

- DANCE OF THE SPIKE -
The William Edmondson Story

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. NASHVILLE, TN - MT. ARARAT CEMETERY - DAY - WINTER, 1936

Cracked and weathered tombstones. Leafless oak trees.

Crumbling mausoleum in need of repair.

A sudden gust of wind blows leaves around in a small tornado.

Eroded statue of an ANGEL. It has a broken wing.

The eyes weathered. We can almost see tear stains.

SUPER: Nashville, Tennessee 1936 - INSPIRED BY A TRUE STORY

INT. NASHVILLE HOSPITAL - JANITOR CLOSET - DAY

Dark. Dank. A single light bulb glows ON.

A FLASH of a knife blade.

The hand of a black man grips the knife. We don't see him yet, but the hand belongs to African American WILLIAM EDMONDSON, late 40s.

He opens a drawer. Inside are knives of various styles. He puts the knife in among the other knives.

A black arm glistens with sweat as it reaches for a chain dangling from a light socket.

The hand gives a sharp pull. CLICK.

Darkness.

INT. NASHVILLE HOSPITAL - CASSIE'S ROOM - DAY

Bright. Sanitized. A white girl, CASSIE MAXWELL, 15, lies in bed. Her eyes open but she's going blind; face expressionless.

A shadow looms. The black hand hovers over Cassie.

In a surprise burst, she latches on to the hand. Cassie's eyes continue in a fixed stare.

CASSIE

Got it.

William opens his hand. It's a crude wooden carving of the HEAD OF A BLACK MAN.

Its facial features sad and withdrawn.

Cassie's eyes continue in fixed stare.

She rolls the carving in her fingers. Her finger tips slow over the nose; flutter over the downcast eyes.

CASSIE (CONT'D)

It's a sad man.

She coughs.

WILLIAM

That was my dad.

He digs in his pocket.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Okay Miss Cassie, here's one I did.
Took me an hour.

CASSIE

You sure are fast.

WILLIAM

Just kind of comes to me.

He gives her a small WOODEN DUCK. Cassie twirls it in her fingers. Squints her eyes.

CASSIE

Wish I could see better.

Cassie stops rolling the object.

CASSIE (CONT'D)

Figured it out.

WILLIAM

Go on then.

CASSIE

A bear. With a fat butt.

WILLIAM

I thought you was going to say Nurse
Whitmore.

They laugh.

NURSE WHITMORE stands at the door. She's rotund, in her 50s. Her starched facial expression matches her nurse's uniform. Her name badge shines.

NURSE WHITMORE

You've been told not to visit the patients. Have you done the floors? They look filthy.

WILLIAM

I will take care of that, Nurse Whitmore.

Cassie giggles. William drops his head, makes his way out.

He turns at the door, gives Cassie a silent chuckle.

Nurse Whitmore collects the figurines, puts them on the window sill. She makes her way back to the bed, takes out a thermometer.

NURSE WHITMORE

Let's see how we are doing.

She jabs the thermometer in Cassie's mouth.

CASSIE

We... can barely even see the shadows anymore.

NURSE WHITMORE

Shhhh.

CASSIE

Do you believe in heaven?

NURSE WHITMORE

I believe you need to be quiet.

She turns to see William still at the door.

NURSE WHITMORE (CONT'D)

The floors?

Cassie rolls towards the door as William leaves.

CASSIE

I liked your bear with the fat butt.

NURSE WHITMORE

He shouldn't be bothering you.

CASSIE

He helps me see.

NURSE WHITMORE

Shhhh, I said. All this talking is bad for you.

HALLWAY

William smiles and turns. Blocking his path is TED MAXWELL, 40s, alpha male. The bottom of his pants and workbooks are covered with a chalk-type dust.

In his mouth is a toothpick. He works it with precision.

Ted stares at William as he brushes past.

CASSIE'S ROOM

TED
(to Nurse Whitmore)
How's my daughter?

Nurse Whitmore takes out the thermometer and reads it.

NURSE WHITMORE
We... have slight temp.

Ted walks over to the window sill, picks up the duck.

TED
What's this?

CASSIE
William the janitor gives me those.

TED
That black man?

CASSIE
Dad, he's my friend. He's funny.

Ted moves in close to Nurse Whitmore.

TED
Black men don't make friends with
white girls. I don't want him in
here.

Every pound of Nurse Whitmore bristles.

NURSE WHITMORE
His job is to clean the floors. And
my job is to make sure he does it.

TED
No more toys.

Ted removes the toothpick; flicks it towards the trash can.
He turns to Cassie.

TED (CONT'D)

I got business downtown. Your mother
will be here before lunch.

CASSIE

Okay dad.

Ted fumbles the good-bye.

TED

Okay, then. You know, you get some
rest.

INT. JANITOR CLOSET - DAY

William fills a bucket with water. Pours in a hefty amount
of cleaning solution. Snags the mop in the corner, puts it
in the bucket.

A carving on a shelf catches his eye. The wood grain is
rich and polished. It is more detailed than the other
carvings.

It's an ANGEL. The wings are spread high and wide.

HALLWAY

William rolls the bucket down the hall. He uses the mop
handle to navigate.

He rolls past Cassie's room, slowing down to peek inside.

CASSIE'S ROOM

William slides in. He's holding the angel.

Cassie SINGS but struggles to do so.

WILLIAM

That is a sweet sound.

CASSIE

Mama tells me singing is my one true
joy.

WILLIAM

Sure sounded pretty.

CASSIE

She said life's mostly hurt. So you
have to find your true joy. That
helps with the hurt.

Cassie coughs. She wheezes as she breathes.

William takes Cassie's hand. He gives her the angel.

WILLIAM
This one is special.

She twirls the angel in her hand. She stops.

CASSIE
Mama and aunt Mary took me to New York on a train when my eyes started going dark and I was having fainting spells.

WILLIAM
That sounds like the most exciting thing, riding a train to New York.

CASSIE
I saw from the top of the Empire State Building.

She moves her face in the direction of William.

CASSIE (CONT'D)
I spit.

WILLIAM
Wish I could do that; ride a train to New York and spit.

CASSIE
You have to work up a really good one, it's a long way down.

WILLIAM
Oh, I can work one up with the best of them.

CASSIE
I remember I saw an angel that couldn't fly.

Cassie runs her fingers over the wings.

WILLIAM
Whoever heard of such a thing?

CASSIE
It was a stone statue at the art museum. Her wings were wrapped around her body. Like she wanted to fly, but she couldn't.

She holds out the wooden angel.

CASSIE (CONT'D)
But I like this one much better.
Feels like she could actually fly.

She flies the angel with her hand.

CASSIE (CONT'D)
This is the one that should be in an
art museum.

Cassie closes her eyes.

WILLIAM
Sometimes I lie awake in bed and I
can see myself being an artist. But
to have my work in a museum?

CASSIE
I'm tired.

WILLIAM
You go to sleep Miss Cassie.

William walks towards the door. He turns.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)
Keep singing, Cassie.

INT. EDMONDSON HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

A fierce wind blows outside, bashing tree branches against
William's window.

William is in bed. He's restless. He flips over on his
stomach. Then back again.

His eyes open. Kicks off the blanket. Exhales a long, deep
breath.

He opens his eyes and sees a wooden carving of a LAMB on his
dresser. He gets up.

William picks up the lamb and twirls it in his hand.

He looks out his bedroom window that's beginning to frost
over.

Cold. Still. Lifeless.

He drops his head.

WILLIAM
This ain't good, this ain't good.

He sees his work clothes hanging over a chair.

INT. NASHVILLE HOSPITAL - CASSIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

We see William in the door frame. He makes his way to Cassie's bed. Her breathing is shallow. It stops.

William pulls up a chair. The breathing continues.

He reaches for her hand.

Cassie gives a slight smile.

CASSIE
I said a prayer for you.

WILLIAM
Cassie, I'm going to get the nurse.

CASSIE
I bet she's off asleep somewhere.

WILLIAM
Then I'm going to get a doctor.

CASSIE
William?

WILLIAM
Yes?

CASSIE
I can't sing.

He squeezes her hand.

WILLIAM
I will sing for you.

He sings part of an BLACK GOSPEL HYMN.

Cassie's breathing is erratic. Deep, then shallow.

Fast, now slow and labored.

A DEATH RATTLE comes and goes.

One long exhale. Her light fades. She is still.

NURSE HINES, a 20s female, enters.

William jumps up and away from the bed.

NURSE HINES
William?

WILLIAM

Cassie's gone, Nurse Hines. She's gone.

Nurse Hines puts her ear next to Cassie's mouth. She checks the pulse.

Outside the storm picks up steam.

NURSE HINES

What were you doing in here?

She turns to get his response, but William is gone.

INT. JANITOR CLOSET - DAY

William sleeps, uncomfortably curled in a chair. He's wearing the same clothes as he had on before.

The door cracks open, light slashes across William's face. Nurse Whitmore peeks in.

NURSE WHITMORE

William?

His eyelids flutter.

NURSE WHITMORE (CONT'D)

Are you sleeping it off?

She pulls the cord on the light. A peek of an eye from a half-opened eyelid.

WILLIAM

What time is it?

NURSE WHITMORE

Almost lunchtime. There's a mess outside of 205. You need your mop.

HALLWAY

William pushes the bucket down the hall. There is no activity.

He comes to 205. He begins mopping what appears to be urine.

He looks down the hall towards Cassie's room. He leans the mop up against the wall and starts towards her room.

An elderly African American, ORDERLY WASHINGTON, 70s, pushes an ELDERLY WOMAN in a wheelchair.

Orderly Washington rolls her past William. He stops. He leaves the woman in the wheelchair and walks back to William.

The elderly woman frowns.

ORDERLY WASHINGTON
Say William. It ain't none of my
business, but I been hearing you in
all sorts of trouble, man.

WILLIAM
What kind of trouble?

ORDERLY WASHINGTON
Being in a white girl's room trouble.

WILLIAM
The little girl was my friend.

ORDERLY WASHINGTON
Folks said you were touching her.

WILLIAM
I was Miss Cassie's friend.

ORDERLY WASHINGTON
They put men like you on the chain
gang. You don't want to be bustin'
rock for the rest of your life.

WILLIAM
I ain't busting no rock because I
did not do anything.

Orderly Washington walks back to the elderly woman.

ORDERLY WASHINGTON
Oh you did something; you was born
black.

EXT. TWO LANE HWY - ALABAMA - DAY

The car engine ROARS as stylish YVONNE CARSON, 30s, passes a series of tacky roadside advertising. She's confident, good looking, and exudes the "Go for it" attitude.

INSERT SIGNS

"See two headed goat at Bama Critter Ranch."

"Be amazed by legless chicken at Bama Critter Ranch."

"Marvel at stuttering opossum at Bama Critter Ranch."

BACK ON SCENE

As she drives deeper into the countryside, she comes upon 2 prison CHAIN GANGS. One is WHITE, the other is BLACK.

They're chained ankle-to-ankle. Each gang walks on opposite sides of the road. It's a solemn march.

An ALABAMA CORRECTIONS CAR creeps along in the center of the road, just behind the gangs.

There are a couple of PRISON GUARDS ON HORSEBACK leading the front of the group. They hold shotguns out as they ride.

She slows for a moment, catches the pain on the weathered faces of the men as they stumble in the heat.

An arm comes out the corrections car and waves Yvonne around. She nods as he passes and then floors it once past the horses.

She rounds a curve and pull off the side of the road and behind a thick stand of kudzu covered trees.

INT. CAR - DAY

Yvonne opens a large canvas bag next to her. She turns and looks back out the rear window.

She's back in the bag digging for a camera. Wrong lens. She digs deeper. She's got it.

She looks up - coast clear

Yvonne gets out of her car. She leaves the keys in and the door open wide.

OUTSIDE THE CAR

She puts on the lens as she darts toward the road.

She finds cover on top of the hill looking down towards the men as they approach.

Snaps pictures of an OBESE GUARD on horseback.

She adjusts her angle and gets a close up of the FACE OF A HORSE. It's lifeless eyes matted and half-closed.

Snap. Picture of a BLACK MAN with a SCAR ACROSS FOREHEAD.

She backs up a little as they get closer.

As the men in chains pass by a well-hidden Yvonne, she snaps a series of CLOSE-UPS OF THE MEN.

Pain.

Sorrow.

ROPE BURN scar around a neck.

We hear a CLANK of CHAIN ON CHAIN.

The HORSESHOES CLOPPING the asphalt. A guard HUMMING.

A distinct CLICK of a CAMERA shutter.

A TEENAGE PRISONER looks in the direction of the noise.

He makes eye contact with Yvonne.

He's tired, frightened, alone.

She smiles. She holds it. He keeps looking back at her as they walk.

The obese guard looks at the teenage prisoner. He then looks to see what the teenager has spied.

He strains his neck to get a better view. The young boy sees that the guard may spot the hidden woman with the camera.

TEENAGE PRISONER

Water, boss?

The guard turns towards the boy, gives a mean look and shakes his head. He takes a drink out of his canteen.

The boy looks back at Yvonne. He smiles.

She takes one last picture and heads to her car.

INT. CASSIE'S ROOM - DAY

William walks in. The mattress is bare of sheets and blankets. William looks towards the empty window sill.

His carvings are inside the trash can. He reaches in and gets the angel. He twirls it around in his fingers.

Nurse Whitmore enters as William slips the angel in his pocket.

NURSE WHITMORE

Dr. Norfield wants to see you.

William looks over his shoulder.

WILLIAM

I need to finish cleaning up that mess at 205.

NURSE WHITMORE

Now, William.

