

CHERRY PIE

FADE IN:

A LITTLE GIRL

SOBBING.

Brown hair. Blue dress. About 8. Cutest thing you've ever seen.

Disorientated. Walking along

THE BAYOU

SUPER: Natchitoches, Louisiana - 1950

Sun's coming down for the day. Its orange glow meets a battalion of greens.

An orchestra of frogs, crickets and water SING their tunes. Not loud enough to drown the cries of

THE GIRL

Whose tears run their own stream. She wipes 'em off. On her hand, a bracelet with a GOLDEN CHERRY.

The little cupcake freezes. Looks ahead at

THE ONLY HOUSE

On the horizon. Made out of wood older than the surrounding trees that hide it.

Something funny in the air. Nothing we can see, but the girl sure catches it. SMELLS it.

Her crying STOPS. Her pace quickens.

Gets closer. And closer.

Sees where the smell is coming from.

ON THE WINDOW

A heaven-like PIE cooling down. Yards away. Makes the girl stop.

The glow in her eyes tells us she'd forget all her troubles for just a slice.

Looks around to the left. More swamp.
Looks around to the right. And--

A CATAHOULA HOUND

Stares right back at her.

In her eyes, certain death. In ours, an OLD, BEATEN DOWN hunting dog whose only prey now is boredom.

The poor mutt doesn't even move. Doesn't break the staredown either, until--

A LOUD BARK

Does the job. High pitched. Coming from another direction. Another dog.

More like a sample of one. But vicious.

Behind him, a TOWERING figure. Only thing we see is the GLOW of a sharp, cooking knife.

THE GIRL

Terrified.

All of a sudden--

WOMAN (O.S.)

Oh, be quiet, Biscuit. Can't you see we have visitors?

The dog RUNS away. Right past the girl.

OUT OF THE SHADOWS

A frail, grey-haired African-American woman. A bit crooked from carrying life on her shoulders. One hand behind the back helps the hunch.

Dress, old as she is. Same goes for the apron over it.

Her shiny blade, dripping blood.

Looks at the girl.

WOMAN

If you ain't the cutest thing--
What's your name, sweetie?

The girl just stares at the knife. Now, the woman does too.

Hides it.

WOMAN

Come see. Don't be afraid.

Reveals the other hand, clutching the biggest, juiciest STEAK since, well, the last big, juicy steak you've seen.

WOMAN

Just a lil' tenny shoe for ol' Bat
to chew in.

Throws the meat all the way to the Catahoula Hound. Lands with a THUD and without a reaction from the dog.

The girl is calmer now.

GIRL

Bat?

WOMAN

Why yes, 'cus he's as blind as one!

The woman lets out a BIG LAUGH. Gets a hold of herself before looking at the girl again.

Girl was too busy looking at the pie. The woman picks up on it.

WOMAN

Tell me if that ain't the prettiest
pie you've ever seen.

The girl NODS positively.

WOMAN

You want a slice, dontcha?

A little time to answer that one.

GIRL

Well, yes, but my momma always told
me--

WOMAN

To never take no nuthin' from
strangers.

The woman cleans her bloody hand to her apron.

WOMAN

My name's Irma. Irma Munson. You
already know Biscuit and Bat.

(beat)

And you sure do know Mrs. Pie over
there. But ain't I just too damn
old to eat it all by my myself?

The girl smiles.

IRMA
What do you say we do it together?

CUT TO:

THE KNIFE

Going to work on that pie. Cutting a slice. Turns out it's apple.

IRMA
One for you.

And another.

IRMA
And one for me.

Milk for the girl. Tea for Irma.

The girl attacks the pie. Irma just watches after a polite bite.

IRMA
You like it?

The girl NODS.

Irma looks at the golden bracelet. Her warm smile suddenly disappears.

IRMA
Lord, what a beautiful bracelet.

The girl finishes off the first slice. Crumbles all around her.

GIRL
You like it? My momma has one just like it.
(beat)
Cherry Pie. That's what she calls me.

A tear runs down Irma's face.

IRMA
Would you excuse me for a second?

She cuts another slice of pie. Pushes the tray towards Cherry Pie.

IRMA
Have another slice, darling.

Forces a smile. Exits the kitchen, knife in hand.

CHERRY PIE

Eating the other slice.

IRMA

Comes back. Instead of the knife, she brings a newspaper clipping.

Puts it on the table. Pushes it near the pie.

ON THE PICTURE

A young, Caucasian girl. A golden cherry bracelet, on her right wrist.

Irma, SOBBING. Manages to control it.

IRMA
Is this your--

Cherry Pie jumps in, immediately.

CHERRY PIE
That is! That is my momma!

Irma can't control the tears now. BREAKS DOWN.

CHERRY PIE
What's the matter, Ms. Munson? Why
you cryin'?
(beat)
Aren't you happy you know my momma?

Irma, composes herself. Smiles again.

IRMA
It's not that. I'm just sad I made
you apple and not cherry pie.
(beat)
My baby used to love apple pie, you
know.

CHERRY PIE
Is she here?

IRMA
Oh, she's with the Lord now.
(beat)
(MORE)

IRMA (CONT'D)

Every week I cook apple pie. And every week, I cool it down by that window so that she can smell it from up there.

