

PROD. #K0620

AMERICAN GOTHIC

"Echo of Your Last Goodbye"

Written

by

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TEASER

FADE IN

EXT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Ben walks out of a local restaurant -- the kind of homey place where macaroni & cheese is listed as a vegetable. It's a cold night, one of the coldest of the year. Ben blows warm air on his hands, hunches his shoulders and shoves his hands in his jacket pocket --

CLOSE ON HANDS IN POCKET

A woman's hand slides in beside Ben's.

WIDER

An attractive woman, CINDY, thirties, snuggles close in the cold night air, her hand clutching Ben's in his pocket as they walk toward his car. They smile at each other -- this is a good date.

CINDY

I hope you don't mind.

BEN

You can warm your hand in mine anytime.

CINDY

When I read your ad, I could tell you were a man who knew how to treat a woman.

A man passes.

BEN

Shhh.

CINDY

What?

BEN

Well, I don't want people to know I'm listed in the personals.

Ben opens his car door for Cindy, lets her in.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

CINDY

What's wrong with it?

(playful)

You're not one of those guys with  
lots of secrets are you?

She unlocks his door for him, and Ben climbs in.

BEN

It's just that some of the guys I  
know, if they found out --

The police radio crackles to life --

FLOYD (V.O.)

(filtered)

Ben, are you out there?

Ben grabs the radio mic --

BEN

Kinda busy. Whatcha got, Floyd?

FLOYD (V.O.)

(filtered)

Half of-Goat Town's called  
complaining some smell is stinking  
up the neighborhood.

BEN

Floyd, I'm real sorry but --

Cindy, an excited smile on her face, puts her hand in front  
of the mic.

CINDY

Let's go together.

BEN

(to Floyd)

Hold on.

(to Cindy)

You are kidding.

CUT TO

EXT. GOAT TOWN - NIGHT

Tar paper shacks, shotgun design, boarded up windows, all  
stand illuminated by the few street lights that aren't  
shattered. A few houses have lights behind stained curtains  
or tacked-up newspaper blinds. Distant discordant music in  
some African language plays angrily from some home.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

Ben's car pulls up, shuts off. Ben gets out, winces at the smell.

BEN

Jeez! It smells like boiled vomit.  
(off Cindy's reaction)  
Sorry.

Cindy gets out, intrigued.

CINDY

I think it's coming from over here!

And Cindy is off, across the street into the shadow of --

A GIANT VICTORIAN HOUSE

A grand rotting monument to faded glory. Ben calls after --

BEN

Cindy --

Something RUSTLES, Ben spins --

DARK FIGURES run between two of the shacks.

At the other end of the street, three figures stand silhouetted out of the light. Motionless. Staring.

Ben watches them for a beat, then turns toward the house, following Cindy into the darkness --

BEN

Cindy!

EXT. VICTORIAN - BACK YARD - NIGHT

Ben holds a handkerchief to his nose as he trounces through the overgrown back yard.

Unexpectedly, Cindy grabs him from the darkness, pulling him down.

CINDY

Look! A light.

WINDOW

Sure enough, a first-story window glows dimly through a scrawny, diseased shrub.

BEN AND CINDY

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

Ben motions for Cindy to stay put, but as he moves closer, she follows. Ben pushes through the shrub, swatting away flies, woozy from the stink. Just as he looks up over the windowsill, a LOUD CRASH behind him, he spins around --

ACROSS THE BACK YARD

The dark figure of kids running down the back ally knocking over trash cans --

BEN

Looks back in the window --

BEN'S POINT OF VIEW - IN THE WINDOW

-Lucas Buck has his arms around Merlyn Temple's neck, which he deftly snaps --

BEN

races from the window in a blind panic, tripping, falling. Cindy grabs him before he can run any further. Ben rolls on his back, gasps and stammers --

BEN

Wh-wh-wh-what did you see?

Cindy looks at Ben curiously. She leans over him, talking softly.

CINDY

(romantic)

I saw a man and a woman. And they were touching. And he put his hands through her hair --

Cindy runs her hands up in her hair in a sensuous demonstration.

CINDY

And then he did this --

Suddenly, Cindy wrenches her head around, snapping her neck, and as it turns 360 degrees, her face is revealed as Merlyn Ann Temple, and she howls LAUGHTER --

CONTINUED

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CONTINUED 2

BEN

His face twists in torment, and he lets loose a SCREAM from deep within his soul...

BLACK

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN

INT. GAIL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Scene to come...

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Ben sits alone, shell-shocked, doing the only sensible thing a right-thinking citizen should do on a night like this -- he downs another bourbon and holds up the glass.

BEN

I'm dry over here.

The bartender, ALLISON -- a late-thirties woman who doesn't look a day over fifty, brings the bottle.

ALLISON

What happened?  
(and as a joke)  
Bad date?

Ben's stare cracks her facade.

BEN

Pour. More.

She does as she's told. Ben takes a long draw, then, hearing the sound of LAUGHTER, quickly, and nervously looks toward the door.

Selena enters, giggling and surveying the scene. Her eyes rest on Ben. He gives a relieved sigh, shakes his head and smiles.

BEN

I never thought I'd be relieved to see you walking in here.

Selena walks closer.

SELENA

Relieved? Not happy, glad, enchanted, intrigued?

BEN

Been there; done that; bought the t-shirt.

Selena laughs, with an edge of gaiety -- an edge Ben hasn't seen.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

BEN

Well, aren't we perky? Want some  
bourbon to drown out those giggles?

SELENA

No thanks, I've got a very  
important pool match.

Ben looks over as Billy walks in.

BEN

Late rendezvous?

SELENA

Dinner, romantic movie, and he just  
went and parked the car.

Selena grins, amused by Billy's gentlemanly antics. Billy  
walks up.

SELENA

What about you? Nothing pan out  
from your ad in the personals?

Ben stiffens.

BEN

W-what ad?

Selena smiles -- gotcha.

SELENA

Oh, come on, Ben. What are you  
trying to hide?

Billy slides his arm around Selena, pats Ben's shoulder.

BILLY

Ben. Good as always.

BEN

You know, she plays a mean game.

BILLY

I can handle myself.

Ben looks to Selena.

BEN

He thinks I'm talking about pool.

Selena starts to pull Billy away, but Billy turns to Ben.

CONTINUED



CONTINUED 2

BILLY

When I was a kid, I busted broncos  
one summer at camp.

BEN

So?

BILLY

I've never been thrown from the  
saddle. Don't intend to start.

Selena smirks.

SELNA

For now, we're just playing pool.

BEN

And don't let her rack your balls.

They walk away. Ben puts his head on the bar.

BEN

Christ. I'm loosing my mind and my  
dignity on the same night.

CLOSE ON JUKEBOX :

A woman puts coins in, punches buttons. CDs spin in the  
center display. A soulful song begins -- Mel Torme's "Echo  
of Your Last Goodbye."