INT. HOSPITAL - DR. NORFIELD'S OFFICE - DAY

DR. NORFIELD, 60s, tall and stately, stands behind his desk. He is reading from a patient's folder.

Ted stands in the room as well. His pant cuffs and boots covered in dust.

SARAH MAXWELL, mid 30s, Ted's wife, is seated off to the side. She is well-dressed.

Nurse Whitmore walks in. William follows.

WILLIAM
Dr. Norfield, sir?

DR. NORFIELD
William, come in.

William lowers his head and walks towards the desk. Ut of the corner of his eye he sees two people.

The Maxwells.

William stops.

DR. NORFIELD (CONT'D)
William, I have a serious concern that will be addressed.

WILLIAM
Yes sir.

DR. NORFIELD
The night nurse said you were in Cassie's room last night.

WILLIAM
Yes sir.

DR. NORFIELD
Were you scheduled to work a shift?

William shuffles.

WILLIAM
No sir.

DR. NORFIELD
Then why were you in the room?

WILLIAM
I don't know.

DR. NORFIELD
You don't know?

WILLIAM
I just felt she needed someone.

Ted moves in closer. Nurse Whitmore takes a step towards him.

TED
What are you talking about? She didn't need anyone but us.

DR. NORFIELD
Please, Mr. Maxwell.

TED
You did something didn't you? You gave her toys to keep her quiet.

William keeps his head down.

WILLIAM
Cassie was my friend.

SARAH
She was everyone's friend.

Sarah stands and moves towards William.

SARAH (CONT'D)
She was my everything.

Sarah begins crying and crumples back to the chair in an emotional heap.

Ted moves in once again. Dr. Norfield steps in between William and Ted.

Dr. Norfield grabs Ted by his shoulders.

DR. NORFIELD
Please, Mr. Maxwell.

Ted backs off.

DR. NORFIELD (CONT'D)
William, I want you off hospital property immediately. And if you're seen or I hear of you being on hospital grounds, I will have you arrested. Do you understand?

William nods.

DR. NORFIELD (CONT'D)

Then go.

William turns to leave.

TED

You think you're going to walk off like that? Better watch your back, boy.

William hurries down the hall. Ted follows and stops at the door. Sarah tries to pull him back inside the room.

TED (CONT'D)

What you did was wrong.

EXT. 14TH AVENUE - KELLY HOUSE - DAY

MISS ELLA KELLY, African American, 30s, gets off a bus in front of her house. Her beauty is only exceeded by her heart.

It's small, but neat and clean, and for winter, the landscaping is well manicured. A small white picket fence surrounds the yard.

A crusty African American, GRANDMOTHER KELLY, 80s, peeks out the door.

William walks by without his coat as Miss Ella gets off the bus.

MISS ELLA

William Edmondson, you shouldn't be walking around without a jacket in this weather.

WILLIAM

Can't feel the weather no way.

She stops, but William keeps walking.

MISS ELLA

You can't feel the weather? It is bone-chilling cold.

She runs inside the house as Grandmother Kelly opens the door for her.

William walks down the street, alone. Miss Ella takes one last peek at William. He's gone.

EXT. MOUNT OLIVE CEMETERY - CASSIE'S GRAVE - DAY

A small GROUP OF MOURNERS shiver as they disperse from Cassie's funeral.

Ted stares at the ground as GRAVE DIGGERS shovel in dirt. Sarah looks weak and tired.

TED
She deserved to live.

Dirt and rock THUD on top of the casket, covering the flowers.

EXT. WILLIAM EDMONDSON HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - DAY - SPRING

The early Spring flowers peek out of the ground. The grass is lush and green.

ORANGE EDMONDSON, African American, 30s, reddish hair, full of life and spirit, walks up the steps to the front door. He knocks.

Orange walks to the front window and peers inside. He knocks on the glass.

ORANGE
Willie. Willie, you in there?

Bug-eyed RUFUS CORRYTON, African American, 80s, sits on his front porch cleaning his rifle.

RUFUS
He's around back.

ORANGE
What you say Rufus?

Rufus inspects the barrel.

RUFUS
You heard me.

Orange waves him off and walks around back.

EXT./INT. TOOLSHED - DAY

William sits on a stool in the dark. He holds a stick and a knife.

On the ground next to him is a pile of wood shavings. It appears all he's been doing is whittling down sticks into nothing.

ORANGE
Hey man, didn't you hear me? What's wrong with you?

WILLIAM
Nothing.

ORANGE
Nothing looks down and out.

WILLIAM
What do you want?

ORANGE
You've been fired for a couple of months now. Can't I check to see if my brother's starving to death?

WILLIAM
I am finding food here and there.

ORANGE
I know you ain't got no money. Do you?

WILLIAM
Think I may try to sell some of my carvings.

ORANGE
That I want to see.

William rises to his feet.

WILLIAM
What else am I going to do?

ORANGE
Listen, old man Rogers says you could help me on my job.

WILLIAM
Bootlegging? Don't mess with that stuff anymore.

ORANGE
You don't mess with it, you deliver it. Make a run with me? Come on William. It's easy money, baby, easy money.

EXT./INT. TWO LANE DIRT ROAD - ORANGE'S CAR - DAY

A beat up black '34 Ford coupe tears over a hill and goes airborne.

Orange drives. William holds on, he grits his teeth.

The car lands, skids sideways. Orange wrestles the wheel.

The car straightens up, Orange floors it.

EXT./INT. MAXWELL TRUCK - DAY

A dump truck loaded with LIMESTONE rambles from the opposite direction.

On the side of the truck is printed: MAXWELL CONST.

INTERCUT - ORANGE'S CAR AND MAXWELL TRUCK

The white TRUCK DRIVER, 50s, wears thick, dirty glasses.

He has only a few teeth and tobacco juice dribbles from his bottom lip. He's taking up most of what little road there is.

ORANGE

This is going to be one of those tight ones.

WILLIAM

Orange, let him pass.

ORANGE

This ain't nothing for a high stepper.

WILLIAM

Help me Jesus.

Orange downshifts and rear wheels kick up rocks and dust as the car fishtails.

The Truck Driver looks in the seat and grabs a pouch of chewing tobacco. He looks through it but it's empty.

He starts eyeing the floorboard. He finds a strand of tobacco. He shoves it in his mouth as the truck weaves back and forth across the road.

The Truck Driver digs at the floor of the truck again. He finds a small plug of tobacco under his seat. He shoves it in his mouth.

He turns and spits out the window, but the window is rolled up. Tobacco juice runs down the window. He wipes off the window with his shirt sleeve.

The truck continues to weave as small CHUNKS OF STONE rattle off the top of the pile and bounce all over the road.

ORANGE

This is a new one.

William's eyes grow wide as Orange and the truck are moments apart.

ORANGE (CONT'D)
Hold on big brother!

Orange looks over to William, but he's not there. He sees him on the floorboard.

The Truck Driver looks up and sees the car. He cuts the wheel hard to the right.

The truck hits a ditch. Stone explodes out of the dump truck.

Orange's car misses the truck by inches. Stone bounces off his car. One chunk flies bouncing off the road and pounds the passenger side door, denting it.

Another stone makes a crack in the windshield.

The pair roar on down the road. Stone bouncing across the street.

The Truck Driver jumps out of his truck.

TRUCK DRIVER
What in the...

He throws his hat, kicks the dirt, and spits.

EXT. VACANT CABIN - DAY

Orange pulls up to an old cabin. They get out.

WILLIAM
I don't like running from the law.

ORANGE
The law? You saw the law? Where?
When? Just now?

In the distance dust rises off the two lane road. A car pulls into the field and drives towards the house.

ORANGE (CONT'D)
Shuler brothers. These guys are
always on time and they're some tough
old boys too.

The car pulls up. Inside are JR. and LEFTY SHULER. The Shuler brothers are white, in their 30's, tough looking and strapping strong.

It appears neither like to shave or wash clothes.

They step out of the car and scratch. A lot.

Both brothers give William the death stare. He makes eye contact with them, but lowers his head.

JR.
(to Orange)
Who's the new boy?

ORANGE
That would be my brother.

LEFTY
I thought all y'all was brothers.

Jr. and Lefty laugh.

ORANGE
And I thought all y'all was ignorant.

Orange laughs and looks to William.

He's not laughing, neither are the Shulers.

JR.
Show us the trunk.

Orange walks over to his car. Lefty stays close to William as they walk.

Lefty stares at William. William looks straight ahead.

Orange opens the trunk.

ORANGE
Now this batch has got some extra
kick. But now the price is going to
be the same.

Lefty pulls out a handgun and sticks it against William's head.

JR.
No, the price is going down.

Jr. puts his hand on Orange's shoulder.

JR. (CONT'D)
You see we like you.

Orange moves back, flipping Jr.'s hand off his shoulder.

JR. (CONT'D)
Well let's see what you got.

Jr. reaches in the trunk and pulls out a case of quart jars. He starts back to his car.

Lefty grins at William.

JR. (CONT'D)

We sure do like doing business with you. What say I give you half of our normal rate? We'll let new boy make that call.

Lefty cocks the trigger. The CLICK makes William shudder.

WILLIAM

Half is good, yes sir.

JR.

Then we've got a deal. Orange help load the rest of this shine if you would.

Orange gives William a disgusted look as he picks up a box and hauls to the other car.

Jr. flips out his wallet and gives him a few crumpled bills. Orange jams them in his pocket without counting.

JR. (CONT'D)

Okay Lefty.

Lefty seems to take longer than necessary, but he gently drops the hammer on the gun.

JR. (CONT'D)

Next week? Same time? Same price? Same brother?

Lefty and Jr. laugh.

ORANGE

Yeah, that's funny, but don't expect no extra kick to it.

The Shulers get in their car and speed off leaving a cloud of dust.

William and Orange watch the car disappear in the distance.

WILLIAM

So what you just shoved in your pocket; that's what they call easy money?

INT. DOWNTOWN DINER - DAY

Ted Maxwell sits at a table watching steam rise off a cup of coffee. A uniformed police officer, OFFICER CHAVIS, a large 40s male, strides to the table and sits.

A busy PERT WAITRESS, 30s, works the floor.

OFFICER CHAVIS
Ted, you holding up?

The waitress stops at their table.

PERT WAITRESS
You two having the special?

Officer Chavis smiles and eyes the pert waitress.

OFFICER CHAVIS
Couple of draft beers, darling.

He looks to Ted.

OFFICER CHAVIS (CONT'D)
That's always special.

The pert waitress leaves and Officer Chavis leans in.

OFFICER CHAVIS (CONT'D)
Give me the details.

TED
You know that Edmondson guy that was
all the time in Cassie's room?

OFFICER CHAVIS
The black janitor, yeah you told me.

TED
He may have had something to do with
Cassie's death.

OFFICER CHAVIS
No disrespect Ted, but didn't they
find out later she had some kind of
brain disease?

Officer Chavis holds a salt shaker. He shakes salt into the
palm of this other hand, then throws it in his mouth.

TED
They don't know for sure. But I
think this Edmondson guy is no good.

OFFICER CHAVIS
You should let it go.

TED
What's a black man doing making
friends with a white teenage girl?

Officer Chavis squirms in his seat.

TED (CONT'D)

What if that was your daughter?

OFFICER CHAVIS

You need to take care of this yourself? There are things you can do if you plan it right.

TED

I can't risk that.

Chavis looks around for his beer.

OFFICER CHAVIS

I will put some heat on him. But after this one time, Ted, you gotta let him go. As your friend, and your cousin, I'm going to tell you; this will lead to more trouble.

Ted nods in agreement.

OFFICER CHAVIS (CONT'D)

So where's he live?

TED

1434 14th Avenue. He lives by himself in one of those little shotgun shacks.

OFFICER CHAVIS

You've already been by there?

Ted nods his head.

TED

A couple of times.

Pert Waitress shows up with the beer. Officer Chavis downs it.

OFFICER CHAVIS

Thanks.

The men get up and leave.

Pert Waitress looks at the table. Missing salt shaker. No tip.

PERT WAITRESS

Jerks.

EXT. EDMONDSON HOUSE - DAY.

Orange passes two dump trucks in front of William's home as he wheels into the driveway. He hops out.

Rufus is on his front porch cleaning his gun.

RUFUS

Better not be bringing that devil's drink to our neighborhood.

He works the bolt action over and over. He opens the barrel looks down inside. Gets a rag and cleans.

ORANGE

I ain't bringing nothing to your house, you old crazy coot.

Orange walks around back.

INT./EXT. TOOLSHED

William sharpens a knife on a whetstone.

ORANGE

You ready to go on a run with me?

WILLIAM

I am just going to sit here and whittle.

ORANGE

What you doing for food? You going to eat that wood? You going to whittle you up a big ol' steak?

WILLIAM

Go on and makes jokes.

ORANGE

I got some jokes about your front yard.

EXT. EDMONDSON HOUSE- STREET FRONT - DAY

William and Orange examine the busted chunks of limestone that was once curb and sidewalk.

Chunks of limestone litter a flower bed, crushing the flowers. A bush as been destroyed by a large chunk.

Orange picks up a chunk of limestone.

ORANGE

Why they tearing all this up?

WILLIAM

Jim Matt Brown says they are getting rid of the limestone and putting in concrete.

William picks up a stone. A flower underneath is flattened.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

They are going concrete the whole city of Nashville.

Orange tosses a chunk towards the street.

William bends down, picks up a chunk. He sees another smaller stone behind it. It's unique. It vaguely resembles a SMALL LAMB.

He picks it up and chips away with at the face with a fingernail. He fishes for his pocket knife, and scraps away at the stone.

