

# HEAVEN OF HELL

by

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Chapter 1/12

THE FIRST IN A SERIES OF ORIGINAL ANTHOLOGIES ABOUT NON-TRADITIONAL DETECTIVES

WME  
Anonymous Content  
Fishburne & Sons

**TEASER**

OVER BLACK a world weary voice.

FRANCES (V.O.)  
In my opinion, my professional  
opinion, there's only one way to  
know the truth.

The sound of a match STRIKING ...

FRANCES (V.O.)  
Which happens to scare the hell out  
of most people.

SLO-MO as a match ignites in an orange flare ...

FRANCES (V.O.)  
Even though we cling to the notion  
that the truth is some kind of  
noble, pure element ...  
(beat)  
The truth about the truth is she  
loves evading the spotlight.

... before being BLOWN out.

FRANCES (V.O.)  
She's a tricky little bitch that way.

Back to regular time as a new match IGNITES and moves to  
touch a red rag jammed into a square metal tin.

We hold on the rag catching fire, the flame revealing several  
colors at once: blue, yellow, violet ...

The flame BLURS as the tin can is thrown off-camera, followed  
by the sound of SHATTERED glass ...

FRANCES (V.O.)  
People accuse me of being O.C.D.

We PAN to reveal Roselawn, Mississippi at 3 a.m ...

Doe's Cafe, Pinkie's Notary. The "All-Star" movie theater  
marquee reads: "New Releases: Fight Club and Blair Witch."

FRANCES (V.O.)  
Say I like going down rabbit holes.

... before stopping on a GIANT PAINTED MURAL on the red brick  
wall of Hall's drug store.

FRANCES (V.O.)  
Of not being able to let go.

The artwork is not a faded advertisement for RC Cola or Miss Ella's Sweet Tea, but a vivid, intense, complex painting.

FRANCES (V.O.)  
Wallace says I've done this my  
whole life.

From off screen we hear the first, rapacious sounds of a fire overtaking a building ... the CRACKLE of timber, POPPING of light bulbs, the PING of heated metal.

As the fire grows behind us, it illuminates more detail and depth of the painting on the wall in front of us.

FRANCES (V.O.)  
Says it's the 'salient feature of  
my personality.'

Revealing a modern interpretation of the firmament of Heaven & Hell as queens behead kings and fallen angels ascend to heaven on the backs of annointed devils.

The layers of concentrated imagery defy quick glance.

FRANCES (V.O.)  
No, I'm not obsessive.

The painting is both classically familiar and savagely original, containing elements of William Blake, Hieronymous Bosch, and Banksy.

FRANCES  
I just have to know the truth.

Small block letters at the bottom of the artwork give the title: HEAVEN OF HELL, 1999.

FRANCES (V.O.)  
It's what I do.  
(then)  
Or did.

Off this, we --

**MAIN TITLES: THE HEAVEN OF HELL**

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

We float high above the verdant earth of the Mississippi Delta. To the west is the snaky outline of Old Man River and to the east, on the horizon, the smudge of Yazoo City.

Below us is Roselawn, Mississippi. In the day light.

We move past images as if photographed by William Eggleston:

Peeling tugboats parked cheek-to-jowl with cotton tractors in the Piggly Wiggly parking lot ...

Gnarled pecan trees guard the ancient stone courthouse ...

The logo on the light blue water tower reads: SOUTHERN MEDIA: Voice of the South since 1927."

CHYRON: **"FIFTEEN YEARS LATER"**

Pan down the main street from the teaser, past Doe's cafe, Pinkie's Notary, and the "All Star" movie theater marquee advertising "Herbalife Regional awards this Saturday!"

PRE-LAP AUDIO

VOICE MAIL RECORDING

You've reached the voice mail of  
Dr. Wallace Bishop ...

EXT. 76 GAS STATION PARKING LOT - DAY -

Tight on a black dog drinking from a red clay mud puddle.

RECORDED VOICE MAIL

I'll return your call as soon as  
possible. If this is an after-hours  
emergency, please hang up and dial 9-1-1.

A blue extended cab truck stops at a gas pump as FRANCES THORNTON (35), gets out, hurried, white earbud dangling. We recognize her voice from the teaser.

FRANCES

Hey there partner, call me back, I  
need advice on a new patient. Male,  
mid-30's, white, doesn't drink or  
use. Ex-Marine, two tours.

FRANCES (CONT'D)

(beat)

He's an odd duck ...

She's pretty, hair pulled into pony tail, black jeans, white blouse with faint perspiration mark.

FRANCES (CONT'D)

Intermittent eye-contact,  
hypervigilant, insomniac ...

Her large, observant eyes land across the parking lot on day laborers--Black, Latino, Creole--faces already wet with sweat as they stand around a busted trailer full of picked cotton.

FRANCES (CONT'D)

He's got wild stories about  
misshapen people, dead bodies, all  
kinds of Gothic shit.

Sensing her gaze, the day laborer's eyes lift in unison ...

FRANCES (CONT'D)

I can't tell if he's having some  
kind of wartime flashback. Or  
psychotic delusions.

Frances meets their gaze until the men look away.

FRANCES (CONT'D)

A couple of times I thought I might  
hit a trip wire with him.

(then)

And yes, my chair's closest to the  
door. Anyway, I need your  
professional advice. I'd like to  
avoid Seroquel if possible.

Two ancient black men in a Buick pull into the opposite pump.

FRANCES (CONT'D)

So much to catch up on, the boys  
love this place, Yates is like a  
pig in shit and me ...

The black men tip their caps to her as they head inside.

FRANCES (CONT'D)

I'm dealing.

(then)

I could stand to hear how much my  
patients miss me back in Palo Alto.

She ends call as a violent THUMPING from the Buick's backseat draws her eye ...

FRANCES (CONT'D)  
273 days to go. Love ya, bye!

She leans down to look ...

Laid across the backseat is the largest fish she's ever seen: a Flathead catfish, alive and glistening, every bit of 95 lbs. as it THWACKS its prehistoric tail against the seat.

HOLD ON: Frances as she stares at this fish out of water.

Turning she clocks her sons in the backseat, DAVIS (8) and REYNOLDS (10), headphones on, eyes lost in Ipads, oblivious.

EXT. SOUTHERN MEDIA OFFICE - MAIN STREET - DAY

CLOSE-UP on RED NEON SIGN: "SOUTHERN MEDIA -- NEWSPAPERS, RADIO, TV, and Internet -- The Voice of the South since 1927"

INT. SOUTHERN MEDIA OFFICE - MORNING

A busy newsroom.

One glance reveals the new/old world's colliding here: four Apple flat screens are sprinkled amongst a sea of old beige monitors, a bank of dusty fax machines sit unplugged underneath a wall-length AP ticker scrolling today's news ...

Fanned across the reception desk are all 18 daily editions of Southern Media's dynasty: Louisville, Memphis, Decatur, Athens, Birmingham, Natchez, Nashville, Gulfport, etc.

A core sample of Southern influence.

YATES THORNTON (35) in a light-blue summer suit, completely in his element, hustles past the newspapers, speed reading from a clipboard, as reporters vie for his attention.

YATES  
(reading)  
Nice job Staunton. It's not easy  
making cotton prices interesting.

A skinny greenhorn reporter in hunting boots beams as Deputy Editor 'NIQUE GREEN (30) elbows her way alongside Yates.

'NIQUE  
(to Staunton)  
You got what you came for. Get your  
snout out of here.

'Nique, 95 lbs. soaking wet, has a mouth full of braces, hair painstakingly braided with hundreds of colored beads and two yellow #2 pencils sticking out of her head like antenna.

'NIQUE (CONT'D)

Monsanto is threatening to sue us  
if we don't retract last week's Op-  
Ed about agriculture subsidies.  
Should I schedule a board meeting?

YATES

(reading)  
No, don't do that.

'NIQUE

Should I get BB involved?

YATES

No. I'll handle it.

'NIQUE

Okay.  
(waiting)  
Handle it how?

YATES

Set up a call with Monsanto ...  
(looking up)  
So I can explain we can't retract  
the truth.

'Nique smiles, damn.

YATES (CONT'D)

And put tomorrow's paper to bed.  
(handing her clipboard)  
I'm all signed off.

Off 'Nique, even more impressed, as she watches Yates exit.

EXT. MAIN STREET - CONTINUOUS

Yates waves as a passing driver slows to say good morning ...

PRE-LAP DIALOGUE

ED HALL (O.S.)

Sometimes the Lord works in  
mysterious ways.

SFX of text arriving. Yates glances at his phone ...

CLOSE-UP: Don Valentine, "deal terms attached."

... pocketing it as he walks over the threshold of the ROTARY CLUB, next to the All-Star movie theater.

ED HALL (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
And I'm glad he does.

INT. ROTARY CLUB BREAKFAST – MORNING

We sweep over the faces of the white American South: carefully combed wet hair, pink cheeks of freshly shaved skin, khaki pants, and v-neck sweaters with Ole Miss logos.

There aren't any black faces here, unless you count CORNELIUS LEWIS (55) serving pancakes from behind a white apron.

Up on the dais is ED HALL (47), Rotary president, and local veterinarian, who missed his calling as a preacher.

ED HALL  
(spotting Yates)  
Our golden boy's back. Back with us. Back to do his thang! And we're going to need every bit of that fancy MBA to get things right around here.

Yates smiles, squeezing shoulders on his way to the stage.

ED HALL (CONT'D)  
Let's hear a big Rotarian welcome for my friend and yours, new Southern Media CEO, Yates Thornton.

The audience launches to its feet as Yates steps onto stage.

YATES  
Thank you Ed, and the Rotarian brotherhood.  
(eyes sweep crowd)  
It's good to be home. You know that fella who said, 'you can't go home again?'  
(then)  
He lied.

The crowd, halfway to being seated, jumps back to their feet.

LATER: Yates shakes hands at the front door like a minister after church. It's a Southern thing, the clasping of hands, the personal touch, as men wait to speak to the prodigal son.

Last in line is Yates' UNCLE BB (57). He's Peter Faulk handsome, but Dennis Hopper uncomfortable in a linen suit.

UNCLE BB  
You getting high on your nut?