BEN

He lifts his head from the bar and stares across into space  
as the music flows over him in a haunting melancholy moment.

FEET

In black high-heeled spikes, walking toward the bar, the  
CLICK, CLICK, CLICK of the heels setting the tempo for the  
song.

BEN

Eyes lost. The CLICK of the heels comes closer and stops.

WOMAN'S VOICE

May I have this dance?

Ben looks over at the woman -- Merlyn. Ben jumps back,  
knocking his glass to the floor. It shatters and Allison  
the bartender turns --

Except it's not Allison; it's Merlyn.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED 3

Ben shoves off the bar, seeing --

BY THE POOL TABLE

Selena looks up from a group playing pool, but she is Merlyn.

Billy turns from the cue rack, but HE is Merlyn!

BEN

He runs for the door. A woman at the phone turns -- Merlyn again. Ben freezes.

MERLYN  
Something stinks, Ben.

CUT TO

INT. BEN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ben enter, stumbling to the bed. He falls on it face first, glad to be in the safety and comfort of his house. He pops an eye open and sees his answering machine. The message light blinks on and off.

Ben reaches out and slaps the play button. The machine BEEPS and- -

MERLYN'S VOICE  
Hello, Ben. Have a long night?

Ben lifts his head up. No. It couldn't be. BEEP. Next message.

MERLYN'S VOICE  
You're awful quiet, Ben.

Ben propells himself off the bed and into the corner of the room, not beleiving what he is hearing.

MERLYN'S VOICE  
But you've been quiet about a lot of things for a long time, haven't you?

Ben grabs a small end table and races for the machine, smashing it with blow after blow.

MERLYN'S VOICE  
(coming a little after  
the machine is smashed)  
Be seeing you around...

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

And Ben tumbles back from the destroyed machine, falling to the floor, looking up, as if to God for answers.

DISSOLVE TO

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY - ESTABLISHING SHOT

Morning, before classes.

EXT. SCHOOL BREEZEWAY - DAY

Boone and Caleb walk around a corner on their way to school --

CALEB

What I'm sayin' is that with x-ray vision, melt-o-vision, and bein' able to fly and all -- NO ONE can beat up Superman, not even Hercules.

Boone starts to object, but stiffens as he sees --

GINA RAWLS

Gina is a couple of years older, pretty, but beneath the girlish dress she is tough enough to beat the crap out of Caleb and Boone.

GINA

(to Boone)  
Hey, shrimpy, my money got stuck again. You gonna get me my soda?

Boone reluctantly puts his books down and goes to the machine. Caleb watches as Boone slides his hand up the drop chute.

CALEB

Boone, you could get in bad trouble!

GINA

Why don't you go on to class, Little Orphan Annie.

CALEB

What did you call me?

Boone pulls out a soda, his arm all wet. Gina smirks.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

GINA

It's not diet.

Gina slaps Boone upside the head. He sticks his hand back in the slot.

CALEB

Com'on, Boone. Let's go!

GINA

They say you're so ugly that your mother jumped out the hospital window when you were born.

CALEB

Shut up!

Caleb shoves Gina, but she knocks him down. Boone, arm up in the machine, struggling, looks on --

GINA

Maybe it's working better now.

Gina slams the "diet soda" button. The machine WHIRS to life. Boone's arm snags -- the machine catching it -- pulling him against the face. He WHIMPERS in pain.

Caleb dives for the plug to the machine, snatching it out of the socket. The machine dies with a GROAN. Boone falls back clutching his throbbing hand. A diet soda falls in the slot.

CALEB

You could have broken his hand.

GINA

You could have shut up, and maybe none of this would have happened.

Gina picks up both cans and walks off. Caleb picks up Boone's books.

CALEB

You okay?

BOONE

You can't be makin' her mad like that. She'll beat me up.

Boone takes his books and stalks away, pissed.

CUT TO

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

As students file in, Caleb talks to Selena. He isn't getting a sympathetic audience.

SELENA

He shouldn't have tried to steal drinks from the machine.

CALEB

But, Miss Coombs, she made him!

SELENA

Now, I doubt that. But this should be a good lesson for little boys -- don't be sticking your fingers into places where they don't belong. At least not yet.

CALEB

But --

SELENA

Now, sit down, Caleb.

Caleb stalks to his seat, bitter at the injustice.

Selena walks over to her desk as the rest of the students take their seats. On her desk is a fresh-cut rose, thorns glistening with dew, and a note. She glances at the class, trying to figure out who sent it, but no one seems suspect.

CLOSE ON NOTE

"I had a great time beating you at pool -- Billy". Beside the note, Selena strokes the stem of the rose, then presses her thumb down on a thorn --

ON SELENA

She smiles to herself.

SELENA

(whisper)  
Sweet little Billy.

She takes in a sharp breath of surprise as she pricks her finger on a the rose thorn. She looks at her thumb and smiles again, sucking off the blood, savoring the moment.

CLOSE ON ROSE THORN

A small glistening drop of blood hangs with the dew on the tip of the thorn.

CUT TO

INT. SHERIFF'S STATION - DAY

Ben, feet up on the desk, reads the paper, which covers his face. Lucas walks up, clears his throat. Ben does not move. Lucas peers behind the paper -- Ben is fast asleep, head thrown back, mouth gaping. Lucas ponders this a moment, then reaches over with one finger and slowly pushes Ben's chin up until his mouth closes.

Ben does not wake; he breathes deeply through his nose. Holding the chin in place, Lucas takes his other hand and pinches Ben's nose closed.

Ben peacefully sleeps for a moment, then, unable to breath, leaps to his feet gasping, strewing the paper on the floor. Ben looks up only to see --

LUCAS

apparently deeply involved reading a report, looking over with bemusement at Ben.

LUCAS

The news is awful scary these days.

BEN

I-I couldn't breath.

Lucas goes to help Ben up.

LUCAS

Dysautonomia. It's an imbalance in the nervous system. It usually only strikes during sleep. But you weren't asleep. At least not during the past three phone calls into the office?

Ben sheepishly gathers the paper off the floor. Floyd enters and tries to make himself busy at his desk, but he is obviously eavesdropping, and getting some enjoyment out of Ben's plight.

BEN

I had a rough night last night.

LUCAS

Figure out what is stinking up Goat Town?

BEN

Lucas, that could be a complicated situation.

LUCAS

Ben.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

BEN

Yes.

LUCAS

Did you go to Goat Town last night?

BEN

Yes.

LUCAS

Did you solve the problem?

BEN

Now, wait a second --

LUCAS

That would be "no," you didn't solve the problem.

BEN

Lucas, I'll be straight with you --

LUCAS

See, I depend on you, as my deputy, to solve problems --

BEN

There was something real strange going on out there --

LUCAS

Find out what it is and tell me about it.

