

TUG

Written by
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Based on Actual Events

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EXT. MAYLIF FAMILY FARMLAND IN HARTSELLE, ALABAMA - JULY 5TH -
1963

Tug Maylif and Sinclair Washington are sitting on a downed tree that once stood as a wind shield for the corn field behind them.

Tug Maylif (25) is white, very tall and broad but not fat.

Sinclair Washington (12) is black, slim and is fairly tall for his age, but Tug still towers over him.

They don't say a word but appear quite content to be together.

Tug, wearing a thick leather Falconer's glove, holds out his arm to catch a Falcon named Chuck that swoops down and clutches the gloved arm.

SINCLAIR

Damn, Tug, it's Chuck, ain't seen
him for a few days.

Chuck lets out a screech.

Sinclair palms his ears.

SINCLAIR (CONT'D)

Damn, my ears!

Tug smiles a little, faces Sinclair and nods as if giving permission for something.

Sinclair stands and pets the Falcon.

After a few seconds, Tug nods, again, and Sinclair pulls away and sits back down.

Chuck lets out another screech.

Sinclair palms his ears, again.

Tug smiles as Chuck flies away.

INT. INSIDE A LATE 50'S FORD PICKUP TRUCK.

Grace and Henry Maylif, Tug's parents, are driving down a gravel road.

Both are greying and are slightly plump.

Henry's wearing overalls and Grace is wearing a full, baby-blue floral dress.

They spot Tug and Sinclair sitting on the log.

Grace puts a hand to her check and shakes her head.

Henry glances at Grace and appears impatient.

HENRY

You fret on everything. Sinclair's a good colored boy. All three Washingtons are good.

GRACE

Oh, I guess we're lucky to have good ones close by instead of nasty ones.

HENRY

Folks understand. They know Tug ain't right in the head and makes friends with everybody and everythang. They ain't blamin' us.

GRACE

Tug does get on our milkers, bright and early.

HENRY

Works like a mule. Tug's always got the bottles filled an' capped, ready fer delivery. No complaints on his work.

GRACE

Bless Tug . . .

Grace nods.

. . . and Sinclair.

Grace and Henry wave as they pass Tug and Sinclair, who wave back.

Tug shows no expression, and Sinclair flashes a huge smile.

GRACE (CONT'D)

I ain't heard you tryin' ta get Tug ta talk recently?

HENRY

You say that at least once a week, woman.

GRACE

'cause I wanna know once a week.

Both are exasperated.

HENRY

Look who's talkin', tryin' ta get him ta learn sign language and all. That's like givin' up as far as I'm concerned.

GRACE

I'm tryin' my way.

HENRY

I got my own damn way, too, woman. Oh, you do try me.

GRACE

You ain't got it, yet, after thirty five years of marriage? Everythang's yer fault.

HENRY

Ain't that the damn truth. Anyway, the boy probably needs a good reason to talk. Doc says his vocal cords are good.

GRACE

He says a few words. There'll be more. But it's been two decades since Lily trampled him.

HENRY

I was happy ta eat that hog. Six hundred thirty pounds, took me forever ta butcher Lily. Even after givin' half of the meat away, still took years ta eat her. Hell, women stay on yer ass even long after they're dead.

GRACE

Mind your tongue!

Henry and Grace, having passed Tug and Sinclair a half mile back, pass a ranch style brick house with a small barn in back and in back of that, thick forest.

GRACE (CONT'D)

We deliverin' them milk now?

HENRY

Gallon a day, got four kids that eat and drink big. I guess that rocket man husband ain't shy at the dinin' table either.

GRACE

Redstone Arsenal, right?

HENRY

Workin' with them Nazi boys.

GRACE

He a Nazi?

HENRY

Naw, only them big boys out thar are Nazi rocket scientists. Or were. Hell, who knows? The other engineers are Americans with college degrees an' such.

GRACE

I hear Kathleen looks like First Lady Jackie.

HENRY

Kathleen's prettier. Some say, 'cause she dyes her hair blond, she looks more like Marilyn Monroe.

Grace slaps Henry on the arm.

GRACE

Both 'er dangerous.

Henry chuckles.

HENRY

Well, ya asked, girl.

EXT. CROSS DRUG STORE, DOWNTOWN DECATUR - FIFTEEN MINUTES BY CAR FROM HARTSELLE - LATE AFTERNOON

A white woman, Kathleen Wagner (34), is with her children Jake (12), Karen (10), Sissy (8) and Paul (7).

Kathleen is wearing tight-red, short pants, a white blouse and sandals with moderately high heels.

Karen is holding a small broom.

The family is walking up to the drug store when a young black woman, carrying too many boxes, struggles up to the drugstore entrance.

When Kathleen sees her, she immediately opens the door for her.

But the black woman, with a look of fearful gratitude, doesn't walk through the door.

Instead, she panics, which makes her lose control of the boxes and drops them.

The black woman quickly stacks them up on the ground and then picks up the stack.

Kathleen still has the door open for her.

KATHLEEN

Oh, please go in.

BLACK WOMAN

Oh, no, ma'am. I can't do that.
Thank you, though.

KATHLEEN

Oh, for heaven's sake. You're gonna drop those boxes, again.

The children stand back.

Kathleen looks into the store toward the soda fountain counter. Sitting there are four men who are looking at the black woman with obvious anger.

There's a portly, older white woman in a pink dress and white apron working behind the soda fountain counter, who is nervously wiping the counter and glancing at the door.

KATHLEEN (CONT'D)

(To the black woman)

Do you see how they're looking at you? Oh, my!

BLACK WOMAN

Yes, ma'am, and that's just fine now. Thank you, but please, ma'am . . . You and the children gotta go in before me.

Kathleen says nothing more and enters with the children and hurries past the soda fountain toward the prescription counter.

The men, not trying to hide their lust, look at Kathleen, up and down.

ONE OF THE MEN
Damn, yer fine, girl!

ANOTHER OF THE MEN
(To the other men)
How can she look that good after
foldin' four of 'em. Damn, woman!

Kathleen hears them, turns around and looks at them with a look of slightly confused disgust.

Larry, the pharmacist, calls out from the back.

LARRY THE PHARMACIST
(Playful but firm)
Hold yer tongue, boys. She's got
children with 'er.

JAKE
(To Larry)
It's okay. We're used to it.

KATHLEEN
(To Jake)
Jake, oh, my God!

The other kids giggle, nervously.

The first man who talked turns in his stool and faces Kathleen.

THE FIRST MAN WHO TALKED
(With focused seriousness)
Hell, yer so fine, we are blind to
yer youngins. How 'bout me bein'
yer mink stole?

KATHLEEN
No, thank you, sir. I already have
one.

The children, sensing that the situation is taking on a more serious tone, hold on to each other. Paul and Sissy hold on to Kathleen's dress.

LARRY THE PHARMACIST (O.S.)
(With a chuckle)
She's a lady, boys. And, I'm not
gonna say it, again--she's got kids
with 'er.

SECOND MAN WHO TALKED
 'kay, Larry, we'll let Marilyn
 Monroe get her medicine.

Kathleen tries to make light of the situation and turns to the four men and smiles, at which point all four men turn to face her.

She mimics Marilyn and blows them a kiss and winks.

KATHLEEN
 Boop boopy doo!

The men are paralyzed with lust and can't move.

They turn slowly back around, speechless, and glare at the soda fountain lady, who folds her arms, looks at the four men as though they're children.

WOMAN BEHIND THE COUNTER
 Stew's gettin' cold, boys.

ONE OF THE MEN
 Naw, Marilyn's keepin' my stew nice
 and hot.

The four men laugh.

Kathleen reaches the pharmacy in the back where Larry, the pharmacist, smiles at her and shakes his head.

Larry, a good looking man, has a fake arm.

Kathleen gazes at it.

LARRY THE PHARMACIST
 The real one's somewhere in
 Okinawa. I'm Larry Cross.

KATHLEEN
 My goodness, a war hero.

LARRY
 I'd rather have the arm. But, hey
 there, thank ya.

Kathleen giggles and looks back at the door where the young black woman is still struggling to get the boxes through the door.

LARRY (CONT'D)
 You and the kids okay after dealin'
 with the Coleen at the door?

KATHLEEN
 (Slightly nonplused)
 She was very polite.

LARRY
 Ya'll are the ones from California,
 right? Kathleen Wagner, are ya?
 Talked with ya on the phone?

KATHLEEN
 That's me. That's us.

She points to each child.

KATHLEEN (CONT'D)
 Jake, Karen, Sissy, and Paul.

LARRY
 Good to met ya'll. Redstone
 Arsenal, is it?

Jake shrugs his shoulders.

Kathleen becomes very uncomfortable.

KATHLEEN
 Excuse me, how did you know that?

LARRY
 Nobody comes here from California
 unless the husband's gonna be
 working in the Space Program. Lots
 of 'em come from Aerojet near Los
 Angeles, I understand. Husband an
 engineer?

KATHLEEN
 That's him.

LARRY
 Well, I've got his insulin for ya.
 Tell me. He must be pretty young.
 How'd he get diabetes?

KATHLEEN
 He thinks it was caused by all the
 test flying he did in new jet
 planes after the war.

LARRY
 (A little suspicious)
 Golly, I didn't know jets could
 give ya diabetes . . .

(MORE)

LARRY (CONT'D)
 Unless, of course, he was eatin'
 all kinda treats in that cockpit.

KATHLEEN
 (Ambivalent giggle)
 I'm happy you didn't lose your
 sense of humor in Okinawa as well.

Larry chuckles.

Kathleen glances back and sees that the young black woman is walking through the store with the packages.

On her way past the soda fountain, one of the men at the counter lightly punches her stack of boxes, and all of the boxes fall to the floor.

The man who punched the boxes looks over to the pharmacist, seemingly for approval.

LARRY
 (To the culprit at the
 counter)
 It's just greeting card stock. All
 the same, I'll ask ya to be careful
 with my boxes.

MAN AT THE COUNTER
 Sorry, Larry, but my fist got all
 excited by little Marilyn over
 thar.

LARRY
 Enjoy your stew, boys.

Larry rolls his eyes.

Kathleen is very concerned for the young woman, who gives Kathleen a please-don't-help-me look.

Every man at the counter is watching to see what Kathleen's going to do.

Kathleen contains herself.

LARRY (CONT'D)
 (To Kathleen)
 Pilots are a different breed.

Kathleen snaps out of her concerned state.

KATHLEEN
 (Smiles)
 P-38 Lightnings.

LARRY

Now, there's yer heroes! 38s were the best. They made mince meat outa those krauts. Funny, and now he's workin' with 'em out at the Arsenal. Funny how that goes.

KATHLEEN

Gotta give ya that one.

The pharmacist gives the kids a thorough looking over.

LARRY

Gonna stop at four of 'em?

Jake, the oldest boy, laughs.

JAKE

She better stop. I got too many to take care of now!

Karen socks Jake on the shoulder.

KAREN

You don't take care of nothing.

LARRY

(To Karen)

Why the broom, little thang?

KAREN

I'll sweep the floor for ya?

Larry laughs.

KATHLEEN

Children will be children. Time to go, kids.

LARRY

(With genuine concern)

Well, now, ya'll be careful. Remember, we might have some educated, sophisticated rocket boys out here, but that doesn't make this California.

Larry hands her the insulin.

KATHLEEN

I'll remember that. Thank you. Until next time, then.

LARRY

We'll continue where we left off.

INT. KATHLEEN'S FAMILY HOUSE - HARTSELLE - THAT NIGHT

Kathleen and husband Rob are reading in bed.

KATHLEEN

. . . you don't seem too concerned with what happened to that colored girl at the drug store.

Rob lays his book down.

ROB

Guys at work say that's the way it is here.

KATHLEEN

Why did Werner Von Braun want to do his research here? In such a terrible place?

ROB

I don't think he cares either way. He thinks about his research, not much else. A real egg head.

KATHLEEN

(Giggles)

A handsome egghead.

ROB

Rich one, too. Some say he's getting two hundred thousand a year. Damn, the Americans there are lucky to get twenty five thousand. And Germans, the ones working directly with Van Braun, get at least thirty percent more than we get.

KATHLEEN

They were so nasty to that girl, Rob. I felt ashamed for not being able to help her.

ROB

We have to mind our own business.

Kathleen kisses Rob goodnight, then turns off the lamp.

ROB (CONT'D)
I wasn't finished reading.

KATHLEEN
You're finished now. You have to
get up early for that rocket test,
remember?

Rob chuckles.

ROB
Such a bitch, but you are my bitch.

Rob laughs and reaches over and hugs her.

Kathleen giggles, sarcastically, and pushes him away.

KATHLEEN
Why do men think that word is
romantic? It literally means
"female dog!"

ROB
Okay, you can call me the word for
"male dog."

KATHLEEN
That word would be, "dog."

ROB
No kidding?

Kathleen nods.

ROB (CONT'D)
Don't call me dog.

They both laugh and start tickling each other.

EXT. BONNER'S GENERAL STORE AND GAS STATION

Bonner's store is on one corner of intersecting, paved farm roads. There's a small diner on another corner and a beauty salon on another.

There are no other businesses or residences around.

Bonner's store, with several warehouses to the side and in back (around two thousand square feet each), is a fairly large operation as Chet and brother Don Bonner sell groceries, hardware, feed for all farm animals, seed and fertilizer, etc.

On Bonner's front porch, Henry Maylif, Don Bonner, and Stinky Whitfield are all wearing overalls and boots and are sitting on chairs except for Tug Maylif, who's standing to the side of them as if waiting for something.

Except for Tug, the men are middle-aged plus, all have beer guts, and are all successful farmers.

Kathleen Wagner, in an early 60s Mercury Station Wagon, pulls in for some gas. She's alone.

Kathleen is wearing what she'd wear in Los Angeles: tight lime slacks and a small white blouse tied in a bow just above her navel.

She hops out of the car, walks quickly around to the store-side of the car and, facing the store's front porch, leans on the Mercury front fender.

Chet Bonner steps out of the front door.

CHET BONNER

(To Tug)

Tug, we'll have that milker feed in the back o' yer truck before ya know it.

Tug nods.

When the men take notice of Kathleen, all them stand and hurry out to help her.

CHET BONNER (CONT'D)

Fill her up, ma'am?

Kathleen giggles and twitches in a very sexy way.

KATHLEEN

Can you do everything?

The men are all standing around smiling at her except Tug, who seems more concerned for her welfare.

CHET BONNER

If there's somethin' I can't do, then I guess one o' these boys can.

KATHLEEN

(Smiles)

Well, then, get to it, boys.

The men are helpless with pure awe and can't stop staring and smiling.

Tug hurries over and stands between Kathleen and the men and waves them all back to the porch except for Chet and Don Bonner.

Chet and Don get started--pumping gas, checking oil and tires, washing the all the windows, etc.

Stinky Whitfield, who is now re-seated on the porch, again, shouts.

STINKY WHITFIELD

Them Bonner boys'd never do all
that fer me!

CHET BONNER

(Loudly back)
That's 'cause yer not as charmin'.

KATHLEEN

Why, thank you, sir.

CHET BONNER

It's Chet Bonner, ma'am.

DON BONNER

I'm Don Bonner, ma'am. We're the
owners.

KATHLEEN

Kathleen Wagner, kind sirs.

STINKY WHITFIELD

(Loudly from the porch)
She'd be a lot more charmin' if
she'd jiggle it a little bit.

Tug, Chet, and Don turn to Stinky.

CHET BONNER

Stinky, she's standin' right here
in front of us! She can hear ya
clear as a cow bell. Sometimes ya
try my good nature.

HENRY MAYLIF

Stinky tries all of nature.

DON BONNER

You know Chet was a medic in the
big one, Stinky, and yer about ta
need his services if'n ya don't
shut that nasty hole 'o yers.

STINKY WHITFIELD

Only thang gonna need a medic is my
big ol' auger after I get done.

Tug hurries up to Stinky, stands in front of him and folds
his arms.

CHET BONNER

I ain't got the knowhow ta mend ya
after Tug snaps yer spine, Stinky.

Stinky puts up his hands and seems to be settling down.

CHET BONNER (CONT'D)

(To Kathleen)

Please forgive Stinky. He really is
Stinky.

KATHLEEN

It's okay. I get that kinda thing
sometimes.

CHET BONNER

Well, now, first time we've had the
privilege of your patronage. The
Wagner family that bought the
Robert's place?

KATHLEEN

Word sure gets around fast here.

DON BONNER

There ain't nobody gonna miss a
classy lady like you.

KATHLEEN

Why, thank you.

Chet and Don finish their work on the Mercury, and they walk
back up to Kathleen.

CHET BONNER

Tell ya what, that'll be on us,
today, dear.

Kathleen quickly digs into her purse.

