

Father's Failure
by
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EXT. BATON ROUGE, LA.- BUS STOP - NIGHT

REV BILLY PRITCHARD, a middle-aged gent wearing faded black suit, unruly hair, with a face wary but kind, holds forth in the dingy light of a bad neighborhood.

BILLY

In Revelations, the Lamb is covered with eyes. Be advised we're being scrupulously scrutinized, cause the Savior's all studded with eyes.

Pedestrians brush past with no acknowledgement.

A spooky-eyed fellow, also shabby, ten years Billy's junior, WOOLMAN stands watching from a distance. They stare at each other. Billy wipes his brow, raises his voice.

BILLY (CONT'D)

We're responsible for what's right and wrong is all I'm saying.

Woolman shyly scuffles off.

There is a small cardboard sign on the pavement beside Billy with the words BESEECH THE LORD'S FORGIVENESS next to a tattered black hat, empty, upturned for alms.

The foot traffic thins. Billy stops preaching, reaches in his pocket for a clutch of business cards cinched by a rubber band.

Studying the top card Billy snaps the rubber tensely

He sighs and wanders down the sidewalk, halts, picks up a cigarette butt off the ground pulls an antique cigarette lighter out of his pocket and lights up.

EXT. DOWN THE STREET - NIGHT

Donna, a late-30's woman in long tattered skirts crouches in a shadow with eyes on Billy. She looks behind, then up ahead.

On her hip she snuggles one year old Coco. Her other hand clasps the diminutive wrist of eight year old Sallassa.

With a heave, Donna rises, tracking Billy like a cat. Kitties cling to Momma. Momma hugs the track.

INT. LAUNDROMAT - NIGHT

Through the window, Billy is seen outside, drifting past, while Jules Pritchard is busy inside kicking digital ass.

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In faded surf shorts, party shirt, flip-flops and cap, he screams at a video screen.

JULES

You win!

His fist hits the glass. He sips a flask, slaps another quarter in, then flicks a glance at a dryer where his laundry spins.

An attractive young woman dressed for attention, YVETTE hastily enters the place, hauls her basket to a machine, challenges Jules' hungry leer.

She opens a washer and starts feeding it soap, a towel, bath mat, skirt, blouse, pair of jeans, clothes for one. She slams the door, crams a quarter in the slot, hits the button.

Jules pulls out his phone camera and takes aim.

JULES (CONT'D)

You're looking fine. May I?

YVETTE

No.

JULES

What's your name?

He snaps one anyway. She sits down and snags a beat-up magazine off a table, hastily flips through the pages.

YVETTE

Why should I say?

JULES

Cause I'm Joe and I want to know.

Jules' dryer stops. He goes over, swings it open, gathers his threads, dumps them on a counter and wads them into a back pack. She flips pages.

JULES (CONT'D)

What are you doing after this?

YVETTE

I have plans.

JULES

Is that so? Are they firm, reliable, long-standing plans?

She stops reading, stares him down, then starts again.

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CONTINUED: (2)

YVETTE
Boyfriend.

JULES
Busy all night? Or free later on?

YVETTE
You serious?

JULES
Looking for something better?

YVETTE
Better would be you, in this case?

JULES
Costs you nothing to discover.

YVETTE
Go fuck my boyfriend, then hook up
with you later on? Is that it?

JULES
I'll wait all night if you'll come.

Donna can be seen slinking past the window now. Same direction Billy went. She glances through the glass and spots a telephone on the wall.

Donna halts, backs up, pushes in the door. Yvette looks on the poor woman and her kids with pity. Jules picks up on it.

Donna makes straight for the phone machine, presses a finger into the coin return, retreats coinless. Sallassa looks up at Jules, wide-eyed. Jules seizes the day.

JULES (CONT'D)
This what you're looking for?

He holds out a quarter.

DONNA
Haven't seen a pay phone in I don't
know how long.

JULES
(to Sallassa then Donna)
Take it. Take it.

Donna reaches for a wilted sunflower in her lapel. She sets it down on the table in his pile of coins and accepts the quarter. Sallassa smiles up at Jules.

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CONTINUED: (3)

Donna nudges Sallassa, opens the door, waiting for her girl.

Sallassa backs across the floor, smiling up at Jules.

Jules watches Sallassa until she's out of sight then returns his attention to Yvette.

JULES (CONT'D)

What you got to lose?

YVETTE

You're really that hard for me?

EXT. A HARD CORE COMMERCIAL STRIP- NIGHT

Along a stretch of sleazy joints, Billy sidesteps a street chick in heels and fishnets.

Down the road, over Billy's back, Donna strains her eyes yawning, clutching kids.

Billy comes to a vacant lot, stops to count on one hand then kneels to draw with the other in the sand.

Donna and the girls come upon him. He's too absorbed to see. They withdraw into an inky alley.

An odd couple shambles up, wily CRONE and crazy-eyed Woolman, sticking close together.

Billy rises.

The trio huddle under a slash of light.

Billy spies a star.

BILLY

We are the dreams of the Almighty.

The woman stares off into nowhere. Woolman peers upward.

BILLY (CONT'D)

I mean, the same way our dreams belong to us, we belong to the Lord.

The woman cuts in.

CRONE

Well, it sure ain't my dream.

BILLY

Not to worry sister, our deliverance is near.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She gestures toward Woolman.

WOMAN

This boy says he watched you on TV
for years. He wants to preach.

Woolman's eyes are fixed on him. Billy leans back.

BILLY

I am unfit to teach.

WOMAN

Let him tag along. It's all he
wants. He is not mute, though he
gives that impression.

BILLY

I do not doubt his worthiness, but
I am in exile for my sins.

Billy sets off. Crone shoves Woolman after him.

WOMAN

But we watched you confess on the
TV and repent. Unless you lied?

Woolman falls in behind him, Billy halts, shaking his head.

BILLY

No, but I'm unworthy of this.

Billy backs away, waving off all bets, then runs.

EXT. INKY ALLEY - NIGHT

Donna snores across from vacant lot propped against a brick wall on her butt. The kids have nodded off too. A country songstress warbles far off on a distant radio station. *Hard times are over, Hard times are over, Hard times are over, over for awhile.*

INT. - CAMPER TRAILER BEDROOM - NIGHT

It's dark. Jules and Yvette are in the act. Cell phone rings.

JULES

(labored)
Joe speaking.

INT. MOBILE HOME BEDROOM - NIGHT

Pregnant BRITTANY, 19, cute, disheveled, sits on a rumpled bed in a tank top and sloppy robe.

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CONTINUED:

BRITTANY

Bring me some chocolate ice cream.

INT. - CAMPER TRAILER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Yvette's head pops up, grabs the phone, gabs at it.

YVETTE

We're not done yet.

She flings the phone against the wall, pulls him down.

JULES

Take it easy, would you?

INT. MOBILE HOME BEDROOM - NIGHT

BRITTANY

Joe? Who was that Joe? Joe? Joe!

She hangs up, falls back wailing and kicking the bed.

EXT. OUTSIDE A NEON SATURATED BODEGA - NIGHT

In the wee hours Billy slumps down, head in hands, elbows to knees. A night clerk leans out, gives a nudge to move along.

EXT. DEPRESSED URBAN NIEGBORHOOD STREET - NIGHT TO DAY

A bank front stock exchange ribbon announces the days losses and gains.

Billy's up again in a walking dream. "Disparity" feeds in slow motion behind him on chipped bricks in greasy green.

All at once, he feels Someone coming up behind him and freezes. Woolman catches up too fast and falls, pulling Billy with him, breathing asthmatically in his face.

BILLY

I regret that I cannot heal you.

A flash of amber startles open Billy's eye. He's alone and lying down as a slum sunrise rips open the dingy sky. He gets up, stumbles away.

EXT. ALLEY ACROSS FROM VACANT LOT - DAY

Donna and her brood arise, drag to their feet. She shakes off the chill, lifts her kids and hits the street.

EXT. SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

We hear kids playing as Billy drinks from someone's garden hose. He hears excited cheers, wipes his mouth on his sleeve.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET CORNER - DAY

Alert now, Billy crosses the street, watching something we can't see and bit by bit he grows excited, smiles childishly.

Now he draws near a playground full of scampering kids. One among them flicks a pennant streaming on a stick.

Billy strides and strums the chain links as if to mind his business. Innocently the pennant tip leaps across the fence.

Billy's quick, reactive snatch makes that pennant his.

Ignited by their jeers and cries he razzes them and scampers off. Children chase, in hot pursuit, that overgrown show-off.

Billy dashes fast to fulfill some inner childish wish. The streamer, like a fishing line, attracts a little school of fish.

Some five-year-olds rush and nearly close the space. Then Billy whirls and flings the flag, breaking off the chase.

Reaching up, all the kiddies squeal and twist, thrusting the air with hungry, snapping little fists. Then some little ACE among them catches and whirls it till we hear it swish.

Once Billy's clear of it, he coughs and spies a half-burned ciggy not far off. As he bends down to collect it, suddenly Ace's bootsole puts a dent in Billy's frame.

The kids squeal as Billy clowns and frowns, exaggerating the pain. Triumphant Ace parades the pennant back to his mates, smiling to the outer limits of his face.

Billy straightens, pulls out his lighter, lights the smoke between his lips. He squints on a spark from the gutter weed and breaks off into a speedy skip.

EXT. VACANT LOT - DAY

Back in the lot where Billy met Woolman before the crack of dawn, he squats again, sketches dirt crosses and octagons.

Donna approaches, putting Coco in Sallassa's care. She arranges them for optimum visual effect, then speaks up quick before he looks.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DONNA

Now then, what are we going to do
about our babies, Preacher?

Startled, he rises, gives Donna a shake and then a hug.

BILLY

How'd you find me, headstrong
woman?

DONNA

Not hard to find a barking dog.

BILLY

The gates of hell are thrice three
fold. Pray poor innocents were not
dragged over desolate thresholds
where I've been.

DONNA

Stop talking like someone from the
bible. Yes these poor children have
unfortunately seen much danger and
cruelty for want of their daddy.

BILLY

I am not their daddy, and you are
mean to give them such notions.

DONNA

Who you calling mean?

BILLY

Me, if I towed a poor woman and her
offspring over the hard road I've
travelled.

DONNA

Who needs towing? I follow you of
my own free will.

Billy crouches to the dirt, draws and yawns over it.

BILLY

I'm so lost. People need to stop
following me. I'm only alive to
save others.

DONNA

Then save your kids.

BILLY

Stop saying that. They're not.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DONNA

You forgetting your own sermon? How
you pleaded for us to treat every
child in the world as our own?

Tenderly touching a vein in the hollow of his arm, Billy
looks up at Donna, then abruptly he reaches for her.

BILLY

Amen sister. Help me up.

She lifts him with some effort.

DONNA

Now then, who's towing who over
hard road?

BILLY

When did these darlings last eat?

DONNA

Sallassa! Daddy's back, give'm a
hug.

Donna takes Coco from her. Sallassa hugs Billy affectionately
then pulls out a half-smoked cigarette and hands it to him.

SALLASSA

I found this for you.

Donna slaps her hand. Sallassa cries. Billy lights the butt.

BILLY

Don't punish her. I'm the one can't
quit the sinful things.

Donna takes the cigarette from Billy and puts it out on his
thumb nail. Billy howls.

DONNA

Try this every time you take a
drag. Keeps you in touch with what
you're lungs look like.

INT. BLOOD CLINIC - DAY

A hypodermic needle is inserted into a soft vein. A fresh
head of red blood twists like a serpent through a clear hose.

The tourniquet comes off the arm. Nurse gives Billy a graham
cracker and small box of juice. He shyly takes it with a nod.

Thirty dollars cash is counted out.

EXT. BLOOD CLINIC - DAY

Billy walks out with gauze-patched arm and cash and snack in hand. He hands the cash to Donna, then gives the cracker to her eldest. Sallassa cracks it and offers some back. He passes.

BILLY

You need a daddy that can take proper care of you.

Donna, sporting Coco under one arm, takes the cash from him, tucks it away in her bosom. Donna helps Coco to a sip of the juice before handing it off to Sallassa.

DONNA

Nothing in this world makes sense if we don't have you.

BILLY

Me? I'm overburdened with myself.

Sallassa offers a grocery sale insert from the newspaper.

SALLASSA

Momma, I found what you were looking for over in the gutter.

DONNA

Brilliant child. Are there any coupons? Look and learn.

Billy claps his hands and reads over Sallassa's shoulder.

BILLY

I don't know about you but I'm craving sardines and peanut butter.

Donna takes the cash out of her bosom pocket, counts it.

DONNA

Let me turn a profit on this first.

BILLY

Please no! Everybody's starved.

SALLASSA

Here's a coupon for milk. Can we get some?

DONNA

Yes, and maybe a meal a day into next week if we're smart.

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CONTINUED:

BILLY

OK, let's get on with it.

Billy salivates over food photos in Sallassa's newspaper.

Sitting on her hip under Donna's left arm, Coco mutters some baby talk. At the sound of this, Billy forgets he's hungry.

Donna swivels Coco around in the crook of her arm to let Billy look into her little face.

DONNA

This one's prone to catch anything and everything that's passing through, so, before letting her give you a hug, have you been exposed to anything contagious?

Billy shrugs, shakes his head, looks bashfully at Coco.

Donna plants Coco squarely in Billy's arms. Just like with the kid's in the schoolyard, his face anticipates the charm in hers and becomes crisscrossed with a tender, shy, vulnerable and toddler-like warmth.

Sallassa turns over another page of supermarket ads. Now Donna reads over her shoulder.

SALLASSA

I didn't know how hungry I was.

DONNA

Look, milk's five bucks. Five bucks! Everything keeps going up.

BILLY

Up, up, up!

Billy bounces Coco up over his head. Coco chuckles.

SALLASSA

Momma can't we go dumpster divin' again over at the Winn-Dixie?

This breaks the charm with which Coco has affected Billy. He frowns at Donna and hands Coco back.

DONNA

You're not going through no dumpster for supper tonight sweetheart, thanks to Billy. She found some sweets there once.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Billy takes the rubber band full of business cards out of his pocket and snatches a look at the top card.

DONNA (CONT'D)
Why do you keep those?

Billy ignores Donna, stashes them and picks up Sallassa.

BILLY
I'm sorry I left you.

DONNA
What matters is you're here now.

EXT. HARDWARE STORE - DAY

Sallassa stands next to the entrance, all by herself, clutching a fist full of new fly-swatters like a bouquet in front of her. A gentle man in mechanic's coveralls walks by.

SALLASSA
Mister, want to buy a fly swatter?

MECHANIC
What for? Who are you?

SALLASSA
Sallassa.

MECHANIC
What? Say it again? Flossie?

SALLASSA
Not Flossie. Sallassa, three S's,
three A's and two L's

Sallassa holds up three fingers, then three again, then two for emphasis while she announces this.

MECHANIC
Aha, I see, and where's your momma?

SALLASSA
Over there. Where's yours?

The man searches across the street.

MECHANIC
That lady and her baby?

SALLASSA
Yeah, that's Coco.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MECHANIC

Coco?

SALLASSA

Yeah, two C's, two O's, Coco.

She makes big, expressive C's and O's with her little hand.

EXT. SUPERMARKET PARKING LOT - DAY

Coco is nestled on the hip of her mother who stands outside the shaded entrance. Close by a woman wearing Chanel fashions exits the store pushing a cart full of groceries.

Donna has her eye on the security guard. After one last scan of the parking lot, he approaches the automated doors and they swallow him. Donna follows Chanel to her car.

DONNA

'Scuse me, ma'am, are you about due for some new pot holders at home? I got real nice ones here for only \$5. Show her Coco. That a girl.

Coco fondles the pot holder. Donna looks over her shoulder.

CHANEL

You better get her out of the sun.

DONNA

I'm teaching her how to make a living? What's wrong with that?

CHANEL

She just looks a little burned.

DONNA

I slathered her all over with aloe.

CHANEL

She looks a little pink.

DONNA

It's growing out front of that office building over there.

CHANEL

It makes me sad to hear that.

DONNA

It's not sad. I'm teaching my girls how to make a living.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DONNA (CONT'D)
 You don't want a pot holder say so,
 otherwise I'm going to show you a
 design here that reminds me of you.

Donna sets Coco down on Chanel's car hood. Coco sits wobbly, clutching her mother's dress. Chanel looks around with her interest thinning.

Donna dips into a pocket in her apron. She casts another glance toward where the security guard was last seen.

DONNA (CONT'D)
 (to Coco, then Chanel)
 Don't move sweetie pie.
 Here, now ma'am, look at this one.
 Real fancy don't you think?

EXT. DOWN THE BLOCK IN FRONT OF A LIQUOR STORE - DAY

Billy's got his hat and sign out on an uncrowded sidewalk.

He whistles a bit of "Glory Hallelujah," looks down the block. Donna's busy with Chanel. He scans across to Sallassa.

EXT. HARDWARE STORE - DAY

Sallassa is swatting flies with one fly swatter and holding the rest rather unconsciously with the other. She's still talking with the man in the coveralls.

MECHANIC
 Where do you live?

SALLASSA
 In a castle up in the mountains.

MECHANIC
 You're making that up, aren't you?

SALLASSA
 Yeah. No, with big, huge windows
 and a huge, big staircase that
 winds up, to a... piano and...

MECHANIC
 That's a story, I can tell.

Her story falls off track as a stiff breeze breaths brief life into a discarded grocery sack. It swirls lightly like a kite over the parking lot before falling slack again.

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CONTINUED:

SALLASSA

Mister, I have to get some milk,
could you buy one of these, please?

MECHANIC

Here's all my change. I got to go.

He hands her about \$1 worth, refuses the merchandise.

SALLASSA

Hey! I can't take hand outs. Momma
won't let me. Take it.

She holds out a fly swatter. He's gone. She keeps shouting.

SALLASSA (CONT'D)

Come back. There's a fly right
here. Want to smash it?

Sallassa sneaks up on the fly like she is going to swat it,
then she shoos the fly.

SALLASSA (CONT'D)

Go away, you're bad for business.

She looks down the block at Billy and waves.

EXT. URBAN LIQUOR STORE - DAY

Billy gives her a thumbs up. His attention then falls on
Woolman leaning against a building across the street.

He studies the disordered face, puts his hand in his pocket,
pulls out the business cards, glances at them, snaps the
rubber band.

EXT. SUPERMARKET PARKING LOT - DAY

Chanel is shifting her weight, shading her eyes. Now Donna's
got her inventory laid on the hood of Chanel's shiny car.

CHANEL

That's the best one. I'll take it.

DONNA

But you need a pair don't you? I've
got the matched set here, see?

CHANEL

OK, alright, how much?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DONNA

Five a piece and that's not too much for cross-stitch and piping.

Channel, digs in her purse and pulls out a crumpled bill.

DONNA (CONT'D)

Oh, lucky you, look at that. I like your ring too. Looks expensive.

