

"THE NIGHT OF THE HUNTER"

screenplay by

James Agee

and

Charles Laughton

Based on a novel by

Davis Grubb

SHOOTING DRAFT

1955

FULL SHOT – THE STARLIT SKY

VOICE

And He opened His mouth and taught  
them, saying...

FADE sky to day.

LAP DISSOLVE TO:

LONG SHOT – HELICOPTER – OHIO RIVER COUNTRY

High over the country, CENTERING the winding river.

VOICE

Beware of false prophets...

LOWER LONG SHOT – HELICOPTER – RIVER COUNTRY

We approach a riverside village.

VOICE

...which come to you in sheep's  
clothing...

A CLOSER, LOWER HELICOPTER SHOT

We descend low over a deserted house; CHILDREN in yard run  
and hide; we hear "IT" counting "five, ten, fifteen,

twenty..."

VOICE

...but inwardly they are ravening  
wolves.

MEDIUM SHOT – "IT"

He finishes his count with a loud "Hundred" and turns, then:

"IT"

What's wrong?

We PAN as he comes towards a little boy, beside an open cellar door, who gestures towards the open door. "IT" looks down.

"IT"

(a low gasp)

Heyy!

(then he shouts to  
all and to us)

Heyy!

We DOLLY IN fast to, and TILT DOWN into open cellar, into:

CLOSE SHOT – A LEG

A skeletal leg in a rotted fume of stocking and a high-heeled shoe. We HOLD a moment, then PULL UP and AWAY over the converging heads of several CHILDREN. A CHILD whimpers softly.

HELICOPTER SHOT

The yard and the CHILDREN, same angle and height as the last descending helicopter shot. We PULL BACK and AWAY.

VOICE

Ye shall know them by their fruits.

DISSOLVE TO:

HIGH LONG SHOT – HELICOPTER

CENTERING the river.

VOICE

A good tree cannot bring forth evil  
fruit...

LOWER LONG SHOT (HELICOPTER)

CENTERING on open touring car, as it drives along a river road.

VOICE

Neither can a corrupt tree bring  
forth good fruit.

We STOOP LOW towards the car.

VOICE

Wherefore by their fruits ye shall  
know them.

CUT TO:

CLOSE SHOT – PREACHER

He is the driver of the car. Pleasant river landscapes (PROCESS) flow behind him. He is dressed in dark clothes, a paper collar, a string tie. As he drives he talks to himself.

PREACHER

What's it to be, Lord, another widow?  
Has it been six? Twelve?... I  
disremember.

He nods, smiles, and touches his hat. We see a farm couple in a poor wagon.

PREACHER

You say the word, and I'm on my way.

LAP DISSOLVE TO:

CLOSE SHOT – PREACHER DRIVING

He brakes his car in a small riverside town; then proceeds.

PREACHER

You always send me money to go forth  
and preach your Word.

A widow with a little wad of bills hidden away in the sugar-bowl.

LAP DISSOLVE TO:

## CLOSE SHOT – PREACHER DRIVING

He shifts into second gear, climbing a steep little hill.

PREACHER

I am tired. Sometimes I wonder if  
you really understand.

(pause)

Not that you mind the killin's...

The stones of a country graveyard gleam in the last daylight.

PREACHER

Yore Book is full of killin's.

He starts fast and noisily down a steep hill.

PREACHER

But there are things you do hate,  
Lord: perfume-smellin' things –  
lacy things – things with curly  
hair –

CUT TO:

INT. A BURLESQUE HOUSE – MEDIUM CLOSE SHOT – A DANCER

She is hard at work, to music o.s.

FULL SHOT – AUDIENCE – CENTERING ON PREACHER, IN AISLE  
SEAT

Among the members of the sad burlesque audience, he is in  
strong contrast: a sour and aggressive expression. Music  
o.s. We MOVE IN fast to a HEAD CLOSE-UP.

MEDIUM CLOSE SHOT – THE DANCER INSERT – PREACHER'S LEFT  
HAND

Labeled H-A-T-E in tattoo across four knuckles, it grips and  
flexes.

INSERT – HIS RIGHT HAND

Before we see the lettering he slides it into his pocket.

EXTREME CLOSE SHOT – PREACHER

His head slants; a cold smile; one eyelid flutters.

INSERT – RIGHT HAND AND POCKET

We hear the snapping open of a switch-blade knife and the point of the knife cuts through his clothes.

LESS EXTREME CLOSE SHOT – PREACHER

He seems to "listen" for something.

PREACHER

No, there are too many of them; you can't kill a world.

A hand descends firmly onto his shoulder. He glances up behind him as we

TILT TO:

CLOSE SHOT – A STATE TROOPER

He bends down and speaks quietly next PREACHER'S ear.

TROOPER

You driving an Essex tourin'-car with a Moundsville license?

LAP DISSOLVE TO:

INT. COURTROOM – CLOSE THREE-SHOT –  
JUDGE AND CLERK, OVER  
PREACHER

JUDGE

Harry Powell, for the theft of that touring car you will spend thirty days in the Moundsville Penitentiary.

PREACHER

(correcting Clerk)  
Preacher Harry Powell.

JUDGE

A car thief! Picked up where you were! A man of God?  
(to Clerk)  
Harry Powell.

LAP DISSOLVE TO:

FULL SHOT – MOUNDSVILLE PENITENTIARY – DAY (HELICOPTER)

A grim stone turreted facade; an American flag idles at top center.

LAP DISSOLVE TO:

CLOSE DOWNWARD TWO-SHOT – JOHN AND PEARL HARPER

They sit in the grass, a sentimental picture. JOHN is nine; PEARL is five. They are working together on PEARL'S doll; PEARL is dressing her, while JOHN gets on a difficult shoe.

PEARL HARPER  
Stand still, Miss Jenny!

JOHN HARPER  
(across her)  
There! What's so hard about that!

He proudly exhibits the shod foot.

They hear the sound of an auto engine o.s. They look o.s. and get up, PEARL dangling the doll.

LONG SHOT – OVER THE CHILDREN – BEN HARPER'S FORD

A Model-T Ford approaches at maximal speed on uneven dirt road.

PEARL HARPER  
(to John, happily)  
Daddy!

The car careens towards us; then swings into the sideyard as we PAN, and stops.

They run towards their father fast; then JOHN looks puzzled and they stop short.

BEN HARPER half-falls out of the far door, his shoulder blood-stained, his eyes wild. A hefty, simple man of thirty. He looks at them, dazed, across the car.

MEDIUM SHOT – BEN HARPER

BEN HARPER  
Where's your Mom?

JOHN HARPER

Out shopping – you're bleeding, Dad –

BEN HARPER

Listen to me John.

On this he comes around clear of the car with a revolver in one hand and a bloody roll of banknotes in the other.

CLOSE SHOT – JOHN

He screams. BEN slaps him with the back of the money hand, leaving blood on JOHN'S cheek.

CLOSE GROUP SHOT – JOHN, BEN, PEARL

PEARL, and the house, are in BACKGROUND. PEARL just clutches her doll. During BEN'S next lines, JOHN touches his cheek and looks at the blood on his fingers and at the bloody money – of which we FLASH-CUT an INSERT.

BEN HARPER

(rushing)

Listen! This money here! We got to hide it before they get me! There's close to ten thousand dollars.

(his eyes dart wildly)

Under a rock in the smokehouse? Ah no. Under the bricks in the grape arbor? No, they'd dig for it.

CLOSE SHOT – BEN

BEN HARPER

(sudden triumph)

Why sure! That's the place!

He moves forward and OUT and in his place we see two police cars, small in distance, coming fast. We hear sirens.

INT. FRONT POLICE CAR – THROUGH WINDSHIELD

...and OVER two STATE TROOPERS. They move at high speed, with sirens. BEN and his CHILDREN, tiny in the distance, dilate.

TROOPER

(driving)

That's him.

2ND TROOPER  
(over his shoulder,  
as if to us)  
He prob'ly still has that gun.

CLOSE GROUP SHOT – BEN AND CHILDREN

...police cars approaching in BACKGROUND. PEARL hugs her doll. JOHN is dazed. BEN stands, pistol in hand.

BEN HARPER  
Here they come.

JOHN HARPER  
Dad, you're bleeding...

He grabs JOHN'S shoulder and stoops as we TIGHTEN IN.

BEN HARPER  
Listen to me son. You got to swear.  
Swear means promise. First swear  
you'll take care of little Pearl.  
Guard her with your life, boy. Then  
swear you won't never tell where  
that money's hid. Not even your Mom.

JOHN HARPER  
Yes, Dad.

BEN HARPER  
You understand?

JOHN HARPER  
Not even her?

In b.g. the TROOPERS get out of their cars and fan out cautiously to surround BEN: guns in hand.

BEN HARPER  
You got common sense. She ain't.  
When you grow up that money'll be  
yours. Now swear. "I will guard Pearl  
with my life..."

JOHN HARPER  
(fumbling)  
I will guard Pearl with my life...



BEN HARPER  
..."and I won't never tell about the  
money."

JOHN HARPER  
And I won't never tell about the  
money.

PEARL HARPER  
You, Pearl. You swear too.

CLOSE SHOT – PEARL

PEARL HARPER  
(giggling)  
Who's them Blue Men yonder?

HEAD CLOSE-UP – JOHN

JOHN HARPER  
(under breath)  
Blue men.

GROUP SHOT – TROOPERS IN BACKGROUND

A TROOPER  
Ben Harper!

BEN HARPER  
I'm goin' now children. Goodbye.

BEN backs away from his CHILDREN, raising his hands, gun in one hand. We PULL BACK a little, enlarging the GROUP SHOT and the role of the TROOPERS in it.

TROOPER  
Drop that gun, Harper. We don't want  
them kids hurt.

TWO TROOPERS approach BEN from behind.

BEN HARPER  
Just mind what you swore, son. Mind,  
boy!

GROUP SHOT – JOHN

He runs forward and clasps his stomach, with his mouth open.

MEDIUM SHOT – BEN AND TROOPERS – JOHN'S VIEWPOINT

One TROOPER smacks the back of BEN'S head with a pistol barrel.

CLOSE SHOT – JOHN

JOHN HARPER  
(shouting; a sickly  
smile)  
Don't!

MEDIUM SHOT – BEN AND TROOPERS – AS BEFORE

Another TROOPER, with a pistol barrel, knocks the pistol from BEN'S lifted hand.

CLOSE SHOT – JOHN

JOHN HARPER  
(shouting)  
Don't!

BEN sinks to his knees as both men, and two others from the front, close in on him.

HEAD CLOSE-UP – JOHN

JOHN HARPER  
Dad!

He takes in the GROUP with his mouth open. o.s. we hear the slamming of car doors, and car starting away.

FULL SHOT – JOHN'S VIEWPOINT – THE CARS

They drive away fast in road dust.

THREE-SHOT – THE CHILDREN AND WILLA HARPER

Carrying a shopping bag, their mother, WILLA, runs up from BACKGROUND between the CHILDREN, looking always to cars o.s.

CLOSE SHOT – WILLA

She has a rich body.

RESUME THREE-SHOT

PEARL comes to her and she picks up PEARL and the doll; JOHN, laden with his oath, walks quickly into the house. WILLA does a bewildered take, then looks again towards the cars  
O.S.

LAP DISSOLVE TO:

INT. COURTROOM – CLOSE THREE-SHOT –  
JUDGE AND CLERK, OVER  
BEN

JUDGE

Ben Harper, it is the sentence of this Court that for the murder of Ed Smiley and Corey South, you be hanged by the neck until you are dead, and may God have mercy on your soul.

LAP DISSOLVE TO:

FULL SHOT – THE MOUNDSVILLE PENITENTIARY SAME VIEW AS BEFORE; BUT NOW IT IS NIGHT

LAP DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BEN'S CELL – NIGHT – CLOSE DOWN-SHOT – BEN

He lies on his back, chuckling and murmuring indistinctly in his sleep.

BEN HARPER

I got you all buffaloed! You ain't never gonna git it outen me; not none o' you!

PREACHER'S VOICE

(O.S., very low)

Where, Ben? Where? Where?

BEN HARPER

(distinctly)

And a little child shall lead them.

CLOSE TWO-SHOT – NEW ANGLE – BEN, THEN PREACHER

BEN lies in profile. From the bunk above, the face of PREACHER stretches down into the SHOT, upside down, snake-like.

PREACHER  
(softly)  
Come on, boy: tell me.

BEN wakes, sees PREACHER, and hits him so hard in the face that he falls from bunk to floor. PREACHER collects himself into a squat, nursing his face. BEN sits up in bed.

PREACHER  
(with wholesome dignity)  
Ben, I'm a Man of God.

BEN HARPER  
Tryin' to make me talk about it in  
my sleep!

PREACHER  
No, Ben.

BEN HARPER  
What'd I say?  
(he grabs Preacher's  
throat and shakes  
him)  
What? What? What? What?

PREACHER  
(choking)  
You was quotin' Scripture. You said –  
you said, "And a little child shall  
lead them."

BEN HARPER  
Hm!

He lies back, amused. PREACHER sits on the bedside; manner of a parson visiting the sick.

PREACHER  
(gravely)  
You killed two men, Ben Harper.

BEN HARPER  
That's right, Preacher. I robbed  
that bank because I got tired of  
seein' children roamin' the woodlands  
without food, children roamin' the  
highways in this year of Depression;  
children sleepin' in old abandoned

car bodies on junk-heaps; and I  
promised myself I'd never see the  
day when my youngins'd want.

PREACHER

With that ten thousand dollars I  
could build a Tabernacle that'd make  
the Wheeling Island Tabernacle look  
like a chicken-house!

BEN HARPER

Would you have free candy for the  
kids, Preacher?

He picks up and wads a sock.

PREACHER

Think of it, Ben! With that cursed,  
bloodied gold!

BEN HARPER

How come you got that stickknife hid  
in your bed-blankets, Preacher?

PREACHER

I come not with Peace but with a  
Sword.

BEN HARPER

You, Preacher?

PREACHER gets and pockets the knife.

PREACHER

That Sword has served me through  
many an evil time, Ben Harper.

BEN HARPER

What religion do you profess,  
Preacher?

PREACHER

The religion the Almighty and me  
worked out betwixt us.

BEN HARPER

(contemptuously)  
I'll bet.

PREACHER

Salvation is a last-minute business,  
boy.

BEN HARPER

(sock near mouth)  
Keep talkin', Preacher.

PREACHER

If you was to let that money serve  
the Lord's purposes, He might feel  
kindly turned towards you.

BEN HARPER

Keep talkin', Preacher.

He wads the sock into his mouth and lies back, sardonic.

PREACHER

(his voice fading  
into Dissolve)  
You reckon the Lord wouldn't change  
his mind about you if...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PENITENTIARY COURTYARD – NIGHT

DISSOLVE TO:

INSERT – PREACHER'S HANDS

They rest on sill of cell window, the lettered fingers  
legible. The right hand is lettered L-O-V-E. The hands open,  
disclosing his open knife. They close over it.

CLOSE SHOT – PREACHER, AT CELL WINDOW

His eyes lift from his hands, heavenward. Moonlight on his  
face. He prays, quietly.

PREACHER

Lord You sure knowed what You was  
doin' when You brung me to this very  
cell at this very time. A man with  
ten thousand dollars hid somewheres,  
and a widder in the makin'.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PENITENTIARY COURTYARD – NIGHT

Same SHOT as before, but now, prison lights are on; and a man, a prison GUARD, waits close inside door. BART the HANGMAN joins him with a silent salute. BART wears a hard derby.

EXT. PENITENTIARY – THE DOOR – (REVERSE)

They walk in silence into MEDIUM, MOVING SHOT, the GUARD talkative, BART reluctant to talk.

The Penitentiary recedes in b.g.

GUARD  
Any trouble?

BART  
No.

GUARD  
He was a cool one, that Harper. Never broke.

BART  
He carried on some; kicked.

EXT. BART'S HOUSE – MEDIUM SHOT – BART AND GUARD

On porch, by door, is a doll's perambulator. BART and GUARD walk into the SHOT.

GUARD stops, BART starts up his front steps.

GUARD  
He never told about the money.

BART  
(walking up steps)  
No.

GUARD  
What do you figure he done with it?

BART  
(turning, at door)  
He took the secret with him when I dropped him.

The GUARD leaves the SHOT; BART goes in.

INT. BART'S HALLWAY – CLOSE SHOT – BART

He hangs up his coat and hat. Across this his wife speaks o.s.; a lighted door is ajar at rear of hall. A clatter of dishes and pans o.s.

BART'S WIFE

(o.s.)

That you, Bart? Supper's waitin'.

BART just nods, and, tiptoeing, walks into a door next the kitchen and snaps on a light and turns on water o.s. His wife comes out of the kitchen and goes in.

INT. BART'S BATHROOM – CLOSE TWO-SHOT – BART AND WIFE

He is washing his hands in thick lather. Passing, she pecks his cheek and, as we PAN, looks into the next room. He looks past her, and we see two small CHILDREN asleep in a big brass bed. BART registers, turns again to the basin, and we PAN them back into the original TWO-SHOT.

BART

(low)

Mother: sometimes I think it might be better if I was to quit my job as guard.

His WIFE'S eyes go sharp and quiet.

WIFE

(low)

You're always this way when there's a hangin'. You never have to be there.

BART rinses his hands. A sigh; he takes up the towel.

BART

Sometimes I wish I was back at the mine.

WIFE

And leave me a widow after another blast like the one in '24? Not on your life, old mister!

He looks at her a moment. She goes out. He looks o.s. towards



his CHILDREN. He goes into their room on tiptoe.

MEDIUM SHOT – BART

He approaches his children, across whose bed WE SHOOT without yet seeing them. He comes into MEDIUM CLOSE-UP. As he leans and we TILT DOWN, he extends his large hands.

CLOSE DOWNWARD TWO-SHOT – HIS CHILDREN

Two rose-and-gold little GIRLS lie in sleep; BART'S hands enter the SHOT and gently rearrange the covers so that their mouths and throats are free. We watch, for a moment more, the two sleeping faces.

LAP DISSOLVE TO:

HEAD CLOSE-UP – BART, HOVERING HIS CHILDREN

CHILDREN'S VOICES

(o.s. chanting)

Hing, hang, hung. See what the Hangman  
done!

LAP DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CRESAP'S LANDING – DAY

We are in Peacock Alley. The tree-shaded dirt street of a small, one-street river town; a picturesque, mid-19th-century remnant of the old river civilization, which general progress has left behind. Chiefly we see, in this order: A schoolhouse (on far side of street); Miz Cunningham's second-hand shop; a Grange House sporting a poster for a Western movie; Spoon's Ice Cream Parlor. At the end of this street, down the river-bank, is a brick wharf and UNCLE BIRDIE'S wharf-boat. In b.g. and in passing, suggestions of sleepy small-town life.

From the HEAD CLOSE-UP of BART the Hangman o.s. chanting, we

LAP DISSOLVE TO:

HEAD CLOSE-UP – JOHN HARPER

Chanting VOICES o.s. complete "see what the Hangman done!"

PULL BACK TO:

CLOSE PULLING TWO-SHOT – PEARL AND JOHN

They stroll barefoot down the empty dirt sidewalk. They look towards the voices, PEARL friendly, JOHN hostile.

MEDIUM SHOT – THE CHILDREN, OVER JOHN AND PEARL

Several, within the door of the Schoolhouse, stick their heads around the edge. They chant at the HARPER CHILDREN. Another, next the door, is drawing something on the wall.

CHILDREN  
(chanting)  
Hung, hang, hing! See the Robber  
swing!

OVER these lines we CUT briefly to –

CLOSER SHOT – THE CHILDREN

...chanting, drawing. The ARTIST completes in chalk, a large simple sketch of a man hanging from gallows. As the verse ends we CUT TO:

MEDIUM SHOT – THE CHILDREN, OVER JOHN AND PEARL

They look towards OUR CHILDREN; JOHN pays them no attention. The drawing is revealed. JOHN takes PEARL'S hand. The other CHILDREN giggle.

CHILDREN  
(chanting)  
Hing, hang, hung! Now my song is  
done!