KATHLEEN

Oh, no, I insist.

DON BONNER

After what Stinky done, we ain't
takin' no money from ya today.

KATHLEEN
Well, you are sweet.

CHET BONNER
(Winking)
Sweet as momma's pie.

DON BONNER
Depends on whose momma yer talkin'
'bout.

CHET BONNER
Well, Don, I believe we had the
same mother?

DON BONNER
I'll be damned.

Kathleen giggles.

STINKY WHITFIELD
Shit, girl, even when ya just
talkin', ya jiggle somehow. Ain't
fair. Damn.

All the other men look at Stinky with great frustration.

HENRY MAYLIF
Stinky, ya lookin' for a whippin'?

Stinky stands and bows to Kathleen.

STINKY WHITFIELD
I do hope ya forgive me, ma'am . .
. And my big ol' auger right along
with that.

Stinky laughs. The other men shake their heads.

CHET BONNER
Kathleen, he ain't here all the
time. Please, don't let him keep ya
from comin' back.

Kathleen quickly makes for the driver's side door.

Chet follows her.

Before she gets in, she whispers to Chet.

KATHLEEN
I understand. He's harmless,
probably be polite as a kitten if
he were the only man here.

Chet looks confused.

EXT. BONNER'S STORE FRONT PORCH - CONTINUOUS

Kathleen has left, and all the men are boyishly congratulating Chet.

DON BONNER

Did you boys see Chet wick at that sweet little thang?

STINKY WHITFIELD

An' Chet was harpin' on me. Shithead. I believe Chet'll do just about anythang to that fine little milker.

CHET BONNER

Yeah, good thang Stinky didn't get too close, or he'd o' done somethin' he'd regret . . . Like stink her out.

STINKY WHITFIELD

Aw, women love my smell.

They all sit back down.

HENRY MAYLIF

Stinky, thar ain't nobody that likes the way you smell.

STINKY WHITFIELD

Yer sittin' next ta me, ain't ya?

HENRY MAYLIF

Ya got land, an' ya purchase my milk.

STINKY WHITFIELD

An' that's 'cause the next milk is eighteen miles away. Ya got this market cornered.

CHET BONNER

The Maylifs got the best milk 'cause they purchase their milker feed right here.

STINKY WHITFIELD

If all ya'll 're okay with me, again, I got a question fer ya'll dumb shits.

The others look at Stinky, shake their heads, and wait for the question.

STINKY WHITFIELD (CONT'D)
 Okay, tell me. We know that little
 milker has gotta be the finest
 thang in Northern Alabama. Right?

Everybody nods and chuckles.

STINKY WHITFIELD (CONT'D)
 I know all a you'd poke 'er in a
 second.

Everybody glances at one another.

STINKY WHITFIELD (CONT'D)
 You'd kiss 'er, lick on 'er. You'd
 eat everythang. Am I right?

The men look at each other in dark anticipation.

CHET BONNER
 (Condescendingly)
 I believe you're on to somethin'
 real nasty here, Stinky.

They all shrug their shoulders, except Tug and Henry, who are getting disgusted.

STINKY WHITFIELD
 Okay, now, we agree that we'd all
 poke that springy little flower,
 right?

There are some tentative chuckles.

STINKY WHITFIELD (CONT'D)
 But would you do something I'm sure
 none of ya ever done?

DON BONNER
 Tell us where yer goin' with this.

Stinky gets very serious, leans forward as if getting ready to tell an important secret.

STINKY WHITFIELD
 Would you suck her snot?

The others are stunned.

STINKY WHITFIELD (CONT'D)
 Time to grow up, boys. I'm asking
 ya this: would you suck that baby
 doll's snot? Damnit, would you suck
 it dry?

Chet smirks and looks at Stinky with resigned disgust.

CHEAT BONNER
 What if it's already dry?

STINKY WHITFIELD
 That's a fair question. Okay, then,
 we'll give her hey fever.

All the men look at Stinky as though they think he's sick.

STINKY WHITFIELD (CONT'D)
 Hey, now, I ain't never done it.
 I'm just askin' ya'll. Who would
 suck her snot? Go ahead. Raise yer
 hands.

Nobody raises a hand.

STINKY WHITFIELD (CONT'D)
 'kay, now. I'm takin' that ta mean
 that nobody would suck her snot?

DON BONNER
 Well, if I was single, I'd suck on
 most anythang else. But. . .

Just then, a customer pulls in driving a 1960 Ford pickup
 truck.

It's Aubrey Washington, a black man (41), Sinclair
 Washington's father.

Aubrey steps out of his truck, looks around and then ambles
 confidently up to the front porch.

He's tall, handsome and clean-cut, and is wearing clean
 overalls, clean boots, and a bow tie.

All the white men appear glad to see Aubrey except Stinky,
 whose expression shows disgust.

AUBREY
 It's a pleasure to see you
 gentlemen.

HENRY
 Same to ya, Aubrey!

CHET BONNER
Fertilizer's here finally.

Aubrey notices Stinky's sneer.

AUBREY
Mr. Whitfield, you okay? Ya look
like you just drank some curdled
milk.

The others chuckle.

Chet looks a little worried.

CHET BONNER
Aubrey, forty pound bags okay?

AUBREY
Yes, sir, Mr. Bonner. That'd be
just fine.

Stinky sits up straight as though a good idea just dawned on
him.

STINKY WHITFIELD
Aubrey, I got a question fer ya.

AUBREY
Yes, sir, Mr. Whitfield. What can I
do for you today?

Stinky gets a little indignant.

STINKY WHITFIELD
You know the new family just down
the road from ya?

AUBREY
Yes, sir, met 'em a few times. Very
nice family.

STINKY WHITFIELD
Would you agree that the wife's
damn beautiful?

Aubrey hesitates, glances at everyone.

CHET BONNER
Stinky, maybe you shouldn't ask him
that crap.

Aubrey becomes a little embarrassed.

STINKY WHITFIELD

Would you suck her snot, Aubrey? I mean, from her nose? Ya know?

Tug rolls his eyes and gets a little angry.

AUBREY

(Without hesitation)

No, sir. That would not be proper.

Tug smiles big and looks away.

Stinky looks very confused.

DON BONNER

(To Aubrey)

I think Stinky had a little too much last night.

AUBREY

Yes, sir. It happens to the best of us.

CHET BONNER

The worst of us, too.

Aubrey is obviously concerned that Stinky's anger is welling up and wants to show his understanding.

AUBREY

Mr. Whitfield, I guess I would think about suckin' snot but only if it's my wife's. But the situation would have to be just right. Ya know?

Stinky smiles.

STINKY WHITFIELD

I knew you was a snot sucker. A snot suckin' nigger!

Stinky laughs and looks to the others for validation, but none of them laugh.

Aubrey shows no emotion.

AUBREY

(To Chet)

Mr. Bonner, I'll just back up my truck into the warehouse.

CHET BONNER
 We'll be out to help ya load real
 soon.

Aubrey exits.

CHET BONNER (CONT'D)
 (Shaking his head)
 Stinky?

STINKY WHITFIELD
 (Angery)
 Ya'll defended a nigger over me?

The others glance at each other with a "who me?" expression.

CHET BONNER
 Aubrey ain't just any colored man,
 Stinky. You know that.

STINKY WHITFIELD
 I've had enough o' that.

CHET BONNER
 Aubrey's ten percent of my
 business. Shit, if he wants to, he
 can trade in Huntsville or Decatur.
 They'd love to have him. He owns a
 lot o' land, leases out a ton more.
 He even employed yer grandson last
 harvest through the 4-H Club, paid
 him damned well, too. Good extra
 money for the boy.

STINKY WHITFIELD
 My only boy that's alive! I hate
 educated niggers. It's niggers that
 gave my boy Sanders polio.

The others roll their eyes.

DON BONNER
 Aubrey's like a white man, Stinky.
 You gotta give 'im that.

Chet cringes at Don, who shrugs his shoulders.

STINKY WHITFIELD
 I ain't givin' that nigger shit.

CHET BONNER
 Well, you ain't gonna keep given
 'im shit in my store, damnit!

Tug stands, walks over to Stinky and stands in front of him.

Then he begins to shake his head and move his index finger from side-to-side.

STINKY WHITFIELD

See thar, Chet, you done got Tug
all over my ass.

CHET BONNER

No, Stinky, you got Tug all over
yer own ass.

Stinky storms out of the store.

CHET BONNER (CONT'D)

There's somethin' different about
Stinky lately.

HENRY MAYLIF

Yeah, he stinks a lot worse.

EXT. STINKY WHITFIELD'S HOUSE - SAME DAY - LATE AFTERNOON

A fairly large farm house in good shape but could use new paint.

INT. THE WHITFIELD KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

At the kitchen table, Stinky's having a beer and his wife, Gertrude, is having coffee.

Gertrude is greying and is slightly portly.

GERTRUDE

I heard you had words, again, with
Audery Washington at Bonner's.

STINKY WHITFIELD

Damn, that happened just today 'an
ya already heard?

Gertrude nods.

GERTRUDE

I know even before it happens,
Stinky.

STINKY WHITFIELD

Weren't nothin', just a nigger
bein' a nigger. They tell ya what
words we was havin'?

GERTRUDE

It was so disgustin' I could hardly listen.

STINKY WHITFIELD

'at bastard, Chet! I'm gonna stop tradin' thar, damnit!

GERTRUDE

Ya don't know it was Chet. Anyhow, ain't nobody else gonna give ya the kind o' credit Chet does. Look, I'm on yer side 'cause yer my man, but I can go only so far with yer lies.

STINKY WHITFIELD

What lies?

GERTRUDE

Everybody thinkin' that ya hate coloreds 'cause a colored family got their polio vaccines before Sanders did. The lie that says the coloreds was in front of Sanders in the line 'an they got the last vaccines . . . 'an that's why Sanders come down with polio 'an passed on. Don't be tellin' that crap to this new Wagner family. Ya hear?

Stinky grimaces.

STINKY WHITFIELD

It's true.

GERTRUDE

(Resolute)

No, it ain't true.

Stinky hammers the table with his fist.

STINKY WHITFIELD

It's true! It's true!

GERTRUDE

I was right thar with ya and Sanders, Stinky. How many times we gotta talk about this?

Gertrude leans forward, points an index finger at Stinky.

GERTRUDE (CONT'D)

Now, the day before we took Sanders, he was at football practice 'an couldn't get the vaccine with the other kids.

Stinky can't stand what he's hearing and grimaces more.

GERTRUDE (CONT'D)

We had ta go the next day. I was right thar in line with ya'll. The folks in line ahead of us was the Maylif family. The Maylifs. Tug couldn't come the day before for the same reason Sanders couldn't come. Last time I seen the Maylifs, Stinky, they was still white people. Plus, thar never was coloreds in that line 'cause coloreds had thar own line on the other side o' Decatur.

Stinky is really steaming up.

GERTRUDE (CONT'D)

You been lynchin' coloreds ever since Sanders passed. I know ya been involved in at least two lynchin's an' four others disappeared, mostly innocent young men. Why ain't ya lynchin' the Maylifs?

STINKY WHITFIELD

'cause they ain't niggers! An', hey, what's ta keep the Maylifs from tellin' the world?

GERTRUDE

(Yelling)

'cause they don't want everybody ta think that they were the reason Sanders died. They just happen to be thar. It's all yer blind rage, Stinky. Yer a bad man, an' I gotta be yer wife.

Stinky leans over and slaps her across the face, knocking her to the floor.

Gertrude doesn't cry and, grimacing in pain, slowly rises, proudly facing Stinky.

GERTRUDE (CONT'D)

Our other children aren't here
 helpin' with the farm 'cause they
 hate ya, Stinky. I gotta hire out.
 I wish I could hate ya just as
 much. You shame Sanders's memory
 and the memories of them boys ya
 killed. An' one more thang, ya
 better stay the Hell away from
 Kathleen Wagner's nose.

Stinky hurries over to her and slaps her to the floor, again,
 and then hurries out of the house.

EXT. ON KATHLEEN'S AND ROB'S FAMILY LAND

Rob Wagner and his two step daughters, Sissy and Karen, are
 outside between their four-bedroom, brick-veneer home and a
 large barn.

Rob's an amateur archer and is holding a large bow and has
 arrows in a sash over his shoulder.

The girls are wearing two-piece swim suits, and Karen is
 carrying a black innertube.

ROB

Stay next to solid ground, girls.
 It's not too deep, but I understand
 it's six feet or so toward the
 middle.

KAREN

Okay, Rob.

SISSY

Okay, Rob.

ROB

I married your mother, you know.
 You can call me "daddy."

KAREN

Mom says we won't be your kids
 until you adopt us.

SISSY

Right now, you're just our friend.

ROB

(Chuckles)

Well, I guess I'll take that.

(MORE)

ROB (CONT'D)
I'll be at the archery target if
you need me.

KAREN
Got it.

EXT. THE POND ON THE WAGNER FAMILY LAND SURROUNDED BY TREES -
A LITTLE LATER

While competing to get through the innertube hole, Karen and Sissy are splashing, laughing and tickling each other.

Tug's Falcon friend, Chuck, is flying above and lets out a few screeches, then swoops down landing next to the pond.

The girls don't notice Chuck.

EXT. AT THE ARCHERY TARGET - SIMULTANEOUS

Rob is shooting arrows at the target and is hitting the bullseye, or coming close, every time.

The girls' splashing and playing sounds reach Rob, but he now also hears a different noise: rustling in the woods.

He shoots, again, then hears the same rustling sound.

He decides to check it out and walks into the woods with his bow and arrows.

As he nears the pond, he spots Tug Maylif near the pond's shore hiding behind some bushes.

Tug is watching the girls as they play.

Rob becomes very concerned and watches Tug, who is pivoting from side-to-side as if ready to lunge toward the girls.

Rob looks back and forth at Tug and the girls.

He pulls an arrow back in his bow, aiming toward the ground in the "ready" position.

The girls are laughing and having a good time.

Then Tug makes a move and starts running fast toward the girls.

Rob puts his bow up and shoots at Tug, missing his head by a few inches.

Tug doesn't notice the arrow passing by and keeps running toward the girls.

Rob runs toward the pond.

Before Rob reaches the shore, two men jump out of the trees, as if from nowhere, and into the water.

The men appear filthy, pale, and are missing most of their teeth.

The two men grab the girls, grunting and panting as they try to feel the girls' bodies.

The girls struggle and scream.

Then Tug jumps into the water, and like an unleashed gorilla, pulls both men by their arms from the water and beats them up.

Rob just stands by and watches, shocked by Tug's brutality.

The girls, still in the water, watch with the same shock.

When Tug is satisfied that the men have had enough, he drags them into the trees by their arms.

The girls then hurry out of the water and are quite shaken.

ROB

My, God. Are you girls okay?

KAREN

That ugly man squeezed my pee pee.

The girls and Rob gather themselves, somewhat, and decide to follow Tug as he drags the two men.

KAREN (CONT'D)

Rob, that big man is Tug. He's nice.

ROB

Well, thank God. Glad my arrow missed.

They continue following Tug as he drags the two men with surprisingly little effort.

After following for about one hundred yards, Tug stops at a small shack and tosses the two men onto the front porch.

ROB (CONT'D)
I heard something about these
people. They're just beyond our
property line.

Tug bangs on the front door.

Rob and the girls get near the shack but keep a safe
distance.

An unkempt but lovely, blonde and blue eyed, teenage girl,
Poppy (16), answers the door and glances at the two men lying
before her.

POPPY
Aww, Tug, why did ya beat 'em so
bad. They're bleedin'!

Rob waits for Tug to speak, but Tug just motions with his
hands: he rubs his own body, then points at the girls.

POPPY (CONT'D)
(To Tug)
My brothers touched the girls?

ROB
They weren't just trying to touch
them. They were rubbing my girls
all over, frightening them to
death.

Tug nods.

Poppy appears very worried but still tries to make light of
the situation.

POPPY
Aww, they wouldn't go much beyond
touchin'.

Tug turns around, kicks one of the men in the butt.

ROB
What's your name, young lady?

POPPY
I'm Poppy Eaglet. And the man Tug
just kicked in the butt is my
brother, Cornstalk. The other one's
Chutney. I am sorry, but my
brothers are real dumb. Their
peckers got near complete control
of thar brains 'cause their brains
ain't good enough ta fight it off.

Rob is trying to control his anger but can't.

ROB
But these are children.

POPPY
Sorry, sir. They can't tell the difference between a child or adult.

ROB
Jesus Christ!

KAREN
(To Poppy)
You're so pretty, and your brothers are so ugly.

SISSY
Like swamp people.

POPPY
They drank too much of our moonshine when we was runnin' it through the old Buick radiator--it was lead--an' it kinda ate thar teeth and brains.

