

BEL

By

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FADE IN:

EXT. ROAD HOUSE - DAY

CORNER STORE/BAIT AND TACKLE/JUKE JOINT squats at the crossroad like a great, brown clump of cornbread. Out of the store spills the PLINKING SOUND of an untuned PIANO. Three BLACK MEN join a fourth and stumble pass STACKED CHAIRS as they gather around FORD MODEL T TUDOR sedan.

They plop on the car's hood, open a map, and map their strategy.

IKE (40s) the band leader barks orders and directs the folding and unfolding of the map.

WADDLE's (20s) the drummer, slobbers over his food as he leans on Ike's shoulder.

REGGIE TRAYNHAM, late 20s, athletic, handsome, and a preacher. He's the quartet's crooner.

SUPER: ARKANSAS, 1927

And THIN (20s), a slow-belly piano player.

IKE
C'mon Thin!

Thin hustles out of the saloon guzzling a COKE.

WADDLE
Let me have a sip.

THIN
I don't want yo lips on ma soda.

IKE
Thin, hurry the hell up.

THIN
I gotta practice since we ain't got
no piano till--

Ike leans over the map. Takes the pencil from behind his ear.

IKE
How far?

REGGIE
'Bout ten...twelve miles.

WADDLE

About? I don't want be stuck out here in the podunks.

IKE

How about this route?

REGGIE

South. Don't know.

WADDLE

Ain't you from here?

REGGIE

Ain't been here for a long time.

THIN

How big is this farm anyway?

REGGIE

Big. Huge.

WADDLE

Not big enough for yo wife and a mistress, preacher!

THIN

Nothin' that big!

IKE

Y'all shuddup and leave the man alone.

EXT. ROAD - DUSK

Arkansas dirt fork road. The parked Ford sighs under its load of instruments and luggage. Reggie and Ike stand on a knoll looking down one road then down the other. Waddle sits in the car air-drumming with two sticks.

REGGIE

I'm sure...

IKE

Yeah? But which way?

Ike looks up the northern split where they've sent Thin. Thin is a low waver of dust in the distance.

IKE (CONT'D)

Thin, hustle!

Thin makes an effort at running but downshifts to a stroll.

IKE (CONT'D)
Take yo time, Thin, we got all day!

THIN
What?!

WADDLE
Thin!

THIN
What?!

WADDLE
See anything?!

THIN
Not a mole!

IKE
What do you wanna do, preacher?

THIN
Ike...Ike...Ike...

IKE
What!?

THIN
The Klan!

Waddle stops drumming. Ike's head shoots around searching the woods. But Thin doesn't hasten. Ike and Reggie share a look.

IKE
Thin, I swear to god! What about
the Klan?!

Thin moseys.

THIN
The guy back at the saloon said
they patrol these roads--

IKE
Goddammit, Thin! You wait fuckin'
now to tell us?

Waddles ba-dum-bums with his sticks.

IKE (CONT'D)
Waddle cut that shit!

Reggie bows his head and closes his eyes.

IKE (CONT'D)
 Preacher, ain't no time for no
 prayer meetin'...

THIN
 What's that?!

A BLACK DOG comes out of the woods sixty yards away, it
 skirts along the south fork.

A FLOCK OF WHITE SHEEP follow. Then a SHEPHERD.

REGGIE
 Start the car. We'll ask him.

EXT. ROAD - CONTINUOUS

The Model T rattles toward the flock.

VOICE (V.O.)
 Reggie!

Reggie spins in his seat. His eyes dart across the tree line.

REGGIE'S POV

A BLACK LAMB is tied to a tree in the woods.

BACK TO SCENE

REGGIE
 Ike, stop the car!

IKE
 Stop the car?

REGGIE
 Somebody called my name back there.

Reggie jumps out and runs into the forest.

After a moment, Reggie returns with a black lamb.

IKE
 You ain't puttin' thing ma car!

WADDLE
 C'mon, Ike, preacher need his
 flock. Lamb can be a mascot! Scoot
 over Thin!

THIN

I ain't sittin' with that thing!

REGGIE

We can just take it up there to the shepherd--

IKE

Not in my car you ain't!

REGGIE

Well, then. You guys just wait here. I'll take to the shepherd.

IKE

And ask him if we goin' down the right road to Pine Bluff.

Reggie tightens the leash-ropes and the lamb trots after.

EXT. ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Reggie presses through the flock.

REGGIE

Excuse me! Excuse me! Sir!

The black dog BARKS. SHEPHERD (60s) old hat, beard, and a crook continues to press the flock onward.

SHEPHERD

(to the dog)

Shuddup! Git! Git!

The dog turns from Reggie to the head of the flock. Shepherd stops. The sheep flow around him. Reggie catches up.

REGGIE

Lost one.

SHEPHERD

Lost one?

REGGIE

One of your sheep.

He lifts the lamb.

SHEPHERD

Put her back where you found her!

REGGIE

Sir?

SHEPHERD

Tie her back where you found her.

Shepherd grips his staff. Plants his feet. Standoff.

REGGIE

Well. I just want to know how I can find Traynham Farm?

SHEPHERD

You're standing on it.

REGGIE

This road leads to the farm?

SHEPHERD

This is the south road. You don't want to be on south road. North road. But all this is Traynham.

He motions toward the forests.

IKE (O.S.)

Ask him if this road will take us to Pine Bluff?

REGGIE

This road go to Pine Bluff?

SHEPHERD

This road goes to Stuttgart, Wiatt and Pine Bluff, but you'll never make it.

Shepherd continues walking. Flock follows. Reggie leads his lamb back to the car.

REGGIE

Thin, hand me my suitcase.

Thin lugs it over the seat. He pushes it through the window.

IKE

You sure about this preacher?

REGGIE

Yeah. Y'all can do a few gigs without me. Have Thin lead sing. He can croak a little. When y'all be in Memphis?

IKE

I'd say at least the first. Pine Bluff, Little Rock, Fayetteville...

WADDLE
Fort Smith.

IKE
Fort Smith, Jonesboro...Memphis.

REGGIE
Memphis on the first. I should be
able to sell a few acres by the
first.

IKE
Thin, reach back and give him the
Ross.

Waddle passes a BOLT ACTION RIFLE to Thin who passes it to
Ike.

REGGIE
I don't need that.

IKE
You sure?

REGGIE
Yea though I walk through the
valley and shadow of death, I will
fear no evil...

IKE
You want us to wait a little while
for you to get on?

REGGIE
Got this lamb to keep me company.

The car semicircles and putters the way it came. Reggie tugs
the rope.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
C'mon, bopeep.

EXT. WOODS - DUSK

Reggie struggles to tie the lamb to a tree. He hears movement
in the brush.

REGGIE'S POV

His eyes scan the trees. A SHROUDED HAG (70s) comes into
focus amid the shadows.

BACK TO SCENE

REGGIE

Who are you!

Reggie winds the rope around his hand. Grabs his suitcase and yanks the rope.

He is stopped by TRUCK NOISE building fast. Reggie slips behind a bush.

ROAR OF SEVERAL TRUCKS WHIZ BY gain distance. Reggie sighs. But in the next moment, the trucks SCREECH to a halt. A TRUCK DOOR SLAMS.

VOICE#1 (O.S.)

Move those goddamn sheep off the road!

The Shepherd's muffles a response.

VOICE#1 (CONT'D)

I'll beat the shit out of you old man! Hear me? Move!

VOICE#2 (O.S.)

Wait! Ask him if he's seen a boatload of niggers come through here.

Shepherd responds beyond earshot.

VOICE#1

You seen any niggers, old man?

(listens)

I can see you're a fuckin' shepherd! Just get those fuckin' sheep off the road!

Ignitions RUMBLE.

REGGIE'S POV

Two trucks pass on the road bedded with KLANSMEN. Following the trucks is an elegant BLACK CHYSLER SEDAN driven by a young WHITE GIRL. Trucks and car DRUM into the distance.

BACK TO SCENE

Reggie picks up the lamb and creeps into the woods.

EXT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Reggie hears TREES RUSTLING several yards ahead. He freezes.

The SNOUT OF A BOAR pushes through the trees. Then the HEAD. Its the BIGGEST BOAR Reggie's ever seen!

Reggie TUCKS the lamb under his arm, and SCRAMBLES to the largest tree.

Reggie struggles to push the lamb up the tree. Finally, Reggie CLAMBERS up the tree DANGLING the lamb by the rope.

REGGIE

C'mon! C'mon!

Reggie HOISTS hand over hand. The lamb BLEATS bloody murder!

The Boar BELLOWS and CHARGES.

Reggie plants himself on a strong limb and lifts the lamb just beyond the SHARP TUSKS.

The Boar disappears under the tree and into the forest. Suddenly, the tree SHAKES. The boar has circled back and is RAMMING from the opposite direction.

EXT. TREE - LATER

Reggie and lamb repose on a strong limb. Boar rests in a nearby clearing.

Reggie attempts to climb down.

The Boar quickens. It stamps a few paces forward.

Reggie retreats.

Night falls.

REGGIE'S POV

On the branch above him, Reggie spies a STRING of HAIN'T BLUE SHELLS just out of reach.

BACK TO SCENE

Reggie settles in for the night.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Trees respire under a bright cloudless morning. A COW FLOATS ABOVE THE TREES.

THIA (15) a healthy, unhewn Black girl, lies on the grass staring at the hovering cow.

THIA
 Can't hide, Sheba! There you is!
 (beat)
 Told you I'm gonna whip you when I
 find you!

Thia shoots up and snatches her CAT O' NINE TAILS WHIP and her WICKER BASKET then strides into a COPSE of trees.

A beat later, what was a floating cow, now appears marches through the trees pursued by Thia's whip. CRACK!

THIA (CONT'D)
 Go on, Sheba! Quit dawdlin'. Told
 you don't try me!

She judders the whip. Sheba rolls her eyes and shuffles through the clearing.

EXT. CREEK - CONTINUOUS

Thia halts the cow at a creek.

THIA
 Wait over there while I bathe.

Sheba drifts to a grass patch. Thia's dress falls from her shoulders. She frolics in the water.

Close on Thia as Thia slowly turns her head...

THIA'S POV

Reggie and the lamb hunkered in a tree.

BACK TO SCENE

Thia returns to pleasuring splashes. After a moment, Thia steps out of the stream.

She is out of view behind some trees. She returns with thorny switches. She braids the switches together.

Savagely, she LASHES HERSELF until the blood flows.

Reggie is watching this recital intensely.

REGGIE'S POV

This dresses slowly. Picks up the basket. She walks in Reggie's direction never meeting his eyes. She vanishes in the brushwood.

After a moment, she reappears right beneath him.

BACK TO SCENE

THIA

I bet you're hungry, mister.
Brought you some food.

REGGIE

Starvin'.

THIA

You gonna come down?

REGGIE

Can't.

THIA

Why not?

REGGIE

That boar there.

THIA

Oh you mean old Pharaoh? He ain't gonna hurt you.

REGGIE

Don't think he thinks that.

THIA

He's just funnin' with you.
(beat)
Sheba!

Sheba stops grazing. She charges at Pharaoh.

Pharaoh rouses and retreats into the woods.

REGGIE

Ain't never seen a cow do that before!

THIA

I see you got my present. Sweet ewe
lamb. Here. Let her down.

Reggie lowers the lamb.

THIA (CONT'D)

Shepherd never wants the black
ones. I told him just leave the
black ones for me.

Reggie stretches up and shakes the blue amulet from the upper
branch.

THIA (CONT'D)

Leave the necklace!

Reggie puts it in his pocket, hugs a branch, and swings sloth-
like to the ground.

He brushes off his clothes.

REGGIE

Reginald Traynham.

Thia mats the ground. Then opens the wicker flaps.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

This Traynham Farm?

THIA

With this lamb...I'm gonna have the
biggest flock in the land! Tom jump
for joy!

REGGIE

Who's Tom?

THIA

A big, black ram!

REGGIE

Suppose he will be happy...tupping
all day!

She looks at him odd. Tupping?

REGGIE (CONT'D)

What's your name?

THIA

Thia.

REGGIE

Thia?

THIA

Good you outta that Witness Tree.
Witness tree's bad luck.

REGGIE

What's a witness tree?

THIA

Witness tree: where black mens been
shot and hanged...

She pats the trunk.

THIA (CONT'D)

See all them bark spots? Bullet
holes grown over!

Reggie runs fingers over the freckled bark then reaches into
his pocket fishing out the talisman.

THIA (CONT'D)

Maeve want those left up there.

REGGIE

Maeve?

THIA

Auntie Maeve. She hangs those to
scare folks. Trespassers.

REGGIE

Maeve must've been that old woman I
saw running in the forest.

Thia tussles with the lamb.

THIA

Freedom? No freedom? Freedom?

Thia ties and reties the rope. Finally, Thia stands.

THIA (CONT'D)

C'mon, Sheba!

Thia troops off. Reggie fumbles with the plate and rope.
Reggie lifts his suitcase.

REGGIE

Wait!

Reggie flits through his suitcase. Shredded clothes! He stuffs what he can into the suitcase. Latch bends but won't catch.

Reggie throws the suitcase down and picks up his BIBLE and his WORKS OF SHAKESPEARE.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Reggie feebles around in a circle. He's lost.

EXT. WOODS - LATER

Reggie cools his feet in a stream.

THIA (V.O.)
C'mon. Quit playing in the water.

He looks around. He snaps his shoes on.

EXT. MEADOW - DAY

Reggie enters a large meadow where Sheba and the lamb graze. Thia is lying on her back.