Eyes, ears, nose appear. William stands up, looks at the lamb.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

That is joy right there.

Orange struggles with a large stone.

ORANGE

What'd you say old man?

William looks down the street. He spies the 4 TOUGH WHITE WORKERS They're smoking next to a dump truck. The leader of the bunch is HOYT REPASS, a crusty, sun-baked, 30s foreman.

William makes a move towards the men.

WILLIAM

Going to carve on this stone.

ORANGE

What are you talking about?

WILLIAM

Talking 'bout my joy.

William holds up the lamb.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Talking about putting my carvings in a museum in New York City.

Orange belly laughs.

ORANGE

You ain't even been out of Nashville.

WILLIAM

When I do leave, I'm riding a train
so put that in your pipe and smoke
it.

William keeps walking. Orange runs to catch up.

ORANGE

I don't smoke no pipe.

William approaches the workers, drops his head, exhales,
raises his head. His eyes are focused, strong.

WILLIAM

Afternoon. I live down the --

HOYT

Did we say you could speak?

Hoyt pulls a hard drag from his smoke, flicks it to the
street, grinds it with his boot heel. Smoke escapes from
his nostrils.

William looks down.

WILLIAM

Oh, no sir you didn't, but --

HOYT

That's right I didn't.

Hoyt moves closer.

HOYT (CONT'D)

So, what you want? Boy.

Hoyt looks at Orange. Orange drops his head.

WILLIAM

It's the sidewalk.

HOYT

And it's in your yard? Well ain't
that tough shit.

WILLIAM

No, sir. Not at all. See, I'd like
to have it.

The workers laugh.

HOYT
You want busted limestone?

ORANGE
Hey guys, my bro --

Hoyt snaps his face to Orange.

HOYT
Ain't nobody asked you. Shut it.

Two of the goon-type workers crunch in next to Orange.

HOYT (CONT'D)
What you going to do with it?

William looks Hoyt in the eyes.

WILLIAM
I'm figuring I would whittle on it.

The workers bust a gut.

HOYT
Tell you what. Whatever we don't
take out of here you can have. Sound
fair?

William shoots a glance to Orange. Orange motions his head
as if to say, "Let's leave".

WILLIAM
Yes sir, sounds fair.

HOYT
And all it's going to cost you is
one shot to my jaw.

WILLIAM
I don't --

HOYT
If you want the stone, then you have
to give me your best shot.

Hoyt points to his jaw.

HOYT (CONT'D)
Right here.

The workers become more animated and energized.

ORANGE
Don't do it, Willie.

The two goons grab Orange by his arms.

HOYT

How bad do you want it, nigg?

William fires a steely gaze. Balls his fist.

Hoyt points to his jaw.

HOYT (CONT'D)

In fact, I'll give you all the limestone on this whole street.

William slow cocks his arm, fist clenched.

HOYT (CONT'D)

Do it.

Time stops.

He drops his arm. His shoulders slump and his head drops.

Orange blows a sigh of relief.

Hoyt crunches an uppercut to William's midsection.

William crumples to the street.

Hoyt stands over William. He looks at Orange.

He looks back to William and kicks him in the stomach. William curls into the fetal position.

ORANGE

Willie!

Hoyt grabs a FOOTBALL SIZED STONE. Holds it over William's head.

William closes his eyes.

Hoyt lets the stone roll from his finger tips. It lands in front of William's face.

HOYT

All you get.

Hoyt turns to Orange.

HOYT (CONT'D)

Get him out of here.

The goons let Orange go. He rushes to William, pulls him to his feet.

WILLIAM

Wait. My sidewalk.

William picks up the stone.

INT. TOOLSHED - DAY

Orange helps William onto a stool.

ORANGE

And you think running shine is dangerous.

WILLIAM

If I am going to New York I need something to work with.

Orange pats William on the shoulder.

ORANGE

Right. Listen, I have a run to make. Have fun with your rock.

EXT. EDMONDSON HOUSE - DRIVEWAY - DAY

Orange walks to his car. A couple of dump trucks rumble pass the house loaded with limestone.

He watches the trucks disappear over a hill as he opens the trunk. Fishes for a licence plate. Picks KANSAS.

ORANGE

Kansas is good. Pretend I am a wheat farmer.

Slides the old plate out of the licence plate frame, slides in Kansas.

He hops in the car and roars off following the dump trucks.

INT. TOOLSHED - NIGHT

A single light burns.

William rambles through the tools on his workbench, tossing aside wrenches, small screwdrivers, wiring.

He finds a large screwdriver. Checks the tip.

Walks to a bookcase littered with odds and ends. Digs through old auto parts and nuts and bolts. Uncovers a hammer.

He sets the stone on the workbench. Holds the screwdriver in one hand, the hammer in the other.

He pokes around on the stone with the screwdriver. Finds the right spot.

Holds the hammer over the screwdriver. Smash!

Stone breaks in half. William recoils, shakes his head.

Takes the screwdriver, pokes around on half of the stone. Finds a spot.

Baby taps the screwdriver. Nothing.

Taps harder. Dislodges a tiny chip. Tap, tap, tap.

Puts down the screwdriver, opens a junk drawer on the worktable.

Sees a RUSTY RAILROAD SPIKE. A slight smile.

William pokes the spike around on the stone. Chips away with care.

The ears of what could be a horse comes into shape.

He looks over his railroad spike. He's feeling the joy.

EXT. COUNTY DUMP - NIGHT

A dump truck unloads the payload of stone, dust flowers up into the night air.

Once the job is finished, they ramble out. They pass a car partially hidden behind a row of JUNK CARS.

The lights are off and the car is silent. It looks empty.

The truck passes. Orange sits up in the front seat, flicks on the lights, turns the key. The ENGINE ROARS.

He slides into the dump.

INT./EXT. TOOLSHED - DAY

William sandpapers the statue; a PROUD STALLION. He takes an ice pick and works it around the nostrils.

Takes sandpaper and rubs.

William turns as he hears a car pulling up to the toolshed. He steps outside.

Orange backs up to the front of the toolshed. The rear-end of the car just inches off the ground. Smoke pouring out of the tailpipe because of the load.

He jumps out, puts the key in the lock, smiles at William.

Turns the key, the lid opens.

Limestone. An entire trunk of all shapes and sizes.

William moves in for a close look. Hugh smile.

ORANGE

If want it, all it's going to cost
you --

Orange points to his chin.

They laugh.

ORANGE (CONT'D)

Now of course, I ain't unloading
none of it.

Orange sits down.

ORANGE (CONT'D)

And change my licence plate too while
you're back there. I think there is
a Georgia plate in there somewhere.

EXT. TENNESSEE STATE LINE - TWO LANE RD. - DAY

Yvonne lights a cigarette and checks her makeup in the rear-view mirror. Clears up a smudge on her lips.

She roars past a beautifully landscaped SIGN: WELCOME TO
TENNESSEE - THE VOLUNTEER STATE.

She smiles, smashes down on the accelerator.

EXT. EDMONDSON HOUSE - FRONT YARD - DAY

The police slow to a crawl in front of the Edmondson home. They pull into the driveway. OFFICER FUSON, 40s, ox of a man, drives. Officer Chavis rides shotgun.

William sits on the porch eating beans out of a can.

OFFICER CHAVIS

What you got in your hand, boy?

WILLIAM

A spoon.

OFFICER CHAVIS

We need you to put that down.

William puts the spoon and can down.

OFFICER CHAVIS (CONT'D)
You William Edmondson?

WILLIAM
Yes.

OFFICER FUSON
Come on, get your ass in the car.

Officer Chavis motions towards the police car.

William walks to the car. Officer Chavis opens the back door, William gets in.

OFFICER CHAVIS
Slide over.

William slides over, Officer Chavis ducks in beside him.

Officer Fuson turns to William as he starts the car.

OFFICER FUSON
Not smart to make friends with a
white girl.

Officer Fuson puts the car in reverse.

EXT./INT. POLICE CAR - NOLENSVILLE ROAD - DAY

Officer Fuson looks straight ahead. Officer Chavis looks straight ahead.

William looks out the side window as The car barrels down Nolensville Road.

The police slows as it nears a billboard sign, "ETERNAL REST FUNERAL HOME." And below that, "ASK ABOUT OUR SPECIALS."

William drops his head.

DIRT ROAD

They turn after the sign onto a single lane dirt road. William glances at the officers. They're looking straight ahead.

The car passes a stand of pine trees. They continue deep into the woods.

EXT. HUNTING CAMP - NIGHT

They come upon an hunting camp. Officer Fuson stops the car.

Both officers exit.

OFFICER FUSON

Let's go.

William takes his time, gets out.

OFFICER FUSON (CONT'D)

Stand over by that tree.

William walks up to a tall pine.

OFFICER CHAVIS

I think it's my time to do the honors.

Officer Chavis puts his hand on his service revolver.

OFFICER FUSON

You did it last time.

Officer Fuson takes out his service revolver.

OFFICER CHAVIS

No remember, you were complaining
about having to clean your gun
afterwards?

OFFICER FUSON

Oh yeah. Using all six shots makes
cleaning tough.

Officer Fuson re-holsters his service revolver.

WILLIAM

Officers, may I say something?

OFFICER FUSON

Nope. And while you're at it, I
need you to turn around and face
that pine.

OFFICER CHAVIS

You heard him; take a good look at
the bark.

Officer Fuson walks up behind William.

OFFICER FUSON

You don't need to be around white
people. You people have your place
and that's where you need to stay.
Got that?

Officer Fuson walks back to the car.

OFFICER FUSON (CONT'D)

You just stay there looking at that tree.

Footsteps. Car doors SLAM. Engine ROARS.

William attempts to sneak a peek, but changes his mind.

The tires throw up leaves and dirt as the car rumbles away.

William turns around. Lonely. Quiet.

An owl HOOTS.

EXT. 14TH AVENUE - DAY

William hobbles down the sidewalk. He's holding his shoes. His feet bruised and bloodied.

KELLY HOUSE

William passes the Kelly house. Miss Ella is pruning her rose bush.

A large section of the sidewalk has been busted up. Some of the sidewalk has been removed.

Small chunks of sidewalk litter the edge of the road.

William navigates around the stone.

MISS ELLA

William Edmondson. Why are you walking down the street in the morning time without your shoes on?

WILLIAM

Morning to you too Miss Ella.

MISS ELLA

You get left at the club last night and just now making it home?

WILLIAM

That is what happened.

William stops.

MISS ELLA

Funny, I didn't take you for a carouser.

WILLIAM

Funny, I didn't take you for a busy body.

MISS ELLA

I don't know about you. Walk around in the winter without a jacket, and here it is spring time and you ain't got no shoes on.

Miss Ella prunes a couple of small rose buds. She crinkles her nose.

MISS ELLA (CONT'D)

Your feet look nasty.

WILLIAM

They look better than that old scraggly rose bush.

MISS ELLA

This old scraggly rose bush is going bloom big one day; you wait.

William shuffles his feet.

WILLIAM

Well I am going to ride a train to New York City to see my carvings in a museum.

Miss Ella looks down to see where William was standing. Blood stains the ground.

MISS ELLA

You're bleeding.

Miss Ella moves to open the gate.

MISS ELLA (CONT'D)

You get in here right now and let me take a look at those feet.

William hobbles and sits on the front porch steps.

Miss Ella gets a small basin and rag. She's followed by Grandmother Kelly.

Grandmother Kelly gets down next to William's feet.

GRANDMOTHER KELLY

Rub those feet hard to get all that dirt out of there.

Miss Ella takes great care as she cleans William's feet. He grimaces.

GRANDMOTHER KELLY (CONT'D)

You need to cover them with fatback.
And rub it in like you mean it.

WILLIAM

Don't put no fatback on my feet.

MISS ELLA

I've got some salve somewhere inside.

GRANDMOTHER KELLY

I know where it is.

Grandmother Kelly shuffles inside as Miss Ella continues doctoring his feet.

She inspects a little closer.

MISS ELLA

You didn't walk from the club, did you?

WILLIAM

I was a little further out than the club. Try the next county; compliments of the man.

MISS ELLA

The police?

Grandmother Kelly comes out holding the salve.

GRANDMOTHER KELLY

It ain't fatback, but I guess it'll do.

Miss Ella rubs the bottom of William's feet with the salve.

She tears rags and wraps his feet.

GRANDMOTHER KELLY (CONT'D)

Tell him to stand up.

MISS ELLA

Okay stand up and see how it feels.

William feet are over-wrapped. He finds his balance as he stands.

WILLIAM

I hope nobody else sees me, but I thank you for cleaning that up.

William hobbles towards the road.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

I'll be keeping an eye on that rose bush.

MISS ELLA

I'll be waiting for you to ride a train to New York.

Grandmother Kelly takes the bowl from Miss Ella.

GRANDMOTHER KELLY

That boy is no good.

MISS ELLA

He likes my rosebush.

Grandmother Kelly frowns.

MONTAGE - WILLIAM WORKS

-- William chisels with the railroad spike.

-- Holds stone in his hand. Works his hands over the stone. Chips away with a thumbnail.

-- Plants tomatoes. Sees a robin perched on a limb of a budding dogwood tree.

-- Uses an ice pick for detail around the eyes of an robin.

-- Holds his old whittling knife. Smiles. Uses it to slice a tomato.

-- Struggles with a large piece of stone. Heaves it up on the worktable.

-- Runs his hands over the stone. Chisels away.

-- Small chip hits him in the eye.

-- William rambles through an old washtub filled with odds and ends.

-- Finds a pair of old welder's goggles. Nods.

-- Looks at the finished piece of a small bust of an WWI American soldier.