Sissy is startled by this and grabs on to Karen.

ROB
Good, God!

Tug shrugs his shoulders, looks sharply and sympathetically at Rob and the girls, and points toward the Wagner house.

ROB (CONT'D)
(To Tug)
We just leave?

Tug shrugs his shoulders, again, and shakes his head.

KAREN
Rob, Tug's trying to say we can't do anything about it right now.

Poppy's brother, Chutney, starts to squirm and moan.

Tug kicks him hard in the butt.

Then Tug steps off the porch, motions to Rob and the girls to follow him.

Rob reluctantly follows along with the girls.

ROB
 (To the girls)
 Doesn't Tug talk?

SISSY
 We heard he talks sometimes.

INT. SECOND FLOOR OF THE AUBREY AND MINNIE WASHINGTON HOME

Aubrey and wife, Minnie, are awakened by their son, Sinclair, who is now standing at their bedroom door.

MINNIE
 What's up, honey?

SINCLAIR
 I think it's red eye gravy this time.

Aubrey and Minnie smile and quickly get out of bed.

INT. FIRST FLOOR OF THE WASHINGTON HOME

All three excitedly descend the stairs, and they enter the kitchen.

Tug Maylif is busy finishing up breakfast for the Washington family.

MINNIE
 Oh, Tug, you shouldn't!

Tug holds out his hand toward the food, now in bowls and on plates at the breakfast table.

SINCLAIR
 (As the family sits)
 Oh, my God! Thanks, Tug. Fried eggs, Ham and Red Eye gravy, grits with fresh butter, hot cakes.

Aubrey approaches Tug, puts a hand on Tug's shoulder.

AUBREY
 Tug, don't you think you gotta make up for the likes of Stinky Whitfield.

SINCLAIR
 Daddy, Tug would cook us breakfast, anyway.

Tug nods and points at Sinclair.

AUBREY
Thanks, Tug.

Tug, while not making eye contact with any of them, nods and smiles.

TUG
(A bit loudly)
Breakfast time!

Tug watches them eat for another minute, then takes his leave.

MINNIE
They don't make them like Tug.

AUBREY
How could anybody that nice be
"made." No, they just appear.

SINCLAIR
Oh, he ain't always nice.

MINNIE
Sinclair, "Isn't" always nice.
Remember your grammar. If you're
going to attend Tuskegee University
like your mother and father.

SINCLAIR
Until then, I'll just attend "Tug
University."

They all laugh.

EXT. THE POND ON THE WAGNER LAND - MORNING

Jake is walking through the woods with bow and arrows when he glances through the trees and sees Poppy bathing nude in the pond.

The girl's back, half under water, is facing Jake, and she's lathering her body with a bar of soap.

Without turning around, Poppy hollers out to Jake.

GIRL
If you're not gonna take me today,
boy, you best get on home.

Jake panics and starts to hurry back toward the family house.

But he stops and looks back, again.

Poppy has turned around and is looking directly at him.

Her breasts are in full view.

They gaze at each other's faces for a bit and both smile at the same time.

POPPY
(Slight laugh)
Go on home, boy!

Jake panics a little and then hurries back toward the Wagner house.

EXT. LONG SHOT OF THE MERCURY STATION WAGON DRIVING DOWN A GRAVEL ROAD - DUSK

About two hundred yards to the right of the Mercury, there's the faint glow of something starting to burn.

INT. INSIDE THE MERCURY - CONTINUOUS

Kathleen, Karen, and Paul are in the car, all in the front seat.

They look to their right: about two hundred yards in the distance, a KKK rally, replete with men in hoods bobbing up and down.

As the Mercury passes, a giant cross explodes with fire and lights up the rally.

PAUL
(Dazzled by the cross)
It's beautiful.

Kathleen is obviously frightened.

KATHLEEN
It's a carnival, honey.

PAUL
I never saw a carnival like that.

KAREN
Mom, we know that's not a carnival.
We're not stupid. It's something
bad, isn't it?

KATHLEEN
We'll be home soon.

Then, they see Poppy alongside the road, wearing a long, dress and standing and gazing, as if in a trance, in the rally's direction.

KATHLEEN (CONT'D)
Why, she looks so young. What's she doing out here?

Kathleen turns the car around to drive back to the girl but quickly sees that the girl is gone.

She turns around, again, and heads home.

KATHLEEN (CONT'D)
Can't believe a Klansman would bring his daughter to a rally. Oh, well.

KAREN
That's the pretty girl we told you about, mom. Poppy.

KATHLEEN
Sister of the men who attacked you?

KAREN
Yep. Jake saw her naked in the pond, says she's got pretty big boobs.

JAKE
Butt hole! You don't have to tell mom everything!

KATHLEEN
Why, Jake?

JAKE
She was bathing, and I saw her. It was an accident.

KATHLEEN
Just don't let that accident turn into a more serious accident. Understand me?

JAKE
My God, mom. I'm not even thirteen, yet!

Karen giggles.

KATHLEEN

All the more reason to be careful.

EXT. A CLOSER SHOT OF THE KKK RALLY

The Klansmen are lighting their hand torches.

About thirty yards away, behind a line of trees, Tug Maylif is hiding in the trees as he watches the proceedings.

We hear the screech of Chuck, the Falcon, above.

Some of the men aren't hooded, among whom is Stinky Whitfield.

When Tug sees him, he shakes his head.

Tug takes notice of the Wagner Mercury passing by, the concern from which shows on his face.

INT. ROB'S AND KATHLEEN'S BEDROOM - THE NIGHT OF THE KKK RALLY

Kathleen lays her book down.

KATHLEEN

Rob, when I was driving back from Decatur today, Karen, Jake and I passed by a very big Klan rally. They burned a giant cross.

ROB

What did you tell the kids?

KATHLEEN

Told 'em it was a carnival.

ROB

Clever. But I'm sure Karen put that on her bullshit meter.

KATHLEEN

Of course.

ROB

I had no idea this weekend farmer crap would come with . . . carnivals.

KATHLEEN

Tried to tell you, honey.

ROB

Oh, come on. You had no idea our ten-acre dream would come with Klan rallies. You were concerned about the distance to good shopping.

Kathleen sits up straight.

KATHLEEN

We need to be careful, Rob.

Rob sits up, too.

ROB

Honey, don't worry so much. I mean, we're white people.

KATHLEEN

Minnie Washington, just up the road, invited me over for tea.

ROB

I think that's okay. When Mr. Maylif was delivering our milk this morning, we had a talk.

INT. JUST INSIDE THE WAGNER FOYER - SAME DAY - THAT MORNING

Rob and Mr. Maylif are talking at the front door.

HENRY MAYLIF

It'll be no problem continuing a gallon to ya every day. Now, they'll always come with cream on top. Gotta getchya a churn to turn 'at cream into butter. After you get the churn, I'll show ya how.

ROB

Thanks. Say, do you deliver up the road to the Washington's house?

HENRY MAYLIF

Since about fifty years before I was born.

ROB

Good to hear it.

HENRY MAYLIF

Minnie churns the best butter around. Yeah, we get along just fine with colored's.

(MORE)

HENRY MAYLIF (CONT'D)

Well, they ain't even like other coloreds. They even got more education than most white people. They know farmin' real good 'cause they grew up with it. They got BA degrees in business and stuff. I mean, they employ a lot of boys and girls at harvest who wanna make extra money. It's sponsored by the 4-H Club. Yep, I got the biggest milk farm around. They got everythang else.

INT. BACK TO THE BEDROOM WITH ROB AND KATHLEEN - CONTINUOUS

Both are sitting up, facing one another.

ROB

The Maylifs seem fine with colored people.

KATHLEEN

It does seem like we have the most in common with the Washingtons. I mean . . .

ROB

I know. Like I said, I clicked with Aubrey when we met at Bonner's Store. Felt natural--haven't had that with anybody else around here.

INT. NEXT MORNING AT THE WAGNER HOUSE - 5:30 AM

Kathleen awakens to the clanking of pots and pans in the kitchen.

She looks over to Rob, sees that he's still asleep.

Frightened, she gets up and checks the boys' room and the girls' room; they're still in bed, but Karen is sitting up.

Kathleen hurries over to Karen's bed.

KATHLEEN

Stay in bed, Karen.

KAREN

What's for breakfast? It's kinda early, isn't it?

KATHLEEN
Somebody's in our kitchen, honey.

KAREN
Maybe we're getting a Tug
breakfast!

KATHLEEN
A what?

Kathleen slowly makes for the kitchen, looks around the corner at the end of the hall.

Tug Maylif is in their kitchen making breakfast, only Kathleen's never met Tug and thinks he's a burglar.

Kathleen panics, opens a broom closet and pulls out a broom as if that would protect her.

Then Karen comes up behind Kathleen, looks around her and toward the kitchen.

KAREN
Oh, it's okay. It's just Tug.

KATHLEEN
Tug? Who the Hell is Tug? Oh, is he
the man who saved you girls from
the strange men with no teeth?

KAREN
Yeah, mom. I hear his breakfast is
the best in world.

Karen looks at the broom Kathleen is holding.

KAREN (CONT'D)
Mom, that's my broom. Could you put
it back in the closet?

Kathleen puts the broom back in the closet.

Even though Kathleen is still hesitant to enter the kitchen, Karen walks in and sits at the kitchen table.

KAREN (CONT'D)
How's it going, Tug?

Tug turns around and smiles.

Already, there are biscuits, a big family bowl of hominy grits, and slices of ham on a big plater.

Kathleen slowly enters the kitchen and inspects all the food.

KATHLEEN
We didn't have ham in the frig.
Didn't have grits either.

KAREN
Tug brings all the food, mom.

Jake enters the kitchen and sits down.

JAKE
Hi, Tug. How's it going?

KATHLEEN
I'm the only one who doesn't know
Tug?

JAKE
Tugs the most, mom. Wish I'd seen
him kick those guys' asses by the
pond. And he cooks breakfast!

KAREN
(To Jake)
Yeh, and it's not all yours, butt
head.

Then Tug sets a plate with five fried eggs, sunny-side-up in
front of Jake.

JAKE
Aw, yeah, still slimy. How did you
know, Tug?

Tug smiles and shakes his head.

KAREN
Over hard, Tug.

KATHLEEN
Now, kids, he's not our servant.

At which point Tug turns to Kathleen, smiles and puts a hand
on his heart.

KATHLEEN (CONT'D)
Scrambled medium, then?

Tug turns back around and cracks one egg with each hand at
the same time.

KATHLEEN (CONT'D)
Tug, I want to say thanks to you
for helping my girls at the pond.
(MORE)

KATHLEEN (CONT'D)

I'm not sure what might've happened
without you there.

Tug turns to Kathleen and puts a hand on his heart, again,
but doesn't make eye contact with anyone.

TUG

(As if making an
announcement)

It's breakfast time!

KATHLEEN

Karen, could you wake everyone?

Karen takes off for the bedrooms.

INT. INSIDE THE WAGNER LIVINGROOM - LATER THAT DAY

Two men in Morgan County Deputy Sheriff's uniforms are
sitting on the sofa.

Kathleen is sitting on a chair facing them.

DEPUTY SHERIFF COTTON

Yes, ma'am, we've had calls on the
Eaglets quite a few times over the
years. We're awful sorry what they
done ta yer girls. Good thang Tug
was around.

DEPUTY SHERIFF ENGLEWOOD

Yes, ma'am, Tug's got a reputation
fer bein' a helpful man. Frankly,
it's just good he didn't tear one
of the Eaglet boy's heads off.

DEPUTY SHERIFF COTTON

He can do it, too.

KATHLEEN

Well, I'm glad he's on our side.

DEPUTY ENGLEWOOD

Oh, ya see, ma'am, Tug's on
everybody's side. But if you done
somethin' wrong, I mean real wrong,
he turns into a damn bear.

DEPUTY SHERIFF COTTON

He done killed one of the Eaglet
boys a while back in a fair fight.
I can't even remember which one it
was.

(MORE)

DEPUTY SHERIFF COTTON (CONT'D)

Nobody knows how many of 'em there are at any given time. They make bad babies, but they die a lot, too. If yer an Eaglet, there's no way fer ya ta know who yer parents are. They all have relations with each other.

KATHLEEN

Oh, my. That's disgusting.

DEPUTY SHERIFF ENGLEWOOD

See, the Eaglets suffer from bad moonshine sickness. Not just bad blood.

Rob enters the house through the front door, which opens directly into the living room.

ROB

I apologize, officers. I drove all the way from Red Stone Arsenal as soon as Kathleen phoned me that you were coming.

Both officers stand.

DEPUTY SHERIFF COTTON

It's good to meet you, sir. I'm Deputy Sheriff Cotton and this is Deputy Sheriff Englewood. And we're very sorry we couldn't come sooner.

Rob takes a seat next to Kathleen.

The Deputies sit back down.

DEPUTY SHERIFF COTTON (CONT'D)

Yes, sir, we were just telling yer kind wife that the folks near yer back property line, the Eaglets, are victims of bad moonshine sickness.

DEPUTY SHERIFF ENGLEWOOD

See, when you make moonshine, you're supposed to run it through copper tubin'. But, for a long time, the Eaglets ran it through old automobile radiators, and them tubes is all lead, see. So, they been drinkin' lead for who knows how many years?

ROB

I did hear something about that.

KATHLEEN

That's dreadful. Couldn't somebody stop them?

DEPUTY SHERIFF COTTON

Most of 'em ain't got teeth. Some are blind. Some can't walk. We think when one of 'em gets too bad, the others just kill 'em and burn 'em somewhere. 'course, we can't prove none o' that.

DEPUTY ENGLEWOOD

None of 'em can read or write 'cept Poppy. They're all mentally retarded from bad moonshine sickness, some more retarded than others.

ROB

Poppy's the one who came to the shack door. She seemed pretty normal.

DEPUTY SHERIFF COTTON

Now, she's got some education, can read and write . . . And think . . .

.

Deputy Englewood chuckles.

KATHLEEN

Well, will you arrest them? I mean, they tried to rape my girls.

ROB

I saw what they did, Deputies. It was vicious, like wild animals.

DEPUTY SHERIFF COTTON

First of all, yer little girls can't go to the pond alone no-more.

ROB

It's our land.

DEPUTY SHERIFF COTTON

To them, see, land is land. They make no distinction, sir.

DEPUTY SHERIFF ENGLEWOOD
See, they think different. They
don't think like the rest of us.
Anyway, as far as we know, they
ain't never killed nobody outside
their own family. And we think
thar's only been one or two rapes
reported over, what, three decades.

DEPUTY SHERIFF COTTON
You'll see 'em around from time to
time. Just leave 'em be.

ROB
How the Hell do they eat?

DEPUTY SHERIFF COTTON
Oh, they got chickens, some hogs,
and they got about fifteen acres,
so they do grow some vegetables.

ROB
Are they squatters?

DEPUTY SHERIFF COTTON
We ain't thought to check that.
They've been thar so long.

KATHLEEN
Do they bathe in our pond?

DEPUTY SHERIFF ENGLEWOOD
We was gettin' ta that. Yes, ma'am,
they do. See, Mr. Roberts, the man
who sold ya this farm, used to let
'em use the pond.

Kathleen looks at Rob very concerned.

KATHLEEN
Why didn't Mr. Roberts tell us
about this before he sold it to us?

Kathleen looks miffed at Rob.

KATHLEEN (CONT'D)
Rob, you wanted to be a weekend
farmer. Look where we are now.

Rob just shakes his head.

ROB
Well, officers, what can we do?

DEPUTY SHERIFF COTTON
I take it you never lived in the
countryside?

ROB
Correct.

DEPUTY SHERIFF COTTON
You ain't never lived on a farm?

ROB
That's correct.

DEPUTY SHERIFF ENGLEWOOD
This here ain't Los Angeles, sir.
This here is Alabama where we got
generations of both healthy and
sick people. All the people here
just expect country life and live
with it. For instance, ya see,
they'd probably accept that they
can't always use their own pond.
Stuff like that.

Rob is welling up with anger.

ROB
They molested our daughters,
damnit.

DEPUTY SHERIFF COTTON
Yes, sir. I understand the pain you
got. I got daughters . . .
But, you gotta understand that
those Eaglet boys had no
understanding of what they were
doin'. They're buck simple. Hell,
if we questioned them, they
wouldn't even remember what they
done. Anyhow, Mr. Jones didn't tell
ya'll that stuff 'cause Alabama
farm livin' is just normal for him.
He didn't mean nothin' by not
tellin' ya.

Rob and Kathleen look hard at each other.

KATHLEEN
So, you're not going to arrest
these men?

DEPUTY SHERIFF COTTON
Well, no, ma'am. And we ask, in a
humble way, for your kind
understanding.

