

B A D J A C K

b. b. brown

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Registered WGAE

FADE IN

EXT NAZI WORK CAMP 1939 NIGHT

A large compound of wooden buildings sits in darkness. Long white shafts of light rake the roofs and poke holes in the shadows huddled between the buildings. Bright circles slither across a dead tree standing in an open area.

EXT GUARDTOWER

A GUARD in a Nazi uniform sweeps a searchlight back and forth. A second GUARD repeatedly jabs a bayonet hard into a tower support beam, then twists the blade as though torturing the wood. All of the Nazis speak in German.

TOWER GUARD #1
(angry)
Dammit, stop! You're driving me
insane.

The other Guard snarls like an animal, then continues jabbing the wood.

TOWER GUARD #2
Swine. I'm bored of watching
swine.

EXT FENCE PERIMETER

Other Nazis stalk the fence-line. Some have leashed DOGS that tug them along.

INT PRISONER BLOCKHOUSE

SOUND: SNORES, WHISPERED CONVERSATIONS, SOMEONE CRYING

Long rows of bunks sit on either side of the blockhouse. The bunks, stretching the length of the bleak interior, are heavy with dirty, exhausted PRISONERS. The men twist about in fitful sleep. A single bunk stands empty.

EXT ASSEMBLY AREA

On one side of the open area, the huge, ugly corpse of a dead tree reaches out of the dirt. Its Y-shaped trunk

ending in two stubby limbs like severed arms. A DEAD PRISONER hangs crucified from the trunk.

EXT DEAD TREE

A shadow like a thick, black stain slides to the base of the tree. No one casts the shadow. Unnaturally dark and solid, even the searchlight's glare cannot penetrate it. A VOICE from the shadow chants over and over.

RABBI (O.S.)
(in Hebrew)
"And God breathed into his
nostrils the breath of life;
and man became a living soul."

From deep within the shadow, fingers thrust into the light, as if breaking through still water. A hand appears. It places a small roll of paper into the crotch of the tree, then vanishes back into the darkness.

The shadow circles the tree. The chant continues. Deep within the shadow is a tiny flash of light, and then another. A sparkling ripples throughout the shapeless darkness.

Gradually, the shadow slips away like a black liquid, flowing away to reveal a RABBI in patched and ragged clothing. His wrists are slashed.

Bleeding to death, he stumbles from progressive weakness. He circles the tree and chants and pours his blood on the ground. As the rabbi slowly collapses, still whispering the words of the chant, the tree absorbs the roll of paper.

With his shadow cloak gone, the searchlights pick him out. The alarm goes up, and the compound lights burst on. Guards run from all directions. The first Guard to reach the Rabbi's body jabs it viciously with his rifle barrel.

GUARD WITH RIFLE
Get up, filth!

An arrogant OFFICER struts forward.

OFFICER
Idiot! Get him up.

The Guard kicks the body.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GUARD WITH RIFLE

Get up!

The Guard shoves the body over with a foot.

GUARD WITH RIFLE

(continuing)

The prisoner's dead, sir.

OFFICER

Don't tell me he's dead.

(shouting)

Tell me how he got out!

EXT FENCE PERIMETER

The dogs jerk at their leashes. They twist and bark and growl as though threatened by something within the compound.

EXT DEAD TREE

A Guard dragged by his dog nears the prisoner. The dog howls and lunges against his leash.

OFFICER

Keep that damned mutt quiet.

(to other Guards)

Begin a search. See if others have escaped.

Elegance interrupted, the CAMP COMMANDER vaults from a limousine and the men snap to attention. Clenching an embroidered linen napkin with one hand, he buttons his jacket with the other as he stamps to the dead rabbi. He glares at the body, and then at the men.

COMMANDER

(sputtering)

For this you interrupt my meal?

OFFICER

The prisoner is dead, sir.

COMMANDER

Obviously!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OFFICER

Sir, we've begun a search for others who may have been with him.

COMMANDER

(shouting)
And how did he get out?

A SHORT GUARD near the tree points to the ground.

SHORT GUARD

Sir! The blood.

Two JUNIOR OFFICERS, looking busy to impress the Commander, march over to the Short Guard.

JUNIOR OFFICER #1

(undertone)
Why's he so upset?

JUNIOR OFFICER #2

(undertone)
Lost money at cards. To a whore at the brothel.

They arrive at the spot indicated by the Short Guard. The blood is being sucked into the ground surrounding the tree.

COMMANDER

Well?

The rabbi's body flips into the air and lands on its back. The men are startled. A tree root protrudes from the ground where body had lain.

SOUND: TREMENDOUS CRACKING

The tree leans over. Its roots pull free of the earth. The soldiers, stunned, back away. The limbs of the tree bend down and tear off the body of the crucified prisoner.

COMMANDER

Impossible.

The dog breaks its leash and attacks a tree root

twisting

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

itself out of the dirt. As it clamps its teeth into the wood, the root rises in the air. Lifted above the ground,
the animal whines but won't let go. The root pauses. Then
it slams the mutt down against the ground.

COMMANDER
(continuing; shouting)
Shoot! Shoot, you idiots!

SOUND: GUNFIRE; SCREAMS OF MEN

The tree smashes through them with stiff, unstoppable power.

INT LIVING ROOM CONTEMPORARY FIRST NIGHT

In the dingy living room of an isolated one-story, country house, BAD JACK, 56, admires his new western outfit and silver-capped boots. A full-length mirror with a broken corner reflects all his glory.

JACK
This outfit shows me right.

Dressed for a night of partying, PATTY, 19, stacked, bursting with youthful energy, enters and strikes a playful pose.

PATTY
Finished admiring yourself?

JACK
Baby, me is all I got.

PATTY
(chanting)
Baaad JACK. Baaad JACK. Baaad
JACK.

Jack wraps his arms around her and squeezes until she can't breathe.

JACK
I never cared for that name,
honey.

He releases her and she gasps for breath.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JACK

Get in the car, baby girl.

Too out of breath to curse, she snatches her cheap purse from an old chair and exits the front door. Jack, unhurried, straightens his outfit.

SOUND: THUMP OF FALLING BODY

Hearing the thump, and fearing nothing except boredom, Jack follows Patty through the front door.

JACK

Have you gone and tripped over
your own feet again, Patty
girl?

EXT COUNTRY HOUSE FRONT

A single, glaring light on a telephone pole shines over the porch and front yard. Azalea bushes line either side of the porch. The bushes are untended, untrimmed, and turning brown. Jack steps boldly out of the house.

JACK

(calling)
Patty girl.

Cautiously, Jack slides down the steps into the yard. Partially hidden by darkness and partially by azaleas, Patty lies crumpled on the ground. Her torn scalp bleeds.

Immediately, Jack spins around to elude any danger, but instead slams into the chest of GRUNT, 38, a wall of a man. Grunt smashes Jack into the dirt using a club-like forearm.

Slipping quickly out of the shadows, Grunt's pint-sized brother, FART, 37, taps Jack's skull with a lead pipe wrapped sparingly with duct tape. Jack goes out. Setting his boot on Jack, Fart preens like a bantam rooster and giggles.

FART

(singsong)
Uh huh, uh huh. Baaad Jack. Uh

huh, uh huh.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Grunt slaps a coil of rope against his brother's chest.

GRUNT
Shutup and tie him tight,
brother Ernest.

FART
Sure will, brother Samuel. He
ain't going nowhere we don't
want.

Grunt, as always, grunts.

INT PLANTATION CELLAR

The cellar door opens, and the Brothers drag in a semi-conscious Jack. They drop him on the dirty, cement floor. He groans.

FART
Miss Rachel'll see you--
directly!

Indifferent, Grunt exits. Fart pauses at the door.

FART
(continuing)
Now, don't you go 'way.

INT UPSTAIRS GUEST BEDROOM

Unframed photographs of country people, fields, homes, tools, families, etc., are pinned carelessly over all four bedroom walls. Photographic equipment lies on the bed and in the room's only chair. Developing equipment clutters the bathroom.

SUSIE, 29, impatient, dressed for a casual evening, tosses

INT UPSTAIRS GUEST BEDROOM

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the
bathroom.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SUSIE, 29, impatient, dressed for a casual evening, tosses aside the curtains and stares into the night. MATTHEW, 33, dresses without hurry.

SUSIE

(without turning)

You gonna take all night? Men complain that women take forever to dress.

MATTHEW

It'd help if you'd move some of your equipment.

SUSIE

Don't start.

MATTHEW

Okay, but pixels are still more convenient than film.

SUSIE

I don't want convenience, I want feeling.

MATTHEW

What's so interesting?

SUSIE

Rachel's two hired morons were stumbling around in the dark. Curious.

He leans down to look, but she drops the curtains. Crossing to a bureau mirror, she attacks her hair with some quick brush strokes. Then she scans the photographs, tearing one down occasionally and dropping it on the floor.

SUSIE

(continuing)

More interviews tomorrow?

MATTHEW

No, they're a dead-end. Nobody knows anything about "some old foreign

(more)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MATTHEW (cont'd)
cuss" who may or may not have
lived
and died here twenty years ago.

SUSIE
Are you finally ready?

MATTHEW
Just about. They aren't that
bad.

SUSIE
Grunt and Fart? Nobody's bad to
you.

MATTHEW
Ernest and Samuel. They're just
rough country boys.

SUSIE
Boys? They're baboons, Matthew,
like their owner.
(cautioning)
Beware the fangs.

MATTHEW
(grins slightly)
What is it between you and
Rachel?

SUSIE
Her perfume would kill maggots.
What other reason do I need?
Besides the fact that she's
always sticking her tits in
your face.

MATTHEW
Susie's jealous, Susie's
jealous.

Irritated, she shoves her nose in his face.

SUSIE
She's gonna get a hard kick
where she lives.

She goes to the door, then turns back.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SUSIE

You, too, if you don't watch
it. Let's go!

She exits.

MATTHEW

Catfight city.

INT PLANTATION CELLAR

The cellar has only one door and no windows. There is no entry from the house proper. With its glaring light, clutter, mustiness, and low ceiling, the place resembles a rifled tomb.

RACHEL, 39, stands in the cellar doorway watching as Susie and Matthew climb into a BMW and drive off. She spits into the night. Behind her, the Brothers wait silently. Rachel turns and glances down.

Bound and gagged, Jack stares back.

RACHEL

Take out that rag.

Grunt grunts and removes the gag. Jack spits to clear his mouth, then looks up.

JACK

Rachel, honey. You wantin' to
see me?

She squats beside him.

RACHEL

Yeah, babe. I hear you're
shacking up with that Patty
Thompson trash.

JACK

Now, honey, you know that on
departing from your residence,
I left my leash behind. And no
forwarding address, neither.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RACHEL

Nobody walks till I say. And then you hump with that young, white-trash, bitch-in-heat? Salt in the wound, Jack.

