

Diplopia

FADE IN:

EXT. WOODED AREA - NIGHT

Two, mud-covered, wading boots, walk, limping through a thick haze.

A hand pushes at bare branches, clearing a path.

EXT. HOUSEBOAT - NIGHT

An old, time-worn, houseboat sits aground in what used to be a river. On its stern, BOO, 6, rolls a pant cuff up, drops a foot down, pretending to immerse it in water.

Behind him, His mother, TITUBA, 28 and pregnant, smiles.

TITUBA
Child, whatchu doin'?

BOO
Fishin'.

TITUBA
Is you ... ?

Boo flicks his wrist -- pretends to cast a line.

TITUBA
You ain't gonna like whatchu catch.

Tituba looks at the dry river bed, examining it.

TITUBA
Not in this river.

She sees something, shrinks back, stiffens.

TITUBA
Boy, get up!

She grabs the back of Boo's shirt, lifting him.

BOO
Momma!

TITUBA
You best stop pretendin'!

She looks back at the river bed. It's filled, if only for a moment, with water -- a body, purple and bloated, floats toward the boat.

EXT. WOODED AREA - NIGHT

The boots stop, turn. A bucket is lifted.

INT. HOUSEBOAT - NIGHT

Tituba stands, holding open Boo's left eye.

TITUBA
Sometimes the right can't see what
the left can.

BOO
But, momma, I didn't see nothin'.

TITUBA
No water?

Boo shakes his head.

BOO
No, momma.

Tituba nods in the direction of a back room.

TITUBA
You get now.

LATER

Tituba sits, legs crossed, holding her belly.

INT. HOUSEBOAT - DAY

Boo's at a window, holding a hand over one eye.

BOO
Momma?

Tituba, at a stove, cracks an egg, depositing it into a pan.

BOO
Momma, what might my left eye see?

TITUBA
Hush.

BOO
But momma ...

TITUBA

What?

BOO

I'm thirsty.

EXT. SHED - DAY

A garden hose winds around the lopsided wood structure.

Behind it, NOCK, 80, stands -- filling a bucket. He looks at the houseboat. He has but one eye, its pupil a dead, milky white.

NOCK

It'll float.

INT. HOUSEBOAT - DAY

Boo, at a table, sits across from Tituba, eating.

BOO

I didn't see daddy. If that's what you thought.

TITUBA

Boy, I don't want you thinkin' 'bout that man.

BOO

Momma, where is he?

TITUBA

He drown.

BOO

But ain't no water. Ain't never been water.

TITUBA

Was when you was little.

BOO

Did you make it go away?

TITUBA

Boy, eat your food.

EXT. WOODED AREA - NIGHT

Nock, bucket in hand, mumbles. His words, a bizarre frenzy of indistinct sounds.

INT. HOUSEBOAT - NIGHT

Tituba sits, as if listening. She moves to a window, slides it open.

EXT. WOODED AREA - NIGHT

Water splashes from the bucket onto Nock's wading boots as he pushes past bushes and branches.

INT. HOUSEBOAT - NIGHT

Tituba's at the window, rubbing her belly.

TITUBA
You can't have this one either! You hear?!

She moves to the:

BACK BEDROOM

Boo's on the floor moving toy cars about -- mumbling like Nock.

TITUBA
Child, whatchu doin'?

BOO
Playin'.

TITUBA
Pretendin'. That's whatchu doin'.

She picks up his toys, takes them.

INT. HOUSEBOAT - DAY

Boo hands Tituba a folded cardboard box.

BOO
Why we movin'?

TITUBA

Baby, we can't stay here no more.
Ain't safe, never was.

EXT. STERN - NIGHT

Boo stands, peeing off the back of the boat.

EXT. RIVERBED - NIGHT

Nock pours the bucket of water onto the dry river bed.

EXT. STERN - NIGHT

Boo, still urinating, looks at the mud-colored ground. The image shifts, jumps left, changes. The river is full, still.

BOO

Momma...

He turns his head. His left hand covers his left eye.

BOO

Momma, it's not the left eye, it's
the right.

TITUBA

Boy, you close that eye!

BOO

But momma, it's back. The water's
back. Can't you see it?

TITUBA

Ain't no water!

BOO

There's a man. It's --

Tituba grabs Boo's hand, pulling it away from his face. The river, again, is dry.

BOO

It was daddy.

TITUBA

Ain't your daddy!

BOO

He's alive!

TITUBA
He my brother. And he dead.

INT. HOUSEBOAT - NIGHT

Tituba ties Boo's hands together.

TITUBA
You got it. You got the eye. We all
do. But you got it most ... Got it
from your daddy.

BOO
Momma -

TITUBA
He pure evil. Black magic.

BOO
Momma, you gonna leave me here?

Tituba pulls a length of packing tape, wraps it around Boo's
head, covering his eyes.

TITUBA
No, baby.

BOO
I'm scared.

TITUBA
Can't nobody hurt you.

She reaches back, grabs a knife off the table.

TITUBA
Not if ya can't see.

She examines the knife's point.

BOO
I love you, momma.

TITUBA
I love you, too, baby.

She places one hand on his head, the other on his back.

TITUBA
Lay down.

BOO

Why?

TITUBA

Do as I say, now.

He lays back.

TITUBA

I'm gonna take this tape off.

BOO

Thank you, mamma.

TITUBA

When I do, I don't want you openin'
that eye. You got that?

BOO

Yes, mamma.

TITUBA

You keep still.

She drops down, places the full weight of her body on his.

BOO

Momma, you hurtin' me.

She starts to remove the tape that's wrapped around his head,
covering his eyes.

TITUBA

You needs to know who your real
daddy is. It ain't T.

EXT. HOUSEBOAT (FLASHBACK) - DAY

T, twenty-four, sits on the stern, fishing with two year-old
Boo.

INT. HOUSEBOAT - NIGHT

Tituba pulls the last of the tape from Boo's eyes, they blink
open. Boo sees the knife in Tituba's hand, and beyond it, a
man, T, stick thin and sallow -- drenched in river water.

TITUBA

Boy, I done told you keep that eye
shut!

BOO
But momma, I saw him. He here.

Tituba whips her head around.

TITUBA
You ain't his daddy!
(to Boo)
Where he be?

Boo covers his left eye.

BOO
He in the chair.

Tituba jumps up, moves to the chair, drives the knife into the seat cushion.

TITUBA
You already dead!

Nock enters, drops the now empty bucket -- stands in the door frame.

NOCK
I ain't.

He winks his one eye.

NOCK
C'mere, son.

BOO
Grandpa?

Nock shakes his head.

NOCK
I is your daddy.

BOO
No, you're momma's daddy.

NOCK
Her's too, boy, and T's.

He looks at T who sits, unharmed.

NOCK
My first born.

T moves to Tituba.

TITUBA

Baby, you can make him go away.

T unzips his pants.

TITUBA

If you don't look, T can't be.
You're the youngest, the baby. The
last born son. You gets the double
vision.

She pushes the knife, sending it across the room to Boo.

He picks it up.

TITUBA

Do it. Cut it out. End it.

Boo picks up the knife, looks at it, trembles.

EXT. HOUSEBOAT - NIGHT

The boat floats down stream.

FADE OUT.