Between lines one and two JOHN turns away from them into –

CLOSE TWO-SHOT – JOHN AND PEARL – THROUGH WINDOW

We SHOOT them through the window of MIZ CUNNINGHAM'S second-hand store. The back of a watch is silhouetted large in FOREGROUND; JOHN'S eyes instantly fix on it; in b.g. the SCHOOL-CHILDREN finish their song and vanish, giggling, into the schoolhouse. We hear the ticking of the watch.

INSERT – THE WATCH

A watch with a moving sweep-hand, ticking.

CLOSE TWO-SHOT – JOHN AND PEARL

PEARL HARPER

Are you goin' to buy it, John?

No answer. JOHN'S eyes are fixed on the watch. OVER a shop-doorbell we hear:

MIZ CUNNINGHAM'S VOICE

(o.s.)

Uh-Hawwww!

(They glance toward  
her.)

MEDIUM SHOT – MIZ CUNNINGHAM

Fantastically dirty and fantastically dressed, she hustles to them and we PAN her into a THREE-SHOT. She talks like a Tidewater Cockatoo.

MIZ CUNNINGHAM

(continuing)

So your Mommy's keepin' you out of school! Poor little lambs!

PEARL watches her; JOHN, the watch.

MIZ CUNNINGHAM

And how is your poor, poor mother?

JOHN HARPER

She's at Spoon's Ice Cream Parlor.

MIZ CUNNINGHAM

(she snuffles)

The Lord tends you both these days!

JOHN doesn't take his eyes off the watch.

CLOSE SHOT – JOHN

His eyes are fixed on the watch o.s.

MIZ CUNNINGHAM'S VOICE

(o.s.)

Didn't they never find out what your father done with all that money he stole?

Eyes as before till "money," then he looks up towards her.

MEDIUM SHOT – MIZ CUNNINGHAM

MIZ CUNNINGHAM

When they caught him, there wasn't  
so much as a penny of it to be seen!  
Now what do you make of that! Eh,  
boy?

She grins horribly.

TWO-SHOT – OVER JOHN AND PEARL

JOHN HARPER

Pearl and me, we have to go.

He walks off fast as we DOLLY BEHIND THEM; he leads PEARL,  
who hugs her doll.

PEARL HARPER

(chanting)

Hing, hang, hung.

JOHN HARPER

You better not sing that song.

PEARL HARPER

Why?

JOHN HARPER

'Cause you're too little.

A few paces in silence; now they come to the big window of  
Spoon's Ice Cream Parlor.

PEARL HARPER

Can we get some candy?

WILLA'S face is seen within; serving a customer, she sees  
them and waves them away.

JOHN HARPER

No.

He keeps her strolling. WALT SPOON, comes out, proffering  
two lollypops.

WALT

Howdy, youngins.

PEARL drags at JOHN'S hand but JOHN, pretending not to see or hear, drags her out of the SHOT, shaking his head. We DOLLY IN on WALT, who looks after them, surprised and touched, then goes inside.

INT. SPOON'S PARLOR – GROUP SHOT – WALT, WILLA, ICEY SPOON

We PAN WALT across a little of his Parlor; he plants the lollypops back in a jar on the counter and leaves the SHOT as we TIGHTEN IN on WILLA and ICEY. WILLA slides used dishes into wash-water; ICEY jaws down her back, from first moment of shot.

ICEY SPOON

Willa Harper there is certain plain  
facts of life that adds up just like  
two plus two makes four and one of  
them is this: No woman is good enough  
to raise growin' youngsters alone!  
The Lord meant that job for two!

WILLA HARPER

Icey, I don't want a husband.

CLOSE SHOT – ICEY

ICEY SPOON

(fiercely)  
Fiddlesticks!

LAP DISSOLVE TO:

FULL SHOT – EXT. STREET – NIGHT

The weekly movie audience is letting out, next door to SPOON'S. Some start cars or wagons, others stroll to SPOON'S.

LAP DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SPOON'S PARLOR – EVENING – TWO-SHOT – ICEY AND WILLA

We start with a CLOSE SHOT as ICEY'S hands slap together a gooey banana split; TILT UP to TWO-SHOT, favoring ICEY; finish on WILLA, on "it's a man you need," etc.

Murmur of CUSTOMERS o.s.

WALT'S VOICE

(calling o.s.)  
One solid brown sody, one Lovers'  
Delight.

ICEY SPOON  
'Tain't a matter of wantin' or not  
wantin'! You're no spring chicken,  
you're a grown woman with two little  
youngins; it's a man you need in the  
house, Willa Harper!

LAP DISSOLVE TO:

LONG SHOT – NIGHT – A TRAIN

A short, lighted, toy-like train departs the town along the  
river-bank, whistling. The whistle TIES OVER the previous  
DISSOLVE. STARLIT SKY.

LAP DISSOLVE TO:

FRAMING SHOT – EXT. HARPER HOUSE – NIGHT

A square, HEAD-ON SHOT, river water below and vibrant  
starlight above; featuring a gas-lamp by the road; a tree;  
and pretty tree-shadows which work across a window.

INT. HARPER CHILDREN'S BEDROOM – NIGHT – TWO-SHOT – JOHN,  
PEARL, SHADOWS

PEARL lies in their bed, her doll snug on her shoulder. JOHN  
sits on the edge of the bed, in his underwear.

PEARL HARPER  
Tell me a story, John.

JOHN HARPER  
Once upon a time there was a rich  
king...  
(he sees the shadows  
on the wall and gets  
up and looks at them)  
...and he had him a son and a daughter  
and they all lived in a castle over  
in Africa. Well, one day this King  
got taken away by bad men and before  
he got took off he told his son to  
kill anyone that tried to steal their  
gold, and before long these bad men

come back and –

PEARL HARPER  
The Blue Men?

He moves, and as his shadow moves away we see the shadow of PREACHER, motionless. PEARL sits up and points at it. JOHN notices her and sees it. We PAN JOHN to the window. He looks out.

FULL SHOT – PREACHER –  
THROUGH WINDOW, JOHN'S VIEWPOINT.

He stands motionless.

RESUME PREVIOUS SHOT – JOHN AT WINDOW

He turns and we PAN him to bed.

JOHN HARPER  
(casually)  
Just a man.  
(he climbs into bed  
and pulls up the  
covers)  
Goodnight Pearl, sleep tight; and  
don't let the bedbugs bite.

PEARL HARPER  
(to doll)  
'Night Miss Jenny; don't let the  
bedbugs bite.

As they settle down we hear PREACHER'S singing, sweet and quiet o.s.: "Leaning on the Everlasting Arms."

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. RIVER AND TOWN – MORNING – FULL SHOT –  
A GINGERBREAD  
SIDE-WHEELER

She steams around a bend towards a toy-like small town.  
PREACHER'S song, o.s., ties over. People are waving from  
shore and boat.

FULL PANNING SHOT – THE BOAT, FROM SHORE

We PAN her into frame UNCLE BIRDIE STEPTOE'S toy-like little

wharf-boat. As she passes broadside we CUT TO:

MEDIUM SHOT – BIRDIE, THEN JOHN

...as boat passes. BIRDIE'S head sticks through a porthole. He is a wiry old river character. The boat whistles. As BIRDIE speaks we PAN JOHN, and foundered skiff, into TWO-SHOT with BIRDIE.

BIRDIE STEPTOE

She don't put in at Cresap's Landing  
no more, but she still blows as she  
passes. Come on in and have a cup of  
coffee.

JOHN HARPER

(starting towards him)  
Ain't nobody stole Dad's skiff.

BIRDIE STEPTOE

Ain't nobody goin' to neither, long  
as Uncle Birdie's around.

He vanishes from the porthole. We PAN JOHN from skiff to wharf and Birdie's door.

BIRDIE'S VOICE

(calling o.s.)  
First day my jints is limber enough  
I'll haul her up and give her a good  
caulkin'.

INT. BIRDIE'S BOAT – TWO-SHOT – JOHN AND BIRDIE

JOHN enters and sits on a box. BIRDIE, in a ramshackle rocking chair, pours coffee. BESS'S photograph on chest near BIRDIE.

BIRDIE STEPTOE

Ain't seen you in a coon's age,  
Johnny.

JOHN HARPER

I been mindin' Pearl.

BIRDIE STEPTOE

Pshaw now! Ain't it a caution what  
women'll load onto a feller's back  
when he ain't lookin'?



He gives JOHN a cup of coffee.

BIRDIE STEPTOE

'Scuse me, Cap, while I sweeten up  
my coffee.

He fetches a liquor bottle from beneath the rocking chair;  
about to pour he does a take at BESS'S PHOTOGRAPH.

INSERT – THE PHOTOGRAPH

It stands in a cabinet frame: A fine-looking young woman in  
archaic dress, with sharp, accusing black eyes.

BIRDIE'S VOICE

(o.s.)

Dead and gone these twenty-five years  
and never takes her eyes off me.

CUT OVER his line to –

CLOSE TWO-SHOT – JOHN AND BIRDIE

He turns the picture away and splashes liquor into his coffee.

BIRDIE STEPTOE

(pouring)

Man o' my years needs a little snort  
to get his boiler heated of a morning.

They drink. BIRDIE, satisfied, sighs and rocks.

BIRDIE STEPTOE

This mornin' I was talkin' to this  
stranger up at the boarding-house.  
He knowed your Dad!

CLOSE SHOT – JOHN

JOHN looks cautious.

JOHN HARPER

Where did he know Dad?

CLOSE SHOT – BIRDIE

BIRDIE'S face falls; he takes another drink.

BIRDIE STEPTOE

Well, boy, I'll not hide the truth;  
it was up at Moundsville Penitentiary.

CLOSE TWO-SHOT – NEW ANGLE

JOHN puts his cup down and gets up.

JOHN HARPER  
I got to go now, Uncle Birdie.

He heads for the door.

BIRDIE STEPTOE  
Why shucks boy, you just got here.

He follows JOHN to the door. JOHN runs up the bank, not looking back.

JOHN HARPER  
(running)  
I told Mom I'd be back to Spoon's  
for Pearl.

EXT. STREET – MEDIUM SHOT – JOHN

He runs up the street close to Spoon's and stops dead.

CLOSE SHOT – JOHN

He is horrified by what he sees.

INT. SPOON'S ICE CREAM PARLOR

GROUP SHOT through door-glass, from JOHN'S VIEW POINT  
PREACHER, WILLA and PEARL surround a little table. WALT stands  
by, puffing his pipe. ICEY in BACKGROUND, stirs fudge at a  
little soda-fountain stove. WILLA looks both moved and  
pleased. PEARL, shyly flirting with PREACHER, all but hides  
in WILLA'S skirts. PREACHER dandles PEARL'S doll on his knee  
as he talks. All the grownups are avid for his words, which  
we don't hear through the glass.

CLOSE SHOT – JOHN

We SHOOT THROUGH the DOOR; he quietly enters.

GROUP SHOT

They look casually to JOHN, and continue talking.

ICEY SPOON

(stirring; with a  
meaningful glance at  
Willa)

God works in a mysterious way, His  
wonders to perform.

OVER this JOHN ENTERS the SHOT and stands at the fringe of  
the GROUP, staring at PREACHER'S hands and at the doll.

PREACHER

I was with Brother Harper almost to  
the end;...

GROUP SHOT – NEW ANGLE – FAVORING JOHN AND PREACHER

PREACHER

(continuing)

...and now that I'm no longer employed  
by the Penitentiary it is my joy to  
bring this small comfort to his loved  
ones.

FLASH-CUT CLOSE-UP – JOHN

On "Penitentiary" he glances quickly at PREACHER'S face;  
then back to his hands.

GROUP SHOT – ICEY

ICEY SPOON

(sniffing)

It's a mighty good man would come  
out of his way to bring a word of  
cheer to a grieving widow!

CLOSE SHOT – WALT

WALT

So you ain't with the State no more?

GROUP SHOT – FAVORING PREACHER AND JOHN

PREACHER

No, Brother; I resigned only  
yesterday. The heart-renderin'  
spectacle of them poor men was too  
much for me.

He becomes aware of JOHN'S staring.

PREACHER

Ah, little lad, you're staring at my fingers.

He hands the doll to PEARL. JOHN'S eyes follow the doll. PREACHER holds up both hands to JOHN. JOHN looks back at his hands.

PREACHER

Shall I tell you the little story of Right-Hand-Left-Hand – the tale of Good and Evil?

JOHN stands still. PEARL, with her doll, crosses to PREACHER and twines about his knee.

CLOSE SHOT – JOHN

He looks on, in dumb alarm.

CLOSE SHOT – PREACHER

PREACHER

H-A-T-E!

(he thrusts up his left hand)

It was with this left hand that old brother Cain struck the blow that laid his brother low! L-O-V-E!

(he thrusts up his right hand)

See these here fingers, dear friends! These fingers has veins that lead straight to the soul of man! The right hand, friends! The hand of Love!

GROUP SHOT – ICEY, WALT, WILLA – OVER PREACHER'S HANDS

They are impressed in their different ways.

PREACHER

(o.s.)

Now watch and I'll show you the Story of Life. The fingers of these hands, dear hearts! – They're always a-

tuggin' and a-warrin' one hand agin'  
t'other.

(he locks his fingers  
and writhes them,  
crackling the joints)  
Look at 'em, dear hearts!

MEDIUM SHOT – JOHN – OVER PREACHER'S HANDS

He looks on with unseeing eyes.

PREACHER

(o.s.)

Old Left Hand Hate's a-fightin' and  
it looks like Old Right Hand Love's  
a goner!

GROUP SHOT – WALT, ICEY, WILLA, OVER HANDS

PREACHER

(o.s.)

But wait now! Hot dog! Love's a-  
winnin! Yessirree!

CLOSE SHOT – PREACHER

PREACHER

It's Love that won! Old Left Hand  
Hate's gone down for the count!  
(he crashes both hands  
onto the table)

FULL SHOT – THE WHOLE GROUP

Slight applause from the ADULTS. PREACHER takes PEARL, with  
her doll, onto his lap.

ICEY SPOON

I never heard it better told. I wish  
every soul in this community could  
git the benefit. You jest got to  
stay for our church pick-nick Sunday!

PEARL offers PREACHER the DOLL to kiss. PREACHER complies.

CLOSE SHOT – JOHN'S REACTION

RESUME GROUP SHOT

PREACHER

(finessing it)

I must wend my way down River on the  
Lord's work.

ICEY SPOON

You ain't leavin' in no hurry if we  
can help it!

WILLA HARPER

John: take that look offen your face  
and act nice.

PREACHER

He don't mean no impudence; do you,  
boy?

(no answer)

Do you, boy? Ah, many's the time  
poor Brother Ben told me about these  
youngins.

JOHN HARPER

What did he tell you?

CLOSE SHOT – PREACHER

He does a little take. His eyes twinkle palely.

PREACHER

Why, he told me what fine little  
lambs you and your sister both was.

GROUP SHOT

JOHN HARPER

Is that all?

CLOSE SHOT – PREACHER

Something new enters his eyes; a game has begun between them.

PREACHER

Why, no, boy; he told me lots and  
lots of things. Nice things, boy.

A tight silence. ICEY pours fudge into a buttered pan.

PREACHER

My, that fudge smells yummy!

CLOSE SHOT – ICEY

ICEY SPOON

(with horrid archness)

It's for the pick-nick. And you won't  
get a smidgen of my fudge unless you  
stay for the pick-nick!

Over her line, o.s., hymn-singing begins and now, OVER her  
"the case rests" smile we bring up the singing and

LAP DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THE RIVER BANK – CHURCH IN BACKGROUND – FULL SHOT –  
THE SINGING PICKNICKERS

A pleasant, grassy river-bank. Few men in proportion to women  
and children. We CENTER PREACHER. They are singing "Brighten  
the Corner;" PREACHER sings conspicuously well. The women  
watch him and admire him. He gives WILLA the eye as we PAN  
to CENTER WILLA, who looks wooed and self-conscious. ICEY  
enters the SHOT and whispers and beckons WILLA and, as the  
singing continues, they leave the group and start towards a  
shade tree in MEDIUM GROUND, which we PAN TO CENTER.

FULL SHOT – WILLA AND ICEY

They walk; singers in BACKGROUND.

ICEY SPOON

Don't he have the grandest singin'  
voice?

WILLA nods. ICEY, looking ahead, is displeased.

MEDIUM SHOT – THE TREE, JOHN AND PEARL

They sit on the bench, their backs to us, partly concealed  
by the tree trunk.

ICEY'S VOICE

(sharp)

John! Pearl!

They look around. ICEY and WILLA enter the SHOT, their backs  
to us.

ICEY SPOON

Run along and play, you two.

JOHN HARPER

Where?

ICEY SPOON

Down by the river. My goodness!

Docile, they leave the shot as WILLA and ICEY approach the bench.

CLOSE TWO-SHOT – WILLA AND ICEY

They sit on the bench, their back to us. The CHILDREN recede towards the river in BACKGROUND. WILLA meekly keeps her head down. Singing continues o.s.

ICEY SPOON

That feller's just achin' to settle  
down with some nice woman and make a  
home for himself.

WILLA HARPER

It's awful soon after Ben's passing.

ICEY SPOON

If ever I saw a Sign from Heaven!

WILLA HARPER

John don't like him much.

ICEY SPOON

Pearl dotes on him.

WILLA HARPER

The boy worries me. It's silly, but  
it's like there was something still  
between him and his Dad.

ICEY SPOON

What he needs is a dose o' salts!

WILLA HARPER

There's something else.

ICEY SPOON

What?

WILLA HARPER



The money, Icey.

ICEY SPOON

I declare, you'll let that money  
haunt you to your grave, Willa Harper!

WILLA HARPER

I would love to be satisfied Harry  
Powell don't think I've got that  
money somewhere.

ICEY SPOON

You'll come right out and ask that  
Man of God!

(turning and yelling)

Mr. Paow-well!

(to Willa)

Clear that evil mud out of your soul!

PREACHER starts towards her. ICEY pivots and we PAN OVER her  
to CHILDREN by river.

ICEY SPOON

(yelling)

John! Pearl!

CLOSE SHOT – PEARL AND JOHN

JOHN looks up from pebble-skimming and loosens his tie.

ICEY SPOON

(yelling o.s.)

Come along hee-ere and get some fuu-  
udge!

JOHN HARPER

(calling)

I don't want no fudge.

His brow is furrowed. He skims another pebble.

ICEY SPOON

(shouting o.s.)

You'll do what you're told!

They unwillingly get moving.

RESUME TWO-SHOT – ICEY AND WILLA

ICEY SPOON  
You go set down by the River.

WILLA HARPER  
(getting up)  
Oh, Icey, I'm a sight!

ICEY SPOON  
Get along with you.

Both women set off, WILLA to River, ICEY towards GROUP. We TRACK after ICEY. PREACHER approaches. ICEY, crossing him, gives him a little shove towards WILLA and a coy –

ICEY SPOON  
You!!!

We FOLLOW her to the women who are busying themselves with the fudge.

CLOSE GROUP SHOT – ICEY AND WOMEN, FAVORING ICEY

...a few men in BACKGROUND, and, beyond them, PREACHER sits down by WILLA at water's edge. JOHN and PEARL approach. As ICEY starts yammering the men, WALT among them, shyly withdraw.

ICEY SPOON  
That young lady'd better look sharp  
or some smart sister between here  
and Captina's a-gonna snap him up  
right from under her nose!  
(they nod and agree,  
ad lib)  
She's not the only fish in the river!  
(more agreement. John  
and Pearl join Icey.  
Icey speaks to John)  
Now you two stay put!

CLOSE SHOT – JOHN

He looks hard towards WILLA and PREACHER o.s.

ICEY SPOON  
(o.s., to women)  
Shilly-shallying around...

LONG SHOT – WILLA AND PREACHER

...from JOHN'S VIEWPOINT in tableau of decorous courtship,  
framed by heavy domestic bodies.

ICEY SPOON

(o.s.)

A husband's one piece of store goods  
ye never know till you get it home  
and take the paper off.

CLOSE TWO-SHOT – WILLA AND PREACHER

They sit by the water; drooling willows; almost in travesty  
of a romantic scene. WILLA dabbles one hand in the water.

WILLA HARPER

(very shy)

Did Ben Harper ever tell you what he  
done with that money he stole?