REGGIE
Is it painful? Lying on your back?

THIA
Used to it.

Reggie lies down beside her.

THIA (CONT'D)
Hear that? Grass growin'. Sometimes I stretch my body to every inch of grass...

REGGIE
Can we get to the farm before dark.

THIA
Ain't no farm.

Reggie searches her face.

REGGIE (V.O.)
Strange girl.

THIA
You think I'm crazy don't you?

REGGIE
I never said that.

Thia bucks up.

THIA
Yes you did! I heard you!

REGGIE
Now I know there's a farm. Left
this very farm when I was five.

THIA
No farm.

REGGIE
Uh-huh. If there's no farm where do
you live?

THIA
In a hut.

Reggie rolls over. Grabs his bible.

REGGIE
Swear! Swear on this bible!

THIA
Not crazy but strange. That's what
you thought: Strange girl. Exact
thought!

REGGIE
How did you know that?
(pause)
Can you read my mind?

THIA
Can't read minds.

REGGIE
Then how do you explain it? Can you
do it all the time?

THIA
Sometimes. Sometimes. I hear
people's unexpressed thoughts.

REGGIE
Reading minds...unexpressed
thoughts? There's a difference?

THIA

Yeah. Its like were sharing a thought together. Like sharing a stream. You think you're thinkin' somethin' but actually I'm thinkin' it. Sometimes vice versa. I can do it animals too.

Reggie scans the pasture.

REGGIE

So what is that lamb thinkin'?

THIA

She ain't got a soul yet. When she gets a soul it'll be different.

REGGIE

How about that cow over there? She gotta soul?

Sheba stops nibbling and watches them.

THIA

Yeah. She thinks she's a bull and runs off every time I wanna milk her.

(beat)

She wanted me to leave you in that tree.

REGGIE

She talks too? All I hear is cud-chewin'.

THIA

She's mad at me.

REGGIE

So why didn't you just tell that boar to leave me alone?

THIA

Pharaoh's different. He's got too many souls raging in him.

REGGIE

How old are you girl?

THIA

Fifteen.

REGGIE
 You should know better than tell
 these lies.

This stands. Sheba charges off the pasture.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
 Where you goin'? I'm saying this
 for your own good.

THIA
 Rain's comin'. Sheba knows.

Reggie searches the sky. Not a cloud.

REGGIE
 Nonsense! I need to get to the
 farm! If you won't help me, I find
 the farm myself.

THIA
 It's too far before the rain hits.
 Heavy rain.

REGGIE
 You ain't afraid of me are you?

THIA
 Should I be?

INT. HUT - DUSK

Reggie peers at grey sways of rain through a window. Cats and
 dogs. Need an ark. He snuggles a QUILT about his shoulders.
 Thia rackets over a pot belly stove.

Reggie opens his KJV Bible. Unfolds a piece of paper.

REGGIE
 This is my baptismal certificate.
 Can you read?

THIA
 Of course.

She sets a plate before him. Sets a WINE JUG opposite.

THIA (CONT'D)
 Eat.

REGGIE
John Paul Reginald Traynham.

THIA

Don't need to prove to me you're a Traynham. Need to prove it to step momma: Ida. Now eat.

Reggie half-turns the plate.

REGGIE

What's this?

THIA

Real Arkansas food.

He takes a few bites.

REGGIE

This is good.

He stretches across and draws the jug.

THIA

Thought preachers didn't let wine touch they lips?

REGGIE

Jesus drank wine!

She takes out two glasses from a chest.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

Yes ma'am. That's what I'm talkin' about!

He chugs. She takes the jug. Pours in glasses. More guzzling.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

Yes ma'am. Yes, ma'am. Just a tad bit more...

Pours.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

Thia? Thia! Where I come from, niggas can be two things. Only two! A preacher or a teacher. Preacher or teacher, yessiree George!

Glares at the covers of the Bible and Shakespeare. Weighs. Compares. Lifts the Bible higher.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

And I'm a preacher! Best youth pastor you ever seen.

(MORE)

REGGIE (CONT'D)

Sang in the choir! Lead the solos!
You name it! Until...betrayed by a
woman!

(beat)

And the Lord said to the woman
because the Serpent beguiled you...

(beat)

Thia. Thia. You wanna see a trick?

Thia sits. He hands her the Bible.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

I'm the best quoter you've ever
seen. Wanna try me? Try me! Quote
circles around any man! King of the
Bible Bee!

He leans close.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

From here to here. Anywhere. From
here over: two thirds. Test me. No
test me! Chapter and verse. Just
start readin'. Don't tell me where.
Read! Read!

THIA

And when Saul saw the host of the
Philistines, he...

REGGIE

Too easy! That's First Samuel
twenty eight and five. Easy! Flip
over to the begats...

THIA

And Lamech...

REGGIE

Lamech! I love Lamech!

THIA

Lamech took unto him two wives: the
name of the one...

REGGIE

Adah, and the name of other Zillah.
And the verse above says: And unto
Enoch was born Irad colon and Irad
begat Mehujael colon begat
Methusael colon and Methusael begat
Lamech. Below it? And Adah bare
Jabal...and so on and so forth...

She claps.

THIA
You're the best youth pastor I've
ever heard.

Reggie bow stumbles.

REGGIE
You sick? Are you?

THIA
No. I feel fine.

REGGIE
Now if you was. Sick. Infirm. I'd
just lay my hands on you and your
sickness would be gone! Don't
matter what the sickness is! Gone!
I have the power to heal folks!

Reggie's jigs across the floor--mock shouting.

He grabs the jug and plops down in the chair.

Rubs his face caressing the jug.

THIA
She was my age, wasn't she?

Reggie stares at her. Gazes at the hard, wet trees outside.

REGGIE
Rain's easin' I think.

He hugs the chair to his butt. With one swift move--drags
quilt, chair, jug, and all to the door.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
I'll sleep outside.

THIA
You don't have to sleep outside.
I'll make you a place in the
corner.

Reggie steps out. Comes around to the window.

REGGIE
How far is the farm?

THIA
Seven or eight miles.

REGGIE
Farm 'bout ten thousand?

THIA
Give or take.

REGGIE
Can I ask you somethin'?

Thia comes to the window.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
Why do you scourge yourself?

THIA
Be free from sin.

REGGIE
It work?

THIA
Synthia rears her ugly head and I
beat the sin right out of her.

REGGIE
No sin just Thia.

Reggie sits and tightens the quilt around his shoulders.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - DAY

They approach a glorified slave shack, a weatherboard affair where shingles cling like a sharecroppers hat. The warped lip of a porch hangs above snagged struts.

Thia drives Sheba to the shack. Reggie heels the lamb.

MAEVE (60s) crouches on the roof painting a fresh coat of haint blue.

IDA (late 30s) extends like a stubborn weed from the doorjamb, ROSIE (2) is pinioned on her hip. The other children WILLIE (5) and LUCY (4) peek from behind her skirt.

IDA
Took you this long to find you way
home?

THIA
Auntie Maeve left the fence open
and Sheba ran into the woods. Then--

IDA

You lucky I have this baby in my arms! I did not ask you about no cow! I could care less than a damn about no cow! Sheba can find her own way home with escort!

THIA

Rain was--

IDA

Child are you twelve shy of a dozen! I swear to god! I bet you was lolly-gaggin' in some grass somewheres gaping at the sky!

(beat)

I hope you have the good sense to answer me!

THIA

The rain was heavy and...

IDA

Is yo mind plumb cookie dough to tell me about rain? Didn't you have plenty of time before the rain? You don't think it rained here?

THIA

Yes, ma'am...

IDA

Come on into this house! Don't try and skirt by me! You gonna get this lick!

Thia ducks up the steps. Ida hands Thia the baby and SMACKS Thia in the mouth. Thia tears inside.

IDA (CONT'D)

Put in yo lip 'for I give somethin' to cry about!

Ida faces Reggie.

REGGIE

It rained pretty hard.

Ida purses. Reggie steps out of the eave's shadow.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

There's a woman on your roof.

Ida keeps her eyes fixed on him.

IDA

Maeve! Come off that roof before
you fall and break yo neck!

MAEVE

I'm paintin' 'gainst the Lucifer!

IDA

Lucifer ain't gonna take time outta
his schedule to come 'round here!
Come down from there!

MAEVE

You ain't da boss of me!

Ida edges to the end of the porch. She cranes up to Maeve.

IDA

Old woman don't try me this
mornin'!

(beat)

What you here for, mister?

REGGIE

I'm a Traynham. Reginald.

IDA

Obviously you a Traynham. I axed
what you here for?

REGGIE

Ma momma said that Traynhams. Any
Traynham that comes back to the
Traynham Farm can claim a piece of
property for his own. Farm.

IDA

(scoffs)

Farm?

(pause)

Somethin' scared you good to come
runnin' all the way to this
forsaken lump of earth.

(beat)

What you do?

REGGIE

Preach the word.

IDA

Preacher?

REGGIE

Youth pastor.

IDA
And you had a callin' to come here?

REGGIE
When I was little there used to be
a church here. Thought I'd preach
and farm.

IDA
Guess you got at least one
follower.

Reggie looks down at the lamb.

REGGIE
Yes ma'am! One! And if she don't
repent...Lamb chops!

He's tickled but Ida's expression barely changes.

IDA
We'll have to talk to Ole Man Asa
'bout what your plot allotment will
be.

She turns to the door, then pivots back.

IDA (CONT'D)
I wanna be clear: Plot's yours long
as you live here! You don't have
any right to sell!

REGGIE
No ma'am. I just wanna work my
portion.

IDA
Niggas come down here shuckin',
thinkin' they gonna sell the land!
Traynham land stays in the family.
We got that understood, mister?

REGGIE
Yes, ma'am.

IDA
When hit the door I could tell you
ain't done a lick of work in your
life!

REGGIE
No ma'am.

IDA

That all you brought? Books?

REGGIE

This is it. Boar got the rest.

IDA

Boar? Well...I'll see if you can fit some of my deceased husband's clothes. Can't work in that suit you got on. You superstitious?

He shakes his head no. Ida goes into the house.

Maeve comes from behind the house. She's clattering EMPTY BLUE BOTTLES in a bucket.

REGGIE

I'm Reggie. Maeve, right?

Maeve deposits the bottles near the barndoor. Nearby a CACTUS OF BLUE BOTTLES blooms.

Maeve raises the empty bucket above her head.

Maeve races to Reggie. Their faces are inches apart.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

You build that?

She SNIFFS him. Wrinkles her nose. She races to the BOTTLE TREE and begins fastening the blue bottles onto it, departing after the last bottle hangs.

Reggie listens to the WIND WHISTLE through the bottles.

INT. BARN - NIGHT

Reggie foot-sweeps hay into a make shift bed and rolls his jacket into a pillow.

Reggie untucks an envelope from his shirt and peels away a creased sheet and subvocalizes to:

SIERRA (V.O.)

P.S.- Did you send the money? Do you still love me like you said? Daddy's kicking me out and I don't know what to do or who to turn to. Write soon! I love you! Sierra!

Reggie pats the straw and leans back. He re-reads letting prickly straw slowly dig into his flesh.

INT. CHICKEN COOP - DAY

Thia roots around the brood nest. She deposits a clutch of eggs into her apron. Agitated hens nervously cluck in a minor key.

THIA
(to the hens)
Don't look! Close your eyes!

Thia puts small eggs into her apron pockets.

Two chicks cry out from their eggs:

CHICK #1
Don't eat me! Don't eat me!

CHICK #2
I'm too young to die! Please!

MOMMA BANTAM HEN clucks shrilly.

THIA
Don't worry, mommy bantam, I'm
bringing them back. Look.

Thia pulls out the FERTILIZED EGGS and marks an X on each with COAL-CHALK.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Thia lobs Crisco into an iron skillet. Another skillet SPUTTERS AND CRACKLES on the stove. She separates the marked eggs from the unmarked.

She places the marked fertilized eggs in a bowl on the counter. Reggie enters.

THIA
Breakfast be done in a minute.

Reggie lifts the bowl with the marked eggs.

REGGIE
Poached?

He brushes passed her. Ida enters.

THIA
No, those aren't--

IDA
What's the problem?

Ida spreads a checkered cloth on the table.

THIA
Nothin'!

Reggie takes the eggs to the table. Reggie taps the eggs with a spoon.

CHICK #1
Don't let him eat us, Thia!

CHICK #2
We're too young to die!

Thia SPLATTERS hot grease on her hand and the stove. FLAMES flare up.

Reggie grabs a towel and FANS. The FLAMES LEAP TO THE WALL.

Ida SHOOTS a BUCKET under the spigot. She takes the pail and bails water to the base of the flames. She repeats.

REGGIE
Fires out! You can stop! Fires out!

Ida ignores him, filling the bucket to the brim. Ida slogs the bucket over to Thia who is standing at attention.

Ida catches Thia with an elbow to the head dropping Thia to her knees.

Ida rakes a chair from the table and thrusts Thia onto it.

IDA
I'm tired of you destroyin' my house!

THIA
It was an accident!

Ida pulls the leather strap off the nail on the wall.

IDA
I don't wanna hear no talk-back!

She WHAPS Thia across the legs. The second LASH curls Thia into a pill bug.

IDA (CONT'D)
I know what cures haughtiness!

Ida throws the leather strap to the floor, grabs a ladle and dips it into the wash boiler.

She scoops water and douses Thia's head.

Ida grabs the BLADE SHEARS from the table.

Reggie half stands half protests but sits under Ida's glare.

Ida cuts, and cuts, and cuts...