Rob is angered.

ROB
Kind understanding? Their hands
were all over our daughters'
bodies! Kind understanding?

The deputies stand suddenly and quickly exit the house.

Rob goes to the front window and watches the deputies quickly
get into their Sheriff's car and take off.

ROB (CONT'D)
What?

Rob turns around to Kathleen, and they look gravely at each
other.

KATHLEEN
What just happened, Rob?

ROB
Let's try not to panic too much.

KATHLEEN
Panic isn't the word.

Rob begins to pace and calm down.

ROB
Honey, I guess we just can't tread
on old boundaries.

KATHLEEN
(Shaking her head)
We'll never really own this farm.

ROB
Damn it! We never really own
anything.

KATHLEEN
You and your idiotic "weekend
farmer dream." Well, you've put my
daughters into harm's way, Rob.

ROB
Look, I had no idea this would
happen. We just have to adjust.

KATHLEEN

We put a thousand dollars down on this farm and got a twenty thousand dollar mortgage.

ROB

Kathleen, if things don't improve, we'll sell it.

KATHLEEN

Right now, I wish I could sell you.

Kathleen gets up and hurries out of the living room, leaving Rob shaking his head.

INT. IN THE WASHINGTON LIVINGROOM - EVENING

Aubrey, Minnie, Rob, and Kathleen are having iced tea.

KATHLEEN

Can we ask for some advice regarding the Eaglets?

MINNIE

Oh, my, from us?

KATHLEEN

Well, you're the best educated people around here.

MINNIE

The education is a blessing and a curse. Most around here feel that our degrees don't count because we had to attend Tuskegee University, an all colored school.

AUBREY

The Eaglet's property borders our land as well. We never had a problem of note with them. We believe they're a little afraid of us because we're colored. Your issue sounds serious. We're very sorry.

KATHLEEN

Are they in the Klan? Do they attend rallies?

MINNIE

Oh, some of them used to go just to sell moonshine, but they never really understood what was going on there.

ROB

It's our understanding that they have serious mental deficiencies.

They all chuckle.

AUBREY

Well, they are smart enough to bring in some decent cotton and corn. Chet Bonner is middle man for their cotton. Since the Eaglets have the (sarcastically) biggest family in Alabama, they never have to hire pickers. I've offered jobs to whomever wants to come over to our place and pick during harvest--you know, so they can earn extra cash--but none of them have ever come around.

MINNIE

These days, that lovely teenager, Poppy, seems to run things. She does all their business, anyway.

ROB

Well, I just want them to stay off our land.

MINNIE

Like the deputy told you, the Eaglets don't understand property lines. They're more like animals in the wild. If they run into a fence, they just jump over it or dig under it.

AUBREY

You're looking for a way to get them moved off, legally?

KATHLEEN

Anything that works at this point.

MINNIE

They did, after all, commit a terrible crime on your little ones.

AUBREY

I remember something interesting. I was at the Tax Assessment Office in Decatur, oh, maybe in '57.

Aubrey pauses to think.

ROB

Go on.

AUBREY

It occurred to me at that time that I'd seen every property owner in Hartselle in that office at one time or another over the many years . . . But never any of the Eaglets, never. It was then I realized that, even though they're supposed to have fifteen acres, there would be no possible way they could afford the taxes on the property and have enough left over to live on. I'm a life-long farmer, I can calculate, almost to the dime, how much they make each year. Now, taxes on the land would come to about \$300 per year, which would leave them only about fifteen hundred per year to live on. I'm figuring in some of Chet Bonner's calculations as well.

MINNIE

They might not even understand what taxes are. With some of them, it's a miracle that they can even utilize their own lungs, much less finances. Poppy would be only sixteen or so. I'm not sure how competent she'd be with money.

ROB

Probably not to savvy.

AUBREY

Hey, I heard you had your first "Tug breakfast"?

KATHLEEN

It was the best breakfast I ever had.

MINNIE

We get a Tug breakfast about twice a month on average.

(MORE)

MINNIE (CONT'D)

For the last, maybe, seven years.
He started doing it when he was
still a teenager.

ROB

Does he cook breakfast for
everybody?

MINNIE

Oh, we've done an inventory of the
"privileged ones." The only thing
we've come up with is they're all
nice people. He stays away from
nasty people.

ROB

But aren't most of the people here
in the KKK?

MINNIE

Most of the folks here see the Klan
the way you might see Boy Scouts or
something. To them, it's more like
a club.

ROB

But I hear they've killed colored
people.

AUBREY

Yep, sometimes some of them get an
itch up their butts--excuse me,
Kathleen--and they lynch somebody.
They don't do that at rallies, at
least not in this area's Klan
chapter. It's more private with
only around ten or so Klansmen in
attendance, usually led by Alfred
Glooner. He's the local foot-
stomping Baptist preacher. He used
to preach out of a giant tent; in
fact, it was at the same place,
Kathleen, where you saw the cross
burning. Now, he's got a new brick
and mortar church, complete with a
Sunday school wing.

KATHLEEN

Do you attend that church?

MINNIE

We couldn't even if we wanted to.

AUBREY
 We attend First Missionary Baptist
 Church in Decatur. It's all
 colored.

INT. AT THE WASHINGTON'S FRONT DOOR - A LITTLE LATER THAT
 EVENING

All four are at the front door saying their goodbyes.

KATHLEEN
 (To Minnie)
 Thanks for the delicious pie.

MINNIE
 Oh, Aubrey baked that rhubarb pie.

KATHLEEN
 Oh, my goodness, no . . .

Aubrey holds out a business card.

AUBREY
 Tug taught me to bake a while back.
 By the way, this is an excellent
 attorney who can help with property
 issues. He's close to Redstone in
 Huntsville. Law school at
 Tuscaloosa. Lots of experience.

Rob takes the business card and inspects it.

ROB
 Randel Sharp, huh?

AUBREY
 Slightly eccentric but a hard-
 working, honest attorney.

KATHLEEN
 Thank you both for such a nice
 evening and for your advice.

MINNIE
 Well, we are sorry about your
 troubles. Let us know what's going
 on.

INT. WASHINGTON BEDROOM - A LITTLE LATER

Aubrey and Minnie, dressed in bath robes, are sitting on the
 edge of their bed.

MINNIE

Sinclair's been playing with the
Wagner's boys for nearly two weeks.

AUBREY

I hope Sinclair doesn't teach them
any . . . tricks?

Minnie laughs.

MINNIE

Boys will be boys. . . And then
there's Tug.

Minnie stands and paces.

MINNIE (CONT'D)

Kathleen and Rob are so different
from other folks. There's something
about them that's so innocent?
Naïve? Clean?

AUBREY

You mean how they treat us like
equals? I enjoy that. It probably
won't last, but I'm gonna enjoy it
for as long as possible.

MINNIE

What do you mean, it won't last?

AUBREY

They've only been here a few weeks.
Lengthy exposure changes folks.

MINNIE

But it's always a good sign about
people when they get a Tug
breakfast. It usually means they
have an underlying good nature.

AUBREY

True. But Tug's judgements don't
always pan out.

MINNIE

He's got a better record than
anybody else in our local white
world.

INT. KATHLEEN'S AND ROB'S BEDROOM - SAME NIGHT

Kathleen and Rob are getting ready for bed.

ROB

I'll call the attorney tomorrow to set up an appointment.

KATHLEEN

They're such nice people, Rob.

ROB

Yeah, very sharp, almost intimidating, they're so smart.

KATHLEEN

My mother once told me that a life of danger makes us smart.

ROB

It's a relief to find somebody around here with something in common.

KATHLEEN

Lots of educated people at Redstone.

ROB

True, but they usually speak German at the office. It also makes me uncomfortable because some of them were actually members of the Nazi Party in Germany before the war. Even Wernher von Braun was a Nazi, not to mention his affiliations with the SS.

KATHLEEN

Well, honey, your German parents taught you German. Why would you have trouble with engineers speaking German?

ROB

Before the war, I thought it was a beautiful language. Now it's ugly to me.

KATHLEEN

You had a lot of terrible experiences as a POW. But that's war, and we're in peace time now.

ROB

Aww, we're never really in "peace time." We're just a bunch of worn out killers taking a break.

(MORE)

ROB (CONT'D)

Anyway, at the next Redstone picnic, I'll need to seat you with the non-German speaking wives, and, of course, all of the Germans' kids are English speakers. So our kids can run wild in their own language.

They chuckle.

EXT. THE DOWNED LOG ALONG THE GRAVEL ROAD

Tug, Sinclair, Paul, and Sissy are sitting silently on the downed log with serene smiles.

Chuck, the Falcon, is sitting next to Tug.

Grace and Henry Maylif slowly drive by, waving as they pass.

All four wave back.

The truck stops suddenly.

Mrs. Maylif calls out to Tug.

GRACE

Now, Tug, don't you be keepin' those youngin's from thar chores. Ya hear?

Tug slowly nods and smiles.

GRACE (CONT'D)

Okay, then.

After Grace and Henry drive off, Tug and Sinclair pull pellet guns from behind the log, and they smile at each other.

They all get excited.

SISSY

You got "pee pee" guns.

PAUL

You mean "bee bee" guns, but these are pellet guns, a lot more powerful, shoots pellets instead of those tiny bee bees.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE MAYLIF BARN - TEN MINUTES LATER

Chuck, the Falcon, is circling above.

Tug opens a wooden window door.

Tug and the four kids look inside.

Sinclair and Tug both have pellet guns ready and pointed at the ground.

They see a giant hog, named John Wayne, inside, huffing and disturbed by the intrusion.

SINCLAIR

That's John Wayne. He's nearly six hundred pounds, which means he's got the biggest balls in the world.

Sinclair points at John Wayne's balls.

SINCLAIR (CONT'D)

Look at the those balls!

SISSY

They look like hairy old potato bags.

PAUL

Gross, she's not my sister.

Tug aims his pellet gun at the hog's balls.

SINCLAIR

Now this pellet won't penetrate, but it'll sure tickle.

Sinclair fires, and the pellet hits the target.

John Wayne goes ape shit all over the barn floor, snorting like a fog horn, bucking like a bull at a bullfight, skittering, digging in.

Paul and Sissy become frightened.

PAUL

(Crying out)
The ground's shaking!

SISSY

(Crying out)
The barn's shaking, too.

SINCLAIR

Well, that's why we're here . . .
Don't worry, he'll settle down.
Just wait.

After a bit, the hog settles down.

SINCLAIR (CONT'D)
The hog really hates when the pellets hit the vein between his balls and butthole.

Sissy shakes her head.

SISSY
Oh, this isn't nice.

PAUL
He's John Wayne. He's gonna get eaten someday, anyway.

This time, Sinclair takes the pellet gun, takes aim and shoots.

There's barely any response from the hog.

Sinclair takes aim, again, at the moving target.

SINCLAIR
I want the vein. The vein.

Sinclair shoots and misses.

SINCLAIR (CONT'D)
Hit it, Tug!

Then Tug takes aim and shoots, hitting the vein.

The hog goes completely crazy, rolls on the ground, bucks, kicks, snorts, bangs into the walls.

Then the hog takes aim at the window, behind which they're taking cover.

John Wayne then lets out a barn-shaking snort and charges the window.

SINCLAIR (CONT'D)
(With great urgency)
Out of the way, right now! Right now!

The four manage to get out of the way as the hog explodes through the barn's strong wooden wall under the window.

After which the hog is still bucking, snorting all around the clearing just outside of the barn.

John Wayne then settles a bit but takes aim at Paul.

PAUL

Why me?

The hog suddenly charges Paul.

SINCLAIR

Oh, shit!

Just before the hog tramples Paul, Chuck swoops down and distracts John Wayne; at the same time, Tug dives over and knocks Paul out of the way.

Chuck lands on John Wayne just above his tail, screeches, and, at the same time, pokes him with his beak several times.

The hog, after running in circles a few more times, runs off into the woods.

Everybody gathers themselves.

PAUL

(Looking at Tug)

John Wayne's gone. And it's our fault. Will we have to pay your parents for him?

SINCLAIR

This happened a few times before. Don't worry. He'll turn up.

EXT. ALONG A GRAVEL ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Sinclair, Paul, and Sissy are walking home from the Maylif's barn.

PAUL

Why do you and Tug shoot at John Wayne?

SISSY

Yeah, I thought you guys were nice. Gosh.

SINCLAIR

When I shoot John Wayne's balls, I see Stinky Whitfield's face. Coloreds know themselves enough to know what they need.

Sissy and Paul appear confused.

SINCLAIR (CONT'D)

And Tug? Tug's the best. See, you noticed that Tug's not like the rest of us. Right?

PAUL

(Sarcastic)

Oh, really?

SINCLAIR

Long before we were born, when tug was ten, he got his brains all bashed up by Lily, one of John Wayne's ancestors. Folks say she was even bigger than John Wayne. Lily split Tug's head open. Can't see the scar 'cause his hair covers it pretty well. But one day when we were playin' around, sprayin' each other with a hose. His hair got all wet, and I saw the scar. The story's true. Anyway, word has it Tug changed completely after that. He's not dumb. In fact, he's the opposite, graduated high school with good grades. He could even run the Maylif farm by himself, no problem. Kids in school made fun of him at first 'cause he was strange, so he made that stop by nearly beatin' a couple of them to death. Then the kids just left him alone.

SISSY

That's sad. So Tug hates hogs?

Sinclair and Paul chuckle.

SINCLAIR

You should see him when he eats pork. You'd think there was never enough. He even gets a little crazy, eyes get all mad an' red. Paul, Tug and Chuck saved you from getting your brains bashed out today. My momma says there've been three hog tramlings while she's been alive that killed people, all kids. You're damn lucky.

EXT. A LOVELY OLD-SOUTH ANTEBELLUM OFFICE BUILDING -
HUNTSVILLE - AFTERNOON

Rob and Kathleen are entering the building.

INT. A WIDE CORRIDOR AND A DOOR THAT SAYS, "RANDEL SHARP
ATTORNEY"--CONTINUOUS

Rob opens it, and he and Kathleen walk in.

INT. A LUSH LAW OFFICE WITH AN OLD-SOUTH PARLOR LOOK -
CONTINUOUS

Randel Sharp rises from his desk.

Randel, who looks like he drinks too much beer, is wearing
egg-shell pants and shirt with suspenders and a bow tie.

We see a egg-shell Fedora and an egg-shell suit jacket
hanging on a nearby rack.

RANDEL SHARP

Mr. And Mrs. Wagner, I presume?

KATHLEEN

That's right. Sorry we're a little
early.

Randel hurries around his desk to shake their hands.

RANDEL SHARP

How ya'll this fine mornin'? And
not to worry a bit. My clients are
often early. They wanna get right
to it.

Randel addresses Rob.

RANDEL SHARP (CONT'D)

Well, it was a pleasure talking
with you, Rob, over the phone. And
it's equally a pleasure to meet you
in person.

ROB

It's our pleasure, Mr. Sharp.

KATHLEEN

A pleasure.

RANDEL SHARP

Rob, you mentioned children. Are they in the car? I mean, I know there's no school right now, it being summer and all.

Rob and Kathleen are taken aback by such a random statement.

KATHLEEN

That's an unusual question. They're with Minnie Washington.

RANDEL SHARP

They're in good hands, then. On the phone, Rob, you said you haven't yet adopted the children. So, I assume they still have their mother's previous last name.

KATHLEEN

The children's last name is still Leslie.

RANDEL SHARP

I assume they're your heirs?

KATHLEEN

Well, we never even thought about that. We'll probably be alive for a while, I hope.

RANDEL SHARP

Well, I mention it only because I do "wills."

Rob appears frustrated.

ROB

Do you know something we don't?

RANDEL SHARP

No, no. I'm just informing you of my other services. Gettin' that out of the way, so to speak.

ROB

Have you had a chance to visit the various government offices that have to do with property.

Randel sits back down behind his desk and takes on a look of concern.

Rob and Kathleen sit in front of the desk.

RANDEL SHARP
Listen, back during the
Emancipation Proclamation, I mean
shortly after the War, 1865 . . .

ROB
. . . What are you talking about?

RANDEL SHARP
(Sternly)
Believe me, this is relevant. This
concerns nearby property owners,
the Maylifs and the Washingtons.
The Eaglets are not property
owners, if that makes you feel
better.

Rob and Kathleen start to take Randell seriously and listen intently.

RANDEL SHARP (CONT'D)
And, frankly, we're not sure if
they're squatting on Maylif land or
Washington land. Your ten acres of
land, of course, is all above
board. But there's another
problem. Ya see, in 1865, Union
General Sherman gave thousands of
Colored families what they called
"40 acres and a mule." That's
right. Sherman took land from white
property owners, chopped it all up
and doled it out to colored
families. Now, that declaration was
not valid in Alabama, but it was
valid next door in Georgia.
However, word spread very quickly
around Alabama, our Plantation
owners, sure it was going to happen
to them, panicked and gave parcels
of land to there most trusted
slaves. These would be slave owners
who were usually what they called
"friendly slave owners."