YATES  
What are you talking about?

UNCLE BB  
(sotto voce)  
Got to eat shitty banana pancakes  
just to talk to my favorite nephew?

YATES  
You can talk to me anytime Uncle  
BB. My office is next to yours.

UNCLE BB  
Well here we are.

YATES  
I've got a conference call with  
Louisville in ten minutes. Join me?

UNCLE BB  
This ain't exactly comfortable for  
me, you swooping in, keeping me in  
the dark.  
(looking around)  
What exactly are your intentions  
for the company?

YATES  
I'm still in triage mode, trying to  
figure out all the levers.

UNCLE BB  
Triage mode? That's a helluva thing  
to say to me.

YATES  
I'm considering all options, just  
like I told the board I would.

UNCLE BB  
The board. Ha. Yeah, well, you and  
the Judge can throw me off the  
board. But I've still got a chit.  
You can't cut me out completely.

Yates puts his hand on Uncle BB's shoulder.

YATES  
(soothing)  
Nobody's trying to cut you out.

YATES (CONT'D)  
 Give me a little time to sort  
 things with the Judge.  
 (hands over coffee mug)  
 You know how it is.

Off Uncle BB, irked, as he watches Yates go.

UNCLE BB  
 Tell me how it is Yates. I'd be  
 most appreciative.

EXT. ROTARIAN PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Yates gets into a brand new Ford sedan as the camera picks up  
 the stencil across the door: SOUTHERN MEDIA. Cranks engine.

DICKIE (O.S.)  
 Quinoa!

Yates turns to see DICKIE BARRETT (34) an old high-school  
 friend. Dickie's the sheriff now. Yates takes in his pressed  
 blue police uniform, shakes his head, puts the car in park.

YATES  
 Try-outs for the Village People  
 were last week.

There's a masculine electricity between the two men, not  
 sexual, but they can't take their eyes off the other...

DICKIE  
 Fuck off. You wanna go hogging with  
 us tonight?

YATES  
 You running?

DICKIE  
 You know it. 12 dogs ready. Peyton  
 Manning's at the vet, tore a pad.

Yates considers.

YATES  
 Let me check with Frances.

DICKIE  
 There we have it folks, the  
 difference between being a man, and  
 being a pussy.

YATES

That's the difference between being married and being single.

Dickie grins: *TOUCHE MOTHERFUCKER*. He THUMPS Yates' car hood.

INT. FORD SEDAN - CONTINUOUS

As Yates pulls away his mobile *vibrates* with a text from Don Valentine: "Call ASAP to discuss offer." Yates switches off.

INT. DOE'S EATING PLACE CAFE - NOON

Frances sits in a booth as waitresses hustle platters of catfish and black eyed peas to the lunch crowd.

Yates enters, lighting up when he sees Frances and kissing her as he slides into the booth.

YATES

How were parent teacher conferences?

FRANCES

Good.

YATES

Tell the truth.

FRANCES

Well, I'm not sure the lead teacher knows how to read, how's that for starters? Don't you run a newspaper or something?

YATES

Voice of the South since 1929.

FRANCES

Here's a scoop for your newsroom: our sons ain't learning squat at that simple jack school of yours.

YATES

Atta girl, let it all out.

FRANCES

Davis thinks God dug the Grand Canyon on a three day weekend and Reynold's can't tell time for shit.

YATES  
Don't hold back.

FRANCES  
Don't patronize me. I'm serious!  
Education is important to me. How  
can we expect our children to  
compete in the modern world?

YATES  
Honey, it's Mississippi. We're not  
real big on competing with the  
modern world.

FRANCES  
And that's supposed to calm me?  
(plaintive)  
What are we doing here?

He takes her hands into his.

YATES  
Give me a chance to navigate these  
waters and I promise I'll steer our  
little rowboat back to Palo Alto.  
(then)  
We're a team. Trust me. Our  
interests are aligned. One hundred  
percent.

She smiles. He knows just what to say. And how to say it.

FRANCES  
How was the ethnically diverse  
Rotarian breakfast?

YATES  
They carried me around the room  
like Achilles on his shield.

FRANCES  
Honey, Achilles was dead when they  
did that.

YATES  
Well there you go! There's my  
Mississippi education at work!

As the waitress puts down two platters of fried catfish,  
Yates phone *vibrates*. He grabs a french fry and stands.

YATES (CONT'D)  
Gotta run. Never keep a Judge  
waiting.

He leans in for a kiss, playfully feeding her the french fry.

YATES (CONT'D)

Love you.

Frances-the-observer watches him leave, noting how the crowd instinctively parts, deferring to Yates as he pauses to shake hands and squeeze shoulders on his way out the door.

FRANCES

Love you too.

REVERSE ANGLE -- Frances, alone in the back of the crowded cafe. Hanging above her is a striking painting of "Ophelia in the River," as arresting as any Walker Evans' photograph.

EXT. MISSISSIPPI RIVER BANK - DAY

We glide over the smooth, serpentine Mississippi River, lingering on the light blue local water tower, painted with a SOUTHERN MEDIA logo. At the tower's base is a green KIA van.

The car's shock's testify to the SQUEAK-SQUEAK of serious boning as Jay Z BLARES from the radio.

INT. KIA -- BACKSEAT

GYNNIFER GREEN (23) a pretty jet-black young woman with short hair and an almond shaped face has her red dress hiked up as she straddles her boyfriend, D-MICHAEL (25). He's sinewy and fit in his orange highway crew vest.

GYNNIFER

Nigger, don't rip the dress.

He stops, annoyed.

D-MICHAEL

(panting)

Then take it off.

GYNNIFER

Can't. I'll be late.

D-MICHAEL

For what? Prom.

GYNNIFER

Trying to make a good impression on my boss.

D-MICHAEL

Me too!

D-Michael grabs her waist and rolls her underneath him.

GYNNIFER

(shrieks)

Don't mess up the dress!

D-MICHAEL

This *sauseeghe* worth being late.

EXT. KIA -- CONTINUOUS

Off SQUEAKY SHOCKS as the red dress flies out the car window.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

Store front for "Teeny's Beauty Shop." Behind the glass is TEENY GREEN, 250 lbs. of ebony beauty, think Aretha Franklin, sitting queenly in an antique barber chair on the phone.

Frances exits truck, waves at Teeny before unlocking a street level door and heading upstairs. CLOSE-UP on door:

"Frances Thornton, M.D. Psychiatry -- By Appointment"

Across the street is the allegorical painting HEAVEN OF HELL from the teaser on the wall of Hall's drug store. Time has faded the paint, but not its artistic power.

Frances notes two tourists take a selfie in front of the painting, before driving off in a rental car.

INT. OUTER PSYCHIATRY OFFICE - DAY

Frances walks inside the reception area, opens the blinds.

FRANCES

Gynnifer! Yoo-hoo.

Silence. She looks at the clock on the wall: 1:05 p.m. She leans over and flips-open the appointment book.

CLOSE-UP: All of the appointment slots are empty.

She crosses to the waiting room ottoman, covered with tchotchke's for her patients and fingers several jigsaw pieces from a half-finished puzzle of galloping white horses.

FRANCES (CONT'D)

(to puzzle)

Aren't you an interesting little fella, yes you are.

She fits a piece into the puzzle before forcing herself ...

INT. INNER THERAPY OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

... into her prototypical shrinky office: potted Ficus tree, oriental rug; framed diplomas from Princeton and Stanford.

She turns on a Zen water element and sinks into her Eames chair, relieved to have a moment alone.

In the corner of the room, a previously unseen figure moves. Frances SCREAMS and covers her face.

FRANCES  
Jesus Christ!

BOYD SUTTREE (30s) scraggly beard and haunted eyes stands dressed in a camouflage jacket and muddy Carhart pants. On his belt is a 12-inch SOG knife in a Kevlar sheath.

BOYD  
You learn to stand real still in  
the desert.

Peeping between fingers, Frances clocks who it is.

FRANCES  
(sitting up)  
Boyd, you scared me.

BOYD  
Scared me too. Thought you weren't  
coming in today.

FRANCES  
I had our next appointment down for  
Friday.

BOYD  
Un-huh. Can't wait that long.

Frances nods, collecting her wits.

FRANCES  
How'd you get in here?

BOYD  
Nobody locks they door in this  
town.

FRANCES  
I told Gynnifer to.

Boyd shrugs.

FRANCES (CONT'D)  
Okay, I can appreciate you felt an urgency to see me, but next time please wait outside, okay?

Their eyes meet for an instant ...

BOYD  
Yes, ma'am.

... before he breaks eye contact, looking down.

FRANCES  
What's been going on?

Boyd exhales. He's been waiting to hear that.

BOYD  
Dog been sick, better now, but that threw me. And still ain't sleeping.

FRANCES  
In our last session you said you sometimes felt hot. Are you still getting hot flashes?

BOYD  
Naw.  
(then)  
Only feel hot when I'm back there.

FRANCES  
Tell me about that.

Boyd nods side-to-side, losing himself in a long ago memory.

BOYD  
Most every day I find myself back there. Inside the stars.  
(his speech slows)  
Thought I'd closed that box.

Frances leans forward, listening.

FRANCES  
How many stars did you see?

BOYD  
Hundreds of them. Stuck all over everything.

Frances writes this down in her notebook.

FRANCES  
 Was this in Fallujah?  
 (fishing)  
 In the desert?

It's like he's not there. Like he's someplace else.

BOYD  
 Chief says fire burns hottest at  
 the center, but the edge was hot  
 too, too hot for me.  
 (to himself)  
 Screams were the same, edge or  
 center.

FRANCES  
 (empathetic)  
 That's awful. Was this an oil fire?

The door to the office FLIES open. Boyd looks up, startled.

It's Gynnifer, regal in her red dress, holding a post-it on  
 the end of elaborately painted finger nails.

GYNNIFER  
 School just called about Davis' nut  
 allergies. Says a peanut farmer is  
 coming in for show-and-tell today.

FRANCES  
 (locked on Boyd)  
 His epi-pen's in the outside pocket  
 of his blue back-pack.

Gynnifer clocks Boyd as she shuts the door behind her.