Ben looks at Lucas for a beat. No. This is't Lucas's doing.

LUCAS

Ben, you scared of goin' to Goat Town?

Ben is obviously very scared.

BEN

No.

LUCAS

Then go solve the problem. Take Floyd with you. I'm tired of people calling us about it.

Lucas walks out the front door, leaving Ben and Floyd. Ben glares at Floyd. Floyd gives a "who, me?" look back.

CUT TO

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

End of the school day. Students file out. Caleb walks out to meet Gail. He still looks angry from this morning. The pair walk along the sidewalk.

GAIL  
Hey, Caleb, want to go get slushies?

Caleb is in a foul mood.

CALEB  
Don't you have to work?

GAIL  
Not right now. Where's Boone?

CALEB  
Boone's mad at me cause of a bully.

GAIL  
Is a bully beating up on you and Boone? 'Cause I can go have a talk with Miss Coombs right now.

CALEB  
Tried that; didn't work. Boone's mad because I probably made it worse by standing up to her.

GAIL  
(surprised)  
Her?!

Lucas Buck steps in stride with the pair, as if out of nowhere.

LUCAS  
Now, don't be so sexist, Miss Emory. Girl bullies can be the worst because nobody believes such cute little things can have such black hearts.

Gail stops, faces Lucas.

GAIL  
Thank goodness we have such an expert on black hearts with us today, Sheriff. What's your advice? Just disappear?

LUCAS  
Now, Miss Emory, I think Caleb is seeking out your council.

CONTINUED



CONTINUED

Gail turns to Caleb.

GAIL

Well, if you can't get help from the teacher, I would try to ignore her so that she gets bored.

CALEB

It's Boone who's getting the worst of it.

GAIL

Well, Boone has to learn to stand up for himself.

LUCAS

You aren't advocating that little Boone actually resort to violence?

GAIL

Well, if he has to fight --

LUCAS

Caleb, violence is not a solution, particularly for Boone. If you beat her up, you've just made an enemy, and if you lose...

Lucas shrugs. Losing is not an option.

GAIL

Then how do you handle a situation like this?

Lucas keeps his eyes on Gail as he ponders his solution.

LUCAS

Hmmm. We have a young female who has taken an antagonistic attitude toward --

(motions to Caleb)

-- an upstanding member of the community.

(looks to Caleb)

In my experience, you can't have too few enemies and too many friends. Forgive her her sins, and let her know, really know, that you're better to have as a friend than an enemy.

CALEB

Be nice to her?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED 2

LUCAS

Don't just be nice.

(to Gail)

Try to make her feel special. She might turn out to be worth it.

Gail tries to act disinterested, but he's gotten to her. She motions Caleb that it is time to go.

GAIL

Until next time, Sheriff.

As they start to walk away, Lucas calls after --

LUCAS

Hey, Caleb!

Caleb and Gail turn. Lucas has both hands stretched out, palms open, empty.

LUCAS

Which hand has the money in it?

Caleb shrugs.

CALEB

Neither.

Lucas quickly wipes his hands together, producing six shining quarters in the palms of his hands.

LUCAS

Nope. Both.

Lucas hands him the money.

LUCAS

Get me a Charleston Chew and I'll show you how it's done.

CUT TO

EXTERIOR - DAY - CLOSE ON HANDKERCHIEF

Ben, with gloves on his hands, sprays the handkerchief with Lysol. REVEAL WE ARE --

INT. CAR/EXT. ABANDONED VICTORIAN - DAY

Ben ties the damp handkerchief up to his face like a bandit as Floyd watches.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

BEN

Floyd, when you get out of the car, you are going to be over-whelmed by one powerful stink, so I highly recomend --

Floyd opens his car and takes a whiff. Then steps out.

BEN

Floyd!

EXT. ABANDONED VICTORIAN - DAY

Ben gets out of the car as Floyd keeps sniffing walking toward the decrepit house. In the daylight, they can see the gang tags spray-painted on the porch walls and the rotting plywood over the busted windows.

FLOYD

I don't smell a thing.

Ben follows, lifting up his Lysol mask to smell for himself. He staggers, immediately nausiated.

BEN

Uggh. Steady. You don't smell that?

Floyd shrugs. Ben presses the handkerchief close to his nose and mouth, and follows Floyd across to the porch to the door, wincing at the rancid smell. The SOUND of SWARMING FLIES grows as they near the door. Ben tests the handle. Locked. He kicks the door open.

INT. VICTORIAN

The FLIES grow louder. Ben coughs as he enters the dark belly of the entrance hall. He clutches the handkerchief to his face, taking deep breaths, then gags. Tears stream down his eyes.

Floyd pushes past, oblivious.

FLOYD

You know, this was the old Youth Center. Must be closed eight, nine years. Does smell a little musty. I'll check upstairs.

And Floyd bounds up the stairs, disappearing into the darkness.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

Ben clicks his Mag light on --

The beam sweeps slowly across the blackness, spotlighting the decay: damp in the walls leaving psychedelic patterns beneath the paint, mold in the rotted carpet, even mushrooms, and the inevitable vandalism. Busted doors, broken glass, holes in the walls. The beam stops on a pile of strewn papers with crude crayon pictures, obviously drawn by children.

Ben moves to the pictures -- incongruously of happy family images -- green grass, red smiles, yellow suns. Construction paper with contrasting paint prints of little hands with crudely-signed names and ages -- Jack, 6, Louise, 5, Sean, 8. And one with crayon kids hugging the legs of a woman, inscribed -- "To Mrs. T, Goat Town Youth Center."

Ben kneels to look closer, but as he puts his hand on the floor, it gives, the wood ripping open and a vapor rising up. Ben tumbles back at the smell of the vapor, and begins to wretch. Suddenly,

Floyd SCREAMS (o.s.) --

Ben whips around to see, but --

MERLYN

stands blocking his view of the stairs.

MERLYN  
You are only as sick as your  
secrets, Ben.

Suddenly, the flies STOP BUZZING. The rotten vapor billows across the floor.

Ben turns and races for the door --

EXT. VICTORIAN

-- diving over the porch railing, slamming into the weeds. Above him the CRASH of glass. Ben looks up --

BEN'S POINT OF VIEW

A WOMAN (JUDITH TEMPLE) in a hospital smock smashes against the broken window, her hands gripping the sill, but somebody is forcing her out. And for a moment it is clear -- the man doing the forcing is Lucas Buck.

BEN

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

He watches, horrified --

POINT OF VIEW

Suddenly, the woman is bodily thrown, sailing out the attic window, shards of glass sparkling all around, streaking straight toward us, filling the screen with SCREAMS and blackness --

BEN

cowers, bracing for impact. But there is none.

FLOYD (O.S.)

Ben, you alright?