KATHLEEN
Oh, don't tell me.

RANDEL SHARP

The Maylif family, who lost both of their sons in the war, parceled out, not forty acres, but two hundred acres to a slave family, namely, the Washington family, and, of course, the Maylifs still had plenty left over. Anyway, somehow the situation stuck--the reason's a mystery--and the Washingtons have been on that land ever since. Now, that's on record at the land office. But, here's the kicker, there's absolutely no record of a title. So you know what that means? We searched three related offices in this county. Nothin'.

ROB

Well, I'm very sorry and confused to hear this, but what does this have to do with us?

Randel Sharp is exasperated.

RANDEL SHARP

The Maylif's title still holds the supposed Washington land as a part of Maylif land. There was some kind of mix up that happened back then. It's a damn mess, frankly. Anyway, by law, the land office has got to mail out an official notice to the Maylifs, informing them of the Washingtons illegally squatting on their land. When that happens, all Hell's gonna break lose.

KATHLEEN

I'm sure the Maylif's would be understanding. I mean, the Washingtons have worked that land for nearly a century.

RANDEL SHARP

No, ma'am, you don't understand Alabama.

KATHLEEN

No, no, no. The Maylifs are nice people.

RANDEL SHARP

Henry Maylif used to be a Klansman,
Mrs. Wagner.

ROB

How do you know that?

RANDEL SHARP

Because, when I was a young man, I
was a Klansman, and Henry Maylif
was, too. Of course, he's not a
Klansman now, but I don't know how
he feels about coloreds these days.
Point is, even if he's okay with
coloreds, he might feel bound my
honor to make trouble. In any case,
he might not want the Klan to think
he's what they call a "nigger
lover" by giving in to a colored
family.

Rob and Kathleen are frustrated.

ROB

What a screwed up culture.

RANDEL SHARP

You're in that Redstone facility
all the time, Mr. Wagner, with all
those misplaced northerners and
westerners, all with college
degrees and such. You need to get
out and visit Alabama more often.
And you will see the blind rage.

ROB

So, you're saying that we're
literally caught in the middle?

RANDEL SHARP

You're gettin' it now.

RANDEL SHARP (CONT'D)

There could be violence, all kinda
legal crap descending on your
family. And I don't know what
you're gonna do about the Eaglets.
Sheriff's not gonna do anything
about them. Hell, I don't even live
in Hartselle, and even I've heard
of the Eaglet's bad moonshine.
They're a dark legend around here.

(MORE)

RANDEL SHARP (CONT'D)
Probably been on that land for a
century turnin' bad moonshine into
dumb children.

 KATHLEEN
When will the Maylifs receive the
notice from the land office?

 RANDEL SHARP
I'd say tomorrow! And I phoned
Aubrey and Minnie before ya'll got
here, explained the situation to
'em. I'm gonna represent 'em. It
could end up bein' a damn battle. I
tell ya, I've done legal work for
the Washingtons in the past, and
the lord doesn't make better
people. I feel sick about all this.

 KATHLEEN
What can they do?

 RANDEL SHARP
At this point, in this God awful
this mess, he'd better damn well
find a title somewhere. Or I can't
tell ya what's gonna happen. I'm
gonna have to do some deep diggin'.
You folks have got to keep yer eyes
peeled and your ears uncorked. Hear
me? Try not to get caught up in
this mess, 'cause, I can tell ya,
there will be one. Oh, one more
thing: I will go out to the
Maylif's farm and try to explain
the situation to them, okay? But,
by law, I have to first make sure
the notice has been delivered.

EXT. IN FRONT OF THE ANTEBELLUM OFFICE BUILDING

Rob and Kathleen are talking at the bottom of the porch
steps.

 ROB
My God! What did we get the
Washingtons into?

 KATHLEEN
Aww, Rob, we didn't know this would
happen.

ROB

Right now, I feel like our only reason for coming to Alabama was to make a persecuted family's life a Hell of a lot worse. I should've stayed at Aerojet.

KATHLEEN

I've been too hard on you, Rob, and now you're being too hard on yourself. Honey, we came here so you could engineer rockets with the best. That's all. This is just life. It's terrible, I know.

ROB

I can't get us to the moon, but, but I can sure as Hell manage to unearth a century-old misunderstanding here on earth.

KATHLEEN

Let's see how it all works out. Mr. Sharp seems like he's on the ball.

Rob palm slaps his forehead, then shakes his head.

EXT. THE FRONT PORCH OF BONNER'S STORE

Chet and Don Bonner are sitting with Henry Maylif and Stinky Whitfield.

Rob Wagner is just leaving in his truck after getting gas.

CHET BONNER

Yeah, Redstone Arsenal's bringin' in a shit load o' development.

HENRY MAYLIF

But not out toward Hartselle. I think it's 'cause all them rocket men don't want to associate with a bunch of hicks.

Chet and Henry chuckle.

The remark makes Sticky a little angry.

STINKY WHITFIELD

The man that just pulled out's makin' rockets out thar, right? We might be hicks, but he loves niggers.

HENRY MAYLIF

Oh, come on, Sticky. I think the lord would be fine with the Wagners associatin' with the Washingtons. They all got college an' such.

STINKY WHITFIELD

Hell, them Wagners probably won't be livin' here fer long, anyways.

A phone rings inside the store.

Chet enters the store to answer the phone, which is on the wall close to the store's entrance.

The other men keep talking.

Chet only takes a few seconds before he comes back out.

CHET BONNER

Henry, it's Grace on the phone, says it's an emergency.

Henry hops up from his rocker and enters the store.

Chet, more out of concern than anything else, keeps the door open so he can hear Henry speaking with Grace.

Stinky, Don, and Chet get as close to the door as possible.

HENRY MAYLIF

A notice? They're sayin' Aubrey's land is ours, that it's always been ours? No way. It's always been theirs. It was when I was born, and it still is. There's been a property search? Aubrey ain't got no title on record? Well, shit, I don't know what all that means. Randel Sharp's comin' out tomorrow? Hell, I know him from a long time ago. Well, okay, then. I'll be home as soon as I can. Can you get Tug to hose down the milkin' stalls?

Henry comes back out of the front door.

CHET BONNER

Everythang okay, Henry?

HENRY MAYLIF

Gotta get back.

Henry hurries out to his truck and takes off.

Stinky is overly excited.

STINKY WHITFIELD

Holy shit. Holy shit. I thought I'd heard it all. Oh, lord in heaven.

CHET BONNER

Stinky, will you just calm down.

DON BONNER

We don't know the situation, Stinky.

STINKY WHITFIELD

Oh, I sure as Hell know the situation. Them is niggers. That's the situation. Them is goddamn niggers and they stole Henry's land.

Chet becomes angry.

CHET BONNER

Stinky, any trouble that comes from this'll be on your hands, hear me? You better keep yer dirty mouth shut about this.

STINKY WHITFIELD

Now, Chet, I thought we was friends. Have you liked me all these years just 'cause I trade at yer store?

DON BONNER

Yer our goddamn cousin, Stinky. What 'er we gonna do?

Stinky is extremely angry.

STINKY WHITFIELD

Don't you know. This is how niggers do it. They sneak it in on ya. They done it. They done it ta Henry, our friend. Well, we can't let them niggers get away with it!

EXT. THE FALLEN LOG - AFTERNOON

Sinclair, Paul, Jake, and Sissy are sitting on the log.

PAUL

Where's Tug?

SINCLAIR

This is the first time he hasn't shown up.

JAKE

There was something goin' on at our house this morning. But Mom and Rob wouldn't say what it was.

SINCLAIR

My house, too. They wouldn't say anything. I hope everything's okay at the Maylifs.

Poppy Eaglet suddenly appears from behind and sits down next to Jake.

She's wearing a tattered but clean dress, and it appears her blond hair is even curled a little.

Jake turns to her and looks up at her face (she's taller than Jake).

They all just stare at her.

Sinclair stands and positions himself in front of her and is confused.

SINCLAIR (CONT'D)

Is that you, Poppy? Poppy Eaglet? Damn, girl, you have grown up.

Poppy laughs and pokes out her chest.

POPPY

I even got tits.

Paul and Jake are mesmerized.

JAKE

Your last name is Eaglet? Wasn't it your brothers who tried to hurt my sisters?

POPPY

They didn't try to hurt 'em. They just wanted to poke 'em. Hell, they try it with me sometimes, and I just slap 'em off. They're dumb.

JAKE

But you're their sister.

POPPY

Yeah, guess so. Could be their daughter, too. Don't know. Everybody just sticks it in everybody else when they get jumpy. They're all dumb. I'm the only one that can think right. I even went to school fer five years, till they kicked me out fer stinkin' up the school bus and classroom for too long. Should'a washed up but the pond was all dried out in them days. The stink in our house coulda killed a cow.

She laughs.

POPPY (CONT'D)

I run everythang in my family 'cause I'm the only one that can think straight. Bad moonshine made everybody that was already dumb a whole lot dumber.

PAUL

You got a funny name.

POPPY

We name our babies after what grows around us. I'm named after a flower. My momma named me, I think she was my momma. She's dead now.

Sinclair introduces Jake and Paul.

SINCLAIR

Well, Poppy, this is Jake and Paul.

POPPY

Yer the new rocket family, right? Ya know, I'm more like ya'll than I am my own family. Hell, they can barely talk. I get so bored. And I'm at the age where I'm getting jumpy, and I don't want any of my brothers pokin' me.

Poppy looks at Jake.

POPPY (CONT'D)

So, Jake, if you ever wanna poke me. That'd be fine by me.

Jake becomes uncomfortable, turns red and looks at Sinclair and Paul.

PAUL
(Cautiously)
What's she sayin', Jake?

Jake starts to panic.

JAKE
Well, I think I'm too small for
you, Poppy. Too young?

Poppy shrugs her shoulders.

POPPY
(Smile)
Maybe pokin' me will make ya grow
quicker.

PAUL
Jake, is she talkin' about what we
saw mom doin' with her boyfriends
through the window? Can you do
that, yet?

JAKE
Pretty sure I could, but . . .

PAUL
. . . it's kinda gross, but I won't
tell mom if ya poke Poppy.

POPPY
It'd be over with before ya know
it, Jake.

Jake gives Paul the worried eye.

JAKE
Well, Poppy, I think your pretty
and all, but I don't think I
should, well, you know, 'cause I
don't know you very well.

POPPY
I'm a girl and yer a boy. What else
you gotta know?

SINCLAIR
(To Poppy)
If Jake won't poke ya, I'd do it
for 'im.

POPPY

I'd love that, Sinclair. I always liked you, but you know my family would kill me if I had a negro baby. Kill the baby, too.

JAKE

Want a baby, huh?

POPPY

A smart baby, somebody I can talk to. You know, have a conversation.

PAUL

I feel kinda sorry for her, Jake.

JAKE

Well, gee whiz, Poppy. I'm sure it would feel good, and I appreciate you wanting to have a baby with me, but I guess I just don't want to, yet. I'm younger than you. But maybe someday. I mean, can I get a little taller first?

POPPY

Oh, I guess I can wait. I'm no bully.

Poppy, a little dismayed, gets up and runs off into the woods.

SINCLAIR

Damn, Jake, she's beautiful. Are you sure?

PAUL

You made her feel bad, Jake.

JAKE

She caught me by surprise. Anyhow, what the Hell am I gonna do with a baby?

SINCLAIR

Sounds like she'd take charge of the baby, like she does everything else. Shit, last time I saw her at Bonner's store--she's the only Eaglet that ever goes there--she still looked like a little girl. Now, she looks like a, a, a, kinda like a movie star with an old dress.

(MORE)

SINCLAIR (CONT'D)

I tell ya, though, she was right about stinkin' up the school bus. I heard from some white kids who took that bus--I never could take that bus 'cause I went to colored school--why, they said it got like a gas chamber in there. Even in Winter, they'd have to put all the windows down.

JAKE

Who's gonna give her a baby?

SINCLAIR

She and Tug love each other, have for a long time. But Tug kinda seems dumb like her family and she doesn't want bad blood. You know?

JAKE

Well, somebody has to convince her to make a baby with Tug.

INT. THE WASHINGTON HOME - AFTERNOON

Kathleen and Rob are at the Washington home to help Minnie and Aubrey search for a title.

Rob and Aubrey are in the attic going through dozens of boxes, wooden chests, etc.

ROB

When was the last time you saw it?

AUBREY

Ya know, Rob. A title is something folks don't think about. But I do remember my grandfather showing it to me once when we were doing spring cleaning. I was a child, but I can't remember the year or anything.

ROB

Do you remember being up here when he showed you?

AUBREY

You know, I think not. I have a great memory but apparently not that good. My memory of seeing the title is clear, but what was going on around me is vague.

(MORE)

AUBREY (CONT'D)

But I know my family wouldn't knowingly keep a title in the attic.

Rob finds a stack of folded cards that he's curious about and looks through them.

ROB

Aubrey, I hope you don't mind, but I just looked through your school report cards. Strange.

AUBREY

I know what you're gonna say, "Why is every grade a "B"? Nothing over, nothing under.

Aubrey shakes his head.

ROB

Well, yeah.

AUBREY

It wasn't Danville School's fault, all colored 1st grade through 12th grade, same one Sinclair attends. The Alabama Department of Education didn't want coloreds to have a chance of getting into the better Alabama Universities. So, nothing over a "B."

ROB

So there would've been all "A's" on these report cards if things had been done right?

AUBREY

No matter, Tuskegee University accepted me. In fact, they accepted a lot of students with straight "B's".

ROB

Did you try getting into a "white" university?

AUBREY

Didn't even consider it, would've been futile. Now, who knows? Nearly two months ago, President Kennedy made Desegregation federal.

(MORE)

AUBREY (CONT'D)

Sinclair's supposed to be going to the big white school in the fall. We'll see.

Rob, shaking his head, is obviously welling up with anger.

Aubrey steps over to Rob and puts a hand on his shoulder.

AUBREY (CONT'D)

Rob, none of this is any good, but it's what I grew up with. Hell, my family is so lucky compared to almost all other colored families especially around here. Winnie and I thank God every day.

Aubrey chuckles.

AUBREY (CONT'D)

We'd better find this title, yeah? Or we'll be sleepin' in your barn.

They both chuckle and get back to work.

Rob thinks of something.

ROB

Aubrey, have you ever thought of inviting a few Klan members over for a picnic or something like that to show them that you're just a regular guy?

Aubrey laughs and sits down on a wooden chest.

AUBREY

Sorry for laughing. Rob, I know that came from a good place in your heart. Well, you might know that even Klansmen send their kids to us at harvest time so their kids can make extra money. The Tuskegee 4-H Club, which is part of a national club for kids, sponsors our harvest time. It's great. White people feel it's safe because of the 4-H name, right? Colored kids working together with white kids. Nobody fights or burns crosses in my cotton and corn fields.

But, it's different with grownup Klansmen.

(MORE)

AUBREY (CONT'D)

There's one family story: before I was born, around 1910, real bad Jim Crow years, my grandfather invited over the local Grand Wizard and his right hand men over for dinner one night to this very house. A good idea, right? Nobody expected them to show up, but they actually came. Oh, no!

Aubrey pauses and laughs a little.

But all during dinner, there were about fifty Klansmen in the front of the house having a small rally, drinking moonshine. And after dinner, the Grand Wizard invited all the Klansmen inside this very house to urinate throughout.

Rob is all shaken up, again.

But then Rob chuckles and shakes his head as he tries to make light of it.

ROB

Urine. Lots of urine . . . But no fires that night, right?

They both laugh.

INT. DOWNSTAIRS IN THE WASHINGTON HOME - SIMULTANEOUS

Minnie and Kathleen are downstairs looking for the title.

Kathleen is admiring a cherrywood roll-top desk.

KATHLEEN

Do you mind if I look through this lovely desk?

MINNIE

I already did, but different eyes see different things.

KATHLEEN

You're a better organizer than I am.

MINNIE

Oh, not me. That would be my man.

KATHLEEN

He's so handsome, Minnie. And he married a lovely lady.

Minnie is a little taken.

MINNIE

Ya'll are pretty good looking yourselves. How can men take their eyes off of you!

Minnie stands up straight and a thought comes to her.

MINNIE (CONT'D)

Not in my life have I heard a white person tell me I was pretty. I just realized that. Isn't that something. I have heard colored people say that Aubrey looks a lot like the actor, Sidney Poitier.

