

23 INT. LIVING ROOM (IN HIS DREAM)

23

A shifting, opaque light bathes it, a transforming light filling the day with nocturnal shadows and animating the spotless Victorian interior with murmuring, restless spirits of its own.

(CONTINUED)

23 CONTINUED:

23

Another door swings back, seemingly of its own accord, and a kitchen is glimpsed. The SONG IS LOUDER now. Michael follows its tuneless call.

24 INT. KITCHEN (IN HIS DREAM)

24

The SONG BLURS with the CRIES of a MAN coming from beneath the floorboards at Michael's feet. The cries slide from pitiful to bestial, the rage of a trapped animal. Michael stares down as the floorboards are POUNDED from beneath, dust moths dancing in the fleeting light.

Something is down there, under his feet, trapped, begging, commanding, raging to be set free.

Michael shoves the gas refrigerator away and a trap is revealed in the floor. The boy reaches down, his hands grasping the bolt, starting to slide it back, to set whatever is down there free.

MICHAEL (V.O.)

No, no --

25 INT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT (BACK INTO REALITY)

25

He rears up in bed, screaming, ripping the IV from his arm, bottles and trays from their perches.

MICHAEL

No!!!

Eli and Caroline burst in, followed by Dr. Koblin. Caroline throws her arms around her terrified son to calm him.

CAROLINE

Michael, Michael --

The boy's body is wracked with sobs.

MICHAEL

Get me, going to get me --

ELI

(gently, soothing)
Who, Michael? There's nobody here or in the whole world who wants to hurt you.

(CONTINUED)

25 CONTINUED:

25

MICHAEL

(weeping)

I don't know.

Caroline hugs him tightly.

CAROLINE

It's all right, pumpkin. It's
all going to be all right.

Dr. Koblin levels with them. Caroline is seated, but Eli's too upset to be anywhere but on his feet.

DR. KOBLIN

I'd be paddling you up a stream if I said that outburst indicated any kind of remission. The boy's sicker than we know. The IV's the only thing keeping him going as it is, and even that's going to have to be supplanted by a full complement of life-support systems if we're going to have any chance of sustaining him.

ELI

(flaring)

Sustaining? Chance? I don't want my son 'sustained,' and I don't want any 'chances' -- I want him cured!

CAROLINE

Eli --

ELI

There's got to be something you can do. A month ago he was a happy, perfectly all right, healthy kid --

DR. KOBLIN

We've done just about everything we can already, Mr. MacCleary. But there's a chemical imbalance -- an occult malignancy -- in his system that won't respond to treatment and --

ELI

Occult malignancy? What kind of medicine do you practice here, Doctor!

Caroline springs to her feet, trying to calm Eli. But Koblin's a professional; she keeps her cool.

DR. KOBLIN

We have a pituitary gland that's gone crazy, out of control, causing way too rapid growth.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

DR. KOBLIN (CONT'D)

Whatever nourishment we give him just isn't enough -- What we have is a starving child. Now, I thought it might be genetic -- inherited -- but the metabolic tests we ran on both of you show you're as normal as pie. So, unless there's something we don't know -- unless there's something more we don't have to complete the picture --

Caroline responds eagerly to it, turning to her husband.

(CONTINUED)

CAROLINE

Eli --

ELI

(snaps)

No.

CAROLINE

(pleading)

Eli.

ELI

(storming from the
room)

No!

27 INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - NIGHT

27

She catches up with him, but he's unreachable.

ELI

Atlanta or maybe Houston, first
thing we do is get him out of
here and to some place where they
know what they're talking about...!

CAROLINE

Eli, please. We can't just wish
it away, we can't just go on
pretending it never happened...
Eli, seventeen years ago I was
attacked and raped, and nothing's
ever going to change that fact!

He spins, raging at her.

ELI

He is my son! He is my own son,
and nobody else's!

CAROLINE

Eli, he is dying! We can't
afford to take the chance! You
heard what Dr. Koblin said,
'something more to go on.' Well...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CAROLINE (CONT'D)

... That man... whoever was responsible seventeen years ago... his background, his medical records may be that something more. Oh, Eli, Michael is your son. You love him, and he loves you, and whatever we find out won't change that.

ELI

(a beat, acquiescing;
in painful tenderness)
Haven't you been through enough?

CAROLINE

No, not if it'll help save the life of our son.

He draws her close, embracing her tight.

27A INT. CORRIDOR OUTSIDE INTENSIVE CARE - NIGHT

27A

Caroline remains, watching them move Michael to one of the IC cubicles for closer monitoring. Dr. Koblin looks on with her. Caroline's obviously told her her story.

DR. KOBLIN

(compassionately)

You and your husband, you never had any other kids?

CAROLINE

No, since that night, after Michael...

(smiles, bravely)

I guess we just were never twice-lucky.

DR. KOBLIN

(change)

Well, no sense wearing yourself out. Nothing more for you to do here. Besides --

(beat, knowingly)

I think your husband would appreciate your help.

27B INT. INTENSIVE CARE - NIGHT

27B

Caroline enters to check on Michael one more time...

27B CONTINUED:

27B

... before she goes. His fevered eyes instantly flicker open.

MICHAEL

(fearfully)

You're leaving.

CAROLINE

No, hon.

MICHAEL

(a rising panic)

Yes, you are. You're leaving me.

CAROLINE

No, I'm just going with Daddy, for a little while, just where we think we can do you best. Nioba. It's not too far. We'll be right back, hon. We'll be right here.

He clutches at his mother's hand.

MICHAEL

I'm afraid. I'm dying... I don't want to be left alone...

CAROLINE

(overlapping)

Oh, hon, no, you're not. Oh, hon, don't worry. Nobody -- Daddy, Dr. Koblin, or me -- is ever gonna let that happen to you...

28 EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

28

It's the same stretch of road where the rape took place so many years ago. A Buick station wagon drives INTO VIEW. Eli and Caroline approach Nioba once again.

29 INT. WAGON - DAY

29

They flash by the old "NIOBA, Heart of Ole Miss" road sign. It's the same sign.

ELI

Nobody's left at the gas station anymore.

He studies his wife.

(CONTINUED)

29 CONTINUED:

29

ELI

You ok?

CAROLINE

Fine.

She twists in her seat to watch a particular spot of road. It looks to be the very same spot they went off the road on that rainy night.

30 EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

30

The wagon clears a rise, and there below lies a small town nestled in a verdant valley. Nioba. The wagon winds its way down.

31 EXT. MAIN STREET - NIOBA - DAY

31

The wagon cruises the main business drag. Time hasn't stopped in this town; it has just slowed to a crawl.

32 INT. WAGON - TOWN SQUARE - DAY

32

They pull up before the center of all things in a town like this, the courthouse in the town square.

ELI

(gazing out)

Looks peaceful enough.

CAROLINE

(a forced cheerfulness)

Want me to come in?

He smiles, still wishing to spare her as much as possible.

ELI

I thought you were first gonna nurse yourself one of those cups of good ol' back country coffee.

32A INT. COURTHOUSE - DAY

32A

A busy, genial, redheaded woman's the CLERK of offices.

(CONTINUED)

32A CONTINUED:

32A

ELI

Hi.

CLERK

Well, hi, yourself.

ELI

I'd like to get some information.

CLERK

Well, darlin', you come to the right place. I'm just a fount.

ELI

Assaults, or violent or capital crimes that might've happened here about seventeen years ago -- how would I find out?

(beat, uncomfortably)

It could've gone officially unreported.

She just stares at him.

33 EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

33

Coffee doesn't hold much appeal under the circumstances. Waiting, Caroline impatiently and nervously continues down the dusty sidewalk. Across from her, a storefront is marked: "NIOBA OUTLOOK: EDWIN CURWIN, PUB." She enters.

34 INT. NEWSPAPER OFFICE - DAY

34

It's the sort of place, cluttered and shadowed, you don't want to spend too much time in. Or maybe it's EDWIN CURWIN, a peevish, late middle-aged man going to paunch and fond of his food.

EDWIN

Help you?

CAROLINE

(hesitantly)

I'd... I'd like to look through your back issues if I could.

He stares at her.

(CONTINUED)

CAROLINE

(continuing)

I'm from Jackson. The extension school there. I'm writing a book about crime in rural America. Doing background research.

EDWIN

We ain't Jackson, and we ain't Shreveport either. You won't find nuthin' criminal here, 'cept a 'casional barn-burning, and that's high spirits. Local news.

(CONTINUED)

34 CONTINUED: (2)

34

CAROLINE

Well, that's exactly the kind of thing I'm looking for. Something to give me the feel of the area.

He stares at her for a moment more, then jerks his head toward a doorway.

EDWIN

Morgue's in the back. But you only got a coupla minutes. I ain't got nobody to mind the office 'lunch -- and I'm not plannin' on puttin' anybody on!

35 INT. NEWSPAPER BACK ROOM - DAY

35

Old papers spill off shelves and tumble out of cardboard boxes. Caroline does her best, quickly locating the box labeled "1964," and begins to thumb through the yellowed pages.

36 INT. JUDGE'S CHAMBERS - COURTHOUSE - DAY

36

An imposing, cagey, Mississippi gent of the old school, JUDGE CURWIN picks from a couple of bow ties trying them on, the dapper bow tie sort of a trademark of his. Eli raps on the opened door.

ELI

Judge Curwin?

JUDGE CURWIN

Judge, mayor, and sometimes 'that pig-headed son of a mule.' What can I do for you?

The Judge turns, smiling.

ELI

The clerk outside, Mrs. Gumfrey, said you might be able to help me with some information. On an assault that took place around here about seventeen years ago.

JUDGE CURWIN

Could she?

(CONTINUED)

36 CONTINUED:

36

No.

ELI

Sheriff?

JUDGE CURWIN

(CONTINUED)

ELI

Haven't tried him yet. I don't think charges were ever filed.

JUDGE CURWIN

Well, then it's gossip -- and that's a mighty tall order!

ELI

I know, but sometimes in a small town --

JUDGE CURWIN

(slyly)

You from a small town? Not 'round here?

ELI

No, but if it wasn't reported, the clerk thought you still might have heard about it.

JUDGE CURWIN

Seventeen years. That'd be '64. Lot of watery years over that Niagara of memory. Hell, this is the new South, friend, we're havin' trouble now even rememberin' who won at Vicksburg! What kind of assault?

ELI

(with difficulty)

Rape.

JUDGE CURWIN

(impressed)

Rape?

ELI

Maybe it wasn't described that way. I'm interested in any possible act of violence, any memorable behavior --

JUDGE CURWIN

(interrupts)

Friend, d'you see the condition o' that road comin' in here? Now, what kind o' 'memorable behavior' do you think a town deserves with a piss-poor coon trail like that?

(CONTINUED)

36 CONTINUED: (3)

36

He claps him jocularly on the back, guiding him deliberately out.

JUDGE CURWIN

(continuing)

Sorry I can't be any help, Mr. --

ELI

MacCleary. Eli MacCleary.

JUDGE CURWIN

Yes, sir. But I hope you won't hold the peaceableness of our little Nioba against her, jes' the same.

37 INT. BACK ROOM - NEWSPAPER OFFICE - DAY

37

Caroline stops searching. She stares at the February 15, 1964 edition. Banner headlines proclaim: "LIONEL CURWIN MURDERED LAST NIGHT."

EDWIN (O.S.)
(impatiently)
Near lunch.

CAROLINE
Almost.

FOOTSTEPS approach. She stares harder.

EDWIN (O.S.)
(adamantly)
Lunch.

CAROLINE
Coming.

She rips one page out and stuffs it in her purse.

38 INT. OFFICE - DAY

38

She crosses toward the door.

EDWIN
Well?

CAROLINE
Nothing. You were right. Nothing unpleasant ever seems to happen around here.

EDWIN
(icily)
Tol' you.

She goes out. Edwin walks to the window and watches her cross the street. She approaches Eli, exiting the courthouse square, on the opposite side.

39 EXT. STREET - DAY

39

CAROLINE
Eli!

She hurries to Eli to find out what he's found, pulling the torn article from her purse to show as well.

40 INT. NEWSPAPER OFFICE - DAY

40

Edwin spots it. He turns suddenly and dashes into the back room.

41 INT. BACK ROOM - DAY

41

Without hesitation he goes to the box labeled 1964, and flips through the back issues until he finds the February 15th edition. Ragged edges are all that's left of the front page.

42 INT. DRUGSTORE - DAY

42

Eli raises his gaze from the article.

ELI

The same time. The same night.
It was his brother, but Judge
Curwin still could've told me.
He didn't have to hide it...

CAROLINE

His other brother's the publisher,
and he didn't want me snooping
in his back issues either.

ELI

I wonder how many Curwins there
are in this town?

CAROLINE

Probably all Curwins. What do
we do now?

ELI

Go find Sheriff Brand. Article
said it was his case...

43 INT. JUDGE CURWIN'S CHAMBERS - DAY

43

From his second-story window, the Judge watches Eli and Caroline exit the store, crossing the street below. Edwin enters.

JUDGE CURWIN

I know.

Edwin joins his brother at the window. They both watch the MacClearys.

EDWIN

She ripped out the front page.
About Lionel. Who's that with her?

JUDGE CURWIN

Her husband, if you'd give me odds.

EDWIN

What'd you tell him?

(CONTINUED)

43 CONTINUED:

43

The Judge turns and glares at him. Edwin backs off.

EDWIN

(continuing)

I better tell Dexter and Horace.
We don't want them forgettin'
thesselves.

44 INT. IC UNIT - JACKSON HOSPITAL - DAY

44

Dr. Koblin enters to find Michael's bed rumpled and empty. She checks the next cubicle, then the next. All empty. She rushes out.

45 INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - DAY

45

Hurrying to the nurses' station.

DR. KOBLIN

Where is he? The MacCleary
boy... where is he!

46 INT. NIOBA JAIL - DAY

46

SHERIFF POOL sits behind his desk. He's a fifty-year-old man with a lived-in basset's face and a belly of too much beer. Caroline and Eli enter.

ELI

Sheriff Brand.

SHERIFF POOL

Pool. Sheriff Brand retired in
'sixty-five.

CAROLINE

Could you tell us where we can
find him?

SHERIFF POOL

Passed on in sixty-nine. You're
jus' a tad late.

ELI

We were hoping Sheriff Brand
would tell us about Lionel Curwin's
murder.

(CONTINUED)

46 CONTINUED:

46

Pool eyes them both.

CAROLINE

(quickly)

We're researching a book, 'Crime
in Small Town America.'

Pool eyes them again.

(CONTINUED)

SHERIFF POOL
I was deputy when it happened.

CAROLINE
(even quicker)
You're not a Curwin, are you?

SHERIFF POOL
(smiling in
appreciation)
No, there's still some of us
for'ners kickin' the dirt 'round
here. What d'you want to know?

CAROLINE
Everything.

SHERIFF POOL
Well, first off, Lionel Curwin
was a son of a bitch, if you
pardon my French. Everybody 'round
here was prayin' he'd give out.
But nobody was prayin' for the way
he finally did.

