"AMERICAN GOTHIC"

PILOT

Written By
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SECOND DRAFT
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AMERICAN GOTHIC

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

EXT. EST. MANTIOKE, NORTH CAROLINA - DUSK

From above the sea, we take in this historic port town, glistening seductively beneath a full moon. As the dark waters of the Gulf stream and the Labrador Strait clash in turbulent fury beneath us, we SOAR toward the shoreline and beyond. Over WHISTLING pine woods and gabled rooftops, we descend into this community's all-too-pristine heart, PASSING:

Row after row of stately Antebellum homes...

Numerous parks and squares, manicured to perfection...

A sparkling new elementary school...

And a sign on the village green: "WELCOME TO MANTIOKE, Pop. 3,666". We'll linger here, then RISE UP to DISCOVER...

A GOTHIC MANSION
towering above us. As it looms ominously, we PUSH IN on:

A MAN WITH PIERCING EYES

surveying the countryside through a picture window. Standing before a raging fire, he glances at his watch, then pins on a sheriff's badge. As the sun sinks in his eyes, we leave him in darkness and SAIL below the tracks, REVEALING:

A small hospital, paint peeling from it's wounds...

A dock side jute joint...

A burned out warehouse with iron legend: "Mantioke Guardian"

And a poor shantyland known as "Goat Town".

CONTINUING on, we FLY with the spirits over ancient cemeteries and Civil War battlegrounds, across miles and miles of white clapboard loneliness, beyond Heaven and Hell, until we finally reach...

A farm.
EXT. EST. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

A rambling, wood framed house, desolate and alone. As a weeping willow lurches malevolently against it's siding, we SLOWLY PUSH IN on a cracked window.

INT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

ON A MATCH STICK

as it ignites. PULL BACK TO REVEAL

A BOY

of dark features and sharp structure, hovered over a birthday cake. With great care, he lights ten tiny candles. Stuffing the matchbook in his pocket, he pushes a clump of hair from his face, lifts up the cake, and begins moving across a dimly lit room. We FOLLOW him to

A DELICATE GIRL OF SIXTEEN

seated at a formica table, slowly rocking back and forth. She wears an oversized taffeta dress and a white ribbon in her hair. Across from her, gripping the table's edge, is

GAGE TEMPLE

forties, weathered, drunk. The boy lowers the cake to the table and begins writing his name in the frosting: CALEB.

CALEB

What should I wish for, Daddy?

Gage is fixed on the window, anxiously twirling a glass in his hand.

CALEB

Daddy, what should I wish for?

GAGE

Salvation.

Gage rises, reaches for a bottle of Applejack perched on the sill. After refilling his glass, he starts to pace nervously. Caleb leans into the girl.

CALEB

Merlyn... What do you think I should wish for?

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

GAGE

Don’t get her goin’.

Caleb stares into his sister’s soulful eyes. She appears to be in a semi-catatonic state. He reaches for a locket that hangs from her neck.

ON THE LOCKET

A sterling silver heart.

CALEB

takes it in his hand and whispers softly to his sister.

CALEB

It’s alright, you don’t have to tell me... I know.

Then he closes his eyes, makes his wish, and calls to Gage.

CALEB

I’m blowin’ out my candles now, Daddy.

No response. As Caleb prepares to mark his day, Merlyn suddenly... stops rocking.

MERLYN

(dead monotone)
Someone’s at the door.

Gage spins from the window. There is a moment of silence.

MERLYN

Someone’s at the door.

GAGE

Oh, Christ...

MERLYN

Someone’s at the door.

GAGE

She ain’t gonna do this again.

CALEB

(nervously)
It’s okay, Daddy. Just give her a minute.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED: 2

The WIND outside begins to HOWL.

MERLYN
Someone's at the door.

GAGE
(moving toward her)
Shut-up.

MERLYN
(louder)
Someone's at the door.

GAGE
I said shut-up.

CALEB
Leave her alone. She can't help it.

GAGE
Goddam retard.

CALEB
She ain't retarded.

MERLYN
(louder still)
Someone's at the door. Someone's at the door. Someone's at...

GAGE
(screaming in her face)
Shut-up, dammit!

BLAM! The front door EXPLODES open and a torrent of wind engulfs the room. Caleb's candles blow out. Gage drops his glass and it SHATTERS on the floor. Merlyn's hair soars wildly about her face as she continues CHANTING...

GAGE
(yelling above the storm)
Tell her to stop it, boy. Make her stop.

CALEB
(screaming)
It ain't her fault.
CONTINUED: 3

GAGE

The hell it ain't. Every damn problem in our miserable lives been her fault.

Fighting the wind, Gage pulls himself out onto the front porch and disappears. Merlyn continues on, getting louder by the moment. After a beat, Gage returns to the doorway, gripping a shovel. His eyes are ablaze.

CALEB

What are you doin'?

Suddenly, Gage brings the shovel CRASHING down on the table. Caleb SCREAMS. Merlyn doesn't even blink.

CALEB

(terrified)

Daddy, don't...

Gage raises his weapon again... BAMM! It lands inches from Merlyn's head. Caleb throws his weight against the table and topples it over, temporarily blocking Gage's path. Grabbing Merlyn's hand, he pulls her into an adjoining room and SLAMS the door.

INT. MERLYN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Caleb pushes his sister to the edge of a bed. She's in perpetual CHANT now, almost in convulsion. Caleb jumps up to a small window above them, tries to open it... Won't budge. He glances at the thick, cloth ribbon in Merlyn's hair. Reaching down, he unties it, and begins wrapping it around his hand.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Gage stumbles forward, raises the shovel...

GAGE

I can still hear you, girl.

And RAMS it into the door.
INT. MERLYN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Caleb pulls back his now wrapped fist and SMASHES it through the window. Bleeding, he reaches for his sister.

CALEB
Come on, Merly. We gotta go.

But she's a million miles away. Caleb tries to lift her up. She won't move. He looks her right in the eye.

CALEB
Alright... You stay here. I'm gonna get help, but you can't open the door understand? Don't open that door.

Caleb jumps back up and pulls himself through the tiny hatch as we HEAR Gage's shovel mercilessly POUNDING on the door. The panels are beginning to SPLINTER.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

Emerging from the window, Caleb hits the ground running, past a hay loft and down a dirt road through tobacco fields. As he rounds a corner, he's suddenly hit by headlights...

CALEB
dives out of the way. A vehicle SCREECHES to a halt.

A TOWERING FIGURE

emerges from the passenger door. Caleb glances up and finds himself staring straight into the haunting eyes of

SHERIFF LUCAS BUCK

the most seductively charming law enforcement officer any man or boy ever bargained with... And the same man we saw in the Gothic mansion. Mid-forties, chiseled, Lucas carries the unflappable confidence of the most powerful man in town. He lifts Caleb to his feet.

LUCAS
No more runnin' son.
INT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

Gage is right where we left him, HAMMERING away at the door. Through it’s ravaged panels, we can now see Merlyn, still CHANTING away.

GAGE
Ten long years, Merlyn. Ten long years a hell you’ve put us through...

EXT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

Lucas’ car SKIDS to a halt. He throws open the passenger door and Caleb scrambles off his lap to the ground. We then REVEAL the man behind the wheel: Lucas’ deputy, BEN HEALY, a former high school football star extinguished by too much gut and too little spine. As Ben starts to exit, Lucas grabs his arm.