Thick SOBS AND CLUMPS of wet hair hit the floor.

Ida SLAMS the shears on the table.

Thia stuffs the marked eggs in her pockets, then covers her head with her arms and storms out of the house.

Reggie and Ida lock eyes.

IDA (CONT'D)

She fascinate you? Bet she does!

REGGIE

I just think--

IDA

I see the way you look at her-- fascinated! She young and menfolk eyes widen and they lust! She fascinated my poor Tom!

REGGIE

I'm ain't fascinated!

IDA

Yes! Yes you are! So fascinated you stand there and let her burn the goddamn house down!

REGGIE

I don't care what you say! Fascinated? So you want me to stand by and let you humiliate her! Kill her!

IDA

She fascinated my poor Tom!

REGGIE

Tom? You're chastising because of a dead man?

IDA

Don't tell me how to chastise!

REGGIE

This ain't chastisement!

Reggie HURLS the shears across the room. Rosie HOLLERS. Reggie picks Rosie up and rocks her.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

Shh. Shh. Shh. It's alright. You
alright. Shh. Shh. Shh.

IDA

This place! It's always a struggle.
Strapped. You can go insane here!
Since they killed Tom I think I'm
the dummy for stickin' around.
Tryin' to save it!

REGGIE

Why don't you sell?

IDA

The farm been under the Tom's
family for one hundred and twenty
seven years.

REGGIE

Anybody ever sold an acre? There
had to be. When times were
desperate?

IDA

No. Never.

REGGIE

I've been thinkin' of how we can
still make some money off the farm
even without selling.

Ida eases in a chair. Waits. Reggie COOS Rosie.

EXT. FARM ROAD - DAY

Ida and Reggie bounce atop a buckboard wagon. At an adjacent
CEMETERY, shaggy green and brown tufts scratch at chalky
headstones.

The abandoned framework of a CHURCH with joists sagging like
malformed bone. Downhill, a stream trickles toward the feeble
gyrations of the WATERMILL.

Reggie billows the reins.

REGGIE

Told ya I'd get the hang of it.

IDA

Damn near rattle my teeth loose!
Pull up! We'll walk from here.

Reggie chokes the rein. He dismounts.

He lifts his arms to help Ida down. She waves him off.

IDA (CONT'D)
Don't try and use those preacher
wiles on me!

REGGIE
Just being courteous.

IDA
I don't need no help, thank you.

Reggie keeps his arms outstretched. She takes his hand by the fingers. He grabs her by the waist and lowers her from the wagon.

IDA (CONT'D)
You think I'm gonna get fascinated
by a jack leg preacher like you
then all your dogs ain't barkin'.

REGGIE
Somebody must've fascinated you.
Them yo kids ain't they?

IDA
Is they?

She lifts a basket out of the wagon bed and walks pass.

IDA (CONT'D)
Hedge row divides the church from
the cemetery. Then the mill. Tom
started building on the church
before the war. Elder takes care of
the mill. Makes what we need but he
ain't no carpenter.

They stroll down hill matching the pace of the stream.

EXT. CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

The church is a concrete slab with stairs leading into a cavity. Above birds dance across wooden beams.

REGGIE
Jesus.

IDA
Tom lost the build battle: Ran out
money, heart and time.

(MORE)

IDA (CONT'D)

He was conscripted. Said it was Satan who done it.

REGGIE

Nobody wanted to help?

IDA

After the killing in Elaine--
Nobody! Too many menfolk gathering
together for whatever reason was
suspicious. They rumored Tom was a
socialist after he come back.

(beat)

This country hard on our menfolk.

(beat)

You hungry? I brought some
sandwiches.

Reggie takes off his jacket and puts in the ground. She hands
him a sandwich.

REGGIE

What happened to the rest?

IDA

Red Summer.

REGGIE

Bad?

IDA

Niggas hid everywhere. Barns.
Sties. Woods. Places whitefolk
never look.

REGGIE

In the earth?

IDA

Yeah. Tom dug trenches. Men were
moles. Finally, we had enough since
to hide them where no one would
ever find them!

REGGIE

Where?

IDA

In plain sight.

Reggie kicks the concrete base.

REGGIE

Foundation is still good. This is the perfect. Bring the people back!

IDA

Building no church ain't gonna save no farm.

Ida stands and brushes off.

IDA (CONT'D)

Folks in town spooked 'bout the farm.

REGGIE

By the Klan?

IDA

Not by the Klan.

REGGIE

By what? All the voodoo trinkets hangin' around? You know, when I got here, I met a shepherd and he didn't seem spooked an inch.

IDA

Right! But he do stay his ass on the southern border!

REGGIE

All I'm sayin' is...maybe if you talk to Maeve about all the voodoo hoodoo...folks won't be so superstitious.

IDA

Maeve is near a hundred years old...she been doin' voodoo since she was a slave in Louisiana...she not gonna stop now!

REGGIE

Talk to her.

IDA

I kinda like her voodoo keeping overripe grapefruits from nosin' around Traynham.

REGGIE

Talk to her?

IDA
Okay. I'll talk to her. But she
ain't gonna be happy!
(beat)
Better get to the mill before Elder
think we ain't comin'.

REGGIE
Is Elder a Traynham?

IDA
No. But he's been with us so long
he's practically bound to the land.

REGGIE
Sharecropper?

IDA
You can ask him when you see him.

She leads to the mill.

INT. WATER MILL - DAY

Shafts of light filter through dust-covered windows. ELDER (40s) is as watchful and powerful as a bull dog. He sits at the carpentry bench puffing saw dust.

Reggie stops inside the door absorbing the molder as Ida approaches Elder and whispers in his ear. Elder looks at Reggie.

IDA
And...he's full of questions!

ELDER
Questions?

REGGIE
I don't have any questions.

IDA
Well I'll leave you two alone.
Headed home. See if the house is
still standin'.

Ida exits.

REGGIE
Nice mill.

ELDER

Half is the machine shop - half the laundry. Twenty foot overshot water wheel that limps along. Little above a trickle nowadays.

Reggie fingers some dust.

REGGIE

Enough power to cut two by fours?

ELDER

Barely. Water from the hills barely yield enough water. White folks put up two dams along the river for manufacture during the war. There towns benefited, ours didn't.

Elder pulls a lever that's suspended from the ceiling. GEARS SCRAPE animating a voracious BANDSAW.

ELDER (CONT'D)

This mill is Shaker construction. Tom must've learned it in Groveland New York where he spent some time. He got pretty good with this ol' bandsaw.

(pause)

Had he lived. He'd a built that church!

Bandsaw chatter high pitches.

REGGIE

How'd he die?

ELDER

What?

REGGIE

How'd Tom die!

Elder shifts the lever and the BUZZ dulls.

ELDER

Having a haughty spirit.

Beat.

REGGIE

I was wonderin'. Has nobody ever tried to sell this place?

ELDER
Bet Ida already answered that?

REGGIE
She say none.

ELDER
That why you here, man? When was
the last time you visited?

REGGIE
When I was five years old.

ELDER
You remember any of the family
reunions?

REGGIE
I remember seein' a lot of white
folks there.

ELDER
There's a Traynham white side and a
Traynham black side. Asa made it so
the black side can only work the
land...

REGGIE
And white Traynham's can sell it?

ELDER
Lot of whites dead now. Asa makes
the plot allotments...who gets
what...but Ida has to approve.

REGGIE
Can you get me in to see Mister
Asa?

ELDER
Think he gonna let you sell a piece
of Traynham?

REGGIE
Keeping my options--

ELDER
Options? I'm curious. Do you know
why you're here? How you got here?

REGGIE
Can you get me to see him or not?

ELDER

Sure.

Beat.

ELDER (CONT'D)

Asa sells through Simon E. Gage.
After you talk to Asa, you may
wanna talk to Simon.

REGGIE

Simon Gage?

ELDER

Wiatt. He practically owns the
town.

REGGIE

How far's Wiatt?

ELDER

Listen! Wiatt's a sun-down town!
Better let me arrange it.

REGGIE

Sundown town?

ELDER

Sundown town: Nigga betta not catch
you in this town when the sun goes
down!

Elder laughs. Reggie can't find the humor.

ELDER (CONT'D)

I'll be at the plantation tomorrow.
See what Asa says 'bout rebuilding
the church.

Reggie nods.

REGGIE

Need another favor...you get in to
town from time to time...

ELDER

Right?

REGGIE

Need you to mail a few letters? One
to a band out in Memphis. Another
to my wife. And another to a girl
named Sierra.

Reggie untucks folded letters from his waste band and hands them to Elder.

INT. FARM HOUSE - NIGHT

Thia washes dishes in the kitchen. Rosie plays on the floor near the table.

Reggie raps on the door frame.

REGGIE

Ida here?

THIA

She's at the big house with Mister Asa. Somethin' 'bout buildin' a church.

REGGIE

What she do that for? Wanted to talk to him myself!

THIA

Guess not.

Reggie watches her move the dishes from the sink to the counter.

REGGIE

Need help?

THIA

Nah.

The nah sounds like an invitation. Reggie tips in. He puts his hands in the dirty dishwater on top of her hands.

THIA (CONT'D)

Don't do that!

REGGIE

Just tryin' help you with the dishes! Sorry!

Reggie sulks to his seat.

THIA

Maeve mighty mad you want take away her voodoo.

REGGIE

Don't want to take it away. Want it less noticeable.

Rosie pulls on the tablecloth.

THIA
Rosie, leave it!

She dries her hands and picks up Rosie. She puts Rosie on the floor away from the table. Rosie scoots back to the tablecloth.

REGGIE
I don't want people seeing all that junk jangling from the trees.

THIA
It's somethin' she believes in!

REGGIE
But you and I know its a bunch of s-h-i...ca ca. Superstition!

THIA
What you believe is superstitious too!

REGGIE
The Bible?

THIA
Everything!

Rosie yanks the tablecloth and the dishes CRASH to the floor.

THIA (CONT'D)
Rosie!

Ida rushes in. She is carrying BROWN PAPER BAGS filled with store bought.

IDA
What the hell's goin' on here!

THIA
Rosie pulled the dishes onto the floor--

IDA
You're supposed to be watchin' her!

Ida SLAPS her hard. Thia dazed stumbles to pick up Rosie.

IDA (CONT'D)
You gonna blame the baby!?! Move!

Ida knocks Thia to the floor.

Reggie grabs Ida.

REGGIE

Enough!

IDA

You gonna let her fascinate you?

REGGIE

She ain't fascinatin' me.

Reggie whirls Ida to him.

IDA

She is. But you don't see it! Don't
wanna see! Let me go!

REGGIE

Not till you stop tussling.

IDA

She tryin' to look like the
victim...look at her! Fake tears
and all!

REGGIE

C'mon! Let's cool off!

She spins away, but he meets her and thrusts her out of
doors.

EXT. PORCH - NIGHT

Reggie goalies the door. Ida paces up and down the porch.

REGGIE

You ain't gettin' in till you calm
down!

IDA

She got you fascinated! I see the
way you look at her! She got you
wrapped around her finger!

REGGIE

Calm down!

IDA

She tryin' to kill me and the
children and you tellin' me to calm
down!

REGGIE

How? How is she killin' you! How is
killin' the children? Tell me!

IDA

How? She's wasteful! She's
neglectful! She's pig...pig-headed!

Ida back steps off the porch--still pacing.

REGGIE

I'm not fascinated okay?

IDA

You're lying!

REGGIE

You know who fascinates me?
Intrigues me?

Ida stops pacing. She searches his face.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

Will Asa see me tonight?

Ida gathers on the stoop.

IDA

In the mornin'.

Reggie sits beside her.

REGGIE

You okay, now?

IDA

Does this look okay to you?

(beat)

Can I go into my own house and take
care of my children?

Reggie steps away.

INT. BARN - DAY

Morning twilight. Reggie lies on piled straw.

REGGIE'S POV

Maeve is on the rooftop of the house. BRUSHING shingles WITH
A SCYTHER.

She leaps off the roof AND INTO THE BARN.

She is a nimble, small goblin moving to and squatting on his chest.

She snickers then raises the scythe and lops off Reggie's arm. SPURTING blood SPATTERS the hay.

Reggie Tries to free himself with his remaining arm but Maeve digs her talon into his chest and TWISTS HIS HEART and sending a sharp pain across his face.

Her head dips into his chest like a vulture into carrion.

BACK TO SCENE

Reggie jerks awake. Checks his arm. Still attached.

He gets his Bible prays till beads of sweat appear.

INT. FARM HOUSE - DAY

Ida clears the dishes. Reggie fights to keep his eyes open.

IDA

Maeve didn't like your no voodoo on the farm policy.

REGGIE

Think Maeve put a hex on me.

IDA

Hex? Maeve's harmless. Her voodoo's mostly show.

REGGIE

Felt real.

Ida dabs her hands with a rag.

IDA

Somethin' happen?

REGGIE

Strange dreams.

IDA

Dreams?

REGGIE

Maeve cut off my arm and peeled open my chest and started eating my insides.

IDA

Well, Maeve is too old to be jumping off a roof. And she barely got teeth.

REGGIE

How'd you know she jumped off the roof?

IDA

Didn't you say somethin' about it?

Ida pecks at a dish with her fingernail. Dips the dish back in the dishwater.

IDA (CONT'D)

Better hurry. Don't want to keep Mister Asa waitin'.

Reggie pushes away from the table.

IDA (V.O.)

Reggie.

REGGIE

Yeah?

IDA

Yeah what?

REGGIE

Thought you called me?

