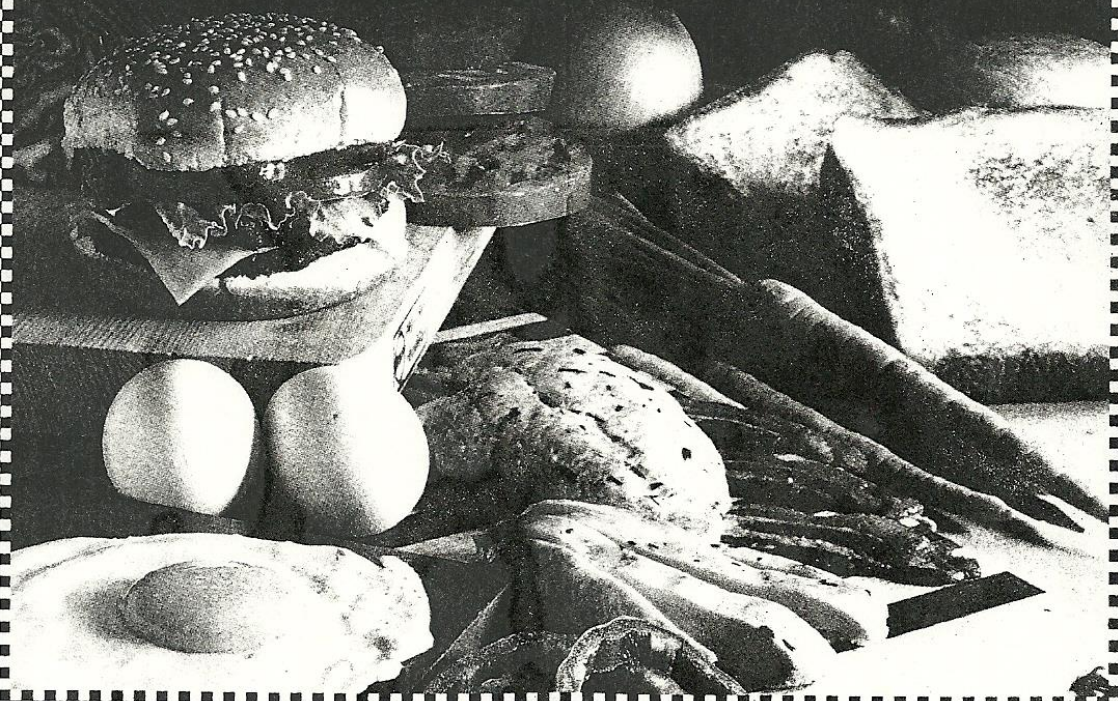


# HUDDLE HOUSE®

“always open, always fresh!”



# **Huddle House Secrets**

**by**

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**A Play in Two Acts**

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## **Cast Of Characters (in order of appearance)**

**NADINE** - 55, Waitress at Huddle House, widowed

**RASCAL** - 35, cook at Huddle House

**REVEREND WHITE** - 42, Pastor at the Baptist Church, Afro-American

**CARL** - 62, richest man in town

**KIMBERLY** - 28, Carl's wife

**BOYD** - 30, carpenter, Kimberly's ex-husband

**CONNIE** - 28, mother of 2, battered wife

**PETE** - 32- Connie's abusive husband

**ACTOR IN AUDIENCE & OFFICER RICKY**- 30's, strong male

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## **Time**

The play begins early Monday morning, 2 AM, in April. April is a quiet month that precedes a bustling tourist season.

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## **Place**

The play takes place inside the Huddle House in Smokey, North Carolina, a small tourist town in the western part of the state.

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# **The Set**

The set is a small 24 hour restaurant where you can get breakfast at any hour of the day, or a simple grilled or fried meal for lunch or dinner. There is a counter running back to front stage right. Behind the counter is the food preparation area consisting of a deep fryer, a grill, a bank of waffle irons, a coffee maker, and refrigerators. There are tables for four at the front of the stage, and a jukebox in the rear. One entrance is on the right, near the front. The second entrance is by the bathroom in the rear.

Nadine will walk into the audience and talk to audience members. There is an actor who is seated in the audience at the beginning of each act.

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## **Summary of Scenes**

### **ACT ONE**

**Scene One - Monday morning, 2 AM**

### **ACT TWO**

**Scene One - Monday morning 3 AM**

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# ACT ONE

[THE LIGHTS COME UP. NADINE IS ON STAGE]

She is holding a coffee pot, a cup, and a menu]

NADINE

(to audience members)

Well, hello there and howdy do!

Welcome to the Huddle House in Smokey, North Carolina!

Yes, my little darlin's, we're still open at 2 AM.

That's cause we're here 24 hours a day, 7 days a week ... holidays included.

Only time we close is Christmas Eve, and then re-open the morning after.

I'm your server, Nadine, or you can call me Naddy. Everyone does.

(To a member of audience) Here's a menu, sweetie ... Coffee?

Honey, we have the best coffee in the whole ever-lovin' world!

And Darlin', if you don't like it, you don't have to pay for it.

That's our motto.

I'll give you some time to look over the menu.

(to ACTOR sitting in audience) Well, sugar, have we made up our mind yet?

[RASCAL ENTERS]

ACTOR (sitting in audience)

I'm thinking about the steak and eggs ... how's the steak?

NADINE

Darlin', the rib-eye here is softer than a baby's bottom ...

so tender you won't know whether to cut it ... or kiss it.

And Rascal, that boy there, is a gourmet chef.

Try one of his Rascal omelets.

They are to die for, honey child.

ACTOR

What's in the Rascal omelet?

RASCAL

Fresh green leaf spinach, baby artichoke hearts in virgin olive oil,

Wisconsin cheddar, and pure Geneva Swiss.

And farm fresh eggs of course.

ACTOR

Do I get grits with that?

RASCAL

It is served with a Nebraska cream of wheat.

ACTOR

Is that grits?

RASCAL

(holding back his anger)

No ... grits are made from corn.

I serve cream of wheat from Nebraska.

ACTOR

Why don't you have grits?

RASCAL

(doing a slow burn) Because I will not serve grits!

I do not want to see a grit.

And I do not want to even *hear* the word, grits.

ACTOR

What's wrong with grits?

RASCAL

Would you *PLEASE* stop using that word!

I HATE THE SOUND IT!

It sounds like ... like ... like ... a grunt you make when you're on the toilet.

Grrrrrr... itttttts. (like he is in a painful constipation, each one more painful)

Grrrrrr... itttttts !

**Grrrrrr... itttttts !!**

Please do not say grits in my presence.

ACTOR

What's his problem? (whispers) Is he ... you know ... ? (waves his wrist)

RASCAL

Hey! That's none of your business!

ACTOR

I'll bet he is ... and his kind has diseases.

RASCAL

And *his kind* is going to spit on your food - if you don't change your attitude.

NADINE

Oh, hush now, Rascal!

ACTOR

(standing up to leave) Cancel my order. I'm going down to the Waffle House.

NADINE

(grabbing onto his arm and getting dragged along)

Oh, come on, sweetie, sit down.

Can't you see he's just teasin' y'all?

He wouldn't spit on anybody's food. Would you Rascal?

(Actor stops dragging her and she lets go of the Actor's arm)

Tell the man you were only foolin' around.

RASCAL

No, I wouldn't really spit on his food?

But I might ... oh ... *piss on his grits*.

ACTOR

That's it! Adios!

RASCAL

I wouldn't cook for you now, anyway.

ACTOR

Faggot!

RASCAL

Faggot? How clever, Mr. Macho!

Please don't run away ...

Don't fight it! Come out ! Come out wherever you are!

**[ACTOR IN AUDIENCE EXITS]**

NADINE

Folks, don't pay Rascal no mind.

He's a great chef, just a touch temperamental.

Rascal, Good Lord, what's got into you?

That's the second customer you chased out of here in as many days.

RASCAL

(crying) I'm sorry, Naddy ... it's just that ...

the world is so quick to judge ... so unfair.

NADINE

(hugging him) It's okay, honey child. Momma Naddy still loves you.

But please, Rascal, don't talk about peenin' in folks' food.

We got enough problems without the Health Department breathin' down our necks.

NADINE (cont'd)

Okay, now straighten yourself up ...  
we got another customer pullin' in ... looks like ...  
Reverend White .... yes, that's his old Cadillac.

RASCAL

Oh, I probably look a mess, don't I?

NADINE

Now, Rascal, I know the good Reverend is a handsome black man, but -

RASCAL

... he's a beautiful black man.  
I'm going to the little boy's room to freshen up.

**[RASCAL EXITS]**

**[REVEREND WHITE ENTERS and sits at the counter]**

NADINE

Well, howdy do there Rev!

REVEREND WHITE

Hello there, Naddy.

NADINE

(pouring him a cup of coffee) Decaf, right? With half and half ...

REVEREND WHITE

Yes, thank you.

NADINE

Right pretty April night, isn't it, Rev?

REVEREND WHITE

Why, yes, it is.

NADINE

It's been quiet, but summer's headin' our way.  
Then all them Florida people will comin' for our cool mountain weather.  
You want the special, Rev?

REVEREND WHITE

Yes, I believe I do.  
Are you doing cooking tonight, Naddy?



[RASCAL ENTERS]

RASCAL

She most certainly is not!

REVEREND WHITE

Oh ... Good evening, Russell.

NADINE

(Whisper) Rascal, you put on enough cologne to sink a battle ship.

RASCAL

(reads the check) Three eggs over easy! Again!

Come on, Rev, live dangerously.

Why don't you try one of my Rascal omelets?

It has fresh chopped green leaf spinach -

REVEREND WHITE

I'm sure it is delicious, Russell, but I'm a creature of habit.

RASCAL

You ought to try something new once in a while, Rev. Walk on the wild side.

You know, you are a most attractive man.

Your skin is luminescent.

NADINE

(whispers) Rascal!

RASCAL

(loud whisper) What? Many religious men are on my side.

REVEREND WHITE

It is an abomination, sayeth the Lord.

RASCAL

Hey, don't knock it until you've tried it, Rev.

NADINE

Rascal, *please*.

We've had enough for one night. Haven't we?

RASCAL

Okay, okay, okay. I'll just cook.

(To himself, but loud enough to hear) He talks about abomination.

I know my Bible.

Adultery is also an abomination.

**[REVEREND WHITE STANDS UP TO LEAVE]**

NADINE

(She grabs onto the Reverend's arm and is dragged along again)

Now, Reverend, please don't take offense.

Rascal's on edge tonight.

RASCAL! HUSH

You're such a rude boy!

Here, let me freshen up your coffee, Rev.

Yes, that's it ... you just set back down ...

RASCAL

(Muttering out loud to himself) Why am I always the bad one?

I get insulted, and *I'm* the bad one.

Faggot and abomination ... that's me ... and rude ...

OH, DAMN IT!

OW! I cut myself.

OW! OOOOOWWWW!

NADINE

Oh, my, that's deep!

Tsk tsk tsk.

Wrap it in a napkin ... while I get the first aid kit.

**[NADINE EXITS]**

RASCAL

Oooooooooooooooooo!

Why did you curse me, Reverend? I never hurt you.

Look at my finger.

You cursed me and I almost cut it off.

I never cut myself. Never.

**[NADINE ENTERS with first aid kit]**

NADINE

Okay, Rascal, let loose that napkin.

RASCAL

Be careful!

NADINE

*Russell!*

I raised three little ones, and now I babysit six grands.

I've bandaged a thousand cuts and scrapes.

Put it under the faucet, here.

RASCAL

Ow! Oooowwww .... Oooooooooowwwwww!  
Watch it now!  
You're going to hurt me, I know it!

NADINE

Honey child, you want to do this yourself?

RASCAL

No ... okay ...  
WAIT A MINUTE !  
Okay ... go ahead ...  
No, wait! ...  
Okay ....  
Ow! Oooowwww .... Oo-

NADINE

There, now how does it feel?

RASCAL

You're done?

NADINE

I told you I've had lots of practice.

RASCAL

It's throbbing. Oh My God! Is it throbbing!