Irma points up. To the Heavens.

Finally, breaks up the sadness.

IRMA

Now, what I wanna know is, how did you end up right in front of my porch.

CHERRY PIE

Momma was too tired to drive me to school. Had to walk today. She does that sometimes.

IRMA

Does what?

CHERRY PIE

Come home late.

SOUND OF THUNDER breaks up the conversation.

Irma looks out the window. It's already dark. Storm's brewing.

IRMA

Oh my, oh my. Can't let you go out like that.

(beat)

Can't call your momma either. Got no phone, no car, no nuthin'.

Irma pauses.

IRMA

Mind spending the night with an old bag like me?

(beat)

I can prepare the couch. It's as smooth as feathers from a goose.

Irma gets up. Points to a small corridor right after the kitchen. At the end of it, two doors.

IRMA

Bathroom, to the left. My room, to the right.

Cherry Pie thinks on the proposal.

IRMA
 (with a smile)
 And you can have as much pie as you
 want.

That seals the deal.

Cherry Pie smiles. Ear to ear.

CUT TO:

THE PIE TRAY

Empty. On top of a table.

The RAIN outside fills

THE LIVING ROOM

The drapeless windows invite the night light in. Just like
 Irma, the living room has seen better days.

A lonely worn-out piano, against the decaying wall.

Dead center, the couch where

CHERRY PIE

Is sleeping on. By her side, the empty tray. Suddenly, her
 tummy PROTESTS.

Loud enough to wake her up. Both hands over it.

CHERRY PIE

Ow!

Gets up.

Floor CREAKING with every small step. Goes right into

THE KITCHEN

Looks at the cabinet where all the glasses are. Tries to go
 for it. No way she can reach it.

PULLS up a chair. Climbs on top of it. Finally gets the
 glass.

Cherry Pie puts the glass under the faucet. Turns the water
 on.

The pipes ROAR in agony. The water takes its time, and when
 it comes--

It comes out BROWN, looking exactly like the "tea" Irma Munson was drinking earlier on.

Cherry Pie goes to smell it.

CHERRY PIE

Ew!

Empties the glass on the sink.

CHERRY PIE

I better go try the bathroom.

CUT TO:

CHERRY PIE

Walking down the hall. Glass in hand.

A light yellow glow at the end of it. Coming from Irma Munson's room.

Step by step and the CREAKING of the floor ECHOES.

A distant low HUMMING joins in. Like a prayer.

As Cherry Pie gets CLOSER and CLOSER, the HUMMING intensifies.

Cherry Pie stops.

She's right outside Irma Munson's room.

KNOCKS on the door.

CHERRY PIE

Ms. Munson?

HUMMING goes on.

Cherry Pie KNOCKS again. Nothing.

PUSHES the door open and walks right into

IRMA MUNSON'S ROOM

Under the bed, that glistering glow. The HUMMING is definitely coming from there.

That small yellow light gives us a glimpse at the rest of the room. Pictures of all sizes, shapes and forms of a young African-American woman.

Strange. One photo's missing.

Cherry Pie looks frightened at all this. Looks to the bed again.

CHERRY PIE
(voice cracking)
Ms. Munson?

More HUMMING.

Cherry Pie kneels down. Looks

UNDER THE BED

Irma Munson laying down. Facing the floor. Clutching a rosary. Two small candles in front of her.

Between those two candles, the missing photo.

Indeed, the HUMMING is a prayer. Or something close to it.

IRMA MUNSON
(over and over)
Thank you Lord for this gift. I
will not disappoint you.

Before Cherry Pie can say anything, Irma STOPS.

Small SILENCE, before Irma opens her mouth again. Keeps looking down.

IRMA
They took her right out the door.
Just like that.
(beat)
And it wasn't enough to kill my
baby. On no. Wasn't enough to burn
her like you burn some old tree.

Irma PAUSES. Voice TREMBLES.

IRMA
They had to drag her through the
mud. Like a dog.

Irma moves a little. Just enough for us to see that sharp, shiny kitchen knife. Waiting its turn to be used again.

Her face, RIDDLED with tears.

IRMA
But they'll know. You'll know.

Irma's face changes. Intensifies. And so does her VOICE.

IRMA

And when she comes lookin' for you,
that white pointy devil you call
momma will know too.

And just like THAT, she GRABS Cherry Pie. Mighty strength.
Cherry Pie SCREAMS, but to no avail.

THE GLASS

Drops to the floor. Not breaking, but rolling away from the
bed.

Everything goes MUTE.

The drops of dirty water from the glass stain the wood.

CUT TO:

THE KITCHEN FAUCET

DRIPPING.

BISCUIT

Eating away whatever's on that bowl with his name on it.

WOMAN (O.S.)

Mmmm-mmm! Irma Munson, this is the
best damn pie you've ever cooked!
(beat)
Pass me the milk, please.

THAT VERY SAME WOMAN

Same age as Irma. Enjoying her pie.

And it's red. It's a cherry pie.

WOMAN

And tell me your secret!

IRMA MUNSON

Pushes the milk forward. On her wrist, not one - but TWO
golden cherry bracelets.

She lets out a LAUGH.

IRMA

Easy. I just doubled the recipe.

The grin stays on her face, before we...

CUT TO BLACK

THE END