ELI
What do you mean?

SHERIFF POOL
Well, I mean he was ripped apart.
Parts o' him eaten. What parts
was recognizable. Sure you want
to hear this?

ELI
(incredulous)
Who did it? A wild animal?

SHERIFF POOL
The kind of animal that tears a
man apart and then tries to set
fire to his house?

CAROLINE
Then who?

SHERIFF POOL
(shrugs a smile)
That's why it's a small town. But
whoever it was never did it no
more. Quiet as a graveyard 'round
here ever since.

47 EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

47

Eli doesn't waste time arguing. He jerks his overnight bag out of the car, pressing the keys in her hand.

ELI

I can get a room in the hotel, you don't have to worry about me. But I'm giving you the car to go back tonight.

CAROLINE

But I don't want to go. I'm not ready to yet.

ELI

Caroline, the guy who attacked you may still be alive -- he's a murdering lunatic -- and I don't want you anywhere near here.

CAROLINE

Eli --

ELI

No. And that's final.

CAROLINE

(evenly)

We'll talk about it over that good ol' back country coffee.

ELI

Caroline, I happen to care about you -- !

48 EXT. SECOND-STORY COURTHOUSE WINDOW - DAY

48

In twilight, Judge Curwin watches them move on, still arguing, Eli with his bag in hand, toward the town's only hotel.

49 EXT. STREET - NIOBA - NIGHT

49

It is that point in the road where the country ends and the town begins. A Buick Riviera with M.D. license plates sweeps down the street.

50 INT. BUICK RIVIERA - NIGHT

50

Barely able to hold himself together, Michael, behind the wheel, peers into the night, his attention riveted on the road, warding off his exhaustion. He follows a corner.

(CONTINUED)

- 50 CONTINUED: 50
- The CICADA SONG STARTS, nothing more than a SHRILL, LOW MOAN. The boy's eyes dart about the street ahead, the quiet, occasional house to either side. Nothing. Just that SONG GROWING SLOWLY, PAINFULLY LOUDER. INTENSIFYING. He hits the accelerator to get away from it.
- 51 EXT. STREET - NIGHT 51
- The Buick leaps forward and takes another corner SQUEALING.
- 52 INT. BUICK RIVIERA - NIGHT 52
- The SONG GROWING MORE INTENSE, a scream of command. Michael floors the accelerator.
- 53 EXT. STREET - NIGHT 53
- The Buick ROARS out of town and into the country.
- 54 INT. BUICK RIVIERA - NIGHT 54
- The SONG IS A DEAFENING, AGONIZING SCREAM and Michael can't take it any longer. He slaps his hands over his ears, trying to shut out the command, slamming the BRAKES. The tires grip instantly, throwing him forward. His head hits the steering wheel.
- 55 EXT. ROAD - NIGHT 55
- The car comes to a stop in the center of the road, HORN BLARING.
- 56 INT. BUICK RIVIERA - NIGHT 56
- Dazed, Michael slowly lifts his head. The song is gone. He tumbles out of the car.
- 57 EXT. ROAD - NIGHT 57
- But he is not spared. The SONG comes again, this time with even GREATER INTENSITY. He screams, writhes, grabs his ears in pain, tries to fight it off. He can't. He slowly turns about face in the direction of that human-born cicada scream and follows its call.

58 EXT. GROVE OF TREES - NIGHT

58

Michael walks past the stalled car, through the trees, the SONG LESSENING in painful intensity, becoming seductive, beseeching, until it is no more than an insistent whisper. Michael stops and looks about. The song has led him nowhere.

(CONTINUED)

58 CONTINUED:

58

And then he sees it, to his right: The deserted, boarded-up ghostly pale shell of a large, columned house, its lawn and fields gone wild with neglect.

It is the abandoned shell of the Victorian house from Michael's dream.

The SONG INTENSIFIES, pulling him across the fields and up that wild lawn, past the columns and CREAKING PORCH, through the rusting oaken door and along the expanse of rotting boards that were once the living room, leading him finally, finally into the kitchen with its traces of fire damage.

The SONG SEGUES sharply into the CRIES of a trapped man, pitiful cries mixed with ROARS of inhuman rage, and the blackened slats beneath Michael's feet begin to dance. Dust jumps in the moonlight. The boy stares down.

MICHAEL

Will you let me sleep? You
have to promise first.

The ROARS SUBSIDE.

MICHAEL

(continuing)
Will you promise?

(CONTINUED)

58 CONTINUED: (2)

58

Nothing. He scrabbles in the dust until he finds a trap door, splintered, beneath the debris. He slips the bolt and lifts it. Below, a black pit looms.

MICHAEL

(continuing)

You can come out now.

Nothing. He scratches a safety match from an abandoned box scattered nearby and descends the rickety steps.

59 INT. FRUIT CELLAR - NIGHT

59

Staring into the pitch.

MICHAEL

I know you're in here.

The match, ebbing, burns his fingers. He drops it, picks it up, and raises it high once more. As he does, the dying light catches his features. And they are no longer that of the same boy. There is a wildness now, a hateful rage behind his eyes, and where before the mouth was given to smile, there is only fury, brows knotted, throbbing, his gaze staring mockingly into the darkness with monstrous, hideous vengeance.

MICHAEL

(continuing)

... I know you are...

60 INT. NIOBA HOTEL - NIGHT

60

The cramped quarters of the best suite in town.

CAROLINE

Eli, there's really no more use
arguing --

(CONTINUED)

60 CONTINUED:

60

The PHONE RATTLES. She drains her paper cup full of bad hotel instant coffee, as Eli answers the phone.

ELI
(into receiver)
Hello? Yes, it is...
(beat)
What? When?

Caroline moves quickly to him, alerted by his sudden reaction.

CAROLINE
Who is it?... Eli, what?

ELI
(turning from
receiver)
Dr. Koblin. Michael's missing,
and her car's gone. One of the
groundsmen saw him leaving. They
checked home, but she thinks he
may be headed here.

61 OMITTED

61

62 INT. KITCHEN - EDWIN CURWIN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

62

Edwin gives the general store hell over the phone. He's in trousers and an undershirt that hardly does justice to his folds of fat; the fixin's for his bachelor's dinner've been delayed; and he's in no mood.

EDWIN

(into phone)

Missy, that boy o' yours ain't worth the mess o' potage you pay 'im!... What d'ya mean, he's already made delivery on the groceries? I've turned the kitchen upside down, Missy, and I'll be damn'd if I can find hide nor crumb o' my order!

63 EXT. REAR OF EDWIN CURWIN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

63

Through the lighted kitchen window, Edwin's porky figure can be clearly seen arguing on the phone. Michael approaches stealthily, puzzling, as he draws nearer, to find a box of groceries tucked on the back door stoop. He stares, his eyes reflecting coldly, glinting. Ravenous. Edwin's flabbiness gleams at him from the kitchen.

Around the corner, Edwin's obnoxious little pug makes the mistake of coming running, YAPPING at Michael.

Eli and Caroline seek out Sheriff Pool's help.

ELI

We just got the call. Our son has run away, and the hospital in Jackson thinks he may be trying to find us here, in Nioba.

Pool just stares.

ELI

(continuing)

Look, he's sick, you've got to do something!

SHERIFF POOL

(immovably)

What's he sick with?

ELI

For God's sake, what difference does it make!

SHERIFF POOL

Mebbe none. Mebbe some. But I think it's mebbe time you two started telling me some things.

ELI

Look, our son is out there. He's very ill, maybe even dying.

SHERIFF POOL

Your boy's dyin' and you two are stompin' 'round Nioba askin' questions 'bout Lionel Curwin and murder seventeen years ago?

CAROLINE

I was raped on that road into town on the same night Lionel Curwin was murdered seventeen years ago.

ELI

Caroline --

CAROLINE

(to her husband)

If we expect him to help us, he's got to know, Eli.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CAROLINE (CONT'D)
(turning back to
Pool)

Michael, our son, was born the following December. Now he's sick, maybe terminally, with a disease the doctors don't understand but think might be hereditary. We thought if the man who attacked me was... Michael's natural father, we might find some personal medical history that might help the doctors know what they're fighting...

SHERIFF POOL
Why didn't you report it at the time?

ELI
Why? Would you have done anything!

CAROLINE
I was in a coma. Eli had enough on his hands as it was. They took me to Jackson. That's where we were going anyhow. Eli had just gotten his first architect's commission there. It was the end of our honeymoon.

Pool rises to the simple police caller and speaks into the box.

SHERIFF POOL
Herb?

(CONTINUED)

64 CONTINUED: (2)

64

DEPUTY HERBERT (V.O.)

Yes, sir.

SHERIFF POOL

Shag on up to the gap and see if
you spot a kid in a --

He looks at Eli.

ELI

Buick Riviera.

SHERIFF POOL

In a Buick Riviera. Keep me
posted.

He clicks off, and heads for the door.

SHERIFF POOL

(continuing)

Let's go.

ELI

Sheriff --

Pool turns.

CAROLINE

(finishing it)

Our son doesn't know about any
of this.

Pool understands. They exit.

65 INT. EDWIN CURWIN'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

65

Edwin finally rings off with the store, hanging up to realize he's alone. Meaning, his dog's not in.

EDWIN

Koko. Koko...

He goes to the back door, yanking it open. And startles, almost scaring himself to death:

Michael stands at the bottom of the step, staring up at him. The box of groceries is at his feet, untouched. But there's no Koko. Just the tiniest smear of warm blood still at the corner of Michael's smiling mouth. Edwin doesn't notice.

EDWIN

(continuing)

Well, it's 'bout time. Well, c'mon, bring it on in! And don't drop it! You boys're always droppin' it...

He rubs his paunch expectantly, turning hurriedly back in to get the cash from the drawer. Michael steps in to follow. A vast hunger of his own. A vast, deliberate hate.

EDWIN

(continuing)

D'you bring pie? You remember the pie?... Missy said no more'n five for the meat and I 'xpect her to stan' by it.

He turns with the cash and sees, noticing for the first time and in amazement, Michael's condition -- the boy's extraordinary, gaunt, eerie, ravenous attention. The box is on the counter now.

EDWIN

(continuing)

Hell, son, what kind o' slave wages is Missy payin' you?

(reluctantly)

Well, si' down. Si' down. 'Nough here to feed an army anyhow...

He rips open the butcher paper on the order of raw ground beef, regretting his generosity almost as soon as he does.

(CONTINUED)

65 CONTINUED:

65

EDWIN

(continuing)

... if we jus' extend it a
little...

(looks up, over
preparations)

Haven't seen you 'round before,
have I?... Nooma's cousin? Poon's
boy? Hell, not Baylor's deaf
'n dumb in-law visitin' from
Natchez!

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

65 CONTINUED: (2)

65

EDWIN (CONT'D)

How d'you like it? I prefer 'em
a little on the raw m'self. Makes
it easier waitin'...

He slaps the chopped beef vigorously on the counter, shaping the meat into bloody, dripping patties. But the fat shaking from his own upper arms and from around his paunch is more compelling for the staring Michael. A knife-holder displaying a complete assortment for butchering hangs on the wall next to where he leans.

EDWIN

(continuing)

Koko? Koko?... Where is that
damn dog anyway?

(stops; a beat)

What's 'at?

It's the SONG OF THE CICADAS starting up faintly outside. He listens as it GROWS LOUDER.

EDWIN

(continuing)

Can't be. Not this time o'
year. You hear it?...

It does more than puzzle him. He moves forward, toward the swinging door to the living room, outside of which the shrill chorus seems to be its loudest.

Behind him, Michael rises to his full, deadly height.

66 INT. EDWIN CURWIN'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

66

Edwin crosses slowly toward the window, the CICADA CHORUS GROWING, SWELLING HORRIBLY, till suddenly: IT STOPS. A full, deafening silence. Like a silence before the storm.

Edwin senses it, too. He turns. But too late. The swinging door bursts open. He screams -- the last thing he does -- as he feels the blood from his face and throat start coursing down his chest from the first point of the ripping, snarling attack.

67 OMITTED

67
&
6867
&
68

69 EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

69

A police car cruises.

70 INT. POLICE CAR - NIGHT

70

Caroline suddenly points ahead.

CAROLINE

There.

71 EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

71

The cop car stops right behind the abandoned Buick in the center of the road. Caroline hops out. The two men are right behind her. She peers into the open door.

CAROLINE

It's empty.

The Sheriff searches the interior. No signs.

SHERIFF POOL

Must be right 'round here some place. Better spread out.

They begin a search.

72 INT. PLATT KITCHEN - NIGHT

72

AMANDA PLATT sweeps dinner scraps off a pair of plates, and into a dog dish. She is no more than sixteen, a blonde angel of ethereal beauty. She steps out the screen door.

73 EXT. BACK PORCH - NIGHT

73

She calls her dog.

AMANDA

Here, Tippy.

The ugly GROWLING OF HER PET draws her around to the side of the house. The animal, a collie cur, has Michael pinned to the wall, held there by its SNARLING.

AMANDA

(continuing)

Tippy!

She tosses the food into the bushes, and the dog chases the scraps. She stares at Michael, at the dried wounds on his forehead and lips, and at his dazed eyes.

But then he seems to see her, smiles, puts a hand out toward her and takes a step in her direction only to crumple. She catches him as he drops.

74 INT. JAIL - NIGHT

74

The Sheriff enters followed by Eli and Caroline.

SHERIFF POOL

If he's lost in them pines,
night's no time to start. We'll
organize a search party first
thing dawn.

The PHONE RINGS; he answers.

SHERIFF POOL

(continuing)

Sheriff's office. Vote for Pool.

He listens a moment and then hangs up.

SHERIFF POOL

(continuing)

Doc Schoonmaker. He's got your
boy.

75 INT. MAKESHIFT HOSPITAL ROOM - CLINIC - NIGHT

75

Michael lies in bed sleeping peacefully. His parents bend over him, the Sheriff watching, along with DOC SCHOONMAKER, a spry, wizened man past sixty. The clinic is a smallish, cinderblock affair, containing Doc's office, lab and two or three temporary rooms for patients to await ambulance removal to the real hospital at the county seat.

76 INT. DOC'S OFFICE - NIGHT

76

DOC

He'll be fine, don't worry.

(to Pool)

Platt girl found him wanderin'
'round their place.

CAROLINE

(cautiously happy)

I don't believe it. He looks
so good. What he's been through
-- and he actually looks so much
better!

ELI

(his excitement
tinged with the
resentment)

I told you, there's nothing wrong
with out son. Nothing that some
simple decent medical care couldn't
cure...

DOC

Well, yes or no, right now sleep's
the best medicine.

CAROLINE

I'd like to stay tonight. Sleep
on your couch.

DOC

Do no such thing. Not runnin' a
hotel.

CAROLINE

In case he needs me.

DOC

(shooing them out
the door)

You two look worse 'n he does.
Now, go. Git! B'sides... don't
have a couch.