-- William knocks on a door of a house. YOUNG BLACK MAN opens the door. William nods, shakes his hand. He opens a sack and takes out STONE FIGURINES. He sets them on table. The young man picks up a statue of a LARGE PREGNANT WOMAN. He smiles. He goes inside and returns holding a CHICKEN. William smiles and takes the chicken.

-- Waters the tomato plants.

END MONTAGE

EXTERIOR TOOLSHED - DAY

Orange walks over to the toolshed.

ORANGE

Hey Willie! What you doing, bro?

William walks out.

He is wearing a cap turned backwards, an apron, and the goggles.

He is covered from head to toe in white limestone dust.

ORANGE (CONT'D)

You are one butt-ugly bug-eyed ghost.

William removes goggles.

WILLIAM

Let me show you something little brother.

Orange looks at the perfect black circles around William's eyes.

ORANGE

You should call on Miss Ella.

WILLIAM

She don't care nothing about me.

ORANGE

Then call on her granny. I know she cares about you.

He puts his hand on Orange's shoulder.

WILLIAM

Come on in here.

INT. TOOLSHED

The pair walk inside. The shelves and workspace have been cleaned and organized.

Where junk once litter the shelving, stone figures of all shapes and subject matter sit.

The artwork has a rustic, folk, almost African look.

Large and small, the work shows spirit and talent.

William picks up his RAILROAD SPIKE and uses it as a pointer.

He points to a statue of a full-figured, LARGE BUSTED WOMAN.

The bust is disproportionate to the size of the statue. Her face is familiar.

ORANGE

Who is she?

WILLIAM

Eleanor Roosevelt.

Orange takes great care and sets her back on the shelf.

ORANGE

And Miss Eleanor is going make you some money?

WILLIAM

Sold one of her already.

ORANGE

How much?

WILLIAM

A chicken. Sold a pregnant woman statue as well, sir. Got a chicken for her too.

ORANGE

So a chicken is the standard rate?

William points to the corner of the shed. A HEADSTONE sits.

WILLIAM

For that boy that drowned.

ORANGE

They pay you?

WILLIAM

Half bushel of corn and 2 quarts of muscadine preserves.

Orange shakes his head.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

So to answer your question. Yes, Miss Eleanor is going to feed me.

Orange goes over to the workbench.

There are three STATUES OF GRINNING MAN. Each sports an oversized erection.

Orange picks up a man.

ORANGE

Do not tell me you get a chicken for this.

WILLIAM

Those are real popular. The ladies club over in Green Hills just snaps them up as fast as I can make them.

Orange sets it back down.

ORANGE

How long it take you to make that guy?

WILLIAM

If I find the right stone, about two hours. Maybe three. It's a soft stone. And, I'm telling you, I can work a spike.

He looks at the spike.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

I just kind of step out of the way and let her do her little dance.

ORANGE

You should have married a long time ago.

He walks around the shed looking at SCULPTURES in various stages of development.

WILLIAM

I am a business man now, Orange.

ORANGE

Where is your sign? Every business has a sign.

WILLIAM

Don't need no sign. And listen on this, this Saturday I'm going to take my carvings to the farmer's market.

ORANGE

How you getting there?

WILLIAM

Elix Menawah's got a truck his boss
lets him use.

ORANGE

Elix Menawah? That half-breed ain't
never helped nobody in his life.

William nods to the erection men.

WILLIAM

Who you think those three are for?

Orange breaks up laughing.

ORANGE

I knew it.

WILLIAM

He says he wants to give them to his
ladies. But anyway, he owes me.

EXT. FARMER'S MARKET - DAY

ELIX MENAWAH, 20s, of Native American and Hispanic decent,
helps William unload sculptures from the truck into a
wheelbarrow.

Some art is wrapped in blankets. Others, in newspaper. A
few things aren't wrapped at all.

WILLIAM

Let's see if we can find a good spot.

Elix rolls the wheelbarrow as William walks alongside.

They pass booths, stands, and tables. Many are selling fresh
vegetables and fruit. Some have jars of honey, sorghum,
preserves, and jellies.

All BOOTH OWNERS are white.

William and Elix politely nod as they pass.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

You see any black folk?

They stop.

ELIX

I don't see no empty tables. I'll
ask somebody.

Elix walks to a booth owner selling jerky. Strips of jerky
hang all over the booth.

There's a handwritten sign under each one.

INSERT SIGNS

Beef. Hog. Chicken. Muskrat.

BACK ON SCENE

Displaying his wares is a LARGE WHITE BOOTH OWNER. He is a white, 40s, 6'5", 325 pound behemoth. His face is tanned and rough. He is sitting down.

ELIX (CONT'D)
 Good morning, sir. We have some
 things we'd like to sell.

The man slowly stands.

His chair springs up as the weight is removed.

An OLD DOG that had been napping WHIMPERS off.

A breeze blows. The jerky flutters. Elix fidgets.

ELIX (CONT'D)
 You see, we have a table here to
 display some whittling. Do you know
 where we could find that?

The man's facial expression doesn't change. A FLY BUZZES around his head. Stoic.

ELIX (CONT'D)
 Let me try this again. You see any
 black folk around?

The man rubs his belly.

Elix suddenly recoils his head as he catches a whiff the sun-baked meat. He waves his hand in front of his nose.

ELIX (CONT'D)
 Whoa, I just caught a whiff of the
 muskrat. Think we'll be going on.

LATER

The pair continue walking. They see an empty table. It's at the very end, separated from the rest of the booths.

It sits across from an outhouse.

WILLIAM
 This would be it.

WILLIAM'S TABLE

The table is set with SCULPTURES. William stands behind the table. Elix sits on the ground.

ELIX

Looks like we have our first customer.

A SCRUFFY DOG noses up to a large statue of CAT on the ground. He sniffs it. Turns and leaves.

ELIX (CONT'D)

Thought we had a sale.

Meet RUBEN JAFFE, 30s, white. He sports a longish teddy boy hair style, but without the oil and grease. His hair curls over his brow and is bouncy and light.

He's cool and ahead of his time. He's a college art teacher.

Ruben walks up to the table. Nods to William and Elix.

WILLIAM

I'm sorry if we're not at the right table. And I didn't see no other black folks setup anywhere.

RUBEN

I think your spot is at the front of this row. You should move up there.

ELIX

And you want to watch us die because --

RUBEN

Because people need to check out this incredible work.

Elix nods at William.

ELIX

You talking about William's whittling?

RUBEN

His sculptures, that's it.

Ruben sticks out his hand to William.

RUBEN (CONT'D)

Ruben Jaffe.

WILLIAM

William Edmondson.

Elix throws his hand out at Ruben.

ELIX

Elix, but my friends call me Night
Cat.

William shoots a look at Elix.

Ruben reaches for a PEGASUS.

RUBEN

Is it okay?

WILLIAM

Look at anything and everything.

RUBEN

I have a friend that's an incredible
art photographer; work has been shown
in major magazines; over the wire
services. They would get into
shooting your work.

WILLIAM

Not really sure about all this.

RUBEN

William, they're on their way to
Nashville right now. What if we
stop by your place after they get
here?

WILLIAM

Bring them by The Dinning Car tomorrow
morning. We can talk about it there.

EXT. MOUNT OLIVE CEMETERY - NASHVILLE - NIGHT

Ted stands at Cassie's headstone.

TED

I wanted you to get better. You
were young. Nobody deserves to die
like that.

SARAH

If you don't let the anger go, you
can't heal.

Ted looks to his car.

TED

I'm dropping you off at the house.
Then I'm going to run an errand.

SARAH

This time of night?

TED

Don't question me.

EXT. EDMONDSON HOUSE - NIGHT

Ted drives down William's street. He turns his lights off as he cruises.

He passes William's house and stops. He gets out not letting his car door shut completely.

Ted walks up to the house.

He looks in a window. He sees William walk by.

Ted works his way around to the back of the house.

EXT./INT. TOOLSHED

He moves quickly into the shed.

He looks around. Sees the railroad spike. Picks it up and feels the tip.

He sets it back on the table, but it falls and hits a METAL CONTAINER LID on the floor.

A METAL ON METAL SOUND cracks through the night air.

INT./EXT. EDMONDSON HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

William looks out the window towards the toolshed.

He decides to check out the noise.

EXT./INT. TOOLSHED

William looks around the outside of the toolshed. He goes inside.

Sees the spike on the ground. He bends over, picks it up, and walks outside with it. Quiet.

EXT. BOXCAR DINER - PARKING LOT - DAY

Yvonne wheels into the gravel parking lot of a railroad boxcar that's been converted into a diner. It's lunchtime.

Yvonne and Ruben get out.

YVONNE

I like it.

INT. BOXCAR DINNER - DAY

Fried ham and cigarette smoke fill the car. The place is packed with BLACK MEN and WOMEN.

William and Orange are eating at a table. William sees Miss Ella with Grandmother Kelly.

WILLIAM

Think I'll go over and tell Miss Ella hello.

ORANGE

Tell granny I got a new batch of shine for her.

William stands up and takes a step towards their table.

Miss Ella sees him. She smiles.

Ruben opens the door for Yvonne. She breezes right in.

The room goes quiet.

The only thing heard is the SIZZLING of HAM.

Ruben scans the crowd.

RUBEN

William is there standing up, next to his brother Orange.

YVONNE

His brother is named after a color? I like this family.

EDMONDSON TABLE

Ruben leads Yvonne to the table as every eye in the room is on her.

GRANDMOTHER KELLY

Wonder what that white woman wants?

Ruben motions towards Yvonne.

RUBEN

Gentlemen, this is Yvonne Carson, the photo-journalist I was telling you about.

Orange and William exchange glances.

Orange notices that every eye in the diner is on Yvonne.

ORANGE

We should talk outside.

As they exit, Orange takes two hush-puppies off William's plate. William holds out his hand, Orange drops in one hush puppy.

William smiles at Miss Ella as they pass.

Grandmother Kelly eyes Yvonne's every step.

GRANDMOTHER KELLY

(to Miss Ella)

She wants a black man.

EXT. BOXCAR DINER - PARKING LOT - DAY

YVONNE

Ruben says your sculptures are powerful yet rustic and earthy.

WILLIAM

I just see them in my head and then make them the best I can.

YVONNE

Using a railroad spike?

WILLIAM

A spike, that's right and she do like to dance.

William and Orange laugh.

YVONNE

William, if your work is good enough, I can sell the photos to interested magazines that already know my work. We'll split the money right down the middle.

Orange perks up.

ORANGE

Like a woman that can make money on the fly.

WILLIAM

Sounds too good to be true.

He shuffles.

Yvonne looks around at the sky.

YVONNE

Nice even light. How about right now?

ORANGE

How about I show you where he lives?

EXT. EDMONDSON TOOLSHED - DAY

Yvonne works her camera. A SMILING GARGOYLE that mixes in an African influence.

A PROUD HORSE with Native American influences is next.

Sees various HEADSTONES.

Comes across a PRIMITIVE AFRICAN WAR MASK.

She snaps a picture of an ELEPHANT.

YVONNE

William, have you ever been to Africa?

WILLIAM

Never been out of Nashville. Now one day, I'm going to New York. I will say that.

YVONNE

Have studied African or Appalachian art?

WILLIAM

Didn't look at many books growing up. We had a Bible and that was it.

ORANGE

Half a Bible. The scary half.

Yvonne runs her hand over an ELEPHANT.

YVONNE

This is incredible.

She looks at Ruben.

YVONNE (CONT'D)

I can actually feel energy coming from this.

She stands up and snaps at a faster pace.

RUBEN

The only art he's ever seen has been on the walls of the hospital. You know, portraits of old white guys with beards.

ORANGE

Always told Willie he should doing something like this.

Yvonne puts down her camera.

YVONNE

William, I have a contact at a very important museum in New York.

William is stunned. He looks at Orange.

YVONNE (CONT'D)

You may not be ready for that just yet. But there's a show in Atlanta next week.

William's ears perk up.

YVONNE (CONT'D)

How would you feel about having your work displayed? I'm pretty sure I can get you in even at this late date.

WILLIAM

Seems like everything is moving too fast.

YVONNE

What are you afraid of? What good does it do if your work isn't seen and enjoyed.

William puts his hand on the elephant. He pauses to feel if there really is any energy coming out of the statue.

WILLIAM

I don't even know you or Ruben. I don't know what you stand for or believe. For all I know, y'all could take all my work and sale it and keep the cash.

Yvonne moves closer to William.

YVONNE

Would you like to be known as Edmondson the janitor or Edmondson the artist? You have to trust somebody sometime.

WILLIAM

Okay, then. Let's do it.

Orange puts his arm around William.

ORANGE

Taught him everything he know; how to pick up women, everything.

EXT. BELEVIEW SCHOOL OF ART - PARKING LOT - DAY

Ruben waits for Yvonne. A small suitcase rests next to him.

Yvonne screeches into the lot. Gravel flies.

RUBEN

Orange thinks you could run shine.

YVONNE

Hop in.

Ruben gets in. He grabs the door handle to close the door.

Smoke rises off the tires as Yvonne burns rubber.

Ruben struggles to close the door.

EXT./INT. CAR

RUBEN

Never been to this show in Atlanta. I've hit a couple of clubs. The jazz scene cooks.

YVONNE

You do know William can't go to Atlanta?

RUBEN

What?

YVONNE

The Atlanta Art Show has a "No colored" policy.

RUBEN

William thinks he's going. Hell, Orange thinks William's going.

(MORE)

RUBEN (CONT'D)

I stopped by yesterday, they were trying to find someone with a suitcase.

YVONNE

People need to see his work, not his face; just yet.

RUBEN

You can't hide he's black.