CHANEL

Okay, here's twenty. I've got to go now, got frozen foods here.

DONNA

Well, thank you very much. You've made our day. Give her a wave bye-bye Coco. Bye-bye.

Donna stashes the cash, then looks over her shoulder for the security guard while she tucks away the remaining hot pads.

Chanel leans in to quietly confide.

CHANEL

And uh, it's refreshing to see someone in your situation keeping such a good attitude.

DONNA

Oh pish-posh. Stop crying.

CHANEL

I mean it. You have to be stronger than most people to do what you do.

DONNA

Oh no I'm not, and things could be much worse off for us, huh Coco?

Chanel hands back the pot holders.

CHANEL

Here, why don't you keep these and sell them to somebody else.

DONNA

No,no. You'll make beggars out of my girls with talk like that. You want a refund?

CHANEL

No. You misunderstood.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DONNA

No. I understand fine. My girl is there across the street, see? You want to be a good Samaritan, go buy a fly-swatter.

Donna pushes back Chanel's pot holders.

The security guard emerges from the supermarket.

CHANEL

If I want to be what?

DONNA

Are you listening to me? Sallassa's got fly swatter's over there. Go buy one if you want to be a saint.

CHANEL

I'm all out of time, sorry. Don't stay in the sun too long, okay honey?

Chanel loads her groceries and closes herself into her car.

DONNA

Enough! We live in the sun, honey. You ought to get a bit yourself.

Donna spots the security guard coming now.

CHANEL

Well, good-luck and God Bless.

DONNA

Bless you back, Mother Superior.

CHANEL

I didn't mean to act superior.

Donna's gaze follows the security guard as he approaches.

DONNA

Wipe her from your mind Coco. If you grow up neurotic I'll ring your neck.

She faces the guard who doesn't say a word. He just shakes his head.

DONNA (CONT'D)

What do you want?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

She assumes a righteous pose, walks over to Chanel's stray shopping cart and slips Coco into the seat, commandeers it toward the entrance of the store.

EXT. LIQUOR STORE - DAY

Billy squats down plucks his hat off the walk and puts it back on his head. Woolman watches from across the street.

Billy removes his hat again, holds it upside down.

A stranger stops in front of Billy, stares at him intently.

BILLY

Could you spare a cigarette?

STRANGER

Where have I seen you before?

Man pauses, pops a smoke into Billy's hat. Billy plucks it and the lighter from his pocket, flicks it, inhales, closes his eyes, exhales luxuriously, opening one eye to the stranger.

BILLY

Ever turn the TV on Sunday morning?

STRANGER

That you? Man, have you slipped.

BILLY

Lord's punishment is severe.

Billy bows his head. Stranger shrugs, disappears into the liquor store.

Billy notices someone else about to approach and takes a quick hit off the cigarette then reluctantly puts it out on his thumb like Donna showed him.

He winces and shakes it off, stashes the cigarette behind his ear, starts whistling "Glory Hallelujah".

AN ELDERLY LADY with a severely limited stride shuffles past. She's going slow. He seizes the opportunity.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Greetings sister. Lovely day. Would you mind telling me what you want the very most in this world?

The old lady stops, stares curiously in Billy's eyes to make sure he's talking to her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

At first glance Billy doesn't even know if she understood him. Billy's about to repeat himself when she interrupts.

OLD LADY

I guess I just want a little good news every day.

BILLY

Um, yes good news. Isn't that what we all live for?

OLD LADY

Yes, a little each day. Not too much though, or it spoils you.

She expresses herself sincerely then continues on at her tortoise-like pace, while Billy tries to keep her engaged.

BILLY

Good news is like oxygen is it not?

He's no sooner spoken then the old lady interrupts.

OLD LADY

I'm on a pension. I can't spare a dime. Now I must catch my bus.

She's on her way, no turning back.

BILLY

No problem. Bless you. Have a wonderful day.

With a carefree gesture, he waves good-bye and looks ahead hoping to catch the attention of the next passer-by.

Sallassa walks up and without a word, hands Billy her bouquet of flyswatters. Billy sticks them in his pocket. Sallassa giggles. They look silly sticking out every which way.

Sallassa hands Billy the money she made. Billy tosses it at his hat not checking the outcome. The coins hit their target.

BILLY (CONT'D)

You still read that pocket Bible?

SALLASSA

I did some, but we had to use it for toilet paper.

BILLY

That's a sin, I think, but it might be excused in your situation.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SALLASSA

It's not very good toilet paper.

Stranger steps out of the liquor store, unscrews his brown bag bottle, takes a jolt, offers it to Billy. Billy points at Sallassa, waves it off. Stranger flashes a peace sign and splits.

BILLY

So, what do you want more than anything in the world, my dear, and how can I help you get it?

SALLASSA

Momma says we'll do what you do.

BILLY

I don't even know what I'm doing.

SALLASSA

Well, we're doing it with you.

With affection, Billy rather roughly throws his arm around Sallassa's collar like a yoke on an ox. Her little body wobbles from the impact.

BILLY

You know, I'm not your father.

Sallassa pulls his arm off her neck and puts her little hand in his. They lean up against the liquor store and just stand in silence for a minute watching the traffic.

SALLASSA

Can I still call you Papa?

BILLY

I wish I was.

SALLASSA

Me too.

They watch a little more traffic. Sallassa starts to whistle.

BILLY

You're momma's clever, you know?
You'll find a place to settle down.

SALLASSA

I want to be with you too, Papa.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

BILLY

Don't call me that. You deserve
much better.

Sallassa straightens the flyswatters in his pocket.

SALLASSA

When you going to teach me to
preach?

Billy crouches down and hugs her, roughly.

BILLY

You're too young to know what
you're asking.

SALLASSA

Why?

Like a bear might, Billy strokes her hair, then tilts her
eyes toward his. His eyes well up with tears.

BILLY

When you glimpse the face of the
Lord, you become filled with
longing and life is never the same.

Billy blinks away a tear. Now Sallassa strokes his hair.

EXT. URBAN RIVERSIDE PARK - DAY

Behind a large tree, Woolman eaves drops on Billy.

Donna spreads a large oval scarf, lays out bread, sardines,
cheese and peanut butter under the shade of a big tree.

With a drinking straw, Sallassa pierces a carton of milk.

Coco comes into view. Billy's bobbing her over his head.

Milk slips in a thin white stream upward through a straw.

Donna hands Billy a piece of bread topped with peanut butter
and sardines, garnished with something very green.

Billy hands Coco back to Donna.

BILLY

What's that on top?

DONNA

Dandelion, grown right here.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She indicates their origins. Billy plucks one, nods his approval, closes his eyes. He almost bites into it when Donna interrupts.

DONNA (CONT'D)

Do you have something to do first?

Billy looks rudely interrupted.

BILLY

Uh, wash my hands?

DONNA

Sallassa take a break from the milk and let the preacher pray a blessing over it.

BILLY

Uh, right, Little Darlin', let us lay down our delectable morsels for a moment and express our thanks.

Everyone else has done so already. He folds his hands and closes his eyes to summon the spirit.

From behind his tree Woolman assumes a prayerful posture.

Meanwhile, Billy can't even think of an opening line. He opens one eye, looks at his food, sucks in some saliva.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Sallassa, why don't you practice?

SALLASSA

Can I?

DONNA

Go ahead Sallassa.

She bows her head and folds her hands like Billy.

SALLASSA

Oh Lord, thank you for Momma and Papa, I mean Billy, and, please make Coco feel better and, thank you for this food, forgive us our sins, and, please use each of us according to your divine purpose. "O ye who dwell in the shelter of the Most High, say unto the Lord, my refuge and my strength, my God in whom I trust." Amen.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BILLY

Amen!

Billy snatches up his lunch and starts gobbling it.

BILLY (CONT'D)

You memorized Psalm 91?

Sallassa's cheeks are filled with milk. She swallows.

SALLASSA

Just that part.

DONNA

Real professional, Sweetheart.

BILLY

Real nice is what it was. I could not have done better myself.

DONNA

(to Billy)

I'm glad you're feeling better.

Coco's asleep now. Donna sets her down on the grass, finishes her sandwich, then pulls out a crumpled brown paper sack. She pokes her hand inside and pulls out sunflower seeds in the shell, starts eating them.

DONNA (CONT'D)

We hoarded these while on your trail through Kansas. Want some?

BILLY

Sunflowers. Yes, I recall their helmeted heads, seven foot tall, in row upon row for miles. The Lord's armies. Was that Kansas?

DONNA

You've been zigzagging from city to sticks like a zombie for the past six months Preacher.

Donna offers Billy a couple seeds. He pops one in his mouth and holds the other one up for close inspection.

BILLY

A gift of heaven in each seed.

DONNA

That contains all the nutrition the human body needs for health.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Billy nods his head and spits out a shell as she speaks.

SALLASSA

Billy, I planted a sunflower seeds
by the roadside every day.

DONNA

If we settled down, we could plant
a bunch.

BILLY

Settling down takes money. I'll not
be a slave to it ever again.

DONNA

I know, I know. I've been hearing
about a commune up north where
everybody puts in and cooperates so
no one goes hungry.

BILLY

Where's this?

DONNA

It's called Mobius, a farm up in
Nebraska.

BILLY

Nah! It's probably a migrant camp.

Donna puts down her sunflower seeds. Picks up her sandwich.

DONNA

Oh ye of little faith.

BILLY

I hope its real. I do. Sounds good.

Sallassa's straw grumbles in the bottom of her milk carton.
She sets it down beside her. She lays back in the grass
looking up at the clouds.

Clouds dance for her in time-lapse romance.

SALLASSA

Momma, I'd like to take a nap now.

DONNA

Go ahead my darling. We barely
slept last night.

Sallassa yawns, pulls her hoodie on, curls over in the grass
like a snail.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

BILLY

Commune huh? It's not some slave colony I hope.

DONNA

No! It's like a big family.

BILLY

We'd freeze our asses in Nebraska.

Donna pulls out another little crumpled bag, and another, and another.

DONNA

You know what these are?

She excitedly pulls out samples from each bag. Billy takes one and holds it close to his eye.

BILLY

Mustard seed? Where'd you get this?

DONNA

I pick some wild plants. Look here, beautiful raspberry seeds stuck in bear manure, ready to plant. They'd bloom like rockets, all they need is sun and earth. Some I've saved some from food we eat. Oh Billy, how I ache to grow things. There's every kind of tomato and melon here, corn and beans...

Donna rolls out more and more of her stash as she rambles on. Billy's face is down close to it now.

BILLY

What is all this?

DONNA

Here, look. Nettles, mulberry, prickly pear. This is a cone of pine nuts. I can't bare to eat it it's so pretty. I don't throw any seed away. I keep it all in these bags. I want to land somewhere, Billy, so I can raise these from the land.

The girls are fast asleep, Billy has lost his taste for conversation. He crawls next to Donna and kisses her cheeks, pawing at her. Donna shrugs him off, rubbing her face.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

DONNA (CONT'D)
Ouch, preacher, don't, it stings.

BILLY
Quick, while they're asleep.

Billy forces her down and rolls on top of her.

Woolman tilts way out from behind his tree to spy.

DONNA
Preacher don't. It hurts.

Billy tries to be more gentle, but Donna pushes him off and sits up. Billy stays lying down tugging at Donna's clothes while she resists.

BILLY
I been missing you awfully bad.

DONNA
I can't help it. I hurt all over.
I'm just a bundle of aches and
pains. I guess I'm getting too old
for doing it on the ground.

Billy sits upright with eroding expression. He wraps his arms around his legs in a cannonball pose and ducks his head, peering out over his knees.

BILLY
Why do you follow me?

DONNA
Why don't we settle down somewhere
and find some work, Billy...

Billy explodes to his feet.

BILLY
I won't do that! You know it, so
what are you doing with me? Huh?

DONNA
Preacher, damn it, we should find
some church where you can preach?

BILLY
I can't! He's bound my tongue!

Coco is startled awake and cries out. Billy's expression undergoes an eerie transformation. He blinks and shivers.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

Disoriented and motivated by some strange obsession, he walks away, clutching himself, as if no one else existed.

Donna gets busy stashing food and tying up her scarf.

DONNA

Uh oh! Sallassa, grab Coco. We're on the street again my daughters.

Sallassa whimpers, yawns, props herself on her feet.

DONNA (CONT'D)

Sorry. We've got no choice.

Donna leads the way. A moment later, Woolman appears behind the next closest tree, as he tracks them with a sneaky gate.

EXT. DEPRESSED URBAN STREET - DAY

Donna and company rest in a deserted storefront across the street, observing.

Billy has his sign out and his hat upturned at his feet, this time on the dingy doorstep of a boarded up building in a slum. He sings like a starved buzzard. "Glory, Glory Hallelujah." There are few people passing by.

BILLY

Won't anybody heed my words?

A couple of young punks walk up, smoking and laughing. They stop. Billy's brave face cracks.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Had a hard day? Me too.

One of the punks spits on Billy.

The other one flicks a burning cigarette butt at his face. It bounces off his forehead. Billy recoils. The punks hover laughing.

Billy tries to smile. He raises his voice with extreme self-control, engulfed in their derision.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Forgiven already, and you too brother. No offense. Thank you.

One of the boys mocks. The other pokes at Billy.

PUNK #1

What brother, huh? Me? Fuck off!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PUNK #2

(to his buddy, then Billy)
He agrees with everything. Watch!
Ok, now say "What a shit ass I am."

Billy reaches for a faded bandana in his back pocket.

BILLY

Yes, but I have benefitted greatly
from the compassion of others in my
life whereas maybe you have only
been shown meanness and hardship.

The punks grab his hat and sign and fling them in the street.

Billy wipes the spit off his face with the rag.

Just then Donna appears at his side. She stares down the
punks with such conviction they give way and leave.

Preacher looks around for Sallassa and Coco. They are
standing by, a little ways off, watching.

BILLY (CONT'D)

I hope Sallassa didn't see that.

DONNA

Why? You bravely told your truth.

In an attempt to recompose his dignity, he folds his bandana
impeccably before replacing it in his back pocket.

Sallassa speaks up from her post with Coco in her arms.

SALLASSA

Papa, I mean Billy. I caught a
rainbow fish. Momma showed me how.

Billy seems spooked by her words.

DONNA

(to Sallassa then Billy)
That you did, Sweetheart, a trout.
It was weeks back in New Mexico.

Billy looks to Donna for a response.

DONNA (CONT'D)

(back to Billy)
Smile, wave or something. She's
trying to make you feel better.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Billy waves, sullenly, turns away and crosses the street, leaving Donna on the curb with the kids.

Woolman is momentarily caught, on camera, in the alley.

They catch up with Billy. He studies the business card.

DONNA (CONT'D)

Why do you always look at that?

Billy looks away, hands her the card.

BILLY

It's my son.

DONNA

You didn't tell me you had a son.

BILLY

We don't communicate that often.

She studies the card.

DONNA

Would you know? He'd have to live in the one place I can never go.

BILLY

New Orleans? Since when?

DONNA

Since that psychotic case worker promised he'd take the girls and put them in foster care.

SALLASSA

Don't take us there Billy.

BILLY

Social Services? Don't worry. I went to Bible college with that Robert fella who runs the program.

DONNA

Promise me we're only going there to visit your son, then we're gone.

Billy takes out his stack of business cards, starts to shuffle through them. Picks out Robert's card.

BILLY

It'd be good to see Robert again.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

DONNA

OK. If you must, you must. We'll go as far as we can with you.

SALLASSA

Momma, I think Coco needs a change. In fact I know she does.

Donna keeps her attention on Billy. He puts the business cards away in his pocket and stares into space.

DONNA

Love for the boy drew you back here. I was curious why you wandered back all this way where people would recognize you.

BILLY

The boy is bitter and resentful.

Billy takes the cigarette butt from behind his ear and lights it. He takes a drag.

DONNA

(reading name on card)
If we help you get Jules back will you accept us as your family?

A long moment passes before he answers.

BILLY

I want to say no, but the Spirit wants yes.

DONNA

That's all I need to hear.

She walks over to Sallassa and takes the crying Coco in her arms, checking her diaper.

SALLASSA

Why do we have to go there, Momma?

DONNA

Preacher has a boy, Sallassa. We're going to find him.

Billy drifts off in his own world. He takes another drag.

SALLASSA

Can we wash Coco's diaper first?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

DONNA

You bet, honey. We're all going to clean up for the occasion.

Billy takes one more drag and puts the cigarette out on his thumbnail, wincing, dancing in place, shaking off the pain.

EXT. A RURAL WETLAND - DAY

In a half acre pond Jules floats, face up, in surf shorts.

A neglected travel trailer slumps at the edge of the water backed by cottonwood trees.

Jules camp is scattered with signs of occupancy, a lantern, a fishing rod, a Coleman stove and coffee pot.

There is a large, tattered umbrella, also a lounge chair and a wooden picnic bench with fillet knife stabbed in its top.

Jules gazes upward humming to himself pressed in on all sides by a reflection of the sky. It is a beautiful day.

In the background, Billy, Donna and the girls approach the trailer.

As they arrive, Billy falls back, short of the front door. Sallassa sticks close by him. Donna plops Coco in Sallassa's arms and goes around to knock on the trailer.

Billy turns his back as she does. He peeks over his shoulder incase anyone answers. No one does.

Donna hammers her fist on that cracker box door. Billy turns away again confronted by Woolman concealed in the underbrush.

He frowns, turns away from him too, squats down and covers his head.

Clutching Coco on her hip, bored Sallassa picks up a stone and lobs it in the pond.

Jules floats, unaware, mumbling his little song.

Sallassa winds up and hurls another rock. This one lands half-way between herself and Jules. Just outside the ripples, lies Jules, still unaware.

SALLASSA

Momma! There's a man out there.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Billy stands up tall, searching for what Sallassa sees. Donna steps off the stoop and shields her eyes from the glare.

DONNA

Billy.

Billy starts pacing back and forth in a self-confined area with his hands in his pockets.

Sallassa sets Coco on the leaves, making her comfy then picks up another stone.

SALLASSA

Is that your boy Billy?

BILLY

He doesn't want to see me.

SALLASSA

He does so. You're his Papa.

Sallassa leans in, winds up and let's loose the skipping stone. It sinks.

Billy picks up a skipping stone and then another. He walks over to Sallassa, hands her one.

BILLY

It's like this.

Billy takes Sallassa clumsily but with affection and sets her stance for her, then concentrates for a second on the way Sallassa is holding her stone.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Stand sideways to the pond and bend your knees.

Coco watches while Billy bends his knees, to demonstrate. Then, while Sallassa imitates him, Billy peeks out at Jules.

Jules is still floating, now serenading himself.

JULES

...well I hope she understands I just had to get back to the island...

DONNA

Billy.

Billy picks up a heavy rock and squints through the distance to Jules.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DONNA (CONT'D)

Billy, roll up your pants and go.