Ben looks up and sees --

FLOYD

standing over him, concerned. And beyond, Ben sees a figure in the shattered window -- Merlyn Temple.

FADE OUT

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN

INT. SHERIFF'S STATION - LUCAS' OFFICE - DAY

Lucas Buck talks on the phone when Ben storms in --

LUCAS

It was no problem at all, Mrs.  
Dunbar, happy to help --

Lucas sees Ben, who is loaded for bear, storming toward his desk.

LUCAS

Duty calls, gotta run.

And Ben slams his hand across the phone receiver cradle.

BEN

We gotta talk.

LUCAS

Bad day?

BEN

Bad decade, Lucas. Ten years ago I  
was standing in the hospital  
parking lot when Caleb's mother  
came sailing out a window.

Lucas stands, moves around his desk toward Ben.

LUCAS

Post-natal depression. The  
baby-crazies. If she'd had Caleb  
with her, she'd have killed him,  
too.

BEN

Well, I saw it again, 'cept this  
time I saw it all. I saw you  
throwing her out that window!

LUCAS

And what T.V. show was this on?

BEN

And last night, I saw you breaking  
that Merlyn girl's neck.

LUCAS

Was this before or after the aliens  
stuck you with the probes?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

Ben grabs Lucas, shaking him.

BEN

She's haunting me! Merlyn Temple's  
haunting me!!

Ben begins to cry, now hanging on to Lucas's shirt for support.

BEN

At the bar, and the old Youth  
Center...

This catches Lucas' attention. He guides a slumped Ben to his desk chair.

LUCAS

The Youth center in Goat Town? Is  
that where the stink is?

BEN

Yeah. Abandoned.

Lucas pours Ben a couple of fingers of bourbon, pours some for himself.

LUCAS

God knows what chemicals might be  
leeching up around there. I'll get  
that state team to go over the  
place, but I want you to stay away,  
get some rest, and have a doctor  
take a look at you.

BEN

Lucas, Floyd didn't smell a thing.

Lucas stiffens. He knows he can't rationalize this away.

LUCAS

(contempt)  
Merlyn.

BEN

I saw you break her neck that  
night.

Lucas stares at Ben a moment, downs the bourbon, and walks closer, all the contempt gone.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED 2

LUCAS

A retarded girl with no mother, a father that takes a shovel to her head, she wouldn't have been human if the doctors had saved her. She wouldn't have known one moment without pain. I don't carry guilt about that night, Ben. I loved Merlyn Temple too much for that. I love Caleb too much to saddle him with her burden.

BEN

Why? Because Caleb's --

Gail Emory stands in the doorway.

GAIL

His son. Or are you trying to keep that a secret, too?

Lucas and Ben both spin around to see her. Both are taken aback.

LUCAS

Fatherhood is based entirely on faith, Miss Emory.

GAIL

Do you often give testimonials of love to your deputies in your office?

LUCAS

Only when I'm talking about family. I'm big on family. Ben was just about to take a well-deserved nap on my sofa --

Ben rises.

BEN

No, Lucas. I think I've been sleeping for too long.

Ben walks past Gail. Gail closes the door. She walks across toward Lucas.

LUCAS

To what do we owe this --

Gail walks right up to Lucas and kisses him fiercely, full on the mouth. She breaks and takes a few love-drunk steps back, a wry smile on her glowing lips.

CONTINUED



CONTINUED 3

LUCAS

-- honor?

Lucas smiles and steps toward Gail for more. She stands firm, and when Lucas gets close, she suddenly backhands him across the face. Lucas reels back, stunned. Gail's eyes glow with satisfaction.

LUCAS

Assaulting an officer of the law carries a stiff penalty.

GAIL

Arrest me. It was worth it.

Gail turns to leave. Lucas adjusts his jaw.

LUCAS

Why'd you kiss me?

GAIL

Because I wanted to.

LUCAS

And the rest?

GAIL

Because you didn't tell me about your affair with my Aunt Judith. I don't like secrets or surprises. If I'm "worth it," Lucas Buck, you have to earn my respect, on my terms. Call me if you're ready for that.

And she leaves, slamming the door behind her. Lucas watches, grinning with patronizing respect.

LUCAS

If it isn't the new Miss Emory.

CUT TO

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY - CLOSE ON BOONE

Boone slams against the soda machine.

WIDER

Gina grabs Boone, threatening --

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

GINA

I don't care if your hand hurts, I want a soda.

Caleb steps behind Gina.

CALEB

My hand doesn't hurt.

Gina turns around, facing Caleb.

GINA

Aside from picking your nose, what do you plan to do with it?

CALEB

I was going to get you a soda.

Gina stares at Caleb a beat.

GINA

Why?

CALEB

'Cause I'm Boone's friend, and if Boone's arm felt better, he'd wanna get you a soda, too.

Gina releases Boone and motions Caleb to get the soda. Caleb walks up to the machine, sliding his hand up the drop chute.

CLOSE ON CALEB

His hand feeling the cold, wet entrails of the machine.

BOONE

You have to push the cans up and then pull down on the metal thing to get it out.

In the distance...FOOTSTEPS. Caleb tenses.

GINA

Hurry up, you twerp.

The refrigeration motor HUMS to life. Everyone jumps a little. The FOOTSTEPS grow LOUDER. Caleb strains to pull the can loose.

CALEB

I -- can't -- get --

CONTINUED

CONTINUED 2

Then -- CA-CHUNK -- Caleb spills back from the machine followed by a stream of soda cans spewing out the chute. Boone, Gina, and Caleb YELP and scamper away as Selena and ANOTHER TEACHER round the corner. The teachers stop, stunned at the continuous flow of cans.

BEHIND A CINDER BLOCK WALL

Boone and Caleb can't help but LAUGH. Gina, though, isn't amused. She grabs Caleb.

GINA

You broke the machine, buzz-head.  
What were you trying to do, get me  
in trouble?

-Caleb looks at her calmly.

CALEB

I was being a good friend to Boone.  
You want me to be a good friend to  
you, then give me another chance.

Gina release Caleb.

GINA

Tomorrow morning.

CUT TO

INT. HOSPITAL - DOCTOR'S PHARMACY - DAY

Selena sips on a cup of coffee, watching Billy, smiling.  
Billy checks some charts, writes a note.

SELENA

You are very sure of yourself,  
aren't you, Billy?

Billy looks up, unsure how to respond.

SELENA

I mean, sending me that rose.

BILLY

Did I cross some line?

Selena LAUGHS. He sets his notepad down and walks over,  
closer.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

SELENA

It's like you have a little rulebook inside your head of just how to do everything and respond to every situation. Tell me, how many dates is it before you go beyond a good night kiss?

BILLY

I'm not sure if that's a compliment, or a --

SELENA

-- dare?

BILLY

Not exactly the word I was looking for.