NADINE

Oh Russell ...  
Here, bring the boo boo over to Naddy.  
Momma will kiss it and make it all better.

RASCAL

Careful!

NADINE

Here ... kiss kiss ... poor little boo boo ...  
Kiss kiss ... poor little boo boo boy.  
Now how does that feel?

RASCAL

Better ... it feels better ... much better ... much much *much* better ...  
Thank you Naddy.  
I love you. (he hugs her)

NADINE

Now make yourself useful and put this first aid kit back.

RASCAL

Okay ... (looks up)

Why do you curse me, Lord?

You made me ... I'm just doing what I'm supposed to.

**[RASCAL EXITS]**

NADINE

I swear, I don't know what's got into that boy.

Now he's talking to God ... out loud.

REVEREND WHITE

He believes I put a curse on him.

I can't accept his lifestyle, but curse him? No.

(to himself) I would never curse another soul.

We all have God's soul in us.

NADINE

Are you okay, Reverend?

You look a little ... well ... off, tonight.

REVEREND WHITE

Off?

NADINE

Would you like to talk about it?

REVEREND WHITE

You know where I've been, just like Russell knows.

NADINE

And it goes no further than here, Reverend.

**[RASCAL ENTERS]**

RASCAL

Reverend ... I'm sorry.

I'm not having a good night.

I didn't mean to insult you.

REVEREND WHITE

It's okay, son.

RASCAL

Hug?

REVEREND WHITE

Perhaps a handshake would be more appropriate.

RASCAL

Oh, you have such a *powerful* grip!  
Do you work out?  
You look like you do.

NADINE

Okay, let go of his hand now, Rascal.  
The Reverend looks hungry.

RASCAL

Okay ... okay ... One special, coming up ... with three eggs ... over easy ... *again*.

REVEREND WHITE

I'll be right back.

**[REVEREND WHITE EXITS TO THE BATHROOM IN THE BACK]**

NADINE

Uh oh ... the gold Mercedes just pulled in.  
Rascal, please put a lid on it for the rest of the night.  
He's friends with Jimmy.  
You say something wrong ... and you're history.

RASCAL

I just wish he'd do something with his hair –  
Shave himself bald, or get a hairpiece.  
Those three long strands look silly glued around the top of his head.  
I'll bet when he unrolls them at night they touch the floor.

Oh, will you look at what Miss Thing is wearing!  
That dress costs more than I make in a month.  
Look at her ... look at the way she sells those tities!  
If I had breasts like that, I would never run out of straight men.

You think they're real, Naddy?

I don't.

They look bigger than the last time she was in here.  
I'll bet she had them done in New York. Or Beverly Hills.  
Where's the best place to get your breasts done, Naddy?  
East coast or west?

NADINE

Rascal! I said to put a lid on it!

**[CARL AND KIMBERLY ENTER. They take a table in back]**

NADINE

(calling from behind the counter) Evening, folks! Coffee?

KIMBERLY

Decaf for me.

CARL

High octane for me, Naddy. I want to party!

KIMBERLY

Carl, honey, you have the energy of a man half your age.

RASCAL

(Whispering) Carl, honey, you have the energy of a man half your hair - I mean age.

NADINE

(giggles) Stop it, Rascal.

CARL

(points to the jukebox) Want to dance, baby doll?

KIMBERLY

Here?

CARL

Why not?

KIMBERLY

Play something slow. My feet are killing me.

CARL

Well, sit yourself down, darlin', and let me rub them for you.

Come on, now ...

Have I ever told you how beautiful your feet are, Kimmy?

RASCAL

I'm going to be sick.

NADINE

(putting her hand over Rascal's mouth) Hush, now, Rascal!

CARL

How's that, sweetness? Better?

KIMBERLY

Much.

CARL

Now let's see what they have on that there jukebox.

(Puts in a coin and "Crazy" by Patsy Kline begins playing)

How's that?

KIMBERLY

(smiling) It's my favorite and you know it.

**[Kimberly joins Carl in a slow dance]**

Carl ... honey?

CARL

Yes, darlin'.

KIMBERLY

Your hand is a little too close to my caboose ...

There are others watchin'.

CARL

Sorry, sweetness.

When I hold you, feel your body pressed to me, I forget where I am.

I smell your perfume, you start breathing in my ear, and my mind goes blank.

You're the only woman that could ever do that to me.

NADINE

(bringing coffee over to their table)

Here you go, folks, after you're finished dancin' ...

You want waffles again, Mrs. Carl?

KIMBERLY

Oh yes! With a scoop of maple walnut ice cream this time.

NADINE

I'm sorry, hon. We don't have ice cream.

KIMBERLY

No? Well, you ought to.

CARL

You want ice cream, baby doll?

KIMBERLY

I would die for some of Rascal's waffles with maple walnut ice cream on top.

CARL

Well, then let's get you what your heart desires.

Here, Naddy. Have the cook get my baby doll some maple walnut ice cream.

He can keep the change, if he makes it back here ***pron-to.***

NADINE

Mr. Carl, that's a hundred dollar bill!

RASCAL

I'll be back ***pron-to!***

**[RASCAL EXITS OUT THE BACK ON THE RUN]**

KIMBERLY

Carl, you spoil me.

CARL

You were meant to be spoiled, baby doll.

NADINE

Mr. Carl, you want anything from the griddle when he comes back?

CARL

Yes, Naddy, throw me on a steak.

(Squeezes Kimberly and whispers) I need to keep my strength up, tonight.

NADINE

(looking in a frig) Well, it looks like we're out of rib eyes out here.

Watch the register for me, folks. I'll be in the back gettin' some more.

**[NADINE EXITS]**

KIMBERLY

Carl, honey, please go easy ... the cardiologist said to watch your cholesterol.

CARL

Cholesterol shmolesterol! I'll dance on his grave.

KIMBERLY

Carl ... the music stopped.

CARL

How about another song?



KIMBERLY

Okay ... if you promise to not get so ... touchy feely.

**[Carl puts another coin in the jukebox. They start dancing again]**

CARL

Kimmy?

KIMBERLY

Yes, Carl.

CARL

You make me feel young again.

KIMBERLY

Yes, Carl.

CARL

How do I make you feel?

KIMBERLY

Well ... important ... for one thing.

CARL

That's the first thing that pops into your mind - important?

KIMBERLY

Carl, honey, it's not what you think.

Sure, I like the fact you're important in this town.

And I'm important because you chose me for your wife.

But I was thinking about a different kind of important.

It's knowing that ... what I want ... and how I feel ... really matters to you.

To me, that's the greatest turn on there is.

CARL

So I turn you on, do I?

KIMBERLY

Don't I show you?

CARL

What do you say we check into that motel down in Bryson?

KIMBERLY

The one with the mirrors and the pornos?

You're a stud!

CARL

NADINE! MAKE THAT TWO STEAKS!  
RAW!

KIMBERLY

Carl ... No Polaroids this time.  
I mean it.  
No Polaroids.  
If someone ever got their hands on those pictures, I'd die. I'd just die.

CARL

No one will ever see them but me, Kimmy.  
They're locked in my safe.  
I take them out when no one is around and look at you, the way God made you.

KIMBERLY

(looking down) Carl, you need to cool off.

**[NADINE ENTERS]**

NADINE

Mr. Carl, did you say somethin' while I was in the back?

CARL

No. The Mrs. and I were just having a little fun.  
(Whispers to Kimberly) Stand in front of me, baby doll. This is embarrassing.

**[REVEREND WHITE ENTERS]**

Oh, Reverend White! We didn't know you were here.

**(Carl stands behind Kimberly to hide his 'condition'. It is funny to watch.)**

REVEREND WHITE

Good evening, Mr. Carl ... Miss Kimberly.

CARL

(Whispers) Try to move with me baby doll.

KIMBERLY

(Whispers) Let me know when it's all clear.  
(Looks down) You stallion!

CARL

(Whispers back) Stop it, now. I'm trying to concentrate.

REVEREND WHITE

The children were very grateful for the Little League uniforms you donated. They got together and made you a big thank you card ... in 120 colors.

KIMBERLY

I designed the back of the uniforms myself.

REVEREND WHITE

It was quite creative, Miss Kimberly.

CARL

(Whispers) All clear.

KIMBERLY

Carl, let's sit down and talk.  
You've run me ragged the whole night. What time is it?

CARL

It's half past 2, baby doll.

KIMBERLY

2:30 in the morning?! Don't you ever get tired?

CARL

There's plenty of time to rest when we're in the ground. Isn't that true, Rev?

REVEREND WHITE

I imagine.

CARL

Well, if we're going to sit and talk, Reverend, why don't you join us?

REVEREND WHITE

This is most gracious of you, Mr. Carl.

NADINE

Anything else I can get you folks until Rascal gets back?

CARL

Baby doll, you see anything else you want until the ice cream gets here?

KIMBERLY

Well, I have a *terrible* sweet tooth tonight.

NADINE

Well ... we have peach pie, apple pie, pecan pie, coffee cake, rice pudding -

KIMBERLY

Did you say *pecan pie*? Is it a good one?

NADINE

It's a killer.

Like everything here, if you don't like it, you don't have to pay for it.

REVEREND WHITE

You know, I wouldn't mind some pecan pie myself.

CARL

That settles it – Naddy, bring 3 big slices of pecan pie.

NADINE

Coming right up!

CARL

So Reverend, what brings you out so late?

REVEREND WHITE

Ah ... ah ... a bereavement call.

CARL

Really? Who died?

REVEREND WHITE

I don't think you knew him – it was someone in my congregation.

CARL

What?! I bet I know almost everyone in Smokey.

KIMBERLY

Carl, can we please change the subject?

I don't like speaking about the dead.

CARL

Sure, baby doll. Anything you say.

You know, I'm starving now.

Naddy, how are we coming on that pie?

NADINE

Be right there, honey child!

REVEREND WHITE

Well, what brings you folks out so late on a Sunday night?

CARL

A late meeting over in Charlotte.  
Brought Kimberly along to get her opinion.  
I like hearing her point of view before I buy a new business.

KIMBERLY

Please, Carl, let's not talk about business anymore tonight.

CARL

Now, baby doll, you don't want to talk about the dead,  
and you don't want to talk about business.  
What do you want to talk about?

KIMBERLY

Well, we have a Reverend with us ... let's talk about something spiritual.

NADINE

Excuse me. Here's your pie.

KIMBERLY

Oh yes!

NADINE

If you want anything else, just sing out.

CARL

Great pie!

KIMBERLY

Carl, honey, please close your mouth when you chew.

CARL

Sorry, baby doll.

REVEREND WHITE

What part of spirituality would you like to talk about, Miss Kimberly?

KIMBERLY

Well ... like ... does God ever speak to you? Directly, I mean.

REVEREND WHITE

Well, yes, sometimes He does.  
Not as often as I'd like ... but He does.

KIMBERLY

What does He sound like?

REVEREND WHITE

Sound like?

Hmmm.

No one ever asked me that question before.

Well ... He sounds mostly ... disappointed.

CARL

Disappointed?! What's He disappointed about?

He's got everything!

REVEREND WHITE

I believe God is disappointed by the way people act towards one another.

He didn't want the world to turn out the way it did.

CARL

Well, He's God.

He can change it all if He doesn't like it!

KIMBERLY

Excuse me, but what does His voice sound like, Reverend?

Like a white man's, or a black man?

CARL

You ask the craziest questions, Kimberly.

Everyone knows Jesus was a white man.

REVEREND WHITE

Well ... to me ... he sounds like a black man.

CARL

No way! Jesus was white!

REVEREND WHITE

I think Mr. Carl is also right, Miss Kimberly.

I believe if Jesus spoke to Mr. Carl, he would sound like a white man.

I think God speaks in the way people best understand.

CARL

I never heard God, so I wouldn't know.

KIMBERLY

I think I have.

CARL

Baby doll, maybe I leave you alone too much.

KIMBERLY

No, Carl. It happened when you were there.  
Remember that night, last week, when we had that terrible thunderstorm?

CARL

No.

KIMBERLY

Well, you were sleeping when it started.  
I shook you, but you wouldn't get up.  
I never saw a person sleep so sound.