Billy drops his stone and turns his back just as Sallassa lets loose of hers. It skips sweetly over the shimmering surface.

SALLASSA

I did it!

Billy seems to be walking toward Woolman, who ducks behind a distant tree.

At the edge of camp, Billy stops at a low-hanging limb where a large, rusty, iron triangle has been dangling inconspicuously all this time. Billy kicks through the sand beneath it.

He reaches down and comes up with a rusty tire iron.

In one swift move Billy sweeps it up, fits it into the triangle and rotates like he's done a thousand times.

This is what finally captures Jules' attention. He looks up, spies the intruders, flips over, crouches like a frog. The water is shallow. He clutches the swampy bottom.

Jules looks at the old dinner bell with his father ringing the devil out of it and mutters to himself.

JULES

Jesus Christ! You're kidding me.

Billy gives a little wave.

Creeping along the muddy bog, Jules takes his time to reach the edge of shore and crawls onto land muttering to himself beneath his father's watchful gaze.

Billy closes in for instant intimacy, slapping Jules' back.

BILLY

Getting some use out of the place?

Billy captures a snatch of a hug. Jules shrugs him off.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Go head! It's why I left it to you.

Jules picks up his shirt, dries himself off.

JULES

You left me nothing. You just left.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

BILLY

This place was never mine. No, it was always meant for you. Before you were born, I dreamed it.

Jules throws on his shirt, crosses to the picnic table from which protrudes the fillet knife. He plucks it up.

JULES

We ain't gonna be fishing buddies no more.

DONNA

You two better start getting along.

Jules advances on Billy with the blade. To Jules' surprise, Billy closes in, flicks Jules hat off.

BILLY

Go ahead. Lord have mercy.

SALLASSA

Momma, I'm scared.

Billy drops on his knees, as close to Jules' blade as possible. Donna manages to maneuver herself between them, with a fist full of shirt collar in each hand.

JULES

Hands off!

SALLASSA

Momma!

DONNA

Don't stick me, please. Children are present.

Jules tries to shake free of Donna's grip.

Billy's still on his knees.

BILLY

Go on. If a man's own son wishes him dead, he might as well be.

Jules hangs in Donna's grip with knife in hand.

JULES

Pathetic gas bag.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

Jules tries to shake clear of Donna again. Donna don't let go until she's ready and when she does she shoves Jules with so much brass that he crashes.

Donna rotates 180 now to Billy, swiftly sweeps him off his knees to pivot him away on toes and heels.

DONNA
Check on Sallassa and the little
one for me. Please?

Jules gets up. Donna won't budge. He shouts past her.

JULES
Get out of here or I'll...

Donna spins around.

DONNA
Calm down. We're just passing
through.

JULES
When he leaves, I'll calm down.

Billy crouches. Sallassa hugs him, protecting.

With poisoned darts for eyes Jules walks back to the picnic table and jabs the knife into it.

BILLY
We came on foot Jules, we're
exhausted and need a rest.

JULES
(to Donna)
He tell you why he walks
everywhere?

Jules paces back and forth sticking and un-sticking the knife into the weathered wood grain of his table top.

BILLY
We'll leave as soon as we're fresh.

JULES
Fresh? Ha! You crusty old corpse.

DONNA
We'll just camp down the way and
mind our business.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

Jules sticks the knife back in the table, goes to the door of the trailer, opens it, hardly time for Donna's next question.

DONNA (CONT'D)

Will anyone mind if I throw in a fishing line?

JULES

There's no fish in there.

Donna looks at the pond nods, shrugs. Jules slams himself inside. Coco bawls.

Angry music blares out the windows.

EXT. DONNA'S CAMP - DAY

By sunset, set a ways down the water's edge from Jules' camp, there is a lean-to made of branches, leaves and grass.

Donna's putting a finishing touch on the hut, while Billy watches Sallassa practice skipping stones.

DONNA

Sallassa, go to the other side of the pond and throw your rocks. Send the fish to me.

Jules trips out of his trailer door with a TV dinner in his grip. He steadies himself and frowns at the intruders while he and his hip flask share a sloppy kiss.

Then he flip flops over to the picnic bench where he lays his tray and slouches. The hip flask is kissed once more before it rests beside his dish.

Sallassa is on the far side of the pond now, skipping stones.

With a sleeping Coco in her arms, Donna watches Jules.

BILLY

How can that anti-Christ be a son of mine?

DONNA

Oh hush! Each of us contains a bit of both you know.

BILLY

You're right. I made him this way. It's my fault.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DONNA
Stop pouting and go talk to him.

BILLY
Not while he's drinking.

DONNA
Then I'm going.

She hands Coco over to Billy. Coco fusses a bit. Billy nuzzles Coco, makes a funny face.

EXT. JULES' CAMPER - DAY

Donna strides over to the camper where Jules is now sprawled in a lounge chair clutching his flask and cigarette.

Jules tries ignoring her. Donna grabs his fishing pole.

DONNA
What's this?

Jules leans back, closes his eyes, sips the jug, hits the cig, squints his eyes, tries to make Donna disappear.

DONNA (CONT'D)
Why the pole if there's no fish?

Methodically Jules screws the lid on his flask, sets it down and climbs out of his lawn chair, walks over to Donna, snatches his rod out of her hand, sets it back where it was, gives her a dirty look. Donna studies him, curious, unafraid.

Jules goes back to his lawn chair, plops himself back down.

She pulls a coil of fishing line out of her pocket, unhooks a spinner, flicks it out into the pond with grace, picks up a stick and starts winding the line around it by hand.

DONNA (CONT'D)
You gave me a coin last week in a laundromat in P-town. Now it turns out your Billy's boy. That's some coincidence don't you think?

Jules glares at her.

JULES
My old man'll screw anything, won't he?

Donna stops, nods to acknowledge the remark, then looks away toward her line, calmly winding it in.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Jules scowls, reaches down, picks up a tree limb, pulls a large folding knife out of a leather case on his belt, unfolds it and bites into the branch to make some lethal point, throwing chips and splinters with a vengeance.

DONNA

Tell him what you want, Jules?

JULES

I'm Joe now, not Jules. Nothing.
He's got nothing I want.

DONNA

Come on Joe, what can your Pa do to
gain your forgiveness?

Jules sets down his cigarette, jabs his staff in the sand, then covers his eyes with one hand and scrubs his brow. He seems to be deciding whether or not to have the conversation.

Donna's lure reaches shore. She lifts it and, in a graceful figure eight, winds up and flicks it into the pond again.

JULES

He can't do anything. He'd have to
undo some things, to be forgiven,
like un-fuck the organist, for
example, and the Sunday school
teacher and maybe others.

DONNA

Neither woman was in the picture
for very long as I understand it.

JULES

Makes no difference. The church
canned me right along with him.

DONNA

That's all past tense. Everyone's
been canned some time or other, so
what? I work for myself now. You
could too.

JULES

You're killing me, you know that?
Alright. Here you go. Ain't been no
honest work around here for months
and months. This chick I was living
with got pregnant. I gave her my
life savings for an abortion. She
spent it on a 36" Sony. I got
pissed and slapped her.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JULES (CONT'D)

That's when she broke my camera which was idiotic, since it's how I make my living. Anyway our mortgage turned out to be worth jacked shit, so I made up my mind to leave her even before she was knocked up.

(pauses, zones out, self-loaths, sighs, puffs, jabs his stick in the ground, exhales, coughs)

I'm living in this dump, one change of clothes to my name, a half a carton of smokes, fifth of tequila, some twenty-dollar bills and her anti-depressant pills. Soon as it runs out, I join the army. Why does Bible Bill suddenly get to show up now and complicate things?

DONNA

What's your girlfriend's name?

JULES

No matter.

DONNA

When is she due?

JULES

About 6 months.

DONNA

Just hold on long enough to get a look in that child's eyes...

Jules drops into his lounge chair, hits the flask, looks over at Billy.

JULES

I broke it off.

DONNA

Hang in there. Think up some names. You won't be sorry.

JULES

It's not my fault.

DONNA

Your child should have a father.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

JULES

Oh please, I'm a preacher's kid,
God damn it, don't preach to me. My
filters are clogged already.

Donna snags a fish and starts wrestling and reeling it in to the shore. She glances over her shoulder at Jules.

Jules lurches up in his chair to watch.

Donna lands a good sized bass. It flips frantically in the dirt with mirrored scales and frightened eyes flashing.

EXT. ACROSS THE POND - CONTINUOUS

Sallassa stops skipping rocks, looks at Billy, pointing.

SALLASSA

Billy, look!

Billy nods. Cradling Coco, he slowly rises to his feet.

BILLY

I saw. Careful darlin'.

Sallassa sprints towards Donna.

Donna steadies the fish with one hand laid across it's side while she extracts her treble hook from its mouth.

JULES

I ain't caught one in over a year.

Sallassa arrives with a stick the size of a billy club and gently kneels beside the fish. It flops helplessly for home.

SALLASSA

Come over hear my dear one. You
will live inside us now.

She rears back and WHAM. The fish stops flopping.

JULES

Holy shit! Where'd you learn that?

She walks it over to the water's edge and tenderly dips the dead fish in the water, cleaning the dirt off it's sides. She comes back and hands it to Jules.

SALLASSA

I don't want to clean the guts, OK?

Jules hesitates, then accepts the fish and walks to the pond.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Sallassa wipes her hands on her skirt.

Sunset reclines at the edge of the sky.

Overseeing the ritual of blood and entrails, Donna stands behind, winding her line.

Billy comes close as Jules guts the fish. Billy's words come out damp with grief.

BILLY

If you knew how I suffered, you'd
let up.

JULES

You still give a shit? Don't.

DONNA

Oh, he cares for you. He carries
you in his pocket. Show him Billy.

Billy pulls out the stack of business cards, crouches down.

Jules stands up, hands the cleaned fish to Donna, goes back to his lounge chair and plops without bothering to look.

Billy pockets the card, clutches his knees, gathering inward.

EXT. JULES' CAMP - NIGHT

All is calm but the crickets. Shadows are painted in campfire light. Jules sprawls, dozing in his lounge chair.

Woolman stares out from a cave of isolation, a fish head lay in a flurry of flies, campfire flickers in both their eyes.

Swat! Swat!

Jules peeks through one eye.

Sallassa has a swatter in each hand going for the flies. Jules pretends to sleep while actually a spy.

Donna has a bundle of smoldering herbs in one hand. She is swirling smoke above Coco's head.

Jules turns his attention on her. She goes on with what she was doing but in a way that acknowledges his game.

Billy remains crouched down staring at nothing.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Sallassa approaches Billy with a candle to put a glimmer in his eye. If he's aware you wouldn't know. Still, she pauses beside him awhile.

Donna glances at Jules, sets down the herbs.

DONNA

There are two kinds of time.
Daytime is for going places and
getting things done. Nighttime is
for concentration and spiritual
practice.

Donna takes a small vial out of her apron, uncorks it, upturns it on her fingertip, begins dabbing medicinal oil on Coco's hands and cheeks in a prescribed fashion.

She does the same thing to Sallassa. Sallassa smiles at Jules with firelight dancing on her freshly anointed cheeks. Jules smiles back.

JULES

Smells good.

DONNA

That's clove and oregano oils for
warding off germs.

Sallassa leaves Billy and goes to kneel beside Jules.

SALLASSA

I want to learn how to preach like
Billy, for my spiritual practice.

She elevates her voice so Billy will hear.

Billy gradually comes out of it, blows out the candle and crawls over next to Sallassa. Donna gathers up Coco.

DONNA

Here, take her awhile, Sallassa.

Sallassa takes Coco from Donna, cuddles her. Jules tries not to act too interested.

Donna re-corks the vial, stashes it, reaches deep into her pocket and pulls out a mini screw-driver set.

DONNA (CONT'D)

I was hoping I hadn't sold the last
of these. Go get that camera of
yours and let me have a look.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Jules deliberates a good long moment, then gets up.

JULES

If you can haul a god damn fish out
of that lake, I suppose you might
be able to fix my camera.

He wobbles over and climbs in the camper. Sallassa yawns and
lays a snoozing Coco on the ground between herself and her
mom, then leans back and looks up at the stars.

SALLASSA

Momma what shall I look for?

DONNA

How about the Summer Triangle
sweetheart. Remember?

SALLASSA

Yes ma'am, the eagle, the swan and
the harp. I'll find them.

Sallassa points to the sky. Billy strokes her forehead.

BILLY

You are the second cleverest girl
in the world right after your ma.

Donna uses the opportunity of Jules being out of earshot.

DONNA

Are you still scared?

BILLY

No, not anymore.

DONNA

Sounds like the last time he was
happy was when he worked with you.

BILLY

It was the easiest thing to do. He
never tried very hard, and couldn't
make up his mind for much else.

Just then Jules steps out of the camper with his camera.

JULES

Who you talking about, you lying
sack of guts?

BILLY

Myself.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

DONNA

Hand me that gizmo, and bring that lantern closer.

Jules passes her the camera. She receives it with care.

Jules puts the lantern as close as possible to Donna so she can see and he can watch.

JULES

I doubt it's fixable.

DONNA

If I fix it, will you come with us?

JULES

Where?

DONNA

Well, I've been thinking, maybe...have you ever been to visit your granddaddy's grave? Your Papa's Papa I mean?

Silently, with pleading eyes, Billy tries to connect with Jules. Jules' eyes avoid Billy's, staying engaged with Donna.

JULES

He was an auctioneer is all I know. I never knew him.

BILLY

He was real mean. I ran away.

SALLASSA

What's an oxen-ear?

Billy's eyes gloss up. Her question goes unanswered.

DONNA

Billy, she asked you a question.

BILLY

Huh? Oh, he pushed livestock, antiques, odd lots, different things and stuff.

JULES

(to Billy, then Sallassa)
Do it for her, old man.
Watch this, it's funny as shit.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

Billy's eyes glow. He blows his nose in his handkerchief, rubs his face, twists his mouth to the side and launches into the rhythmic drone of an auctioneer's patois.

BILLY

Ladies and gentlemen, bidding for this beautiful hog starts at five hunerd. I'm a five hunerd dollar bid, who'll go six? There's six. I'm a six hunerd dollar bid looking for a' seven.

Jules starts laughing. Sallassa joins in. Jules stifles himself.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Seven hunerd, seven hunerd, seven a' seven hunerd dollars there's seven who'll gimme eight? who'll gimme eight? Seven hunerd a' gimme eight?

Donna starts laughing with them. Coco giggles too.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Who'll give me seven seventy-five? Seven-seventy-five-five, there's a' seven hunerd seventy five dollars. Now who'll go eight? Who'll gimme eight? Somen gimme eight. Seven hunerd-seven-five a waitin'on a' eight. waitin' on a' eight. No one takin' eight? Going once, going twice, sold for seven hunerd-seven five dollars to the gentleman in the bright suspenders.

Jules won't break a smile but claps his hands. All unite in applause for Billy.

Billy smiles at Jules with a tear in his eye.

BILLY (CONT'D)

You and I had some good times.

Billy reaches for the booze flask which has gone to sleep in Jules' hand. He unscrews the thing and takes a nip.

DONNA

We need to go visit that grave.

BILLY

We were pals Jules. What happened?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

Jules avoids eye contact with his father and addresses Donna.

JULES

You wouldn't know it, but this old scarecrow used to have a stock portfolio.

BILLY

Jules, now listen...

JULES

The church let him go with it and guess what he did?

Donna's absorbed in her task, but nods her head.

JULES (CONT'D)

He gave it back to the church, god damn it, know why? Old man sprained his brain. He tell you about this?

BILLY

If I felt oppressed by it, why would I give such a thing to you?

Billy frowns, listens. Donna has a handkerchief spread out across her knees. She's got the housing off the camera, and the insides are on her lap where she's examining every inch.

JULES

His brain is sprained, you know. His lover pushed a gigantic Bible onto his nut while dusting his pulpit up there one day.

This puts Jules in hysterics. Donna gives no encouragement to him. Meanwhile, she's on to something. Her fingers work busily inside the guts of the machine.

BILLY

It's because I would not leave your mother for her.

JULES

Huh-huh. The TV station had made us elevate his pulpit six feet above the congregation, so if someone stood up during the service my camera would not be blocked.

Billy's imagination has him back in his church on the pulpit. He gestures toward the back of the room interrupting Jules.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

BILLY

No. It was so the gospel could be heard all the way to the back.

JULES

Ha-ha, that big, gilded, special edition Bible landed on his skull like a sledgehammer.

Billy laughs a little.

SALLASSA

It's not funny.

BILLY

I was out for a spell.

JULES

Soon after that's when he started chasing the organist.

BILLY

Woman badly need loving.

JULES

And you are the savior.

DONNA

This is all past tense.

Billy sighs, bends over to pick up a cigarette butt out of Jules' ash tray, puts it between his lips, and spots Woolman who has the fish head now and he is eating it in the bushes. Billy says nothing and flicks his lighter.

Donna puts the housing back on the camera, tightens down a couple of screws, hands it to Jules.

DONNA (CONT'D)

Switch it on. I think I got it.

Jules does so and looks through the viewfinder.

JULES

How'd you do that?

BILLY

The woman is blessed, I assure you.

DONNA

Good eyesight helps.

Jules points the camera at Donna to examine her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (7)

JULES

You seem like a person's got a lot
a learning out of life.

DONNA

Come with us to the cemetery Jules.

JULES

Not interested.

DONNA

There's a healing in it for you.

JULES

The junk in my head is stuff like,
the first sip of a drink is the
strongest because alcohol floats...

DONNA

How about it? We're headed for the
St. Clyde cemetery at daybreak,
then off to Mobius, Nebraska.

JULES

Thanks. I prefer to drink alone.

Clutching his camera, Jules struts over to the camper shuts
himself in.

BILLY

I'm not going to Nebraska.

He extinguishes his cigarette on a burnt thumbnail.

EXT. JULES' CAMP - DAY

The intrepid travellers are assembled at camp's edge, booted
up and buttoned for travel. Jules stands opposite with camera
aimed and operating. Woolman watches from behind a tree.

JULES

So uh, hope I don't see you for at
least another year old man.

BILLY

It's hard to forgive I know.

DONNA

Come with us.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JULES

Pity I can't stand my old man's company, it would make an amusing documentary.

Just then a motorcycle rumbles into camp, operated by Jules' pregnant girlfriend, Brittany. She's a teen angel in clunky boots, hardly big enough to handle the bike. Coco is upset by all the noise and begins crying.

Jules lowers the camera. Brittany pulls up next to him, sets the kickstand, gets off the bike. It falls over in the sand. Jules hands his camera to Donna.

BRITTANY

Who are these retards?

JULES

What business is it of yours?

DONNA

Hello honey, the girls and me, we're friends of the family. This is Jules's, uh, Joe's father Billy.

BRITTANY

What is this? Some freak show?

JULES

She fixed my camera, which you broke.

Billy comes up to Brittany and hugs her roughly.

