

EZEKIEL MOSS

an original screenplay by

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FADE IN:

EXT. NEBRASKA CORNFIELD - DAY

October 1934: in the heart of the USA in the heart of the Great Depression, in a part of the country that's so flat you can watch your dog run away for three days, in a town so small that you don't even need to know its name.

JOEL CARSON (11) comes running across the length of the cornfield. Joel is a skinny and gangly boy - imaginative, inquisitive, and quite frankly more than a little bit wild.

He has a large tree branch tucked between his legs and he's pretending it's a horse. As he gallops across the field, he lets out a joyous battle cry. He scales up the branches of a tall tree and hoists the branch to the sky in triumph.

Then Joel stops short. He cocks his ear to the wind. For a moment it's like he can hear strange whispers and moans on the breeze. Then all of a sudden it's quiet again.

INT. SCHOOLHOUSE - DAY

MARTHA AYRES (60) is at the blackboard of the tiny one-room schoolhouse. Martha is pleasant but brisk and careworn. A pig-tailed YOUNG GIRL is trying to remember a poem.

YOUNG GIRL

The boy stood on the burning deck,
Whence all but he had fled.

The door creaks open. Joel steps into the room. His face and clothes are wet and muddy from this morning's adventures.

YOUNG GIRL (CONT'D)

The flame that lit the battle's wreck,
Shone round him o'er the dead.

MARTHA

Now, Joel, would you like to explain
where you've been all morning?

JOEL

I got attacked by pirates. They took me to their hiding place inside the big tree by the creek. That's where they bury all their jewels.

The other kids laugh and snigger at Joel's ridiculous story.

MARTHA

You don't even respect me enough to make up a story that could actually be true.

Joel stares back at Martha, genuinely perplexed by this.

JOEL

What's the point of making up a story
that could actually be true?

EXT. SCHOOLHOUSE - DAY

At the end of the day, all the students except for Joel run out the door and race each other back to their houses. Joel stands in the field all by himself. He picks up two branches and holds them like they're a bow and arrow.

IRIS CARSON (30) stands on the steps of the schoolhouse. She is vivacious and tender, a winning mixture of toughness and fragility. Maybe her lipstick is a little too red and maybe her dress is cut a little too short for this town.

Iris is in the middle of a serious conversation with Martha but she keeps one eye on Joel playing alone in the field.

MARTHA

I just thought you'd like to know
how rarely your son has been finding
his way to my classroom.

IRIS

Joel's always taught himself anything
he ever wanted to know.

Martha extends her arm to Joel, who is now charging the tree at the edge of the field, wrapping his arms around the trunk as though he's trying to wrestle it to the ground.

MARTHA

He's wild. He's got no friends. He
lives inside his own head. I'm just
trying to broaden his horizons before
his horizons close in on him.

And Iris turns to consider Joel with a genuine concern.

EXT. CONGRESS STREET - DAY

Despite its name, there's not a great deal of congress here on Congress Street. It's the main drag of the town which doesn't say much for the town.

Iris and Joel walk home together past the drug store, post office, movie theater, and pool hall. A large poster behind them reads REVEREND WHEELWRIGHT'S REVIVAL MEETING IN OCTOBER.

JOEL

Did I get you in trouble?

IRIS

Don't be silly, baby, I can get in trouble all by myself.

JOEL

I get bored in school. I know all of it already.

IRIS

According to Mrs. Ayres, you said you were late today because you got attacked by pirates. I wonder exactly how pirates made their way to a state that's landlocked three times over.

JOEL

That's why they came here: it's the last place anyone'd look for them.

IRIS

I guess that kind of makes sense.

JOEL

They keep their jewels hidden in that big tree. And the creek is where the dragon sleeps. See?

Joel smiles hopefully at his mother. Iris looks out at the dingy town, the fallow fields, and the endless plains.

IRIS

Honestly, baby, I can't see any of that. But you know what? I like what you see so much better.

EXT. CARSON HOUSE - DAY

The sun is sinking in the sky as Iris and Joel head up the walk to a two-story house on the outskirts of town. It could use a coat of paint but it's friendly and cheery. A sign in the parlor window reads ROOMS FOR LET.

DONALD HOBART (35) sits on the porch steps. He carries a traveling salesman's sample case. He's paunchy and sweaty but not unattractive. Iris grins to see him.

DONALD

Little birdie told me you've got a room for rent. I hope you won't disappoint a wayfaring stranger.

IRIS

I make it my business never to disappoint a wayfaring stranger.

INT. CARSON KITCHEN - EVENING

Iris cuts big pieces of apple pie for dessert and hands them over to Donald and Joel. Iris is flirting up a storm and Donald is happy to reciprocate. Joel watches closely.

IRIS

I don't think we've ever had a soybean salesman staying with us before.

DONALD

I'm the wave of the future.

IRIS

We've had a Fuller Brush Man and two encyclopedia salesmen and a Bible salesman. The Bible salesman just wasn't any fun at all.

Donald reaches into his sample case and pulls out a packet.

DONALD

Soybeans are a revolutionary crop. They regenerate the soil. And you know who loves soybeans? Henry Ford. He owns a suit made out of them.

IRIS

Now I wonder what got you into this line of work. I bet nobody's born wanting to sell soybeans.

DONALD

I used to be the best third baseman in the Western League. Till my trick knee started playing tricks on me.

JOEL

Really? Who'd you play for?

DONALD

Kansas City Blues. 1929 to 1932. Dashing Donald Hobart. So if you want, sonny, tomorrow morning we can toss the old rawhide around - you can get some tips from a professional.

By now Donald has successfully charmed both Iris and Joel.

IRIS

Isn't that sweet of you? Now who wants another piece of pie?

INT. JOEL'S ROOM - NIGHT

It's a small room with lots of papers strewn about. Upon closer inspection, they're all Joel's drawings and stories. Joel buttons up his pajamas, looking at himself in the mirror.

He hears voices from the room next door. He climbs onto his dresser and takes the mirror down from the nail on the wall. There's a crack in the wall. If Joel puts his eye right up to it he can see what's going on in the guest room next door.

Through the wall he can see Iris and Donald. Iris is setting out Donald's guest linens on his bed. Joel can only make out bits and pieces of their conversation.

IRIS

...not much in the way of luxury...

DONALD

...nicest bed I'll ever sleep in...
best cup of coffee...prettiest eyes...

Donald puts his arms around Iris and kisses her. Joel hangs the mirror back on the wall and goes over to lie in bed. He takes a framed photo off the bedside table.

It's a picture of his mother, arm-in-arm with a handsome young man. Joel traces the young man's face with his finger. Joel whispers intently to the young man in the photograph. We can't hear what he's saying but his eyes water over.

Outside the wind is howling in the trees, the walls of the house are vibrating just a little bit, and Joel can hear the strange whispers and moans on the air.

INT. CARSON HALLWAY - MORNING

It's the break of dawn. The door to Iris's bedroom creaks open. Donald pokes his head out. He carries his bags. Inside the room we can see Iris lying asleep in her bed.

Donald leaves the door open just a crack and treads lightly as he walks down the hall, trying not to make a sound.

INT. CARSON FOYER - MORNING

Swiftly but cautiously Donald starts down the stairs. He stops short when he sees Joel sitting on the floor just in front of the door to the house, holding his bat and glove.

JOEL

You're leaving already?

Donald pitches his voice low to avoid waking Iris.

DONALD

I've got some urgent business to attend to, so our game of catch will have to wait for another day.

JOEL

You're not gonna say goodbye to her?

Joel rises and stands in front of the door. Donald opens his jacket and shows Joel the pistol on his belt.

DONALD

Look, it's cute the way you try to take care of your mother. But will you let me pass? There's a freight train due at seven and I'd like to be ready to jump on board.

Joel opens the door. Donald nods to Joel as he heads outside carrying his suitcases. Joel watches Donald running off.

INT. IRIS'S BEDROOM - MORNING

By now Iris is sitting up awake in her bed. She's dressed in a lacy chemise and wrapped in a blanket. Joel heads up the stairs on his way back to his room. Iris smiles sadly.

IRIS

Why don't you make up a story for us and then maybe I can start thinking about what we'll have for breakfast.

Joel comes into the bedroom and sits on the bed next to Iris.

JOEL

There was this king who built a castle a thousand miles high. And the castle had a dungeon a thousand miles under the ground. It was so deep that no prisoner had ever escaped...

Iris wraps her arms around Joel, already feeling better. Joel smiles, takes a deep breath, and keeps telling the story, as the morning sunlight shines down through the open window.

INT. TALLEY'S DRUG STORE - DAY

About half a dozen customers mill about the drug store. Iris stands at the counter while the owner GEORGE TALLEY (35) rings up her purchases. George wears spectacles, is rail-thin, stands ramrod-straight, and is tightly-wound. Excitedly Iris picks up a lipstick from the display.

IRIS

Ruby red! Olive, I think you saw me
coming down the street and put this
out on display just to tempt me!

OLIVE TALLEY (35) stands by the magazine rack, keeping a
close eye on Joel to make sure he doesn't shoplift anything.
Olive is fluttery, nervous, and over-emotional.

OLIVE

Then George had better ring you up
quick before you get any more tempted.

Iris laughs as she puts the lipstick in with her purchases.

GEORGE

Say, Iris, will you be joining us at
the revival meeting tomorrow night?

IRIS

Kind of you to mention it but I've
got too much to do around the house.

GEORGE

Tent'll be right down by the quarry.
Gonna be here a whole week this year.

OLIVE

Now leave her in peace, George, she
already said she doesn't want to go.

GEORGE

It's just I think Reverend Wheelwright
has a message that'd be especially
good for you to hear, Iris.

Iris's posture noticeably stiffens. Joel pretends to be
absorbed in The Phantom but he's listening very closely.
All the other customers in the store are listening now too.

IRIS

And what message is that?

GEORGE

Thing is, people are getting a little
concerned about the kind of men you're
letting rent rooms in your house.

IRIS

But I need to earn a living.

GEORGE

Yes, well, it's just, some of us are
wondering what exactly you're giving
those men in exchange for their money.

George shoots Iris a meaningful glance. Iris's eyes widen in anger and indignation. Everyone in the store watches.

OLIVE

Me and George, we know you're lonely.
I think we understand that better
than anybody. After we lost Julia,
there were whole days we couldn't
even come down here to open the store.

Iris winces to hear Olive compare their situations.

OLIVE (CONT'D)

But the Reverend - he helped us. It
makes the rest of life bearable,
just to imagine her waiting for us
on the other side.

IRIS

I'm glad he gave you comfort. I
just don't think he has any for me.

GEORGE

But maybe it'd do you good to spend
a few nights listening to the Reverend
preach instead of staying home to
entertain some new traveling salesman.

Iris is aware she's being called out in public and it's utterly mortifying. Everyone in the store is listening.

IRIS

You can't sell me the lipstick and
then shame me for wearing it.

Iris picks up her bags and extends her arm to Joel. Joel takes advantage of the commotion to shoplift the magazine. They walk out of the store as fast as their legs carry them.

INT. JOEL'S ROOM - NIGHT

Joel sits at his desk, raptly reading his stolen issue of The Phantom. He hears some distant noises from outside. He goes to his window and looks off into the distance.

He can see lit torches down by the quarry. A couple of trucks are parked there. Their headlights cut through the night. There are several men hard at work erecting a large tent.

Overcome with curiosity, Joel climbs out the window and into the branches of the large oak tree that's just outside.

EXT. CARSON HOUSE - NIGHT

As stealthily as possible, Joel clammers through the branches and shimmies down the trunk of the tree, landing gracelessly but safely on the ground. He runs off toward the tent.

EXT. REVEREND WHEELWRIGHT'S TENT - NIGHT

Joel scampers across the pebbly dirt and stops short at the entrance to the tent. The place looks to be deserted.

Joel cocks his ear to the wind: on the breeze he can hear the strange whispers and moans. Quickly he ducks inside.

INT. REVEREND WHEELWRIGHT'S TENT - NIGHT

Joel steps inside to see that there are torches lit but there doesn't seem to be anybody around. There are a lot of benches stacked up, and a wooden platform that must be the altar.

Hanging behind the altar are a series of tapestries. They depict Reverend Wheelwright at work: making a blind man see, making a crippled girl walk, casting demons out of a boy.

The tapestries are aged. The paint is chipped and cracked. The images are lurid and grotesque. Joel stops short at the demon-possessed boy and stares at him, fascinated.

Without warning the beams of a flashlight illuminate his face. Joel is grabbed by the scruff of the neck by an imposing thick-necked teenage farm boy named DEACON JAMES.

DEACON JAMES

Beat it, kid, we ain't got anything here that's worth stealing.

JOEL

I just wanted to see.

The flashlight is shut off. The man holding it is none other than REVEREND TOM WHEELWRIGHT (40). Wheelwright is a broad-shouldered and rough-hewn man. He has the hands of someone who's done a lot of hard labor. He wears a gun on his belt.

There is nothing pious or effete about him. He is salt of the earth: imposingly powerful and a true believer.

WHEELWRIGHT

He's just a young pilgrim who can't wait till tomorrow to be saved.

DEACON JAMES

Forgive me, Reverend, but he don't look much like a pilgrim to me.

WHEELWRIGHT

If Jesus had turned away all the ruffians and hooligans, we wouldn't have much of a church to speak of.
Why don't you unload the truck?
I'll watch over this lamb myself.

Deacon James nods and heads out of the tent. Wheelwright pours two cups of coffee and hands one to Joel. Joel points to the tapestries behind the altar.

JOEL

You really did all those things?

WHEELWRIGHT

It's not me who heals them. People heal themselves with the power of God working through them.

JOEL

So you know how to cast out demons?

WHEELWRIGHT

Why do you care? You know somebody who's got a demon inside?

JOEL

I think I've got a demon in me.

WHEELWRIGHT

What makes you so sure of that?

JOEL

One night last week I was walking in the graveyard and I saw this demon rise up out of the ground. He grabbed me by the neck and yanked my mouth open and made me swallow him up.

Wheelwright grins broadly to hear such a blatant lie.

WHEELWRIGHT

You don't have any kind of demon in you. All you've got is mischief.

JOEL

How do you know I'm lying?

WHEELWRIGHT

Because I've seen more demons than I'd care to count. The first one I ever met was inside my own father. And demons don't grab you by the neck. They knock on your front door
(MORE)

WHEELWRIGHT (CONT'D)
and you invite them in without even
knowing it. How's the coffee?

JOEL
It's good.

Agitatedly Joel takes a sip of his coffee and nearly burns
his tongue, it's so hot.

WHEELWRIGHT
Now you might've come here tonight
to make mischief, but you're a pilgrim
all the same. Aren't you?

JOEL
I don't know.

WHEELWRIGHT
Here's what I can tell you. Each
second of every day, God is posing a
question to you. And in your heart
you know the right answer. It's
tiny things. If you make your bed
before your mother asks you. If you
give a penny to a blind man. If you
take a step closer to God, or a step
away. Do you understand?

Joel doesn't really understand but he nods all the same.

WHEELWRIGHT (CONT'D)
As for demons - don't go trying to
find them. Believe me, they already
know where you are. Now why don't
you get on home? There's got to be
somebody who's started missing you.

Joel nods. He puts down his cup of coffee and heads out of
the tent. Wheelwright watches after Joel. He pours the
dregs of Joel's coffee into his own cup and takes a swig.

EXT. REVEREND WHEELWRIGHT'S TENT - NIGHT

Joel comes through the flap of the tent and breaks into a
run back to his house. As he runs home, it seems like the
wind is blowing harder, swirling up the leaves around him,
and it feels like the voices on the breeze are even louder.

INT. CARSON FOYER - MORNING

The early morning light makes its way through the windows.
Joel sprawls out on the floor, drawing, with his paper and
pencils scattered all around him. His drawings are of
dragons, knights, pirates, angels, devils, and monsters.

There's a knock on the front door. Joel gets up and opens it. Two silhouetted figures stand in the doorway. Joel has to squint to see their faces in the sun.

The woman is named HEPZIBAH WEBB. She wears a long, dusty cloak over a black dress, and a tall pointed hat. She is brusque, unsociable, and so unkempt she's almost feral.

The man is named EZEKIEL MOSS. He wears a frayed old black suit and a beaten-down old hat. He is gentle and courtly but politely reserved. He has an open, friendly, handsome face, but there's something sad and lost behind his eyes. For the want of a better word he looks haunted.

They are neither old nor young but it's hard to pin down their precise age. There's something unsettling about them. As far as Joel is concerned, they look exactly like demons.

HEPZIBAH

Are you gonna invite us in? Or are you just gonna stand there with your mouth open till you swallow a fly?

JOEL

What do you want?

Iris steps into the foyer from the parlor. Ezekiel doffs his hat and takes a tentative step into the room.

EZEKIEL

If you'll permit us to introduce ourselves. My name is Ezekiel Moss. And this is my partner Hepzibah Webb.

Ezekiel extends his hand to Iris stiffly and formally. Hepzibah isn't interested in shaking hands with anybody.

IRIS

I'm Iris Carson and this is my son Joel. What can we do for you?

EZEKIEL

At the post office in town they told us you might have rooms for rent.

IRIS

Two lovely rooms on the second floor. Sunset views. It's usually three dollars apiece for the week but since you're traveling together I'll make it an even five.

HEPZIBAH

We only need one room. I can sleep on the floor. I do it all the time.

IRIS

If the two of you aren't married,
I'll have to ask you to take separate
rooms. You understand I can't let
this house develop a reputation.

HEPZIBAH

According to the folks at the post
office, your house has *already* got
quite a reputation.

Ezekiel flushes red, embarrassed by Hepzibah's comment. But if Iris is offended she plays it off delicately.

IRIS

Let me correct myself, then: I can't
let this house develop any *more* of a
reputation.

EZEKIEL

Of course we'll pay the five dollars
for two rooms. We'll be staying for
the whole week. And we'll pay in
full and in advance.

