

THE RIDDLE BOOK

FADE IN:

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

A night sky. Faint stars dot the black void. The city is bright and lively.

The street experiences light traffic. Few cars on the road. Lampposts light up the lively streets.

Jazz music. Playing faintly. Everything's alright and happy at the moment.

Between two buildings, there is a narrow alleyway. Filled with trash cans and dumpsters.

A clang. A can gets thrown onto the wet cement.

A dark figure is slumped over a trash can. Digging through the garbage. Tossing the waste onto the ground as it searches.

It finds something...stands upright. Exclaims in excitement. He's holding a half eaten burrito. Takes a bite.

The person appears to be a YOUNG TEENAGE BOY, about 14. He's dressed in rags. His frizzy hair is filthy with mud, his face grimy with dirt.

He's wearing a flannel shirt. It's torn up. His jeans are filthy and has holes all over them. The soles of his brown boots have almost worn away completely.

In just seconds, the burrito has been reduced to the paper wrap in which it came. It's tossed back into the garbage can.

The boy exhales. Satisfied. He turns and exits the alleyway.

A while later, he stops. Enters another narrow alleyway. His home.

He walks up behind a dumpster and sits down. On the ground, a newspaper lies flat on the dirty pavement.

The headline is visible, displayed in large, black letters: "A MOTHER AND FATHER PERISH IN A DEADLY FIRE THAT DESTROYS HOME".

(CONTINUED)

He stares blankly at the periodical. Suddenly, eyes water...tears form. Runs down his dirty face. Wipes them up.

Makes himself comfortable, he wraps his arms tightly around his body and lies down. His eyes close.

BOY
(whisper)
Good night...

EXT. ALLEYWAY - DAY

Cars zoom back and forth past the entry to the alleyway.

The boy wakes up to a horrible sound. It's his stomach. It's growling loudly.

He sighs. Grasps his stomach.

Struggling, he finally gets to his feet. And he ventures off...to raid another garbage can.

CUT TO:

Once again, he's slumped over the side of the dumpster.

He retrieves a chicken bone. Stares at it. Disgusted.

Cringing, he brings it to his mouth and picks off the bits left over. Tosses the now empty bone away.

Hopeless, he walks away. But suddenly, something catches his eye. He looks peculiarly at it.

It's a book. It's dirty, and old. The pages are yellowed with age. On the cover, in huge Old English font, are the words: "THE RIDDLE BOOK".

He walks towards it and picks it up.

BOY
A...riddle book?

A smile awkwardly forms on his face.

BOY
I'll just keep this for my own
amusement.

He opens the pages. They're dry and stiff. They're coated with dust and dirt. It reeks of garbage.

(CONTINUED)

The boy looks strangely at the book. He reads one of the riddles to himself.

BOY

You throw away the outside and cook
the inside. Then you eat the
outside and throw away the inside.
What did you just eat?

He stares blankly at the page. No clue. He flips to the back and looks at the answer.

He smiles and nods his head.

BOY

An ear of corn.

He closes the book and tosses it to the ground. Continues looking through the trash can.

A moment later, he squeals with satisfaction.

BOY

Oh my god!

He pulls out an ear of corn. The pale green husks still attached to it.

The eager kid ecstatically pulls at them, and the husks fall to the ground. Like an animal, he feasts on the raw vegetable.

Just moments after, the cob is clean. Bits of corn stick to his lips.

BOY

Oh...that was amazing.

With a smile on his face--one that has never appeared on it until now--he departs.

EXT. CITY STREET - AFTERNOON

Hours later. The boy sits on the sidewalk outside a street shop. The sun shines high in the sky. Pedestrians walk past, without paying much attention to the homeless boy.

BOY

Donations? Anyone? Please, I'm
really hungry.

He thrusts out a tiny paper cup. His imploring eyes, staring directly at passersby.

(CONTINUED)

They continue to ignore him. But he doesn't give up.

BOY

Anyone have any extra change? I
could really use it.

Finally, a pedestrian walks by. Tosses a coin into the
cup. Walks away as fast as she arrived.

BOY

Thank you, ma'am.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - NIGHT

The boy slumps to the ground. Hot, tired, exhausted.

He reaches into his pocket and tosses a few coins on the
ground. A soft ding as it bounces across the
cement. They're only a couple of dimes and a quarter.

He sighs. Clearly upset. He looks over at the riddle book,
leaning up against the brick wall.

The boy approaches it and opens it, attempting to brighten
up his mood.

He reads a riddle out loud to himself.

BOY

You have two paper
bills. Altogether they total
\$15. What are the bills if one of
them is not a ten-dollar bill?

He ponders over this for a moment. Then answers.