CARL

My momma, may she rest in peace, use to say I slept like a saint, without a worry in the world.

KIMBERLY

Let me my story, Carl -  
I don't mean to be rude, but I've wanted to talk about this with a religious person.

Anyway, on the night of that thunderstorm, I couldn't fall back asleep.  
I had something on my mind that wouldn't go away.  
You know what, Carl ... we've been arguing about it.

CARL

Oh, that.

Kimberly wants to have a baby. I don't.

REVEREND WHITE

Why not, if you don't mind my asking?

KIMBERLY

Carl thinks he's too old.

CARL

That's not the main reason, darlin'.  
Tell him the main reason.

KIMBERLY

Well ... Carl says he loves me too much to share me.

CARL

What do you think about that, Rev?  
Am I being too selfish?  
Kimberly thinks I am.

KIMBERLY

Before you answer, Reverend, let me tell what happened that night.

Well, like I said, I couldn't sleep because of the terrible lightning and thunder.

Then I heard a tapping on our bedroom window. (She taps on the table)

I got up and went over to it, but nothing was there.

As soon as I got back into bed, the tapping started again. (She taps on the table again)

I got up again, but still there was nothing there.

When I got back in bed, it started up again. (She taps on the table)

I closed my eyes and prayed.

I said, "Jesus, is that you?"

Then you know what happened, Reverend?

REVEREND WHITE

God answered you?

KIMBERLY

Yes. And do you know who He sounded like?

Like Carl.

CARL

Well, now, that's interesting.

KIMBERLY

And he sounded like my father.

And my grandfather.

He sounded like every man I ever respected.

Every man that told me what to do.

And then I realized no man has ever had my problem.

And I wasn't going to listen to the wisdom of any man.

That's when she appeared to me.

REVEREND WHITE

She?

KIMBERLY

Mary, the Mother of God.

CARL

And what did she say?

KIMBERLY

She said ... oh look, there's the cook!



[RASCAL ENTERS]

CARL

She said what?!

NADINE

There you are! It's about time, Rascal.

RASCAL

(Out of breath) I hurried as fast I could.

I swear, I think they only hire the inbred to work the night shift at the Supersol.

The checkout girl had only four teeth - and each one was green or brown!

Ugh! Disgusting!

By the way, they were out of maple walnut so I got vanilla.

**WHAT ARE Y'ALL DOING!**

CARL

What's it look like? We're eating pecan pie.

RASCAL

But you'll ruin your appetites!

KIMBERLY

You know what? Let's try the pie with that ice cream.

Here, put some of it here on my plate, please.

RASCAL

I WILL NOT!

NADINE

Now, Rascal, they paid a lot of money for that ice cream.

Scoop 'em out some!

RASCAL

But it was supposed to go on my waffles!

CARL

You know, son, you're awfully temperamental.

Give the lady what she wants.

KIMBERLY

Put it on the side of the pie, please.

REVEREND WHITE

If you don't mind, I'd like some, too.

CARL

Oh, what the hell, put some here, too.

NADINE

Maybe you better let me do that, Rascal.

RASCAL

Yes, you scoop it out, Naddy.

I can't do anything right tonight.

I'm cursed.

Look, if anyone wants something more substantial than ice cream and pie.

I'll be in the back peelin' potatoes – or Grrrrr .... iiiiiittts.

**[RASCAL EXITS]**

CARL

Why don't you take some of the ice cream for yourself, Nadine?

NADINE

Thank you, Mr. Carl. Don't mind if I do.

CARL

And sit down and join us.

NADINE

Oh no. Jimmy would bust a gut.

CARL

Now, Nadine, you just set yourself down here and don't worry.

I'll handle ol' Jimmy if he says something.

KIMBERLY

He owes Carl a lot of money. Carl has the deed to ....

CARL

Now, baby doll, that's nobody's business.

**[THERE IS THE SOUND OF A CAR WITH A LOUD MUFFLER OUTSIDE]**

NADINE

(stands up) Uh oh ...

**[BOYD ENTERS. He has been drinking.]**

CARL

Now baby doll, just take it easy.

BOYD

(Sits down at the counter by himself) Evening Naddy.

NADINE

(Whispers) Boyd, we don't want any trouble here.

BOYD

There won't be any trouble.  
Not from me.  
Let me have the special.

NADINE

We'll all out of the special.

BOYD

Well, then, how about a burger?

NADINE

No burgers left either.  
Made the last one an hour ago.

BOYD

Okay, then give me what they're having.

NADINE

We're out of that, too.  
(Whispers) Boyd, maybe it's better that you go.

BOYD

Naddy, there ain't no other place open to get a cooked meal at this hour.  
Come on, darlin'.  
Feed a hungry man who couldn't sleep and didn't have nothin' to eat at home.  
(He looks at Kimberly) Used to be a lot of food at home, once upon a time.

KIMBERLY

Carl, let's go.

CARL

Take it easy, baby doll. I have it all under control.

NADINE

Boyd, I don't like you bothering our customers.

BOYD

Who am I bothering?  
Am I bothering you Reverend?

REVEREND WHITE

Well .... no.

BOYD

(stares at Kimberly) Anybody else here I'm bothering?  
Anybody?  
\Speak up now ...  
See there, Naddy.  
Nobody is being bothered.

CARL

You're bothering my wife.  
Turn yourself around..

KIMBERLY

Carl, don't ... please.

BOYD

Excuse me?

CARL

I said, you're bothering my wife, Boyd, so turn yourself around and leave her be.

BOYD

Leave her be? Why, I haven't done one thing to her.

NADINE

Here, have some coffee, Boyd.

REVEREND WHITE

Well, I best be running along.

CARL

No, Reverend.  
Stay and finish your conversation with Kimberly.

KIMBERLY

No, Carl, the mood's broken.  
We should leave, too.

CARL

This was bound to happen sometime, baby doll.

BOYD

Where's the cream and sugar, Naddy?

NADINE

You best be drinking it black and strong, the condition you're in.

BOYD

Okay. Black and ...

(Takes out a pint bottle and pours into his coffee)

... strong.

NADINE

Put that away, Boyd!

(She takes away his coffee cup and dumps it out)

BOYD

Hey! I ain't payin' for that.

NADINE

(pours a fresh cup) That one was on the house.

Now, drink this one ... black.

BOYD

(Lights up a cigarette) Ain't nothing like a cigarette with cup of coffee, now is there?

NADINE

Put that out!

You know there's no smoking in here.

BOYD

Well, get me some of that pie they're having and I might.

**[KIMBERLY COUGHS]**

CARL

Are you okay, baby doll?

BOYD

Never could stand my smoking, could you *Baby Doll*?

NADINE

Okay, here's some pie. Now put out that smoke.

BOYD

How come they got ice cream with their pie and I don't?

NADINE

On account that's Mr. Carl's ice cream.

BOYD

Did he buy up all the ice cream in this town?  
Like he bought up all the businesses ...  
like he bought up all the *people*?

KIMBERLY

Carl, let's go.  
(coughs) The cigarette smoke is giving me a headache.

CARL

No. I'm not leaving because of the likes of him.  
You know I'm not made that way.

HEY YOU! BOYD!  
YEAH YOU!  
THAT'S RIGHT! I'M TALKING TO YOU, BOYD!  
PUT OUT THAT CIGARETTE!  
IT'S BOTHERING MY WIFE!

BOYD

Who you givin' orders to? I don't work for you no more.

CARL

PUT IT OUT!

BOYD

Now, why don't you come on over here, old man, and make me put it out?

KIMBERLY

Carl ... please.

CARL

I'm not afraid of him.

NADINE

Do you want me to call the Sheriff, Mr. Carl?

CARL

Kimberly?

KIMBERLY

No ... he's been drinking ... going to jail won't improve him.

BOYD

Now look at that ... she still cares about me.

NADINE

Boyd, mind me now! Put out that cigarette or leave.

BOYD

I ain't putting nothin' out until I get some of that ice cream.

KIMBERLY

Naddy, give him some of our ice cream already!

BOYD

You heard her.

CARL

That isn't the way to handle him, Kimmy.

NADINE

Boyd, I swear, if I have any more trouble out of you ...  
I'm gonna smack you with one of these frying pans and waffelize your face.

BOYD

Naddy, you know you look cute when you're angry.

**[RASCAL ENTERS]**

RASCAL

Is anybody still hungry for ...  
OH MY GOD!

BOYD

What's your problem, pal?

RASCAL

I have a name you know!

BOYD

What is your name? Dusty or Rusty or ... I remember it was an odd name for a faggot.

RASCAL

A WHAT?!  
What did you call me? (reaches for frying pan)

NADINE

That's it!

(she takes the frying pan from Rascal)

I warned you, Boyd!

RASCAL

Give him one for me, Naddy.

BOYD

Okay, hold off now!

I'll apologize ...

I'm sorry, fellah ... whatever your name is.

RASCAL

It's Rascal.

NADINE

Boyd, now you finish what's on your plate ... and then get!

BOYD

(Grumbles to himself) Jesus ... I've never seen such lousy service.

**[CONNIE ENTERS. She puts her hand over her face and sits by herself in back.]**

NADINE

Be right with you, hon. Coffee?

CONNIE

Yes, m'am.

NADINE

Boyd, you better behave yourself while I'm over there taking an order.

(walks over with pot and cup)

Good eve ..... Connie Dellman, is that you?!

CONNIE

Hello Naddy.

NADINE

How long has it been – eight years, nine?

How is life treat-

Good Lord, honey child, what happened to your face?!

CONNIE

Please ... Naddy.

I have both my children sleepin' out in the station wagon ...

I need to stay awake ...

I have to think ... it's so hard to think ....

NADINE

Let me get you some ice for the swelling.



CONNIE

I don't want to be a bother.

NADINE

It's no bother, sweetheart.

[She gets up and whispers to Rascal. He nods then **RASCAL EXITS**]

NADINE

(sits back down with Connie) Who did this to you?

CONNIE

Naddy, please, I can't think.  
I have to make plans.

NADINE

Do you have any family around here you can stay with?

CONNIE

No.

NADINE

Any friends?

CONNIE

Well ... no.

NADINE

How much money do you have, darlin'?

CONNIE

(puts crumpled money on table)

I don't know ... five ... six ... seven dollars ...

NADINE

Here, take this.

CONNIE

No, I couldn't. That's your tip money.

NADINE

It's perfectly all right, darlin'.  
And here ... here's my house key.  
You'll stay with me.

CONNIE

I don't want to put you out.

NADINE

Put me out!  
Why darlin', I'm thankful for the company.  
I have 2 bedrooms that aren't even used.  
They're yours as long as you need 'em.

**[RASCAL ENTERS with a plastic bag filled with ice]**

NADINE

Connie, darlin', put this here ice up against your eye.  
Oh, I bet that hurts ...

RASCAL

Tsk tsk tsk.

NADINE

Rascal, don't you have something else you need to be doing?

Now you just stay here and catch your breath.  
When you're ready ... drive over to my place and let yourself in.  
Make yourself right to home ... stay as long as you like.  
If you or the little ones get hungry, help yourself to the frig.  
There's leftovers on the bottom shelf.  
Spaghetti and meatballs.  
And sweet potato pie up top.

CONNIE

Thank you, Naddy.

**[PETE ENTERS]**

NADINE

What's wrong? You look like you've seen the devil himself.

PETE

There you are.  
Come on, it's time to go home.

CONNIE

(whimpering) No ... Pete .... no ....

NADINE

Let go of her.

RASCAL

(grabs a big skillet) You animal! Let her go!

PETE

Hey! I got a right to take my wife home!  
She's got our kids sleeping in the car in the damn parking lot, for Christ Sakes!

NADINE

Them kids is just fine.  
We got a watchful eye on them.

RASCAL

Yeah!

NADINE

And we'll be checking them for bruises and the such.

PETE

What do you mean by that?

NADINE

You know what I mean.  
Now them young 'uns go where she goes, and she don't want to go with you!  
So get! You make any more trouble here and I'm calling the Law.