INT. OUTER PSYCHIATRY OFFICE – CONTINUOUS

REVERSE ANGLE -- Gynnifer, ear pressed to the wall,  
 eavesdrops on the session in the other room.

INT. INNER THERAPY OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

FRANCES  
 (gently)  
 Tell me more about the fire. What  
 you mean when you said, 'I'm back  
 there'?

BOYD  
 It feels real close again. Real,  
 real close.

BOYD (CONT'D)

(dissociating)

It's loud. Fires are loud on the inside ...

(low singing)

'like a freight train running thru my head'

(rubbing arms)

And you're tangled up, wires everywhere. Took a week of hard scrubbing to get that woman's perfume off me.

(then)

I seen it all clear as day. Far as you to me. Twelve people. Melted like butter.

FRANCES

Did you tell your commanding officer?

Her question jolts Boyd back into the present.

BOYD

Why would I?

(locking eyes)

Fire happened a block from here.

Frances writes this down.

FRANCES

Is this fire you're talking about a recurring nightmare?

BOYD

(puzzled)

Nightmare? I told you I ain't sleeping.

Frances nods, wheels turning, as she tries to diagnostically decipher if she's dealing with flashbacks or delusions.

FRANCES

Let's figure out how to help you sleep.

BOYD

(exhaling)

Yes ma'am.

(then)

Anything to get away from Pig man.

FRANCES

Tell me about him?

BOYD  
Do I have to?

FRANCES  
It might help.

BOYD  
He's a man in a suit, an English  
butler type suit, walking cane,  
real proper like.

FRANCES  
And why do you call him Pig man?

BOYD  
(matter of fact)  
Cuz he's got two pig heads.

Frances notes this.

BOYD (CONT'D)  
He was there the night of the fire,  
watched the whole thing. If you ask  
me, he knows a whole lot more about  
that fire than he's letting on.

Frances nods, pig man? Case closed. Boyd's delusional.

Over Boyd's shoulder a clock shows 2:05 P.M.

Determined to re-establish professional boundaries, she puts  
her hands on knees, STANDING to signal the session's over.

FRANCES  
I'm glad you came in today Boyd.

BOYD  
We doing the right thing here, Doc?

FRANCES  
Yes, you're doing the right thing.  
I'm going to think about what  
you've told me and get back to you  
with my recommendation.

Frances crosses to her office door ...

INT. OUTER PSYCHIATRY OFFICE – CONTINUOUS

... exiting in time to catch Gynnifer, ear pressed to the  
wall, as Boyd trails behind, oblivious.

BOYD

Okay then, see you next week.

Boyd stands a little too close to Frances.

FRANCES

(extending hand)

At our regularly scheduled time.

As the door closes, Frances wheels on Gynnifer.

FRANCES (CONT'D)

Rule one, you don't listen in on somebody's private session. It's totally unprofessional. Not to mention illegal.

GYNNIFER

It ain't like that --

FRANCES

Boyd's hiding in my office, you're snooping. Is this how it works around here? Doesn't anybody in this town have boundaries?

Frances stares until Gynnifer lowers her eyes; chastened.

FRANCES (CONT'D)

(softening)

I'm guessing you've never experienced a professional environment quite like this before.

GYNNIFER

(bowing up)

Excuse me? What do you know about what I've experienced? Do you know me, personally? You have no idea what I've experienced.

FRANCES

I was just pointing out --

GYNNIFER

(arms crossed, head cocked)

I'm up in here trying to get a little bit of your white world and just because you hang your fancy frames on the wall don't even think you can make me feel inferior.

FRANCES

I was merely --

GYNNIFER

And what do you know about boundaries anyway? You got no earthly idea.

FRANCES

Perhaps a more productive way --

GYNNIFER

I was listening in so I could *protect* you, not because I care what your cracker ass thinks is "professional" or not.

FRANCES

(losing it)

You were late this morning. If it happens again I'm going to have to let you go.

Gynnifer is incredulous.

GYNNIFER

Oh hell no. You can't threaten me.

She grabs her purse and SLAMS the door behind her knocking a Calder print off the wall and SMASHING it onto the desk, revealing it to be a completed, framed jig-saw puzzle.

FRANCES

Protect me?

She can't help but lean over to snap a few scattered jigsaw pieces into place before forcibly stopping to dial the phone.

FRANCES (CONT'D)

Hey, this is Frances Thornton. I want to call in a prescription. 100 mg of Seroquel. Of course.

(nodding)

Yes, I understand it's an antipsychotic. Yes, his diagnosis is Psychosis NOS. Yes he's got delusions, likely hallucinations. Yes I want a month supply. Yes to refills.

(beat)

Name is Boyd Suttree.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

EXT. SUMMERTREES - DAY

A long oak-lined driveway leads to an Antebellum, Federal-style Southern mansion. This is SUMMERTREES.

Yates Thornton sits in his company car underneath a huge tendril of Spanish moss as a flock of peacocks stroll past.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

Yates reviews papers in a blue folder as DON VALENTINE's deep baritone voice comes from the car's speakerphone.

DON VALENTINE (O.S.)  
We're reviewing the offer, but at  
first blush we're favorably inclined.

Yates visibly exhales at these words.

YATES  
Always nice when your largest  
shareholder says that, Don.

DON VALENTINE (O.S.)  
Let me circle up with the team and  
we'll be in touch.

INT. SUMMERTREES PORCH - DAY

Yates sits alone on the back porch, blue folder in his lap lost in thought as footsteps draw his attention.

As his father JUDGE THORNTON (67) enters. The Judge is diminutive. And very well dressed. Don't be fooled by his stature and courtly bearing, he plays two moves ahead.

Yates STANDS to shake his father's hand before they sit.

JUDGE  
Heard you slayed 'em at Rotary this  
morning. What's it feel like,  
Prince Hal, returning home to  
accept the throne?

YATES  
Prince Hal. Or Falstaff?

JUDGE THORNTON

Every crisis presents a great opportunity. That's either the Buddha, or Jughead. Can't remember.

Yates nods, smiling. There's his opening.

YATES

Speaking of opportunity.

Yates extends the blue folder to his father.

YATES (CONT'D)

We got an offer today. From McClatchy.

The Judge takes the folder.

JUDGE THORNTON

I had no earthly idea we were entertaining offers.

YATES

This came in unsolicited --

JUDGE THORNTON

Horseshit.

YATES

It's better than a fair offer.

The Judge looks into the distance.

JUDGE THORNTON

So you're all for selling? Just like that.

YATES

I didn't say that.

JUDGE THORNTON

I called you home to sort things out after BB screwed it up. I want you to run the business. Not sell the business. You understand the difference?

YATES

I'm trying to do what's right. For all stakeholders.

The Judge stares, nonplussed.

JUDGE THORNTON  
Don't try to big-stick me, son.

YATES  
Our circulation's flat. Our best  
demo's dying. Even our most  
optimistic projections aren't --

JUDGE THORNTON  
Ever wonder what would happen to  
Memphis if FedEx pulled out?

YATES  
Keeping headquarters here will be a  
nonnegotiable deal point.

The Judge gives him a 'give me a break' look.

JUDGE THORNTON  
(extending fingers)  
We just got the Casino referendum  
passed last month --

YATES  
Judge, this isn't 1980 anymore --

JUDGE THORNTON  
Don't give me that little-phones-  
are-taking-over-the-world nonsense.  
(next finger)  
Local influence is what makes the  
world turn, always has.

Yates takes a deep breath to maintain composure.

JUDGE THORNTON (CONT'D)  
(next finger)  
18 newspapers, 36 radio stations.  
When's the last time you heard the  
howl those preachers raise on  
Sunday morning radio? "Let the Lord  
lift you up!" You can hear it all  
the way to the Panhandle. There's  
money in influencing people, same  
as it ever was.  
(then)  
You think Facebook got that casino  
referendum passed? No son, this  
company still has enormous influence.  
And so does this family. Sell the  
company and that goes away.

YATES  
I know that's how it used to work --

JUDGE THORNTON

Twelve men --

YATES

... but the world is --

JUDGE THORNTON

Our papers got twelve legislators in five states elected last cycle. Two up from the previous election. Hell, we got Billy Shapiro hired as the new football coach at Ole Miss. And if you think that didn't take a kingmaker you don't know your bourbon from your branch.

YATES

We're talking about two different things.

JUDGE THORNTON

Are we? I don't think so.

(then)

Anton Scalia hunted ducks with me down here for 23 years because he *liked* freezing his ass off?

YATES

Course not.

JUDGE THORNTON

We're part of --

(choosing words)

The *deep weave* of this place and that's worth a lot more than a bean splitter at a New York investment bank will ever understand.

YATES

I'm not saying we have zero influence. I'm saying your kind of influence is hard to value. And getting harder.

The Judge's eyes light up -- check mate.

JUDGE THORNTON

Not around here it isn't.

Long beat.

YATES

So you're against selling. At any price?

JUDGE THORNTON  
I'm against selling something I  
know my son can run better.

Yates looks up against it.

YATES  
I said I'd come home and help you  
for a year. Twelve months.  
(exasperated)  
I mean, come on Judge. A woman like  
Frances isn't going to stay down  
here forever.

The Judge cocks his head as the real subtext emerges. He  
delivers a withering look: *whose wearing the pants?*

JUDGE THORNTON  
That's between a man and his wife.

Off Yates, as the Judge hands back the blue folder, unopened.

INT. PUBLIC LIBRARY - DAY

Frances walks thru the front door, loaded down with books.  
The librarian, IDA JEFFERS (30s) looks up from her computer.

IDA  
Oh hey there Frances. Sorry to hear  
about your girl.

FRANCES  
Girl?

IDA  
I heard Gynnifer quit on you this  
morning.

Frances' face falls. She hadn't realized Gynnifer had quit  
this morning. Like permanently.

Beat as another small town truth lands -- everybody's in  
everybody's business. Welcome to the fishbowl.

IDA (CONT'D)  
You know how these kids are these  
days, all attitude, no gratitude.  
(looking around)  
I might could be available if you  
need somebody right quick?

FRANCES  
I'll keep that in mind, Heidi.

IDA  
It's Ida.

FRANCES  
Off course, excuse me. Where's your  
bathroom?