IDA

Nope. Didn't say nothin'.

Her eyes trail him as he leaves.

EXT. PLANTATION HOUSE - DAY

Moss-creep lines the column bases and the porch ceiling of the Plantation House. Reggie paces outside. ASA TRAYNHAM (80s) is in bas relief, molded behind the front picture window.

From this distance and angle, Reggie can't tell if Asa is alone or with company.

The door opens but Reggie is not admitted.

A BLACK MALE SERVANT ushers Elder out and shuts the door.

REGGIE
 Didn't know were here.

ELDER
 We'll talk 'bout Asa later.
 Somebody I want you to meet.

Reggie watches as Elder heads down the footpath.

EXT. CHAPEL - DAY

Elder and Reggie park their car in front a small, blemished chapel tucked in the woods. They pull alongside a FORD MODEL A sedan.

INT. CHAPEL - DAY - LATER

Reggie stands at the ALTAR. Elder and the Reverend sit in the front pew. REVEREND PEARSON (60s) is the kind of preacher who never steps on anyone's toes. MRS. PEARSON (late 60s) prefers to observe church business from the back pew, out of the way.

PEARSON
 You can quote the Bible better than
 any man I've ever heard...

REGGIE
 Yessir?

PEARSON
 But...heh heh...We'll need more'n
 that for the building fund
 committee. Can't see the church
 board spendin' near what you asks.

REGGIE
 It ain't much.

PEARSON
 Be easier for you to come to
 Brightstar Baptist. Preach there
 Sunday. Then we can take up a
 collection on the spot.

REGGIE
 A collection won't be near enough
 to rebuild the church on Traynham.

Pearson picks up his hat from the pew. Adjusts the crown.

PEARSON

Tell the truth, son, most folks
won't go to Traynham even if a
church sets there. No, sir!

REGGIE

Elder and me was thinkin' of havin'
a tent revival. Doesn't have to be
on Traynham property--

PEARSON

I'm sorry, son.

Pearson tucks his hat and stands.

PEARSON (CONT'D)

Ready, momma?

Mrs. Pearson nods. Picks up her CANE. Reggie watches Mrs.
Pearson struggle to balance herself with the cane.

REGGIE

How are you, Mrs. Pearson?

She waves.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

Noticed you had a hard time walkin'
in here.

MRS. PEARSON

Don't mind me. I'll be awright.

PEARSON

She has the palsy. Gout too.

REGGIE

Palsy? Ma'am may I?

Reggie walks to her and stretches out his palms. She puts her
hands in his.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

Strong hands. Can you stand?

She stands slowly. Reggie eases her into the center aisle.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

Reverend, please stand behind yo'
wife.

Pearson hesitates, then he steps a few feet behind his wife.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
 I'm just gonna say a prayer for
 you. That all right?

They lock eyes. Mrs. Pearson bows his head. Reggie utters sub
 voce gutturals. Speaks in TONGUES.

Mrs. Pearson SHAKES, her eyes roll and she falls back into
 her husband's arms.

She lies motionless for a long moment.

The Reverend frantically pats her hand. He looks up with
 alarm at Reggie.

Then she awakens. Her eyes search Reggie's face for what just
 happened.

EXT. CHAPEL - DAY

Reverend Pearson holds the passenger car door open for his
 wife. She is strutting. She peeps to the driver's side.

MRS. PEARSON
 I'll drive!

Mild shock and confusion registers on the Reverend's face.
 What did he witness. He sinks in his seat.

MRS. PEARSON (CONT'D)
 Mr. Traynham you'll have your
 revival...if I have anything to say
 about it!

The Ford spits gravel as she peels off.

INT. FARM HOUSE - NIGHT

Thia's clears dinner dishes. Reggie is too excited to sit.
 Ida adjusts Rosie facedown on her lap. Ida puts a finger to
 her lips to quell Reggie's excitement.

REGGIE
 I just laid ma hands on her and she
 was healed!

IDA
 Don't wake the baby.

REGGIE
 I could feel my soul tremble! Power
 just rush through me!

IDA
Asa say anythin' 'bout this tent
meetin' you propose?

REGGIE
Elder gonna make all the
arrangements.

IDA
Don't leave it to Elder. You talk
to Mister Asa yoself.

REGGIE
I will. I will. Where you think we
should put up the tent?

Ida lifts Rosie and settles Rosie on a floor quilt.

IDA
Folks scared the Klan patrols...

REGGIE
Right.

IDA
I'd suggest the old north camp
site. It's off property. Folks can
come down Clarendon or use the
backroads. Brightstar townsfolk
familiar with the back roads.

THIA
Back roads is overgrown--

IDA
Did I axe 'bout the road
conditions, stuck boot?

Reggie goes to the window.

REGGIE
Hear that?

They freeze. Share looks.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
Voices out back? Expecting company?

IDA
At this hour? Hell no.

Thia listens. Returns to dish scrubbing.

THIA
Just the sheep.

REGGIE
Don't sound like sheep.

Reggie goes out the door.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - BACK YARD - NIGHT

Hundreds of grazing shadows fill the back yard. A BLACK RAM silhouettes a nearby hill. Thia joins Reggie.

THIA
Sheep.

REGGIE
Where'd they all come from?

THIA
North. And there's the sire: King Tom. Mr. Firstling.

REGGIE
Firstling?

THIA
Firstling of a flock!

REGGIE
I wouldn't know what a firstling was if it bit me!

THIA
The firstling always comes to you. If you ever need the flock: call him. I told Tom you needed his help.
(pause)
Can you load up the stakes and wire mesh?

REGGIE
Wire mesh? What for?

THIA
You'll see. Tom's already started to the site.

Reggie looks up but Tom is gone.

EXT. OLD CAMP SITE - DAY

A PEN OF WIRE MESH forty four yards square contains ten or so black sheep mowing the grass. Reggie leans on the mesh in amazement. Thia leans on his shoulder.

REGGIE

Would've taken forever to clear all
this grass!

THIA

They can do it in hours. Where
they're at now is just for the
tent. They can clear more for the
cars...tables...and food.

REGGIE

Food?

THIA

Gotta have food.

REGGIE

What if nobody comes?

THIA

Have faith!

REGGIE

Thia. I never said thank you.

Reggie grabs her by the shoulders.

INT. CHURCH - SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASS - DAY [FLASHBACK]

Basement hallway. A BRIGHT YOUNG GIRL (15), fresh with braids and stockings stands before Reggie the youth pastor. She's clutching a Bible to her breasts. Reggie is transfixed. Other young girl gigglers flock around him. Myriad of black faces!

BACK TO SCENE

Reggie is inside the enclosure surrounded by sheep faces and Thia is nowhere in sight.

EXT. MEETING TENT - DAY

A slow breeze billows the top folds of the BIG TOP TENT.

INT. MEETING TENT - CONTINUOUS

Reggie PANTOAMIMES behind a MAKESHIFT PULPIT. Elder measures out rows of wooden chairs. Thia comes through a tent with more PIES to spread on rear wooden tables.

REGGIE
Anybody yet?

THIA
Not yet.

ELDER
Pies'll spoil set out too early,
Thia.

THIA
Pies'll be fine.

REGGIE
Wish my band was here! Sho' spruce
up them church hymns. Hey, Elder,
get them letters mailed?

ELDER
Sure did.

Reggie dons a black robe over his suit. Pantomimes.

INT. MEETING TENT - LATER

Reggie sits with his head in hands. Thia, on the front pew, flirts for Reggie's attention. In the back, Elder dumps pie crumbs then invites himself to another slice.

There's a distant RATTLE of an ENGINE.

The engine stops short and shuts off.

Mrs. Pearson peeks through the flap. She has OVEN MITS AND A STEAMING pan.

REGGIE
Welcome!

MRS. PEARSON
How long's your sermon?

REGGIE
Less than an hour. That should
leave time for folks to repent.

MRS. PEARSON

Good! Doesn't matter if you eat
this hot or cold.

She lifts the small, covering towel: CORNBREAD. She places
the cornbread on the table.

MRS. PEARSON (CONT'D)

Tablecloths? Brought some if you
needed. Kitchen committee will be
along later. May need more chairs.
I talked to everybody I could.

Reggie hesitates. Then bolts through the tent flap.

EXT. ROAD - CONTINUOUS

A car caravan crawls toward the revival tent.

INT. TENT REVIVAL - DAY (MONTAGE)

-Reggie bounds from one end of the pulpit to the other. Women
in the audience sway. Men clap their hands.

-A line of souls approach the altar. Reggie lays his hands on
them. Some quiver. Shake. Roll on the floor. Cry. Shout.

-Reggie comes off the platform. Puts his hands on a MAN IN A
WHEEL CHAIR. Man in Wheel Chair ambles down the aisle.

-Reggie cries. Sings praises. The audience listen in rapt
attention.

-USHERS snake COLLECTION BASKETS from row to row. TITHES fill
each.

BACK TO SCENE

Churchgoers queue along food laden tables.

INT. MEETING TENT - LATER

Near empty tent. Elder counts and stacks MONEY. Reggie
envelopes several cash stacks and hands the bulgy envelopes
to Pearson. Pearson shuffles to balance the plate on his lap
while loading the bulges into his pockets.

PEARSON

Try the pig's feet?

REGGIE

No.

PEARSON

Just taste.

Pearson pushes his plate forward.

PEARSON (CONT'D)

Pigs feet. Chittlins. Heh heh.
Everything the white man didn't
want. Niggas make a meal of it!

REGGIE

No thanks.

PEARSON

Suit ya-self, but if you gonna live
down here you gonna have to eat
down here.

REGGIE

Cash enough?

Pearson pats his pocket.

PEARSON

Should be enough to bring the other
hold-out pastors onboard. How long
you plannin' on havin' this tent
service?

REGGIE

Week or two. See if we can spread
the word to other counties.

PEARSON

With your healing power? They'd be
fools not to take the offer!

Reggie sits next to Elder. Reggie restacks the envelopes.

REGGIE

This enough?

ELDER

For a start.

Pearson clears his throat.

REGGIE

What's wrong?

PEARSON

I didn't want to say nothin'. But a Traynham church gonna be a hard sell.

REGGIE

I was hoping, Reverend, for a few good words on Sundays from your pulpits.

(beat)

I know it'll be hard at first. But, if you can tell the brethren we're headed in the right direction: Takin' down all the witchcraft stuff. All the voodoo. And that we'll re-pave the road leading to the church...

PEARSON

Don't know. Still a hard sell.

REGGIE

We can make Traynham church part of your Brightstar diocese.

PEARSON

Diocese? Diocese! Like that word.

REGGIE

Boasting community healing services.

PEARSON

That's what the wife wants!

(pause)

Still gotta see what the other ministers want. What they say.

REGGIE

That's all I ask, reverend.

PEARSON

Let's see how this week goes.

Pearson stands and pats him on the shoulder.

PEARSON (CONT'D)

Gotta get big but not too big--know what I mean? Down here white folks see prosperity and--

MRS. PEARSON

And what?

Mrs. Pearson strolls in. She's carrying a large brown box.

PEARSON
(whispers)
They burn churches. Mind if I take
one of these home?

Pearson gestures to a SWEET POTATOE PIE.

REGGIE
Yours!

MRS. PEARSON
He don't need that!

PEARSON
Gonna eat it all and ain't gonna
share.

MRS. PEARSON
This box is for you. Figured one of
the Traynhams be back someday.

REGGIE
What is it?

MRS. PEARSON
Tom Traynham's old stuff: pictures,
trinkets...books. Service records.
Got an old dresser and bed if you
want. Tom used to stay with us
before he moved out to the farm.

PEARSON
Mommy, he don't want that old
stuff.

REGGIE
It's fine. I'll take it.

MRS. PEARSON
I think it only proper that one of
his family should have it. Hate to
see it thrown away.

PEARSON
We tried to contact his kin but all
our letters come back return to
sender.

Reggie holds a portrait of unsmiling soldier with garrison
cap and drab tunic.

Mrs. Pearson fishes a wooden handle from the bottom of the box and then lifts the rest of a COLT Revolver .45 ACP.

MRS. PEARSON

Then there's this. Please sit.

Mrs. Pearson leans to his ear and whispers.

INT. FARM HOUSE - DAY

Reggie totes the box in and puts it on the table. The children run to the table like its Christmas. Ida washes breakfast dishes.

IDA

Don't put that box on my linen.

Reggie sets the box on the floor. Opens the box and takes out the picture of Tom.

REGGIE

Know who this is?

Ida glances. Turns back to the dishes.

IDA

I know who it is.

REGGIE

Tom Traynham! Was he the last male heir?

IDA

To what?

REGGIE

The farm!

IDA

Aren't you a male? Aren't you a Traynham? Then evidently he wasn't last.

REGGIE

Whatever happened to him?

IDA

Where is Thia? She supposed to be dryin' these dishes!

REGGIE

Mrs. Pearson said Tom went mad on this farm.

(MORE)

REGGIE (CONT'D)

He was seen runnin' half naked down
the southern road before he--

IDA

If you know all the answers what do
you want me to say?

REGGIE

Why are there no men here?

IDA

Very few women here either. They
died. We'll die.

REGGIE

I wanna know how and what happened.
I want it straight!

Ida rakes her hands across her apron. She sits at the table
opposite Reggie.

IDA

Straight? What country we in?

REGGIE

America.

IDA

And you from?

REGGIE

Chicago.

IDA

And any fool know...any fool
walking the face of the earth,
breathin' the air, knows that if a
nigger walks down here, and he
ain't wise enough to watch hisself,
he gone wake up and find hisself d-
e-a-d. Dead.

