

CROOKED LETTER CROOKED LETTER  
Paul Stebbings & Phil Smith  
draft 5

Act One

Actors:

1/ Young Silas, Angie, Alice in photo, Nurse, TV reporter.

2/ Cindy, Irena

3/ Young Larry, older Mrs Ott,

4/ Adult Silas, Alice, school kid

5/ Adult Larry, younger Mrs Ott (MOM), Carl, Police Officer at Larry's house

6/ Wallace, French, Schoolboy, Cecil, Doctor in Hospital.

(Music hissing of snakes, crickets, heat. A spotlight stage right and one stage left. Two chairs. Two small tables. Two phones. Larry Ott sighs sits and opens a coke stage left. Stage right Silas pulls on his tie – uniformed policeman, sighs and sips a coffee. Larry moves to his phone and calls Silas – who lets his own phone ring. Larry finishes dialling and waits; no pick up but an answerphone message.)

LARRY: Ah! (sighs and waits for end of a short answerphone message) Silas. Silas. Sorry to bother you. I know you are busy with Police work, but please call me back if you can. Please! (Puts phone down, then rings again). Silas, Call me back. It's real kinda important. Even if it's late. It's important. OK? I've something I wanna tell you. I don't know what I need to do. Thank you.

(Larry returns to the table and still standing, he takes the beer from the table, he holds it to his forehead and sighs. He sits at the table and takes a sip of the coke and opens the horror novel, with its garish cover, and begins to read avidly. Wallace emerges in zombie mask from the shadows and moves to where Larry can see him. Larry's jaw drops, as if

something from his novel had just jumped off the page. At first Larry can't speak, but grunts shock and surprise. Very slowly, Larry stands, letting the novel fall from his hand to the floor.)

Larry: How, how... how'd you find that?

( Masked man raises the gun.)

Larry: O, wait now.... wait, wait... you hold on...

(Larry slowly raises his hands. Wallace suddenly leaps into a firing stance, pointing the gun close to Larry's chest and screaming "Girl killer! Rapist! Liar! Coward! (he shoots Larry, who gasps and falls slowly to the ground.)

Man : (Pointing at the apparently dying Larry) Everyone knows what you did, Larry! (He squats by the now motionless body of Larry on the ground. Urging him:) Die killer!

BLACKOUT stage right.

(Stage left the lights which have faded but not gone out rise to reveal Silas but also ANGIE who either in dressing gown or paramedic uniform cleaning teeth emerges from shadows and putting her arms round Silas from behind his chair speaks):

ANGIE: Who was that, honey?

SILAS: Ah nuthin. Wrong number.

ANGIE: How come this wrong number knows your name? Officer Silas, You are one lousy liar.

SILAS: You got me, (kisses her hand) I confess.

ANGIE: To what?

SILAS: That was Larry Ott.

ANGIE: Scary Larry?

SILAS: Well...It's not the first time he's called. I never pick up the phone.

ANGIE: How come?

SILAS: Listen, Angie, I gotta get into the station. Can you drop by Larry's cabin and see if he's OK. I mean you don't have to go in just call out. Get him on the porch.

ANGIE: You do it.

SILAS: I can't. Every officer in the county has been called in to the station.

ANGIE: Yeah?

SILAS: Tina Rutherford has gone missin'.

ANGIE: The Rutherford heiress? She's a kid.

SILAS: Was a kid...

ANGIE: Oh God.

(Blackout).

TV presenter: (Speaking as a shaking gagged girl is half lit in an upstage spotlight). Police across Chabot county are appealing for information to help with their investigation into the disappearance of Tina Rutherford, aged 17 years. The heiress to the Rutherford logging fortune was last seen two days ago leaving her high school at 6 pm. Any member of the public.....(voice trails off and lights fade as a sack is lowered over Tina by a masked figure).

(Flashing police lights. FRENCH enters in stepson and shades. He pulls a police cordon tape attached in one wing across to the other wing, secures it and re-enters. As SILAS enters from the opposite direction.)

SILAS: What's happening?

FRENCH: Larry Ott just shot himself.

SILAS: You shitting me.

FRENCH: Naw, I ain' t. Shot himself in the chest.

SILAS: Goddam. (He turns and a walks off a few meters. FRENCH watches him suspiciously.)

FRENCH: Rains it pours, don' t it. How come you knew to come here? We only just called it in.

SILAS: A hunch.

FRENCH: A hunch? Who are you, Sherlock Holmes?

SILAS: (Shrugs) I just got...

FRENCH: Don' t say "a bad feeling" ...

SILAS: Yeah, ... I had a bad feeling about...

FRENCH: You after my job?

SILAS: You sure it was suicide?

FRENCH: He ain' t dead yet... lost a shitload of blood...

SILAS: It could an attempted murder. Plenty o' folk in this town nurse a grudge against Larry Ott. I reckon you' d never find a more hated man...

FRENCH: Good cause. Everyone knows he was the perpetrator in the Cindy Walker case. He' s sinister. Twenty years an he never made a false move. Twenty years he' s kept that body hidden. Reckon if we find where he' s buried Tina Rutherford we gonna find Cindy Walker' s little body in the same place. Reckon we got ourselves two cases solved here.

SILAS: Larry Ott never hurt a fly. That talk is just small town crap.

FRENCH: It ain' t talk. We got two open cases and Larry Ott is a chief suspect in

both... look at him... (POINTS TO LARRY' S BODY) ...there' s your confession!

SILAS: Believe me. Larry Ott doesn' t have it in him, do something like that...

FRENCH. O yeah. I heard 'bout you and Larry. School friends, weren' t cha?

SILAS: Bullshit. Kids like me and Larry Ott didn' t socialize. He was a fat weedy kid...

FRENCH: O yeah, and you was the big baseball star. What' s that they call you?

SILAS: 32. My baseball number...

FRENCH: Well, you seem to know an awful lot about the guy for someone who never talked to him. You ain' t been seeing him recently have you?

SILAS: I ain' t seen or heard from him in twenty years.

FRENCH: An' you just turned up here on a hunch..... You leave the detecting to me, Constable. Screw your bad feelings!

SILAS: Can I see him?

FRENCH: You disturb my crime scene, I' ll have your badge.

SILAS: Sure...

(SILAS ducks under the cordon tape and approaches LARRY' s body.)

FRENCH: (shouts after him) Screw your hunches!

(SILAS APPROACHES LARRY' S PRONE FORM. ANGIE IS CROUCHED OVER HIM. WHEN SILAS SEES HIM, HE TURNS AWAY IN HORROR.)

ANGIE: C' me on, you seen this stuff before!

(SILAS PULLS HIMSELF TOGETHER, KNEELS BY LARRY.)

SILAS: Is he gonna pull through?

ANGIE: (SHRUGS) We done everything we can for him. (SPEAKS TO LARRY) It' s up to you now, Mister Ott. (TO SILAS) Depends on how much he wants to live.

SILAS: I reckon he does plenty. He didn' t do this, Angie.

ANGIE: That gun was fired right by his chest...

SILAS: (STANDS AND WALKS ABOUT AGITATEDLY) No, no... this is all my fault, O god, O god... I knew what i had to do and I didn' t do it.. kept putting it off.. I thought it' d get easier... but it never did...

(OTHER PARAMEDIC ENTERS.)

ANGIE: Hey, calm down, sweetie. I gotta go, we gotta take this poor boy into the hospital, get him some proper care. Scary Larry, or not.

(SHE HELPS OTHER PARAMEDIC ROLL LARRY ONTO STRETCHER AND TAKES LARRY OFFSTAGE.)

SILAS: O god... o god... (CAN' T BEAR TO WATCH THIS. SILAS KNEELS BY THE BLOOD AND PUTS HIS FINGERTIPS IN IT.) O what have I done...[ANGIE RE-ENTERS TO COLLECT PARAMEDIC EQUIPMENT LEFT BEHIND.)

ANGIE: Whatever you did or didn' t do, Silas, we' re gonna have to talk about it.OK, sweetie?

SILAS: (SHAKING HIS HEAD.) Sure, sure... Thanks for checking on Larry...

ANGIE: It was the phone call, wasn' t it. You knew. How come you knew? You been so weird these last few days!!

SILAS: I' m sorry. I shoulda told yuh long time ago, I knew Larry Ott, not just knew, but.... we go back a long, long way... but I couldn' t.. o, shit... (ANGIE IS STARING AT

HIM HARD,. HE SEES HER LOOK) ...all right, all right... I best tell you everything... it all started when we were kids, my Mamma and I had just arrived in Chabot...

(LIGHTS DOWN ON ANGIE WHO EXITS. SILAS WALKS DOWN TO AUDIENCE.)

(Young Larry (YL) enters, a horror novel in hand, and takes a seat with his father, CARL – who enters from the opposite direction - in their truck; they act driving along.)

CARL: Done your home study, son?

Young Larry: Sure thing, Pa?

Carl: What you readin' that horror shit for?

YL: It's good, Pa, Stephen King.

CARL: Creepy shit.

(YOUNG SILAS (YS) enters, wearing a baseball cap, tosses a baseball in his hand. He stands waiting by the roadside, looking up and down as if waiting for something.)

Silas: (to audience) I was just fourteen years old, back then, still a child... it was hard! We lived in a hut in the woods out behind the Otts' place. Day I met Larry Ott, it was real real cold! Shivering cold. (He shivers and YS shivers.) I was starting my new school.

(YS takes up the story.)

YS: Mom took me to where the track to our hut met the only good road for miles and we just stood there, waiting for something... (To SILAS) What we doing here, Mom?

(Remaining two performers enter and take SILAS's police hat and jacket and hand him a wrap-around dress and woman's hat. SILAS actor now plays ALICE. She shivers.)

Alice: Shush. You just wait quietly, now.

YS: (shrugs.) School bus don't even come this way!

Alice: I said shush now; be patient.

(Wind howls. YS and Alice shiver. Silas throws the ball up in the air.)

Alice: And stop playing with that fool thing!

(Sound of truck approaching. Alice and Silas watch the truck, from one side of the stage to the other.

In the truck.)

Carl: You done your homework, Larry?

Larry: Yes, Sir. (pause as Dad not really interested, maybe he whistling "Dixie") Hey Daddy? See that! Those coloured folk didn't have no coats!

CARL: Ah damn it.

(CARL steps on the brakes, sound of squealing brakes. Carl looks over his shoulder, one hand on the wheel, reverses truck. Leans over YL and opens the door.)

CARL: (Shouts to Alice and Silas) You better get in then!

(YS and Alice get in the truck, Carl helping Alice – just the slightest hint of a former past intimacy as their hands touch. Alice is deadpan.)

ALICE: Thank you very much, Sir. Thank the kind gentleman, Silas.

YS : Thank you kindly, Sir.

(They drive for a while, YS and YL eyeing each other uneasily. CARL notices their reticence.)

CARL: Alice, you better introduce these young'uns.

(SILAS reacts, surprised that CARL has addressed his mother by her first name. What does CARL mean here? Does he expect ALICE to introduce them as brothers, or does CARL know that ALICE knows that such an introduction is 'unthinkable'.)

ALICE: (Pauses.) Larry, this is Silas. Silas this is Larry.

(They shake hands, then a thought strikes YOUNG LARRY.)

YL: Say! (Pointing at ALICE.) How *you* know my name?

CARL: Shudd up, Larry, and throw a log on that damn fire!!

YS: There ain't no fire in here!

YL: My Daddy means the heater. (He adjusts the knob on the heater.) There now. On full. Like a real fire!

YS: Like in our cabin. We only got a wood stove in our cabin. No 'lectricity.

YL: Why's that?

CARL: Shuddup with your askin' this and that. Or I cuff you.

YL: Yes, Sir.

CARL: The two of you's as bad as each other! Jeez. (Changes the subject. To Alice.) Freeze my ass off, this cold.

ALICE: Mmmm.

CARL: You ever seen the like?

ALICE: No, Sir.

CARL: Not even in Chicago? (No answer. Pause. YOUNG LARRY looks at YOUNG SILAS and YS smiles at him; LARRY is scared and looks away. Takes out a book and starts to read it to avoid looking at YS: the book is an early Stephen King horror novel; 'Salem's Lot'. YS begins to shake; LARRY notices. Larry hands YS one of his smart gloves. YS accepts it, puts it on. Carl sighs and shakes his head.)

CARL: Here's the school, now. (Sound of truck coming to a halt. CARL turns off the engine.)

YL: (Suspiciously) What grade are you in?

(YS looks at CARL, scared to speak, looks at ALICE.)

ALICE: Tell him.

YS: Eighth.

YL: Me too.

(Meanwhile a schoolboy passes).

BOY: Hey look, a negro in a white man's truck! Wow! (Wolf whistles and Carl winces, and stares straight ahead).