JACK

Yeah, Rachel girl, you always was that way, and I reckon your boys'll stomp me pretty good. But it's over, baby. Ain't no going back.

Rachel considers, then stands.

RACHEL

Jack, sometimes, you're just right.

(to the Brothers)

Take him to the golem tree.

JACK

Wait. Rachel!

Grunt gags him.

INT BAR-B-QUE PALACE

The Palace is luxurious country. A converted multi-story mansion, it has polished wood tables and booths surrounding a dance area. A LOCAL BAND plays country music too loud.

With gnawed rib bones stacked on plates in front of them, Susie and Matthew drink beer from large, glass mugs and watch local people of all ages socialize and dance. Susie can hardly sit still.

SUSIE

God, this is exciting!

MATTHEW

It's certainly loud.

SUSIE

This is authentic country. I've

got to do a study of this
place.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MATTHEW

(feigning deafness)

What?

SUSIE

I knew it. When you said you were off to search out your uncle's burial spot, I knew right away it'd turn up interesting.

MATTHEW

Great uncle. Grandmother's brother.

SUSIE

Can't you feel the energy in this place?

MATTHEW

At the prices they charge, I ought to feel something.

JOE, a large man wearing a large cowboy hat, steps to their table. He speaks politely to Matthew.

JOE

Excuse me, sir, may I ask your date for a dance?

Matthew glances at Susie. She shakes her head slightly but definitely no. He smiles.

MATTHEW

She was just telling me how much she felt like dancing.

JOE

(removing his hat)

Ma'am?

She reluctantly takes his hand.

JOE

(continuing)

I know I'm plug-ugly, but I swear

I'll bring you back alive.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She laughs, and they dance away. Matthew sips his beer and stares at the band.

MATTHEW

I wonder if they know Chopin?

He is stuffing a paper napkin in one ear when a hand taps his shoulder. He turns to see GERRY, a heavy woman, standing beside him wearing a big, friendly smile. She's looking directly into his eyes, and he's still sitting.

GERRY

Howdy, hon, how about a dance?

She pulls him out of his seat and onto the dance floor.

GERRY

(continuing)

Don't remember seeing you here before, sugar.

EXT TRASH RAVINE

The untillable ravine serves as a garbage dump.

Stretching

upward from the trash to a height of eight feet is a coarse, twisted, and very ugly tree, the GOLEM TREE.

The tree absorbs pieces of trash into its trunk as it increases in size. Cans, bottles, pieces of metal, and even a car tire protrude from it.

At the top of the tree, there are three crooked branches. The branches form a recess at the point where they join the trunk. On the dirt surrounding the trunk lie scattered animal bones.

Using the headlights of a battered pickup and a new, spotlessly clean SUV for illumination, the Brothers finish strapping Jack to the trunk of the golem tree. Rope girdles him from chest to knee. He hangs upsidedown.

Rachel watches without comment.

GRUNT

Be careful, Ernest.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FART

I know, Samuel. I ain't going to let the golem tree get my fingers.

JACK

Godalmighty, Fart. You stink worse than this trash heap.

FART

I can't help it. When I gets excited, I farts.

RACHEL

Shut up. Get the sling blade, Grunt.

Grunt exits.

JACK

Grunt and Fart. I ain't going to miss you two.

Grunt enters with the heavy, sling blade. Fart moves away.

JACK

(continuing)
Sharpened that thing lately?

GRUNT

Just for you, Jack.

JACK

Do it right. I don't want to flop like some sorry chicken while you hack at my neck bone.

RACHEL

Got something to say?

JACK

I ain't got no regrets to piss over, if that's what you mean. But if I can crawl out of hell, Rachel, I'll set things right.

RACHEL

Do it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Impassively, Grunt sets his feet. Then he slashes through Jack's neck with a tremendous stroke. Jack's head jumps off and rolls away into the dark.

FART

Good one!

The severed blood vessels of the Jack's body pump blood onto the tree and dirt.

RACHEL

You messed with the wrong lady,
Mister Ladykiller.

(to Grunt)

Get the backhoe and bury him
someplace deep. And don't
forget his goddamn head.

Grunt grunts. She climbs into her SUV.

GRUNT

People'll be looking for him.

RACHEL

Not likely. He was nothing but
trash and trouble.

She drives away. Grunt, rhythmically rubbing his hands on his shirt, watches her go.

FART (O.S.)

Lookee what I found.

He enters carrying Jack's head with both hands.

GRUNT

Quit playing and give me some
help.

Fart acts as though the head were a basketball. He "dribbles" and, with the top of the tree as a hoop, throws it. The head lands in the recess and stays.

FART

(shouting)

TWO POINTS. All right!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Fart dances.

GRUNT

Dang it, Ernest, stop messing around. I ain't had no supper.

FART

Jesus, Samuel, you never let me have no fun.

Grunt stares.

FART

(continuing)

All right, all right.

They inspect the body.

GRUNT

Where's the blood?

With flashlights, they search for a sign of blood on or near the tree.

FART

I don't like this a-tall.

Grunt cuts the ropes. The body hangs in place. He pulls, but it will not budge. With a flashlight, he looks closer.

GRUNT

Sunk in an inch at least.
Tree's done got a good hold.

FART

Damn, Samuel, that ain't right.
It's never taken up nothing
that fast afore.

GRUNT

We never fed it no man afore.

FART

What're we gonna to do? Cut
down the whole damn thing?
What'll we do?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GRUNT

We'll wait.

FART

Wait? Sweet Jesus, for what?

GRUNT

If it takes the whole body
clean, no problem. If not, we
cut it.

(turns)

Let's eat.

They climb into the pickup and drive away. Neither one sees the boy, GOLEM, 13, who watches from the darkness.

INT GOLEM'S LIVING ROOM

What Golem calls home is no more than a 3-room shack, with a kitchen and two "bedrooms". Opening the front door, he literally steps into the children's bedroom.

His mother is a drunk. She can be heard weeping and singing in the adult's bedroom which, since the father deserted long ago, she shares with the oldest daughter, ROSALIE, 15.

Two more children include a boy, ROGER, 11, and a girl, SASSY, 10. They sleep in the converted living room.

Golem enters. The couch sits unfolded into a bed and ready for use. A sleeping pallet lies beside it on the floor. The kids, of course, are not ready to sleep.

SASSY

Golem's home. Golem's home.

ROGER

You know Momma don't like you
calling him that.

SASSY

Miss Rachel calls him Golem.
Everybody calls him Golem.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROGER

Keep calling him that and
Momma'll whip your butt.

SASSY

Momma don't whip nobody's butt
no more. She just prays
over'em.

ROGER

Larry'll feed your puppy to the
golem tree.

SASSY

No, he won't neither.

ROGER

Yes, he will.

SASSY

Won't.

ROGER

Will, too.

GOLEM

Shut up!

The children stare at him in surprise.

GOLEM

(continuing)

Stop fussing. It's past your
bedtime and you know it.

Roger and Sassy automatically climb onto the couch-bed
and
crawl under the covers.

ROGER

Something wrong, Larry?

Rosalie enters from their mother's room looking sad and
wilted.

ROSALIE

Momma wants to see you, Larry.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GOLEM

All right.

He walks by her.

ROSALIE

Been feeding your tree?

GOLEM

It ain't my tree. Why're you
always looking so sad, Rosalie
girl? Always so damned sad.

ROSALIE

I don't know, Larry. Better
than always being mad, I guess.

GOLEM

I ain't mad.

ROSALIE

If you say so.

She slumps into the kitchen.

INT MOTHER'S BEDROOM

The big bed takes up most of the small room. Years of
washing in old machines have darkened its sheets and
covers.

Golem's MOTHER, 31, lies wrecked on the bed, her arms
outstretched as on a cross. One hand grips a crucifix,
the other a whiskey bottle. With eyes shut, she sings a
hymn while she waits for death.

GOLEM

Yes, Momma?

She stops singing.

MOTHER

I thought I heard your father.

GOLEM

No, Momma, he's long gone.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MOTHER

He might visit sometime.

The boy stands silently waiting.

MOTHER

(continuing)

He's a good man.

GOLEM

That's why he run off from his family, I guess.

MOTHER

Don't you smart off to me, young man.

She sits up.

MOTHER

(continuing)

Rachel's a bad woman a'waitin' for you. Don't let her give you no bad name, son. Don't let her stain your soul.

He looks at the floor.

MOTHER

(continuing)

And stay away from that Jack Mosby. He's charming for a boy with no father, but there's an evil seed in him. And evil's always waiting to flower.

GOLEM

(frowning)

You don't have to worry about Jack no more.

MOTHER

Larry, look at me.

She takes his chin in her hand.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MOTHER

I'll never be nothin'. But you've got a rare soul that shines, shines through the dirt. I'm depending on you to take care of the family.

GOLEM

Yes, Momma.

MOTHER

Can you shoulder that burden, child?

GOLEM

I'll do it, Momma.

She clings him. His arms hang down, and his face is stern.

GOLEM

(continuing)

I'll do it for you.

EXT TRASH RAVINE

The tree changes. In ceaseless motion, it engulfs and absorbs Jack's body. As it enlarges and reshapes itself, new limbs erupt from the trunk.

EXT SHERIFF'S HEADQUARTERS FIRST DAY

It's a peaceful Saturday morning. Traffic on the main thoroughfare flows busily and without problem.

The headquarters occupies a one-story, brick building that's just as ugly as a police substation in the "big city". Unused squad cars sit in the small parking lot. The Sheriff's car enters and takes a parking space.

INT SHERIFF'S HEADQUARTERS LOBBY

The lobby is empty. SHERIFF CARLSON, 40, enters and crosses to the dispatch office. A large capacity coffeemaker sits on a table with coffee cups, etc. He fills a cup.

DEPUTY SILVERMAN, female, 37, sits in the office

reading a romance novel. The Sheriff peeks around the corner.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SILVERMAN

Well, damn, Sheriff. What're you doin' here on a Saturday?

SHERIFF

Pick up messages. Think a little.

SILVERMAN

Nothing's doing that I've heard of. How's Patty Thompson?

SHERIFF

Three stitches.

SILVERMAN

That girl is a bonehead.

SHERIFF

So I've heard.

SILVERMAN

Anything on Jack Mosby?

SHERIFF

Nope.

SILVERMAN

I sit in front of this radio and don't hear a damn thing. Then you guys come in and don't know nothin'. I could get fresher news at the beauty parlor.

SHERIFF

Maybe we ought to set you and that radio up in the beauty parlor.

SILVERMAN

I'd hear something I'd rather not know about somebody I know. I'm better off here with my stories and listening to gossip about strangers.

He smiles and points a finger at her as he exits.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHERIFF

You're a good deputy, sister.