REGGIE

But--

IDA

Butt your but! You know what my
momma say? She say if you sittin'
around conjecturin' you ain't got
enough to do!

REGGIE

Ida, I just want to get to the bottom of these vanishings towns people are talkin' about.

IDA

Vanishings? That's the stupidest... Grown folks don't just vanish? If grown folks goes to places they knows better not to go...get the point?

She stands.

IDA (CONT'D)

I got work to do. You wanna keep that junk. Keep it in the barn. I have enough reminders of my dead husband right here.

Ida points to her head. Reggie hefts the box and leaves.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - DAY

Thia escorts Maeve inside the fence. Reggie sits on the stoop holding a Tom's picture. He angles the picture so the light glints in Thia's eyes.

THIA

Whatcha got there?

REGGIE

Hey, why don't you come down to the tent and see me preach tonight?

THIA

I've seen it once. Besides, Maeve gets agitated if I'm gone too long. Don't want her lettin' the animals out cause she wants attention. Right, Maeve?

Maeve nods.

REGGIE

Sounds like an excuse. You'll have a good time watchin' me wallop Satan!

THIA

Don't he come right back?

REGGIE
Lot of boys your age...

THIA
I don't like boys my age.

Beat.

REGGIE
Got somethin' I wanna ask you. Is
there somewhere we can go?

THIA
Chicken coop?

Maeve watches them run into the coop.

INT. CHICKEN COOP - DAY

Thia tugs Reggie into the coop.

She puts her arms around his neck. Kisses him.

REGGIE
Don't you think Ida'd disapprove?

THIA
She wants you more than I do.

REGGIE
(scoffs)
Think not.

THIA
Oh yes. She the kinda girl that'll
beat you up till she gets your
attention!

REGGIE
True. Guarantee she'd kick my
behind! But, I brought you in here
to ask you somethin' secret.
(pause)
When Tom came back after the war--

THIA
I don't wanna talk about Tom.

REGGIE
Anything you can remember.

THIA
He went crazy. But we settled him.

REGGIE
Then he's not dead?

THIA
No.

REGGIE
Are you sure?

THIA
Sure I'm sure. We turned him into a
ram.

REGGIE
No more wild stories.

THIA
When he come back, he tried to
build a church for all his war
crimes. But the ground was cursed
and God didn't forgive him. So he
poisoned his family...took his
pistol...

REGGIE
And killed a white man?

THIA
And then ran naked down the south
road shootin' everyone he saw.
That's why they made a patrol.

REGGIE
So the Klan got him?

THIA
Whole town of Wiatt came out!

Thia pushes him.

THIA (CONT'D)
Thought you brought me out here to
hump. This ain't romantic at all!

IDA (O.S.)
Thia! Where is that girl!

THIA
Gotta go!

REGGIE
But I have more questions.

THIA

I'll get beat if she sees me come
outta here with you. Can you wait
till she goes inside?

Reggie nods. Thia ducks out of the coop.

IDA (O.S.)

Hurry up, girl, we don't have all
day!

THIA (O.S.)

Yes, ma'am!

IDA (O.S.)

You seen that man?

THIA (O.S.)

No ma'am!

The chickens watch Reggie slink into a corner.

INT. PEARSON HOUSE - DAY

Reverend Pearson lies on his couch. HOUSEKEEPER (40s), brings
him a folded wet towel and a SELTZER.

PEARSON

How's, mommy doin' downstairs?

HOUSEKEEPER

Bad as you. Worse. She threw up
twice 'fore you got home.

PEARSON

Call Dr. Brooks.

HOUSEKEEPER

He tied up with the other families
who's sick.

Pearson sits up.

PEARSON

What families?

HOUSEKEEPER

Every family that went to that holy-
roller revival.

Pearson eases down to his pillow.

HOUSEKEEPER (CONT'D)
Want me to send for Dr. Drew in
Monticello?

Pearson nods and turns his back.

INT. PLANTATION HOUSE - DAY

Asa leans over a bowl of soup. Old Black Butler dabs at Asa's drool with a moist hand towel. Reggie sits at the far end of the table flanked by Elder.

ASA
Why are you here?

ELDER
He wants the church lot near the cemetery and not the lot you've assigned him.

ASA
I asked him! Why are you here?

REGGIE
I want the church lot by the cemetery.

ASA
What makes you think I'm gonna change my mind?
(pause)
Did swaps once before and the fella run off. I know a runner when I see one. You're a runner!

REGGIE
A runner? No, sir.

ASA
Your the type to sell the place from under us! A hundred and twenty seven years gone up and smoke cuz you got desperate.

REGGIE
Sir?

ASA
Desperate fella. Not like Tom. Tom came and made somethin' of what I give. Thankful Tom. You look like Tom. But not like Tom.

(MORE)

ASA (CONT'D)

Tom was a family man--didn't have bastards all over Chicago!

Reggie puts his napkin down. Stands.

ASA (CONT'D)

Sit. I don't mean offense.

REGGIE

Beg your pardon, sir, but, I think you do mean to offend.

ASA

I suppose I do.

Reggie picks up his napkin. Sits.

REGGIE

Can we stick to the business, sir?

ASA

What a man is, is business! Lets understand each other. Start over. Start from the beginning if you like.

(pause)

I wanna know why you down here?

REGGIE

I'm a Traynham.

ASA

That's not what I asked.

REGGIE

My mother told me that I'd never have worry about a home as long as the family had the farm. That if I was a Traynham I could always come here.

ASA

When was the last time you were on the farm?

REGGIE

Eighteen ninety five, six maybe.

ASA

Over thirty years ago. You remember me?

REGGIE

I was only remember one reunion.

ASA

I remember you. You sat by yourself playing with your fingers. Your the little boy that used to stand outside my window. Like the other day. Do you want the truth?

REGGIE

What's that?

ASA

You're gonna fail! You here but you'll never leave!

REGGIE

What the hell are you talkin' about, old man? You don't know me!

ASA

Oh, but I do. I'm in your mind. I summonsed you from windy Chicago!

REGGIE

You? Summonsed? What the hell are you talkin' about!

EXT. TRAYNHAM CHURCH YARD - DAY [FLASHBACK]

ASA (V.O.)

Think back to that reunion...

YOUNG REGGIE (5) plays with a BRUSHY MUSTACHE pressing his face against the mustache's hard bristles.

Young Reggie leans as far back as he can, focusing on a FACE as white as the moon.

SAUL TRAYNHAM (90s) glazed eyes, jostles Young Reggie on his knee. The two are at an OAK DESK. Young Reggie watches the SAUL'S BANDAGED HAND scratch a SIGNATURE on VELLUM SHEETS in RED INK.

BACK TO SCENE

REGGIE

I remember a white face with scratchy mustache.

ASA

My father, Saul! It was he who fell in love with a slave! He willed her all of Traynham!

REGGIE

Yes. I was on his lap at a desk...

ASA

Why'd he sign away the farm to a nigger? Ever wonder that? I'll tell you! He wasn't in control of his faculties! She made him! Hung in the corners of his mind cobbling it up with falsehoods!

REGGIE

It sounds to me he did it of his own free will...

ASA (V.O.)

Free will! No one on Traynham has free will! She controls us all!

INT. ASA'S ROOM - NIGHT [FLASHBACK]

Asa is lying in his bed. His breath is labored. We come out of the room, follow downstairs but can see all floors as though a doll's house. Maeve is cleaning knives in the sink.

ELDER (V.O.)

Reggie it's gettin' late. We probably need to go.

REGGIE (V.O.)

Not going without the swap.

ASA (V.O.)

She was thirteen when grandfather brought her from Louisiana...

REGGIE (V.O.)

Maeve?

Maeve stops cleaning. She's heard her name and is now listening intently crooking her head toward the ceiling.

ASA (V.O.)

And he gave her to my father. My grandfather shortly died after. Mysterious illness. I say poisoned. I say she poisoned my father cuz he died the year after. So she went to my brother. My brother married her and when my brother died I married her--my brother's wife!

REGGIE (V.O.)
Why would you marry an old woman?

ASA (V.O.)
She had a grip on our souls! None
of us she loved!

Maeve puts a large knife into her apron. She comes to the bottom of the staircase. She stops. Listens. Then mounts.

ASA (V.O.)
One night I was in my bed. I
couldn't move! Paralyzed! You know
when your body is numb?

REGGIE (V.O.)
Yes.

ASA
I could hear her rattling around
and the kitchen, it was like I
could see through the floor boards.
I could see her gettin' the largest
butcher's knife she could find...

REGGIE (V.O.)
Who?

ASA (V.O.)
That day I had tried to sell
Traynham. What did I know? She'd
made a covenant...a deed dedicated
in our blood!
(pause)
She's at the door--

Maeve stands at the door of Asa's room. She reaches in her apron.

ELDER (V.O.)
Mister Asa, I think that's enough.

BACK TO SCENE

Asa PUSHES FROM THE TABLE, HIS EYES WIDE.

ASA
Then she was on my chest, cutting
off my hand, my forearm, my upper
arm! My whole body! Then she put me
in a pot! A pot! I tried to
scream...but, she snatched my
spirit right out of my body!

(MORE)

ASA (CONT'D)

My soul hung on the ceiling! She said: shut up or I'll turn you into a goat! I kept saying I don't want to be a goat!

BLACK SERVANT

Mister Asa, sir...

ASA

Now look at me walking the south road with the Shepherd. A old goat!

(beat)

It was so peaceful before you came! I had such peaceful goat thoughts!

ELDER

Reggie lets go--

REGGIE

Hold on!

ASA

Why torment me? Just kill me! Don't bring me back here! Ever!

Black Servant settles him back in his wheel chair and wheels Asa from the table.

EXT. PLANTATION HOUSE - FRONT YARD PATH - CONTINUOUS

Reggie and Elder are several yards down the path before they speak.

ELDER

When the Old Man starts talkin' gibberish, you know you've overstayed your welcome.

A GUNSHOT BURST echoes from the plantation house.

REGGIE

What was that!

ELDER

What was what?

REGGIE

Gunshot!--

REGGIE'S POV

TOM TRAYNHAM, in WW1 INFANTRY FATIGUES sprints from the house and across the front yard. His REVOLVER limp in his hand.

BACK TO SCENE

REGGIE

Tom?

Reggie takes off in pursuit.

ELDER

Wait!

Elder grabs him by the arm. Reggie rips his hand away.

EXT. FARM WOODS - NIGHT

Reggie chases Tom into a nest of trees.

REGGIE

Stop!

Tom outstrips Reggie.

EXT. CLEARING - CONTINUOUS

Tom whisks into a flock of grazing sheep. Reggie trails through the flock in hot pursuit.

REGGIE'S POV

Tom sprints over a rise.

BACK TO SCENE

Reggie forces the sheep to make a scant path.

REGGIE

Move! Move!

Reggie reaches the summit face to face with a BLACK RAM. The ram BELLOWS AND CHARGES--SLAMMING Reggie square in the chest and TOPPLING him headlong backwards. At the foot, Reggie STAGGERS to his feet only to be ROCKED and BUTTED into den of BRIARS.

Reggie BLEEDS from a the head.

ELDER POV

Reggie being PITCHED several times by the ram each time Reggie gets to his feet.

BACK TO SCENE

The ram springs over the briars. Elder runs down the hill and lifts Reggie's head.

INT. REVIVAL TENT - NIGHT

Reggie lies on a make shift gurney with a table cloth pulled up to his chin. The ceiling web comes into focus and Reggie realizes he's in the revival tent.

He's peering through one eye. The other is bandaged. His head is wrapped and his arm is in a sling.

Elder is standing over him.

ELDER
Doctor Drew!

DR. DREW (O.S.)
Yes?

DR. DREW (40s) blurs into Reggie's view plane.

Reggie attempts to sit up.

DR. DREW (CONT'D)
How do you feel?

Reggie registers the words but says nothing.

DR. DREW (CONT'D)
You had a concussion. A sprained wrist. You may have cut the cornea of your right eye, but I'm not an optometrist, so I can't be sure.

Reggie takes his arm out of the sling. He slowly rotates his wrist. Winces.

DR. DREW (CONT'D)
You're very lucky Elder found me as soon as he did.

REGGIE
Anybody check the plantation house?

DR. DREW
The plantation house?

REGGIE
You tell him about the gunshots we
heard?

DR. DREW
Gunshots?

REGGIE
Tom Traynham came running out of
the house waving a pistol!

Dr. Drew looks at Elder.

DR. DREW
Somebody's livin' in the old
plantation house?

ELDER
Shouldn't he stay lying down,
doctor?

DR. DREW
I'd say so. Experiencing dizziness?

REGGIE
Not much.

Reggie closes his eye. Wilts to his seat.

DR. DREW
Call me if anything changes.

Dr. Drew opens his split-handle Gladstone and stacks bandages
and stethoscope inside. Reggie sits up.

REGGIE
How long do I need to keep these
bandages on?

DR. DREW
Few days.

REGGIE
Can't preach with them on.

DR. DREW
Preach?

REGGIE

If a preacher looks all scarred
up...it looks like God ain't
protecting him, doc.

DR. DREW

I wouldn't worry about preaching
any.

REGGIE

I got a revival service tonight.

Drew looks at Elder and Reggie.

DR. DREW

Revival? Nobody's comin' to any
revival.

REGGIE

I can still do it--

DR. DREW

Whole town of Brightstar's sick.
Three or four other neighboring
towns too. Dr. Brooks and I have
been up all night tendin' the sick.
Some of those folks say they never
comin' out here. Ever.