YVONNE

I can for awhile.

Yvonne rounds a curve.

RUBEN

Not good.

YVONNE

Once William's work generates some talk in Atlanta, I'll approach a couple of the papers and magazines.

RUBEN

It makes no sense, Yvonne.

YVONNE

We have got to get people talking. We've got to build some excitement. I want William to be seen as exclusive and elusive.

RUBEN

You should ask him how he wants to be seen.

YVONNE

Okay, let's tell everyone right now he's black. See how far that will get him; or us.

RUBEN

Don't like it.

The car roars down the road.

EXT. EDMONDSON TOOLSHED - DAY

William wraps a small statue of a INDIAN WARRIOR in a blanket. He puts it in a crate. Yvonne, Ruben, and Orange are busy.

WILLIAM

I'll load this last one up Miss Yvonne
and then I need to go get my suitcase.
Imagine, Atlanta, Georgia.

Ruben looks to Yvonne.

She moves towards William flashing a smile.

YVONNE

I have a feeling you're going to
sell many pieces in Atlanta and we're
going to need more.

WILLIAM

Get started on it when we get back.
I have got some ideas about a pack
of wolves.

She puts her hand on William's shoulder.

YVONNE

It may be best if you stay here. We
have momentum, William, and it's up
to you to keep it going.

It hits him. He's not going. William drops his head and
shuffles.

WILLIAM

Oh. I see.

YVONNE

I know you don't know me very well,
or at all even, but please trust me.
I know the game. I know how to play
the game.

Yvonne and Ruben walk to the car.

RUBEN

I'm sorry guys --

Yvonne starts up the car. She screams out the passenger
side window to Ruben.

YVONNE

See you when I get back.

Yvonne's foot smashes the gas pedal.

She roars off leaving Ruben standing.

Ruben throws his hands in the air.

RUBEN

My suitcase.

He turns around.

RUBEN (CONT'D)

My favorite shirt was in there.

Orange walks to William.

ORANGE

I'm sorry Willie.

WILLIAM

How do you like that?

He turns back to watch Yvonne drive down the road.

INT. EDMONDSON TOOLSHED - DAY

Orange walks in the shed with two quarts of sparkling Tennessee shine.

He gives one to William and the other to Ruben.

ORANGE

This stuff will bite you.

WILLIAM

We done been bit once today.

Orange nods.

ORANGE

Sometimes it pays to get bit twice.

Ruben glances at his quart jar.

RUBEN

Don't you need one Orange?

Orange takes two flasks out of his back pocket.

ORANGE

Oh, I got the ol' double barrel.
And it's loaded pure grain.

He takes a long pull off one of the flasks.

He wipes off his lips with the sleeve of his shirt.

ORANGE (CONT'D)

Kind of has that kerosene aftertaste.

William takes a long, slow, drink.

He's stoic.

LATER

Empty flasks and quart jar. Ruben and Orange are passed out.

William has a half of quart left. He sees a small block of wood. It's a SMALL WOODEN ROSE that he started but never finished.

He picks up the rose.

He closes his eyes. He sways. He twirls it around in his fingers.

EXT. KELLY HOUSE - NIGHT.

William walks up to the Kelly house. He staggers a bit as he climbs the steps onto the porch.

A BLACK CAT rushes by his feet.

He stumbles not trying to step on the cat.

He makes his way to the door and bangs with his fist. He blows his breath into the air.

William smacks the door again.

GRANDMOTHER KELLY'S FACE

Peers out the window.

She shuts the drapes.

William knocks on the door again. This time, it almost sounds like an upbeat melody.

The door flies open.

Grandmother Kelly, in her nightgown and bed-cap, minus her teeth, looks dead at William.

GRANDMOTHER KELLY

You scared me half to death banging
on the door in the dead of night.
What is wrong with you?

She catches a whiff of the shine.

She waves her hands and crinkles her nose.

GRANDMOTHER KELLY (CONT'D)

Now I know what's wrong with you.
You're acting the town drunk again.

WILLIAM

Came to pay a visit to Miss Ella if
you don't mind.

William staggers back.

Miss Ella brushes past Grandmother Kelly as she buttons up
her robe.

MISS ELLA

William, are you okay?

WILLIAM

I am drunk.

He tries to balance on one foot.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Yup. I'm drunk.

Grandmother Kelly shakes her head in disgust.

GRANDMOTHER KELLY

I knew it. He's a drunkard and a
liar. And he walks down the street
with no shoes on.

Miss Ella whirls towards her grandmother.

MISS ELLA

You know you don't have your teeth
in, Grandmother Kelly?

GRANDMOTHER KELLY

Well I for one, am glad you didn't
wasted no fatback on his feet.

Grandmother Kelly huffs and disappears inside.

WILLIAM

I'm sorry, I shouldn't have come
here.

MISS ELLA

No, you should come here. But you
shouldn't come here drunk. Is it
about that white woman?

William looks off.

WILLIAM

She took my art to Atlanta to show.

MISS ELLA

That's great William. There's people out there that believe in you. All you have to do is trust them.

WILLIAM

Trust? I don't know who to trust.

He moves away.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Don't know why I would trick myself into thinking I could get to New York.

MISS ELLA

New York? You are drunk, William. And you need to go home.

She moves to William and extends her hand.

MISS ELLA (CONT'D)

Why did you come here tonight, William?

He reaches for her hand. He holds it, then lets it go.

WILLIAM

I don't know.

William turns to leave. He pauses at the rose bush; then staggers away.

GRANDMOTHER KELLY'S FACE

Leers out the window.

She huffs.

INT. ATLANTA ART SHOW - DAY

Paintings and sculptures abound. Yvonne has a table set with William's work. A toupee wearing ART DEALER, 50, approaches.

ART DEALER

This is unique.

YVONNE

William Edmondson. Remember that name.

ART DEALER

I'll remember that name because he's going to be the artist that sells nothing here.

YVONNE

This is the most inspired work in the room.

ART DEALER

It's the most elementary work in the room. I've been dealing in art for the last 30 years, this is garbage.

The man inspects Yvonne closer.

ART DEALER (CONT'D)

How'd you get in here?

YVONNE

I registered for William Edmondson.

ART DEALER

Let me enlighten you, missy; only the actual artist can register for this show.

YVONNE

Somebody took my money, so I say I'm registered. By the way, do you comb your hair with a rake?

Art Dealer fumes. He calls over a BURLEY GUARD. Burley Guard walks over to Yvonne. She smiles.

BURLY GUARD

You got a problem, boss?

YVONNE

I'm sorry, we got off on the wrong foot.

She bats her eyes at the guard.

ART DEALER

Too late smart mouth.

YVONNE

People in the south are supposed to be friendly.

ART DEALER

I'm from Ohio.

Yvonne runs her finger in her hair and grins at the art dealer.

YVONNE
Look honey --

ART DEALER
Don't even try it. You're done.

Yvonne sees a YOUNG GUARD walking up.

She backs up.

YVONNE
Fine, I'll pack it up.

ART DEALER
No, you're not taking anything with you.

Art Dealer nods to both guards.

ART DEALER (CONT'D)
Escort her out. Use force if you have to.

The guards nod.

YVONNE
You can't keep all this.

ART DEALER
Any artist, or artist representative, will forfeit all materials in the event they do not adhere to show policy. Didn't read the contract?

He turns to the guards.

ART DEALER (CONT'D)
Throw her out.

The guards grab Yvonne by the arm lifting her off the ground.

YVONNE
Let go of me.

Art Dealer looks around. Sees FRAIL WHITE custodian with a garbage can.

ART DEALER
Hey old man. Come over here.

Old man saunters over.

ART DEALER (CONT'D)

Box all this up and dump it.

EXT. EDMONDSON TOOLSHED - DAY

William works the sandpaper over a statue of COILED SNAKE.

A shadow behind him. It's Yvonne.

YVONNE

I'm sorry William.

William continues sanding.

YVONNE (CONT'D)

William, please forgive me. I thought I had it all planned out.

WILLIAM

Nice of you to let me in on the plan.

YVONNE

It was a white only show. If they knew you were black they would have never let you in.

William stops. He looks at his sandpaper. He blows on it and dust clouds around his head.

YVONNE (CONT'D)

It was a risk I had to take.

WILLIAM

A risk you had to take? I'm the one that's risking everything. Quick, name a famous black painter.

Yvonne darts her eyes back and forth.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

A famous black sculptor? You can't because the white world doesn't want you to know. They think we don't exist. Well, we do. And I'm going to prove we do.

For the first time in her life, Yvonne sweats. But just a little.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

How much did you sell in Atlanta?

He looks at Yvonne. She forces a weak smile.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

You did sell something, didn't you?

Yvonne looks down.

YVONNE

I didn't get the chance.

William puts down the sandpaper.

He moves closer to Yvonne.

WILLIAM

Didn't get a chance?

YVONNE

I was kicked out. They kept all your things.

William laughs a hearty laugh.

YVONNE (CONT'D)

What's so funny about that?

She cocks her head.

YVONNE (CONT'D)

I was kicked out and they kept your sculptures. That's not funny.

William shoots her a smile.

WILLIAM

You know, you do turn a good story.

She puts her hands on William's shoulders.

YVONNE

William, they wouldn't let me bring anything back. I was kicked out and they kept it all.

WILLIAM

They kept my work? All those hours I put in on each one of those pieces?

YVONNE

I'm sorry, they had guards.

He turns away.

WILLIAM

So you pretend I'm going to Atlanta for some big art show and then you lose all my work.

YVONNE

William, I really didn't think it through. I'm sorry.

WILLIAM

And here I went and made you something special for going to Atlanta for me.

William walks over to the workbench.

William gives her a wooden carving of ROMAN MAN in a toga.

YVONNE

This is interesting. What do you call it?

She turns the carving over and there is a LARGE KNIFE coming out of the back.

WILLIAM

Et tu?

YVONNE

I will make this up to you William. I promise. I'm going back to New York tomorrow and I will see about getting you a showing there.

William picks up the sandpaper and sands the coiled snake.

WILLIAM

You know who I can count on? Me. Sometimes Orange, but mostly it's me and the good Lord.

YVONNE

I said I'm sorry.

WILLIAM

You ain't nothing but a fly-by-night. And fly-by-nights and me don't get along.

Yvonne starts to reach for William, but she stops and walks away. William stops sanding.

OPENING AND CLOSING of a CAR DOOR.

ENGINE ROARS. Seconds later, SCREECHING TIRES.

William continues sanding.

EXT. EDMONDSON HOUSE - DAY.

Miss Ella watches as Yvonne roars off.

EXT./INT. TOOLSHED - MOMENTS LATER

William walks out of the toolshed.

MISS ELLA
What happened?

WILLIAM
I trusted somebody that believed in me.

MISS ELLA
Did the show go well? Did she sell any pieces?

WILLIAM
They stole everything.

MISS ELLA
They can't do that.

WILLIAM
They did.

MISS ELLA
So now what?

WILLIAM
I work harder. I work longer. And I count on myself.

William moves away.

As he moves, the flash of small round chunk of SHINNING BLACK ONYX catches the eye of Miss Ella.

She picks it up and smiles.

MISS ELLA
This one looks different.

WILLIAM
Ruben says it's black onyx. If you're lucky you can find them in the limestone caves down by the river.

She rubs her hand over the stone.

MISS ELLA
I wonder what you could make out of something this pretty?

William looks at Miss Ella.

WILLIAM
It's too small to be any good.

MISS ELLA
You just don't see what it could be
William.

She twirls the object in her hand.

MISS ELLA (CONT'D)
It could be anything.

William takes the stone from her and puts it in his pocket.

WILLIAM
I don't see nothing.

She smiles.

INT. NEW YORK - MUSEUM OF MODERN ART - SAM'S OFFICE - DAY

Yvonne blows into the office of SAM BURKLEY, 30s, director
of MOMA.

Sam sees her and gets up and gives her a hug.

SAM
How's my favorite photographer?

YVONNE
In need of a huge favor. And you?

SAM
In need of nobody bothering me with
a huge favor.

YVONNE
Let me show you some work.

Yvonne gives Sam a portfolio of William's work. He flips
through the book.

SAM
Very raw. Elementary.

YVONNE
But powerful.

Sam looks at Yvonne.

SAM
I was talking about you.

YVONNE
I know. Now focus.

Sam looks back to the portfolio.

SAM
Where'd you find this artist?

YVONNE
Nashville. He's black.

Sam closes the portfolio.

SAM
We've never had a black artist show
their work here.

YVONNE
And wouldn't you like to change that?

Yvonne opens the portfolio.

SAM
It's not up to me, it's up the board.
And you know how they are; they don't
like change.

Sam closes the portfolio. Yvonne crams her hand between the pages and opens it back up.

She moves in closer to Sam.

YVONNE
It's your job to sell the board on
what shows. It would make a great
story, "Artist becomes first person
of African decent to show at Museum
of Modern Art."

SAM
Catchy, but we're not ready for it.

YVONNE
People will recognize you as the
visionary you truly are if we can
pull this off.

Sam glances down at the pictures of William's work.

SAM
Now I'm a visionary?

Yvonne moves in even closer.

YVONNE
You are a lot of things. Caring,
funny, sexy --

Sam smiles.

SAM

I'll see what I can do. We're all meeting next week. I'll put it on the table.

Yvonne backs up.

YVONNE

That's perfect, what time?

Sam shakes his head.

SAM

Oh no. You're not going to be there.

YVONNE

Oh yes I am. I need 15 minutes of their time.

SAM

Five.

Yvonne turns towards the door.

YVONNE

Fine. Five it is.

We know she's not ever going to take five.