SELENA

See, I'm big on dares. I like breaking the rules, bein' wild.

BILLY

I've seen your chart.

Selena is intrigued. She moves closer.

SELENA

So, what do you like?

Billy, too, steps closer.

BILLY

Oh, you know: Pool, French wines, long slow sex that seems like a dream, and a woman I won't break if I have to say goodbye.

Selena reaches out and runs her fingernails up Billy's shirt, around his neck and into his hair. Pulling him closer...

SELENA

Nobody breaks me, Billy.

And as they are about to kiss...the door to the office opens -- Gail. Selena and Billy adjust themselves accordingly. Gail sizes up the situation.

GAIL

Playing spin the needle again, Selena?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED 2

Selena gets off the counter, walks toward the door.

SELENA  
Just trying to do something to get  
my name in the papers.  
(to Billy)  
Tomorrow night, I'll be at the  
bar -- if you want to see me.

BILLY  
Is that a dare?

SELENA  
Not even close.

Selena exits.

BILLY  
What can I help you with, Gail?

GAIL  
I'd like to see the hospital's  
records on the death of Judith  
Temple ten years ago.

BILLY  
Caleb's mother? You know you  
should go through the front office  
for that.

GAIL  
This isn't newspaper business.  
Judith was my aunt, and...

BILLY  
You have a curious mind?

GAIL  
I don't want to make all the same  
mistakes she did.

Billy looks long and hard at Gail.

BILLY  
Just some of the same mistakes.

CUT TO

INT. COUNTY RECORDS OFFICE - NIGHT - CLOSE ON TABLE

A pile of thick books drops, THUNDERING DOWN on the table  
top.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

WIDER

Ben and DYLAN, a middle-aged black custodian, stand over the table in the closed County Records office.

DYLAN

There's all the records on Goat Town clear back to the Revolutionary War.

BEN

Think I only need the last couple of decades. Thanks for helpin'.

DYLAN

Well, Lucas has helped me out often enough.

BEN

I'm sure he has.

Dylan moves off. Ben sets down a cup of coffee and gets to work.

CLOSE ON BOOKS

Ben flips through the pages. Land deeds, parcel records, lot of numbers.

BEN

Okay, Merlyn Temple what are you trying to tell me?

Ben flips through more pages, finds a map and a large corner lot. He notes the number, then flips through the book. The lights dim and come back up -- brown out.

Ben looks around. Nothing. He goes back to the book.

His finger traces across parcel numbers, finding the match to the map. His finger traces across empty blocks, finding the most recent entry -- "default," and before that, an entry, "Goat Town Youth Center, 9/22/65". And in the blocks earlier, a series of names of previous owners, all anonymously meaningless.

BEN

Nothing I don't already know.

A sudden wind blasts the book, the lights flash, explode in showers of sparks. Pages rip out in the tempest. The whole table shakes, bouncing like wind-up toy.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED 2

BEN

Dylan!!!!

Ben hangs on to the table. The book in front begins dissolving into some sort of sludge, black, thick, impenetrable, spilling toward Ben.

Dylan walks calmly out of the shadows, except it's Merlyn.

MERLYN

Need some help, Ben?

The black sludge begins congealing into letters --

jud E st

Ben's coffee cup flips, the liquid rolls into the same letters --

jud E st

The table leaps about with even more force. Ben reaches across and grabs the land-deed book, pulling closed against the HOWLING wind. He slams it. THUNDERCLAP, flash of lights, and --

All is normal. No sludge on the table. No torn pages. No Merlyn. Ben's coffee steams comfortably without so much as a ripple on the surface. Ben suddenly gets a sharp pain in his hand, which he pulls back from the cover of the land deed book.

He looks at his palm. Seared in, the charred black skin smoking, are six letters --

jud E st

And like that, the letters disappear, leaving no scar.

FADE OUT

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FÁDE IN

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

Ben drives up, gets out of his car, and walks toward the school.

BEN

(to himself, practicing)  
Miss Coombs, I need to speak to  
Caleb alone for a momment.

(beat)

No, no, nothing serious. Just take  
a momment.

He seems to like his tone and continues on.

CUT TO

EXT. SCHOOL - BREEZEWAY - DAY

Caleb waits by the soda machine. Gina walks up.

CALEB

(as if he's happy to see  
her)  
Mornin', Gina.

Caleb picks up a diet soda from the drop chute.

CALEB

As promised.

Gina looks surprised. She takes the can.

GINA

You figured out how to do it?

CALEB

Even better. Watch this.

Caleb holds out his empty hand, palm up -- just like Lucas did -- then bends over and slides the hand up the drop chute.

CALEB

See, the change box is over here,  
and the coin release is on this  
little spring thing --

Caleb strains to reach.

CONTINUED



CONTINUED

CALEB

But my arms are just barely long  
enough. There!

A CLATTER of metal, and Caleb pulls out his damp arm, and in his hand are three quarters. Gina, amazed, instinctively reaches for them. Caleb whips his hand back.

CALEB

Un-uh. No way. I'll show you how.

GINA

Okay.

CALEB

Hold on.

A group of students walk past. Caleb goes and peers around the corner. He gives the all-clear.

POINT OF VIEW FROM ANOTHER CORNER

Someone watches the activity.

CALEB

Just put your hand up in there and  
reach up here for the change box.

BACK TO SCENE

Gina sets her books down and reaches up for the area Caleb indicates, sliding in her whole arm. Hearing more FOOTSTEPS, Caleb looks around the corner again.

CALEB

Feel that little metal bar?

GINA

Yeah. Pull on it?

CALEB

Yeah. Hold on a sec.

Caleb slips around the corner. Gina pulls. Suddenly, the machine WHIRS to life, and Gina is pulled flush against the front panel as her arm is snagged inside. She YELPS.

EXT. SCHOOL

Ben hears Gina's cry and runs toward the breezeway.

EXT. BREEZEWAY

GINA

Un, un, unplug it!

But Caleb's gone. A group of STUDENTS including Boone round another corner (not the one Caleb or Ben is watching from). They stop at the sight of Gina thrashing, fighting to free her arm.

GINA

Help me! Unplug it!!

Boone steps forward. Now is his chance for vengeance.

BOONE

(dripping with sarcasm)  
Poor little Gina's in a fix. What shall we do?

Boone walks right up to Gina, who is totally defenseless, writhing in pain.

GINA

I'm sorry, I'm sorry, just unplug the thing. It hurts!

BOONE

So does getting slugged in the stomach!

EXT. BREEZEWAY - CORNER

Ben races to the corner and stops, taking in the scene --

Boone rears back to slug her when Caleb pushes him out of the way and yanks the plug out of the wall. The machine GROANS and releases Gina's arm. She pulls her arm out, revealing a nasty red whelp across her forearm. She cradles it, trying not to cry. It may be broken.