INT SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Picking up messages from his secretary's desk, he enters his office. After flipping through the notes, he tosses them on the desk and walks to a large county map tacked to a wall.

SHERIFF

Jack is missing. Jack was Rachel's latest live-in. Jack walked out.

He wanders around the office.

SHERIFF

(continuing)

She's proud, vindictive, and possessive. Is she capable of murder? Does a dog have fleas?

He slurps coffee and sits.

SHERIFF

(continuing)

She had the means, the motive, and the opportunity. What I do not have is evidence.

He stands and studies the map again.

SHERIFF

(continuing)

Where has she planted you, Bad Jack?

EXT MANSION REAR LAWN

Golem waits by the back porch. Friendly dogs cluster round him begging for attention. The male COOK, 62, wearing a neat, colorful apron, enters to throw food scraps to the dogs.

COOK

C'mon in out of the sun, Larry

boy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The boy shakes his head.

GOLEM
Thanks. Waiting for Miss Susie.

Susie enters from the house with a well-worn camera.

COOK
Mornin', Miss Susie.

She nods to the Cook and hops down the porch steps. She and Golem pet the dogs.

SUSIE
Good morning. These your friends?

GOLEM
Dogs like me.

COOK
That boy has a blessed touch with all creatures.

GOLEM
(hesitant)
You still want to see the tree?

SUSIE
Sure. Is there a problem?

GOLEM
Guess not.

They take a well-worn path leading to the far side of the rear lawn.

SUSIE
Why do they call you Golem?

GOLEM
Miss Rachel named me. I called the tree a golem tree, so she started calling me Golem.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SUSIE

Why a golem tree? Do you know
what a golem is?

GOLEM

I found the sapling root with a
book. The book said "Golem". I
figured that was its name.

SUSIE

Rachel seems to have pet names
for everyone around her.

GOLEM

Yeah. What's a golem?

SUSIE

It's a powerful being created
to do good but turns evil.

GOLEM

Oh.

Rachel enters behind them and follows silently.

SUSIE

What's your given name?

GOLEM

Lawrence.

SUSIE

Your friends call you Larry?

GOLEM

No, everybody `cept Momma calls
me Golem. Names Miss Rachel
gives have a way of sticking.

RACHEL

Like to know the name I got for
you, Susie, dear?

Susie starts.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SUSIE
(undertone)
Witch.

RACHEL
No, but that's not too far
wrong.

Rachel catches up with them and stays between Rachel
and Golem.

RACHEL
(continuing)
Certain enough, Golem is a
right good little man. Scrawny
but sharp as a tack. Daddy's
dead, Mom's a drunken whore. He
takes care of his whole damn
family. Not lazy like his
daddy, if he was his daddy.

GOLEM
Momma don't whore.

Susie glances at Golem who stares at the ground as they
walk.

RACHEL
Too busy drinking, I guess. He
keeps the young'uns in line by
threatening to give their pets
to the golem tree.

GOLEM
I ain't never done it.

RACHEL
Even feeds that damn tree. I'll
bet it knows his smell by now.

SUSIE
Feeds it?

RACHEL
Rats and such trash. Sucks them
right in.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SUSIE
Come off it.

RACHEL
You wait, missy.

GOLEM
Trees can't smell, can they?

SUSIE
They can in a way. It's called
pheromones.

GOLEM
I didn't know that.

RACHEL
Ain't you a real smartass.

SUSIE
I finished high school.

A YOUNG CAT, little more than a kitten, begs Golem for
attention.

RACHEL
Goddamn animals just love him.
He'll be quite a ladykiller.

The trash heap gives off a strong stench in the morning
heat. As they approach it, Susie pinches her nose.

RACHEL
(continuing)
Nothing like a whiff of country
air to wake you up.

EXT TRASH RAVINE

The golem tree is gorged and enlarged. Jack's body,
covered
by bark during the night, distorts the trunk. The
depression at the top of the tree has changed into a
protrusion. The three limbs have become longer and
thicker, while others have extruded from the trunk.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The bark has thickened and turned a reddish color. Circling the base of the trunk, hairy roots poke out at grotesque angles.

SUSIE

It's so enormously ugly.

Susie uses her camera while stepping over the roots.

GOLEM

It's changed. A lot.

RACHEL

(softly)

Over night, as you might say.

The stray cat rubs against Golem's legs. While squatting to study the roots, he pets the cat. It purrs.

SUSIE

What's all that junk sticking out of the trunk?

GOLEM

It sucks up whatever's in the ground near it. Does the same to animals that touches it.

(to the cat)

You stay away from it, you hear me?

SUSIE

You're kidding.

RACHEL

Loves blood and flesh, dear. Spits out bones. A real city gourmet.

GOLEM

That's why I feed it rats and such trash. To keep it from getting the farm animals and pets that wander in here.

SUSIE

A colossal Venus flytrap.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

An object shines from the trunk: it's the silver-capped toes of Jack's boots. Susie can't see what it is, so she moves closer. As she steps carefully through the tangle of tree roots, one root shifts near toward her foot.

GOLEM

Miss Susie! Come out now, Miss Susie.

He edges toward her. The stray cat trots along with him.

SUSIE

What's wrong, Larry?

RACHEL

(quickly)

Never you mind. He gets excited easy. You go on and get a good, close look.

A second root twists in her direction.

GOLEM

Come out, Miss Susie. Come out now.

Susie takes a step toward him. Attracted, the cat runs to her. There's a blur of motion, then a small cloud of dust rises. And the cat is gone.

Stunned, Susie looks at the roots pulsating around her. Then she runs to Golem.

SUSIE

What the hell was that?

GOLEM

Tree root, I guess. It's never done that before.

SUSIE

It killed that cat.

RACHEL

Ate the cat, sweetie.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Grunt enters.

RACHEL
(continuing)
A little breakfast snack.

GRUNT
Sheriff's here.

RACHEL
Why don't you deliver good news
sometime?
(to Susie)
You play with the golem tree
all you want, Susie dear. I do
believe it likes your fairy
moans.

Rachel exits with Grunt following doggedly.

GOLEM
She doesn't like you.

SUSIE
It's mutual.

He touches her arm lightly.

GOLEM
Be careful, Miss Susie. She's
more dangerous than that golem
tree.

Unseen, at the top of the trunk where Fart threw Jack's
head, a pair of sunken eyes stare at the sky.

EXT MANSION REAR LAWN

Rachel's quick strides require all of Grunt's long legs
to keep up.

GRUNT
Tree never took no cat like
that afore.

RACHEL
That damn tree ain't nothing to
me

(more)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RACHEL (cont'd)
when I'm pissed. Why the hell
didn't
you bury Jack's body like I
said?

GRUNT
It took him too fast. Nothin'
showing but the toes of his
boots and that ain't for long.

RACHEL
Jack's custom-made party boots
and all that's showing is the
silver-capped toes.

Rachel unbuttons her blouse as they walk.

RACHEL
(continuing)
I'll cut your throat if we're
found out. And your idiot
brother's.

GRUNT
I know.

EXT MANSION FRONT DRIVE

The Sheriff sits in his car. Rachel enters. She bends
over
so that her blouse falls open.

RACHEL
By damn, lookee here.

SHERIFF
Morning, Rachel.

RACHEL
You ain't been coming round for
quite a while. Momma keeping
you satisfied?

SHERIFF
The boys haven't been
collecting debts again, have
they, Rachel?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RACHEL

Why you ask?

SHERIFF

Patty Thompson got knocked on
the head. Raised a bump the
size of an egg.

RACHEL

See who it was? How is she?

SHERIFF

Squalling like a siren.
(holds up three fingers)
Three stitches.

RACHEL

Hell, she's too stupid to hurt
hittin' on her head.

SHERIFF

Jack Mosby's missing.

She runs her fingers up and down her cleavage.

RACHEL

Bad Jack?

SHERIFF

Yeah, Rachel, Bad Jack. Know
anything about it?

RACHEL

Nope.

SHERIFF

Hadn't seen him?

RACHEL

Not since he chose to leave my
home of his own free will.

EXT TRASH RAVINE

Susie, taking shots of the golem tree, pauses to study
the

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

shiny place on the trunk.

SUSIE
Would you do me a favor, Larry?

GOLEM
Sure.

SUSIE
Know where my room is?

GOLEM
Upstairs. Front bedroom.

SUSIE
I have a camera with a
telephoto lens. I could really
use it right now. Before Rachel
returns.

EXT MANSION FRONT DRIVE

The Sheriff starts his car.

SHERIFF
So, the brothers haven't been
making rounds?

RACHEL
Nope. Everyone's paid up and on
time.

Matthew drives his BMW by them and up to the Mansion.

SHERIFF
Tell Matthew and Susie I'll be
back after an errand.

RACHEL
Got something interesting to
show them?

SHERIFF
Could be.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RACHEL

They're out back. Why don't you tell'em?

SHERIFF

What's out back?

RACHEL

We're watching the golem tree.

He nods.

SHERIFF

No. Saw it once.

RACHEL

Never know what that tree'll do next!

She bangs the top of the car and smiles, then walks away swinging her hips. The Sheriff watches her.

SHERIFF

Lewd, lusty, lying bitch.

INT MANSION KITCHEN

Matthew enters. Looking disheartened, he lays a notebook on the kitchen table, then runs tap water into a glass. When he sips the water, he gags and spits in the sink.

MATTHEW

God! Is that sewage or pesticide?

Setting the full glass on the counter, he frowns and stares out a window. Rachel enters from behind and, on seeing him, relaxes into a genuine smile. Her blouse is still unbuttoned. He turns.

MATTHEW

(continuing)

Good morning, Rachel. How're you this beautiful day?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RACHEL

Why I'm doin' right well,
Matthew, dear. I thought you
was busy climbing the family
tree.

MATTHEW

I'm not having much luck.

RACHEL

It was awfully inconsiderate of
your Uncle Josef to die like
that.

MATTHEW

Great Uncle. Grandmother's
brother.

RACHEL

No forwarding address and all.

MATTHEW

I never thought locating his
grave-
site would be such an
intractable
problem.

(frustrated)

The man boarded here for
decades and nobody remembers
him.

She steps close to him.

RACHEL

It was a long time ago. People
forget.

MATTHEW

I know he was reclusive, but
it's as if the earth had
swallowed him.

RACHEL

Of course, that was before I
came into ownership of this
plantation. But, you know,
honey, he didn't exactly fit in

around this neck of the woods.

He backs away from her. She moves with him running her fingers over his shirt.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MATTHEW

(tentatively)

Because he was a Jew? A German Jew?

RACHEL

You know, Matthew, honey, the boys in the pointy, white hats liked to make nightly visits on fellows like that. It'd be right doubtful if anybody round here, then or now, would trouble themselves if he. . . came up missing.

MATTHEW

I see.

RACHEL

(gently)

But tell me, dearest Matthew, have you enjoyed your visit?