BILLY

Welcome to the family, daughter-in-law. Just call me Billy.

Brittany slaps Billy smartly across the face then hurls herself at Jules, screeching and swearing.

The bike falls over again.

Jules catches Brittany by the wrists and holds her away from himself as best he can, but she can not be calmed.

JULES

(to Billy)

Understand why I left her?

Donna hands the camera off to Billy, she deposits Coco with Sallassa, then hustles over to the dinner bell and snatches up the strike. She gives it all she's got. Everybody freezes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DONNA

(last line to Brittany)
Whoever is going, let's go.
Jules, I beg you, come.
You're welcome to join us too.

BRITTANY

Me? You're nuts.

JULES

Second thought, maybe I will go.

Jules takes his camera from Donna, joins them as they trek toward the main road.

BRITTANY

Joe honey, come on. I don't want to go to no graveyard.

JULES

You're not. I am.

BRITTANY

How long you going to keep this up?

JULES

Bye Britt.

DONNA

Just come with us. He'll wise up.

JULES

If she goes, I stay.

Billy makes a private plea to Donna.

BILLY

Best not intrude in their affairs.

Brittany goes over to the motorcycle sobbing. She wrestles it upright with all her might, kick starts it then guns the bike before punching the gearshift with her boot and lurching off.

BRITTANY

Asshole! You fucking asshole!

Donna picks up the pointed staff Jules abandoned the night before and appropriates it for a walking cane.

Sallassa tries to take Jules' hand in hers which he rejects. Billy brings up the rear with Coco.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

SALLASSA
Why don't you like her?

He encounters a rock in the road and kicks it, in a lame attempt to hit Billy.

JULES
It's all his fault.

SALLASSA
How come?

Jules switches on his camera and shoulders it.

JULES
Watch, I'll show you.

By then, Brittany's way down the road fishtailing a cloud of red dust into the air over the bedraggled travellers. Woolman trails along at a safe distance.

EXT. RURAL ROAD, EDGE OF NEW ORLEANS - DAY

Miles of kudzu and honeysuckle climb wire fences surrounding pasture land accented by a cow herd.

A white dove startles from the branch of a tree.

Billy and company climb out of a bar ditch in loose formation and approach a roadside lot with fireworks tent.

EXT. FIREWORKS TENT - DAY

FIREWORKS. BLACK CAT. 2-4-1 SALE. The roadside enterprise announces business with the customary bright signs.

Jules points the camera briefly at himself, then spins it around back on Billy for introductions.

JULES
Family Jules Productions presents,
"A Father's Failure," by Joe
Pritchard and starring, here he is,
ladies and gents, a genuine
Christian counterfeit, the bona-
fide holy hypocrite, Saint Baloney
the mystic phony and original ass
in the manger, my old man, none
other than, Rev'rn Billy Pritchard.

Billy shrugs and tries to look past the lens at Jules. Billy opens his arms.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BILLY

I've confessed and repented. He
without blame may cast a stone.

JULES

That choice nugget delivered to you
by a professional stone caster.
Nothing but a ripped-off quote from
a book he did not write. In any
other business it's called
plagiarism, but his profession make
their living at it.

Coco starts crying. Donna checks her. Sallassa tugs at her
mom's skirt.

DONNA

Jules, lay off for awhile, you're
upsetting Coco

SALLASSA

Mom, I've got to potty real bad.

JULES

Men like this are addicted to their
tongues, in love with the sound of
their own voices.

Billy looks a little lost for what to do. He kneels down and
draws in the dirt.

A FAT MAN in biker leathers, BLACKY emerges from inside one
of the tents wearing a Black Cat T-shirt. He steps out of the
shade, folds his arms below a gold crucifix.

Woolman emerges from the bar ditch, ducks behind the tent.

Donna steps out of formation and approaches Blacky with a
porta-potty in view.

DONNA

Can my girl use your potty?

Ignoring Donna, Blacky bends down to talk to Sallassa.

BLACKY

What grade you in little girl?

Coco fusses. Sallassa adjusts her on her hip and appraises
Blacky while she tenses her lips.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DONNA

She just needs to bathroom stop,
then we're off to visit Grandpa.

Blacky shakes his head, walks back inside the tent.

BLACKY

Customers only.

DONNA

But, we're flat broke.

Billy gets up from his dirt scribbles.

BILLY

Excuse me. What does that cross
you're wearing mean to you, sir?

BLACKY

Means nobody shits here for free.

BILLY

See what money does to men, Jules?

JULES

It's no sin to make a profit.

BLACKY

Amen brother.

JULES

Screw you anyway.

SALLASSA

I have to go now Momma.

Jules aims his lens at Blacky.

BLACKY

Get that off me.

To avert a scene Billy retreats. Jules follows.

Donna searches behind the forlorn shit cubicle for privacy.

Around the back of the fireworks tent, Billy and Jules are surprised by Woolman lurking in the fringes. Jules fixes his lens on Woolman. Woolman lowers his eyes.

JULES

Who the hell are you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

BILLY

He is a lost sheep. Be kind.

JULES

You know this loser?

Billy becomes aware of Blacky peering out at them from beneath a raised tent flap.

BILLY

Are you ready with that thing?

Billy wades into the high weeds of a vacant lot with a dilapidated billboard that advertises insurance.

JULES

Ready for what?

Jules comes around to face Billy with the lens.

BILLY

A prophecy.

JULES

Prophecy?

BILLY

Hell yes! Camera rolling?

JULES

Rolling, rolling, go!

BILLY

There is a big cat, crouched on a huge mountain.

JULES

So?

BILLY

That's not all. He's the very last cat on the very last mountain.

Standing in full view Woolman listens and observes, nibbling his fingernail.

JULES

Sounds like bad science fiction.

BILLY

I'm not making this up. Hear this!
It is no ordinary mountain, its
made of food.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

BILLY (CONT'D)

So much food, in fact, its rotten,
but he stays up there anyway, the
last cat, eating.

JULES

Who cares? Let him.

BILLY

He stays up there feeding on those
putrid sweets, never coming down.
After awhile, he even forgets why.

JULES

Who cares why?

BILLY

He just keeps on eating and eating,
hoping he'll remember why.

JULES

Oh-kay, what then?

BILLY

Then comes memories. Painful
losses. Bitter reminders come back
up, and he swallows them again and
again. So now he eats to help
himself forget.

JULES

Wait a minute? Now it's to forget?

BILLY

One sour memory oozes into the
next, like the garbage he's eating.
Finally he scarfs up the last
little scrap and he lands back down
to earth all by his lonesome.

Staring at Billy, Woolman nips nervously on a hangnail.

Donna and kids arrive. Billy's running out of steam.

JULES

So what? What happens to him?

Jules bumps Billy, knocking him off balance.

Billy latches on to Jules shirt tail to keep from falling
down. Jules shrugs him off violently to keep him in frame.

He staggers, catches himself.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

BILLY

Well, there's nothing left and he's all alone. He begins to ponder this as he licks grease and garbage out from under his nails and off his chin, and down his big, soft belly.

JULES

What next? Speed it up.

BILLY

Well, he licks himself over and over until there is a sore somewhere that starts bleeding.

Blacky's watching Billy's every move. Billy sees him and laps his tongue for emphasis. Woolman takes his fingers away from his mouth. Jules looks through his viewfinder.

JULES

You're reaching 'em now preacher.

BILLY

That beast is wailing, biting himself now and feasting on his own flesh, right down to the gristle.

JULES

A weeping cat is so "Wizard of Oz." Got to make it something different?

BILLY

He's roaring, biting and gnawing off chunks of his skin.

JULES

Roaring? No. That's taken too. Why not puking?

BILLY

(last line to Jules)

He's puking, yes! Puking up his own flesh and garbage and still he licks and gnaws at the spot under his belly where he bleeds.

Woolman hugs his gut, hand over mouth, watching closely.

Billy stops, turns away from the lens, squinting up into the clouds, swaying.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

Woolman staggers, gasps, then hunches over and pukes a great gut-full of puke that splatters in the weeds and puddles at his feet. Donna catches her breath for him.

SALLASSA

Whew! Preacher knows how to lay it down.

DONNA

What's wrong with that poor soul?

Donna approaches Woolman. He staggers away. Jules' camera records it all.

INT. FIREWORKS TENT - DAY

Woolman wipes his mouth on his sleeve, panting and staring out at Billy from inside the tent. Blacky comes up sweeping the place with a broom.

BLACKY

I'd swear I see right through that man to a devil.

Not taking his eyes off Billy Woolman silently takes the broom from Blacky and starts sweeping.

EXT. ADJACENT VACANT LOT WITH BILLBOARD - DAY

Jules narrates with the camera in close up on Billy.

JULES

Words of a self-righteous parasite, or post-modern prophet? Judge for yourselves.

BILLY

It is truth and shall come to pass.

Jules points the camera at himself.

JULES

Let me remind all of you watching out there of an important distinction. Just because this old man don't know what to do with a boatload of cash, doesn't mean I don't. I'm going to need serious investors soon. So, spread the word and stay tuned while I prove it.

Billy ponders the billboard whose message reads. *Put Your Trust in the Rock.*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BILLY

Maybe if I had it to do all over again, I'd give you those stocks.

JULES

Hold on, this tape is full. I need to put in a fresh one.

Donna takes Coco from Sallassa.

DONNA

Camera's off. Go ask him now.

Sallassa bolts for Billy.

While Jules switches tapes, Billy kicks dirt over the vomit on the ground, then takes a cigarette butt out from behind his ear, lights it. Starts walking back out toward the road.

Sallassa comes running up to Billy. Donna follows with Coco.

SALLASSA

Billy? When will I have visions?

BILLY

I would not wish it if I were you.

EXT. DEPRESSED COMMERCIAL DISTRICT - NEW ORLEANS - DAY

Jules stands with his lens on Billy who is seated with others in a window over which a sign reads, Blood Bank.

Just outside, Donna is completing a transaction, selling miniature American flags to an elderly gentleman. She pockets \$3, drops down on a stoop and fans herself as he walks away.

DONNA

Thanks again. You've made my day.

The gentleman tips his hat. Sallassa is holding down a position just around the corner from her mom. A lady passes.

SALLASSA

"Scuse me, Madam? I've got 4th of July flags here for \$1 but I'd be willing to take a bit less.

The woman walks past without acknowledgment.

DONNA

Sallassa, cut out the "madam." thing. It's off-putting.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SALLASSA

One dollar. Come and get your July
4th colors here. Only a dollar.

Billy and Jules walk up. Billy gives Donna the proceeds from his latest blood donation. Jules swings over to Donna, continuously capturing the moment.

DONNA

Cut it out Jules. Keep my daughters
out of your movie.

JULES

Don't you worry about a thing.

Jules leads the bunch, walking backwards with his electric eye on Billy's face who shuffles along with Sallassa beside him. Out of lens shot Donna brings up the rear with Coco.

JULES (CONT'D)

It's Joe Pritchard again. This is
my old man, Billy. That's right,
you seen him crash and burn on
KWLW's Morning Star Sunday service
and on affiliate stations all over
South Texas, West Arkansas, and the
Louisiana gulf counties.

Billy responds to this by stopping, changing direction and trying to slip out. Jules just gets even more in his face. Billy trudges on protecting his brow from the noonday sun.

JULES (CONT'D)

Stay with us to learn Billy's sob
story, in all it's lurid detail.

Donna catches up and drops Coco off with Sallassa then attempts to break Jules's hold over Billy.

DONNA

Can I say something?

Jules sees Donna coming and works her into his narrative.

Donna steps between Jules and Billy.

JULES

Now let's hear what one of his
followers has to say.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DONNA

Friends and neighbors, does your belly burn and butt itch from the crap we're eating these days? Why don't we grow some food of our own for a change. Sounds delicious doesn't it? If you're lazy, just plant sunflowers. You can survive on them. Crave variety in your diet? Go back to hunting a little rabbit. They're all over the place, same with quail, turkey, rattlesnake. Eat wild! That's what I preach. Hooks and fishing line are cheap too.

SALLASSA

Can we stop talking about food?

Donna signals at Sallassa to keep quiet.

DONNA

Knowing how to fix rummage is also helpful for keeping change in your pockets.

SALLASSA

Momma, what does rummage mean?

DONNA

Turn it off.

JULES

How long you been living like this?

SALLASSA

Momma, what does it mean?

DONNA

Cut her out please Jules. Turn it off when I'm with Coco or Sallassa.

Jules pretends to turn it off. Donna looks at it, not sure.

DONNA (CONT'D)

Rummage is things broke, Sallassa, but fixed once, or else like mended clothes, or something that's marked way down, you know?

SALLASSA

Uh yes ma'am, that's what I thought you were sayin'.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

DONNA

Good girl. Do you always make your own guess before you ask somebody a question?

Sallassa nods. Donna glances at the lens again, turns Sallassa away from it. Billy pats Sallassa on the head.

BILLY

A wise woman, just like your momma.

When Donna turns her back, Jules aims it at Sallassa.

SALLASSA

I want to be like you too Billy.

He re-aims his camera at Billy.

BILLY

Let's sing the song I taught you.

Preacher hums the key and launches into "Glory Hallelujah" with Sallassa straining to keep up.

The song fritters out as Jules jabs his lens into the face of his father. Donna snags Sallassa out of the way.

JULES

Ma put her wedding ring in the collection plate one Sunday. Didn't she Old Man? Isn't that right?

Billy looks haunted, head down, shuffling faster than normal.

JULES (CONT'D)

...by the time this idiot added it all up, she was addressing me a postcard from a Greyhound bus.

DONNA

What kind of movie are you making?

JULES

Where she ended up, we never knew. Do you ever think of her old man?

Billy stares straight ahead, marching like a slave with tears in the corners of his eyes.

BILLY

I pray for her daily.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

JULES

That the best you can do?

Billy shoves aside the lens and whispers in Jules' ear.

BILLY

That's more than you do, I'll bet.

JULES

Wrong. I curse both of you daily.

BILLY

Give it up Jules. It's past tense.

Billy cuts away down a street. Donna catches up.

DONNA

You said you wanted to go see
someone when we get to New Orleans.

Billy stops in his tracks, he pulls a single card out of his breast pocket.

BILLY

I been waiting for a sign. I guess
you're it.

He hands the card to Donna. She reads as she follows Billy.

They come to a street corner. Billy makes a sharp turn and crosses.

JULES

Where we going?

She hands Jules the card to read for himself. Then hugging Coco, herds Sallassa hastily in front of her. They manage to cross with the light.

Jules tries to catch up but must retreat to the curb as car horns honk and traffic cuts him off.

EXT. QUAINLY FURBISHED 1940'S PROTESTANT CHURCH - DAY

In a nice old neighborhood, Billy approaches the church. Jules has caught up, recording every step.

Donna reads the sign in front of the church which reads, *Christian Foster Care Center*. She grabs Sallassa's hand, does an about face.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DONNA

Okay, meet you at that public library we passed a couple blocks back.

EXT. BACK STEPS OF THE CHURCH - DAY

Billy waves, waits until she's turned the corner. Jules prepares a two shot at the door. Billy knocks.

Clean cut Reverend Robert steps out, straight as an arrow, on freshly painted porch boards. Billy is speechless.

ROBERT

Billy? And can this be Jules?

JULES

Hey reverend. How's it going? Haven't seen you in a long time.

ROBERT

Indeed Jules, so, why the camera?

JULES

The old man is doing the lonesome apostle shuffle and he wanted to see you the minute we hit town, We walked all the way from Baton Rouge. But you two haven't seen each other for quite awhile, I'll let him tell you. I'm just going to hang back and roll tape if you don't mind.

ROBERT

Yes, I do mind, Jules. Hang forward please, and roll no more.

Jules does as he pleases anyway, shrugging him off.

JULES

Forget I'm here. Talk to Billy.

Billy is ready for Jules to take the back seat. He steps up.

BILLY

Hello Robert.

The two men shake hands. Compared to Billy's smile, Robert's looks rigged, but he is a deep-voiced, handsome, fair-haired man.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROBERT

Billy, this is awkward. I'd rather not involve myself. You understand?

BILLY

There is nothing to get involved in. You were my role model in Bible college, Robert. I would like to ask you a question if I may.

ROBERT

Now Billy, you've hardly modelled your life after me. Why?

BILLY

Debate something with me, Robert, like we used to in college. Let's have a doctrinal discussion.

PASTOR ROBERT

Well Okay, but not on camera.

Jules pretends to turn off his camera. Billy spills it.

BILLY

What will happen to this love for my Lord that I feel so deeply, if I am damned to hell, like people say?

PASTOR ROBERT

Is it not the ultimate hell to loose your most precious gift?

BILLY

Then I'll lead a rebellion in hell.

PASTOR ROBERT

Delusions of grandeur, Billy.

BILLY

If I could never see God's face again I'd rather my soul would cease to exist altogether.

PASTOR ROBERT

None of this will do.

Billy hangs his head. The news appears to crush him. Robert tries to close the storm door. Billy stops it with his shoe.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BILLY

I will not bother you for my self again brother but on behalf of my family, do you have need for an afternoon of labor. I'd be willing to do just about anything for \$20.

ROBERT

I don't feel The Spirit prompting.

BILLY

I don't understand.

Robert nudges Billy's shoe out of the way with his and snaps the door shut.

Billy descends the stairs and doesn't look back.

Jules remains on the porch. His camera is at ease, but pointed at Robert. The air becomes tense as they silently stare one another down.

The two men remain locked in a gaze just long enough, then Jules flips him off, turns and descends the back porch steps.

EXT. BATON ROUGE LIBRARY - DAY

Donna rests Coco on a bench. Coco is having a coughing fit. Donna dabs her with oil again. There are some sketchy characters milling around.

Sallassa can be seen down the street, hawking flags. Nobody is buying. She keeps looking up the street for Billy and then over her shoulder at her mom.

Donna pulls out a rag, dampens it and wipes Coco's forehead.

Billy and Jules walk up greeted by Sallassa. Billy launches into his update from across the street while closing in on Donna and Coco.

BILLY

We haven't any bread to offer.

DONNA

We've had no luck either.

They gather round Donna and Coco. Jules reviews his footage.

BILLY

How is our little chickpea?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DONNA

She'll pull through, I think.

JULES

Some excellent footage here!

Sallassa drops her hand full of flags and plops down right there on the floor in protest.

SALLASSA

Momma, what's wrong with us? Why is it so hard just to eat?

DONNA

Things could be a lot worse dearest. Always keep that in mind.

Sallassa gets up, goes over to a vending machine.

SALLASSA

Jules, will you buy me something?

JULES

No.

DONNA

It's junk food sweetheart.

BILLY

I don't want you to cause a scandal for Pastor Robert, Jules.

JULES

I'll do what I want old man.

Billy attempts to reach for Jules' camera.

DONNA

Leave Jules to his own folly Billy. You're not responsible for him.

JULES

Yes he is. You stay out of this.

