

SOUTHERN COMFORT

written by

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FADE IN:

INT. NIGHT OWL BAR - TRIBUNE CO. - NIGHT

The bar is a dimly lit and well kept little dive, the town hot spot. Country music is playing on the jukebox. The beautiful and always elegant MRS. SUZANNA MAE (25), sits alone at a table nursing a martini. She fans herself from the intense summer heat.

Annoyed by the lack of attention being paid to her, Mrs. Mae sashays onto the dance floor and dances alone. She draws the eye of the young and ruggedly handsome ROWDY GOODWRENCH (21), a blue jeans, white t-shirt and cowboy boots kind of guy.

They exchange flirtatious glances. Rowdy finishes his beer and joins Mrs. Mae on the dance floor. They share a long seductive dance. The patrons look on discreetly. Rowdy dips Mrs. Mae just as her husband, the stoic and reserved REVEREND RAY JAMES (40), walks up.

MRS. MAE

Hey sugar.

Rowdy brings her back up, their arms still wrapped around one another.

MRS. MAE (CONT'D)

Whew! That martini went straight to my head. Honey, this is my new friend...

ROWDY

Rowdy, Rowdy Goodwrench.

MRS. MAE

Nice to meet you, Rowdy. This is the Reverend Ray James, my husband.

Surprised, Rowdy slides his hand from around Mrs. Mae's waist. He tips his hat to the Reverend.

ROWDY

Reverend.

MRS. MAE

He's the Reverend at the Baptist Church on Old Mill Road. Do you go to church, Rowdy?

ROWDY

No ma'am. Me and the Lord don't have much in common these days.

REVEREND

That's too bad.

ROWDY

Say, I thought reverends couldn't get married.

MRS. MAE

If they can't then we're in a whole lot of trouble.

Mrs. Mae and Rowdy laugh. The Reverend does not.

REVEREND

(to Mrs. Mae)

We should be going.

MRS. MAE

Nonsense. I haven't finished my drink.

She takes another sip of her martini.

REVEREND

I haven't seen you around here before, Mr. Goodwrench.

ROWDY

I'm from Baldwin.

MRS. MAE

What do you do in Baldwin?

ROWDY

I work at a gas station.

MRS. MAE

You work on cars, do you, Rowdy?

ROWDY

Yes ma'am. I do mechanical work, bodywork, paint jobs, even some upholstery. I did a complete overhaul on a '78 Mustang a few months back. Now, it looks and runs like brand new.

REVEREND

You're quite a ways from Baldwin. Are you here on business?

ROWDY
 (looking at
 Mrs. Mae)
 No business. Just pleasure.

REVEREND
 Susan, it's time to go.

MRS. MAE
 (sarcastically)
 But daddy, my curfew isn't until
 midnight. I have a few hours left.

REVEREND
 Now!

MRS. MAE
 Well, Rowdy, thank you for the
 dance. Maybe one day we'll get a
 chance to finish it.

ROWDY
 Yes ma'am.

She finishes her martini. She and Rowdy sneak one last
 glance before she leaves.

Rowdy walks over to the bar.

ROWDY
 Another beer please.

The BARTENDER (50's), serves him another beer.

BARTENDER
 A bit of advice, son, forget about
 her.

He takes a swig of his beer.

INT. MAE HOUSE - LATER

The house is a beautiful two-story mansion.

Mrs. Mae storms inside, followed by the Reverend.

MRS. MAE
 How dare you. Embarrassing me like
 that in front of all those people.
 Ordering me out like I was your
 child. I am your wife...

She fixes herself a drink.

REVEREND

Why don't you start acting like it. Hanging out in bars all night long. Flaunting yourself in front of every man who'll look at you. You ought to be ashamed. I told you to stay from down there anyway. All that drinking and propositioning going on. That's the devil's ground!

MRS. MAE

And I was dancing with him and having a good time!

She gulps down her drink. She fixes another one.

REVEREND

Susan, that's the last time I'm dragging you from down there!

MRS. MAE

Good. I'll be able to enjoy myself now without any interruptions.

Mrs. Mae tries to take another drink.

REVEREND

You've had enough.

He grabs her arm, stopping her. Her drink spills.

MRS. MAE

See what you made me do! Let go of me!

She yanks her arm away. She grabs the liquor bottle and tries to take a swig. The Reverend grabs the bottle.

REVEREND

I said that's enough!

He starts emptying all of the alcohol bottles.

MRS. MAE

No! Ray, stop it! Stop!

REVEREND

Is being married to me so bad that you have to get loaded up every day just to get through it? Huh?

MRS. MAE

No, of course not.

REVEREND

Then what, Susan? What is going on here?

MRS. MAE

We've always had a tumultuous relationship. It's what keeps us spirited.

REVEREND

No!

(holding up a
bottle)

This is what keeps you spirited. This here bottle of 40 proof, your crutch. Since we've been married, I haven't seen you once without a glass of liquor strapped to your lips!

MRS. MAE

I'm surprised you noticed...
(under her
breath)
since you're never here.

REVEREND

What was that?

MRS. MAE

I said, you're never here! You're always either gone out of town on some mission of mercy, always too busy to spend time with me. I get lonely and I need someone, something to comfort me. All right!

REVEREND

Susan, the only thing you find at the bottom of a bottle is your reflection and a hangover.

She sighs and looks away.

REVEREND (CONT'D)

You knew what marrying me would entail, my lifestyle, my work, the reputation I've built up and need to maintain. What people must think of me when they see you gallivanting around to these kind of places, in these flimsy little dresses, acting like a... like a...

MRS. MAE

Like a what?

REVEREND

Like an unmarried woman!

She bolts upstairs.

REVEREND

Susan, come back here. We're not done with this!

MRS. MAE

I am!

REVEREND

Susan!

INT. GAS STATION - BALDWIN CO. - SUNDAY MORNING

In the middle of nowhere, is this run-of-the-mill little gas station/convenience store. There is a small room in the back that Rowdy calls home.

Rowdy's going over some paperwork. A car drives up. The driver honks a few times.

ROWDY

I'll be with you in a minute!

The driver honks again.

ROWDY (CONT'D)

Keep your pants on! I'll get to you in a minute!

The driver honks again. Rowdy storms out.

EXT. GAS STATION - BALDWIN CO. - SAME

ROWDY (CONT'D)

Dag gummit! Are you deaf? I said...

He sees Mrs. Mae smiling at him. Rowdy quickly cools off and walks over to her with a smirk on his face.

MRS. MAE

Is that the way you talk to all your customers? No wonder the place is empty.

ROWDY

Well if heaven didn't send me an angel... What brings you way out here?

MRS. MAE

(looking around
the empty lot)

Thought you could use some business.

ROWDY

(leaning in)

I'm listening.

MRS. MAE

I've been wanting some work done on my car since forever. So, when you told me this was your line of work, I thought I'd give you a try. So, here I am.

ROWDY

Yes indeed.

(looking car
over)

Buick Skylark, 1953. Pretty.

MRS. MAE

It belonged to daddy.

ROWDY

Did you have work done on it before?

MRS. MAE

He had it redone. Everything in white, his favorite color. White cars. White suits. White house. White carpet. He was pristine that way. This was his first car. Momma said when he was 18, he held down three jobs to earn enough money to buy it. Momma said they hardly saw each other for a whole year because he was so busy working. She said he was so proud when he got it. He immediately came to pick her up in it, and they drove all around town honking at everybody with daddy yelling, "Look at my new car!" Momma said they almost got arrested that day. Out of all the cars he had, this one was his favorite. When I was a

(MORE)

MRS. MAE (CONT'D)
little girl, he use to always say,
"One of these days, I'm going to
fix this car up and give it to my
little princess." That was his
nickname for me. He never got
around to it. I promised myself
that I'd do it for him. So, Mr.
Goodwrench, do you think you can
handle it?

ROWDY
I can handle anything.

MRS. MAE
I bet.

ROWDY
So, are you going to fix it up and
sell it? You could get about 40...

MRS. MAE
Heavens no! If I sold this car
daddy would come back and drag me
over to the other side. This is a
special car. It's an antique, you
know.

ROWDY
I know.

MRS. MAE
To be handled by only the most
delicate of hands. I don't let
just anybody under my hood.

ROWDY
I bet.

MRS. MAE
The way you held me when we danced
last Friday night, so close, so
gentle. The way you glided me
across the floor, so smooth. And,
when we dipped, oh! You sure can
dip good. I'm getting chills up
and down my spine just thinking
about it. Yes, so masculine and
suave. I knew right then and there
you were the one.

A MAN pulls into the station. He sounds the horn a few
times. Rowdy gestures for the man to wait.

ROWDY

The one what?

MRS. MAE

The one I want under my hood.

The man honks again.

MAN (O. S.)

Can I get some service here! I'm
in a hurry!

ROWDY

Hold that thought.

He walks over to the man. Mrs. Mae watches on from her rear view mirror as the conversation between the two turns hostile. Rowdy grabs the man by the collar and pulls him out of the car. He shoves his face up to a sign. He lets him go and tries to straighten him back up. The man pushes Rowdy away. The man pumps his gas.

Rowdy walks back over to Mrs. Mae.

ROWDY

Now, where were we?

MRS. MAE

You were about to get under my
hood.

ROWDY

Yes indeed. What exactly do you
need done?

MAN (O. S.)

Come here for a little service and
I get assaulted!

MRS. MAE

Everything.

MAN (O. S.)

No wonder this place is always
empty. If you don't know how to
treat your customers then you
shouldn't be running a business!

MRS. MAE

Why don't you just fiddle around
under there until I tell you to
stop.

MAN (O. S.)
You need to learn some damn
respect...

ROWDY
All right, that's enough out of
you! Get off my lot! I said get!

He jumps in his car and speeds off.

MAN (O. S.)
Jerk!

They share a laugh. Rowdy slides his hand inside the car and
pops the hood. He slides his hand back out.

MRS. MAE
I love a man with a slow hand.

He lifts the hood and plunders around.

ROWDY
Let's see what we got here. Hmmm.
Well for starters, your radiator's
overheated. Start her up.

After a few cranks, the car starts.

ROWDY (CONT'D)
New starter. Turn your steering
wheel.

It makes a loud squeaking sound. She drives it forward and
hits the brakes, which also make a loud squeaking sound.

ROWDY (CONT'D)
That doesn't sound good.

MRS. MAE
Look underneath.

Rowdy gets on his hands and knees and looks under the car.

ROWDY
Oil's leaking. Tires are worn.

He gets up and dusts himself off.

ROWDY (CONT'D)
You weren't kidding when you said
everything. How did this thing
make it up here?

MRS. MAE
I told you it was special.

ROWDY
Do you want a complete overhaul?

MRS. MAE
I want everything all shiny and new.

ROWDY
Okay. I'll get you some water for that radiator.

Mrs. Mae is lost in thought as she studies his masculine physique walk past her. Rowdy takes notice.

ROWDY
This is a big job. It's gonna take a few months. It's gonna cost you a lot of money too.

Rowdy peaks around the hood and sees Mrs. Mae still gazing at him. He tweaks some wires and the horn goes off, startling Mrs. Mae.

ROWDY
I'm finished.

MRS. MAE
It'll get me back to Tribune?

ROWDY
Well, it got you here. I reckon it'll get you back. This'll be the last ride I take in it, though, until it gets fixed.

He puts the hood down and walks over to her.

MRS. MAE
I'll have it here tomorrow morning. You can start on it then.

ROWDY
All right. Hey, why aren't you in church? Sunday morning. The preacher's wife. Shouldn't you be there singing hymns, clapping your hands and stomping your feet? Heck, one would think you'd be up there leading the pack.

MRS. MAE

(under her
breath)

The pack of what? See you
tomorrow.

She tries to crank the car. Third times the charm. She
drives off.

ROWDY

I'll take a ride down in a few in
case it stops in the middle of the
road!

Mrs. Mae honks at him. He laughs.

INT. CHURCH - TRIBUNE - LATER

Church is in session. Mrs. Mae is seated in her usual spot,
front row, center aisle.

REVEREND

Alcoholism and drug addiction
aren't diseases. I don't care what
the government tries to sell you.
If you don't pour a bottle of
vodka down your throat, guess
what? You won't become an
alcoholic. If you don't snort coke
up your nose, guess what? You
won't become a drug addict. Cancer
is a disease. Diabetes is a
disease. You don't snort cancer up
your nose. You don't pour diabetes
down your throat. Because so many
people, millions of people,
succumb to these addictions, we
want to dignify them by labeling
them diseases. Folks, alcoholism
and drug addiction are not
diseases. They are weaknesses,
they are temptations, they are
sins. And the only way to
strengthen your weaknesses, to
ward off your temptations, to
repent your sins, is to walk with
the Lord. Never let him out of
your sight. Never leave his side.

PEOPLE

Amen!

REVEREND

Take care and I'll see you all
next Sunday morning.

The PEOPLE file out.

MAN

Good service, Reverend.

REVEREND

You can't go wrong preaching the
words of the Lord.

Mrs. Mae gets up to leave.

REVEREND

Susan. May I speak with you,
please.

She walks up to him, his head buried in paperwork.

REVEREND (CONT'D)

It doesn't look good when the
Reverend's wife is late to his
church service. Where were you?

MRS. MAE

I finally found someone who can
fix up daddy's car.

REVEREND

And this couldn't wait until after
the service?

MRS. MAE

You know how I get when
something's preying on my mind.

REVEREND

Yeah, and this someone who can fix
it is the disco dancer, I presume.

MRS. MAE

His name is Rowdy Goodwrench. He
says that he can do it, so I'm
going to let him.

REVEREND

Um hum.

MRS. MAE

He does manage that filling
station on Siler Road. It has a
garage in back.

REVEREND

You just make sure that your gas tank is the only thing that he's filling up.

Mrs. Mae gasps. She storms out.

EXT. CHURCH - SAME

Some of the people, lead by "the mouth of the south" MS. EDIE COLLINS (40's), are socializing.

MS. COLLINS

You should have seen the way she was dancing with that boy. Pressed all up against each other. Arms all around each other. They were wrapped up so tight you could've slid them underneath a Christmas tree. Thank goodness the Reverend came in and dragged her out.

WOMAN 2

A married woman messing around like that.

WOMAN 3

Married to a Reverend no less. She's sinning right there with the Lord watching.

MS. COLLINS

He better keep an eye on her.

WOMAN 2

He better keep both eyes on her, 'cause she'll sneak around the one.

WOMAN 3

Shh. Here she comes.
(to Mrs. Mae)
Hey, Mrs. Mae.

Mrs. Mae, still steaming, does not slow down.

MRS. MAE

Ladies. Who are you cutting up this morning?

WOMAN 2

(nervously)
Why, nobody, Mrs. Mae.

WOMEN

Goodbye, Mrs. Mae.

She stops at her car. She spots Rowdy gazing at her from across the street. Holding his gaze, she doesn't realize that the Reverend has arrived. He steps in front of her, breaking her gaze. He opens the door for her. She gets inside.

He gets in and they drive off.

INT. CAR - SAME

Mrs. Mae spies Rowdy following them from her side mirror.

EXT. MAE HOUSE - LATER

They pull into the driveway. Mrs. Mae watches Rowdy drive past. She is not pleased.

INT. MAE HOUSE - LATER

The Reverend reads the newspaper as he relaxes on the sofa. Mrs. Mae is in the kitchen fixing brunch.

REVEREND

What's he charging to fix it?

MRS. MAE (O. S.)

I didn't ask.

REVEREND

He should've at least given you an estimate.