ALICE: Good bye. (To Carl – there is no thanks in the voice. He does not look at Alice.)

CARL: (Mumbles) Bye.

(ALICE climbs out of the truck, then YS and YOUNG LARRY follow suit. Lights down on CARL in the truck and he exits. YS running off towards the school, remembers his mother and turns, waves to ALICE. ALICE waves and exits. YS remembers the glove and offers YOUNG LARRY his glove back, but YL refuses and walks off quickly, exiting. YS takes off the baseball cap and walks down to the audience.)

YS: In the school, it weren't so different from Chicago. Eighty per cent of the student population was black, plus plenty of the teachers and the vice principal. A kid like me who could swish a baseball out of the air could get on pretty good... a kid like Larry Ott who couldn't catch a cold, let alone a football, a soft weird kid in love with books.... for him it was real tough... then, again, outside the school yard, and everything was reversed, black kids still needed to watch their backs in Redneck towns like Chabot..maybe still do.

(A sudden burst of activity. Using multi – racial white and black masks a scene of school life is created without fixed dialogue and with music. YL – clutching Stephen King novel – is isolated amongst the ball playing tough black kids and the smart sexually posturing white kids. He is mocked for being bookish by both groups. But as the bell rings and the kids go back to class, YS throws a ball to YL, which has never happened before and astonishes YL. He throws the ball back and they play for a while despite YL's incompetence – then a call.)

MOM: (Offstage) Larry!!! Get here now!!!

(It's YL's mother. She wears a distinctive coat and hat. YL turns away, ignoring YS. YS looks up and sees Mrs Ott (MOM) coming and instinctively runs off, exits.)

YL: Hi Mom.

MOM: (Entering.) Were you playing ball with that strange negro boy? Since when you been doing that?

YL: He's not a stranger, Ma, Daddy knows him... *and* his Ma.

MOM: What you mean? I never heard the like!!

YL: Yeh! It's true! We picked them up this mornin'. It was real cold. They wuz just standin' by the roadside, all shakin'. Waitin'...

MOM: (Suspicious) Waiting, you say? (YL nods enthusiastically.) This negro boy's Ma. She named Alice?

YL: How you know that?

MOM: I just do,. An' another thing, I don't want you playing ball with that negro boy again. Geddit?

YL: (Pause). No one ever threw me a ball before.

MOM: (Slaps him, losing it hysterically) Don't you dare answer me back!

YL: (Howls) I done nothing! Why you hit me like that? Mom?!

MOM: Shudupp, you little....you... you... ruin my life... the two of you!

(MOM grabs YL's hand and drags him off, they are both crying.)

Blackout.

(Repeat of scene: Alice and YS walking along cold road. This time it is Mom and YL in a car. The car pulls up).

MOM: Larry, do what I told you.

YL: Yes, Mom. (Silas is trying to move towards the car).

MOM: (to YL) Honey, roll down the window. (He does, MOM yells through the window to YS.) You stay right where you are, boy.

(YS freezes. ALICE stands, impassive. YL gets out of the car, carrying two coats.)

YL: Take these please. (He holds out two coats, outsized, to Alice and YS).

YS: Oh, thanking you. (He takes a coat. But Alice just stares at Larry's mother.)

MOM: Hello, Alice.

ALICE: Hello, Miss Ina.

MOM: They should fit you, near enough. And that is it, you understand? That is the end of this.

YS: Of what?

ALICE: Hush, now. (She takes the coat from YL without thanks and she and YS begin to shuffle off).

MOM: (Yelling after ALICE.) Take the coats. But if you take that man, I'll kill you.

(ALICE stops, but does not turn. YS turns and looks back at YL and MOM with a glare. Then ALICE grabs YS and leads him offstage.)

Now you forget this all happened. An' don't you ever mention this to me or your Daddy again. Ever. Do you understand?

YL: Mom. I hear you. But I do not understand.

MOM: And may you never.

(Blackout).

(Cecil and Carl are drinking. Maybe a couple of other performers in overalls and masks make up a drinking group.)

CECIL: Carl, what was that you's saying other day, about that crazy nigger?

CARL: O, yeh. Hey! This guy got an Afro hair do an' an old MG Convertible. An this hair do is like big! Now he's got the top down like he wants to feel the wind in his spikey hair an' that maybe saves his life, 'cos that car's hood unsprang at 55 miles an hour on the highway, I swear to God -

CECIL: What? Hood just sprang up?

CARL: Right in front of that crazy nigger's windshield. Hit the rim and knocked him clean on the head, pop! An that convertible just span all over the highway, lucky there ain't much traffic around here. So Nigger got blood all over his head and he gets back in the drivin' seat an drives the car over to my garage here an shouts: Call a goddam amb-u-lance! Blood drippin down his brown nose. An he hated this car now, so this son of a bitch sold me that convertible on the spot, for two hundred dollars cash. I closed the hood. Wired it up. Drove him to the hospital. Him hunched up worrying about the hood (imitates). Oooo! So I says, hey you want a motorcycle helmet? He says, no, it 'ud never fit over my hair! (Cecil laughs and they toast each other with cans of beer).

YL: (Who has been reading, not laughing) Hey Dad. Can I borrow a rifle?

CECIL: I lend you my automatic.

CARL: No, this baby can handle nothin' better than a pop gun. You can't handle a machine tool, can't turn a bolt on a car, about as much use in my garage as an ice cream on a barbecue!

CECIL: (Howls with laughter) You tell 'em, Carl. You could have been a comedian.

CARL: I'm a mechanic, Cecil.

CECIL: Well you're sure mendin' my day!

YL: Dad?

CARL: OK take the . 22 its on the rack. See if you can hit a deer.

CECIL: Or a wall!

CARL: (Laughs) Kids today can't shoot for shit.

YL: Thanks, Daddy.

CECIL: That damn step daughter of mine, never says "Thanks Daddy" to me. Calls me Cecil. Drives her Mom mad.

CARL: Drives me mad too. Little titties on that thing 'nuff to make a preacher run panting from his pulpit.

CECIL: Now if I were her Daddy I could get upset with you, Carl pal, for that bad bad suggestion. But as I am only her step Daddy I tell you, them little titties get my horn goin' too.

CARL: She still makin' trouble?

CECIL: She's a wild cat. Her Mom can't do nothing with her.

CARL: Glad I never had a daughter. Girls today they.....(fades into snorts and drunken laughter as YL has the rifle and now the focus shifts to him in the forest).

(Forest trees, sunlight, birds. Young Silas is in the woods collecting fire wood and humming to himself. Then we see Young Larry stalking Silas, is it for fun or what? But Silas notices him as he raises his gun).

YS: You gone shoot me?

YL: No. (looks around making sure they are not seen. Holds out his one gloved hand).

YS: You scared me is all. Sneaking up like that.

YL: I ain't a sneak. Sorry, Silas. (He leans rifle against a tree).

YS: What you doin' here?

YL: My daddy owns this land. I was hunting.

YS: You kill anything? Cause I ain't heard no shots.

YL: I'm hunting deer.

YS: I had me a gun I could kill some of these squirrels. Let Momma fry 'em. You reckon I could borrow that one? Bet your Daddy got twenty five guns. He'd not miss one. Let me shoot it.

YL: Won't your Momma hear?

YS: She's out workin'. Late shift. Early shift too. My, does Momma work! (He is slowly taking the gun off Larry who allows it to happen). How you do it?

YL: It's loaded. Just cock and shoot.

YS: How you shoot?

YL: You never shot?

YS: I ain't never touch no gun.

YL: See that hammer there, cock it back. Place it 'gainst you cheek like you loves it.

YS: It's cold.

YL: Now close your left eye and look down the barrel through that little sight and put it on what you want to hit.

YS: I pull the trigger, like in the movies.

YL: Like in the movies. (A bang).

YS: Wow! That ain't so loud.

YL: That's how I like it. A .22

YS: Shoots 22 times?

YL: No it's the calibre. A .22.

YS: Can I shoot agin? (does so nothing happens). Hey! Nuthin.

YL: You got to work the lever. (Shows him and spent cartridge ejects).

That's the spent part of the shot.

YS: It Smell good.

YL: Gunpowder. (reloads) Now try again.

YS: (Takes rifle and slowly shifts aim until it pointing at Young Larry in the face – YL backs off). Now we even. (Then he moves the gun around and aims at a tree and fires). Hit!

YL: Go on keep it. The rifle.

YS: For real? (YL nods). You got bullets.

YL: (Hands over cartridges) Cartridges. For the squirrels.

YS: Hey, look at our cabin!

YL: I see it. Kinda small. You live there?

YS: Yeah but look, no smoke. Momma gonna kill me dead that fire go out. (Runs off, shouting). Thanks for the rifle.

YL: Larry. Thanks, Larry! (laughs).

Blackout.

(School yard – baseball game – realism except no ball. All playing except Larry who is sitting reading in the corner – excluded by both white and black kids. Silas excels at pitching and the bat. Maybe slow motion as he makes a home run. One white girl, Cindy, is particularly loud or exuberant in her cheering of Silas. Larry looks up, admiring quietly. School bell. As all – or almost all depart for class, Silas smiles and throws a ball once more to Larry who fumbles and drops it but laughs and throws it back in a high loop that Silas effortlessly catches. Cindy has only pretended to leave and looks on, unknown to Larry).

YL: Hey Silas, you wanna go huntin' Saturday? I can get my Daddy's .33. So we got two guns.

YS: Sounds cool, Larry.

YL: I got to mow the grass first, so about eleven?

YS: I'll be waitin' for yer in the woods above the cabin. You won't see me 'till I shoot – like a Sioux, like a Cherokee.

YL: Sittin' Bull!

YS: Pow. Pow! (Makes shooting sound using bat as rifle).

YL: See you. (Exits).

CINDY: Now don't you go rushin' off to class, wastin' your talent for baseball on books.

YS: (Knowingly) Well what I want to hang here for?

CINDY: (Looks around) This. (Runs up and kisses him on the cheek, then rushes off).

YS: (Shouts after her but is he loud enough for her to hear?). Hey Cindy! You are sweet!

Blackout.

(The woods, YL with rifle is ambushed by YS, playful but air of danger as these are real loaded guns).

YS: Hey Buffalo Bill, look a snake!

YL: Where?

YS: You blind? There!

YL: Yeah! Copperhead?

YS: Nah, not poison yer. Geddit! (They charge after snake and pin it to ground with a cleft stick). Kill it.

YL: Nah.

YS: Kill it cowboy!

YL: OK. (Fires at head).

YS: Pow pow. One dead copperhead!

YL: You said it ain't poisonous! Liar!

YS: White man, I speak with forked tongue. (They roll over hitting each other and laughing).

TL: You are a mean hunter, Chief Silas. Let's go an shoot some squirrel. (Pauses as he silences his disgust). For your Momma to fry.

YS: Momma. She say I ain't supposed to play with you.

YL: Why? (Silas just shruggs.) Cos I'm a white boy?

YS: I don't know.

YL: She didn't tell you?

YS: She just say, 'Don't you go near *that* boy.' Made me promise I wouldn't.

YL: How come?

YS: (Sharp) I done said I don't know.

YL: But you won't promise. I mean I ain't got no friend but you.

YS: I don't know. (Kicks grass).

YL: I don't tell my Daddy. This (points to both). It's our secret. Like spies. Pow pow.

(YS shrugs silently). You ever tell your Mammy about the rifle?

YS: Hell naw. I keep it hid.

YL: How come?

YS: Cause she'll make me give it back.

YL: I do need it back. Before my Daddy finds out. (YS shrugs again). Sorry, pal. Hey Silas, I'll take you somewhere. Some place real secret. OK?

YS: Maybe.

YL: Secret. Like spies.

YS: OK.

YL: Hush, tread real soft....(fading light for passing time). This way.  
(Then.) Now by the dead tree. We go down on our bellies like Injuns.  
OK?

YS: Where are we goin? I don't want to go to your house.

YL: I want to show you something. Somebody.

YS: Who? A girl?

YL: A real pretty one.

YS: Who is she?

YL: Our closest neighbor. Her stepdaddy, Cecil, he's a funny man,  
always doing crazy things.

(As they get closer to the edge of the woods Larry puts a finger to his  
lips and begin to creep. Finally, Silas lays alongside Larry and together  
they peer out of the woods. Fifty yards away, the Walker house).

YS: It's kinda dirty.

YL: Yeah, that's Cecil. He's a slouch. Drinks beer all day and his  
woman's no better. But he's kinda fun. Tells a good story and they got a  
pretty daughter but you know her, hey Silas. I seen her whoopin' when  
you hit a home run.

YS: Oh (unsure) Cindy? (lying).

YL: Cindy. She likes to sunbathe on the porch. I don't think they let her  
out on Saturdays. So she just lies there. If we get to that tree without  
being seen we can see her.