HEAD CLOSE-UP – PREACHER

His head goes slantwise and he smiles oddly.

PREACHER

My dear child, don't you know?

CLOSE SHOT – JOHN

He watches intently towards his mother; PEARL holds his hand.  
ICEY'S voice o.s.

GROUP SHOT – WOMEN, JOHN AND PEARL

ICEY SPOON

She's moonin' about Ben Harper. That  
wasn't love, it was just flapdoodle.

(agreeing nods and  
murmurs)

Have some fudge, lambs.

(she hands some down  
to John and Pearl.

Pearl smears her  
mouth with it; John,

watching always  
towards his mother,  
takes one nibble and  
throws the rest away)

When you're married forty years, you

know all that don't amount to a hill  
o'beans! I been married to my Walt  
that long, and I'll swear in all  
that time I'd just lie there thinking  
about my canning.

In BACKGROUND WALT looks sheepish.

WILLA'S VOICE  
(calling o.s.)  
John! John?

All look towards her.

LONG SHOT – OVER GROUP

WILLA is standing, beckoning JOHN

MEDIUM TWO-SHOT – JOHN AND PEARL

They start towards their mother.

GROUP SHOT – ICEY AND WOMEN – NEW ANGLE

ICEY SPOON  
A woman's a fool to marry for that.  
It's something for a man. The good  
Lord never meant for a decent woman  
to want that – not really want it!  
It's all just a fake and a pipe-dream.

The others agree with her. She puts a piece of fudge in her  
mouth.

CLOSE GROUP SHOT – PREACHER, WILLA, CHILDREN

...as JOHN and PEARL (with DOLL) come shyly up. WILLA is  
seated again. She is radiant.

WILLA HARPER  
John, Mr. Powell has got something  
to tell you.

PREACHER  
Well, John, the night before your  
father died, he told me what he did  
with that money.

CLOSE SHOT – JOHN

He desperately conceals his reaction; he thinks BEN has betrayed him.

RESUME GROUP SHOT

PREACHER

That money's at the bottom of the river wrapped around a 12-pound cobblestone.

CLOSE SHOT – JOHN AND PEARL

He now conceals his new reaction.

RESUME GROUP SHOT

WILLA touches PREACHER'S hand, warmly.

WILLA HARPER

Thank you, Harry.

She looks all around her, glowing, and stands up, hands to hair.

PEARL HARPER

John...

JOHN HARPER

Sshhh...

WILLA HARPER

I feel clean now! My whole body's just a quiverin' with cleanness!

She walks away towards ICEY and the WOMEN.

CLOSE SHOT – PREACHER

PREACHER

John: here.

CLOSE SHOT – JOHN AND PEARL

JOHN moves to stand in front of him; PEARL, to stand beside PREACHER, with the DOLL.

CLOSE SHOT – PREACHER AND CHILDREN

From JOHN'S eye-level; as JOHN steps in front of him and PEARL beside him.

PREACHER  
Your tie's crooked.

HEAD CLOSE-UP – JOHN

The hand named LOVE and the hand named HATE come in to straighten the necktie. JOHN looks down. He looks up and sees:

GROUP SHOT – JOHN'S VIEWPOINT

PREACHER, in close-up, hands busy o.s.; PEARL, with doll; and between them, in BACKGROUND, WILLA. She is now running fast towards ICEY, who walks towards her with arms outstretched. Behind them, the group of WOMEN. BIRDIE'S guitar music begins o.s.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BIRDIE'S BOAT – EVENING – MEDIUM SHOT – BIRDIE, JOHN AND SKIFF

Birdie sits beside his open door, strumming a guitar and singing. The scene is lamplighted from within. Ben's skiff is inverted on trestles in FOREGROUND. At start of scene we see only JOHN's feet; he's under the skiff, examining it. After three lines of song he comes out from under, and lounges against the skiff, tracing a tarry seam with his forefinger.

BIRDIE STEPTOE  
(singing)  
'Twas down at Cresap's Landing, Along  
the River Shore, Birdie Steptoe was  
a Pilot in the good old days of yore.  
Now he sets in his old wharf-boat...

JOHN HARPER  
(across him)  
When'll Dad's skiff be ready?

BIRDIE STEPTOE  
Can't hear ye, boy.  
(singing)  
...So the big boats heave a sigh,  
They blow for Uncle Birdie...

JOHN HARPER  
(across him)  
When'll the skiff be ready?

BIRDIE STEPTOE  
(singing)  
And the times that are gone by. I'll  
have her ready inside of a week; and  
then we'll go fishin'. How's your  
Maw?

Through rest of scene, Birdie picks lazily at his guitar.

JOHN HARPER  
O, she's all right.

BIRDIE STEPTOE  
How's your sister Pearl?

JOHN HARPER  
Just fine.

He gets up.

BIRDIE STEPTOE  
Leavin', boy?

JOHN HARPER  
Yep; gotta watch out for Pearl, Uncle  
Birdie.

BIRDIE STEPTOE  
Well goodnight, boy. Come again –  
any time.

JOHN leaves the SHOT.

BIRDIE STEPTOE  
And mind now – I'll have your Paw's  
skiff in ship-shape, 'side of a week.

MOVING SHOT – JOHN

As he runs past SPOON'S, looking in, he is curious.

MOVING SHOT – SPOON'S, HIS VIEWPOINT

ICEY embraces WILLA or waltzes her around; WALT looks on,  
pleased.

FULL SHOT – JOHN

He hurries away from us towards home.

FRAMING SHOT – THE HARPER HOUSE

In the otherwise dark house, one window is lighted. JOHN enters the SHOT, his back to us. Seeing the lighted window, he hesitates.

JOHN HARPER

(softly)

Is somebody there?

Silent pause, listening; then he walks cautiously towards us.

FULL SHOT – JOHN

A tall, narrow shooting-frame; right and left thirds of screen are black.

We SHOOT from inside the screen door. JOHN crosses the porch and softly opens the door and enters on tiptoe and pauses, close to us, in the dark hallway, listening sharp.

JOHN HARPER

(softly)

Is anybody here?

Silence. Relieved, but puzzled, he tiptoes along towards the rear of the hallway in CLOSE-UP as we PULL AWAY. We bring in the bottom of the stairs.

PREACHER'S VOICE

(o.s.)

Good evening, John.

JOHN gasps, peering, and looks up.

TWO SHOT – JOHN AND PREACHER – NARROW SCREEN

PREACHER looks at JOHN; JOHN sinks onto the edge of a chair. PREACHER sits opposite. A bar of light from door falls across PREACHER'S face.

PREACHER

I had a little talk with your mother



tonight, John; and your mother decided  
it might be best for me to – let  
you know the news.

From JOHN, just a questioning helpless reaction.

PREACHER

Your mother told me tonight she wanted  
me to be a daddy to you and your  
sister. We're going to get married,  
son.

JOHN is still.

PREACHER

Did you hear what I said, son?

JOHN HARPER

Huh?

PREACHER

Married! We have decided to go to  
Sistersville tomorrow, and when we  
come back –

JOHN HARPER

(just breathing it)

You ain't my Dad! You won't never be  
my Dad!

PREACHER

(obsessed, disregarding  
him)

– and when we come back, we'll all  
be friends – and share our fortunes  
together, John!

JOHN HARPER

(screaming)

You think you can make me tell! But  
I won't! I won't! I won't!

He gawks at his own folly, covers his mouth with his hand  
and looks up at PREACHER.

PREACHER

(softly)

Tell me what, boy?

JOHN HARPER  
Nothin'!

PREACHER  
Are we keeping secrets from each  
other, little lad?

JOHN HARPER  
No. No.

PREACHER

stiffens, relaxes, and chuckles softly.

PREACHER  
No matter, boy, we've got a long  
time together.

CLOSE TWO-SHOT – JOHN AND PREACHER

JOHN starts for the stairs.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HARPER YARD – MORNING – CLOSE SHOT – BEN'S FORD

It stands vibrating, then moves out of shot with receding  
engine sound o.s., disclosing:

TWO-SHOT – JOHN AND PEARL

ICEY'S skirts in BACKGROUND. They are awfully spic-and-span;  
they even wear shoes.

ICEY SPOON  
(o.s.)  
Wave yer hands! Great sakes!

They wave after the car, bewilderedly.

ICEY SPOON  
(o.s.)  
You wait here while I get your night-  
things.

She hustles out of shot.

PEARL HARPER  
Now can I tell?

JOHN HARPER

Hm?

PEARL HARPER

When Mr. Powell's our Daddy then I  
can tell him about –

His hand clamps over her mouth. She struggles and whimpers.

JOHN HARPER

You swore, Pearl!

PEARL HARPER

(across him)

John! Don't!

JOHN HARPER

You promised Dad you wouldn't never  
tell!

He takes his hand away but holds it ready.

PEARL HARPER

I love Mr. Powell lots and lots,  
John.

JOHN grabs her by the shoulders and glares.

JOHN HARPER

Don't you tell! Don't you NEVER DARE  
tell!

Over them we

LAP DISSOLVE TO:

SHOULDER CLOSE-UP – WILLA

She is caressing her shoulders.

FULL SHOT – WILLA

Her back is to us. She is in a pathetic night dress; she  
stands before a mirror in a hotel bedroom in Sistersville.  
She walks to the door.

INSERT WILLA'S HAND

It hesitates on the doorknob.

CLOSE SHOT – WILLA

Shooting OVER her as she opens the door, we see PREACHER in bed, his back to us. Beyond him, a window. The drawn shade rustles quietly.

CLOSE SHOT – THE DOOR

...from within the room. WILLA closes the door, on which PREACHER'S coat hangs. The closing brings a knocking sound. WILLA feels the outside of the coat; feels something hard; takes out the knife and looks at it.

INSERT – THE KNIFE IN HER HAND – CLOSE SHOT – WILLA

A moment of perplexity; then a little smile.

WILLA HARPER  
(whispering)  
Oh! It's... uh...

She puts it back in the pocket and gives the pocket a pat. She starts towards the bed.

TWO-SHOT – WILLA AND PREACHER

We SHOOT OVER PREACHER as she approaches modestly and stands by the bed.

WILLA HARPER  
(softly)  
Harry...

His hand comes up; she puts out her own, expecting a loving hand-clasp; but PREACHER points to the window.

PREACHER  
Fix that window shade.

Startled, then again tender, she moves to:

CLOSE SHOT – WILLA AT WINDOW

She adjusts the shade, looking always towards the bed. She smiles maternally. As we PULL BACK and PAN into FULL SHOT OF BED she comes to the bed and sits on the edge and slips off her mules. PREACHER'S back is to her.

WILLA HARPER  
(softly)  
Harry!

PREACHER  
(cool and clear)  
I was praying.

WILLA HARPER  
Oh, I'm sorry, Harry! I didn't know!  
I thought maybe –

With a sounding of bedsprings PREACHER turns. His voice is quiet and cold.

PREACHER  
You thought, Willa, that the moment  
you walked in that door I'd start in  
to pawing you in the abominable way  
men are supposed to do on their  
wedding night. Ain't that right,  
now?

WILLA HARPER  
No, Harry! I thought –

PREACHER  
I think it's time we got one thing  
perfectly clear, Willa. Marriage to  
me represents a blending of two  
spirits in the sight of Heaven.

He gets out of bed. WILLA puts her face down to the pillow and moans.

PREACHER snaps on a harsh bare bulb at center of room.

PREACHER  
(quietly)  
Get up, Willa.

WILLA HARPER  
Harry, what –

PREACHER  
Get up.

She obeys.

PREACHER

Now go and look at yourself yonder  
in that mirror.

WILLA hesitates.

FULL SHOT – OVER PREACHER – CENTERING A STAINED BUREAU  
MIRROR

PREACHER

Do as I say.

WILLA walks to meet her image in the mirror; her eyes on  
PREACHER.

PREACHER

LOOK at yourself.

Her head drops, facing the mirror.

CLOSE SHOT – WILLA, PREACHER, BULB

WILLA is in HEAD CLOSE-UP; bulb hangs at center; PREACHER,  
in his nightshirt, is beyond it.

PREACHER

What do you see, girl?

Her mouth trembles; she can't talk.

PREACHER

You see the body of a woman! The  
temple of creation and motherhood.  
You see the flesh of Eve that Man  
since Adam has profaned. That body  
was meant for begetting children. It  
was not meant for the lust of men.

WILLA just opens her mouth.

PREACHER

Do you want more children, Willa?

WILLA HARPER

I – no, I –

PREACHER

It's the business of our marriage to

mind those two you have now – not  
to beget more.

WILLA HARPER

Yes.

He stands watching her for a moment; then he snaps off the  
light and gets into bed.

PREACHER

You can get back into bed now and  
stop shivering.

WILLA, in the darkness, does not move. She folds her hands  
in prayer and lifts her eyes.

WILLA HARPER

(whispering)

Help me to get clean so I can be  
what Harry wants me to be.

LAP DISSOLVE TO:

INSERT – A TORCH OR RAILROAD FLARE

VOICES

(o.s.)

AAA-MEN!

GROUP SHOT – CONGREGATION

A dozen country men and women in religious ecstasy.

(NOTE: No set necessary for this scene. Flare, or flares, in  
every SHOT. Faces lighted by flares.)

CONGREGATION

AAA-MENN!

WILLA HARPER

(o.s., very loud)

You have all sinned!

CONGREGATION

Yes! Yes!

HEAD CLOSE-UP – WILLA

WILLA HARPER

But which one of you can say as I  
can say: I drove a good man to murder  
because I kept a-houndin' him for  
clothes and per-fumes and face paint!

GROUP SHOT – CONGREGATION

WILLA HARPER

(o.s.)

And he slew two human beings and he  
come to me and he said: Take this  
money and buy your per-fumes and  
paint!

FULL FIGURE SHOT – WILLA, STANDING; PREACHER STANDING IN  
B.G.

WILLA HARPER

But Brethren, that's where the Lord  
stepped in! That's where the LORD  
stepped in!

PREACHER

Yes!

CONGREGATION

(o. s.)

Yes! Yes!

GROUP SHOT – CONGREGATION

WILLA HARPER

(o.s. screaming)

And the Lord told that man –

CONGREGATION

Yes! Yes!

CLOSE SHOT – WILLA

WILLA HARPER

The Lord said, Take that money and  
throw it in the River!

CONGREGATION

(o.s.)

Yes! Yes! Hallelujah!

WILLA HARPER



Throw that money in the River! In  
THE RIVER!

CONGREGATION  
(o.s.)  
IN THE RIV-ER!

CUT TO:

EXTREME CLOSE DOWN-SHOT – PEARL'S DOLL

It lies face down on arbor bricks, its back wide open; money spilling out. A little breeze toys with the money. HOLD, a moment, in silence. Then we hear a snipping sound o.s. TILT UPWARD into –

CLOSE SHOT – PEARL

She sits at the end of the grape-arbor. She finishes cutting a skirted paperdoll out of a hundred dollar bill and lays it down beside a male hundred-dollar paper-doll. She pats the dolls.

PEARL HARPER  
Now! You're John – and you're Pearl.

JOHN'S VOICE  
(o.s. calling)  
Pearl?... Pearl?

PEARL starts guiltily and looks towards him, scrambling money together. JOHN'S footsteps o.s.

PEARL HARPER  
You'll get awful mad, John. I done a  
Sin!

CLOSE SHOT – JOHN – PEARL'S ANGLE

JOHN HARPER  
You what?

He hears the frantic rustling of paper –

JOHN HARPER  
(aghast)  
Pearl! You ain't –

CLOSE SHOT – PEARL, OVER JOHN

PEARL HARPER

John, don't be mad! Don't be mad! I  
was just playing with it! I didn't  
tell no one!

FLASH CUT CLOSE-UP – JOHN

...as he stoops toward her, dumb with horror.

CLOSE SHOT – PEARL

She continues to gather the money together.

PEARL HARPER

(pleading)

It's all here.

CLOSE TWO-SHOT – JOHN AND PEARL

JOHN HARPER

Pearl! Oh, Pearl!

She's stuffing bills back into the torn doll. They slide  
through her fingers. He helps.

FLASH INSERT – PREACHER'S FOOT

...as he plants it, with sound, in damp grass.

CLOSE SHOT – THE CHILDREN

JOHN freezes.

PREACHER'S VOICE

(o.s.)

John?

JOHN HARPER

Oh – yes?

LONG SHOT – PREACHER – CHILDREN'S VIEWPOINT

He stands at far end of arbor.

PREACHER

What are you doing, boy?

LONG SHOT – CHILDREN – PREACHER'S VIEWPOINT

JOHN HARPER  
Getting Pearl to bed. I –

PREACHER  
What's taking you so long about it?

FLASH INSERT – THEIR FRANTIC HANDS, MONEY, THE DOLL

JOHN HARPER  
(o.s.)  
It – she –

CLOSE SHOT – PREACHER – PEERING TOWARDS THEM

PREACHER  
What's that you're playing with,  
boy?

LONG SHOT – CHILDREN – PREACHER'S VIEWPOINT

JOHN HARPER  
Pearl's junk. Mom gets mad when she  
plays out here and don't clean up  
afterward.

PREACHER  
Come on, children!

INSERT – JOHN'S HANDS PIN THE DOLL TOGETHER

FULL SHOT –  
CHILDREN STAND UP, LOOK TOWARDS PREACHER, AND  
SLOWLY START TOWARDS HIM. THE TWO FORGOTTEN PAPER-  
DOLLS ARE  
BLOWN TOWARDS HIM TOO.

MOVING SHOT – PREACHER – JOHN'S VIEWPOINT

PREACHER'S watch-chain gleams. The shot SLOWLY CLOSES DOWN  
on it and becomes still. We see the paper-dolls blow past  
him.

PREACHER'S VOICE  
Now, up to bed with the both of you.

CLOSE SHOT – JOHN AND PEARL

JOHN starts to laugh uncontrollably. We PAN them past

PREACHER'S stomach into FULL SHOT.

PREACHER'S VOICE

Come here, John. Run along, Pearl.

PEARL goes, JOHN comes towards PREACHER.

PREACHER – JOHN'S VIEWPOINT

PREACHER

Your mother says you tattled on me,  
boy. She says you told her that I  
asked you where that money was hid.

JOHN HARPER

(o.s.)

Yes. Yes.

PREACHER

That wasn't very nice of you, John.  
Have a heart, boy.

CLOSE SHOT – JOHN

His helpless reaction. Pause.

PREACHER'S VOICE

Run along to bed.

As JOHN turns away we

LAP DISSOLVE TO:

CLOSE SHOT – WILLA IN PROFILE

...and PULL AWAY showing JOHN as he turns to her. (PEARL'S  
head is turned away; she's asleep.)

WILLA HARPER

Were you impudent to Mr. Powell,  
John?

JOHN HARPER

Mom, I didn't mean –

WILLA HARPER

What were you impudent about?

JOHN HARPER

He asked me about the money again,  
Mom.

WILLA HARPER

You always make up that lie, John!  
There is no money, John. Can't you  
get that through your head?

LAP DISSOLVE TO:

CLOSE SHOT – A GAR, UNDERWATER CLOSE UPWARD TWO-  
SHOT –  
JOHN AND BIRDIE

They look down into the water.

BIRDIE STEPTOE

Meanest, orneriest, sneakiest critter  
in the whole river, boy! A gar!

CLOSE TWO-SHOT – JOHN AND BIRDIE

They sit up into it.

JOHN HARPER

Here's your can o' hooks, Uncle  
Birdie.

BIRDIE STEPTOE

There hain't nary hook in the land  
smart enough to hook Mister Gar.  
What a feller needs is mother-wit –  
and a horse-hair.

Over this, he pulls horse-hair out of his hatband. He sets  
to work rigging his noose.

JOHN HARPER

Won't he bust it, Uncle Birdie?

BIRDIE STEPTOE

Shoot, a horse-hair'll hold a lumpin'  
whale.

He puts over his line. Pause.

BIRDIE STEPTOE

Do you mind me cussin', boy?

JOHN HARPER

No.

BIRDIE STEPTOE

Tell you why I ask – your step-pa  
being' a Preacher an' all...

JOHN's lips go like string. BIRDIE sees it.