Off Ida nodding left as she watches Frances walk away.

INT. WOMAN'S BATHROOM STALL - CONTINUOUS

Frances sits, eyes closed, catching a moment's rest.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)  
I need your help.

FRANCES  
(opening eyes)  
Hello?

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)  
You're Frances, right? I recognized  
the shoes.

Frances looks down at her Toms ... then over at the bejeweled  
black cowboy boots in the next stall.

FRANCES  
Can you come by my office?

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)  
I'd prefer not to.

FRANCES  
Okay, this is highly unusual.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)  
People have been telling me that my  
whole life.

Frances shakes her head at this small-town fishbowl bullshit.

FRANCES  
(standing)  
I'm sorry, you're going to have to  
make an appointment.

She FLUSHES. Exits.

EXT. GREENWOOD GOLF CLUB - DAY

The perfect greens of the state's old-guard golf club. The  
opposite of ostentatious, membership is select and coveted.

INT. GREENWOOD CLUB LOCKER ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Judge Thornton, wet hair, towel around his neck, checks his reflection in the mirror. He smiles, frowns, smiles again.

HOLD ON: The Judge staring at his reflection. He drops the smile. There's something sad there we haven't seen before.

He shakes a pill from a prescription bottle and swallows it.

EXT. GREENWOOD GOLF CLUB - CONTINUOUS

The Judge, looking natty, emerges from the clubhouse.

JUDGE THORNTON

Jed!

Two golfers turn and then one motions for his friend to head on. This is JED HOWORTH (50s), short cropped silver hair, fit physique; reeks of former military.

JED

Good to see you Judge. We missed you at the Cotton carnival.

JUDGE THORNTON

Was she pretty?

JED

Stunner. Headed to Alabama.

JUDGE THORNTON

Listen, I won't interrupt your leisure, but I wanted to say what nice things I hear about you from Walker in the Governor's office.

JED

Thank you Judge. Hard work is its own reward.

Beat as the Judge nods, taking in the Proverb.

JUDGE THORNTON

Ever think about wearing a black robe? After your term's up?

A judgeship is only Jed's most cherished professional dream.

JED

That's in the Lord's hands.

JUDGE THORNTON  
Matthew 7:7.

Beat as the 'ask-and-ye-shall-receive' offer lands on Jed.

JED  
I appreciate that very much, Judge.

JUDGE THORNTON  
Oh, before I forget, I hear Ronny  
Green's coming up in front of your  
parole board next month.  
(then)  
I hear he's got real poor  
handwriting.

Off Jed, wheels turning as he searches the Judge's face.

INT. FRANCES PSYCHIATRY OFFICE - DAY

Frances enters.

FRANCES  
Gynnifer --

Catching her mistake, she picks up the office phone and dials  
her husband ... Gets Yates' voicemail as her iphone vibrates.

Close-up: Incoming call from WALLACE BISHOP.

FRANCES (CONT'D)  
Oh thank god.

WALLACE (O.S.)  
I've got exactly two minutes before  
my next patient.

FRANCES  
Rub it in.

WALLACE (O.S.)  
Got your message, how are you?

FRANCES  
Well --  
(where to start)  
These people schedule weddings  
around football games down here!

Wallace chuckles.

WALLACE (O.S.)  
How's tricks with your new patient?

FRANCES  
I'm going Seroquel.

WALLACE (O.S.)  
Good, I gotta run.

FRANCES  
You said two minutes!

WALLACE (O.S.)  
They're early. If it makes you feel any better Stanford's back in session and our practice is getting a ton of psych referrals from Student Health.

FRANCES  
Actually, that makes me feel worse.  
(then)  
Promise me something

WALLACE (O.S.)  
I promise I'm in love with you.  
Just don't tell your husband.

FRANCES  
Oh he knows I have a homo-husband.  
No, promise me I'm not crazy for coming down here.

Beat of silence.

WALLACE (O.S.)  
Gotta run.

He hangs up as Frances MOANS in frustration, wishing she had more time unburden herself to her closest friend.

She crosses to fridge, opens a Dove ice cream bar and leans over the unfinished white horse jigsaw puzzle.

As she takes her first bite, the office door opens, revealing a flamboyant white woman dressed in a leopard print tunic, black leather pants, and the familiar bejeweled cowboy boots.

This is DEVOE SHIFLET.

Even as a plump 45-year-old, she has some kind of sexy "it".

DEVOE  
Do you have any available appointments?

Frances, mouth stuffed with ice cream, hands full of puzzle pieces, is hard-pressed to act super busy.

DEVOE (CONT'D)  
(closing door)  
My name's Devoe Shiflet. We  
conversated at the library.

Frances slides her Dove bar into an empty mug and jerks her head towards the inner office.

INT. INNER THERAPY OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

DEVOE  
I'm up shit's creek. Seriously, I  
am so fucked right now it's not  
even funny. Pardon my language, you  
must think me a heathen, but Jesus  
fucking Christ I am so fucked.

FRANCES  
That sounds like a lot. What's  
going on?

DEVOE  
Bruce and I been married like 13,  
14 years now. And it's been all  
right but you know, not great  
actually.  
(patting knee)  
You got an itch, you scratch it.

Frances slow nods.

DEVOE (CONT'D)  
I need you to prescribe me Lithium.

FRANCES  
Why do you think you need Lithium?

DEVOE  
I don't need the actual Lithium, I  
just need the prescription. That  
way I can prove to Bruce that last  
week's mishap with Len was a side  
effect. Narcologically speaking.

Fascination and bewilderment mingle on Frances' face.

FRANCES

Well Devoe, Lithium is a Class-5 narcotic anti-manic agent used to help severe schizophrenics achieve chemical balance in the pre-frontal cortex. Do you really see yourself as seriously mentally ill?

DEVOE

Oh I'm not crazy, crazy. But things do happen to me. Like men fall in love with me at the DMV.

(holding up two fingers)

And strangers put me in their will.

(holding up three fingers)

I have a way with people.

(then)

Well, men mainly.

Devoe crosses her legs, revealing a grey ANKLE monitor in the gap between her leather pants and her cowboy boots.

FRANCES

Who is Len?

DEVOE

Can you keep a secret?

FRANCES

That's the whole idea.

DEVOE

My parole officer.

Devoe's cell phone CHIRPS with a text. She reads it.

DEVOE (CONT'D)

(standing)

So sorry, gotta go. Family emergency.

(then)

People have you pegged all wrong.

You're approachable as all get out.

FRANCES

There's still 30 minutes left in your session.

DEVOE

(texting)

Just roll it over to next time.

FRANCES

It's not like a parking meter...

Devoe plucks a gold Am-Ex from a knock-off Channel handbag.

FRANCES (CONT'D)  
 (reading card)  
 Who is Sean Jean Dupree?  
 (handing back)  
 Anyway, we don't have the credit  
 card machine hooked up yet.

Still texting, Devoe produces a crisp, mint \$100 bill.

DEVOE  
 This should cover it.

As Devoe exits Frances holds the \$100 bill up to the light, noticing ink so fresh it's slightly streaked.

INT. SUMMERTREES - DRAWING ROOM - AFTERNOON

Every wall of the antique filled drawing room is covered in oil paintings ... a tour of the South by a master painter: portraits of black tobacco farmers, Gothic midnight landscapes, a hurricane bearing down on the land ...

Standing in the middle of the room are Yates and his mother, BIRD THORNTON (60), who carries herself like the Vanderbilt equestrian she once was.

BIRD  
 Course, as it gets closer your  
 father's getting fussy about his  
 birthday party.

YATES  
 (off large stack)  
 Can't go wrong going small.

BIRD  
 Don't be foolish. He complains  
 about it. Then revels in it. You  
 know how he is.  
 (then)  
 He enjoyed your visit.

YATES  
 You talk to him?

BIRD  
 I could tell by the way his eyes  
 followed you off the porch.

YATES  
 Eyes lie, Momma.

Stung, she stamps two invitations in silence.

BIRD  
Someone else would love to see you.

Yates nods.

BIRD (CONT'D)  
One of her paintings sold last week  
in London for a record amount.

YATES  
Which one?

BIRD  
The one with the deer antlers.

YATES  
That'll look rather smashing in  
Rupert Murdoch's media den.

BIRD  
Woodchuck over in Tunica said he  
found one of your sister's  
paintings last week in a yard sale.

YATES  
Half the time those are fake.

BIRD  
This one's not.

YATES  
How do you know?

She flips over an oil painting on the table in front of them.

BIRD  
I bought it.

Yates looks at the painting.

YATES  
How'd this get away from us?

The phone RINGS in another room.

BIRD  
Hang on.

She leaves Yates transfixed by the painting, lost in a memory.

INT. PAINTING STUDIO -- JUMP BACK IN TIME

Inside a converted barn, slanted sunlight coming thru slats.

Every surface is disorganized ... painted canvases piled ten deep ... brushes scattered like match sticks ... books about everything from autopsy photos to the Voynich manuscript.

In the center of the studio stands an auburn haired young woman, hands on hips, the front of her denim overalls spattered with different hues of paint.

This is Yates' older sister, JANUS (19) and she radiates a magnetic, sexual intensity far more powerful, and odd, than being merely pretty.

Sixteen year old Yates, skinny and shirtless, stands in blue swim trunks holding one arm forward, finger outstretched.

JANUS

Take off your shorts. I need to paint you nude.

Without blinking, Yates shucks off his shorts, resumes pose.

She studies his body unsparingly. Head cocked. Paints.

JANUS (CONT'D)

(putting down brush)

Stay where you are.

Janus walks over to a young man sitting in a chair. It's Dickie Barrett age (16) ...

She leans down, moving her head side-to-side like a hawk in front of a field mouse. Dickie follows, transfixed.

She kisses him. When he tries to kiss back she breaks away, leaving a smudge of paint on his face.

In his frustrated movements, we see he's tied to the chair.

Yates looks up as her otherworldly gaze trains on him.

JANUS (CONT'D)

Break.

Yates releases his pose, leaning over to pull up his shorts.

She takes the canvas off the easel, turning it to Yates.

CLOSE-UP: Reveals him naked facing his own reflection rendered as a grotesquely beautiful skeleton: each bone, muscle, tendon, rendered with Lucien Freud precision.