77 EXT. TOWN SQUARE - DAY

77

In the morning, Judge Curwin, adjusting his bow tie as he walks to the courthouse, is stopped by a late model hearse that pulls up beside him. The driver, DEXTER WARD, is late thirties, a short, fat man.

JUDGE CURWIN

What is it, Dexter?

(CONTINUED)

77 CONTINUED:

77

DEXTER

Newspaper ain't open and it's
past ten.

The Judge turns his gaze to the darkened office.

DEXTER

(continuing)

Ain't such a thing happened since
the night Lionel's place got
torched.

JUDGE CURWIN

Thank you, Dexter.

Dexter drives off, leaving the Judge to check into it.

78 INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIOBA - DAY

78

Michael lies in bed, an untouched breakfast tray be-
fore him. He glows with health. His parents enter,
his mother still amazed and even more stunned to see
his sunny smile.

CAROLINE

Michael?

MICHAEL

Hi, Mom. Dad.

CAROLINE

Michael? Hon?

She embraces him, laughing and crying.

MICHAEL

What's the matter?

ELI

How do you feel, son?

MICHAEL

Terrific. Why shouldn't I?

ELI

You sleep good?

MICHAEL

Yeah. Sure. Mom, what's wrong?

(CONTINUED)

78 CONTINUED:

78

She stifles tears, still unable to answer. Eli does it for her.

ELI

It's just so good to see you
looking your old self, that's
all.

(laughing)

Not that that's so old!

79 INT. HALLWAY - DAY

79

ELI

OK?

CAROLINE

Did you see him? It's a miracle.

ELI

I know. But how do you feel?

CAROLINE

Wonderful. The best I've felt
in months.

She laughs, and they kiss.

80 INT. DOC'S OFFICE - DAY

80

Doc Schoonmaker glances up from his papers as they
enter.

DOC

Come in, come in. Well, can
you believe it now?

ELI

Yes.

DOC

Good, I can't.

CAROLINE

(pausing in mid-step)
What do you mean?

DOC

(a mite troubled)
Talked to Dr. Koblin.

ELI

(frowns)
Koblin.

DOC

Well, jus' the same. I got all
her figures. Did you know your
son has grown an inch in one
day? And weighs exactly four
and three-quarter pounds more 'n
he did the same time yesterday?

ELI

He's entitled.

(CONTINUED)

80 CONTINUED:

80

CAROLINE
He's eating again?

DOC
Hasn't touched his breakfast.

ELI
Then last night.

Doc shrugs, possibly, undoubtedly.

CAROLINE
Well, what's wrong? What're
you telling us?

DOC
Nothing. That's just it. Nothin's
wrong. Contradicts everything
known to medical science -- but
it seems to be jus' fine.

He smiles at them, happy to give good news.

DOC
(continuing)
But then who are we to question
the ways of the Lord, right?

CAROLINE
(in relief)
Amen.

81 INT. EDWIN'S KITCHEN - DAY

81

Judge Curwin enters via the back door, and as soon as
he enters he knows something's not right. The light's
still on, the raw patties are out attracting flies,
and the groceries are still on the counter.

JUDGE CURWIN
Edwin?
(a different tack)
Koko?

Nothing. The Judge steps toward the living room,
pushing open the swinging door.

82 INT. EDWIN'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

82

As soon as he does, he wishes he hadn't. He fights
back disgust, nausea.

His brother Edwin stretches bloodily over the floor,
savaged and just about totally devoured.

The MacClearys sit with their son; Doc enters.

DOC

Tests all seem to show he's still fine. What're you three goin' to do now?

ELI

We'll have to talk.

(to his son)

But you, hot shot, maybe it'd be a good idea if we went to Houston and had them really check you out, to make sure.

MICHAEL

No!

ELI

Houston, the Astrodome.

MICHAEL

No! I'm not leaving here!

ELI

What?

MICHAEL

I want to stay.

Beat. Into both his parents' startled gaze.

MICHAEL

(continuing)

I don't know. I like it here.

The door opens and DEPUTY HERBERT enters. He is a gangly guy in his late twenties, painfully serious about his job and very polite.

DEPUTY HERBERT

Mr. and Mrs. MacCleary? Pardon, but Sheriff wants to see you. You, too, Doc.

DOC

What for?

DEPUTY HERBERT

(beat; grimly)

Seein's believin', Doc.

Led by Deputy Herbert, they all enter by the back door. The swinging door is open, so the grisly scene in the living room is just off. Sheriff Pool enters from there.

SHERIFF POOL

In there, Doc.
(to Eli and Caroline,
sparing them)
Not you.

Doc goes on in. The Sheriff keeps them at a distance, but Eli and Caroline trying to glance in, get the gist.

SHERIFF POOL

(continuing)
Edwin Curwin. He was murdered
last night. Like his brother
Lionel seventeen years ago.
Ripped apart.

DOC (O.S.)

(calling)
Where're the arms?

SHERIFF POOL

(loudly back)
Dunno. Not yet.

Caroline sinks into a chair.

CAROLINE

Then he's still alive. The man --
whoever was responsible the first
time -- is still alive.

SHERIFF POOL

Maybe. Maybe not. Coincidental,
though, that it only happens about
the time you two are driving through
this town.

ELI

(defiantly)
What the hell is that supposed to mean?

CAROLINE

Eli --

Doc re-enters, interrupting just in time.

DOC

Well, s'pose I'd better call Dexter.

SHERIFF POOL

Phone in the living room.

(CONTINUED)

84 CONTINUED:

84

DOC
(sparing himself)
Well, if you don't mind, I think
I'll take it in here.

85 EXT. REAR OF EDWIN CURWIN'S HOUSE - DAY

85

Eli and Caroline step outside, waiting it out where
Deputy Herbert waits, smoking and poking with his
foot at what can only be Koko's gnawed remains.

ELI
(to Caroline)
You all right?

CAROLINE
Would you stop asking me that!

She helps herself to one of Deputy Herbert's cigarettes.

ELI
You don't smoke.

CAROLINE
I do now.

She lights up. Beyond, by the other outbuildings,
Judge Curwin keeps his own brooding counsel. Eli
approaches.

ELI
I'm sorry. I know it must be
pretty hard on you.

JUDGE CURWIN
(slowly, towards
him)
I hold you responsible, sir.
Personally responsible. None
of this would've happened if
you hadn't come here, you and
your wife, asking your vile,
impertinent questions. None of
it!

The outburst takes Eli by surprise. Sheriff Pool and
Caroline come over. But the biggest surprise is still
for Judge Curwin.

(CONTINUED)

TOM LAWS suddenly screams at him. Tom Laws, stepping from behind a tree -- a squat, swarthy half-breed Indian in his mid-fifties, face pocked with scars and body swollen from a lifetime of alcoholic abuse.

(CONTINUED)

TOM LAWS

Liar! It's your fault, nobody's
fault but your own!

(approaching)

I know, we're not s'posed to stand
up to you -- but it's you, you
and the whole damn Curwin family.
The evil Lionel sowed. Lionel's
evil come back to haunt you. I
hope it kills you, kills you like
him -- every one o' you Curwins!
Every dam' one!

Deputy Herbert finally gets to him, subduing the drunken
breed and dragging him toward the squad car.

JUDGE CURWIN

(to the Sheriff)

You keep him away from me, you
understand. You keep that Injun
slime away or it'll be your job!

(turning his gaze
on the MacClearys)

And them too. Especially them.

He stalks off. Deputy Herbert bundles Tom Laws into
the back of the cruiser. Eli and Caroline and Sheriff
Pool are left.

ELI

(meaning Laws)

Who is he?

SHERIFF POOL

Tom Laws.

ELI

One of your suspects?

SHERIFF POOL

Would be. If he hadn't been
sleeping it off in the back o'
my jail for the last thirty years.

He turns, going back inside to join Doc. Eli returns
to Caroline, who still stands alone.

ELI

What is it, Caroline?

(CONTINUED)

85 CONTINUED: (3)

85

CAROLINE

Nothing. Everything...! Michael's not going to get better. Can't you feel it? Something's wrong here. Terribly wrong. And I don't know what to do. Eli, we've got to get him away from here!

Crying, she searches for comfort in his arms.

86 INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIOBA - DAY

86

Michael rises from bed, and goes to the closet. He dresses.

87 INT. AMANDA PLATT'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

87

She sits mending when a KNOCK calls her to the door. She opens it to find Michael standing there. She is overcome with shyness, and remains silent.

MICHAEL

Hello.

AMANDA

You're better.

(CONTINUED)

87 CONTINUED:

87

MICHAEL

Yes. I wanted to thank you for
last night.

More silence and averted eyes from her.

MICHAEL

(continuing)

You saved my life.

AMANDA

Oh, no. Tippy wouldn't hurt
you.

Another moment passes.

MICHAEL

Can I come in?

AMANDA

My pa won't 'low strangers in
the house when he's not here.
I'm sorry.

MICHAEL

Oh. Well, what about outside?

AMANDA

Yes.

She sprints to get her coat.

88 EXT. FIELD - DAY

88

They walk in a field on the outskirts of town. A
clear winter's day.

MICHAEL

You must have a lot of boyfriends.

AMANDA

'Don't.

MICHAEL

You should. You're beautiful.

She doesn't say anything.

MICHAEL

(continuing)

Don't you know that?

(CONTINUED)

AMANDA

Never had anybody tell me before.

Michael points to a wild patch of low ground. It is overgrown with brambles and studded with stones and pools of fetid water.

MICHAEL

What's that?

AMANDA

Black pine bog. Nobody ever goes there. Not even to pick blackberries. It's full of briars.

He walks down the rise toward the patch.

AMANDA

(continuing)

You don't want to go there. It's full of quicksand!

MICHAEL

Come on, don't be afraid. We'll be careful.

He holds out his hand and she takes it. Suddenly her collie appears and races circles around Michael. He BARKS furiously and nips at his heels.

AMANDA

Tippy, stop that!

Michael throws a stick, and the dog chases it.

AMANDA

(continuing)

I don't know why he acts that way 'round you.

MICHAEL

Maybe he smells my cat.

AMANDA

That must be it. What kind of cat d' you have?

MICHAEL

Me? I don't have a cat.

(CONTINUED)

She stops to look at him.

AMANDA

You're strange.

They both laugh. He takes her hand, and leads her to the lone tree in the field. She pulls away. He walks closer. The trunk is alive, undulating with millions of dirty brown insects scaling its length. He stares at them.

AMANDA

(continuing)

They're horrible.

MICHAEL

No, they're not! What's horrible about getting re-born. Seventeen-year locusts. Born again, that's what cicada means in Nioba Indian talk, didja know that?

AMANDA

(knowing when she's
being teased)

No, it doesn't.

She moves away, anxious to be free of the teeming insect life. Ahead, Tippy forgets about the stick and concentrates on the bog, digging, wet earth splaying out between his hind legs, and barking madly.

(CONTINUED)

AMANDA

Look at him. Isn't he silly?

MICHAEL

Must have found a bone.

He stops beside her. Both are painfully aware of the other's closeness.

MICHAEL

(continuing)

Why don't you have a boyfriend?

AMANDA

Because o' Pa, I guess. He's terrible strict.

MICHAEL

What's your name?

AMANDA

Amanda Platt.

MICHAEL

Your father's Horace Platt, Lionel Curwin's cousin?

(CONTINUED)

AMANDA

Yes. How'd you know?

Michael's face is torn by sudden fury -- a consuming hate -- and he turns away to hide it from her.

AMANDA

(continuing)

You sick again? Want me to run for Doc?

She gently touches him, and he shakes his head, slowly assuming command of his own emotions again until he is calm enough to face her and show none of what he feels.

Very sweetly, very softly, he kisses her.

She returns the kiss and suddenly they are in each other's arms, holding one another closely, and kissing again. Their tenderness turns to passion.

Tippy suddenly disturbs them, WHINING at their feet. Amanda glances at the dog and SCREAMS.

The dog carries a bloody, dirt-encrusted stump of a human hand in its mouth, its tail wagging furiously with the joy of discovery. Amanda keeps on screaming.

89 EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

89

It's reported, Deputy Herbert bringing word to one of the first -- Judge Curwin -- as he screeches his squad car to a stop just inches from the Judge stepping off the curb.

DEPUTY HERBERT

Judge! Mayor!

90 EXT. GENERAL STORE - DAY

90

HORACE PLATT drinks outside on the porch. He's 35, dressed in the uniform of the Mississippi Power and Electric Company, Amanda's father, but where goodness shines from her, he just emanates white trash meanness. He stares at Judge Curwin approaching.

JUDGE CURWIN

They discovered Edwin's remains,
part of 'em, up at the bog.
Amanda and the boy.

HORACE

What boy?

JUDGE CURWIN

We can't have them pokin' 'round
that bog, Horace.

HORACE

What boy?

JUDGE CURWIN

MacCleary, what else?

Horace swings to his feet, moving.

JUDGE CURWIN

(continuing)

You hear me, Horace? Be careful.
Edwin tol' you, his parents been
pokin' 'round, asking a lot of
questions 'bout Lionel and things
ever since they arrived.

91 EXT. FIELD - DAY

91

Michael and Amanda, Eli and Caroline. The Sheriff points to the bog.

SHERIFF POOL

Say that's where the dog was diggin'?

Amanda nods. Sheriff Pool sees a four-wheel jeep bearing down on him. It's Horace Platt's.

SHERIFF POOL

(continuing; to himself)

Damn. As if I din't have trouble 'nough.

He swings back to his deputy.

SHERIFF POOL

(continuing)

Well, d'you bring the shovels?

Deputy Herbert unloads them from the squad car as the jeep comes to a fast stop and Horace leaps out, striding toward Amanda. She cringes.

HORACE

What're you doin' out here?

AMANDA

Just takin' a walk, Pa.

HORACE

I give you permission?

She says nothing, dropping her eyes.

MICHAEL

She didn't want to come. I talked her into it.

Horace ignores the boy.

HORACE

Get in the jeep.

She scrambles. He turns on Michael.

HORACE

(continuing)

You stay 'way from my baby... 'n you stay clear, y'hear?

(CONTINUED)

He jumps into the jeep, and spews dirt speeding away.
Eli puts a comforting arm around Michael's shoulder.

ELI

(to Pool)

Is he always like that?

SHERIFF POOL

That was civil. Coupla years back
he caught his wife in bed with
another man. Killed 'em both.

ELI

(stunned)

He wasn't put away?

SHERIFF POOL

The Judge's his cousin. Want to
give me a hand here?

(then to Deputy

Herbert)

Herb, run on over to the jail and
bring me back Tom Laws, will ya?

Eli takes off his coat to help Pool, joining Caroline
and Michael at the station wagon. Michael's gaze
still fixed on the disappearing jeep.

MICHAEL

He's going to hurt her.

ELI

No, he won't. No man's going to
hurt his own child.

MICHAEL

Horace Platt will.

Caroline ushers him into the car.