PETE

Back off, woman!  
I'm taking my wife and we're going!  
(He pushes Nadine into Rascal and Rascal hides behind her)  
You too, faggot! Back off!  
You hear me?  
Back off!

NADINE

We'll back off when you take off.

PETE

I mean to take off.  
As long as everyone just minds their own business while I get my wife.

CONNIE

No ...

NADINE

Do you hear that?  
She don't want to go with you!

PETE

I say she does. Now come on, woman!

CARL

This isn't right.  
Somebody ought to do something.

KIMBERLY

Carl, you let them work this out among themselves.  
You have a bad heart.

PETE

Girl, don't make me angry now!  
Let's git!

NADINE

(grabs onto Pete) Leave her be!

RASCAL

Yes, you!  
You ... you ... animal!

PETE

Would you get off of me, woman!

**[Pete pushes Nadine away again, and she falls down, in pain]**

NADINE

Ow! My back!

PETE

Connie, mind me now!  
We're going!

BOYD

Whoa, there.  
Seems to me things are getting a little outa control here, fella.  
Let's all settle down.  
Naddy, are you okay?

NADINE

I hurt my back... he knocked the wind out of me.

BOYD

Pete, you shouldn't have done that.

PETE

Oh yeah?  
And what are you going to do?

**[Pete takes a swing which Boyd ducks under easily.]**

BOYD

Pete, now you shouldn't have taken a swing at me, neither.  
Now I got to give you an ass-kicking.

PETE

You ain't kicking nothing, Boyd!

**[Boyd hits Pete in the stomach.]**

RASCAL

Hit him again, Boyd!  
Make him vomit!

**[Boyd hits Pete again in the stomach, doubling him up]**

RASCAL

Oooooowwww! That hurt!  
That's it, Boyd!  
Knock the puke out of him!

Now punch 'em in the face!  
Give him a black eye like he gave her!

**[Boyd hits Pete in the face, knocking him down.]**

RASCAL

Oooowww!  
That's going to smart!  
Now kick him in the balls, Boyd!  
Knock his balls right off!

BOYD

Hey, Rascal, take it easy.  
I don't need a cheerleader.

RASCAL

Sorry! I got carried away.

BOYD

They tried to do this the nice way, Pete.  
(He lifts Pete to his feet)

Now you gotta go and the lady stays.

**[Boyd opens the door, then kicks Pete out of it. PETE EXITS]**

PETE

(Offstage, pounding on the door) YOU AIN'T SEEN THE LAST OF ME YET!

BOYD

That's okay.  
There's more ass-kicking if you come back.

PETE

(Offstage) WE'LL SEE ABOUT THAT!  
YOU AIN'T SEEN THE LAST OF ME!  
I'M TELLING YOU, YOU AIN'T SEEN THE LAST OF ME YET!

NADINE

Will somebody help me up, now?  
(Rascal helps her up)

RASCAL

Do you want ice?

NADINE

For my butt? There ain't enough in the machine for that.

BOYD

(talking to Connie) Are you okay, m'am?

CONNIE

Yes ... thank you, Boyd.  
I'm sorry, y'all, about bringin' this trouble here.

NADINE

It ain't your fault, honey.  
Nothing to be sorry for ...  
Boyd, thanks for helping out.

BOYD

Ah, it was no big thing.

NADINE

Maybe we should call the Law on him. What do you think?

BOYD

Nah, I think we've seen the last of him.  
I know his kind.  
All hot air.  
No real gumption.

CARL

Damn, that was exciting!  
Nothing like a little fracas to get the heart pounding.

KIMBERLY

Yes ... exciting ... can we go now, please?

CARL

Naddy, you give Boyd here whatever he wants, and put it on my tab.

BOYD

I can pay my own way.

CARL

Just trying to be friendly, Boyd.

BOYD

Friendly? Tell me you didn't say that.

You call taking a man's wife being *friendly* ... do you, *Mr. Carl*?

KIMBERLY

Don't answer him, Carl.

NADINE

Boyd, you sit down and we'll fix you up something special.  
Rascal, cook up one of your omelets for Boyd here.

RASCAL

One Rascal Omelet coming up!

CARL

Baby doll, maybe it's time we got passed this.

KIMBERLY

Not here ... in front of everybody.  
Carl, this is embarrassing.

BOYD

What? You think I'm not embarrassed, Kim?  
Everywhere I go, I hear what people are whisperin' behind my back.  
They say, "There goes Boyd. Mr. Carl stole his wife away."

CARL

Why, I never stole anything my whole life.  
Everything I have, I've earned.  
Including this fine woman who became my wife.

BOYD

Yeah? And just how did you earn her, Carl?

KIMBERLY

Carl, **PLEASE!** I don't want to get into this here.

CARL

Kimmy, if this conversation is disturbing you, we can take it outside.

KIMBERLY

Carl, I don't want to continue it outside ... or anywhere!  
I'm leaving. Are you coming with me, or staying here?

CARL

Baby doll, running away isn't going to solve anything.  
Let's lance this boil and let the puss run out.

RASCAL

Oh! That's disgusting!

KIMBERLY

Good night, then.

BOYD

Don't look so surprised, Carl.  
She has a real bossy side to her.  
Or have you kept that hidden, *Baby Doll*?

KIMBERLY

Quiet, you. It's not going to work, so forget it.  
Carl, are you coming? CARL!

BOYD

(Whistles like to a dog) Heel, boy! HEEL!

CARL

I ain't no dog, so cut it out!

BOYD

Sure you are. And you're running after ... the bitch in heat.

**[There is dead silence as Kimberly reels like she's been punched in the gut.]**

KIMBERLY

Oh .... that's it! You filthy animal!  
You disgusting filthy animal!  
When will you just SHUT THE FUCK UP and GO AWAY!

CARL

Kimberly?! The Reverend is here!



KIMBERLY

Carl, he's pushing my buttons again.  
I warned you. He doesn't want to work things out.  
He just wants to push me and push me and push me ... until I get down on his level.

BOYD

What did I say?

REVEREND WHITE

I think we're better off leaving this discussion for a different time.  
Mr. Carl? What do you say?

CARL

If my baby doll wants it that way, then that's the way it's going to be.

KIMBERLY

Thank you. Can we PLEASE leave now?

BOYD

(Whistles) What do you smell, boy?  
Do you have the scent? Go get that bitch!

KIMBERLY

Oh, that's it!

**[KIMBERLY STOMPS OVER AND SLAPS BOYD]**

CARL

Kimberly?!

BOYD

You always did like to get physical, didn't you *Baby Doll*?  
Don't you worry, Carl.  
You're going to have a good time tonight.

KIMBERLY

Do you see now what he does to me, Carl?  
This isn't some silly puss boil-

RASCAL

Will everyone please stop with all this puss, already!  
This is a restaurant and it's positively disgusting.

KIMBERLY

Oh, shut up, Rascal!

RASCAL

... sorry ...

KIMBERLY

Carl, please ... take me home!

**[PETE ENTERS. He is wearing a long coat.]**

CONNIE

Pete!

RASCAL

(Ducks down behind counter) Oh no!

PETE

I told you I'd be back.

**[He pulls out a sawed off shut gun]**

Now, I'm in charge here!

**[He fires shotgun in the air]**

Hey you! ... Behind the counter.

RASCAL

(from under counter) Yes ...

PETE

Stand up where I can see you!

RASCAL

Okay ... okay ... Don't shoot me ...

Please don't shoot me ... I'm only the cook.

PETE

And you! (to Boyd)

BOYD

Yeah?

PETE

Get over here, Boyd!

Move!

**[Boyd doesn't move.]**

I said MOVE!

**[Boyd still doesn't move. THE LIGHTS DIM. ]**

I got ways to make you move.

**[Pete fires the shotgun again on a dark stage]**

**[INTERMISSION]**

# Huddle House Secrets

## ACT TWO

[THE LIGHTS ARE DIM ONSTAGE. ALL THE ACTORS ARE THERE.  
NADINE AND RASCAL WALK OUT INTO AUDIENCE]

NADINE (to audience)

We got ourselves a real situation here.  
Most fuss since we was robbed by that drug addict from New York City.  
What was it, Rascal, three years ago?

RASCAL

Four.

NADINE

Four then.  
That boy come in here all glassy eyed and nervous ...  
pulled out a meat cleaver and started screamin':  
"Gimme money! I want your money!"  
What could I do?  
Honey, I wasn't about to get a hand chopped off!  
Gave him everything in the register.  
What was in the till, Rascal?

RASCAL

Eighty-six dollars ... It was a slow night.

NADINE

Soon as he got the money, he run out.  
Whole thing couldn't have lasted more than five minutes.  
By the time I caught my breath, he was gone.

Police caught him a couple of hours later speedin' on the Interstate.

But this here situation has a whole different feel to it.  
Looks like we're gonna be here for a while, gettin' heart attacks and the such.  
That boy up there with the shotgun might do something stupid like killing someone.  
(To audience) What do y'all think?  
Think he's gonna kill someone?  
Maybe everyone?

RASCAL

Don't talk like that, Naddy!

NADINE

Well, he could, Rascal.  
Only thing to do is ... hunker down and see what happens.

Sorry for bringing y'all into this.  
We just wanted to show you some of Smokey's late night folks.  
Interesting people even though this is a small town.  
Now we got this here situation.

**[PETE WALKS INTO AUDIENCE, PUMPS THE SHOTGUN, FIRES]**

PETE

What are y'all doin'?!  
Didn't I tell you to get back up there with the others?

NADINE

All right, I'm going ... I'm going.

PETE

That goes for you, too.

RASCAL

Hey! Don't shove that thing up my butt!  
It's hot!

PETE

I thought you'd like that.

RASCAL

That's not funny!

PETE

Both of you sit at the counter, with the rest of your friends.

**[The lights go on and all the actors are sitting at the counter now. From left to right are Boyd, Reverend White, Carl, Kimberly, then Naddy and Rascal. Connie is still sitting by herself at a back table.]**

**[PETE RELOADS THE THREE SHELLS HE SHOT OFF]**

PETE

What're you lookin' at?

ACTOR IN AUDIENCE

Nothing.

PETE

Don't say it like that.  
I ain't nothin'.  
I got five shells back in the breech and one sitting anxious in the chamber.  
(taps pocket) Hear that?  
I got a whole box of shells in my pocket here.  
Double aught buck.  
Gonna turn whoever I aim at into Swiss cheese.  
You wanna see what it can do?  
No ... then mind your own business.

ACTOR IN AUDIENCE

Yes, sir.

PETE

What'd you say?

ACTOR IN AUDIENCE

I said, "Yes, sir."

PETE

Hey, I like that. Say it again.

ACTOR IN AUDIENCE

Yes, sir.

PETE

That sounds real good. Now, let me hear everyone at the counter say it.

ALL ACTORS ON STAGE

Yes, sir!

PETE

(To whole audience) Now all of you!  
Come on, say it!  
YES SIR!

THE WHOLE AUDIENCE

Yes, sir!

PETE

LOUDER, DAMN IT!

THE WHOLE AUDIENCE

YES, SIR!

**[PETE WALKS BACK ON STAGE]**

PETE

I didn't hear you say nothin',  
Mr. Big Man Boyd, Gonna Give Me More of an Ass-Kicking When I Come Back.  
How come you're so quiet now?

BOYD

You're holding the reason, Pete.

PETE

Yes, I am.  
Now let me hear you say, "Yes, sir," like everyone else.

BOYD

(With great difficulty) Yes ... sir.

PETE

You hear that, honey?  
You hear how he's respecting me now?

CONNIE

Pete, you're scaring me! Please put that shotgun away!

PETE

Scaring you?  
You're the one who made me get this.  
You're the one that wouldn't come home with me.  
Got Boyd here to kick my ass.  
Only he ain't kicking no more ass, now are you, Boyd?!  
Are you?

BOYD

No.

PETE

No ... what?

BOYD

No, sir.

PETE

Hey, Mr. Carl. Bet you hear that every day, 'bout a thousand times, don't ya?

CARL

I earned that respect.

PETE

Yeah, well I'm earnin' it now.  
Let me hear you say "Yes, sir."  
Come on, old man?!