KATHLEEN

He does. Well, I think you look a little like Sarah Vaughan, except you're prettier.

MINNIE

Oh, you like colored jazz and blues?

KATHLEEN

Ella Fitzgerald, Ray Charles, Billie Holiday, Etta James, Louis Armstrong, a whole bunch. You know, I was once in love with a jazz piano player in Hollywood.

MINNIE

A colored one?

KATHLEEN

Well, no.

They chuckle.

KATHLEEN (CONT'D)

He was white, and I loved him dearly, but he couldn't stay away from the junk.

MINNIE

Now, that's both tragic and fascinating, but it's not a world I know about.

KATHLEEN

Talking about not knowing a world.
I just can't understand yours.

MINNIE

Probably never will, honey, and
that's okay. Who really understands
another person's world?

INT. BONNER'S GENERAL STORE

Rob Wagner is looking around for something on the store
shelves when Chet steps up to him.

CHET BONNER

Yes, sir, Mr. Wagner, "What can I
do ya for?"

ROB

Please, call me Rob. After all, I
call you Chet.

Rob chuckles as he notices an army tattoo on Chet's forearm.

ROB (CONT'D)

Army, huh?

CHET BONNER

21st at The Battle of the Bulge.

ROB

Invasion forces at Normandy?

CHET BONNER

You betcha. Medic.

ROB

Damn, you saw some stuff. Well, I
should tell you that I might've
been strafing Germans along the
beach ridges, who knows, maybe
right above you.

CHET BONNER

Hell, yes, Army Air Force!

ROB

P-38 Lightnings.

CHET BONNER

Damn!

They shake hands.

CHET BONNER (CONT'D)
38's was the funniest lookin'
aircraft we ever did see, but they
killed like Gods, I tell ya. I do
remember ya'll above my head and
was so thankful. Hey, it could o'
been you up thar.

Chet smiles big.

CHET BONNER (CONT'D)
I know yer busy, so, well, Rob,
what'll ya have today?

ROB
Oh, during my wife's big shopping
in Decatur, she forgot a few
things, sugar and flour.

CHET BONNER
Yes, sir, I got 'em both right over
here in our baked goods section.

Chet takes Rob over to baked goods.

ROB
Say, Chet, do you, by any chance,
know a teenage girl named Poppy
Eaglet?

CHET BONNER
Why, she's grown up into a real
beauty, ain't she?

ROB
Comes from that big Eaglet family.

CHET BONNER
Well, now, she could be either
sister, daughter or both to one of
them boys who hurt yer little
girls.

ROB
That incest stuff, huh?

CHET BONNER
That kinda thang used to be more
common 'round here. That family got
all carried away, I guess. And that
corn liquor they made fer years
didn't help 'em none. It had lead
in it.

ROB

Well, Poppy has strange ideas, but seems otherwise fairly normal.

CHET BONNER

Yes, sir, it does happen that those families' get a normal child, but she's the only one they got. And she takes care o' thangs. Handles money, all the shoppin'. She's got an old Singer sewin' machine. I give her odd fabric lengths for sewin'. Other products I can no longer use. Anyways, she cooks. Does everythang. Poor dear. I'm sure them men over thar are always tryin' ta poke 'er, too. They don't know any better.

ROB

Earlier today, when I was out doing some archery, she approached me and asked me if I'd "poke" her.

Chet Chuckles.

CHET BONNER

Aw, don't worry. She's asked everybody she thinks got good blood. She even asked me a few weeks ago. But, if'n I did that, my wife would find out.

ROB

Good blood, huh?

CHET BONNER

Minnie Washington was in here one day not too long ago. She likes to read about history. Well, she told me that royal families that got too many retarded people, 'cause they been pokin' each other for too long, will look outside for fresh people that are smart and healthy. That's what Poppy's doin'. Why, she even admits as much.

ROB

How many Eaglets are there?

CHET BONNER

Nobody knows fer sure. These days-- well, ya know, they tend to die young an' all--maybe ten or so. I can remember a while back when thar was up to fifteen, at least. And they burn thar own dead, ya know, right on their land. Nobody in Hartselle will even know about it until they see and smell the sweet-pork smoke.

Rob, shaking his head, gazes at Chet in disbelief.

ROB

Fascinating.

CHET BONNER

(Friendly chuckle)

Yeah, you ain't in Los Angeles no more, rocket man. By the way, for yer information, word has it Poppy asked yer boy, Jake, fer a poke. I mean, it wouldn't take much fer her to jiggle that boy's flag pole . . . Even at his tiny age, he's feelin' the thump. Know what I mean?

Rob suddenly becomes a little panicked.

ROB

. . . Thanks, Chet. I'd better get moving.

Rob takes off without purchasing anything.

INT. WAGNER BEDROOM - THAT NIGHT

Kathleen and Rob are reading in bed.

KATHLEEN

Thanks for talking to Jake, honey.

ROB

I'm trying with Jake, you know?

KATHLEEN

So he said he won't touch her?

ROB

I asked him how he felt when she asked him for a "you know what?"

Kathleen puts her book down and sits up.

KATHLEEN

And? Does he even fully understand what sex is?

ROB

Oh, honey, of course. He's almost thirteen! The mechanics, anyway. He said the experience made him scared and feel good at the same time.

KATHLEEN

And you told him that "feel good" was a disaster waiting to happen?

ROB

No, but I did tell him to keep being scared. No baby making with the Eaglets.

KATHLEEN

God, can you imagine Christmas dinners with the Eaglets?

Rob takes on a playful expression.

ROB

Brother of assaulted girls marries perpetrators' daughter/sister/aunt, whatever.

Kathleen slaps Rob on the arm.

KATHLEEN

You're terrible.

INT. WASHINGTON BEDROOM - SAME NIGHT

Aubrey and Minnie are sitting up in bed with books at their sides.

AUBREY

No way I'm gonna get any readin' done until this title crap goes away. Rob and Kathleen have been very kind about helping.

MINNIE

Kathleen's rare. She's been through something that makes her understand things.

AUBREY
Hey, can I run something past you?

MINNIE
Shoot.

AUBREY
You remember about three years ago
when we were awakened around 3:00
AM by noises in the house?

MINNIE
I remember.

AUBREY
Remember, we didn't find anybody
and didn't find anything missing?

MINNIE
I think I see where you're going
with this.

AUBREY
What I'm saying is, maybe we've
found out what was taken that
night.

MINNIE
So, you're positive that we did
have a title?

AUBREY
I have a better memory than anyone
I know. I absolutely remember
seeing it--my grandfather showed it
to me--when I was a boy.

EXT. THE CLEARING IN FRONT OF A FAIRLY SUBSTANTIAL MAYLIF
FARM HOUSE - NIGHT

Poppy is hiding amongst the trees as she watches a dozen men
stand around the Maylif's front porch stoop.

Stinky Whitfield is in front of the men speaking loudly.

STINKY WHITFIELD
It was just a matter o' time 'fore
them niggers became niggers. They
been growin' nigger food fer
generations.

Grace and Tug Maylif step out of the front door.

Tug stands to the side and just in back of Grace.

GRACE

(Loudly, resolutely)

If'n the Washington land turns out ta be Maylif land, then we'd work out a lease agreement with 'em. What the Hell the Klan got ta do with anythang 'cept gettin' in the way!

ONE OF THE MEN

But they been makin' lot's o' money off yer land, Grace, and not a penny of it went to ya.

GRACE

We done made lots o' money off THEM. They been tradin' with us fer a hundred years: our milk, eggs, chickens. Their corn, cotton, wheat, soy beans.

STINKY WHITFIELD

We'll be damned by Jesus if we do nothin'. Whar the Hell is Henry?

GRACE

Henry ain't standin' with ya fer a reason, Stinky, 'cause ya'll should let the courts handle this matter. If'n ya'll go an' do somethin' dumb, that'll make thangs worse.

STINKY WHITFIELD

Henry's a pussy.

The other men get excited, and we hear many "yeah's" among them.

Poppy, still over in the trees, becomes saddened and sheds a few tears.

GRACE

So ya'll think yer fighin' fer us, but now ya'll are goin' against us. Listen here, ya'll's mommas didn't make ya'll that dumb. Now, get on out o' here!

STINKY WHITFIELD

(To Tug)

Tug, why is it you ain't makin' my family breakfast no more, but yer making them niggers breakfast?

GRACE

Tug's a friend with the Washington boy.

STINKY WHITFIELD

Yeah, he probably just butt boiled Sinclair in back o' the barn. Shit, I wonder what that baby gonna look like.

Stinky laughs and the other men laugh, too.

ONE OF THE MEN

I bet that baby would get a Tug breakfast ever' mornin'.

Everybody laughs, again.

Tug becomes angry and lunges at Stinky, takes him by the arm, swings him around, let's him go, and Stinky lands about ten feet into the clearing.

The other men back off.

Stinky slowly gets up.

STINKY WHITFIELD

Damn Hell, Tug. (Stinky points at the last man to talk dirty) Dale's the one said the bit about breakfast.

Tug points at all the mean, panning his index finger.

TUG

No breakfast! No breakfast!

Grace hurries out and takes Tug by the hand.

GRACE

Now, Stinky, and the rest, ya'll ain't here ta help us. Yer just here 'cause ya need somethang ta do.

Grace looks at Dale.

GRACE (CONT'D)

Dale, if ya wasn't here right now,
I'd call ya 'cause yer a damned
deputy sheriff. Shame on you, boy.
I'll tell yer momma.

DALE

Aww, she don't care.

GRACE

Let's test it. I know she got a
phone last year. She told me at
church. We'll call her right now.
She knows this ain't what God's
children do.

Dale looks embarrassed.

TUG

(Shaking his head)
No breakfast. No breakfast.

GRACE

Remember, all the times the
Washingtons, goin' way back, hired
nearly all o' ya'll durin' harvest
when ya'll was kids? They paid
ya'll good money, too. And they
still hire our young. And teach 'em
thangs about life.

STINKY WHITFIELD

That don't take the nigger skin off
'em, Grace.

Stinky looks at the other men, who have started to lose that
evening's enthusiasm.

STINKY WHITFIELD (CONT'D)

Let's go, boys. This ain't over,
Grace.

The men get in back of Stinky's pickup truck and leave.

GRACE

(To Tug)
Ain't no stoppin' Stinky.

Tug shakes his head and looks at Grace with grave concern.

EXT. A PICKUP TRUCK DRIVING DOWN A GRAVEL ROAD - AFTERNOON

It's Sticky Whitfield driving slowly.

He spots Karen (with her broom) and Sissy (with a long stick) playing stick horse alongside the road.

Jake and Sinclair are playing, too, but they haven't yet emerged from the trees.

Stinky smiles at the girls.

But then he sees Sinclair pop out from the trees, which makes him stop the truck next to them.

When the kids see stinky pull up, they stop playing.

Jake hasn't emerged from the trees, yet.

Sinclair, obviously concerned that Stinky will see him alone with two white girls, looks around for Jake.

SINCLAIR

Jake? Jake? Please?

Stinky is already steaming.

STINKY WHITFIELD

Why are you helpless little girls
out here with that nigger boy!

Sinclair is still looking around the trees for Jake.

SINCLAIR

Jake? Jake? Come back.

KAREN

(Broom still between her
legs)
We're not helpless.

SISSY

We're just playin'.

Then Jake pops out from behind the trees.

JAKE

Hi there, Mr. Whitfield.

Stinky starts to cool down.

STINKY WHITFIELD

(To Sinclair)
Listen, you dumb nigger. You mind
yerself around these white girls.
I'm tellin' ya. I don't give a shit
how young ya are. I'll, I'll, rip
yer guts out!

SINCLAIR

Yessir, Missa Whitfield, I be good, sir. I always be wit dey brothers, too. I show dim girls respect, sir.

STINKY WHITFIELD

You better be damn sure o' that. This time, I'll let it go 'cause a white-boy-nigger-lover is here with ya. Just so ya nigger-lovin' kids know, don't be lovin' niggers too much. Don't get too close 'cause thar breathe 'ill give ya cancer.

Stinky drives off.

All the white kids gaze at Sinclair in disbelief.

KAREN

Sinclair, why did you change the way you talk with that terrible man?

SINCLAIR

I have to sound the way he wants me to. Even my daddy calls him, "Mr. Whitfield."

JAKE

Damn, you can't even be yourself. I don't like it here.

MISSY

I've never known a person that terrible. He was soooo mean. Would he really hurt you, Sinclair?

SINCLAIR

Oh, he'd have me lynched. Stinky wouldn't have the courage to do it, himself, but there are plenty of Klansmen who would. Then they'd have a party around my burning dead body.

KAREN

But your family's rich.

SINCLAIR

Hey, don't you worry about this. I grew up with it. We just need to be more careful.

JAKE

I'm sorry, Sinclair, that I ran off. I saw a deer and just followed it a little ways. I'll make sure next time.

The three white children appear dejected.

But Sinclair acts like it's all just routine.

EXT. THE EAGLET SHACK - MORNING

INT. INSIDE THE EAGLET SHACK - CONTINUOUS

Poppy's at a wood burning stove and is stirring a huge, cast iron pot filled with grits.

There are three males and two females (20s to 30s) crowded onto a beaten up sofa with wooden crates in front used as coffee tables, on which there are tin bowls and cups.

They're wearing tattered clothes. The men are shirtless.

Except for Poppy, they have few or no teeth, and all have uncorrected, poor eyesight.

All of them, except Poppy, are mentally challenged in varying degrees and are picking their noses, scratching themselves and occasionally saying unintelligible words.

There are several mangy dogs lying around.

POPPY

(Turning to the sofa)

Got hominy grits, and I stirred in mustard greens. Bring up yer bowls.

One of the men raises his hand and moans.

CORNSTALK

Awww. Awww.

POPPY

Cornstalk? Talk.

CORNSTALK

Dandelion ain't gonna eat 'cause she on her mat out back.

POPPY

I looked over at 'er after I woke up 'an she didn't seem ta be breathin'. I didn't check on 'er 'cause I had ta go to the outhouse real quick. Then, I done forgot about 'er.

CORNSTALK

She ain't been breathin' all mornin'.

Poppy looks somewhat concerned but more relieved.

CORNSTALK (CONT'D)

We all got tired o' washin' 'er all da time, so we done let her rest.

POPPY

It's hard to clean a girl that big. Twenty? Nearly six feet tall.

CORNSTALK

Shittin' herself all the time.

POPPY

Cornstalk, I know you were doin' most of the work on her.

CORNSTALK

Yep. It was real hard.

POPPY

Did you keep the dogs from . . .

CORNSTALK

. . . From eatin' on 'er? Pretty much, yeah. But I wasn't fast enough, I guess. Bo-Bo tore a little meat off 'er leg, I guess.

POPPY

Okay, Cornstalk, you burn her. Get Soybean to help ya carry her to the pit.

Soybean stands and raises his hand and nods.

Cornstalk smiles, toothless, at Poppy.

CORNSTALK

Ok, Poppy. Hey, how's 'bout I poke ya after?

POPPY

Now, Cornstalk, you know that's never gonna happen. Oh, by the way, Cornstalk, you ain't been makin' corn liquor and runnin' it through that old Buick radiator, again, have ya?

CORNSTALK

Yeah, I done it. It tasted like shit.

POPPY

That's 'cause the radiator's lined with lead, dumb ass.

CORNSTALK

Yeah, like lead in a pencil? I just can't understand why Buick would wanna make us sick.

POPPY

'cause, Cornstock, Buick didn't make radiators fer moonshine. They made 'em ta cool car engines.

CORNSTALK

Or ta get them engines drunk.

Cornstalk laughs at his own joke.

Nobody else laughs. They just look straight ahead.

POPPY

Cornstalk?

CORNSTALK

Yep?

POPPY

It's stinkin' real bad in here. Take everybody to the pond tonight when it's good and dark. Take soap this time. Make 'em wash their clothes real good, too. No pokin' the girls, Cornstalk. If ya do, I'll stop cookin' and ya'll gonna starve. Hear me?

CORNSTALK

Okay, Poppy, I try to remember. Poppy, I always got a headache. It . . .

POPPY

. . . It makes you forget
everythang. I know. I know.

CORNSTALK

I could remember stuff if I could
poke me a Poppy.

POPPY

(Chuckles)

Sometimes I think yer smarter than
you let on, Cornstalk. In fact, you
think yer smart 'nough ta milk
Chevy?

CORNSTALK

Why can't goats milk thar own self?

POPPY

'cause they got Cornstalk ta do it.
Lazy boy!

CORNSTALK

'course, you know what it'd take ta
rub some lazy off me, Poppy.

Poppy takes a big cleaver and holds it up.

POPPY

Yer a heavy sleeper, Cornstalk.
I'll have 'at tiny picker off
before ya wake up.