BOY

That's an easy one. A \$5 and a
\$10. One of them is not a
ten-dollar bill.

He smiles. Then his mouth suddenly opens as he lets out a
yawn. He lays himself down and falls asleep...

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

Once again, the boy is begging for money on the side of the
street.

(CONTINUED)

BOY

Please, can I have some extra change? I'd really appreciate it.

Someone flips a coin into his tiny paper cup and disappears.

BOY

Thank you
sir! Anyone? Donations? Please?

Another pedestrian walks by. Tosses a rolled up bill into the cup, then walks away.

His face lights up, pleased.

BOY

Thank you, ma'am!

He picks up the bill from the cup and unrolls it. Immediately, his eyes widen. His jaw drops to the ground.

In his hand, he holds two paper bills: a \$10 bill and a \$5 dollar bill.

He lurches up onto his two feet and runs. Excitedly.

INT. MCDONALD'S - DAY

The young boy takes a bite out of a huge cheeseburger. For once in his life, he is finally happy.

Panning outward, he sits at his own table. It's covered in food, ranging from burgers, drinks, fries. Everything the boy ever imagined but was unable to have.

Lets out a guttural burp in satisfaction.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - NIGHT

The boy makes his way back to his "home". Slumps down up against the brick wall. He's clearly exhausted.

Tilts his head to the right, where his riddle book is. He's bored. Got nothing else to do. The boy picks it up. Opens it.

BOY

Hmm...

He peruses the crisp, yellow pages.

(CONTINUED)

BOY

Most of you have two eyes. I only have one. Most of you have eyeballs. I do not. Your eyes aren't dangerous, neither are mine. But all together, I am extremely dangerous. You can see things with your eyes. I can't see anything, even though the air is clear where my eye is. What am I?

Stumped.

BOY

Oh geez, I have no idea...a cyclops?

He chuckles softly at himself. At the ridiculousness of his answer.

The boy flips to the back. Checks the answer.

BOY

A hurricane?

He pauses to think about the answer for a beat.

BOY

Heh, that makes sense.

Putting the book away, he starts making himself cozy.

FADE TO BLACK

SUPER: 7 Days Later...

EXT. STREET - DAY

A gray sky. The sun is not out today.

The traffic is light, and no pedestrians are walking around. The wind blows strong and loud. A faint rumble of thunder in the distance.

The trees sway with the wind. The leaves rustling loudly.

The boy walks down the street. He looks around. He's confused. Wondering why the area is practically devoid of life.

(CONTINUED)

He walks past an electronics store. A shelf filled with different models of televisions are on display in the window. A news program is playing on the television screens.

It's the weather forecast. The boy walks by when it catches his attention.

WEATHER REPORTER

...Hurricane Watson is expected to make landfall tomorrow morning, with sustained winds of about 120 miles per hour...

His face is suddenly flushed with shock and horror. He presses up against the window, watching.

BOY

(whispering)

A...a hurricane?

WEATHER REPORTER (CONT'D)

...a mandatory evacuation is being issued. The downtown Superdome is offering shelter to those who haven't--

The televisions suddenly turn off. At that moment, the door opens. A pudgy, middle-aged man comes out. A dimly lit cigarette hanging from his lips. He's holding a large wooden board and a hammer. He sees the boy.

STORE OWNER

Hey, what are you doin' 'ere, kid? Take cover! You know a hurricane's comin', doncha? Or have you been living in a dumpster?

He turns away, and starts boarding up the windows.

The boy looks back into the city skyline. The Superdome right in view. He takes a deep breath. Then takes off running.

EXT. CITY SKYLINE - MORNING

SUPER: The next morning...

The sky is much darker. Almost black. The wind blows with a fierce intensity. The waters on the shore pound against the beach. The water level rising... A torrential downpour of rain onto the streets.

(CONTINUED)

The trees are getting blown over. Siding of houses getting picked off bit by bit. Shingles flying off into the wind. Cars sliding against the slick, wet pavement. Glass windows shattering...the glass shards getting caught in the wind.

The levee is trembling from the blows of the waves. It struggles to hold. Brown, muddy water seeps through. Water overflows.

A torrent of water rushes into the city. Destroying everything...

Blackness.

FADE IN:

The city is destroyed. Water reaches up to rooftops. Trees are knocked down in their prime by the strong winds.

Homes...now nonexistent or submerged. Streets no longer visible.

The dome stadium...the roof nearly blown off.

INT. SUPERDOME - DAY

The seats are filled to the brim with people, now without a home. There is loud, indistinct chatter. People are crying, devastated by this tragedy.

The boy sits by himself on one of the seats. He has no possessions...just his riddle book.