MATTHEW

Yes, yes, the Bar-B-Que Palace, the peaceful countryside. And, of course, you've been, uh, sweet.

RACHEL

Thank you.

MATTHEW

Has Susie seen the "golem" tree?

RACHEL

Even as we speak.

MATTHEW

(nervously)

One of your hired hands spoke of feeding it. Do you feed it some kind of plant food?

RACHEL

Blood.

He laughs but stops awkwardly. She pushes her body
against

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

his.

RACHEL

It caught a pony by the hoof
and started sucking it in. By
the time we found it, its leg
was trapped fast, and that pony
was dead. The golem tree sucked
the blood right out of its
little heart.

Matthew's eyes water, and he coughs.

MATTHEW

Your perfume is. . . rather
strong.

RACHEL

I like distinctive things. Are
you
the kind of man who prefers
women with big tits?

MATTHEW

I like all types. Of women.

She opens her blouse and presses her nipples against
his chest.

RACHEL

You don't think a strong woman
lacks charm, do you?

MATTHEW

No, no, uh, not at all.

She pins him against the kitchen counter with a hand on
either side. He coughs more.

RACHEL

My perfume a bit much? We could
wash it off. In the shower.

Grunt enters without knocking.

GRUNT

Problem with the backhoe.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Rachel winks at Matthew, then gooses him. He jumps. She slaps Grunt's face hard as she walks by him.

RACHEL
Let's go, Romeo.

Grunt, after staring at Matthew for a moment, doggedly exits after her. Matthew wipes his eyes. Picking up the glass of tap water, he throws its on his face.

EXT PLANTATION TOOL SHED

A backhoe and open toolbox stand by the shed. Fart, nearby, scratches his butt. Rachel and Grunt enter.

RACHEL
What is it, Fart?

FART
I don't know, Miss Rachel.
Something with the hydraulics.
It just won't lift.

RACHEL
Get Bob Campbell.

FART
He ain't home. Must of taken
the wife and kids to the fair.
Everybody's goin' to the fair
for the weekend.

RACHEL
Do tell. What about the dozer?

FART
I'm still welding on it.

RACHEL
(to Grunt)
You can't rip that goddamn tree
out with your truck?

GRUNT
No.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RACHEL

Then maybe you boys ought to try using an axe.

FART

But even if we cut it down, we can't bury it deep anywhere's till the backhoe's going.

RACHEL

Damn it to hell! Wait till Monday and get Bob Campbell to fix the goddamn backhoe. Then bury that damn tree!

She speaks over her shoulder as she exits.

RACHEL

(continuing)

You can scratch your ass now, Fart.

Fart scratches. Grunt slaps his shoulder.

INT UPSTAIRS GUEST BEDROOM

Matthew stares out a window and drums his fingers on the wall. Susie enters.

SUSIE

Matthew! That tree--that thing--killed a cat.

MATTHEW

(nodding absently)

That's not something you see everyday.

SUSIE

I couldn't believe it.
(snaps her fingers)
Like that, and it was gone.

MATTHEW

Susie, we have a problem.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SUSIE
Yeah, a goddamn, man-eating
tree.

MATTHEW
Rachel just stuck her tits--

SUSIE
(interrupting)
I warned you about that man-
eater. Come look at this one.

She tugs a cap on his head.

SUSIE
(continuing)
It's got more character anyway.

She sticks sunglasses in his pocket.

MATTHEW
What about Rachel?

She drags him from the room.

SUSIE
Why do you think she let us
stay?

EXT TRASH RAVINE

Golem quietly sits on a bucket near the roots and
watches. Fart and Grunt stand by themselves to one
sidespeaking in undertones.

FART
Bad Jack's coming back.

GRUNT
It's Satan who's coming. We
sent him the messenger.

Grunt sniffs the air.

GRUNT
(continuing)
Dammit, Ernest, take your
pills.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FART
(protesting)
I did! You're smellin' the
tree.

GRUNT
It ain't ALL the tree.

Matthew and Rachel enter to the edge of the circle of roots.

SUSIE
Careful, not too near those
roots.

He squats to study the rank growth.

SUSIE
(continuing)
Was I exaggerating?

He stands up.

MATTHEW
(shaking his head)
Tree? That's a cancer.
(sniffs)
What's that smell?

SUSIE
Burns the eyes like ammonia.

MATTHEW
(excited)
I've smelled it in hospitals
and nursing homes. And look at
those strange spirals in the
bark. It's frightening.

The entire tree pulses with a fine tremor. Blood red leaves hang from branches. Distinctive whorls dig through the bark of the trunk over the area of Jack's body. Susie considers the eerie marks.

SUSIE
It's almost like a face.

EXT MANSION FRONT DRIVE

The Sheriff's car turns into the drive.

EXT TRASH RAVINE

The limbs of the Golem tree tremble without a wind, while the roots writhe in the earth. Grunt and Fart now stand close to the others. The Sheriff enters with Rachel.

RACHEL

The Sheriff's here to take you
for a little ride, Matthew,
dear.

SHERIFF

What is this?

Stunned, ignoring everyone, the Sheriff walks around the tree's circle of roots. Fart, a few steps behind, follows him around the tree, rather like the kitten that trailed after Golem.

SUSIE

That thing killed a cat.

RACHEL

Smack your head against it. See
what happens.

A tire slips out of the tree's grip with a plop.

FART

There it goes! Been waiting for
that.

SHERIFF

(to Golem; shouting)
All this time.

He continues around the tree moving closer to Golem.

SHERIFF

(continuing; shouting)
I thought you was lying.

He crosses to Golem.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHERIFF

I sincerely apologize, son. I
was wrong as hell.

Golem, stunned by having an adult apologize to him,
doesn't
know what to do except shrug modestly and look away.

FART (O.S.)

(excited)

Them leaves is red as blood.

Fart trots over.

FART

(continuing; giggling)

They're blood leaves. That's
it. Blood leaves.

RACHEL

Shut up, you imbecile!

Susie smiles. Rachel glares defiantly.

SUSIE

Blood leaves. I wonder how much
blood is in those leaves?

EXT SHERIFF'S CAR

The Sheriff's car travels along a blacktop highway,
then turns down a gravel road.

SHERIFF (O.S.)

Damn! That tree is Biblical.

(pauses)

Like a plague.

MATTHEW (O.S.)

It's a blasphemy of root and
bark.

INT SHERIFF'S CAR

The Sheriff drives. Matthew sits in back, Susie in
front.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHERIFF

What could've caused it?

SUSIE

Ten-to-one, Rachel has a good idea about everything that happens around her.

The Sheriff turns onto a short dirt road that ends in a weed-ridden field.

SUSIE

(continuing)

Where're we going, Sheriff?

SHERIFF

I debated showing you this.

(pauses)

Well, we're here.

He stops the car on the edge of the field by the woods. No houses are in sight.

EXT WEED-RIDDEN FIELD

They exit the car. The Sheriff walks to a spot near the tree-line. Matthew and Susie follow.

The Sheriff points to the earth at his feet. There's a smashed headstone. It's been reduced to rubble.

SHERIFF

This is your great uncle's grave.

SUSIE

Matthew's talked to every unfriendly idiot in the county? And now you show him this?

SHERIFF

Sometimes bad memories shouldn't be disturbed.

MATTHEW

How do you know this is his grave?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHERIFF

When I was young, I ran with punks. I was a punk. One night I watched while they beat this man to death.

SUSIE

Why?

SHERIFF

You mean, why'd they do it?

MATTHEW

Hatred.

SHERIFF

Ah, hatred. Everybody blames hatred.

SUSIE

Then why?

SHERIFF

Because beating a man to death is fun. It gives you a rush.

SUSIE

That's sick.

SHERIFF

I see it a lot.

MATTHEW

Josef escaped Nazis in Europe only to die at the hands of punks in America.

SHERIFF

Seeing that old man beg for mercy.

(shakes his head)

That night set on me. It got me to thinking that maybe I wanted to be more than a punk.

SUSIE

Did you try to help him?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHERIFF

If I had, then I'd be lying
there alongside him.

SUSIE

And that excuses you?

MATTHEW

(angry)
Dammit, Susie!

SHERIFF

I accept my guilt. But some
people want what they want. And
they'll kill without hesitation
to get it.

He takes a few steps.

SHERIFF

(continuing)
That evil isn't dead. It's just
waiting for the right
conditions.

He brushes the weeds with his boot.

SHERIFF

(continuing)
Then, like weeds, it'll shoot
up and spread like wildfire.

INT UPSTAIRS GUEST BEDROOM

The door opens. Golem enters quietly. He has a book-
sized object wrapped in a plastic bread wrapper.
Slipping to the bed, he opens a piece of luggage lying
on the bed and puts the object inside. Then he
carefully exits.

EXT WEED-RIDDEN FIELD

The Sheriff, Matthew, and Susie return to the car.

SHERIFF

(hinting)
You know, lots of people round
about have no conscience.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SUSIE
Like Rachel?

SHERIFF
Like Rachel.

SUSIE
You think she killed this Jack
Mosby?

SHERIFF
(shrugs)
There's no proof. Yet.

MATTHEW
And you suggest that we. . .

SHERIFF
Leave. Today. Rachel is
goddamned dangerous.

Susie gives him a big hug.

SUSIE
Tell us again how nasty Rachel
is.

INT BAR

The Bar-B-Que Palace has a bar with a grandiose mirror. Rachel sits with a stiff drink and stares at her reflection.

Drinking beer at a nearby table are two young men, LYLE and JAY, both 18, wearing athletic jackets. Lyle checks her out. Jay's not interested. Female BARTENDER, 20s, enters.

BARTENDER
You want another drink, honey.

Rachel counts out the cash without saying anything.

RACHEL
Bring me the change.

BARTENDER
Don't want to bankrupt you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RACHEL

Watch your ass, bitch.

The Bartender exits. Rachel watches herself stuff the cash in a pocket.

INT PALACE DINING AREA NIGHT

Jack sits at a table with a very sexy GIRL, who drapes herself over him. Rachel appears. In a rage, she grabs the girl by the hair, drags her off the seat, and pummels her with fists.

Jack continues to sit and sip his drink.

EXT STREAM IN THE WOODS DAY

Fishing poles lie on the bank. Clothes also lie scattered. At the water, half in and half out, Jack and Rachel make love.

INT MANSION KITCHEN NIGHT

Rachel has a knife and tries to stick it in Jack. Catching her wrist, he slaps her face hard and takes away the knife. Then he puts her over his lap and spanks her.

EXT BEDROOM DAY

Jack and Rachel make love.

EXT MANSION FRONT LAWN NIGHT

Rachel has a shotgun leveled on Jack's belly. He steps up, grasps the barrel, and puts it against his forehead. She lowers the gun and walks away into the darkness.

INT BAR

Lyle ignores his buddy's protests and approaches Rachel.