LUCAS
I’ll handle this.

INT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

Gage PUNCHES through Merlyn’s door, RIPS it aside, and stumbles into the room. She’s going at warp speed now.

MERLYN
Someone’s at the door... Someone’s at the door... Someone’s at...

Gage pulls back the shovel...

GAGE
This is for your mama.

...and lets it rip. We HOLD ON GAGE, as the shovel COLLIDES with it’s target... and then there is silence. Gage lifts the shovel once more, but hesitates. In this moment, a flash of sanity crosses his face: The horrible reality of what he’s done. He takes a halting step forward. Suddenly

LUCAS BUCK

is upon him. Coming from behind, he lifts Gage off his feet and hurls him back into the living room. As Gage’s body CRASHES O.S., Caleb rushes in. Lucas restrains him.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

LUCAS

Call an ambulance.

Torn, Caleb reluctantly backs out of the room. Lucas turns and we finally REVEAL

MERLYN

sprawled on the bed, her party dress strewn violently about her waist.

BACK WIDE

As Lucas comes closer, staring at the girl's angelic face. Her eyes flutter. She is still alive.

LUCAS

Merlyn? Merlyn, honey... Can you hear me?

Merlyn's eyes open slightly.

MERLYN

(barely audible)
Someone's...at...the...door.

Lucas sighs, gently lifts her head into his hands.

LUCAS

Yes, darlin'. But we won't have to worry 'bout that no more.

And then, as we HOLD ON LUCAS, he suddenly, inexplicably... BREAKS her neck.

MERLYN'S HEAD

drops to the mattress with a dull THUD.

BACK TO LUCAS

who checks her pulse. Satisfied with his handiwork, he rises and turns toward the living room. It is only then that he notices the horrified expression of

BEN HEALY

staring at him through the broken window. As he meets the sheriff's deadly gaze we

@ CUT TO:
INT. APARTMENT BEDROOM - NIGHT

ON A STRIKING YOUNG WOMAN

who bolts up in bed, terrified. Though we don't know it yet, her name is GAIL EMORY, and she's in one serious cold sweat. She snaps on her bedside lamp. There's an open Powerbook at her side, various newspapers and magazines at her feet, books, letters, half a pizza...

GAIL

reaches for a bottle of water on the end table. A framed photo gets our attention:

ON THE PHOTO

A man and a woman are standing proudly before a printing press, holding up a newspaper. The paper, "The Mantiok Guardian" reads: "Gail Emory to Lead Bicentennial Parade." Pointing at the headline with a smile is a little girl wearing a paper crown. As

GAIL

stares at the photo pensively, we

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT - LATER

ON MERLYN'S BODY

as two paramedics lift it into a Rescue Squad vehicle. Flanked by a couple cameramen, the red and blue truck takes off, followed by an ambulance. We then PICK UP

BEN

exiting the house, carrying the shovel. In the b.g.

GAGE

watches from the rear of a patrol car. As Ben gets closer, he pushes his face up against the glass, and SCREAMS...

GAGE

Deputy!

Ben spins around with a start.
CONTINUED:

GAGE
Keep that monster away from my boy.

And the car ROARS off. Clearly unnerved, Ben watches Gage disappear into the night, then slowly turns and sees

LUCAS BUCK

surrounded by what passes for the local media. We PUSH IN on him.

LUCAS
The body of the victim, Merlyn Ann Temple, was discovered at...

Lucas catches sight of some cameramen attempting to focus.

LUCAS
You folks see me in back?
(to a black newswoman)
Danielle, let’s give these boys some room.

DANIELLE, and a few others down front, start to clear.

LUCAS
(aside to Danielle)
How’s the job workin’ out, D?

DANIELLE
I don’t know what you said, but the station’s offered me a helluva deal.

LUCAS
There any other kind?
(then re: his appearance)
Hat on or off?

DANIELLE
(smiles)
On. Much more heroic.

Lucas winks at her, adjusts his "Smokie", and with the cameramen now in position, gets back to business.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:  2

LUCAS
Alright, then... The body of Merlyn Ann Temple, a sixteen year old child, beautiful child, was discovered this evening at approximately nine fifty-five P.M. Though unconfirmed, cause of death appears to be a blunt instrument to the head. I have the sad duty of reporting that the victim's father, Gage Temple, is our prime suspect.

There is a clamoring among the reporters.

LUCAS
We have no motive at this time, but we do have...

Lucas glances around, catches

BEN
hovering in the b.g., nervously rapping a pen in his hand, watching him darkly.

BACK TO LUCAS ON A TELEVISION SCREEN

LUCAS
... We do have a witness: Caleb Temple, the surviving child. As he has now been left without a family, I'm hoping our community...

INT. APARTMENT BEDROOM - NIGHT

PULL BACK TO REVEAL GAIL

watching Lucas on TV, hanging on every word.

LUCAS
...will support me in shepherding him through the dark days ahead.

Gail thinks for a moment, then moves to a closet and pulls out a duffel bag.
EXT. FARMHOUSE - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

DANIELLE
Sheriff, where is the child now?

LUCAS
We have him safely in custody. As soon as we're able to...

Ben approaches Lucas, whispers something in his ear. Lucas' reaction speaks volumes.

LUCAS
Uh... It seems the boy was slightly injured in the melee and has been taken to the hospital.
(shooting daggers at Ben)
He won't be there long.

EXT. EST. FULTON COUNTY HOSPITAL - NIGHT

A small, three story brick structure. The emergency vehicles from the crime scene are now visible in the garage.

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - NIGHT

ON CALEB - MOVING

strapped to a gurney, pushed in by an attendant. The room is partitioned into three areas: The first two are empty. The third bustles. The boy cranes his neck to SEE

A GAGGLE OF NURSES

male and female, hovered over a body in the distance. We HEAR comments like "Poor thing", "I knew that man was crazy", "Look at the mother", etc.

BACK TO CALEB

forced to digest this perverse gossip.

MATT (O.S.)
Folks?

Caleb, and all the nurses, turn to discover

DR. MATT CROWER

standing in the doorway. Thirties, offbeat, battle weary.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

MATT

Bar's closed.

A couple of nurses immediately try to look busy. A few more file sheepishly out the door. Matt looks down at Caleb.

MATT

Let's get you out of here.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Caleb is seated on a bed, staring into space, a wall of emotion. Matt's beside him, chewing gum, wrapping the boy's hand in gauze.

MATT

You have any other relatives in town?

Caleb shakes his head.

MATT

Child Welfare talk to you yet?

Negative.

MATT

Want a piece of Black Jack?

Caleb glances at him. Matt's holding out a stick of gum.

MATT

I'm a Doctor. Gotta ask these questions.

Caleb turns away. Matt drops the gum back in his pocket.

MATT

Your hand's going to be fine, Caleb... And nothing else that happened is your fault.

He waits for a response. Doesn't come. Rises.

MATT

I'm at the end of the hall if you need me.

As he turns to go...

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

CALEB
(softly)
That my sister down there?

Matt holds.

MATT
Yes.

CALEB
I want to see her.

MATT
That’s not a good idea.

CALEB
Why not?

MATT
Because it won’t help.

Beat.

CALEB
You know it’s my birthday?