He looks around at the people. The people that are now like him.

A woman crying. Another man embracing her. Comforting her.

The boy just sits there. He finally decides to do something to pass the time. Opens his riddle book. Just flips through the pages.

Runs his fingers down the pages...then stops.

His fingers are on the words: "Most of you have two eyes. I only have one. Most of you have eyeballs. I do not. Your eyes aren't dangerous, neither are mine. But all together, I am extremely dangerous. You can see things with your eyes. I can't see anything, even though the air is clear where my eye is. What am I?"

His mouth opens, somewhat shocked. Getting the drift.

(CONTINUED)

He flips through more of the pages. Runs his fingers through quickly in search.

Stops at the words: "You throw away the outside and cook the inside. Then you eat the outside and throw away the inside. What did you just eat?"

FLASHBACK:

EXT. ALLEYWAY - DAY

The boy digs up an ear of corn in the garbage can. Eagerly peels off the husks. Gobbles it down like an animal.

BACK TO PRESENT:

INT. SUPERDOME - DAY

His eyes are wider than ever. He starts flipping through the book once more.

The words "You have two paper bills. Altogether they total \$15. What are the bills if one of them is not a ten-dollar bill?" are displayed.

FLASHBACK:

EXT. STREET - DAY

The boy reaches into his paper cup. Unrolls the bills.

It's a \$10 bill and a \$5 bill.

BACK TO PRESENT:

INT. SUPERDOME - DAY

He looks up in shock.

BOY

What have I done?

He quietly thinks this over for a beat. Realizing the calamity he has caused, he breaks down. Tears run down his cheeks as he sobs silently.

As the boy cries, a WOMAN walks by. In her 30's, she's young and attractive. She looks in great condition despite the raging hurricane that left the city in shreds.

(CONTINUED)

She notices the crying, lonely boy. She stops and approaches him. In an attempt to comfort him, she speaks.

WOMAN

Honey, it's okay. Don't worry. Where are your parents?

The boy calms himself. Wipes his tears. Responds between big, wet sobs.

BOY

They're...gone...

WOMAN

Sh, shh, it's okay. Don't think that way. There are people out there looking for survivors, they'll find your parents I promise.

The boy just stares at her, bewildered. She kneels down, speaking with the boy, eye to eye.

WOMAN

Remember, when there's hope, you are capable of doing anything.

With that, she stands up and walks away.

BOY

No, you don't understand, they're...

But she's already gone, out of earshot. He sighs heavily, and looks down. Towards the riddle book. He stares at it for a beat. Thinking.

He's realizing something. Picks up the book, twisting it around in his fingers.

Suddenly, he springs to his two feet. Once again, he starts running, this time, determined.

Refugees stare at the running boy. He darts toward the exit, and disappears out of view.

EXT. SUPERDOME - DAY

He exits from the entrance of the stadium. Looks at the devastation.

Then he opens his riddle book. Opens to a page. Smiles.

(CONTINUED)

BOY

What word begins with sight, ends
with a question, and has it in the
middle?

He looks up, towards the swampy wasteland.

BOY

City.

And just like that...the brown, murky water...flowing
backwards...as if possessed by some supernatural
force...flowing towards the shores from whence they came...

Buildings, homes...brick by brick, they come together and
rebuild themselves...Streets uncover themselves from the
water and debris that had once interred them.

Fallen logs, naked branches...shadows of their former
glory...stand and reunite with their roots, entombed in the
muddy earth, to live once again.

The city is now as it has always been. It is whole again.

The boy looks onward, with a smile...

BOY

It's time for the finishing
touch...

He turns a few pages in the book. Recites a riddle.

BOY

There's a house in a very small
neighborhood. The neighborhood is
very poor and nobody lives there.
There are no streets, and there are
no sidewalks. There are no trees,
no grass. There are no lakes or
ponds. No mountains or
valleys. No cars or highways
exist. There's not even any
animals there. So what is there
then?

Beat.

BOY

A house.

Suddenly, in an empty lot across the street, a small house
magically begins constructing itself. Bricks, pulled out of
thin air, stack each other atop of each other until it is
complete.

(CONTINUED)

A small, cozy house, just large enough for one person, stands before him...just waiting to be inhabited.

With a sincere grin spread across his cheeks, the boy snaps the riddle book closed. A cloud of dust emanates from the decrepit pages. With it tucked under his shoulders, he struts toward the front door. Opens it.

The sense of welcoming is unreal... the aura of the home and the hearth is irresistible. The boy happily lets himself in, shutting the door behind him.

Panning upward, it's clear that everything is now alright...everything is repaired to its original form...as if nothing had ever changed.

The city is whole once again.

THE END.