LYLE

Why're you drinking alone, darling?

The Bartender sets down her drink and change. Pocketing the

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

money, Rachel glances him over, then stares at the mirror.

RACHEL

Feel like it.

LYLE

Well, I'm surprised to see a sexy woman like you all by yourself.

RACHEL

Yeah.

LYLE

Mind if I join you?

RACHEL

Seat's empty.

LYLE

(sitting)

Maybe you're feeling a bit blue?

RACHEL

Yeah?

LYLE

I heard ol' Jack Mosby's done run off.

RACHEL

Yeah. Jack's gone right enough.

LYLE

Well, darling, don't give him another thought.

RACHEL

My old man taught me two things. Pay for your liquor by the drink. And don't fret over the past.

LYLE

Sound advice.

RACHEL

So what do you want?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LYLE

I'm just commiserating with
you, darlin'.

RACHEL

Every piss-ant with two hairs
between his legs thinks he can
get in my pants.

LYLE

What--

RACHEL

(interrupting)

Take over where Jack left off?
Ha! Compared to him you're
nothing but a two-legged dog.

LYLE

Wait a minute--

She backhands his face as hard as she can. He's
stunned, and then furious. Jay grabs him from behind.

JAY

Don't be a fool! You know who
she is.

RACHEL

Touch me and you'll never make
another mistake.

Jay drags his friend to the exit.

RACHEL

(continuing; drinking)

They shouldn't let school out
early. Kiddies get themselves
into trouble.

EXT MANSION DRIVEWAY DUSK

The Sheriff waits in his car. Susie enters with a
rolled paper.

SUSIE

Check this out.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He unrolls the paper. It's a photo of Jack's silver-capped toes peeking from the golem tree's bark.

SUSIE

I took that before the bark covered them. They're the toes of boots, aren't they?

SHERIFF

Jack was famous round here for his party clothes. And his fancy boots.

SUSIE

Okay?

SHERIFF

You're saying that the golem tree ate Jack?

SUSIE

All I'm saying is that weird tree sucked up something bigger than a cat. You'll have to take it from there.

SHERIFF

Can I keep this?

SUSIE

Yes.

SHERIFF

Are you packed.

SUSIE

We'll be out of town before sundown, Sheriff.

He grins and points a finger at her.

SHERIFF

Okay, pardner.

EXT TRASH RAVINE SECOND NIGHT

The tree writhes. Its limbs dip and pull, then twist from side to side. The roots loosen the ground's hold. Blood leaves fall. Alone in his watch, Golem sleeps against a big barrel.

INT UPSTAIRS GUEST BEDROOM

Curses echo from downstairs. Matthew listens as he picks discarded photographs from the floor and neatly stacks them. Susie enters and slams the bedroom door.

SUSIE

Bitch! Bitch bitch, bitch
bitch, bitch bitch bitch.

MATTHEW

So, how'd it go?

SUSIE

She wants us out. Tonight.
Immediately.

MATTHEW

Really?

SUSIE

I told her we'll leave
tomorrow.

MATTHEW

The Sheriff suggested--

SUSIE

(interrupting)
I wanted to piss her off
royally.

MATTHEW

(nodding)
That was thoughtful.

SUSIE

I told her to keep her goddamn
hands, and her tits, off you.

MATTHEW

I see it was a productive
meeting.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SUSIE

Piss off.

MATTHEW

Did you give the photo to the Sheriff?

SUSIE

Yes. Rachel must have seen us, cause she pounced on me right away.

Susie scrambles among her luggage.

MATTHEW

Now what?

SUSIE

I'm gonna call a few media people I know.

She pulls out the object left by Golem and holds it out to Matthew.

MATTHEW

What's that?

SUSIE

It isn't yours?

She dumps it out of the bread wrapper onto the bed. It's a book. The leather cover has no title, but printed on the title page by hand is "DER GOLEM: Die Toten Reiten Schnell".

MATTHEW

(to himself)

"Die Toten Reiten Schnell".

SUSIE

What?

MATTHEW

"The Dead Travel Fast".

Forbidding, handwritten German script covers the manuscript

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

pages. Matthew studies a few pages.

SUSIE

So give out--what is it?

MATTHEW

My Great Uncle Josef wrote
this. It seems to be a journal
of the Nazi era.

EXT TRASH RAVINE

Roots have pushed themselves almost completely out of the dirt. The tree leans, using its branches for support, and slowly pulls itself from the earth.

SOUND: CRACKING WOOD

Golem, sleeping against the barrel, is awakened by the sound in time to see the tree snap off smaller roots and extract itself from the ground. Frozen, Golem waits. There is a pause as the TREE-BEAST stands utterly still.

Golem slowly turns and crawls. A great root slams down in front of him. Another root rams into the dirt on the other side. He looks up. The thing stands over him.

It extends limbs around Golem but doesn't touch him. The smaller branches and twigs tremble as they move up and down the boy's body. It pulls back its limbs, then moves away on its huge roots. The monstrosity scars the earth where it passes.

And Golem remains frozen in place.

EXT MANSION FRONT LAWN SECOND DAY

Matthew and Susie throw the last of the luggage in the BMW. Susie keeps a camera in hand.

SUSIE

I wonder if Larry ever went
home last night?

MATTHEW

We should've checked.

EXT FARMER BROWN'S PASTURE

DEAD COWS lie scattered across the level, well-tended pasture. The corpses look deflated. A CALF stands beside its dead mother and bawls.

FARMER BROWN leans against one of two pickups, while DOCTOR JEFFERSON sits on the tailgate of the other.

The Sheriff's car pulls up. The Sheriff and a Deputy, KENNY WAYNE, get out. They see large scars in the earth leading from the pasture into woods. The scars are identical to those left by the Tree-Beast.

SHERIFF

What's going on?

BROWN

If we'd a known, probably wouldn't of bothered calling you.

SHERIFF

Good point.

They examine a cow. Dozens of holes puncture its hide.

BROWN

Happened overnight. Damnedest thing.

SHERIFF

What do you say, Doctor Jefferson?

JEFFERSON

It wasn't a disease. And it wasn't any predator that I know.

SHERIFF

Vandals, maybe? Why're they so.

. .

JEFFERSON

Deflated? Blood's gone.

KENNY WAYNE

A cow vampire?

SHERIFF
(exasperated)
Kenny Wayne.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JEFFERSON

You tell me.

KENNY WAYNE

One of them satanic cults.
Blood sacrifices and
liberalism.

SHERIFF

First, we find facts, Deputy.
Then we solve the case.

EXT TRASH RAVINE

Golem still sits by the barrel. Of the tree, only a
gaping hole remains.

SUSIE

Where's the goddamn tree?

MATTHEW

What happened, Larry?

Golem points to the trail of scars in the earth leading
from the ravine.

SUSIE

Rachel's goons must've dug it
up.

They look at Golem.

MATTHEW

Is that what happened?

He remains silent.

SUSIE

Larry?

EXT FARMER BROWN'S PASTURE

The Sheriff, Kenny Wayne, Brown, and Jefferson walk
along the trail of scars.

KENNY WAYNE

What kind of equipment would
make tracks like that?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Sheriff picks up two objects. One is a beer can, the other a blood leaf.

BROWN

Whoever made them tracks threw their trash out as they went.

SHERIFF

What do you make of this, Doctor?

He hands him the blood leaf. Jefferson glances at it and hands it back.

JEFFERSON

It's a leaf. I'm a vet, not a botanist.

KENNY WAYNE

They're all along that track.

SHERIFF

The track heads towards the highway there, the other side of that stand of trees. How long these cows been dead, Doc, or can't you say?

JEFFERSON

I'd guess no more than two hours. But that's not official.

SHERIFF

Right.

The Sheriff turns back to the squad car and the others follow.

SHERIFF

(continuing)

Kenny Wayne, you get the riot gun and follow that track.

KENNY WAYNE

On foot?

SHERIFF

Yes, on foot.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KENNY WAYNE

What about the squad car?

SHERIFF

I'll drive to the other side.
If we're incredibly lucky, we
might still catch them between
us.

KENNY WAYNE

But these are my best boots,
Sheriff.

SHERIFF

You got something better to do?

Jefferson and Brown go back to their pickups. Kenny
Wayne gets the riot gun from the car and walks toward
the trees.

KENNY WAYNE

(to himself)

Thought I might slip away
early. Here I am chasing a
bunch of stupid cowsuckers.

INT PLANTATION BARN

The converted hay barn is a workshop containing tools
and a large, old model dozer with a blade. Fart sweats
and welds on the dozer tracks. He pauses to take off
his protective goggles. His brother, sitting nearby,
hands him another welding rod.

FART

This old dozer has just about
had it. But I'm going to get it
running one more time. And then
she can just go to hell.

Grunt, as usual, grunts.

FART

(continuing)

I don't know how many more
times these rollers can be
redone. It needs new rollers.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GRUNT

She ain't going to pay for
nothin' she don't got to.

FART

I don't know how tight she
squeezes them legs, but it
can't be half as tight as she
squeezes a dollar.

GRUNT

She don't give away nothin'
without sticking out that
little hand of hers for a
divvy.

FART

Damn straight, brother.

He turns again to his welding, working quickly and skillfully. Grunt watches impassively. Fart stops, takes off his goggles, then sits and wipes the sweat from his face.

GRUNT

Ernest, I think I done you an
injury.

FART

(quietly)
Whatcha mean, brother Samuel?

GRUNT

Everything here is hers. The
plantation, the equipment, the
tenants. Her fancy new SUV. Us.

FART

She don't own us. We got
options.

GRUNT

(interrupting)
Options? Nobody'll hire us.
We'd have to hit convenience
stores to eat.

FART

Ain't your fault, no way.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GRUNT

I shoulda put you through trade school while I's still in the service. But I blew my pay, every dime, without thinking. I shoulda planned.

FART

Oh, hell, Samuel, you was young. Young men don't think, they live big and plan big. If I hadn't a been color blind, I'd of gone in the Navy and blown my salary the same as you. I bet it'd of been a big salary, too, working electronics on one of them nuclear submarines.

GRUNT

That don't matter. It wasn't the right way for a brother to act. I shoulda thought ahead. Maybe we wouldn't be sittin' here.

FART

Maybe. It still ain't your fault. It's like a saying I heard. "If wishes was fishes, we'd all throw nets." I ain't got no regrets, Samuel. You ain't done me no hurt.

Grunt looks out of the barn toward the trash ravine where the golem tree once stood.

GRUNT

I heard a saying. "What goes around, comes around."

Fart grunts.

EXT STREAM IN WOODS

The Tree-Beast, taller and larger with a more definite red color, sits in a stream waving its limbs gently. It

holds a COW against its trunk.