Ezekiel gestures to Hepzibah. Grudgingly she opens her purse and hands five crumpled old dollar bills to Iris. Joel watches intently, not even remotely trusting the new guests.

IRIS

Are you here for the revival meeting?

HEPZIBAH

None of your goddamn business.

EZEKIEL

We're tradespeople. But we've found
a revival meeting is a good place to
make the acquaintance of new clients.

HEPZIBAH

If they buy the Reverend's horseshit
then they'll buy anything.

Ezekiel flushes red again. Iris attempts a gracious laugh.

JOEL

Where's your sample case?

EZEKIEL

I'm sorry?

JOEL

If you're a salesman then why don't
you have a sample case?

IRIS

You'll have to forgive my son. We've had some pretty shabby characters darken our door in the past and he's just trying to look out for me.

EZEKIEL

If you're going to open your home to us, you ought to know our business. I don't carry a sample case because what we sell isn't entirely tangible.

IRIS

But it's all perfectly legal, isn't it? I only ask because a few months ago we rented a room to a very nice man who turned out to be a rumrunner. He tried to make a still in the water closet and nearly blew up the bathtub.

HEPZIBAH

We're in the insurance business.

Iris doesn't quite believe this but she doesn't want to press the point: five dollars is five dollars, after all.

IRIS

Well. That's fine, then. I'm sure business is booming. Everyone could use more peace of mind these days.

EZEKIEL

One thing is we'll be bringing clients back to my room. Sometimes quite late into the evening.

IRIS

Come and go as you please. I serve supper at six o'clock sharp.

HEPZIBAH

We don't need any supper. I have too much work to do. And Ezekiel needs to get some rest. In fact, why don't you just leave us both the hell alone for the rest of the week?

Iris and Joel stare open-mouthed at Hepzibah. Finally Iris regains her composure and extends her arm to Joel.

IRIS

Of course. Joel, why don't you take our guests up to their rooms?

Hepzibah has already started up the stairs. Reluctantly Joel picks up her bag and follows after her.

HEPZIBAH

I've been walking for days and these goddamn shoes make my feet bleed.

Ezekiel turns back to Iris, hat in his hand. He pitches his voice low so Hepzibah won't hear what he's saying.

EZEKIEL

If it's all right, I *would* like to have supper with you. And I'm very pleased to make your acquaintance.

Before Iris can respond, Ezekiel turns and heads upstairs. Iris watches him go. He's definitely friendly and very attractive but she's not sure who she's let into her house.

EXT. CARSON HOUSE - DAY

Joel sits on the porch swing, twisting his hands around each other agitatedly. Ezekiel comes out the front door.

EZEKIEL

Mind if I join you?

Joel shrugs his shoulders. Ezekiel sits down on the swing.

JOEL

That tree over there is where the pirates hide their jewels. And that creek is where the dragon lives.

EZEKIEL

I saw their submarine when I arrived this morning. They built a canal beneath the earth that travels all the way to the Pacific Ocean. That's how they can get in and out of town without anybody noticing.

Ezekiel has said this very simply and forthrightly. Joel doesn't know quite how to respond for a moment.

JOEL

Also they can breathe underwater because they're half-fish. They've got gills on their faces.

EZEKIEL

They stole the crown jewels from the Emperor of China. So he made an army of tiny men out of crystal.

(MORE)

EZEKIEL (CONT'D)

They can walk across the bottom of the ocean. Any minute the crystal men will come up out of the creek and take the jewels back to China.

Despite himself, Joel is impressed with Ezekiel's inventions. For his part, Ezekiel is completely matter-of-fact.

EZEKIEL (CONT'D)

I bet if we sit here for a little while we'll be able to see the battle.

Ezekiel looks at the creek. Joel looks back and forth between the creek and Ezekiel, not sure what to make of this stranger.

EXT. MUNICIPAL CEMETERY - DAY

Joel crouches down and hides behind a mausoleum. He watches as Hepzibah walks up and down the aisle of graves.

An OLD MAN approaches one of the graves. He lays a bouquet of flowers down in front of the headstone. Hepzibah goes over to talk to him. Joel is too far away to make out what they're saying to each other. He watches them closely.

INT. CARSON KITCHEN - DAY

Iris is making a stew for supper. She's at the counter chopping carrots when Joel barrels into the house.

JOEL

That lady's been hanging around the graveyard all day. And that man is really strange.

Joel is flushed and out-of-breath. Iris shakes her head.

IRIS

There's enough for me to worry about already. I can't start worrying about things that aren't even real.

JOEL

But I think they're demons.

IRIS

Listen, baby, I don't mind when you tell stories about dragons in the creek or wizards on the roof. Those stories make things more fun and we can always use more fun around here.

Iris puts her arm around Joel and speaks very tenderly.

IRIS (CONT'D)

But why tell stories that make things
even worse than they already are?
The world is disappointing enough.
It doesn't need any help from you.

Joel starts to respond but then he realizes that Iris isn't going to believe him anyway. He heads upstairs. Iris goes back to cutting the carrots, a little unsettled.

INT. JOEL'S ROOM - EVENING

Joel sits at his desk trying to do his homework, but he can't concentrate. He looks out the window and sees Hepzibah coming up to the front door with the Old Man from the cemetery.

Now he hears people walking up the stairs. Quickly Joel clammers on top of the dresser and takes the mirror down. He presses his eye right up to the wall.

Through the crack in the wall he can see Hepzibah leading the Old Man into the room. Ezekiel shakes hands with the Old Man. Joel can only hear snatches of what's being said.

OLD MAN

...and how much does it...

HEPZIBAH

Eight dollars...ten minutes...not to touch...never come back again...

Joel strains to hear but that's all he can make out. Ezekiel and the Old Man sit across from each other at the table. Hepzibah dims the lamps, turns over an hourglass on the table, and lights a candle. The candle illuminates Ezekiel's face.

Joel presses his eye to the wall. All of a sudden Ezekiel gives out a low moan. In the candlelight it looks like his face is distending. His skin becomes translucent and Joel can see the outlines of his skull pressing against his flesh.

Ezekiel opens his mouth to scream but no sound comes out. He's clearly in vast and excruciating pain. Suddenly the wind blows out the candle. And now Joel can't see anything.

INT. CARSON HALLWAY - EVENING

Stealthily Joel opens the door a crack and looks out. The door to Ezekiel's room opens. Hepzibah is ushering the Old Man out. The Old Man pulls some cash out of his wallet.

OLD MAN

Take all of my money. Take my watch.

HEPZIBAH
Don't ever tell anybody about us.

Joel watches all of this very closely through the doorway.

INT. JOEL'S ROOM - EVENING

Joel paces back and forth across the room, extremely worked-up. He goes to the window and looks out. In the distance he can see all the people from the town heading down toward the revival tent, which looks like it's glowing from within.

He hears the front door slam. Hepzibah comes outside and starts following the crowd down to the revival meeting. Joel considers a moment. Then he makes a decision. He climbs out his window and into the branches of the tree.

EXT. CARSON HOUSE - EVENING

Joel clammers across the branches and shimmies down the trunk onto the ground. Keeping his distance so he won't be noticed, he follows Hepzibah and the crowd down toward the tent.

INT. CARSON KITCHEN - EVENING

There are two places set at the table. Iris has put her hair up and wears a simple, lovely dress. Ezekiel appears in the doorway. He looks perfectly normal. There's certainly no trace of the creature Joel saw earlier tonight.

EZEKIEL
Is it just the two of us?

IRIS
I gave Joel his supper in his room.
He's been skipping school so he's
got a lot of work to catch up on.

EZEKIEL
He seems like a very bright boy.

Ezekiel sits down at the table opposite Iris and she serves him the stew and the bread. She pours two glasses of wine.

IRIS
He's an odd duck in case you hadn't noticed. I can't even understand what he's saying half the time.

EZEKIEL
He's got quite an imagination. I noticed that right off the bat.

IRIS

He's made up a crazy story about you
and your friend, I'll tell you that.

Iris laughs at the thought of Joel's story. Ezekiel is a little unnerved by this but he covers it up well.

IRIS (CONT'D)

He's a little wild. I wish I could help him straighten up and fly right but I guess that's a father's job.

EZEKIEL

He's lucky to have one good parent to tuck him safely into bed at night.

Iris looks at Ezekiel, more and more intrigued by him. Ezekiel buries himself in his plate and eats ravenously.

IRIS

It's too bad your friend Hepzibah wasn't interested in joining us.

EZEKIEL

Hepzibah isn't all that interested in, well, people.

Iris isn't sure quite how to draw Ezekiel out: there's something deeply mysterious and unreachable about him. She's certainly attracted to him but she can't make sense of him.

IRIS

If you don't mind my saying so, the two of you make a pretty strange pair. How did you find each other?

EZEKIEL

We've known each other since we were children. I don't know what I'd do without her. She takes care of me.

IRIS

(mischievously)

Do you think maybe she wants to marry you? Have you ever asked her?

EZEKIEL

I can guarantee you Hepzibah doesn't want to marry anybody.

IRIS

And what about you? Do you want to get married someday?

Ezekiel sees where this is headed. He stiffens slightly: clearly he doesn't want to reveal too much about himself.

EZEKIEL

I think some people have a knack for love. They can feel it coming for them from miles away. And those are the people who find each other, who get married and live long and happy lives together. I've just never had the knack - that's all.

IRIS

Are you absolutely sure about that?

A mysterious smile crosses Ezekiel's face. He speaks without bitterness or self-pity. It's just the honest truth.

EZEKIEL

I've traveled from Canton, Ohio up to Bangor, Maine and down to Lady Lake, Florida and as far west as Morro Bay, California, and on all those miles of road, love hasn't touched me once - it's never even brushed the soles of my shoes.

IRIS

My goodness. What on earth has kept you on the run for so long?

Ezekiel lets out a little shrug of sly resignation.

EZEKIEL

I've been asking myself that question every single day of my life.

INT. REVEREND WHEELWRIGHT'S TENT - NIGHT

Joel crouches in the back of the tent so he won't be seen. He eyes Hepzibah, who's standing in the back across the way.

It looks like almost the whole town is down here sitting on the hard wooden benches, singing and praying. George and Olive Talley are of course sitting right up front. Joel's teacher Martha Ayres sits quietly off by herself.

Up at the altar, Reverend Wheelwright stands with Deacon James next to an Old Lady in a wheelchair. Wheelwright is in the midst of fervent prayer over the Old Lady.

WHEELWRIGHT

Take one step. I'm not the one who's healing you. This is between you
(MORE)

WHEELWRIGHT (CONT'D)
and God. But I have faith in both of
you. So let my faith be your
strength. And take just one step.

With the help of Deacon James, the Old Lady rises up out of her wheelchair. She takes a step toward Wheelwright. And then another step. And then another step.

The congregation goes crazy. George Talley leaps to his feet and starts shouting hallelujahs. Olive is cheering. Wheelwright drops to his knees and starts speaking in tongues.

Joel's eyes alight on Hepzibah. She watches Martha, who is the only one sitting quietly amid all the noise and chaos. From his hiding place, Joel watches Hepzibah watching Martha.

INT. CARSON PARLOR - NIGHT

After supper Iris brings Ezekiel into the parlor. She goes over to the armoire and pulls out a bottle of liquor.

IRIS
I have one bottle left over from
when the rumrunner stayed here.

EZEKIEL
I don't think I should. I have to
work tonight and I need to keep my
head clear.

IRIS
One little drink can't hurt, can it?

EZEKIEL
I'm grateful for your hospitality.

Iris pours two glasses. Ezekiel perches awkwardly on the sofa. This is starting to feel more and more like a date.

IRIS
I was lucky to be born in this house.
And when my parents passed away, it
was mine free and clear. I scrape
together pocket money renting the
spare rooms to nice people like you.

EZEKIEL
So this has always been your home.
That's a fortunate thing.

IRIS
If you don't mind my asking, where
are *your* people now?

Ezekiel hesitates a moment. This is a difficult topic.

EZEKIEL

My mother died when I was born. And
I don't know where my father is.

IRIS

Not at all? I don't mean to pry.

Ezekiel is looking more and more uncomfortable. He speaks with a practiced stiffness and formality.

EZEKIEL

When I was one day old, my father left me on the steps of a church with my birth certificate and their wedding photograph.

IRIS

And that's all you know about him?
Have you ever tried to find him?

Abruptly and curtly Ezekiel rises from the couch.

EZEKIEL

All of a sudden I'm feeling a little tired. I should take a nap before Hepzibah comes back with a customer.

IRIS

It's just, I lost my husband the night Joel was born. He was driving us to the hospital. There was frost on the road and the car went into the air. If he hadn't wrapped himself around me to protect me and Joel inside me... I don't mean to compare our situations. But I do understand something about how it feels.

EZEKIEL

I'm very sorry to hear that.

Iris is speaking very matter-of-factly to cover any feelings she has. She waves the whole subject away with her hand.

IRIS

It's eleven years ago now. I've lived much longer without him than with him. But still - the feeling never really goes away. Does it?

EZEKIEL

No: I don't think it does.

Iris goes to the window. She looks down the hill at the lights from the tent. She shakes her head mordantly.

IRIS

Everybody in town is trying to get me to go to that revival meeting. Like after all this time it'll make me feel better to imagine I'll see him in Heaven. But he's gone and that's all there is to it. You know?

Iris turns to look at Ezekiel plaintively, her hopelessness barely concealing her deep hopefulness. Ezekiel opens his mouth to speak: he doesn't even know where to begin. The two of them consider each other for a moment, both aching.

All of a sudden the screen door bangs shut. Ezekiel and Iris turn to see Hepzibah and Martha standing in the foyer.

IRIS (CONT'D)

Oh. Well. Hello, Martha. What are you doing out so late? Can I offer anybody a cup of coffee?

MARTHA

No, it's all right, I mean--

HEPZIBAH

Oh, for Christ's sake, let's go upstairs, we don't have all night.

Hepzibah turns and heads up the stairs. Nervously Martha follows after her. Ezekiel and Iris are left alone.

EZEKIEL

Apparently I have a client. Well. No rest for the weary. Excuse me.

Ezekiel makes an awkward attempt at a bow to Iris. Then he heads up the stairs. Iris watches after him.

EXT. CARSON HOUSE - NIGHT

Joel quickly climbs up the tree and crawls back inside through the open window, trying not to make too much noise.

INT. EZEKIEL'S ROOM - NIGHT

Joel slips into Ezekiel's room and looks for a place to hide. He heads into the closet and shuts the door behind him, leaving it open just a crack so he can see what's going on in the room. He wraps his arms around his knees and waits.

INT. CARSON KITCHEN - NIGHT

Iris comes into the kitchen and stands over the sink, staring at the dirty dishes. A single tear falls down her cheek. Defiantly she wipes it away. She goes back to work.

INT. EZEKIEL'S ROOM - NIGHT

Ezekiel steps into the room and closes the door behind him. Tensely he runs his fingers through his hair: he's had quite an evening already and his work for the night has only begun.

Hepzibah takes Martha's coat and sits her down at the table. Martha twists her hands nervously around the straps of her purse. From inside the closet, Joel watches intently.

HEPZIBAH

Eight dollars.

Martha reaches inside her purse and takes out the money. She still can't quite believe she's agreed to do this.

MARTHA

Highway robbery. And what if I'm not satisfied with the results?

Hepzibah takes the bills and puts them in a jar on the table. Ezekiel dims the lamps and lights a candle.

EZEKIEL

If we don't keep up our end of the bargain, you get a full refund.

HEPZIBAH

We get paid up front because in the past we've had some trouble with freeloaders. And it costs him a lot to do this. Frankly he's undervalued.

MARTHA

I went to a medium once. There was a Ouija board and lots of banging on the table, it was too silly for words.

Ezekiel shakes out his hands to sober himself up before he goes to work. He sits down at the table across from Martha.

EZEKIEL

This isn't that. First off: why don't you tell me who you miss?

MARTHA

My husband Charlie. I have a picture of him if that helps.

Martha reaches into her purse and hands Ezekiel the picture.

EZEKIEL

It's not necessary but it can't hurt.

MARTHA

Is there anything you need me to do?

EZEKIEL

All you have to do is want him back.
Do you think you can do that?

MARTHA

It's the easiest thing in the world.

Martha smiles shyly at Ezekiel. Ezekiel smiles back at her.
Roughly Hepzibah leans across the table to Martha.

HEPZIBAH

Here's the rules. Keep your hands
on your side of the table. You're
never allowed to touch Ezekiel.

MARTHA

(a little alarmed)

Is that for my safety?

EZEKIEL

Actually it's for *my* safety.

HEPZIBAH

You have ten minutes. So make sure
you know what you want to ask. Some
people get flustered. Then afterward
they regret it. No refunds for that.

MARTHA

I know exactly what I want to ask.

HEPZIBAH

Good because this is a one-time-only
deal. We don't take repeat customers.

MARTHA

Yes, you've made that perfectly clear.

HEPZIBAH

One last thing - you're not allowed
to tell anybody about this, not ever.

MARTHA

This is easily the most embarrassing
thing I've done in my whole life.
Do you honestly think I'm going to
tell anybody about it?

EZEKIEL

Then we're ready to start.

Ezekiel closes his eyes. Martha stares at him warily. In the closet, Joel knows what's coming and he cups his hands over his ears. Hepzibah turns over the hourglass.

Ezekiel gives out a soft moan. Through Joel's eyes, it seems like Ezekiel's flesh is stretching and contorting, as though something is pushing through his body.

MARTHA

What's happening to him?

HEPZIBAH

Quiet - it'll be over soon.

The walls of the house start to vibrate. A strong wind blows through the open window. The closet door bangs open. Joel can't close it or he'll risk being seen so he just tries to stay as far back in the shadows as possible.

And suddenly the spell passes just as quickly as it came and Ezekiel is silent and still again. Inside the closet, Joel cautiously uncups his hands from his ears so he can hear.