CAROLINE

You're tired, hon. You're still
not well. I'm putting you to
bed and this time you're staying
put.

She circles the car to the driver's side.

91 CONTINUED: (2)

91

ELI

Well, at least we know what was responsible for his outburst this morning.

CAROLINE

What do you mean?

He nods after the jeep.

ELI

Amanda. I think our Michael has a crush.

He kisses her, seeing them off.

92 EXT. BOG - NIGHT

92

Sheriff Pool and his deputy dig on one patch of solid ground, while Eli and Tom Laws work on another. Eli sees his chance between shovelfuls.

ELI

What about Lionel Curwin?

TOM LAWS

What about him?

ELI

You had plenty to say this morning.

TOM LAWS

Gospel truth, all o' it. Ruined m' family. Ruined plenty others, too. Worst, Widda Connors.

ELI

Widow Connors? What happened to her?

TOM LAWS

Everythin'. Her boy Billy was mah best friend. He loved Sarah. Always did, 'back since school. But we never had no money, dirt poor, and she was forced to marry Lionel. One night they run off, Sarah and Billy, and neither one was seen again. Billy's ma had a hardware store, Lionel wanted his revenge, so he bought the mortgage 'n foreclosed, foreclosed on Widda Connors.

(CONTINUED)

ELI

What happened to her?

TOM LAWS

Same night Lionel got his, she swore she saw her boy Billy. After all them years. Swore he'd come back to her. But nobody else saw him, thought she was crazy. 'Cause that time she was...

Eli drops the shovel and leaps out of the hole, going to where Sheriff Pool watches his deputy dig, while resting on his own shovel.

ELI

Why didn't you tell me about Widow Connors? She saw her own son the night of the murder. Maybe he came back, saw what Lionel had done to his mother, and killed him. Maybe she knows what happened to my wife that night.

SHERIFF POOL

Tom Laws also tell ya she went screamin' down the middla the street buck naked, screamin' in the middla night?

ELI

I want to talk to her.

SHERIFF POOL

Go 'head. Won't be easy, though. Mattawonket. State asylum. Been there ever since the night.

Deputy Herbert screams. Pool and Eli scramble over to him.

SHERIFF POOL

(continuing)

Find the other arm?

Even better. They stop at the lip of the hole. At the bottom, buried in the dirt, lies a human skeleton with ribs poking through the earth like piano ivories.

(CONTINUED)

92 CONTINUED: (2)

92

Now Tom Laws yells, and all three men scramble to his dig. There is another skeleton at the bottom of his hole. Sheriff Pool stares about at the bog.

SHERIFF POOL

(continuing)

Sweet Jesus, what've we found?

93 INT. DOC'S OFFICE - NIGHT

93

Doc stares out the window in the direction of the bog. The entire area is lit by flickering torches. Caroline enters from Michael's room, and joins Doc at the window.

CAROLINE

Any more news?

DOC

At last count, they'd found twenty-eight more.

He turns to her.

DOC

(continuing)

How's the boy?

CAROLINE

Sleeping like a baby.

DOC

(worried)

He's lost weight again. Close to three pounds.

CAROLINE

He hasn't eaten all day.

DOC

People don't lose or gain that much weight in one day. Not from fastin' or anything else. And he's grown another half inch. I'm going to take new x-rays in the mornin' but I think you better get in touch with that doctor in Jackson soon as you can.

Deputy Herbert pushes his head in the door.

DOC

(continuing)

I know.

(CONTINUED)

93 CONTINUED:

93

He looks to Caroline.

CAROLINE

It's all right. I'll stay with Michael.

94 EXT. BOG - NIGHT

94

The bog is torch lit. The entire town digs, men working in grim silence while their women huddle together and watch. Blankets, one after another, lie on the ground in a long line. Doc walks from the squad car to Eli and Pool.

DOC

How many now?

SHERIFF POOL

Thirty-six.

DOC

You I.D. any of them?

SHERIFF POOL

Not yet.

He whips back a blanket. A pile of bones is revealed. He studies it, then moves on to the next blanket while Eli and the Sheriff follow.

DOC

All been in the ground some time.
Worms done their work well.

He glances up from the skeleton to the Sheriff.

DOC

(continuing)

What do you think?

SHERIFF POOL

Don't know. Somebody -- mass murderer from outside the county, prob'ly -- buryin' his victims here.

DOC

Mebbe, but this one's Emily Oldenburgh.

(CONTINUED)

94 CONTINUED:

94

SHERIFF POOL

Can't be. We buried her in the
churchyard. Both of us was there,
remember?

DOC

Know it. But it's still Emily.
Put that plastic hip joint in her
m'self.

He points to a man-made socket embedded in bleached
bone.

DOC

(continuing)

Something else strange.

He hefts a shattered, gnawed bone.

DOC

(continuing)

Looks gnawed. So do most of 'em.

Eli and the Sheriff blanch.

DOC

(continuing;
to Sheriff)

Have a talk with Dexter Ward, if
I was you.

95 INT. MAKESHIFT HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

95

Michael is in the grip of a nightmare, the horror in
his mind given temporal reality by the rising, insis-
tent, commanding CICADA SONG that bathes him in sound
and finally rips him upright in bed, awake, eyes wide
in fear.

MICHAEL

No, no --

His words of refusal weaken as his gaze travels to the
moonlit tree outside his window. Its trunk is a solid
blanket of cicada, crawling upward toward the branches,
some already there, the visual timepiece of his own
metamorphosis.

Michael's eyes glaze over, his face slackens, only to
be replaced a moment later by a mask of implacable
hate. He gets out of bed and begins to dress.

96 EXT. MORTUARY - NIGHT

96

Sheriff Pool, Eli and Doc get out of the squad car and walk toward the building, Pool reminding Eli:

SHERIFF POOL

'Preciate the help, but jus' 'cause you went diggin' some holes in some bog, don't mean you can go takin' over law enforcement responsibilities in this county.

DOC

(realizing)

One problem.

SHERIFF POOL

What's 'at?

DOC

Dexter wasn't undertaker when Emily died. Dexter was his assistant.

ELI

Who was?

Sheriff Pool pounds the door.

DOC

(beat)

Lionel Curwin.

The door opens and the mortician stares at them. He doesn't say a word.

SHERIFF POOL

Well, you gonna invite us in?

Dexter steps back, and they enter.

97 INT. MORTUARY CORRIDOR - NIGHT

97

SHERIFF POOL

You hear what's been goin' on in Black Pine bog?

DEXTER

Think I got time? I got my own hands full, y'know.

98 INT. EMBALMING ROOM - NIGHT

98

He means, of course, Edwin. The inner sanctum is a chamber of horrors and Edwin's body is the centerpiece. He lies on the embalming table, tilted for the blood to run down to the gathering tray below. His eyes and mouth have already been sewn shut. Rouge and pancake give his face a lifelike glow.

(CONTINUED)

A suit stuffed with tissue paper hides the missing limbs. There are more tables in the room, machines and sharp instruments, and a huge wooden door in the back leading to the refrigeration room. The men gather.

SHERIFF POOL

You, or Lionel, work on Emily Oldenburgh, Dexter?

DEXTER

Emily Oldenburgh! Hell, been so long, who can remember?

SHERIFF POOL

We jus' found her skeleton in the bog.

DEXTER

Impossible! Prepared her for burial here myself. Remember placin' her in the coffin. Her hips creaked.

ELI

Could anybody have removed the body between here and the cemetery?

DEXTER

'Course not!
(stares)
Who're you?

SHERIFF POOL

Dexter, jus' answer the question, will ya?

DEXTER

No, why should I? It's insultin'!
I don't owe this man...

The Sheriff eyes him for a moment longer, knowing they're not going to get anything out of Dexter this way.

DOC

Like your new paint job, Dexter.

They leave, and the undertaker looks up from his work, staring after them as they go.

The three men climb back into the squad car.

100 INT. SQUAD CAR - NIGHT

100

ELI

Well?

SHERIFF POOL

Well what?

ELI

Who's buried in Emily Oldenburgh's coffin?

SHERIFF POOL

(realizing)

One way to find out.

He puts the car in gear.

101 EXT. DESERTED RAILROAD STATION - NIGHT

101

Tom Laws returns to his booze, lying in a muttering sprawl amid the garbage. It's where Michael, emerging from the shadows, finds him.

MICHAEL

(his back to us)

How are you, Tom?

Laws looks up, trying to focus.

TOM LAWS

Who're you?

MICHAEL

Been a long time, Tom.

TOM LAWS

Has? Who're you?

He returns greedily to his bottle. Michael smiles, slowly advancing. We see him fully now, as he approaches inches close to the drunken man. Laws studies him, staring deeply into the boy's eyes, still seeing nothing more than a stranger. But then Michael speaks in the VOICE of Billy Connors, a voice no longer his own, but a youthful voice filled with sweet, sibilant menace (INDICATED HEREAFTER BY BILLY/MICHAEL).

BILLY/MICHAEL

Don't you recognize me, Tom?

TOM LAWS

Billy? Billy Connors?

Frightened, he jerks back, scrambling.

(CONTINUED)

101 CONTINUED:

101

TOM LAWS

(continuing)

Stop it! No fair playin' tricks
on an ol' Injun cripple. No fair!

Laws hunkers, starting to rock, chanting in his delirium an old Indian chant.

TOM LAWS

(continuing)

Oh, Billy, Billy, remember how
we'd sit with 'im, mah Daddy, and
he'd tell us about it? The song?
Singing to us?

(turns, avidly)

... Is it true, Billy? Can you do
it? The magic? Like the locusts?
The cicadas? Can you survive, can
you get through it all, anythin'!,
by becomin' somethin' else?
Changing? Be reborn?

But hysterical, he resists the possibility, rocking
and chanting feverishly some more. Michael extends
his hands.

TOM LAWS

(continuing)

No!

Terrified, he slams back against the wall, cringing.

TOM LAWS

(continuing)

Get 'way from me! Injun lies!
Ain't true!

BILLY/MICHAEL

(gently)

I thought you'd be pleased, Tom.
I've come back for 'em. All of
'em. But I'm savin' the judge
for last. Just to torture him,
like his brother Lionel tortured
me.

TOM LAWS

Stop it! No, you're the MacClary
boy! Not Billy! No, it's jus'
lies!

(CONTINUED)

101 CONTINUED: (2)

101

Suddenly, the single-note call -- THE CICADA SONG -- begins its soft, shrill cry, rising from Michael's lips. Hardly a lie, but an invocation. A promise. A haunting, terrifying reality. Tom Laws stumbles back, fleeing.

TOM LAWS

(continuing)

No! No!!!

102 INT. EMBALMING ROOM - NIGHT

102

Dexter on the phone.

DEXTER

I'm not staying here, not with the Sheriff and that fella snoopin' 'round. I want every dime you and Horace have, my last payment --

The front DOOR SQUEALS OPEN AND SLAMS.

DEXTER

(continuing)

They're back. You bring it over tomorrow morning, Judge. You make sure.

He slams the phone down.

103 INT. CORRIDOR - NIGHT

103

It is dimly lit with many side doors. Dexter walks to the front door expecting to find the Sheriff, but there is no one there. He checks the outside steps only to hear a SIDE DOOR SHUT behind him down the corridor. He looks back. Empty. He closes the front door and returns to his inner sanctum.

104 INT. EMBALMING ROOM - NIGHT

104

He screams. Facing him is the body of Edwin Curwin. Someone has sat it up, cut the thread and opened the eyes and mouth. The dead face smiles at Dexter in a horrid rictus imitation of life. Dexter's gaze darts about the room.

(CONTINUED)

104 CONTINUED:

104

DEXTER

It's you kids again now, ain't it?

He pulls the prop from under Edwin's back, and the body smacks flat on the metal. Dexter covers the remains with a dirty sheet and prowls the room.

DEXTER

(continuing)

Better come out or I'll let you take Cousin Edwin's place. I'm warnin' you.

Nothing but silence; the refrigerator DOOR SLAMS SHUT behind Dexter with a SUCKING SOUND and he whirls.

105 INT. REFRIGERATION ROOM - NIGHT

105

Dexter steps warily into the room.

DEXTER

No escape now. I warned you.

Three shroud-draped bodies on tables crowd the room. He slowly parades past all three and then whirls about tearing the sheet from one.

DEXTER

(continuing)

Gotcha!

It is the marble white body of a beautiful teenage girl, just as cold and unapproachable in death as she was in life. He drops the shroud and moves to the next corpse. With this one he delicately lifts the corner and peers underneath.

DEXTER

(continuing)

Peek-a-boo, I know you're in there.

A dead man, past ninety at the time of expiration, stares at him with withered eyeballs. A RUSTLING SOUND swings Dexter around. Rearing above him is the third corpse, now come to life, a white-shrouded ghost looming over him. The drape slides away, and Michael stands there, his face a mask of cold hatred, a draining funnel with razor sharp edges in his hand. Dexter screams. The funnel plunges down.

106 INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIOBA - NIGHT

106

The door opens; Caroline enters with a tray full of food.

CAROLINE

Michael --

The bed is empty. She drops the tray and runs from the room.

107 EXT. CHURCH GRAVEYARD - NIGHT

107

Doc holds the electric torch while Pool and Eli dig out the last of the dirt from Emily Oldenburgh's coffin. Her tombstone looms over them. They pry at the lid and finally with a SCREECH OF RUSTY NAILS it gives. They stare at a box full of white rocks. The sheriff hefts one in his hand.

DOC

From the bog.

Eli glances at Pool.

ELI

Dexter Ward?

SHERIFF POOL

Dexter Ward.

They climb out of the grave.

108 INT. SQUAD CAR - NIGHT

108

Sheriff Pool wheels the car to stop before the mortuary. He is on the police radio.

SHERIFF POOL

Herb, get right over here to
Dexter's place.

He clicks off and they all get out.

109 INT. EMBALMING ROOM - NIGHT

109

It's as quiet as a crypt.

SHERIFF POOL (O.S.)

Dexter? You in there?

(CONTINUED)

109 CONTINUED:

109

He and the other two enter.

DOC

Think he ran?

All three circle the room. The soles of Eli's feet make a sucking noise, and he glances down. They are covered with sticky blood. He follows the ever-narrowing trail to the refrigerator door. There is a slow river of the red stuff seeping from under the jamb.

ELI

Over here.

110 INT. REFRIGERATION ROOM - NIGHT

110

All three enter. From under one of the sheets on a table a hand protrudes. It has been strapped down, a razor sharp funnel inserted into its wrist artery, and left there to drain the life's blood away.

The floor is awash in the ooze. To the other side of the sheet is a bottle, nearly empty, slung high on a sling. It is labeled formaldehyde. Eli pulls the sheet back while the other two watch with grim determination. Dexter Ward lays on the table, his face a death mask of horror.

DOC

Lord save us. He's been embalmed alive.

Eli gags. A leg has also been torn off.

111 INT. PLATT KITCHEN - NIGHT

111

The back door silently opens, and Michael slips inside.