The tips of a dozen branches puncture the poor animal.
A

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

child's plastic doll falls in the water as its trunk swells. Abruptly, the overgrown weed jerks out its branches and tosses away the dead cow.

EXT MANSION LAWN

Cars and vans splattered with gaudy TV news logos litter the lawn. Golem and The Cook run a refreshment table. NEWS- and CREWPEOPLE lounge about the lawn eating, joking, and gossiping. Matthew weaves through them to the table.

MATTHEW
(to himself)
Talk about a Biblical
pestilence.

He reaches the table.

MATTHEW
Susie around?

COOK
Yes, sir, I saw her a minute ago. Did she call all these people?

MATTHEW
Impressive, isn't it? Things jump once she's set her mind.

GOLEM
Here she comes.

Susie enters talking to a NEWSPERSON with pen and notebook in hand.

SUSIE
There's a thousand dollar reward for the tree's return.

NEWSPERSON
A thousand? I thought it's priceless.

SUSIE
Five thousand. Five thousand

dollars for the tree's safe
return.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Nodding, the newsperson exits making notes.

MATTHEW

Whose five thousand bucks?

SUSIE

Mine. I'll get it back, and more, with my layout of that tree.

Susie smiles at Golem.

SUSIE

(continuing)

Larry.

GOLEM

(groaning)

Not another interview.

INT MANSION HALLWAY

Rachel leans against a wall. A FAT MAN enters.

FAT MAN

Where's the bathroom, ma'am?

She motions down the hall, and the man exits into a room.

EXT MANSION LAWN

Susie coaxes Golem.

SUSIE

You're the golem tree expert, Larry. Come on, it won't hurt.

GOLEM

Yeah.

(glances around)

Did you get the book?

SUSIE

(surprised)

Yes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GOLEM

I can't read it, but I thought
it might help somehow.

Someone motions in the distance.

SUSIE

Damn! Be right back.

She exits.

MATTHEW

Where'd you find the book?

GOLEM

With the sapling root.

MATTHEW

You mean a tree cutting?

GOLEM

Yeah, I planted it. It's what
the golem tree grew from before
it--

(catches himself)

You didn't know?

INT MANSION HALLWAY

A TALL, YOUNG MAN enters to Rachel.

YOUNG MAN

Hi, hon. Where's the can?

Rachel smiles and nods down the hall.

YOUNG MAN

(continuing)

Thanks.

He exits into the room. Rachel follows him and shuts
the door.

SOUND: LOCK CLICKS SOFTLY

EXT STREAM IN WOODS

Kenny Wayne reaches the stream. A plastic doll floats in the water hooked on debris. Crossing the stream, he finds the dead cow. He juggles the riot gun and proceeds slowly.

KENNY WAYNE
I'm not liking this.

He follows the strange tracks until they end by a tree. He stands there, puzzled, and glances around. He sniffs, then looks at the bottom of his new shoes.

SOUND: STRANGE CREAKING

Kenny Wayne looks up. Tree branches like giant hands snatch him off the ground. He fires blindly. One shot hits and blood runs from the bark. The Tree-Beast whips and twists about. He screams.

People loiter around the refreshment stand. The Cook

EXT MANSION LAWN

motions with his head for Golem to take off. He and Matthew step away from the table.

GOLEM
Can you read that funny
writing?

MATTHEW
Yes.

Golem speaks in a low, cautious voice. Matthew follows suit.

GOLEM
It's where I got the name,
golem. I figured since it was
with the root, then it must be
about the root. Have you read
it?

MATTHEW
Not all of it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GOLEM

Better not mention it, you know, to Miss Rachel. She'll take it for sure.

MATTHEW

Why?

GOLEM

I found it in her cellar.

MATTHEW

I won't say anything.

They speak normally again.

GOLEM

There's a stick, too.

MATTHEW

A stick?

GOLEM

A fine walking stick with carvings top to bottom. I figured--

A news crew interrupts. The CAMERAPERSON squats for a shot, and a NEWSPERSON shoves a microphone in his face. Susie waits in the background.

NEWSPERSON

You're Golem?

GOLEM

Yeah. That's the name of the tree, too.

NEWSPERSON

And this tree is the only one of its kind in the world?

GOLEM

Yeah. I take care of it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NEWSPERSON

Any special instructions in
caring for this valuable tree?

GOLEM

Don't pet it.

EXT ROADWAY NEAR WOODS

The Sheriff sits in the squad car off the road with the door open. He watches the tree-line. Tired of waiting, he uses the radio.

SHERIFF

Deputy Peters. Report Deputy
Peters.

(pauses)

Kenny Wayne, answer your damned
radio.

He pauses again.

SHERIFF

(continuing)

I hope that boy hasn't tried to
think all by himself.

He switches the radio to a loudspeaker and broadcasts.

SHERIFF

(continuing)

Deputy Peters, this is Sheriff
Carlson, can you hear me?
Please reply.

An object flies out of the woods, spins through the air, and smashes into the windshield. It's a human leg. Other body parts rain on and around the car. The Sheriff rams the car into reverse and hits the gas.

EXT MANSION LAWN

The last of the news vans leave.

SUSIE

Well, we've documented the
situation. Rachel can't claim
it never

(more)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SUSIE (cont'd)
existed, no matter what she's
done with the golem tree.

GOLEM
Yeah.

Matthew enters.

SUSIE
Where have you been?

MATTHEW
I finished the journal. Larry,
can I keep it for a bit longer?

GOLEM
Sure.

MATTHEW
Where's the Staff--the walking
stick?

GOLEM
I left it in the cellar.

MATTHEW
Let's find it. Come on, Susie.

They walk toward the rear of the mansion.

SUSIE
For what?

MATTHEW
We played your game, now you
play ours.

EXT COUNTRY MEADOW

The Tree-Beast's roots dig into the soft earth as it
crosses a meadow. It stops. Its limbs stretch outward
as if searching. Pivoting slowly to a new direction, it
exits.

INT MANSION CELLAR

Everything is topsy-turvy, even for the normally cluttered cellar. Matthew, Golem, and Susie sweat from exertion.

MATTHEW
Where could it be?

GOLEM
(indicating)
It was against that wall.

SUSIE
Why're we looking for a stick?

EXT CELLAR DOOR

Rachel listens outside the door.

GOLEM (O.S.)
It goes with the book and the tree.

INT FARMHOUSE KITCHEN

A MOTHER prepares dinner while she listens to a boombox that sits on a counter. Her CHILD, 2, plays with its toys on the floor by the door to the backyard. The inner wooden door is open, so that the screen door frames the backyard and woods beyond.

SOUND: POPULAR MUSIC

A small CHILD plays with its toys by the screen door.

MOTHER
Momma's makin' biscuits, honey.
You want a biscuit?

CHILD
Ex'lent!

MOTHER
Mmmmm, you like biscuits.

CHILD
Ex'lent!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Tree-Beast can be seen through the screen door as it emerges from the woods. The Child continues to play, while the Mother rolls out biscuits. Using its limbs like divining rods, the monster quickly approaches the house.

MOTHER

You just keep playin', baby.

CHILD

Ex'lent!

Its trunk stands outside the door. A limb rips through the screen and enters the kitchen. The music covers any sound it makes. The child looks up, then makes a face and holds both hands over its nose.

CHILD

(continuing)

Ex'lent!

The Mother smiles as she hums with the music and cuts the biscuit dough. The limb stretches across the kitchen and picks up the boombox. She pauses and sniffs. The limb withdraws with the boombox.

SOUND: MUSIC RECEDES

She turns and sees the limb pull the boombox through the screen over the head of her Child.

MOTHER

(whispering)

God.

She grabs the child from the floor and backs away until she bangs into the counter. Clinging tightly, she reflexively puts one hand over her nose and mouth.

SOUND: CRASHING, WOOD BREAKING

A root tears through the floorboards by the door. The concussion knocks the Mother to her knees and the Child cries. Struggling to her feet, she runs toward the living room. The root surges even further inward and blocks her path.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She is trapped. Crouching in a corner, she shields the Child with her body. The root withdraws. It takes out part of the wall as it goes. A limb enters. Its smaller limbs tremble. The Child still cries. The limbs move towards it.

MOTHER

Shh, baby, shh, for Mommy,
please.

She sings a lullaby in a voice just above a whisper. The limb stops. She sings louder and the limb moves toward her. She stops singing, and it moves toward the crying Child.

The Mother sings as loudly as she can. Quickly laying the Child down and standing, she edges along the counter. The limb follows. When she can go no further, she closes her eyes and sings a hymn. The limb hovers a moment. Then it impales her like a spear.

SOUND: CHILD CRYING

The limb carries the mother's body through the smashed wall. Pivoting, the black-hearted freak stalks away.

INT MANSION CELLAR

Matthew tosses aside a piece of trash.

MATTHEW

Only the Staff will destroy the
Tree-Beast.

SUSIE

The what does what?

MATTHEW

I'll explain after we've gotten
it.

Golem, speaking his thoughts, interrupts Susie's reply.

GOLEM

Jack wasn't so bad. He took me

fishin', huntin'. I liked him
and he liked me. If she had to
do it, she shoulda just killed
him. It wasn't right feeding
him to that tree.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SUSIE

What're you saying?

GOLEM

I was there. She'll kill me for sure.

EXT CELLAR DOOR

Rachel turns, pauses, then slowly walks in a different direction.

EXT GRAVEL ROADWAY

With the boombox still playing, the Tree-Beast stalks its way down a road with large gullies on both sides. Approaching from the opposite direction, JEROME, drinking beer, drives his pickup truck too fast. There's a sharp bend in the road, so he can't see what's ahead.

JEROME

(mocking angrily)

"It's your turn on third shift, Jerome. Everybody but you's worked it." What do I care? Piss on them.

Bulling his way around the corner, he finds the Tree-Beast obstructing the road. Swerving to a stop, the pickup slides partially off the road. The front wheels sit on the edge of a gully. His truck now blocks the thing's path.

JEROME

(continuing; dazed)

What the hell was that?

It puts a root underneath his truck and lifts. Jerome grabs the steering wheel with one hand and braces himself against the roof with the other, still holding onto the beer can.

JEROME

(continuing; shouting)

What's happenin'?

When the monster pauses a moment, Jerome unwillingly

slides off the seat. He keeps hold of the beer can. The Tree-Beast flips the truck over into the gully. Then, with the boombox playing, the malignant grotesque continues down the road.

INT SHERIFF'S OFFICE

With the door closed, the Sheriff sits at his desk with a phone to his ear. There's a knock, and the door cracks open. DEPUTY BAGSBY peeks in. Bustling activity can be seen through the open doorway.

SOUND: LOUD TALK AND SHOUTING

The Sheriff waves irritably. Bagsby enters and shuts the door against the noise.

SHERIFF

Yes, ma'am, Kenny Wayne was a good son.

The Sheriff glances at Bagsby.

BAGSBY

Everybody's reported in.