And when Ezekiel opens his eyes and stares across the table at Martha, it seems to Joel like he's become somebody else.

EZEKIEL

(as Charlie)

Well, hello there, Martha.

Ezekiel looks exactly the same and he speaks in his own voice. But his speech is a drawl and he has the crooked posture of an old man. To Joel it looks like there's another soul in Ezekiel's body. But Martha is understandably too skeptical to accept it right away. She frowns at him.

MARTHA

That's not really you in there, is it, Charlie?

EZEKIEL

(as Charlie)

You're such a schoolteacher. Always wanting empirical evidence.

MARTHA

I paid good money to talk to my husband. I ought to examine the merchandise or else I'll get gouged.

EZEKIEL

(as Charlie)

The day we met, you were standing outside the American Legion Hall and you were bleeding all over your dress because you'd tried to feed a rabid cat and it bit you. I gave you my handkerchief to wrap around the wound and took you to get a tetanus shot.

Martha still isn't sure whether or not this is a hoax but she decides she might as well believe it.

MARTHA

I've missed you.

EZEKIEL

(as Charlie)

Tell me: what have you been doing with yourself since I've been gone?

MARTHA

You know the drill. Hundreds of cursive writing assignments. Hundreds of dead-eyed boys and girls reciting the seven times tables and the preamble to the Constitution and the poems of Miss Emily Dickinson.

Martha is on a tear of anger and pain. In the closet, Joel inches closer to hear, leaning dangerously into the light.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

Then lugging the papers home every night to grade them over a bottle of bootleg gin. Endless games of bridge with the ladies, losing track of all my tricks. All these days like paper chains. That's how I've been.

EZEKIEL

(as Charlie)

Breaks my heart to hear that.

Hepzibah catches sight of Joel and her eyes narrow in anger. She goes to the closet door and slams it shut. Martha and Ezekiel are both too wrapped up in each other to notice.

MARTHA

I'm wrecked without you, Charlie. I'm just killing time. But enough about me. How have you been?

EZEKIEL

(as Charlie)

Same as you, pretty much. Sometimes I can feel you brushing by me on the stairs or I sit on the file cabinet at school and try to watch you teach your class but mostly I can't see you or hear you. So it's lonely.

MARTHA

That's what it's like being dead?

Joel peers through the tiny crack in the doorway and listens as closely as he can. He doesn't know what Hepzibah is going to do with him but he knows it won't be good.

EZEKIEL

(as Charlie)

I stay close to what I love and mostly what I love is you. I try to reach you but I can't: sometimes I feel like I'm letting go of myself and soon I'll break apart and disappear.

Hepzibah checks the time on the hourglass.

HEPZIBAH

You're running out of time.

Martha nods at Hepzibah. She leans across the table to Ezekiel and speaks with a hushed urgency.

MARTHA

Charlie, something's growing in my chest and it's eating up my insides. The same thing that killed my mother. I haven't told anybody, but I guess my secret's safe with you, isn't it?

EZEKIEL

(as Charlie)

I knew as soon as I saw you.

Martha leans further across the table, extending her arms to Ezekiel. Hepzibah takes note of this but decides not to do anything about it just yet. Joel is breathing very hard.

MARTHA

I know you've been waiting for me a long time but please don't disappear just yet. Will you stay long enough to meet me? Please?

EZEKIEL

(as Charlie)

That's what you wanted to ask me?
Of course I'll wait for you. Now
come on over here so I can kiss your
hair. Please? Martha?

With a surge of feeling, Ezekiel reaches across the table
for Martha. Hepzibah puts her hands down on his shoulders.

HEPZIBAH

That's enough, Charlie, calm down.

EZEKIEL

(as Charlie)

Believe me, I'd break through this
man's body if that would get me even
one inch closer to you.

Martha lets out a sob. Ezekiel is getting very worked up.
Now Hepzibah has to restrain him bodily.

HEPZIBAH

Stay right there, Martha, don't you
touch him, I told you the rules.

EZEKIEL

(as Charlie)

I'd wait a thousand years for you.
I've been all alone here in the empty
air waiting for you.

Hepzibah grabs hold of Ezekiel and speaks intensely into his
ear. Deeply anguished, Martha sits very still in her chair.

HEPZIBAH

It's all right, Ezekiel, you can let
go of him, you come back to yourself
now, you've done your job.

Ezekiel's eyes close. He starts to moan under his breath.
Hepzibah whispers soothingly to him, helping him through.

The house starts to vibrate again and the breeze from the
window knocks over a chair. Inside the closet, the shelves
start shaking, and a few hatboxes tumble down on Joel's head.

Ezekiel rubs his eyes and takes a drink of water. Martha is
frozen in her chair. She is at a loss for words.

EZEKIEL

I hope I haven't disappointed you.

MARTHA

Quite the contrary. You did exactly what you promised. In fact I think you might consider raising your fee.

Martha rises. Her feet buckle slightly underneath her. Hepzibah goes to Martha and helps steady her.

EZEKIEL

Let Hepzibah see you out. It usually takes some time to get your bearings.

Martha shakes her head. She needs to get out of the room.

MARTHA

It's a dark night and a long walk and I'd like to get home to bed.

And Martha is gone. Hepzibah shuts the door behind her. Immediately she flings open the closet door to reveal Joel sitting on the floor. Ezekiel stares at Joel, surprised.

HEPZIBAH

What the hell are you doing in there?

JOEL

I'm sorry.

In a blind fury, Hepzibah grabs Joel by the collar and drags him out of the closet, beating her fists into his chest.

HEPZIBAH

I should kill you right now! I should strangle you with my bare hands!

EZEKIEL

Don't, Hepzibah, you're only making things worse--

Joel wrenches himself away from Hepzibah. Quickly he climbs out the window and clammers down the tree into the yard.

HEPZIBAH

I've got to catch him before he runs off to the Sheriff or the Reverend--

EZEKIEL

Quiet, you'll wake up his mother, let me take care of the boy myself--

And Ezekiel and Hepzibah start to head out of the room and down the hall, moving as quickly and stealthily as possible and trying to be as quiet as possible.

EXT. MUNICIPAL CEMETERY - NIGHT

Joel runs down the hill through the cemetery. He's moving as fast as his legs can carry him. He allows himself one look back. There's a shadowy figure running after him.

Joel turns to face forward. His eyes are wide with panic and fright. He runs faster and faster. He can hear the footsteps of the figure behind him, gaining on him.

And then two arms reach out from behind Joel. He is grabbed by the shoulders and spun around. Joel looks up in fright.

It's Ezekiel. Joel struggles to get away but Ezekiel is holding onto him firmly and implacably.

EZEKIEL

Where do you think you're going?

JOEL

Let go of me! Leave me alone!

EZEKIEL

What's the point of running when you don't have anywhere to go?

Joel realizes that Ezekiel's too strong for him so there's no chance he's going to get away. He stops struggling. Ezekiel keeps his strong and steady grip on Joel's shoulders.

JOEL

What are you going to do to me?

EZEKIEL

I don't want to do anything to you.

JOEL

Your friend said she was going to strangle me to death.

EZEKIEL

I can protect you from Hepzibah but only if you do exactly what I say.

Ezekiel's voice is insistent but steady. His arms are firmly around Joel's shoulders. It's very tense between them.

JOEL

What do you want me to do?

EZEKIEL

First of all you can't tell anybody about us. Not even your mother.

JOEL

If I don't tell, then you won't do anything bad to us?

EZEKIEL

I like you and your mother very much. I like staying in your house. And I don't want you to get into trouble.

JOEL

Are you in trouble?

EZEKIEL

There are a lot of people who don't like what I do.

Joel is incredibly frightened by Ezekiel but at the same time he's also completely fascinated by him: this is the first time he's ever met a creature like this in real life.

JOEL

Can you really make ghosts come into your body? Or is it just a trick?

EZEKIEL

What do you think?

JOEL

I think you're real. What are you? Are you a demon? Are you a monster?

Ezekiel considers this very seriously. He looks directly into Joel's eyes and speaks with something like sorrow.

EZEKIEL

I suppose I *am* a monster. I suppose that's the only word for what I am. So will you keep my secret?

Their eyes are still locked on each other. Finally Joel nods his head. He shrugs his shoulders a little forlornly.

JOEL

Nobody ever believes me anyway.

Ezekiel allows himself the faintest flicker of a smile. He loosens his hands from around Joel's shoulders and nods.

EZEKIEL

Why don't you come back inside?
It's not safe for you out here.

Then Ezekiel turns and starts heading back toward the house. Joel stands alone in the middle of the graveyard. He can hear the strange whispers and moans on the air again.

Then Joel makes a decision. He heads up toward the house, following Ezekiel but keeping a safe distance between them.

INT. CARSON HALLWAY - NIGHT

Joel creeps back up the stairs. Ezekiel is heading into his room. Ezekiel turns around and looks at Joel. His expression is implacable and unreadable. Then Ezekiel shuts his door.

Joel wants to go his own room but he's too scared to walk past Ezekiel's door. He turns and heads down to the other end of the hall. He opens the door to his mother's room.

INT. IRIS'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Joel cautiously steps into the room. Iris lies in bed, a sleeping mask on her eyes and cotton balls stuffed in her ears. A liquor bottle and a glass sit on the bedside table.

Joel climbs into bed with his mother. She moves slightly but she doesn't wake up. Joel stares up at the ceiling. It's not clear if he's protecting her or she's protecting him. But it's clear Joel isn't getting any sleep tonight.

INT. CARSON PARLOR - MORNING

Iris puts the liquor bottle back into the armoire. Joel comes down the stairs and heads straight for the door. He really doesn't want to talk to his mother this morning.

IRIS

Aren't you hungry for breakfast?

JOEL

I don't want to be late for school.

IRIS

At least let me kiss you goodbye.

Joel stands there with his hand on the doorknob. Iris goes to him and kisses him on the forehead. He's struggling under the weight of all his new knowledge.

Joel heads out the door, a little boy with the world on his shoulders. Iris watches him head down the road.

INT. CARSON KITCHEN - MORNING

Iris is working in the kitchen. Ezekiel comes down the stairs. Iris turns to see him. Neither one of them knows quite what to say for a moment.

IRIS

There's a pot of coffee on the stove.

EZEKIEL

I hope we didn't keep you up too
late last night.

IRIS

I stuffed my ears with cotton so I
was dead to the world. But that
must be some really amazing insurance
you're selling, that's all I'll say.

Ezekiel shifts on his feet a little bit awkwardly.

EZEKIEL

It's probably best if we don't talk
too much about what I do.

IRIS

A lot of different types of men come
to stay here in my house for a night
or two. By now I'm an expert at
looking the other way.

EZEKIEL

It's just, if you knew me better,
you might not want me to stay here.

IRIS

I certainly don't want you to go.

EZEKIEL

I don't want to go either.

They hold each other's gaze a moment. Then they look away.

IRIS

I know you have to work tonight so I
guess you wouldn't have any time to
go to the pictures with me. It's a
show I'd really like to see and it'll
be quiet with everyone at the revival.

Ezekiel hesitates. It's clear he'd really like to go with
her but he also knows it's probably a terrible idea. Iris
smiles hopefully at him. Finally he makes a decision.

EZEKIEL

I haven't been to the pictures in
years. I suppose we could sneak out
so long as we don't get back late.

All of a sudden Hepzibah comes down the stairs, carrying her
bags in her arms. She glares at both of them.

HEPZIBAH

I'm afraid we have to leave town
right away. I won't ask you for a
refund. We paid for the full week.

Brusquely Hepzibah turns and leaves the room. Ezekiel and Iris stare at each other in incomprehension. Then Ezekiel heads off after Hepzibah, shaking his head, exasperated.

EXT. CARSON HOUSE - MORNING

Hepzibah comes out the front door with her bags, letting the screen door slam shut behind her. She heads into the yard, dragging the bags behind her. Ezekiel comes out the front door. He has to run to catch up with her.

EZEKIEL

Why do we have to leave now?

HEPZIBAH

Because the boy saw everything!

Ezekiel is a little taken aback at the ferocity of her anger.

EZEKIEL

I swore him to secrecy. And he's
too frightened to say anything.

HEPZIBAH

You can't trust him. Sooner or later
he'll talk to his mother or his
friends. And then somebody will
tell Reverend Wheelwright that we're
following his meeting around again,
and then the sky will fall in!

EZEKIEL

The mother likes me, and I guarantee
she won't go talking to Wheelwright--

Now Hepzibah rails on Ezekiel with even more fury.

HEPZIBAH

Don't get me started on the mother.
She's the *real* reason you don't want
to leave, isn't she?

EZEKIEL

She's a good woman in a bad situation
and I'm just trying to be her friend.

Hepzibah lowers her voice so there's no way that Iris can hear her from inside the house.

HEPZIBAH

You want to be much more than her friend. I think that's actually why you don't want the boy to tell her about you. Isn't it?

This is precisely what Ezekiel is afraid of and he's furious at Hepzibah for calling him out on it.

EZEKIEL

I'm not going anywhere today.

Ezekiel and Hepzibah stare each other down, neither one of them budging an inch. Finally Hepzibah drops her bags on the ground. She extends her arms helplessly to the sky.

HEPZIBAH

Then I guess I'd better get to work.

Hepzibah turns and heads out of the yard. Ezekiel stares after her for a moment. Then he picks up the bags and starts to carry them back inside the house.

INT. SCHOOLHOUSE - DAY

Joel sits at his desk, drawing Ezekiel's face on his pad: contorted and wrenched and crying out in pain. Martha stands in front of the blackboard reading from a book of poetry.

MARTHA

...I shall not see the shadows, I
shall not feel the rain, I shall not
hear the nightingale sing on as if
in pain...

The other kids are bored. They pass notes or pinch each other or stare out the window daydreaming. Only Joel looks up at Martha: he sees his teacher in a very different light this morning. She recites with surprising fervor.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

...And dreaming through the twilight
that doth not rise nor set, haply I
may remember, and haply may forget...

Gradually Joel becomes aware of the whispers on the air again. He turns to look at the file cabinet and watches as a breeze lightly blows the stack of papers on top of it. It's as though somebody is watching and listening very closely.

EXT. SCHOOLHOUSE - DAY

At the end of the day, Martha stands at the door as all of her students come running past, thrilled to be rid of her.

Only Joel hangs back in the doorway. Martha stares at him quizzically. With a rush of compassion, Joel throws his arms around Martha and embraces her tightly, comforting her.

Martha has no idea what's brought on this show of emotion but she lets Joel envelop her in an embrace all the same.

EXT. INDERMILL CREEK - DAY

Joel is walking home from school past the creek. Ezekiel sits in the dirt skipping stones along the water.

JOEL

What are you doing?

EZEKIEL

I was waiting to see you actually.

JOEL

I didn't say anything to anybody.

EZEKIEL

I just wanted to make sure you were all right after everything that happened last night.

Ezekiel holds Joel in his gaze. Joel stuffs his hands in his pockets. He's bursting with questions for Ezekiel. It takes all of his effort to work up the courage to speak.

JOEL

Can I ask you a question?

EZEKIEL

You can ask anything you want but I'm not going to answer you.

Ezekiel gets up from the dirt and starts walking away from Joel. Joel is too curious: he keeps following after Ezekiel.

JOEL

Did somebody sell your soul to the devil? Or were you born like this? Are your father and mother like you?

EZEKIEL

Even if I knew, I wouldn't tell you.

JOEL

Does it hurt when you make the ghosts come into your body? Because it looks like it hurts.

Ezekiel turns to Joel. There's a flash of anger in his eyes. It's clear that Joel's questions are hitting a nerve.

EZEKIEL

The only way I can keep you safe is
if you don't know anything about me.

JOEL

Do you ever wish you were different?

Ezekiel's eyes narrow into slits. For a moment he looks very frightening. But then his face softens slightly.

EZEKIEL

Don't you?

Joel opens his mouth to respond but then he realizes that he doesn't know what to say. Ezekiel and Joel consider each other, suddenly realizing that they're very much alike.

Then Ezekiel turns and heads off down the road. Joel stares after him, more and more fascinated by him.

EXT. MUNICIPAL CEMETERY - DAY

Walking through the cemetery, Joel sees Hepzibah copying down names from the tombstones in her notebook. He hides behind one of the tombstones, watching her closely.

Hepzibah moves down the row of tombstones. Joel keeps on watching. He creeps behind the tombstones, following her.

INT. REVEREND WHEELWRIGHT'S TENT - NIGHT

The revival meeting is in full swing. Wheelwright stands up at the altar preaching. If anything the tent is even more crowded tonight. Hepzibah and Joel skulk in the shadows. Hepzibah is watching Wheelwright. Joel is watching Hepzibah.

WHEELWRIGHT

God has given us this one life. But
it isn't ours to keep. You try to
hold onto your life and it'll just
slip through your fingers.

Joel's eyes alight on George and Olive Talley, who are sitting as usual in the front row. George is rocking back and forth in prayer. Olive gazes on Wheelwright with rapt attention.

WHEELWRIGHT (CONT'D)

So you have to make a gift of your
life. Will you give it to whiskey?
Will you give it to loose women? Or
will you give it back to God?

Joel steps closer to Hepzibah. Hepzibah sees him and whirls on him, whispering to him with a quiet, controlled fury.

HEPZIBAH
Didn't I already warn you to stay
out of our business?

Joel whispers to Hepzibah as he points out George and Olive.

JOEL
That's Mr. and Mrs. Talley. They
own the drug store. They had a little
girl named Julia. But last year she
drowned in the creek.

Hepzibah turns to look at Joel. The expression on her face
slowly changes. She nods gruffly at Joel.

From up on the dais, Wheelwright catches sight of Joel and
Hepzibah. His eyes narrow into a dark suspicion.