MATT
Uh... No. No, I didn’t.

CALEB
Well, it is. And I think I gotta right to see my sister on my birthday.

Before he can respond, a nurse, RITA BARBER, pops her head in the door. Mid-forties, permed hair, she wears an "I’ve been to Graceland" tee shirt beneath her smock.

RITA
Dr. Crower? Sheriff’s here.

MATT
(to Caleb)
Give me two minutes.

EXT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Matt is pacing on the sidewalk in front of the entrance. Lucas is fuming. Ben listens from the car in the b.g.
CONTINUED:

LUCAS
On who's authority is he with you?

MATT
Situations like this, Child Welfare grants the doctor in charge temporary custody.

LUCAS
These folks seen your drivin' record?
(off Matt's reaction)
Forgive me... Alcoholism's just a "disease" now right? Like the common cold, only more... colorful.

MATT
(taut)
What do you know about me?

LUCAS
Yankee blue blood, Harvard Med, came to Mantee last fall and been makin' trouble ever since: "Let's build a new hospital, let's clean up Goat Town, let's drown the poor in biscuits and gravy..." Ain't exactly been shy, Doctor.

MATT
And I thought the Southern Sheriff was just a cliche.

LUCAS
I want the boy.

MATT
Question him tomorrow.

LUCAS
This ain't about questioning. I'm family.

MATT
Not according to his file.

Lucas glares at him.

LUCAS
You're a good man, aren'tcha?

(Continued)
CONTINUED: 2

MATT
I don’t know what that means.

LUCAS
Anything happens to that child, you will.

Matt starts back up the steps. Lucas slips into the car, calls after him...

LUCAS
You got him ’till noon tomorrow.

And the car ROARS off.

EXT. GAIL’S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Dressed in sweats and leather jacket, Gail hurriedly exits her building and makes her way to an old Mustang across the street. Tossing her duffel in back, she hops into the driver’s seat and REVS up the car.

INT. MATT’S OFFICE/ SECOND FLOOR HOSPITAL HALL - NIGHT

Matt is studying Caleb’s file. He picks up the phone and punches in a number.

MATT
Dan? See if you can track down some files on Caleb Temple’s parents for me, will ya? We got twelve hours to find a long, lost Uncle... Thanks, Danny.

Matt hangs up, moves out into the hall.

MATT
Sorry, Caleb. I...

He reaches Caleb’s door. The room is empty.

MATT
Caleb?

INT. FIRST FLOOR HOSPITAL HALL - NIGHT

Peering out from a stairwell, Caleb watches the "Emergency Room" door. A couple of nurses exit, giving him the opportunity he’s been waiting for. He dashes inside.
INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - NIGHT

Empty and foreboding. Cautiously, Caleb makes his way toward the gurney in the back of the room. Reaching Merlyn's body, he notes her toe tag. Touches her hair. Then slowly, grimly... pulls back the sheet.

ON MERLYN'S FACE

Frosty white, but somehow beautiful nonetheless. We are granted the side that did not see the shovel.

CALEB

stares at his sister for a long beat, then reaches into his pocket and pulls out the white ribbon. He begins tying it back in her hair. As he works diligently, his eyes well up, and a single tear falls down his cheek.

CALEB

I'm sorry, Merly. I should have been there to look after ya.

CLOSE ON MERLYN

Lying in grace. A CHILLING SOUND begins to fill the room. A DISSONANT, HAUNTING SOUND...

CALEB

Takes a step back, glancing around nervously... Nothing but the SOUND. He looks back to his sister.

ON MERLYN

As a tear begins to emerge from her eye: A tear of blood.

CALEB

looks on in disbelief as

A CRIMSON TEAR

slowly inches it's way across Merlyn's icy flesh.

CALEB

reaches out and touches the bloody trail crossing his sister's face. Suddenly

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

THE DOOR SWINGS OPEN REVEALING MATT

and everything immediately becomes silent.

MATT

Caleb...

Caleb looks at Matt, then returns to Merlyn. The blood on her face has vanished. Reaching the gurney, Matt pulls the sheet back over her head.

MATT

You don't need this.

As he leads the boy from the room, Caleb sneaks a glance downward: Merlyn's blood is still on his hand.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE
ACT TWO

INT. LUCAS' CAR - MOVING - NIGHT

Ben’s driving, Lucas is shotgun. They’re gliding through "Goat Town" and there’s heavy tension in the air.

BEN

Lucas... I’m having a hard time.

LUCAS

That so.

BEN

(haltingly)
You’ve done an awful lot for me...
And I figure I owe you...

LUCAS

Got your lucky pen?

BEN

Yeah...

LUCAS

Write that down.

BEN

(sighs)
What I’m tryin’ to say is...

Ben’s throat tightens.

BEN

I saw you... I saw what you did to
that girl. I didn’t mean to, I...
I thought you might need help,
so...

Suddenly, Lucas lurches across the seat, rams his foot down on the brake and

THE CAR

CAREENS off the road.

LUCAS

whips out his gun and presses it into Ben’s forehead. (CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

LUCAS
What color is this gun?

BEN
(terrified)
What?

LUCAS
What color is the gun?

BEN
I... I...

LUCAS
Answer's plain as the nose on your face.

BEN
It's, uh... It's gray. It's a gray gun.

LUCAS
A ray gun?

BEN
No, no, no.... A gray gun. It's a gray gun, Lucas.

LUCAS
That's right, Ben... It's grey. But isn't it possible that my idea of grey, and your idea of gray, might differ?

BEN
I... I guess so.

LUCAS
All depends on your perception, right?

(then)
Get out of the car, Ben.

BEN
No... No Lucas, please...

LUCAS
(firmly)
Get out of the car.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED: 2

Ben falls out his door. Lucas slides over to the driver's seat and addresses him through the window.

LUCAS

Now...

Ben stares at him, terrified.

LUCAS
I believe you need a drink.

Lucas pulls out his wallet, tosses Ben a twenty.

LUCAS
Have a bottle on me. And while you're sippin', you think about what you "saw" tonight.

BEN
(with great relief)
Alright, Lucas. I'll do that.

LUCAS
The world can be a beautiful place, Ben. You just gotta know how to look at it.

Lucas REVS up the car and leaves Ben gratefully in the dust.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Caleb is seated on the bed, Matt's at his side.

MATT
You got water, phone, extra blanket... and a genuine Elvis pillowcase.

Caleb turns... Sure enough, Elvis' mug is on his pillow.

MATT
Nurse's idea. Make you sleep like a king.

Caleb cringes. Matt reaches into his pocket.

MATT
Got something else for you, too.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

He pulls out Merlyn's locket. Caleb's eyes widen. He reaches for it with the hand that did not touch Merlyn's blood; the other remains hidden beneath the covers.

CALEB

stares at the locket with reverence... then opens it.

ON A PHOTOGRAPH INSIDE

A picture of a beautiful young woman, seated in a rocking chair.

MATT

That your Mom?

Caleb nods, stares at the photo a beat longer, then...

CALEB

You known a lotta folks that's died?

MATT

Guess I have.

CALEB

Family?

Matt reaches for Caleb's water...

MATT

My wife and daughter.

Caleb reacts. Matt takes a long swig.

CALEB

Where do you think they are now?

MATT

I don't know... I keep forgetting they're gone.