BIRDIE STEPTOE

Never was much of a one for preachers  
myself. I dunno what's wrong up at  
your place, but just remember one  
thing, Cap – if ever you need help  
you just holler out and come a-  
runnin'. Old Uncle Birdie's your  
friend.

A powerful strike. BIRDIE lands the gar. The air is full of  
sparkling water.

BIRDIE STEPTOE

There! You slimy, snag-toothed, egg-  
suckin', bait-stealin' so-and-so!

QUICK INSERT – THE THUMPING FISH IN BOTTOM OF BOAT

FULL SHOT

He beats the fish with the heel of an old shoe.

BIRDIE STEPTOE

(beating)

Mind what I told you. If ever you  
get in a crack, I just come a-runnin'.

Now there is no sound of thumping or beating.

CLOSE SHOT – JOHN

Admiring BIRDIE, he squares his shoulders, full of confidence.

JOHN HARPER

Can we eat him, Uncle Birdie?

BIRDIE STEPTOE

If you got an appetite for bones and  
bitterness.

On this, he flings the dead gar in a wide arc out into the river.

LAP DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CHILDREN'S BEDROOM – NIGHT

The children are ready for bed.

CLOSE SHOT – PREACHER

Smiling, quiet, awaiting an answer.

CLOSE SHOT – JOHN

JOHN HARPER

I don't know.

TWO-SHOT – JOHN AND PREACHER

PEARL plays unconcernedly in background.

PREACHER

(intimately)

She thinks that money's in the river,  
but you and me, we know better, don't  
we, boy?

JOHN HARPER

I don't know nothin'!

PREACHER

The summer is young yet, little lad.

(he turns away from

John)

Pearl?

He holds out his hands to her; she comes to his lap, dropping her doll at his feet. JOHN turns his back and looks out the window beside bureau.

PREACHER

John's a feller who likes to keep  
secrets.

PEARL HARPER

Mm-hm.

PREACHER

I'll tell you a secret.

PEARL HARPER

Yes?

PREACHER

I knewed your Daddy.

(PEARL frowns)

And do you know what your Daddy said to me? He said, "Tell my little girl Pearl there's to be no secrets between her and you."

INSERT – JOHN'S HAND COMES TO REST BESIDE A HAIRBRUSH

RESUME TWO-SHOT – PREACHER AND PEARL, JOHN IN B.G.

PEARL HARPER

Yes?

PREACHER

Now it's your turn.

PEARL HARPER

What secret shall I tell?

PREACHER

How old are you?

PEARL HARPER

That's no secret. I'm five.

CLOSE SHOT – JOHN – PREACHER AND PEARL IN B.G.

A look of impotent hatred.

PREACHER

Sure, that's no secret.

RESUME TWO-SHOT

PREACHER

(continuing)

What's your name?

PEARL HARPER

(giggling)

You're just foolin'! My name's Pearl.



PREACHER

Tst-tst! Then I reckon I'll have to  
try again! Where's the money hid?

JOHN throws the hairbrush, striking PREACHER's head.

JOHN HARPER

(screaming as he throws)

You swore you wouldn't tell!

(he beats the air

with his fists)

You swore! You swore! You swore!

CLOSE SHOT – PREACHER

He is sure now PEARL knows.

THREE-SHOT – PEARL, PREACHER, JOHN

PEARL HARPER

(awed)

You hit Daddy with the hairbrush!

Another silence.

PREACHER

(cheerfully)

You see? We can't have anything to  
do with John.

(light off)

You and me will go down to the parlor.

PEARL HARPER

Miz Jenny! Miz Jenny!

She gets the doll. We PAN them through the door.

TWO-SHOT – PREACHER AND PEARL

Outside door as he closes it.

PREACHER

John's just plumb bad through and  
through –

CLOSE SHOT – PEARL

As PREACHER's hand locks the door.

PEARL HARPER  
(at door)  
Yes, John's just plumb bad.

CUT TO:

INT. SPOON'S ICE CREAM PARLOR – THREE-SHOT – WILLA, ICEY,  
WALT

We shoot over ICEY as WILLA opens the door to leave. WILLA is in outdoor clothes and is not dressed for work in the parlor.

WILLA HARPER  
That boy's as stubborn and mulish as  
a sheep!

ICEY SPOON  
It's a shame!

WILLA's face shines like one possessed.

WILLA HARPER  
Goodnight.

WALT enters shot, his back to us.

ICEY SPOON  
Goodnight, honey.

As WILLA starts away we DOLLY THROUGH DOOR and PAN her to deserted street. There is a river mist.

TWO-SHOT – WALT AND ICEY

WALT is ill at ease.

RESUME SHOT ON WILLA

ICEY SPOON  
(o.s. calling)  
Plan on a longer visit next time.

WALT  
(o.s.)  
You don't hardly get settled till  
you're frettin' to git home again.

Again WILLA pauses and turns.

WILLA HARPER  
(with sweet radiance.  
To Walt)  
I'm needed to keep peace and harmony  
between them.  
(to Ikey)  
It's my burden and I'm proud of it,  
Ikey!

She walks off into the mist.

LAP DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HARPER HOME – NIGHT – MEDIUM SHOT – LIGHTED PARLOR  
WINDOW; REST OF HOUSE DARK

Distant muffled sound of river-boat whistle.

PEARL HARPER  
(o.s.)  
John's bad.

WILLA enters, her back to us; she stops.

PREACHER  
(o.s.)  
Yes; John's bad.

PEARL HARPER  
Tell me another secret about my Dad.

CLOSE SHOT – WILLA

She smiles benignly.

PREACHER  
(o.s.)  
O no! Your turn!

PEARL HARPER  
All right.

PREACHER  
Where's the money hid.

WILLA keeps smiling.

PEARL HARPER

John's bad.

PREACHER

Where's the money hid? Tell me, you  
little wretch, or I'll tear your arm  
off!

Still smiling, shaking her head as in disbelief, WILLA makes  
for house as PEARL screams.

INT. HARPER HALLWAY – TWO-SHOT – WILLA AND PREACHER

Narrow screen, same set-up as in earlier corridor scene,  
PREACHER and WILLA. Their eyes meet. Pause.

PREACHER

(stunned)

I didn't expect you home so soon.

CLOSE SHOT – WILLA

She still smiles; her eyes turn to sound of PEARL's sobbing.

TWO SHOT – AS BEFORE

PREACHER stands still; WILLA in BACKGROUND opens closet door  
where PEARL sobs.

CUT TO:

TWO-SHOT – WALT AND ICEY

...washing and drying glasses. ICEY is washing briskly, WALT  
is drying slowly.

WALT

Icey, I'm worried about Willa.

ICEY SPOON

How do you mean?

WALT

I'm figurin' how I can say it so's  
you won't get mad.

ICEY SPOON

Say what, Walt Spoon!

WALT

There's somethin' wrong about it,  
Mother.

ICEY SPOON  
About what!

WALT  
About Mr. Powell. All of it!

ICEY SPOON  
Walt!

WALT  
Now, Mother, a body can't help their  
feelin's.

ICEY SPOON  
May the Lord have mercy on you, Walt  
Spoon!

WALT  
Mother, I only –

CUT TO:

INT. WILLA'S AND PREACHER'S BEDROOM – FULL SHOT – WILLA ON  
BED – PREACHER IN BACKGROUND

WILLA lies in profile on the bed along the bottom of the  
frame. A prim, old woman's nightdress makes her look like a  
child. Her hands are clasped.

PREACHER, fully dressed, stands at the window, which is in  
BACKGROUND towards foot of bed. His coat, hung over a chair,  
is in silhouette. River mist outside window halated by  
exterior gas-lamp. The window shade is up. She is mumbling  
in prayer. She stops.

PREACHER  
(his back still turned)  
Are you through praying?

WILLA HARPER  
I'm through, Harry.

He turns. WILLA is calm and immobile with the ecstasy of a  
martyr.

PREACHER

You were listening outside the parlor window.

WILLA HARPER  
It's not in the river, is it Harry?

PREACHER  
Answer me!

WILLA HARPER  
Ben never told you he threw it in the river? Did he?

PREACHER hits her across the mouth. A pause.

WILLA HARPER  
(continues, unruffled)  
Then the children know where it is hid? John knows? Is that it?  
(a pause)  
Then it's still here, somewhere amongst us, tainting us?

CLOSE SHOT – PREACHER, LISTENING FOR A VOICE

RESUME TWO-SHOT

WILLA HARPER  
So you must have known it all along, Harry.

CLOSE SHOT – PREACHER, LISTENING

After a moment, the river boat whistle blows, nearer. HOLD  
CLOSE-UP a moment after whistle.

CLOSE DOWN-SHOT – WILLA, SAINT-LIKE

WILLA HARPER  
But that ain't why you married me, Harry. I know that much. It couldn't be that because the Lord just wouldn't let it.

RESUME TWO-SHOT – WILLA

WILLA HARPER  
He made you marry me so's you could show me the Way and the Life and the

Salvation of my soul! Ain't that so,  
Harry?

CLOSE SHOT – PREACHER

He has heard the VOICE and starts to move out of CLOSE SHOT.

RESUME TWO-SHOT

He has moved over to the coat on back of chair.

CLOSE SHOT – COAT

His hand goes into the pocket and brings the knife out. (It is the same coat, and pocket, as in the wedding-night scene.)

RESUME TWO-SHOT

WILLA HARPER

So you might say it was the money  
that brung us together.

He pulls down the blind. He moves toward the bed.

WILLA HARPER

The rest of it don't matter, Harry.

INSERT – PREACHER's HAND AND KNIFE It clicks open.

RESUME TWO-SHOT

As he raises his arm to strike:

HEAD CLOSE-UP – WILLA

WILLA HARPER

Bless us all!

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CHILDREN'S BEDROOM – FULL SHOT – THE SHADOWS ON THE WALL

They are shaped as in earlier scene, but altered by mist. Set-up as in earlier scene. Over them we hear the whinny-and-catch and the failure of the Ford being cranked; once; then again: the JOHN's shadow moves on the wall and on a third cranking which engages the engine, we PAN TO WINDOW, shooting over JOHN, who peers out, into blind mist. The gears of the

car shift; the car moves away, unseen; its sounds diminish slowly, and die. A moment of silence; then JOHN turns and we PAN him to the bed. He gets in beside PEARL, who is asleep, and, as we TIGHTEN IN CLOSE, puts his hand across the face of the doll.

DISSOLVE TO:

HEAD CLOSE-UP – ICEY

An ominous expression. She looks sharp to WALT, beckoning secretly; through rear screen door of kitchen, onto porch.

ICEY SPOON  
(loud whisper)  
Walt! Come quick!

FULL FIGURE SHOT – WALT

He is scrubbing out an ice cream container on the back porch. He looks up and moves towards her.

WALT  
(natural voice)  
What's wrong, Mother?

MEDIUM CLOSE – ICEY, THEN WALT

ICEY SPOON  
(whisper)  
Sshhh! He's in there.

WALT ENTERS SHOT with pipe.

WALT  
Who?

ICEY SPOON  
(whisper)  
Mr. Powell!  
(Walt looks enquiry)  
Willa has run away!

WALT  
I'll be switched!...

They enter the kitchen. We hear muffled sounds of sobbing  
O.S.



MEDIUM CLOSE TWO-SHOT

WALT  
Just went?

ICEY SPOON  
She took out some time durin' the  
night, – in that old Model-T –

WALT clucks his tongue.

WALT  
Is he hit pretty bad?

ICEY SPOON  
All to pieces!

WALT moves towards kitchen cabinet.

WALT  
There's a little peach brandy –  
maybe a sip?

ICEY SPOON  
A man of the Cloth?

MEDIUM CLOSE SHOT – WALT

He pours, snaps it down; weak-defiance.

MEDIUM CLOSE SHOT – ICEY

ICEY SPOON  
Walt Spoon, that's for sickness in  
the house!

MEDIUM CLOSE SHOT – WALT

He looks towards o.s. sobbing.

WALT  
What can we do, Mother?

TWO-SHOT

ICEY SPOON  
I thought if you went and talked to  
him – another man –

MEDIUM SHOT – PREACHER

He sits at a table, his back towards us, mumbling over his Bible.

TWO-SHOT – WALT, ICEY BEHIND HIM, ENTERING THROUGH DOOR

WALT  
Mister Powell?

PREACHER  
(suddenly loud)  
A strange woman is a narrow pit!

ICEY SPOON  
(a reverent whisper)  
Amen! Amen!

PREACHER  
She lieth in wait as for a prey. And  
increaseth the transgressors among  
men.

He closes his Bible and turns to them with weepy eyes and a brave little smile.

PREACHER  
My dear, dear friends! Whatever would  
I do without you!

CLOSE SHOT – ICEY

ICEY SPOON  
(wailing)  
Mister Powell!

THREE-SHOT – NEW ANGLE

WALT  
Is there anythin' – anythin'...?

PREACHER  
It is my shame – my crown of thorns.  
And I must wear it bravely.

ICEY SPOON  
What could have possessed that girl!

PREACHER

(simply)  
Satan.

ICEY SPOON  
Ah.

WALT sits across from PREACHER. ICEY is at PREACHER's elbow.

WALT  
Didn't you have no inkling?

PREACHER  
Yes; from the first night.

WALT  
The first night?

PREACHER  
Our honeymoon.

CLOSE SHOT – WALT

WALT  
How's that?

TWO-SHOT – PREACHER AND ICEY

PREACHER  
She turned me out of the bed.

ICEY SPOON  
(with pleasure)  
Nnnooooo!!

CLOSE SHOT – WALT

Filling his pipe.

WALT  
What do you figure to do?

TWO-SHOT – PREACHER AND ICEY

PREACHER  
Do? Why stay and take care of them little kids. Maybe it was never meant for a woman like Willa to taint their young lives.

ICEY SPOON  
(hands clasped; with  
approval)  
Mmmmm!

CLOSE SHOT – WALT

Dabbing at moisture in the corner of his eye.

WALT  
That's mighty brave of you, Reverend.

TWO-SHOT – PREACHER AND ICEY

PREACHER  
I reckon it's been ordained this  
way, Brother Spoon.

CLOSE SHOT – WALT

WALT  
Didn't – didn't she leave no word?

TWO-SHOT – PREACHER AND ICEY

PREACHER  
A scrawl. On a piece of notepaper on  
the bureau.

ICEY smiles sideways.

PREACHER  
I burned it.  
(Preacher holds out  
his hand, stares in  
disgust, and wipes  
his palm dramatically  
on his coatsleeve)  
I tore it up and burned it – it  
stank so strong of hellfire.

ICEY SPOON  
Amen.

PREACHER  
The pitcher has went to the well  
once too often, my friends.

CLOSE SHOT – WALT

WALT

She'll come draggin' her tail back home.

CLOSE SHOT – PREACHER

PREACHER

She'll not be back. I reckon I'd be safe in promisin' you that.

CLOSE SHOT – WALT

WALT

Maybe she's just run off on a spree.

PREACHER'S VOICE

(o.s.)

No!

WALT

Well, there's no harm in hopin'.

TWO-SHOT – PREACHER AND ICEY

PREACHER

Ain't no sense in it, neither. I figured somethin' like this was brewin' when she went to bed last night.

ICEY SPOON

(all woman)

How?

PREACHER

She tarried around the kitchen after I'd gone up, and when I went downstairs to see what was wrong...

ICEY SPOON

(eagerly)

What!

PREACHER

She'd found this fruit jar of dandelion wine  
(Icay touches him)  
that the husband – Harper – had

hid somewheres in the cellar.  
(playing his ace)  
She was drinking.

CLOSE SHOT – ICEY

ICEY is happy to let her mouth fall open and let out a gasp.

CLOSE SHOT – WALT

Sniffing.

THREE-SHOT – PREACHER, ICEY, WALT

PREACHER  
I tried to save her.

ICEY SPOON  
I know you did, Reverend. Oh, I know  
how you tried!

PREACHER  
The devil wins sometimes!

CLOSE SHOT – PREACHER

PREACHER  
(eyes upturned)  
Can't nobody say I didn't do my best  
to save her!

DISSOLVE TO:

CLOSE UNDERWATER SHOT (TANK)

We PAN, with slowly streaming weeds, and bring in WILLA in close profile; the current, coming from behind her, drifts her long hair across her throat.

MEDIUM SHOT – WILLA AND CAR

She is in profile as before –

CLOSE SHOT – A BAITED HOOK

It descends, and catches on the windshield, and the line tautens; then tugs. We start to follow the line up.

CLOSE SHOT – ABOVE WATER – THE LINE

We continue to follow the line up, and bring in, close, the stern of BEN HARPER's skiff.

MEDIUM SHOT – UNCLE BIRDIE

He sits back, tugging unconcernedly at the line. Then he leans over to see what's wrong.

CLOSE SHOT – BIRDIE

...as he peers over side.

DOWNSHOT – FULL SHOT OF CAR AND WILLA; BIRDIE'S VIEWPOINT

CLOSE SHOT – BIRDIE, HORROR-  
STRICKEN MOVING UNDERWATER SHOT –  
WILLA

We hear PREACHER's voice o.s., singing:

PREACHER

(o.s.)

Leaning! Leaning! Safe and secure  
from all alarms!

Meanwhile we move vertically DOWNWARD TOWARDS HER FACE, serene in death. We may or may not glimpse the gashed throat, through drifting hair.

LAP DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HARPER HOME – FULL SHOT – THE HOUSE AND TREE

PREACHER leans against the tree; he continues singing:

PREACHER

Leaning! Leaning! Leaning on the  
Everlasting Arms!

(seductively)

Children!

CLOSE MOVING SHOT – PREACHER

We start moving before he does. LOW CAMERA; full figure. We TILT to frame him from the waist downward and follow close behind him. As he leaves the tree and walks along the side of the house; we TILT DOWNWARD and CLOSE IN, to follow only his feet; he steps past a tiny cellar window and we PAN and

TIGHTEN IN CLOSE ON IT, into –

CLOSE TWO-SHOT – JOHN AND PEARL

Their noses are flat against the glass; their cheeks touch; their window isn't quite big enough to hold both their heads. It is on the ground; we don't see their chins. They look towards the departed PREACHER.

PREACHER'S VOICE

(o.s.)

Chill-dren?

PEARL, who is on the side PREACHER has left by, turns her head towards JOHN.

INT. CELLAR – MEDIUM CLOSE TWO-SHOT – JOHN AND PEARL

They are standing on a coal heap, faces at window.

PEARL HARPER

John, why do we have to hide?

JOHN has taken charge. He speaks very quietly, but calmly and cheerfully, as to an invalid. He starts down the rustling coal-heap, helping PEARL down.

JOHN HARPER

Careful...

The following dialogue as they climb down, making as little noise as possible.

We PULL slowly away.

PEARL HARPER

Where's Mom?

JOHN HARPER

She's gone to Moundville.

PEARL HARPER

To see Dad?

JOHN HARPER

Yes, I reckon that's it.

They have achieved the cellar floor.



PREACHER'S VOICE  
(more peremptorily  
outside)  
Children!

During the following dialogue we hear, o.s., the opening of a door, and PREACHER'S footsteps indoors as he crosses floor, climbs stairs, and opens another door.

JOHN HARPER  
Someone is after us, Pearl.

PEARL HARPER  
I want to go upstairs. It's cold and  
spidery down here. I'm hungry.

JOHN HARPER  
Now listen to me, Pearl. You and me  
is runnin' off tonight.

PEARL HARPER  
Why?

JOHN HARPER  
If we stay here somethin' awful will  
happen to us.

PEARL HARPER  
Won't Daddy Powell take care of us?

JOHN HARPER  
No, that's just it. No.

FULL SHOT – A ROOM UPSTAIRS

PREACHER looks under the bed.

RESUME CELLAR TWO-SHOT – THE CHILDREN

PEARL HARPER  
Where are we goin', John?

JOHN HARPER  
Somewheres. I don't know yet.

o.s., PREACHER'S footsteps come down stairs; JOHN leads PEARL carefully past a rake, a hoe, and a shelf-prop and they crouch down into –

## CLOSE TWO-SHOT – JOHN AND PEARL

...beside an apple barrel. PREACHER'S footsteps cross kitchen o.s.

PEARL HARPER

I'm hungry, John.