EXT. REVEREND WHEELWRIGHT'S TENT - NIGHT

The revival meeting is breaking up for the night. Joel
watches from his hiding place behind one of the trucks.

George and Olive Talley come out of the tent. Hepzibah
follows behind them. She taps George on the shoulder.

HEPZIBAH
I'm sorry to bother you. Iris
Carson's boy told me you run the
drug store in town.

GEORGE
We're open tomorrow from seven till
five if you need anything.

HEPZIBAH
I was wondering if you wouldn't mind
opening up for me tonight. I've
been staying at Iris's boarding house
and I've been having so much trouble
getting to sleep.

OLIVE
No bother at all - we'd be happy to.

George can't help but roll his eyes: Olive is such a soft
touch. The three of them head off toward the town. Joel
creeps out from behind the truck. But he comes face to face
with Wheelwright, who towers over him, shaking his head.

WHEELWRIGHT
It's my lost pilgrim.

JOEL
What do you want?

WHEELWRIGHT

Are you friendly with that woman?

Wheelwright gestures in the direction where Hepzibah has headed off with George and Olive. Joel is brought up short but he manages to come up with a lie without much difficulty.

JOEL

She was looking for the drug store.
I've never seen her before. I don't
think she lives around here.

WHEELWRIGHT

I'd highly recommend that you keep
your distance from her.

JOEL

Did she do something wrong?

WHEELWRIGHT

She's a barnacle on the side of my
boat. And I know there are sheriffs
in at least three states who'd like
to run her in. She travels with a
man. They try to keep to the shadows.

Joel looks at Wheelwright, surprised by this new information.

JOEL

Do you think they're demons?

WHEELWRIGHT

Shouldn't you be in bed? Tomorrow
is a school day after all.

Joel nods at Wheelwright. He turns and heads off toward his house. Wheelwright watches after Joel very intently.

INT. PICTURE SHOW - NIGHT

Ezekiel and Iris sit together in the nearly empty theater. Most everybody else in town is down at the revival meeting. They're watching Roscoe Karns try to pick up Claudette Colbert in It Happened One Night and they're having a great time.

Iris curls up in her seat, doubled over with laughter. Ezekiel keeps sneaking glances at her: when she's laughing like this, she seems like a tender-hearted little girl.

Iris clutches Ezekiel's hand tightly and they both laugh joyously together in the dark movie house.

EXT. CONGRESS STREET - NIGHT

Joel heads home down the street. He sees George and Olive lead Hepzibah into the drug store and turn on the lights.

Joel stops and sits in the shadows beneath the pool hall awning on the other side of the street, watching closely.

INT. TALLEY'S DRUG STORE - NIGHT

George unlocks the door and leads Olive and Hepzibah inside. Hepzibah takes a seat on one of the stools as Olive goes to get the sleeping pills and George unlocks the cash register.

GEORGE

Are you in town for the revival?

HEPZIBAH

I've traveled all over the country following one preacher or another.

GEORGE

Most preachers just dust off some dry sermons and then pass the plate around. But Reverend Wheelwright is the genuine article.

Olive hands the sleeping pills over to Hepzibah.

OLIVE

I have dreadful insomnia myself, so I can tell you from experience, this is the best thing on the market.

HEPZIBAH

I'm very grateful. I'd like to do something for both of you in return.

GEORGE

All in a day's work.

HEPZIBAH

Would I be right to guess that you've recently suffered a terrible loss?

George's fingers freeze on the cash register buttons. Olive's face goes pale. Hepzibah considers them evenly.

GEORGE

Iris Carson's boy told you that too?

HEPZIBAH

I'm so sorry for you both. Is that what's causing your insomnia, ma'am?

(MORE)

HEPZIBAH (CONT'D)

Grief can be such an awful burden on
both the body and the soul.

OLIVE

We all make it through the day the
best we know how.

Olive looks very tense and George looks very hostile but
Hepzibah is calm: she's an expert in these situations.

HEPZIBAH

Oh yes. We take our sleeping pills
and we bow our heads in prayer. But
it's never really enough, is it?

GEORGE

I'm a salesman myself so I know when
someone's trying to sell me something.

George glares at Hepzibah. She holds him in her steady gaze.

HEPZIBAH

What if you could speak to your
daughter again for ten minutes?

GEORGE

(a moment, then quietly)
Get out of my store.

HEPZIBAH

I'm sure there's all kinds of things
you wish you'd said to her when she
was alive. And all kinds of questions
you'd like to ask her now. I have a
friend who can give her back to you.

Olive is listening very closely. Her face is unreadable.

GEORGE

Do you think we're fools?

HEPZIBAH

I think for a long time now you've
wished somebody like me would walk
through your door. Isn't that right?

George opens his mouth to respond but finds that he can't
think of anything to say.

OLIVE

How much would it cost?

HEPZIBAH

Eight dollars of your money. Ten minutes of your time. If it doesn't work, we'll give you a full refund.

George and Olive look back and forth at each other.

HEPZIBAH (CONT'D)

Really you have nothing to lose. If we can bring her back to you, then you get to speak with her one last time. And if we can't, then at least you'll know it's impossible and you can stop hoping. Either way it'll be a relief. So what do you say?

EXT. CARSON HOUSE - NIGHT

Ezekiel and Iris come up the walk, heading home, laughing to themselves about the movie, having a very nice time.

IRIS

I haven't been to the pictures in such a long time. It was awfully sweet of you to take me.

EZEKIEL

It was so nice of you to ask me. I don't go out very much, I'm afraid.

Ezekiel is friendly but formal: he doesn't know how to act. Iris blushes a little but she plays it off very lightly. She's trying to be flirtatious without being forward.

IRIS

It must be so lovely to travel around the country the way you do. A new town every week. All these strangers waiting to become your friends.

EZEKIEL

Well. It's not as nice as you make it sound. Mostly I sleep in hard hotel beds and I eat off cafeteria trays. I never really make any friends. I always thought it'd be nice to have a home like yours.

In his halting, awkward way, Ezekiel is reaching out to her. Iris can see this and she's deeply touched by him.

IRIS

It's not all it's cracked up to be. A small town like this...it's full
(MORE)

IRIS (CONT'D)
of small-minded people. It doesn't
take much to get a bad reputation.

EZEKIEL
How could you have a bad reputation?

IRIS
Oh, you know, I run a boardinghouse.
Lots of men stay here for a night or
two and, present company excepted,
they aren't always respectable. And
I'm a woman without a husband.

EZEKIEL
But don't you hope that someday you'll
get married again?

Ezekiel is asking this question for all kinds of reasons.
Iris is deeply affected but she still keeps things light.

IRIS
That kind of thing - it only happens
when you're a girl. So I'm fairly
certain it's never going to come
around for me again. But that's all
right. I had my spin on the carousel.

EZEKIEL
I'm sure you must still miss your
husband very much.

IRIS
Oh, I don't know. It's just every
day I see more of him in Joel. So
sometimes I wish...but it's too nice
a night to talk about things like
that. Isn't it amazing, the size of
the sky on a night like tonight?

EZEKIEL
I've traveled all over the country
and I don't think I've ever seen a
sky this nice.

IRIS
Poor thing - don't you ever want to
pull off your boots - get off the
road - rest your weary bones - look
up at the same sky every night?

Impulsively Iris takes Ezekiel's hand and kisses him on the
mouth. Overcome by emotion, Ezekiel wraps his arms around
her and kisses her back.

All of a sudden Joel comes barreling down the walk, nearly crashing into Ezekiel and Iris. Shaken out of her reverie, Iris takes hold of her son.

IRIS (CONT'D)

Joel! What are you doing out so late? You were supposed to do your homework and go right to bed!

Joel loosens himself from Iris and runs into the house. Iris starts to go after him. Then Ezekiel and Iris turn to see Hepzibah coming across the yard with George and Olive.

HEPZIBAH

Good evening, Ezekiel, I'd like you to meet George and Olive Talley.

Hepzibah's eyes narrow to see Ezekiel and Iris together. George and Olive shake their heads, confirmed in their low opinion of Iris. Iris is stunned to see George and Olive.

IRIS

Well. My goodness. George. Olive. I don't think I ever expected the two of you would come visit my house.

OLIVE

We were only - we just came here to - what I mean is...

Olive trails off helplessly. George is growing more and more annoyed and impatient. He turns to Hepzibah.

GEORGE

Can we get this over with?

HEPZIBAH

Right away. Ezekiel? Are you coming?

Hepzibah starts up the porch steps with George and Olive in tow. Ezekiel hesitates a moment. Then he nods regretfully to Iris and heads inside after them. Iris watches them go. She doesn't know what to think about what's going on tonight.

INT. EZEKIEL'S ROOM - NIGHT

Ezekiel strides into the room, still extremely worked up, and shuts the door behind him. George and Olive stand tensely in the room. Ezekiel turns to Hepzibah.

EZEKIEL

You told them the rules?

HEPZIBAH

Only ten minutes, no repeat visits,
no touching you, no telling anyone.

EZEKIEL

All right then: who do you miss?

Ezekiel sits down at the table and tries to compose himself.

OLIVE

Our daughter Julia.

GEORGE

You'll give us the eight dollars
back if this turns out to be a trick?
Otherwise I'm calling the sheriff.

HEPZIBAH

There won't be any need for the
sheriff. If you'll both have a seat.

George and Olive sit at the table opposite Ezekiel. Hepzibah dims the lamp, lights the candle and turns over the hourglass.

Ezekiel closes his eyes. He lets out a soft moan. The house shakes. The window flies open. The whispers and moans can be heard on the breeze. George is entirely unconvinced.

GEORGE

Oh for crying out loud.

OLIVE

George, I'm asking you to be still.

Hepzibah watches intently. Olive puts her hand to her mouth. But George is determined not to believe anything is happening.

GEORGE

This makes a mockery of everything
Reverend Wheelwright has been--

Then suddenly Ezekiel is still. He opens his eyes and stares across the table at them. Now he appears to be someone else.

EZEKIEL

(as Julia)

Mommy? Daddy?

Of course Ezekiel looks the same, but his voice is breathier and softer, and he wraps his hands beneath his legs on the chair, squirming like an 8-year-old girl. Olive is astonished. George shakes his head darkly.

OLIVE

Julia? Darling?

GEORGE

You know that's not Julia. He's
just trying to imitate her voice.
Not doing a very good job either.

Ezekiel flutters his hands in front of his face. Tears spring to his eyes. George stares daggers at him across the table.

EZEKIEL

(as Julia)

I'm sorry I ran away. I know you said stay in my room so we can all go to the creek together. But it was sunny out and I had my new bathing suit on and I couldn't wait.

OLIVE

It's all right, my darling, please
don't cry--

EZEKIEL

(as Julia)

It was nice in the creek so I kept swimming but then I got too far out and my feet couldn't find the bottom and I yelled as loud as I could but you didn't come find me!

Inside Ezekiel, Julia is deeply upset by the memory. Olive is devastated and George is utterly furious.

OLIVE

We were too far away, my love, we heard you and we ran as fast as we could, we were just too late--

EZEKIEL

(as Julia)

I thought you were angry at me for going swimming without you so you weren't coming to help me!

OLIVE

No, no, we never would've abandoned you, please forgive us--

GEORGE

(deeply upset)

You're making all of this up! You paid Joel to tell you about our daughter! That's all this is! You ought to be ashamed!

Inside Ezekiel's body, Julia is confused and frightened. She looks to her mother for comfort and protection.

EZEKIEL

(as Julia)

If you're not mad at me, then why is
Daddy yelling at me?

OLIVE

He's not, it's fine, Mommy's here.

Olive reaches across the table toward Ezekiel. Hepzibah leans across the table to stop them from touching.

HEPZIBAH

I warned you, Mrs. Talley, keep your hands on your side of the table.

EZEKIEL

(as Julia)

I just wanted to go swimming! I didn't do anything wrong!

Angrily George rises and bangs his fist against the table.

GEORGE

Vultures! Monsters! Demons!

HEPZIBAH

Mr. Talley, if you won't calm down, I'll have to ask you to leave--

GEORGE

Why in God's name would you make us live through this all over again?

Inside Ezekiel, Julia can only believe that her father is yelling at her, so she bursts into tears.

EZEKIEL

(as Julia)

Why does Daddy hate me?

OLIVE

He doesn't hate you! I promise! He just misses you! You have no idea how much we miss you!

EZEKIEL

(as Julia)

Sometimes at night I can hear Daddy crying, and sometimes I can see you lying in my bed all day--

George reaches out his arm and knocks the table over. The candle goes flying to the floor and Hepzibah stomps her foot to put out the flame. Inside Ezekiel, Julia is terrified.

GEORGE

Enough! Enough!

EZEKIEL

(as Julia)

Daddy, please, don't--

OLIVE

Your father just doesn't understand,
please, my love, don't cry--

Inside Ezekiel, Julia is sobbing. Olive is bawling. George seethes with fury. The candle has gone out so the room is only lit by the moonlight. Hepzibah raises her arms.

HEPZIBAH

That's it! We need to stop!

EZEKIEL

(as Julia)

Why won't you kiss me, Mommy? Please,
kiss me and make it all better!

OLIVE

Of course, my darling--

Olive reaches out and takes Ezekiel's hand. All of a sudden there's a flash of lightning that cuts across the dark room.

The glow appears to be emanating from Ezekiel's body. Or maybe it's just the lightning cutting across the room. George and Olive go still as they turn to Ezekiel in shock.

HEPZIBAH

Let go of him!

Ezekiel's body goes as stiff as a board. He collapses to the ground, knocking over the chair as he falls.

OLIVE

Where has Julia gone? You promised us ten minutes with our daughter!

HEPZIBAH

I warned you not to touch him! It's too dangerous! Why didn't you listen to me? You're both so stupid!

OLIVE

You mean now she's gone for good?

All of a sudden the door flies open. Iris flies into the room dressed in her nightgown. She's in a state of panic. Joel comes running down the hall. He stands behind Iris.

IRIS

What's all that noise? What in God's name is going on in here?

George leans over the unconscious Ezekiel and grabs him by the lapels. He bangs Ezekiel's head into the floor.

GEORGE

You're a fraud! You're a monster!
They ought to throw you in jail!

In a blind fury, George is pounding Ezekiel's head into the floorboards. Olive screams. Iris and Hepzibah pull George off of Ezekiel with a surprising force.

IRIS

George, you let go of him right this instant! What gives you the right to come into my house and--

OLIVE

George, stop it, what are you doing--

IRIS

You act all high and mighty but you're worse than anybody, that's the truth--

Iris has gotten George away from Ezekiel. Hepzibah holds Ezekiel in her arms and cradles him tenderly.

GEORGE

Give us our money back! I'm not going anywhere till these people give us our money back!

HEPZIBAH

Come back to me, Ezekiel, it's all right now, you're safe here, you've done your job for the night.

OLIVE

No, George, stop it, let's go home, I want to go home, it's too late--

Olive runs out the door and down the stairs. George follows after her, shoving Joel aside as he runs off.

IRIS

Joel, baby, you go back to bed now, you don't need to be seeing this--

Joel runs off. Ezekiel comes back into consciousness. He looks at the overturned table, the anguished faces of Iris and Hepzibah, and the mess that's been made.

EZEKIEL

You should run after them, Hepzibah.
We should give them their money back.

INT. CARSON KITCHEN - NIGHT

Iris dips a cloth into a basin of water and presses it against the bruise on Ezekiel's forehead. Ezekiel flinches. They are both enormously worked up from the events of the night.

IRIS

Hold still.

EZEKIEL

Honestly I'm not hurt. He took me by surprise is all.

IRIS

You've got a nasty bruise. Just let me take care of it. George Talley acts all pious but he's always more than ready to start a brawl.

EZEKIEL

I'm making trouble for you.

IRIS

Don't be ridiculous.

EZEKIEL

If you want, Hepzibah and I can clear out of here first thing tomorrow.

IRIS

That's the last thing I want.

Iris stops with her hand pressing the cloth to Ezekiel's forehead. It's extremely intimate between them. Ezekiel winces. It's less from pain and more from regret.

EZEKIEL

I'm sorry for everything that I did tonight. For what happened with George Talley. And for...I shouldn't have kissed you. I'm so sorry.

IRIS

You really are a gentleman, aren't you? Most of the men who stay here, they're not nearly as kind as you. They figure I'm running a five-and-dime and they can have me for a song.

Iris is deeply embarrassed and ashamed. Ezekiel is mortified. It takes him a moment to figure out what to say to her.

EZEKIEL

But things can't go any further. If I kiss you again, I'll want to stay for good, and I can't. It wouldn't be any good for either one of us.

Iris smiles sadly. Ezekiel is so polite that he's trying to make it seem as though he isn't rejecting her.

IRIS

I guess if some things were different other things would be otherwise.

All of a sudden Hepzibah comes barreling through the front door. She looks at Iris holding the cloth, her hand on Ezekiel's forehead. She allows herself a disgusted sneer.

HEPZIBAH

I gave those jackasses their money back. Now can we all get some goddamn sleep? Is that too much to ask?

Hepzibah storms up the stairs. Ezekiel heaves a sigh. He smiles sadly at Iris, then turns and heads up to his room.

Iris empties the pot of water into the sink, staring at the dirty dishes. Impulsively she picks up a teacup and hurls it against the wall. It shatters into bits. She buries her head in her hands, furious with herself, utterly devastated.

INT. TALLEY'S DRUG STORE - NIGHT

George unlocks the door to the drug store and leads Olive inside. He starts up the stairs that lead to their apartment. Olive doesn't have the strength to take another step.

GEORGE

In the morning I'll talk to the sheriff and he'll take care of those people. And then we'll go and see Reverend Wheelwright and he can--

Olive surrenders herself to sobs. Her sobs are bitter and heaving and frightening. She stares at George, devastated.

OLIVE

You wrecked everything! You wouldn't believe it was her! You screamed at her! You made her cry!

GEORGE

But I--

Olive shakes her head angrily. George subsides into silence. The sobs are coming out of her one after another like waves.