She brings in the coffee.

REVEREND (CONT'D)

Thank you. There's a lot wrong with that car. Everything under the hood is...

MRS. MAE

I know. Rowdy already told me.

REVEREND

Okay. Well, I'll tell you something that he didn't. Parts and labor, fully restored, we're talking ten to fifteen thousand dollars. That car is not worth that much trouble.

MRS. MAE

I don't care if it costs and arm a leg. I'm taking it in tomorrow morning.

The Reverend sighs.

REVEREND

I'm sure dollar signs are already dancing in his head.

MRS. MAE

What?

REVEREND

You should let me bring it in.

MRS. MAE

He's a 21-year-old gas station attendant. I think I can handle him.

She goes back into the kitchen.

REVEREND

No matter. This guy seems a little shady to me.

MRS. MAE (O. S.)

Based on what?

REVEREND

He was flirting with you right in front of me, and you let him. You were trying to make me jealous. I don't know what Mr. Goodwrench's agenda was, is.

MRS. MAE (O. S.)

Maybe you should stop being so paranoid.

Mrs. Mae walks back into the room with the croissants.

REVEREND

Maybe you should keep both eyes open and looking out for Mr. Goodbar.

MRS. MAE

Wrench.

REVEREND

Whatever. Pass the butter, please.

MRS. MAE

The doctor told you to watch your cholesterol.

REVEREND

A little bit's not going to kill me.

The phone rings.

REVEREND (CONT'D)

I'll get it. Hello, Alex. How are you?

(pause)

Is he all right?

(pause)

Yeah, I can fill in for him.

He takes notes. Mrs. Mae sighs.

REVEREND (CONT'D)

I'll meet you there in about half an hour. All right. Goodbye.

He hangs up.

REVEREND (CONT'D)

Bill was in a car accident.

MRS. MAE

Oh my God. Is he all right?

REVEREND

He has a broken leg and a concussion, which means that he won't be able to make the convention this week.

MRS. MAE

And, you will have to fill in for him.

REVEREND

Well, honey, the Lord's work is never done.

MRS. MAE

Neither is yours.

REVEREND

I have to meet up with Alex in a bit so that he can brief me. Why don't you come with me to New Orleans?

MRS. MAE

So I can watch you work? I get my fill of that here.

REVEREND

I do feel bad leaving you here alone so much. You use to socialize with some of the women in town.

MRS. MAE

Those cackling hens?

REVEREND

Maybe you should take up a hobby, join a club or something.

MRS. MAE

Yeah. I could join one of those old woman's clubs and read a book every month.

REVEREND

Whatever you want to do. 'Cause you here all day with nothing to do, you're mind's going to wander. Then, you're going to wander. Then I'm going to worry. Pass me the cream, please.

MRS. MAE

You're just itching for a heart attack, aren't you?

INT. BEDROOM - MAE HOUSE - LATER THAT NIGHT

Mrs. Mae awakens and begins kissing the Reverend on the neck. He wakes up.

REVEREND

Honey, I told you no hanky panky on a Sunday.

MRS. MAE

It's 12:00 a.m., Monday.

Mrs. Mae grabs him and kisses him passionately.

MRS. MAE (CONT'D)

I think it's time we start working on that family we keep talking about.

REVEREND

That you keep talking about. I told you that I'm not ready.

MRS. MAE

If we wait until you're ready, the kid will come out with a mustache and a head full of hair.

REVEREND

You're just being silly now.

MRS. MAE

I'm not being silly! I waited until you finished divinity school. You wanted a long engagement. You wanted a small wedding. Now, you want to wait a few years to have kids. Our whole relationship has been on your terms. When do I get what I want for a change?

She turns away from him in a huff. He cuddles her.

REVEREND

Sweetheart, I appreciate your support and patience through all of this. And, I know how much you want to have a baby, but we agreed to wait until it was a good time for the both of us. You know how busy I've been, especially this past year, traveling all the time.

Mrs. Mae sighs. He turns her around to face him.

REVEREND (CONT'D)

I promise I'll start slowing down.

He tries to kiss her. She pulls away.

MRS. MAE

When?

REVEREND

Soon.

He tries to kiss her again. Again, she pulls away.

MRS. MAE

When?

REVEREND

You know I want to run for
President of the Southern Baptist
League later this year, so...

She sighs.

REVEREND (CONT'D)

Okay, the beginning of the year.

She lays a hot kiss on him then gets out of bed.

REVEREND

Where are you going?

MRS. MAE

I'll be in the room across the
hall, until the beginning of the
year. Goodnight.

REVEREND

Susan!

EXT. GAS STATION - NEXT MORNING

Rowdy is dozing in a chair. Mrs. Mae speeds into the
station, stopping only a few feet away from him. Startled,
he falls out of the chair as he tries to get out of the way.

She storms out of the truck.

ROWDY

Hey lady! What are you trying to
do, kill me?

She stands over Rowdy as he lay on the ground.

MRS. MAE

I darn well should! Don't you ever
follow me again, to my house, with
my husband in the car! Are you
crazy?

Rowdy gets up and brushes himself off.

ROWDY

Ou, wee! Who lit you on fire this
morning?

MRS. MAE

You've got some nerve! What if he
had seen you?

ROWDY

So, what if he had?

MRS. MAE

He might've gotten the wrong idea.

ROWDY

And what idea might he get?

MRS. MAE

Don't you play dumb with me.
 Didn't your daddy ever tell you
 that it's not polite for a
 gentleman to follow a lady home
 without permission?

ROWDY

Who said anything about me being a
 gentleman?

Mrs. Mae huffs and puffs and shoots Rowdy an angry glare.

ROWDY (CONT'D)

All right. I'm sorry if I made you
 feel uncomfortable. The next time
 I follow you home, I'll make sure
 the Reverend ain't around.

MRS. MAE

(her demeanor
 softening)

I brought the car.

It's hitched to the back of the truck. She tosses him the
 keys. Rowdy parks it in the garage and goes to work on it.

MRS. MAE (CONT'D)

Sorry I almost ran you over.

ROWDY

Let's just say, you owe me one,
 and I always collect.

Mrs. Mae sits in her truck, door open, legs crossed and
 dangling out.

ROWDY (CONT'D)

Tell me something. How does a
 young, beautiful, fiery woman like
 yourself end up getting hitched to
 a middle-aged Reverend? Did he
 brainwash you with all of that
 holy talk. "You've been a naughty,
 naughty woman, and only I can save
 your soul." Have you speaking in
 tongues and stuff?

MRS. MAE
That's not very nice.

ROWDY
Sorry.

MRS. MAE
You're not much for religion, are you?

ROWDY
Like I said earlier, the Lord and I just don't have much in common these days.

MRS. MAE
So, you're an atheist.

ROWDY
Would you think twice about me if I was?

MRS. MAE
Mr. Goodwrench, I'm thinking twice about you already.

MRS. MAE (CONT'D)
So, what do you believe in?

He gives her a mischievous grin.

MRS. MAE (CONT'D)
Ah, trouble.

ROWDY
Since you know the answer, the question is, am I looking in the right place?

MRS. MAE
You didn't answer my question.

ROWDY
What do I believe in. Let's see. I believe in living life to its fullest. You know, good liquor, good music, fast cars and even faster women.

MRS. MAE
Ah, the good life, according to Rowdy Goodwrench. No offense, Mr. Goodwrench, but some of us are a little more complicated than that.

ROWDY

Life's as complicated as you make it.

(pause)

How come you don't go by the Reverend's last name?

MRS. MAE

Daddy told me to keep my last name when I get married. He always said, "You are a Mae. Let everybody know it and be proud of it."

ROWDY

And the Reverend's happy about that?

MRS. MAE

No, but I told him to get use to it.

ROWDY

Ooh, a strong woman. I like strong women.

Rowdy walks up to Mrs. Mae. He looks her over.

ROWDY (CONT'D)

So, you and the Reverend live in that big white house. Biggest house I ever saw. Nice new truck here. That Mercedes and I believe I saw a white Cadillac in the driveway too, when I followed you home. Not to mention, every time I see you, you're wearing a fancy dress, and I know this...

(holding up her hand)

doorknob on your finger didn't come out no box of cracker jacks. Has the good Reverend been dipping his hands into them collection plates?

MRS. MAE

You're just full of cynicism, aren't you?

ROWDY

So what then? Did you win the lottery?

MRS. MAE

No. Daddy left it to me.

ROWDY

Daddy left it to you. You keep talking about daddy this and daddy that. Just who was your daddy?

MRS. MAE

Don't tell me you never heard of Big Daddy Mae?

ROWDY

(pondering)

Big Daddy Mae? Big Daddy. Big Daddy... Willie Mae?

MRS. MAE

The one and only.

ROWDY

You're Big Daddy's daughter?

MRS. MAE

Yes.

ROWDY

No kidding! I didn't even know Big Daddy had a daughter.

MRS. MAE

That's because he wanted to hide me from the likes of you.

ROWDY

Well, I'll be dog gone. Big Daddy Willie Mae. How long's it been?

MRS. MAE

Almost seven years.

ROWDY

He was my hero. Hell, every kid in the neighborhood wanted to grow up to be like Big Daddy. He used to roll into town in that big white Cadillac, with the top down and throw candy to all us kids every Saturday afternoon. He would buy toys for all of us at Christmas time, too. He was like Santa Clause.

MRS. MAE
Daddy was very generous.

ROWDY
Yes, he was.
(pause)
Wait a minute. That big white
Cadillac in your driveway... Don't
tell me that...

MRS. MAE
That's the one.

ROWDY
Dog gone! I can't believe it! Big
Daddy was on the tip of
everybody's tongue back in the
day. Everybody loved him. It's
like he was Jesus or something.
Momma said he was the richest man
in the whole state. Was he?

MRS. MAE
Maybe.

ROWDY
Are we talking hundreds of
thousands or millions?

MRS. MAE
Yes.

ROWDY
What did your daddy do for a
living?

MRS. MAE
Business.

ROWDY
What kind of business?

MRS. MAE
The money making kind.

ROWDY
So, what do you do with all that
money he left you, besides buying
fancy dresses and fancy jewelry?

MRS. MAE
Besides owning practically the
entire town of Tribune, the
Reverend uses some of the money to
build and restore churches around
(MORE)

MRS. MAE (CONT'D)
the country. It's something he's
always wanted to do, spread the
gospel.

ROWDY
Ya'll wasting all that money on
the Lord?

MRS. MAE
The Reverend says it's helping
people. Everybody needs a place to
pray.

ROWDY
If he wants to help people, tell
him to forget the churches and
write everybody out a big fat
check, instead.

Rowdy goes back to work on the car.

ROWDY (CONT'D)
It must be nice to have a lot of
money. You can pay all your bills
on time and buy whatever you want.

MRS. MAE
Money isn't everything, Rowdy.

ROWDY
That's easy to say when you have a
whole lot of it.

MRS. MAE
True, but money doesn't buy
happiness. There are a whole lot
of rich, miserable people in this
world.

ROWDY
Well, I'd rather be rich and
miserable than poor and miserable.

He laughs.

MRS. MAE
What's so funny?

ROWDY
Nothing.

He laughs even louder.

MRS. MAE

What? Tell me!

ROWDY

I was just thinking. The Reverend went out and got himself a sugar momma.

Rowdy lets out a hearty laugh. Angry, she slams the door and starts the truck. Rowdy races over to her.

ROWDY (CONT'D)

Oh come on. I'm just having some fun with you. Stay and tell me some more about yourself.

MRS. MAE

Seems I've told you too much already.

ROWDY

Come on. Stay.

MRS. MAE

I'm glad I'm not paying you by the hour. I have to go, anyways.

ROWDY

Where to?

MRS. MAE

To get a hobby. The Reverend said I should get a hobby to occupy my time while he's away.

(pause)

Maybe he's right. I do nothing all day. I'm an empty glass waiting to be filled.

ROWDY

You already have something to do.

MRS. MAE

What's that?

ROWDY

Being here. Keeping me company.

She rolls her eyes at him.

ROWDY (CONT'D)

If that's not enough for you, you could throw on a pair of overalls, slide under that car and help me change the oil or something.

MRS. MAE
 (snickering)
 I don't get dirty.

ROWDY
 (under his
 breath)
 Not yet, you don't.

MRS. MAE
 Excuse me.

ROWDY
 Why don't you meet me at the Night
 Owl later. We got a dance to
 finish.

MRS. MAE
 The Reverend doesn't want me going
 down there anymore.

ROWDY
 Oh, I see. When the big bad
 Reverend speaks, the little wife
 says amen. I must've been hearing
 things when someone was telling me
 that she was a strong independent
 woman with her own...

MRS. MAE
 I'll be there at eight.

Mrs. Mae speeds off. Rowdy smiles.

INT. NIGHT OWL BAR - LATER THAT NIGHT

The bar is half packed. Rowdy puts a quarter in the jukebox
 and dances over to his table.

ROWDY
 (singing)
 I'VE GOT SCOOTS IN MY BOOTS AND I
 WANT TO GET DOWN. COME ON BABY
 LET'S HIT THE TOWN.

He spots Mrs. Mae walking towards him.

ROWDY
 Hello.

He kisses her hand and pulls out her chair.

ROWDY (CONT'D)

I swear, you get prettier every
time I see you.

MRS. MAE

Thank you.

The pretty young waitress, THELMA SYKES (21), walks up.

THELMA

Hello, Mrs. Mae. What can I get
for you?

MRS. MAE

Hello, Thelma. I'll have a
martini, dry with a twist.

THELMA

Yes ma'am.

She starts to leave.

MRS. MAE

Thelma. Aren't you going to ask my
gentleman friend if he would like
anything?

THELMA

Sure. Where is he?

MRS. MAE

(to Rowdy)
She seems to know you.

THELMA

(to Rowdy with
a bit of
attitude)
Do you want something?

ROWDY

No.

Thelma walks away in a huff.

MRS. MAE

What's that about?

ROWDY

I asked her out a few times. She
basically told me to go stuff it.
So, now, I just ignore her. It
makes her mad.

(pause)

How did you explain our little
rendezvous to the Reverend?

MRS. MAE
I didn't have to. He's out of town
again.

ROWDY
You mean I have you all to myself?

MRS. MAE
Yes.

ROWDY
Good, then let's finish our dance.

Thelma arrives with Mrs. Mae's drink.

MRS. MAE
Thank you.

She gulps it down. Rowdy whisks her onto the dance floor.

After a little upbeat dancing, Rowdy pulls her in close and dances her over to the jukebox.

ROWDY
Why don't we slow this down a bit.

He picks out a slow song.

ROWDY (CONT'D)
This is much better.

Rowdy spins her around. They're enjoying the moment. The patrons slyly look on in shock.

Thelma walks by with a tray of drinks. Mrs. Mae grabs one and gulps it down.

EXT. GAS STATION - LATER

Mrs. Mae gets out of her car and runs towards the door. Rowdy chases after her.

ROWDY
You trying to get away from me?
You can't get away from me. I'm
too quick for you.

He picks her up. Mrs. Mae lets out a playful scream. Rowdy unlocks the door then kicks it in.

INT. BACKROOM - GAS STATION - SAME

It's pitch black. Rowdy flips on the light switch.

ROWDY
The bulb must be out.

He sits her on the bar top.

ROWDY (CONT'D)
Stay right there.

He leaves the room then returns a few moments later with a flashlight.

ROWDY
The electricity's out.

Rowdy shines the flashlight on Mrs. Mae. He gazes at her silhouette for a moment.