Caleb looks at him questioningly. Matt puts down the glass.

MATT

Family stays with you, Caleb. You think about them, dream about them... That keeps them alive.

(CONTINUED)
CALEB
(very difficult)
I dream 'bout my Mama a lot. Never
met her, but...
(glancing at the locket)
Made a wish about her tonight... A
wish to have her back.
(off Matt; reflectively)
Maybe I didn't have to.

Matt touches the boy's shoulder.

MATT
Try to get some sleep, huh?

Caleb nods. Matt turns off the light and exits. Caleb lies
there a moment... Then pulls his blood tinged hand from
beneath the covers. As he stares at it pensively, we go

EXT. HIGHWAY - ON AN OLD RED MUSTANG - NIGHT

Racing down the interstate.

INT. MUSTANG - MOVING - NIGHT

Gail's at the wheel, sipping hot coffee from a Sinclair mug.
She pulls out a cellular phone and punches in a number. We
hear a voice mail response, then a BEEP.

GAIL
Dina, it's Gail... I won't be in
the office today, I've... There's
something I've got to do. Tell
Arthur not to worry about the
welfare piece, I'll still make
deadline... And when I know where
I'm at... I'll call.

She hangs up, let's out a deep sigh. As the WIND HOWLS all
around her, we go

EXT. EST. JUTE JOINT - NIGHT

More like a bait shop then a club, this is a dry county's
ramshackle version of a speakeasy. We HEAR MUSIC within...
INT. JUTE JOINT - NIGHT

 Makeshift bar, couple of pool tables, lots of illegal booze. People of every color are swaying to the SEDUCTIVE SOUNDS of the juke box. PANNING across this ocean of sweat we find

BEN HEALY

shooting pool, alone, looking every inch the death of the party. A bottle of Jack Daniels rides the corner pocket. Meanwhile, across the room...

THE SEXIEST LEGS THIS SIDE OF HEAVEN

are moving toward him with cool authority. We FOLLOW at thigh level as we are led through traffic and right back to

BEN

who glances up from his cue... and almost rips the felt.

SELENA COOMBS

is hovering over him. Smart, sexy, and much too dangerous in a strapless dress.

SELENA

Hello, Ben. Conducting a raid?

Ben just stares at her.

SELENA

I wasn’t aware they allowed Law Enforcement in places like this.

BEN

I’m off duty.

SELENA

Lucky me. Rack your balls?

Selena lounges on the edge of the table, takes a slug of booze. Ben shakes his head.

BEN

Whatta you doin’ here, Selena?

SELENA

Trollin’.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

BEN
You can do that in a nicer neighborhood.

SELENA
I have certain needs that can’t be fulfilled... uptown.

Ben shoots... Scratches. Tries to gloss over it.

BEN
This ain’t my game.

SELENA
I can see that.

She smiles lasciviously.

SELENA
Need a teacher?

INT. MATT’S OFFICE - NIGHT

Matt’s at his desk, stirring coffee with a stick of gum. Rita pops her head in the door.

RITA
Dan said you wanted some files?

MATT
Oh, right... Thanks.

She places them in front of him. Notes his worn expression.

RITA
That boy’ll survive, you know... (gently pointed)
We all do.

Matt surrenders half a smile, opens a folder.

MATT
Were you here when his mother died?

RITA
Right on the floor.

MATT
What happened?

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

RITA
Day after Caleb was born, she started actin' crazy; convinced somebody was gonna steal her baby. We tried gettin' holda the father, but that little girl was throwin' a fit and he couldn't get away.

MATT
Merlyn?

RITA
(nods)
She'd been traumatized by somethin' earlier that year. No one knew why, but she'd just go off sometimes... Any rate, Mama was makin' such a fuss we had to call the sheriff...
(sighs)
He barely made it to her room before she threw herself out the window.

MATT
My God...

RITA
Yeah. After that, Caleb's Daddy was never the same. Blamed himself... Really blamed that girl.

MATT
Is this why the sheriff is so interested in Caleb?

Rita looks away, a trace of melancholy in her eyes...

RITA
Lucas is interested in everyone.

EXT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE AND JAIL - NIGHT

Lucas' car pulls up out front and he emerges. Standing majestically beneath the moonlight, he takes in his dominion, then moves toward the entrance.
INT. JAIL - NIGHT

A mulatto jailer, CAMMALOUS FRY, is seated behind a desk watching "The Andy Griffith Show". As Lucas enters, Cammalous snaps off the TV and pats down his hair.

CAMMALOUS

Hey, sheriff.

LUCAS

Evenin' Cammalous. How's the family?

CAMMALOUS

Picture perfect.

Lucas reaches behind the desk for a set of keys.

LUCAS

Your daughter get into that school?

CAMMALOUS

Sure did. And don't you worry, I'll be payin' you back as soon...

Lucas silences him with a paternal hand.

LUCAS

I ain't worried.

INT. CELL BLOCK - NIGHT

A rotting, nineteenth century lockup. Lucas makes his way down a dark hall, passing a number of empty cells encased in stone. Running his keys along the bars like a sadistic schoolboy, he whistles the theme from "The Andy Griffith Show". At the end of the corridor lies

GAGE

backed into a cell, staring out from the abyss.

GAGE

Where's my boy?

LUCAS

Almost home.

GAGE

You made this happen, didn't you?

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

    LUCAS
    Me?

    GAGE
    You make everythin' happen.

Lucas pulls a document from his pocket.

    LUCAS
    This form grants me sole custody of Caleb. I'd like you to sign it.

    GAGE
    I ain't signin' nothin'.

    LUCAS
    You care about his future?

Lucas pushes the document through the bars and holds a pen out like a carrot. With great reluctance, Gage takes the pen, slowly raises it aloft... Then holds. He'd like to shove it straight into Lucas' heart...

    LUCAS
    Too late for salvation, my friend.

    GAGE
    Not for me.

And Gage lowers the pen to his side. Lucas sighs.

    LUCAS
    You know... You may have a point.

Gage studies him warily.

    LUCAS
    You miss your wife, Gage?
    (beat)
    She was quite a woman, wasn't she?
    Some would say a Saint...

    GAGE
    Get out of here.

    LUCAS
    But I guess she just wasn't cut out for motherin'...

    (CONTINUED)
CONTINUED: 2

GAGE
Get out.

LUCAS
So she did the honorable thing; she took her life. Which spared her family her pain... And set her son free.
(the coup de grace)
Must be some salvation in that.

Tears are running down Gage's face. Lucas stuffs the document back in his pocket and starts down the hall.

LUCAS
Goodbye, Gage.

As he leaves, we PUSH IN on the pen still dangling from Gage's hand and

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Lucas' car slithers into an alley alongside the hospital. After a beat, he emerges and gazes intently at a window on the second floor.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Caleb is sleeping. We HOVER above his bed, slowly PUSHING IN on his face... and the DISSONANT SOUND begins. The same CHILLING SOUND we heard in the emergency room. Caleb's eyes open. He looks around nervously, reaches to turn on his bedside lamp.... CLICK. Nothing happens.

INT. HOSPITAL ADMITTING ROOM - NIGHT

An elderly black orderly, DAN, is seated behind the desk doing a crossword. Lucas enters and surreptitiously slips by him, moving toward the stairs. As he's almost out of sight...

DAN (O.S.)