112 INT. STAIRWAY - NIGHT

112

Michael is met at the head of the stairway by Amanda's collie; the animal, SNARLING, blocks his way. Michael stares at the dog, momentarily immobile, certainly unafraid and then suddenly he bares his teeth, and a guttural sound tears from his mouth. It's an animal SNARL of hatred, a declaration of his willingness to kill. The collie SHRIEKS, and turns tail and runs.

113 INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

113

As Michael passes a door, there is a yell from within.

HORACE (O.S.)

Shuddup, ya dumb mutt!

Michael pauses, deliberately changes course and heads for that door. Another door, farther down the hallway, suddenly opens.

AMANDA

Tippy? Tippy?

Michael presses himself against the wall while the girl calls softly for her pet. The dog is gone, and after waiting a moment, she closes her door.

Michael walks to that door and stares at the jamb until the yellow lamp light goes black. She's back in bed, alone in the dark now. He opens the door and slips inside.

114 EXT. MORTUARY - NIGHT

114

Deputy Herbert, with Caroline beside him in the squad car, pulls up in front of the building. She leaps out and dashes for the door just as Eli comes out. He grabs her, preventing her from entering.

ELI

No.

Doc and the Sheriff are right behind him.

CAROLINE

Michael's gone. Is he with you?

Eli's too stunned, surprised to respond.

CAROLINE

(continuing)

Then he must be at Amanda's.

SHERIFF POOL

Christ, Horace'll kill him.

They all run for the cars.

115 INT. AMANDA'S ROOM - NIGHT

115

Michael slips silently along the wall.

(CONTINUED)

Amanda rolls over in bed, suddenly facing him, her eyes closed. He's gripped by a sudden, savage need. He grabs the first thing, a heavy paperweight from her desk, advancing. Lifts it over her. She is so beautiful. He fights himself, trying to conquer the urge, his face twisting with the effort, sweat carving down his brow.

He finally stumbles back, breathing hard, until he leans against the wall trying to control the tremors that sweep his body. She tosses fitfully in bed, and suddenly her back is to him. He stiffens, his face mirroring his inner struggle, and then he advances once more, the paperweight held high, poised, only seconds from smashing into the sleeping girl's skull.

116 EXT. PLATT HOUSE - NIGHT

116

Eli pounds on the door, the others behind him, until a light snaps on in the overhead bedroom.

HORACE (O.S.)

Who is it? Who's there?

The lights go on in the vestibule, and Horace opens the door.

HORACE

(continuing; snarls)

What d'you want?

ELI

Is our son here?

HORACE

What is this? A joke?

CAROLINE

Could we look? Please.

HORACE

(fiercely)

Get out o' here.

Amanda screams. They all tear up the stairs.

117 INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

117

Amanda cowers in bed, staring up at the shadowed figure above her.

(CONTINUED)

117 CONTINUED:

117

Michael, fighting the urge, slowly brings the paper-weight down to his side and steps into a beam of moon-light streaming in through the window. He's smiling, and it's a smile brimming with love and adoration.

The door bursts open and his parents and the others fill the room. Caroline rushes to her son.

CAROLINE

Michael! What're you doing here?

MICHAEL

(calmly)

There's a murderer running loose,
I didn't want to leave her alone.

HORACE

Liar.

He lunges at the boy, but Eli blocks his path. Horace knocks him out of the way and is almost upon Michael, when the Sheriff stops him.

SHERIFF POOL

The boy says he was only protectin'
her, Horace.

Their eyes meet and hold; Horace finally drops his gaze. Caroline takes Michael and hurries him from the room, skirting Horace. But not before Michael casts a smile back at Amanda, and she returns it.

118 INT. PLATT STAIRWAY - NIGHT

118

Horace rants after them from the landing as they go.

HORACE

Next time, I'll kill you, ya
little bastard! Y'hear!

118A INT. AMANDA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

118A

Then he stalks back in and slaps his daughter viciously.

119 OMITTED

119

120 INT. SQUAD CAR - NIGHT

120

Eli, Caroline and Michael drive back with Deputy Herbert. Caroline's in back with Michael.

120 CONTINUED:

120

CAROLINE

Michael, what were you doing there?
In Amanda's room?

The boy stares straight ahead with a dead, frozen gaze.

CAROLINE

(continuing)

Michael?

ELI

Not now, Caroline.

What she sees in her son's face upsets her a great deal. She turns away.

121 INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

121

It is late night. Both MacClearys lie in bed, but Caroline does not sleep. She stares at the ceiling.

CAROLINE

Eli?

ELI

Hm?

CAROLINE

Let's go. Let's get Michael and leave this instant.

ELI

(sleepily)

Caroline, it's two-thirty.

CAROLINE

I don't care.

ELI

Well, I do. Besides, we can't. Doc wants to take a final round of tests in the morning.

CAROLINE

He is not the final authority!

ELI

By noon. I promise, by noon we'll be on the road.

He turns back to bed, and as he does, he sees the ribbon of scars on her back, the scars left seventeen years ago by her attacker.

122 INT. LAB - CLINIC - DAY

122

In the eerie red light, Doc finishes developing the newest x-rays of Michael. His parents look on. Doc pulls the negatives from the chemical tray that sets them and holds them up to the crimson bulb.

DOC

What I thought. Here. This is what I've been feelin' beneath his skin.

With his fingertip he traces a hard black line that runs like a second-skin above the boy's skeletal structure and yet hidden beneath his outer skin.

ELI

What is it?

DOC

A subcutaneous layer just beneath the epidermis. I never seen anythin' like it before. But I knew I felt somethin'.

CAROLINE

Well, what does it mean?

Doc hangs the print up to dry.

DOC

I don't know, but he sure seems to be healthier, doesn't he? He's also another whole inch taller. (CONTINUED)

122 CONTINUED:

122

CAROLINE

Can he travel?

(beat; worried)

Well, I think it's time we got
him back to Jackson and his doctors
there, don't you?

123 INT. MAKESHIFT HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

123

Michael is in bed as Caroline and Eli enter. Caroline
sits by his side, while Eli begins to throw together
Michael's few belongings.

ELI

OK, hotshot, big surprise. You
can stop faking it now, 'cause
we're going home.

MICHAEL

No.

ELI

Listen, Doc's checked you out --
can't argue with Doc -- and you
can always write Amanda from home
when you get there.

He throws a change of clothes on the bed. Michael
does not move.

ELI

(continuing; gently)
Now, c'mon, let's get going.

Michael still doesn't move.

ELI

(continuing)
Hop to. Your ma insists.

MICHAEL

I'm not leaving here. You can't
make me.

Eli jokingly takes him by the arm.

ELI

Wanna see me try?

MICHAEL

Get your hands off me.

Eli freezes.

(CONTINUED)

123 CONTINUED:

123

CAROLINE

Michael, that's your father you're speaking to.

MICHAEL

No, it ain't. He ain't my daddy. Billy Connors is.

ELI

What?

Michael's suddenly confused.

ELI

(continuing)

What did you say?

Michael's unable to answer.

ELI

(continuing; fiercely)

Why'd you say that? Who told you?

MICHAEL

I don't know. The words just came out.

ELI

What do you mean, they just came out!

CAROLINE

(interceding)

Eli --

MICHAEL

(weeping)

I told you, I don't know. Just leave me alone, please. Just leave me alone!

124 INT. CORRIDOR OUTSIDE - DAY

124

ELI

(agitatedly)

He's known. He's known all along it wasn't me...

CAROLINE

No, that's not true. Eli, I swear, I never told him. I never said anything that might indicate --

ELI

(fixating)

Billy Connors... Billy Connors!

125 INT. DOC'S OFFICE - DAY

125

Eli breaks in on Doc studying the x-rays at his desk.
Caroline's close on Eli's heel.

ELI
We're leaving Mike with you for
a couple hours. Can you handle
it?

DOC
'Course. But why?

MICHAEL'S VOICE
(from his room)
Dad! Dad!

125A INT. MAKESHIFT HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

125A

They rush in. Michael, struggling up from his bed to
reach his father, flies into his arms, weeping.

MICHAEL
I didn't mean it. I didn't...

ELI
(embracing him)
I know, son. I know.

MICHAEL
(sobbing)
You've got to stop it.

ELI
Stop what?

MICHAEL
What's inside me. It's trying to
hurt me. Last night, it tried to
hurt Amanda --

ELI
Last night? You were going to
hurt Amanda?

MICHAEL
No, not me. It. It was going to
hurt her -- kill her! Help me!
Please! You gotta stop it, you
gotta!

Shaken, Eli holds the sobbing boy close, closer than
ever to him.

126 INT. CORRIDOR - DAY

126

Eli and Doc exchange a second of privacy, while
Caroline remains inside with Michael a little longer.

ELI
What do you make of it?

DOC
(deeply troubled)
I'm jus' a country doc. Not a
psychiatrist.

Caroline exits the room, joining them.

ELI
(meaning Michael)
Any better?

CAROLINE
Scared, mostly.

127 INT. MAKESHIFT HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

127

Eli re-enters, sitting himself next to his son, who
gazes out the window.

ELI
Michael, you said you almost hurt
Amanda. Because of the thing
inside you?

Michael nods.

ELI
(continuing)
Well, I'm sure you didn't mean
it. But you've got to fight it.
That thing inside. A young man
like you's always got to fight
those kind of feelings.
(beat, smiling)
And will you do something else
for me? Will you stay here and
not leave this room unless one
of us is with you?

Michael nods. Eli kisses him on the cheek and heads
for the door.

MICHAEL
Dad.

(CONTINUED)

127 CONTINUED:

127

Eli stops.

MICHAEL
(continuing)
You're my only daddy.

Eli leaves.

128 EXT. DOC'S OFFICE - DAY

128

Eli sweeps her along with him toward the station wagon.

CAROLINE

Where are we going?

ELI

To get some answers.

CAROLINE

Where?

ELI

Mattawonket. The state mental
hospital.

129 INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

129

Suddenly. Suddenly, Michael arches in pain. He shrieks
and stumbles out of bed and into the bathroom.

130 INT. BATHROOM - DAY

130

The pain is in his neck. He drops his robe and exam-
ines his back in the three-sided mirror. From the nape
extending three inches down his spinal cord is a split,
a rending seam in the skin.

MICHAEL

(terrified)

No, you promised --

The seam widens again, another inch, as he watches.

131 INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

131

Doc enters and sees the empty bed and the closed bathroom door. He knocks on the door.

DOC

You in there, Michael?

132 INT. BATHROOM - DAY

132

Michael does his best to hide the seam with bandage.

DOC (O.S.)

You all right?

MICHAEL

Yes.

DOC (O.S.)

Well, then what's takin' you so long?

133 INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

133

Doc rattles the door.

DOC

Son?

The door opens unexpectedly. Michael moves back to bed, careful to keep his back turned away from Doc. He climbs in.

DOC

(continuing)

Somethin' wrong?

MICHAEL

No.

DOC

Sure?

MICHAEL

Yes.

DOC

Want anything?

MICHAEL

No.

Doc hesitates; then he leaves.

134 INT. JAIL - DAY

134

Sheriff Pool and his deputy pore over records from the mortuary. Judge Curwin bursts through the door.

JUDGE CURWIN

Where's Dexter?

Pool doesn't immediately reply.

JUDGE CURWIN

(continuing)

I was just down there. The mortuary's all locked up. Now where would he be?

SHERIFF POOL

He's dead, I'm afraid, Judge.

JUDGE CURWIN

What?

(blanches)

Who? Who did it?

135 INT. CELLBLOCK - DAY

135

Nearby, Tom Laws, looking like death from last night's drunk, pulls his dripping head from under the running tap and listens.

SHERIFF POOL (O.S.)

That's what we're tryin' to find out.

JUDGE CURWIN (O.S.)

Tryin'? Do it!

136 INT. JAIL - DAY

136

JUDGE CURWIN

Call the state police if you have to. Edwin... Dexter... they're both Curwins. That's who he's killin'. Curwins!

The Judge doesn't lose any more time, leaving and slamming the door behind him. Tom Laws appears from the cellblock. Pool and Deputy Herbert turn back to business.

TOM LAWS

Sheriff?

SHERIFF POOL

Yeah?

TOM LAWS

I know who it was.

SHERIFF POOL

(without interruption)

Was what, Tom.

TOM LAWS

Who killed 'em. It was Billy.
Only t'wasn't Billy. It was the
boy -- the MacCleary boy -- come
back as Billy.

Pool, preoccupied, tosses a dollar on the desktop.

SHERIFF POOL

Get yourself some breakfast, Tom.
You look like the back end of a
coon dog leavin' the swamp.

TOM LAWS

I'm tellin' the truth. He tol'
me hisself -- last night, in
the station.

DEPUTY HERBERT

Thought only Jim Beam hung 'round
that station, Tom.

TOM LAWS

I'm tellin' no lies, I tell ya!
He's come back. Billy! Because
of the magic. Injun magic!
Because of the song.

DEPUTY HERBERT

(fed up)

Doc gets paid for this sorta
thing, Tom.

He guides him firmly to the door, but Laws jerks free.

TOM LAWS

Don't you understan'? The Judge's
right! He's come back to kill 'em
and he won't stop. I know he won't!

Both men regard him with pity. He finally bolts out the
door.

137 INT. CORRIDOR - STATE MENTAL INSTITUTION - DAY

137

Two attendants move by with a patient. An orderly unlocks a cell door for Eli and Caroline and ushers them inside. WIDOW CONNORS sits huddled in a corner. The loss of her

137 CONTINUED:

137

son, the years of economic persecution by Lionel Curwin, and now her incarceration -- all of it shows in her old, old face. Eli kneels by her side, Caroline watching, the orderly hanging around by the door.

ELI

Mrs. Connors?

No response.

ELI

(continuing)

Mrs. Connors, we need your help.
My wife and I. Do you know where
your son is? Is he alive?

No response. Slowly, he pulls a snapshot of Michael out of his pocket and shows it to her.

ELI

(continuing)

Recognize him?
(beat, painfully)
Could this be Billy's son, Mrs.
Connors? Could this be your
grandson?

The Widow's eyes slowly fill and focus on the picture

WIDOW CONNORS

Billy?
(taking the snapshot)
Billy?

ELI

No, not Billy. Billy's son.

WIDOW CONNORS

(walking to Eli)

Who're you?
(then, spotting
Caroline)
Billy's missus? He sent you, didn't
he? I knew... I knew he wouldn't
forget his mamma.

CAROLINE

Mrs. Connors, you saw him seventeen
years ago. When? What happened
that night?

(CONTINUED)

137 CONTINUED: (2)

137

WIDOW CONNORS

That night?... He come to me, he
did. Come to me...

Her fingers unconsciously shred the picture; the hor-
rifying memory returning:

WIDOW CONNORS

(continuing; fighting
panic)

But it weren't Billy no more. Not
my Billy. It were... It were...