ROWDY (CONT'D)
Fancy martinis ain't my style, but
I have some beer. Lite.

MRS. MAE
Are you watching your figure?

ROWDY
No, I'm watching yours.

Rowdy grabs a couple of beers from his fridge. He opens one. It fizzes everywhere. He takes a sip.

ROWDY (CONT'D)
Dang it! There's nothing I hate
more than warm beer.

He opens the freezer. He gets the ice cream out.

ROWDY (CONT'D)
Except warm ice cream. Dang it!

Mrs. Mae laughs.

ROWDY (CONT'D)
You think this is funny, huh? Us
sitting by flashlight drinking
warm beer and slurping up
milkshakes. You think it's funny?

They burst into laughter.

ROWDY (CONT'D)

The store is hooked up to a generator. I'll get us some cold drinks from the store.

MRS. MAE

Don't bother.

ROWDY

You sure?

MRS. MAE

Yeah.

Rowdy gazes at Mrs. Mae.

ROWDY

I just can't get over it.

MRS. MAE

Over what?

ROWDY

You, a reverend's wife. You just don't seem the type.

MRS. MAE

Exactly what type do I seem?

ROWDY

No, I mean, I would've imagined you to be all conservative and dress with everything covered up like a little old church lady. Instead, you're beautiful, sexy, filthy rich and not afraid to show it. You definitely are not a little old church lady.

MRS. MAE

Like I said, I'm my own woman.

ROWDY

So, let me get this straight. You're beautiful and rich. You have everything that money can buy. You have an understanding husband. You're living the life a lot of people would kill to live, yet...

MRS. MAE

Here I am.

ROWDY

You came to the right place.
(slurping up
the melted ice
cream)
Want some of my milkshake?

MRS. MAE

No thank you.

ROWDY

It's good.

MRS. MAE

(laughing)
I'm sure it is.

ROWDY

You have such a sexy laugh.

MRS. MAE

Thank you.

ROWDY

You're welcome.

He flashes her a mischievous grin.

MRS. MAE

Now what?

ROWDY

I was just wondering...

MRS. MAE

About...?

ROWDY

It must be kinda peculiar having
with a reverend.

MRS. MAE

Oh my goodness! You are the most
unfiltered person I've ever met in
my life!

ROWDY

Seriously, though. It's gotta be a
little weird. Right?

MRS. MAE

If you think about it, I guess. I
never have. It is like making love
with Jesus right there watching
you.

ROWDY

Do you go to confession afterwards?

MRS. MAE

I just confess while we're doing it. Forgive me, Oh Lord. Please, please forgive me.

ROWDY

Can I get an amen?

MRS. MAE

Hallelujah! You're a mess!

He leans into her, pressing his body against hers.

ROWDY

Am I making you uncomfortable again?

MRS. MAE

Uncomfortable isn't the word I'd use to describe me right now.

He takes her face in his hands and caresses it.

MRS. MAE

I hardly know enough about you, Mr. Goodwrench.

ROWDY

You know enough to be here. What else do you want to know?

MRS. MAE

You have family around?

ROWDY

No.

MRS. MAE

Brothers? Sisters?

ROWDY

No.

Rowdy runs his fingers over her lips.

MRS. MAE

(breathlessly)

What's your favorite color?

ROWDY

Green.

MRS. MAE

Olive? Chartreuse?

ROWDY

The color of money.

MRS. MAE

I think I'll take that cold drink.

She hops off the bar. Rowdy grabs her arm and pulls her into him. He kisses her. She turns away and pauses. She stares at the big table in front of her and walks towards it. In a burst of enthusiasm, she swipes the items off the table. She turns towards Rowdy, who has sneaked up behind her. He lifts her onto the table.

ROWDY

Exactly how much did you say
you're worth?

MRS. MAE

A lot.

They embark on a long passionate kiss.

EXT. GAS STATION - LATER

Mrs. Mae storms out of the station, stomping and swearing.

MRS. MAE

You son of a... ugh! I cannot
believe... If he thinks...

(turning back
towards the
station)

If you think you're going to get
away with this, then you are
sorely mistaken, Mr.! Ugh! I
cannot believe this. You have no
idea who you just messed with, Mr.
Goodwrench! Take advantage of me
and get away with it? I don't
think so! You son of a... ugh!

She gets into her car and slams the door. She rolls down the window.

MRS. MAE (CONT'D)

(shouting back
at him)

You are going to regret that you
ever laid eyes on me, you, you,
gas pumper! Ugh!

She rolls up the window and speeds off.

INT. MAE HOUSE - LATER

Mrs. Mae fixes herself a drink.

MRS. MAE

Ugh! I have never been so
humiliated in all of my life!
You've got some nerve, Rowdy
Goodwrench!

She gulps down the drink then fixes another.

MRS. MAE (CONT'D)

Nobody makes a fool of Mrs.
Suzanna Mae and gets away with it.
Nobody, especially some 21-year-
old gas station attendant!

She gulps down her drink.

MRS. MAE (CONT'D)

You, Rowdy Goodwrench, are going
to be pumping gas for the rest of
your good for nothing life! I'm
going to see to that.

She fixes another drink.

MRS. MAE (CONT'D)

Oh, I hate men!

REVEREND (O. S.)

Hello.

Startled, she spins around. Her drink lands on the Reverend.

REVEREND (CONT'D)

Honey, you know I don't drink
martinis.

MRS. MAE

Ray! You startled me.

REVEREND

So, I see.

She tries to clean him up.

MRS. MAE

Honey, I'm sorry. What are you
doing here? I thought you were
going to the convention?

REVEREND

I called in a favor so I could
come back home and surprise you.
Surprise!

MRS. MAE

(feigns
surprise)

Yeah. When did you get back?

REVEREND

Just now.

He takes off his jacket and shirt and hands them to her.

REVEREND (CONT'D)

So, do you hate all men or just
me?

MRS. MAE

I don't hate you. I haven't
exactly been very fond of you
lately...

REVEREND

You took the car into that boy
this morning. Did something
happen? Did he do something to
you?

MRS. MAE

No.

REVEREND

He's going to charge you more than
you thought, right? You should've
let me take it in. I'll pay him a
visit tomorrow and get the car...

MRS. MAE

Don't! This is my business. I'll
handle it.

REVEREND

I told you not to trust that boy.
Anybody who doesn't go to church
or have God in their lives in some
way, should not be trusted. Their
fooling around in a whole new
realm entirely.

MRS. MAE

I'll get this cleaned up.

She leaves.

EXT. CHURCH - SUNDAY MORNING

REVEREND (O. S.)

The first thing he did when he got paid was buy a new set of threads. Bills two months behind. Hadn't eaten a decent meal in weeks, but he's going to look good. No heat. No electricity. No food, but, "Don't I look good," he said.

A big white Cadillac pulls up. A man gets out and walks up the steps of the church.

REVEREND (O. S.)

But let me tell you, this was no ordinary set of threads. No, they had special powers. When he put this set of threads on, he felt like a million dollars. And the shoes, his snakeskin shoes were so new and shiny, if you stuck your hand down there, they would've bitten your fingers off. He was looking good. His hair was all oiled up and slicked to the side. I tell you, that boy was so greased up, he didn't walk in, he slid in.

The doors of the church swing open. Rowdy walks in wearing a white suit, snakeskin boots and a cowboy hat. He takes off his hat and walks inside. The eyes of the room follow him. Mrs. Mae looks him over in disbelief. He takes a seat.

INT. CHURCH - SAME

The PEOPLE start to mumble.

REVEREND

Um, um.

The mumbling stops.

Rowdy catches Mrs. Mae's glance and winks at her. She rolls her eyes and quickly turns away.

REVEREND (CONT'D)

As I was saying, this young man was under the misguided notion that trying to impress others with his wealth was the only way to get them to take notice. Sure, by decorating the outside with pretty ornaments, you can make a good

(MORE)

REVEREND (CONT'D)
 first impression, but nurturing
 what's on the inside and sharing
 that with others is what makes a
 lasting impression.

PEOPLE
 Amen!

EXT. CHURCH - LATER

Mrs. Mae confronts Rowdy.

MRS. MAE
 What in the hell is wrong with
 you?

ROWDY
 Watch your language. We're at
 church.

MRS. MAE
 Don't tell me to... You have the
 nerve to show up in our church
 looking like the country pimp!

ROWDY
 Country pimping! I like it!
 (pause)
 Well, what do you think?
 (modeling his
 garb)
 I clean up pretty good, don't I?

He flashes his gold Rolex at her. Mrs. Mae rolls her eyes.

ROWDY (CONT'D)
 Pretty, huh? Come on. You gotta
 see this.

He grabs her hand and whisks her away.

ROWDY (CONT'D)
 Remember when I told you how much
 I loved your daddy's white
 Cadillac?

They stop at this big white Cadillac.

MRS. MAE
 You stole daddy's car?

ROWDY

No, silly! I bought one just like it and pimped it out. Ain't she pretty?

MRS. MAE

Are you kidding me?

ROWDY

What? This is great! I can take you out in style now. We can go cruising with the top down and let the wind blow through our hair.

MRS. MAE

Oh my God! This cannot be real.

ROWDY

Oh, it's real.

He caresses her shoulder. She swats his hand away.

MRS. MAE

Keep your grubby little hands off of me!

ROWDY

Hey, my hands are not little. Besides, you liked my grubby hands on you the other night.

MRS. MAE

I was out of my mind to get mixed up with you. What was I thinking? What was I on? Did you slip something in my drink?

ROWDY

Of course not! You were clean and sober and all into it.

MRS. MAE

Oh my God! Make it stop! I'm going to close my eyes, count to three, and when I open them, this car will be gone. Those snakeskin boots with you in them will be gone, and I will be free...

ROWDY

Shh!

Mrs. Mae opens her eyes and sees the Reverend walking towards them.

REVEREND

Mr. Goodwrench, it was good of you to join us this morning.

ROWDY

I guess you can say that I've finally seen the light.

Mrs. Mae glares at him.

REVEREND

The Lord's door is always open.

(pause)

So, what were you two talking about just now? It looked pretty heated.

ROWDY

I was just telling your wife the restoration on her car is gonna take longer than expected 'cause I have to have some parts specially ordered. She didn't take the news very well.

REVEREND

An old car like that, that's not surprising.

The Reverend looks Rowdy over.

REVEREND (CONT'D)

Say, this is a very fine suit.

ROWDY

Thank you.

Rowdy opens the jacket, revealing the designer label.

REVEREND

Nice.

Mrs. Mae rolls her eyes.

REVEREND

(catching a glimpse of Rowdy's watch)

A Rolex.

(looking at his boots)

Is that real snakeskin?

ROWDY
Only the best.

Rowdy leans against his Cadillac.

REVEREND
This pretty Cadillac is yours too?

ROWDY
Yes sir. Re-stored it myself.

REVEREND
(to Mrs. Mae)
This looks just like your daddy's
Cadillac, minus a few doodads.
(to Rowdy)
Don't tell me oil started coming
out of those gas pumps?

ROWDY
No sir, just gas.

REVEREND
You must've hit the jackpot then.

ROWDY
I guess you can say that.

He looks at Mrs. Mae. She shoots him a look that could kill.

ROWDY (CONT'D)
See you next Sunday, Reverend,
Mrs. Mae.

He gets into his car and drives off.

REVEREND
Some people just don't know what
to do when they get a little bit
of money.

They get into their car and drive off.

INT. MAE HOUSE - NEXT MORNING

The Reverend and Mrs. Mae are having breakfast.

MRS. MAE
I want to go visit momma and
daddy's graves.

REVEREND
We'll drive up there Saturday.

MRS. MAE

No, I want to go tomorrow.

REVEREND

Tomorrow?

MRS. MAE

Yeah. I haven't been to visit them in months. I just need to spend some alone time with them. You have to leave for Atlanta tomorrow afternoon, anyway.

REVEREND

It's probably best if you did go alone. Your parents never did like me much, especially your daddy.

MRS. MAE

He didn't think anyone was good enough for his little girl.

REVEREND

We weren't even dating when he was alive.

MRS. MAE

That's because he wouldn't let us.

REVEREND

Yeah, I bet he did a 360 in his grave when we got married. He's probably still spinning.

(pause)

And I don't care what you say, your mother did not like me either. She was kind of sneaky with it too. She was the kind of person who could insult you with a compliment.

MRS. MAE

She's dead, honey. Let it rest.

REVEREND

I just don't understand how she could not like a Reverend, a man of God. Not to mention, the good that we're doing with our half of the money. Building new churches. Giving people jobs and building up their morale. We're giving them something that belongs to them. A place where they can gather, a place where they have something in

(MORE)

REVEREND (CONT'D)
 common, Jesus Christ. Everyone
 deserves a place like that. How
 could she have been opposed to
 that? All she ever did with her
 half was waste it playing bingo.

MRS. MAE
 Daddy told her to enjoy it.

REVEREND
 Well, all of that money wasted.
 Gambling. That's the Devil's play.
 The Lord does not look too
 kindly...

MRS. MAE
 Will you give it a rest. He's
 probably up there playing bingo
 with momma and daddy right now and
 laughing at us.

REVEREND
 The Lord does not play bingo,
 Susan.

She sits on the Reverend's lap.

MRS. MAE
 You do what you have to do. I'll
 do what I have to do, then maybe
 we can meet back here for a little
 rendezvous.

REVEREND
 So, you're finally letting me out
 of the doghouse?

MRS. MAE
 It's only been a few weeks.

REVEREND
 It seems longer. Can I get a
 little preview of this rendezvous?

He tickles her stomach and kisses her neck. She grimaces.

REVEREND
 Did I hurt you?

MRS. MAE
 No. Just feeling a bit ill. I've
 been having these dizzy spells
 lately.

REVEREND

You should go lie down. I'll carry you.

MRS. MAE

No. No. I can make it. You go on to work. I'll be fine.

She kisses him.

REVEREND

Can I get you anything before I go?

MRS. MAE

No. I'll be fine. Now go.

She kisses him again and ushers him towards the door.

REVEREND

All right. I'll call to check on you later, and I'll get home as soon as I can.

MRS. MAE

All right. Bye.

He kisses her then leaves. Mrs. Mae clutches her stomach and gives a heavy, woeful sigh.

INT. STORE - GAS STATION - LATER

MRS. HILARY (40's), and another LADY (40's), are picking up a few items. They are seemingly alone in the store.

MRS. HILARY

How's your mother doing?

WOMAN

She's doing better. She took the funeral hard, though.

MRS. HILARY

Poor dear.

WOMAN

Well, she had him for ten years.

MRS. HILARY

What's she going to do now? Is she going to get another one?

WOMAN

Her son brought over a couple for her to look at, but she said that she needed more time to get over losing Oscar.

MRS. HILARY

What kind of dog was Oscar?

WOMAN

A Yorkshire terrier. He was a beautiful little dog.

They walk to the register and ring the bell. They fumble around in their purses for money.

MRS. HILARY

(whispering)

Oh, I didn't tell you who I saw in Cane County... in the drug store... buying a home pregnancy test the other day.

WOMAN

Who?

MRS. HILARY

None other than Mrs. Suzanna Mae, herself.

WOMAN

Really? So, she and the Reverend are trying to have a baby. Good for them.

MRS. HILARY

But why did she have to go all the way to Cane County to buy a test?

WOMAN

Maybe, she doesn't want the Reverend to know.

MRS. HILARY

Yeah, but why?

Rowdy strolls in from the storage area.

WOMAN

Shh.

ROWDY

Hello ladies.

WOMEN

Hello.