Sheriff?

Lucas turns, caught like a rat.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

DAN
What's a five letter synonym for intelligent?

Lucas pauses for a moment, then...

LUCAS
Alert.

DAN
Oh... Right. Thanks.

And Dan goes back to his puzzle. Lucas shakes his head... and starts up the stairs.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

As the CHILLING SOUND grows, Caleb pulls himself from the bed and moves toward the door. He reaches for the knob... It's FREEZING COLD. He jumps back with a start and SEES

HIS BLOODY FINGERPRINTS

now visible through an icy frost on the doorknob.

INT. HOSPITAL STAIRWELL - NIGHT

Lucas approaches the second floor. Suddenly

A NURSE
crosses at the top of the stairs.

LUCAS
ducks down, and waits for her to clear. After a healthy pause... he rises, and continues his ascent.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Caleb is looking on in terror as

HIS FINGERPRINTS

begin to come alive. To re-liquefy and move, spreading beyond the knob to the door and the wall itself... Creating new forms... Letters... Letters of blood:
INT. SECOND FLOOR HOSPITAL HALL - NIGHT

Lucas surveys the hall. Matt's office door is closed. With clear intent, he starts toward Caleb's room.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Caleb can't believe his eyes. He takes a wary step back as HIS BLOODY FINGERPRINTS continues their eerie transformation. More letters materialize:

    O E O E S T H E O O

And then finally:

    S O M E O N E S A T T H E D O O R

And as this ominous warning registers on Caleb's face...

INT. SECOND FLOOR HOSPITAL HALL - NIGHT

Lucas reaches for Caleb's door knob... and suddenly into FRAME shoots

MATT'S HAND

grabbing his wrist and spinning him around. Though the SOUND RAGES in Caleb's room, not a trace is heard out here.

GO WIDE

    MATT

What do you think you're doing?

Lucas is thrown... but quickly recovers.

    LUCAS

Oh... Doctor. I was lookin' for ya.

    MATT

I'll bet you were.

Lucas reaches into his pocket...

    LUCAS

Would you give this to Caleb?

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

He pulls out a toy police car and hands it to Matt.

MATT
What's this for?

LUCAS
(smiles)
I forgot to give him his birthday present.

MATT
Really.

LUCAS
Yeah, well... I figured in light of what he's been through tonight... it was the least I could do.

Matt just stares at him. Not buying. And Lucas knows it.

LUCAS
(coldly)
Maybe I'll just...
(taking the car back)
...leave it at the front desk.

MATT
I'll walk you out.

And as they leave FRAME, we go

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Caleb is frozen in fear, as SOMEONE'S AT THE DOOR begins to fade, dissolving into these two final words:

GO HOME

And now, the message is clear.

CALEB

stumbles backward, this last salvo hitting it's mark, and as the CHILLING SOUND reaching MAXIMUM PITCH we

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO
ACT THREE

EXT. MANTIOKE TOWN SQUARE - THE NEXT MORNING

A bright, sunny morning and all is seemingly well. From the air we SLOWLY PUSH IN on

A COIF OF LADIES

gathered on the village green for a breakfast tea. Beneath mulberry parasols, the silk-skirted set listen raptly as a handsome African-American man, HENRY DAVENPORT, addresses them. Looking on proudly is DANIELLE DAVENPORT, his spouse and our newscaster from the previous evening. Above hangs a banner: "Pirate Days Frolic: June 10 - 27". We PUSH IN...

DAVENPORT
...And finally, I’d like to thank the Ladies Auxiliary for their generous support. To kick off this celebration...
(mock scary)
...Of our blood thirsty heritage...
(laugh among the ladies)
...We have two of Mantioke’s most notorious swashbucklers: Betty Dee and Lovey Lee Holland.

A pair of eighty year old twins emerge from the crowd and are met with rich applause. They are led to a couple of microphones and they take stage.

BETTY DEE
Thank you, Mr. Mayor. My sister and I are most happy to be here.

LOVEY LEE
I ain’t happy.

The crowd laughs.

BETTY DEE
(to Lovey)
We are both very proud.

ANOTHER ANGLE - ON GAIL IN THE MUSTANG

As she pulls up to a stop light. She glances out her window, taking in this spectacle from her car.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

BETTY DEE
(reaching into her purse)
I have prepared a short speech...

LOVEY LEE
I don’t need no speech. I had a vision this mornin’. A vision of evil...

BETTY DEE
Lovey, you promised...

Betty looks around nervously. The Mayor takes the mike, smiles with discomfort.

DAVENPORT
Uh... We all know Miss Lovey has the "second sight", so I’m sure we can indulge her...

Lovey Lee pulls herself to her feet.

LOVEY LEE
Don’t patronize me, Henry. We’re honorin’ the devil here...
(coughs)
And ya’ll know it.

Gail reacts.

BETTY DEE
(truly frightened)
Lovey, please don’t do this...

LOVEY LEE
(to the crowd)
Sittin’ there in your finery...
(coughs)
Pretendin’ you don’t know...
(more coughing)
Who I’m... I’m...

Lovey points skyward and begins coughing violently. The Mayor rushes to her side, as Betty looks on through tears.

BETTY DEE
She’s havin’ a seizure.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED: 2

DAVENPORT
(to an aide)
Call an ambulance.

THE CROWD
reacts in dismay as
GAIL
sticks her head out the window to SEE what Lovey had been pointing at:

THE GOTHIC MANSION
is directly above her, but what's most unsettling is that we can just make out Lucas' shadowy form, standing before the fireplace, watching everything from his picture window.

GAIL
gazes at this mysterious figure with curious trepidation...
HONK! She jumps in her seat, reacting to the impatience of the driver behind her. Hitting her gas pedal, Gail takes off down the road and we

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOSPITAL - MATT'S OFFICE - MORNING

Matt's pacing, chewing gum, downing coffee, reading a file. Rita enters in street clothes.

RITA
I'm goin' home, Matt.

MATT
Help me a sec... Caleb's mom died from massive head injuries...

RITA
You ever sleep?

MATT
But her body was filled with puncture wounds.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

RITA
I thought you were looking for relatives.

MATT
Why was she so cut up?

RITA
Glass from the window.

MATT
Right. But if you’re gonna kill yourself by jumping out a window...
Don’t you open it first?
(beat)
Was the sheriff the only one in the room when this happened?

RITA
Careful, Matt... Mr. Buck’s been around a lot longer then you have.

Matt grabs the phone and punches in a number.

MATT
Dan? What time they coming to pick up the Temple girl for autopsy?...
Too late to cancel?... Because I’d like to send her up to Chapel Hill...
(off Rita)
Yeah, I know the sheriff prefers... Jacksonville, but I want to go another way...

GAIL (O.S.)
Excuse me...

Rita spins around. Gail’s standing in the doorway.

GAIL
Are you Doctor Crower?

RITA
Uh... No.

MATT
(off Gail)
Dan? I’ll call you back.

(Continued)
CONTINUED: 2

Matt hangs up the phone, stares at this attractive young woman lingering in the hall.

MATT
Can I help you?

GAIL
I'm Gail Emory... Caleb Temple's cousin.

Matt's eyes light up...

GAIL
Our mothers were sisters.

Matt checks his file... and breaks into a smile.

MATT
The long, lost Uncle...