Her eyes empty with fear, and once more she is an autistic, shriveled form with pieces of the shredded picture littered at her feet. Eli and Caroline withdraw, the bulking orderly locking the door behind them.

138 INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

138

Michael on his side, his back to the door, stares at the tree outside, haunting him through the window. Doc enters, charts in hand.

DOC

Michael --

The boy whirls in bed, hiding his back.

DOC

(continuing)

What's that? What's that bandage on your neck?

MICHAEL

Nothing.

Doc walks to the bed.

DOC

'Nothing' you don't see.

He reaches for it.

MICHAEL

(avoiding)

I told you, it's nothing. Just a scratch.

(CONTINUED)

138 CONTINUED:

138

DOC

Never know. Might get it infected.

He lays his hands on Michael to roll him on his side.

DOC

(continuing)

Now just roll over --

Michael shoves him with a force so powerful the old man lifts off his feet and flies through the air to smash into the wall. He slides to the floor leaving a smear of blood on the plaster. Michael springs out of bed, dressing.

139 EXT. DOC'S OFFICE - DAY

139

The MacClearys park their station wagon, get out, and walk toward the building. Tom Laws appears out of the shrubbery.

TOM LAWS

MacCleary?

Eli and Caroline stop.

ELI

(beat)

Yes?

TOM LAWS

You gotta stop him. You have to.

ELI

Stop who?

TOM LAWS

The boy. Your boy. Only he ain't your boy. Not in his head anyway.

ELI

What're you talking about?

TOM LAWS

He's the one that's been doing all the killing. He told me so himself.

(CONTINUED)

139 CONTINUED:

139

Eli won't take it. He leads Caroline quickly away toward Doc's door, but Laws grabs him.

TOM LAWS

(continuing)

Don't you see? He's the one 'cause he hated the Curwins. Billy hated the Curwins --

ELI

Billy? Billy Connors?

(grabbing him,
realizing)

You drunken savage! You're the one. You're the one who's been talking to my son, filling his head about Billy Connors.

Eli throws him in the dirt. Caroline hurries and pulls Eli off before any more damage is done, urging him in with her toward the building.

Laws slowly picks himself up as they leave. Something rustles a curtain window in the clinic. Laws sees something and his face drains of color. He spies and starts running, running as far and as fast as he can.

140 INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

140

They find Michael missing as they enter.

CAROLINE

Michael!

Even worse, they find Doc bloodied and unconscious on the floor.

ELI

Doc!

141 EXT. DESERTED RAILROAD STATION - DAY

141

Laws finally rounds the corner, reaching safety and skidding to a halt. Michael, however, blocks the exit opposite, staring with those dead impassive eyes. Laws stumbles back, turning tail and running again.

142 EXT. MOUNTAIN SIDE - DAY

142

Laws scrambles up the steep slope, breathing hard.

(CONTINUED)

142 CONTINUED:

142

He stops to glance back. There's no one behind, an unobstructed view of open field, except for a small stand of trees. A DOG'S BARKING suddenly draws his attention. Amanda's collie worries the stand of trees, dashing finally into their midst. A second later, the dog's DEATH SHRIEK shatters the mountain air. Laws scrambles to his feet again and continues running.

143 EXT. POWER PLANT - DAY

143

Laws slides down the last slope, hits the road and dashes to the power plant. He disappears through the door of the crumbling brick building.

144 EXT. POWER PLANT - DAY

144

The NOISE inside is deafening. The SOUND OF THE RIVER RUSING alongside and the HUM OF THE ENORMOUS ELECTRIC MACHINERY. Laws climbs a ladder and pounds down a catwalk until he reaches a steel door. He slips inside.

145 INT. STORE ROOM - DAY

145

Laws slams the door cutting off all sound and light into the small room. He searches for the light switch only to find it dead when he flicks it. He scratches a match and sees the room is choked with boxes and old desks. He rams one in front of the door, and then piles boxes on top, working in the dark, doing it all by feel. At last, feeling safe, he lets the tension flow out of his body listening to the loudest sound in the room, the hammering of his heart until even that quiets. And that's when he hears it: BREATHING, excited breathing, the breathing of a hunting animal that has its quarry cornered.

Laws, terrified now, edges along the wall until he's pressed himself into a corner. He can go no further; then he sees them, two eyes hanging there in the blackness -- blazing yellow eyes. He scratches another match with trembling fingers and sees Michael, inches away, smiling at him.

BILLY/MICHAEL

Where we always come when we were
kids. When we didn't want nobody
to find us. D'you think I'd ever
forget, Tommy?

The match dies and the room plunges back into black. Laws dives for the door, pulling the boxes down, shoving the desk out of the way. Hands grab him and he screams.

146 EXT. POWER STATION - DAY

146

Horace Platt, wearing his Light and Power uniform, works at the transformer. Above, unseen by him, Michael carries a struggling Tom Laws high over his head to the edge of the catwalk and there throws him out and away, cartwheeling through the air, cutting an arc downward.

Tom explodes on impact, bursting into fireworks and flame as he smashes, spread-eagled against the circuitry of the enormous transformer. He fries, sizzling, turning to leather and then to ash before our very eyes.

Horace gapes in horror. He dodges the flames, the wires smoking, the transformer flashing as the power overload burns the station -- and Tom Laws -- completely out.

147 INT. JAIL - DAY

147

Sheriff Pool and Deputy Herbert glance up from their paperwork as the fluorescent lights flicker and die. Pool clicks on his call box. Dead. He walks to the window and stares in the direction of the power plant.

148 INT. JUDGE'S CHAMBERS - DAY

148

The Judge, sitting behind his desk, a loaded shotgun in his lap, reacts as the power fails. Radio. Lamp. Both dead. He picks up the double-barreled, cocking it frantically, as he goes to the window and stares out, too, at the plant.

149 INT. DOC'S OFFICE - DAY

149

Doc sits in a chair, head bandaged, slowly returning to form. The lights die.

DOC

Now what?

Eli flicks the switch on the x-ray viewbox. Dead, too. Doc, with Eli and Caroline watching, struggles up from the chair and goes to the window, focusing on the dead power station.

Outside, the Sheriff's squad car speeds past.

150 EXT. POWER PLANT - DAY

150

Sheriff Pool strides the catwalk for clues. Below, the carnage smoulders. A shaken Horace finally emerges from the men's room. The Sheriff approaches, as Deputy Herbert helps Horace to a bench.

150 CONTINUED:

150

SHERIFF POOL

Anythin' else, Horace?

HORACE

Just what I tol' you. I was
workin' down here and suddenly he
come flyin' off that catwalk at me
and into the transformer.

SHERIFF POOL

(beat)

Seen anybody up there with 'im?

151 INT. DOC'S OFFICE - DAY

151

Eli, Caroline and Doc, try to collect themselves,
staring, sitting in the shadows, out of any more
excuses.

ELI

What was Billy Connors like, Doc?

DOC

Billy? Strange boy. Beautiful
to look at, though, tall 'n silent,
when he moved --

CAROLINE

(interrupts, picking
up on it)

Gentle, loved the woods, and
everything in them. Could talk
to the animals. Said even the
bugs would answer him...

Doc stares at her, speechless, but neither Eli nor
Caroline is as surprised anymore by the accuracy of her
description. She turns to the Doc, quickly:

CAROLINE

(continuing)

You could be talking about our son.

DOC

Well, mebbe so, but your boy wasn't
always hangin' 'round with Tom
Laws 'n his dad. Then he had to
go and fall in love with Sarah...

ELI

(to him)

You believe it, don't you?

Doc turns.

(CONTINUED)

151 CONTINUED:

151

DOC

What?

ELI

What Tom Laws was saying about
Michael and Billy Connors.

DOC

(uncertainly)

Oh, wouldn't put much stock 'n
that. Injun palaver. Local
Nioba nonsense.

The POWER suddenly WHIRS ON, lights coming back on,
along with the SOUND of Sheriff Pool striding rapidly
down the corridor toward them. He enters.

SHERIFF POOL

(to Doc)

Tom Laws's been killed.

(turning to Eli)

I want to talk to your boy.

CAROLINE

Michael didn't have anything to
do with this --

SHERIFF POOL

Where is he? Laws tol' me earlier
he, your boy, was the killer.

ELI

So what? Laws talked to us, too.
But he was rambling, incoherent.
He's a superstitious drunk.

SHERIFF POOL

This town's been turned upside
down, MacCleary. Now, I jus'
wanna talk to him. Where is he?

152 INT. JUDGE CURWIN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

152

HORACE

We gotta kill him.

JUDGE CURWIN

He's just' a boy.

(CONTINUED)

152 CONTINUED:

152

HORACE

Jus' a boy? If he can lay hands
on m' girl, he's ol' enough to
die like a man.

JUDGE CURWIN

They'll know.

HORACE

No, they won't. Jus' another
victim of our mad killer. Who's
to say he isn't?

He hefts his shotgun, loading it.

HORACE

(continuing)

Tha's what's so nice about it.

153 INT. PLATT HOUSE - VESTIBULE - NIGHT

153

The front door opens and Michael silently, gracefully
steps on in.

154 INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

154

He moves down the hallway like a stalking animal.

155 INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

155

Michael steps through the door and startles Amanda who stands at the sink, cutting greens.

AMANDA

What're you doin' here?

She hurries to him.

AMANDA

(continuing)

You gotta get out. Please.
Pa'll be home any second.

He takes her chin in his hand to see. An ugly bruise mars her cheek.

MICHAEL

He do that to you?

She doesn't answer.

MICHAEL

(continuing)

Can you drive?

AMANDA

(reluctantly)

Kinda.

MICHAEL

Then I want you to get in the car and leave right now. And keep going until you're away from here. Far away!

AMANDA

Why?

MICHAEL

Whoever killed the others is gonna come for you, Amanda. I know it.

AMANDA

(frightened suddenly)

Why? I never hurt anyone.

MICHAEL

It doesn't make any difference. You're a Curwin. Now, c'mon, grab some things and get out of here.

AMANDA

Will you come with me?

(CONTINUED)

MICHAEL

I can't.

Stymied, she returns to cutting the greens.

AMANDA

Then I won't go.

He explodes, grabbing her by the shoulders.

MICHAEL

You must go, you must!

The knife in her hands CLATTERS to the floor.

AMANDA

Is it that important to you?

MICHAEL

Yes.

AMANDA

All right. Then I promise.

She holds her finger to the light. Blood wells from a cut.

MICHAEL

Did I do that? I didn't mean to
-- I didn't mean to hurt you.

AMANDA

'S nothin'.

She sucks the blood from her finger. His eyes glitter as he watches her.

AMANDA

(continuing)
What's the matter?

He tears himself away, and turns to stare out the window at the tree in the yard.

MICHAEL

The cicadas. They're in the trees now. In the branches. Soon they'll be shedding their skin.

AMANDA

What?

(CONTINUED)

155 CONTINUED: (2)

155

MICHAEL

Go! Right now. Get in the car
and go!

She touches him, however, trying to establish emotional contact.

MICHAEL

(continuing)

Now! Go!

She backs away, hurt by the anger in his voice. She slips out of the room, going upstairs to get ready. He glances at the knife at his feet. A delicate drop of her blood is smeared on the blade. His self-control begins to dissolve.

156 INT. STAIRCASE - NIGHT

156

He ascends the steps impassively.

157 INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

157

Amanda stands half-naked in the bathroom, changing clothes. She hears him coming and closes the door.

AMANDA (O.S.)

I'll be right out.

He walks to the bathroom door, cold and tight -- Rests his head against the door.

MICHAEL

I warned you. I warned you to go.

AMANDA (O.S.)

What? I can't hear you.

A HIGH-PITCHED KEENING reaches his ears and he looks out the open window to see the branches of the tree in the yard. It is deep dusk out there.

Michael loses his emotional battle. His face suddenly splinters with rage. Both hands grip the doorknob.

158 INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

158

Amanda stares at the knob. It is twisting right out of its wood frame.

159 INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

159

He tries to stop it, fighting for self-control.

MICHAEL

Run, Amanda, run --

AMANDA'S VOICE

Michael?

MICHAEL

(a fiendish roar)

Amanda!

He rips open the door, throwing himself back, however, to stop it. She rushes out to him.

AMANDA

Michael, what's wrong?

He screams and runs from her.

160 INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

160

She rushes into the hall, accidentally cutting him off from the stairs to the first floor.

AMANDA

Michael, you all right?

She advances toward him, hands outstretched, offering help.

MICHAEL

Get away from me!

AMANDA

(closer)

Michael, I ain't gonna hurt you.

He pulls away, throwing open a door to the attic steps. He pounds up them. She peers in the darkness overhead.

AMANDA

(continuing)

Michael?

No answer. She begins to climb the steep, narrow steps.

161 INT. ATTIC - NIGHT

161

It is pitch black inside the long, narrow room; tiny windows bracket either end. Dirt and cobwebs and the discard of decades choke the area. Amanda appears at the top of the stairs and peers into the darkness.

AMANDA

Michael?

He crouches hidden from her in a corner.

AMANDA

(continuing)

Why are you hidin'?

He slowly rises, still cloaked in shadows, only a dark form to her, but she runs to him, full of love.

AMANDA

(continuing)

Michael --

He steps into the light and his face writhes with hatred, both hands coming up to welcome her neck as she runs into his arms.

BILLY/MICHAEL

Amanda.

And then she's in his arms, but he's fighting the other side of him, his face contorting, trying to drive Billy out, winning, losing, moments passing and the struggle continuing all the while holding her close, pressing her face into his shoulder so she can't see what he's going through, and then he loses. His hands creep toward her throat. Michael breaks through for a moment, and with a scream of helpless rage he shoves her aside. He dashes for a window and dives through it.

162 EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

162

Michael sails through the window in an explosion of glass, his body arcing in the air for a moment and then hurtling downward, crashing through the branches of the big tree, pinwheeled about as skin smashes into bark until he slams into the moist earth at the bottom of the trunk. He lies still, only the Cicada SONG destroying the peacefulness of the summer night.

Moments pass and then the lonely screendoor BANGS open and shut and Amanda runs to his side.

(CONTINUED)

162 CONTINUED:

162

AMANDA

Michael!

She lifts his head; he is unconscious. There is no one there to help.

(CONTINUED)

162 CONTINUED:

162

She gently lays his head back on the ground and runs across the lawn and disappears into the darkness.

On the tree trunk beside Michael, Life crawls, abundant, teeming life, Cicada life. The branches above are alive with them, the bark of the tree next to Michael's head undulating with its second, living skin.

Brown pupae from the branches above drop to the ground. Rainbow colored locusts step forward into the night and sing, sing for their mates, for the continuation of their species. Slowly, Michael's still form is pelted with the castoff skins from above.

163 EXT. STREET - NIGHT

163

Amanda runs out into the middle of the street, waving her arms at the coming headlights. A car skids to a halt inches from impact. The Sheriff gets out, the occupants of the second car doing the same. Amanda can't talk; she's too hysterical; all she can do is point to her house.