KIMBERLY

Carl, honey, say it.

CARL

(With great difficulty) Yes ... sir.

PETE

Yes sir!

CARL

Yes, sir.

PETE

Think we'd see the day, Connie, when Mr. Carl would be saying, "Yes, sir," to me?

CONNIE

Pete, please ... please .... please ... I'll go back with you.  
Just let these people be. They ain't done nothing to you.

PETE

No. It's too late, now.

CONNIE

No it's not.  
We can just walk out of here, you and I.  
Come on, Pete, before something bad happens ... something we can't change.

PETE

I swear, you don't have any sense in your head.  
Soon as we leave, they'll be callin' the sheriff.

CONNIE

No, Pete.  
Naddy could have called the Law when you first come in here, but she didn't.  
Am I right, Naddy?

NADINE

That's right!  
And it was Boyd's idea to leave things be.  
How about it, Boyd?  
You still okay with leavin' the Law out of this?

BOYD

Yeah ... sure.

KIMBERLY

And I won't say anything.  
And neither will Carl ... right honey?

PETE

She speaking for you, Mr. Carl?

CARL

Yes, she speaks for me.

PETE

How about you, sissy boy?

RASCAL

What did you call me?

NADINE

(putting her hand over his mouth) I can vouch for him.  
He won't say anything and neither will I.

PETE

The men here all got women talkin' for them except for you, Rev.

REVEREND WHITE

Forgive and forget, son.  
Forgive and forget.

CONNIE

So you see, there, Pete?  
We can just walk out of here the same way we come in.  
**[Connie stands up and takes Pete's hand]**

PETE

(stares at Connie a long time)

No, this ain't the same way we come in.  
You left me ... snuck out of our house ... took our kids.  
I come here to beg you to come back, but and you didn't want to.  
You think I forgot that?  
You think I forgot how crazy I was, goin' home without you?  
You got me so crazy I got this gun.  
You're the reason I'm standing here with a sawed off.  
You're the reason I don't care anymore if I live or die.  
We go back home, how do I know you aren't going to leave me again?



CONNIE

You treat me right, I'll stay.

RASCAL

And he's going to treat you right, aren't you, Pete?

PETE

Shut up, you! This is between her and me.

Connie, I love you ... you know I do.

CONNIE

Yeah, sure, Pete.

PETE

But I might slip up, again.

I might.

I won't mean it ... but it could happen.

I was born with a terrible temper.

You gonna leave me for good if I slip up, again?

CONNIE

Pete, I can't take you hitting me no more.

PETE

But I might slip up ... I won't mean it ... but I might.

RASCAL

(Whispers) Oh, Christ. Heterosexuals!

NADINE

Hush now, Rascal, let 'em talk it out.

We might walk outa here, yet.

PETE

I gotta know how it's gonna be, Connie.

I got nothing to live for if you don't come back with me,  
and stay with me for good ... like we promised each other.

CONNIE

Will you promise to stop hitting me?

PETE

I'm going to try ... but I might slip up.

I got something angry inside me, something bad.

You know I don't mean it ... but it happens.

CONNIE

Pete, you can't beat me like a dog, and then come crying to me like you are now.  
My heart ain't built that way.  
I'll stay with you if you promise to stop.

PETE

I want to promise ... but I might not be able to stop myself.

CONNIE

Then there's no sense to going back home.  
I can't take one more beating.  
I just can't take it.

[Connie sits back down]

Sorry, y'all.

PETE

Come on, Connie.  
I know you love me down deep.  
And you know I love you.

CONNIE

How do you expect me to keep loving you when you hurt me so much?

PETE

I don't know ... I figured you'd love me in spite of it.

CONNIE

I tried, Pete. I really tried.  
Look at my face.  
Look at it. You done this to me.  
How can you say you love me, and then do this to me?

PETE

Are you saying you don't love me anymore?

CONNIE

I'm saying I just don't know, Pete.  
I just don't know.

PETE

You don't know?  
Why if I thought you didn't love me anymore ... I'd ... I'd ... I'd kill you.  
I'd pull this trigger and end it.

**[Pete has his back to the others. Rascal stands and tip toes to the back exit. ]**

CONNIE

Then you do what you gotta do.  
I'm not afraid anymore, Pete.  
I been afraid enough.

PETE

Hey you! Where you goin'?

RASCAL

I have to go to the bathroom.

PETE

Sit back down, you!

RASCAL

But I have to go potty!

PETE

Sit back down before I fill you so full of holes it leaks out.

RASCAL

Okay! Okay! I'll hold it in!

PETE

Connie, you're gonna make me kill someone here!

CONNIE

They haven't done anything to you, Pete.  
They don't deserve you threatenin' them with that shotgun.  
But for me ... no ... I'm not afraid anymore.  
Maybe dying ... right here, right now ... is better than the slow death you've been givin' me.

PETE

Connie, you're doin' it again! You're gettin' my temper up!

CONNIE

Then do what you gotta do, Pete.

**[Pete raises the gun and points it at her.]**

I ain't afraid no more, Pete. Do what you gotta do.

PETE (Lowers the gun)

Look at me!

CONNIE

No ... you just do what you gotta do.  
I got nothin' more to say on the matter.

PETE

Will you look at that ... Now she's treating me like I don't exist.  
(Screaming) You think I'm so bad?  
There's plenty worse out there.  
You don't know how the world is.

Why look at the people here.  
You think they're so good?  
Look at the Reverend there.  
Don't you wonder why he's here at this hour?  
Tell what you're doing here Rev.

REVEREND WHITE

(Stammering) I was paying a condolence call in the area.

PETE

At this hour?!  
Who are you kidding?  
Who are you fucking that lives around here?

KIMBERLY

He's a preacher!

CARL

Yeah, boy. Show some respect!

PETE

Who you calling boy? I ain't no boy!  
And you sittin' there with Miss Fancy Pants, her titties hanging out!  
I'm the one with the most respect around here.

So speak up, Rev.  
I want my wife to hear this.  
She thinks I'm scum 'cause I hit her.  
But I don't sneak some poontang on the side.  
Be good for her to hear how you been sneaking around.

REVEREND WHITE

Young man, please.

PETE

She black or white?

BOYD

Come on, Pete. Get off of this.  
It ain't going nowhere.

PETE

You shut the hell up!  
We'll be getting to you soon enough, hero.

Well, Rev, is she black or white?  
Rev? You hear me?!

**[Pete puts the shotgun on the Reverend's chest]**

I said, do you hear me?

RASCAL

Oh for God's sake, she's black.

REVEREND WHITE

Russell ... please.

RASCAL

Well, it isn't worth dying over! Is it?

REVEREND WHITE

I'm sorry, Mr. Carl ... Miss Kimberly ... that you had to hear that.

PETE

So you are sneaking around, ain't ya, Rev?  
You hear that, Connie?  
I don't do that. I never done that.

CARL

It's okay Reverend ... we're not casting any stones here.

PETE

Why - you sneakin' some on the side too, *Mr. Carl?*

CARL

No, I got all I can handle right here.

PETE

Looks to me like you got *more* than you can handle.  
What is she, old enough to be your daughter ... or granddaughter?

What about you, Missy?  
You getting some on the side, too, like the Rev here?  
What's the matter? Cat got your tongue?

KIMBERLY

Could you please leave me out of this.

PETE

No, I want my wife to see how the rest of the world is.  
Connie, you see how they are? You see I ain't so bad?  
Say somethin' girl!

CONNIE

I see Mr. Carl treats his wife like a lady.

PETE

You don't see nothin'.  
What about how Miss Fancy Pants here used to be married to the big hero over there?  
Would you like to know why she left him for that old man?

CONNIE

No, Pete, they're entitled to their privacy on the matter.

PETE

What are you sayin'? Mr. Carl here took away Boyd's wife.  
Any man did that to me, I'd blow his head clean off.  
I'd just put the barrel of this shotgun right here ... and then pull the trigger. **BOOM!**

CARL

You proved your point.  
Now take the gun away.

PETE

Ah, you ain't the one who interests me anyway.  
No, it's Boyd here.  
I want to hear his side of it.

So why didn't you kill that old man for taking away what was yours?  
Come on, you got balls.  
We all seen that.  
Why didn't you use 'em?  
Speak up Boyd.

BOYD

I can't concentrate, Pete, lookin' down the barrel of a sawed off.

PETE

You try anything ... anything at all ... just a hint of anything ... You're done.

BOYD

I ain't gonna try anything.  
I had a friend that was taken out by a shotgun in a hunting accident.  
There was pieces of him all over the trees.

PETE

So speak up, Boyd.  
Why didn't you kill that old man there?

BOYD

Truth be told, Pete, I stayed up a lot of nights, plottin' his death.  
Sometimes it was beating him ... sometimes, stabbing him until his guts come pouring out.  
Many a time, using a shotgun ... just like you.

PETE

Yeah, now you're talking!

BOYD

I got me a short barrel 12 gauge, too ... a Mossburg pump.

PETE

I prefer this here Remington. Less trouble with jamming.

BOYD

Yeah, but I got a deal on the Mossburg. Only paid eighty bucks for it.

PETE

So why didn't you do it for real?

BOYD

Oh, there was a few times it almost got real.  
When I could feel myself getting too serious, I reached for Mr. Jack Daniels.  
(He takes out his flask) Drank 'til I fell asleep.  
Found some real comfort in this flask.  
(Takes a swig from his flask) You want some?

PETE

Don't mind if I do.  
No, put in on the counter and slide it over.  
(Takes a swig and then slides it back to Boyd)

BOYD

Yeah, Mr. Jack Daniels got me to sleep many a night.  
In the morning, with a hangover, the angry feeling was gone completely.

PETE

You shoulda done something about it.

BOYD

Nah, Pete.  
(Takes another swig from flask) You want some more?

|  |      |
|--|------|
|  | PETE |
| Yeah, slide it back here.  |      |
|  | BOYD |
| I need a cigarette. You mind if I smoke?   |      |
|  | PETE |
| No, go right ahead ... what brand?   |      |
|  | BOYD |
| Marlboros. You want one?   |      |
|  | PETE |
| Don't mind if I do.  |      |
|  | BOYD |
| (Slides the pack down) You got a light?<br>Here, use my lighter. (slides that down)  |      |
|  | PETE |
| You know, Boyd, you ain't such a bad guy.  |      |
|  | BOYD |
| Hey, I got no grudge against you, Pete.<br>You took the first swing.<br>If not for that, I figure, what happens between a man and his wife is their own business.        |      |
|  | PETE |
| So finish your story.  |      |
|  | BOYD |
| There's no more to tell.<br>I realized no matter what I did, it wouldn't have brought her back to me.<br>Same as that gun ain't helpin' you now.                         |      |
|  | PETE |
| Yeah, but then he wouldn't get her!  |      |
|  | BOYD |
| Yeah ... and I suppose I'd have a long time to gloat about that.<br>About 40 or 50 years ... in a 6 by 9 cell.<br>I got friends in prison.<br>Ever been in prison, Pete? |      |
|  | PETE |
| No.  |      |



BOYD

You ever been there, you wouldn't want the experience.

PETE

I ain't gonna see the inside of no prison.  
Nobody is gonna take me alive.

BOYD

Maybe yes, maybe no.  
You can't plan these things.  
Sometimes they get you before you can end it for yourself.

PETE

Let's cut the shit about prison and talk about you.  
Why do you think your wife left you?

BOYD

Don't know. Wish I did ... but I don't.

PETE

You don't know?!

BOYD

To this day I still don't know.  
She ain't talking.

PETE

Maybe she won't talk to you, but she'll talk to me.  
Won't you, missy? MISSY!

KIMBERLY

Could you *please* leave me out of this.

PETE

No, (mimicking her now) I don't want to leave you out of this.  
Explain it to us.  
Why'd you leave Boyd here for that old man?  
***I'm talking to you!***

KIMBERLY

Leave me alone.

PETE

Come on.  
Say the truth.  
He can take it. Can't you, Boyd?

BOYD

I suppose.