JOHN HARPER

We'll steal somethin' to eat.

PEARL HARPER

It'll spoil our supper.

PREACHER'S VOICE

(o.s.)

Pearl?

Both look sharp towards cellar door o.s.

## THE CELLAR DOOR – CHILDREN'S VIEWPOINT

The door opens; PREACHER'S head, carrying a candle in holder; a white-washed wall and stairs are lighted.

PREACHER'S VOICE

I hear you whisperin', children, so  
I know you're down there. I can feel  
myself gettin' awful mad, children.

## CLOSE TWO-SHOT – THE CHILDREN

PEARL HARPER

(whispering)

John...

JOHN claps his hand over her mouth.

## CELLAR DOOR

PREACHER'S VOICE

My patience has run out, children.  
I'm comin' to find you now.

He clop-clops nearly to the bottom of the stairs. ICEY'S voice cuts cheerfully across his descent.

ICEY SPOON

(calling o.s.)

Yoo-Hooooo! Mis-ter Paow-wellll!

He goes up the stairs and vanishes. Light on wall through open door to kitchen.

ICEY'S VOICE

Just a little hot supper I fixed for you and the children.

PREACHER'S VOICE

Bless you, bless you!

ICEY'S VOICE

And how are the children?

PREACHER'S VOICE

They're down there playin' games in the cellar and they won't mind me when I call 'em. I'm at my wit's end, Miz Spoon.

ICEY clucks her tongue o.s.

ICEY'S VOICE

(yelling)

John: Pearl:

She appears at head of stairs. Her voice crackles with authority.

ICEY SPOON

John! Pearl! Shake a leg!  
(she claps her hands sharply)

FULL SHOT – THE KITCHEN – OVER ICEY

ICEY SPOON

(continuing)

I won't have you worryin' poor Mister Powell another minute!

A short pause; then the children, covered with coal-dust, emerge into the light and climb the stairs. JOHN'S head is hung in defeat. As they enter the kitchen we PULL BACK.

ICEY SPOON

Just look at you! Dust and filth from top to toe!

GROUP SHOT – THE CHILDREN, OVER PREACHER AND ICEY

ICEY SPOON

Want me to take 'em up and wash 'em good?

PREACHER

Thank you, no. Thank you, dear Icey. I'll tend to them. Thank you.

ICEY pats JOHN'S head.

CLOSE SHOT – JOHN

ICEY'S VOICE

Don't be too hard on 'em, Reverend. Poor motherless children.

JOHN looks to PEARL and we PAN HER IN as PREACHER'S hand named LOVE moves through her locks. We PAN with PREACHER and ICEY as they move towards the door.

ICEY SPOON

Remember now Mister Powell, don't be afraid to call on us. Good night.

CLOSE SHOT – JOHN

He watches ICEY leave, o.s.

PREACHER

(o.s.)

Good night Miz Spoon, and thank you again.

FULL SHOT – PREACHER AND ICEY

ICEY goes away along path outside. PREACHER, his back to us, watches her a moment, then turns.

PREACHER

Weren't you afraid, my little lambs, down there in all that dark?

HEAD CLOSE-UP – JOHN

Wondering what to do next.

LAP DISSOLVE TO:

CLOSE SHOT – BIRDIE, OVER BESS'S PICTURE

We begin with HEAD CLOSE-UP of BIRDIE as he rocks, and PULL BACK He is rocking; and drunk. A bottle stands beside the picture. He turns and speaks to the picture.

BIRDIE STEPTOE

They'll think it was me! They'll  
think it was old Uncle Birdie!

CLOSE SHOT – BIRDIE – NEW ANGLE

His hands grip the edge of the chest on either side of the picture, which we now see.

BIRDIE STEPTOE

If you'd o' seen it, Bess! I'm drunk  
as a lord and I know it, but...

INSERT – BESS'S PICTURE

BIRDIE'S VOICE

(o.s. continuing)

Sweet Heaven, if you'd o' seen it!

RESUME PREVIOUS SHOT

BIRDIE picks up the bottle. His hand and the liquor tremble.

BIRDIE STEPTOE

(continuing)

Down there in the deep place... her  
hair wavin' lazy and soft like meadow  
grass under flood waters and that  
slit in her throat just like she had  
an extry mouth.

INSERT BESS'S PICTURE

BIRDIE'S VOICE

(o.s.)

And there ain't mortal human I can  
tell but you...

RESUME PREVIOUS SHOT

BIRDIE STEPTOE

(continuing)  
...Bess, for if I go to the Law  
they'll hang it on to me.

The bottle falls from his hand onto its side on the edge of the chest.

CLOSE SHOT – BIRDIE – NEW ANGLE

The reverse angle of the opening shot. BIRDIE rocks heavily; liquor gurgles from bottle to floor.

BIRDIE STEPTOE  
Sweet Heaven save poor old Uncle  
Birdie!

LAP DISSOLVE TO:

MEDIUM THREE-SHOT – PREACHER, JOHN, PEARL

PREACHER sits at head of table. JOHN stands to PREACHER'S right, around corner of table; he remains expressionless and immobile, until he speaks. PEARL stands to JOHN'S right, hugging the DOLL. The table is loaded with good food.

PREACHER, well-fed and at leisure, dabs his mouth delicately with his napkin, folds it, puts it in a ring, and folds his hands. He waits.

PEARL HARPER  
(at last)  
I'm hungry.

PREACHER  
Why, sure. And there's fried chicken  
and candied sweets and cornsticks  
and apple cobbler!

PEARL HARPER  
Can I have my supper please?

PREACHER  
Naturally.

PEARL HARPER  
Can I have milk too?

PREACHER  
Yes. But first of all we'll have a

little talk.

PEARL frowns and puts her finger in her mouth; she remembers he twisted her arm.

PREACHER  
(softly)  
About our secrets.

PEARL HARPER  
No.

PREACHER  
Why, pray tell?

PEARL HARPER  
Because John said I mustn't.

THREE-SHOT REVERSE – PREACHER, OVER NECKS OF CHILDREN

He slaps the table; his eyes crackle.

PREACHER  
NEVER – MIND – WHAT – JOHN –  
SAID!

PEARL starts to snivel.

PREACHER  
John is a meddler. Stop sniveling.  
Looky here a minute!

He brings out the knife.

PREACHER  
Know what this is?

PEARL shakes her head for no.

PREACHER  
Want to see something cute? Looky  
now!

He touches the spring; the blade flicks open.

PREACHER  
How about that! This is what I use  
on meddlers.

He lays the open knife on the table.

PREACHER

John might be a meddler.

THREE-SHOT – THE CHILDREN, OVER PREACHER

PEARL thinks the knife is a toy and crosses behind JOHN to pick it up.

PREACHER

NO – no, my lamb. Don't touch it!  
Now don't touch my knife! That makes  
me mad. Very, very mad.

She hugs the DOLL and he puts the hand named LOVE on her curls.

PREACHER

Just tell me now; where's the money  
hid?

PEARL HARPER

(affectionately)

But I swore. I promised John I  
wouldn't tell.

CLOSE SHOT – PREACHER

PREACHER

JOHN – DOESN'T – MATTER! Can't I  
get that through your head, you poor,  
silly, disgusting little wretch!

HEAD CLOSE-UP – PEARL

Her mouth quivers; a large tear brims in her eyes.

CLOSE SHOT – PREACHER

PREACHER

There now! You made me lose my temper!

THREE-SHOT – CHILDREN, OVER PREACHER

PREACHER

I'm sorry! I'm real sorry!

PEARL sniffles and wipes her eyes with her free fist.



PREACHER  
(in a caressing tone)  
Now! Where's it hid, honey?

JOHN HARPER  
(suddenly and lightly)  
I'll tell.

THREE-SHOT – PREACHER, OVER NAPES OF CHILDREN

PREACHER  
(lightly)  
I thought I told you to keep your  
mouth shut –

JOHN HARPER  
(light and quick)  
NO, – it ain't fair to make Pearl  
tell when she swore she wouldn't.  
I'll tell.

PREACHER'S EYES CRINKLE and he turns to PEARL, smiling  
brightly.

PREACHER  
(chuckling)  
Well I declare! Sometimes I think  
poor John will make it to heaven  
yet!

His eyes snap back to JOHN and his voice is like a whip.

PREACHER  
All right boy: where's the money?

HEAD CLOSE-UP – JOHN

JOHN HARPER  
In the cellar. Buried under a stone  
in the floor.

THREE-SHOT – PREACHER OVER CHILDREN

He closes and pockets the knife. His eyes never leave JOHN'S.

PREACHER  
It'll go hard, boy, if I find you're  
lyin'.

THREE-SHOT – PREACHER OVER CHILDREN

PEARL gapes up at JOHN as he speaks.

JOHN HARPER  
I ain't lyin'. Go look for yourself.

CLOSE SHOT – PREACHER

...as he gets up, cellar door in BACKGROUND.

PREACHER  
All right...  
(he turns towards the  
door; then glances  
around)  
Come along.

HEAD CLOSE-UP – JOHN

JOHN HARPER  
What?

THREE-SHOT – PREACHER, OVER CHILDREN

PREACHER  
Go ahead of me – the both of you.

They cross him, towards the door.

FULL SHOT – THE CELLAR STEPS – FROM THE BOTTOM

The CHILDREN precede PREACHER, who carries a candle in holder.  
PEARL is gaping at JOHN'S lie. JOHN is looking left and right,  
casing the joint.

PREACHER  
(continuing)  
You don't reckon I'd leave you.

JOHN HARPER  
(with forced lightness)  
Don't you believe me?

PREACHER  
(sardonically)  
Why sure, boy, sure.

Now they are at bottom of stairs. JOHN sees PEARL'S expression and takes her hand.

PREACHER

Now where, boy? Mind; no tricks. I can't abide liars.

JOHN HARPER

Yonder.

He squeezes PEARL'S hand harder, and points.

FULL SHOT – NEW ANGLE – OVER THE THREE

JOHN points out a place beneath a shelf laden with Mason jars; it is at the most distant part of the cellar from the stairs.

PREACHER starts toward it, leaving them at foot of stairs, then turns, catching JOHN'S ruse.

PREACHER

(sardonic)

O no you don't!

He shepherds them ahead of him.

THREE-SHOT – NEW ANGLE

They arrive beneath the shelf.

PREACHER

Now: Where?

JOHN HARPER

(lying magnificently,  
meeting Preacher's  
eyes)

Under the stone in the floor.

PREACHER sets the candle on a barrel near the shelf-prop and sinks to his knees below shot as PEARL gapes at JOHN and JOHN looks stony. She seems about to speak.

FLASH INSERT –

JOHN SQUEEZES PEARL'S HAND HARD CLOSE SHOT –  
PREACHER, FEATURING FLOOR

His hands sweep dust and expose concrete. He straightens on

his knees and turns to the children in close BACKGROUND.

HEAD CLOSE-UP – PREACHER

..as he turns.

PREACHER

This is concrete.

CLOSE TWO-SHOT – THE CHILDREN

A moment's silence.

PEARL HARPER

John made a Sin. John told a lie.

THREE-SHOT – FAVORING PREACHER

PREACHER gets slowly to his feet and puts on his "listening" look. His sincerity is beyond doubt.

PREACHER

The Lord's a-talkin' to me now. He's a-sayin', "a liar is an abomination before mine eyes."

He takes his knife out, and springs it open.

CLOSE TWO-SHOT – FAVORING JOHN

PREACHER

Speak, boy: Where's it hid?

(the knife pricks the  
flesh under John's  
ear)

Speak; before I cut your throat and  
leave you to drip like a hog hung up  
in butcherin' time!

CLOSE SHOT – PEARL

She starts to sob.

CLOSE TWO-SHOT – JOHN AND PREACHER

JOHN HARPER

Pearl, shut up! Pearl, you swore!

PREACHER

You could save him, little bird.

HEAD CLOSE-UP – PEARL

PEARL HARPER

(crying)

Inside my doll! Inside my doll!

TWO-SHOT – JOHN AND PREACHER, FAVORING PREACHER

PREACHER is astounded. His hands fall away from JOHN. He leans back against the wall and talks through laughter.

PREACHER

In the doll! Why sure! Sure!

HEAD CLOSE-UP – JOHN

His eyes are all over the place.

PREACHER'S VOICE

(o.s.)

The last place anyone would look!

THREE-SHOT – PREACHER, JOHN, PEARL

PREACHER makes a lunge across JOHN for the doll; JOHN ducking under his arm, pulls PEARL forward with his left hand; he turns backwards and with his free hand, in one movement, knocks over the candle and pulls out the support on the shelf.

CLOSE SHOT – PREACHER

Jars shower over him; one crowns him and breaks, shedding guck, which he wipes from his eyes.

TWO-SHOT – THE CHILDREN

They start up the stairs.

FULL SHOT – PREACHER

He makes one step forward, steps on a rolling jar, and falls.

TWO-SHOT – THE CHILDREN

They are near the top of the stairs. We hear PREACHER below them. JOHN slips and they nearly fall backward. As JOHN recovers, PREACHER enters the shot, his back to us. The

children get through the open door as PREACHER reaches top. JOHN slams the door, catching PREACHER'S hand. PREACHER screams. JOHN'S astonished eyes peer through the crack in the door; the door loosens; PREACHER yanks his hand loose and sucks it, groaning; the door slams to; the bolt is shot home.

HEAD CLOSE-UP – PREACHER

...over sound of slamming bolt. He snarls like the Big Bad Wolf.

All the above happens at once.

INT. KITCHEN – CLOSE TWO-SHOT – JOHN AND PEARL, BY DOOR

PEARL, dangling her doll, cries. JOHN panting, leans against wall by door. JOHN is wondering what to do now. Pause.

PREACHER'S VOICE

(o.s., sweetly)

Chill-dren?

(continuing)

The only reason I wanted that money  
is so's you could have it.

JOHN HARPER

(to himself; panting)

The river. That's the only where!  
Uncle Birdie Steptoe!

PREACHER'S VOICE

(cooing)

Puhr-urri? Want your Mommy back?

(Pearl hugs her doll)

Want me to get her right now?

PEARL HARPER

(sharply)

John?

JOHN HARPER

Hush, Pearl. Come on.

They fly out of the house.

PREACHER'S VOICE

(bellowing, as they  
go)

OPEN THAT DOOR, YOU SPAWN OF THE  
DEVIL'S OWN STRUMPET!

FRAMING SHOT – EXT. THE HARPER HOUSE

A pretty, pastoral shot of the house in light mist, as they run across and leave the shot. Before they disappear, we hear PREACHER'S fists hammering against the door. We stay on the house at leisure; we hear him lunging, shoulder to door; we begin to hear squeaking of hinges and splintering of wood.

FULL CIRCLE SHOT – FRAMING BIRDIE'S WHARF-BOAT

An ultra romantic image of shelter and peace. Frogs or river noises o.s., then the rattle of running footsteps. The children center, their backs to us, sprinting towards the boat. Light mist as in previous shot.

JOHN HARPER  
(calling)  
Uncle Birdie! Uncle Birdie!

INT. BIRDIE'S BOAT – GROUP SHOT – BIRDIE AND CHILDREN

We shoot over BESS'S turned photograph and over BIRDIE, close, passed out in his rocker. The children run through open door in BACKGROUND and JOHN runs up to BIRDIE.

JOHN HARPER  
Uncle Birdie!

CLOSE SHOT – BIRDIE

BIRDIE STEPTOE  
(gesturing feebly)  
Don't!

CLOSE TWO-SHOT – NEW ANGLE – BIRDIE, OVER JOHN

JOHN HARPER  
Hide us Uncle Birdie! He's a-comin'  
with his knife!

He grabs BIRDIE'S shoulder; BIRDIE half-rises, and falls face down on floor.

CLOSE TWO-SHOT – BIRDIE ON FLOOR, OVER JOHN

JOHN HARPER

It's me! John Harper and Pearl! You  
said to come a-runnin' if we needed  
you!

BIRDIE rears on one elbow and looks up at him.

BIRDIE STEPTOE  
(in friendly  
recognition)  
Johnny!

He falls face down again.

CLOSE TWO-SHOT – NEW ANGLE – FAVORING JOHN

JOHN grabs BIRDIE by one ear, turning his face up.

JOHN HARPER  
Uncle – Birdie! Oh – please! Please  
wake up!

CLOSE TWO-SHOT – FAVORING BIRDIE

He looks up earnestly at JOHN.

BIRDIE STEPTOE  
I never done it, boy. Sweet Heaven I  
never done such a terrible thing!  
I'll swear on the Book to it, boy! I  
never done it! I never!

CLOSE SHOT – JOHN

He is lost; and he becomes a man.

BIRDIE'S VOICE  
(o.s.)  
Lord save poor old Uncle Birdie  
Steptoe that never hurt a fly!  
(he snores, softly)

JOHN HARPER  
(quiet)  
There's still the river. – The skiff  
is down by the willows.

He masterfully takes PEARL by the hand and leads her into  
the night.



## LONG SHOT – THE CHILDREN

We shoot from the river. They struggle through the sumac and pokeberry weeds at edge of river, towards skiff, whose prow, tethered to willow, we see throughout this un-moving shot, at our extreme right. When they come opposite skiff – which is a few yards out from shore –

WE CUT TO:

## TWO-SHOT – THE CHILDREN

PEARL, frankly bored, dangling her doll, is yawning. JOHN, as he finishes undoing rope from a willow root, looks up and around, checking on pursuit. His eyes fix.

## FULL SHOT – PREACHER'S SHADOW

On the bank above, it is huge in the mist. Same camera position as foregoing; new angle.

## TWO-SHOT – THE CHILDREN

BACK view: skiff in BACKGROUND. Same camera position; new angle.

JOHN HARPER

(whispering)

Please be quiet – Oh please, Pearl!

PEARL HARPER

(natural voice)

John, where are we g –

JOHN HARPER

Hush.

## FULL SHOT – SHADOW, THEN PREACHER

Same position and angle as before.

PREACHER'S own figure advances to supplant his shadow. He peers downward, his open knife catching the light.

PREACHER

(businesslike)

Children?

He starts slashing his way down through the brush-filth.

## FULL SHOT – THE CHILDREN

Same camera position as before. They are floundering through mud, half-way to the skiff.

## FULL SHOT – PREACHER

Same position and angle as in previous shot of him. He is half-way down the bank. With his knife, he hacks at an entangling vine.

## FULL SHOT – THE CHILDREN

Position and angle as before. They reach the skiff. Hacking sounds o.s.

JOHN HARPER

Get in the skiff, Pearl, goodness,  
goodness, hurry!

PEARL HARPER

(hesitant)  
That's Daddy!

He picks her up and throws her into the skiff.

## CLOSE SHOT – PEARL AND DOLL

...as they land, sprawling, in bottom of skiff among fish-heads and bait cans. JOHN gets in after them.

## FULL SHOT – PREACHER – CHILDREN'S VIEWPOINT

He tears free of brush to edge of river, knife glittering.

## CLOSE SHOT – JOHN

With his oar, he tries to push the boat free of mud.

## FULL SHOT – PREACHER – CHILDREN'S VIEWPOINT

He wades towards them, knee-deep in mud.

## CLOSE SHOT – JOHN

He is shoving at the oar even more desperately.

## INSERT – JOHN'S HANDS

Straining.

FULL SHOT – PREACHER – CHILDREN'S VIEWPOINT

He flounders deeper and more heavily through the mud; much closer.

CLOSE SHOT – JOHN

He pushes the boat free of mud.

CLOSE SHOT – PREACHER – CHILDREN'S VIEWPOINT

He hurries much closer through shallow water. Prow of boat in FOREGROUND.

PREACHER

Wait, you little whelps! Wait!

Another step forward and he does a pratt-fall and makes a splash.

CLOSE SHOT – JOHN – PEARL IN BACKGROUND

He is trying to feather the boat out to where the current will catch it. In panic and haste he is clumsy.

JOHN HARPER

Why can't I do it when I know how to do it!

FULL SHOT – PREACHER

..as he gets up, at edge of mud.

PREACHER

Wait! Wait! I'll slit your guts!