OLIVE

It was our one chance to talk with her and you destroyed it! And now she's never coming back! You took her away from me all over again!

The truth of this hits George like a ton of bricks.

GEORGE

I'm going out for a walk. You should take a pill so you can sleep.

Stiffly George moves past Olive and heads outside. Olive watches after him until he disappears from view.

EXT. INDERMILL CREEK - NIGHT

It's past midnight by now. George walks down to the edge of the creek. The night is very still. There's only the breeze and the sound of the gently rushing current.

George stuffs his hands in his pockets and stares out at the place where his daughter drowned. He shudders.

He takes off his glasses and puts them in his pocket. He kneels down and picks up several large stones from the ground. Methodically he piles the stones deep inside his pockets.

He stands on the bank of the creek. Then he takes a step into the water. Then another step, and another. He's in no hurry. Now he's up to his neck in the water.

He knows the drop-off is coming. There's no expression on his face. He considers the water and the trees and the sky. He takes one last long look at the world.

Then he takes one more step. And he disappears beneath the surface of the water.

The night is still again: there's only the breeze and the sound of the gently rushing current.

EXT. INDERMILL CREEK - MORNING

But in the morning the creek isn't nearly so still. On his way to school, Joel walks past. The SHERIFF is there, along with a few of the other men from the town.

Joel steps closer to try and get a better look. Some of the men are wading out of the creek. Their hip-boots squish against the mud. They're carrying something in their arms.

Joel can't quite make out what they're carrying. He sneaks around one of the trees to try and get a closer look. But the Sheriff is there and puts his hand over Joel's eyes.

SHERIFF
You run off to school now, boy.

Joel looks up at the Sheriff, startled and frightened. Then he turns and breaks into a run, racing off to school.

EXT. CONGRESS STREET - DAY

Iris comes walking quickly down the street, very distraught. The door to the drug store is wide open but nobody's at the counter. Hurriedly she crosses the street and heads inside.

INT. TALLEY LIVING ROOM - DAY

Iris comes quickly up the stairs. About five or six of the women from town are gathered in the apartment. One woman is making tea. The others stand in pairs whispering sadly to each other. Iris turns to the woman who's making tea.

IRIS
Let me know how I can help.

There is a sob from the bedroom. Iris turns and looks through the open door. She sees Olive sitting on her bed crying. Two other women are with her, each holding one of her hands. Iris steps toward Olive. But Olive shakes her head angrily.

OLIVE
This is all *your* fault! You let
that man into your house! Your son
is the one who told them about us!

Olive bursts into jagged sobs. Iris stands very still in the middle of the room, completely uncomprehending.

OLIVE (CONT'D)
And I know what you do with the men
in your house! You're going to bed
with him! You're the Devil's whore!

Iris stares at Olive. She can only assume that Olive is deranged with grief. Nobody else knows what to say.

IRIS
Olive, I don't understand what you--

OLIVE
I'm going to tell Reverend Wheelwright
all about you! He'll throw you in
jail! He'll make sure they take
Joel away from you!

Iris steps back, shocked, unable to make sense of any of this. The living room door swings open and Reverend

Wheelwright steps into the room. He carries his Bible and looks very solemn. All the women turn and look at him.

WHEELWRIGHT
Mrs. Talley sent for me.

OLIVE
I need to talk to the Reverend alone.

Through her tears, Olive extends her arms to Wheelwright. Iris turns and quickly heads out the door and downstairs.

EXT. CONGRESS STREET - DAY

Iris comes out of the drug store and heads down the street. The townspeople are gathered in small clumps, talking amongst themselves somberly. Iris nods at a few of them.

But when the townspeople see Iris, some of them avert their gaze from her, and some of them stare at her very darkly. Iris is deeply unnerved and completely at a loss.

EXT. SCHOOLHOUSE - DAY

At the end of the day, Martha stands at the schoolhouse door as all the children run past her and head home.

Iris comes walking up the steps of the schoolhouse just as Joel heads out the door. He looks up at Iris nervously.

JOEL
Am I in trouble?

IRIS
Wait outside for a minute.

Martha leads Iris inside the schoolhouse. Apprehensively Joel looks after them.

INT. SCHOOLHOUSE - DAY

Martha admits Iris into the classroom and closes the door.

IRIS
Apparently I don't know what's going on in my own house these days.

Iris holds Martha in her steady gaze. Martha sits down at her desk and rubs her temples with her fingers.

MARTHA
The first thing you should know is I don't think they meant to do anybody any harm. And as far as I'm concerned they did me a world of good.

Iris sinks into a chair as Martha starts to tell her story.

EXT. SCHOOLHOUSE - DAY

Joel paces back and forth outside the schoolhouse. Iris comes out the door and extends her arm to him. She looks very upset. They start to walk quickly across the field.

IRIS

How long exactly have you known about all of this?

JOEL

He told me not to tell you. He said if you didn't know anything about it then you couldn't get in trouble.

IRIS

Have you been *helping* them?

JOEL

He didn't mean to do anything bad. He was just born this way. He's only trying to help everybody.

IRIS

Oh, Joel, you don't actually believe that they're really demons, do you?

JOEL

But I saw it!

IRIS

Of course you *think* that's what you saw. But you believe all kinds of things that can't possibly be true.

Joel stares at his mother in stunned incomprehension.

JOEL

You don't think he's real?

EXT. CARSON HOUSE - DAY

Ezekiel and Hepzibah are sitting on the front porch as Iris comes up the walk, holding Joel's hand, absolutely furious.

IRIS

I need you to tell me exactly what you've been doing in my house.

HEPZIBAH

There's nothing wrong with what we're doing. It's all totally above-board.

IRIS

You put my son to work for you.
Collecting information for you.

Ezekiel turns to look at Hepzibah, very upset by this.

EZEKIEL

You've got him *working* for you now?

HEPZIBAH

I didn't force him to do anything.
He volunteered to help.

EZEKIEL

I told you I didn't want them to get involved. I told you that I wanted to keep them safe.

IRIS

It's a little late for that now. I need you both to leave right away.

HEPZIBAH

We're paid up for a full week - we're not leaving without a refund.

IRIS

After everything you've done, you're actually asking me for *money*?

EZEKIEL

You're right, we'll leave right away, we won't cause any trouble for you--

All of a sudden Wheelwright heads up the walk. He isn't any less imposing in broad daylight. Deacon James is with him, along with a sizable portion of Wheelwright's congregation.

WHEELWRIGHT

Didn't I tell you there's no need to go searching for demons? Because it looks like they've already beaten a path to your door.

They all turn and look at Wheelwright and the townspeople. Ezekiel holds up his hand to calm everybody down.

EZEKIEL

How can we help you, Reverend?

WHEELWRIGHT

I'm afraid it gives me no pleasure to see you both again.

HEPZIBAH

I've been listening to you preach
all week and you're absolutely right,
it's been no pleasure at all.

Wheelwright starts heading up the walk to the porch. The townspeople follow after him.

WHEELWRIGHT

I've warned you before not to ever
do business with my congregation.

HEPZIBAH

If they got what they needed from
you, then they wouldn't need to buy
what we're selling.

WHEELWRIGHT

What I give them comes from God.
What you give them...let's just say
it comes from someplace else.

HEPZIBAH

(a harsh laugh)

Are you actually trying to put the
fear of Jesus into me?

Wheelwright smiles darkly. It's extremely tense right now.

WHEELWRIGHT

Did you bring George and Olive Talley
up to this house last night?

HEPZIBAH

That's what this is about? Did George
Talley send you here? We gave him
everything he asked for plus a full
refund and he's still ungrateful.

WHEELWRIGHT

Last night George Talley put stones
in his pockets and walked into the
creek so I'd say he's a hell of a
lot worse than ungrateful.

Hepzibah takes a step backward. Ezekiel goes very still.

EZEKIEL

I didn't know anything about that.

WHEELWRIGHT

I thought you might like to hear.
So first off I'm asking you kindly
to leave my congregation alone.

Wheelwright stands his ground firmly. Hepzibah is feeling very threatened so she lashes out. Ezekiel looks ashen. Joel and Iris watch closely.

HEPZIBAH

I don't like how you're looking at us. Like we held his head underwater ourselves. We didn't do anything wrong. You come back with the sheriff if you want to run us out of town.

WHEELWRIGHT

If I call the sheriff he'll find out quick that there are warrants out for your arrest in Missouri and Kansas and Oklahoma for starters. So maybe it's best if we handle this ourselves.

EZEKIEL

How do you propose to handle it?

Wheelwright is playing the rabble-rouser and the peacekeeper at the same time. It's truly a masterful performance.

WHEELWRIGHT

I understand this boy is the one who told you about George and Olive. And how they lost their little girl.

IRIS

He didn't know any better. He's only eleven years old.

WHEELWRIGHT

He's been running errands for those people - did you know about that?

EZEKIEL

Until right now she didn't have any idea what we were doing in her house.

WHEELWRIGHT

Now I find that hard to believe. Word around town is that she's been keeping company with you.

IRIS

Last I checked this was my private property and I'm beginning to think you're trespassing, Reverend.

WHEELWRIGHT

See, I've heard this isn't the first man of questionable character you've
(MORE)

WHEELWRIGHT (CONT'D)
let into your house. Apparently
you've got quite a reputation in
this town. If you're an unfit mother
then maybe it'd be best to remove
the boy from your sphere of influence.

With a surge of anger Iris picks up the pitchfork from the porch and holds it out toward Wheelwright's face. Ezekiel and Hepzibah and Joel seize up in panic and shock.

IRIS
You've got five seconds to turn around
and walk away from my house.

Iris holds the pitchfork an inch from Wheelwright's face. Iris and Wheelwright keep their unblinking eyes on each other.

Ezekiel and Hepzibah and Joel watch the scene very tensely. The congregation looks very upset. There's a very good chance it's about to get violent. Then Wheelwright raises his hand. He nods in capitulation. Iris allows herself a small smile.

Wheelwright turns and starts to head out of the yard. The congregation follows after him, whispering amongst themselves. Iris is triumphant. Wheelwright speaks over his shoulder.

WHEELWRIGHT
All right then: I'll be back soon
with the Sheriff.

IRIS
That's good to know. I'll be waiting
right here for both of you.

It's clear to Ezekiel that Iris is endangering herself by standing up for him. He calls out to Wheelwright.

EZEKIEL
I want to speak to you alone.

INT. EZEKIEL'S ROOM - DAY

Ezekiel admits Wheelwright into his room and shuts the door. Wheelwright sits on the bed. Ezekiel sits at the desk. They consider each other for a highly-charged moment.

WHEELWRIGHT
I've known darkness all my life. My
daddy found an awful demon in a bottle
of whiskey. But I've never seen a
worse demon than the one inside you.

EZEKIEL

Why don't you just tell me what you want from me?

Wheelwright takes out a cigarette and lights it. He takes a deep drag before he speaks. Ezekiel watches him closely.

WHEELWRIGHT

Come down to my tent and together we can cast the demon out of your body.

Ezekiel is already shaking his head no.

EZEKIEL

I've been to preachers and faith healers before. It never ends well.

WHEELWRIGHT

Since the last time you crossed my path I hired a man to look into your history. Sad tale: losing your mother when you were born. Then your father left you in that orphanage.

Ezekiel stiffens slightly to hear Wheelwright tell his story.

WHEELWRIGHT (CONT'D)

And speaking of your father...old Reverend Hull told me about a man who used to follow his revival meeting. He sounded a lot like you. He kept to the shadows. He said he could make ghosts come into his body. Called himself Quentin Moss.

Ezekiel's hands start to shake a little. It's suddenly clear to Wheelwright that he's hit a nerve.

EZEKIEL

Did you ever find out anything about what happened to Quentin Moss?

WHEELWRIGHT

Reverend Hull tried to lay hands on him but the poor man was too far gone. He was all demon.

EZEKIEL

And do you have any idea where Quentin might be these days?

WHEELWRIGHT

Half a day's drive from here. If he's where Reverend Hull left him. But that was thirty years ago.

EZEKIEL

He's that close?

WHEELWRIGHT

Best you don't ask me anything more about what's become of him. Just believe me: you don't want his life.

EZEKIEL

Why do you care what happens to me?

WHEELWRIGHT

You've got a terrible demon in you, but I've got a great gift in me. So maybe I was put on this earth to save your soul.

Ezekiel thinks about this long and hard.

EZEKIEL

You need to do two things for me.

WHEELWRIGHT

You're not in any position to be driving a bargain here.

EZEKIEL

I want to make certain nobody blames Joel or Iris for anything that's happened in this house. I know you can take care of that.

WHEELWRIGHT

As far as I'm concerned, they're both completely innocent.

EZEKIEL

And I want to meet my father.

Wheelwright is brought up short by this.

WHEELWRIGHT

It'll only make you sad.

EZEKIEL

I need to know what he really is. So I can figure out what I really am. That's the only way I'll ever know how I can be healed.

Wheelwright weighs this heavily. He stubs out his cigarette.

WHEELWRIGHT

You meet me down at my tent tomorrow
at dawn and I'll drive you out there.
But if you don't show, then I can't
be responsible for anything that
happens to the boy and his mother.

INT. CARSON FOYER - EVENING

Hepzibah watches as Ezekiel leads Wheelwright down the stairs. He opens the door. Wheelwright doffs his hat to Hepzibah. Then he leaves the house. Ezekiel shuts the door.

HEPZIBAH

What did that jackass say to you?

EZEKIEL

I promised I'd go somewhere with him
in the morning. And if I do what he
asks, he'll take care of everything.

HEPZIBAH

That's what he *says*, but if we stay
past sunset, he'll have a mob coming
after us with torches and pitchforks.

Ezekiel gestures outside. Through the window they can see Wheelwright talking to his congregation. After a moment they all turn and start heading out of the yard.

EZEKIEL

We got innocent people tangled up in
this. If I run away now, all the
trouble's gonna fall on them.

HEPZIBAH

Who the hell cares what happens to--

EZEKIEL

I understand if you don't want to
stick around. You're free to go if
that's what you want.

Ezekiel holds Hepzibah in his gaze. Hepzibah is taken aback: Ezekiel has never suggested anything like this before.

HEPZIBAH

You know I'm never going anywhere
without you.

Hepzibah speaks with tremendous tenderness and fervor. Ezekiel allows a grateful smile to cross his face.

EZEKIEL

Then why don't you get our things packed? I have to try and make things right with Joel and Iris and it'll be easier if I can talk to them alone.

Hepzibah takes this in. She shakes her head darkly.

HEPZIBAH

You've already gotten that boy into enough trouble. And whatever you want from that poor woman, she won't be able to give it to you. All you're doing is breaking your own heart.

Hepzibah turns and heads upstairs. Ezekiel looks out the window at Iris sitting all alone on the porch.

EXT. CARSON HOUSE - EVENING

Ezekiel comes out the front door. Iris is sitting on the porch swing, staring straight ahead, her face hard.

EZEKIEL

I don't really know how to begin.

IRIS

I won't believe anything you say anyway so it really doesn't matter.

EZEKIEL

I've made a deal with the Reverend. I'm gonna do everything he asks and he's promised to leave you in peace.

IRIS

Honestly I don't trust either one of you as far as I can throw you.

It fills Ezekiel with tremendous pain to hear this. He stuffs his hands in his pockets and speaks as simply as possible.

EZEKIEL

I know it doesn't make any difference now but the only reason I didn't tell you the truth about myself is because I wanted to protect you.

IRIS

You actually expect me to believe that you are what you say you are?

EZEKIEL

I don't expect you to believe it but it's the truth.

IRIS

You follow revival meetings from town to town looking for suckers--

EZEKIEL

We follow the meetings because that's the best way to find as many people as possible who've lost somebody--

IRIS

And your friend collects secrets about them--

Iris is utterly betrayed and infuriated. Ezekiel is utterly devastated and bereft. He defends himself as best he can.

EZEKIEL

Hepzibah just tries to find out about everybody in town so we know who needs our help--

IRIS

And you pretend to be whoever it is that those poor people are missing--

EZEKIEL

I'm not pretending. It's something that happens to me. I can't even remember any of it afterward--

IRIS

So maybe you've been lying to people for so long that now you're actually starting to believe your own lies--

EZEKIEL

Believe me, I wish I was lying. I wish I could stop it. All I ever wanted was to take this thing inside me and use it to try and help people.

Ezekiel is speaking with tremendous passion and feeling. Iris stops short and listens to him very intently.

EZEKIEL (CONT'D)

But now it's so clear to me that I can't go on like this. Not for one more day. I have to try and find some way to stop it.

Iris realizes that Ezekiel truly believes that he is what he says he is. She shakes her head, a little overwhelmed.

IRIS

You really believe that you can...are
you out of your mind?

EZEKIEL

Sometimes I think I must be. I can't
see them or hear them or talk to
them. I can only feel them...moving
through me. Especially when I'm in
a place they cared about or when I'm
with someone they loved.

Iris swallows hard. She can't look at Ezekiel now.

IRIS

So are you saying that - do you mean
to say that there's someone you can...
when you're here with me?

Ezekiel knows what she's asking. He's been expecting it.

EZEKIEL

He's here all the time. He's here
now.

Iris lets a tear fall from her eyes. Then she wipes it away.

IRIS

Naturally that's what you'd say.

While they've been talking the sun has set. It's growing
darker and darker around them. Ezekiel hesitates.

EZEKIEL

Would you like to talk with him?

IRIS

(with a harsh laugh)
Of course I want to talk to him.
But there's not a thing in this world
you can do about that.

Ezekiel looks down at his hands. It's going to cost him so
much to do this. But he's in love with her so he's desperate
to help her any way he can. He leans in to her intensely.

EZEKIEL

I've done so much damage. I want to
do something to help you. And I
don't have anything else to offer.
So will you let me?

IRIS

Why don't you go upstairs and start
packing your things?