EXT. 14TH AVENUE - NIGHT

Two YOUNG AFRICAN AMERICAN GIRLS skip down the street.

They pass Ted Maxwell's car. He's not inside.

EXT./INT. EDMONDSON HOUSE - NIGHT

William walks in the backdoor from his toolshed.

KITCHEN

He washes off a tomato and slices it. He finds a small loaf of bread and cuts off two slices.

He puts the tomato on the bread.

A FLASH of AX HANDLE. It slams hard across William's back.

It's a sick DOUBLE THUD as the handle hits the top of his head and he drops to the floor.

Ted stands over William, but he's out cold.

The HEEL of Ted's boot

CRUNCHES hard on William's left hand.

BONES CRACKING.

TED

Carve something now.

EXT. MOUNT ARARAT CEMETERY - DAY

It's a black cemetery. It needs upkeep.

Blood seeps through the bandage on William's hand as he motions Elix to back his truck up to a fresh grave.

Orange is in the bed with a tombstone the shape of a diamond.

WILLIAM

That's good.

William moves to open the tailgate. Orange jumps out.

ORANGE

Let me get that. I know your back
is killing you.

William throws open the tailgate.

WILLIAM

Ain't nobody going to take my joy.
I will still chisel with my spike.

He pushes in past William and gets one side of the tombstone. Elix gets the other side. They carry it to the head of the grave.

ORANGE

I would have never thought this, but
trying to be an artist is more
dangerous than running shine.

WILLIAM

My problem now is, I ain't got no
stone to work it. This headstone is
it.

William carries the shovel. He hands it to Orange who hands it to Elix.

ORANGE

Just deep enough to set the stone,
Elix.

ELIX
I've done this before.

Elix digs.

ORANGE
I wonder who would attack you like that?

WILLIAM
Could be anybody.

ORANGE
What about the police? Or that Maxwell cat?

WILLIAM
Yeah, that what I was thinking.

ORANGE
Somebody don't like you.

Elix takes a break.

ELIX
Hey, I've seen some stone. Down at that old building they're tearing down over on Second Avenue.

ORANGE
Boy, you don't even know what you're talking about.

Elix jabs the shovel deep into the ground and moves towards Orange.

ELIX
I've seen the mess they're making. It's stone.

ORANGE
You talking about that old brick building that was the department store?

ELIX
Yeah, it was a department store, but it ain't brick.

William steps in.

WILLIAM
So let's go take a look at see what's what. If Elix is right, I could be back in business.

William motions towards the grave.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

And men, y'all need to show a little respect.

Elix and Orange look down. They are standing on the grave. FOOTPRINTS are all over.

The shovel is stuck in the ground where the middle of the body would be.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

Elix's truck pulls up near the rubble of a former building. All three men are in the cab.

A wrecking ball stands quiet. Stone litters the ground.

WHITE WORKERS load stone into a dump truck. One of the Workers is ETHAN NICHOLS, 20s, a wiry tough guy.

EXT./INT. TRUCK

Big grin from William.

WILLIAM

That's Tennessee limestone.

ORANGE

I've got a plan. William, go get beat-up for it.

William hops out of the cab.

WILLIAM

There are no more free punches.

He slams the truck door.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Y'all sit tight.

William walks over to the men, head held high.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING

William passes a dump truck and we see "MAXWELL CONSTRUCTION" on the doors. He doesn't notice.

William converses with Ethan. Ethan rubs the back of his hand over his mouth. He nods.

William smiles and sticks out his hand. Ethan smiles big and extends his hand. They shake.

William walks back to Orange and Elix.

INT./EXT. ELIX'S TRUCK

William opens the passenger door.

WILLIAM

I just got us one load of stone
delivered to the house.

ORANGE

And you didn't get killed. You know
what? I think you are going to take
that train ride.

WILLIAM

Orange, go over and get in the dump
truck, and after they load it, you
show them where I live.

Orange gets out, a little confused.

ORANGE

You want me to ride with them?

WILLIAM

And make sure I get a full load.
Don't let them off with no half-load.

Orange walks towards the truck.

EXT./INT. DUMP TRUCK - DAY

The truck is loaded with stone.

Ethan works the gears as he stares at Orange.

ETHAN

I ain't never rode in a truck with a
negro before.

ORANGE

What do you think?

ETHAN

Ain't bad.

Ethan shifts gears.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

How come you have red hair?

ORANGE

I'm Irish, fool.

Ethan shifts again. Looks out the windshield to the road.

ETHAN
So where you live?

ORANGE
No, we're going to my bother's house.

ETHAN
But first, we're going to your house.
And then, we're going to your
brother's house.

Orange sits up a little.

ORANGE
Why we going to my house?

ETHAN
To pick up 12 quart jars of moonshine.

Orange sits up higher. He starts to talk but realizes he's been conned.

ETHAN (CONT'D)
Problem?

Oranges sinks back in the seat.

ORANGE
You ever get really sick of family?

The two men connect on that one.

EXT. EDMONDSON HOUSE - DAY

William and Elix sit on the front steps. William is whittling on a small piece of wood.

The dump truck pulls up to the front of the house. The breaks squeaks.

Ethan tosses his smoke out the window.

Next to him are 12 quarts of moonshine in a cardboard box.

William stands up and moves to the road.

Ethan hits a lever, the truck drops the payload of limestone in the street.

A huge limestone cloud of dust covers the entire area.

Ethan puts the truck in gear and takes off.

Orange pulls up, hops out. Goes to the trunk of his car and changes out the licence plate to FLORIDA.

ORANGE

You think you're smart. Setting me up like that.

WILLIAM

I knew you'd come through with it.

ORANGE

But 12 quarts of my finest? It hurts to pay that price.

ELIX

You didn't even ask him to dump it in the back, did you?

Orange drops his head.

TOOLSLED

William sharpens the tip of his spike.

Elix carries stone in a wheelbarrow.

ELIX (CONT'D)

So you make me do all the work?

ORANGE

Well, if you feel like that, Night Cat, we can take turns hauling with the wheelbarrow.

ELIX

That's more like it.

ORANGE

You empty it, then I'll take it down the road where you can fill it back up.

INT. MAXWELL CONSTRUCTION CO. - TED'S OFFICE - DAY

Ted stalks into his office, slams the door. Sitting in a chair waiting is Ethan.

TED

You were passed out in a dump truck?

ETHAN

I reckon.

TED
That's twice this week and once last week. Do you not want to work here?

ETHAN
I'm sorry, Ted.

TED
Where you getting this liquor?

ETHAN
Shine.

TED
How much shine you have?

ETHAN
Had 12, but now 5 or 6 mason jars.

TED
You don't have money for 12 quarts.

ETHAN
I traded a load of stone from down at the site.

Ted jerks Ethan out of his chair, slams him against the wall in one fluid motion.

TED
You did what?

ETHAN
I might be sick.

TED
Where'd you take the stone?

ETHAN
Over to black town. 14th Street.
Edmondson or Edmonds.

Ted turns red.

TED
It better not have been William Edmondson.

ETHAN
Yeah, that's the guy.

Ted releases him.

TED
You get every bit of that stone back.

Ethan tips to the side.

TED (CONT'D)

You take some boys and a truck and
you pick it up all up. Everything.

INT./TOOLSHED - DAY

William stands over a large chunk of stone. He holds a hammer
in his right hand.

His left hand is still covered with a DIRTY, BLOODY BANDAGE.

He picks up the railroad spike.

He grips it hard. Pain shoots through his hand and up his
arm. He grits his teeth.

He sets the spike on rock. SLAM with the hammer. He grimaces
he works, but he is truly in his element.

EXT. EDMONDSON HOUSE - FRONT YARD - DAY

Ethan pulls up with BIG JOHN, TOMMY, couple of tough guys in
their 20s.

Orange has the trunk of his car open. He is changing licence
plates.

The dump truck roars up and drive way and around Orange's
car.

TOOLSHED

Ethan heads right for the toolshed. He slams on the brakes
and they pile out.

Orange runs, following the truck. William darts out from
the toolshed holding his hammer and spike.

ORANGE

Hey, whoa fellas.

Big John exits the cab with a shovel...and cracks Orange
across the head.

He's on the ground, still.

Blood seeps from his temple.

Tommy pick up stone from the ground and throw at William's
head.

He's hit. Drops the hammer, but holds onto the spike.

William staggers and Ethan and Tommy pick up more stone and once again pummel William. The spike slips from his fingertips.

William's out.

ETHAN

Lets load this shit up and get out of here.

Orange is still.

William is still, blood streaming down his face.

All quiet except for CLANK and CLANG of stone being thrown into the METAL TRUCK BED.

Ethan takes a closer look at Orange.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

We need to go, now.

They hop in the truck. Ethan floors it.

INT. EDMONDSON HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

JIMMY PURVIS, 40s, African American and highly educated, sews up a gash on William's shoulder.

Miss Ella sits on the bed holding William's hand.

WILLIAM

Easy there, Jimmy.

JIMMY

If I can doctor a mule, I can doctor on you.

William stirs.

WILLIAM

What happened?

JIMMY

A fight broke out over your stone. Or maybe it was rightfully their stone.

Miss Ella dabs a wet napkin on a scab on William's forehead.

WILLIAM

Guess the shine wasn't no good.

William sits up a bit.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Jimmy, could you run by Orange's place when you leave and tell him what happened?

Jimmy looks at Miss Ella.

She moves closer in to William as Jimmy backs up.

MISS ELLA

William, it pains me deep down inside right now.

William sits up higher. She can't get the words out.

MISS ELLA (CONT'D)

Orange is gone.

WILLIAM

What? No, he's not. He's home or on a run.

MISS ELLA

Orange was killed in the fight with them men.

WILLIAM

He wasn't there. It was just me. They only came after me.

MISS ELLA

Orange was there.

WILLIAM

No.

MISS ELLA

You listen William. Your brother died. He was there. He must have just gotten there. His car trunk was open and licence plates was on the ground.

William sinks deep into the bed. Tears well up.

His nasty, bandaged hand grips the white, clean sheets of the mattress. His hand has begun bleeding again.

MISS ELLA (CONT'D)

I'm so sorry, William. I'm so, so sorry.

EXT. MAXWELL CONSTRUCTION COMPANY - DAY

Ted signs paperwork and hands paperwork to YOUNG WORKER who then leaves as the Ethan pulls up.

TED
You boys get the stone?

Ethan gets out of the truck with Big John and Tommy.

ETHAN
Yeah.

Ethan looks down at the ground. He shuffle his feet.

TED
What are you not telling me?

ETHAN
We was jumped.

TED
Jumped? How?

TOMMY
They came at us.

ETHAN
We had to fight them off.

TED
You did what you had to do.

Ethan, Big John, and Tommy look at each other.

ETHAN
We left them hurtin' pretty bad.

TED
That's okay.

ETHAN
One of them is in pretty bad shape.

TED
Did anybody see you or the truck?

The guys shrug their shoulders.

ETHAN
No. I was looking.

TED
Then nobody says nothing. Y'all got that?

Ethan smiles.

TED (CONT'D)
Wipe that smile off your face.

Ethan drops his head.

TED (CONT'D)
Nobody says anything, and we'll just
let this ride.

The guys look at each other.

TED (CONT'D)
Go empty the truck and park it around
back.

The men get in the truck and roar off.

INT. BLACK CHURCH - DAY

PASTOR LOVE, 60s, stands at the pulpit. The church is packed
with PEOPLE.

Orange's casket is in the front of the pulpit. It's been
painted ORANGE.

William sits next to Miss Ella. She reaches out to hold his
hand.

Ruben sits in the back. Elix is there as well.

PASTOR LOVE
Orange Oscar Edmondson lived a life
to give us lessons. Lessons to learn
from and by. I know he taught me
how to drive.

The crowd smiles.

William's head is lowered.

PASTOR LOVE (CONT'D)
If I ever give up preaching I would
go to running shine 'cause Orange
taught me well.

A BLACK GRANDMOTHER frowns.

Pastor Love steps out from behind the pulpit and walks to
the open casket.

PASTOR LOVE (CONT'D)

Orange taught us how to look to be a snappy dresser. The ladies will tell you he was always looking good.

2 YOUNG LADIES smile at each other and nod.

PASTOR LOVE (CONT'D)

And he taught us that if you have a gift, you should use it. No matter how bad things get, bring joy to yourself and others.

Miss Ella looks at William. His head is still lowered. She rubs on his arm. He is motionless.

PASTOR LOVE (CONT'D)

Orange's gift was loving life and people. Orange's gift was giving people laughter. I know that brought him joy. But let me tell you, he could sure be stubborn smart ass.

Elix smiles.

PASTOR LOVE (CONT'D)

When you remember Orange as you go about your lives, which is full of pain and sorrow as well as joy, remember your gift and how best to use it.

Pastor steps away from the casket. He nods

William gets up along with 5 African American PALLBEARERS.

They walk to the casket. William shuts the lid. The men pick up the casket and carry it outside.

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

Orange's car waits. It shines.

Hooked up to his car is a flatbed trailer.

The men slide the casket onto the trailer.

William notices the licence plate. It's VERMONT.

He smiles and shakes his head.

Elix gets behind the wheel. William rides shotgun.

The car pulls away.

INT. TOOLSHED - DAY

William puts his tools in a box. He shoves the box in a corner.

He sees the spike. He tosses it in a bucket on the floor.

He turns walks out. He shuts the door on the toolshed. Leaning against the shed is a small tombstone.

William picks it up, puts it under his arm.

EXT. KELLY HOUSE - DAY

William passes the Kelly house with the tombstone under his arm.

Miss Ella watches.