DONNA

He's not some puppet that you can march through the muck and grime for your selfish aims.

BILLY

Jules, leave this afternoon out of your documentary, I beg you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DONNA

And leave the girls out of it too.

JULES

Screw all of you. I'll stick around long enough to make my documentary, then you can all go to hell.

DONNA

You think your movie is why you're here, but you enjoy being together as a family as much as we do.

JULES

I'll tell you one thing. You and I are going to have to have an understanding right now.

DONNA

Don't worry, We'll never compete for your papa's love.

JULES

I could care less. Just stop bossing me.

Donna grabs Jules by the lapels.

DONNA

You got to promise one thing. Don't show Coco or Sallassa on that camera, understand? Or those caseworkers will be on my case in a heartbeat.

Jules violently shakes free of her grasp.

JULES

You been warned, alright? I'm not taking any more of your shit.

Jules lifts the tape out of the camera and slips it in his top pocket then walks out the door.

BILLY

Where are you going?

JULES

To the movies.

Donna looks for a place to set her weary bones down. Billy reaches for Jules. Jules can't be bothered.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

DONNA

We'll get it over with then. We'll wait here until you're back.

BILLY

Jules...

SALLASSA

Can I go Jules?

JULES

No.

EXT. A MOVIE THEATER - DAY

With a knotted plastic grocery bag swinging from his wrist. Jules swaggers up, finishing a hot dog. He tosses the wrapper on the sidewalk, tips his flask, swings in the front door.

INT. MOVIE THEATER - DAY

Jules climbs the back row of a half-full house. He sits in the aisle seat. A movie is in progress, a horror flick.

ON THE MOVIE SCREEN:

Sundown in a Kansas cornfield. An attractive female victim, dressed in the uniform of a corporate professional, impatiently climbs out of a car with a flat tire on a deserted road.

Rows of corn line the highway for as far as you can see. Cicada's sing out. She growls into her phone.

VICTIM

Pick me up and be quick about it.
I've got to fly in two hours.

IN THE AUDIENCE:

The sound of cornstalks rustling. The audience stops munching their popcorn.

VICTIM (CONT'D)

AHHH!

Frightened yips and murmurs escape the mouths of two young girls in front of Jules. He laughs in their ears to get their attention. They check him out, giggle and turn away.

A projector emits the familiar swirling cone of light that floats over the heads of the crowd. Jules looks over his shoulder into the projection booth.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The young woman inside is already staring at Jules with the 35mm reel turning like a halo behind her head. Jules grasps his parcel, spins out of his seat, dips under the cone of light and slips along the back row.

INT. INSIDE PROJECTION BOOTH - DAY

JEN is a pale, thin, pretty, born in the 80's. She's perched on a high stool wearing Goth black with pink-streaked hair.

On a desk inside the door, her laptop is open next to a joystick with some vampire video game graphics on screen. Jules steps inside, scans the screen, reads her score.

BILLY

Wow. You speeding?

JEN

Just bored out of my gourd.

Jen slides off her stool, crosses to her computer. Jules takes a box of Hershey's kisses out of his pocket, unwraps one, pokes it into his mouth, sucking suggestively until his lips are coated and his mouth is a crevice of milk chocolate.

Jen slips her hand around the joystick suggestively.

JULES

How's Electric Ray these days?

JEN

Moldering in his basement as usual.

JULES

You're boyfriend needs a bath.

JEN

I'm over it.

He holds out a hand full of Hershey's kisses.

JULES

Tsk. Tsk. Want some chocolate?

Jen approaches Jules and shoves his hand aside.

JEN

I'll have some of yours?

Jen reaches out for his shirt and pulls Jules in for a kiss. Her mouth comes away from his, painted the same color.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Hershey's kisses drop on the floor. These two look like they've done this before.

INT. PROJECTION BOOTH - LATER

The reel on the projector has considerably un-spooled. Jules and Jen are straightening their clothes.

JEN

So, where you been? Haven't even
battled with you online in awhile.

Jules takes the plastic bag off the floor. He unties it and pulls out a clutch of mini-HD tapes.

JULES

Launch these on a fresh domain for
me and call it fathersfailure.com.

JEN

What is it?

JULES

Watch 'em with Ray, he'll
understand.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

It is an overgrown, antique looking place with big old trees and thick, rangy turf between assorted headstones.

Coco coughs twice. A raven responds twice in mocking rhythm.

A gravedigger, on hands and knees, rolls sod over a fresh grave with a wheel barrow and spade for company.

GRAVEDIGGGER watches as the motley crew of pilgrims arrive and fan out searching for Billy's family plot.

JULES

I was thirteen when my old man
first ducked out.

BILLY

My pilgrimage to The Holy Land? I
was back home in three weeks.

JULES

You didn't tell me you were going.

Billy meanders around the cemetery, direction-less.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BILLY
I was following a vision.

JULES
Yeah? What was her name?

Billy hesitates then attempts to lean-in past the camera.

BILLY
You're mother was terribly
repressed. After you were born, she
completely gave up sex.

Jules backs away pointing at the lens.

JULES
Speak into the camera please.

BILLY
(to Donna)
Should I be giving this much
detail?

DONNA
No. Cut that part out, Jules.

JULES
Stay out of this.

Coco coughs in fits. The raven drops onto a closer branch,
with each cough of the sick child.

Donna's attention becomes fixed upon Coco and can no longer
keep up with Billy and Jules.

Billy is in the lead. Jules is on top of him with the camera.
Sallassa is tagging along.

BILLY
A little peace, please.

Finally fed up with it, Billy crouches down, assumes the look
of a scared animal. Behind him we see two trees grown close
together in the distance. Donna calls up to him.

DONNA
Say whatever you have always wanted
to tell your daddy, Billy? Say it.

In the background, Gravedigger has stopped his work and he
listens in on the proceedings.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BILLY
I can't find him.

DONNA
Tell him.

BILLY
Not until I find his grave.

DONNA
Say it now. Don't think too hard.
It gets you in trouble.

BILLY
God have mercy on you, you tyrant.

Sallassa stands next to Billy. Billy gets on his knees, joins his hands in prayer. Donna puts her hand on Billy's shoulder. Jules is a vulture on his other.

DONNA
Get into it more Billy

JULES
Yes, please explain what is going on for our online audience.

DONNA
This is going to require more from you than an act of prayer. Confront your father. Tell him what you've never told him.

Billy collapses instantly into the human cannonball position that comes so readily to him. Glancing shadows streak his frightened face. You get the idea his father is beating him.

BILLY
Why am I so terrified of you still?
You're more than thirty years dead.

DONNA
Let it out of the bag Billy, come on.

BILLY
I can't carry your pain. I have my own.

DONNA
Go Billy! Jules, help your papa free himself.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

JULES

I am helping him.

DONNA

Put that down and throw your arms
around your father now.

JULES

I assure you, I have him in my
tenderest embrace.

BILLY

You drunken, woman hating, child
abusing selfish bastard. I wish you
were alive so I could kill you.

DONNA

We're close, Billy. Let your heart
lead. What do you need to tell your
Papa to be free at last?

Billy's getting sweaty and red in the face. His breath comes
through his nostrils with impressive force.

Woolman leans out from behind a tree with a look of concern.

BILLY

Where the hell are you hiding you
coward.

Woolman quickly pulls his head back out of sight.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Damn it! I need the headstone in
front of me to do this right. We
buried him between a couple of
scrawny saplings.

The Gravedigger has been listening to all this. He looks over
his shoulder at the pair of tall, twin evergreen trees, then
climbs out of hiding to point them out to Billy.

Startled at first, Billy apprehends the man's intention as he
mutely indicates to Billy the whereabouts of the trees.

SALLASSA

Billy, let's go see.

BILLY

Run ahead girl, read me the name.

EXT. GRAVE OF BILLY'S FATHER - DAY

Coco coughs. Sallassa points excitedly. The stone reads:
PRITCHARD. A raven caws.

Jules's camera hovers over Billy who is pacing back and forth on the grave of his father.

BILLY

You didn't love me. You abused me
you despicable, hard-assed, bully.
I'd choke you right now if you were
here, poke your eyes out and stomp
your face in the ground.

Billy takes Jules' walking stick and goes ape shit, slobbering, jabbing the turf, pounding the headstone. His rage reaches full ignition. He falls down kicking and writhing, desecrating his father's grave.

Gravedigger stands watch with his back to the proceedings, looking at something off into the distance. His POV reveals Woolman lurking among the graves.

A WHILE LATER:

Jules is still taping. Donna and Sallassa sit crossed-legged on either side of Billy. Donna is ignoring Jules for the moment and waving a bundle of smoldering herbs. Judging from the short nub that remains of her bundle they've been sitting there awhile.

Billy has now exhausted his rage and he's weeping, arms out, face down on his father's grave, speaking tender words.

There is a comical amount of damage to the turf. Even the gravestone has a couple chunks missing around the edges now.

BILLY (CONT'D)

I only wanted your love and to love
you back. I still want it. It's
what a son is for. If I can't do
it, I'm crippled...

Jules tilts up and pans his camera over the cemetery, resting his lens finally on Gravedigger.

Gravedigger is watching Woolman, so Jules finds Woolman in his viewfinder.

Now Jules is carried away as though his camera had a life of its own and is pulling him headlong into a confrontation.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Unaware of all this, Billy dries up and rises on his arms panting, soaks in the late afternoon splendor that is filtering through dark trunks and long shadows of trees.

Donna sets down the herbs and wipes Billy's tears.

EXT. CEMETERY - WOOLMAN'S HIDING PLACE

Jules charges right into Woolman's hiding place.

Woolman reacts first by retreating, but Jules gains on him.

Woolman pulls out Jules' filet knife for protection. Jules' back shields all these particulars from Donna.

Jules' possessed camera won't stop until it's physical. The standoff becomes, literally, lens glass to knife point. Jules is the first to pull back.

JULES

Wait. Cut. Don't cut, I mean. Who are you? Hey, is that my knife?

EXT. CEMETERY - BILLY'S PAPA'S GRAVE - CONTINUOUS

Billy lays face up on his father's grave. He lets out a huge sigh of relief. Sallassa strokes his forehead.

BILLY

Didn't know I harbored such resentment.

DONNA

Let all that poison run out of you.

SALLASSA

You look much better now.

Billy sighs, relaxes in the grass. Donna's right next to him. Sallassa lays her head in Mom's lap.

Donna's attention is split every which way trying to comfort Coco, be there for Billy and Sallassa and not let on about what looks to be happening with Jules.

Suddenly the tension in that side of her face relaxes. From her perspective, Jules is returning. Woolman appears to be leaving peacefully.

From Jules' perspective, he is recording his forward progress in a prolonged, hand-held, push in.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Once again, the master of his camera, it turns into a close-up as if there had been no interruption between this shot and their last.

Billy smiles through the lens at his son. There is an air of serenity and release all about him.

Jules bends over without touching him. The camera is so close, between his lens and Billy's face, the space itself is a sort of embrace. Billy wipes his eyes, looks in the lens.

BILLY

I never did forgive him Jules, only forgot him, but I forgave him just now and what a difference.

Billy sighs again and looks skyward. Slowly Jules stands up, holding the shot as he cranes up and lifts away from Billy, then tilts up to the sky and treetops before finally switching off the camera with a satisfied nod.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Are you getting what you're after?

JULES

Not bac, butomething tells me it's going to get a whole lot better.

DONNA

Jules, can you just say, I forgive you and I love you Dad?

JULES

Make me rich and famous and I will.

BILLY

Tell me what to do and I'll do it.

Jules reaches out his hand. Billy takes it.

JULES

Come along, my little circus chimp.

EXT. DOWNTOWN NEW ORLEANS - NIGHT

The streets are packed. We see Jules tipping his flask. POV his camera leering at breasts and buns. He occasionally glances over at Billy who is carrying Coco in his arms.

Donna's got Sallassa's hand bringing up the rear of their formation, but there is a familiar new figure in their party. Gravedigger is tagging along a few yards behind.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Sallassa stops as they pass an advertisement of a country and western songstress blown up life-sized on a poster.

On the same stretch, a thin, scruffy musician plays a fiddle.

"Bo wid' a Fiddle" is printed boldly inside his instrument case, which lay sprung open below for scarfing up coins and bucks. Bo fiddles, watching Donna and Sallassa.

Up walks Billy, followed by Jules. Bo leans into his melody soulfully. When he thinks he has captured Sallassa's attention, he winks and ups his rhythm.

Just then she points at the poster of the pop star in the window behind him. He looks over his shoulder, crestfallen.

SALLASSA

She the one we keep hearing.

Donna pulls over to the inner edge of the sidewalk and reads the advertisement. Bo watches thru the corner of his eye.

DONNA

That the gal sings " *hard times are over?* I like her.

Sallassa nods. Bo starts playing the melody for "Hard Times Are Over." Donna notices and smiles.

Sallassa watches Bo. Donna's attention returns to the poster.

DONNA (CONT'D)

Hey Billy, look at this.

Billy turns to face them, leaving Jules recording the back of his head. Jules thrusts forward over Billy's shoulder.

Sallassa speaks to Bo as he fiddles.

SALLASSA

How'd you learn that?

BO

Practice lot's of these.

Bo abandons the melody and plays a few scales super-fast. Sallassa gets a rush of delight and looks over at her Momma. Donna chuckles at Sallassa.

Billy catches up. Donna motions towards the entertainer on the poster. Jules pans to the fiddler. Bo gets self-conscious, flubs the tune. Sallassa returns to the pop star.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DONNA

She's performing in the park before
the fireworks tonight.

SALLASSA

Can we go Billy?

Billy scratches his head, seems unsure how to answer. Pauses,
shrugs, nods. Jules returns his attention on his father.

JULES

Maybe you could do some good big
crowd preaching for my camera. How
about that Old Man?

Billy takes Jules' jive to heart, searches his reflection in
the shop window, parting his hair a different way with his
fingers after he's had a good look.

Bo stashes his fiddle and straggles along behind. Gravedigger
follows. Further back, Woolman skulks.

Donna stops to sell someone a flag. Sallassa hangs close to
Jules and watches while he nips tequila from his flask.

SALLASSA

Can I have a taste?

JULES

Certainly. Be my guest.

Jules first checks to see Donna's not watching then hands it
off. Sallassa sips it and spits it back out with a cough.
Her eyes water. She looks afraid to budge. Jules is amused.

SALLASSA

That didn't taste like I thought it
was going to.

She hands it carefully back to Jules and wipes her mouth.

JULES

Ha-ha. Nothing ever does, darlin',
nothing ever does.

EXT. PARK - BANDSTAND - EVENING

A white dove roosts up in the rafters of the band shell.

There is a bluegrass band on stage. The crowd is keyed up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Jules is in a good mood, sucking his flask like a nipple, taking random clips of Billy, alternating with close ups aplenty of fresh young booty in the crowd.

Blacky, the man from the fireworks stand, has a samba line of volunteer dancers following him. He's weaving through the crowd in a BLACK CAT MASK, undulating his spine, armed with multiple streaming sparklers from each fist like claws.

At the head of the serpent, Blacky circles the square. Jules catches him on camera as he passes. Billy looks away.

There is a sign on stage that says, "Open Mike Competition."

Sallassa has Billy by the hand. She's leading him toward the gazebo where the band has just left the stage. The crowd is whipped up and cheering.

ANNOUNCER

Thanks to the Sloppy Mountain Boys.
We got time for one more? Anybody
else, real quick, before we wind up
the open mic competition?

Jules wheels around and pounces on his dad.

JULES

Jump up and give us a sermon, old
man. Here. Get ready, set, don't
think. Three, two, one, go!

DONNA

You can do it Billy. I've seen you.

Billy shakes his head. Sallassa tugs his sleeve.

JULES

Like old times Pop. Take them by
the hand, lead them to the promised
land. Camera's rolling.

Billy looks at Sallassa for support. She pulls his arm.

BILLY

The spirit must prompt me.

DONNA

Go up there and be natural, Billy.
It's all you can do.

Billy gives Coco to Donna and starts pacing in a small circle then crouches down in his accustomed crouch.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SALLASSA

Don't be afraid.

BILLY

Learn to wait on the spirit,
darlin', we need a sign first.

JULES

Come on Pop.

Jules points the camera at himself and Billy, pushing people out of the way, crowding in next to his father for the shot.

JULES (CONT'D)

Joe Pritchard here in old New Orleans with the Reverend Billy...

An announcer returns to the microphone.

ANNOUNCER

The open mike is now closed. We'll announce the winner of this year's competition at intermission, but now it's time for the 2011 Old Town 4th of July headliner.

The crowd whoops it up. Billy sighs with relief. Jules pounds his own knee with a fist.

The announcer shouts to be heard.

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)

She has a beautiful voice, a face to match and right now she's got a top ten radio hit. You all know who I'm talking about. Please welcome Jonquil Jones

The famous cowgirl singer appears center stage waving her rhinestone tambourine to hush the crowd.

JONQUIL

Thank ya'll for coming out tonight. We're going to start out honoring our nation. Ya'll join in and sing "The Star-Spangled Banner."

The band plays. The famous singer belts it out.

JONQUIL (CONT'D)

Oh, say can you see.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Just then, the white dove that has been roosting above shoves off from its perch but only after taking a dump that lands directly in Ms. Jones' eye.

Billy sees is the white dove flying out of the band shell.

Jonquil Jones screams and stops the show. The band is startled to silence. Jonquil is immediately surrounded by a mob of handlers and security personnel.

In a very short time, Jonquil Jones is whisked off stage. There is much mumbling in a vacuum where the music went.

SALLASSA

Momma what happened?

DONNA

Have you noticed any eyebright growing around here?

SALLASSA

The one that looks like straw?

DONNA

She could sure use some right now.

At the urging of the promoter, the band members start up the music. The national anthem resumes, but the crowd sounds bleary and disjointed. Billy looks at Donna. She nods.

DONNA (CONT'D)

Go Billy. They need a shepherd.

JULES

Get up there preacher.

BILLY

Get up there preacher.

Billy picks up Sallassa and gets up on stage. Sallassa waves to the band. They pick up the pace.

Billy smiles so big a missing molar shows. He leans into the mike and sings the National Anthem with pride and conviction. Sallassa joins in. The crowd follows to the end.

BILLY AND CROWD

*O'er the land of the free and the
home, of the brave.*

Billy puts Sallassa down. She curtsies. The audience erupts in cheers. Sallassa waves, stepping back down into the audience and leaving Billy alone on stage.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

Billy steps forward and adjusts the microphone like he's done it a hundred times.

BILLY

Brothers and Sisters, let me have a quick word with you. I'm Billy Pritchard. Some of you may know who I am. It's not important. I used to have a Sunday morning television show. That's not why I'm here. I'm here because, well, you're not ready to go home yet are you? Happy Independence Day to you!

The crowd answers back with enthusiasm.