FULL DOWN-SHOT – THE SKIFF, THEN PREACHER

The current catches it and spins it round like a leaf. JOHN'S efforts with the oars are useless. PREACHER enters, wading fast. His hands are within an inch of reaching the helpless skiff; capriciously the current takes it downstream.

TWO-SHOT – JOHN AND PEARL

The skiff is taken steadily by the current. PEARL sits up,

doll in arms. JOHN is almost asleep with exhaustion.

FULL SHOT – THE SKIFF, OVER PREACHER

It is well away from him and getting smaller. Waist-deep, he wades a couple of steps after it, then just looks.

HEAD CLOSE-UP – PREACHER

He begins a steady, rhythmical, animal scream of outrage and loss.

LONG SHOT –  
THE RIVER AND LANDSCAPE, FEATURING STARLIGHT;  
AND THE DRIFTING BOAT – PEARL IN STERN TWO-SHOT – THE  
CHILDREN – FRONT ON

JOHN is asleep. PEARL sits sleepily whispering to her doll.

PEARL HARPER

Once upon a time there was a pretty  
fly, and he had a wife, this pretty  
fly...

MEDIUM LONG SHOT – THE DRIFTING BOAT THROUGH FIREFLIES

PEARL'S VOICE

(o.s.)

...and one day she flew away, and  
then one night his two pretty fly  
children...

SPECIAL SHOT – THE MOVING SKIFF, THROUGH DEW-  
JEWELLED SPIDER-  
WEB

PEARL'S VOICE

(o.s., continuing)

...flew away too, into the sky, into  
the moon...

SPECIAL SHOT – A FROG, AND SKIFF

A big frog is profiled; the skiff drifts by in distance; the frog twangs out a bass-note.

DISSOLVE TO:

INSERT – A PICTURE POSTCARD – A COUNTY COURTHOUSE

As the card is turned to the handwritten side we

CUT TO:

CLOSE TWO-SHOT – WALT AND ICEY

WALT

(reading aloud)

Dear Walt and Icey: I bet you been worried and gave us up for lost. Took the kids down here with me for a visit to my sister Elsie's farm. That a little change of scenery would do us all a world of good after so much trouble and heartache. At least the kids will git a plenty of good home cooking. Your devoted Harry Powell

ICEY SPOON

Now ain't you relieved, Walt?

WALT

Sure, but you was worried too, Mother; takin' off with never a word of goodbye. I even got to figurin' them gypsies busted in and done off with all three of 'em.

ICEY SPOON

You and your gypsies! They been gone a week!

WALT

Not before one of 'em knifed a farmer and stole his horse. Never caught the gypsies nor the horse.

LAP DISSOLVE TO:

DESCENDING HELICOPTER SHOT – THE RIVER – DAY

A man is going along a river lane on horseback.

It is PREACHER; he walks the horse away from us.

DISSOLVE TO:

## DESCENDING HELICOPTER SHOT – ANOTHER BEND OF THE RIVER

We descend to a poor riverside farmhouse; JOHN and PEARL tether a boat in front of it.

## GROUP SHOT (FROM GROUND) THREE HOMELESS CHILDREN, OVER JOHN AND PEARL

They are eating hot boiled potatoes. A glance at JOHN and PEARL, and they turn away towards lane in BACKGROUND. JOHN and PEARL proceed towards the house.

## MEDIUM SHOT – JOHN, PEARL, WOMAN, THROUGH DOOR

We shoot from within open door of kitchen. JOHN and PEARL advance to edge of porch. A TIRED FARM WOMAN stands by door, within. We shoot OVER her.

TIRED FARM WOMAN

Hungry, I s'pose. Well, I'll see if there's any more potatoes to spare. Where's your folks?

JOHN HARPER

Ain't got none.

Woman leaves shot briefly (we HOLD on CHILDREN) She re-enters and goes to them with a bowl of steaming potatoes. They take hands-ful, and make to eat.

TIRED FARM WOMAN

Go 'way; go 'way.

They turn away and walk towards boat. She looks after them.

TIRED FARM WOMAN

Such times, when youngins run the roads!

She leaves the SHOT. We frame them briefly, walking away, then;

DISSOLVE TO:

## CLOSE SHOT – A PLACARD – NIGHT

It is lit by firelight. It reads:

PEACH-PICKERS WANTED WEEKLY HIRE

PREACHER'S VOICE

(o.s.)

An ungrateful child is an  
abomination...

LAP DISSOLVE TO:

GROUP SHOT – PREACHER AND MEN

PREACHER stands behind the flames; in FOREGROUND an OLD MAN sits profiled on a box. Other workers, all men, sit around fire.

PREACHER

(continuing)

...before the eyes of God. The world  
is fast going to damnation because  
of impudent youngins a-flyin' in the  
face of Age.

Short silence, as the other men look at PREACHER without liking. Then the old man spits into the fire.

CLOSE SHOT – THE FLAMES

A spurt of steam as spit strikes.

CLOSE SHOT – A HOOT OWL

...hooting.

LAP DISSOLVE TO:

CLOSE SHOT – A TURTLE – NOONDAY

He comes down to water.

JOHN'S VOICE

(o.s.)

They make soup out of them...

LONG SHOT – THE CHILDREN IN PASSING SKIFF

Full landscape in BACKGROUND.

JOHN HARPER

(continuing)

...but I wouldn't know how to go

about gettin' him open.

LAP DISSOLVE TO:

LONG SHOT – CHILDREN AND SKIFF, OVER RABBITS IN GRASS

We shoot OVER two sitting rabbits as they watch, their ears up. The skiff passes. PEARL plays with doll JOHN unspools line.

LAP DISSOLVE TO:

FULL SHOT – THE CHILDREN AND SKIFF, FRAMED BY WILLOWS – TWILIGHT

The skiff passes. Baa-ing of sheep o.s.

MOVING SHOT – FROM RIVER – A SHEEP

The sheep bleats. We PAN in a big barn near the river, then a lighted house; willows along shore.

FULL SHOT – THE SKIFF – FROM THE BANK

JOHN re-sets his oar. They angle towards us for the shore.

JOHN HARPER

We're gonna spend a night on land.

UP-SHOT – THE CHILDREN, OVER THE MOORED SKIFF

...they reach top of the bank. Corner of barn and lighted window in BACKGROUND. Sounds of mouth-organ and girl singing o.s.

FULL SHOT – A LIGHTED WINDOW, THE SHADE DRAWN

A wire bird-cage hangs close to the shade, silhouetted. On the perch, a canary. Lullaby and mouth-organ continue o. s. After a moment the CHILDREN enter, backs to us, and stop, looking.

CLOSE TWO-SHOT – THE CHILDREN

Window-light on faces, song over. A moment.

PEARL HARPER

Are we goin' home, John?



JOHN HARPER

Ssh...

He turns, her hand in his. We PAN as they tiptoe towards the big, open door of barn; big open hayloft window above.

INT. ROOM – LOW TRACKING SHOT – THE CHILDREN

As they walk down aisle of barn we shoot them past bellies and legs of row of cows. Sounds of munching and soft lowing o.s. JOHN helps PEARL up a little ladder to the hayloft.

MEDIUM SHOT – THE CHILDREN, WINDOW – TWILIGHT

...as the CHILDREN bed down in hay, only legs visible, protruding into frame of window, which frames a middle-distant white lane beyond house, and a landscape. Whippoorwill o.s. A DARKENING OF LIGHT.

LAP DISSOLVE TO:

SAME SET-UP

The full moon is half-risen. Whippoorwill o.s.

LAP DISSOLVE TO:

SAME SET-UP

The moon is well above the horizon. Whippoorwill o.s.

LAP DISSOLVE TO:

SAME SET-UP

The moon is still higher. A pause; the whippoorwill stops in mid-phrase. Brief pause; then John sits up into silhouette.

CLOSE SHOT – JOHN

He listens intently. We hear nothing. His eyes alter. We hear, distantly

PREACHER'S VOICE

(o.s., singing)

Leaning, Leaning...

At various distances o.s., we hear dogs barking at the sound of the singing.

PREACHER'S VOICE  
(continuing; louder)  
...safe and secure from all alarms;

The dog from the farm rushes braying to his gate. Other dogs continue o.s. PREACHER appears, astride his walking horse, singing.

PREACHER  
Leaning...

CLOSE SHOT – JOHN

Watching; dread and despair. Sounds go.

PREACHER  
(o.s.)  
Leaning; Leaning on the Everlasting  
Arms.

FULL SHOT – PREACHER

He approaches and crosses center screen, continuing the hymn. (We do not PAN with him; he crosses the frame of the great window.)

CLOSE SHOT – JOHN

Eyes following PREACHER. PREACHER and dogs continue o.s.

JOHN HARPER  
(to himself)  
Don't you never sleep?

FULL SHOT – PREACHER

He vanishes beyond trees, his singing more distant. Dogs continue.

CLOSE SHOT – JOHN AND PEARL – NEW ANGLE

He wakes her. PREACHER'S singing o.s.

JOHN HARPER  
(scared whisper)  
Pearl, wake up! Come on, Pearl!

FULL SHOT – PREACHER

He vanishes; scuttling of children in hay, o.s.; dogs quiet; his song dies. Brief silence. The whippoorwill resumes.

MEDIUM LONG SHOT – THE CHILDREN, NEAR BARN

Hand in hand, they hurry out of barn and, as we PAN, along its side, towards River, o.s. Whippoorwill o.s.

FULL SHOT – A BRIGHT FULL MOON

The whippoorwill's singing continues o.s.

FULL SHOT – CHILDREN AND SKIFF

JOHN steers through turbulent, moonlit water. Whippoorwill continues. Low moon.

CLOSE SHOT – A FOX, BARKING CLOSE DOWN-SHOT – CHILDREN ASLEEP IN SKIFF (TANK)

Blank, calm water; the skiff enters and passes full length below us, the CHILDREN asleep in it; blank water again; again the fox barks.

MEDIUM SHOT – THE SKIFF, DRIFTING SHOT THROUGH RIVERSIDE GRASS

Crickets o.s. The skiff nears a sand-bar.

INSERT – THE PROW, GROUNDING

The prow softly grates against sand.

MEDIUM SHOT – THE GROUNDED SKIFF, AGAIN THROUGH GRASS

Crickets fainter. TILTING UPWARD.

LAP DISSOLVE TO:

FULL SHOT – THE STARLIT SKY

LAP DISSOLVE TO:

FULL SHOT – RIVER LANDSCAPE – SUNRISE

Distant; medium; the near; roosters crow o.s.

CLOSE SHOT – JOHN WAKING

He looks to PEARL o.s.

FULL SHOT – PEARL, THEN RACHEL, OVER JOHN

PEARL is picking daisies. A fence up beyond her. Beyond the fence, a woman, RACHEL COOPER, appears. She carries a berry-basket on her arm. JOHN scrambles up, grabs an oar, and holds it defensively. PEARL freezes.

RACHEL COOPER

(loud)

You two youngsters get up here to me  
this instant!

TWO-SHOT – JOHN AND PEARL – RACHEL'S ANGLE

RACHEL COOPER

(o.s.)

Mind me now!

JOHN lowers the oar at the female authority in her voice.

RACHEL COOPER

(o.s.)

Now git on up to my house.

They hesitate.

THREE-SHOT – OVER JOHN

RACHEL COOPER

I'll git me a willow switch.

They still hesitate. She breaks off a switch and comes for them, squishing through the mud. She surrounds them and drives them like geese up the bank.

LOW FULL SHOT – THE THREE, FROM SIDE

They move across the meadow like a nursery frieze. She tweaks with her switch. As she goes near PEARL'S calves, JOHN turns.

JOHN HARPER

Don't you hurt her!

RACHEL COOPER

Hurt her nothin'! Wash her's more  
like it!

(hand to mouth, yelling)  
Ruby!

#### FULL SHOT – A TOMATO PATCH

Three crouching figures pick tomatoes beyond a low white fence; Rachel's house in background. RUBY, thirteen, pops her head up like a rifle-target.

RACHEL COOPER  
(o.s.)  
Clary!

Clary, eleven, pops up.

RACHEL COOPER  
(o.s.)  
Mary!

Mary, four, pops up.

THE GIRLS  
(in chorus)  
Yes Miz Cooper!

#### GROUP SHOT – RACHEL AND HARPERS, MOVING TOWARDS FENCE

She has JOHN and PEARL by their napes.

RACHEL COOPER  
Bring yer baskets.

The three girls enter, their backs to us, carrying baskets of tomatoes.

#### GROUP SHOT – THE GIRLS, OVER RACHEL AND HARPER CHILDREN

She holds JOHN and PEARL very firmly, inspecting baskets, across gate of fence.

RACHEL COOPER  
Nicely picked, Clary. Mary; put the big ones on top. Ruby, most o' them ain't fit to go to market. Put them baskets down. Ruby, fetch the washtub and put it by the pump. Mary, Clary, fetch me a bar o' laundry soap and the scrub brush.

GIRLS  
(in chorus)  
Yes Miz Cooper!

They hurry off.

RACHEL COOPER  
Come on, now; up to the house.

She opens the gate, pushes the Harper children through, shuts the gate, and walks between them, her back to us. The children hesitate. She turns to them and stops.

THREE-SHOT – THE CHILDREN, OVER RACHEL

She looks them up and down. If we saw her face, her lips would be pursed and working with anger.

RACHEL COOPER  
Gracious! If you hain't a sight to  
beat all! Where you from?

No answer; their eyes are wide with curiosity.

RACHEL COOPER  
Where's your folks?

CLOSE SHOT – JOHN

RACHEL COOPER  
(o.s.)  
Speak up now!

His eyes go down to her feet. He, and we, start to examine her from foot to head; for this is our heroine at last.

CLOSE TILTING SHOT – RACHEL

...from JOHN'S eye-level. We TILT SLOWLY UP her height. She wears man's shoes, heavy with mud; a rough skirt; a shapeless sweater hangs over her shoulders; she is in her middle sixties and wears a man's old hat. Her face says:

RACHEL COOPER  
(sort of roughly)  
Gracious! So I've got two more mouths  
to feed!

CLOSE SHOT – JOHN

For no reason at all he feels he has come home.

LAP DISSOLVE TO:

GROUP SHOT – JOHN, PEARL, RACHEL, RUBY, DURING WASHING

RACHEL mercilessly scrubs JOHN; JOHN doesn't like it; RUBY washes PEARL with a cloth.

CLOSE SHOT – JOHN

Hating the scrubbing. He breaks away.

FULL SHOT – JOHN AND RACHEL

JOHN dodges behind a bush, RACHEL in hot pursuit.

CLOSE SHOT – THE BUSH; RACHEL

RACHEL'S head bobs up and down above the bush; we hear the unmistakable sound of a female hand on a child's bottom.

LAP DISSOLVE TO:

FULL SHOT –  
A SHELF, FULL OF MARKET BASKETS, NEATLY COVERED  
WITH DAMP MUSLIN

LAP DISSOLVE TO:

FULL SHOT – THE CARRIED BASKETS, IN MOTION

EXT. MOUNDSVILLE STREET – TRACKING SHOT –  
RACHEL AND HER  
BROOD

All carry baskets. RACHEL charges along at the head of the procession. A CATTLE DEALER strolls the other way.

CATTLE DEALER

Howdy Miz Cooper – you goin' to  
sell me yer hog this year?

RACHEL doesn't stop walking.

RACHEL COOPER

With the price o' pork what it is?

CLOSE TRACKING SHOT – RACHEL

She keeps walking.

RACHEL COOPER

(talking to herself)

I'm butcherin' my hog myself, smokin'  
the hams, and cannin' the sausage.

(she calls to children  
over her shoulder)

You-all have your work cut out!

CLOSE TRACKING TWO-SHOT – JOHN AND CLARY IN MID-  
PROCESSION

JOHN HARPER

She talks to herself.

CLARY

All the time.

JOHN HARPER

Your Maw's funny.

CLARY

She ain't our Maw. We just live at  
her house.

They walk in silence.

JOHN HARPER

Where's your folks?

CLARY

Some place.

MARY

My Daddy's in Dee-troit.

JOHN HARPER

(to Ruby)

Who's your folks?

RUBY

I dunno.

FULL SHOT – THE STREET



A WAITRESS, wearing an apron labeled EMPIRE EATS, hurries across the street towards the GROUP. We PAN her in to MARY. The procession halts briefly. She embraces MARY.

WAITRESS

Mary! Honey! Mornin' Miz Cooper.

(to Mary)

Guess what! I'm savin' up to buy ye a charm bracelet!

CLOSE SHOT – RACHEL

RACHEL COOPER

Never mind the gewgaws; don't you miss your visit this Sunday; and come to Church with us.

FULL STREET SHOT

The WAITRESS hurries away. She dodges past a car.

WAITRESS

See ye Sunday, love!

CLOSE SHOT – RACHEL

she follows WAITRESS, then LOVERS in car, with her eyes.

FULL STREET SHOT

The car CENTERS, held up in traffic; two lovers in it, sitting close.

CLOSE SHOT – RACHEL

She takes in the LOVERS.

RACHEL COOPER

Women is durn fools! All of 'em!

She sighs, angry at all women, herself included, and turns away. We are at the door of a GROCERY STORE. The GROCER is on his doorstep.

FULL SHOT – GROUP AND GROCERY

RACHEL COOPER

(to children)

Take yer baskets in.

The CHILDREN file in past her and GROCER.

RACHEL COOPER

(to Grocer)

Looky there.

(she indicates the  
lovers)

She'll be losin' her mind to a tricky  
mouth and a full moon, and like as  
not I'll be saddled with the  
consequences.

She starts into store with the GROCER.

INT. STORE – GROUP SHOT – RACHEL, GROCER, CHILDREN

RACHEL and GROCER come up to counter.

RACHEL COOPER

(continuing; she takes  
a list from her bosom  
and gives it to Grocer)

Here's what you owe me.

(she counts baskets)

One, two, three, four, five... where's  
the other basket? Where's Ruby?

CLARY

She went.

RACHEL COOPER

John: you go fetch Ruby.

(John goes. As Grocer  
empties baskets and  
tots up, Rachel  
continues:)

Big Ruby's my problem girl. She can't  
gather eggs without bustin' 'em; but  
Ruby's got mother hands with a  
youngin, so what're you to say?

EXT. DRUG STORE – FULL SHOT – RUBY

She stands with her market-basket, reacting to wolf whistles  
o.s.; she is seeking the world.

THREE-SHOT – RUBY, OVER TWO YOUNG LOAFERS

1ST LOAFER  
How 'bout tonight, Ruby?

RUBY gestures RACHEL'S nearness.

2ND LOAFER  
(to 1st)  
What gives?

1ST LOAFER  
The Old Lady's around.  
(to Ruby)  
How 'bout Thursday?

RUBY nods.

1ST LOAFER  
(to 2nd)  
The old gal thinks she comes in fer  
sewin' lessons o'-Thursday.

FULL SHOT – RUBY; JOHN IN BACKGROUND

JOHN HARPER  
(calling)  
Miz Cooper wants you.

He turns and goes; RUBY, with an eye to 1ST LOAFER, turns and follows.

INT. GROCERY STORE – GROUP SHOT – CENTERING RACHEL

GROCER  
(to Pearl)  
And will you show me your dolly,  
little lady?

JOHN has entered in BACKGROUND. PEARL holds the doll to her, and JOHN moves in quietly to her side. They stand together, as so often before.

GROCER  
See ye got two more peeps to your  
brood.

RACHEL COOPER  
Yeah, and ornerier than the rest.

GROCER

How's your own boy, Miz Cooper?

RACHEL COOPER

Ain't heard from Ralph since last Christmas. Don't matter – I've got a new crop.

(she laughs. Loudly)

I'm a strong tree with branches for many birds. I'm good for something in this old world and I know it, too! We know that she will rout the Devil.

GROCER

(a good tradesman)

Got a good buy in soap, Miz Cooper.

RACHEL COOPER

(triumphant)

Don't need no soap. I'm boilin' down the fat from my hog.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. RACHEL'S SCREENED PORCH – EVENING – GROUP SHOT –  
RACHEL, GIRLS, JOHN ASIDE

CENTERING RACHEL as she takes a book from table, and the GIRLS MOVE to set at her seat, and JOHN stands to one side. RACHEL glances at him.