The Sheriff nods.

SHERIFF

And a good deputy.

He looks at Bagsby who fights to maintain a noncommittal expression.

SHERIFF

(continuing)

No, ma'am, just one casket.

Yes, bye, bye.

(hangs up phone)

What've we got?

BAGSBY

Besides every reporter in the world.

SHERIFF

How'd they get here so quick?

BAGSBY

They're already in the area. Something about a weird tree out at Rachel's place.

(grins)

A good deputy?

EXT WOODS DUSK

The sun is low, the sky is red. The Tree-Beast smashes the boombox, digs its roots into the dirt, and becomes as still as death.

SOUND: LOUD CRACKING SOUNDS ECHO THROUGH THE WOODS

Splits appear in its bark.

INT MANSION CELLAR THIRD NIGHT

Matthew, Susie, and Golem have finished examining the cellar's contents.

SUSIE

What is this damn stick?

Rachel and Grunt enter. He carries a pump shotgun.

RACHEL

Nothing that's your concern, Missy. Thanks for redecorating my cellar, but you've done enough.

MATTHEW

Rachel, why does he have that gun?

RACHEL

Cause I got to decide what to do with you, Matthew, and I don't want you going anywhere until I do. That includes you, Mister Larry.

SUSIE

The Sheriff knows we're here. You can't do anything to us.

RACHEL

(snapping)

Don't you bet your life on what I can and can't do.

MATTHEW

There's no need for violence. There's no evidence. Our dis-

appearance would draw
suspicion.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SUSIE

At least let the boy go.

RACHEL

He put his lot in with you free
and clear--no one forced him.

(exiting)

Take off your shoes and stay
awhile. I'll be back, ya'll
hear?

EXT DEEP WOODS

The bark of the Tree-Beast splits into shreds. It is huge, much larger than before. Its roots tug themselves out of the ground, then shake. Pieces of bark fly away.

Its new "skin" is smoother, mottled with light and dark colors, while the trunk has fewer limbs. The whirl on the trunk etches a sleeping human face. The ravenous demon quickly stalks away with limbs writhing in the night air.

INT SHERIFF'S OFFICE

The Sheriff moves around his desk as Bagsby chuckles.

BAGSBY

(to himself)

A good deputy.

SHERIFF

Let's do it.

BAGSBY

There's a report in, Sheriff.

SHERIFF

What?

BAGSBY

Jerome Potts ran in a gully on
his way home.

SHERIFF

Drunk?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BAGSBY
Breath box says no.

SHERIFF
What's the point?

BAGSBY
He says a tree ran him off the road.

SHERIFF
(apprehensive)
What?

BAGSBY
(laughing)
A tree was walking down the road, picked him up, and threw him in the gully.

The Sheriff says nothing.

BAGSBY
(continuing; laughing)
I wouldn't of thought he'd had enough imagination to go nuts.

SHERIFF
Which way was it headed?

BAGSBY
What?

SHERIFF
The tree.

Bagsby laughs even harder.

INT MA & PA'S CAR

Heavy woods line both sides of a new asphalt highway. Traffic is extremely light. Pa drives, Ma tells him when to turn and when to stop--literally. He's blind as a bat. They sit at a green traffic light. Pa waits.

MA
The light's green, Pa.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PA
(irritated)
I know.

MA
What're you waitin' on?

PA
I'm waitin' for idiots to stop
runnin' the light.

MA
(frustrated)
They ain't nobody else, Pa.

PA
Would you shutup?

The light turns red. A van stops beside them.

SOUND: EXTREMELY LOUD METAL-GRUNGE-RAP NOISE

The rearview mirror in Pa's car vibrates.

MA
Good grief! They'll be deaf
afore they turn twenty.

PA
Who?

The van rises in the air. Ma is petrified, Pa oblivious. The Tree-Beast stalks away with it. Ma watches as the monster stops in the middle of the intersection.

The "music" enrages the creature. Smashing the van to the ground, it hammers it. Then it slams the van repeatedly with its roots. In short, the Tree-Beast squashes it as flat as an empty soft drink can.

When the "music" stops, the devilish delinquent stalks off against the red light, across the road, and into the woods.

PA
(continuing)
I told you somebody'd run that

light.

INT RACHEL'S BEDROOM

A toilet flushes. Rachel appears from the bathroom. Passing her dresser, she picks up a perfume bottle of "#102".

RACHEL
You weren't much help.

She drops it in the trash. Opening a closet door, she withdraws a six foot staff engraved with unpolished carvings and exits.

EXT BAR-B-QUE PALACE PARKING LOT

SIGN FLASHES: "TONIGHT ALL U CAN EAT BUFFET"

Teenagers, ROBBIE and TERRIE, sit on the tailgate of a shiny pickup. Robbie looks at the bottoms of his boots.

ROBBIE
What's that smell?

TERRIE
My perfume. Number One-oh-Two.
It's very chic.

ROBBIE
Damn, thought I'd stepped in
cow shit.

EXT WOODS BEHIND BBQ PALACE

The rear wall of the Palace is faintly illuminated by the peripheral glow of emergency floodlights located on the corners of the roof.

SOUND: DISTANT MUSIC

The Tree-Beast emerges from the dark of the woods and pauses at the tree line. Its limbs extend like antennae toward the Bar-B-Que Palace.

INT LARGE PICTURE WINDOW BBQ PALACE

The same country band plays, still too loud. Tables are shoved wherever they'll fit. The place is crammed with people.

INT DANCE FLOOR BBQ PALACE

Joe, the tall, ugly man who asked permission to dance with Susie, dances carefully with a lovely, petite blonde. Gerry, short and heavy, tugs another MAN from a table onto the dance floor.

INT BAR BBQ PALACE

The two young men who had a run-in with Rachel, Lyle and Jay, sit at the bar with their dates, two sisters, NAN and FRAN. Lyle nurses a drink. Jay, irritated, drums his fingers to the music.

NAN

I thought we were gonna dance.

FRAN

Yeah, we can drink anytime.

LYLE

Well, go dance.

NAN

Still frettin' about that white trash, Rachel?

FRAN

That slut will give you a disease.

NAN

Or two.

JAY

(hopping up)
To hell with this. Come on, girls, let's dance.

He puts his arms around their waists, and they exit laughing. Lyle sits at the bar staring at the mirror. He raises his glass in a toast.

LYLE

Here's to the bad boy to come.

EXT BEHIND BAR-B-QUE PALACE

The Tree-Beast follows the music to the picture window.

INT BAR-B-QUE PALACE

PEOPLE dance happily. Then the floor beneath the picture window crashes upward knocking tables, chairs, and people around the room. The band stops playing.

A few rush to help the injured. Muttering and subdued questions come simultaneously from a dozen spots. Most are poised to flee.

The Tree-Beast crashes through the side of the building. One of its great roots blindly lashes the floor and brick to clear a path. People scream and flee to the exits.

Fully inside the building, the it's limbs search the room. Locating fleeing women, it pierces them with innumerable smaller branches, and lifts them in the air. In moments, several women "fly" about the room, screaming.

INT SHERIFF'S HEADQUARTERS

The Sheriff addresses the assembled officers and newspeople.

SHERIFF

There's two murders, possibly three. What evidence we have is inconclusive. I want to--

The Dispatcher interrupts.

SILVERMAN

Sheriff! Someone's attacking the Palace. People are being killed.

There's a massive rush as the officers and the newspeople exit together. The Sheriff gets to the dispatcher.

SHERIFF

What's going on?

SILVERMAN

I don't know. Something about a tree.

INT BAR-B-QUE PALACE

The Tree-Beast, having moved across the room, stands

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

between stunned survivors and the front exits. The floor has been torn up, making a long gap in the demolished floor divides the area into two sections, the north side with the bar and the south side with side exits.

About a dozen survivors hide against a wall behind furniture on the south side. Several are hurt. None of them can see clearly what the monster is doing. Close by, Joe, having lost his cowboy hat, and bleeding from a cut on his forehead, watches from behind a pillar.

Gerry hides under a table on the north (opposite) side of the gap. And Lyle, on the same side, peeps over the bar.

The Tree-Beast pulls a body off a limb and tosses it aside. The body hits a table where, separated from the others, a WOMAN IN BLUE JEANS hides. She screams and flees. The Tree-Beast impales her like potting a bird on the wing.

Joe can see the side exits, the Tree-Beast, and the people huddled against the wall. However, he looks frantically until he finds--his cowboy hat, about six feet away. First glancing at the Tree-Beast, he crawls to his hat.

On the other side of the gap, Gerry watches as the Tree-Beast tosses aside another body.

Gerry
(whispers)
OhJesusohJesusohJesusohJesusohJ
esus.

Joe recovers his hat, combs back his hair with his fingers, and slaps it on. Then he crawls to the group huddled against the wall.

The limbs of the Tree-Beast tremble over the room like divining rods. They find something: a purse on the floor. Moving in, they shove the purse about, revealing the broken remains of a perfume bottle. The limbs, as if fascinated, poke at the broken glass.

Gerry
(continuing; whispers)

Perfume. Smell?

Gerry drags out an economy bottle of perfume.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The survivors by the wall can't see the side exit. Several are injured. Joe gets to them and indicates the corner. They nod. He motions and they crawl along the wall toward the corner. Joe drags the most severely injured person.

Behind the bar, Lyle creeps toward one end. He carefully avoids the broken mirror glass that covers the floor. However, a bottle lies on the edge of the bar. Lyle slips and catches himself by grabbing the bar.

His hand touches the bottle, and it spins. Lyle watches as it spins away from him, down the edge of the bar, slows, then slides off the bar. The noise attracts the Tree-Beast. Tearing its way through flooring and debris, it pokes a limb around the bar.

With care, Gerry creeps from under the table. She quickly works her way to the gap. After splashing perfume around the splintered floor, she throws the bottle in the gap as far from the front exit as she can. Then she hides and watches.

The Tree-Beast seems unaffected. Lyle lies flat on the broken glass and spilled liquor as the monster probes for him. Then its limbs twitch. Turning, it crashes its way to the gap, tearing at the floor in search of the source of perfume.

Gerry runs behind the Tree-Beast, leaps the gap, and bangs out the front doors. Simultaneously, seeing their chance, Joe and the others rush to the side door.

It finds the bottle of bargain perfume, picks it up, and crushes it. Lyle sees the others disappear. Dashing from the bar, he runs to the gap and leaps. And the Tree-Beast spears him in mid-air.

EXT BAR-B-QUE PALACE

The parking lot is chaos. Isolated from the highway, it has only one exit, a two-lane, wooden bridge over a creekbed. Accidents block the exit. Some abandon their cars, blocking others while they run.

Sheriff's deputies and fire department vehicles roll up

on

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

the main road. They are closely followed by the newspeople who contribute to the confusion. At this point, Gerry, then Joe and the others, rush out the exits.