Billy looks off stage now. Crowd sounds intensify. He's getting a nod from the stage manager, so he goes on. He looks down at Sallassa who is waving at him with a big smile. Donna is next to her beaming at him with pride.

Jules is at the foot of the stage with the camera tilted up at Billy shouting directions.

JULES

No turning back Preach. We're live.

BILLY

I believe in heaven and hell.

Some in the crowd murmur their encouragement.

BILLY (CONT'D)

You know, unbelievers like to make fun, but I ask you, what more literal proof of a bona-fide hell does anyone need? This minute, as we breathe, the gases of the underworld burn with fires in which all of us are slowly roasting.

The crowd makes a collective groan.

BILLY (CONT'D)

You say "this can't be hell the Lord was supposed to come and take us away first." SORRY! That happened already. He came like a thief in the night.

Blacky has been standing about half way back from the stage and he's heard enough. Woolman stands next to him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

BLACKY

Prove it.

Billy's knees wobble. His body remains standing, stage struck, trembling before the crowd. Billy sees the camera and gazes in to the tunnel of Jules' lens.

BILLY

You say to me, " Well If this is Hell, why didn't The Lord take my God-fearing grandma?"

BLACKY

(shouts above him)

This man's speech is unclean.

JULES

He's talking biblical Hell.

BILLY

Right! Because we become captives of that place even before we die.

BLACKY

Do not attempt to explain your foolishness you fool.

BILLY

I beg your pardon sir, but, the Lord promised, "I am retuning very soon." Did he not? It's been a long, time since somebody said the Lord said that, so I for one am thinking the Judgment Day is past and over with and we did not pass over with it. So get over it.

Woolman makes his first utterance.

WOOLMAN

Boo.

BILLY

We'll pass with the gas of the underworld now, with a grievous longing for the heaven which we lazily gave away.

BLACKY

Better watch your tongue.

WOOLMAN

Boo.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

BILLY

It's a shock, I know. It's hard to believe, but we're damned.

WOOLMAN

Boo!

A few in the crowd join in. Jules is rubbernecking now, capturing the confrontation at ground zero.

BILLY

What if it's true? Think about it.

BLACKY

Step down, weaver of lies.

More booing ensues. Suddenly there is a screech in the crowd nearby. It is Bo, the fiddle player. All eyes go to the noise on which the fiddler capitalizes.

BO

I've never heard anyone talk like this. Is nobody else curious? Let him speak. It's only an opinion.

With that his bow strikes strings once more. The crowd generally goes with him, some even applaud and whistle. Blacky shouts over the noise.

BLACKY

That one is bogus too. They're working this crowd.

BO

Free speech is what 4th of July is all about for god's sake.

BLACKY

Devil's talk is never free.

Jules shouts him down.

JULES

Hells bells. It's show business. Shut up and let a devil work.

DONNA

Yeah, let him have his turn.

WOOLMAN

Boo!

Again the crowd rally's for Billy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (7)

Billy has their attention and so must speak. He fixes his eyes on Woolman.

BILLY

What's your argument with me? I'm not defending opinions, dogmas, ideologies, gossip, none of that.

Woolman starts making for the back of the crowd.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Whichever way we can disagreed about how things ought to be, there are really only five simple needs: clean air, food, water, shelter, and security. Those gifts from above make this earth a paradise for everyone. It is the meaning of the cross. That's all there is to it. Why are we acting as if we're in Hell? Have we abandoned ourselves and fallen so far back that we could not even see the Lord when he came and divided His winners from The Enemy's losers?

Billy claps his hands for emphasis.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Boom! The righteous just went away without saying goodbye. Nobody bothers to tell the losers. Are we left to figure this out on our own?

Crowd answers a resounding "no".

BILLY (CONT'D)

I hope not either. But, friends and strangers, believers and non-believers, we don't have to live like this. Heaven exists for us now if we want it. The command, to love one another grants us freedom to achieve our dreams. That awful smell in the air is the burning consequence of our refusal to do so thus far.

WOOLMAN

Hypocrite!

Billy looks at Jules camera like he knows it's a close up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (8)

BILLY

Ladies and gentlemen, that man followed me for days pretending he did not have the power of speech. That he is choosing to speak up now, I find suspicious.

WOOLMAN

He is a disgraced preacher!

To cut it off, Billy quickly folds his hands and bows.

BILLY

Thank you for your time and attention ladies and gentlemen. From the bottom of my heart, I ask your blessing and forgiveness. May the Lord bless and forgive us all.

BLACKY

Do not say amen to that fiend.

WOOLMAN

The devil speaks through him.

Billy wants to get off stage now.

Bo does another lick on his fiddle to capture the crowd.

BO

Hooray for freedom of speech. God Bless America.

The audience joins in Billy's support.

Jules takes his ball cap off and shoves it at Sallassa.

JULES

Take up a collection.

Donna cuts in with forbidding arm.

DONNA

No Sallassa, that's begging.

JULES

Shut up. He earned it.

DONNA

Oh, you're right, but let me do it.

SALLASSA

Not fair Momma, Jules asked me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (9)

JULES

The kid's perfect for the part.

He tussles a little with Donna then nudges Sallassa to make the rounds. Someone is already putting a dollar in the hat, followed by others. Jules grabs a few frames of it before returning his focus on the stage.

From the stage wing, out steps the white-fringed Jonquil Jones with jaunty tambourine and white patched eye.

The crowd throws up their hands. She gamely takes the stage arms outstretched while her audience heaps their adulation. Then she hushes them and nimbly navigates the spotlight.

JONQUIL

I had a little accident, but it's taken care of now, so I can come out and sing to you after all.
(pauses for applause) I wasn't going to leave you. How could I?

Now she sweeps one arm in Billy's direction. The spot light stays with her.

JONQUIL (CONT'D)

And thanks to this gentleman for making the show go on while my eye was being mended.

Crowd is happy to give Billy his due.

Billy doesn't acknowledge their praise except to wait for it to pass and then speaks into the aftermath of their applause like a pro.

BILLY

Sisters and brothers, thank you.
Peace and love, forgive and forget.
Live and let live. Good night. God Bless.

More applause. Jules sweeps the crowd with his camera.

JULES

(to himself)
And stay tuned.

Billy blows Donna a kiss from the stage. She's beaming at him. Jules is excitedly panning the crowd. The crowd is swaying and clapping in unison.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (10)

Billy goes over to Jonquil Jones and kisses her hand. Jonquil accepts his graciousness tensely. Billy bows and retreats.

BILLY

Thank you. I must be moving on.

Jules pans over the crowd as it sways and sings. Billy descends the stage flicking smiles into a sea of cheers.

The white dove re-settles in the rafters of the band shell.

Billy makes eye contact with Woolman who is standing way in back staring at Billy. Jules and camera close in.

BILLY (CONT'D)

What happened?

JULES

All you needed was a camera.

Jules lowers his, holds out his hand for a shake. Billy pauses for a moment to acknowledge the significance of the gesture. Then he extends his hand and Jules shakes it.

BILLY

Thanks Son. What did I say?

Jules pulls his flask out of his back pocket and unscrews it.

JULES

Hell and damnation. Right on old man. This calls for a celebration.

Jules thrusts his flask at Billy who is caught by surprise. Jules swings his camera on his shoulder to capture it.

Billy hesitates a second before rejecting the flask.

JULES (CONT'D)

Hypocrite.

Jules insists, then sets his lens back on Billy.

BILLY

Is this what you want?

Billy unscrews and tips the flask to his lips.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Whatever I can do to help son.

Jules captures him in the act. Billy smiles for the camera, then screws the lid down extra hard and returns it to Jules.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (11)

JULES

Hypocrite.

Billy exaggerates his swallow then coughs on the afterburn.

On stage Jonquil Jones cranks out her latest hit. Billy's rag wipes his lips. The crowd is shaking flags and hips.

He meticulously refolds the bandana, replaces it and turns away, searching for some way out.

Sweeping the crowd, Billy's eyes fall upon Woolman again. Woolman's eyes burn into Billy. They stare each other down at thirty yards. Woolman cuts and runs.

Plunging in with his arms first, Woolman can be seen stroking his way through the back of the crowd to the street. Billy swims after him in hungry pursuit.

At first Jules clings close leading with his lens, but the crowd cuts him off and Billy presses on.

Donna is back in the front row with Coco on her hip. She couldn't cut through that crowd with the children. Sallassa's just returned at her side with a hat full of cash, so she stuffs it in her bosom as she watches over her shoulder.

Meanwhile Sallassa claps to Jonquil Jones singing "Hard Times are Over."

EXT. ABANDONED INDUSTRIAL LOT - NIGHT

Weathered shipping pallets are scattered about this god-forsaken scene with scrub grass and weeds woven between.

In the light of a full moon Billy catches up with Woolman who is hunched over, vomiting.

BILLY

Brother? You and I don't have
enough of a quarrel to be at war.

It becomes apparent that Woolman is luring him when he turns suddenly, and tackles Billy, pulling him to the ground.

Billy is taken by surprise and easily goes down.

Now Jules catches up. We hear his shout first. The recording switch is on and he's caught them at their worst.

JULES

Don't worry Old Man, I'm here.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The two men tussle awkwardly. Very quickly Woolman wiggles loose then crawls on all fours a few paces before standing.

JULES (CONT'D)

That's right, scurry away you
cockroach. Hey, what's going on?

It is not until now that we see Woolman wipe the blade of his knife on his pants.

Jules abandons his camera, placing it on the ground in such a fashion as to capture the action and sets off after Woolman.

Jules unfolds his jackknife. Woolman stands his ground.

Billy sings, laying on his left side as he bleeds. A puddle spreads outward filling the crescent of his hunched-in body with a bright red eclipse. Even his breathing hurts.

BILLY

Mine eyes have seen the glory of
the coming of the Lord...

The fireworks show begins in the distance behind them, signaled by an opening salvo of rockets exploding into giant purple and gold canopies over the treetops.

EXT. PARK BAND SHELL - NIGHT

The figures of Sallassa and Donna holding hands, while Donna cradle's Coco, are lit by exploding rockets. Sallassa's face brightens with childish wonder at the spectacle. Donna seems preoccupied with her youngest.

DONNA

This crowd's too close. Coco's
tired of it. Let's find Billy.

SALLASSA

Can I keep watching while we walk?

DONNA

If you hang on tight.

Sallassa grabs her mother's skirt, eyes to the sky.

EXT. ABANDONED INDUSTRIAL LOT - NIGHT

Woolman bares his steel. Exposed to light, it flashes. Then Jules raises his blade.

Just then we hear Sallassa's scream. Both men are startled.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SALLASSA

Billy!

By the time we see her, Donna is on her knees examining Billy's injury. Sallassa is looking down with tears in her eyes and Coco crying in her arms.

DONNA

Sallassa, I need yarrow. You remember what it looks like?

SALLASSA

I'm scared of that man, Momma.

Donna looks over at Woolman now.

DONNA

Jules, back off and put it away.

Jules stares at Woolman.

JULES

Don't boss me woman.

BILLY

Jules, back off!

Billy's call startles Jules.

WOOLMAN

You better listen to them.

Jules struggles with his courage, hurls his knife at Woolman and backs away.

JULES

Loser! Psycho! Get out of here.

Woolman laughs and taunts Jules as fireworks light the sky.

BILLY

"He has trampled out the vintage
where the grapes of wrath were
stored."

WOOLMAN

He'll live, but that demon won't
bother him anymore.

Billy sings softly while he draws, like a child's finger-painting, with his blood. The familiar crosses and octagons are scrawled in bright red script on cracked grey earth.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Donna's fishing in her apron pocket.

SALLASSA
Momma, please.

Donna pulls the money Sallassa gave her from the collection and tosses it in Woolman's direction.

DONNA
I beg you, leave us.

Woolman picks up the money, pockets it.

WOOLMAN
I'll take his tongue out next time.

DONNA
Don't utter another word mister,
please just go.

Donna fishes in her apron, pulls out an ice-pick, pulls a cork off the end then rolls Billy's pocket for his lighter.

She scratches the flint and toasts the tip of the ice-pick until it glows red in the blue flame.

About this time Bo emerges from the shadows, as if he has been there the whole time. He makes his presence clear behind Jules. Both men are now glaring back at Woolman.

Next appears Gravedigger in the dreary street light.

Woolman laughs, turns his back and walks away, disappearing into the shadows.

Jules returns to his camera, studying Donna and his dad.

Sallassa's standing, head down over Billy, softly praying.

Donna nervously kneels before Billy's wound, in the middle of the blood, trying to pull herself together.

SALLASSA
Who was that man Momma?

DONNA
Let's see...now, what does yarrow
look like daughter?

SALLASSA
It's lacy and smells like medicine.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

DONNA

Good girl. Find some of it with flowers if they have them. Leave roots in the ground if possible.

SALLASSA

Momma, I'm scared.

DONNA

You don't have to leave my sight darlin, but pick some yarrow fast.

Sallassa adjusts Coco on her hip and fans out in search. Donna starts plucking grass from right where she is sitting.

She stuffs a plug of grass in Billy's mouth which he bites down on and screams when Donna cauterizes his wound with sizzling sounds. Smoke curlicues float into her tearful eyes.

Sallassa pauses in shock to watch and she bounces Coco to settle her. Coco is bawling, expressing all the overwhelm and upset for everyone. Sallassa passes her off to Jules.

SALLASSA

Can you take her?

Jules does so reluctantly. He doesn't know what to do with Coco, so he sets her down between his crossed legs, then empties his flask in a gulp, except it was already empty.

Sallassa attends to Donna's request, sobbing, urgently scouring the ground for familiar plants.

JULES

Why not go for an ambulance?

DONNA

No! They'll take my girls. Tell no one of this trouble, understand? Throw that tape out.

Bo steps forward.

BO

Can I do anything?

JULES

Yeah. Go away!

DONNA

Fiddle, by god, fiddle like you were raising the dead.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

Bo draws his bow, pulls together a thin, sketchy dirge.

JULES

What are you feeling Pop?

BILLY

Praying. Praying for my attacker
and forgiving him.

JULES

Maybe this wasn't such a good idea.

BILLY

Is it rolling, Jules?

JULES

I'm all eyes, Pop.

Billy attempts to get up but is overcome by pain. The pool of blood around him grows ever darker, Coco's crying louder.

Fireworks explode overhead. Bo fiddles with frightened eyes.

Donna's battling back tears. Breath by breath her grief expands as she plucks and stuffs grass in her mouth.

Jules sways, uncomfortable with Coco writhing and screaming in his lap. His face cracks. He can barely hold his camera.

Filling her cheeks with grass Donna's grief builds to a crescendo and finally blows. An eerie harmonic is struck between her weeping and Coco's wailing and the rockets whistling overhead.

Just when Donna's cheeks could not be more damp with tears nor stuffed more full of grass, she expels the enormous wad from her mouth, molds it with her hands and proclaims, sobbing with green-mouthed grief:

DONNA

I was taught the Good Book from the moment I came to this world and all my life I've tried to live by it, but none of it prepared me for the likes of this.

She holds her hand open below his mouth and Billy spits out his grass plug.

BILLY

Amen sister.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

As it passes into her hand, Donna adds his chewed grass to the ball she's just spit out.

She plasters the grass into Billy's bleeding wound, then puts Billy's hand over it to hold it in place.

Donna does her best, threads a needle, reddens it in flame, commences to sew and reclaim Billy from the fangs of death.

Jules is queasy. Camera falls off kilter and hits the deck.

EXT. VACANT LOT WEEKS LATER - DAY

The stain of Billy's blood is faded on the ground.

Billy is situated in the middle of the dump, scrounging through mounds of discarded shipping pallets.

Protective of his tender mid-section he slowly stacks up a two-story shelter with pallets and wire.

From a platform on an A-frame of pallets, Jules perches like a vulture, looking down through his lens at crude structures.

A completed shanty sits nearby, an octagon covered in patched plastic. Inside are Donna and Sallassa.

INT. SHANTY - DAY

Sallassa plants rows of sunflower seeds while Donna makes shallow holes with a lovingly carved wooden poker.

DONNA

If you plant ten rows and harvest seven, now many rows does that give for seed to plant next year?

Sallassa drops a sunflower seed into a hole, dribbles water from her jug on it then covers it with soil before moving on.

SALLASSA

Um, (pause), ten minus seven? Three?

DONNA

Very good math young lady, now how about a little geography. From which part of the world do these sunflowers come?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SALLASSA

Um, (pause), Central America?

DONNA

Good, and where is Central America?

SALLASSA

West? Uh, no East? Oh, I forgot.

DONNA

Probably because you've never been. It's South, darlin' way down, past Mexico. Now tell me where is Kansas again? You've been there.

SALLASSA

Kansas is North of here? And Polaris, the north star, is too.

EXT. OUTSIDE SAME SHANTY - CONTINUOUS

DONNA

All good.

SALLASSA

Now can I practice writing?

Jules has his electronic eye on Billy from his platform above.

Billy sorely hunkers down in his familiar squat, not introverted for a change, but amused as he reflects on what's happening with Donna and Sallassa inside the tent.

Billy takes a drink of water from a plastic milk carton while listening in.

DONNA

What is heliotropism?

SALLASSA

Plants that follow the sun like sunflowers?

Billy uncurls and rocks back on crab legs exposing the sight of a stitched puncture in his left side just above the belt.

DONNA

Excellent! Write on the subject of Heliotropism for a paragraph or two. Remember what a paragraph is?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SALLASSA

More than one sentence.

BILLY

My, how proud I am of you Sallassa.

SALLASSA

Thank you Papa.

JULES

(V.O.)

Heartwarming isn't it? If you want to witness something, my beloved internet audience, if you want to raise your level very quickly, then watch carefully.

Jules voice drones on while we watch Billy. He's on the job again scratching eight foot crosses and octagons and getting around with the help of Jules' staff.

JULES (CONT'D)

What is this? Is this our future? This clown is leading us back to the primitive squalor we once raised ourselves out of.

Now we hear Coco cry loud.

BILLY

Squalor is not what I'd call this.

JULES

I'll mold something of you yet.

DONNA

Quiet, you two, its upsetting Coco.

INT. MOBILE HOME - KITCHEN TABLE - NIGHT

A slow leaking faucet drips into a lone bowl and spoon in a kitchen sink.

BRITTANY

I'm connected now. OK, thank you.

Brittany, the once-pregnant lover of Jules, pinches a cell phone between her ear and shoulder.

She sits before an outdated computer typing with one finger while breast feeding Jules's 3 month old son, Joe Jr. She mutters as she types.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BRITTANY (CONT'D)

Let's see, now J-o-e P-r-i-t-c-h-a-r-d. Search!

We share her POV on the screen in front of her. The screen loads a page and we hear a lowered volume voice of Jules over a still image of his father.

BRITTANY (CONT'D)

It works! Thank you much. K' bye.

JULES

(background)

Look ladies and gents. Here is a "Baby Boomer", head of the class, evolutionarily speaking, past his prime for sure, but fully conscious, supposed to be leading edge of the human race, my father the failure, homeless, eating garbage...