YOUNGER YATES

(amazed)

How'd you do that?

JANUS

*How is the least interesting part.*

*How does one breath?*

Flustered, her little brother scrambles to head off a mood.

YOUNGER YATES

What I meant was, where-where'd  
this come from?

Janus leans in, studying him.

JANUS

I paint what I see.

She kisses him on the cheek.

JANUS (CONT'D)

Happy Birthday, brother.

She kisses him again, tenderly, on the lips as she hands the painting over. Yates studies the canvas, captivated.

Janus walks to the center of the barn, raising her arms.

JANUS (CONT'D)

You two are boring me.

Dickie and Yates eyes meet. Dickie looks away.

JANUS (CONT'D)

I want to paint a new kind of body.  
A challenging body. An interesting  
body. A black body. A fat body. A  
skinny mini body ...

From a pile she pulls a thick book filled with bookmarks:  
"Smith's Recognizable Patterns of Human Abnormalities."

JANUS (CONT'D)

Bring me a bird headed dwarf.

(reading)

Or a human octopus.

Beat. Then Dickie THUMPS the chair legs approvingly.

JANUS (CONT'D)

(eyes on fire)

We're not sleeping until I have a new body. And you two sheep are going to get it for me.

THUMP! THUMP! go the chair legs as Janus straddles Dickie, unsnapping her top, and placing her breast into his mouth as she studies him, participating and watching at the same time.

In the background Yates studies his painting, as if it's Guernica.

Off Yates, as the noise across the room raises his eyes.

INT. SUMMERTREES - DRAWING ROOM - BACK TO PRESENT

Back in the present, Yates grips the painting with such intensity he pushes his thumb thru the canvas as Bird enters.

BIRD

(chuckling)

That was Woodchuck wondering if he sold it to me too cheap.

YATES

Darn. There's a hole in it.

(holding up)

Right along the edge. Hard to see unless the light is just right.

His mother takes the painting and inspects.

BIRD

My eyes are failing. Sotheby's will repair it. They'll do anything to stay in our good graces.

She puts down the painting and takes Yates' hands.

BIRD (CONT'D)

Promise me something --

YATES

Yes Momma, I'll go see her.

Off Bird, smiling at her son's obedience.

INT. PARCHMAN STATE PRISON - DAY

A nondescript white-washed room cut in half by thick glass.

Gynnifer, looking fine in a strapless black dress, sits like visiting royalty as the prison guards eye-fuck her.

UNCLE RONNY (50's) in an orange jumpsuit with salt-and-pepper hair appears on the other side of the glass.

UNCLE RONNY

Almost forgot what my favorite niece looked like.

GYNNIFER

I've been busy.

UNCLE RONNY

Me too.

Gynnifer checks to confirm he's joking.

GYNNIFER

'Nique says you got a parole hearing coming up.

UNCLE RONNY

Two weeks.

GYNNIFER

I don't care what color the robe, you think a bunch of white men never heard a nigger say 'you got the wrong guy?'

UNCLE RONNY

True is true.

(calm)

I've got people working on my side in here. Jed Howorth is known to be a good, godly man.

Gynnifer rolls her eyes at her Uncle's faith.

GYNNIFER

I'm curious about something.

UNCLE RONNY

Since the day you were born.

GYNNIFER

The night of the fire, what did it smell like?

UNCLE RONNY

Why you want to go there?

GYNNIFER

Just what.

UNCLE RONNY

(eyes wandering)

It smelled like a fire.

(then)

And sweet.

GYNNIFER

Like how?

UNCLE RONNY

(sense memory)

A bottle of perfume must have  
popped in the heat and the smell  
got all over everything, boots,  
gloves. Took forever to get it off.

Gynnifer nods.

GYNNIFER

What did it look like inside?

UNCLE RONNY

Tell you the truth, it looked like  
a million stars --

Gynnifer's eyes narrow as Uncle Ronny corroborates Boyd's exact description of the fire.

GYNNIFER

(finishing)

All bleeding together.

UNCLE RONNY

Yeah. How'd you know that?

GYNNIFER

Keep going.

UNCLE RONNY

There were little molten stars all  
over the walls, floor, ceiling.

(then)

The arson investigator told me  
spattering fuel made that effect.

GYNNIFER

And you know nothing about that?

He absorbs her inference with the demeanor of a man who has spent 15 years in prison sanding off the edges of his anger.

UNCLE RONNY

I know your mother put all kinds of  
thoughts in your head about me.

(world weary)

I put the fire out. I didn't start it.

Gynnifer stares like she's trying to make up her mind.

UNCLE RONNY (CONT'D)

'Nique believes me. Why don't you?

GYNNIFER

I don't know what to believe.

Uncle Ronny puts his hand onto the glass ...

UNCLE RONNY

Tell 'Nique it would be a good time  
to write about me again.

Off Gynnifer trying to figure out what she thinks about him.  
She drums her elaborate fingernails on the glass and exits.

EXT. SOUTHERN MEDIA OFFICE - DAY

CLOSE-UP on RED SIGN: "SOUTHERN MEDIA -- NEWSPAPERS, RADIO,  
TV, and Internet -- The Voice of the South since 1927"

INT. SOUTHERN MEDIA OFFICE - DAY

Yates hustles thru the newsroom, ducks into an office ...

INT. EXECUTIVE OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Uncle BB stares out the window, Panama hat askew on his head.

YATES

(shutting door)

There you are. Got a minute?

UNCLE BB

Nope. I'm real, real busy here.

Uncle BB's words are thick with liquor. Yates pushes forward.

YATES

I'm considering selling the paper.

Uncle BB's knees go weak ... Yates grabs his Uncle ...

YATES (CONT'D)

Whoa!

... as Uncle BB embraces Yates in a quivering bear hug.

UNCLE BB

That solves a lot --  
 (stuttering)  
 A lot--

YATES

A lot of problems, I know.

Beat as Yates realizes his uncle is WEEPING in his arms.

YATES (CONT'D)

Hey. Come on, you're going to choke  
 me up in here. You all right?

He takes his Uncle by the shoulders, straightening him.

UNCLE BB

Just a little blubbery.  
 (wiping eyes)  
 The last couple of years --

YATES

I know.  
 (then)  
 If we're going to pull this off I'm  
 going to need your help.

UNCLE BB

You haven't told him yet?

YATES

I hinted as much.  
 (then)  
 I prepped the ground.

UNCLE BB

And how is the 'family moron'  
 supposed to convince the almighty?

YATES

You don't have to.

UNCLE BB

I don't follow.

YATES

You're still a voting member of the  
 board, aren't you?

The magnitude of what Yates is proposing lands on Uncle BB.

UNCLE BB  
(incredulous)  
You want to strong arm the Judge?

Uncle BB says 'the Judge,' as if it's the President.

YATES  
It won't come to that.

Uncle BB looks dubious. Yates leans in to whisper.

YATES (CONT'D)  
We got an offer today from  
McClatchy. A good one.

UNCLE BB  
Damn.

Uncle BB opens a hollow book on his desk, pulls out a flask.

YATES  
So, if we go in together, arms  
locked, he'll take us seriously.  
(then)  
We'll get him to our side. I  
promise you that.

UNCLE BB  
I get it.  
(taking pull from flask)  
I'm in.

Yates smiles and slaps his Uncle's back as he exits ...

INT. SOUTHERN MEDIA HALLWAY -- CONTINUOUS

... running straight into 'NIQUE GREEN.

'NIQUE  
I want to pitch you a story.

He nods as they walk down the hallway.

'NIQUE (CONT'D)  
You hear about Ronny Green coming  
up for parole?

YATES  
Already? Time flies.

'NIQUE

I want to write about it.

Beat as Yates takes this in. It's complicated.

YATES

Sounds pertinent to me. I'm sure  
you'll do a great job.

'NIQUE

Even though it's a big ass conflict  
of interest?

YATES

What isn't a conflict of interest  
in this town?

(then)

All we can do is our best to be  
honest about it.

Off 'Nique nodding, again impressed by Yates' leadership.

INT. SUMMERTREES GUEST HOUSE - BEDROOM - MIDNIGHT

Frances and Yates lay in an antique four poster bed. She  
studies the ceiling fan as he reads drafts of the newspaper.

FRANCES

Stanford's back in session and  
we're getting a ton of psych  
referrals from Student Health.

Yates reads how homesick she is for Palo Alto.

YATES

McClatchy's offer letter came thru.

FRANCES

Okay.

(gently)

What does that mean?

He rolls over on his side, facing her.

YATES

It means we get to go back to Lotus-  
land even sooner.

FRANCES

And the Judge is on board?

YATES

I'm working on it. But yes, one way  
or the other he'll come around.

She kisses him hard as she peels off her night shirt ...

FRANCES

You amaze me.

... and rolls him on top of her as she kisses him.

YATES

(playful)

And how was your day?

ANGLE DOWN on Yates as he nuzzles her breasts.

FRANCES

Totally boring ...

Yates kisses down to her belly-button.

FRANCES (CONT'D)

I got passed counterfeit money ...

YATES

Mmmwwwm.

FRANCES

My only employee quit.

YATES

Hmmmmmm.

FRANCES

And my only patient shared a  
delusional tale of a pigman setting  
a fire on main street.

ANGLE ON: Yates' face freezes.

YATES

Yeah.

(then)

What'd you do?

FRANCES

What do you think? I called in a  
heavy duty prescription.

YATES

Who was it?

FRANCES  
 Come on baby ...  
 (fingers thru his hair)  
 You know I can't tell you that.

She can't see the look of concern on his face.

FRANCES (CONT'D)  
 Doctor patient confidentiality.

Off Yates: wheels turning.

EXT. SUMMERTREES DRIVEWAY - MIDNIGHT - CONTINUOUS

From above we see the headlights of SIX vehicles turning down Summertrees' driveway before VEERING towards the guest house.

INT. FRANCES AND YATES BEDROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Yates and Frances kiss like teenagers as the ROAR of engines and the FLASH of sirens splash across the bedroom walls.

SFX of dogs BARKING. Yates looks at the bedside clock.