Ezekiel heads into the house and lets the screen door slam shut behind him. Iris is alone on the front porch. She is left alone with her thoughts. Slowly her face changes.

She puts her hand to her face and looks up at the night sky. She can barely wrap her mind around what she's about to do.

INT. EZEKIEL'S ROOM - NIGHT

Ezekiel starts to pack his things but then he stops. He sits down and puts his head in his hands.

The door opens and Iris steps into the room. She's changed into a very pretty dress and retouched her makeup and put up her hair. She looks as scared as a girl on a first date.

Ezekiel looks up to see her all dolled up and his heart nearly cracks in two. He gestures for her to shut the door.

IRIS

I can't believe I'm doing this.

EZEKIEL

Just sit next to me. This may look like it hurts but I promise I'm fine.

Ezekiel dims the lamps in the room and lights the candle on the table. Iris sits down next to Ezekiel and nods.

IRIS

I guess it's now or never.

Ezekiel closes his eyes. He gives out a soft moan. It doesn't look like anything particularly supernatural is happening. Maybe he's trying to control himself in front of Iris or maybe this is just how he looks through her eyes.

Finally he opens his eyes. He considers Iris with bashful amazement. He doesn't seem like himself anymore: he acts like a good-hearted, sweet-natured, rough-riding farm boy.

EZEKIEL

(as Will)

Aw, Iris, you know you didn't have to dress up for me.

Iris's voice catches in her throat. She wants to believe it's her husband but all her logic tells her otherwise.

IRIS

I don't believe this for a second. This is just embarrassing.

EZEKIEL

(as Will)

You don't have to say anything if
you don't want. You can just sit
there and let me look at you.

Ezekiel holds Iris in a gaze that's loving and full of desire.
It takes Iris a moment to find the words.

IRIS

That can't be you, Will. Can it?

EZEKIEL

(as Will)

I was thinking today about when we
were sixteen and it was my first day
working in the mine. Do you remember?
You borrowed your daddy's car without
asking and you drove all the way out
there to pick me up from work.

Despite herself, Iris allows herself to get carried away by
the memory. More and more she's allowing herself to believe.

IRIS

And you were so filthy you got coal
dust all over the inside of the car
and you drove so fast through the
swamp that the tail-lights fell off.
And my daddy was so mad he wouldn't
let me see you for a month.

Both Iris and Ezekiel are laughing a little bit now.

EZEKIEL

(as Will)

So every night you'd sneak out this
window and climb down that tree and
meet me at the creek and we'd go
swimming and you'd let me kiss you.

Iris's laughter withers and dies on her face and suddenly
she looks very sad and lost.

IRIS

I miss the way I was with you.

EZEKIEL

(as Will)

Yeah, I miss how I was with you too.

Iris hesitates again. Asking this next question is like
jumping off a huge precipice into the unknown.

IRIS

Can I ask you something, Will? What's it like where you are?

Ezekiel frowns. He scratches his head.

EZEKIEL

(as Will)

It's kind of hard to say really. It's like I'm here but I'm not here. Sometimes I hear your voice but I can't make out the words, or I catch a glimpse of you but it's only a shadow. And boy, does that make me sad. Mostly it feels like I'm waiting for something but I'm not sure what.

IRIS

That's mostly what it's like for me too. I think about how you wrapped yourself around me to save my life. I know I didn't deserve it.

Ezekiel reaches across the table and takes Iris by the hand. Ezekiel flinches slightly. The candle flickers and goes out. Iris is too emotional to notice.

EZEKIEL

(as Will)

Don't say that, Iris, I'd do it all again tomorrow.

IRIS

It's just I don't know if you'd like me anymore if you knew me now.

Ezekiel gingerly reaches over and wipes the tears from Iris's cheek. The touch of his hand on her face is almost too much for Iris to bear.

EZEKIEL

(as Will)

Did you fall in love with somebody new? Did you get married again? It's okay if you did.

IRIS

(shaking her head)

It's so shameful, Will. I've been handing myself out to all these different men. To anyone who shows up at my door with a half-decent smile and a good line.

Ezekiel can't help but look a bit crestfallen.

IRIS (CONT'D)
I've become embarrassing to myself.
I can't hold onto anybody. And the
truth is I don't want to. You're
the only one who ever got to me.

EZEKIEL
(as Will)
I didn't mean to hold on so tightly.

IRIS
Don't be sorry about that. It was
good to have you even if it was only
for such a short time. If it wasn't
for you I would've missed it entirely.

Ezekiel does not know how to respond to this. He drums his
fingers nervously on the table.

EZEKIEL
(as Will)
Can you tell me about my kid?

IRIS
Joel. He's eleven years old now.

EZEKIEL
(as Will)
What kind of boy is he?

Iris lets out a tender laugh to think about Joel.

IRIS
So wild and reckless. And he's always
making up stories that can't be true.
I don't think the world is gonna
have any idea what to do with him.

EZEKIEL
(as Will)
Maybe he's just growing into himself.

IRIS
I hope you're right about that. I
love him so much it cuts me to the
bone. But I don't understand him
and I don't know how to help him.

For the first time, Iris lets herself cry full out. Ezekiel
can't bear to see her in pain.

IRIS (CONT'D)
I can't help thinking if you were
still here then maybe all the pieces
(MORE)

IRIS (CONT'D)
he's broken into would somehow find
a way to fit themselves together.

EZEKIEL
(as Will)
Aw, Iris, don't.

Iris gets up and turns away from him so he won't have to
watch her crying. Ezekiel rises to his feet.

IRIS
I've been nothing but nothing without
you, Will. I hate to say it but
it's true. I meant to be so much
more than I am.

Iris is sobbing full out now. Ezekiel goes to Iris and holds
her tightly. Iris wraps her arms around him and kisses him.
He kisses her back. She surrenders herself to his embrace.
He keeps on kissing her, passionately and desperately.

She stops short for a moment and traces the outlines of
Ezekiel's face, seeing her lost husband inside his eyes.

He leans down and kisses her on the mouth again. She takes
his face in her hands and kisses him back.

INT. JOEL'S ROOM - NIGHT

Joel lies awake in bed, staring at the ceiling. Suddenly
the house starts to shake violently as though it's being
rocked to the very foundation. Joel's window shatters.

And suddenly he hears his mother screaming from down the
hall. He bolts out of bed and runs out of the room.

INT. EZEKIEL'S ROOM - NIGHT

Hepzibah flings open the door to the room. Iris kneels over
Ezekiel. He is naked to the waist. He lies on the floor.
Joel follows right behind Hepzibah. He stares at Ezekiel.

Ezekiel looks like he's not breathing. Hepzibah lets out a
cry. She falls to her knees and cradles Ezekiel in her arms.

HEPZIBAH
What did you do to him?

IRIS
He isn't breathing. His heart isn't
beating. Joel, call Dr. Stone.

Joel starts out the door but Hepzibah shakes her head.

HEPZIBAH

No doctors! Why did you let him do this? Was it more than ten minutes? Did you touch him?

IRIS

I didn't know I wasn't supposed to!

Iris reaches out for Ezekiel but Hepzibah holds out her arm.

HEPZIBAH

I'm taking care of him! Stay away from him! You nearly killed him!

Hepzibah will clearly brook no argument. Iris takes Joel in her arms and the two of them leave the room.

Hepzibah clutches Ezekiel very tightly. It looks like she's carrying a corpse in her arms. She whispers in his ear.

HEPZIBAH (CONT'D)

All right, Ezekiel, you can come back to me, you did a stupid thing tonight, such a stupid thing, but I forgive you, just come back to me...

Very slowly and gradually the color starts to come back to Ezekiel's flesh. He draws a breath.

Hepzibah cradles Ezekiel in her arms and rocks him very gently as little by little his body returns to life.

INT. EZEKIEL'S ROOM - MORNING

The first rays of sunlight make their way through the window. Ezekiel allows his eyes to open. His face is pale and drawn but it looks like he's more or less come back to himself.

He looks around the room. Hepzibah is asleep and snoring in the rocking chair, a blanket in her lap.

With some effort Ezekiel sits up in bed. He's pretty weak. He takes several deep breaths. He gets out of bed.

He kisses Hepzibah lightly on the forehead. He adjusts the blanket so it covers her more snugly. He slips out of the room and shuts the door behind him.

EXT. CARSON HOUSE - MORNING

Joel sits at the edge of the yard next to a flower patch full of grey dandelions. He draws in the dirt with a stick. Ezekiel comes out of the house and walks across the yard.

JOEL

Are you leaving for good?

EZEKIEL

I think I might have to.

JOEL

If I didn't bring the Talleys here
then nothing bad would've happened.

EZEKIEL

None of this is your fault. It's
all because of me.

Joel keeps on drawing in the dirt with the stick.

JOEL

Where did Mr. Talley go when he died?

EZEKIEL

I don't think anyone can leave the
world all at once. There's this
place called living memory and it's
filled with all these ghosts who we
can't quite abandon. I think the
dead don't haunt us so much as we
haunt the dead.

Ezekiel extends his arms to envelop the yard around them.

JOEL

So nobody ever really goes away?

EZEKIEL

Once in a while I can feel a spirit
letting go of this life. It's like
he's scattered to the wind and he's
finally free. It feels like this.

Ezekiel picks one of the dandelions and gently blows on it.
They watch as the bits of dandelion scatter on the wind.

JOEL

I hope that's what happens to me
when I die.

Joel and Ezekiel watch as the pieces of dandelion get carried
away on the breeze and little by little disappear from view.

EZEKIEL

(with tremendous hope)

Yes, I hope that's what happens to
me, too.

Ezekiel gets up and starts to head off down the road. Joel stares after him for a moment, frowning to himself, thinking about what he should do. Then he makes a decision.

EXT. REVEREND WHEELWRIGHT'S TENT - MORNING

Ezekiel comes walking across the dirt to the tent. He moves a little more slowly than usual and maybe even limps a little. Wheelwright is tightening the ropes to the tent posts.

EZEKIEL

I'm ready whenever you are.

WHEELWRIGHT

Might as well have some coffee and eggs first. Nobody can get saved on an empty stomach.

Wheelwright leads Ezekiel inside the tent. After a moment Joel emerges from behind one of the trees. He hesitates.

Then Joel climbs into the back of the Reverend's truck. He pulls a tarp over his body to keep himself hidden.

INT. HEPZIBAH'S ROOM - MORNING

Tentatively Iris knocks on Hepzibah's half-open door. She pokes her head in the room. Hepzibah is packing her bags. It's amazing what a mess she's made of the room considering how little she owns and how briefly she's lived here.

IRIS

You need to let me talk to him.

Hepzibah stuffs her clothes into her suitcase. Boldly Iris takes a step further into the room.

HEPZIBAH

He's not here to be seen. I guess he's off somewhere with the Reverend.

IRIS

What is the Reverend going to do to him? Shouldn't we try and stop him?

Hepzibah stuffs the last of her things into her suitcase.

HEPZIBAH

Ezekiel's trying to help you. We would've run off *days* ago if it wasn't for you. So if anything else happens to him, I'm holding you responsible.

IRIS

Why did he stay here for me?

Hepzibah is finished packing. She turns to Iris and stares at her with bitterness and withering contempt.

HEPZIBAH

Don't stand there with your painted lips and your painted face and say you don't know what you did to him. You made him fall in love with you.

As Iris listens to Hepzibah her face slowly changes. Hepzibah picks up her suitcases and starts past Iris out the door.

IRIS

What are you talking about?

HEPZIBAH

I think he liked pretending he could make a home with you. Maybe be a father to your boy. But turns out you're just like everyone else. You don't care about him at all. You just want him to bring somebody back.

Hepzibah heads down the stairs with her suitcases. Iris stands in the doorway looking after her, utterly wrenching.

EXT. DR. PORTER'S SANITARIUM - DAY

The truck pulls to a halt in front of a large windowless cinder-block building behind a gate and a tall fence.

Wheelwright and Ezekiel get out of the truck. Wheelwright shakes out his legs from the long drive. Ezekiel stares at his surroundings with trepidation.

DR. PORTER, a formal and officious man, comes out the main entrance and extends his arm to Wheelwright.

DR. PORTER

Your reputation precedes you, Reverend Wheelwright. So good to meet you.

WHEELWRIGHT

This is my friend Ezekiel. As I told you I believe there's a chance he's the son of one of your patients.

They head inside. After a moment, Joel climbs out from the back of the truck and sneaks around the side of the building.

INT. DR. PORTER'S SANITARIUM - DAY

Dr. Porter leads Wheelwright and Ezekiel down the corridor. The place is a snake pit: you wouldn't wish it on anyone.

DR. PORTER

Quentin is a fascinating case. A classic example of dementia praecox. What the Swiss call schizophrenia. Delusions and hallucinations and catatonia. In less enlightened times, you'd say that he was possessed.

Ezekiel looks at the inmates as they pass: some of them are laughing to themselves, some of them are weeping, and others are just staring glassily off into space.

WHEELWRIGHT

The mind is its own place, Dr. Porter. It can make its own angels and devils.

Ezekiel takes all of this in. He steadies himself.

EXT. SANITARIUM GARDEN - DAY

Wheelwright and Ezekiel come into the garden, which is really just a patch of dead grass. A few catatonic residents sit and moan softly to themselves. An older woman keeps calling out for help in a plaintive voice. It's a scary place.

There's a high wooden fence around the edge of the garden and several attendants guarding the fence. Joel pokes his eyes between the wooden slats of the fence, trying to see.

Ezekiel catches sight of Joel and shakes his head: this is just one more thing he's going to have to deal with today.

Dr. Porter comes out of the building, pushing an old man in a wheelchair down the ramp toward Ezekiel and Wheelwright.

The old man is grotesquely desiccated. There are patches of dead skin all over his face and body. One of his eyes has gone all white and milky.

His tongue lolls out of his mouth and he stares straight ahead into the empty air. He's at least half-crazy and more than half-dead. This is QUENTIN MOSS.

Despite himself, Ezekiel can't help but seize back in horror. Dr. Porter pushes Quentin up to Wheelwright and Ezekiel.

DR. PORTER

Look here, Quentin: you've got yourself some special visitors today.

Dr. Porter sits down next to Wheelwright and Ezekiel. Quentin doesn't even acknowledge their presence. Wheelwright leans in and speaks directly into Quentin's ear.

WHEELWRIGHT

Listen - my friend has a few questions
he wants to ask you.

EZEKIEL

Your name is Quentin Moss?

Finally Quentin turns to look at them. His face is scrunched up in a demented rictus. It takes enormous effort for him to speak. His voice is faint and raspy and eerie.

QUENTIN

Who knows? Can't remember my name.
Can't keep myself straight anymore.

EZEKIEL

What do you mean by that?

Quentin turns to look at Ezekiel. He leans in and whispers directly and confidentially into Ezekiel's ear.

QUENTIN

Too many ghosts in my head.

Upon hearing this, Ezekiel's face goes pale. Wheelwright nods at Ezekiel solemnly. Dr. Porter leans toward them.

DR. PORTER

I'm afraid this is typically how his dementia manifests itself.

EZEKIEL

How long have you been like this?

Quentin takes several deep breaths. He chuckles slightly. It's a hollow, mirthless kind of laugh.

QUENTIN

Born this way. Used to be, I could turn it on and off like a faucet. Now I can't stop them from coming. All these ghosts all the time.

Quentin lets out a shudder and a terrible hacking cough. He's so frail that his clothes are hanging off his bones.

EZEKIEL

And you've never been able to find a cure for what you've got?

Ezekiel looks at Quentin like he's looking into his own future. Quentin stares back with half-mad paranoid suspicion.

DR. PORTER

Sad to say there's no cure as yet.
All we can do is sedate him when he
becomes too unruly. And see if we
can learn anything from him that'll
help us treat other afflicted souls.

WHEELWRIGHT

Dr. Porter, would you mind leaving
us alone with Quentin a moment?

Dr. Porter considers for a moment. Then he nods. He rises
and excuses himself from the table. He leans against the
garden wall near where Joel is hiding - close enough to see
but not close enough to hear. Quentin leans across the table.

QUENTIN

Who are you anyway?

Quentin holds Ezekiel in the gaze of his milky dead eyes.
Ezekiel doesn't know what to say. Wheelwright leans in.

WHEELWRIGHT

Quentin: this here is your son.

Quentin stops short and allows this information to penetrate
his addled old mind. He lets out a cry like a wounded animal.

QUENTIN

Go away! Leave me alone! Don't
want you to see me!

Dr. Porter takes a few steps toward them but Wheelwright
holds up his hand to him and he stops short, giving them
their space. Quentin covers his face with his hands and
howls. Ezekiel stares at his maddened and devastated father.

EZEKIEL

Is that why you ran away? You didn't
want me to see you like this?

QUENTIN

Wanted to keep you safe from me!
Didn't want you to grow up like me!
Say you didn't grow up like me!

Quentin is so upset he's foaming at the mouth. For a moment
Ezekiel considers lying to spare his father's feelings.

EZEKIEL

I grew up like you.

Quentin pounds his fist into the arm of his wheelchair.

QUENTIN
Goddamnit! Goddamnit!

Wheelwright watches Ezekiel, who's thinking very hard about all this. Joel stands on his tiptoes so he can see better.

EZEKIEL
When I was a boy the other kids told me you'd cursed me or sold my soul to the devil and that's why I'm the way I am. So I really believed that if I found you then you'd be able to help set me free from all this.

It's harder and harder for Quentin to speak. It takes all the effort he can muster to form the words on his tongue.

QUENTIN
Nothing I can do. Leave me alone.

Quentin begins to howl again. Ezekiel shakes his head, rocked to the core, utterly devastated by all of this.

EZEKIEL
But I've missed you and my mother so much and I never even knew you. My mother especially. I'd trace my finger around her picture every night before I went to bed.

A low moan escapes Quentin's mouth. Wheelwright understands what's going on but Ezekiel is too keyed up to notice yet.