ROWDY

Will this be all?

WOMEN

Yes.

He rings up their purchases. They pay.

ROWDY

Here you are. Now, you ladies have
a nice day, and drive safely.

WOMEN

Thank you. Good-bye.

They leave. Rowdy looks on.

EXT. GAS STATION - LATER

Rowdy's working on Mrs. Mae's car. She drives up. He gets
up. They approach each other tentatively.

ROWDY

Howdy.

MRS. MAE

I just came by to tell you to put
a rush on my car.

ROWDY

You could've called me for that.

MRS. MAE

I thought it would be more
effective if you heard it in
person.

ROWDY

I'll try to move a little faster.
(pause)
Do you want to sit down?

MRS. MAE

No.

ROWDY

Can I get you something to drink?
Some milk?

MRS. MAE
(puzzled)

No.

He rushes to get her a chair.

ROWDY
Here, go ahead. Take a load off.

He helps her into the seat. Confused by his actions, she takes a seat. He stands there staring at her.

MRS. MAE
Let me ask you something. How many other women have you slept with?

ROWDY
(taken aback)
Two.

Mrs. Mae shoots him a look of disbelief.

ROWDY (CONT'D)
Really! You, Tabitha Nealy and Sam Adams. I'm only 21. I haven't had time to get around...

MRS. MAE
Wait a minute! Sweet little Tabitha Nealy, and Sam Adams? How in the world did you get with... Never mind. Never mind. You swear? You swear that you've only been with those two girls?

ROWDY
I swear! It's not like there's much to choose from around here. Why?

MRS. MAE
I just want to make sure that you didn't pass on any venereal diseases to me.

ROWDY
Oh wow! Are you serious? I always use protection! I'm clean. You've got nothing to worry about.

MRS. MAE
Yeah. Just hurry up with the car.

She gets up to leave. Rowdy helps her out of her chair and walks her to her car. He opens the door for her and tries to help her inside.

MRS. MAE
 What in the hell are you doing?
 What's wrong with you?

ROWDY
 Just concerned about you.

MRS. MAE
 There's no need for you to be.

ROWDY
 Of course there is, since you are
 carrying my baby.

(beat)

MRS. MAE
 What!

ROWDY
 Yeah, that's why you went all the
 way to Cane County to buy a home
 pregnancy test when you could've
 got one in Tribune. You got a bun
 in the oven, and you don't want
 the Rev' to know. I can think of
 only one reason why not.

MRS. MAE
 You don't know what you're talking
 about, so shut up! And you better
 not spread this gossip around
 either, or I will ruin you!

ROWDY
 Calm down, sweetheart. I'm not
 gonna rat you out.

MRS. MAE
 There's nothing to rat out!

ROWDY
 Then why the home pregnancy test?

MRS. MAE
 It was negative. All right!

ROWDY
 No it wasn't.

MRS. MAE
 How did you find out?

ROWDY

I heard Mrs. Hilary and another lady talking about it in my store today.

Mrs. Mae crumbles. Rowdy tries to comfort her, but she pulls away.

MRS. MAE

Oh God! What am I going to do?

ROWDY

Are you sure the baby's not his?

MRS. MAE

There's a possibility, but we're always extra, extra careful. God forbid, one of his little swimmers get past Fort Knox and I get pregnant. We, on the other hand, were drinking and in heat, so, with my luck, it'll be yours.

He hands her his handkerchief. She wipes away her tears.

MRS. MAE (CONT'D)

I've been wanting to have a baby for over a year now, but the Reverend didn't. Now I'm having a baby, but it ain't the Reverend's.

ROWDY

We could just keep quiet about it. We're the only ones who know there's a possibility...

MRS. MAE

You just said you heard it from someone else, so it's obviously making the rounds.

ROWDY

They know that you bought a pregnancy test. That's it. You've been intimate with the Rev' in the past two weeks, right?

MRS. MAE

(hesitantly)

Of course.

ROWDY

Well, there you go. We keep our mouths shut, and we both get what we want. You get your white picket fence marriage to the Rev' with lil' Rev' in the oven, and I get easy street.

Mrs. Mae shoots him a stunned, yet angry glare.

ROWDY (CONT'D)

Hey, I'm giving you what you want. I'd think you'd be grateful.

MRS. MAE

You're going to use this innocent child against me?

ROWDY

This child has nothing to do with it.

MRS. MAE

Give me the tape.

ROWDY

I can't.

MRS. MAE

If you wanted to you could.

He leans into her.

ROWDY

Darling, I can't do that. I've got a good thing going here, and I don't wanna give it up. Everything'll work out just fine for both of us as long as lil' Rev's true identity remains our dirty little secret.

Mrs. Mae slaps him hard.

MRS. MAE

You're disgusting!

She pushes him away and gets into her car. She tries to close the door, but Rowdy stops it.

ROWDY

Don't you ruin this for me!

Mrs. Mae yanks the car door away from him and slams it in his face. She speeds off.

INT. BACKROOM - GAS STATION - NEXT MORNING

There's a knock at the door. Rowdy looks through the key hole and sees the Reverend. The Reverend knocks again.

REVEREND

Mr. Goodwrench, are you in there?

Rowdy opens the door, slightly.

REVEREND

Good morning.

ROWDY

Reverend. We're not open yet.

REVEREND

I know. I was hoping that I would catch you before you opened.

ROWDY

Why?

REVEREND

I just want to talk to you.

ROWDY

If you come back in a couple of hours, we can...

REVEREND

Mr. Goodwrench, I apologize for the inconvenience, but what I have to say won't take long. Please.

Rowdy reluctantly lets him inside.

REVEREND (CONT'D)

Thank you.

The Reverend looks around Rowdy's place. It's filled with brand new technology, a flat screen tv, stereo system, etc.

REVEREND (CONT'D)

Nice equipment. Expensive looking.

ROWDY

What can I do for you, Reverend.

REVEREND

How's the car coming along?

ROWDY

As expected.

REVEREND

Good. My wife loves that car. It belonged to her daddy.

ROWDY

I know.

REVEREND

I know that she comes by here almost every day to check up on it. That's why I'm here. You see, Mr. Goodwrench, my wife's been acting rather peculiar lately. Nothing major, I hope, just out of the ordinary. Distracted. Upset. On edge. The interesting thing here, though, is she didn't start acting peculiar until she met you. I don't suppose you'd know why?

ROWDY

No, I wouldn't.

REVEREND

I just thought since you and my wife spend so much time together, she may have said something to you.

ROWDY

I'm sorry, Reverend. I can't help you.

REVEREND

Look, Mr. Goodwrench, my wife is a very strong-willed woman. She does what she wants, when she wants and with whom she wants. And, that's all right with me as long as it's within the confines of our marriage. The last thing that a preacher's wife needs is to be involved in any kind of scandal. You know what I mean?

(pause)

Good day, Mr. Goodwrench.

The Reverend leaves. Rowdy puzzled by the visit, quickly locks his door.

INT. MAE HOUSE - LATER

Mrs. Mae is pouring coffee. The Reverend is lounging.

REVEREND

Where were you off to so early
this morning?

MRS. MAE

I went for a drive.

Mrs. Mae has a flashback.

MRS. MAE (V. O.)

What do you mean, I'm not
pregnant? My home test said I am.

DOCTOR (V. O.)

Mrs. Mae, those do-it-yourself
kits aren't 100% reliable. This
one is, and unfortunately, it says
you're not.

REVEREND

I went for a drive too. To Baldwin
County.

MRS. MAE

Why?

REVEREND

To pay Mr. Goodwrench a visit.

MRS. MAE

About...?

REVEREND

You.

Mrs. Mae lets out an angry sigh.

REVEREND

I was just telling him that ever
since you two met, you haven't
quite been yourself. I asked him
if he knew why.

MRS. MAE

How would he know anything about
me?

REVEREND

You do spend half your time at
that gas station.

MRS. MAE

Of course I do. He has daddy's car. I told him to get the lead out, by the way. And, I don't appreciate you going to some stranger inquiring about my mental state.

REVEREND

Well, you never tell me...

MRS. MAE

And, what do you mean ever since I met him, exactly how am I acting?

REVEREND

Edgy.

Mrs. Mae sighs.

REVEREND (CONT'D)

Distant. Nervous.

MRS. MAE

You're right. I have been under a lot of stress lately, and I've been taking it out on you. It's just that nothing's working out the way I want it to.

REVEREND

Like what?

MRS. MAE

Everything. What I want, I'm not getting, and what I don't want, I am getting. It's just that, I don't know. I'm just so frustrated!

He walks up to her and puts his arm around her.

REVEREND

Sweetheart, is this about the car?

Mrs. Mae sighs and looks away.

REVEREND (CONT'D)

I never should've let you get involved with that boy. I knew he couldn't be trusted. He's probably stalling on the car, so that he can squeeze more money out of us. You should see that backroom of his. He has all kinds of fancy

(MORE)

REVEREND (CONT'D)
 stereo and video equipment in
 there, not to mention the suits,
 the Cadillac and that Rolex. I
 wonder where he got the money to
 afford it all.

Mrs. Mae starts to feel uneasy. She looks at her watch.

MRS. MAE
 Hey, isn't it time for you to be
 catching that plane?

REVEREND
 (checking his
 watch)
 Yeah, it is.

MRS. MAE
 Are you all packed?

REVEREND
 I still have a few things to...

The phone rings.

MRS. MAE
 You get that, and I'll finish
 packing. What do you need?

REVEREND
 My toothbrush and razor.

She goes upstairs. He answers the phone.

REVEREND
 Hello.
 (pause)
 What's up, Doc?
 (pause)
 Actually, I'm on my way now.

(beat)

A stunned, yet confused look comes over the Reverend.

REVEREND (CONT'D)
 Thank you.
 (pause)
 Of course.
 (pause)
 Thank you. Goodbye.

He hangs up. Mrs. Mae struggles, trying to drag the suitcase
 down the stairs.

MRS. MAE
Honey, will you give me a hand.

He gives her a hand.

MRS. MAE (CONT'D)
Who was on the phone?

REVEREND
That was Doc Anders.

Mrs. Mae is shaken.

MRS. MAE
What did he want?

REVEREND
He said you left your prescription
on his desk this morning, so he
called it in for you.

MRS. MAE
Yeah, I went in to see him about
those dizzy spells. It turns out
that my blood pressure is low, so
he wrote me out a prescription.

REVEREND
He also said he was sorry that we
weren't pregnant. But we're both
healthy, and we shouldn't have a
problem, if we keep trying.

She sighs.

REVEREND (CONT'D)
Susan?

MRS. MAE
I thought I was pregnant. I took a
home test. It came back positive,
so I went to him. Turned out to be
a false alarm.

REVEREND
Why didn't you tell me?

MRS. MAE
It was a false alarm. There wasn't
anything to tell.

REVEREND
No, when you thought you were
pregnant, why didn't you tell me?

MRS. MAE
 Because you told me you weren't
 ready to start a family.

The Reverend studies her, which makes her uncomfortable.

MRS. MAE (CONT'D)
 I think I hear that plane engine
 revving up.

REVEREND
 We'll talk about this when I get
 back.

EXT. MAE HOUSE - SAME

He puts the suitcase in the car.

MRS. MAE
 Have a safe trip.

REVEREND
 You too. You're still driving up
 to visit your parent's graves,
 right?

MRS. MAE
 Yeah.

She gives him a quick uncomfortable kiss. The Reverend gets
 into his car and drives off.

INT. MAE CAR - LATER

As Mrs. Mae drives, tears well up in her eyes.

EXT. GRAVEYARD - SAME

She walks up to her mother's grave site. Still teary eyed,
 she kneels down and places some roses on her parents graves.

MRS. MAE
 Oh momma, I really messed up,
 didn't I? How am I going to fix
 this?

EXT. GAS STATION - LATER

Mrs. Mae drives up. She watches through the window as Rowdy
 tends to a customer. The customer leaves. She walks inside.

INT. STORE - GAS STATION - SAME

She is wearing a very low cut, knee length strap dress and high heels. Rowdy watches on as she saunters over to him. She leans over the counter, exposing plenty of cleavage. Rowdy has a hard time maintaining eye contact.

MRS. MAE

Hi.

ROWDY

Hi.

MRS. MAE

Are you about to close?

ROWDY

If you want me to.

Mrs. Mae puts the closed sign up and locks the door. She slinks across the counter. She tosses Rowdy a bottle of vodka and grabs a six pack of beer. She takes Rowdy by the collar and drags him into the backroom.

INT. BACKROOM - SAME

Mrs. Mae throws him onto the bed and straddles him.

MRS. MAE

I thought we could have a some fun.

She opens the vodka and pours some into his mouth.

ROWDY

I thought you were mad at me.

MRS. MAE

I am, but there's nothing wrong with a little hate sex, is there?

ROWDY

No.

MRS. MAE

Good. Besides, my husband is away again.

ROWDY

When the cat's away, the rats will play.

MRS. MAE
 (devious smile)
 Here, have some more.

She pours more vodka down his throat.

ROWDY
 Aren't you going to have some?

MRS. MAE
 No. I'm with lil' Row', remember?

ROWDY
 Oh yeah. We gotta be careful of
 lil' Row'. Should we be doing this
 then?

MRS. MAE
 You don't have to do a thing.

She chuckles. She rips open his t-shirt. Rowdy's shocked at her aggressiveness, but welcomes it. She gently massages his chest.

ROWDY
 Feels good.

She hands him the vodka.

MRS. MAE
 Drink some more.

He gulps down more vodka.

INT. BACKROOM - LATER

Mrs. Mae lifts Rowdy's arm. It falls limp to the bed. He is out cold.

MRS. MAE
 All right, now where a simple man
 like yourself hide it?

She scans the room. Her eyes land on the DVD player.

MRS. MAE (CONT'D)
 Of course.

There is a disk in the player. She presses plays.

MRS. MAE (CONT'D)
 Oh Rowdy, you are just too simple
 for words.

She takes the disk. She goes through his pockets and finds the keys to her daddy's car.

MRS. MAE (CONT'D)

Well, it was nice knowing you, Mr. Goodwrench.

Mrs. Mae leaves.

INT. MAE HOUSE - NEXT MORNING

There's a knock at the door. It's Rowdy. He's rather nervous and fidgety.

MRS. MAE

What are you doing here? I told you to never come to my home.

ROWDY

Yes ma'am, I know, and I'm sorry, but I've got some bad news for you.

MRS. MAE

What?

ROWDY

I went to work on your daddy's car this morning, and it was gone. The keys are missing, too. Somebody must've broken into my place last night and took them and your car. I was gonna call the cops, but I thought I should tell you first.

MRS. MAE

My car is in my garage.

ROWDY

What?

MRS. MAE

I went by the station and picked it up yesterday evening.

ROWDY

You came by the station yesterday?

MRS. MAE

Yes.

ROWDY

(thinking back)

Yeah. You did come by with that low cut dress on. I can't remember anything after that, though. There were a lot of empty beer cans everywhere, when I woke up. Maybe

(MORE)

ROWDY (CONT'D)

that's why.

(pause)

Did we...

MRS. MAE

Not on your life. I wouldn't make that same mistake twice.

ROWDY

Why did you pick it up? I'm not finished with it.

MRS. MAE

You are now and so are we.
Goodbye.

She tries to close the door, but Rowdy pries it back open.

ROWDY

Hold on one minute!

MRS. MAE

Let go! I want you off my property now!

ROWDY

Sweetheart, you really should calm down. A woman in your condition and all...