YS: See her..what?

YL: See Cindy liyin in the sun with her bra strap undone!

YS: For real?

YL: For real! (They shuffle around).

YS: Oh God! Just panties. If she rolled over you'd see it all.

YL: Oh Lord you have sent me a vision of paradise.

YS: Hey, that's your Daddy comin' out on the porch. Your Daddy and Cecil. What's he doin' there?

YL: Dunno. Maybe just drinkin' with Cecil.

(The scene suddenly rotates and we see Cecil and Carl – beers in hand on other side of the deck from Cindy who is not in view).

CARL: You're too soft on that kid, Cecil. You know if she were a boy and gone an make that sort of trouble you'd take you belt to her. I'd do it for you but I might get to like it too much.

CECIL: She dresses like a damn hooker and shows no respect to me on account of me not bein' her real Daddy.

CARL: But you are the Daddy of this house and the husban' of her Mom. So she owes you respect. Hell, Cecil, the whole world owes you respect. Toss me a beer. (Catches a can). Fine pitch! (they laugh). Where's Cindy now? Studyin'?

CECIL: She don't read no books. You not seen her? She lyin' on the other side of the deck sunnin' her bareback. Drives me crazy. Why don't she study? Git a proper job, pay for her board and lodgin' that I have to find the cash for? 'Stead of partyin' and comin' home late, keepin' me awake with beer on her breath and lipstick all runnin from kissin and worse!

CARL: Ground her. I would.

CECIL: Wife told her she could go out it bein' Saturday. She's soft on her.

CARL: You the man about here. You ground her. If she yells. Whip her.

CECIL: Yeah. Yeah. Right on, Carl. You're my buddy and my buddy

knows best.

CARL: Buddy! (tries to high five but misses).

CECIL: Cindy. Cindy! You get your ass over here.

CINDY:(offstage) I'm busy.

CARL: You takin' that?

CECIL: Cindy, I did not ask you. I commanded!

CINDY: Leave me alone.

CARL: (Nods off). Belt.

CECIL: (Undoes belt and his trousers slip) When I say jump you jump little miss. (Exits and comes back on with complaining Cindy who is covering herself with a towel).

CARL: Now you show your Daddy some respect, little Miss.

CINDY: He ain't my Daddy. My Daddy's dead.

CARL: Your Ma told you that? Thought he ran off with some Nigger woman!

CINDY: You're drunk.

CECIL: You respect my buddy! (cuffs her lightly). Or I gonna beat you ass.

CARL: What ass? The one under that towel? (Pulls towel – Cindy screams).

CECIL: Don't play the little saint wi' me. I know what you get up to at those movies. Back seat with them boys. Well you ain't goin' nowhere tonight, little miss. You keepin your little ass at home. That's a command.

CARL: An order.

CINDY: Mom said I could go!

CECIL: Well Mom is workin' a shift and I am here.

CARL: In command. (Tugging towel).

CINDY: Let go!

CECIL: What you hidin'? You got marijuana there? I bet you smoke weed. You got some in your panties? (Pulling towel).

CARL: Go, Cecil!

CINDY: Let go! I'll tell Mamma. (Screams hopelessly.) Mamma!  
Mamma!

(Then, perhaps in slow motion, Young Silas breaks out of the wood and races onto the porch, pushing the drunken men into each other so that Carl falls).

YS: Yall leave that girl alone! Hear me!

(For a moment Cindy catches YS's eye, then she storms off into the house/wings with a slamming of a door. Cecil looks up in astonishment).

CECIL: Who you, boy?

(YS just shakes his head, kicks over a beer can and walks across the stage and off with dignity. Cecil looks after him and then to the treeline, he staggers a few paces towards the trees).

CECIL: Where that asshole come from?

CARL: (Getting up and staggering to tree line) Any more natives down yonder? Don't get stobbed by no spear. (YL now reappears and 'hides' close to his father. Carl unzips his flies and pisses really close to his hidden son).

(Blackout).

YL: (Kneeling in spotlight) Oh Lord, thank you sending me a special friend. Thank you for curing my asthma and thank you for Mommy bein' good to me. And forgive me for not tellin' her everythin', especially about the special friend you sent to me. Amen.

CARL: Get off your knees.

YL: yes, Daddy. (stands)

CARL: Where's my god damn rifle, boy?

YL: I ain't got it, Daddy?

CARL: Sold my rifle!

YL: (Stammering) I – I – I -let my friend use it.

CARL: Friend?

YL: Yeah

CARL: Didn't know you had no friend?

YL: Got one.

CARL: My boy subcontracting out my firearms. I want to know who it is. Well?( Larry doesn't answer). I ain't asking again.(reaches for his belt).

YL: That boy we picked up.

CARL: What boy?

YL: Silas.

CARL: Silas? That nigger boy? You tell your mother you bin seein' Silas and..and his Ma?

YL: No.

CARL: Never! You hear me? Not 'no'. Never!

YL: Yes, Sir, never.

CARL: Now you go and get my goddam gun back or I will bust your hide.

YL: Sir!

(Blackout)

(lights up on YS tossing baseball against a wall – YL ambles over and watches him. YS ignores YL. Then YS instead of fielding, lets the ball die in the weeds).

YS: You always spying on people?

YL: I don't spy.

YS: You ever take that girl on a date? (Larry didn't answer and just kicks grass). You wasn't gone help her.

YL: I wanted to.(Silas watches him a moment, then gets his ball).

YS: Chickin'.

YL: I need the .22 back.

YS: How come?"

YL: I just do. Please, Silas.

YS: Tell me how come. You got a lot of em. I ain't got but one.

YL: No. We need it. It's my daddy's.

YS: You got... (suddenly Carl appears with a bottle of Bourbon in his hand).

CARL: Hell,I followed you, boy. Just right behind you, you never seen me. Not once. Drunk I followed you, boy.(He stumbles). In the olden days you'd a been dead a long time ago. Some Indian cutting your throat or some gook with a grenade. You got it easy. Momma's boy reading the livelong day. Watch your cartoons, read your funny books. But you can't unscrew a god dang bolt to save your life, can't charge a damn battery even. And here when it comes to knuckles, you can't even get your own daddy's gun back from the boy that stole it.(To Silas).You don't like that do you, boy? (Silas folds his arms over his chest, the glove in his right hand, not looking at Carl). Answer me, boy!

YS: Naw.Naw, sir.

CARL: Why not?

YS: (Now he looks Carl in the face). Cause I ain't stole nothing.

CARL: (Drinking) Well, if you ain't stole nothing I'll take it all back. (YS does nothing)

Well now, looks like we got us a dispute between the races, here. Race war.

Silas. Tell me who your daddy is. (pause) I ain't gone ask you again.

YS: He dead.

CARL: Dead! Well, ain't that sad. And he didn't leave you no gun? Ain't that one of a daddy's duties? Leave his boy a weapon? Tell you boys what. So. Yall both want the rifle. You remember King Solomen, you know your bible?! Two mothers one baby. They get to fight over it. Two boys one rifle, so you two get to fight over it.

YS: I'll get you your rifle, Sir.

CARL: Naw, naw. I got it. Yall got to fight it out. Man to man. White to colored. Whichever one of yall wins gets the gun.

YS: I'm goin'. (Turns to go).

CARL: Well if you do I will wait on your Ma's porch down there till she come home and have a word or two with her. Will have finished my whisky by then so I might make an etiquette mistake or two. (YS turns back). Fight! (Pause). Now Larry's a little older than you Silas, but on the girly side, so I reckon it's about even.

YS: You can't make me.

CARL: Oh I can't? (Taking off his belt now). I'll whoop you both! (Silas goes forward and pushes Larry in the chest. Larry does nothing). Fight! (Larry grabs Silas round the waist. Silas knees him in the stomach and Larry falls).

YS: He down.

CARL: Get your pansy ass up, boy! (Whacks Larry with belt on his behind – he stands). Now fight! (they start to do so). Bitin' allowed. Kneein' in nuts allowed. Kidney punches, OK. Eye gougin'. Go ahead. Fight dirty! (Silas soon has Larry face-down in the dirt)

YL: L-l-let go!

CARL: (To YS) Looks like you won yourself a rifle, boy.

YL: Let me-me-me-me-me uh-uh-up. (Silas in his shame is quite cruel and will not let Larry go).

CARL: La-la-la-la-listen at the little stuttering baby! (Silas holds on and presses on Larry).

YL: You, you n-n-n-nigger. Nigger! ( Silas lets him go and rises. He backs up with his hands open. Then, with anger in his eyes, Silas swings at Larry. Larry waits without trying to protect himself. Silas's punch lands. Larry falls. Carl drops his bottle and begins to topple, hugging Silas for balance, the two dancing weirdly through the bitterweed toward the house, Silas fighting to get away, crying himself ).

YS: Let me go, Mr Ott, Sir, please. (As Carl staggers and YL rises to his knees and vomits, Silas runs away and leaves Carl to fall – the father and son like wounded on a battlefield.

Blackout.

Dark woods. Outside of the hut where Alice and YS live. YS runs on. He picks up a baseball bat that is leaning against the hut and begins to hit extravagant air shots. He is working off his anger frustration after the fight. ALICE comes to the door of the hut and looks out into the dark woods.)

ALICE: Are you out there, Silas? Is that you?

(YS freezes and slips behind a tree.)

ALICE/MA: I know you is out there, son. Don't try to deceive me.

YS: I not deceivin'. Just leave me alone.

ALICE: I know where you been, Silas. I know what you been doing.

YS: Please, Ma....

ALICE: I found lipstick on your shirt. I know that lipstick. An' I know them

lips is white lips.

YS: That? Ma!! That's just nuthin! Jus' messin'. Jus' fun.

ALICE: You gotta leave that girl alone. Ain't nuthin but trouble'll come from mixin' up with white folk. Yer hear me?

YS: I hear yer, Mamma. Now leave me be!

ALICE: As long as you lives in my cabin you 'bide by that and stick to yer own.

YS: I hear you, Mamma.

(A figure in the dark – it's Cindy – light down on YS – he has a flashlight).

CINDY: (Urgent whisper) Honey!

YS: Hush – (indicates) Mamma.

ALICE: Is someone else out there with you?

YS: No, Ma! Just a racoon in the leaves!

ALICE: Well, you behave yerself!

(ALICE exits into the hut.)

YS: She's gone!

(The beam lights YS, he lets it travel up Cindy in an almost erotic lingering, then they meet and kiss as he flicks the torch off).

(Blackout – Carl staggers on with bottle and a flashlight).

CARL: Alice, hey Alice!

ALICE (Entering from the hut. She holds a broom, as a weapon.) You get away Carl. I don't wanna talk to yer no more. We ain't got nuthin' to talk about.

CARL: Alice. Listen. I dun't wany nuthin' from yer no more. I jus' warnin' you - my wife wants you out of here. I don't know how long I can hold her

off. I just don't know. Threatenin' to leave with Larry. I don't know how long...I try, I tried. I ain't made o' stone. But you best look for some place else. Take Silas wi' you.

ALICE: I ain't talkin'. Jus go.

CARL: Well I warned yer. Like a decent type. I did my best for yer.

ALICE: Oh yeah?

CARL: You go rot in Hell. (staggers off ). I did what I could. I done now. (mutter) Women... they mess yuh 'round... women!! (spits)

(Blackout)

(Music, the Halloween party. All laughing dancing, flirting. Larry is late but he has the best mask. We see him put it on and awkwardly but energetically disco dance – Bee Gees?  
All clap but when he takes off mask at end of track they all groan and say “Larry, oh no Larry”. YS has been clapping too, Larry goes to him smiling awkwardly).

YS: (no enthusiasm). That' some mask.

YL: Hey, Silas...

YS: This nigger got nuthin' to say to you. (Turns and goes – Larry is crushed – Cindy comes up to Larry).

CINDY: Hey don't mind Silas, he's jus' sore 'bout the gun.

YL: Hey, thanks (astonished). Thanks Cindy.

CINDY: You ain't done nuthin' wrong. Was your Daddy's gun.

YL: Yeah, but I said -

CINDY: Words is nuthin'. You are a sweet boy. I know you don't mean no harm.

YL: (Bright, happy) No I don't.

CINDY: You like the movies?

YL: Yeah, movies.

CINDY: You ever go?

YL: Star wars. Sat'day Night Fever.

CINDY: Mr Travolta! (Mimes dance , he blushes). You ever go to that drive in theater they got by Hattiesburg?

YL: R rated movies!

CINDY: We could go.

YL: You and me?

CINDY: Can you get a car? With a big back seat...

YL: I can try.

CINDY: Well try, Larry. Friday night?

YL: Friday night.

CINDY: You know where to find me. Cecil will be fine as you are his buddy's lil' boy.