Dr. Drew closes his bag. Reggie takes his arm.

REGGIE

Never?

DR. DREW

Never.

REGGIE

What is it?

DR. DREW

I'm not a superstitious man, Mr.
Traynham...but...

REGGIE

Tell me.

DR. DREW

Collective foodborne botulism be my
opinion.

REGGIE

Poisoning?

DR. DREW

Most swore it was intentional and happened here. Intentional. Do you have any idea how this might of happened?

REGGIE

No.

DR. DREW

Strange...

REGGIE

What?

DR. DREW

Never seen so many cases at the same time.

Drew closes his bag.

DR. DREW (CONT'D)

Little advice? Might wanna leave those ewes alone--ram might not understand your intentions!

Drew pushes through the tent flap. Elder guides an envelope in Reggie's palm.

ELDER

A letter came from Chicago.

REGGIE

Its open.

ELDER

That's the way it came. Can you see all right?

REGGIE

I can manage.

He opens it. Familiar hand writing but not Sierra's.

BISHOP PAYNE (V.O.)

Let me make myself perfectly clear: You write Sierra again and I will come down there and shoot you myself! As far as I'm concerned you will never see, hear, touch or scratch your way in a church in Chicago as long as I live! You are the most vile creature to ever slither out of a pulpit!

It goes on--but Reggie can't. He sets the letter down.

ELDER
Everything okay?

REGGIE
I thought I could pastor a church here. Build a town, maybe even a house...a store. Nothin' fancy...

ELDER
Yeah?

REGGIE
I would imagine first few folks would brave up the road. Then a few more. Stay. Build. That's all what was needed, right? To make somethin' of this place. Folks just need a little push.

ELDER
And now?

REGGIE
Don't know. Thought someday I'd bring Liz down. Liz is my wife, you know. I put her through a lot of...shit.
(beat)
Ever since I set foot on Traynham, nothing but a nightmare!

ELDER
Tell you a way to get outta this nightmare?

Reggie looks up at him.

ELDER (CONT'D)
Somebody who'll fix it where you don't need a mill or a church or a tent revival. Nothin'!

REGGIE
Who?

ELDER
Simon Gage!

EXT. GROVE PATH - DAY

Behind the wheel of beautiful BLACK CHRYSLER IMPERIAL E80 lounges OPAL GAGE (18), sleepy-eyed with the pampered air of indolence.

Opal's unalarmed at two Black men emerging from the woods.

ELDER

That's Gage's daughter, Opal.

Reggie walks up to the car. Chauffeured in the back seat is SIMON GAGE (50s) blond, with the whiff of a patrician. His eyes evaluate men as if they are auction house showpieces.

Simon THRUSTS open the back door.

Reggie places his foot on the car's RUNNING BOARD. But, Simon wags his finger.

Reggie back-steps.

A WIRE FOX TERRIER bounds passed Reggie and onto Simon's lap. Simon closes the door behind the bitch.

Simon cranks down the window.

SIMON

Speak through the window.

REGGIE

Sir?

SIMON

Speak through the window.

REGGIE

Reginald Traynham, sir.

SIMON

Simon Gage.

(pause)

I think you owe me something.

REGGIE

Sir?

SIMON

I don't remember you coming to Wiatt and getting a permit for that revival.

Reggie looks at Elder.

SIMON (CONT'D)

In these parts, you black boys need a special permit to preach the gospel. I grant the permits. I'm the fee collector.

REGGIE

Did not know that, sir.

SIMON

Where are you from, boy?

REGGIE

I was born here.

SIMON

But, you're not from here, are you?

REGGIE

Sir?

SIMON

There's a distinction between born and from, wouldn't you agree?

REGGIE

I'm a Traynham if that's what you mean...sir.

SIMON

A Traynham?

REGGIE

Yes, sir, a Traynham.

SIMON

We had a few Traynhams before the war. Seven, eight years ago. One came back, had a lot of notions...European notions, right Elder?

ELDER

Yessir.

SIMON

He was nothin' but trouble! Didn't want to take that damn uniform off. He wanted to start-up a union. Fashioned a preacher, too. Said black folks didn't need to pay permits if white folks didn't.

ELDER

Tom, sir. His name was Tom.

SIMON

Tom! Yes, Tom.

ELDER

You have a good memory, sir.

SIMON

Crazy Tom! Killed a white man. Its those small things that if you let them slip end up big. Slight the permit next thing we know nigger kills a white man!

REGGIE

How much is the permit?

SIMON

How long is this revival gonna run?

REGGIE

Two weeks.

SIMON

Two whole weeks! Now at ten dollars a day including weekends: It'll run you a hundred and forty dollars...I can waive the late fee--it being your first time--but I will have to charge you for the use of the grounds.

REGGIE

Use of the grounds?

SIMON

It wasn't held on the Traynham place?

REGGIE

No...

ELDER

Sir, if I may interrupt. The revival only lasted one night. The rest of the services have been cancelled.

SIMON

Really?

ELDER

All the townspeople got sick.

SIMON

All? Sounds like a plague? She involved?

ELDER

Yes, sir, she was.

REGGIE

Who's she?

SIMON

In that case...two days payment will suffice!

REGGIE

We only held one service!

ELDER

Two days is fine.

SIMON

Opal. Lamb. Can you collect, I don't have my gloves on.

Opal thrusts her hand through the front window. Reggie presses two notes to her limp palm. Simon cranks his window.

SIMON (CONT'D)

Very gracious, Mr. Traynham.

Reggie turns to leave. Simon rolls down the window.

SIMON (CONT'D)

Mr. Traynham! One more thing!

Reggie returns.

SIMON (CONT'D)

Do you realize you're standing with a prophet?

REGGIE

A prophet?

SIMON

Yes, Elder's a prophet!--a minor prophet--but a prophet nonetheless!

(pause)

Elder prophesied that your revival would only last a single day. I'm more fond of his second prophesy--

ELDER
Sir, please!

SIMON
The sheep would be scattered in the
land of Traynham! And the third:
The Prince would possess all the
land!

REGGIE
What the hell are you talking
about?

SIMON
Freedom.

REGGIE
Freedom?

SIMON
Freedom! Right, Elder?

ELDER
Freedom, sir. Yessir.

SIMON
But if you let one go free you got
to put the other to death. Its all
in the bible, right, Mr. Traynham?
Quid pro quo?

REGGIE
Are we done?

SIMON
Remember Elder...she must be
brought to my feet: A foe, a
footstool. Understood?

ELDER
Yessir.

SIMON
Deed done. Not without blood,
Elder, not without blood.

ELDER
Yessir.

Elder slumps away. Reggie grabs Elder's arm.

REGGIE

Wait! Am I getting a receipt for
this special permit? Or chalk it up
to southern hospitality?

Simon seems to come out of his trance. He fixes his eyes on
Reggie. Reggie's gaze doesn't waver from Simon's face.

SIMON

Elder, come to my store tomorrow
and we'll provide you with a
receipt.

ELDER

Yes, sir.

Reggie bows and grins.

Simon rolls up the window. The car backs away.

REGGIE

Does Arkansas attract nothing but
nuts?

ELDER

No. But, we get our fair share.

Reggie sits.

ELDER (CONT'D)

We gotta get back to the farm or
we'll git a scoldin' from Ida!

REGGIE

Yes, Jeremiah the prophet!

Elder helps Reggie to his feet.

INT. FARM HOUSE - NIGHT

Reggie and Elder sit at the table with their heads down. Ida
stands over them.

IDA

A sack of wet leather both of you!
I swear I got the dumbest men
walkin' the face of the earth!

Beat.

IDA (CONT'D)
 You want the church property just
 ask! Don't run behind my back to
 Mister Asa--

REGGIE
 Behind your back? I thought--

IDA
 Because he's a white he owns
everything? And Elder I know you
 know better!

ELDER
 Yes, ma'am.

IDA
 Ain't you supposed be watchin' him?
 Make sure nothin' happens?

ELDER
 Yes, ma'am...

IDA
 I swear does this place attract
 nothin' but nuts?

The men share a look.

IDA (CONT'D)
 Slippin', slidin' and schemin'--
 that's all men do!

ELDER
 Reggie had the idea that swappin'
 the property bestowed with the
 church property wouldn't be a big
 deal. We could rebuild Tom's
 church.

IDA
 And what did Tom say about it?

REGGIE
 Are you talkin' about that ram?

IDA
 Tom did not agree, no siree!

REGGIE
 The ram didn't want the church?

IDA

What don't you understand? He didn't want it! Now what did that ole bastard Simon want?

ELDER

What he always wants.

IDA

Foes on footstools? He must think I'm losin' my grip?

ELDER

You are losing your grip! Simon can sense it! I can sense it!

IDA

You can sense it? Think I'm gonna give up? Die? What then? When Simon's done with this farm--you niggas will have nobody to protect you! And know what he's gonna do?

Ida grabs her back collar and pretends to throw herself out the door.

REGGIE

You poisoned those people?

IDA

What people?

REGGIE

The people at the revival!

IDA

I don't fool with poison. Thia's the poisoner. Knows all the herbs and mushrooms on the farm!

REGGIE

So you knew they'd get sick!

IDA

Sure. Wouldn't kill 'em. Just enough to keep 'em frightful.

(beat)

Anyways, they minds already poisoned. Poisoned for years.

REGGIE

I was tryin' to revive this farm! Those people can bring life to it!

IDA

This land been alive for a hundred
and twenty seven years! Don't need
your revivals!

A clap of thunder erupts in the distance.

IDA (CONT'D)

A hundred and twenty seven years of
toil! Trail of Tears! Slave blood!
I kept the souls alive! Me alone
without a niggas help!

Thunders closer.

IDA (CONT'D)

Moved a thousand unclean spirits by
myself!

REGGIE

Hear that?

ELDER

What?

REGGIE

Thunder!

EXT. FARM HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

White specks dot a perfect sky. Reggie is stunned. No clouds,
no thunder?

He stands paralyzed on the porch until Elder guides him back
into the house.

INT. FARM HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Elder squats Reggie into a chair. Thia, Ida and Maeve veer
above him. When the women speak it is an otherworldly,
measured tone as though from a single voice: Nadie's.

REGGIE

A storm!

THIA (V.O.)

We storm here!

Thia points to his head.

Reggie lifts the bandage from his eye. The eye is a swirling
cloud. Elder's voice echoes.

ELDER (V.O.)
 What you want me to do with him,
 Nadie? His mind is slippin' the way
 Tom's mind slipped!

IDA (V.O.)
 Will the church do? Give him the
 church!

MAEVE (V.O.)
 What do we do about Simon? His clan
 will be here soon!

THIA (V.O.)
 Simon knows we are weak!

REGGIE
 The thunder!

ELDER (V.O.)
 He's slippin'!

IDA (V.O.)
 Have you the covenants? Bring him!
 Bring the covenants!

Elder unbuttons shirt and pulls out a few SQUARES OF VELLUM.

ELDER (V.O.)
 Right cheer! Near my bosom!

The women nod.

REGGIE
 I hear you in my head!

IDA (V.O.)
 Quickly! Quickly!

Thunder RUMBLES.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - NIGHT

Ida, Thia and Maeve stand on the porch. Elder lifts Reggie on his back and runs into the field.

EXT. MEADOW - NIGHT

Elder's scampers across the field Reggie bouncing like a rucksack.

REGGIE'S POV

A black ram darts in the field to his left and a massive boar lopes through the field on his right!

REGGIE
Tom! Pharaoh!

BACK TO SCENE

A squat hut hurtles toward them on a cushion of wind. Reggie recognizes it as Thia's hut.

EXT. HUT - NIGHT

Elder eases Reggie from his back.

REGGIE
Why are we here?

ELDER
You need help and she's the only one who can help you now.

REGGIE
Look. My arm. Healed!

He rotates his wrist.

ELDER
Never mind your arm. The longer you stay in this state, the less likely you'll recover!

NADIE (V.O.)
Bring him in!

REGGIE
Who are you talking to?

Elder flings open the hut door.

INT. HUT - NIGHT

NADIE (80s), her shrunken body wrapped on a wafer of bed. Elder unshoulders Reggie and goes to Nadie's bedside.

ELDER
You wanna sit up?

She waves him off.

NADIE
Bring him closer!

Elder drags Reggie closer. Reggie examines her drab, frail face.

REGGIE
Who are you?
(beat)
Can she understand me?

ELDER
She can understand many languages,
right Nadie?

She unburdens her blanket and creeps to the fire place.
Stokes the embers. Fairies flake up the chimney.

ELDER (CONT'D)
She's an Endoran!

REGGIE
What's an Endoran?

Nadie laughs.

EXT. RURAL HILLSIDE - UNDER AN OAK - DAY [FLASHBACK]

TWO GRINNING WHITE MEN gaze up at two BLACK FEMALE FEET
dangling just out of frame.

The feet grow still for a moment then slowly LIFT OUT OF
FRAME.

Their grins evaporate and the blood drains from their faces.

The white men run HOWLING down the hillside.

ELDER (V.O.)
She's been hung, drowned...

EXT. LAKE - DAY

A GATHERING of seven or eight WHITE MEN AND WOMEN stare out
across a lake as ripples expand.

BUBBLES pop on the surface of the water then cease. They wait
forever. The crowd is satisfied. They turn to leave when...

A YOUNG NADIE (30s) bobs to the surface.

Her eyes open with a POP.

There's bedlam on the shore as the crowd SCATTERS.