KIMBERLY

*No you can't.*

Your delicate ego couldn't handle it at all.

PETE

Uh oh, she said, "No you can't!" like it was some embarrassing sex thing?

CARL

Son, you're getting on everyone's last nerve!

PETE

Yeah, and what are you going to do about it?

Nothing.

So, *Mrs. Carl*?

CARL

Did it ever occur to you, that she just stopped loving him, and started loving me?

PETE

No.

Just like it wouldn't have occurred to anyone else.

Connie, what do you think?

You think one day Mrs. Carl here just stopped loving Boyd, and the next day, started loving Mr. Carl?

CONNIE

That could have been the way it happened, Pete.

PETE

It that what happened to you?

You just woke up one day and stopped loving me.

CONNIE

No. It happened after one too many beatin's.

PETE

But I told you I was sorry!

CONNIE

How many times have you said I'm sorry, Pete? How many times?

PETE

A few. I can't deny it.

CONNIE

No, it hasn't been just a few.  
It's been once a month until three months ago ...  
then it became once a week.

PETE

But I love you.  
Don't that mean something?  
How could you just wake up this morning and not love me anymore?

CONNIE

Whatever feeling I had for you, you beat it clean outa me.

PETE

Well, that sure says it, don't it, Boyd?  
Maybe that's what happened to you.  
You hit her once too often and she stopped loving you.

BOYD

I never raised a hand to her.

PETE

That true, Missy?

KIMBERLY

I said leave me out of this.

PETE

Ah, you two just don't make any sense at all.  
All this time, and you still don't know.  
What's it been, a couple of years?

BOYD

Three years, four months, and ten days.  
That's when I came home to an empty house.  
She moved out while I was at work.

PETE

No clue as to why?

BOYD

Nope.

PETE

She leave a note?

BOYD

Nope.

PETE

Come on. It was his money. I'd say absa-fucking-lutely it was his money!

KIMBERLY

Tell him the truth, Boyd.

PETE

Oh, now you want to talk huh?

CARL

Baby doll, let him go off on someone else.

PETE

So, *Baby Doll*, if it wasn't his wasn't his money, what was it?

His hair? (He messes up Carl's hair)

**[RASCAL LAUGHS. CARL STARES AT HIM. RASCAL STOPS.]**

KIMBERLY

Leave him alone!

(She fixes Carl's hair and then kisses him on the top of the head)

PETE

How do you feel, Boyd, when you see them all lovey-dovey in front of you?

BOYD

How do you think I feel?

PETE

I think you feel like killing them both.

That's the way I'd feel.

BOYD

Yeah, sometimes ... when I see them together.

KIMBERLY

What are you saying?

You don't ever see us together.

BOYD

This is a small town, Kim.

I see you everywhere.

And when I don't see you for a while, I drive over and watch you.

KIMBERLY  
You spy on me?!

BOYD  
Yeah ... if you want to call it that.

KIMBERLY  
You're sick, you know that.

BOYD  
Hell, yes, I admit it.  
I'm sick in love ... with the wrong woman.

KIMBERLY  
So find another one.

BOYD  
You ruined me for other women.

KIMBERLY  
Bullshit.

CARL  
Kimberly?

KIMBERLY  
Come on, lover. You know I know the words.

PETE  
You know, I changed my mind about her.  
Now I'll bet she's good in bed.  
It's them holier than thou types that are so hot between the sheets.  
You good in bed, Miss Fancy Pants?

KIMBERLY  
None of your damn business.

PETE  
Boyd?

BOYD  
Oh yeah.

KIMBERLY  
I said it's none of his business!

BOYD

Yeah, well you don't speak for me anymore, Kim.

KIMBERLY

Go to hell.

BOYD

What's the sense in denying it?  
You are the best when it comes to that.

KIMBERLY

Can we *please* change the subject?  
Pete, tell us how your wife is in bed.  
Is she good?

PETE

She's okay. Yeah, she's okay.

KIMBERLY

What about you, Connie?

CONNIE

M'am?

KIMBERLY

What kind of lover is Pete? Does he please you?

CARL

Can we change the subject, please?

PETE

No, I don't mind if we go there.  
What difference does it make if she don't love me no more?  
Go ahead and tell them, Connie. Did I do you right in bed?

CONNIE

I guess so.  
I never slept with anyone else, m'am.  
I don't have any point of comparison.

KIMBERLY

Yeah, well I'll bet he ...

CARL

(Putting his hand over her mouth)

Kimberly, can we change the subject please? Ow! Why did you bite me?

KIMBERLY

Why did you put your hand over my mouth?

CARL

I'm sorry, baby doll, but there didn't seem to be any way to stop you, otherwise.

KIMBERLY

If my sex life is an open book, why can't his be open, too?

CARL

Because he has the 12 gauge, darlin'.

Hey, you? Pete.

This subject is getting stale.

Why don't you find out about the cook, there?

I'll bet he has an interesting sex life.

PETE

Forget it. Faggots disgust me.

RASCAL

No hold on there, homophobe!

Don't knock it 'til you've tried it.

PETE

No thanks, fudgepacker.

RASCAL

What did you call me?

PETE

Fudgepacker.

RASCAL

Oh, what I could say now.

NADINE

No, Rascal. It's better to not say what you could say now.

RASCAL

No! I'm sick and tired of being everybody's whipping boy.

I'll have you all know that I happen to be a very considerate lover ...  
when I'm fortunate to have a lover.

PETE

Lover? What kind of lover?

Lover of little boys, I'll bet.

RASCAL

I do not touch little boys!  
That's for pedophiles and priests ... no offense Reverend.

REVEREND WHITE

None taken.  
I'm a minister, not a priest.

RASCAL

Why are straight people afraid to leave children around a homosexual?  
Most of the child abuse is from straight fathers, or 'funny' uncles.  
Pete, are you turned on by little girls?

PETE

Hell no!

RASCAL

Then why would you think I want I to have sex with little boys?  
Fudgepacker?!  
Who makes up these names?  
If I didn't have to stay around here ... take care of my mother with her emphysema ....  
She smoked three packs a day for forty years,  
I swear if not for her, I'd leave this town and never look back.

It's a real privilege to be the only gay man in Smokey.  
I have to drive three hours to Charlotte, each way, to find a social life.  
And when I get there, it's all one night stands.  
Wham, bam, thank you, Sam.  
No one wants to come here - there's no culture and no night life.

And who wants to hear the snickering behind your back?  
Sissy boy! Faggot! FUDGEPACKER!  
I'm a culinary chef with a diploma from the finest school in Europe.  
And I'm stuck in the Huddle House in the backwoods of Smokey, North Carolina –  
making sophisticated omelets nobody wants, and grits which everyone wants.  
GRITS! Grrrrrr.... iiiittttts! GRITS!  
I'd like to tattoo GRITS on the forehead of every red neck peckerwood that comes in here!

***EAT MY GRITS, YOU MOTHER FUCKERS!***

Oh ... sorry.  
Guess I got carried away.  
Well, what do you think of my amazing sex life now, Mr. Carl?

CARL

I think it was a little too much information, son.



PETE

Well, I still think he's a fudgepacker.

RASCAL

I'm so glad we had this chance to communicate, Pete.

REVEREND WHITE (Stands up)

Uh hum. Young man? If I may say something now?

PETE

Sit down, Rev.

REVEREND WHITE

If you don't mind I would prefer to stand. I do my best-

PETE

No, sit down! I ain't in the mood right now to be preached to.

REVEREND WHITE

Peter, I'm not going to preach to you ... quote from the Bible ... or invoke the name of the Lord.

PETE

I have to decide whether to kill you, and everyone here.  
Can help me with that, Rev?

REVEREND WHITE

Yes. I believe I can.  
I will talk to you straight from my heart ... be as honest as I can be.

PETE

As honest as you can be?  
(Laughs hard) You're here after screwing some wild black momma,  
lying to all the world that you're out visiting bereaved people,  
and you're going to help me decide whether OR NOT to kill you?!  
Rev, you got no right to talk to me at all.  
*Now you sit down!*

**[PETE PUSHES REVEREND WHITE BACK INTO HIS SEAT]**

CARL

Have some respect there, young man.  
He's still a man of the cloth!

PETE

Respect!? He's a phony and a liar and I don't want to hear another word from him.  
Why are you standing again, Rev?

REVEREND WHITE

I am being called to judgment, and It helps me think when I am on my feet.  
I am not questioning your authority here, Peter.  
I merely want to express myself as best I can,  
help you make the best decision you can.  
May I have your permission to continue?

PETE

Go ahead.  
But as soon as you start preaching, I'm going to make you sit back down and shut up.

REVEREND WHITE

Fair enough.  
I will build a temple for you, Peter, and that temple will be built on the bedrock of truth ...  
not the shifting sands of lies and hypocrisy.

I am being called to judgment as a liar and hypocrite ... and that is the truth.  
Every day I live with my own lies, and that is also the truth.

PETE

You still ain't saying nothing', Rev.

REVEREND WHITE

PAIN!

PETE

What?

REVEREND WHITE

The truest thing I know is pain.  
Everywhere I look, I see pain.  
It's in Boyd's flask.  
It's in the eyes of your wife  
It's in the breach of your gun.  
PAIN!

PETE

Hallelujah, and amen, Rev.  
Keep on going. You got my attention.

REVEREND WHITE

Pain is beating down upon our heads like burning hail.  
Pain!  
Pain we didn't cause. Pain we don't deserve.  
Someone loses his job, someone goes broke, someone gets wiped out. Pain!  
Someone gets sick, someone gets crippled, someone dies. PAIN!

PETE

Yeah, you got that right.

REVEREND WHITE

Every day, people get hurt, through no fault of their own, and they are put in pain.

PETE

That's a fact.

REVEREND WHITE

And when we are lucky enough to avoid the accidents, people hurt you on purpose.  
Every day, people are lying, stealing, cheating ...  
crawling over, under, and on top of each other ...  
like snakes and vipers ... crushing the spirit out of each other.

People share this pain with me.  
Every day. Every hour of the day.  
Day in and day out, more pain, and more pain!

PETE

We got the picture, Rev.

REVEREND WHITE

And then the pain brings doubt.  
"Why am I getting this pain?" they ask me.  
"Will it ever stop?" they say with tears in their eyes.  
"Who's in control here?" they wonder.

And I look into their bleeding eyes and I mumble cliches.

"Who knows the many and wondrous ways of our Lord?"  
"The wheel of life will turn, and what goes around, comes around."  
"It's all for the best."  
EMPTY USELESS CLICHES!

PETE

Call it what is, Rev. It's bullshit, pure and simple.

REVEREND WHITE

Yes, you're right. That is what it is.  
And it contaminates me.  
It works its way into my soul.  
Each day I wake up to this mountain of pain and doubt.  
It overwhelms me.  
My shoulders ache and my back is breaking from carrying all the pain and the doubt.

REVEREND WHITE (cont'd)

Where is God?  
When will He do something?  
I wait and I wait and I wait ...  
until waiting for God no longer works for me ...  
because God is *hiding*.

So I seek pleasure.  
A little fleeting pleasure to show that life is NOT all pain.  
Something to prove there is some sense to living, there is something good.  
I need something to satisfy my soul ... even if it's only for just a short while.

And that is when I go where I should not go.  
To a woman who has the same pain in her soul, the same need for an antidote.  
I go and risk everything for just a little bit of pleasure.  
A little reassurance that life gives me something - something other than PAIN!

I try to resist her, but on Sunday she sits right up front.  
She smiles that wicked smile at me ...  
I turn away. I put her out of my mind.

Then it's nine o'clock, on Sunday night, and my heart starts pounding.  
I'm lying to my wife ... and I'm driving over to her house ...  
looking in my rear view, looking around to see if anyone recognizes me.  
I park in the back of the used car lot on Rose Street.  
I walk through the vacant lot and then the woods after it.  
I knock on her back door ... she lets me in.  
She has that same wicked smile again.  
She has the devil in her, and my flesh is weak.

So what's the truth?  
I'm here after taking a little pleasure to make my life worthwhile.  
Because many days my life is NOT worthwhile.  
Many days it's a mass of pain and doubt.