BEN

watches.

CALEB

stands between Boone and Gina.

CALEB

Back off. No one messes with Gina. She isn't going to mess with any of you any more, so just back off.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

Tad and Jim look taken aback, as do the others, but they don't look nearly as surprised at Gina.

CALEB

Gina's my friend, and nobody treats her wrong. And she ain't gonna let nobody treat me wrong either. Understand?

Caleb's classmates look on with respect, but Gina looks at Caleb with awe as he helps her up.

CALEB

Let's go to the cafeteria and get some ice on your arm.

GINA

Uh, yeah. Uh, thanks.

And Caleb leads her past his stunned classmates, a satisfied, Lucas-like smile on his face.

BEN

pulls back from the corner, and turns face-to-face with Merlyn.

MERLYN

You're not going to get your answers from him. He's his father's son.

Ben backs up from Merlyn.

BEN

What do you want?

Merlyn slips back through the brick wall....

MERLYN

It's a secret, Ben. And you have all the clues.

And Merlyn is gone.

CUT TO

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Selena walks in like she owns the place, and judging from the smile on her face, she does. She sidles up to the bar.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

Cognac.

SELENA

Allison smiles.

Special night?

ALLISON

You never know. I hope so.

SELENA

Too few of them are. The new doctor?

ALLISON

Selena smiles.

Yeah. Until I get bored with him.

SELENA

Both women exchange knowing looks and then laugh.

CUT TO

INT. BEN'S ROOM - NIGHT - CLOSE ON MAP

Ben, a few beers nearby, examines the street index --

No E street. No Jude -- E Street.  
Judy Street.

BEN

Ben tosses the map away revealing another, and he begins checking the street index. Then tosses the map away. And we SLOWLY ZOOM OUT as Ben checks more maps and more, searching for a street. And we REVEAL the room is filled with street maps.

Not here. Not here! It's not here!!! There is no street in the whole state!!!

BEN

And Ben rips and throws the maps in the air.

Nooooo!!!!

BEN

CUT TO

EXT. ABANDONED VICTORIAN - NIGHT

Ben walks into frame, taking a swig from a pint bottle. He's a little toasted, and very tortured. He stands on the sidewalk staring up at the dark, looming structure.

BEN

What is your secret? What do you want from me?!

The house stands silently, unresponsive. Ben starts to cry, falls to his knees.

BEN

What is happening to me?!!!

CLOSE ON BEN

Crumpled on the ground, head kneeled forward as if in supplication, he sobs. Merlyn leans in to speak into his ear.

MERLYN

Don't you want to know what happened to them?

Merlyn leans back out of frame, and before Ben can respond, a BOOT lashes out catching Ben under the ribs, flipping him over --

WIDER

Ben cries out --

DARK FIGURES surround him, kicking, knocking him back -- LAUGHING. Ben raises useless arms to defend himself. A blow send him sprawling against the porch steps of the house. He looks, sees --

BEN'S POINT OF VIEW - THE DARK FIGURES

walking toward him, light catching bits of faces, illuminating one girl -- Gina, her arm is a cast. The rest are young faces, feral boys and girls of indeterminate race.

THE BASE OF THE STEPS

Ben cowers in fear, holding a shaking hand up for protection --

BEN

You're real! The smell is real!

GINA

No smell 'cept you stinkin' up this place.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

And the Gina steps closer.

BEN  
"jud E street?" Where is it? "jud  
E street," what does it mean? "jud  
E" --

TALL, OLDER KID  
There was a Judy Temple who taught  
me to read in this rotten house,  
but she's dead and that was a long  
time ago --

Ben's eyes fill with understanding. And the tall figure  
lashes out, his boot slamming into Ben's jaw, and all goes  
to --

BLACK

OUT OF THE BLACK

Lucas Buck leans forward into a pool of light.

LUCAS  
You made it.

Another figure steps out the darkness into the light --  
Gail.

GAIL  
Your message said you needed me.

Lucas reaches out and turns a rheostat, illuminating --

INT. SHERIFF'S STATION - LUCAS' OFFICE - NIGHT

Gail stands near the door. Lucas sits in his chair. He  
stares at Gail, a challenging beat passing between the two.  
He stands and walks toward her.

LUCAS  
I buried my past a long time ago.  
Let it rest in peace.

GAIL  
It's my past too, and it doesn't  
rest easy for me.

LUCAS  
Learn to live for the future.

GAIL  
My future, or ours?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

Lucas turns to a drawer. He pulls out a picture of JUDITH TEMPLE, smiling. With his back to Gail, he looks at the photo.

LUCAS

I have my wounds, too. They took a long time to heal. Some people think they made me cold. Maybe they're right.

GAIL

And if you're too scared to show me that part of you -- then we have nothing else to talk about.

Gail turns to walk out the door.

LUCAS

Gail...

She turns back to him.

LUCAS

One night. Anything you want to know. But be prepared for what you discover.

She stares at him a beat, deciding...

CUT TO

INT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Attendants wheel Ben down a corridor, an oxygen mask on his bruised face --

CUT TO

EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

Lucas's Crown Vic rolls down a country road, headlights skimming the trees --

CUT TO

INT. HOSPITAL - STAGING AREA - NIGHT

Billy examines Ben with a team of nurses.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

BILLY

Give him 10ccs Demerol and prep him  
for head and chest X-ray. Christ,  
what time is it?

CLOSE ON NEEDLE

spewing out a clear stream, then plunging down into Ben's  
arm.

CUT TO

EXT. BURNED FARMHOUSE - NIGHT - CLOSE ON FIREPLACE

The flames crackle in the blackened fireplace. WE PULL OUT  
TO REVEAL

LUCAS

standing in front of the lone chimney, surrounded by the  
charred remains of the farmhouse, Caleb's childhood home.  
Gail stands further back.

GAIL

How did it begin?

Lucas turns, the orange light of the flames rings him.

LUCAS

She needed release. You know, all  
the years of trying to be the scion  
of the community. When you're  
Uncle Gage got hurt and ended up in  
the hospital, we comforted each  
other --

CUT TO

INT. HOSPITAL - STAGING AREA - NIGHT

Billy slides X-rays up in the back-lit screen. A NURSE pops  
her head in the door --

NURSE

Doctor, we've got a massive  
coronary coming in.

CAMERA WHIPS to

BEN

CONTINUED



CONTINUED

MOANING on the gurney. The Emergency Room medical team rolls the heart attack victim into place, right next to Ben. As the CAMERA MOVES CLOSER on Ben, the medical team's VOICES DISTORT. Tubes, wires, equipment seem to flow into the area.

And Ben looks over with tense concern, and his eyes grow wide as white light begins to glow on his face --

CUT TO

EXT. BURNED FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

Gail's face glows orange in the light of the flames.

LUCAS (O.S.)