164 INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

164

Michael lies in bed unconscious. Doc turns him over on his stomach while his parents, Sheriff Pool and Deputy Herbert watch. Amanda lingers in a corner.

Doc works by kerosene lantern, cutting the bandage from Michael's neck. The seam is revealed; it has widened and elongated and now travels halfway down his back along his spinal cord. The edges are brown with time, the corium underneath still pink.

Doc slices into the last layer of mucous tissue covering the bottom of the fissure, peels it away and a black surface, hard and matted with wet hair appears.

CAROLINE

What is it?

But Doc is totally baffled. Michael stirs; his eyelids flutter open, and his dark, caring eyes stare at Eli. Michael whispers so his father must bend close to hear.

MICHAEL

Kill me.

(CONTINUED)

ELI

What?

MICHAEL

You must kill me. Now.

His gaze travels to the window; it's dark out there now, the low MOAN OF CICADA SONG filling the night.

MICHAEL

(continuing)

An hour... it'll be too late.

ELI

(shocked)

Michael, what're you saying?

Michael sees Amanda in the corner.

MICHAEL

What are you doing here?

She steps forward.

MICHAEL

(continuing)

You promised. You promised me!

She steps back, slipping out the door after a moment's hesitation. Caroline bends close to her son.

CAROLINE

Michael, you tried to kill yourself. Why?

MICHAEL

To save you. All of you. 'Cause he killed Edwin, then Dexter. They deserved it, but not Tom. They were friends, best friends... But he's gone crazy... the blood, the food, that's all he wants...

CAROLINE

Who, Michael? Who?

(CONTINUED)

164 CONTINUED: (2)

164

MICHAEL

Kill me, kill me! Or you won't
be able to stop him!

The men in the room force him back onto the bed. Doc
straps him down.

165 EXT. DOC'S OFFICE - NIGHT

165

Amanda hurries out of the building and down the street.
Judge Curwin and Horace watch her from the shadows.
Horace takes a step to go after her, but the Judge
grabs him.

JUDGE CURWIN

Later. She'll wait.

166 INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

166

Michael is strapped to the bed, unable to move, still
delirious.

MICHAEL

(gasping)

Go. To Lionel Curwin's house.
The fruit cellar. See. Then
you'll understand. Not me. Not
me you'll be killin'. I'll be
dead anyway... But him. Him!

Exhausted, he turns his gaze to his father and passes
out. The adults stand about, shaken.

ELI

We're losing him. We're losing
him...

CAROLINE

Well, do something! Can't
anybody do something!

Sheriff Pool answers her, wasting no more time as he
grabs his hat, heading for the door.

SHERIFF POOL

Who's comin'?

167 EXT. DOC'S OFFICE - NIGHT

167

Sheriff Pool, Deputy Herbert and Eli pile into the squad car and drive off. Watching them, Horace takes a step for the office, only to be stopped by the Judge.

JUDGE CURWIN

Doc and the woman are still in there.

Horace eyes the building.

HORACE

(reluctantly)

I'll give 'em a coupla minutes to come out. But then I'm goin' in after the boy anyway!

168 INT./EXT. VICTORIAN HOUSE - NIGHT

168

Eli, Pool and Deputy Herbert walk through the silence of the boarded house, their flashlight beams traveling the dust and rubble. Eli's beam hits the trap door Michael uncovered a few nights before.

SHERIFF POOL

What's that?

(beat, closer)

Never saw it b'fore. Musta been covered by the ashes when the ol' place almos' burned.

He unlatches and CREAKS it open. All three men stand silently over the black pit, and send their lights shooting into the hole. Eli starts down the stairs, but Pool stops him, drawing out his revolver for security.

169 INT. FRUIT CELLAR - NIGHT

169

The beams travel the dirt floor, before Deputy Herbert's light is the first to pick it up. A skeleton. Grisly and gaping in agony.

DEPUTY HERBERT

Lord God...

(CONTINUED)

169 CONTINUED:

169

It's huge, easily seven feet long, with a chain collar in place around its neck. The heavy chain is broken, but links lead off into the dark where the end is sunk in mortar.

ELI

Who is it?

SHERIFF POOL

Billy Connors, prob'ly.

DEPUTY HERBERT

Can't be, this one's close to eight foot!

SHERIFF POOL

Chained, anyway.

Eli picks up the broken end in his hand.

ELI

(beat)

Not always.

170 EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

170

Horace Platt's jeep, driven by Amanda, winds its way along the narrow, uncertain road.

171 INT. JEEP - NIGHT

171

Amanda sits behind the wheel, trying to drive through her tears. Suddenly, the beams pick up danger -- road cones and the sawhorse barriers marking off a bad stretch. She hits the brakes, spinning the wheel to avoid.

172 EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

172

The jeep slides out of control, hitting the barrier. Amanda's slammed against the dash. She slumps out of the opened door to the ground unconscious and bloodied.

173 INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

173

Caroline and Doc watch over Michael. His eyelids snap back and he stares at Caroline. His eyes are filled with pain and regret and then whatever life is left in them flickers and dies. His body stretches in a convulsion. His sinews swell as if about to burst.

CAROLINE

Doc, Doc --

She tugs at him, trying to draw his attention to those suddenly lifeless eyes fixed on her.

173A INT. CORRIDOR - NIGHT

173A

Outside, Judge Curwin tries to hold Horace back a moment longer, but Horace has been waiting long enough.

JUDGE CURWIN

Horace, don't be a damn fool --

173B INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

173B

The door bursts open, and Horace, with the Judge trailing, pushes into the room, his shotgun trained square on Doc and Caroline.

JUDGE CURWIN

(to them, covering
his own tracks)

I tried to stop him, really I
did --

Doc and Caroline are forced into a corner. Horace swings the barrel of his weapon toward Michael, and Caroline rushes him.

CAROLINE

No!

(CONTINUED)

173B CONTINUED:

173B

Horace shoves her back, hard, and the barrel of his gun swivels to rest on her.

HORACE

OK, you want it first, well, then,
mebbe you can have it first.

And then it happens. Michael wakes, opening his mouth in a scream, and where his tongue is, above it comes rolling out another large tongue, hideous and bestial. Because this is no ordinary scream, it is an ANIMAL ROAR OF RAGE, a primeval monster emerging from the first swamp, and Michael lurches up in bed, the restraints popping free, one by one as he rises.

(CONTINUED)

Horace and the Judge turn to him, and then freeze as they see his face.

It is suffering a transformation, a metamorphosis. The skin is pulled back tight, stretched everywhere, flattening the features into a prenatal mass, and then a horrible rent, a split of skin slices down one cheek and the hint of another skin beneath pops out.

The outer edge of the pupil of the right eyeball peels back, white disappearing and the edge of a smouldering red eye beneath stares out. Then another tear appears across the forehead, the skin pulled too tight to hold together any longer, more and more places on the face splitting and peeling away to reveal glimpses of dark foreign, mouldering flesh beneath, pushing out in ugly folds to be free.

The last restraint tears away, and Michael stands, rising above them all, standing on the bed, staring down at them as his face continues to shred, long peels of skin running and hanging the length of his neck.

JUDGE CURWIN

Shoot, shoot!

Horace pulls the trigger and the SHOTGUN ROARS, the blast hitting Michael square in the chest, blowing away his shirt, blowing away the pink skin to reveal an animal hide beneath, glistening with a birth fluid. Curwin screams in panic and dashes out of the room while Doc grabs Caroline and drags her out.

Only Horace is left facing Michael, the boy towering above him, staring down at him with that face slowly metamorphosing before his horrified eyes. Horace edges along the wall toward the door and safety.

The boy's eyes, now red like bloody death, follow him. Michael smiles and the splits in his skin widen and lengthen. Horace screams and dashes for the door. But Michael is on him, opening his mouth and drawing the man's throat to his teeth, sinking them deep into the soft flesh of his throat, tearing. Horace continues to scream as the blood gushes into Michael's sucking mouth.

174 EXT. DOC'S OFFICE - NIGHT 174

Eli, Pool and Herbert arrive, running from the squad car for the building as the Judge bolts out the door, the SHOTGUN BLAST STILL REVERBERATING in the night.

175 INT. DOC'S OFFICE - NIGHT 175

The men burst into the room. Caroline sits on the couch, seemingly in shock.

ELI

Michael?

Doc looks toward the hospital room. The building suddenly shakes and GROANS and then there is another SCREAM and a HUGE CRASH as masonry and wood give way. The men run into the corridor, the Sheriff and Herbert with guns drawn.

176 INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT 176

The entire side wall is missing; it's been torn away, now only a gaping hole. Doc pokes through the blood and debris on the floor.

SHERIFF POOL

Horace?

But Doc's got no answer, shaken to the core by what he has just seen and experienced. Caroline enters, drifting toward the gaping hole, staring out, still dazed, into the forested night to call after her son.

CAROLINE

Michael...

Eli turns for action. But she screams after him.

CAROLINE

(continuing)

No!

177 EXT. THE PINES - NIGHT 177

The five of them together, a small search party, they search the blackness, their flashlight beams poking holes in the night. Deputy Herbert, who tracks for them, stops and circles.

(CONTINUED)

177 CONTINUED:

177

SHERIFF POOL

What is it?

DEPUTY HERBERT

Looks like here he lef' the ground
for a second...(realizing the
absurdity)

Don't worry, I'll pick him up.

(CONTINUED)

177 CONTINUED: (2)

177

He widens his circle. Eli backs off and stands under a tree. A drop splats his shoulder. He puts his fingers to the spot, and feels warm, sticky liquid. He holds his hand to the light and sees blood. He shines his beam into the branches. There, nestled in the bough of a tree, is Horace. His throat and chest torn out.

Eli quickly grabs Caroline and pulls her away. The Sheriff and Doc stare up at the remains. They CLICK THE SAFETIES off on their rifles, and move quickly to catch up with the others.

178 EXT. CLEARING - NIGHT

178

The CICADA SONG THRUMS, A LOW, CONSTANT MOAN. The group break into the clearing, guns drawn, beams probing the shadows. Both the Sheriff and Herbert now circle the same spot, their eyes close to the ground.

ELI

What's wrong?

SHERIFF POOL

Tracks gone again. Right into thin air.

He points to the last set of prints in the soft earth. Caroline raises her flashlight beam and plays it among the trees. The light stops.

CAROLINE

Look!

All eyes glance up. From a thick pine branch above them hangs something. It is over five feet in length, browning as it dries in the night air. Viscous fluid drips from it, embryonic fluid that sparkles in the torchlight. It's a sheath, neatly split down the back, arms dangling to the ground, feet wrapped around the branch overhead.

Deputy Herbert stands his ground, powering his light into whatever it is. The others slowly inch around to the front.

(CONTINUED)

178 CONTINUED:

178

CAROLINE

Michael?

She gasps. It is Michael -- or rather, his skin, the empty husk of its face staring out at them, no more than a crystalline shell now, an abandoned, sparkling cloak. Eli tries to hide her face in his shoulder, but Caroline pulls away from him, having to stare at it.

179 INT. JUDGE CURWIN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

179

The Judge works quickly by lamplight, jamming stocks, bonds, gold and cash from a wall safe into a suitcase. He zips the bag shut and hurries from the room.

180 EXT. GARAGE - NIGHT

180

His big Chrysler sits in front of the garage. He throws the bag in front and climbs in.

181 INT. CHRYSLER - NIGHT

181

No sooner does he hit the ignition, then it appears, rearing before him. There, caught in the twin beams, in his entire glory for the first time, birth fluid matting its fur, dripping from the bare patches of black hide, powerful haunches poised to spring, the BEAST ROARS, the hatred of its cry stilling even the cicada.

Limbs end in claws of ragged human fingernails, its face a broad, degenerate parody of mankind, its skin white with the pallor of worm, the paleness of a living thing kept for years in cellar darkness.

The Beast lunges, coming for Curwin. The Judge stomps frantically on the gas pedal.

182 EXT. GARAGE - NIGHT

182

The Chrysler lurches forward, smashing into the garage door.

183 INT. CHRYSLER - NIGHT

183

The Judge looks up from the wheel, stunned by the impact.

(CONTINUED)

183 CONTINUED:

183

He can see nothing out the front window but the splintered wood of the garage door. He slips the car into reverse.

184 EXT. GARAGE - NIGHT

184

Spewing dirt, burning rubber, the car pulls itself free and backs up a hundred yards. It jerks to a stop.

185 INT. CHRYSLER - NIGHT

185

The Judge stares at his ruined garage door. There is nothing in the headlights but opened ground. He twists to the right and then to the left, looking out the car windows on either side. But there's nothing.

He's been spared. He's scared it away. The Judge eases, catching his breath. Relaxed, more assured now, he leans forward to start the car, then leans back to check the view -- only to come up eye-to-eye with the Beast looming outside the car window, gaping in. The Judge screams. The Beast lunges, driving its razor-sharp claw-like talons at him through the window, splintering the shatter-proof glass into a million pieces. The Judge floors it.

186 EXT. GARAGE - NIGHT

186

The Chrysler zooms out, careening wildly to fly down the drive into the night.

187 EXT. STREET - NIGHT

187

It takes the turn just as fast as it can, which is too fast, the Chrysler veering, slowing up on the curve, upending and smashing against a tree. Money and bonds, thrown from the suitcase, go fluttering into the night. The Judge, staggered, crawls out the broken window and drops to the ground, picking himself quickly up and running, leaving the paperful of wealth littering the ground without even looking back.

188 INT. JAIL - NIGHT

188

Deputy Herbert returns, slipping through the door to join Eli, Caroline, Doc and Sheriff Pool who are already here. Pool doubles and then triple locks the door behind the deputy.

DEPUTY HERBERT

Done. Notified as many as I could to lock 'n double bolt themselves in, 'til we can get some search'n help out tomorra mornin'...

CAROLINE

(unreconciled, to Eli)
We should've gone on. We should've kept looking. He's our son, he still needs our help --

A frantic POUNDING on the locked door. Pool and Herbert train guns on it.

(CONTINUED)

SHERIFF POOL

Who is it?

JUDGE CURWIN'S VOICE

Lemme in! Jesus' name in Heaven,
lemme in!

Deputy Herbert unlocks the door. The Judge spills in.

JUDGE CURWIN

(continuing)

He almost got me. Out there --
and he's after me!

Deputy Herbert walks to the barred window, staring out.

JUDGE CURWIN

(continuing; fran-
tically, to Pool)

He won't leave. Not 'til I'm
dead. You gotta give me
protection. I'm the last Curwin.
I'm your Mayor! You gotta give
me sanctuary!

ELI

Why?

JUDGE CURWIN

(spins to him)

What -- ?

ELI

Why the Curwins? Why does he
have to kill you all?

JUDGE CURWIN

(nervously)

I don't know. How should I know?

Eli unbolts the door, grabbing and shoving him out:

ELI

Then get out.

JUDGE CURWIN

What? You crazy! Stop it! Don't!
Sheriff!