CORNSTALK

I can do the same ta Poppy.

POPPY

Why, then you'd starve, now,
wouldn't ya? Or you'd actually have
to work hard. Now, I mean it.
Beanstalk can do most of the work
you can. Go on an' poke Daisy. She
barely even knows yer doin' it. And
ain't never been with baby. Never
will.

CORNSTALK

Already pokin' Daisy. She knows I'm
doing it, too, an' she loves it.

Cornstalk laughs. Nobody else does.

Poppy is exasperated but smiles a little.

POPPY
Remember, Cornstalk, everybody in
the pond tonight!

EXT. BONNER'S STORE - LATE AFTERNOON

Rob and Aubrey are in front of the store leaning on Aubrey's pickup truck.

Aubrey is well dressed, as usual: brown slacks with suspenders, white shirt with a bow tie, and wingtip shoes.

Rob smiles as he looks at Aubrey, up and down.

ROB
I swear, Aubrey, you are the best
dressed farmer I have ever seen.
Look at you!

Rob is wearing simple black slacks and a white tee shirt.

ROB (CONT'D)
I'm such a square. An engineer.

AUBREY
You'll notice especially around
Decatur and Huntsville, there are
many colored folk who wear their
"Sunday best" everyday.

They both laugh.

AUBREY (CONT'D)
It's unspoken, Rob, but it's armor.
Coloreds who can't afford nice
clothes are usually the ones who
get their asses kicked . . .
sometimes killed. And sometimes,
when I hear of some less fortunate
colored folk getting harassed, I'll
buy 'em some nice clothes, and that
has helped in the past. In a war,
folks need armor.

Rob shakes his head.

ROB
I'm working for former Nazis who
turned their heads away from
genocide. Now I'm living in a
community that persecutes people I
care about.

AUBREY

As you know, I saw some action in Italy when I was with the 92nd. Well, in Italy, too, the locals looked at us colored soldiers as though we were just let out of a zoo. They were kind to us because we were their to end fascism. The women were very nice to us. Oh, my, those women.

ROB

Maybe I should change the subject.

AUBREY

Yes, you'd better.

They laugh.

ROB

Anything on that title?

AUBREY

Now that you mention it, I think Minnie and I are on to something. A few years ago, somebody broke into our place while we were sleeping. Loud enough to wake us up, but by the time we checked the whole house, the intruder was gone. And nothing was missing. Only now do we know that there was one thing missing. Our title to the property.

ROB

Too bad you didn't see anybody.

AUBREY

We have other senses, however. We didn't think about it at the time. You know those thoughts that just hover like cobwebs in the top corner of your mind. You can't quite grasp it, but it nags?

ROB

I'm an engineer. I have a lot of those cobwebs waiting for rockets.

AUBREY

The person that was in our house that night left behind a foul odor, and that particular odor belonged to Poppy.

(MORE)

AUBREY (CONT'D)

She doesn't stink anymore, seems to have grown out of it, somehow, but that's how she used to smell. The odor was so bad, it got her expelled, permanently, from school.

ROB

That girl is something.

AUBREY

She ask you for a "poke," yet?

Rob just smiles and shakes his head.

AUBREY (CONT'D)

Tempting, though, right?

ROB

She is maddingly beautiful. You?

AUBREY

She actually apologized to me for not asking me. It was sincere. "If I had a negro baby," she said, "my family would kill me." Fair enough. Anyway, she's a smart girl, so she must know that the land they're on is not theirs. At the age she was when she stole the title, she most likely didn't know that a title is only as good as the name printed on it.

ROB

Oh, my God. That must mean she actually broke into the land office at some point and stole their copy.

AUBREY

Assuming she has it, she won't just hand it back without getting something in return. That's just the way she operates. A wheeler-dealer, she is.

ROB

We know she wants a man. Well, that's something we can't just hand over.

AUBREY

We'll think of something.

ROB

Does Tug have a good relationship with her.

AUBREY

Well, it's no secret that they have crushes on each other. Chet said he even suggested to Poppy that Tug would be a good match for this baby idea, but she thought the baby would end up like Tug, nice baby but . . . different. Chet tried to make her understand that Tug wasn't born with the problem, but she didn't believe it, or didn't want to take a chance.

ROB

You think Tug should talk with Poppy about the title?

AUBREY

Tug does have some kind of moral authority over people, even the Eaglets. It would probably be best if I asked Sinclair to talk with Tug. They're close.

INT. INSIDE THE MAYLIF'S KITCHEN - EVENING

Tug, Grace, and Henry are having dinner.

HENRY

If the land converts to us, like I said, we'll lease it back to the Washingtons for a percentage of their profits. I believe that's fair.

Tug appears dejected.

GRACE

Tug, if the land is ours, we can't just let 'em keep it 'cause other folks would think we're devoted "nigger lovers." Well, we kinda are, but for our protection, yer protection, we can't let 'em think so.

HENRY

As a farmer, Aubrey runs circles around me. I know that.

(MORE)

HENRY (CONT'D)
 I respect him. I ain't got nothin'
 bad planned. I'll even give 'im the
 better side of the deal.

Tug, shaking his head and lifting his arms, forces out a few words.

TUG
 Stinky. Stinky. trouble!

HENRY
 What? Stinky definitely plannin'
 somethin'?

Tug nods as if to say, "of course."

HENRY (CONT'D)
 I'll give 'im a call. (to Grace)
 They got a phone now, right?

GRACE
 Called Gertrude the other day.

INT. THE WASHINGTON KITCHEN - MORNING

Minnie, Aubrey, and Sinclair are having breakfast.

SINCLAIR
 Tug said he'd talk to Poppy.

MINNIE
 Oh, thank you, honey.

SINCLAIR
 Well, you know Tug. He already knew
 everything and was thinking of
 talking with Poppy, anyway.

Sinclair pauses, deep in thought.

SINCLAIR (CONT'D)
 That night, you think Poppy came in
 and stole the title?

AUBREY
 Yes.

SINCLAIR
 Why didn't you know that bad smell
 was Poppy's back then?

AUBREY

Well, we had just laid fertilizer that was packed with cow dung. Yeah, her odor did carry a different tinge, but with the smell all mixed with the fertilizer, I just couldn't pinpoint it as Poppy's. I mean, I caught it a couple of times when I ran into her at Bonner's Store, but . . .

SINCLAIR

I just hope she still has the title. I don't want to leave Hartselle, got new friends and all.

AUBREY

Paul and Jake?

SINCLAIR

Yeah, Karen and Sissy are fun, too.

Minnie and Aubrey rise to attention.

MINNIE

How are the girls fun, honey?

SINCLAIR

Oh, mom, it's just playing.

AUBREY

Sinclair, whenever you're with those girls, you must have Paul and Jake along as well. You cannot be alone with white girls.

SINCLAIR

But, daddy, they're from California.

AUBREY

Sinclair, people like Stinky Whitfield don't think like that. He sees only white and colored. That's it.

MINNIE

Please, promise us you're gonna be careful. It could mean . . .

Minnie hesitates.

AUBREY

. . . Boy, they'll kill you flat dead. I mean it. Probably kill us, too. You never, I mean never go sniffin' around that tree!

Sinclair's level of alertness rises.

SINCLAIR

Don't worry, I already talked with them about caution.

AUBREY

Okay, what happened?

Sinclair looks away.

AUBREY (CONT'D)

Tell us right now! We need to know.

SINCLAIR

Stinky drove by and saw me playing with Karen and sissy. Jake had been with us but was gone in the woods for a minute. That made Stinky real mad, but then Jake showed up, again, so Stinky cooled down. He gave us what sounded like a serious warning.

MINNIE

I feel that cross burning, Aubrey.

Aubrey hits the table lightly with his fist.

AUBREY

Stinky's lookin' for excuses. Something's stirring alright. Henry said he had a talk with Stinky but said Stinky wasn't listening, like he'd already made up his tiny mind.

Minnie takes Sinclair's hand.

Then they all take each other's hands.

MINNIE

We don't pray often enough around here, but I think now is a good time. Dear Lord . . .

INT. IN THE WAGNER DINNING ROOM - EVENING

The family is having dinner.

KATHLEEN

I need to talk to you kids about something.

ROB

And it's very serious.

The kids lower their heads.

KATHLEEN

We just spoke to Aubrey and Minnie, and we all agree that, until things cool down around here, you all and Sinclair can't play together.

PAUL

Oh, mom, no way.

KAREN

Something bad could happen to Sinclair, Paul.

KATHLEEN

Unfortunately, something bad could happen to the whole Washington family.

JAKE

Why did we move here? Because our stepfather wanted to?

SISSY

Are we in danger, too?

JAKE

Of course, we are, dumb ass!

SISSY

Pig butt!

ROB

Look, you guys, I'm sorry things have turned out this way.

KATHLEEN

There's no way Rob could've known that any of this would happen.

JAKE

Well, what about this title stuff?

ROB

Aubrey and I are working with Tug on that.

JAKE

So we just wait and stay away from the Washingtons for awhile?

KATHLEEN

I know it'll be hard. It's summer break. You're a little bored.

KAREN

You take us from a busy city where we always had stuff to do and brought us to cows, hogs, corn, cotton and mean people.

SISSY

They're not all mean.

KATHLEEN

Anyway, the Washingtons and we agreed that you kids can talk with Sinclair on the phone. Okay. Let's eat.

EXT. THE WOODS NEAR THE EAGLET SHACK - LATE AFTERNOON

Tug and Poppy walk into a clearing in the woods.

He hands her a piece of paper.

After she reads it, she puts a hand to her mouth.

POPPY

How did they know?

Tug sniffs under his armpit and waves his hand.

POPPY (CONT'D)

I knew I shoulda washed up before goin' there that night.

Tug cocks his head as if to say, "Well?"

POPPY (CONT'D)

I do have it, and . . .

Tug lets a out a sigh of relief.

POPPY (CONT'D)

. . . And I do have enough sense now ta know I can't use it. But I ain't given it up until certain promises are made. I took the copy from the County Office, too.

Tug slaps his forehead and lifts his arms.

POPPY (CONT'D)

I need a good man to give me a baby. And I want a new moonshine still with copper tubin' instead of that damned Buick radiator.

Tug takes Poppy's hand.

Poppy is taken aback.

Tug bows down in front of her and forces her hand to his head where his old scar is.

Poppy rubs the scare and then stands back and dips her head.

POPPY (CONT'D)

I'll be damned, what Chet Bonner told me was true. You did get yer head split open. That hog did getcha ya, huh? So, you weren't born dumb?

Tug shakes his head back and forth.

Poppy laughs.

POPPY (CONT'D)

That means our baby wouldn't be dumb?

Poppy takes Tug by the hand, and they continue their walk as Poppy keeps talking.

EXT. HENRY MAYLIF'S TRUCK LUMBERING DOWN A GRAVEL ROAD -
AFTERNOON

INT. INSIDE HENRY'S TRUCK

Henry's turning his head from side-to-side, obviously looking for somebody.

He sees Stinky Whitfield on a tractor driving slowly down an access road.

EXT. OUTSIDE HENRY'S TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

Henry stops on the side of the road, steps out of his truck and starts trotting after Henry.

Stinky sees him coming but keeps driving.

HENRY
(Yelling)
Goddamnit to Hell, Stinky!

Stinky stops for moment as if thinking about communicating with Henry; then, as Henry nears the tractor, he take off, again.

HENRY (CONT'D)
(Winded and crying out)
Stinky, ya fool. Stop 'at damn
thang. It ain't no faster than me,
anyways.

Stinky doesn't stop.

Henry trots beside the tractor.

STINKY WHITFIELD
(Yelling)
Niggers had yer land fer a hundred
years an ya'll don't care.

Henry's still trotting alongside.

HENRY
Why didn't you take any o' my phone
calls, Stinky? Rude bastard! You
better not be plannin' nothin'
dumb, Stinky.

Stinky stops the tractor.

STINKY WHITFIELD
Yer great, great granddaddy's land,
Henry! Them niggers stole it!

HENRY
They ain't stole nothin', Stinky!
It weren't nothin' but a mix up.

STINKY WHITFIELD
They took yer land, Henry, and
they're gonna pay!

HENRY

It's just land, Stinky. It ain't worth their lives. Plus, it's my affair, Stinky. You ain't got no business in it at all.

STINKY WHITFIELD

You know what's gonna happen if'n them niggers get away with this? It'll make all us look weak. We work too hard, Henry, for our land and our families.

HENRY

They're good folks, Stinky. Hell, they used ta hire Tug durin' harvest when he was a little boy. Aubrey taught my boy a lot. Yer boys, too. Not ta mention yer daughter, Abigail. Plus, I heard Poppy done stole the title from the Washington's house a couple o' years ago. Do ya hear me. There is a title with the Washington name on it, you damn fool.

STINKY WHITFIELD

Why is it I ain't had a breakfast from Tug in so long? He used to come over 'bout twice a month.

HENRY

Why, he makes breakfast fer folks who are nice to others, Stinky. An' you ain't been too nice fer a good while--well, I hate ta say it, ever since polio took yer boy, Sanders.

Stinky palm-slaps the tractor steering wheel and starts driving it forward, again.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Nobody took yer son, Stinky. Coloreds didn't take him. We didn't take him 'cause we Maylifs was really the ones in front of ya at the polio line. No, Stinky, God saw it was time for Sanders ta come home. That's all. An' that don't give you no call ta be nasty ta folks.

Stinky keeps moving the tractor along.

STINKY WHITFIELD
 (Yelling with rage)
 You ain't seen nasty, yet! Now get
 away or I'll run ya down!

Henry, seeing the impenetrable rage in Stinky's eyes, lets him drive on.

EXT. FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, HARTSELLE - SUNDAY MORNING

It's after mass and white folks are crowded around the front of the small church.

Stinky is talking with Minister "Preacher" Alfred Gloomer, who is holding a Bible.

Alfred Gloomer is a tall, pleasant looking man with a "resting" serene expression and is soft spoken.

STINKY WHITFIELD
 Fine sermon, Alfred.

MINISTER GLOONER
 Lord aims ta please, Stinky.

STINKY WHITFIELD
 Well, I got somethin' ta ask ya.

Minister Gloomer motions for Stinky to talk away from the crowd.

Stinky follows.

MINISTER GLOONER
 Yes.

STINKY WHITFIELD
 Ya said in a sermon a while back. I think ya said niggers ain't God's children?

Minister Gloomer hesitates before answering.

MINISTER GLOONER
 Well, true, they ain't his children, but they are his creatures.

STINKY WHITFIELD
 So, like dogs 'er somethin'?

MINISTER GLOONER
I would not compare my wonderful
German Shepard to a nigger.

Stinky chuckles.

STINKY WHITFIELD
Oh, I gotcha, I think.

MINISTER GLOONER
Tell ya what, let's just call
niggers God's nasty children, okay?
What's up?

STINKY WHITFIELD
I know some niggers that ain't been
good lately.

MINISTER GLOONER
Before doin' God's work, Stinky,
you gotta talk ta God about it and
get permission.

STINKY WHITFIELD
I done did that. I'm pretty sure
God said, "yes."

Minister Gloomer puts a hand on Stinky's shoulder.

MINISTER GLOONER
Stinky, what do ya do when yer
underbrush gets too thick?

Stinky thinks for a bit.

STINKY WHITFIELD
Oh, yeah! Ya clear it.

Minister Gloomer raises an index finger and smiles.

STINKY WHITFIELD (CONT'D)
(Proudly)
I understand now, Alfred.

INT. IN THE WASHINGTON FOYER - SAME DAY - AFTERNOON

Henry's talking with Minnie and Aubrey.

HENRY
Got no idea what Stinky's gonna do,
ya'll. Whatever it is . . . it
ain't gonna be good.

MINNIE

What do you think he'll do, Henry?

HENRY

It's "they." I hear Sticky's got at least six or seven of the Klan with 'im on this. I don't know exactly what thar thinkin'.

AUBREY

They're thinking a strike on a colored family is long overdue.

MINNIE

They lynched Able Jefferson just two years ago.

Henry gets very nervous.

HENRY

You know I wasn't thar when they got Able, right? I never took part in any lynchin'.

MINNIE

Oh, we know. We know. And, of course, we thank you for your kindness.

HENRY

I'm wondering why Poppy hasn't brought ya'll the title.

MINNIE

Oh, yeah. Well, she'd like some assurances.

Henry appears confused.

AUBREY

She wants her family to stay on the same land . . . And she wants a new moonshine still with copper tubing so they can make some decent money, again.

MINNIE

You do know that Tug's taken to Poppy, don't you?

HENRY

Hell, Tug's always pined over her even when she was smellin' so bad.

(MORE)

HENRY (CONT'D)

I seen 'im watchin' Poppy many times.