There is no greater pain than  
forbidden love, and no greater joy.

Lucas squats hunched over the fire, his back to Gail as he talks.

LUCAS

I knew she would be the one great  
love of my life, and I blame myself  
for her death.

GAIL

Others have blamed you, too.

Lucas turns. His eyes are wet with tears.

LUCAS

When she got pregnant that  
porcelain veneer started to crack.  
Judith Temple couldn't take the  
pressure. Her daughter Merlyn  
started to go. And I, I thought I  
could be king of the world. I  
could save her with my love. And  
now, this is all that's left --  
ashes. Ashes and a boy named  
Caleb.

Lucas walks closer, all his defenses down.

LUCAS

Everything else is just a pose.  
Flash a smile for the constituents.  
Try to make the people think I'm  
enough of a bastard to keep them  
safe at night, no matter what it  
takes.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

Lucas slumps down in the ashes, head in his hands.

LUCAS

But when I wash in the morning, I can't get her blood off my hands. Her blood, Merlyn's blood, Gage's blood. I destroyed that family. I know it. I destroyed what I loved.

This isn't the story Gail expected to hear. Holding back her own tears, she puts her hands on his shoulders.

GAIL

Tell me about the suicide, Lucas.

CUT TO

INT. HOSPITAL - STAGING AREA - NIGHT

Ben, light glowing on his face, struggles beneath the Demerol haze to get off the gurney, fearful of --

MERLYN ANN TEMPLE

She is the patient undergoing the heroic efforts. But she is unaware of the commotion surrounding her body.

MERLYN

Buried secrets stink, don't they, Ben?

BEN

He is halfway off the gurney.

BEN

I can't give you justice!

MERLYN

I don't want justice. I want the truth.

Ben gets his feet under him, running drunkenly --

BEN

Lucas Buck killed Merlyn Temple!  
It's true!!!

INT. HALLWAY

Ben bounces from wall to wall, trying to keep balance. No one sees him, or hears him --

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

BEN  
Lucas Buck snapped that girl's  
neck!

He grabs an conservative-looking nurse, her back to him --

BEN  
Lucas Buck --

He stops. Staring past the nurse as she slowly turns toward  
him --

HOSPITAL HALL DOORS - SLOW MOTION

The hall doors swing open like the gates to Hell. Lucas  
Buck enters from the darkness, striding down the hall,  
-vengeance in his eyes --

BEN - SLOW MOTION

crumples to his knees --

BEN  
No!!!!!!

The nurse turns to face him -- Merlyn, again. She LAUGHS...

MERLYN  
No one listens much when you're  
dead, Ben.

LUCAS' BOOTS

Thunder down the hall, past the doctors, nurses, visitors --

BEN AND MERLYN

Ben clutches Merlyn's nurse uniform, begging for  
forgiveness.

BEN  
I know! He killed your mother, too!  
And if she'd lived, the youth  
center --

Merlyn glares at him, furious.

MERLYN  
It's not about the past, Ben.

Lucas looms up behind Merlyn, hands reaching for her head.  
Ben backpedals along the floors.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED 2

MERLYN

It's about the future.

Lucas's grip tightens around her neck and head; Merlyn is unconcerned.

MERLYN

And the future depends on you.

And Lucas grins and twists --

BEN

He SCREAMS! We are --

INT. HOSPITAL - STAGING AREA - NIGHT

Ben SCREAMS on the gurney as a nurse jabs a needle into his arm, pumping in more drugs. And the scream reduces to a mild WHIMPER.

BILLY

That valium should let him sleep.

Ben's face goes slack, eyes unfocused, but open.

BEN'S POINT OF VIEW

The nurse, just a blurry figure, leans close, into focus -- it is Merlyn again with a soft smile --

MERLYN

Actions have consequences. Silence has consequences, too.

And she goes out of focus again, as we --

FADE TO BLACK

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN

EXT. BURNED FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

Lucas stares out at the black darkness, his face an open book.

LUCAS

I tried to reach for her, but she just kept screaming. It was like she wasn't human any more, just an animal. She ripped the restraint with her teeth. Then, she leapt from the bed, grabbed the curtain rod, and kicked out the window. She hurled herself through the glass.

Gail holds charred piece of timber in her hand, stroking it absently.

GAIL

And that's why Ben saw glass falling before she fell, because she kicked the window first?

LUCAS

Yeah.

Gail stands, hefting the long, black piece of wood. Like a champion baseball hitter, she swings it around, catching the unsuspecting Lucas in the chest.

He flies back onto the ashes ground, GASPING. Gail lands on top of him, pressing the timber against his throat.

GAIL

What did you really do, Lucas? Did you make love on the bed that used to be here? Or did you hold her down on the floor and rip her clothes off?

Gail rips Lucas's shirt open, clawing at his body, her hands leaving ash marks on his pale skin. She pulls at her own clothes, too.

LUCAS

(gasping)  
What are you doing?!

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

GAIL

You don't have a cesarean and a spinal and go kicking out windows, you son of a bitch!

Lucas's eyes widen. He's been caught.

GAIL

You need to know what it feels like to be used, to be manipulated for my amusement, to be forced!

She mounts him. Raping him. Lucas can barely breath with the timber pressing down on his neck.

And as Gail begins to enjoy herself, she presses down harder on Lucas's throat. His hands flail uselessly. Gail MOANS with buiding ecstasy.

-- and her CRIES ECHO into the dark black night.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Late night. Allison stacks the bottles and glances down to her lone customer --

SELENA

is drunk and getting drunker. And it's a bad, surly kind of drunk. The cognac is long gone, and she's down to rot gut in a dirty, lipstick-smearred glass.

ALLISON

I hope you're not driving.

SELENA

I'll do what I please.

ALLISON

They're all scum, babies searching for momma, or they're already married.

SELENA

I didn't really think he'd be different.

She looks at her long fingernails.

SELENA

But the next guy -- the next guy is going to pay.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

ALLISON

Maybe it's bedtime?

Selena growls to Allison --

SELENA

What the hell do you know? I can stay up all night and do what ever I want to! Get my tab ready!

She finds crumpled-up bills in her purse and hurls them on the bar and stalks for the door. Allison smooths the bills, and from her reaction, Selena has overpaid.

ALLISON

The rest of this a tip?

CLOSE ON SELENA

Selena spins around.

SELENA

Yeah, and tonight's tip is: don't hope for too much.

BILLY (O.S.)

Why not?

WIDER

Selena turns, and there is Billy. She grabs a glass off the bar and hurls it at him.

He catches it.

BILLY

Is that the way you like to play?

SELENA

Men don't treat me this way.

Billy steps close.

BILLY

I won't treat you the way other men do. Ever.

SELENA

What do you want from me? To woo me? I don't woo.

BILLY

Maybe I'm doing it for a dare.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED 2

SELENA

Well, don't.