ELDER (V.O.)
Burned...shot...stabbed

EXT. BURNING HOUSE - NIGHT

A Cotton Shack is ENGULFED IN FLAME. Parts of the roof WHISTLE to the ground.

Silhouette of Young Nadie, flames at her back, braces herself in the door frame. Then stumbles off the porch.

She gathers to her feet--only to be crumpled by a RIFLE SHOT to the abdomen. After a moment, Young Nadie brushes off and walks toward the men on horseback.

The frame fills with DUST, LEGS, AND HOOVES as we see GALLOPING RIDERS retreat from the homestead.

ELDER (V.O.)
But, my favorite is the bear...

EXT. ARKANSAS TRAIL OF TEARS - NIGHT

FOUR MOUNTED CAVALRY SOLDIERS escort a STRING OF CHEROKEES down a shaggy trail.

Indians notice the Young Nadie reclined on a branch above the caravan. The soldiers pass Nadie undiscovered.

EXT. CAMP - NIGHT

Campfire. A ragged circle of light separates White from Red man.

With a GROWL AND A SHAKE, a BEAR CHARGES at the SOLDIERS. The Soldiers shriek and fumble for their rifles before beating into the woods leaving the Indians to fend alone.

Nadie walks into the fire light, the bear like a shadow, ambles behind her.

The Indians lose their alarm and sup with her.

BACK TO SCENE

Reggie sits quiet processing the stories.

REGGIE
An Endoran is a witch?

NADIE
(soft chuckle)
And a not comely one.

REGGIE
What did she say?

ELDER
She's no longer pretty.

REGGIE
But how did she survive that? The
shootings? The drownings?

ELDER
Hard to explain. Ever hear of
astral projection?

REGGIE
No.

ELDER
Her body can...if there's enough
body left to come back to...can
project the spirit out temporarily.
(pause)
Like leaving a room and leaving the
door open to that room. She can fly
out and if possible fly back in. Do
it to others too!

REGGIE
She can raise the dead?

ELDER
Did I do it justice, Nadie?

She nods.

REGGIE
She's all powerful?

ELDER
Nadie, he thinks you're all
powerful!

NADIE
Spirit-casting takes its toll!

REGGIE
Can you cast my spirit?

She laughs.

ELDER

From man to beast not man to man.
(beat)

There was a time when she'd stretch
across every acre of Traynham.
Every blade of grass. Hear every
noise. She could freeze with a
stare. See through trees. Conjure
the dead. Lot of that vision's
faded now, Nadie?

NADIE

Faded.

ELDER

Remember all them souls clamoring
summer nineteen-nineteen? Out did
yourself casting that summer,
right?

She shrugs.

ELDER (CONT'D)

You know you can't keep him?

(pause)

Reggie has to leave, Nadie! You
can't protect him any longer!

(hesitates)

If he continues in this...strong
delusion...his mind will go! Like
Tom's mind went!

NADIE

He can stay under my wing--

ELDER

It won't due! You know it! Simon
knows it! And Simon's getting
stronger.

Beat.

Nadie goes to the cupboard. Unscrews a TIN. Sprinkles FLAKES
into a bowl. GRINDS with a PESTLE.

She deposits the ingredients into a cup and pours water into
it. Stirs.

NADIE

Drink!

REGGIE
What's this?

NADIE
Flowers, bark, roots. For sleep.

REGGIE
Will I die?

Nadie fixes him with a stare. Reggie sips.

NADIE
My best work is done on a sleeping
mind. Now drink!

Nadie reveals a knife from her apron pocket.

NADIE (CONT'D)
Bring the covenants?

Elder places the vellum sheets on the table.

NADIE (CONT'D)
(to Reggie)
Give me your hand.

He hesitates.

NADIE (CONT'D)
Covenants are dedicated with
blood...

Reggie unclenches. She makes a thin slice in his palm with the knife and turns his hand over blood-letting onto the vellum. She cuts her own hand and repeats.

NADIE (CONT'D)
Now say: the enmity between us is over.

REGGIE
The enmity between us is over. I
thought you were the Traynham
family protector?

Elder laughs.

ELDER
More enemy than protector.

Nadie dries and bandages Reggie's hand.

NADIE

I pursued your father's father and
father's father's father before
him. And on and on. Filthy
chieftains who killed and exiled
us! Bled us from the continent!
Pacts and pogroms! Until there was
but few of us left.

(beat)

I vowed then that none of you would
escape. None! Not even when they
shacked your fathers on slave ships
at Ouidah! We pursued!

Beat.

REGGIE

You came to kill me...kill me...I
have nothing...I can't go back.

Nadie pivots the blade.

NADIE

Elder. Move him over into the
corner. Put something under his
head.

Elder pulls Reggie into a corner.

ELDER

Kill him now?

NADIE

I'll decide the hour of death as is
my right! If you want your freedom,
beast, you'll do as I say.

REGGIE'S POV

BLURRED IMAGE of Nadie with a knife slicing Elder's palm and
dripping the blood. Elder wraps his hand and snatches up the
vellum sheets.

BACK TO SCENE

Reggie's head slumps to his chest.

INT. HUT - NIGHT

We find Reggie hunched in the same corner. A WW1 Trench coat
blankets him. Nadie nestles at his shoulder.

REGGIE
I'm alive?

NADIE
Yes, child?

REGGIE
Elder carried me on his back to
you?

NADIE
Yes.

REGGIE
Why?

NADIE
What's that little fifteen year old
girl you fascinated?

REGGIE
Sierra.

NADIE
Sierra! That's right. I tried to
peel it from your brain, but, you
had it way hidden. You know how I
found you?

REGGIE
No.

NADIE
When your desire was at its peak I
could feel you tingle...tingle as
on an invisible web! Then I knew
you were ready for summonsing!
Struggling like a fly! All I had to
do was wait. Didn't have to hunt
you at all.
(beat)
Then I could sail back to my own
country...
(beat)
But you reminded me so much of--

REGGIE
Tom?

INT. ARMY RECRUITMENT OFFICE - DAY [FLASHBACK]

Tom leans over a desk scratching his signature on a
REGISTRATION CARD.

A bulge of recruits trails behind him awaiting their turn to join the war. Nadie stands unseen next to Tom.

NADIE (V.O.)
Yes, Tom. Sign, Tom.

Tom glances for a familiar face among the throng--someone who might've called his name--but finds none.

EXT. ARMY RECRUITMENT OFFICE - DAY

Ida and Maeve stand outside gripping their handbags. YOUNG THIA (7) BLUBBERS in the back seat of the Ford. Tom strolls by sidestepping the two women. He plunks into the driver's seat.

Nadie stands at the top of the stairs.

EXT. TRENCH - FRANCE - NIGHT

FLARES illuminate Tom putting on boots in a fox hole. A KRAUT and a BLACK DOUGHBOY lie at his feet gripped in death.

Tom slips the COLT PISTOL from the Black man's holster and picks up the bayonet rifle.

He picks up a Bible and shakes the dust off of it. He mumbles a quick prayer and hurls himself out of the fox hole.

EXT. ROAD - DAY [FLASHBACK, ARKANSAS 1919]

ARMY TRUCK CONVOY led by a DAVIDSON ARMORED CAR is parked by the side of the road as several OFFICERS target practice at a large, wild boar near the edge of the woods.

OFFICER'S POV

The boar roots then coolly disappears into the woods.

We recognize one of the officers as Simon E. Gage. The officers return to their vehicles, and convoy moves on.

In an opposite field a SHEPHERDESS NADIE PLUCKS flowers in the tall grass.

Two dozen BLACK SHEEP hug at her heels: stopping when she stops, starting when she starts.

EXT. FIELD - DAY

Now we can see that Shepherdess Nadie is not plucking flowers
BUT STOOPING OVER SLAIN BLACK BODIES lying in the field.

As she whispers GHOSTS LIKE STEAM CONDENSING AND MORPHING
into Nadie's FLOCK.

Nadie buzzes from each body like a bee until sundown.
Finally, she COLLAPSES, her breath labored

EXT. FIELD (SAME) - LATER

A moment later, she is face to face with FIFTEEN WANDERING
BLACK MEN: SHARECROPPER GHOSTS.

SHARECROPPER GHOSTS:
Have you a place we can rest?

NADIE'S POV

Pharaoh emerges out of the forest.

NADIE (V.O.)
Pharaoh!

The beast trundles over. Nadie hand feeds it ACORNS.

NADIE (V.O.)
(to Ghosts)
Rest here all.

Souls PLUNGE INTO PHARAOH'S HIDE.

Pharaoh REELS and BUCKS--BERSERKING into the forest.

BACK TO SCENE

INT. HUT - MORNING

Reggie lifts his head. He watches Nadie move about in small
kitchen.

She's a grandmother putzing.

REGGIE
Swore I died.

NADIE
No.

REGGIE
Had the strangest dream.

NADIE
You'd better hurry if you want to
say goodbye.

REGGIE
Dead men became sheep. Felt so
real.

NADIE
Its only a temporary home for a
restless spirit.
(beat)
Don't dawdle.

REGGIE
My grandmomma used to say that.

Reggie stumbles out of doors into the sunlight.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - DAY

Reggie stands in front of the deserted farm house.

Nadie hobbles up beside him. She hands him a ROLLED SLICKER
and Tom's HAVERSACK.

INT. FARM HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Reggie surveys the kitchen: a graveyard.

He lays out the slicker. He unfolds the uniform in the manner
of a funerary cadaver.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Reggie sits on the front stoop. Nadie beside him.

REGGIE
Thia, Ida, Maeve: Felt so real.

MONTAGE:

INT. FARM HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Now we see instead of Thia, Elder fanning the grease fire.

EXT. ROAD - CEMETERY - DAY

Instead of Ida, Nadie rides along beside Reggie to the water mill.

INT. HUT - NIGHT

Nadie watches a drunk Reggie weigh Shakespeare against the Bible.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - FRONT YARD - DAY

Maeve puts blue bottles on a tree, Thia puts eggs in her apron, Ida hustles the children up the porch steps.

NADIE (V.O.)
 Projections you chose to believe.
 We just filled in the gaps.

CLOSE MONTAGE

REGGIE
 And Simon wants this? A broken down
 farm? A crumbling plantation?

NADIE
 Sometimes its not what people want--
 its what they don't want you to
 have.

REGGIE
 Those Brightstar folk...you
 controlled all their minds?

NADIE
 My mother would say a spider best
 serves a single web. Simon'll find
 out soon enough with his clan. As
 they grow you lose control.

REGGIE
 Like Pharaoh? Too many different
 souls in one body?
 (beat)
 Does a spider ever tangled in her
 web?

NADIE
 Oh yeah.

She lifts her dress and reveals a crisscross of WELTS AND LASH MARKS down her back. Between her breasts are the stain of several BULLET SCARS.

Tears fill her eyes.

Then her eyes roll back. She drops to her knees.

REGGIE

Nadie! Let me get you some water.

NADIE

You don't have much time, child!

REGGIE

You were to kill me, right?

NADIE

When you're gone all will be done.
I freed my familiar and he is now
betraying me to Simon.

REGGIE

Familiar? Elder?

EXT. GAGE'S ANTIQUES - DAY

Elder knocks at the back door. Simon opens it.

SIMON

Elder! My bosom companion. You're
one Colored man that doesn't have
to use the back door.

ELDER

Back door's fine with me, Simon,
sir.

(beat)

She's losing her powers. Rapidly.

SIMON

I know. I can feel it. Give me a
sign.

ELDER

Reggie's delusions are unstable.

SIMON

And his mind is disintegrating?
Perfect.

(pause)

You have the deed? Show me.

Elder opens his jacket. Vellum sheets peek out.

SIMON (CONT'D)
Blood of the lamb!

EXT./INT. GAGE'S ANTIQUES - DAY

Opal leans on the counter fuddling with the cash register. The shop is burdened with overstuffed furniture and bric-a-brac. Tiny veins called aisles snake through the store.

Elder follows Simon to the back office.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Simon sits behind his desk. Elder isn't presumptuous to sit.

SIMON
Let's see the wonderous work!

Elder un-scrolls the vellum and peels off a sheet. Simon turns the paper this way and that.

SIMON (CONT'D)
I'd've loved to see her face when the blood dripped! How'd the old bat look?

ELDER
Fordone.

Elder unpeels another sheet and wags it.

SIMON
That?

ELDER
My freedom.

SIMON
I guess no man can serve two masters.

ELDER
Sir?

SIMON
You have your freedom from her not me!

ELDER
Sir?

SIMON
Bring me her body!

ELDER
But, we agreed--

SIMON
That you put a bullet in her head,
then and shortly after I snatch her
soul!

ELDER
What if I miss? She could kill me!

SIMON
If I don't kill you first! Do you
realize that one ounce of her life
would give me the power to control
a hundred minds! Maybe a thousand!

ELDER
But, she's so weak--

SIMON
Out of her weakness--I will become
strong!

Elder bows and exits.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - DAY

NADIE
It's done. He's ready.

REGGIE
Simon?

NADIE
Simon and the Klan. Be here by
nightfall.
(beat)
Before they come, you take Tom's
pistol and shoot me right between
the eyes--

REGGIE
I'm not gonna do that.

NADIE
I'm a nasty old witch. Would've
killed you given the chance!

REGGIE
Not gonna do it.

NADIE
If he has my power he'll poison
even more minds than I ever have.

REGGIE
I've been wondering why I'm not
dead and I've come to a conclusion
as to why I'm not dead! You know
what I think?

NADIE
There's not time...

REGGIE
I think you can't kill me because I
remind you of what you did to Tom.
How you befogged Tom's mind!