EXT. MOUNT ARARAT CEMETERY - DAY

Dark clouds move in. The wind kicks up.

William walks past graves.

He tugs at the small headstone that gets heavier with each step.

William stops near a freshly dug grave.

He gets on his knees near the top of the grave.

William digs at the dirt with his bare hands.

He digs harder, scooping up the dirt. His hands are cold, dirty, and bleeding.

He sets the tombstone. On the front is a crude image of a FLYING CAR. It reads: ORANGE O. EDMONDSON.

INT. NEW YORK - MUSEUM OF MODERN ART - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

The conference table is surrounded by cigar smoking, overweight OLDER MEN. A meek FEMALE SCRIBE, 20s, sits in the corner along with Yvonne. RALPH, 60s, runs the show.

RALPH

Okay Sam, kick this off for us.

Sam takes a quick sip of coffee. He gives a slight wink to Yvonne.

SAM

The Museum of Modern art is about expanding the limits of what a typical visitor may feel and see.

He shoots a smile and gets up.

SAM (CONT'D)

And today, we have a chance to decide to push those limits to a place we've never been.

He looks towards Yvonne.

SAM (CONT'D)

A one man show by black sculptor William Edmondson will take us in the direction we want to go. A direction that will expose the creative genius that is within all of us.

RALPH

I don't think our patrons are ready for this kind of thing. And I've already run something like this by our 3 biggest donors. They have confirmed to me that they will stop all donations if we present slave art.

Yvonne almost comes out of her chair. Sam holds his hand out to stop her.

RALPH (CONT'D)

Okay, Negro art, then.

SAM

Art knows no color, and yet art works through all colors. You should know this Ralph.

RALPH

I know about financial issues, and we have many. You should know this Sam.

SAM

By having this show, it's true, we may lose some support. However, by choosing to show Edmondson, we will bring in a host of new patrons that are visionaries.

RALPH

So you hope these new patrons, if we even get them, would replace the support of the owner of a steel mill? They would replace the generosity of an owner of a string of five-star hotels?

Ralph laughs.

The other men in the room smile and nod. Sam looks to Yvonne.

SAM

Gentlemen, there's someone I'd like you to meet. You've seen her work in every major American magazine. I would like to turn the floor over to Yvonne Carson.

She stands.

Ralph looks to the meek scribe.

RALPH

Is her name on the agenda?

Scribe looks down at her paperwork. Shakes her head no.

Ralph stands.

RALPH (CONT'D)

Sam, we go way back. But we don't have time for this nonsense. It's a noble cause to be sure, but we can't risk what we've built up over the years.

Ralph walks closer to Yvonne.

RALPH (CONT'D)

I'm sure your little friend would have some inspiring words. However, the board voted before you got here today. The Edmondson showing was rejected.

The other men begin closing their notebooks.

RALPH (CONT'D)

Meeting adjourned.

Sam gives Yvonne a stunned look.

EXT. TOOLSHED - DAY

William scatters feed on the ground for a couple of chickens.

He turns. It's Officer Chavis. His hat is in his hands.

OFFICER CHAVIS

Stopped by to tell you no charges
will be filed against the men from
Maxwell Construction.

William drops his head.

WILLIAM

Ted Maxwell?

OFFICER CHAVIS

Yes.

WILLIAM

Let me guess what you're going to
tell me next. Ain't nothing going
to happen to him.

OFFICER CHAVIS

The judge saw it as self defense,
Edmondson. Orange came running up
to them. You came running.

WILLIAM

They were in my yard.

OFFICER CHAVIS

Judge Creekmore saw it as the men
protecting themselves for property
that was rightfully theirs.

William stands tall and looks at Officer Chavis.

WILLIAM

I know how your world works. That
world takes care of its own. My
brother's dead, my art destroyed,
and my materials taken. And I just
found out that even if I did have
sculptures to show, I wouldn't get
to because your world voted me down.

Officer Chavis becomes uncomfortable.

OFFICER CHAVIS

Well, I just wanted to stop by.

Officer Chavis looks at the ground.

William continues to stare hard at Office Chavis. Officer Chavis puts back on his hat.

OFFICER CHAVIS (CONT'D)
Guess I'll be going.

WILLIAM
Yeah, you do that.

FRONT YARD

William follows Officer Chavis around to the front of his house and watches him drive off.

RUFUS'S FRONT PORCH

Rufus in his chair. His rifle leans against the wall next to him.

RUFUS
What'd they want?

William walks into Rufus's yard.

WILLIAM
Said somebody reported me as having mice running all over my backyard.

RUFUS
You need to shoot them. Only way to get rid of mice, you know. Got to shoot them.

William moves on in.

WILLIAM
Think that rifle of yours would do the job?

RUFUS
A Hawk 22 bolt action is the best rifle in the world. It can do the job.

Rufus stands up.

RUFUS (CONT'D)
Would you like to use it? It's loaded.

WILLIAM
Sure.

William receives the rifle from Rufus.

RUFUS

Now don't you clean it, okay? That's my job. You take care of your problem and I'll clean it.

INT. TOOLSHED - DAY

He sets the rifle on a table with care.

Gets a jar of moonshine. He opens the lid and drinks long and slow.

He sets the jar next to the rifle and pulls up a stool.

William takes a short slug of the shine.

He runs his fingers over the gun stock. The grain is smooth, the wood is warm. His fingers glide back.

He takes another pull from the quart jar.

He picks up the gun and pops the bolt, SNAP.

It's loaded.

He chambers a round, CLICK.

Sets the butt of the rifle on the floor between his legs.

His body trembles. He takes another quick slug.

He lowers his head so his forehead is directly over the end of the barrel. He closes his eyes --

Can't do it. He tosses the rifle on the table as he stands. His hand trembles as he reaches for the jar. A tear escapes as he drinks.

He picks the rifle up. He appears to be counting in his head to "three".

He looks down and sees his spike in the container. It's his joy.

The gun slips from William's fingers as he crumples to the ground.

EXT. MAXWELL CONSTRUCTION CO. - DAY

Ted pulls up in front of his office. Waiting for him is Officer Chavis.

OFFICER CHAVIS

Looks like your boys are going to skate by on the murder charge.

TED
Murder? Is Edmondson dead?

OFFICER CHAVIS
Orange, the younger brother is the one that got it. William was lucky he didn't get it too.

TED
They got the wrong one.

OFFICER CHAVIS
It was a brutal, vicious attack. The head was caved in. Senseless.

Ted drops his head a little.

OFFICER CHAVIS (CONT'D)
Nobody deserves to die like that.

Ted shoots his head back up, remembering his earlier words.

Officer Chavis heads to his patrol car.

OFFICER CHAVIS (CONT'D)
You got what you wanted.

EXT. NASHVILLE - FIRST AVE - DOCKS - DAY

Downtown is alive. PEOPLE bustle. Sun sparkles off the water. A GRUFF FOREMAN white, 40s, barks commands.

A group of BLACK MEN unload a barge.

One of them is William.

GRUFF FORMAN
Edmondson. Pick up the pace. There's people younger than you waiting to take your place.

He is hot. He is tired. He is beaten.

Yet he picks up the pace.

EXT. EDMONDSON HOUSE- STREET FRONT - DAY

Miss Ella walks down the sidewalk with FLO, 20S, African American female.

She sees William on the front porch.

MISS ELLA
Flo, you go on, I want to see how William's doing.

FLO

I know what you want.

MISS ELLA

Get on... I will talk to you later.

Miss Ella walks up to William. He doesn't look up.

MISS ELLA (CONT'D)

A nice beautiful day, William.

Nothing.

Miss Ella shows another angle of her figure.

MISS ELLA (CONT'D)

You should look around and enjoy it
once in awhile.

WILLIAM

How about you sit down next to me
and I'll enjoy it just fine.

Miss Ella sits down next to William.

MISS ELLA

Are you sculpting any?

William looks up.

WILLIAM

No.

MISS ELLA

William --

William reaches out. He feels her face with his hand. He feels her skin on his fingertips. It's almost like her face is a highly polished sculpture the way he caresses her.

He moves closer, pulls her close, they enjoy how each other feel. His lips meet hers.

EXT. MUSEUM OF MODERN ART - DAY

Yvonne runs up the steps of the MOMA. She looks hotter than usual as she's meeting Sam for lunch.

She runs into Sam and Ralph coming down the steps. She goes right up to Ralph, she actually has to climb a step higher to become eyeball-to-eyeball.

YVONNE

Is this a good time for meeting? I
think it's perfect.

Sam makes a weak attempt to cut in.

SAM
Not a good time.

RALPH
You had your say.

YVONNE
My "say" is right now.

Sam backs up.

YVONNE (CONT'D)
Do you know where you're standing?

Ralph looks around like it's a trick question.

YVONNE (CONT'D)
You're standing on historic ground.
Right here, this very spot.

Ralph perks up just a tad.

YVONNE (CONT'D)
Because these are the very steps
William Edmondson is going to climb.

Ralph cranks his head to try to stretch out a knot in his neck.

YVONNE (CONT'D)
This is New York. It's a new era.
And these are the steps that lead to
a whole new direction.

Sam is busting his buttons.

YVONNE (CONT'D)
And you and your wonderful, generous
patrons will have made it happen.

She moves in uncomfortably close to Ralph.

YVONNE (CONT'D)
Have the board reverse the decision.

She glides her index finger across Ralph's cheek.

YVONNE (CONT'D)
And we'll talk about dinner.

She turns to Sam, holds out her hand.

YVONNE (CONT'D)

Lunch?

Sam grabs her hand and they head down the steps leaving Ralph standing there with his mouth open.

SAM

Your timing is horrible. The board's not meeting for another six weeks.

She pulls Sam in close.

YVONNE

I think my timing is perfect.

They share a smile.

YVONNE (CONT'D)

When the right time comes, the right thing happens.

INT. MISS ELLA'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

Miss Ella pens a letter. She puts the pen down and rubs her eyes. She takes a breath. She exhales.

She picks up the pen and continues writing.

EXT. MISS ELLA'S HOUSE - DAY.

William walks the sidewalk headed to the docks. Miss Ella sits on the front porch enjoying the sun.

MISS ELLA

Today's a beautiful day William.

He smiles at her.

WILLIAM

Now it is.

MISS ELLA

Where you off to on this beautiful day when you can sit down right here next to me instead?

WILLIAM

Down to the docks to see if I can work any of the boats.

She stands up.

MISS ELLA

Hold right there William, I have something for you.

Miss Ella darts inside and then returns with a letter. She gives it to William. He doesn't open it.

MISS ELLA (CONT'D)

I wrote this to you.

William drops his head.

MISS ELLA (CONT'D)

Go on and read it. You've got time, don't you?

William opens the letter. He stares at it.

His hands shake. He squints his eyes. He thrusts the letter back to Miss Ella.

MISS ELLA (CONT'D)

I wrote it for you. Go on, read it.

William shakes his head.

WILLIAM

I don't know how.

MISS ELLA

You can't read?

WILLIAM

Can't even sign my name.

Miss Ella takes the letter.

MISS ELLA

Then I'll read it for you.

FRONT PORCH

MISS ELLA (CONT'D)

Come on and sit next to me.

William sits, not making eye contact with her.

MISS ELLA (CONT'D)

Dear William.

She drops the letter down to her side.

She looks at William.

MISS ELLA (CONT'D)

I wanted to let you know how much you mean to me. You have been there for me and you inspire me. And William, I just wanted to tell you --

William reaches out to embrace her. They kiss.
He holds her tight.

MISS ELLA (CONT'D)
I should write in the letter how
much I enjoy kissing you.

WILLIAM
Ella, I was thinking we should spend
more time together.

MISS ELLA
And I agree because I'm going to
help you learn how to read and write.

WILLIAM
I'm not sure if I can.

MISS ELLA
Oh you can, and will. Now let's
start with what I wrote you. Dear
William. "Dear" starts with letter
"D".

INT. YVONNE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Yvonne looks over her photos of the chain gang. They're
compelling and gripping. PHONE RINGS.

INTERCUT TELEPHONE CONVERSATION - YVONNE AND SAM

YVONNE
Hello?

SAM
I took your advice and asked the
board to name one black sculptor or
painter.

YVONNE
I got that from William. Works
doesn't it?

SAM
The board got the message and voted
unanimously. It's a go for Edmondson.

YVONNE
That's great news. Oh Sam, I really
owe you.

SAM
And that's exactly where I want you,
owing me.

YVONNE

And stringing you along for an eternity is exactly where I want you.

SAM

Our fall show kicks off in three weeks so start shipping the Edmondson art pieces as soon as you can.

YVONNE

I'll have Ruben get right on it. And Sam, as a thank you, I'll let you take me out to dinner.

EXT. EDMONDSON HOUSE - DAY

Ruben screeches up to the front of William's house. He jumps out and runs to the front door. He bangs. He looks in the windows.

RUBEN

William. Hey William, you in there?

He bangs again.

RUBEN (CONT'D)

William, got some great news.

William opens the door.

RUBEN (CONT'D)

You're going to New York.

WILLIAM

What?

RUBEN

Yvonne got you the showing in New York. William Edmondson is the first black artist to have an art showing at the Museum of Modern Art.

William backs up and sits down. He lowers his head.

WILLIAM

Thank you.

RUBEN

And there's even better news; you're going to be there as well. Yvonne's going to be there. I'm going to be there.

WILLIAM
When do I have to be ready?

RUBEN
Third week of October.

WILLIAM
That is less than a month away.

RUBEN
Is that a problem?

Ruben smiles.

BACKYARD

William takes Ruben around back.

Weeds everywhere. Grass is knee-high.