AUBREY

The Wagners are willing to let them stay next to their land but said they were unwilling to have men coming around all the time pickin' up moonshine.

HENRY

We can worry about a pick-up place later. Right now, we just gotta get that title back.

AUBREY

Then we can show it to Stinky.

HENRY

Probably won't do no good at this point. He probably wouldn't even look at it.

Minnie grabs hold of Aubrey's arm.

INT. INSIDE THE WASHINGTON HOUSE - LATER THAT EVENING

There's a knock on the door, and Minnie slowly approaches the door and cautiously calls out.

MINNIE

Who is it?

POPPY (O.S.)

(From the other side of the door)

It's Poppy Eaglet, ma'am.

Minnie opens the door, and sees Poppy, who is holding a large manila envelope, and Tug is at her side.

INT. WASHINGTON LIVINGROOM - CONTINUOUS

Aubrey and Winnie are talking with Poppy and Tug.

There's another knock on the door.

Minnie asks who it is.

MINNIE

Who is it?

GRACE
It's Henry and Grace.

INT. WASHINGTON LIVINGROOM - CONTINUOUS

All six are talking.

GRACE
Poppy, I hope you know how much
trouble you made 'round here.

POPPY
I'm so sorry, ma'am. I was just so
worried about my family. They're
all real dumb an' all, but they're
all I got.

MINNIE
Well, it looks like you have Tug as
well.

POPPY
I'm hoping Tug'll give me a smart
baby an' all.

Tug smiles.

GRACE
(Light hearted but
serious)
Now, you ain't even married, yet.
Hold on, girl. Yer lookin' at Tug's
momma.

Aubrey has the title now, and he hands it over to Henry for
inspection.

AUBREY
Same title that I remember.

Henry inspects the title.

HENRY
Oh, yeah, this is the real deal
here. Well, I'm happy I don't have
ta charge ya a hundred years o'
back rent.

They all laugh.

POPPY
The moonshine "still" don't have ta
be nothin' fancy.
(MORE)

POPPY (CONT'D)

I just gotta have copper from now on 'cause the corn we ran through that Buick radiator done chewed up my family's brains and teeth. Thankfully, I always hated the taste of it, so I still got my brains and some education.

AUBREY

Now, Poppy, you are going to have to start paying some rent, not too much, once you get things up and going, okay? We'll talk later about the amount. Tug can show you how to make more money off your land, and the rest of us can advise you as well.

POPPY

I appreciate that, sir.

AUBREY

I don't think a white person has ever called us "sir" and "ma'am." It feels odd. Please, just call us Aubrey and Minnie.

POPPY

Yes, sir, I will.

Everybody laughs at Poppy.

INT. TUG'S 2ND STORY BEDROOM AT THE MAYLIF HOUSE - DARK OUTSIDE

Tug is sitting in a chair, asleep but fully clothed, with a book on his lap near an open window.

Chuck, the Falcon, appears on Tug's window sill.

Chuck screeches, waking up Tug.

TUG

Not breakfast time.

Chuck screeches again and again, non-stop.

Tug is alarmed and gets closer to the window.

Chuck keeps screeching.

Tug looks into the distance and sees the glow of a house burning.

TUG (CONT'D)
Sinclair! Sinclair!

INT. WAGNER LIVINGROOM - DARK OUTSIDE- A FEW MINUTES LATER
Kathleen and Rob, in bathrobes, are watching a movie on TV.
Paul, in pajamas, comes into the living room.

KATHLEEN
(To Paul)
What are you doing out of bed,
honey?

PAUL
The smoke smell woke me up.

ROB
People do burn things around here.

PAUL
Yeah, but not this late, right?
It's 10:30 at night.

Kathleen and Rob get up and go to the front door, which opens
out to the front yard and the gravel road.

They see smoke wafting by.

ROB
It doesn't smell like a controlled
farm fire.

Then they hear a curdling scream coming from the
Washington's.

KATHLEEN
Oh, my God, it's Minnie.

The scream continues.

They see Tug running by the house incredibly fast.

PAUL
I didn't know Tug could run that
fast.

ROB
Kathleen, you call the fire
department. I'm going to help.
Paul, you stay here, all of you. In
fact, Paul, go get my pants and
shirt. On the bed. Quick!

Paul runs back and returns quickly with Rob's clothes.

Rob dresses at the door.

KATHLEEN
Oh, God, Rob. Be careful.

ROB
Don't come unless you're sure the
kids won't follow.

Rob takes off running.

INT. AT THE WAGNER PHONE

Kathleen is phoning the fire department.

All the kids are up now and are listening.

KATHLEEN
How long will it take?

MAN ON THE OTHER END (O.S.)
You said the Washington house?
Aubrey Washington?

KATHLEEN
Yes. How long?

MAN ON THE OTHER END (O.S.)
Well, I gotta wake everybody up an'
all. And it's kinda far. . .

KATHLEEN
Oh, it's not far, firehouse
couldn't be more than five miles
toward Decatur.

MAN ON THE OTHER END (O.S.)
Well, tonight it might be a lot
farther, ma'am.

KATHLEEN
What? Oh, my God! What did you just
say?

There are mens' chuckles in the background.

KATHLEEN (CONT'D)
What is that? Are men laughing? Are
men laughing? Why are they
laughing?

MAN ON THE OTHER END (O.S.)
 Yes, ma'am, they're just watchin' a
 funny movie.

The men in the background let out snort-chuckles.

KATHLEEN
 I'll call the police, you know?

MAN ON THE OTHER END (O.S.)
 Yes, ma'am, got some o' them right
 here, wanna talk to 'em?

Kathleen hangs up.

KATHLEEN
 Oh, God. Oh, God. I don't think
 they're coming.

Kathleen, in a state of panic, palms her face.

JAKE
 What do you mean "they're not
 coming, mom?"

KATHLEEN
 I can't believe this shit!

INT. INSIDE STINKY'S TRUCK ON THE GRAVEL ROAD BETWEEN THE
 WAGNER'S HOME AND THE WASHINGTON'S HOME

Stinky and two other men in the truck's cab watch Tug running
 with all his strength toward the engulfed Washington home,
 which is only about fifty yards away.

Tug gives them the finger as he runs past them, which strikes
 fear in Stinky.

Dale is sitting next to Stinky.

DALE
 It's burnin' like a mother fucker.
 Them nigger screams sound to me
 like a hymn at church.

Stinky yells through his fear.

STINKY WHITFIELD
 I done had it with niggers!

EXT. THE WASHINGTON HOME - CONTINUOUS

The house is ablaze.

Minnie's outside as Tug runs up to her as she, in a state of panic, runs around looking in the windows and calling out for Sinclair.

Minnie's screaming and pleading.

MINNIE
Sinclair's inside, Tug! Aubrey went
in after him. Oh, my God. Oh, my
God.

Without hesitation, Tug runs into the house through the front door.

Minnie falls to her knees.

MINNIE (CONT'D)
(Crying out)
Dear Lord, don't hide from us now!

She screams.

Just as Rob runs up, Tug carries Aubrey out of the front door and places him on the ground.

Minnie and Rob run up to Aubrey, who is alive but is gagging from smoke inhalation.

TUG
(Yelling to Aubrey)
Sinclair? Sinclair?

AUBREY
(Struggling to speak)
Upstairs.

Without hesitation, Tug runs toward the front door but realizes he can't enter because the flames have become too intense.

Tug then hurries to find a place where he can climb up to the second floor.

He spots some lattice next to a gutter spout and quickly climbs up.

MINNIE
Please, Tug, get him! Get him!

Tug sees that Rob below him is trying to climb the lattice.

Tug points at Aubrey.

TUG
No, Rob. Aubrey! Aubrey!

Rob backs down and heads back over to Aubrey.

Kathleen and the kids are now in the front yard.

Rob looks over to them and shakes his head.

KATHLEEN
(Crying out)
The kids said they'd stay back. Oh,
my God!

Tug enters a second floor window.

Poppy and her brother, Cornstalk, show up.

CORNSTALK
(To Minnie and Rob)
Somebody still inside?

MINNIE
Tug's in there trying to find
Sinclair. He's upstairs.

Without hesitation, Cornstalk, like a monkey, runs up the lattice and hops through a window.

Meanwhile, the others can only watch.

Then we see Tug in one of the windows holding Sinclair in his arms.

A part of the first story roof is just below the window. Tug rolls Sinclair out onto the roof.

TUG
(Yelling)
Catch him! Catch him!

Rob, and Aubrey struggling to join in, catch the falling Sinclair, who is gagging from smoke inhalation.

But Tug does not follow.

Everybody now tends to Sinclair.

POPPY
(Crying out)
Both my men are still inside.
(MORE)

POPPY (CONT'D)
 Goddamn! Goddamn! Tug! Cornstalk!
 Don't you die on me!

KATHLEEN
 Where's the fire department?

Poppy lets out a cynical laugh.

POPPY
 Hell, they might come when they're
 sure it's all over!

Suddenly, screams from both Tug and Cornstalk come from the house.

As everybody looks up, a window explodes with both men on fire, bursting out.

They slide, still on fire, down the roof and onto the ground where they start rolling on the ground.

Rob and the boys take their shirts off and stamp out the remaining flames on their bodies.

Tug loses consciousness, while Cornstalk, flames out, comes over to help Tug.

Poppy falls to her knees next to Tug.

KATHLEEN
 Where's the goddamn ambulance and
 fire trucks? Where the Hell are
 they? I called them! I called them!

SINCLAIR
 (Through his continued
 coughing)
 They make fires. They don' put 'em
 out.

Tug's not waking up, and Rob checks his pulse.

ROB
 Oh, Christ. I'm not getting a
 pulse. No Pulse. Tug! Tug! Tug!

Grace and Henry pull up in their truck and jump out, hurry over to Tug and fall to their knees next to him.

Chet and Don Bonner pull up in their pickup.

Chet yells out.

CHET BONNER

We need ta get all the injured in
the back of this truck right now.
I'll take 'em ta Decatur.

Don and Chet get out of the truck.

Chet looks with great concern at Sinclair.

SINCLAIR

I'm okay, Mr. Bonner. See to Tug,
okay?

CHET BONNER

I was a damn medic in the Bulge,
son. All's I know is you okay until
you ain't.

ROB

(To Chet)

Tug doesn't have a heartbeat.

Chet checks Tug's neck for a pulse.

CHET BONNER

Oh, he's gotta slight beat alright.
Lung trauma. (to Don) Don, you
drive. I gotta tend to Tug in the
back on the way.

Don, Aubrey, Rob, and Henry load Tug into the truck.

Cornstalk walks Sinclair to the truck, but they're not
getting in.

SINCLAIR

We're okay, Chet.

CHET BONNER

You getcher asses in this truck
now. You can still get lung
failure. I'm tellin' ya. I seen it
in battle too many times.

CORNSTALK

I ain't got no money ta pay.

CHET BONNER

I'll pay fer ya, dumb ass. Get in
here.

MINNIE

Sinclair, get your butt in that
truck.

AUBREY
 (To Sinclair and Chet)
 We'll drive in later, ya'll.

CHET BONNER
 (To Aubrey)
 Yer gettin' yer ass in here, too.

Aubrey reluctantly hops in the back of the truck along with Sinclair, Tug, Cornstalk, and Chet.

With Don driving, they peel out toward Decatur.

EXT. WASHINGTON LAND WHERE THE HOUSE IS STILL SMOLDERING -
 DAWN

Minnie, Rob, Poppy, Grace, and Henry are sitting on the ground, dejected as the house has burnt to the ground.

Kathleen walks onto the property.

The others look at her anxiously.

KATHLEEN
 Just got off the phone with the doctor. He said Sinclair, Aubrey and Cornstalk are in the clear.

POPPY
 Ain't nothin' that can kill cornstalk. Damn. (To Minnie) I'm happy 'bout Sinclair.

Grace is dejected with worry and clumsily approaches Kathleen.

GRACE
 And Tug?

KATHLEEN
 The doctor said they can't get his heart to stop fibrillating. They say it's heart/lung trauma, and he hasn't stabilized. They said they're not sure about him right now.

Grace and Henry hold each other, and Grace cries.

POPPY
 Tug ain't goin' nowhere. He's gotta give me a baby.

Minnie starts to cry.

MINNIE

That sweet soul saved my boy. My,
God.

ROB

We can't do anything here anymore.
It's time we all get to Decatur.
Henry and Grace, I'll get our
station wagon. Can you follow us
okay?

Henry, still embracing Grace, simply nods.

EXT. TWO WEEKS LATER - WASHINGTON LAND WHERE THE HOUSE WAS -
MORNING

Randel Sharp pulls up the front of the property in a Buick,
steps out and approaches the rubble where Minnie, Aubrey,
Rob, Kathleen, Grace, and Henry are preparing to help the
Washington's remove the rubble.

RANDEL SHARP

Minnie, Aubrey, even though you're
not fire proof, you are as of this
morning, bullet proof. Land office
just authenticated your title. Said
they'd mail out your copy.

Randel looks around and sees the mail box, which has survived
the fire.

RANDEL SHARP (CONT'D)

Looks like ya'll are gettin' ready
to rebuild Noah's Arch.

MINNIE

Thanks, Mr. Sharp. We're grateful.

There's a backhoe, a bull dozer, wheel barrels, and the
trucks are ready for loads.

The Bonner brothers pull up and start unloading removal
tools.

CHET BONNER

(To Aubrey)

We should have most of this outa
here today. Fire did most of the
work for us.

AUBREY

Thanks, Chet. (Aubrey turns to everyone) Thank you, everybody, so much for your help.

HENRY

Aubrey, Minnie, we'll be helpin' until your new house is finished. That is, o' course, if'n yer gonna stay. And we hope ya'll do.

MINNIE

We're stayin', Henry. It's our home.

Rob and Kathleen dip their heads.

KATHLEEN

We're staying until the house is up, but . . .

POPPY

Don't go, Kathleen. We ain't gonna use yer pond too much.

KATHLEEN

Thanks, Poppy. You're our friends, but this just isn't our place. Plus, Rob got a call from Cape Canaveral down in Florida.

Then Tug, with a head bandage and bandages on his arms, walks onto the clearing carrying two large baskets of food.

TUG

Breakfast time!

Some Eaglets are in tow including Cornstalk, a young man with crossed eyes and no teeth and an adult female also with crossed eyes and no teeth.

The Eaglets are pushing wheel barrels filled with buckets, brooms, shovels and picks.

Kathleen's kids follow close behind, also with brooms and other tools.

Everybody crowds around Tug to see how he's doing.

KATHLEEN

(To Tug and the others
approaching)
Hey, ya'll . . .

GRACE

Kathleen, you said "ya'll." And now yer thinkin of leavin'?

Chuckles all around.

KATHLEEN

Any word from the sheriff's office?

There's silence.

ROB

Now, come on, the sheriff is just gonna let Stinky get away with this?

SINCLAIR

Didn't do anything about the last lynching, or the one before that, the one before that one. Why would they do anything about this?

Kathleen tears up, and Rob comes over to give her a hug.

AUBREY

Well, you know, things have to get better. We have President Kennedy and the Reverend King. Things are changing.

Minnie shakes her head.

MINNIE

All we can do is keep moving forward.

EXT. GRAVEL ROAD ALONGSIDE A CORNFIELD - A FEW DAYS LATER

Tug is walking along the road wearing his Falcon-glove and has his pellet gun over his shoulder.

Chuck, the Falcon, is circling above.

Then Chuck flies farther out over the corn field, dives and screeches, flies back up, dives, again, and screeches.

EXT. CORN FIELD - MORNING - CONTINUOUS

Stinky Whitfield is standing on a small access road inspecting an ear of corn, his truck nearby.

His ears prick up when he hears the snort of a hog.

About fifty feet from him is the hog, John Wayne, that almost trampled Paul near the Maylif's barn.

John Wayne is watching Stinky and digging his hoofs in the dirt.

Chuck continues to circle in the sky.

About fifty feet on the other side of the hog, Tug, well hidden and with his pellet gun, is watching the situation.

John Wayne digs its back hoofs deeper into the dirt.

Stinky waves his arms, trying to shew the hog away.

STINK WHITFIELD

Goddamn, hog. Getcher lard ass out
'o here.

Now, Tug takes aim at the hog.

TUG

Between the balls and butthole.

He shoots and hits the hog right on target.

And the hog commences to charge Stinky.

Stinky screams.

STINKY WHITFIELD

No, no, no, no, no . . .

John Wayne, with unrestrained violence, tramples Stinky to death and then runs off back into the corn.

Tug walks up close to Stinky's body.

Chuck swoops down and settles on Tug's arm.

Tug looks around the corn, turns back around toward Stinky's body.

TUG

No breakfast for you.

THE END