MRS. MAE

I'm going to count to three, then I'm calling the police.

ROWDY

Are you forgetting I'm holding all the cards here? Two, to be exact.

MRS. MAE

One...

ROWDY

I got that disk with you and me on it making lil' Row.

MRS. MAE

Two...

ROWDY

You're carrying lil' Row. I got you coming and going, honey, so don't you threaten me!

MRS. MAE
 News flash, honey. I'm not
 pregnant!

Rowdy is taken aback. He pans down to her stomach.

MRS. MAE (CONT'D)
 Yeah, you heard right.

ROWDY
 The test... you said was positive.
 You're lying. You are to pregnant!

MRS. MAE
 I'm not lying, fool! I went to see
 the doctor the other day and the
 test turned out wrong.

Rowdy stands there dumbfounded, mouth agape.

MRS. MAE (CONT'D)
 Oh, and by the way, when I went to
 the station last night to pick up
 my car, I picked up a souvenir
 too, the disk, in your DVD player.
 Just a little something to
 remember you by. Good-bye.

She again tries to close the door, but Rowdy stops her.

ROWDY
 The disk. How did... No, you
 didn't take it.

MRS. MAE
 How would I know where it was if I
 didn't take it.

She smirks at him. Rowdy grows infuriated.

ROWDY
 I made copies. Yeah, that's right.
 I made a whole lot of copies.

MRS. MAE
 You weren't smart enough to.

ROWDY
 You think this is it, huh? You
 think you've won. Think again,
 honey. I've got a million tricks
 up my sleeve. We made a deal and
 you're gonna...

MRS. MAE

Three!

Mrs. Mae opens the door all of the way. A huge white dog comes charging out after Rowdy. Rowdy streaks off.

ROWDY (CONT'D)

Ah! You're not getting away with this. Oh my God! You're gonna be sorry. Ah!

Rowdy does a head first dive over the fence. He jumps into his car and races off. Mrs. Mae laughs.

INT. NIGHT OWL BAR - NIGHT

Mrs. Mae is sitting at a table having a drink. Rowdy, a bit intoxicated, approaches her from behind with a drink in hand.

ROWDY

Hello, sweetheart.

MRS. MAE

It's Mrs. Mae, to you.

ROWDY

We passed formality a long time ago.

MRS. MAE

You just don't give up, do you?

ROWDY

Never.

He sits down. He takes a sip of his drink.

ROWDY (CONT'D)

You know, I never thought I'd be one to go for these fancy little drinks, but they're kinda good. Cute too, with the little umbrella. Of course, you gotta drink about ten of 'em to get any kinda buzz. This is my eleventh.

MRS. MAE

You are a sad case. Look at you. Drunk as a skunk.

(sniffing him)

And, what is that smell?

ROWDY

It's my new cologne. Wilder-beast.
You like?

She rolls her eyes. Rowdy props his feet up on the table, showing off his new boots.

ROWDY (CONT'D)

Nice, huh? That there is genuine snakeskin. Cobra.

MRS. MAE

And the snake doesn't stop at those boots either.

Rowdy laughs. He takes off his cowboy hat and places it on the table.

ROWDY

(pointing to
the feathers)

That there is a genuine peacock tail, plucked right off of a peacock.

Mrs. Mae giggles.

ROWDY (CONT'D)

I can still make you laugh.

MRS. MAE

Believe me, I am not laughing with you.

ROWDY

Oh come on, you know you don't hate me. In fact, I think you're still rather taken by me.

MRS. MAE

You pompous, obnoxious arrogant ass to think I still want anything to do with you. I will never forgive myself for cheating on my husband, but for you to videotape it and blackmail me with it, is lower than those snakeskin boots you're wearing.

ROWDY

It was all business, baby.

MRS. MAE

The gigolo business?

ROWDY

Hey, I tried doing things the right way. Hell, I worked at that gas station since I was 15. I've been on my own. Trying to survive in this little one horse town. I got tired of it. I saw an opportunity to see how the other side lived, so I took it.

MRS. MAE

So, all this was just so you could get some kicks?

ROWDY

Isn't that why you did it?

MRS. MAE

You were going to use your child as a pawn...

ROWDY

No fair using an imaginary kid to make me feel guilty.

MRS. MAE

Don't try to justify what you did by giving out some sob story. Your pride is completely shot. Isn't it?

ROWDY

Sometimes you have to swallow your pride. I'm tired of being poor all the time! Not having enough food to eat or clothes to wear. I've got four pair of underwear I've been wearing for the past year, but you wouldn't know what that's like. I bet you've got a pair for every day of the year. Don't you?

She rolls her eyes at him.

ROWDY (CONT'D)

That's what I thought.

MRS. MAE

Are you serving drinks at this pity party, because I'd like another one.

ROWDY

Yeah, well, people like you don't have to worry about stuff like that. You were born rich. You live rich, and you're gonna die rich. But, for those of us who ain't that lucky, we have to find other ways to get ahead, like the Reverend did.

Mrs. Mae shoots him an angry glare.

ROWDY (CONT'D)

Come on now. You're a beautiful young woman and all, but don't think for one minute the Reverend didn't have dollar signs dancing in his head when he asked you to marry him. How else was he gonna go building the hallelujah all over the place.

MRS. MAE

You're sick! My husband's nothing like you.

ROWDY

I'm not trying to hurt your feelings, honey. I'm just trying to wise you up, is all.

MRS. MAE

You wise up to this. There is no more car. There is no more disk. There never was a baby. You have nothing on me anymore, so you and those snakeskin boots can go slide under a rock. Goodbye!

Mrs. Mae tries to leave. Rowdy grabs her arm.

ROWDY

You have the cutest little heart-shaped birthmark on your inner thigh, the left one.

She yanks her arm free.

ROWDY (CONT'D)

And that mole on your lower back... You suppose the Reverend would wonder how I'd know about such details in such intimate places? Oh, and the way you scream out when you...

MRS. MAE

You son of a...

She tosses his drink in his face and storms out. Rowdy wipes his face. Thelma walks up to him.

THELMA

Would you like another one of those?

ROWDY

What is your problem with me, huh? Every time I come in here, you treat me like I'm nothing. Is that it? You think I'm nothing, huh?

THELMA

Right.

ROWDY

Well, let me show you something then, honey. Lay your baby browns on this!

He pulls out a roll of bills from his pocket and throws it on the table. Thelma's eyes light up.

ROWDY (CONT'D)

And there's more where that came from.

THELMA

Whew wee! Look at all of this money.

She goes to pick some up but stops herself. She looks at Rowdy for his approval.

ROWDY

Yeah, go on. You can touch it.

Thelma picks up the money.

ROWDY (CONT'D)

Pretty ain't it?

THELMA

(sniffing it)

Smells good too.

ROWDY

That ain't no play money, neither. It's all green, and all good.

THELMA

I've never seen this much money before in my life. Wow! What did you do, rob a bank?

ROWDY

Of course not.

THELMA

How then? Where from?

ROWDY

Let's just say, I'm running a little hospitality business on the side.

THELMA

Ooh. Where do I check in? You know, you're starting to look better to me already. I get off work in a couple of hours.

ROWDY

Maybe I'll stick around.

THELMA

I'll get you another drink.

He slips a twenty-dollar bill in her hand.

ROWDY

Make it a beer, and keep the change.

EXT. CHURCH - SUNDAY MORNING

The Reverend and Mrs. Mae drive up. Rowdy and Thelma drive up in his Cadillac and park next to them.

THELMA

Good morning Reverend, Mrs. Mae.

REVEREND

Good Morning.

ROWDY

Looks like a storm's coming. You better make this sermon short, Reverend.

REVEREND

Never rush the Lord.

MRS. MAE
That's a fancy dress you're
wearing, Thelma.

THELMA
Isn't it pretty? Rowdy bought it
for me.

Mrs. Mae shoots Rowdy an angry look.

ROWDY
Fits you like a glove.

REVEREND
Mr. Goodwrench, you seem to be
getting richer every time I see
you.

ROWDY
The Lord's been good to me lately.

THELMA
Rowdy's in the hospitality
business.

REVEREND
Really?

ROWDY
Never mind, honey. How does that
saying go Reverend, "If you giveth
unto the Lord, the Lord will
giveth unto you." I guess all this
church going I've been doing
lately is paying off.

REVEREND
Well, the Lord does work in
mysterious ways.

A thunderous roar startles them.

REVEREND
We should be heading inside.

INT. CHURCH - SAME

Rowdy and Thelma sit on one side of the room. Mrs. Mae takes
a seat on the other side. The Reverend takes the pulpit.

REVEREND
Good morning everyone.

PEOPLE

Good morning Reverend.

REVEREND

Should I leave the doors open so the room won't spontaneously combust, or have we all been behaving ourselves this past week?

(laughter)

MAN 1

Some of us have. Some of us ain't.

REVEREND

You, sir, go sit in the back.

(laughter)

MAN 2

Reverend, you should consider a career in comedy.

REVEREND

That's what my wife told me last night. Ba da bing!

(laughter)

Mrs. Mae shoots him a glare.

REVEREND

And she gives me the evil eye. Moving on...

INT. MAE HOUSE - LATER

The Reverend is sitting at his desk going over the utilities. Mrs. Mae is lounging on the sofa.

REVEREND

Our phone bill is up.

MRS. MAE

So, you're telling me that if a man broke into our home and brutally raped and killed me, you wouldn't want him to get the death penalty?

REVEREND

Why on earth would you ask me something like that?

MRS. MAE

Your sermon this morning, you said you didn't believe in the death penalty.

REVEREND

I'd want to kill him with my bare hands, but the Lord would will me to do otherwise.

MRS. MAE

So, you'd rather he go to prison and live out the rest of his life even though he ended mine? Not only that, but you, as a taxpayer, would be paying his way, three meals a day, a bed to sleep in, a pillow to lay down his head so he can have sweet dreams at night, probably of killing me over and over again. And, the cherry on top being, if he asks for repentance from the Lord, then he shall receive it. Does that sound like justice to you?

REVEREND

We're all God's children, no matter our sins. While I understand what you're saying, I just don't believe one has to become evil to do away with evil.

Mrs. Mae studies him for a moment after this statement.

REVEREND (CONT'D)

Back to this phone bill. Were you and Mr. Goodwrench playing phone tag? One, two, three, four, six of these calls were made after you got the car back.

MRS. MAE

Just clearing up loose ends.

REVEREND

(suspiciously)

All right.

He rifles through the rest of the bills.

REVEREND (CONT'D)

What about this fifteen thousand dollars that was withdrawn from our bank account?

MRS. MAE

I made an investment.

REVEREND

Really? Stocks, bonds, mutual funds?

She walks over to the bar and pours herself a drink.

MRS. MAE

(to herself)

My future.

REVEREND

What?

MRS. MAE

Why are you always questioning me? Can't I do anything on my own without you raising an eyebrow?

REVEREND

That's a lot of money. I just hope it wasn't wasted on something frivolous.

MRS. MAE

Oh for heavens sake, if it doesn't go to the church it's frivolous.

(gesturing to heaven)

Forgive me, oh Lord, for not putting fifteen thousand more dollars into your collection plate! How will you ever make due with the measly two million that I gave you already!

REVEREND

Susan, do not get sarcastic with the Lord!

MRS. MAE

I'm sure the Lord will not begrudge me a little splurging here and there. I've hardly bought anything since we've been married. This is all my parents stuff we inherited.

REVEREND

You're not going to tell me, are you?

MRS. MAE

No.

EXT. CHURCH CONSTRUCTION SITE - BALDWIN

The new church is under construction. The Reverend and Mrs. Mae are overseeing the project.

REVEREND

This is an older community. There are some folks here who can't travel ten miles every week to get to the church in Tribune or Cane County. We're building this for them. Keep up the good work.

WORKER

Yes sir.

The Reverend pats the worker on the back.

MRS. MAE

We should plant a tree over there, maybe plant some flowers around it. We could plant some in front of the church too and outline the walkway. We could put some shrubs around to outline the property. This is a smaller church, so it'll give it more of a homey type feel. What do you think?

REVEREND

I think I should put you in charge of landscaping.

He puts his arm around her as they share a laugh.

MRS. MAE

This is such a beautiful area. Very quiet and peaceful.

Rowdy drives up, country music blasting from his car. He and Thelma get out. They walk over to the Reverend and Mrs. Mae.

MRS. MAE

There goes the neighborhood.

THELMA

Hey Reverend. Hey Mrs. Mae.

REVEREND

Thelma. Mr. Goodwrench.

MRS. MAE

You two are joined at the hip
lately.

ROWDY

Just enjoying each others company.
Right, honey?

THELMA

Right, baby.

She throws her arms around Rowdy's shoulders, flashing a huge rock on her ring finger.

REVEREND

Is that an engagement ring?

Mrs. Mae's head snaps towards Thelma's hand.

THELMA

Why yes. It is.

REVEREND

You two moving a little fast.

ROWDY

Life's short. Why waste time.

Mrs. Mae shoots him a vicious look, then turns away.

REVEREND

Well, congratulations. When is the big day?

ROWDY

We're thinking when the church gets done, we could christen it with a wedding. We want you to perform the ceremony, of course.

REVEREND

It would be my pleasure.

ROWDY

Looks to be coming along just fine.

REVEREND

Yeah, I'd say another month or so it should be done.

MRS. MAE

Yeah, it'll be nice to have a church closer to where you live. Then you won't have to travel all those miles to Tribune to do your confessing.

ROWDY

You'd like that, would you Mrs. Mae?

(pause)

By the way, the rest of the parts for your car came in yesterday. I'll put them in whenever you'd like.

MRS. MAE

I'll have someone pick them up tomorrow. Our business is done.

REVEREND

Absolutely not. He started this job, and he's going to finish it.

(to Rowdy)

Come by the house tomorrow. You know where it is. Good day.

Mrs. Mae and Rowdy share a puzzled look. She and the Reverend get into the car and drive off.

INT. MAE CAR

They drive in silence. The Reverend glances back and forth at Mrs. Mae.

MRS. MAE

What?

REVEREND

I saw him follow us home that Sunday morning.

MRS. MAE

Why didn't you say anything?

REVEREND

I thought he was just being curious.

MRS. MAE

I wish you hadn't have invited him to our home. We shouldn't have strange men coming to our home. It's not safe.

REVEREND

If you hadn't swiped the car from him in the middle of the night, I wouldn't have had to.

MRS. MAE

I got tired of him taking his sweet time with it.

REVEREND

I figured he followed us home that morning to see how we were living, to see how much he could take us for. You said you could handle him, though, so I left it alone.

MRS. MAE

I got the car back, didn't I? I tried to break all ties with him, didn't I? But you went and invited him to our home tomorrow morning. Tell you what, let's turn back around so you can ask him if he wants to have breakfast with us too!

REVEREND

Now wait a minute. You're the one who involved that boy in our lives in the first place, ignoring my opinion on him, because you just had to get your daddy's car fixed, no matter what. He started it, so he's going to finish it.

(pause)

What did he do to get you so hot and bothered anyway?

MRS. MAE

I'm not hot and bothered.

REVEREND

I could light a cigarette on your head, you're so lit up. I can't help you unless you tell me what's going on.

MRS. MAE

I don't need your help, thank you.

INT. CAR - MARY'S HOUSE

REVEREND

We'll finish this when we get home. Meanwhile, put on a smile.

The Reverend gets out of the car. He opens the door for her.

MRS. MAE

Go ahead. I need to fix my face.

He's greeted with a hug from MARY (40), an old friend. Mrs. Mae and Mary exchange waves. The Reverend goes inside.