YL: My Daddy too, sure he'll lend me the car.

CINDY: An' git some cans o' beer. (Waves and flirtatiously exits).

YL: Hey Ken!

VOICE or actor: What you want lousy Larry!

YL: You know them rubbers you showed me.

KEN: Trojans. Yeah, so?

YL: Can I buy one of them Trojans off you?

KEN: What you want them for? (mimes masturbation). You got a kinky date with your own dick?

YL: No I got a real date.

KEN: Larry Ott got a date?

YL: Yeah, I'm takin' Cindy Walker to the drive in.

KEN: Horse shit, she wouldn't go out with you.

YL: Well she is. Friday. Drive in. Ask her.

KEN: (Holds out palm and Larry slaps it). You a bad ass now? (Larry smiles). Take it. Trojan. Best to nick the pack open before the date so it slips out.

YL: How much?

KEN: Badass like Larry Ott don't pay nuthin'. Cindy Walker – wow. (Larry smiles like an angel).

(Blackout - sound of a car pulling up).

YL: Mr Walker, Mr Walker!

CECIL: (opening a beer can). Hey! It's Larry Ott. My buddy's boy.

YL: My Daddy sends his regards, Sir.

CECIL: Shit he does. But return my regards to Mr Ott (laughs and almost spit out beer as he does so, then slaps YL on the back rather too hard). Get over here. (pushes YL up against the wall).

YL: Is something wrong, Sir?

CECIL: (Hurting YL) If you so much as get a finger in her, I'll cut your little dick off myself. You get me sissy boy?

CINDY: (Arriving, intervening) Cecil! (YL falls – Cecil laughs and steps over him).

CECIL: Go on out with that sissy boy. He ain't gone do you no good tonight, you little whore.

CINDY: (She tries to help Larry stand but he falls again). Can you walk?

YL: I can try. Hey, Cindy – your Daddy...

CINDY: Hush. He's a son of a bitch. I hate his guts. Let's go. Come on I'll drive.

YL: Do you even have your license?

CINDY: You got beer?

YL: You want one now? (She nods) Jus' two cans. Pulled them from my Daddy's coolbox. (Gives her one). They sort of warm now. Sorry Cindy. (He pulls the ring, she sips as she drives. Then she pulls over. Lights a cigarette).

CINDY: I need to get someplace else tonight, not the movie.

YL: What you mean? Where?

CINDY: That bastard Cecil 'll only let me out of the house with you.

YL: Me?

CINDY: Yeah. He thinks I'm safe with you.

YL: You are safe.

CINDY: I know. That's why I need to go to Fulsom. I got to go see him.

YL: Who?

CINDY: My boyfriend. (YL moves his legs carefully, his balls still tender).

YL: But Cindy -

CINDY: Listen. You have to help me. Cecil is after me, and if I can't go see my boyfriend, I'll never get away from him.

YL: But can't we just have our date?

CINDY: I'm gonna tell you something. Something nobody else knows.

YL: OK.

CINDY: Something you got to swear to God you won't ever tell nobody. Okay? Swear.

YL: I swear.

CINDY: To God.

YL: To God.

CINDY: (Finishes beer and throws her cigarette out the window). I'm gonna have a baby.

YL: A what?

CINDY: Baby. An itty-bitty baby. And if Cecil finds out, he'll kill me. For real kill me!

YL: Who's the, you know, daddy? Your boyfriend?

CINDY: I can't say. If Cecil finds that out, he'll kill him, too.

YL: What you need me to do?

CINDY: I'm going to meet ..my boyfriend.. so we can talk. We got to make us a plan. You just ride around awhile, but don't let nobody see you. Go on to the movie, it's dark, won't nobody see I ain't in the car with you. Park in the back row. My boyfriend'll drop me off at the road to my house. You can pick me up there at eleven and drive me home. That way Cecil won't never know.

YL: Cindy, I don't want to do this. Can we just go to the movie?

CINDY: Fuck the movie! You the only person in the world who can help me, Larry. God damn it. Please.

YL: OK.

CINDY: We drive five miles down this road to the gravel track by the high trees. You let me out there. Come back for me at 11. Give me that last beer.

YL: OK.

CINDY: You find your way back OK?

YL: Sure.

CINDY: An' you will come back? (YL nods). Swear!

YL: I swear.

CINDY: To God, Larry.

YL: I swear to God.

(Blackout)

(Music the credits of a Movie – YL with a blanket and hand miming sex with Cindy).

YL: (Winds down window) G'night, Ken, give my regards to the Trojans! (Drives off, pulls in and lets out sigh of relief). Done. Thanks, 'Cindy' (throws blanket over rear seat in disgust). 20 after ten. Time to go. (Noise, lights on the highway, car pulls off on dirt road. YL drums finger on car then gets out). Eleven. (Walks up and down). Hey, Cindy. Eleven! (Pause). I gotta get back! (lights fade and rise). It's 30 after! Cindy! (Lights down and up). Midnight. I waited for you Cindy and now I gotta go. (starts but returns). Come on Cindy, Cecil 'll kill me. I gotta go. You gotta be here! (Shouts) Cindy!

(Blackout – sirens, dogs – Larry is in handcuffs, a sheriff by his side).

SHERIFF: So this is where you dropped Miss Walker? What sort of gentleman are you? Leavin' a young lady in a place like this all alone?

YL: I swore to do so, Sherriff, Sir.

SHERIFF: But you were seen by your classmates at the drive-in movie. Seen with her.

YL: No Sir. That was a trick to fool Ken.

SHERIFF: Or me, you tryin' to fool the Law, boy?

YL: No Sir. I was keepin' my word.

SHERIFF: Things are lookin' bad for you Larry Ott. Looks to me like you killed that there pretty girl 'cos she ain't given you what you wanted.

YL: No Sir. If I killed her, which God help me I did not, where is the body?

SHERIFF: You read too many books, I reckon. Put ideas in your head. Well, things don't always work out so nicely in real life. Soon as we find a body you gonna spend the rest of your life in Jail.

YL: And if not, Sir?

SHERIFF: You gonna spend the rest of your life with folks thinking you should be in jail for rapin' and killin' a preddy girl.

(All cast appear and point at Larry, repeating):

ALL :You gonna spend the rest of your life with folks thinking you should be in jail for rapin' and killin' a preddy girl. Everyone knows what you did! (All spit on Larry. Blackout).

INTERVAL.

ACT TWO

(The adult Larry is sitting in a chair on his porch, reading a sipping coke. Sound of a car. Kids).

LARRY: Hello, hello, who's there?

VOICE (suppressing hysterical giggles). Is that Larry Ott?

LARRY: It is, can I be of assistance?

VOICE: Scary Larry!

ALL VOICES: Scary Larry!

LARRY: Get out of here!

VOICE: Killer Larry, Rapist Larry.

ALL: Scary Larry! (Noise of smashed headlamps and car denting and firework thrown across stage and broken glass. Beer cans crash onto the stage.)

LARRY: Get out! Get out...or I'll...Or I'll (noise of car pulling away). I'll do nuthin'. Can do nuthin'. Just me, all alone here.

(Larry goes to fetch the beer cans, bending to clear them up, when the sound of a car is heard and then a headlight beam picks out Larry. Larry tenses.)

LARRY: Not more kids...

WALLACE: (Off.) Hi, Mr Ott? Hidy there, my name's Wallace.  
(WALLACE enters.) Good evening, it's Wallace Stringfellow, Mr Ott!

LARRY: Good evening, what can I do for you?

WALLACE: Well, Mr Ott, I am a disc technician for DIRECT TV, I see you got an old antennae on your cabin roof an' I am on what we technician's call an 'installation drive'. I was jus' ridin' around and saw you ain't got a dish. (Takes out cigarette , offers one to Larry who declines). What you get out here, like three channels?

LARRY: I appreciate your riding all the way out here, but I don't reckon I need a disc. Three channels are more than enough.

WALLACE: But look, you don't know what's out there. Something for every taste. Get you a dish, boom, your evenings are as full as you want em to be. I can screw her in right up there, listening at the sky. You like cooking shows, boom, we got you covered. Murder shows? Crime investigation? Wrestling? It's a whole channel devoted to that.

LARRY: I appreciate you comin' all the way out here, down some dirt track jus' to -

WALLACE: You don't know the half. I get you hundred and twenty somethin' channels: HBO, ESPN, Skinflicks. Hey, give me a break. I could do with getting a deal today. (pause) You got a drink, pal? It's hot.

LARRY: Oh yeah, sorry – Wallace was it? (W nods). I just don't get many visitors. Just sit out here. It's cooler on the porch. (Exits).

WALLACE: You the boss, hoss. (Looks around) Nice place.

LARRY (Off) You wanna coke or a soda?

WALLACE: You got a Bourbon to go with it?

LARRY: Nope. Coke's cold. (emerging with two cans). I don't drink alcohol.

WALLACE: Not even a beer?

LARRY: Sorry.

WALLACE: I'll take the coke, Mr Ott.

LARRY: How you know my name?

WALLACE: We work our way through the registers at County Hall.

LARRY: For real? Hey you go to Fulsom high school? With a cousin named Stringfellow?

WALLACE: Yeah. But I never graduated.

LARRY: Me neither. Cheers!

WALLACE: Cheers. To two drop outs! Cheers Mr Ott.

LARRY: Call me Larry.

WALLACE: Larry? You mean you are *the* Larry Ott?

LARRY: Sure...

WALLACE: You were the one they say did away with that girl, Cindy. Back in high school. That's how come you quit school. Huh, shit boy. You famous, or infamous.

LARRY: You still want to sell me a dish?

WALLACE: Hell, I'd sell you three dishes. Nine hundred channels! But all that can wait 'till Monday. It's noon an' the end o' my shift. Friday noon.

That's the deal. My week end has just begun. I'll drop by first thing Monday. Mr Ott, Sir.

LARRY: How about that, Wallace, I'll see you Monday then?

WALLACE: Sure as clockwork.

LARRY: Amen.

(Blackout).

(The Care Home, Mrs Ott is wheeled in by a Nurse).

LARRY: Hi Mamma! (kisses her cheek – she pulls away). I bought you some candy. You like candy.

MRS OTT: Larry is a good boy.

LARRY: Yeah, Ma, Larry is a good boy.

MRS OTT: Where is he? What you done with my Larry?

LARRY: I'm here, Ma.

MRS OTT: You killed him, didn't you? You killed my l'il boy.

LARRY: No Ma, I never killed nobody!

MRS OTT: Throw him out, throw him out!! He's a killer! I tell you! Killer! Killer! Killer!

LARRY: Please, ma...

MRS OTT: Please don't hurt me, killer!

(LARRY looks to the NURSE who shakes her head.)

LARRY: Sorry, Ma, I better go...

(Blackout).

(Larry sitting on porch reading and drinking coke. A car sound).

WALLACE: Hidey, Larry. You surprised to see me?

LARRY: Well Monday was a month ago. So yeah I am a liddle bit surprised to see you now, Wallace.

WALLACE: Beer? (Offering and taking one himself).

LARRY: No thanks.

WALLACE: Would you believe it, those Direct TV bastards fired me!

LARRY: You on Welfare now?

WALLACE: Hell no, I been paintin' houses. It's work. What you readin' now?

LARRY: 'Carrie'. It's a horror.

WALLACE: Ain't that a movie too?

LARRY: Not as good as the book. (Pause as Wallace drinks, neither man knows what to say).

WALLACE: You don't like me much, do you? (Larry says nothing). It's OK. Not many folk do. Think I'm weird. That's why I quit school, like you. I was tired of folks making fun of me.

LARRY: It's not that I don't like you, I just don't know you. I don't get much practice with visitors neither.

WALLACE: Why not? You are one Hell of a conversationalist. I figure you'd have folks over here for beer most nights, tellin' jokes and stories from these books you read. Makin' 'em laugh and getting' as high as a giraffe's pussy.

(LARRY chuckles.)

LARRY: Well, see, you make me laugh, Wallace. I ain't had a visitor that makes me laugh in a long time. If it ain't that Detective French checking me out after every murder and assault in the state, it's kids smashing my car headlights and denting the hood with a hammer.

WALLACE: Fuck!

LARRY: Shouted out: Murderer, rapist, faggot. (Matter of fact delivery). Took a baseball bat and smashed my windshield.

WALLACE: Ain't you got no gun?

LARRY: Nope. Sherrif take away my gun rights.

WALLACE: They can't do that! It's in the Constitution. You ought to ride you out to Walmart, get one of them single shot twelve gauges. Blast 'em to Hell. Bout eighty bucks. I could go with you.

LARRY: I don't want to hurt no one.

WALLACE: Then get a dog, a mean one. Why ain't you got no dog? I got one. Real mean. Call him John Wayne. Hates niggers worse than anythin'.