CLOSE-UP: "12:23 a.m."

YATES  
 Shit.

He scrambles out of bed, pulling on jeans and sweatshirt...

FRANCES  
 What is it?

YATES  
 Let me deal.

Yates is out the door ...

EXT. FRONT YARD -- CONTINUOUS

... and into the yard shielding his eyes from the headlights.

MEGA PHONE VOICE  
 Yates Virginius Thornton III,  
 you're hereby under arrest for  
 being a yeasty California pussy!

Laughter from the assembled men as the VOICE steps in front of the headlights, revealing Sheriff Dickie Barrett, still in uniform but clearly the beneficiary of several cold beers.

DICKIE

Moment of truth my friend. You own  
a pair? Or just rent 'em?

Yates is annoyed.

YATES

It's late Dickie. Boy's are asleep.

DICKIE

Shit, let's take 'em with us.  
(then)  
It's okay to be scared.

YATES

Just because you prefer being  
surrounded by horny men in camo  
doesn't make it normal.

Dickie takes a sip from his beer.

DICKIE

You can take the boy out of  
Mississippi ... ?

Their eyes lock as if speaking their own silent language.

Yates' steps off his porch and into their masculine orbit to  
the sound of rebel YELLS ...

Dickie guides Yates into his truck THEN notices Frances, robe  
on, watching from the bedroom window. Their eyes lock.

Dickie winks as if to say: "he's mine now."

She SHOUTS something to Yates, but it's lost in the noise of  
the REVVING trucks, SLAMMING doors, and HOWLING dogs.

CLOSE-UP on Frances, framed by the upstairs window as several  
strong emotions play across her face.

She dislikes seeing her husband ripped away from her.

She dislikes the person who did it.

But what she dislikes most is the surprise of learning Yates  
would ever choose Dickie over her.

END OF ACT TWO

**ACT THREE**

EXT. MISSISSIPPI RIVER BREAKS - MIDNIGHT

Dickie and Yates, in camouflage coveralls, wade waist-deep, holding their .30-06 riffles above the black swamp water.

In the distance is the YAWP of the hound's excited barks.

Dickie takes a pull from a pint of tequila.

DICKIE

Tell the truth, I never thought I'd see you back here. Permanently.

YATES

Don't know how permanent it is, but yeah. Duty called.

He passes the bottle of tequila.

DICKIE

Good to be home?

YATES

Yeah. Gotta get Fran into it, but yeah.

DICKIE

Fran. You need to heel that bitch.

Yates rolls his eyes: drunk talk from a perennial bachelor.

DICKIE (CONT'D)

Don't get me wrong, it's great you're home. Yes sir, you're talk of the town: Yates this and Yates that. If I wasn't such a god-damned apex predator I might be jealous.

YATES

We're lost, aren't we?

Dickie stops wading. Scans water.

DICKIE

You feel that?

Yates smiles. He's not going to be fooled.

YATES

Nope.

DICKIE  
I'm serious.

YATES  
Don't fuck around Dickie.

Yates takes a step forward in the water.

DICKIE  
GATOR!

Dickie draws a handgun from a shoulder holster and BANG!  
BANG! fires as something disturbs the water in front of them.

Yates scrambles sideways for dry land.

Long beat as they scan the water.

Ten feet away a 9-foot alligator floats to the surface, a jagged, red cherry bullet hole between its lifeless eyes.

DICKIE (CONT'D)  
Hot damn!  
(turning to Yates)  
Hot fucking damn, son!

Yates and Dickie grin wide-eyed at each other.

From off-screen comes the ominous, sub-human FX of GRUNTING.

We go into SLO-MO as Yates and Dickie TURN toward the noise.

A GIANT, 1200 lb. WILD BOAR, (think Hog-zilla), charges from the underbrush, fast and low ...

... and SPEARS Yates in the groin with a massive white tusk.

*Yates is thrown UP and ACROSS the boar's back before the beast bolts into the underbrush with it's new passenger.*

Release into REAL-TIME as Dickie looks around, all alone.

DICKIE (CONT'D)  
The fuck.

EXT. SUMMERTREES DRIVEWAY - MIDNIGHT - CONTINUOUS

A silhouette carries a hurricane lantern down the oak-lined driveway. In the distance is Frances and Yates' house.

EXT. YATES AND FRANCES' FRONT YARD - MIDNIGHT

The silhouette puts the lantern on the porch, looks up and CLOCKS the bedroom light is on upstairs. Knocks on door.

The door opens, revealing Frances, surprised.

REVERSE to reveal the Judge looking courtly in a bow-tie.

JUDGE THORNTON

Light was on. Came to check on you.

Frances motions him to come in.

EXT. MISSISSIPPI RIVER BREAKS - 1 A.M.- CONTINUOUS

TIGHT ON Dickie STEPPING THRU a thicket of fiddle-head ferns scanning for sign of Yates ...

He FREEZES.

PULL BACK to reveal a picturesque clearing: blooming swamp orchids in the foreground, the reflection of the full moon off the black water in the middle ground ...

But that's not what Dickie's staring at.

A strangled MOAN across the water draws Dickie's eye to the dark shape of the wild boar and Yates, semi-conscious, splayed across its back.

The winded animal breathes in a ragged: *Huff-shh-Huff-shh* as blood pools on the boar's belly before dripping into the mud.

Dickie s-l-o-w-l-y lifts his rifle to his shoulder.

CLOSE on YATES' panicked face, cut and eye swollen from the berserked sprint thru the underbrush.

YATES

(moaning)

Can't feel my balls.

CLOSE on Dickie, rifle stock pressed to his cheek.

YATES (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Jesus Christ Dickie, shoot before the fucking thing takes off.

DICKIE

'Our golden boy's back. Back with us. Back to do his thang!'

Beat as Yates realizes Dickie's quoting Ed Hall's Rotary speech. But with a malevolent intonation.

DICKIE (CONT'D)  
 'And we're going to need every bit  
 of that fancy MBA to get things  
 right around here.'

Dickie has an off-kilter look we haven't seen before.

DICKIE (CONT'D)  
 Here you are, once again, holding  
 our future in your hands.

YATES  
 For the love of God.

DICKIE  
 People are worried Yater. They say  
 if you sell the company it'd pretty  
 much devastate this town, the  
 county. Economy what it is, we'd  
 never recover.  
 (he switches OFF safety)  
 It'd be like putting a bullet in  
 our heads.

REVERSE ANGLE -- from Dickie's POV down the barrel. The sight  
 of the gun is AIMED on Yates' head.

YATES  
 It'll all work out. I promise

DICKIE  
 Will it? Cuz I don't truck with the  
 idea of running this town without  
 the full weight and support of  
 Southern Media.  
 (then)  
 Too much history at stake. For both  
 of us. You owe me that.

Even in his weakened state the words land on Yates. Before he  
 can answer Dickie squeezes the trigger.

BANG!

We go into SLO-MO as the bullet leaves the end of the barrel  
 and starts across the water ...

INT. SUMMERTREES - 1 A.M - CONTINUOUS

Frances and the Judge sit on the back porch, the full moon high in the sky, two glasses of bourbon between them.

Judge reads the situation: absent husband, pissed off wife.

JUDGE THORNTON

Dickie's father was a wild one too.  
He was sheriff here for 32 years.

FRANCES

Retired?

JUDGE THORNTON

No. He left us via a heart-attack  
in his mistresses' bed.

Frances nods, amused.

JUDGE THORNTON (CONT'D)

At the funeral his sister got up  
and said her brother died doing  
what he loved most.

Frances can't help but chuckle.

JUDGE THORNTON (CONT'D)

Our two families go way back. Six  
generations, all the way back to  
when Mississippi was just a  
territory.

(then)

Oh the genealogy would bore you.

FRANCES

Do you like them?

The Judge takes a sip of bourbon.

JUDGE THORNTON

I've always found the Barrett's a  
touch, common.

(then)

Mind if I ask you a question?

FRANCES

Shoot.

JUDGE THORNTON

Do you like Mississippi?

She resists the urge to reply: "a touch common."

FRANCES

It's growing on me --

JUDGE THORNTON

A nice place to visit, but you  
wouldn't want to live here?

FRANCES

I didn't say that.

His face says she didn't have to.

JUDGE

In my experience, you never know  
where you were meant to be until  
after the fact.

(sips bourbon)

Frances, I make it a habit not to  
patronize smart women. I tried it  
once from the bench and it  
necessitated a hand-written apology  
and a month of public humiliation.

(then)

You and I are both keen observers  
of human nature.

He stares at Frances until she's forced to nod in agreement.

JUDGE THORNTON

This is a small, old world down  
here. Think of it like the roots of  
an ancient forest. The biggest,  
oldest trees are the most  
connected. As a member of this  
family, you're linked to everything  
and everyone. Even if it doesn't  
feel like it yet.

Frances reaches over to clink the Judge's glass.

FRANCES

You don't need to sell me, Judge. I  
know I'll love it here.

Off the Judge nodding as he rises.

EXT. MISSISSIPPI RIVER BREAKS - 2 A.M. - CONTINUOUS

In a clearing flooded with spotlights, Deputy sheriff, HOPP  
HENDERSON (40s) leaps from an ATV BUGGY and turns to unload  
Yates Thornton from the back.

Yates is GHOST WHITE, GLASSY-EYED, pant leg soaked in blood.

HOPP HENDERSON  
 (supporting Yates)  
 You one lucky motherfucker.

Yates' head rolls on the end of his neck.

HOPP HENDERSON (CONT'D)  
 Fella over in Shelby got his nards  
 tore clean off, cables dangling.

YATES  
 (softly)  
 He missed.

HOPP HENDERSON  
 It's right rare, most of the time  
 them things have a nose for nuts.

YATES  
 The sheriff missed his shot.

HOPP HENDERSON  
 Missed?  
 (shaking head)  
 No sir, sheriff don't miss.

YATES  
 (insistant)  
 He missed.  
 (then)  
 The boar rubbed me off on a stump.

Hopp regards Yates.

HOPP HENDERSON  
 Nah man, you in shock.

Hopp guides Yates into the front seat of a sheriff's truck,  
 shuts door, THUMPING hood twice as the truck ROARS off ...