GAIL
Excuse me?

Matt moves toward her, shakes her hand warmly.

MATT
Welcome to the front, Ms. Emory.

GAIL
How's Caleb?

MATT
Why don't we find out.

Matt leads Gail out the door. We STAY with Rita, a look of deep concern on her face. She sighs... and picks up the phone.

INT. SECOND FLOOR HOSPITAL HALL - MORNING

Matt and Gail are moving toward Caleb's room.

MATT
When did you see him last?

GAIL
Actually, we've never met.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

MATT
(surprised)
Oh... Well, he's a great kid. He's been through a lot, but he seems pretty resilient. He's bright, sensitive...

GAIL
You don't have to sell me, Doctor.

MATT
Sorry. It's just that you may be all he's got left.

Matt eases open the door...

MATT
(sotto)
He was up pretty late...

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY
ON CALEB'S SLEEPING FORM - MATT AND GAIL'S P.O.V.
All we SEE is the top of a head protruding from the covers.
ON GAIL AND MATT
As she turns to him, whispers...

GAIL
Don't wake him.

MATT
Can you come back later? Say... noon?

Gail nods and Matt closes the door. We STAY IN THE ROOM and SLOWLY PUSH to the opposite side of the bed, REVEALING ELVIS' FACE
just popping out from beneath the covers.

EXT. WOODS - DAY
Caleb is walking through the forest, obviously exhausted from a long night's journey.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

There's little sunlight here, and the dense trees cast eerie shadows all around him. He reaches a country road, starts to cross, then HEARS an approaching car. He ducks down.

A WHITE CORVETTE

races by. We STAY WITH THE CAR.

INT. CORVETTE - MOVING - DAY

A very hung over Ben Healy's at the wheel. His hair's a mess, he's unshaven... And a familiar strapless dress lies provocatively on the passenger seat.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

ON A WOMAN'S BACK

as she draws a happy face on a blackboard, then turns...

SELENA COOMBS

is revealed, looking the antithesis of strapless in her conservative schoolmarm disguise. She smiles...

SELENA

Who's feelin' happy today?

ON THE CLASS OF FOURTH GRADERS

As every hand in the room goes up... except one: That of a nerdy, African-American kid, JOSS, seated by an empty desk.

SELENA

looks at him with faux concern.

SELENA

What's the matter Joss?

JOSS

I miss Caleb.

SELENA

Well, I'm sure we all do. But can't you put on your happy face for our special guest?

(continues)
CONTINUED:

Joss makes a halfhearted grin.

SELENA

That's better.
(calling)
We're ready for you, special guest.

LUCAS BUCK

enters, carrying a big greeting card and a bigger smile.

LUCAS

Howdy, kids.

THE CLASS

Hello, Sheriff Buck.

Selena applauds her student's well rehearsed greeting. Lucas tips his hat to the teacher and moves toward Joss.

LUCAS

Mind if I sit next to you?

Joss shakes his head. Lucas takes the empty desk.

LUCAS

I heard what you said, 'bout missin' your friend? That's why I'm here.
(to the class)
I'm sure ya'll know 'bout what happened last night. Caleb Temple needs our support. So...
(holding up a gold star)
Who wants to be deputized?

Every hand in the room shoots up.

LUCAS

Alright, then...

Lucas pulls a bag of plastic stars from his pocket, hands them to Joss with the greeting card.

LUCAS

Mayor's your daddy, right?

Joss nods.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED: 2

LUCAS
Then you're a natural born leader.
I'd like you to see that everyone
signs this for Caleb... And after
they do, you may deputize them as
"Junior Bucks". Handle that?

JOSS
Yessir.

LUCAS
Good man.

Lucas pats Joss' head and rises.

LUCAS
Miss Coombs... May I see you in
private?

INT. TEACHER'S LOUNGE - DAY

Lucas is spinning a giant globe. Selena's behind him,
massaging his shoulders.

LUCAS
How much did he tell you?

SELENA
Everything.

LUCAS
Son-of-a-bitch... Where's he now?

SELENA
Droppin' off my car.

LUCAS
You let him drive your car?

SELENA
It needed a wash.

Lucas looks at her pointedly.

SELENA
Well, I wasn't going to take him to
my apartment.

He snorts, turns away from her.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

LUCAS

How was he?

SELENA

Short.

LUCAS

I told you to test his loyalty, not his endurance.

SELENA

You work your way, I'll work mine. Besides, that deputy ain't your problem.

LUCAS

What do you mean?

SELENA

How much do you love me?

LUCAS

Depends.

SELENA

Well... This little information machine's got more news: Caleb's cousin's in town.

LUCAS

What?

SELENA

Little bird told me she popped into the hospital this morning "very concerned" about her kin.

LUCAS

Oh, Hell...

SELENA

Looks like you left some food on your plate, darlin'.... (smiles insidiously) Want me to clean it up for ya?

Lucas dismisses Selena with a wave and opens the door.

LUCAS

(patronizingly)
Put on your happy face, Miss Coombs... And get outta mine.
INT. JAIL CELL BLOCK - DAY

Cammalous is leading Matt down the long, rat infested hall.

CAMMALOUS

You expected?

MATT

No.

CAMMALOUS

Then he may not talk. He was in a foul mood last night. Sheriff told me to hold his breakfast.

They reach Gage's cell. He's seated, back to us on the bed.

CAMMALOUS

Got a visitor, Mr. Temple.

MATT

Gage? I'm Doctor Crower. I was wondering if I could ask you some questions about your wife...

Gage doesn't move. Matt looks at Cammalous. He shrugs.

MATT

Open the cell.

Cammalous reaches for the keys, pulls out his gun... And cautiously unlocks the door. Matt swings the old gate aside and enters. He takes a few steps, rounds the bed...

MATT

If you'll just give me a...

And then he SEES

GAGE'S HORRIFIC FACE

Mouth agape, eyes popping from their sockets... And the pen, jutting out of his throat. As a steady DRIPPING of blood continues to service the massive death pool between his legs

MATT

reacts with repulsion, and we

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE
ACT FOUR

EXT. TOBACCO FIELDS - DAY

Miles of copper colored leaves are swaying in the WIND. As dark storm clouds gather overhead, we PICK UP

CALEB

trudging through the tall plants. Tired and hungry, he reaches a clearing and stumbles onto a dirt road. Looking ahead, he SEES:

THE FARMHOUSE

about a mile away. An Andrew Wyeth nightmare, it sits ragged and alone against a blackening sky.

CALEB

stares at it with trepidation. A gust of WIND hits him in the face, he touches Merlyn's locket... and continues on.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

ON LUCAS' CAR

Lucas is at the wheel. Ben's tense as ever. Because of the clouds, it's quite dark now, and throughout this scene we'll hear intermittent rolls of THUNDER. Ben's just hanging up the radio receiver.

BEN

Cammalous said it looked like Gage'd been dead for hours.

LUCAS

Pity.

BEN

You got no conscience about anything, do ya?

LUCAS

Conscience is just the fear of gettin' caught, Ben.

Ben shifts his eyes. They ride in silence a moment, then...

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

BEN
I can’t be part of this no more.

LUCAS
That so...

BOOM! The car suddenly bolts...

BEN
(nervously)
What was that?

BOOM! Happens again...

LUCAS
Radiator.