She's so absorbed, Brittany forgets to hang up the phone. Baby Joe spontaneously cries. The faucet drips.

BRITTANY

We're not going to even waste the "F word" on him are we baby Joe?

Eyes glistening, she tenderly tweaks baby Joe's cheek.

INT. MOVIE THEATER PROJECTION ROOM - DAY

To the sound of a disaster flick sound track, Jules enters and wordlessly sneaks up on Jen, spying over her shoulder while she plays war games on a laptop.

By the way that she's wasting "F words", Jen is not winning and still unaware of Jules until he puts his hand over hers.

He guides it and turns her score around. Jen leans back into Jules with the joystick bucking in her fist. Points are suddenly racking up.

A BIT LATER ON:

Jules poaches a piece of pizza from a box on Jen's desk.

Jen pulls down her sweater, then rakes through her backpack to take out a file folder bursting with checks.

JEN

Ray says come. We need to talk.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JULES

Donations? Already? How much?

He grabs it, munching pizza. No sooner does she make the hand-off then she keys up "fathersfailure.com" on her laptop and starts scrolling through video thumbnails.

JEN

Yesterday it was about \$1500.
Today, its closer to \$20,000.

JULES

Jesus Christ!

JEN

We need a PO Box, a bank account,
business license and a book keeper.

Jen clicks on a video and together they watch. Now it's Jen that's scoring points. Jules' leans against her.

POV Jules on Jen's laptop screen:

INT. CAR AT THE CURB IN A CHIC SUBURB - NIGHT

With the help of an anonymous cameraman, a garishly painted and bewigged young drag queen named Vesta, and a long lens protruding through a car window, reveal what's happening on the porch of a nearby brownstone.

Here is the point of view of the camera.

EXT. UPSCALE BROWNSTONE - CONTINUOUS

VESTA

(V.O.)

There's is my dad, Congressman Dean
Spooner. And that is not my mom.

The Senator gropes his tipsy date and nips her neck.

VESTA (CONT'D)

(V.O.)

All my life he shamed me about sex.

While the man interrupts his love play long enough to unlock the door of the house, his girlfriend plops down on the porch, giggling in a drunken stupor.

The man turns around, gathers up his prey and nearly falls backward off the porch as he carries her over the threshold.

INT. CAR AT THE CURB - NIGHT

Vesta has the camera pointed at her now.

VESTA

This is the wrath of Vesta- Savage
She-Male. Let history decide
between him and me, who's the
biggest failure at love.

INT. MOVIE THEATER PROJECTION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jules takes over the laptop and cruises his website.

JULES

Who did this?

JEN

People started sending us videos of
their dad's too. Me and Ray said
hey, its the same content, why not?

JULES

Fuckin' A! I knew my idea was good.

JEN

Good? It's fucking genius.

JULES

I need an appointment with a major
media company.

Jen fishes for a file in her backpack, hands it to Jules.

JEN

Here's four good offers already.

Jules grabs the folder, fishes out some one-page documents,
scans each one carefully, then goes over them for Jen.

JULES

This one has me worried. Some prick
for the feds. I don't like this.
Does Electric Ray know a lawyer?
This one sounds like a scam, don't
even answer. These guys look hip.
Check 'em out.

JEN

Now that you got money for lawyers,
how much longer you expect me and
Ray to work on spec?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JULES

I don't have an address so Ray has to leave his cave if he wants to invoice me.

He grabs her, kisses her.

JULES (CONT'D)

With you I pay as I play don't I?

JEN

I expect a very big bonus.

She shoves off. Jules hands her a stack of tapes.

JULES

Post these.

INT. BRITTANY'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

A little older Joe Jr. feeds himself with spoon and baby jar, in a highchair. Brittany's attention is glued to her Internet screen watching Jules' latest post.

JULES

(VO)

Got camera? Power up! Point and Shoot! Aim it anywhere at your future and you'll catch some baby boomer red-handed trying to steal it. Do it now! Post your two-timer today at fathersfailure.com.

In the background is the same faucet that was dripping only now the drip is faster and the sink is full of dirty dishes.

EXT. ABANDONED INDUSTRIAL LOT - DAY

Billy, Sallassa, Donna, Coco, Jules, Bo and the Gravedigger are seen being productive around their primitive encampment strung together from cast off trash.

Jules' camera tower has grown much taller. He peers down from three stories up now like a god.

JULES

And now friends and foes of fathersfailure.com welcome to the latest post from ground zero of where this movement began.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JULES (CONT'D)

It's incredible the magnitude of your response and a miracle to think that in a matter of a hundred days, this project has matured from one lone lens to a community of thousands.

A drop of moisture drains off the plastic roof of a dwelling into a five gallon bucket.

Gravedigger picks up the bucket of rain water, struggles a few steps with it and empties it into a larger plastic barrel that has a feed line running into the greenhouse.

JULES (CONT'D)

Thanks to you, children of flakes and fakes, your father's failures, many of which have resulted in criminal charges, are the subject of the unique, original programming streaming 24/7 to our growing activist community.

A fire pit smolders with cook pots around it. Donna tends Coco, stirs pots and pokes coals.

JULES (CONT'D)

Together we've captured politicians, clergy, teachers, physicians, military leaders, corporate CEOs and flocks of average fuck-ups committing sins from bribery and extortion, to drunk driving and toilet seat pissing.

Billy flies a homemade kite with Bo and Sallassa.

JULES (CONT'D)

But let's not focus on the negative. We're not writing them off like they did with us. This site is a tool for positive social change, and your posts count as much as mine do for success. You want to see how much these videos changed this old failure's life? Here's is what can happen when you force their feet to the fire.

The camera swings up, surveying a camp of 12 cross-shaped dwellings interspersed with four octagonal green houses bursting with vegetation.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JULES (CONT'D)

Observe what we have made happen in
the life of one loser.

What would otherwise look like some sad homeless people, are
a band of engaged urban farmers in a prosperous agricultural
cooperative.

JULES (CONT'D)

I didn't let him out of my sight
and what do you know? He got his
shit together. A star is born
again.

Beyond the camp is a patch of mature sunflowers. Next to
them, beehives harmonize.

JULES (CONT'D)

The folks you're looking at were
forced out of their homes by bully
banks who sold them liar loans.
Where there were once more than a
dozen homeless people isolated
within a several block radius of
here, there is now a band of urban
farmers being prosperous on a once
forsaken plot of ground.

Chickens scratch in the walkways between closely grouped pods
of dwellings. There is a goat wandering around.

JULES (CONT'D)

Some call it a communist plot,
others a grassroots enterprise.
They call themselves "The Common
Sense Cooperative." I declare it a
modern media miracle made possible
by you the digital revolutionaries
of fathersfailure.com.

INT. BRITTANY'S KITCHEN - DAY

The kitchen faucet drip has turned into a steady stream. The
sink is swamped and overflowing. Dirty dishes abound.

INT. AUTOMOBILE - INTERSTATE REST STOP - DAY

Brittany finishes changing Joe Jr.'s diaper. She straps him
in. He's 9 months now. She turns on the radio and pulls out a
map and a red pen which she uses to trace her route.

"Hard Times are Over for Awhile", plays on the radio.

EXT. ABANDONED INDUSTRIAL LOT - DAY

Jules with his camera on his perch looking down.

Billy walks around the village leaning on his Jules' stick. He proudly shakes hands and splits a cigarette with a citizen in overalls who bashfully shrugs with toothless grin.

Now Donna steps into the frame looking up at Jules. He aims down at her. As though it were normal, they converse through the lens.

DONNA

You said when you were famous you were going to forgive your father.

JULES

I said, when I'm rich and famous.

Just then a beat up car screams into camp, kicking dust.

Brittany steps out with little Joe. She has a camera ready.

JULES (CONT'D)

What the fuck? No. Not now!

From the top of his perch Jules turns off his camera and swiftly descends the rungs of the tower.

Donna grabs the camera from Jules as his feet reach ground. Brittany holds her lens on her baby, then the baby's father.

BRITTANY

This is Joe Pritchard Jr. son of the loser standing here who left me flat broke and expecting in Baton Rouge fifteen months back. You want to see a hypocrite? Want to know what a failure looks like? Here.

JULES

Go away. Don't do this.

BRITTANY

Do what Joe? Look what you did.

Brittany puts Joe Jr. in Jules's arms. The kid's adorable. Donna switches on Jules' camera and aims it right in his face. Jules tries to push it away.

JULES

I don't want this in there.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Jules looks his child over the way a father does.

JULES (CONT'D)
Come on, turn it off. Is there
nothing sacred?

Donna zooms from a three to a two shot, then close on the kid. The baby makes cute cooing sounds that captivate Jules. Jules keeps trying to turn his back to the camera.

DONNA
What did I tell you? He gorgeous.

BRITTANY
You can run but you cannot hide.

JULES
I'm not running from anything.

Jules finally surrenders and holds still for Donna.

Billy walks up, looks at the baby in Jules' arms. He is transfigured in his usual way by the sight of an infant.

BILLY
Lord of Mercy! What is this Jules?

JULES
Yeah, the camera loves him I bet.

Donna shuts down the camera as Sallassa walks up holding Coco, who is red-faced with a herbal compress across her tiny forehead.

SALLASSA
I want to see.

DONNA
Don't bring Coco any closer
darlin'. She's got a nasty fever.

Brittany snatches Joe Jr. in full retreat from Coco.

SALLASSA
But I want to see.

BRITTANY
Get that baby to a doctor. Borrow
my car if you need to.

JULES
What happened to my car?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BRITTANY

I've taken my anger out on it.

A closer look at the car reveals that it has been tortured.

BILLY

Daughter in law, forgive him. As a father I failed Jules. How could he do any different?

Coco cries. Brittany won't take her eyes off her.

BRITTANY

What is wrong with your baby?

DONNA

She needs antibiotics but if I take her in, they're liable to snatch her from me for good.

BRITTANY

You gotta find some kind of help.

DONNA

Um-hm. So. Have you come to live with us?

JULES

No, no, no, no way.

BRITTANY

Failure or not, you're his father. He has a right to be close to you.

JULES

Failure Ha! I'm wrestling his future from all the crooks.

BRITTANY

I don't know about the future, but for now, we're staying.

JULES

Go home! I'm riding this rocket till the wings catch fire.

DONNA

You sound just like your Papa.

Coco starts coughing hard. It stops everybody in their tracks. Donna gives Jules his camera back, takes Coco from Sallassa. Billy rubs his wound.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

BRITTANY

You better do something.

BILLY

If I go to the clinic, they might give antibiotics for a gash like this, then Coco can have them.

DONNA

Maybe your right. I should've asked for help sooner.

JULES

I'll go too and drop some tapes.

DONNA

Tapes can wait. Coco's got me worried this time.

INT. URBAN CLINIC - DAY

Jules sits in a corner not easily seen by the medical clerk behind the reception desk. His camera is in his lap. He studies its monitor while Billy speaks to the lady.

BILLY

I cut through a construction site and fell down on a steel stake.

CLERK

I'm not sure I can help you.

JULES

You can, you just don't want to cause he smells bad.

The clerk sits up and peers over the counter at Jules.

CLERK

Would you sign in please? And no cameras in here.

JULES

I don't need a doctor. This is my old man. Give him some antibiotics.

CLERK

Turn off the camera or leave now.

JULES

Are you going to help him?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLERK
Yes! Turn it off!

Jules gets up, backs out the door with the camera on. Clerk gives him a dirty look all the way out.

INT. HALLWAY - URBAN CLINIC - DAY

Jules cracks open the door gently and pokes his lens back inside where Billy stands revealing his wound.

BILLY
I was sewed up by a combat nurse.

CLERK
Wait here!

Just then Jules is interrupted by someone whose been watching him from behind.

DICK
You've made considerable trouble
with that web site, Mr. Pritchard.

Jules carefully lowers his lens. He lets the door slip shut and turns around. DICK, a rude-looking bland dude in bland business suit stands there.

JULES
Who are you?

DICK
I wrote you the letter.

JULES
If you take over, what will you do?

DICK
Shut it down.

JULES
What's your offer?

DICK
You won't go to prison.

JULES
That's more where you belong. You
like to hurt people. I don't.

DICK
Some people have to be hurt before
they learn.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JULES

I'm just trying to make an honest buck in show business.

DICK

Channel your creativity wisely, or it will bite you.

JULES

(pointing to camera)

Hey, I didn't make this, some corporation did. It's their own invention biting their ass. I didn't invent mass media. I am not the enemy. I'm just pushing a button. If it's illegal to push this button, it should be illegal to sell this camera.

DICK

Your site has to come down. If you try to make a media event of it, don't be too sure how it will play.

JULES

Fine! Confiscate the data, force all the web sites out of existence. You won't kill the message, you'll be sending it out even stronger.

DICK

Put an end your anarchist's agenda, or I will. Beyond that, do whatever you want as long as you're willing to accept the consequences.

JULES

Thank you Mr. Uh, Consequences. I understand. Keeping a job is tough these days. Sorry about what you have to do to keep yours.

DICK

Don't get personal with me.

Dick shoves Jules. Jules stiffens his spine and recovers, but doesn't strike back, except with his tongue.

JULES

Shove me? Call me "anarchist." Then tell me not to get personal? Who are you anyway?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Dick whips out his credentials. The door to the clinic opens and Billy steps out to see Jules looking red-faced. Jules shoulders his camera and fixes his eye on Dick's shield.

BILLY
Who's this Jules?

JULES
Nobody. The competition.

DICK
Reverend. Your son's "program" has come to the attention of the agency. We want it shut down.

BILLY
Hmm. What happened to free speech?

DICK
Inflation.

Jules lowers his lens. Billy holds a pack of pharmaceuticals.

JULES
Excuse us, we're in a hurry.

DICK
A bigger hurry than you think.

BILLY
Peace brother. Live and let live.

Billy flashes him a peace sign as he and Jules make tracks toward the street.

EXT. PARKING LOT - HEALTH CLINIC - DAY

Jules stops to review tape as Billy rushes to Brittany's car.

JULES
This may be the last post on fathersfailure.com.

Billy goes back, grabs Jules by the shirt and starts pulling.

BILLY
There's no time Jules.

Billy gets behind the wheel and screeches off the curb while Jules replays the incident.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JULES

Oh! Praise the Lord! This is gold.
We've got to drop it off now.

BILLY

Coco needs medicine. You heard.

JULES

Donna didn't know dogs were on our
trail. This is the climax. It sets
up the sequel perfectly.

BILLY

It doesn't Jules. When everything's
telling you to stop, why insist on
pushing through?

JULES

Maybe Donna was right, there's a
little of you in me after all.

BILLY

I'm afraid, Jules, what happens
next is really going to hurt.

INT. MOVIE THEATER - PROJECTION ROOM - DAY

JEN

It's too late for an abortion.

Jules sets down a box of Chinese food and swallows an
overlarge mouthful of beer.

Jen is rewinding a reel of film. Two huge spools spin on
either side of her with her back to Jules. He looks tense.

The film is finished rewinding. An empty reel grinds to a
halt. A wild leader on the other spool laps the air.

JULES

As we speak, I'm hooking up with my
ex-wife again, so you're too late.

JEN

Liar.

He pulls out a fat wad of cash, throws it down.

JULES

You'll be my CEO, I'll promise a
huge bonus but make the baby go.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JEN
It's not going.

JULES
I need business relations right
now, not family ones.

She turns around, reveals the bulge, sheds a tear.

JULES (CONT'D)
I gotta go. What'd the lawyer say?
What'd he say?

JEN
He's devoting full time to us.

JULES
See! Nothing's going to stop us.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

In Brittany's beat up sedan, Billy speeds down the road like an off road racer. Jules rests his head on his seat with the camera on Billy's profile.

JULES
Hey old man, how's it feel to be in
an actual car again and driving?

BILLY
Don't ask.

JULES
You didn't cause that wreck, you
know. That's why you were never
charged.

BILLY
I'd rather discuss Brittany.
What are you going to do when
you're my age? You'll need someone.

JULES
Don't even start...

BILLY
How can you say I didn't cause that
accident? Just because he rammed
me? He was trying to kill her, plus
me, and was rightfully jealous.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JULES

They died and you didn't. The end.
He was no angel. It's an accepted
fact he was two-timing her.

Billy grabs Jules by the sleeve. Jules shakes him off.

BILLY

Get yourself settled down Jules
before such things happen to you.

JULES

Don't worry. Nothing that happened
to you is ever going to happen to
me.

EXT. ABANDONED INDUSTRIAL LOT - NIGHT

A raven croaks boldly from the top of Jules's tower.

The car screeches up in a cloud of dust. A few heads peek out
of their shelters. Billy jumps out, not bothering to turn off
the engine or close the door.

He hastens to Donna's shanty, calls out clutching the strip
of pills, plucks one of the big white capsules from it's
plastic and traps it, like a moustache between his nose and
upper lip.

BILLY

Got meds?

No answer. Billy let's the pill fall. Brittany sits mutely
outside Donna's on a bucket nursing little Joe, awaiting
Billy's response to what he's about to hear.

Sallassa emerges from the shanty barefoot.

SALLASSA

Momma says don't cry. She doesn't
want everybody to know.

Billy rushes the entrance, lowers himself into view of mother
and child. Donna lies tear-streaked next to the bundle that
once was Coco.

BILLY

Sorry we're late. Lord have mercy.

DONNA

It's not your fault.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Jules catches up with camera rolling. After a moment, he kneels, addresses Donna.

JULES

It was already too late. You wouldn't admit it.

DONNA

Prayed much and acted little.

Billy climbs in to the shanty where Coco's body lies bundled. He strokes the bundle gently. Jules camera slyly peeks through the entrance.

BILLY

Fly up Coco. Fly little one. Go to the light. You're halfway home.

SALLASSA

Momma, I wish we could have found Coco's mother.

JULES

Who?

SALLASSA

Is it OK to tell Jules Momma? How we found Coco in a dumpster?

DONNA

Yep, over in Tulsa, behind the Pig n' Whistle.

BILLY

She had a mother thanks to you.

JULES

I'd never've doubted she was yours.

Jules kneels in the entrance with his camera at rest next to him. Mournful but ever watchful Donna puts her foot in front of it. Jules pretend-bows down, trying to peek with his lens.

DONNA

Coco knew better. She knew she'd been abandoned and was pissed. That's why she was always sick.

BILLY

Merciful short life that it was.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DONNA

Jules I am going to re-break that camera if you don't get it out!

Now Brittany comes to the shanty entrance, shaken up.

BRITTANY

Who are all these cars driving up?

BILLY

Get inside.

JULES

I've got agents on my back.

Jules backs out and shoves Brittany and little Jules inside. He peeks then ducks down. Like a periscope his camera lens looks over the top of the dome.

Jules then kneels in the shanty door and reviews the tape.