Dickie emerges from the woods, barking into a cell phone.

DICKIE LEE  
 He'll be at Highway 116 junction in  
 12-13 minutes. Tell the ambulance  
 to be there, engines running.  
 (then)  
 Yep, he's conscious, but he's lost  
 a lot of blood. Spare no effort or  
 expense. He's like a brother to me.

END OF ACT THREE

**ACT FOUR**

CHYRON: TWO WEEKS LATER

EXT. SUMMERTREES FAMILY CEMETARY - SUNSET

An ornate, baroque family cemetery.

An alabaster Angel of Mercy, with a four foot wingspan, hangs over 20 streaked, chalky white marble tombstones.

CLOSE-UP on FAMILY GRAVE MARKER:

*LUCINDA JANUS THORNTON 1980-2000*

Summertrees is visible in the background.

In the foreground a man stands with his back to us, a crutch under his arm. His leg is wrapped in a medical sheath.

REVERSE: to reveal Yates as he bends and leaves a bouquet of sunflowers on his sister's grave.

YATES

Figured if they were good enough  
for Van Gogh.

(standing)

Sometimes it feels like you're  
still here. Like you're still  
painting. At work, busy in the  
world.

(then)

When does that stop?

Pull back to reveal a large oil painting hanging from a nearby oak tree overlooking the cemetery.

The painting is of the same view Yates surveys across his family's land. Yet somehow, by virtue of the artist's talent, the painting is deeper, richer than the real thing.

Yates touches the canvas as he leaves, lingering on the painter's signature, in the corner of the canvas: "JANUS."

INT. SUMMERTREES GUEST HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Frances enters, loaded with grocery bags, to the POP of a firecracker outside. And twice more. She puts the bags down and heads for the back door ...

EXT. BACK YARD - CONTINUOUS

Panic flashes across Frances' face as she spots the source of the noise. She's down the back steps two at a time ...

REVERSE to reveal Dickie Barrett in uniform, Davis and Reynolds beside him, as the boys aim .22 rifles at a target.

BANG! BANG!

Ten yards away a watermelon EXPLODES into a pulpy red mess.

DICKIE

Atta boys. Just like that. One eye closed, squeeze don't jerk.

Frances comes up fast, lasers in on Dickie.

FRANCES

What are you doing?

DICKIE

(smiling)

Well hello there Frances. Just recreating with the boys.

Frances leans over to reassuringly tousle her boy's hair.

FRANCES

I wish you'd checked with me first.

DICKIE

Ahh boys. Momma don't like guns.

FRANCES

No. Momma don't like people overstepping boundaries.

Dickie smiles as he shakes his head; a feisty one.

DICKIE

I can see why Yates likes you.

(winks)

Round here it's a good thing to know how to use a gun. Never know when you might need it.

Frances responds to this macho bullshit by staring him down.

DICKIE (CONT'D)

Okay boys, empty your chambers.

DAVIS

C'mon Mom, why do we have to stop?

REYNOLDS  
Yeah, this is fun.

FRANCES  
We'll do this another time, promise.

REYNOLDS  
With Uncle Dickie?

Frances smiles as she lies to her two boys.

FRANCES  
Yes, of course.

Off Dickie, smiling at the small victory as Frances turns to walk back to the house, her boy's flanking her.

EXT. HALL'S PHARMACY - DAY

Yates parks his company car. Door opens and he swings out his injured leg first.

INT. HALL'S PHARMACY - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Behind the counter in a white pharmacist coat, is MARCI STRONG (35) one of the town's prettier girls 15 years ago. Her eyes light up when she sees Yates limping toward's her.

MARCI  
Oh hey sugar, I heard you got the tar knocked clear out of you. You feeling all right?

Yates and Marci went to high-school, lost their virginity to one another in 10th grade. So she's always, sorta, wondered if she could have landed him.

YATES  
Feel like I'm playing second fiddle to a dead man.  
(lifting bottle)  
Need a refill.

MARCI  
Oh baby, let me take care of you.

She turns to check inventory, giving him a clear view of her heart-shaped ass, still memorable in a pair of faded 501's.

MARCI (CONT'D)  
 (back turned)  
 Talk to me Yater, everything else  
 all right, family good?

YATES  
 Oh yeah, other than the hole in my  
 leg everything's good.

MARCI  
 Matches the hole in your head.

She turns, smiling, loving the familiar flirtacious vibe.

YATES  
 Matching pair.  
 (then)  
 Hey you remember a couple of weeks  
 ago, Frances called a prescription  
 in for a patient of hers?

MARCI  
 Yeah. Sorta.

YATES  
 You remember who it was?

MARCI  
 (slapping his arm)  
 You know I can't tell you that.

Yates smiles as she puts his refilled bottle on the counter.

YATES  
 Course, course.

Beat. Yates takes the bottle.

YATES (CONT'D)  
 I can't tell you how good it is to  
 be home. Surrounded by old friends.

Off Marci, eyes licking up this unexpected attention.

INT. SOUTHERN MEDIA CAR - CONTINUOUS

Yates puts his car into reverse as his cell phone CHIMES. He  
 looks down. The text is from a BLOCKED NUMBER.

CLOSE-UP: "Boyd Suttree"

Off Yates, baffled for a blink before it dawns on him ...

INT. TEENY'S BEAUTY SHOP - DAY

Frances is reclined with wet hair as Teeny stands behind her, working in the shampoo. Around the room, the bottom half of six women extend from underneath old fashioned hair driers.

TEENY

What you make of this place?

FRANCES

I'm getting the hang of it.

TEENY

(lathering)

Umm-hmmmm. People talk about Southern hospitality and all that, but you know, it can be hard to be an outsider down here. I seen that happen more than once.

The mirror frames this giant black woman cradling a petite white woman.

TEENY (CONT'D)

The mistake I seen people make when they first come here: they don't give this place a chance.

(lathering)

You have to give over to the Delta, you hear? You give the Delta a chance, it'll give you a chance. It works in that order.

(rinsing)

People who come down here either like it, or hate it, ain't no in between. Ain't nothin' black and white down here.

Their eyes meet in the mirror.

FRANCES

I see who the real psychiatrist is in this town.

TEENY

(tickled)

There you go girl. There you go.

(then)

Look, I'm passing you off to my #1 girl. She take real good care of you.

Frances turns to see Devoe Shiflet in a white lab coat.

DEVOE  
 (squeezing her shoulder)  
 Oh hey you.

FRANCES  
 Hey.

Frances lifts a magazine to head off small-talk.

DEVOE  
 (running hands thru hair)  
 I just love your hair.

FRANCES  
 (reading)  
 Thanks.

DEVOE  
 I hear you got your hands full.

FRANCES  
 My boys do run me in circles.

Devoe cuts with deft snips.

DEVOE  
 I was talking about Boyd Suttree.

Beat. Frances lowers the magazine.

DEVOE (CONT'D)  
 You need help figuring him out, let  
 me know.  
 (into her ear)  
 Me and him used to have a thing.

Devoe cuts hair for a moment, in silence.

DEVOE (CONT'D)  
 Yeah, my people and Boyd's people  
 go back. As far as duck's go, he's  
 an odd one.

Frances and Devoe's eyes meet in the mirror.

DEVOE (CONT'D)  
 But you should know something.  
 (off Frances)  
 He's not a liar. And he's not  
 delusional.

Frances takes this in.

DEVOE (CONT'D)  
And he doesn't make things up.

Frances is extremely uncomfortable discussing Boyd like this.

FRANCES  
(formal)  
Please give him my best.

Devoe spins Frances around and leans in, face-to-face.

DEVOE  
Point is, don't medicate the  
canary.

Beat as this lands on Frances.

DEVOE (CONT'D)  
I'm sure this place looks simple to  
you.  
(snip)  
Looks simple sure.  
(snip)  
But nothing's been the same since  
that fire.

Devoe spins the chair around and holds up a hand mirror.

DEVOE (CONT'D)  
Like what you see?

FRANCES  
Looks great, thanks.

She hands Devoe cash from her purse, heads for the door.

DEVOE  
Call me anytime. I love to talk.

Off Devoe looking down at the money -- it's the \$100 bill she gave to Frances earlier, the one with the streak marks.

INT. PAROLE BOARD HEARING - DAY

Uncle Ronny looks hopeful in coat and tie, groomed haircut, as he stands overlooking a dais with three empty chairs.

A sign on the dais reads: "Parole Hearings -- Noon Daily."

The clock on the wall reads 12:45 p.m.

A bald, white Parole Advisor in a forgettable suit checks his watch and looks at Uncle Ronny, winking.

EXT. MAIN STREET - AFTERNOON

As Frances exits Teeny's she's stopped by the HEAVEN OF HELL painting across the street illuminated by a beautiful sunset.

She approaches for a closer look, sweeping her eyes across each section until something catches her eye way up high...

CLOSE ON: A court jester, dressed in a black tuxedo, holding a walking cane above his head ...

But his face is not human, but that of a two-headed pig.

Fascinated, she uses her iPhone to snap photos of the painting before her eyes stop on title: HEAVEN OF HELL.

She types into her Iphone ...

CLOSE ON: Google results:

"The mind is its own place, and in itself can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven." -- Paradise Lost

Beat as this quote lands on Frances.

She looks over her shoulder to find Devoe watching from behind the glass of Teeny's Beauty shop.

Their eyes meet, then Devoe closes the blinds.

INT. PAROLE BOARD HEARING -- DAY

Clock on the wall now reads 2:45 p.m.

Uncle Ronny is still standing, still hopeful. His council dozes beside him, mouth open.

A door marked "Do Not Enter," opens as a bailiff slow walks over, avoiding Uncle Ronny's searching eyes.

We lip-read the word "postponed" followed by an alarmed question from Uncle Ronny, to which the bailiff shrugs.

PRE-LAP AUDIO: Sound of BUZZING. Lots of it. Angry BUZZING.

EXT. WOODS - AFTERNOON

We see two women beating a hornet's nest hanging from a branch above their heads ... as hundreds of hornets, angry and alert, emerge from a bashed hole in the side of the nest.

The two women swing, undeterred: determined, angry, fearless.

The first woman is Gynnifer. Her sister, 'Nique, next to her.