LARRY: How come?

WALLACE: (Shrugs.) Jus does. You wanna borrow him I can chain him up. Then you git trouble jus' let him loose. Grrr – ah!

LARRY: (Laughing) It ain't black folk that mess with me.

WALLACE: (On a roll) You know John Wayne he likes to catch armadillos, two or three a night. I hates armadillos, they give me the creeps. I calls 'em 'armoured dildos!'

LARRY: Hey, Wallace. Tell me the truth. You never worked for Direct TV, did you?

WALLACE: (Grins) OK. You got me. Truth is I borrowed that van from Momma's boyfriend. He works for Direct TV. He was at the dog races with my Momma so he did not miss his wagon for a while.

LARRY: How come you took the van? You got your own four wheeler, here. (points off).

WALLACE: Hell man, you got a reputation. You might cut me up and bury me in the woods. So I thought I might...you know-

LARRY: Test the water with 'scary Larry'.

WALLACE: You know when I start drinkin' I hate to stop! (Opens another beer). You ever been married?

LARRY: Nope.

WALLACE: Got a girl?

LARRY: Nope.

WALLACE: What do you do when the ole pecker gets ready? (Makes fist) You ain't one of them forty year old virgins?

LARRY: No. (Larry laughs) I am one of them forty one year old virgins. (Wallace laughs like this is the funniest thing he has ever heard).

WALLACE: Hell, you *are* a comedian. Should go on TV. But I'm single too. Though there is this girl I see over at the trailer park. She is hot as a rabbit on heat. Married too but her man ran off. Maybe scared of her. (Shakes wrist). Then there's this crackhead in Dentonville. Nigger girl. She'll suck you dry for twenty bucks, fuck your eyes crossed for thirty. Name's Wanda Something. You drive. We can go over there now. Bust your cherry.

LARRY: 'Preciate it, but no.

WALLACE: I 'bin in a bit of trouble over in Dentonville too. Fightin' in a bar.

LARRY: (Gets up). I gonna get a coke.

WALLACE: Mind if I smoke a spliff?

LARRY: Hmm. Jus' don't leave no criminal evidence on my porch (Larry exits. WALLACE takes out a pre rolled joint, inhales – Larry re-emerges behind him in the Monster mask). Yarg!

WALLACE: (Sees the mask.) Oh fuck!

LARRY: (Taking off the mask) Sorry, Wallace. But I think you know this mask, don't you?

WALLACE: OK, OK. Yes! Guilty as charged! When I was twelve years

old you jus' about scared me to death in that mask.

LARRY: I didn't mean to hurt you. Jus' scare you away. I couldn't have no kid messin' about in my barn.

WALLACE: Teachers at high school all said we was not to go too close to Scary Larry and his cabin. So I thought I'd make myself look big if I came out here. Then I got to *like* sneakin' into your barn, treated it like it was my place. I never had a place. So when you was away at the garage, daytime, I'd skip class and come on down and mess around in the barn. (Points.)

LARRY: Not safe for a kid. Full o' sharp things.

WALLACE: Like knives to cut up young women. (Makes sexual sawing noise and inhales, then offers Larry a smoke).

LARRY: I wish you'd wait 'til you got home to smoke that. I don't want no trouble with the Law.

WALLACE: Man with your reputation, scared of a little Mary. J. Wanna? Shit. Fuck the law, Larry. You see 'em anywhere. It's jus' us dropouts here, us and them buzzards. (Points to sky.)

LARRY: Maybe you should go home.

WALLACE: Why Larry, I feel more at home on this here porch with you than I do at my own home. OK I miss my dog. But you kinda better conversationalist than John Wayne. (Barks, laughs and Larry laughs too).

LARRY: You come round anytime you like, Wallace. Anytime.

(Blackout)

(Larry sitting inside this time. Coat on – it is winter. A car arrives – he looks out the window – sees nothing, humphs and sits down again with his book and mug of coffee. Then singing or whistling of a Christmas carol – perplexed, Larry gets up, the empty mug now like a knuckle duster. Rather scary carols pop out from different places. Larry getting worried now... but then a ribboned package slides across the floor – Larry picks it up and reads the gift tag).

LARRY: Merry Christmas, Larry, from Santa Claus. (Then a car engine). Wallace, Wallace is that you? (Larry takes the package and opens it – it's a gun). Thanks, Wallace. (He shakes his head.) Thank you, friend.

(Blackout).

(Back on the porch, it's warmer now. Larry in his chair. Wallace with a beer, maybe strumming a guitar or harmonica).

LARRY: I like it when you play.

WALLACE: Art teacher at High school said you could draw. Showed us a few she kept. Only teacher had anythin' good to say 'about scary Larry.

LARRY: That's kinda nice. But I don't draw no more. Got no one to show it to.

WALLACE: Once I thought I cud be a moosishun. Shit! (plays bum chord).

LARRY: Beer?

WALLACE: How many words for yes are there? (Larry gets him a beer). Larry?

LARRY: Yep?

WALLACE: Tell me about that girl.

(Flash of lightning. Both men look up. Then back to the conversation.)

LARRY: Girl?

WALLACE: Did you do it?

LARRY: No.

WALLACE: You mind talkin' about it?

LARRY: Nobody asked me in a long time.

WALLACE: If you had killed her, would you tell me?

LARRY: I took her on a date. That's all.

WALLACE: Did you get in her panties?

LARRY: Naw.

WALLACE: You ain't queer are you?

LARRY: No. Not in that way.

WALLACE: Good, 'cos I can't stand a damn faggot.

(Rumble of thunder.)

LARRY: All folk is good.

WALLACE: Jesus H Christ. Where is your fuckin' halo? (they laugh). You know Larry we ought to go out to that cabin of yours. One in the woods.

LARRY: You found that too?

WALLACE: Yeah. When I was a kid I used to play in it.

LARRY: 'spose it's about fallin down now. Not bin there in years. I thought my Daddy kept it locked. After Silas and his Mammy left. How did you get in?

WALLACE: Silas? Like Policeman Silas?

LARRY: Yeah, he and his Mammy used to live there. Then my Daddy sent 'em away. I don't know why.

WALLACE: Well I used to get in the window. There was a crack. Kinda fun. (pause) I wondered - ?

LARRY: What?

WALLACE: Maybe you buried that girl there. (Flash of lightning. WALLACE takes out joint and inhales). Hid her naked body. But I never did find nuthin'. Not even a rubber or a dirty magazine. (Rumble of thunder.) Hey, Larry I ought not to be tellin' you this but I am as high as a buzzard on laughing gas. (Larry tries to chuckle but it comes out as a

weird sound). I used to imagine you'd find me there, in the cabin, and keep me prisoner. But instead of killin' me, you an' me we'd get to be friends. Ouch! (Roach has burnt down, he flicks it into the distance). You know what else?

LARRY: (Grudging) No.

WALLACE: I don't care if you took that girl or not. We would still be friends, you and me. If you did.

LARRY: I didn't.

(Rumble of thunder.)

WALLACE: I wouldn't mind, that is all I'm sayin'. If you done it. If you had raped that preddy girl. Killed her. Sometimes women can make you crazy, can't they? You ain't got to tell me that! (Silence). But you can trust me, Larry. We are friends. Best friends. An' a friend would never call the Police on his friend, no matter what his friend had done. (Lights up again). So if you did kill her, I'd like to know how, how you done it. If you raped her.

LARRY: I didn't.

WALLACE: (Now drinking too). Sometimes they like it, getting' raped. They want you to do it. Carry them out to the cabin and throw 'em onto the floor. Gag their preddy mouth. Tear at their clothes, hit 'em a little bit. Smack 'em on their white ass.

(Sounds of thunder.)

LARRY: Wallace, I don't like that talk.

WALLACE: Strangle 'em with a belt, get 'em on the table doggy style an' show-em who Daddy is!

LARRY: I think it's time you go home, you're drunk an' high and don't know what you sayin'. I'm gonna bed. (Starts to leave).

WALLACE: Wait -

LARRY: Good night. (Flicks light inside, Wallace is holding his crotch, excited).

WALLACE: Larry. Wait!

LARRY: Go home. Drive careful. Come back when you're sober.

WALLACE: (Wallace looks as if he might cry, humiliated and lost and whines) Just wait.

LARRY: Good night. (Goes).

(Crash of thunder, following by the sound of heavy rain falling. Wallace cowers from the rain.)

WALLACE: (Bangs his head on the wall and shouts). Fuck you. Fuck you! I know what you done. Know you raped that girl and killed her. Folks are right about you! You did it! Killer, raper. I'm gonna tell the Police you told me. Actin' like you're better 'n me! You killed her, I know!!! I'm gonna tell the Police right now that you told me everythin' you did to her!! (Exiting.)

LARRY (returning in overcoat, as at the top of the play): I never hurt nobody in my life. Now go home!

WALLACE: (Off now) Fuck you, crazy Larry.

(The sound of smashing car headlights and a dented roof. Larry shakes his head sadly. Noise dies down. Rain falling heavily, Larry steps out into the rain and kneels, praying on his porch.)

LARRY: Dear God. Please forgive my sins. Send me some business to the garage. Give my Momma a good day so she knows who I am or take her if it's time. And help Wallace, God please.

(Stands – goes inside, takes off his wet coat, goes to the phone. Dials).

LARRY: Hello. Hello. Silas. Silas. Sorry to bother you. I know you are busy what with Police work, but please call me back if you can. Please! (Puts phone down, then rings again). Silas, Call me back. It's kinda important. Even if it's late. It's important. I've something I wanna tell you. Thank you.

(He sighs. Takes a beer from the fridge, pleased that it is still cool. Sits in the chair and opens a book. Behind him a man in a horror mask bursts

out, Larry rises, dropping the book.)

LARRY: Wait, please... wait...

(WALLACE in mask, screaming "Killer! Killer!", shoots Larry who falls to the ground).

WALLACE: (To apparently dying gasping Larry) Everyone knows what you did!

BLACKOUT

### ACT THREE

(Lights up on TV Reporter, speaking to camera, holding microphone.)

**TV Reporter:** Tina Rutherford is still missing. The heiress to one of the largest logging fortunes in West Mississippi is gone. A quiet girl who was well liked at high school. A girl who never put a step wrong and who never stayed out late or dated strange boys is gone. Gone where we do not know. But across this quiet county today the fear is that she may lie in a shallow grave. And while this case is not yet a murder case, there are strong suspicions surrounding one Larry Ott, a suspect in the parallel case of the disappearance of young Cindy Walker twenty five years ago. Mr Ott lies in a coma in the hospital behind me. A gunshot wound to his chest. Was it self-inflicted? Was it guilt that pulled the trigger? This is Caroline Thompson for NBC news in Chabot, Mississippi.

(Blackout)

(Silas, sitting at home replaying the answerphone):

LARRY VOICE: Silas. Silas. Sorry to bother you. I know you are busy what with Police work, but please call me back if you can. Please! (Puts phone down, then rings again). Silas, Call me back. It's kinda important. Even if it's late. It's important. I've something I wanna tell you. Thank you.

(Walkie talkie starts up).

(Angie walks out of the darkness in a dressing gown, with bottle of beer,

and puts her arms around the troubled seated Silas).

ANGIE: What do you think he wanted to tell yer?

SILAS: I dunno.

ANGIE: I think you do. That's why your heart is beatin' like hell.

SILAS: Cud be you, bein' close (tries to smile).

ANGIE: But it's not.

SILAS: You should be the detective.

ANGIE: Ain't no black detectives in Mississippi.

SILAS: Well you found me out.

ANGIE: You don't think Larry shot himself do you?

SILAS: No.

ANGIE: You don't think Larry killed Cindy, then Tina?

Silas: No.

ANGIE: What else do you know?

SILAS: I know too much. But for now. I need to keep it inside until and if Larry pulls through. Dead man can't forgive.

(Blackout).

VOICE: Silas?

SILAS: Yep.

VOICE: Can you get on down to the trailer park. One Irena Jones gotta rattle snake in her mail box. Looks like it didn't git there on its own. Makes that a felony. OK?

(SILAS putting on his cop's hat.)

SILAS: Snake still in there?

VOICE: 'fraid so.

SILAS: I'm good with snakes.

VOICE: You're bad. You're scared. Off you go.

SILAS: M'am.

(SILAS exits. The barking of dogs. Country music. Redneck trailer park – Silas enters, looks about him.)

Silas: (On radio) Well, I'm here. White trash alley.

RADIO: Now, officer, that is no way to describe our respectable citizens.

SILAS: Respectable?

RADIO: OK our pig ignorant trailer trash. (They laugh).

IRENA: Hey Officer. You here 'bout my mailbox?

SILAS: (Quickly changing his attitude.) Yes, M'am.