DONNA

Did you put the girls in your film after I asked you not to?

JULES

This is strange. Must be six guys, dumping something.

We hear the sound of machinery.

Jules climbs back out and takes a peek with his camera. Drops back down in the entrance. Reviews tape.

JULES (CONT'D)

They're pounding fence posts.

DONNA

Did our whereabouts have to be pinpointed for my enemies? Do you punish me in your mother's place or do you just hate me for my own sake?

Jules holds his camera up. It's rolling.

JULES

No. My show shows all, that's all.

BILLY

Jules, she's frightened. Leave the show out of this for God's sake.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

JULES

Not now, no way. What would you do?
Turn it off and walk away? If you
were me? It's show time. Get ready.

From outside comes the sound of car doors slamming.

EXT. DONNA'S SHANTY - CONTINUOUS

Jules sneaks up the rear of his crow's nest to tape cops in riot gear as they chase off the citizens of the farm.

INT. DONNA'S SHANTY - NIGHT

Donna starts gathering things as if she's about to set off.

DONNA

Sallassa! Brush your hair and teeth
and wash up. Make quick!

SALLASSA

Is someone coming to take me?

DONNA

We're going to leave this place
soon as its quiet. Get ready.

SALLASSA

Momma don't let me be taken.

DONNA

Billy. Help me for God's sake.

BILLY

Brush up for now, Precious. We'll
hide and they'll soon forget.

The sound of strangers approaches.

EXT. OUTSIDE DONNA'S SHANTY - NIGHT

The last straggler is chased off the premises by a shield.

A perimeter is being wired off and posted around the village
by a skilled crew working at high speed.

Flat on his perch. With the jeers of lawmen in frame, Jules
camera documents the entire incident undetected by them.

A Sheriff, two deputies and a familiar clergyman, Pastor
Robert come knocking.

Pastor Robert calls out. Billy steps out to meet him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PASTOR ROBERT

You've made a mess here Billy,
don't you think?

BILLY

I don't really, Robert. The mess
was always here. It was just more
spread out and disorganized.

PASTOR ROBERT

It's disgraceful.

BILLY

Sheriff, is this fence for
protection or imprisonment?

SHERIFF

Depends on whether the glass is
half full or half empty, I guess.

PASTOR ROBERT

Billy, I've come for the children.
I know they're here.

DONNA

(from inside)

Nobody's taking my children.

SHERIFF

If you don't bring them out I will
come in.

DONNA

Damn it! I've been hearing a voice
for days telling me to leave, and
this is what I get for ignoring it.

BILLY

Robert. I beg you. This is
unthinkable. She will go mad.

INT. DONNA'S SHANTY - CONTINUOUS

Donna and Sallassa listen tensely with Coco's corpse between.

ROBERT

I'm afraid it is not up to me.

BILLY

Robert I'm forced to confide in you
again though I promised not to.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROBERT

What?

BILLY

The youngest died just hours ago,
at sunset. Our grief is fresh,
please go away.

The Sheriff raises his voice to the pitch of a barking dog.

EXT. DONNA'S SHANTY - CONTINUOUS

SHERIFF

Bring the children now!

Billy backs up to block the way, hands in front of him in supplication. The Sheriff remains rigid, poised, insistent.

BILLY

Alright, but please call more
gently.

SALLASSA

I'm very frightened Billy!

BILLY

So is everyone out here, my
darlin'. Let us not make it worse
by disobeying.

DONNA

I will defend my child.

BILLY

Donna stop! Sallassa, come out
please.

SALLASSA

I can't leave momma right now.

BILLY

I promise to take care of her.

The sheriff taps his foot, turning beet red. After a tense pause, Sallassa steps out of her mother's shanty with the body of Coco in her hands which she places in Billy's arms.

SALLASSA

What do they want Billy?

BILLY

Better step up, my sparrow.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SALLASSA

Momma!

Donna comes out of hiding and charges Pastor Robert clutching his leg. The Sheriff motions to his deputies to handcuff her.

DONNA

I couldn't live with the thought of another mother raising my daughter.

ROBERT

It will be best for both of you.

SHERIFF

(to Donna)

Until your identity is confirmed, You are charged as Jane Doe. You are under arrest for child abuse and manslaughter.

(to Billy)

You are charged as an accessory. The deputies will read you your rights.

SALLASSA

Billy, when is the Lord going to deliver us?

ROBERT

Billy is cursed, and such has befallen you and yours now my lamb.

Accepting Coco's corpse from Billy, Robert tenderly takes Sallassa by the hand and escorts her to his car.

Before they drive off, Billy shakes off the deputies just long enough to answer Sallassa through a half-open window.

BILLY

Very soon, I promise you. Never give up. Don't ever, ever give up.

A deputy catches up and grabs Billy by the handcuffs behind his back. Now Donna brakes loose chases after Sallassa.

DONNA

I'll find you. Don't worry. I will!

Donna is captured and goes hysterical while she and Billy are loaded into separate cars and driven away.

EXT. TOP OF JULES PERCH - NIGHT

JULES
(whispers, unseen)
Freakin' awesome!

The crew stringing up the wire closes off the last stretch of "POLICE PERIMETER - DO NOT CROSS".

They hurl their gear into their pick-ups and drive off.

The place is deserted except for Jules on top of his perch, reviewing tape while Brittany and Joe Jr. slip out of hiding.

JULES (CONT'D)
Freakin' pure gold is what this is.

BRITTANY
You said they were after you.

JULES
Not them, the Feds who ought to be along any time now. Wanna be my getaway driver?

BRITTANY
Who am I to you Joe? What am I? Who is this boy, huh? What is he? We're your family Joe, not your crew.

Jules climbs down from his perch, camera dangling from a shoulder strap. He heads straight for the car.

JULES
I'm looking for business partners right now, not life partners.

BRITTANY
How long you going to keep this up?

JULES
Till something better comes along.

EXT. MOVIE THEATER - NIGHT

Brittany cruises up to the curb.

JULES
Let me out here.

BRITTANY
Where you going?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JULES

Just drive around the block.

He waits until she turns out of sight to go inside.

INT. PROJECTION BOOTH - CONTINUOUS

On a high stool, Jen has been previewing the last tape on a monitor. Jules leans against her, looking over her shoulder. She closes the screen and shoves off of him.

JEN

You had the means to help her but
you let the baby die?

Jules holds out the last tape.

JULES

It wasn't her baby after all.

JEN

Are you mentally ill?

JULES

The mother wouldn't let me
intervene. She's responsible.

JEN

You'll inspire some hatred for
outing her online when you could
have prevented it.

JULES

Don't freak on me. What I need you
to do now is call the lawyer, get
Donna and Billy out of jail so they
can spring Sallassa. That's our
season ending. Do you get it now?

JEN

I can't decide if your a psycho or
a genius.

Jen slips off her stool, underneath is a FEDX envelope. She hands it to Jules. He reaches in and fishes out a white page.

JEN (CONT'D)

It came just before you got here.

JULES

Woah! Is this for real? Awesome!
I've always loved his movies.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JEN

I guess he always plays a rebel
cause he is a one at heart.

He flicks the paper into the air. It seesaws down.

JULES

He wants to be my benefactor, we're
in the clear. Nothing can touch us.

JEN

Jules did you just sacrifice Coco's
life for your ambitions?

Jules throws his arms around her, kisses her.

JULES

Issues obviously need to be worked
out between you and me, but we
can't afford to slow down. We're
blasting off right now. Time to
celebrate!

JEN

I want to celebrate too.

JULES

We'll tell her story to millions.
She won't have died for nothing.

Jules starts digging through Jen's backpack.

JULES (CONT'D)

Give me all the blank tape and
charged batteries you got, then get
down to the jail.

INT. MOVIE THEATER LOBBY - NIGHT

Swinging a satchel of video supplies, Jules stops at the
candy counter, picks out and pays for a box of chocolates.

EXT. CURB OUTSIDE MOVIE THEATER - NIGHT

Little Joe's in his car seat crying. Jules is about to hop in
the passenger side when he finds Brittany sitting there.

BRITTANY

You drive. Baby needs me.

Jules takes the order like "no biggy" and gets in.

INT. BRITTANY'S CAR - NIGHT

Brittany nurses baby Joe. Jules watches with growing rapport.

JULES

Never seen that so close up before.

BRITTANY

Never seen what? Your kid being
nourished off his mother's tit?

JULES

Huh, huh, yeah. How 'bout that.

BRITTANY

It doesn't get more real than this.

JULES

Right. That's pretty cool.

Jules takes out the chocolate he bought in the movie theater and hands it to Brittany. She takes it and gets into it.

BRITTANY

You been with anybody Joe?

JULES

Me? When would I have time?

Jules searches for a cigarette. Lights one. Gets a dirty look from Brittany, throws the thing out the window.

Brittany kisses him and pops a chocolate in her mouth.

EXT. ABANDONED INDUSTRIAL LOT - NIGHT

As midnight breaks over the vacant camp, a Sheriff's car cruises by with a search lamp. It turns a corner and drives away.

From the shadows, Donna, Billy, and Sallassa sneak up to the perimeter. Hand-in-hand they slip under the wire. Jules and camera track along side. Brittany and little Joe catch up.

Jules offers Donna his car keys.

BRITTANY

Leave it at the fishing hole. We'll
pick it up there.

DONNA

I couldn't even if I wanted to.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JULES

Take it. We got funded this afternoon. I can afford to buy anything now.

Sallassa stops and hugs Brittany, then walks on. Donna does the same, ignoring the keys. Billy plays with little Joe in Brittany's arms.

JULES (CONT'D)

Here you are, old man, hitting the road in a fever. Why don't you stick around? I'll buy a house on the beach where we can all live.

SALLASSA

Momma, can we?

DONNA

Sounds real nice, but it hasn't happened yet and we need to base our plans on fact.

JULES

Listen to what I'm telling you. My lawyer will be here in the morning with a check. We can start new.

BRITTANY

Thanks a lot for telling me at the same time as everyone else.

JULES

It was going to be a surprise.

SALLASSA

Momma, can we stay with Jules?

DONNA

Sheriff did warn us to find a permanent address within 30 days.

BILLY

We don't want to put you out.

JULES

You're not. You helped make it happen. It's rightly yours.

Just then a beat up compact car drives up. Everyone watches as out pops a young woman clutching an infant.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

YVETTE

D'you get your cigarettes Joe?

It's Yvette whom Jules met in the coin laundry in Act I. She's carrying young Jose, Jules' number two son.

JULES

What are you doing here?

YVETTE

You said you were just going out for a pack of cigarettes.

BRITTANY

Joe. I thought you said there hadn't been anyone else.

JULES

No, no, this is a joke.

BRITTANY

It better be.

YVETTE

Who are you?

BRITTANY

Who are you?

JULES

Brit meet Yvette.

YVETTE

It's that Joe's kid too?

Brittany looks a little weak. Billy offers to take Joe Jr.

BILLY

Past has a way of sneaking up.

DONNA

How you like being famous Jules?

Donna keeps the tape rolling. Sporting little Joe, Billy introduces himself to Yvette while the babies meet cute.

JULES

Listen, ladies I'm going to have to split for awhile.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

BRITTANY

You kidding? I'm sticking to you like lice. Not going to be fooled by the same fool twice.

YVETTE

This could get real ugly real fast.

Jules goes up to Jose and takes him from Yvette.

JULES

I'll gladly help raise my boys, but I'm raising them to be their own men. They aren't going to see me tied down to any one of you.

YVETTE

Fine, as long as I go where you go.

BRITTANY

That's not fine with me.

JULES

You two will have to follow me on the web like everybody else.

BRITTANY

Joe!

YVETTE

Unacceptable.

He hands Jose back to Yvette, returns to his camera. Donna hands it back.

DONNA

Joe, this journey has not been easy for these young women...

JULES

Shut up. They'll all get their due. I'm no deadbeat dad. For now, we're shooting the conclusion of season one. I'm not hearing any more discussion until it's finished.

Before anything more can be said or done, a limo pulls off the road, rolls to the edge of the camp. A tuxedo-ed driver opens the rear door. Out steps Jen and Electric Ray. They approach Jules.

Electric Ray is a double-wide, dread-lock guerilla in a trench coat and geeky shades.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

JULES (CONT'D)

Howdy Ray. Shades at midnight?
Famous already?

ELECTRIC RAY

I've been staring at screens for
days. Takes hours for my eyes to
adjust.

JEN

Jules, it's a three-way split at
this point. Any problem with that?

JULES

Why the big hurry?

JEN

Before you sign away more of it.

They silently stare each other down for a moment. Jules
flinches first.

JULES

There is no need to be greedy. It's
going to be a boat load of money.

ELECTRIC RAY

Good! And with that, we're out of
here. We'll see you at the signing.
By the way, that lawyer is an old
pal of mine so don't try anything.

JULES

Don't make me sorry I trusted you.

JEN

Ray, by the way, I'm throwing in
with Jules. This is his baby.

YVETTE

Excuse me. You're going to have to
get in the back of the line sis.

ELECTRIC RAY

You're sorry you trusted who?

JULES

Blame your body odor, not me.

JEN

Jules, who is this?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

BRITTANY

Who the hell are you?

ELECTRIC RAY

Ha-ha, see? Instant Karma.

Ray flips off Jules and walks back to the limo. Jen's becomes tense with something very urgent to say.

JEN

Jules, you were in such a hurry this afternoon, you wouldn't let me tell you. That psycho Woolman showed up with a contract bearing your signature claiming he's a partner. He demands to see you.

JULES

Where?

JEN

In the limo.

JULES

No way!

Electric Ray has just reached the limo as the chauffeur helps Woolman out of the back seat. Electric Ray hops in and the car drives off.

JULES (CONT'D)

Go over there. Make him stay put until I can think where to fit him in.

Jen springs into action but asks over her shoulder.

JEN

By the way, which one is your ex?

JULES

(shouting to Woolman)
I'll right over. Don't move.

BRITTANY

(to Jen)
I'm no ex. We're together still.

JULES

(to Jen)
Jen, this is Brittany.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

YVETTE

Honey, put the trash out please.

JEN

Who's talking trash over there?

YVETTE

Not me. I recycle.

JULES

Jen, this is Yvette.

YVETTE

Get in line, chick, and fill out the form.

BRITTANY

Joe! You got yourself in the deepest shit of your life buster. What are we going to do?

JULES

Alright, I'm about to get the camera rolling because that's what I do? Everybody else take a number. I'll get to you as quickly as I can.

BILLY

The story's over Jules. Time to come out from behind it.

JULES

Quiet. I need one more thing.

EXT. SHANTY TOWN - NIGHT

Jules and camera tilt down from atop the tower.

Out of the shadows Billy whirls holding his grandsons, twirling them gently through the air.

Billy whirls like a dervish with a boy on each arm. He passes Joe Jr. Off to Brittany and Jose to Yvette then stands ready.

Donna and Sallassa emerge from the shanty. Both have every piece of clothing on their backs and Sallassa is carrying a milk jug of water.

BILLY

Good ending Jules, turn it off.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JULES

Just one last favor.

Jules locks down the camera and descends from the tower.

JULES

I'm glad we got to sort through
some of our issues.

Jules throws his arm around his old man's shoulders.

Billy shoves his hand in his pocket, fishes for something.
He comes up with the antique lighter, hands it to Jules.

BILLY

Here, this was your grandad's.

Jules lights a cigarette with his new lighter. Offers one to
Billy. He refuses it. He reaches for the one Jules is
smoking. Jules surrenders it. Then Billy takes Jules by the
thumb of one hand and puts the cigarette out on it.

Jules surrenders to his father this petty torture then yanks
back and shakes off the sting.

SALLASSA

Does Jules want to quit smoking
Daddy?

JULES

In the near future little sister,
we will live together if you want.
I'll buy you your own house.

SALLASSA

Why is that man over there.

Woolman appears, approaches Jules with their contract.

WOOLMAN

You said when you made the big
bucks you'd share it.

JULES

Beat it, you screw up bad.

BRITTANY

Are you having a baby with this
person too?

YVETTE

Unacceptable.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DONNA

How do you like being rich Jules?

JULES

Why didn't you stick him and run?
Why'd you fight?

WOOLMAN

It would have looked bad on camera.

JULES

You made the director look bad
instead. Contract void. Good-Bye
Loser.

WOOLMAN

You'll hear from my lawyer. I don't
scrape off so easy.

Woolman drifts out of the camp like a spook.

DONNA

You set Billy up to be stabbed?

JULES

I knew he'd understand.

JEN

You are a madman. You'll hear from
my lawyer too. By the way, here's a
letter from someone who claims to
be your mother.

JULES

You don't say, huh? Hold on to it.
Maybe I'll read it some day.

JEN

You hold on to it.

She flicks the envelope at Jules' chest. He picks it up,
stuffs it away. Jen takes her phone and stabs in a number.

JEN

I need a cab.

Now Jules is in the foreground with Donna.

SALLASSA

Momma, did Jules want that man
stick Billy?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

DONNA

You really did go too far Jules.

JULES

Give me a break. He begged me to the day we were reunited.

BILLY

I know Jules, but we'll be moving on just the same.

JULES

Wait a second. What about your rap on forgiveness? It works both ways.

DONNA

Are you saying you're sorry?

JULES

I'm not convinced I was wrong.

BILLY

I forgive you, but you've got some confusing bonds to sort out for yourself, so I guess we'll try that commune up north.

DONNA

You said you'd never go, Billy.

BILLY

You've got a right to your dreams.

JULES

Listen, why don't you stay? We could work more miracles together.

BILLY

Sorry.

SALLASSA

Why can't we live with Jules?

DONNA

I'll explain when your old enough to understand.

SALLASSA

I don't want to go.

Billy and clan begin to make an exit. Jules turns on his camera once more.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

JULES

If you forgive me, leave your
blessing.

Billy stops, turns.

BILLY

Brittany, Yvette, Jen gather round.

Jules and his children's mothers gather.

Billy beckons Donna and Sallassa to come.

BILLY (CONT'D)

May your lives be bound by truth
and love in service to one another
and the community.

Silently Billy's group disengages.

The mother's of Jules' kids cautiously let their babies mix.

Billy picks up his walking stick. Sallassa drops her water
jug and sinks to the ground in tears.

SALLASSA

I wish we didn't have to go.

BILLY

My how your hair looks nicely
brushed. Come along now.

Billy picks up the water jug and walks on.

With tender and patient effort Donna picks her up and carries
Sallassa close behind.

Billy plants his walking stick, leaving a tiny hole with each
step.

Sallassa watches them multiply.

SALLASSA

Let me down, Momma.

Donna eases her back to earth. Sallassa reaches in her pocket
for a handful of sunflower seeds and carefully drops one in
each hole.

Repeating this with each new hole from Billy's cane.

Jules switches off his camera.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

In this fashion they make their way out of camp, gradually vanishing into shadows.

Just as we lose sight of them the sun pops over the horizon.

THE END