Only when there's nothing left of the mud daubed nest do they drop their brooms ... and RUN through the woods ...

Gynnifer's long legs churn as she LAUNCHES off a stump ...

FLYING thru the air, arms spinning, before landing with a splash into a clear pond ... 'Nique right behind her.

UNDERWATER -- at the bottom of the pond the two sisters float, eye-to-eye, rage playing across their faces.

ABOVE the furious hornets swirl looking for the culprits.

EXT. SUMMERTREES - SUNSET

A Southern birthday party in full swing. The backyard tented, wine flows, Zydeco plays, as roasted pigs turn on spits.

White coated staff, supervised by Bird, fan thru the crowd with platters of crawfish beignets and Virginia ham biscuits.

INT. TENTED PAVILLION - NIGHT

As we glide thru the party, the Judge, hair combed back, is holding court in a white suit, like Nero at the Lyceum.

Around him are many of the faces from the story so far: Frances, Bird, Davis and Reynolds dressed in matching seer-sucker suits ... Dickie and his tarty date from Biloxi ... Uncle BB and his wife, Claire ... In the corner, taking it all in, is Jed Howorth, all bow-tied up, and his wife in her best Lilly Pulitzer dress.

INT. CHEVY VOLT - NIGHT

'Nique drives. The glow of the dash reveals welts from the hornets on each woman's face and arms.

'NIQUE

You're going back to work for her.

Gynnifer combs her wet hair out in the visor mirror.

GYNNIFER

Hell no.

'NIQUE

Hell yes. We need you inside that woman's office.

GYNNIFER

For what?

'NIQUE

So you can be her Watson, bitch.

(then)

Can't hear if you're not there.

GYNNIFER

Hear what?

'NIQUE

That crazy country cracker may tell  
her shit about the fire he ain't  
told nobody. We've never had an  
opening like this before.

Beat as this lands.

GYNNIFER

Keep talking.

'NIQUE

I'm going to write a story about  
the bullshit that got pulled on  
Uncle Ronny today.

GYNNIFER

(eye roll)

Like they gonna let you write about that.

'NIQUE

Like they ain't!

GYNNIFER

I mean come on sister, what world  
you living in?

'Nique bobs her head, defiantly.

'NIQUE

That's what I'm going to find out.

Gynnifer dabs cold cream from a jar onto her face.

GYNNIFER

Then what?

'NIQUE

When the time is right we beat a  
big ass hornet's nest

'Nique turns off the highway as she leans over and cranks up  
an angry Kanye song ...

EXT. SUMMERTREES DRIVEWAY - CONTINUOUS

WIDE SHOT as we see 'Nique's car turn onto the Summertrees driveway, barreling toward's the birthday party's warm glow.

INT. TENTED PAVILLION - NIGHT

Bird and the Judge shag on the dance floor as everyone HOOTS. As the song ends, Judge Thornton holds up a glass of wine.

JUDGE THORNTON

I'm tired of waiting for somebody  
to toast to my health so --  
(raising glass)  
To my family, to my community, and  
to my company!

Murmurs of approval from the guests as Uncle BB raises his glass, eyes searching for Yates, nowhere to be seen.

INT. UPPER SUMMERTREES PORCH -- NIGHT

Yates stands face-to-face with DON VALENTINE (55), his baritone voiced main investor he spoke to at the beginning.

Even at 10 PM the Delta heat has both men sweating.

YATES

Don't big-stick me, Don.

DON VALENTINE

I understand your situation, but  
for my firm, right now, we'd rather  
keep you down here improving the  
asset versus a quick sale.  
(sipping Jefferson cup)  
We're patient investors.

YATES

But you said you wanted to go thru--

DON VALENTINE (O.S.)

I know, but we took a hard look at  
the current offer and it doesn't  
reflect Southern Media's true value.  
(then)  
Local influence is what makes the  
world turn, always has. Sell the  
company and that goes away.

Yates goes white at this familiar phrasing.

DON VALENTINE (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Our preferred shares give us right  
of first refusal, and we're  
exercising that.

YATES  
The Judge got to you.

Don considers denying this, but he likes Yates.

DON VALENTINE  
For a decade I've had a big deal in  
Atlanta tied up in a zoning dispute.

Yates shakes his head as he puts it all together.

YATES  
I'm the one who brought you in.

Beat as Don gives him a 'it doesn't work like that' look  
before leaving to go refresh his drink.

Yates looks down on the party below.

He sees Gynnifer and Frances in deep in conversation, clocks  
as Frances leans over to give Gynnifer a long hug.

Yates turns to see the Judge, cheeks flush with whiskey and  
social energy looking magisterial in his white suit.

Yates wills himself composed.

YATES (CONT'D)  
I just spoke to Don Valentine.

The Judge nods, waiting.

YATES (CONT'D)  
I told him I wanted to reject the  
McClatchy offer.

The Judge moves towards Yates, relief on his face as Uncle BB  
enters behind them in a wrinkled linen suit, each hand  
clutching a Jefferson cup full of bourbon.

UNCLE BB  
Whoah! I've been trying to tango  
with you two all night. But noooo.  
Well I got you sons-a-bitches  
trapped now.

Uncle BB wobbles as he spreads his legs in a gunfighter pose.

UNCLE BB (CONT'D)

(to Yates)

You want to tell him? Or should I?

(before he can answer)

Things are going to be a little  
different around here, big brother.

Off Uncle BB taking triumphant sips from both Jefferson cups.

INT. LOWER PORCH - CONTINUOUS

Frances, alone on the lower porch, dials her phone and lifts.

FRANCES

Hi this is Dr. Frances Thornton, do  
me a favor and cancel Boyd  
Suttree's prescription refills for  
Seroquel. Thank you.

She closes the phone and looks out at the party as the Zydeco  
band finishes their encore.

REVERSE ANGLE - We see the instant Frances catches the sound  
of her husband's voice from the porch above her ...

EXT. UPPER PORCH -- CONTINUOUS

Uncle BB wears a confident grin. Yates stares at the floor.

UNCLE BB

How ya like them damn apples Judge?  
Guess your little brother ain't  
such a moron after all?

JUDGE THORNTON

Tell him.

Yates looks up to meet Uncle BB's confident gaze.

YATES

It's complicated.

INT. LOWER PORCH - CONTINUOUS

HOLD ON: Frances face as she eavesdrops on Yates explain to  
Uncle BB what's happened ...

Her hand instinctively touches her throat as panic then  
betrayal flash across her face.

Above her the scuffled sound of Uncle BB charging the Judge.

PRE-LAP DIALOGUE

FRANCES (V.O.)  
 Things happen in life that seem so  
 random, so completely unexpected.

EXT. ROSELAWN MAIN STREET -- NIGHT

We're back in the Teaser.

We've seen this moment before. But not like this.

The sound of a match STRIKING ...

FRANCES (V.O.)  
 It's only later when you look back.

SLO-MO as a match ignites in an orange flare ...

FRANCES (V.O.)  
 That you understand how it all fits  
 together.

... before being BLOWN out.

FRANCES (V.O.)  
 Like a jigsaw puzzle.

A new match IGNITES and lights a red rag jammed into a square metal tin can ... The flaming tin can is thrown off-camera, followed by the sound of SHATTERED glass ...

We PAN to reveal Roselawn, Mississippi main street at 3 a.m.

FRANCES (V.O.)  
 I wish I could have stopped asking  
 questions.

... before stopping on the HEAVEN OF HELL painting.

FRANCES (V.O.)  
 Stopped listening.

Light from the fire off camera illuminates the painting.

FRANCES (V.O.)  
 Stopped piecing everything  
 together.

From deep in the complex artwork the camera finds the image of Pigman, dancing away, walking stick over his head ...

FRANCES

As if that was the solution.

The fire's flickering light makes it look like he's dancing.

FRANCES (V.O.)

I'm not obsessive.

INT. ROSELAWN MOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Inside a torched ground floor motel room a nylon bedspread is melted over a charred body.

In the corner, a lawyer's trial bag sits, smoking.

Along the baseboard is the blackened square metal can, the red rag burnt away.

HOLD ON: The barely legible, heat bubbled label: "All-Purpose Paint Thinner."

FRANCES (V.O.)

I just have to know the truth.

(then)

It's what I do.

(then)

Or did.

EXT. MISSISSIPPI WOODS - DAY

We are deep in backwood's Mississippi. It's raining. The brown delta mud soft as marzipan to the touch.

CLOSE ON a stream of rain transferring from wet magnolia flowers to the open mouths of swamp crocuses.

The rolling piano of Nina Simone's "SINNERMAN" builds as the flat grey light is disrupted by red and blue FLASHING sirens.

A sheriff's truck drives down a dirt road, the swiping wipers obscuring the occupant's faces. Despite the sirens, the truck travels at low speed.

REVERSE ANGLE: The truck stops in front of a shack, a tendrill of smoke coming from the chimney. The shack's patched with old traffic signs. No power lines go to this structure.

The truck door opens and Dickie Barrett takes his time getting out, pausing to put on his sheriff's hat with a kind of courtly formality.

The shack's door opens, revealing Boyd Suttree, shirtless, holding a butcher's knife and a bloody venison tenderloin.

When Boyd recognizes Dickie, he drops everything, and BOLTS from the porch, leaping off-screen ...

TIGHT ON: the bloody meat and knife on the front porch as the drumming rain washes it clean.

We see Boyd zagging thru the woods as Nina Simone sings, "so I ran to the devil, he was waiting, I ran to the devil, he was waiting..." as Dickie lunges, tackling Boyd into the mud.

EXT. SHERIFF'S TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

In the rainy windshield three things are happening at once.

We finally get a fragmented glimpse of the passenger. It's Yates, who looks over the scene unfolding in front of him ...

In the windshield's reflection we see Dickie in the distance mercilessly beating Boyd as "SINNERMAN" builds in intensity.

The camera focuses on Yates, the frantic wipers and shadows making it impossible to decipher if it's rain on the windshield, or tears on his conflicted face.

He shakes a painkiller loose from a bottle, chasing it down with the bottle of Wild Turkey.

CUT TO BLACK:

**END OF EPISODE ONE**