Mrs. Mae fixes her face and gets out of the car.

EXT. MARY'S HOUSE

Mary greets her with a hug. They go inside.

INT. MARY'S HOUSE

Mary escorts Mrs. Mae around then breaks away to greet other arriving guests. Mrs. Mae wanders, half-heartedly through the room full of PARTYGOERS, meeting and greeting as she goes along. She picks up intermittent parts of various conversations along the way.

WOMAN

That black forest cake you made the other day was delicious. You have to give me the recipe.

She spies the Reverend in a corner chatting with some MEN.

REVEREND

They're a left-handed hitting lineup. All Atlanta needs to do is throw Reyes twice. The guy is three and zero against them this year and Helms, who's two and one, in a five game series, they'll win.

Mrs. Mae continues through the party, stopping at the buffet table. She samples the hors d'oeuvres. Hearing a familiar voice coming from the next room, she peeks around the corner and spies Mrs. Hilary, Ms. Collins and some other WOMEN, having a gabfest.

MR. SYKES (50's), walks up to the ladies. He has a pronounced limp.

MRS. HILARY
Hello Mr. Sykes.

MR. SYKES
Hello. Are you ladies enjoying yourselves?

MRS. HILARY
Yes we are. Thank you.

MR. SYKES
Good. Good. If you will excuse me...

MRS. HILARY
(chiming in
over the other
women)
Goodbye, Mr. Sikes.

He heads in Mrs. Mae's direction. She ducks back around the corner. Mr. Sykes greets Mrs. Mae with a cold stare and a tip of the hat. Mrs. Mae returns with an uncomfortable nod of the head, barely making eye contact with him.

Mrs. Mae continues to eavesdrop on the women's conversation.

MRS. HILARY (O. S.)
You know his daughter, right?
Thelma, she works at the Night Owl.

MS. COLLINS (O. S.)
Yeah, the pretty young waitress.

WOMAN 3 (O. S.)
I heard that he isn't too happy about his little girl working at a place like that.

WOMAN 4 (O. S.)
I wouldn't want my daughter working there either.

MS. COLLINS (O. S.)
She's doing well with it, though, working her way through college. I believe she's a junior in majoring in psychology. Smart girl.

MRS. HILARY (O. S.)
But, not smart enough to stay away from that Rowdy Goodwrench. That boy is going to ruin her yet.

WOMAN 3 (O. S.)

He's a handsome devil, though. If I was young again, I'd have trouble staying away from him myself. Young girls are always attracted to that bad boy type.

MRS. HILARY (O. S.)

He takes after his mother, if you ask me. That woman is no good to the bone. She drove her husband crazy. The poor man's still in the nut house ten years later.

WOMAN 3 (O. S.)

We never see her in church.

MRS. HILARY (O. S.)

If that woman ever set foot near a church she would spontaneously combust. Rowdy didn't even start showing up until he struck it rich, and he's just coming to show off his wares.

WOMAN 3 (O. S.)

I know. That pretty Cadillac. New suits. A Rolex watch. I know he didn't get the money for all that working at that gas station. Every time I drive by that place, it's empty.

WOMAN 4 (O. S.)

Speaking of which, Mr. Johnson, the truck driver, told me he sees the Reverend's wife hanging around that gas station a lot.

MS. COLLINS (O. S.)

I'm not surprised with the way she was all over that boy at the bar that night.

WOMAN 4 (O. S.)

You heard about that too?

WOMAN 3 (O. S.)

The whole town's heard about that.

INT. MARY'S HOUSE - NEXT ROOM - SAME

Fed up, Mrs. Mae approaches the women from behind.

MRS. MAE
Hello ladies.

The women are surprised.

WOMEN
(nervously)
Hello Mrs. Mae.

MRS. HILARY
Are you enjoying the party, Mrs. Mae?

MRS. MAE
Yes, Mrs. Hilary, I am. Thank you.

MRS. HILARY
That's good.

MRS. MAE
But, I'm enjoying the conversation you ladies are having about me even more.

WOMAN 4
Mrs. Mae we were just...

MRS. MAE
My daddy use to say, why get the manure after it falls from the jackass when you can get the hay straight from the horse's mouth.

The women laugh nervously.

MRS. MAE (CONT'D)
So, let me begin. I'm paying Mr. Goodwrench to fix my car. That's why I've been hanging around the gas station so much. I wanted to keep an eye on my investment, and just so you know the latest details, the car is back in my possession. In fact, Mr. Goodwrench is coming over to my house tomorrow to finish the job. The Reverend will be there, of course. Feel free to drop by, if you'd like to watch. Maybe Mr. Johnson can drive you there in his big truck. Now, about me and Mr.
(MORE)

MRS. MAE (CONT'D)

Goodwrench at the bar, don't tell me you, ladies, haven't grazed the fields a few times. Mrs. Hilary, I saw a twinkle in your eye and a smile on your face when you were greeting Mr. Sykes. Tell me, when he was standing so close to you, and you were taking in his scent of Old Spice, did you get a tingle in your tummy for the taste of nuts and honey?

The women gasp.

MRS. MAE (CONT'D)

Ms. Collins, I could say that I saw you knocking back a few at the Night Owl on the very night you were spying on my and Mr. Goodwrench's goings on. I hope you haven't fallen off the wagon?

The women gasp.

MS. COLLINS

Those were club sodas!

MRS. MAE

I'm sure they were, but you see how easily rumors can get started. Like my daddy also use to say, we need to watch what comes out of our mouths and even more so, where we set foot. See you ladies in church.

Mrs. Mae walks off. The women are speechless.

EXT. MARY'S HOUSE - SAME

Mrs. Mae huffs and puffs to her car. She gets in and starts crying. She quickly regains her composure.

INT. MARY'S HOUSE- SAME

The Reverend and the men are still chatting.

MAN 1

You just keep that pretty wife of yours away from the coarse this time. I declare, that if every time I went to hit the ball, she didn't flash some leg and I ended up in the bushes.

MAN 2

Where is that pretty wife of yours, anyway?

REVEREND

I saw her with Mrs. Hilary and her group.

The Reverend looks around but can't find her.

REVEREND (CONT'D)

Excuse me.

He walks over to Mrs. Hilary and her group.

REVEREND

Hello ladies.

MRS. HILARY

Hello Reverend.

REVEREND

Have you seen my wife?

MRS. HILARY

(shooing her hand)

She went that way.

The Reverend is puzzled by her gesture.

REVEREND

Thank you.

He searches for her.

EXT. MARY'S HOUSE - SAME

He spots his wife in the car. He walks back into the party.

INT. MARY'S HOUSE - SAME

REVEREND

(to Mary)

Sweetie, the Mrs. and I are going to have to call it an evening.

MARY

No. You just got here.

REVEREND

I know, and I'm sorry. My wife isn't feeling well, so I'm going to take her home.

MARY

Oh, that's too bad. Where is she?

REVEREND

She's in the car. I'll tell her that you said goodbye.

MARY

Tell her I hope she feels better, and I'll call her later.

REVEREND

I will. It was a great party. I had a wonderful time. We'll get together again soon.

MARY

All right, honey. Take care.

REVEREND

You too.

The hug. He leaves.

EXT. MARY'S HOUSE - SAME

He walks to the car and gets inside. They drive off.

INT. MAE CAR - SAME

REVEREND

Are you all right?

MRS. MAE

People sure do talk a lot around here. That's all they do. Talk, talk, talk, talk.

REVEREND

what were they talking about?

MRS. MAE

Everything.

REVEREND

See, that's why I don't want you hanging out at bars and socializing with shady characters. We have reputations to uphold. We need to be setting a good example for people. If they see their preacher's wife out living it up at some juke joint every night, how are they suppose to take me preaching the gospel to them

(MORE)

REVEREND (CONT'D)
 seriously? This is a small town,
 and there isn't much else for
 people to do except talk. The
 thing for us to do is to not give
 them anything to talk about.

MRS. MAE
 I just don't like to be made a
 fool of.

REVEREND
 Nobody does.

Mrs. Mae turns away and sighs. The Reverend watches her.

EXT. MAE HOUSE - NEXT MORNING

The Reverend is sitting on the porch reading a newspaper.
 Rowdy is working underneath the car.

REVEREND
 Honey!

ROWDY
 Ouch!

REVEREND
 Are you all right under there?

ROWDY
 Yeah. Just hit my finger. I'll
 live.

MRS. MAE
 (standing in
 the doorway)
 You called?

REVEREND
 Yes. Maybe Mr. Goodwrench would
 like something cold to drink.
 (to Rowdy)
 What do you say, Mr. Goodwrench?

ROWDY
 Huh?

REVEREND
 I said, would you like something
 cold to drink? We have lemonade,
 tea. I would offer you a beer, but
 alcohol and heavy machinery don't
 mix. I wouldn't want you to have
 an accident under there.

ROWDY

No thank you.

REVEREND

Are you sure?

(to Mrs. Mae)

Honey, you don't mind fixing Mr. Goodwrench a drink, do you?

MRS. MAE

No.

REVEREND

See, so go on Mr. Goodwrench. Pick your poison.

ROWDY

No thank you. I don't want no poison.

Mrs. Mae heads back into the house.

REVEREND

Honey, why don't you come on out here and join us. It's a beautiful day. I'm sure Mr. Goodwrench will enjoy your company. Won't you, Mr. Goodwrench?

Rowdy's hand slips and oil leaks down onto his face.

ROWDY

Dang it!

The Reverend pulls out his handkerchief.

REVEREND

(to Mrs. Mae)

Come on out here, and hand this to Mr. Goodwrench.

She hesitantly joins them. Rowdy slides from underneath the car. She takes the handkerchief over to him.

ROWDY

Thank you.

He wipes his face. He and Mrs. Mae exchange puzzled looks, then he slides back under the car.

REVEREND

Come on over here and sit down, honey.

She sits down next to the Reverend. He smiles at her. She reluctantly smiles back.

REVEREND (CONT'D)

So tell me, Mr. Goodwrench, why does a man of your new found wealth, still live in that little room in the back of gas station? You could pawn that Rolex watch you have and put a deposit on a nice apartment for yourself.

ROWDY

I suppose I could, but I'm buying the gas station instead.

REVEREND

Is that right? Did you hear that, honey? Mr. Goodwrench here is going to become a business owner.

ROWDY

That's right. I'm gonna be my own boss soon. I won't have to answer to nobody.

REVEREND

Everyone has to answer to someone, Mr. Goodwrench.

(pause)

The Mrs.' and I own a few gas stations around here too.

ROWDY

Along with just about everything else.

REVEREND

That's true. We are very prominent citizens in this community. I was telling the Mrs.' the other day, when you're in a high position, people are always looking for an opportunity to knock you down. So, we, of all people, have to behave ourselves. Right, honey?

Mrs. Mae gives him a reluctant half smile.

REVEREND (CONT'D)

Yes, I'm living a good life. A big house, big cars, big money. A pretty young wife. You'd like all those things one day, wouldn't you, Mr. Goodwrench?

ROWDY

Who wouldn't?

REVEREND

Who wouldn't, indeed. Seems you're off to a good start.

(pause)

Well, if you need some business advice, feel free to call on me or the Mrs.' anytime.

ROWDY

Thanks, but I've got everything under control.

REVEREND

I'm sure you do.

(pause)

I think I'll have some of that cold lemonade.

MRS. MAE

I'll get it.

REVEREND

I'll get it. You stay here and keep Mr. Goodwrench company.

He goes inside. Mrs. Mae springs out of her seat and walks over to Rowdy.

MRS. MAE

He knows.

ROWDY

If he knew he would've said something.

MRS. MAE

He saw you follow me home that Sunday morning, but he just mentioned it the other day. He's been asking all kinds of questions. His suspicion is building. And, what is this here? It's like he invited you over here as some kind of test, to see how we behaved around each other.

ROWDY

Well, you're failing it, so calm down, will you!

MRS. MAE

He asked about the money.

(pause)

I told him I made some investments. I don't think he bought it. I'm telling you he knows something.

Rowdy slides from underneath the car. He gets some tools from his truck.

ROWDY

He doesn't know anything, but if you don't put a lid on it, he will. Are you sure you didn't let anything slip?

MRS. MAE

I'm positive.

ROWDY

Good.

MRS. MAE

But people are talking.

ROWDY

Let me guess, that big mouth Mrs. Hilary and her posse. She talks about everybody else's life because she doesn't have one of her own. You know she's got the hots for Thelma's daddy.

MRS. MAE

I know.

ROWDY

I'm telling you we've got nothing to worry about. We've only been seen in public and there's nothing wrong with that, so just stay cool.

Rowdy slides back under the car and gets back to work. Mrs. Mae sits back on the porch.

INT. MAE HOUSE - SAME

The Reverend secretly studies Mrs. Mae and Rowdy's interaction from an upstairs window. He makes a phone call.

REVEREND

Saul, I need you to look into something for me.

INT. CHURCH - SUNDAY MORNING

Mrs. Mae and Rowdy are seated in front on opposite aisles.

REVEREND

Good morning, everyone. Today I want to talk about sin. What is sin? Sin is any deviation from God's laws or perfect standards. Lying, cheating, stealing, gambling, blasphemy, hatred, self-righteousness, greed, lust, drunkenness, covetousness, adultery. Sin!

Mrs. Mae perks up. Rowdy listens on intently.

REVEREND (CONT'D)

God created man, and through that man sin entered into this world. When Eve handed Adam that apple and he took a bite, we were all given the right to lead lives of greed and pleasures and make excuses for it. And, in the end, we only have to pay for it with our souls. When we're dead, what does it matter what happens to our souls. Sounds like a good deal, right? You could live with that, right? But God said, not so fast. You're not getting away that easy. So, here's what I'm going to do.

A look of guilt washes over Mrs. Mae.

REVEREND (CONT'D)

I will give you my only son, Jesus Christ, to bear your burdens.

PEOPLE

Amen!

REVEREND

To suffer for your sins.

PEOPLE

Amen!

REVEREND

To die for your salvation, but first, you must come on over to my side. Play by my rules. Give your soul to me, then we can talk.

PEOPLE

Hallelujah!

INT. CHURCH - LATER

REVEREND

God knew that man could not live up to his perfect standards. The man he created, could not live up to his standards. It's our nature to sin. It's our curse. Knowing this, God gave us the right of forgiveness through his son, but only those who recognize their sins and repent them shall be forgiven. Do not let our Lord hath died in vain.

PEOPLE

Amen!

REVEREND

I will see you all next Sunday.

The people file out of the church, including a very uncomfortable Rowdy. Mrs. Mae waits until the people leave then approaches the Reverend.

MRS. MAE

There is something I need to tell you.

REVEREND

We'll talk about it when we get home.

MRS. MAE

I might not have the courage to later.

REVEREND

You will.

Mrs. Mae exits the church in tears.

EXT. CHURCH - SAME

Mrs. Mae runs past Rowdy and Thelma on her way to her car.

ROWDY
(to Thelma)
Stay here.

He chases after Mrs. Mae.

ROWDY (CONT'D)
Hey, wait up. Who's chasing you?
Hey, hey, what's going on? Why are
you crying?

He looks around.

ROWDY (CONT'D)
Where's the Reverend?
(clutching her
shoulders)
You didn't tell him anything, did
you? Answer me!

MRS. MAE
Let go of me!

He lets go of her.

ROWDY
I warned you not to ruin this for
me. I've got too much riding on
it.