IRENA: Call me, Irena. (she has baby on hip, dressed in cut off jeans).

SILAS: OK Irena, what happened?

IRENA: First thing this mornin' I go to check my mail when I hear this rattle in the box and this stink.

SILAS: Lucky it's a rattler not a copperhead.

IRENA: Yeah, if it were the silent type it could've killed me darn' dead! Hey, Mister, you the silent type? You got a big sting on you, Officer?

SILAS: Call me Silas, M'am.

IRENA: Sure thing, Silas... I like that name... kinda slippery... ssssilasss... snaky...

SILAS: Irena, you got a shovel?

IRENA: Sure. Anything for you, snake boy! (Shouting off.) Hey, Betty, git me a spade.

SILAS: Ain't got no men around here?

IRENA: Nah, we three is all divorced. 'sides, men in them trailers all busted. No more handle a rattle snake than they could me an' Betty!

SILAS: So you all on your own? Any ex husbands with grudges...

IRENA: All of them.

SILAS: Enough to put a deadly reptile in your mailbox?

IRENA: Not jus' our ex husbands, our ex-lovers, ex-one nigh stands, ex...

SILAS: OK, OK, but no explicit threats? No calls. No notes?

IRENA: Betty, you get any sorta threat'nin' thing? (OFF: Nope). Nuthin'. So? You gonna kill that there, snake? Or stand there talkin' all day?

SILAS: Hmm... (He looks.) It ain't in no rush to leave your nice warm box.

IRENA: Ain't that the way! Hope you ain't in no rush to withdraw right off, either, Officer Silas.

SILAS: I'm on duty, M'am. So hand me the shovel. (Looks again.) What happened here? Your 'snake of the month' arrived early?

(They laugh).

IRENA: Yeh, but I ordered a copperhead.

(Silas laughs, then goes serious. He opens the mailbox flap, rattler sound, sticks in spade, when the snake strikes he grabs it by the neck, throws it to the ground and cuts its head off with the shovel).

IRENA: My oh my! If I paid any taxes I'd say it was money well spent.

SILAS: Come on, Irena, this here is attempted murder. You gotta know

who jus' might be *that* mad at you?

IRENA: (Kicks dust) Well, there is some kind of weird one. But he can be sweet too. An' kind to my little boy.

SILAS: What's his name, Irena.

IRENA: I don't want to get no one into trouble. Might not be him. Might be my husband.

BETTY (Off): Your husban' so darn stupid he couldn't get a dead chicken in your mail box!

IRENA: Or a pork chitlin! (rude gesture).

SILAS: Well, you give me a buzz, if you recall the names of the weird one or your husband. (Hands her a card). That's my number.

IRENA: O, I will give you a buzz, Silas, if you give me a chance. Even if I don't recall them names.

SILAS: Good day, M'am. (looks up, stops and stares).

IRENA: Hey, what yo' lookin' up at the sky for?

SILAS: Buzzards.

IRENA: That's a damn shame, when there's prettier birds right here on the ground.

SILAS: There's a track down there, right?

IRENA: Nuthin' down there but an ol' cabin.

SILAS: Where is that? Is that the back of Larry Ott's place?

IRENA: Ugh! Him! Now he *is* a creep! Think *he* come over here and put the snake in there?

SIALS: No... no... I just didn't connect the two places.... look, I gotta go.

IRENA: But, hey, you be sure to come back and see us, Officer Silas? Report on your investigation! (He is exiting.) Hey!! You still got my

shovel!!! (Hands on her hips.) Shit!

(Blackout).

(Silas pushing through the undergrowth, apocalyptic lighting, creepers, noise of birds, forest; the outline of a hut. Silas has the shovel in hand. He stops, waves the spade. A flutter of birds. He takes a couple more steps and freezes. Sound of someone else moving through the undergrowth.)

SILAS: Anyone there?

ANGIE: (Off) Silas? Is that you?

SILAS: Over here!

(ANGIE enters, still in her paramedic's kit.)

SILAS: Thanks for comin', Angie.

ANGIE: You owe me big time. When I get you home, you gotta show me how much you appreciate this... (She looks around.) ... where are we? Is this Larry Ott's property?

SILAS: He owns this land.

ANGIE: This is about the phone message, yea? (She goes to him. Kisses him on the lips, then looks in his eyes.)

SILAS: (Breaking from ANGIE) I got a hunch. I need a witness. See that hut? Buzzards !

ANGIE: I know what buzzards are...

SILAS: Attracted to the smell of dead meat. In a minute I'm going in to dig, and I expect to find what's left of the Rutherford girl...

ANGIE: You don't need a paramedic for that, you need cops.

SILAS: No, I need you. See, I didn't always live in Chabot. We came here from Chicago. This is where we lived.

ANGIE: In there?

(SILAS nods.)

SILAS: If Tina Rutherford is in there, the kid's buried in my childhood home...

ANGIE: You think 'Scary Larry' did that?

SILAS: (shakes his head) I don't know. Larry knows about the cabin. His redneck Daddy let me and my Ma stay in there.

ANGIE: You knew Larry then ?

SILAS: Sweetie, I was best friends with Larry Ott. For a while. Then we had a fight. He called me Nigger. I never spoke to him again. Not many other folk did neither.

ANGIE: Lonesome Larry, scary Larry. These loners, you know they make killers.

(SILAS shakes his head.)

SILAS: He ain't got it in him.

ANGIE: How come you so certain he ain't killed that Cindy?

SILAS: (Breaking) Oh Lord, I...I.. hold me, Angie.

ANGIE: You want to tell me your trouble?

SILAS: Oh Cindy....

ANGIE: You weren't dating the Cindy girl were you?

(SILAS looks at ANGIE but doesn't answer. He looks away.)

SILAS: If I had been smart I would have kept away from her and her Redneck badass Daddy.

ANGIE: Who ever accused you of being smart?

(SILAS looks up at her sharply, thinking she was about to accuse of him of something, then gets the joke, and laughs. ANGIE laughs with him.

SILAS takes deep breath.)

SILAS: OK. I better do this.

ANGIE: We'd better do this. (She takes out a camera and starts to help. He takes the shovel and enters the hut, Sound of SILAS digging, then he stops.)

SILAS: Oh Lord! (More digging, stops.) O Lord! (More digging, then stops.) O please Lord!!!

ANGIE: White, late teens. (Holds up necklace). To my darling Tina.

TV Reporter: We interrupt this programme for a newsflash. The mutilated corpse of logging heiress Tina Rutherford has been found buried in a shallow grave on the property of suspect Larry Ott. Latest medical reports indicate that the suspect has been moved out of intensive care in Chabot hospital and will soon be interrogated by police officers who are hoping to make an arrest.

(POLICE OFFICER, in dark glasses, enters from Larry's house.)

POLICE OFFICER: Hey, 32, what you doin' here at 'Scary Larry's house ?

SILAS: Now that is pure prejudice, Officer Johnson, an' I object to prejudice in any man, but specially a policeman. ' Sides that Larry don't scare me; I been living in the same town as him now for three years; didn't cause me no trouble.

POLICE: Well I guess you are not as pretty as poor Tina Rutherford! Hahah! Hey, wanna beer? Found these cans of Bud in the coolbox.

SILAS: You sure? His Pa was a drunk driving fatality. Larry Ott was teetotal. How come he got beer?

POLICE: Dunno. But it's so damn hot, even a killer's beer works good.

SILAS: OK if I go through the cordon? Have a look see if there's anything else out of the ordinary?

(POLICE OFFICER shakes his head. Folds his arms across his chest.)

SILAS: I guess not. You got any objection to me feeding them chickens? Can't you hear them screaming? You were gonna leave 'em like that? Starve to death? (Staring to move off down the side of the house.) I can git you an egg or two?

POLICE: Nah, my wife whop me if I bring home eggs from 'Scary Larry'. Maybe you can sell 'em on e bay to one of them serial killer sites.

SILAS: Chickenshit.

POLICE: Off you go. Them birds sure as hell make a noise.

SILAS: Hungry birds.

POLICE OFFICER: (Mimicking Hannibal Lecter) "It's the screaming of the chicks, Clarisse, the screaming of the chicks..." (He opens himself a beer.)

(Silas stops, checks the POLICE OFFICER is not looking and climbs into the house. We see him within the frame of the house; searching through drawers and cupboards. He sees something in a drawer and takes it out.)

SILAS: Now, what is this?

(Lights change, POLICE OFFICER exits. SILAS comes forward, downstage with the book. Light on him, SILAS reads the title on the front of the album.)

SLAS: 'The family Ott photo album: 1970 to 1990.' Woah. What little treasure have we here? (He opens the book, and in a separate area lights up, into which steps CARL, striking a pose for the camera.) Carl the bastard. Looking like the pig he was. (SILAS turns the page. The light on Carl goes out and the ANGIE performer enters, dressed in Alice's dress and hat, light up on her, she has her back to the audience, a white baby (a doll of baby Larry) on her shoulder, its face visible to the audience.) Little Larry, in somebody's arms... is that Mrs Ott? (He turns the page and the lights go down on Alice and baby, and then comes up as MOM (younger Mrs Ott) enters the light in her distinctive hat and coat; she takes the baby from Alice and they pose, Alice still with back to the audience and arms to her front, invisible to SILAS and the audience. Photo pose.) No, that's his ma, I recognise her. She never liked me. And

look at Larry, he was never as smart as that when I knew him! (Turns page, lights down, this time, MOM hands the baby to Alice/ANGIE and then holds up a washing bowl, into which Alice now dips the baby. Her hands are now visible to the audience. Lights up.) Larry agin'. Larry in the washtub with... black hands washin' him down. Who's black arms are those, then? Who held you in their black arms, Larry? Some maid or other the Otts had before we came along? ...hey, hey... who are you? (The lights still up, SILAS turns a page and Alice/ANGIE turns to look out from the photo. SILAS involuntary yells out: ) Mamma! O lord... o lord... that's you, Mamma! That's my preddy Mamma. Holy pretzel!!! My Mamma was the Ott fam'lee maid!

(Blackout. Lights up on the hospital. Larry is in the bed, rigged up to beeping machines, tubes in his arms.

SILAS sneaks in, unseen. Goes to Larry's bed. Bends over him – a suggestion for a moment that he's going to smother him, but he's just listening to his breathing.)

SILAS: (whispering) Larry, Larry. Can you hear me? Larry, Larry? It's Silas here. Your old friend. I'm sorry what's happened, Larry.. sorry about everything... I need to know. When you called my answerphone, what did you mean to tell me? Can you hear me. Wink if you do. (Bends. Nothing. He straightens.) You jus' carry on starin' at the ceilin'. I'm gonna come back. But if you wake an' I am not here, don't go tellin' them you killed Tina and Cindy. Don't tell 'em, pal. Don't tell 'em for your old friend, Silas, eh?

(Blackout.

Lights up on elderly Mrs Ott in bed, or in wheelchair, in a Care Home. Soothing music, muzak, is playing. Mrs Ott is mumbling. SILAS enters with a male NURSE and is guided to Mrs Ott's bedside.)

NURSE: (In Mrs Ott's hearing) I'm afraid Mrs Ott is not all with us. She may not be ...entirely clear with you, Officer.

SILAS: Well, I need to ask her some questions, any type of answer might help. Does she know her son is in hospital? And... under suspicion?

NURSE: She knows his name, Sir. She can talk about him but not in the

present, if you know what I mean.

SILAS: Well, any information is good. Can I? (Nurse nods).

NURSE: Good luck. Shame it is isn't her son...

SILAS: Was he often here?

NURSE: Plenty. I'll leave you now.

SILAS: (Goes over to woman in wheel chair). Mrs Ott, Mrs Ott? It's me, Silas.

OLD WOMAN: What? Larry?

SILAS: No. Silas. Silas Jones. My mother, Alice Jones, was your maid.

OLD WOMAN: (Gesturing.) Get that woman out of here!

SILAS: (Looks around.) What woman?

OLD WOMAN: Get her out! You and your dirty whore. Get out! Out. I know what you bin doing!

NURSE: (Running in). What's goin' on?

SILAS: I didn't do nothing...

OLD WOMAN: I know! I know it all!

NURSE: (Trying to pacify Mrs Ott.) Mrs Ott! Mrs Ott!

SILAS: No, no. Let her alone. Let her speak!

OLD WOMAN: You fuck that nigger under my nose! Jesus wept! I'm gonna go back to my Daddy in Memphis and take Larry with me. Get her out or I am goin' back to Memphis and you will never see me nor your son no more!

SILAS: Mrs Ott, are you talking about... Alice Jones?

OLD WOMAN: No, no, whore. Whore!

NURSE: I gotta sedate her, sir. Sorry, you're gonna have to leave.  
(Takes syringe and Mrs Ott collapses in chair. Injects her. Mrs Ott is silent, staring).. she say anythin' useful 'bout the killin'?