PETE

Many days? Hell, every day

REVEREND WHITE

Have I reached you, Peter?

PETE

Yes, Rev.

REVEREND WHITE

Did I say anything to you that seemed false?

PETE

Not yet.

REVEREND WHITE

Then let us now talk about you.

PETE

No. Let's not.

REVEREND WHITE

But we have to make a decision, you and I.

Do we walk out of here, back to our lives of pain and doubt - but with occasional pleasure?

Or do we reach the end right now? Are you ready to end it right now?

PETE

Yes.

REVEREND WHITE

Is there nothing on this earth that gives you some pleasure?

PETE

Nothing.

REVEREND WHITE

Not your wife?

PETE

She doesn't love me anymore - you heard that.

REVEREND WHITE

Your children?

PETE

They're afraid of me, now - because of my temper.

REVEREND WHITE

Your mother or father?

PETE

My Mom is a burn out. A zombie.

My Dad – ha! - he has a worse temper than me.

REVEREND WHITE

Your job?

PETE

Sit down, Rev, you're wasting my time.  
I lost my job three months ago.  
They found a Mexican who'll do it for 2 bucks an hour less.  
Hey, Mr. Carl ...  
*Mr. Carl! ...You hear me?*  
Stop whisperin' to Miss Fancy Pants!

CARL

I hear you.

PETE

You don't even know who I am.  
Look at him staring at me.  
I had the honor of being in your clean up crew at the factory.  
Emptied trash cans and swept floors.  
Five years you've been signing my paychecks, *Mr. Carl*,  
and you didn't have a clue as to who I was when I walked in here, did you?

CARL

(Stands) We have 200 employees at the factory.  
My accountant signs the paychecks.

PETE

Sit back down, you, and stay put!

CARL

Son, I need to stand up and move around.  
My legs cramp when I sit too long.

**[Carl moves away from the counter, and Kimberly starts to sneak away  
when Pete's attention is diverted.]**

PETE

You see, Rev, how important my job was to him?  
It wasn't much to me, either.  
Just a paycheck.  
Ten bucks an hour.  
Now he has a Mexican costs him eight bucks.  
And that's all that Mexican's ever going to be to the boss man.  
Someone who don't habla and saves him 80 bucks a week.  
Right *Senor Carl*?  
(To Kimberly) **HEY YOU! GET BACK HERE!**

KIMBERLY

No, I can't take this anymore! **I CAN'T TAKE IT!**

PETE

I can fix that right quick!

[Pete shoots his gun overhead]

CARL

Kimmy! Come back here!

KIMBERLY

(Runs hysterical to Carl) *I CAN'T TAKE THIS!*

*I CAN'T!*

*CARL, MAKE IT STOP!*

CARL

There, there ... there, there ... Kimmy it's going to be all right.

PETE

Now sit down, both of you.

I catch anyone trying to sneak out again, and I'm gonna kill everyone here!

EVERYONE!

DO YOU HEAR ME!?

REVEREND WHITE

We hear you, son.

PETE

Look at them, Rev! What a pair!

You say you want to bring me the truth, well, here's my truth:

My life sucks! I want a whole lot more. I just ain't getting it.

When I lost my job, I looked everywhere for another ... went out a hundred miles.

I was willing to drive three hours a day extra just to take care of my family.

But there ain't no work out there.

Nothing that'll get me a *little pleasure* at the end of the day.

What do I need?

A few beers, a pack of cigarettes.

Some time in the sack with the wife every now and then.

Now all we got is unemployment checks.

Less than half of what I was making at that shitty job.

Half ain't enough for nothing.

Barely enough for food. Can't pay the mortgage.

Can't pay the electric. We been livin' in the dark for last week.

Yeah, I been drinking too much.

I'm like Boyd. The whiskey kills the angry feeling, when you get enough of it.

PETE (cont'd)

But Connie interrupts me before I get enough.  
Starts bitchin' about the foreclosure notices.  
What can I do about 'em? There ain't no money for mortgage payments no more.

The kids are bitchin' about not watching tv.  
I tell 'em when you're broke, cable is a luxury.  
They don't understand.  
Only way to shut 'em all up is to hit them.

Now I got nothing.  
No wife ... no kids ... no job.

CARL

If a job is what you need, I'll hire you back.

PETE

Do you think I'm stupid, Mr. Carl!

CARL

No, son.

PETE

Stop callin' me that!  
You ain't my Daddy.  
Do you think I come with this shotgun just to get back a \$10 an hour job?

CARL

Seems to me your problems started when you lost that job.  
I can make it up to you.

PETE

Yeah, whatta you gonna do? Make me vice-president?

CARL

Hey, I've had a whole lot worse jobs than you, for a whole lot less money.

(Stands up again) Do you mind if I stand up again?  
My legs are really cramping.  
Kimberly will say put, now ... won't you Kimmy? (she shakes her head, yes)

Oh, that feels better.  
It's a bitch getting old.

Did you know my first job in this town was working for old Jimmy?



PETE

No shit?

CARL

No, there was plenty of shit.  
And I had to take it and smile.  
I cleaned bathrooms out at the plant.  
Jimmy was the owner back then.  
Yeah, that's right.  
I had to scrub the floors and mop up the piss and pick up the shitty toilet paper.  
Sometimes I had to clean up puke.  
Pete, you ever have to clean up puke?

PETE

No, can't say I ever have.

CARL

Well it ain't no Sunday picnic - makes you want to puke yourself.

RASCAL

Can we get off the puke, please?! It's making me gag!

PETE

Shut up you!

CARL

I worked all the overtime I could.  
Lived on corn flakes and spaghetti.  
Scrimping and saving.  
Looking to put away a nest egg to start a business.  
Any business.  
Anything to get out of cleaning bathrooms, working for that nasty old man.  
I was going to climb up that ladder of success if it killed me.  
  
One day, I overheard a banker talking about bargains buying land for back taxes.  
And I thought, what the hell.  
After two years of overtime, I had a couple of thousand dollars put away.  
I took it and bought a little tract on Indian Mountain.

PETE

What you make on it, a million dollars?

CARL

Nope.  
Lot was one acre and government said you needed two acres to build a house on.  
Damn thing was worthless.

CARL (cont'd)

That's why the owner let it go for taxes.  
All my hard work, all that overtime, wasted. Gone.

So I dragged myself back to the plant.  
Cleaning up more piss and shitty toilet paper and puke.  
Two years more, and I tried again.  
Only this time, I did my homework.

A nice piece of land on Mohawk Creek came up for taxes.  
Man died who owned it and none of his kin cared about it.  
Paid \$900 for it.  
Sold it 2 months later for \$10,000.  
Thought it was all the money in the world.

First thing I did, quit that shitty job!  
A few months later I bought 2 more lots, and then 2 more.  
When I built up a stash, I started to buy stores, then warehouses.  
I lent money to people the banks turned a cold shoulder to.  
All the time, climbing up that ladder of success.

Thirty years to the day I quit the plant, I bought it.  
Jimmy got old and tired, the world got tougher, and he couldn't get out of the hole he dug.  
I modernized that factory, hired a fancy advertising agent, sold the hell out of the products.  
It started making money. We put on a second shift.

What shift you work, Pete?

PETE

The second.

CARL

Then you got that job because of my hard work.  
Didn't exist before I bought the plant.  
You and a lot of other good people in this town depend on me for their livelihood,  
and I take that responsibility seriously.

Yes, I have a knack for making money.  
Lots of people don't. I do, and I'm proud of it.

But it took a big toll on my life.  
I paid the price - all of my youth and my middle age.  
Worked a lot of 20 hour days, seven day weeks.  
No time for a wife or a family - too busy climbing up that ladder of success.

Three years ago I got knocked off that ladder.

CARL (cont'd)

Doctor told me to slow down.  
I developed heart problems.  
Said I better sit back and let my money do more of the work, or I was going die.  
Die?! Hell, I still had a whole lot of living to do!

That's when this lovely lady entered my life ... and I dedicated myself to making her happy.  
She is what I wake up worshipping each morning, and what I go to bed each night praying about.

Yes, I love her. I love her with all my heart and soul.  
You hear me, Boyd? I love her.  
More than I ever knew I could love a woman.  
I'm near the end of my life, and I fell in love.

Ain't life a bitch?  
I been through all the pain and doubt that the Rev there talked about,  
and **now** I find pleasure each and every day ... at 62 years old ...

No, I'm 67.  
I'm sorry, Kimberly, but I lied to you.  
I'm 67, not 62.

KIMBERLY

I already knew that.  
I found your old high school yearbook and did the math.  
It made no difference.  
I love you whatever age you are.

CARL

You see that, Pete?  
You hear that, Boyd?  
That's what gives me a reason to go on.  
I don't want her to die, Pete.  
And I don't want to die, neither.  
I been looking down the barrel of that shotgun now for an hour, and it woke me up.

So Pete, let's do business.  
If there's something I can do to help you,  
something to stop you from harming the good folks here, well, I aim to do it.  
I'm a man of my word, and I do what I say, and say what I do.  
Let's lay the cards on the table.  
What can I do for you, so you let us all walk out of here?

PETE

There ain't nothin' you can do for me, old man.  
Your speech didn't mean diddly squat.

NADINE

What are you talking about?  
Mr. Carl is giving you a blank check.

PETE

Oh yeah? How much money you got on you, Mr. Carl?

CARL

(Pulls out a money clip and counts) I got a little more than \$2,000.

PETE

And your wife?

KIMBERLY

Just a couple of hundred.

PETE

You expect me to let you go just for that?  
How long is that gonna last?

CARL

Kimberly, do you have your checkbook on you?

KIMBERLY

Yes, I do.

CARL

Okay, Pete. Name your price.

PETE

My price ... hmmm ... why don't you cut me a check for ... oh ... a million dollars.

CARL

Go ahead, baby doll.

PETE

No, wait a minute - make it two million.

CARL

Now, Pete ... ah never mind ...  
Okay... make it two million.

PETE

No, you said that too easy.  
Make it five million now.

CARL

Now wait a minute ... let's be reasonable.

PETE

Reasonable?

How much money are you worth, Mr. Carl?

Ten million ... fifty million ... a hundred million?

Write me a check for half of what you got.

CARL

That isn't fair.

PETE

What's the matter?

Isn't your life worth that much ... or your wife's?

CARL

Go ahead, Kimberly.

Write him a check for ... (whispers an amount in her ear)

PETE

You must think I'm really stupid, don't you?

Whatever check you give me, you'll stop it as soon as you get out of here.

And I ain't no thief!

I didn't come back here with this gun to rob you.

Nadine, I got news for you -

NADINE

No, now I have news for you. What time is it?

PETE

Who cares what time it is?

NADINE

Soon as I tell you what's happenin' in about ... oh ... ten minutes, you're gonna care.

Officer Ricky and his partner Tom are gonna drive in here on their break.

PETE

I think you're lying.

RASCAL

No, it's the truth.

I was wondering why in God's name she told you?

NADINE

'Cause I don't want those officers walking in here just yet.  
I think someone is going to die when they do ...  
either us ... or you ... or them ... maybe everyone.  
And contrary to what you said, Pete, I think, deep down, you want to walk out here.  
And I think there is only one person who can help you make the right decision.

PETE

And who is that?

NADINE

Well, Mr. Carl tried to help you, but that didn't work.  
Boyd, if given the chance, may get himself killed wrestlin' with you.  
Rascal and me, well we ain't nothing to you. Just a cook and a waitress.  
Our best hope was the Reverend, there. That didn't work neither.

That leaves only one person ... (she turns and stares at Connie)

CONNIE

I tried, Naddy.

NADINE

I'm sorry, darlin', but you didn't try hard enough.

PETE

You ask me, she didn't hardly try at all.

NADINE

I didn't ask you.

Connie, you're at the crossroads of your life.  
I know Pete ain't much.

PETE

Hey!

NADINE

Hey, we listened to everyone else's truth.  
Now you're gonna listen to Nadine's truth.  
Shotgun or no shotgun.  
If old Nadine is going to meet her Maker, she's goin' proud ...  
with the truth on her lips and love in her heart.