Selena charges past, but Billy grabs her, pulling her back.

BILLY

Is this the way you want to play?  
Trying to hurt each other? Jabbing  
at hidden wounds, trying to get a  
reaction?

Selena looks at him, stunned.

BILLY

Because there is another way to be.  
I like you because you are you're  
own person. But so am I, and I  
don't play these kind of games. So  
if you are looking for a lap dog  
who you can slap around and who  
will still fetch your slippers,  
keep looking. But if you can  
handle something different, well...

And he kisses her, softly, full. She breaks, a sexy smile  
on your face.

SELENA

Are you sure you don't want to  
fetch my slippers?

CUT TO

INT. SHERIFF'S STATION - LUCAS' OFFICE - DAY

The body of Lucas Buck lays sprawled on the sofa, a huge  
blue-black bruise across his neck, his shirt ripped, and his  
body stained with ash.

He GROANS, letting us know he is alive. A tired hand  
reaches up and touches the bruise across his neck. Yep, it  
hurts just as bad as it looks. Lucas opens his eye, then  
narrows them to focus on --

WIDER - BEN

looks spit and polish. He glares down at Lucas in contempt.

BEN

Go down one stump hole too many,  
Lucas?

CONTINUED



CONTINUED

LUCAS  
What happened to you?

BEN  
I spent some time with my bookie  
figuring out how to even up my  
account.

Lucas manages to get up on his elbows.

LUCAS  
What?

BEN  
You done a lot for me, but it ain't  
been for free. You killed that  
Merlyn Temple, and you killed her  
momma, and you killed part of me  
when I was silent. But I've been  
to Goat Town, and I know what could  
have been. You throw a woman out a  
window, and there are ripples in  
the pond, hundreds of lives that  
are effected.

LUCAS  
(struggling to get up)  
Ben, what's gotten into you?

Ben shoves Lucas back down.

BEN  
I got my vision back. I can see  
again. From now on, you mark all  
my debts paid with interest, and  
just know that here on out, you owe  
me one.

Lucas sits back, aghast. Ben gives him one last look before  
he walks out.

BEN  
Why don't you clean yourself up  
before you make a bad impression on  
someone?

And Ben walks out.

CUT TO

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

Caleb and Boone walk up in the morning. Caleb seems to have an extra bit of cockiness in his step. Other students pass by, all noticing Caleb, all giving respects --

MALE CLASSMATE  
Morning, Caleb. Hey, Caleb.

An older student pats Caleb on the back.

OLDER STUDENT  
Hey, kid. You doin' alright?

Caleb nods. Boone can't help but smile in amazement at all this attention. TWO GIRL classmates join up with Caleb and Boone.

GIRL #1  
Caleb, you and Boone coming to the basketball game?

CALEB  
Dunno. Maybe.

GIRL #2  
Well, see you there.

The girls peel off. Boone leans close.

BOONE  
I still don't understand how you turned this around.

They approach a crowd of older students, which starts to part as they near, all eyes on Caleb.

CALEB  
Forgiveness, Boone, is the strongest weapon I had.

And the parting crowd reveals Gina, a cast on her forearm. She smiles seeing Caleb.

GINA  
I was waiting for you. I want you to be the first to sign it.

She hand Caleb the Sharpie. He starts, but pulls back.

CALEB  
But Boone gets to sign it next.

Gina rubs Boone's head and smiles affectionately.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

GINA

Sure, twerp.

CUT TO

EXT. GAIL'S APARTMENT - DAY

Gail lays on her bed, the lights out, crying, lost.

A hand turns a lamp on. Gail looks up.

Lucas Buck, now washed and clean, stands nearby. He looks, somehow, humble. Gail sees him and is tormented with self-loathing.

GAIL

How can you come here? After what I did?

He kneels beside her.

LUCAS

We all do things we regret. You needed to feel that power over me. I understand that.

GAIL

It was horrible. You are horrible.

LUCAS

But there is a part of you that would do it again if you could.

Gail's looks reveals that Lucas is dead on.

GAIL

I don't want to know that part of me.

LUCAS

You have to know it to control it.

GAIL

(realizing)  
You wanted me to, didn't you?

Lucas just looks her straight in the eye.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

LUCAS

I couldn't tell you the truth. I can't ever tell you the truth about Judith Temple, no more than you can ever tell anyone the truth about last night. I accept that.

Lucas walks away, over to the window.

LUCAS

It's a dangerous game... a game I've played too often. I didn't understand it with Judith, and I doubt you'd be here today if you understood it, any better.

Gail turns to him, trying to search for meaning in her torment.

GAIL

What are we going to do?

Lucas turns and walks back to her. He crouches beside her and takes her hand.

LUCAS

I don't know. But I'm sorry, Gail. I'm sorry I lied. I'm sorry I pushed you to the limit. It was easy when Caleb still had Gage and Merlyn. But you and I are all he has. I'm going to have to start taking some responsibility for my actions.

And Gail looks into his eyes, filled with gratitude and respect for Lucas' absolution.

GAIL

We both have to. Together.

CUT TO

EXT. ABANDONED VICTORIAN - DAY

Ben pulls up to the house and gets out of the car, looking up at the tired, empty structure. He takes a deep sniff...no smell at all.

He walks up to a faded, almost unreadable "FOR SALE" sign on the porch and pulls it down.

INT. VICTORIAN - DAY

A boombox plays a local RADIO station. Ben works hard, scraping away at the mold stains and paint. Full trash bags nearby are testament to the clean floors.

CLOSE ON THE BOOMBOX

A woman's finger switches the selection switch from "Radio" to "Tape" and all is silent.

CLOSE ON BEN

He steps back from the wall, but does not look back at the boombox. He speaks evenly, softly, invitingly.

BEN

(throw away)  
Do you want to dance?

CLOSE ON BOOMBOX

The woman's finger presses "play." "Echo of Your Last Goodbye" plays.

MERLYN

She steps toward Ben.

MERLYN

Your actions have consequences.

CLOSE ON BEN

Still not turning to look.

BEN

I'm prepared for that now.

Merlyn's hand slide up on Ben's shoulder, softly touching him.

MERLYN

What do you plan to do with the place?

BEN

I don't know. Bring some life back to it. It's been buried too long.

Ben wipes away some mold, revealing a crayon mark on the wall -- "jude E st"

BEN

Judy, Saint. Like Saint Jude.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

MERLYN

The kids here called her that.

BEN

Saint Judith Temple. Was she?

MERLYN

She was my mother.

Merlyn leans in close, a warm smile on her face.

MERLYN

You know, Ben, I love to dance.

Ben smiles, too, and turns to take her in his arms.

WIDE

And as the music plays, Ben and Merlyn dance slowly in the dark embrace of a once-grand Victorian room.

SLOW FADE OUT

THE END