SILAS: Just ravin'. Gone.

NURSE: Kinda for the best, suppose. Not knowin' her son is a killer.

SILAS: Yeah. Yeah. That's it, isn't it... everything 's for the best... everything... for... the.. best... (He stares hard at the NURSE.) Some things are best kept secret.

(NURSE nods as if this is a secret agreement between them. NURSE not quite understanding what he has just agreed to.)

NURSE: Sure. Sure, officer. Like you say. I better get her medication.

(NURSE exits. Silas goes over to Mrs Ott and speaks in her ear).

SILAS: I kept a secret all these years. From you, your son and the police. That secret, Mrs Ott, was Cindy Walker. (Sighs). I know what's missin' out of you, Mrs Ott (makes twirling motion in front of her head). Now, I reckon I know what's missing out of me: the plain courage to own up and tell the truth. Strange just how hard it is.... (Radio crackles.) Hello. Sir... Larry's awake? OK, I coming in. Can he speak?

(Blackout.

Lights up. The hospital – Larry sitting up. Detective French is there).

FRENCH Hell, Dioc, he's awake. You gotta let me at him.

DOCTOR: (To FRENCH.) Officer French, I will tell you when the patient can talk. OK Officer? (Takes pulse. Shines light in Larry's eyes). Sip it slowly. How do you feel? (Larry nods and lifts thumb, tries to smile). What's your name?

LARRY: Lar -ree....Ott.

DOCTOR: Who is the President?

LARRY: (Coughs) Did they find the girl?

FRENCH: Yeah. She's dead, Larry. But you already knew that...

LARRY: Officer Jones?

FRENCH: Officer Jones found you. Saved your life.

LARRY: Yes, Sir? Silas Jones? Saved me...

FRENCH: You can take a break now, Doc, we ain't in any rush here.

DOCTOR: (uncertainly) OK, well, you call me immediately if there's any kind of problem... (He walks away, stands at the door of the room.)

FRENCH: (to LARRY) Doc there tells me you're gone pull through. Said the bullet just missed your heart. Do you hear me, Larry?

LARRY: Yes... sir.

FRENCH: Did you shoot yourself?

LARRY: I don't know.

DOCTOR: Some memory loss is common, officer.

FRENCH: (Turns round, annoyed the DOCTOR is still in the room.) You still here? (Back to LARRY.) Well, let's come back to that in a minute. Now, Doc there, he says the first thing you asked when you come round this morning was if we'd found Tina Rutherford. Can you tell me, when was the last time you seen her?

LARRY: I never seen her.

FRENCH: You mean it was dark when you dun it? How come she was buried in that ol' cabin on your land. Raped—

LARRY: (Straining against the bed ties). What? No!

FRENCH: Beaten to death. Now I've rode you pretty hard over the years, Larry, I know. But we ain't never found nothing yet that would let us convict you for that Cindy girl you killed. Till now. Hey, if it was all an accident, an innocent misunderstanding, you didn't intend Tina winding up dead, did you? So you get the guilt off your chest, tell us how it happened, you won't need to go putting no gun 'gainst your chest no

more? Eh? What do you say?

LARRY: I dunno. Maybe...do you think I dun it, Sir?

FRENCH: Yeah, I really do, Larry. I think you killed both them girls. Tina and Cindy. We don't know why you did it – but if you want to tell us (he glances at the DOCTOR who shifts uneasily, complicit) it sure would help.

LARRY: I don't know why. Why I would've done that... I didn't even know the Tina Rutherford girl.

FRENCH: Well, sometimes we do bad things without knowing the reason. But the way you felt when you put that gun to your chest and pulled the trigger? That ain't going away..... the only way a guy like you ever gets to feel better is to confess and take their chance with a jury.

LARRY: Okay.

(ANGIE AND SILAS ENTER. ANGIE IS CARRYING A HORROR NOVEL OF LARRY'S AND GRAPES OR FLOWERS FOR LARRY.)

SILAS: (Entering) Can we come in?

FRENCH: (groans in frustration.) Talk o' the devil. Hello, constable.

LARRY: Hey, Silas. There you are.

SILAS: Hey, Larry. How you feeling?

LARRY: (TEARFUL) Not too good. They say I shot myself and killed that girl, but I can't remember doing either. They want me to say I killed Cindy Walker, too. Remember her?

DOCTOR: Right. That's enough for today. You rest now, Mr. Ott. Come on, gentlemen, ma'm, Mister Ott needs some peace and quiet. You can come back tomorrow.

ANGIE: (HOLDING UP GIFTS) We're not here for an interrogation.

DOCTOR: Well, five minutes then. As for you, detective, I'll see you in the morning. (HE STANDS WAITING FOR FRENCH TO LEAVE.)

FRENCH: (HUFFING IN FRUSTRATION) Jeez, fellah was about to confess. Well, you can tell me in the morning, Larry. (TO SILAS) Leave the detecting to me. (EXITS FOLLOWED BY THE DOCTOR.)

LARRY: I'm glad now you're here, Silas.

ANGIE: We brought you some things, Mister Ott. (SHE PUTS BOOK AND GRAPES BY THE BED. BUT LARRY IS FOCUSED ON SILAS.)

LARRY: Silas, was you here at night? Lookin' at me.

(ANGIE looks at SILAS, surprised.)

SILAS: Sure. I was here. I fed your chickens too.

LARRY: Thanks, pal, them chickens must've been mighty hungry.

SILAS: But I did not touch your beer.

LARRY: I don't drink. That was Wallace's beer. Wallace... (Struggling with memory)... I didn't like Wallace... going on about girls and stuff he'd like to do...

ANGIE: Mister Ott, we know you had nothing to do with the Tina Rutherford killing.

LARRY: But I can't remember. They got me so confused... all these years people been telling me I killed the Walker girl, now they're telling me I killed Tina Rutherford... Poor girl... I don't know what happened... maybe I just don't remember...

SILAS: (TO ANGIE) Jesus, if he talks like that to French, they'll send him to the 'lectric chair.

ANGIE: You've got to tell him.

LARRY: Tell me what?

ANGIE: Mister Ott, it ain't you that's going to confess. It's Silas. (TO SILAS.) Go on, sweetie...

LARRY: What choo mean? I'm the suspect...

ANGIE: Tell him, Silas, tell him what you told me!

LARRY: What is it, Silas?

ANGIE: (TO SILAS) Go on.

SILAS: Jesus. (TAKES A DEEP BREATH.) You never had anything to do with Cindy's disappearing. Cindy Walker disappeared on account of me..

(LARRY's mouth falls open. He tries to speak.)

ANGIE: Tell him it all.

SILAS: It was all my fault. That night.... I didn't mean it to work out how it did... once the damage was done I was too scared to....

LARRY: What do you mean?

ANGIE: Silas. Stop messing him around and tell him straight.

SILAS: Larry, that night when Cindy went missing... I know.... I know the whole story.... it happened like this:

(Fade to black, music. YL and Cindy in YL's parents' car. Cindy steps out the car).

CINDY: I'm going to meet S.... my boyfriend..... so we can... talk. We got to make us a plan. You just ride around awhile, but don't let nobody see you. Go on to the movie, maybe, it's dark there, won't nobody see I ain't in the car with you. Park in the back row. Later... my boyfriend'll drop me off at the road to my house. You can pick me up there at eleven and drive me home. That way Cecil won't never know.

YL: Cindy, I don't want to do this. Can't we just go to the movie?

CINDY: Fuck the movie. You the only person in the world who can help me, Larry. God damn it. Please.

YL: OK.

CINDY: OK. So. No, you leave me here and drive five miles down this road to the gravel track by the high trees. Come back for me at 11. OK? Now, give me that last beer.

YL: OK.

CINDY: You find your way back OK?

YL: Sure.

CINDY: An' you will come back? (YL nods). Swear!

YL: I swear.

CINDY: To God, Larry. I know you believe in Him.

YL: I swear to God.

CINDY: Go!

(Car drives off. CINDY looks around. Sound of something moving in the vegetation, like the sound when ANGIE appears by the hut.)

CINDY: (worried) Who's there? Silas! Silas, honey! Is that you?

YOUNG SILAS: Here I am, Cindy. Woah! You got that Larry wrapped round your li'll finger.

CINDY: Same as I got you? (Kissing him) I dun't want no one else but you.

YS: Cindy, you the best thing ever happened to me but this ain't gonna work. This is crazy... here? In Chabot?

CINDY: We can run away. Chicago. You and me.

YS: I can't. I gotta go to college. For my Mom.

CINDY: What your Mom give you that I don't give you. Lovin'... (She moves in on YS, but he pushes her away). Don't push me away like that! (Cryin').

YS: I don't wanna push you away, sweetie. I jus' bein' realistic. Whole world dun't want us to be lovin' and I can't stand against that. (Looks around him, becoming scared.) I gotta get out. You want to run away, then you run to Chicago. But not with me, Cindy. Not with me.

CINDY: You can't do this.

YS: I can't do anything else. Come on, I'm takin' you home.

CINDY: No. What about Larry?

YS: He'll wait a while, then he'll go home too. It's what scared kids do – they go home. We party, we go wild.... but we all end up going home.

CINDY: I don't wanna go home. I hate my Ma. I hate Cecil, one of these days he's gonna rape me!

YS: Get in the car. You're goin' home. It's over, Cindy. I can't listen to your crap any longer.

(He helps her, weeping, into the car and they drive off.  
Extra scene where Cindy arrives back at her family home, she's in tears, waves, limply, at Silas's departing car.)

Cindy: (to herself) O, Silas, Silas...

(CECIL emerges from the shadows and begins to move steadily towards her, CINDY sees him coming and begins to back off.)

CINDY: No, no....

(CINDY exits backwards followed by CECIL. A scream cut short. Music and flashback ends).

SILAS: It was down to me.

LARRY: Me too, pal. I let her out that car. I drove off and left her.

SILAS: She asked you to do that for her. It was me that put her in danger.

LARRY: She was pregnant with your little baby? I'm so so sorry...

SILAS: No. No. No. I'm the one owes everyone the apology. Cindy was never pregnant. She just said that cause she knew you were a good guy at heart and you'd do the right thing and bring her to see me. That's the reason she chose you.

LARRY: Wait, wait, wait. We were friends, then. Weren't we, Silas?

ANGIE: Tell him the truth, Silas.

SILAS: You were, Larry. By that time? I don't know what I was. All I know is I was angry. After Cindy disappeared and I reckon that bastard Cecil killed her and god knows what else, I was too scared to tell anyone about it. 'Case they put me in prison for it. Instead I put you in prison, Larry. Just no bars.

LARRY: What's all this go to do with Tina Rutherford?

SILAS: Whoever killed her's probably cashing in on your reputation. Making it look you did it, burying her on your land. Then tried to get rid of you... if you could tell us who shot you, I got a good idea that that person may be the one that killed her. Try and think... (LARRY SHAKES HIS HEAD) Larry, you called me, the night you got shot. You said it was important. What was it you wanted to say?

LARRY: You never called back.

SILAS: But the message? What was it?

LARRY: I wanted to tell you was that I was sorry. About what I said, when Daddy made us fight.

SILAS: That's okay, Larry. That's OK. It was a long time ago. (Troubled.) I think it's OK...

LARRY: But now, I don't know what to think. Or even if I'm still sorry.

SILAS: Fine, for sure, I understand that... but, Larry, but do you know who it was that put that bullet in your chest? (pause) Larry? Don't protect him.

(Larry rolls over and closes his eyes).

LARRY: My friend, Wallace.

SILAS: Wallace who, where is he? Wallace who?

(LARRY begins to shake and then goes stiff and still. SILAS shakes him).

SILAS: He's dying! Doctor! (presses buzzer).

ANGIE: He's going to be fine. He's just tired. He needs to rest now. Come on. Leave him be; he's fine. He's just passed out. He ain't goin' nowhere.

(Blackout).

A bar. Silas drinking beer. Unhappy. Irena walks in).

IRENA: Hey, snake man. I was told you drink here. You gonna buy me a martini? I'm class. (Silas looks up without emotion). Hey, ain't yer pleased to see me?

SILAS: I don't deserve anythin' pleasin'.

IRENA: Well you can please me even if I can't please you. Snake man.

(SILAS melts slightly, smiles.)

SILAS: Hey, why not. (Sighs.) A Martini for the lady.

IRENA: (To bar tender.) Sweet Martini. (Moves in on SILAS.) I gotta tip for you, lover boy.

SILAS: I'm off duty.

IRENA: (Putting her hand on SILAS's thing.) Sure looks like you are at attention, to me. (Giggles.) Betty and me we both bin seein' this wiry guy on an' off. But I never went nowhere with him, jus' messed around in his truck. But Betty gone to his house, like he has a house. An' Betty sort of shy 'cos he smokes weed with her.