CLOSE SHOT – JOHN

He looks suspiciously to the Book in her hands, for to him it has come to mean only Preacher.

INSERT – THE BIBLE

...as she opens it on her lap o.s. we hear a screen door open.

GROUP SHOT – RACHEL, CHILDREN, JOHN IN BACKGROUND

We see the door closing as JOHN goes out. The girls sit on low stools in semi-circle at RACHEL'S feet. We CENTER RACHEL. RACHEL, keenly aware of JOHN, pretends to ignore him. JOHN crosses behind her and stands with his back to us. We see the back of his head through the screen. RACHEL, changing her mind about what story to tell, finds the new page she's

after, and spreads her hands flat on the pages. She never glances at the text. She is fishing for JOHN.

RACHEL COOPER

Now old Pharoah, he was the King of Egyptland! And he had a daughter, and once upon a time

(louder)

she was walkin' along the river bank and she seen somethin' bumpin' and scrapin' along down on a sandbar under the willows.

CLOSE SHOT – THE BACK OF JOHN'S HEAD, IMMOBILE

RACHEL COOPER

(o.s.)

And do you know what it was, children?

RESUME GROUP SHOT

RUBY, CLARY, MARY

(excited)

No!

PEARL HARPER

No!

RACHEL COOPER

(still loud)

Well, now, it was a skiff, washed up on the bar. And who do you reckon was in it?

RUBY

(confidently)

Pearl and John!

RACHEL COOPER

(still loud)

Not this time! It was just one youngin – a little boy babe. And do you know who he was, children?

CLOSE SHOT – JOHN'S HEAD

...as he turns around.

RUBY, MARY, CLARY, PEARL

(o.s. in unison)  
No!

## RESUME GROUP SHOT

RACHEL closes the Bible; she knows the Lord's battle is won. As she continues, she puts aside the book and takes up her mending.

RACHEL COOPER  
(very quietly)  
It was Moses! – A King of men, Moses,  
children. Now. Off to bed. Hurry.

On "off to bed," JOHN turns his back again.

## CLOSE SHOT – RACHEL; JOHN IN BACKGROUND

She mends for a few moments.

RACHEL COOPER  
(commandingly)  
John, git me an apple.

JOHN crosses behind her and off, towards door. We hear it open and close.

RACHEL COOPER  
Git one for yourself, too.

## MEDIUM SHOT – JOHN

He approaches with two apples. We PAN him into a:

## TWO-SHOT – JOHN AND RACHEL

He gives her an apple. She immediately takes a bite. He doesn't bite his. She looks up at him from her apple.

RACHEL COOPER  
(suddenly)  
John, where's your folks?

JOHN HARPER  
(plainly)  
Dead.

RACHEL COOPER  
Dead.

(she nods with finality)

JOHN starts to eat his apple.

RACHEL COOPER

Where ye from?

JOHN HARPER

Up river.

RACHEL COOPER

I didn't figger ye rowed that skiff  
from Parkersburg!

JOHN makes a move; he slowly and tenderly reaches out his hand and lays his fingers on her knuckles.

JOHN HARPER

Tell me that story again.

Our heroine would like to thank the Lord openly, but she knows she must not show her feelings; she speaks gruffly –

RACHEL COOPER

Story, honey? Why, what story?

JOHN HARPER

About them Kings. That the Queen  
found down on the sandbar in the  
skiff that time.

RACHEL COOPER

Kings! Why, honey, there was only  
one.

JOHN HARPER

I mind you said there was two.

RACHEL COOPER

Well, shoot! Maybe there was!

CLOSE SHOT – RACHEL

Maybe we see – though JOHN does not – the thanksgiving in her eyes.

RACHEL COOPER

Yes, come to think of it, there was  
two, John.

o.s., in distance, we hear the whistle of a river boat.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. MOUNDSVILLE STREET – EVENING – MOVING SHOT – RUBY

Her head and shoulders from behind as she walks down the neon-lighted street; drugstore and loafers in b.g.; jazz music o.s.

FULL SHOT – RUBY, OVER DRUGSTORE LOAFERS

Our two loafers lounge on a bench. RUBY approaches.

2ND LOAFER

(to 1st)

Hey. Must be Thursday.

1ST LOAFER

Here we go.

He gets up and starts towards RUBY, who catches his eye.

RUBY, FROM BEHIND

She turns to a magazine stand and fingers a magazine, awaiting LOAFER, who approaches in BACKGROUND.

INSERT – RUBY'S HAND; MAGAZINES

They are lurid, tawdry fan and pin-up magazines.

PREACHER enters, between RUBY and LOAFER, and turns to RUBY into CLOSE TWO-SHOT. LOAFER pauses in BACKGROUND.

PREACHER

You're Ruby, ain't you, my child?

RUBY

Can I have this?

PREACHER

Surely. I'd like to talk to you, my dear.

RUBY

Will you buy me a choclit sody?



PREACHER

O' course.

LOAFERS

Watch out Preacher! Why, Preacher!

PREACHER

(sternly)

Shet yer dirty mouths!

CLOSE SHOT – RUBY

She looks up at him admiringly; then to LOAFERS; back to PREACHER.

LAP DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DRUGSTORE – CLOSE TWO-SHOT – PREACHER AND RUBY

RUBY is finishing her soda.

RUBY

Ain't I purty?

This is a familiar clue to PREACHER.

PREACHER

Why, you're the purtiest girl I've seen in all my wandering. Didn't nobody never tell you that, Ruby?

RUBY

(hoarsely)

No. No one never did.

PREACHER

(moving in)

There's two new ones over at your place, ain't there Ruby?

She nods.

PREACHER

What's their names?

RUBY

Pearl and John.

PREACHER

Ahhh.  
(whispering)  
And is there – a doll?

RUBY  
(nods)  
Only she won't never let me play  
with it.

PREACHER  
Ahh!

He gets up and heads for door. RUBY, dismayed, hurries after him.

PREACHER  
(firmly)  
Yes!

He strides through door, RUBY following.

THREE-SHOT –  
PREACHER AND RUBY ON SIDEWALK, 2ND LOAFER IN  
B.G. 1ST LOAFER HAS GONE

PREACHER comes out fast, RUBY touches his arm, he turns on her. They are in CLOSE TWO-SHOT. RUBY goes on tiptoe. PREACHER inclines his ear.

CLOSE SHOT – RUBY

RUBY  
Did you ever see such purty eyes in  
all your born days?

CLOSE SHOT – PREACHER INSERT – PREACHER'S HAND

It slides into his knife pocket. We hear a click.

2ND LOAFER  
(o.s.)  
Don't let him git away, Sugar!

THREE-SHOT – PREACHER AND RUBY, LOAFER IN B.G.

RUBY  
He ain't like you-all! Next time I  
won't even ask him to buy me a sody!

She turns to PREACHER, but PREACHER, on "next time," has left the SHOT.

CLOSE SHOT – RUBY

She looks after him, clasping the magazine under her chin.

FULL SHOT – PREACHER

Her hero strides away into darkness.

CLOSE SHOT – RUBY

Gazing after him.

RUBY  
I been bad!

DISSOLVE TO:

CLOSE DOWN-SHOT – THE MAGAZINE, OPEN, IN RACHEL'S LAP

WE PULL UP AND AWAY INTO:

TWO-SHOT – RACHEL, SEATED; RUBY STANDING BESIDE HER

RACHEL COOPER  
Ruby, you didn't have no money to buy this.

RUBY  
You'll whip me!

RACHEL COOPER  
When did I ever?

RUBY  
This man down at the Drugstore...

RACHEL COOPER  
The Drugstore?

RUBY  
Miz Cooper. I never went to sewin' lessons all them times.

RACHEL COOPER  
What you been up to?

RUBY

I been out with men.

RUBY collapses face down over RACHEL'S lap and sobs, as we  
TRACK IN CLOSE.

RACHEL COOPER

Dear God, child!

Now RACHEL also weeps. She bends low over RUBY, stroking her  
hair.

RACHEL COOPER

You was lookin' for love, Ruby, the  
only foolish way you knowed how.

(she lifts Ruby's  
face cheek to cheek  
beside her own)

We all need love. Ruby, I lost the  
love of my son – I've found it with  
you-all.

They weep together.

RACHEL COOPER

You must grow up to be a fine, full  
woman; and I'm goin' to see to it  
you do.

She starts making up RUBY'S hair like that of a young woman.

RUBY

This gentleman warn't like them! He  
just give me a sody and the book.

RACHEL COOPER

Now who was this?

RUBY

He never asked me for nothin'.

RACHEL COOPER

He must have wanted somethin', Ruby.  
A man don't waste time on a girl  
unless he gets something.

RUBY shakes her head.

RACHEL COOPER

What'd you all talk about?

RUBY  
Pearl and John.

RACHEL COOPER  
John and Pearl!

RUBY nods.

RACHEL COOPER  
Is he their Pap?

RUBY shrugs.

RACHEL COOPER  
Why hasn't he been to the house?

DISSOLVE TO:

FULL SHOT – PREACHER ON HORSE ON ROAD

FULL FIGURE SHOT – RUBY

Seeing PREACHER, she drops two eggs.

RUBY  
(shouting)  
Miz Cooper!

RACHEL COOPER  
(o.s. from within  
house)  
What?

RUBY  
The man! The man!

TRACKING SHOT – PREACHER

He tethers his horse and, as we PAN and TRACK on behind him, walks to the bottom of the steps; RUBY moves into side of SHOT: beyond PREACHER, RACHEL stands behind her screen door, hands folded under apron.

PREACHER  
Mornin', ladies.

FULL FIGURE SHOT – RACHEL, BEHIND SCREEN

RACHEL COOPER  
How'do.

FULL FIGURE SHOT – PREACHER

RACHEL'S VIEWPOINT, through screen.

FULL FIGURE SHOT – RACHEL, BEHIND SCREEN

PREACHER  
You're Miz Cooper, I take it.

RACHEL COOPER  
(coming through door)  
It's about that John and that Pearl?

THREE-SHOT – PREACHER, RACHEL, RUBY IN BACKGROUND

PREACHER'S face twitches with emotion. He breaks out into great thankful sobs. He falls to his knees.

PREACHER  
My little lambs! To think I never  
hoped to see them again in this world!  
Oh, dear Madam, if you was to know  
what a thorny crown I have borne in  
my search for these strayed chicks!

CLOSE SHOT – RACHEL

She takes him in. He doesn't take her in.

THREE-SHOT – AS BEFORE

RACHEL COOPER  
Ruby, go fetch them kids.

RUBY minces off around the side of the house.

CLOSE SHOT – PREACHER – RACHEL'S ANGLE

He wipes off tears with the heel of his left hand, watching her.

PREACHER  
Ah, dear Madam, I see you're looking  
at my hands!

CLOSE SHOT – RACHEL

She is.

CLOSE SHOT – PREACHER – AS BEFORE

He holds up the right hand.

PREACHER

Shall I tell ye the little story of  
Right-Hand-Left-Hand – the tale of  
Good and Evil?

CLOSE SHOT – RACHEL

PREACHER

(o.s.)

It was with this left hand that old  
brother Cain struck the blow that  
laid his brother low –

RACHEL COOPER

(wanting to know)

Them kids is yours?

CLOSE SHOT – PREACHER

PREACHER

(recovering from the  
interruption)

My flesh and blood!

CLOSE SHOT – RACHEL

RACHEL COOPER

Where's your Missus?

TWO-SHOT – PROFILING RACHEL AND PREACHER

PREACHER gets to his feet.

PREACHER

She run off with a drummer one night.  
Durin' prayer-meetin'.

RACHEL COOPER

Where's she at?

PREACHER

Somewheres down river! Parkersburg,  
mebbe! – Cincinnati! – One of them  
Sodoms on the Ohio River.

RACHEL COOPER  
She took them kids with her?

PREACHER  
Heaven only knows what unholy sights  
and sounds those innocent little  
babes has heard in the dens of  
perdition where she dragged them!

CLOSE SHOT – RACHEL

RACHEL COOPER  
Right funny, hain't it, how they  
rowed all the way up river in a ten-  
foot john-boat!

CLOSE SHOT – PREACHER

...recovering, and by-passing it.

PREACHER  
Are they well?

He turns his head.

FULL SHOT – RACHEL AND PREACHER, FROM SIDE

All the CHILDREN enter, around corner of house. As they move  
in, RACHEL replies:

RACHEL COOPER  
A sight better than they was.

By now JOHN is on the top step beside RACHEL. One of his  
hands holds on to her skirt, as if he were pulling her towards  
him. His eyes never leave hers. All the CHILDREN freeze,  
PEARL is on ground, just beyond JOHN. Others in BACKGROUND;  
RUBY as near PREACHER as she can get.

PREACHER  
Gracious, gracious! You are a good  
woman, Miz Cooper!

RACHEL COOPER  
How you figgerin' to raise them two



without a woman?

PREACHER  
The Lord will provide.

PEARL, with a wail of happiness, drops the DOLL on the step and runs to PREACHER, who picks her up. JOHN instantly picks up the DOLL and holds it to him. He looks up at RACHEL.

CLOSE TWO-SHOT – JOHN AND RACHEL

JOHN looks deep into RACHEL'S eyes.

PREACHER  
(o.s.)  
The Lord is merciful! What a day is this! – And there's little John!

RACHEL COOPER  
What's wrong, John?

JOHN HARPER  
Nothin'.  
(he smiles)

PREACHER  
(o.s.)  
Come to me, boy!

RACHEL COOPER  
What's wrong, John?

TWO-SHOT – PREACHER AND PEARL

PREACHER  
Didn't you hear me, boy?

TWO-SHOT – JOHN AND RACHEL

RACHEL bends a little over him. She wants the situation clarified.

RACHEL COOPER  
John, when your Dad says 'come', you should mind him.

JOHN HARPER  
He ain't my Dad.

## HEAD CLOSE-UP – RACHEL

She takes this in; JOHN has sold her. She looks to PREACHER  
o.s.

RACHEL COOPER

He ain't no Preacher neither. I've  
seen Preachers in my time, an' some  
of 'em was saints on earth. A few  
was crookeder'n a dog's hind leg,  
but this 'un's got 'em all beat for  
badness.

She starts to turn.

## GROUP SHOT

She walks purposefully into the house. PREACHER lunges for  
JOHN and the DOLL.

## CLOSE TWO-SHOT – PREACHER AND JOHN

JOHN ducks under the porch and PREACHER tries to follow him.  
He can't get under. o.s. we hear the slam of the screen door.  
PREACHER'S head comes up to see and we TILT UP, shooting  
OVER the back of his head. RACHEL stands there, full figure,  
with a pump-gun.

RACHEL COOPER

Just march yourself yonder to your  
horse, Mister.

Back of PREACHER'S head is still immobile.

RACHEL COOPER

March, Mister! I'm not foolin'.

## CLOSE SHOT – PREACHER, OVER GUN-BARREL

PREACHER gets to his feet. The open knife is in his hand. As  
we see it, the gun-barrel twitches. PREACHER backs away  
towards his horse, bouncing the knife lightly in his hand.

PREACHER

(screaming)

You ain't done with Harry Powell  
yet! The Lord God Jehovah will guide  
my hand in vengeance! You devils!  
You Whores of Babylon! I'll come

back when it's dark!

As he mounts his horse we

DISSOLVE TO:

FULL SHOT – RACHEL'S HOUSE – NIGHT

It is dark. o.s. we hear PREACHER singing Leaning.

FULL FIGURE SHOT – RACHEL

She sits in profile, her gun across her knees. Song continues o.s.

FULL SHOT – THE CHILDREN, ASLEEP

...in a big bed. RUBY sits up, listening to song o.s.

FULL FIGURE SHOT – RACHEL, AS BEFORE

Song continues o.s. We PAN to PREACHER outside. We see him through window. He sits hunched on a stump.

FULL SHOT – THE HOUSE, OVER PREACHER

He continues singing.

HEAD PROFILE – RACHEL

After a moment we see her mouth open; and either to comfort herself or to drown out PREACHER'S voice, she joins in the hymn.

FULL SHOT – THE HOUSE – AS IN OPENING SHOT

A descending candle moves past a window; RACHEL and PREACHER sing o.s.

FULL SHOT – PREACHER ON STUMP

...over back of RACHEL'S head. The song ends. RUBY enters SHOT carrying a candle. Its light blacks out the window-glass. RACHEL looks up.

RACHEL COOPER

Moonin' around the house over that  
mad dog of a Preacher! Shame, Ruby!

She blows out the candle. We see through the window. PREACHER has gone.

CLOSE SHOT – RACHEL

RACHEL COOPER  
Merciful Heaven!

She stands up.

CLOSE TWO-SHOT – RACHEL AND RUBY

RACHEL COOPER  
Ruby, get the children out of bed.  
Bring them all down here to the  
kitchen.

RUBY leaves the SHOT. RACHEL moves towards window. She puts her hand over her eyes.

RACHEL COOPER  
Women is such fools!

The soft hoot of an owl o.s. RACHEL looks up.

CLOSE SHOT –  
AN OWL ON A BRANCH, LOOKING DOWN CLOSE SHOT –  
A BABY RABBIT CLOSE SHOT – THE OWL SPREADS HIS WINGS AND  
SWOOPS CLOSE SHOT – RACHEL

Still for a second; then o.s., the scream of a rabbit.

RACHEL COOPER  
It's a hard world for little things.

OVER this line we have heard the patter of feet down staircase. She turns.

GROUP SHOT – THE CHILDREN

They look at her with complete trust.

GROUP SHOT – RACHEL, OVER CHILDREN

RACHEL COOPER  
(snapping)  
Children, I got lonesome. I figgered  
we might play games.

PEARL and MARY jump up and down, patting their palms. RACHEL extends her hands and they gather close to her.

PEARL HARPER  
Won't you tell us a story?

CLOSE SHOT – RACHEL

RACHEL COOPER  
I might  
(a swift furious glance  
into the moonlight)  
I might tell a story.

She sits down, the gun across her knees.

GROUP SHOT – RACHEL AND CHILDREN

...as MARY and PEARL sit at her feet. RUBY stands beside RACHEL. JOHN stands near RACHEL.

CLARY  
I'll light the lamp.

RACHEL COOPER  
It's more fun hearin' stories in the  
dark.

CLARY sits at RACHEL'S feet.

CLOSE PANNING SHOT – JOHN

He is alert now. He moves in close beside RACHEL, whom we PAN into CLOSE TWO-SHOT with him, and presses the whole of his right arm against her arm. RACHEL registers quietly.

CLOSE GROUP SHOT – RACHEL AND CHILDREN

RACHEL COOPER  
Well... mind what I told you about  
little Jesus and his Ma and Pa and  
how there was No Room at the Inn?

HEAD CLOSE-UP – RACHEL

Her eyes, sharp and glittering, look outside.

FULL SHOT – THE OUTSIDE, FEATURING EMPTY STUMP, RACHEL'S VIEWPOINT

## GROUP SHOT – RACHEL AND CHILDREN

She gets up with gun; we PULL AWAY; in BACKGROUND, CHILDREN turn faces to keep watching her. She comes close to window, gun ready, CHILDREN in BACKGROUND

RACHEL COOPER

Well now, there was this sneakin',  
no-'count, ornery King Herod!

She turns round and walks back to her chair; CHILDREN'S eyes always on her.

RACHEL COOPER

And he heard tell of this little  
King Jesus growin' up and old Herod  
figgered: Well, shoot! There sure  
won't be no room for the both of us!  
(she sits down)  
I'll just nip this in the bud.

## GROUP SHOT – RACHEL AND CHILDREN, FROM SIDE

RACHEL COOPER

(continuing)

Well, he never knowed for sure which  
one of all them babies of the land  
was King Jesus.

## HEAD CLOSE-UP – RACHEL

Her eyes glittering as she turns to look towards us.

## RESUME SIDE GROUP SHOT

RACHEL gets up, with gun. Again we PULL AWAY, as faces of all CHILDREN in b.g. turn to watch her.

RACHEL COOPER

And so that cursed old King Herod  
figgered if he was to kill all the  
babies in the land, he'd be sure to  
get little Jesus.

Without speaking, she goes back to her chair.