EZEKIEL (CONT'D)
I'd tell her all these stories in my head, stupid things really, I'd just tell her about my day, everything I did since I woke up in the morning--

To Ezekiel it's like something's trying to push its way out of Quentin's skin. He howls in pain like a wounded animal.

Ezekiel stares at his father with a horrified fascination. He's never seen this happen to anyone else. Joel watches from behind the fence: he knows what's happening too.

All of a sudden the spell passes and Quentin is still. He opens his eyes. It seems like he has become someone else.

The wildness is gone from his eyes. His voice is gentle and kind. And he reaches out his hand tenderly toward Ezekiel.

QUENTIN

(as Caroline)

No, don't, please, Ezekiel, let your mother look at you.

EZEKIEL

I don't...I mean...

Ezekiel looks up. Inside Quentin, Caroline smiles sadly.

QUENTIN

(as Caroline)

I've been so worried about you. Sometimes I can catch sight of you just for a second and you look so alone and there's nothing I can do about it and that's so awful.

(PAUSE)

You're like your father, aren't you?

EZEKIEL

Yes.

From inside Quentin, Caroline allows herself to cry a little. Ezekiel is overwhelmed by all of this. Wheelwright watches grimly. Joel presses his face to the fence.

QUENTIN

(as Caroline)

We brought you into the world with nothing but love. But it's the cruelest thing we ever could've done. To sentence you to this life.

EZEKIEL

So you and my father...you knew I'd probably turn out like this?

QUENTIN

(as Caroline)

Of course he told me the truth about himself. But I loved him so much. I didn't care what he was.

It makes Quentin very emotional to talk about this. Hungry for any information about himself, Ezekiel leans forward.

QUENTIN (CONT'D)

(as Caroline)

So when I got pregnant with you, your father and I figured since we loved each other so much, that would solve everything. Of course, with the benefit of hindsight...that was so terribly stupid of us.

EZEKIEL

Please don't be sad about me. I'm going to be all right. I'm trying very hard to be all right.

QUENTIN

(as Caroline)

Are you? Really? Have you made peace with yourself? Have you found a way to live in the world?

EZEKIEL

I used to think so. I tried to help people. But it didn't work.

QUENTIN

(as Caroline)

Your father tried to do that too. But in the end it just caused everybody more pain. And every time you do it...you become less and less human. Don't you?

Ezekiel nods. From inside Quentin, Caroline stares at her son with enormous sorrow and regret.

EZEKIEL

So what am I supposed to do?

Ezekiel stares at his mother with naked pain, like the lost child that he is. Inside Quentin, Caroline shakes her head. She speaks gently but firmly to her son.

QUENTIN

(as Caroline)

First of all...please...don't ever let anybody love you. Whatever you are...you're not made for it. It only turns to grief.

EZEKIEL

Well, luckily, I haven't been faced with that particular problem so far.

Ezekiel smiles darkly at his mother. From inside Quentin, Caroline reaches out and takes Ezekiel tenderly by the hand.

QUENTIN

(as Caroline)

And try to find a way to heal yourself. But if you can't...then find a way to leave this world with grace. Be the last one like you. Maybe that's what your purpose is.

(MORE)

QUENTIN (CONT'D)
To finally end all of this. Wouldn't
that be a blessing? Because I wish--

All of a sudden Quentin seizes up. His eyes close. His
tongue lolls out of his mouth. He starts to shake again.

EZEKIEL
Mother?

But she is gone. Quentin goes still. Wheelwright and Ezekiel
stare at him closely. Joel watches from behind the fence.

Finally Quentin opens his eyes. He stares at them angrily.
And he lets out a howl of enormous sorrow. He stares at
Ezekiel with naked fury and pain.

QUENTIN
Why did you make me remember her?
Why did you do that to me?

Ezekiel looks down at the ground, trying to compose himself.

EZEKIEL
I'm sorry, Dad. I didn't mean to
hurt you.

Quentin starts to howl and moan bitterly and furiously. Dr.
Porter and the Orderlies come rushing over to restrain him.
Quentin spits and pants madly as they all hold him down.

QUENTIN
Go away! Don't ever come back! Too
many ghosts in my head already!
Can't manage any more!

Ezekiel looks up at Quentin. Quentin stares back at him
with rage. Wheelwright watches as Dr. Porter injects him
with a sedative. Dr. Porter shakes his head gravely.

DR. PORTER
A classic case of dementia praecox.
And there's nothing to be done about
it I'm afraid. His poor soul is
lost forever in there somewhere.

Gradually Quentin stops struggling. His body goes still.
His eyes go glassy, his tongue lolls out of his mouth, and
he starts to drool a little.

EZEKIEL
Dad? Dad?

But Quentin just stares off into space catatonically. He's
lost inside his own head now. He hums to himself softly.

Dr. Porter pushes Quentin inside. Ezekiel watches his father go, knowing it's for the last time. He keeps on watching his father even after he can't see him anymore.

INT. REVEREND WHEELWRIGHT'S TRUCK - DAY

Wheelwright drives home past the abandoned and fallow farms. Ezekiel sits next to him, staring out at the landscape.

EZEKIEL

Why does the exact same road always seem so much longer on the way back?

WHEELWRIGHT

I guess because it isn't new anymore. And maybe that makes us feel tired.

EZEKIEL

Will you try and save me?

Wheelwright looks at Ezekiel. Ezekiel is still looking out the window. Wheelwright looks back at the road ahead.

WHEELWRIGHT

Come down to the tent tonight.

EXT. CORNFIELD - DAY

The truck pulls to a stop on the dirt road at the edge of the cornfield back in town. Ezekiel gets out of the passenger side of the cab. He comes around to the back of the truck.

He reaches into the back of the truck and extends his arm to Joel, who has once again hidden himself under the tarp.

EZEKIEL

You can come out of there now. What were you thinking, following me all the way out there?

Sheepishly Joel emerges from beneath the tarp. Ezekiel helps him climb out of the back of the truck. Wheelwright puts the truck in drive and starts heading away, down the road.

JOEL

I thought the Reverend was taking you away with him. And I don't want you to go.

EZEKIEL

I don't want to go either.

Ezekiel smiles sadly but fondly at Joel. The two of them walk across the cornfield together in silence for a moment.

JOEL

Was that your father?

EZEKIEL

It was.

JOEL

Does he know how to help you?

EZEKIEL

No.

Joel looks up at Ezekiel. He wants to say something that will help. It takes him a moment to find the words.

JOEL

My father can't help me either.

Ezekiel takes this in. He puts his arm around Joel's shoulder. Joel puts his arm around Ezekiel's waist. And the two of them head across the cornfield together.

EXT. RAILROAD TRACKS - DAY

Ezekiel and Joel head toward the railroad tracks on the edge of town. The freight train sits on the tracks. There's an unguarded and open freight car right in front of them.

Hepzibah sits behind a tree, hiding, bouncing on her feet nervously. It looks like she's been sitting there all day. Their bags are scattered at her feet. Ezekiel turns to Joel.

EZEKIEL

I need to talk to her alone.

Joel nods. Ezekiel steps toward Hepzibah. She rises and starts toward him, very much in a state.

HEPZIBAH

The train will be leaving in two minutes. Can we finally get the hell out of this place?

EZEKIEL

All right then: let's go.

Ezekiel and Hepzibah pick up their suitcases. They look around to make sure nobody is watching. Then they scurry out from behind the tree and jump into the freight car.

Joel stands watching from a safe distance. He's not sure what's going on but it looks like Ezekiel is leaving.

INT. FREIGHT CAR - DAY

Ezekiel and Hepzibah quickly arrange their bags in the darkest corner of the freight car so they won't be easy to spot.

HEPZIBAH

Hurry up - we don't have all day.

It takes a moment for Ezekiel to find the right words.

EZEKIEL

I know you've been trying to keep me safe. Truth is you've spent our whole lives trying to keep me safe. And I'm so grateful to you - I would've been useless without you.

HEPZIBAH

This is the only life I ever wanted.

EZEKIEL

But it's been cruel of me to hold onto you so tightly. I need to let go of you. I need to let you have your own life before it's too late.

As Hepzibah stares at him, the full extent of what he's saying slowly dawns on her. Deeply wounded, she lets out a cry.

HEPZIBAH

This is all about *her*, isn't it? You think if the Reverend can heal you, then you can stay here and play house with her and the boy.

EZEKIEL

Maybe she's one reason but she's not the only reason.

HEPZIBAH

Except she's not in love with you. She's still in love with her husband. She proved that last night. So she doesn't really care about you. All she wants is what you can give her.

EZEKIEL

Even if that's true it doesn't matter. Because I'm in love with her. I've turned that corner now and there's no going back even if I wanted to.

It's unbearably painful for Hepzibah to hear this.

HEPZIBAH

I won't let you do this to yourself.

EZEKIEL

If the circumstances were reversed,
if you were in love with someone,
I'd let you go, you know that.

HEPZIBAH

I am in love with someone.

And now she's finally said it. It's the closest that she'll ever come to admitting the real reason why she's been traveling with Ezekiel all these years.

Ezekiel has always known it but it kills him to hear her say it. He stares at her with compassion and terrible regret.

EZEKIEL

I wish I could give you what you want.

HEPZIBAH

I've always been willing to settle for what I can get.

Ezekiel takes her by the shoulders and leans in to her. The train whistles loudly. The engine starts springing to life.

EZEKIEL

You've still got plenty of miles ahead. You can't afford to waste any more time with me.

Ezekiel throws his arms around Hepzibah and embraces her. She clings to him for dear life, utterly heartbroken.

HEPZIBAH

What's going to happen to me now?

The freight train starts to move. Ezekiel gently tries to loosen himself from Hepzibah's embrace but she clings onto him tightly and fiercely. Ezekiel is incredibly torn.

Finally he pulls away just a little bit. He smiles sadly at Hepzibah. She stares back at him. They hold each other.

Then she lets go of him. She nods sadly. Ezekiel kisses her on the forehead. Then he jumps out of the train car.

Hepzibah leans out of the train car, trying to catch one last glimpse of Ezekiel before the train rounds the bend. Ezekiel holds her gaze. Just before the train is out of sight, Hepzibah allows herself to let out a moan of sorrow.

EXT. RAILROAD TRACKS - DAY

Ezekiel stares after the train until the very last car has disappeared from view. Then he turns to Joel.

EZEKIEL

Now there's one more thing I need
you to do for me. I have to go down
to the revival meeting tonight. And
I need you to keep your mother away.
Will you promise me that?

Joel hesitates. Then he nods. Ezekiel tousles his hair. Then Ezekiel heads off in the direction of the tent. Joel stares after Ezekiel, trying to decide what he should do.

EXT. CARSON HOUSE - EVENING

Joel comes up the walk. Iris is pacing back and forth frantically across the porch. When she sees Joel in the yard she heads down the porch steps and runs toward him.

IRIS

I've been looking all over for you!
Where did you run off to this time?

It doesn't even take Joel two seconds to break his promise.

JOEL

There's something I'm not supposed
to tell you.

EXT. REVEREND WHEELWRIGHT'S TENT - NIGHT

Ezekiel paces back and forth in the shadows just outside the tent, very worked-up, watching as the last few stragglers head into the meeting. From inside the tent he can hear the entire congregation singing. He ducks inside the tent.

INT. REVEREND WHEELWRIGHT'S TENT - NIGHT

Ezekiel steps inside. The tent is packed to capacity. Deacon James leads the crowd in a hymn. Wheelwright stands at the altar smiling down on his flock.

Olive sits in the first pew. She looks even more distraught than she did the last time we saw her. Martha sits back in the shadows. When the hymn is finished, Wheelwright holds up his hands in blessing. The congregation sits down.

WHEELWRIGHT

Tonight I want to talk to you about
damnation.

The crowd is silent and still. Wheelwright is a master orator and he holds them all in the palm of his hand.

WHEELWRIGHT (CONT'D)

I don't believe in a fire and
brimstone kind of Hell, where damned
souls shovel coal all day and night.
But anybody who says there's no such
thing as demons never saw my father
Moses Wheelwright just after he'd
emptied a bottle of whiskey.

Laughter from some of the men in the congregation.
Wheelwright allows himself a smile before he turns solemn.

WHEELWRIGHT (CONT'D)

And I say it was a demon inside our
friend George Talley who made that
poor man take his own life.

A deep hush falls over the crowd. Olive puts her hand to
her mouth in anguish. Standing in the back, Ezekiel feels a
shudder run through his body.

WHEELWRIGHT (CONT'D)

Now: there's a man here among us
who's possessed by a terrible demon.
But he's so courageous that he's
come here tonight asking to be saved.
Will you come up to the altar?

Ezekiel squares his shoulders and starts toward the altar.
The crowd parts to make way for him. Wheelwright extends
his hand and helps Ezekiel onto the platform.

WHEELWRIGHT (CONT'D)

Can you tell everyone who you are?

Ezekiel looks out at the congregation. They look up at him,
their expressions a volatile mix of fear and pity. Olive
stares at Ezekiel with enormous rage and pain.

EZEKIEL

My name is Ezekiel Moss.

WHEELWRIGHT

And how long has this demon been
living inside your body?

EZEKIEL

Since I was born.

WHEELWRIGHT

But now you want to be free of it.

Joel leads Iris through the fold in the tent. They huddle in the shadows near the back. Ezekiel can't see them.

EZEKIEL

What I know is, so long as this thing
is inside me, I can't love anyone.
I can't be loved by anyone.

Iris listens to Ezekiel very closely. It kills her to hear this. Wheelwright extends his arms to the assembled crowd.

WHEELWRIGHT

This is what our demons do to us.
They plunge us into darkness and
despair where the light of God and
the love of our fellow human beings
can't reach us. That's why Ezekiel
Moss is such a brave man. Because
he's come here tonight so he can
cast the demon out of his body.
Isn't that right?

EZEKIEL

Yes.

A few Hallelujahs from the crowd. Iris holds Joel tightly by the hand and tries to move a little closer to the front.

WHEELWRIGHT

Now what I'm asking you to do next
might frighten you. But I need you
to trust that you're safe here with
me. I want you to make your demon
visible to us. Can you do that?

You could hear a pin drop inside the tent. Iris clutches Joel's hand very tightly. Ezekiel is brought up short.

EZEKIEL

Are you sure that's what you want?

WHEELWRIGHT

We can't fight him if we can't see
him. We'll bring him into the light
and then we'll destroy him.

Wheelwright speaks with tremendous confidence and faith. Ezekiel stares at him. He knows how dangerous this is but he really doesn't have a choice. He closes his eyes.

He lets out a moan. But this time the sounds emanating from him are louder and more piercing than we've ever heard.

Now the crowd starts to panic a little. They clutch each other tightly, huddling together in fear. Wheelwright holds up his hand to try and calm them down. Olive watches closely.

It seems as though a thousand restless and violent spirits are trying to escape his body. The wind whips through the air. The poles of the tent start to buckle.

Iris takes advantage of the chaos to get them closer to the altar. Ezekiel could see them now if he could see anything.

Ezekiel stands on the tips of his toes, almost levitating into the air. It seems as though he's being torn apart from within, like he's about to be ripped into pieces.

Iris lets out a cry. The congregation is terrified. Up on the altar, Deacon James gets down on his knees to pray.

In the center of it all, Wheelwright just stands there, steady and strong, an oasis of calm in the eye of the hurricane.

And suddenly Ezekiel grows still and quiet. The crowd starts to hush. They're terrified of what might be coming next.

Finally Ezekiel opens his eyes. He looks around him at the crowd of people. His eyes alight on Martha. And suddenly he is speaking in the voice of Charlie.

EZEKIEL
(as Charlie)
Oh, Martha, I'm still all alone here
in the empty air waiting for you--

Then with a painful wrenching, Ezekiel falls off the altar and into the crowd, landing at the feet of a middle-aged man. He speaks in the voice of an angry, spurned wife.

EZEKIEL (CONT'D)
(as the Wife)
Barely two weeks in the ground you
went and married her, it's like you
couldn't wait for me to die--

Ezekiel's body spins around in the air now as the crowd screams and tries to get as far away from him as possible.

Ezekiel's eyes fall on an Elderly Man and all of a sudden he speaks in the voice of a sad young soldier.

EZEKIEL (CONT'D)
(as the Soldier)
They threw the grenade into my foxhole
and it launched me into the sky like
I was headed straight into the sun,
it was the most beautiful thing I--

Iris and Joel watch intently, desperately wanting to help but not sure what they can do. Wheelwright watches closely, ready to intervene when necessary. Ezekiel's eyes fall on Olive in the front pew and he speaks in George's cadences.

EZEKIEL (CONT'D)

(as George)

I had to drown myself, Olive, I knew
you were never gonna love me again,
so don't you dare blame this man for
what I did--

Olive takes this in and lets out a choked sob. Ezekiel is out of control now. Either he's having a complete nervous breakdown or else more and more ghosts are crowding into his body, their voices cascading over each other, enveloping him, overwhelming him, pushing through his flesh.

The wind blows harder. Thunder and lightning are very close by. The ground suddenly seems like it isn't solid under everyone's feet: the earth starts cracking open beneath them.

Wheelwright grabs hold of Ezekiel and with great strength and power he pulls Ezekiel up onto the altar.

Then suddenly Ezekiel grows still again. His eyes alight on Wheelwright. A dark, mean smile slowly grows on his face. He grins mischievously.

He wipes his mouth with the back of his sleeve. He pushes his hair back from his face. He is still not himself. But it's not clear who he is until he opens his mouth.

EZEKIEL (CONT'D)

(as Moses)

Well now. Good evening to you, son.
How the hell have you been, Tom?

For the first time since we've met him, Wheelwright's facade fissures just a tiny bit, as he realizes that the man in front of him is now his own father Moses Wheelwright.