REVEREND WHITE

Preach sister!

NADINE

Connie, honey, you didn't deserve the life you got.  
Of all my daughter's friends, you were the sweetest and kindest.  
Truth is, you reminded me more of me, than my own daughter.  
You had a big, generous heart, and shared it easily.  
And just like me ... you married a real hard case.

CONNIE

I had heard your husband was wife-beater, too, m'am.

NADINE

Yes, he was.  
Bad as they come.  
Sent me to the hospital ... more than a few times.

PETE

Yeah, well I never sent Connie to the hospital.

NADINE

Fool! They don't hand out points for beating your wife ... and NOT sending her to the hospital.

CONNIE

How come you kept taking your man back?

NADINE

'Cause I believe he woulda killed me if I didn't.

CONNIE

You didn't love him at all?

NADINE

Oh, I was filled with love when we was first married. No question I loved him.  
Then he beat the love out of me just like Pete beat it outa you.  
Then it was the hate that had to disappear – the wanting to slit his throat while he was sleeping.  
Didn't want to spend my life in prison, like Boyd said.

No, I needed to stop caring altogether.  
Took this night job at the Huddle House. Put in long hours.  
We're open 24/7, which is perfect for a woman lookin' to avoid her husband.  
Sent my kids away where they were safe. They grew up with good family around 'em.  
My man didn't mind. Less noise around the house.  
More money to spend on beer and cigarettes.

And I waited.  
His drinking ruined his liver and he died young. At forty-five.  
After giving me twenty-three hard years of marriage.

NADINE (cont'd)

So, you see, someone bigger and stronger came along and gave me justice - The Man Upstairs.  
I still believe in God, Reverend.

And while sometimes it looks like He ain't watching over things, eventually, He pays attention.

REVEREND WHITE

Amen.

NADINE

Now, Connie darlin', you're going to have to tell the truth here.

You're going to have to tell it so the hard case you married believes you.

You say you won't take him back, he'll believe that easy.

You tell him you will take him back, you aren't going to fool him if you don't mean it.

You got to believe it in your heart so he believes you.

CONNIE

But my heart is so cold to him, Naddy.

NADINE

I'm telling you the only way to win here is to take him back.

You'll survive, and by surviving, you'll win.

Someday, you'll have some pleasure in your life, like the Reverend says.

People like you and me, people with good hearts, we always wind up happy.

The world needs us.

And God helps us.

Someday, you'll be holding your children - and your grandchildren –  
giving out the love you have inside you without any fear.

But if he kills everyone here, your kids will pay for your cold heart.

Connie, darling, listen to me.

You're not as fortunate as I was, you don't have other kin to take over for you.

He kills you, your children will be like orphans, living in orphanages.

If they're lucky, they'll get foster homes, which still ain't the same as family.

God knows what'll become of 'em.

You'll figure it out. If you need help figuring it out, you come to me.

Pete, have you been listening to me?

PETE

Yeah.

NADINE

Good. Ricky and Tom pulled up in their police car.

We don't have much time, now.

She promises to take you back, are you ready to walk out of here?



PETE

Is she still going to be a wife to me?

NADINE

Connie?

CONNIE

I'll be a wife to him.

And he can come to my bed.

NADINE

There you have it, Pete.

It's up to you, now.

What's it gonna be? A second chance at life ... or the other?

PETE

What about the rest of y'all?

You going to give me a second chance, too?

I want to hear it from each and every one of you.

NADINE

There ain't time.

PETE

I don't care! I want to hear it.

KIMBERLY

I promise.

CARL

I promise.

And I'll take care of the damage here.

And you can have your job back.

REVEREND WHITE

And I promise.

BOYD

I ain't seen or heard nothing.

I'm deaf, dumb and blind. So I promise.

PETE

What about you?

RASCAL

Oh, I promise! Cross my heart and hope to die, I promise!

NADINE

Well, there it is.  
You got everyone's solemn promise.  
You got your wife back. You got your second chance. Now get!

PETE

Any of you talks to the police, I'll come back and get you.  
Come on, Connie.

(Pete puts the shotgun back inside his coat and waits for Connie to stand up)

**[OFFICER RICKY ENTERS]**

OFFICER RICKY

Hi, Naddy.

NADINE

Hi, darlin'. Cup of coffee?

OFFICER RICKY

Yes, please. One for Tom, too.  
He'll be right in after he fills out a report.

NADINE

Two coffees comin' up, one light and sweet, the other black.

OFFICER RICKY

I've never seen so many people here at this hour.  
Good evening, Mr. Carl ... M'am ... Reverend White ... Boyd.  
You folks are all up late.

(to Connie and Pete) Those your kids out there sleeping in the white mini-van?

CONNIE

Yes, sir. We'll be taking them home right now.

OFFICER RICKY

(he looks at her eye, then looks at Pete)

Hold up, m'am.  
My partner is calling in the license plates.  
You both have a seat until he's finished.  
And I'll need your name.

CONNIE

Connie Jenkins.

OFFICER RICKY (to Pete)

You the father?

PETE

Yeah. I'm Pete Jenkins.

OFFICER RICKY

What are you doing here, at this hour, with your kids sleeping in the car?

PETE

We was out ... and it got late ... and we was hungry for some pancakes.

OFFICER RICKY

Yeah, Rascal here makes some delicious pancakes, don't he?

RASCAL

Would you like some, Officer? I could make them up in no time.

OFFICER RICKY

No, just some of your coffee will do.

You brew some great coffee, Rascal.

RASCAL

Why, thank you. I use only the finest Columbian beans.

I buy them over the Internet, from an importer in Miami ...

Rigoberto is his name.

He buys them from an organic farm in Beliz and flies them ...

I'm talking too much, aren't I?

Nobody cares where I buy coffee, do they?

OFFICER RICKY

Looks like you got some ceiling problems there, Naddy.

NADDY

I told old Jimmy to fix it ... but he's gotten real cheap in his old age.

OFFICER RICKY

If I didn't know any better, I'd say those were buckshot holes up there.

(to Pete) Hey you, sit still!

(Talks into his hand held police radio)

Tom, are the license plates clean?

Okay. You can go now folks. Let me get the door for you.

CONNIE

Thank you. Good night, officer.

OFFICER RICKY

Good night, m'am ... you ought to get that eye looked at.

[OFFICER RICKY MOVES ASIDE TO LET PETE AND CONNIE LEAVE.  
When Pete goes by him, OFFICE RICKY BUMPS HARD on THE BULGE IN  
PETE'S COAT PETE'S SHOTGUN FALLS ONTO THE FLOOR]

OFFICER RICKY

(draws his gun and picks up the shotgun)

Hey, buddy ... Looks like you dropped something ...

**[THE LIGHTS GO DOWN ON THE STAGE]**

OFFICER RICKY (over Police Radio)

That's a 10/4, Sergeant.

We have Peter Jenkins in custody.

We'll be in as soon as we get statements from the witnesses.

**[A SPOTLIGHT SHINES ON RASCAL]**

RASCAL

You want to know what happened, officer?

That homophobe pulled a shotgun, shot up the place, and stuck the hot barrel up my butt ...

He thought that was funny.

If you want me to testify, I will.

As far as I'm concerned, he should be locked up, and toss away the key.

His kind never changes.

**[THE LIGHTS GO DOWN]**

**[A SPOTLIGHT SHINES ON REVEREND WHITE]**

REVEREND WHITE

My statement comes from the Bible - "Vengeance is mine, sayeth the Lord."

Peter Jenkins was a man who was taken beyond his limit tonight.

Who among us does not have those same seeds of destruction lying deep within our souls?

That we are all alive right now is testimony to man's underlying goodness.

I believe with counseling, Peter will return to being a useful member of society.

**[THE LIGHTS GO DOWN]**

**[A SPOTLIGHT SHINES ON KIMBERLY]**

KIMBERLY

Reverend White, I don't like to disagree with a man of the cloth,

but that miserable excuse for a husband was trash, pure white trash.

He insulted you. He insulted me ... and then my Carl, who never did anything unkind to him ...

I'm with the cook.

You want me to testify against him, I will.

**[THE LIGHTS GO DOWN]  
[A SPOTLIGHT SHINES ON CARL]**

CARL

Yes, officer, he pulled out a shotgun and threatened to kill all of us.  
Like my wife said, he gave us a pretty rough time.  
My heart can't take this kind of stress anymore.  
Look, I know what it's like to be in his shoes.  
I know what it's like to be working for peanuts, knowing there is greater worth inside of you.  
But I wouldn't ever take a shotgun and go and threaten innocent people.

No. He deserves punishment, and I'll show up with my wife to testify.

But I will say this ... if he turns a new leaf,  
if he's shows real repentance for what he did here today, I might hire him back at the factory.  
Man's got to work.

**[THE LIGHTS GO DOWN]  
[A SPOTLIGHT SHINES ON BOYD]**

BOYD

Ricky, turn off that machine. What I got to say I don't want written down or recorded.

Ricky, you and me grew up together in this little ass mountain town.  
You say I look like I've seen a ghost tonight, and I have.  
I been a ghost these past 3 years four months and ten days ...  
it's time for me to man up and face the truth.  
Kim don't love me anymore ... maybe she never did.  
Whatever it is, or was, don't matter. I gotta move on with my life.

No, I won't testify against Pete ... and it ain't because I'm afraid of him, neither.  
Pete is me, if not for the Grace of God and Jack Daniels. I coulda been here, doin' much worse.  
Sure he needs some head work – some counseling –  
but let me tell you, I was an inch away from doin' worse many a time.  
I got my final counseling session tonight looking down the barrel of a sawed off twelve gauge.

That's all I got to say on this.

**[THE LIGHTS GO DOWN ON THE STAGE.]  
[A SPOTLIGHT SHINES ON CONNIE]**

CONNIE

You want me to testify that he hit me?  
Well, he did ... and you can take my pictures, if you want.  
But I ain't gonna be around for any trial, no sir.  
Soon as I get home, I'm packin' up.  
We'll be leavin' tomorrow and won't be lookin' back.  
You just hold him in jail long enough for me get a good head start.

CONNIE (cont'd)

Think you can do that?

I been told a woman will take a man back who beats her five times.  
After five times, he either kills her, or she's learned her lesson.  
Tonight I learned my lesson.  
Pete won't never find me.

**[THE LIGHTS GO DOWN]  
[A SPOTLIGHT SHINES ON NADINE]**

NADINE

Officer Ricky, you already know what happened. You don't need me to repeat it.

Will I come and testify?

Yes, if I have to.

You may think I got reasons to see that young man never gets out of prison,  
as a sorta vengeance for what happened to me with my own mister?

Well, it ain't true. What is true is that man had hand trouble,  
and hand trouble is handed down from father to son, like a bad disease.

It's a hard fever to break, and it's just a damn waste of life.

I don't know if Pete will ever change, I know my man never did.

It's all just a damn waste of life.

**[LIGHTS COME UP AND NADINE WALKS INTO THE AUDIENCE WITH RASCAL]**

NADINE

Well, that was sure one hell of a night, wasn't it? You folks have an excitin' time?

RASCAL

Exciting? It was a heart attack on wheels.

I've had it up to here with the graveyard shift.

First the heroin fiend with the meat cleaver, and then the homophobic plaster blaster.

No, I'm working days from now on, or I'm outa here.

NADINE

Folks, don't pay him no mind.

When you come back to the Huddle House in Smokey, he'll still be here with me.

No one else can put up with him like I can.

NADINE

(looking at audience member)

What's bothering you, honey child?

You worried about what Pete will do when he gets out?

Think he'll come back here and torment us?

Well, look it ... if you were God, how would You have this end?

Would You get involved ... or ... would You let us work it out for ourselves?

Think maybe we'll get it right sometime?  
Well, you think about it.

And hey, while you're thinking on it,  
if you get hungry, don't forget, we're open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, holidays included.  
Only time we close is on Christmas Eve, and then we re-open the morning after.

My name is Nadine, but you can call me Naddy.  
Everyone does.

You all come back now, y'hear?

**THE END**