## FRONT GROUP SHOT

RACHEL COOPER  
(more relaxed)  
And when little King Jesus' Ma and  
Pa heard about that plan, what do  
you reckon they went and done?

CLARY  
They hid in a broom closet!

MARY  
They hid under the porch!

HEAD CLOSE-UP – JOHN

JOHN HARPER  
No; they went a-runnin'.

TWO-SHOT – RACHEL AND JOHN

RACHEL COOPER  
Well now, John, that's just what  
they done! They went a-runnin!

The clock starts striking three. RACHEL looks to sound o.s.

FULL SHOT – CLOCK AND HALL MIRROR, BEYOND DARK KITCHEN

In the mirror, a shadow ducks.

FULL GROUP SHOT – RACHEL AND CHILDREN

RACHEL gets up, gun at port, and faces into the darkness.

PREACHER  
(o.s.)  
Figured I was gone, eh?

Eyes on the darkness, she bends low to the CHILDREN.

RACHEL COOPER  
(whispering)  
Run hide in the staircase! Run quick!

They scatter out of shot; RUBY lingers.

RACHEL COOPER  
(without turning to  
her)  
Ruby, git.

RUBY obeys in a trance. RACHEL, gun at ready, looks into the darkness.

FULL SCREEN – DARKNESS

Pause.

RACHEL COOPER  
(o.s.; in a high,  
steady voice)  
What do you want?

PREACHER  
(o.s.)  
Them kids!

RACHEL COOPER  
(o.s.)  
What are you after them for?

PREACHER  
(o.s.)  
None of your business, Madam.

RACHEL COOPER  
I'm givin' you to the count of three  
to get out that screen door; then  
I'm a-comin' across this kitchen  
shootin'!

A stepped-on cat screams o.s. and PREACHER'S satanic face, and his hand lifting the open knife, rise swiftly from floor.

FULL FIGURE SHOT – RACHEL – SAME SHOT AS BEFORE

She fires off her gun.

FULL SHOT – SCREEN DOOR

PREACHER staggers out and runs yelping with pain into the barn. o.s. we hear the zing-zing of a country phone being cranked.

GROUP SHOT – RACHEL, OVER BACKS OF CHILDREN'S HEADS

They huddle on the stairs in reverent silence. RACHEL, her gun slung sportily under one arm, talks into wall phone which hangs just within the box stairway.



RACHEL COOPER  
Miz Booher? Rachel Cooper. Git them  
State Troopers out to my place. I  
done treed somep'n up in my barn.

DISSOLVE TO:

FULL SHOT – RACHEL AND JOHN

RACHEL sits on the screened porch, awake, gun on knees. JOHN  
sits on floor, asleep, his head leaning against her. Barn in  
BACKGROUND. Sunrise.

CLOSE SHOT – RACHEL AND JOHN

Same position. JOHN awakes.

JOHN HARPER  
I'll see to Pearl.

RACHEL COOPER  
I'll make coffee.

They get up and start into kitchen.

GROUP SHOT – THE CHILDREN, OVER RACHEL AND JOHN

They lie huddled in calm sleep. JOHN and RACHEL watch a  
moment.

JOHN HARPER  
She's all right.

They start for the stove.

TWO-SHOT – RACHEL AND JOHN, AROUND STOVE

RACHEL puts her gun beside the stove, ready to hand, and  
picks up a coffee-pot; JOHN puts kindling in stove.

RACHEL COOPER  
John, you know? When you're little  
you have more endurance than God is  
ever to grant you again? Children  
are Man at his strongest. They abide.

JOHN looks at her a moment. o.s. we hear police car sirens.  
They look towards the sound.

## FULL SHOT – THROUGH POLICE CAR WINDSHIELD

We SHOOT OVER two TROOPERS. Sirens loud, they rapidly approach RACHEL'S house as RACHEL, without gun, holding JOHN'S hand, comes down to fence. Presently, the other CHILDREN hurry out of house behind. The car brakes.

## FULL SHOT – RACHEL AND CHILDREN OVER TWO POLICE CARS – BARN IN BACKGROUND

The TROOPERS, fanning wide, advance towards barn. RACHEL and the CHILDREN are grouped a short distance behind them. The barn door gapes black. Short pause; then PREACHER appears.

A TROOPER

(shouting)

Is that him, Ma'am?

RACHEL COOPER

(shouting)

Yes! Mind where you shoot, boys!  
There's children here!

TROOPER

Whyn't you call us up before?

RACHEL COOPER

Didn't want yer big feet trackin' up  
my clean floors.

## CLOSE SHOT – PREACHER

He stands, swaying; his left arm is bloody and helpless. In his right hand the open knife hangs apathetic. His eyes are glazed. He does not seem to care whether they come or not.

TROOPER'S VOICE

(o.s.)

Harry Powell, you're under arrest  
for the murder of Willa Harper!

## MEDIUM SHOT – PREACHER AND TROOPERS – JOHN'S VIEWPOINT

TROOPERS close in on PREACHER, from before and behind, exactly as for BEN'S arrest.

## CLOSE SHOT – JOHN

The same sickly look, as at BEN'S arrest.

MEDIUM SHOT – PREACHER AND TROOPERS – JOHN'S VIEWPOINT

One TROOPER smacks the back of PREACHER'S head with a pistol-barrel.

CLOSE SHOT – JOHN

JOHN HARPER  
(shouting)  
Don't!

RESUME VIEWPOINT SHOT

Another TROOPER, with a pistol barrel, knocks the knife from PREACHER'S lifted hand.

CLOSE SHOT – JOHN

JOHN HARPER  
(shouting)  
Don't!

RESUME VIEWPOINT SHOT

PREACHER sinks to his knees as both men, and two others from the front, close in on him. The tableau is the same as in BEN'S arrest.

CLOSE SHOT – JOHN

JOHN HARPER  
(shouting)  
Dad!

FRONT GROUP SHOT – RACHEL AND CHILDREN

JOHN grabs the DOLL from PEARL and starts to run.

RACHEL COOPER  
John! John!

She starts after him.

FULL SHOT – TROOPERS, JOHN, RACHEL, OVER PREACHER

PREACHER prostrate along bottom of screen. TROOPERS are beating him. JOHN runs up from BACKGROUND followed by RACHEL.

JOHN rushes among the TROOPERS, flogging PREACHER over the head with the DOLL. The TROOPERS, astounded, lay off. RACHEL is stopped in her tracks.

JOHN HARPER

Here! Here! Take it back! I can't stand it, Dad! It's too much, Dad! I don't want it! I can't do it! Here! Here!

The DOLL has burst open and the money has spilled over PREACHER. Now two TROOPERS gently lift JOHN away. RACHEL lifts him in her arms; she turns towards house.

FULL FIGURE PULL SHOT – RACHEL AND JOHN – GROUP IN BACKGROUND

She carries JOHN towards the house. His head hangs back over her arm. We hear his dry, exhausted sobs.

INT. COURTROOM – DAY – CLOSE SHOT – ICEY

ICEY SPOON

(yelling)

Lynch him! Lynch him!

TWO-SHOT – WALT AND ICEY

ICEY SPOON

(yelling)

Bluebeard!

WALT

(yelling at all the men around him)

Twenty-five wives!

ICEY SPOON

And he killed every last one of 'em!

GROUP SHOT –

WALT, ICEY, MEMBERS OF COURTROOM AUDIENCE

Perhaps ten faces. Most are frenetic. Our two LOAFERS are having fun. General hubbub o.s. A gavel o.s.

ICEY SPOON

(yelling)

If the People of Marshall County...

LOAFERS  
(cynically, across  
her)  
Bluebeard! Bluebeard!

CLOSE SHOT – JOHN

He looks to sound of gavel. The hubbub and the gaveling stop.

LAWYER  
(o.s.)  
Will you identify the prisoner?

JOHN looks over his shoulder in same direction as the gavel.

LAWYER  
(o.s.)  
Please, little lad. Won't you look  
yonder...  
(his pointing finger  
enters the shot.  
John shakes as if he  
had a cold)  
...and tell the Court if that is the  
man who killed your mother?

JOHN looks at the finger. Short pause.

LAWYER  
(o.s.)  
It's all right, Mrs. Cooper. You can  
take the little fellow away.

The LAWYER'S hands gently help him from chair.

GROUP SHOT – RACHEL AND CHILDREN

...as LAWYER'S hands consign JOHN to RACHEL.

LAWYER  
Merry Christmas to you and yours,  
Mrs. Cooper.

The CHILDREN bob and reply, ad lib, "Merry Christmas to you."  
RACHEL sniffs.

LAWYER  
(o.s.)

And what's Santy Claus going to bring  
you, little man?

Above JOHN'S head, by winding and holding to ear, RACHEL  
pantomimes a watch.

LAWYER  
(o.s.)  
O-ho-oo-o!

ICEY SPOON  
(o.s.)  
Them is the ones he sinned against,  
my friends!

Gaveling starts.

LOAFER  
(o.s.)  
Bluebeard! Bluebeard!

CROWD  
(o.s.)  
Bluebeard! Bluebeard!

As RACHEL and CHILDREN turn to go, gaveling and hubbub fade  
and we

LAP DISSOLVE TO:

INT. A CAFE – NIGHT

RACHEL and her CHILDREN sit in two booths, in a corner, next  
to a big front window. Christmas parcels on bench at RACHEL'S  
right.

FULL SHOT – RACHEL AND HER GROUP, THEN CAFE AND WINDOW

Sound o.s. of approaching crowd. As we PULL BACK we bring in  
a few other customers and the big window. There are Christmas  
decorations in the cafe and the street outside is hung with  
them. Thirty feverish people, some of whom carry torches,  
enter the scene; ICEY stares in the window and screams.

ICEY SPOON  
(high-pitched)  
Them's hers!

Everyone in the cafe stands up. RACHEL gathers her parcels.

ICEY rushes to door and opens it.

ICEY SPOON  
Them's her orphans!

She turns to crowd.

RACHEL COOPER  
Where's Ruby?

CLARY  
She went.

ICEY shouts into the cafe.

ICEY SPOON  
Them poor little lambs!

ICEY turns to the street mob. RACHEL hurries her CHILDREN to door.

ICEY leaves door to yell at mob.

ICEY SPOON  
Them's the ones he sinned against,  
my friends!

CASHIER  
(across Ikey)  
Go out the back way, Miz Cooper.

As RACHEL leaves SHOT, the CASHIER shuts and locks the door.

EXT. BACK ALLEY – NIGHT – PANNING SHOT – RACHEL AND COMPANY EMERGING FROM DOOR

MARY and CLARY come out first and start walking to our left. RACHEL comes out and hurries off to our right, followed by JOHN, holding PEARL'S hand.

We PAN to MARY and CLARY.

CLARY  
Ain't we goin' to the Bus Depot?

No answer. They turn and we PAN with them as they hurry after RACHEL, and we bring in RACHEL, charging away from us with her brood hustling to keep up.

## GROUP SHOT – FEATURING WALT AND ICEY

ICEY carries a torch. She is flanked by rabid faces and by smiling LOAFERS, one of whom carries an axe. As she speaks, a MAN rushes up to WALT and gives him a rope.

ICEY SPOON

(shouting; high-pitched)

Draggin' the name of the Lord through  
the evil mud of his soul!

WALT

(bellowing)

Come on!

They all start marching, in step.

## PANNING SHOT – RACHEL AND CHILDREN

Marching and voices o.s. and in BACKGROUND.

Carrying Christmas parcels, they hurry alongside a building  
and, at CENTER of PAN, cross the end of a street.

The MOB marches down the street TOWARDS CAMERA; Men run to  
join it.

ICEY SPOON

(high-pitched)

He lied!

WALT

Tricked us!

ICEY SPOON

He taken the Lord's name in vain and  
he trampled on His Holy Book!

WALT

String that Bluebeard up to a pole!

ICEY SPOON

He's Satan hiding behind the Cross!

OTHERS

(ad lib)

Lynch him! String him up!

We PAN RACHEL and CHILDREN past this street and they hurry



towards RUBY, who stands alone in BACKGROUND, facing the jail.

#### HEAD CLOSE-UP – RUBY'S ECSTATIC FACE

In BACKGROUND, RACHEL and CHILDREN hurry towards her. MOB noise o.s. Hearing the approach of RACHEL'S GROUP, RUBY turns the back of her head towards us. Now there are no mob voices; only the ominous sound of fifty-odd people marching in step.

RUBY  
I love him!

#### TRACKING SHOT – RUBY

Ominous silence.

RUBY  
He loves me because I'm so purty!  
You think he's like them others!

#### SIDE TRACKING SHOT – RUBY, RACHEL AND GROUP

Marching sound o.s.

RACHEL firmly takes RUBY'S arm and drags her off in our direction. RACHEL shoos MARY and CLARY ahead of her. JOHN and PEARL flank RACHEL, clinging to her wide skirts. RUBY, nearest us, keeps looking back over her shoulder. We TRACK them along side of JAIL to rear of JAIL.

RUBY  
(continuing)  
You took on something awful about  
him buying me that there movie book.  
You was so mad you shot him and the  
blue men took him.

On "blue men," we stop TRACKING and, as GROUP leaves SHOT, CENTER a POLICE CAR, waiting at rear door of JAIL. POLICEMEN start out of door.

#### MEDIUM GROUP SHOT – POLICEMEN AND PREACHER

They roughly hustle PREACHER into the car. Marching sound o.s.

#### SHOT – FROM WITHIN CAR – BART

PREACHER and POLICE are in b.g. Through car window we see BART the HANGMAN come out of his door. He wears his derby. A POLICEMAN puts head out of window. Marching sound o.s.

MEDIUM SHOT – BART THE HANGMAN

On porch, by door, is a doll's perambulator, but this time there is a Christmas wreath on the door. Marching o.s.

POLICEMAN  
(o.s.)  
Hey Bart!

Auto engine starts up o.s.

HEAD CLOSE-UP – BART

BART  
Yeah?

MEDIUM SHOT – BART

Marching o.s.

POLICEMAN  
(o.s.)  
We're savin' this bird up fer you!

HEAD CLOSE-UP – BART

Marching o.s.

BART  
This time it'll be a privilege.

FULL PANNING SHOT – POLICE CAR, THEN RACHEL AND GROUP

The car jumps fast out of SHOT and we PAN PAST BART and CENTER RACHEL and GROUP, walking fast away from us. Mob voices o.s.

A VOICE  
(o.s., over departing  
car)  
Bust the door down!

CLOSE GROUP SHOT – RACHEL AND CHILDREN

Clutching Christmas parcels they hurry away from us into darkness. RUBY, hanging back, dragged by RACHEL, babbles

over her shoulder.

RUBY

(happily)

They'll git him out. I'll git my things ready – my shawl and my Mickey Mouse wristwatch that don't run and the straw hat with the flower, and we'll be married and live happily ever after!

VOICES

(o.s. ad lib, cutting across Ruby)

Bust the door down! Set fahr to it! Where's that axe! Climb up on the balcony! You six git 'round to the back!

ICEY SPOON

(o.s., screaming)

People of Marshall County!

DISSOLVE TO:

FULL SHOT – NIGHT LANDSCAPE –  
PINE TREES, AND SOFTLY FALLING  
SNOW

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. RACHEL'S HOUSE – EVENING; SNOWING – CLOSE SHOT –  
RACHEL AT MAILBOX

She peers into empty mailbox.

RACHEL COOPER

Nothing!

She slams the box shut and, as we TILT and PAN, walks away from us through snow towards her lighted house.

RACHEL COOPER

I'm glad they didn't send me nothing!  
Whenever they do it's never nothing  
I want but something to show me how  
fancy and smart they've come up in  
the world.

She goes into the house.

INT. RACHEL'S KITCHEN

It is decorated for Christmas.

GROUP SHOT – RACHEL AND CHILDREN

Rachel enters; the four girls stand in line, packages ready;  
JOHN stands in b.g., in doorway to next room.

MARY

Can we give you your presents now?

CLOSE SHOT – RACHEL

RACHEL COOPER

Shoot! You don't mean to say you got  
me a present!

Their hands hold packages up to her.

RACHEL COOPER

Shoot now!

She takes a package.

CLOSE SHOT – JOHN

RACHEL COOPER

(o.s.)

Why, Ruby!

Embarrassed, JOHN leaves the shot.

RACHEL COOPER

(o.s.)

A POT-HOLDER!

CLOSE SHOT – JOHN – NEW ANGLE

From a fruit bowl, he selects the biggest apple, shines it  
on his shirt, wraps it in the doily under his bowl, opens a  
drawer and gets out a clip clothespin, clips his package,  
and leaves shot.

RACHEL COOPER

(o.s., continuing)

And much neater than last year's,

Ruby!

(Sound of tearing  
gift-paper o.s.)

(o.s.)

And Clary! ANOTHER POT-HOLDER! Ain't  
that thoughtful. I'm always burnin'  
my hands.

FULL SHOT – RACHEL, AND CHILDREN, OVER JOHN

...as he enters with present. RUBY and CLARY are standing  
aside; MARY and PEARL hold up a third pot-holder.

RACHEL COOPER

And did you two make this together?

Both nod.

MARY

You hop us, some.

CLOSE SHOT – RACHEL, ACCEPTING JOHN'S GIFT

She opens it.

RACHEL COOPER

(quietly)

John, that's the richest gift a body  
could have.

(continued, briskly)

You'll find your presents in the  
cupboard under the china-closet.

GROUP SHOT – RACHEL AND CHILDREN

RACHEL COOPER

You know where, Ruby.

All turn and run through door except Ruby, whom RACHEL  
detains.

RACHEL COOPER

Ruby:

(she takes a box from  
her apron pocket)

This is yours.

RUBY opens it quickly; it is a cheap costume-jewelry flower-  
spray. RUBY and RACHEL kiss like grown women and RUBY goes

to join the others.

#### FULL SHOT – RACHEL

She turns to her stove and is framed by Christmas garland in b.g.; banging pots about and stirring; praying as she works, which is the best way to pray.

Appropriate noise, o.s., of opening presents.

#### RACHEL COOPER

Lord save little children!

(bang)

You'd think the world would be ashamed  
to name such a day as Christmas for  
one of them...

(bang)

...and go on the same old way.

(she starts stirring)

My soul is humble when I see the way  
little ones accept their lot.

(she pauses in stirring)

Lord save little children! The wind  
blows and the rain is cold. Yet,  
they abide.

In BACKGROUND, the girls run upstairs, their new dresses over their arms. RACHEL glances over her shoulder.

#### MEDIUM SHOT – JOHN – RACHEL'S VIEWPOINT

JOHN stands in next room, looking at something in his hand.

#### CLOSE SHOT – JOHN – IN OTHER ROOM

We see he holds a watch. He looks like any boy, rich or poor, with his first watch.

#### HEAD CLOSE-UP – RACHEL

#### RACHEL COOPER

(whispering, so that  
he does not hear)

For every child, rich or poor there's  
a time of running through a dark  
place; and there's no word for a  
child's fear. A child sees a shadow  
on the wall, and sees a Tiger. And  
the old ones say, "There's no tiger;

go to sleep." And when that child sleeps, it's a Tiger's sleep, and a Tiger's night, and a Tiger's breathing on the windowpane. Lord save little children!

JOHN enters boldly behind her and, with a scrape, masterfully swings a chair around close to her and straddles it. RACHEL turns her back to us. She expects him to speak, he doesn't, so she fills in:

RACHEL COOPER

That watch sure is a fine, loud ticker!

JOHN gives her a burning, proud smile.

RACHEL COOPER

It'll be nice to have someone around the house who can give me the right time of day.

JOHN finds his tongue.

JOHN HARPER

This watch is the nicest watch I ever had.

RACHEL COOPER

A feller can't just go around with run-down, busted watches.

She turns back, face to us, and goes on with her stirring. JOHN goes off towards the staircase to join the girls; then turns back.

CLOSE SHOT – JOHN

JOHN HARPER

I ain't afraid no more! I got a watch that ticks! I got a watch that shines in the dark!

He turns and hurries to the stairs.

HEAD CLOSE-UP – RACHEL

Over the sound of his running upstairs:

RACHEL COOPER  
(telling us)  
They abide and they endure.

LAP DISSOLVE TO:

FULL SHOT – STARRY SKY

FADE IN TITLE:

THE END