SILAS: Shy to tell a cop like me, huh?

IRENA: Sort of makes sense. An' now Betty says she needs to tell you that this weird streaky guy got glass cages full of snakes, at the house. An' Betty sort of riled him by not given him what he wanted so we reckon he's the weird one that dropped the rattlesnake in our mail box. Weird an' stoopid!

SILAS: So? This creep got a name?

IRENA: Kiss me, snake man. (He seems about to then, kisses her hand – she howls with laughter). Wallace. Wallace Stringfellow. (Waves scrap of paper). Now the address of this snake den might be worth more than a ladylike kiss? (Leans forward with eyes closed for a kiss but Silas just snatches the address from her hand).

SILAS: (Paying bill) N'other time, Irena. Sorry.

IRENA: Hey, don't you owe me? Where you goin'?

SILAS: Back on duty. (Rushes out).

IRENA: Snake!

(Blackout).

SILAS: (To walkie talkie) OK. I'm goin' in.

VOICE: You want back up?

SILAS: Nah. Just goin' in for a little talk. I'll call if I need a tank.

VOICE: Take care, Silas.

SILAS: I always do. (He puts down device and flips open his holster and walks across the stage. Noise of a dog barking aggressively.)

(BLACKOUT)

LARRY: I wanna talk, I wanna talk! Turn on that damn tape recorder. (Doctor or guard does so). Wallace was my...I don't know if he was my friend. But I felt like I wanted to save him, protect him. My friend. But then Silas was my friend too, an maybe I was wrong about the word 'friend'. This Wallace. He has a mean dog named John Wayne Gacy. He gave me the pistol he shot me with. He said girls wanted to be raped, they liked it. He came to my house and said he'd done something. I saw his eyes in the mask he wore. My mask. And it was only four people alive who knew about the cabin where that Rutherford girl was buried. Me. My mother, who can't remember anything. Silas Jones. And Wallace Stringfellow. Wallace Stringfellow shot me.

(Black out, sound of dog barking – Wallace appears as his name is said, in cross fade. He has a baseball bat).

SILAS: Hey there. How you doin'?

WALLACE: I help you?

SILAS: This your house?

WALLACE: Yeah.

SILAS: That your animal?

WALLACE: Yeah. You need something?

SILAS: Jus' wanna talk to yer.

WALLACE: I ain't rode on no highway with beer in me. Like I said I wouldn't.

SILAS: Glad to hear it. Hey, can we go inside with that dog barkin' it's kinda loud.

WALLACE: Ain't got time now. I'm kinda busy.

(Silas moves towards Wallace who backs off).

SILAS: I jus' wanted to ask you a few questions.

WALLACE: 'Bout what?

SILAS: Snakes?

WALLACE: OK. Shoot. (sits).

SILAS: Hey, impressive. You a reptile collector? Mind if I take a look?

WALLACE: It's a hobby. Ain't against no law, I'm kinda busy so....

SILAS: King snake, eats rattle snake whole I'm told. Hey, that mask. (Sees Zombie mask). Where did you get it?

WALLACE: Dunno. Someplace. That damn dog. (Still barking – Wallace

leaves stage – Silas whips round and offstage hears): Shut the fuck up!

SILAS: Hey, Wallace. (Sound of dog – slow motion fight with mimed dog, barking, shots and as Wallace comes over to shoot Silas with gun he has in hand, Silas rolls over and fires using dog as cover and Wallace is hit and screams and limps away. Silas, wounded, rolls over and calls for help on his device). Officer Jones here, get me assistance. Man down, yes that's me. Man down. Man down!

(Black out – sirens).

(In Darkness)

LOUDHAILER: Wallace Stringfellow. Wallace. We have you surrounded. Come out with your hands behind your head. Come out now.

WALLACE: Go to Hell, fuckers! (A shot).

LOUDHAILER: Fire. (A blaze of shots, Wallace falls).

(Blackout)

NEWSWOMAN: A shoot out in Chabot county this afternoon has left a police officer wounded and a suspect dead. The suspect, Wallace Stringfellow, fired on officers when they tried to arrest him for the murder of logging heiress Tina Rutherford. Tina's bloodstained wallet was found in Stringfellow's house along with other evidence linking him to the shooting of car maintenance business owner Larry Ott, who was wounded in what may have been a related incident. The injured police officer has been taken to the county hospital where he is now undergoing surgery.

(Blackout.

(Hospital. SILAS in bed, hooked up with drips, etc. ANGIE by his side.)

ANGIE: O, you crazy man. Why did you hold it all in? You could have told me. At any time, sweetie. I wouldn't ever, ever have thought any less of you. You're my treasure. I love you.

(SILAS is too overcome to do much more than touch ANGIE's face and squeeze her hand.

SILAS: Rabies?

DOCTOR: (Giving Larry a shot). Nah, this is for that damn hound's teeth marks. Razor teeth. Now you take it easy. (Gestures to Angie to go – she kisses Silas forehead and leaves).

(Lights switches to corridor – Angie takes out a cigarette and when Doctor exits and scowls she nods and goes to side as if out of a door where she can see and hear the next exchange. Larry wheels himself in and talks to Doctor)

Larry, in a wheelchair now, is wheeled in by the DOCTOR.)

LARRY: How's Silas?

DOCTOR: He was hurt real bad. That dog almost took his arm off. An' he got shot in the leg.

LARRY: He gonna be OK, though?

DOCTOR: (Smiles.) That Silas is one tough son of a bitch.

LARRY: Yeah, kinda thick skin. Don't nuthin' touch him.

DOCTOR: It's the training, I suppose. You a friend of his?

LARRY: I don't know. He done me wrong.

DOCTOR: Well, looks like he nailed that girl killer. Can't be all bad?

LARRY: You don't need to be all bad to hurt someone.

DOCTOR: You discharging yourself?

LARRY: Yep, I can drive even if I can't walk.

DOCTOR: Good luck, Larry. We all treated you wrong. **Sorry. (He pats his arm.)**

LARRY: Thanks Doc. (Doctor exits – Larry wheels to go but is blocked by Angie).

ANGIE: Larry Ott?

LARRY: Yeah. I ain't doin' no interviews.

ANGIE: I'm not press, I'm a...I know Silas, well.

LARRY: That make you lucky?

ANGIE: I think so. He's in that room, cut up real bad.

LARRY: I know.

ANGIE: 'Fore you go from here. I know you weren't planin' on seein', Silas. But I would like you to do so. I would appeal for you to do so, because he may be sufferin' from them dog bites and shot wounds, but you wounded him **deeper**.

LARRY: (**Angry**) What I do?

ANGIE: Nuthin' bad, Larry. You just were. He done you wrong. But he needs you to forgive him or them wounds 'll never heal.

LARRY: (Pauses) I dunno...

ANGIE: I think you do know. An' I think you know more than you gonna tell me. **But I guessed. (Looks at him hard, but Larry is giving nothing away.)** There it is. I asked. 'Can't do no more.

LARRY: (Shakes his head and starts to wheel away).

ANGIE: (Kneels) Please, oh God please.

**LARRY: Who are you?**

**ANGIE: I'm the paramedic saved your life; because Silas rang to ask me to see if you OK..**

LARRY: (screws up face, sighs and turns towards Silas's ward). **OK.**

ANGIE: (half to herself) Larry Ott, he's a good man.

(Lights shift and Larry is in his wheel chair by Silas's bed).

SILAS: Larry Ott. (Groggy). Am I dreamin'?

LARRY: Nope, it's me.

SILAS: I should have answered your call.

LARRY: You should.

SILAS: Sorry.

LARRY: Accepted.

SILAS: Maybe I could have saved Cindy, maybe the other one too. I sure could have saved you from all you suffered.

LARRY: I am saved. (pause). Maybe I could have done more too. Spoken out against Wallace. I think what he did to that girl. Makes me cold.

SILAS: Wallace was tryin' to be like you. But you were not that man, **Larry**. You never harmed nobody, but I harmed you.

LARRY: You did. But a black boy keepin' quiet 'bout kissin' a white girl? **T**hat's 'cos he needs to. He ain't to blame. That's our blame.

SILAS: That's Mississippi.

LARRY: That's the world. (Pause, smiles) 'least my Daddy gave you a ride, even if he took away that rifle.

SILAS: Larry. You need to see somethin'. Look in that wallet will you. In my coat. I can't move my arm. (Larry wheels across to get the wallet in hanging coat).

LARRY: OK. Here it is? You not tryin' to bribe me? (chuckles).

SILAS: (**Laughs through the pain.**) No, Larry. There's a photo in there. (Larry finds it) Sorry I creased it. Came from your barn.

LARRY: That's me, hey?

SILAS: An' that's my Mommy, Alice. Your nursemaid.

LARRY: Your Mammy? Hey..she **was** preddy.

SILAS: That's what your Daddy saw too. He fooled around with 'Miss Alice'. And your Ma got wind and sent her away. An' though I cannot be certain, I believe Alice was "with child" when she was sent packin' to Chicago. I was that child. (Larry knows all this or has guessed all this and he is visibly deflating as he can no longer keep up the pretence.) And you, Larry, you are not my friend, you, Larry, are my brother.

(Silas painfully raises his hand, Larry backs off a while in his wheel chair)

Larry: (looks down at ground) I knew. (Larry can't speak any more and with a sob grasps Silas's hand).

Blackout.

**THE END**

[tnttheatre1@gmail.com](mailto:tnttheatre1@gmail.com)

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### **Wallace car snake scene:**

(Silas picks up the beer bottle and marches offstage. Sound of police car engine and siren starting up. Flashing police lights. All lights fade to black, remove the 'LOT'S MECHANICS' sign. Siren fades to silence.

Lights up. Wallace is in his pickup truck. He drives determinedly, sounds of police siren in the distance growing louder, flashing police lights getting brighter. Wallace looks over his shoulder.)

Wallace: Goddam!

(Shaking, rattled, Wallace tries to ignore the siren and lights, sound of a muffled instruction for Wallace to pull over.)

Wallace: O for... I don't need this!

(He pulls over. Slams his hands on the wheel. Turns his engine off. Lights continue to flash, but the siren is cut. Police car engine is turned off. Wallace stares ahead; aggressive. Silas enters and checks the truck's licence plates. Then, as if distracted for a moment, he looks

around, as if he recognises where he is, but puts the thought aside. Goes to the window of Wallace's truck.)

SILAS: How y'doing, citizen? You was going mighty fast for this kind of road.

WALLACE: Ain't no crime, I ain't break no speed limit.

SILAS: That's right. So what you doin' that's so important you need to be driving so fast?

WALLACE: Out huntin'. No law 'gainst that is there, officer?

SILAS: No, less your wagon was swingin' around like that cos you been drinkin' and huntin... There sure is a law against that; pretty tough law, in fact.

WALLACE: Cut a man a bit of slack, Officer. I just had a beer to cool me down. This is Mississippi. Things get real tight sometimes.

SILAS: What's in that there sack, in the back?

WALLACE: O, that?

SILAS: Yeah, that.

(Unseen by Silas, Wallace slips a gun from under his seat so he is ready to fire if Silas goes to the sack. Silas takes out his night stick to poke the large sack).

WALLACE: Chrissake don't poke that sack!

SILAS: It moved!

WALLACE: 'Course it moved, you dumb cop, it's full of rattlers!!

SILAS: (Taking a step back, scared.) Snakes?

WALLACE: You know any other kind of rattler?

SILAS: What the hell you got snakes in your truck for?

WALLACE: Got me a whole heap o' snakes, I keep 'em as pets at my

cabin... corn snakes, rattlers, cottonmouths, copperheads...

SILAS: Why you wanna do that?

WALLACE: (Shrugs.) I reckon they's more reliable than women... (He laughs darkly.) Ain't against the law to keep snakes, is it? Say.... you wanna ride up with me and see all my snakes? (Silas cringes.) Nah? Then maybe you could cut me some slack? Eh?

SILAS: I don't wanna see no snakes. I wanna see your license, then you can get outta here. Rattlers! Ugh!

(Unseen by SILAS, WALLACE slides the gun back under his seat, takes out a filthy driving license. SILAS doesn't touch it but arches his neck to read the name.) Well, Wallace Stringfellow, you're a young fella, like I was once. So I'll give you a chance – but I ever see this truck swervin' around on my patch again, you're going straight down to the county jail. Get it?

WALLACE: Yes, officer, thank you, Sir.

SILAS: (With a laugh in his voice.) Get outta here!

(SILAS walks away from the truck. That part of the stage with the truck fades into darkness as Wallace drives off, truck sounds fade. SILAS turns and watches the truck drive off. SILAS is just turning to exit to his police car, when his radio goes off. He answers).