Bits of small stone here and there.

Small bits of scattered stone all over the toolshed.

WILLIAM
Spend most of my day unloading the
boats.

RUBEN
Where is your finished art?

WILLIAM
Finished art? I ain't even got any
materials.

RUBEN
Shit. Man, shit.

INT. MUSEUM OF MODERN ART - DIRECTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Sam takes a pull off his cigar. He is on the phone with
Yvonne.

INTERCUT PHONE CONVERSATION - SAM AND YVONNE

SAM
You've have got to be kidding.

He puts his cigar in the ashtray.

YVONNE
I thought he had finished pieces.

SAM

If the Ralph or the board finds out they will pull the offer.

YVONNE

You can't do that just yet.

SAM

I have to start looking for a replacement. I'm sorry.

INT. MAXWELL HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Ted sits in his favorite chair. A shot of whiskey and a half empty bottle sit next to him.

Sarah puts a few books in the bookcase. She moves a book and behind is a carving of a heart.

She picks it up.

SARAH

I've let the anger and bitterness go, Ted. And the hatred. It was turning me into somebody I didn't want to be.

She looks at the heart.

SARAH (CONT'D)

I remember when the black janitor made this for Cassie. It used to make me smile but when I saw it now, I thought about you.

Ted takes a drink.

SARAH (CONT'D)

And how your heart is like this; hard, unfeeling.

She moves over to him and kneels.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Time to move on. And whatever that means to you, however you have to do it, now is the time.

TED

How can you let something like this go? It's always been a part of me; a part of my family. I can't do it.

Sarah inches closer.

SARAH

Find a way.

EXT. EDMONDSON HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - DAY

William waters his tomato plants. Miss Ella keeps in step.

MISS ELLA

So you won't make New York this time,
but there might be another time.

WILLIAM

But until that day, there's just the
docks.

MISS ELLA

What about your joy?

She picks up a stone DOVE that sits next to the tomatoes.

WILLIAM

I think my joy has brought too much
pain.

MISS ELLA

What about your train ride? You
can't give up on that.

WILLIAM

What am I supposed to work with?

14th STREET

Ted's car slows in front of the Edmondson house.

He parks and gets out.

William moves in front of Miss Ella towards the street.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Get in the house, Ella.

MISS ELLA

No.

William doesn't take his eyes off Ted.

WILLIAM

Go.

Miss Ella backs up to the porch steps.

MISS ELLA

William, come up here.

Ted walks up to the house.

TED
I need to take you somewhere.

William puts down the watering can.

TED (CONT'D)
Would you take a ride with me?

William looks to the car.

TED (CONT'D)
Please.

MISS ELLA
Don't do it William.

TED
It will be okay.

MISS ELLA
He'll kill you.

TED
Cassie loved you. She loved life.
She was never about seeing color,
but heart. I know she was blind,
but I want to see like she did.

WILLIAM
Miss Cassie was a special young girl.
Her heart could light up a room,
sure could.

William looks to Ella.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)
Somebody told me that there are people
that believe in me. And all I have
to do is trust them.

William walks to the car.

He puts his hand on the back door handle.

TED
Ride up front.

EXT. FOUR LANE HIGHWAY - DAY

The car barrels down the highway. Turns onto a dirt road.

EXT./INT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

William keeps his eyes on Ted.

Ted glances at William. Looks back to the road.

They come to a gate.

EXT. GATE

Ted gets out. Fishes for his keys. Unlocks the gate. Swings it open.

INT. CAR

William reaches for the door handle.

Ted gets back in. Puts the car in gear. Drives on.

William tightens his grip on the handle.

EXT. ROCK QUARRY - DAY

The car rolls to a stop. Ted gets out. William stays put.

TED

This is what I wanted to show you.

William gets out.

TED (CONT'D)

Over here.

The pair walk beyond a stand of evergreen trees.

On the other side is a 5 mile wide, 1 mile deep, MAJESTIC LIMESTONE QUARRY.

They stand at the top. The wind whips. A YOUNG EAGLE tests out its new wings as it glides around the quarry.

Ted overlooks the enormous quarry.

TED (CONT'D)

Loved my little girl. Loved her more than life. I didn't know how to show her. Didn't know how to tell her.

He looks at William.

TED (CONT'D)

When Cassie first got sick, I thought we might lose her. And we did.

Ted lowers his head.

TED (CONT'D)
Then it was too late to be the father
that I should have been.

Ted walks closer to the edge. William stays put.

TED (CONT'D)
So I'm showing her I love her. And
I'm showing her, and you, that I
know I treated you in the worst
possible way.

Ted looks back to William.

TED (CONT'D)
I was raised a certain way. Taught
certain things. But that don't mean
I have to be that way. I don't want
to be that way.

Ted turns back and looks out over the quarry.

TED (CONT'D)
Any stone you can pull out of here
is yours.

William walks up to the ledge.

WILLIAM
I don't understand.

TED
Neither did I.

Ted offers his hand.

William sticks out his hand and they shake.

EXT. ROCK QUARRY - GUARD SHACK - DAY

Miss Ella, William pull up to the small guard shack. Ruben
is in the back seat. OLD GUARD walks out as they pull up.

OLD GUARD
What do you want?

MISS ELLA
This is William Edmondson.

William leans over and makes sparkling eye contact. His
grin is enormous.

Old guard flips at his clipboard.

His eyes grow. He gives William the once over.

OLD GUARD
I thought you was white.

WILLIAM
You haven't seen me with my goggles
on. I'm as white as they come.

Miss Ella gives the old guard a big smile as he waves them through.

MONTAGE - WILLIAM'S JOY

- William picks up a stone. He runs his hands over it.
- Miss Ella teaches him to read.
- He puts on his goggles and hammers away.
- Miss Ella picks the last of the tomatoes.
- William hangs up a sign: EDMONDSON CARVING AND WHITTILING.
- William chips away at the stone. It's a moonshine jar.

EXT. EDMONDSON HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - DAY

William and Miss Ella sit on the front porch stringing beans.

Ruben drives up; gets out of the car. He hurries up to the front porch.

RUBEN
William, get as many statues together
as you can. We're going New York.

Miss Ella and William are stunned.

WILLIAM
I thought I lost my spot.

RUBEN
They realized the doors you could
open into a whole new world of art.
You're the first William.

MISS ELLA
Oh William.

RUBEN
Well?

William stands up. He flashes the biggest smile of his life.

Miss Ella jumps up and down. They hug and dance.
They jump on Ruben. All three dance in a circle.

EXT. RUFUS FRONT PORCH.

Rufus, rocking on his front porch, huffs.

RUFUS

(to William)

All y'all is crazy. And you still
got my rifle. How long does it take
to shoot a bunch of mice?

EXT. EDMONDSON PORCH

RUBEN

So what's your backyard look like?

WILLIAM

It's full of critters and an Eleanor
Roosevelt or two.

They all smile and laugh.

EXT. NASHVILLE TRAIN STATION - DAY

PEOPLE bustle. Lots of activity as the train sits.

William, Miss Ella, and Ruben wait to board.

RUBEN

Just talked to Yvonne and all your
work is at the museum and is being
put into place as we speak.

MISS ELLA

William, I am so proud of you.

She hugs him.

TRAIN conductor steps out onto the platform.

TRAIN CONDUCTER

All aboard.

RUBEN

That's us William.

Miss Ella and William hug. They kiss.

WILLIAM

I love you.

MISS ELLA

I love you.

William walks towards the back train car. A WHITE CONDUCTOR waits at the steps. William starts to board and he blocks his path.

WHITE CONDUCTOR

There's no negro car on this train.

Ruben comes running up.

RUBEN

I have tickets.

WHITE CONDUCTOR

No negro car. Your friend will have to take the 8:30 tomorrow. It has a negro car.

William takes a ticket from Ruben. He takes a step up and holds out the ticket.

WILLIAM

My name is William Edmondson.

He smiles at the conductor.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

I am an artist and I am going to New York City.

He takes another step up moving him to eye-level with the conductor.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

But first, I am going to have myself a train ride; today.

William smiles bigger.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Take my ticket, please.

The conductor takes his ticket.

Ruben and William find seats on a bench among a couple of CONFUSED WHITE PASSENGERS.

William runs his hands along the seat back in front of him. He takes time to feel the grain of the wood.

He taps on the window with his knuckle.

He breathes in the wood and leather smell of the car.

Ruben pats William on the back.

TRAIN WHISTLE

A smiling William look out the window as the train pulls away.

INT./EXT. TRAIN VIRGINIA FOOTHILLS

The train passes a small farm. The WHITE FARMER waves.

William waves back.

William walks around the car talking to PEOPLE and shaking their hands. Almost everyone is receptive to him, old and young alike.

Except one old WHITE SOUR PUSS. He sits with his arms folded.

The conductor motions for William. He leads him to the

CABOOSE

He takes great pride as he shows William around the caboose. He opens the rear door.

William walks out on the steps. He takes in the moment as the train snakes through the rolling hills.

He sees a proud BUCK DEER.

WILLIAM

I'll chisel you.

EXT. NEW YORK - GRAND CENTRAL STATION - DAY

Excitement. Energy. BUSY PEOPLE dash here and there.

William and Ruben exit. William stops, takes it all in.

Yvonne sees William. She rushes up and gives him a tight hug.

YVONNE

Welcome to New York.

WILLIAM

It sure smells good here.

YVONNE

Honey, that's me your smelling.

William smiles at a WHITE MAN walking by. They're taken aback, but smile back and nod.

EXT. MUSEUM OF MODERN ART - DAY

The trio exit the car. They look up the steps to the entrance.

RUBEN

Long way from the outhouse at the farmer's market.

William smiles.

YVONNE

You first William.

Yvonne and Ruben take a half-step back.

William's eyes the massive entrance.

He throws his head back and begins his walk up the concrete steps into history.

At the top step he turns. Looks over the city and every ounce of his hurt, his pain, his anguish, as well as his joy, becomes the energy that thrusts his LEFT HAND HIGH INTO THE AIR.

He's clutching the SPIKE.

INT. MUSEUM OF MODERN ART - ENTRANCE

MEEK GUARD, 50s, greets them. He nods towards William.

MEEK GUARD

His hours are after six on Thursdays.

Yvonne moves in close.

YVONNE

He's one of the artists, Officer Nimrod.

MEEK GUARD

We've never had a negro artist.

YVONNE

You do now. He's William Edmondson.

Yvonne moves closer.

Jabs a painted fingernail into his chest.

YVONNE (CONT'D)

You do have the Edmondson exhibit, don't you?

MEEK GUARD
Lincoln room. To the right.

Ruben and William pass.

Yvonne WHISPERS as she passes the guard.

YVONNE
I like a man who backs down.

The guard loosens his tie.

HALLWAY

William slows his walk, taking in the paintings and sculptures.

He sees Cassie's ANGEL with the CROWN OF WINGS.

He steps in closer. The face is compassionate.

Yvonne sees a placard. "WILLIAM EDMONDSON - TENNESSEE."

She puts her hand on William's shoulder.

YVONNE (CONT'D)
You should go in first.

WILLIAM
I just went first up the steps.

They laugh and William holds his head high as he steps into the room.

INT. LINCOLN ROOM - DAY

WHITE PEOPLE eat and drink as they mingle.

A OLDER BLACK JANITOR uses a dust mop.

William walks in and everyone slow turns to see him.

Big Ralph beams with pride.

Sam's smile lights up the room.

YVONNE
Ladies and gentlemen, I present
William Edmondson.

APPLAUSE FROM CROWD.

William drops his head. Smiles.

Sam bulls his way to William, extends his hand.

SAM
You are an incredible artist.

WILLIAM
Thank you sir.

SAM
Whatever you need, we're here for
you.

William nods to one of his pieces. It's a KING RIDING A
STALLION.

WILLIAM
Is it okay if I pick this up?

SAM
It's yours isn't it?

Sam looks around at the others, laughing.

William picks up the king; inspects it. He walks towards
the janitor.

He presents the king to the janitor.

WILLIAM
This is inside you.

The janitor looks around. Everyone is smiling.

He smiles, nods, leaves with his prize.

William takes the original wooden angel out of his coat
pocket.

He rolls it around in his hands.

He sets the wooden angel in the place of the king.

He turns to Yvonne.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)
I'm ready to go home now.

YVONNE
But you just got here.

WILLIAM
I've done everything I've wanted to
do.

RUBEN
Everything?

William pauses. An idea comes.

WILLIAM

Well, there is one thing I'd like to do.

INT./EXT. EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - OBSERVATION DECK - DAY

The three make their way out of the freight elevator. Yvonne hands the BURLY GUARD a few bills. He crams them in his pocket.

WILLIAM

That's what they call easy money.

BURLY GUARD

Anyone complains you're out of here.

The trio make their way to the edge. William scans the horizon.

RUBEN

Inspiring.

William clears his throat.

He leans and spits; watches it fall.

A YOUNG MOTHER and YOUNG WHITE GIRL stand next to William.

The young white girl watches William.

She clears her throat and spits.

They smile and share a laugh.

EXT. TRAIN - TENNESSEE MOUNTAINS - DAY

Rolling hills that rise to mountains.

Green. Bright. Breathtaking.

EXT./INT. TRAIN CAR - DAY

William watches the scenery. He fishes for a smooth cloth in his coat.

Digs for a small object in his pocket.

He buffs a time or two.

He holds up his work for inspection.

It's a WEDDING RING. Made from the small black onyx stone.

Epilogue:

William Edmondson went on to break other barriers in art,
even showing in Paris, France.

He died in 1951 in Nashville, TN. His headstone was unmarked
until 1981.

FADE OUT.