ELI

You know why. You know everything.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

188 CONTINUED: (2)

188

ELI (CONT'D)

You know what happened that night
and what happened to our son! And
you're not coming back in until
you tell us!

JUDGE CURWIN

No -- !

ELI

Then tell us. Who's out there!

(CONTINUED)

JUDGE CURWIN
It's Billy! Billy Connors!

He yanks himself free of Eli's grip and dives back into the farthest corner of the room where no one can drag him out. Eli closes and locks the door, turning, as everyone else does, to the Judge.

JUDGE CURWIN
(continuing; feverishly)
My brother Lionel, he did it. Turned him into whatever he is. 'Cause Billy didn't run away with Sarah. Never had the chance. 'Cause Lionel killed her!

SHERIFF POOL
(stunned)
What?

JUDGE CURWIN
Well, don't look at me that way! None o' us coulda done anythin' 'bout Lionel. He was a crazy man, he woulda killed us all!... Wouldn't even touch his late wife Nan 'cause he thought it was sinful. When he caught Sarah and Billy together, he like as went crazy...

He stares, recalling in horror.

JUDGE CURWIN
(continuing)
Killed her, but that wasn't enough for him. Had to go and lock up Billy, too, in the fruit cellar. And then, when Billy was starvin' and couldn't stand it no more, Lionel opened that door and says to him, you want her, Billy, well, now, you can have her! and throws her body down to him... Well, Billy was dyin' of hunger. He had to do it. He had to live!

ELI
(realizing)
Oh, my God.

Caroline and the others choke on their horror, too.

(CONTINUED)

JUDGE CURWIN

After that, it was easy for Lionel.
He was our undertaker. Robbin'
his own coffins to feed Billy
his flesh, the dead human flesh
he'd come to need, it was easy...
Easier for Billy, too. 'Least
he knew he'd never starve...

SHERIFF POOL

(sickened)

And you covered for him? You and
Edwin, Horace and Dexter, you
all let it happen?

JUDGE CURWIN

We had to! Lionel was my brother
... and us Curwins, we... we got
an important role to play in our
community... Besides, we did the
best we could! And we woulda
succeeded, too. Seventeen years,
and nobody else woulda been hurt
-- nobody! -- if Billy hadn't gone
and broke his chain and got out --

ELI

And got out, and attacked my wife!

He lunges at Curwin, but Doc and Pool quickly inter-
cept, pulling him off.

JUDGE CURWIN

Wasn't our fault. We didn't know.
We went after him just as soon as
we could. Tracked him through
the pines. Wounded him --

SHERIFF POOL

And that's probably how he came
back, too. Wounded and dying, to
the fruit cellar -- the only place
he knew -- to die. We jus' found
his remains.

JUDGE CURWIN

Couldn't be. He wouldn't be out
there now!... We tried to kill him.
We done our best...

(CONTINUED)

CAROLINE

Your best? Killing? Is that all
you know? No kindness? Or mercy?

JUDGE CURWIN

Kindness? Mercy?... You don't
understan', do you?

(staring wildly)

Seventeen years, all those years
down there eatin' human flesh...
Billy wasn't a man any more. The
years... they'd turned him into a --

Suddenly, the shadow of the Beast falls over the window.
Judge Curwin screams. The men whirl, Pool and Herbert
grabbing their rifles and guns.

(CONTINUED)

188 CONTINUED: (6)

188

SHERIFF POOL

Get down, down!

Curwin blocks a clear shot, Deputy Herbert dragging him to the floor as a BARRAGE OF BULLETS from the Sheriff EXPLODE the window glass. The Beast is gone, however; the window empty. They all listen.

DEPUTY HERBERT

Where?

A huge hand slams the front door answering, and a wooden panel splinters inward. They back away. Another blow and more wood cracks.

SHERIFF POOL

Fire -- now!

He and Herbert pump another BARRAGE OF BULLETS into the front door. Moments pass and nothing happens.

DEPUTY HERBERT

We killed it, ' know we did.

Another blow and another panel splits inward revealing a glimpse of the Beast's hairy chest, scarred with bullet wounds, pumping blood. Another blow and the door threatens to crumple.

SHERIFF POOL

Back here.

He throws open the steel door to the cellblock, and they all run inside. Eli, backing up with Caroline, grabs a gun now, too, and joins them. The door slams shut just as the front door splinters from its hinges.

189 INT. CELLBLOCK - NIGHT

189

Sheriff Pool locks and double-locks, then bars the door. The Deputy caresses the metal.

DEPUTY HERBERT

Never get through this. Not pure, solid steel.

(CONTINUED)

189 CONTINUED:

189

Judge Curwin backs into a cell.

JUDGE CURWIN

Lock me in, lock me in here.

They all look at him, the Sheriff with the keys in his hand.

JUDGE CURWIN

(continuing)

Do it. Hurry! It's the only safest place!

Pool locks the door. The others stand staring at the steel office door leading into the cellblock.

DOC

What do we do now?

SHERIFF POOL

Herb, you take the door.

The Deputy crouches next to the slab of metal. Pool glances at Eli and Caroline and points to the far end of the cellblock.

SHERIFF POOL

(continuing)

You two down there. Doc and me'll stay here.

(to Doc)

That way if he gets through we'll have him in a crossfire.

They take up their positions facing the metal door. Moments pass and nothing happens, the kerosene lanterns making their shadows dance on the walls. Suddenly the door bulges as it's hammered from the other side. Judge Curwin whimpers in his cell and backs to the far wall, just below the barred window. He whines at the Sheriff.

JUDGE CURWIN

A gun, give me a gun. He's comin' through. I know it... At least give me a gun!

Sheriff Pool skitters his .38 across the floor, under the bars and into the terrified man's hands. Suddenly the rain of blows on the metal door stop. They all stare at the misshapen metal. Still nothing, and Deputy Herbert caresses the steel.

(CONTINUED)

DEPUTY HERBERT

Toldja. Bessemer open hearth.
Stop a semi at full throttle if
it had to.

Caroline, next to Eli, starts to sob quietly. More
moments pass. Pool listens.

SHERIFF POOL

Out there, in the office. I can
feel it...

(calling to it)

Billy!

The rising strains of the CICADA SONG answer in re-
sponse. Shrill and ever-rising.

DEPUTY HERBERT

What's 'at?

DOC

(puzzled)

Cicadas.

SHERIFF POOL

Not this time o' year. Not in
winter.

Judge Curwin presses himself tighter against the back
wall of the cell, his eyes and gun trained on the
metal door they all watch.

JUDGE CURWIN

Winter, summer, what diff'rence
does it make? He's comin' after
me, that's all that counts!

SHERIFF POOL

Shut up! He'll have to get us
first, won't he?

The CICADA SONG strengthens, playing hauntingly over
the whole scene, but they try to ignore it, all their
attention focusing on that steel door.

SHERIFF POOL

(continuing)

He'll have to come through that
door. No other way.

(CONTINUED)

189 CONTINUED: (3)

189

DOC

Try, anyway.

SHERIFF POOL

No way else.

DEPUTY HERBERT

Not a chance.

Then suddenly they can't ignore it. The song stops.
Stops to dead silence. And then:

It strikes. Two huge claws ripping through the mortar and brick of the cellblock wall behind the Judge, lunging from either side of his head toward his throat. As everyone turns from the steel door to the cell where the Judge is screaming, those claws wrap themselves around his throat and pull backwards through the brick, the fingernails cutting like razor blades, the neck being torn away to nothing, except for the Judge's trademark bowtie bobbing imbedded in the remaining brick, and the Judge's decapitated head tipping off and rolling noisily across the cell floor.

(CONTINUED)

189 CONTINUED: (4)

189

Caroline screams. The claws disappear through the mortar just as quickly as they came. And after a stunned moment, those left alive open the metal door and rush outside.

190 EXT. JAIL - NIGHT

190

They round the side where the cellblock wall gapes. The Beast is gone, nothing but two neat holes in the wall to indicate it was ever there. There's a trail of broken branches and gouged dirt leading into the woods. They all stare at it. Then Eli, with Pool and Herbert and with his gun, starts after.

CAROLINE

No!

She tries to stop him.

ELI

Caroline, it's not our Michael.
That thing out there, it's not
our son --

CAROLINE

You never did love him! You hated
him, resented him -- you never did
love him the way I did!

ELI

(stunned)

Caroline -- !

He grabs her by the shoulders, but she gives out on her own, sobbing and collapsing into his arms.

191 EXT. PINES - NIGHT

191

They later finally join up with the three men, pausing on a slight incline for breath.

DEPUTY HERBERT

What'll we do?

SHERIFF POOL

'Bout what?

(CONTINUED)

191 CONTINUED:

191

DEPUTY HERBERT

If we find it.

Pool turns, a stare to answer. But before he can answer, a claw flashes down from the tree above and smashes in Deputy Herbert's head. Pool and Doc open FIRE, but the clawed arm vanishes into darkness. Doc examines the Deputy.

(CONTINUED)

191 CONTINUED:

191

DOC

He's alive, but not for long if
we don't get him back to my
office.

Eli and the Sheriff, the only two strong enough to
carry the deputy, exchange glances.

ELI

You go. I'll be all right.

SHERIFF POOL

Ain't you confusing jurisdictions
here? I'm still the Sheriff.

ELI

And he was our son!

Eli continues fiercely off, into the woods, leaving
him. Caroline hurries to catch up.

192 EXT. PINES - NIGHT

192

The Beast, not seen clearly, more of a presence, stag-
gers through the woods. Heavy rain has begun to fall,
and the blood from its wounds mixes with the rain and
washes to the ground. It halts at the top of a rise,
its clawlike feet gouging the muddy ground. Below,
like a ribbon, the country road winds. The Beast,
its breathing coming fast and shallow, plunges on.

193 EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

193

Only Eli and Caroline now follow. Caroline kneels by
the side of the road, tracking the blood stains as the
rain dilutes them on the tarmac.

CAROLINE

He went off here.

Eli stops his searching and hurries to her side. Both
climb the hill.

194 EXT. JEEP - NIGHT

194

The jeep lies stalled by the side of the same stretch
of road where, years before, Caroline was raped. We
can tell by the old, weathered "Nioba" sign. The rain
a torrential downpour now, washes the blood from Amanda's
face and revives her as she groans and struggles to sit
up.

195 EXT. HILL - NIGHT

195

The Beast halts, its massive head outlined in the darkness, white nostrils flaring as they pick up the scent on the night air: spoor, human female spoor.

196 EXT. JEEP - NIGHT

196

Amanda drags herself erect using the jeep as support. She takes a few tentative steps, clearing the front of the jeep, and stops to catch her breath. A claw-like hand, horribly white and deformed, reaches out of the darkness to stroke her hair. She whirls to face the Beast, and SCREAMS. What she sees are impressions with the rain and darkness and the CICADA SINGING and the thing partially hidden by the wreck of the jeep, but she sees the yellow eyes, the ochre spittle, the hunks of rotting flesh on twisted limbs and worst of all she senses the Beast's need, its almost sexual want. She runs.

197 EXT. PINES - NIGHT

197

Like Caroline years before, she runs for her life, but Amanda is weak from her accident, on the verge of shock, and the horror, whatever it is, is gaining on her. She can hear it crashing through the woods behind her, feel its breath on the clean, pale skin of her neck. She staggers, stumbles, and then unconscious, and she crumples to the wet earth.

The Beast drags its wounded body out of the darkness, its shadow enveloping her in the moonlight, its blood soiling her cleanliness. Yellow, unreadable eyes stare at her silent form, a claw strokes her hair almost tenderly, and then the razored nails rip her blouse from her body, and then her skirt, and slowly, painfully, smearing her with its own blood and bile, the Beast mounts her.

198 EXT. HILL - NIGHT

198

Eli and Caroline, both near the breaking point of exhaustion, finally crest the hill. They know it's close. And push on, faster.

(CONTINUED)

199 EXT. PINES - NIGHT

199

The Beast stops and cocks its head. The ears twitch. It has heard Caroline and Eli. The nostrils flare. It smells them. Two rotting hands, but with arms corded with muscle, reach down and pick the unconscious girl up. It lumbers toward the road with Amanda.

200 EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

200

Halting in the middle of the road and gently setting her down. It pauses for a moment to study her, and then one claw reaches down and covers her vulnerable nakedness with the shreds of her clothes. The shadow of the Beast stumbles back into the pine forest.

201 EXT. HILL - NIGHT

201

Eli and Caroline move slowly ahead following the trail of blood, the splotches ever larger even with the hard rain working to wash them away.

CAROLINE

He can't keep going. Not with
all the blood he's lost.

The Beast breaks cover to their right, heading uphill, away from the road and Amanda. Eli and Caroline glimpse nothing more than a fleeting and hear his CRASHING SOUNDS moving away, leading them away from where Amanda lies.

CAROLINE

(continuing; spotting
the Beast's movement)

Eli!

They both plunge after.

202 EXT. RISE - NIGHT

202

They top the rise, and the bloody trail they've been following becomes a constant smear on the ground now. They move slowly, cautiously forward.

203 EXT. CLEARING - NIGHT

203

They break through the pines and there, in the center of the clearing, lies the Beast, for the second time now seen in its entirety. Prone, it seems massive, endless, Caroline and Eli moving past its torso for what seems like hours before they finally reach the massive, flaring, piteous head.

The Beast gapes, staring at them, but its strength is gone. It opens its jaws to scream its defiance, but even that issues forth only a dying whimper.

Eli raises the rifle in aim at the huge head. But he can't do it. He can't... can't shoot his Michael.

Caroline does it for him, grabbing the gun. Because it's not just their son lying there. It is the travesty of their son, loathesome and disgusting, the ghastly creature that one night seventeen years ago attacked and raped her. She FIRES.

And the night REVERBERATES.

The Beast yelps, dying.

And Caroline, finally, screams.

Because the Beast's face slowly changes, and she finds herself looking down no longer at the loathesome sight of her attacker, but at the serene, mortal face of her only son...

204 EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

204

Meanwhile, over the unconscious body of Amanda lying in the center of the road, headlights play and TWO MEN come running out of their stopped truck to pick her up and carry her back to their vehicle. The CRACK of a GUNSHOT carries over the RISING SONG OF THE CICADA.

1ST MAN

What was that?

2ND MAN

Who the hell cares? C'mon, she's hurt bad!

The cicada song weakens, audibly lessening, as the men open the cab door and place the unconscious girl inside.

(CONTINUED)

204 CONTINUED:

204

The continuing song haunts the 1st Man, however. He
stares up into the shrouded pines.

1ST MAN

Shit, cicadas. Musta mated early.

(beat)

Be happy to die now.

(CONTINUED)

204 CONTINUED:

204

They don't waste anymore time getting the girl some help. The 1st Man circles round to the driver's seat, gets in and gets their rig moving toward Jackson. Their taillights dim and fade in the night.

So does the cicada song. The rain stopping. The mist rising. And the country dark being given over to peace and solitude once more.

THE END