NADIE
I'm tired, Reggie--

REGGIE
And you were jealous!

NADIE
Reggie...if you won't want to kill
me. Can you do me this one favor.

REGGIE
What?

NADIE
Could you shuddup.

REGGIE
No I won't!
(beat)
You got in his mind and tried to
destroy it! What was it!

NADIE
His love...

REGGIE
Not for you--but for his wife!

Nadie's skin is pebbly and thin like a desiccated peel.

NADIE

Since you won't shuddup. Will you
take me to the witness tree? My
soul is ready. Let me unburden it.

EXT. WITNESS TREE - DUSK

Reggie carries Nadie to the tree and eases her to the trunk
base. He unties the rope from his wrist and tugs the black
lamb to him.

NADIE

Bring my black ewe lamb!

REGGIE

C'mon, lamb!

Nadie eyes lose their focus.

NADIE

Tom?

REGGIE

Reggie.

Nadie's voice echoes in Reggie:

NADIE (V.O.)

Tom your mind is like a tangled
cobweb...

TOM

Ida!

Tom in his army uniform is standing by the witness tree. Tom
races toward the farm.

Reggie lowers Nadie and pursues Tom.

INT. FARM HOUSE - DAY

Tom enters the house. Thia, Ida and Maeve are bowed as though
they are in prayer...but, their faces are soaking in soup
bowls. Tom lifts each head and moves the bowls away.

Reggie bolts into the house. He stands at the door watching
Tom examine each body and the anger rise in his face.

Reggie follows Tom to the children's loft, where the children
are TUCKED-IN but MOTIONLESS.

Tom falls on his knees.

TOM
 Why bring me home, God?

Tom reaches into his haversack and pulls out his COLT.

INT. PLANTATION HOUSE - DAY

Asa sits at the dining room table spooning soup. He doesn't notice Tom behind him with a revolver. Reggie stands near Tom.

TOM'S POV

A SPIKED GERMAN PICKELHAUBE crowns Asa's head. Asa continues sipping unaware of the change.

BACK TO SCENE

Tom pulls the trigger.

EXT. WITNESS TREE - DAY

A CROWD OF GHOSTS PASS REGGIE: WHITE MEN GHOSTS marching Tom to the Witness Tree. A THICK MIST GATHERS about the marchers.

As the mist clears, we see the crowd of White Men still marching behind a TOM, a BLACK RAM.

REGGIE
 You know what I don't understand?
 You have all this power and all
 this control. You can peace to
 restless souls, but you never once
 tried to rescue Tom's family. Never
 once found rest for their souls.

NADIE
 Please. My misery.

REGGIE
 Your misery? It was you who just
 let them wander in this country
 with no rest and no place to go!

Nadie weeps.

REGGIE (V.O.)
 Why project these images on my
 conscience--so, I'd see your side?
 Feel sorry for you? I don't!

(MORE)

REGGIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

(pause)

You loved him but to have him you
killed his family?

The ghosts march up to the tree and PASS THROUGH IT.

REGGIE

Did he ever know it was you who
poisoned his family and not Asa?

Reggie looks down at her.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

I'm not the last Traynham am I?
But your the last of your kind?

NADIE

No. There is another. He'll raze
the land rather than let you live
on it.

REGGIE

Simon?

INT. HUT - NIGHT [FLASHBACK]

Blood drips on vellum.

NADIE (V.O.)

Sold!

BACK TO SCENE

REGGIE

You've cursed us with your revenge!
Now tell me how to get the farm
back.

NADIE

There is no farm.

REGGIE

Break the curse?!

NADIE

Once the bond is sealed in blood
its too late.

Reggie bolts up.

NADIE (CONT'D)
Unless you kill me and Simon!
I'm dead already. Take Tom's gun to
Gage's antiques and kill Simon.

REGGIE
I didn't see Tom gun.

NADIE
It was in the Haversack. Elder
must've taken it!

Reggie races off.

INT. WASHROOM - NIGHT

Simon strips off his gloves. He buries his hands in the
sink's murky water. He scrubs and scrubs but the brown never
budges from white flesh: Vitiligo.

EXT. WIATT - MAIN STREET - DUSK

A wrinkle of sunlight retreats along Main Street. Airless
heat ripples shade across open bars and store fronts.

Reggie streaks into this ghost town.

TWO WHITE WOMEN (40s) approach in the opposite direction.
Reggie passes them without acknowledging their presence.

The two white women hush and peer after Reggie.

TWO WHITE WOMEN POV

Reggie enters the front door of SIMON E. GAGE'S OLD
MERCANTILE ANTIQUES, COLLECTIBLES & REAL ESTATE SHOP.

BACK TO SCENE

The two women follow.

INT. GAGE'S ANTIQUES - DUSK

Opal sits at the counter cross-legged, dangling a shoe on one
foot. Reggie stands a few feet inside the store.

REGGIE
I need to see your father.

OPAL
He ain't here.

REGGIE
Do you know where I can find him?

OPAL
He and a group a-guys headed to the
town hall for a meetin'.

Reggie whirls to leave.

OPAL (CONT'D)
Don't think you wanna go there!
Daddy said now they can run every
nigger out of this county!

Opal watches the Two White Women crowd the window. The women's faces register shock.

OPAL (CONT'D)
Weren't you supposed to use the
back door?

REGGIE'S POV

The Two White Women expressions turn to disgust.

BACK TO SCENE

The women bustle off.

Reggie snakes through the furniture and out the back door.

OPAL
Hey! Not through there!

EXT. ROAD - DUSK

Reggie winds his way through brush and around trees.

EXT. WITNESS TREE - DUSK

Reggie falls next to Nadie's body.

REGGIE
Nadie!

Her mouth opens.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

Nadie!

NADIE

They're here now? Take this.

She fumbles a trinket into his palm.

REGGIE

Thought this was for show?

NADIE

It is.

She puts it around his neck. She presses her fingers at his temples.

NADIE (CONT'D)

I need the lamb. Fetch the lamb--

REGGIE

Its already here!

Reggie tugs the rope.

NADIE

Yes...I'd forgotten...

She presses her fingers to lambs head.

NADIE (CONT'D)

Azazel, my bright ewe lamb...Atone my spirit...

She takes Reggie's hand.

NADIE (CONT'D)

And let the curse be lifted from this place.

She slouches back. Her apparition TWISTS like candle flame and alights on the lamb.

Nadie's body is motionless.

REGGIE

I can hear the trucks on the south road! Nadie! The trucks!

Reggie sprints off.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - DUSK

Ike's car is parked in front. Waddle is looking around the house.

Reggie bounds up out of breath.

WADDLE

Shit, preacher, been lookin' all over for you.

REGGIE

What are you guys doin' here!

WADDLE

Came from Memphis. Got a letter. Wrote but didn't hear back. Thought we'd drop by and see what's up 'fore we left for Chi-town!

REGGIE

Get in the car!

WADDLE

Thin's still up at the plantation lookin' for you.

REGGIE

Klan goin' be here any minute!

WADDLE

Klan? Ain't seen no Klan! Reg!

Reggie doesn't answer. He's lookin' over the rooftop at FLOATING SHEBA!

REGGIE

Sheba?

WADDLE

Sheba? Who the hell is Sheba? Man, you okay?

Reggie chases the floating cow like a child an escaped balloon.

EXT. WOODS - DUSK

Reggie dashes through the woods following the vision. The floating cow hovers.

Reggie comes out of his trance. He stares at a copse of trees.

REGGIE
There you are!

EXT. WITNESS TREE - DUSK

Reggie tugs Sheba to the witness tree, but Nadie's body is gone.

He searches around the tree. On a nearby hilltop--Black Ram Tom appears. Behind Black Ram Tom are TROOPS OF BLACK SHEEP.

BLACK RAM TOM (V.O.)
Company, mark time, march! A-
company halt!
(to Reggie)
All present and accounted for, sir!

Reggie stares at the ram. Then turns.

REGGIE
Sheba!

Sheba looks at him.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
Find Pharaoh!

Sheba gallops off.

EXT. SOUTH ROAD - DUSK

Two KLAN TRUCKS barrel down the tree lined road, suddenly, the truck is flanked by Black Ram Tom charging from the hill. Tom is stride for stride alongside the lead truck.

Uncorked, the BLACK SHEEP FLOCK spills in from both sides of the road.

Tom bears in on the lead truck causing the truck to slam on the brakes. The driver narrowly misses Tom, but not the tree.

The second truck smashes into the first.

KLAN MEMBERS are spat from the truck beds into the road.

Possessed sheep snarl and plunge at them, knocking some to the ground, kicking and ramming others, bloodying and shredding their robes.

In confusion, panicked Klansmen break for the woods. Some climb back into their trucks and cower in the beds. But, sheep warriors press the attack.

Some Klansmen gain composure, remembering their rifles, and fire indiscriminately into the dense black cloud. Men and sheep fall. BLEATING COMMINGLES WITH SCREAMS before all who can flee do flee.

EXT. SOUTH ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Simon's headlights illuminate animated melee of man versus sheep. Opal brakes in bewilderment. Simon rushes onto the road.

SIMON

Get those got damn things off the road!

Simon gets back in the car.

SIMON (CONT'D)

Drive on, lamb. Opal drive!--

SIMON'S POV

Elder staggers onto the roadway. BLOOD DRIPS from what's left of Elder's face. FLESH HANGS from the jawbone.

He stumbles forward, his hand SMEARING BLOOD on Simon's hood. Opal puts the car in reverse and Elder face plants the road.

As Elder gains his footing, Pharaoh SMASHES into him-- TRAMPLING and STAMPING him under hoof.

Several STRAY KLANSMEN pelt gunshot into Pharaoh with their rifles.

Pharaoh absorbs the shot shielding the fire from Reggie.

BACK TO SCENE

Reggie emerges from Pharaoh's cover, yanks open Elder's jacket and retrieves the COLT.

Pharaoh retreats into the woods. Simon watches as the TREES SHAKE AND THE BRANCHES TREMBLE. The monster ERUPTS AT SIMON'S FLANK.

Simon scrambles to get out of the car.

EXT. ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Pharaoh BARRELS INTO THE SIDEDOOR SMASH-BUTTING A SERIES OF DENTS. Finally the car OVERTURNS.

The overturned SPINS like a helpless turtle on its back.

SPARKS FLY. Until a whoosh of flame crackles along the chassis underbelly.

More shattered glass and blood as we see Simon crawl through a crushed window.

Simon reaches and reaches, twisting an arm through the window. Then the other hand crooks out clutching the vellum contracts.

The vellum catches fire.

Simon tries to snuff the flames by beating the sheets in the dust.

Reggie raises the pistol and runs toward Simon's car. The car EXPLODES sending SHARDS OF DEBRIS WHISTLE through the air.

Reggie walks up to the burning wreck.

Simon's face is a TORMENTED MASK OF FLESH.

SIMON
Bring me a goat.

REGGIE
So you can escape?

The fire grows in Simon's eyes.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
You can go to hell with the body
you're wearing!

Reggie raises and the gun and aims for the center of Simon's forehead.

EXT. SOUTH ROAD - DAWN

Pharaoh lies bleeding and laboring to breathe. Reggie lies beside the beast, stroking and consoling him.

Reggie surveys the string of sheep carcasses.

Sunlight reveals the strained, lost looks of BLACK MEN AND BLACK WOMEN GHOSTS hovering above slain sheep.

PHARAOH MOANS AND EXHALES. One by one, a string of BLACK MEN ESCAPE Pharaoh's carcass.

Reggie watches as the remaining ghosts form columns and shuffle along the road: a dusty portrait of convicted men awaiting mob justice unaware that DEATH has already come.

The ghosts stare back at Reggie. Expectant. Sunrays erase these spirits until their contours disappear.

Black Ram Tom files the remaining flock into the cool forest.

EXT. CEMETARY - DAY

Reggie stands over tombstone. He places a WREATH AND Tom's PORTRAIT on the marker. He takes Nadie's necklace out of his pocket. He bobs it in his hand but decides not to put it on the headstone.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - DAY

Waddle and Thin load instruments into the Ford. Ike takes Reggie by the arm.

IKE

Sure you don't need nothin'.

REGGIE

Nothin'.

Reggie digs in his pockets and peels off a few bills and puts them in Ike's coat.

IKE

What you doin'? Man, we can't take that. You need to take care of yo family.

REGGIE

I am takin' care of my family.

They hug.

IKE

We gonna miss you, preacher. Shoulda heard Thin croak out yo songs!

REGGIE
 I can just imagine!
 (pause)
 Wanna see y'all down here...make
 Traynham part of the tour!

Waddle presses the HORN.

IKE
 I'm comin'! Take care preacher man!

Reggie waves. The band moves on.

Another car pulls along Ike's car, window to window, but headed in the opposite direction. After the exchange, Ike's Ford recedes while the other car continue up the drive path.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

LIZ TRAYNHAM (28), Black female with stressed but delicate features, features weathered by conjugal disappointment.

The car pulls in front of the farm house.

REGGIE
 Honey!

Reggie rushes to the driver's side door. He attempts to kiss Liz, but she rewards him with a snap of the head and a peck on the cheek.

Liz steps out of the car. She walks passed Reggie.

Liz opens the sedan's back door and SIERRA PAYNE (15), pops up from her lying position in the back seat.

LIZ
 Her father kicked her out. She had
 no place to go so she came to me.

Sierra slides out of her seat and squints.

She's full term.

Reggie notices that Sierra's standing in the same spot Thia stood. And wearing the same dress.

FADE OUT.