WIDE ON THE CAR
As it lugs to the side of the road... And stops.

LUCAS
twists the key in the ignition, tries to turn it over...

LUCAS
Damn...
(sighs)
Open the hood.

Ben looks at him warily.

LUCAS
Come on, Ben... Ain’t got all day.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

We FOLLOW Ben as he cautiously makes his way toward the front of the car.

LUCAS
calls to him through the open driver’s side window.

LUCAS
We may have popped a hose. Check it out.

Ben hesitates...

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

BEN
Why don’t you come out here and help me?

LUCAS
(condescendingly)
Because someone’s got to start the engine.

Keeping one cautious eye on Lucas, Ben gingerly reaches across the hood, unlatches it, and pulls it up... All from the side of the car. Lucas shakes his head.

LUCAS
What are you doin’? Get in there and find out what’s wrong.

Ben looks at the engine... but keeps his distance.

BEN
I don’t see any hose.

LUCAS
Oh, Hell...

Lucas leaps from the driver’s seat, moves to the front of the car, and grabs something beneath the hood.

LUCAS
What’s this?
(then)
Probably clogged. Gimme your pen.

Ben reaches into his pocket... Feels around...

LUCAS
Come on, Ben...

BEN
I... can’t find it.

Ben continues to search with growing concern...

LUCAS
Your lucky pen’s missin’?

BEN
Yeah...

(Continued)
CONTINUED: 2

LUCAS

Gee...
(all innocence)
Wonder where it went?

Ben freezes... and the horrible realization hits.

BEN

Oh, my God...

LUCAS

Hey... You didn’t have anything to
do with Gage’s death... did ya?

BEN

Lucas...

LUCAS

No... Not you. Not my trusty
deputy... My faithful sidekick.
You’d never do anything like that.

BEN

Please, don’t do this...

LUCAS

You’re much to loyal, aren’tcha?
Just because it was your pen...
Your lucky, gold, monogrammed
pen... That was rammed into Gage’s
throat... That still don’t mean you
did it...
(smiles)
Right?

BEN

(panicking)
I... I was with Selena Coombs. All
night long.

LUCAS

Miss Coombs? That sweet little
school teacher? But I saw her
today and she said she’d spent a
quiet evenin’ at home gradin’
papers...
(pointedly)
And everybody knows, she wouldn’t
lie.

(CONTINUED)
CENI:

BEN

(breaking)

Why are you doing this to me?!!!

Lucas casually adjusts the hose, slams down the hood, and hops back into the car.

LUCAS

Just another lesson in perception,
Ben: All guilt is relative,
loyalty counts, and never let
your conscience be your guide.

As a great FLASH OF LIGHTING explodes above him, Lucas
DRIVES off... leaving Ben framed and mounted.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Gail stands before two headstones in an ancient cemetery.
After a reflective moment, she bends down, places a single
rose between them...

PETER MARK EMORY       CHRISTINE ALICE EMORY

...and wrestles with her emotions.

GAIL

I'm here, Mom... Dad... Bet you're
surprised to see me... I've always
wanted to come back... Guess I was
just too afraid...

Gail sighs. The rain begins to fall...

GAIL

There's a little boy here... who's
in the same situation as I was.
He's going to have a lot of
questions... and I don't know if I
can answer them. Maybe if I
understood what happened to you...
it would help.

(struggling)

I need to know the truth... Please
help me find it...

(with great resolve)

'Cause this time... I'm not leaving
'til I do.

We HOLD on Gail's determined face and go
INT. SECOND STORY HOSPITAL HALL - NOON

ON LUCAS' BOOTS

marching down the hall. With great purpose, they LEAD us to

DAN

who's seated outside Caleb's room, crossword in hand.

LUCAS (O.S.)

Caleb Temple in there?

Dan glances up.

DAN

Yessir.

LUCAS

I'm here to retrieve him.

DAN

(rising)

Sorry sheriff, but Doctor Crower called and said that no one's to
see the patient until...

INT. CALEB'S HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Lucas throws open the door, moves toward the bed. Dan's
right on his heels.

LUCAS

Caleb? You awake?

DAN

Hey...

Lucas keeps coming, checks his watch...

LUCAS

What kind of drugs they give you, boy?

Reaching the opposite side of the bed, he pulls the covers
aside and SEES

ELVIS' HEAD

staring at him mockingly.

(continued)
CONTINUED:

LUCAS

grabs the stuffed pillow case, rips the blankets aside...

   LUCAS
   (enraged)
   Where is he?

   DAN
   (panicking)
   I... I don't know.

Lucas moves forward... hesitates. He glances at the wall that carried Merlyn's bloody message... and touches it. A look of apprehension crosses his face. He takes a deep breath.... A dog, tracking it's prey.... And something registers.

   LUCAS
   (seething)
   Bitch.

Lucas suddenly races past Dan out the door. As the old orderly stares at the bed in dismay we

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HOSPITAL - DAY

ON THE RESCUE SQUAD VEHICLE - MOVING

Rounding a corner, and SCREECHING to a halt in the garage.

   MATT
leaps out the passenger door and races inside the building.

   MATT (V.O.)
   You check the emergency room?

INT. MATT'S OFFICE - DAY

Matt is grilling Dan as Gail looks on.

   DAN
   Been all over, Matt. He's gone.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

MATT
And you have no idea where the sheriff went?

DAN
No... He just shot outta here like wildfire.

Matt looks at Gail with deep concern...

MATT
We've got to find Caleb before he does.

GAIL
Well...
(sighs)
Someone here thinks he may have gone home...

Matt looks at her. She points out the door, and we follow Matt's gaze to REVEAL

LOVEY LEE
staring hauntingly out a window at the end of the hall.

GAIL (O.S.)
...to see his sister.

INT. FARMHOUSE - DAY

The front door swings open REVEALING

CALEB

in silhouette, standing on the threshold. The WIND is whipping at his clothes. He hits a light switch. Nothing happens. Ripping aside a piece of yellow crime tape, he steps into the room and looks around.

THE LIVING ROOM - DAY - CALEB'S P.O.V.

The carnage from the night before is frighteningly evident: Gage's broken glass... The overturned table... every dish in pieces... and the pathetic remains of Caleb's birthday cake.
CONTINUED:

CALEB

moves forward, picks up the cake and a few broken candles, and carries them to the foot of a staircase. Sitting down, he SEES:

THE DESECRATED REMAINS OF MERLYN’S DOOR
directly across from him, barely hanging from the frame.

CALEB

stares at the splintered wreckage, begins replacing the candles in his cake... And starts to cry.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

ON THE MUSTANG - MOVING

The RAIN is pouring now as Gail and Matt race toward the surrounding farmland. He’s got a map in his hand.

GAIL

How much further?

MATT

About five miles.

GAIL

You really think the sheriff is dangerous?

MATT

Let’s just say he’s got a great propensity for showing up just before people die.

Gail looks at him apprehensively... then puts the pedal to the metal and we go

INT. FARMHOUSE - DAY

Caleb is right where we left him, just placing the last candle in his cake. We can HEAR THE RAIN POUNDING on the tin roof as he reaches into his pocket, pulls out his matchbook... and STRIKES.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

AN EXPLOSION OF LIGHT

suddenly shoots out of Merlyn's bedroom.