MRS. MAE
Didn't you hear him in there? All
that talk about lust,
covetousness, adultery, sin! He
was calling us out. I'm surprised
he didn't shine a spotlight on our
heads. I told you last week he
suspected us. Now, I'm sure of it.
It's over. Don't you get it? Over!

ROWDY
Maybe it was just a coincidence.

She throws her hands up in disbelief.

ROWDY (CONT'D)
If he knows, why hasn't he
confronted us?

MRS. MAE

(mumbling to
herself)

He's waiting for me to come clean
on my own.

ROWDY

We're both on edge here, all
right. Anything anyone says, we're
gonna get paranoid about it.

She shakes her head.

ROWDY (CONT'D)

Even if he does suspect, he
doesn't have proof of anything.

MRS. MAE

I'm going to give him proof.

ROWDY

What?

MRS. MAE

I'm confessing. I'm going to tell
him every sorted detail of
everything I did. I've ruined my
marriage. I've broken my vows.
I've humiliated myself. I've
humiliated my husband. I've made a
mess out of our lives. I've driven
myself to the lake, so I might as
well jump in.

ROWDY

Honey, don't loose your mind here.

MRS. MAE

I'm tired of all the lying. I'm
tired of all the sneaking around.
I'm tire of you blackmailing me.
I'm just tired, period!

ROWDY

I'm sorry about that.

MRS. MAE

Yeah, I can see it's just tearing
you up inside! Don't you have any
remorse at all for your part in
this? You know what? Forget it. I
don't blame you for any of this
mess, because none of it ever
would've happened if I hadn't let
it. It's all my fault, so you get

(MORE)

MRS. MAE (CONT'D)

a 'get out of jail free card' on me. Use it!

ROWDY

It's not all your fault, and I am sorry for my part in this. Like I said before, I saw an opportunity and I took it. I like you. You're a nice lady, and if you and the Reverend can't work things out, maybe you and I can hook up for real, next time. But all of that aside, I still owe five thousand on my gas station and four thousand on my Cadillac. I'm gonna need the rest of that money you owe me now.

MRS. MAE

You're not getting anything from me anymore!

ROWDY

If you don't give it to me the Reverend's just gonna take it and build some more hallelujah houses. So, either he's gonna milk you or I am.

MRS. MAE

God, I hope you're going to hell when your time is up.

ROWDY

Honey, my ticket was punched before I was born, and the big man don't give no refunds. Write the check!

She fumbles around in her purse for her checkbook.

MRS. MAE

You want a check, huh? You want a check? Here, write your own damn check!

She tosses the checkbook at him along with her credit cards and purse.

MRS. MAE (CONT'D)

Take my credit cards too. Here, take them. Take everything. Just take it all! It's caused me nothing but heartache anyway! Do you hear? Heartache!

Rowdy picks up the mess.

ROWDY
What in the hell is wrong with
you?

REVEREND (O. S.)
I'd like an answer to that too.

Rowdy hands Mrs. Mae back her purse.

ROWDY
(surprised)
Reverend. The lady dropped her
purse.

REVEREND
Susan? You said there was
something you wanted to tell me.

She and Rowdy have a stare down.

MRS. MAE
Yes, there is.

She turns towards the Reverend. Thelma walks up.

MRS. MAE (CONT'D)
I slept with Mr. Goodwrench.

Thelma gasps. Rowdy sighs. The Reverend's blue eyes widen
and become dark and steely as they lock onto Mrs. Mae.

MRS. MAE (CONT'D)
Hello, Thelma. You might as well
come on over and join the party. I
was just informing my husband that
Mr. Goodwrench and I did the
horizontal boogie a few months
back. I even thought I was
pregnant by him. Remember that,
honey? Being the opportunist that
he is, Mr. Goodwrench began
blackmailing me with my
indiscretion. In fact, he was
asking me for more hush money just
now. Right, Mr. Goodwrench?
(pause)
(to Rowdy)
Well don't go getting all quiet on
me now.

THELMA

So, that's where you got all of that money. You've been wining and dining me with ill-gotten money! You dirty lowdown...

Thelma slaps Rowdy across the face. He winces in pain.

ROWDY

You enjoyed it, didn't you?

THELMA

Well, I didn't know that I was being taken in by a, a, a gigolo!

ROWDY

You take that back!

THELMA

If the snakeskin boots fit...

REVEREND

(to Mrs. Mae)

Are you done?

MRS. MAE

You wish. Thelma, your man may be a gold digger but at least he admits it. You know, I didn't realize it until Mr. Goodwrench brought it to my attention a while back. At least he ended up being good for something. You were never interested in me until you found out my daddy was loaded, and when you did, that little light bulb lit up in your head with the word jackpot in it, didn't it?

REVEREND

I'm not going to dignify that with an answer, Susan.

MRS. MAE

There isn't enough dignity left in this world to cover our behinds now, so humor me. You married me for my money, didn't you? That's why you don't want to start a family with me. That's why you're always gone all the time. You just want to take all of my money and run. All I am to you is a 24/7 ATM machine that's financing your dream of becoming the new Jesus.

(MORE)

MRS. MAE (CONT'D)

I'm your tooth fairy, your
leprechaun, your genie in a
bottle. I'm your, your...

(to Rowdy)

What was that word?

ROWDY

(whispering to
her)

Sugar momma.

MRS. MAE

Sugar momma! Well, I hope you boys
have satisfied your sweet tooth,
because you have licked this
lollipop for the last time! Daddy
was right. Money is the root of
all evil. It makes good people do
very bad things. Even daddy had to
get his hands dirty a few times to
stop money grubbing, blood sucking
leeches...

(pointing to
the Rowdy)

like you...

(pointing to
Reverend)

and you! Daddy use to break their
arms and legs. Boy, I wish daddy
was here right now!

They all shoot Mrs. Mae a puzzled look.

THELMA

Wait a minute. Daddy Mae. Big
Daddy Willie Mae. I remember momma
and daddy arguing one day about
daddy owing somebody a whole lot
of money. Then that night, daddy
came home on crutches. It was him.
He owed your daddy money. Your
daddy broke my daddy's leg!

MRS. MAE

I'm sorry Thelma. I was hoping you
wouldn't have to find out.

Thelma, dumbfounded, crumbles to the curb. Rowdy tries to
comfort her, but she angrily pushes him away.

REVEREND

Your daddy was a loan shark?

Mrs. Mae nods her head yes.

REVEREND (CONT'D)

You told me he was in the coffee business.

She nods her head no.

REVEREND (CONT'D)

He was a loan shark?

MRS. MAE

And a gambler, a moonshiner, in his younger days, and he owned a few strip clubs. That's how he met momma. She was a go-go dancer.

Thelma, Rowdy and the Reverend's mouths literally drop to the floor from shock at this revelation.

REVEREND

You're kidding me?

She nods no.

REVEREND (CONT'D)

Why didn't I hear anything about this before?

MRS. MAE

Because everyone either loved Big Daddy, was scared of Big Daddy or was on Big Daddy's payroll, including cops, politicians, preachers...

The Reverend shoots her an angry look.

MRS. MAE (CONT'D)

...and just everyday Joes. Lookout men, he called them. Daddy owned this town. In a lot of ways, he still does. That's why when he died, all of his dirty little secrets died with him.

The Reverend, dumbfounded, crumbles to the curb next to Thelma.

REVEREND

No wonder they didn't like me. While I was singing the gospel, they were dancing to it with the Devil.

(pause)

I've been building churches with the Devil's money. I'm going to hell.

THELMA

Maybe we can all go together.

The Reverend walks towards the church.

REVEREND

I can't believe you had me realizing people's dreams, helping them find their faith and building a stairway to Heaven for them to march towards the Lord, with the Devil's money! I had thousands of people being baptized in hell houses! No, this can't go on. I have to tear these down!

The Reverend angrily kicks one of the church support beams. He grabs his foot and grimaces in pain.

MRS. MAE

It doesn't matter whose hands it passed through, Ray! Money's money. It's not like Satan printed it up himself with little skulls and bones on it.

The Reverend marches towards Mrs. Mae. He pulls out a bill from his wallet.

REVEREND

Susan, if I stuck a pin in this bill it would start bleeding! This is blood money!

He tosses all of his money onto the ground. He marches back towards the church door and opens the doors.

REVEREND (CONT'D)

Ah, the gateway to hell. This door, Susan, was paid for courtesy Thelma's daddy's leg!

He closes the door, and then kicks it several times.

REVEREND (CONT'D)

How much for the window, Big Daddy? "Well, son, that's going to cost you an arm and leg. Ha, ha, ha." Hell!

He picks up a rock and throws it through one of the windows. Mrs. Mae, Rowdy and Thelma watch on in shock.

ROWDY

He's lost his mind.

MRS. MAE

Are you crazy, Ray? Desecrating a church. If you weren't going to hell before, you sure as hell are going now! Stop it!

The Reverend storms over to the flower garden and picks a few flowers. He walks over to Thelma and hands them to her.

REVEREND

Here, Thelma. I'm sorry about your daddy's leg.

THELMA

Thanks.

He marches back to the flower garden.

REVEREND

How much for the lovely bouquet,
Big Daddy? Two thumbs? No? What if
I threw in a foot?

He stomps and kicks his way through the garden, leaving it ragged.

MRS. MAE

Ray! Stop it!

She starts towards the Reverend. Rowdy holds her back. She jerks loose and continues towards him.

REVEREND

(pointing to
Mrs. Mae)

This is all your fault!

Mrs. Mae stops dead in her tracks, giving him a double take.

REVEREND (CONT'D)

If I had known I was making a deal
with the Devil, Susan, I never
would've shook hands! I never
would've taken that money if I
knew where it was coming from!

MRS. MAE

Would you have taken me?

REVEREND

Knowing what I know now... I don't know. I just don't know.

MRS. MAE

So it's true. You did marry me for my money. Only now, you find out it's dirty, so you regret everything! You son of a...

She storms up to him and starts beating on him with her purse. She knocks him to the ground and continues to beat on him. Rowdy and Thelma race over and pull her away.

THELMA

Mrs. Mae, get a hold of yourself!

Rowdy helps the Reverend to his feet. The Reverend dusts himself off then sucker punches Rowdy in the face, knocking him to the ground.

REVEREND

That's for sleeping with my wife!

THELMA

I swear all of you people are crazy!

(to the
Reverend and
Mrs. Mae)

And, you two building churches?
Lord, help us all!

Thelma takes off down the street. Rowdy gets up and dusts himself off. He massages his jaw, to ease the pain.

ROWDY

Thelma, wait!

Rowdy gets in his car and chases after her.

INT. ROWDY'S CAR - SAME

ROWDY

Thelma, get in the car.

THELMA

No!

ROWDY

Thelma, you're not walking all the way home.

THELMA

What do you care? You only went out with me to make her jealous! And, to propose to me... Ugh! I was right about you all along. You're a no good, good for nothing!

She throws one of her shoes through the car window. He ducks out of the way.

ROWDY

I'm sorry. All right? I didn't mean to hurt you. Would you please get in the car so we can talk about it.

THELMA

I wouldn't get back in that car with you if Bigfoot was chasing me! Now, go on.

ROWDY

Just let me give you a ride...

THELMA

I said go on!

She throws her other shoe through the car window and hits him in the face.

EXT. CHURCH - SAME

MRS. MAE

Well, it looks like it's just you and me, babe. What now?

REVEREND

I need to go. I need to go think about all of this. I just need to go.

He starts walking down the street.

MRS. MAE

Are you coming home?

REVEREND

I, I need some time. All right? Just give me some time to think.

MRS. MAE

Well, I'm going to be doing some thinking on this too!

Mrs. Mae gets into her car and drives off. She speeds past

Rowdy, Thelma and the Reverend.

INT. NIGHT OWL BAR - LATER THAT NIGHT

Rowdy and Thelma are sitting at a back table.

ROWDY

What do you mean it's over? What about all the things we planned and all the expensive things I bought you? You can't dump me. You're into me for too much!

Thelma pulls out a wad of cash from her pocket and slams it down on the table. Rowdy's eyes light up.

THELMA

I sold everything you bought me. I got most of your money back.

Rowdy grabs the money and starts counting it.

ROWDY

How much is it?

THELMA

Fifteen hundred. If you're smart you'll donate it to charity.

ROWDY

I will. My favorite charity, me.

THELMA

The Reverend's right. That money's cursed. The way you got it was wrong. And, if you keep it, bad things are going to happen to you.

ROWDY

That's silly. What's with you and that Reverend? Maybe you two should hook up, and you can be poor and full of morals together.

THELMA

If you keep that money, I will never speak to you again.

ROWDY

Thelma, it's been nice knowing you.

He walks off.

THELMA

You jerk! I hope you, that money and Christine all go on a long slow drive down the highway to hell!

EXT. NIGHT OWL BAR - SAME

Rowdy walks to his car.

ROWDY

(thumbing
through the
money)

Blood money, huh. It looks green to me. Sorry 'bout your daddy's leg Thelma, but it's gonna help pay for my gas station. You can come by for some free gas if you want.

He gets into his car and drives off.

INT. ROWDY'S CAR - SAME

ROWDY

Christine, huh! Don't worry, Christine. I'll finish paying for you next.

(pause)

A curse, ha!

He turns on the radio.

ROWDY (CONT'D)

(singing and
talking)

RED, RED WINE. STAY CLOSE TO ME. DON'T LET ME BE ALONE. Ha, blood money. That's so dumb. THE MONKEY GET CHOKED. How can money be cursed? And a car? Yeah right. That's that voodoo stuff. I don't believe in that crazy stuff. Only crazy people believe in that crazy stuff, and I ain't crazy.

(pause)

Devil money. Thanks for the money Big D. Could you loan me another ten thousand? No bones though.

(pause)

Curse? That's crazy.

The car suddenly stops on a deserted road.

ROWDY (CONT'D)
 Oh no. Don't do this to me,
 Christine!

He repeatedly tries to restart the car with no luck.

ROWDY (CONT'D)
 Oh, come on! Dag gummit. Dag
 gummit!

The doors automatically lock, trapping him inside. Suddenly,
 the car starts up by itself and slowly drives down the road.

ROWDY (CONT'D)
 What the...

Rowdy slams on the brakes, but the car continues moving
 forward.

ROWDY (CONT'D)
 The hell!

MAN (O. S.)
 Exactly, Mr. Goodwrench.

ROWDY
 Huh?

Rowdy looks around to see from where the voice came. He
 checks the stereo. Nothing. He looks up and sees a wall of
 darkness, and he's heading straight into it.

ROWDY (CONT'D)
 Jesus Christ!

He, again, frantically tries to gain control of the car. He
 jumps from the front seats to the back seats then to the
 front again trying to open the doors. He starts to beat and
 kick at the windows trying to break the glass, to no avail.

MAN (O. S.)
 I'm not Jesus, Mr. Goodwrench, and
 this is not the highway to heaven.

ROWDY
 Who are you? Where are you? What
 do you want with me?

MAN (O. S.)
 Don't you recognize me?
 (pause)
 No? Then, let me refresh your
 memory.

Images of Rowdy's affair with Mrs. Mae flash before him like
 a slideshow. As the relationship gets darker, the images get

darker and the car starts to speed up.

MAN (O. S.)

Recognize me now? I am you, Mr. Goodwrench, the new and improved, Rowdy Goodwrench. The one that lies, cheats and steals. The one that's filled with excuses and false confidence. The one that's filled with greed, lust and drunkenness. The one that's filled with temptation. The one that's filled with sin. Take a long hard look, Mr. Goodwrench, because this is your life, and you are driving down the highway to hell!