But it's nothing more than a flicker of anxiety - just a furrow or two on his brow. Wheelwright quickly wipes it off his face. He smiles back at Ezekiel defiantly.

WHEELWRIGHT

You're such a crafty demon, aren't you? You can take whatever form you damn well please, can't you?

EZEKIEL

(as Moses)

Cut out that horseshit, Tom. It's just your pa over here. And you're not showing me much respect. Calling me a demon. How ungrateful is that?

The congregation starts whispering amongst themselves. They can't quite make sense of what's going on now. Only Iris and Joel understand and they know it's not good.

WHEELWRIGHT

You're trying to shake my faith.
But I'm a stone fortress.

Wheelwright smiles placidly but Joel can see that his hands are trembling a little. From inside Ezekiel, Moses looks around at Wheelwright and the crowd. He gives a low whistle.

EZEKIEL

(as Moses)

What a big man you are now. Last time I saw you, you were a tiny thing, scared of your own shadow. I could make you jump any time I stomped my foot. Bet I can still make you jump.

Inside Ezekiel, Moses smiles craftily at Wheelwright. He pauses. Then he stomps his foot. Instinctively Wheelwright seizes back the tiniest bit. Moses grins at him.

EZEKIEL (CONT'D)

(as Moses)

See? I made you jump.

The crowd is now deathly quiet. Wheelwright takes a second but then he regains his full composure.

WHEELWRIGHT

I'm here tonight with all the power of God to make you disappear forever.

EZEKIEL

(as Moses)

I'd like to see you try that. I would. I haven't had a good laugh in a very long time. Yes, sir.

WHEELWRIGHT

I'm going to use all my strength and all my faith and all my might and I'm going to save Ezekiel Moss.

EZEKIEL

(as Moses)

What? You're trying to *save* people now? That's a terrible idea, son. You're just not any good at it. I mean, you couldn't save me from getting so drunk I burnt the house down. And you couldn't save your mama cause you were too little to carry her out of the house.

WHEELWRIGHT

I saved myself. Didn't I? I got myself the hell away from you.

Wheelwright isn't even thinking about his congregation anymore. He's not even thinking about Ezekiel. He's having a private showdown with his father.

EZEKIEL

(as Moses)

Ran away with some preacher man. Fell in love with God because you wanted a daddy even stronger and meaner than me.

WHEELWRIGHT

I'm a man of faith now. I don't belong to you anymore. There's nothing of you left inside me.

Inside Ezekiel, Moses's smile grows wider and even more terrifying. He steps closer to his son, twisting the knife.

EZEKIEL

(as Moses)

Are you joking? You've got so *much* of me inside you that it scares the living daylights out of you. You think if you save enough souls then you might finally let go of all the darkness inside yourself. You tell all these people to follow you so maybe you won't feel so alone.

WHEELWRIGHT

I don't need anything from you. So I'm kindly asking you to go to Hell.

By now the congregation is at least as scared of Wheelwright as they are of Ezekiel. From inside Ezekiel, Moses has a good laugh about all of this.

EZEKIEL

(as Moses)

You need *everything* from me. And that's what kills you. It's the saddest story I've ever heard. All these years gone by, you're still on your knees begging me to love you.

WHEELWRIGHT

I'm not on my knees to you anymore. I promise you that. So what makes you think I need you to love me?

EZEKIEL

(as Moses)

Because otherwise you wouldn't have brought me back. I only came because you called me here. You know that.

Inside Ezekiel, Moses is quietly triumphant. Wheelwright realizes the truth of what his father is saying.

Steadily Wheelwright takes his pistol from his holster and points it directly at Ezekiel's head. The crowd lets out a collective gasp but Wheelwright is steely and serene.

WHEELWRIGHT

I will put a bullet in this man's skull if that's what it takes to get you out of his body.

Iris and Joel get right up to the edge of the altar. It's not hard to do that since everybody else is trying to get as far away as possible. Ezekiel doesn't even break a sweat.

EZEKIEL

(as Moses)

Go ahead: shoot this poor fellow if you want. That won't keep me out of your head. See, I'm not his demon - I'm yours. So if you want me to stop haunting you, I'd recommend you turn that pistol on yourself, son.

Wheelwright cocks back the safety. Iris steps up onto the altar and stands between Wheelwright and Ezekiel. Joel clammers up to the altar after her.

IRIS

Stop it! Stop it!

WHEELWRIGHT

I'm asking you to step aside. I'm doing the work of the Lord.

IRIS

That's how you're gonna save him?
By killing him?

WHEELWRIGHT

I'm taking the demon out of his body.

IRIS

You put that gun down right now or
you're gonna have to shoot me!

WHEELWRIGHT

I will shoot you right between the
eyes if you don't get out of my way.

Ezekiel grabs hold of Iris and Joel and holds each of them
by the arm. He smiles at Wheelwright.

EZEKIEL

(as Moses)

That's right, Tom, you have to murder
the lady and the little boy if you
want to get to me. Will you do that?
How far will you go to get me out of
your head? I'd really like to know.

Wheelwright's hand is steady on the gun. By now the whole
congregation has turned against Wheelwright completely.
They are fighting each other to try and get out of the tent.

Iris takes Ezekiel by the shoulders and whispers to him
desperately, trying to help him come back to himself.

IRIS

It's all right, Ezekiel, let go of
him, please, come back to me--

It takes all of Ezekiel's strength to expel this ghost from
his body. The wind whips violently through the air. The
posts of the tent are giving way. The ground is cracking
beneath their feet. Wheelwright grabs one of the lit torches.

WHEELWRIGHT

I will sacrifice everybody if that'll
take this demon out of the world!

Upon hearing this, everyone in the tent starts to scream and
run. In the hysteria, Joel wrenches himself away from Moses
and wraps his arms around Wheelwright's legs.

Wheelwright stumbles and lets go of the gun and the torch.
The gun falls from his hand. The torch flies backward into
the tapestries, setting them on fire.

Iris keeps tight hold of Ezekiel as he starts to come back to himself. He opens his eyes and looks at Iris.

IRIS
Are you all right?

Ezekiel nods. The Sheriff and some of the other men grab Wheelwright roughly by the arms. Wheelwright's eyes are still filled with rage. He calls out to Ezekiel.

WHEELWRIGHT
There ain't nobody who can help you.
And there ain't nothing in this whole
world that can save you.

Ezekiel takes this in. He knows it's the absolute truth. He leans over and speaks quietly to Reverend Wheelwright.

EZEKIEL
Then I'm sorry for both of us.

They hold each other's sad gaze. Wheelwright looks like a broken man. The Sheriff and his men drag Wheelwright away.

Quickly regaining his bearings, Ezekiel takes Iris and Joel by the hand. He finds a flap in the tent and leads them all outside. As he heads out, Joel looks back and catches a glimpse of the tapestries going up in flames.

EXT. REVEREND WHEELWRIGHT'S TENT - NIGHT

Ezekiel picks Joel up on his shoulders and takes Iris by the hand and the three of them run away as fast as they can, past the screaming crowd and the flames of the burning tent.

EXT. CARSON HOUSE - NIGHT

Ezekiel is carrying Joel on his back and holding Iris tightly by the hand and they're still running as fast as they can when they finally reach the yard.

In the distance they can hear the sirens of the fire truck as it speeds down the road. They turn around and watch as the truck pulls to a stop far away down by the quarry.

The firemen emerge from the truck, unraveling the hoses, spraying water all over the tent, dousing the flames.

Ezekiel takes Joel off his shoulders and puts him down safely in the grass. All of a sudden Ezekiel is overcome by what he's been through tonight. He crouches down and puts his hands on his knees. Joel turns to Ezekiel, very concerned.

JOEL
What's wrong?

EZEKIEL

I just need to catch my breath.

Ezekiel kneels down in the grass and stares out at the fire. Iris considers him closely for a moment. Then she takes Joel by the hand and leads him up to the porch steps.

IRIS

You know, baby, I can't tell you how brave you were tonight. I'm so proud of you. It's almost bursting my heart, how proud I am of you.

Iris kneels down and tousles her son's hair very lightly.

IRIS (CONT'D)

So I think you've earned a good night's sleep. And tomorrow morning we'll figure out what we should do to celebrate. All right?

Joel looks at his mother. Then he looks at Ezekiel kneeling in the grass watching the firemen extinguish the fire.

He nods. He throws his arms around his mother. Iris envelops him in an embrace. Finally she lets go of him. Joel turns and goes inside and runs up the stairs.

Iris stands alone on the porch. She watches Ezekiel kneeling out on her lawn. Then she goes over and kneels down in the grass next to him.

The last few embers of the fire down by the quarry are extinguished. The light flickers across their faces.

EZEKIEL

Guess I've scared everybody away.

IRIS

I think everybody's way more scared of the Reverend than they are of you. What were you thinking, walking into the lion's den like that?

Ezekiel turns to Iris. She stares at him plaintively.

EZEKIEL

The Reverend really believed he could save me. And I really wanted to believe he was right.

IRIS

Yeah, well, you almost got yourself killed trying to get yourself saved. I don't see how that does any good.

EZEKIEL

You and Joel, you're the ones who
saved me tonight.

Iris looks down at her hands. Then she looks up at him.

IRIS

Did you do this for me?

EZEKIEL

I've become so fond of you and Joel.
I guess it doesn't do any harm for
me to tell you that now. But now
you understand exactly what I am,
and I know there's no way you can...
but it was still nice to hope for a
couple days that you could be mine.

Now Ezekiel turns to her. She puts her hand gently to his cheek. It's dark and still and the only light illuminating their faces is traveling from the stars and the moon.

IRIS

Truth is I can't rightly say if you're
a con man or a madman or a devil.
But honestly it doesn't matter to me
one way or the other anymore.

Iris is tremendously impassioned. She reaches over and takes Ezekiel's hand in hers and looks right into his eyes.

IRIS (CONT'D)

You've been so good to my son. You've
treated me so kindly. You look at
me like you want the rest of my life
and nobody's looked at me that way
for so long I forgot how it felt.
How could I not love you for that?

Ezekiel and Iris stare at each other. Then Ezekiel leans in and kisses Iris full on the mouth. She kisses him back.

INT. IRIS'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Iris leads Ezekiel into her room and shuts the door behind them. They're both suddenly a little shy around each other.

Ezekiel takes Iris by the hand and leads her over to the bed. They sit down on the side of the bed holding hands. Then Ezekiel runs his fingers across Iris's cheek. She closes her eyes and feels his fingertips against her face.

And then she opens her eyes. They sit there just looking at each other with their eyes wide open as though they're trying to memorize every single thing about each other.

Ezekiel and Iris wrap their arms around each other and kiss each other tenderly and passionately.

INT. IRIS'S BEDROOM - MORNING

It's dawn. Ezekiel allows the sunlight to open his eyes. He lies in bed next to Iris. They're both still wearing their clothes from last night.

She's fast asleep but her arms are wrapped around him. He watches her sleeping. He allows himself a little smile.

Slowly his smile fades. Gently he adjusts Iris's arms so she's holding the pillow instead of his body. Iris stirs a little but she's still sleeping soundly. Ezekiel stares at her sorrowfully. Then he gets out of bed.

INT. CARSON HALLWAY - MORNING

Ezekiel opens the door to the bedroom just a crack and slips out. Through the open doorway he can see Iris still fast asleep in bed. Ezekiel takes one last look at her. And then he shuts the door carefully and starts down the hall.

INT. CARSON FOYER - MORNING

Ezekiel comes down the stairs as quietly as possible. He looks up to see Joel sitting cross-legged in the foyer right in front of the door. Ezekiel winces slightly to see him.

JOEL

You should say goodbye to her.

EZEKIEL

Walk me to the train.

EXT. RAILROAD TRACKS - MORNING

The sun is just rising in the sky. Ezekiel and Joel make their way across the field toward the railroad tracks.

EZEKIEL

You know I wish I could stay.

JOEL

If you wish you could stay then you can stay.

EZEKIEL

Thing is I've seen how it ends for me. It only gets worse and I can't let you and your mother live through that. It wouldn't be fair to you.

JOEL

I can take care of you. I want you to stay. I don't care about what's gonna happen to you.

Ezekiel shakes his head. They head up the road to the tracks.

EZEKIEL

It's best if I go it alone. And I promised somebody I'd be the last one in the world like me. I've got to let go of myself in grace. I don't know exactly how to do that but I've got to try.

JOEL

But my mother's in love with you.

EZEKIEL

That's the main reason I have to go. Because I can't let anybody love me. It'll only turn to grief. And your mother's been living with her heart cracked open for too long already.

JOEL

You mean she misses my father.

EZEKIEL

That's right.

JOEL

He died because I was born. It's all my fault he's gone.

EZEKIEL

You're wrong about that.

JOEL

Sometimes she can't even look at me. I think she wishes I was the one who died instead of him.

Ezekiel stares at this sad, broken kid. He sits down on a tree stump just in front of the train tracks. He motions for Joel to come over and sit down next to him.

EZEKIEL

It's hard for your mother to look at you sometimes because every day you look more and more like him. And she wishes your father could see you now because he'd be so proud of you. Don't you ever wish that?

Joel hesitates a moment: it's a painful thing to admit.

JOEL

I've got this picture of him. At night sometimes I talk to him.

Ezekiel smiles to see so much of himself in Joel. And all of a sudden it comes to him, and he knows how he can let himself go in grace. It's so simple that he doesn't know why he never thought of it until this exact moment.

JOEL (CONT'D)

I ask him questions. Or I tell him what happened today.

Ezekiel closes his eyes. And this time he doesn't cry out. His body is still. It doesn't seem like he feels any pain at all. It's like he's lit from within by a silver light.

JOEL (CONT'D)

And then sometimes I wish he could take me to all the places where he used to go when he was a kid.

Ezekiel opens his eyes. He's someone else now and this time it's someone we've already met. He grins to see his son.

EZEKIEL

(as Will)

You ever been to that cave just past the quarry? I used to ride my bike down there. I'd sneak inside and draw pictures of dinosaurs on the walls and pretend cavemen drew them.

Joel turns and looks at him. He thinks he knows who it might be, but he can't quite bring himself to believe it yet.

JOEL

You drew those dinosaurs?

EZEKIEL

(as Will)

Yeah I did. And I used to climb up the drainpipe to the steeple of the town hall. There's this little ledge in the belfry that's just big enough to fit one kid about your size.

By now Joel fully comprehends that he's talking to his father. He can't help but let a wide grin spread across his face.

JOEL

I didn't know about that.

EZEKIEL

(as Will)

You'll have to put bread crumbs in your pockets to feed the crows that nest up there. Then once the sun sets, you can get the best view in town of all the stars and the planets.

JOEL

Will you show me how to climb up there?

EZEKIEL

(as Will)

Of course. Good Lord, you look exactly like me. I was skinny as a rail too. But give it a couple years and you'll grow into yourself.

Joel stares closely at the man who used to be Ezekiel. He looks very much alive: far more alive than we have ever seen him before. And more than that, the sorrow behind his eyes has vanished. He isn't haunted anymore.

JOEL

Where did Ezekiel go?

The man who used to be Ezekiel Moss stares back at Joel. He frowns, thinking long and hard, shaking his head, astonished.

EZEKIEL

(as Will)

I don't know, son. All I can say is he's gone. I think maybe he let go of himself for good. I think maybe he gave himself away to me.

And as Will slowly realizes the depth of Ezekiel's sacrifice and the enormous gift he has been given, he starts to cry. He weeps freely and unashamedly and with a bottomless joy.

JOEL

Dad? Dad?

Joel puts his hand on his father's chest to feel his heart beating. His father embraces him.

The two of them hold onto each other for dear life as the freight train roars past and disappears around the bend.

INT. CARSON KITCHEN - MORNING

Iris stands at the kitchen sink washing dishes, alone and abandoned again, but bravely facing the day, as always.

In the foyer, the screen door slams shut. And then somebody is standing in the doorway of the kitchen.

EZEKIEL
(as Will)
Iris?

Iris doesn't need to hear another word to know who it is. She turns around and looks at the man who used to be Ezekiel Moss. She stares at her lost husband, come back to her.

IRIS
Will.

Iris goes to her husband and embraces him. He lets out a shout of happiness. Iris laughs. He cups his hands to her face and kisses her on the mouth. She kisses him back. They hold each other tightly. They don't want to let go.

INT. SCHOOLHOUSE - DAY

Outside the window we can see that all the leaves have fallen from the trees and there's a thin layer of frost on the grass.

Martha sits at her desk and listens intently as Joel stands at the front of the room, reciting a poem for the class.

JOEL
There came a burst of thunder sound -
The boy! Oh! Where was he....?
Ask of the winds that far around
With fragments strewed the sea!

Joel is reciting with a new confidence and understanding, and there are tears in his eyes. The kids in the class stare off into space but Martha watches him very closely.

JOEL (CONT'D)
With mast, and helm, and pennon fair,
That well had borne their part --
The noblest thing that perished there
Was that young faithful heart.

EXT. CARSON HOUSE - DAY

Joel heads into his yard, on the way home from school. The sun is going down and it's turning the cloudy white sky all orange and purple. A few snowflakes are falling lightly.

Inside the house it looks warm and cozy. Through the windows he can see his mother and father setting the table for supper.

But Joel stops when a breeze blows lightly against his hair. On the wind Joel can hear the soft voices once again.

He sees the patch of dandelions sitting on the grass. Somehow the frost hasn't gotten to them yet. He walks over and crouches down in front of them, thinking.

With a sudden surge of emotion, Joel reaches out his arm and runs his hand across the dandelions, breaking them up into a million pieces that are quickly caught by the wind and sent aloft high into the air.

Joel rises to his feet and watches as all the tiny fragments of silver-grey flower scatter on the breeze. He extends his arms to them, to try and free the soul of Ezekiel Moss.

Joel watches the last tiny bit of flower get borne away on the air until it disappears from sight forever. And then he turns and starts running across his yard, heading for home.

THE END