CALEB

falls back against the wall as

THE GREAT SHAFT OF LIGHT

cuts through the room like a knife.

INT. MERLYN'S ROOM - DAY

We face the door as Caleb appears in FRAME, cautiously
moving toward us, into the light. The CHILLING SOUND is
emanating from within. Caleb reaches the door way, looks
into the room... and gasps.

THE IMAGE OF MERLYN

is standing before him like a surreal Goddess, wrapped in a
gown of white ribbon, holding a cake of a thousand candles.
Though beautiful, her movements and voice project an eerie
staccato quality, not unlike a ballerina on broken legs.

CALEB

(awe struck)
Merlyn...

She smiles softly.

MERLYN

Happy Birthday.

CALEB

Are you... a ghost?

MERLYN

No.

CALEB

Angel?

She looks deep into his eyes.

MERLYN

I'm your family.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

CALEB
(in absolute wonder)
You're... talkin'.

MERLYN
In life you were my voice... Now
you must hear me.
(with powerful intent)
Your father is coming.

CALEB
Daddy? But I thought he was...

MERLYN
You have the locket?

CALEB
Yes...

MERLYN
Open it.

CALEB
Why?

MERLYN
Because you need to know the truth,
Caleb.

Caleb hesitates...

MERLYN
Turn around... and open the locket.

Caleb stares at her a beat longer... then slowly turns and opens the tiny, silver heart. Suddenly... FLASH!

INT. FARMHOUSE LIVING ROOM - DAY

A muted image appears in the room:

CALEB'S MOTHER

is now seated before the fireplace in a rocking chair. She has a book in hand and has just posed for a photograph.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

SIX YEAR OLD MERLYN

runs up with a camera and jumps into her lap.

LITTLE MERLYN

Got your picture, Mama.

CALEB’S MOTHER

Sure did, Merlyn... Now, listen to the rest of the story.

CALEB

is stunned. He looks back to the image of Merlyn... She’s watching along with him.

CALEB’S MOTHER

starts to read:

CALEB’S MOTHER

...So on he went, deeper and deeper into the woods, until the Wolf finally arrived at Grandmother’s house...

LITTLE MERLYN

That where Daddy is?

CALEB’S MOTHER

Daddy’ll be home soon, honey.

The mother smiles, rubs Merlyn’s head, and continues reading...

CALEB’S MOTHER

When he reached the door, the Wolf scanned the forest to make sure he hadn’t been seen, then...

KNOCK, KNOCK.

CALEB

jumps, glances into the entry way, as

LITTLE MERLYN

leaps off her mother’s lap and scurries toward the front door. Swinging it open, she REVEALS

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED: 2

LUCAS BUCK

smiling brightly on the stoop.

LUCAS

Hello, darlin'. Mother here?

LITTLE MERLYN

calls to her mother innocently...

LITTLE MERLYN

Mama?... Someone's at the door.

As Merlyn's final words register, we SLAM IN on

CALEB'S FACE

watching Lucas cross the threshold.

CALEB'S MOTHER (O.S.)

What do you want?
(with trepidation)
Stay away from me...
(then)
No!!

WE HOLD TIGHT ON CALEB

As we HEAR the rocking chair CRASH to the floor and Caleb's
mother SCREAM IN PROTEST.

LITTLE MERLYN'S EYES

widen in horror as

CALEB

turns away, unable to watch... and unsure how to stop it.

LITTLE MERLYN

begins to shake violently as

CALEB

forces his eyes to return to the horror, suddenly WAILING...

CALEB

NOOOOOOOOOOO!!

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED: 3

He slams the locket shut... erasing his mother's AGONIZING CRIES and the tragic vision that surrounded him. Once again, there is only the SOUND of the RAIN outside. He turns to the vision of Merlyn, the reality of his violent conception now all too clear, and one tiny word escapes from his lips...

    CALEB

Why?...

Merlyn's image begins to fade away...

    MERLYN

Be careful, Caleb...
    (a whisper)
    Someone's at the door.

CRASH!
The front door flies open and

    LUCAS

appears on the threshold.

    CALEB

spins around, meets his gaze, and we

    GO WIDE

    LUCAS

No more runnin'... Son.

Caleb SCREAMS and races across the room, bolting up the stairs. Lucas enters, deeply inhales... and follows him.

    LUCAS

(calling)
    Listen to me, boy: There's only two roads in this world, and if you're listenin' to anyone but me, you're on the wrong one.

Reaching the top of the staircase, Lucas SEES:

    A WALL LADDER

at the hall's end, leading to a trap door in the ceiling.
EXT. FARMHOUSE - DAY

ON GAIL’S MUSTANG

As it sloshes to a stop out front, right next to Lucas’ car. They both leap from the car and we go

INT. FARMHOUSE ATTIC - DAY

Caleb is hurriedly moving through the cobwebs toward an old sea chest beneath a broken window. Throwing the lid open, we REVEAL

A CASE OF APPLEJACK

Gage’s secret stash. Caleb pulls out one of the bottles as

LUCAS

pops his head through the trap door.

LUCAS

Caleb... I’m only doin’ this ‘cause I care.

Caleb clears the glass from the window, then rips the top off the whiskey and begins pouring it across the floor. Lucas moves toward him...

LUCAS

That’s good liquor you’re wastin’, son.

Caleb looks Lucas right in the eye... And pulls out his matchbook.

CALEB

I ain’t your son.

With that, he STRIKES a match and tosses it onto the floor, igniting A WALL OF FIRE between them. In that instant, he leaps through the window... And disappears.

LUCAS

start to move after him, when...

GAIL (O.S.)

Hey!

He spins around and SEES

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

GAIL

standing behind him, as Matt pulls himself up into the room.

    GAIL
    What do you think you’re doing?!

LUCAS

is thunderstruck. He looks deep into Gail’s eyes...

    LUCAS
    You...

    GAIL
    Where’s Caleb?

    LUCAS
    (in amazement; to Gail)
    You’ve... You’ve come back...

Gail looks to Matt with confusion. He picks up the ball.

    MATT
    Yeah, she’s come back. Now, where’s the boy?

Lucas just keeps staring at Gail, as if he’s in a trance. Matt grabs him by the collar.

    MATT
    (screams)
    Where’s Caleb?!!

Matt’s outburst suddenly breaks Lucas’ daze. Regaining his purpose, he pulls away, leaps through the wall of fire... and pushes his head out the window.

EXT. REAR OF FARMHOUSE - DAY

ON CALEB - LUCAS’ P.O.V.

two stories below, just pulling himself from the hay loft. The boy takes off on a dead run, racing through the rain into the tobacco fields, leaving

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

LUCAS

surrounded by flames. As the veins in his neck begin to pulsate, his mouth opens and the voice of a monster EXPLODES from his gullet...

LUCAS

CAAAAALEEEEEEEEB!!!

And that's where we leave him, as we BLAST across the countryside toward

THE GOTHIC MANSION

looming in the distance. FLYING toward it at warp speed, we zero in on the picture window. The fire is ROARING inside as we hit the glass, REVEALING

A GREAT PORTRAIT

hanging above the fireplace. A man and woman are dressed in Eighteenth century wedding garb, but it's their faces that stop us dead: Lucas... and Gail. As this prophetically horrifying image blinds us in anticipation of darker things to come, we slowly

FADE OUT.

THE END