The car is now traveling at full speed. A wicked uproarious laugh ensues from the mysterious voice.

ROWDY

No!

INT. BACKROOM - GAS STATION - SAME

Rowdy awakens in a pool of sweat. Horrified, he examines himself and his surroundings. Everything's normal. He ponders what just happened.

INT. MAE HOUSE - NEXT DAY

The doorbell rings.

MRS. MAE

What are you doing here?

ROWDY

I'd like to talk to you, if it's all right.

Mrs. Mae sighs and walks back into the house. Rowdy pokes his head inside.

ROWDY (CONT'D)

Is the Reverend here?

MRS. MAE

He didn't come home last night.

Rowdy walks inside.

ROWDY

Nice house.

Mrs. Mae sits down. Rowdy pulls out a check from his shirt pocket and places it on the table.

ROWDY (CONT'D)

I put the car up for sale. When I get a buyer, I'll give you the money.

Mrs. Mae gives him a puzzled look.

ROWDY (CONT'D)

I went into town and sold some of that equipment. I'm working on selling the rest. Thelma, um, sold the stuff I bought her too. The clothes, I gave to the Salvation Army. I figure someone'll get a real kick out of those snakeskin boots.

(pause)

About that gas station, it's a pretty good investment. Since I already put 5 grand of your money on it, maybe you should go ahead and buy it and add one more to your collection. If it's all right, I'd like to keep my room there and work for you and pay rent, of course.

MRS. MAE

What brought all of this on?

ROWDY

Let's just say I experienced a divine intervention.

MRS. MAE

I thought that you didn't believe in that religious stuff.

ROWDY

I do now.

(pause)

Mrs. Mae, I'm sorry. I really am.

MRS. MAE

It's my own fault. I was looking for an escape. If it wasn't you, it would've been someone else. I don't know if that someone else would've blackmailed me, but I guess I deserved it. You were my karma.

Rowdy sits next to her.

ROWDY

You didn't deserve it. I just wanted to see how the other side lived. Not gonna lie, I enjoyed it. I didn't enjoy hurting you, though.

MRS. MAE

Did you apologize to Thelma?

ROWDY

Well, she won't see me, and she won't take my calls. I didn't want to leave a message on her machine, so I wrote her a letter. Hopefully, she'll read it.

MRS. MAE

What a mess we've made, huh?

ROWDY

Yeah, my mess was so big, I found Jesus in it.

They laugh.

MRS. MAE

Would you like something to drink?

ROWDY

Yeah, something really cold would be great.

EXT. MAE HOUSE - SAME

A truck pulls up in front of the house. The Reverend, unshaven and disheveled, gets out from the passenger side. The truck drives off. He sees Rowdy's truck parked in front of the house.

INT. MAE HOUSE - SAME

ROWDY (O. S.)

Trust me. You didn't want that car. I think it was possessed.

MRS. MAE (O. S.)

You're kidding?

ROWDY (O. S.)

No ma'am, seriously. It started up by itself, driving slowly down the road, then the doors locked on me, and I couldn't get out. Then this voice came out of nowhere...

REVEREND

Well, well, I see that nothing's
changed since I've been gone.

Their attention turns towards the Reverend. Mrs. Mae rushes to him. She greets him with a hug.

MRS. MAE

Ray. I'm so glad you're home. I
was worried about you.

Rowdy gets up.

ROWDY

Reverend, I came by to apologize
to Mrs. Mae.

MRS. MAE

He sold some of the stuff and gave
me a check.

(showing him
the check)

See.

REVEREND

Wasn't that nice of him.

ROWDY

I owe you an apology too, sir, for
interfering in your marriage. I'm
sorry.

REVEREND

Mr. Goodwrench, you're interfering
in my marriage by being here right
now.

MRS. MAE

Ray.

The men stare each other down. The phone rings. Mrs. Mae answers it.

ROWDY

You're right.

Rowdy gulps down the cold drink.

ROWDY (CONT'D)

Good day, Mrs. Mae, and thank you.

He walks off. The Reverend follows him.

REVEREND

Mr. Goodwrench, this will be the last time that you come anywhere near my wife.

ROWDY

That's gonna be a problem 'cause I work for her now. Goodbye Rev'.

Rowdy leaves. Mrs. Mae walks up.

REVEREND

What does he mean, he works for you now?

MRS. MAE

I'm buying the gas station.

REVEREND

Are you serious? I'm not having this punk kid hanging over head for the rest of my life!

MRS. MAE

What happened to, "those who repent shall be forgiven?"

REVEREND

That's between him and God, but between him and me, he slept with my wife. What am I suppose to do with that, Susan? What am I suppose to feel?

(pause)

I can't believe you. After all this, I come home and here you two are sitting down sipping lemonade like nothing ever happened. It's like he put a spell on you and turned you against everything good that you know. Physically, emotionally, spiritually he's possessed you and taken over your soul. I don't understand how this happened. What has he done to you?

MRS. MAE

We were going downhill long before Rowdy Goodwrench.

REVEREND

Not like this. I know I could've been a better husband to you. I took you for granted a lot. I take responsibility for my part in what

(MORE)

REVEREND (CONT'D)

happened here. That's why I came back! I will not apologize for working my tail off to make something of myself, so that I can stop depending on you to support us! That's my job! If we have any shot left, Susan, you have to make a choice. Him or me. Him or me.

He leaves. Mrs. Mae fixes herself a drink.

EXT. GAS STATION - NEXT DAY

Rowdy is working on a car. Mrs. Mae is sitting down.

ROWDY

I talked with my father earlier. He's real excited about moving into the new facility. More freedom for him. More independence. It'll make him feel like a man again. Thank you for helping him.

MRS. MAE

I may have finally found my calling.

ROWDY

You'd be great at it.

MRS. MAE

We got into a big fight after you left yesterday. He threatened to divorce me if I didn't end all ties with you.

ROWDY

If you want your marriage back, then maybe you should.

Mrs. Mae shoots him a concerned look.

ROWDY (CONT'D)

Then again, maybe that's not what you want. Maybe you already know what you want, and you're just looking for someone to tell you everything's gonna be all right.

(pause)

Come on inside. I'll buy you a cold drink.

They walk into the store.

INT. ALEX'S CAR - SAME

The Reverend, still disheveled and unshaven, and another fellow Reverend, ALEX (30's), are driving along.

ALEX

I'm sorry to hear about you and the Mrs.'

REVEREND

I need you to do me a favor. I need you to take over for me for a few weeks. I need some time to sort all of this out and figure out what to do next.

ALEX

Of course. Maybe you and the Mrs.' should go away for awhile, you know, be alone. Maybe you can work things out. And, this money thing, you're doing good with it. You're helping people out with it. They don't care where it came from. It's where it's going that counts.

REVEREND

I still think I should tell them where it came from.

As they pass by the gas station in Baldwin, the Reverend sees Mrs. Mae's car parked there.

ALEX

Well, do what you have to do. Anyway, I hope you and the Mrs.' can work things out. That Mrs. Mae, she's a nice lady.

INT. MAE HOUSE - LATER

The Reverend walks into the house and sees a couple of suitcases by the door. He hurries upstairs and sees Mrs. Mae packing another one.

REVEREND

So, this is it. You're walking out on our marriage?

MRS. MAE

I walked out on our marriage when I slept with Mr. Goodwrench.

REVEREND

Any remorse?

MRS. MAE

Yes.

REVEREND

For cheating or walking out on our marriage?

MRS. MAE

Both. I didn't want us to end up this way.

REVEREND

It doesn't have to. You could stay and help me fight for us.

MRS. MAE

If I felt there was anything left... I have to be going.

REVEREND

You should stay here. I'll go.

MRS. MAE

It's all right. I need to get out of here, from under momma's, and especially daddy's, lair.

REVEREND

Where are you going to stay? The back of a gas station isn't exactly your style.

MRS. MAE

(upset)

No, it isn't.

REVEREND

Well, I just assumed that you and...

MRS. MAE

Don't.

REVEREND

After waiting so long to get married, I never counted on getting a divorce.

MRS. MAE

It's not what I had in mind either.

REVEREND

Why did you marry me, Susan?

MRS. MAE

I was lonely. And, you were safe. After momma and then daddy died, I was lost. Didn't know where to turn. didn't know where to go. I needed some security. Somewhere belong. I thought you would take care of me. Protect me. Respect me.

REVEREND

You wanted me to pick up where your father left off.

MRS. MAE

In a strange way, yes, I did.

REVEREND

Did you love me?

MRS. MAE

I did.

She strains trying to pick up the suitcase. He helps her.

EXT. MAE - HOUSE - SAME

They load the suitcases into the car.

MRS. MAE

I'll come back for the rest of my things in a few days, once I get settled.

REVEREND

I love you.

MRS. MAE

Goodbye, Ray.

Mrs. Mae gets into her car and drives off.

INT. NIGHT OWL BAR - LATER THAT NIGHT

The Reverend is at the bar. The PATRONS are shocked by the Reverend's uncouth appearance.

REVEREND

Can I get a bourbon on the rocks.

BARTENDER

Coming right up.

The Bartender hands him his drink.

BARTENDER

How's it going, Reverend?

REVEREND

(sarcastically)

Never better.

(raising his
glass)

Cheers.

He downs his drink. He puts his glass on the bar and gestures for the bartender to refill it.

The Reverend notices some of the patrons spying him. He studies their rather suspicious and somewhat nervous expressions. He looks at the bartender, who puts his head down and turns away. The Reverend puts two and two together.

His gaze turns towards the backroom. He eyes the room for a moment before making his way towards it. Stopping in the doorway, he scans the room until his eyes land on a corner booth way in the back where Mrs. Mae and Rowdy are snuggled up, affectionate, laughing and gazing into each others eyes. Mrs. Mae runs her hands through Rowdy's hair. The Reverend has seen enough. He gulps down his drink and leaves.

EXT. GAS STATION - BALDWIN CO. - LATER

Mrs. Mae and Rowdy get out of the truck and head hand-in-hand into the station.

INT. GAS STATION - SAME

Rowdy grabs some snacks and a couple of sodas from the coolers. Mrs. Mae looks at him disapprovingly.

ROWDY

Take it out of my check.

INT. BACKROOM - GAS STATION - SAME

It's dark.

MRS. MAE (O. S.)

I'll take the bed. You take the chair.

ROWDY (O. S.)
Or, we could both take the bed
like we did before.

Rowdy turns on the light. The bag of chips fall from his mouth to the floor. They both gasp in horror.

INT. CHURCH - LATER

The church doors blast open. In walks the Reverend, carrying Mr. Mae. She's hysterically crying and struggling to free herself. He continues up the aisle.

REVEREND
I've been good to you, Susan.

MRS. MAE
I know you have, Ray.

REVEREND
I've been a good husband.

MRS. MAE
Yes.

REVEREND
We had a strong marriage, Susan.

MRS. MAE
We had a good marriage, but now it's over, Ray. You have to let me go.

REVEREND (OVERLAP)
Until you invited evil in!

MRS. MAE
I'm sorry, Ray!

REVEREND
Save your apologies for the Lord, Susan. He's the one you sinned against.

MRS. MAE
I'm sorry, Lord!

REVEREND
He knows. He knows. That's why he had me bring you here, to his house, the house of the Lord. To come face to face with him, to repent your sins, to beg his forgiveness, and he will grant it.

He stops at the altar and gives the sign of the cross. He

takes Mrs. Mae's hand and mimics the motion, blessing her.

REVEREND (CONT'D)
Say it with me, Susan. Oh Lord,
Jesus. I come to you in shame.

No answer from Mrs. Mae.

REVEREND (CONT'D)
Say it with me, Susan!

MRS.. MAE
Oh Lord, I come to you in shame. I
can give you money, Ray. You can
build all the churches you want,
all over the world!

REVEREND
The Lord does not want your dirty
money! But, I come to you now with
open arms, ready to embrace, open
eyes, ready to see, open ears,
ready to listen and open mind,
ready to understand and open
heart, ready to be filled.

MRS. MAE (OVERLAP)
You want another chance, Ray? You
think if you exorcise the demons
from me and remake me into the
Virgin Mary, we'll give it another
shot? Is that it? Huh? Our
marriage is over, Ray! There's no
going back!

He drags a huge baptismal font from the corner. He sits Mrs.
Mae in it. She's too exhausted to try to escape.

REVEREND (CONT'D)
I realize that, Susan. Be my
teacher, to learn me right from
wrong. Be my net, to catch me when
I fall.

MRS. MAE
Then what?!

REVEREND
Be my strength, to lift me back up
afterwards.

MRS. MAE (OVERLAP)
What do you want from me?!

REVEREND (OVERLAP)
 He wants what he should already
 have, Susan, you soul!

He fills a bucket with water.

REVEREND (CONT'D)
 (to himself)
 In the name of the Father, Son and
 the Holy Spirit, I bless this
 water.

He dips his fingers in the water and draws the sign of the
 cross on Mrs. Mae's forehead.

REVEREND (CONT'D)
 Be my light, to guide me through
 the darkness. Be my savior, when I
 sin. Be my soul, to cherish. In
 the name of the Father, the Son
 and the Holy spirit, God bless her
 soul.

He throws the entire bucket of water onto her. She screams.

REVEREND (CONT'D)
 With this water I wash her body
 clean. This body that's been
 violated and soiled by the hands
 of the Devil!

She jumps out of the font and tries to run. The Reverend
 grabs her. She continues trying to fight herself free.

REVEREND (CONT'D)
 You can't run from the Lord,
 Susan. He's everywhere.

MRS. MAE
 You're crazy!

REVEREND
 And, he's been watching you. He
 has seen the evil that you have
 perpetrated in our marriage, and
 he is not pleased!

MRS. MAE
 Let me go! Let me go!

He dips her head in the font then pulls her up.

REVEREND

You've got evil in you, woman!
Only Jesus can save you. Do you
accept the Lord, Jesus Christ as
your savior?

MRS. MAE

Ray, no!

He dips her head even farther in, holding her under a bit longer.

REVEREND

I said, do you accept the Lord,
Jesus Christ as your savior?

MRS. MAE

I can't breathe!

He pushes her entire head under water and holds her under longer.

MRS. MAE

(gasping for
air)

Yes! Ray, stop!

REVEREND

Tell him, Susan. Tell him that you
repent, and beg his forgiveness!

MRS. MAE

(breaking down)

I'm sorry, Lord. I'm sorry. I
didn't mean to hurt you. I didn't
mean to hurt anyone. Please
forgive me, but please don't let
him kill me!

Suddenly, the Reverend's hands release their hold on Mrs. Mae. He clutches at his chest, in agony. He takes a few gasps and drops to the floor.

REVEREND

He forgives you. I forgive you,
Susan. I did care...

Mrs. Mae looks on in shock.

Just then, the church doors fling open. Rowdy battered and bruised, looks on in disbelief.

EXT. FUNERAL - DAY

The Reverend's funeral is ending. Mrs. Mae is the last to leave. Dressed in all black, face covered by a veil, she walks away from the site.

INT. MAE HOUSE - LATER

Mrs. Mae closes the door to her bedroom. She walks down the stairs, stopping at the bottom. She looks around the room. She walks to the front door. She opens it and takes one last look around the house.

MRS. MAE
Goodbye, mamma. Goodbye, daddy.
She closes the door.

EXT. HOUSE

A cab is awaiting her. The driver loads her luggage into the trunk. He holds the door open for her. Mrs. Mae gets in and they drive off. Rowdy watches on, unnoticed from a distance.

FADE OUT