The Tree-Beast crashes through the front wall of the Palace. People jump out of their cars and run like mad knocking each other about. The monster slowly stamps its way across the parking lot using the cars like stepping stones. Deputies shoot it without effect.

The Sheriff coordinates the retreat, while the Tree-Beast squashes cars and snatches women who flee between the cars. CAMERAPEOPLE run into the parking lot.

SHERIFF
(shouting)
You idiots! Get back!

Terrie, whose boyfriend compared her perfume to cow dung, flees from the Tree-Beast. As she weaves in and around cars, it follows with its quivering limbs held out like unerring divining rods.

Attempting to slide over a car hood, her dress hangs on a windshield wiper. The Tree-Beast scoops her up. Then it stops and sniffs her carefully. She screams. It abruptly stalks away into the surrounding woods.

The Camerapeople are caught by surprise when it abruptly changes course. And the gruesome brute doesn't notice when it crushes them under foot.

EXT MAIN ROAD BY BBQ PALACE

The Sheriff reaches into a patrol car and grabs a radio mike.

SHERIFF
Silverman.

SILVERMAN
Here, Sheriff.

SHERIFF
We've got a catastrophe. I need
(more)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHERIFF (cont'd)
every ambulance, medical
emergency team, doctor,
dentist, chiropractor, nurse,
and veterinarian in the county.
Can you do it?

SILVERMAN
Television and radio stations
are making emergency
announcements for medical help
as we speak.

SHERIFF
You're a good man, sister.

He throws the mike back in the car.

EXT WOODS

As the Tree-Beast stalks through the woods with Terrie,
she struggles without effect. It stops again and passes
its branches over her. She screams. When the Tree-Beast
pulls the branches away, she stops screaming.

TERRIE
Please. Let me go.

A few of its smaller branches move rhythmically, like
the absentminded drumming of fingers.

INT RACHEL'S BEDROOM NIGHT

Jack sniffs Rachel's perfume bottle and makes a face.

INT RACHEL'S SHOWER NIGHT

Jack and Rachel make love in the shower.

INT MANSION CELLAR JACK'S P.O.V. FIRST NIGHT

Rachel stares down at Jack.

RACHEL
Take him to the golem tree.

EXT TRASH RAVINE JACK'S P.O.V. FIRST NIGHT

Rachel stares at Jack upsidedown.

RACHEL

Do it.

Grunt slashes down with the sling blade.

EXT WOODS

The Tree-Beast still clutches the girl.

TERRIE

Please please. Let me go.

The Tree-Beast tosses her aside. She lands in a heap like a rag doll. It slips into the darkness.

INT MANSION CELLAR

Rachel and Grunt enter again. Susie and Matthew study them anxiously. Rachel juggles the staff. Grunt, impassive as ever, carries the shotgun.

RACHEL

Been strange reports on the TV, killings and such. Why's this stick interest you so much?

MATTHEW

(quietly)

May I see it, Rachel?

She hands him the Staff. He looks at the engravings closely.

RACHEL

Well?

MATTHEW

(pointing)

You see this? That's "ameth". It means "truth". This is "meth". It means "death". The Staff is covered with these two symbols.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RACHEL

So what?

He hands her back the Staff.

MATTHEW

It's a Staff of Power. It was made to destroy the Golem.

Rachel barks a laugh.

RACHEL

Ain't that poetic, a regular fairy tale. I thought you wanted it for the money. Is it worth anything?

MATTHEW

Not to you, Rachel.

Fart bursts in carrying a large chainsaw and an axe.

RACHEL

Jesus, Fart, watch where you're swinging that thing.

FART

I saw it.

RACHEL

What?

FART

The golem tree. I saw it coming from the woods. They's talking on the radio about how it tore into the Palace killin' people. It's here.

RACHEL

(weakly)

You gonna cut it up with your little saw?

Grunt looks out the door.

GRUNT

How far, Ernest?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FART

I don't know, Samuel. Half-mile
or so. It was comin' slow like
it knew exactly where it's
going.

RACHEL

A tree ain't got no eyes.

GRUNT

Don't need'em. Jack could walk
blindfold over every crick,
hill, and road in this county.
He's born here, he died here.

RACHEL

(screaming)

IT AIN'T JACK.

SOUND: POPULAR MUSIC (O.S.)

A rhythmic tremor shakes the debris on the cellar
floor.

The music becomes louder. Then the roots and trunk of
the Tree-Beast appear outside the cellar. Fart peeks
out.

FART

(offended)

He got my radio from the barn.

SUSIE

That smell. It's worse than it
was at the trash heap.

FART

I took my pills!

GRUNT

Shutup and get that saw goin',
Ernest.

(turns to the door)

Jack's back.

Grunt steps to the door and empties the shotgun into
its trunk. This has no effect. Fart starts the
chainsaw. As Grunt steps back, his brother passes him
the saw and takes the gun.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

While the others hide variously about the cellar, the Brothers take separate places on either side of the door, chainsaw on one side, axe on the other. They wait. A tree limb pokes in and "sniffs", then withdraws.

Dirt and wood explode as a huge root crashes through the doorway. The attack knocks Grunt backward and off his feet. Fart hacks at the limb, but the blade bounces off.

The root goes directly to where Rachel flattens herself against a wall. It wraps around her and drags her irresistibly to the doorway.

RACHEL
(furious)
Nooooo. No. No. No.

Getting to his feet, Grunt grabs the chainsaw, revs it high, and lays it on the root. Blood slings off the chain. The root releases Rachel and pulls from the cellar.

FART
(shouting)
You did it, Samuel. You did it.

A limb flashes into the cellar, spears Grunt like a fish, and drags him outside. Dazed, Fart gawks at the smashed doorway. The music still plays.

FART
(continuing)
Samuel gave me that radio.

He steps fully into the doorway.

FART
(continuing)
You wanta play, Bad Jack? You wanta play?
(screaming)
I'M GONNA BURN YOU IN HELLFIRE.

Fart exits towards the barn at a run.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MATTHEW
(shouting)
Wait.

He, Susie, and Golem cross to the door. The Tree-Beast ignores them all.

GOLEM
It didn't even try to get him.
I guess it doesn't care about
him.

SUSIE
Who does it care about?

Golem stares at the floor. Matthew and Susie look at Rachel.

RACHEL
It's got nothing to do with me.

Matthew picks up the Staff. Golem watches the Tree-Beast.

GOLEM
(quietly)
It's healin' itself.

Susie and Matthew glance back through the door.

EXT CELLAR DOOR

The wounds to the root visibly heal and close.

INT MANSION CELLAR

Turning away, Susie and Matthew move from the door. She takes the Staff and studies it. Matthew looks stunned.

MATTHEW
(thoughtfully)
Regeneration. Incredibly fast
regeneration.
(to himself)
It's Apocalyptic.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RACHEL

Maybe your precious stick can regenerate our bodies after that thing's ripped us apart. What do you say to that, "Mister" Golem?

GOLEM

My name's Larry. If we got to die, at least you could call me Larry.

RACHEL

HA! Getting ideas above yourself.

SUSIE

So, does this thing unleash lightning bolts, or what?

MATTHEW

I don't know.

Rachel laughs.

SUSIE

Exactly what do we do?

He takes the Staff.

MATTHEW

The journal says a German rabbi in a pre-War slave camp created a golem from a dead tree.

Rachel prowls about the cellar like a lioness in a cage.

MATTHEW

(continuing)

The rabbi also carved sacred symbols onto a wooden Staff to destroy the golem when its purpose was done.

Rachel sits on the other side of the cellar.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MATTHEW

After devouring the camp
guards, it started killing
prisoners. My Great Uncle Josef
destroyed it with the Staff.

RACHEL

Doesn't look dead to me.

MATTHEW

And only this Staff can stop it
now.

RACHEL

Is that the Staff of Moses?
That ain't Pharaoh out there.

SUSIE

No, it's Bad Jack, and he's
back to set things right.

RACHEL

(screaming)

NO.

SUSIE

(continuing)

If you're not gonna admit that
you're responsible for sparking
that thing to life, then will
you. . .

(screaming)

SHUT UP?

Rachel sits trembling and silent.

SUSIE

(to Matthew)

I thought a golem was made out
of stone. Like a statue.

MATTHEW

A golem's a shapeless mass.
Something incomplete animated
by magic.
What Larry planted must've been
part of the original golem. It
was triggered by the blood of a

sacrifice.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

They look at Rachel, who turns her back on them.

MATTHEW
(to himself)
The past is in the present.

SUSIE
(annoyed)
Well, right at this moment,
we've got a really big problem
lurking outside in the shadows.

Golem, who stopped watching during Matthew's
explanation, looks back out the door.

MATTHEW
We have the Staff.

SUSIE
Think! How're you gonna get
close enough to use it?

GOLEM
(interrupting)
Something's happened.

SUSIE
Is it coming?

Matthew and Susie rush to the door. Rachel stays seated
but strains to see.

GOLEM
(continuing)
It's gone.

SUSIE
I thought you were watching?

GOLEM
I got distracted.

SUSIE
Right.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A tremor shakes them. One of the walls splits open and a root thrusts into the cellar. At the same time, a limb crashes through the doorway, blocking the exit while it probes inward.

The limb knocks Matthew aside, so that the Staff skitters out of his reach. Susie drags him aside to a corner, where they are trapped. The boy flattens against the wall by the doorway. Rachel backs against a wall further in the cellar.

The root writhes in the air but does not attack. The limb sweeps back and forth. Rachel finds a stack of old burlap sacks and covers herself with them. Her feet stick out from the burlap.

The limb hovers where she had been, then glides slowly to where she lies under the burlap. It pauses. Then, fast as a snake, the limb sways to one side and the root wraps itself around her.

The limb still has Matthew and Susie blocked in a corner. But the boy sees the Staff. He dashes over, grabs it, and slaps the limb with it. The Tree-Beast jerks. A jet of white flame bursts from the point of contact. Instantly dropping Rachel, it retreats from the cellar.

SOUND: HUGE DIESEL ENGINE ROARS (O.S.)

While the boy runs to help Rachel, Matthew and Susie run to the smashed doorway.

EXT MANSION REAR LAWN

Fart rides the huge dozer. He rams the dozer blade into the trunk of the Tree-Beast and shoves it backward. Its limbs whip at the dozer and driver's cage, while its roots dig frantically for traction.

The dozer shoves the Tree-Beast into, and then over a car. The car stops the dozer's impetus. With the Tree-Beast entangled in the car, and its limbs whipping and groping around him, Fart backs away.

FART
How'd you like that, BAAAAD
JACK?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A great, bleeding gash stretches across its trunk from where the blade struck. Throwing the car to the side, the Tree-Beast probes for the dozer. The vibrations of the huge engine make it easy to locate.

FART

I'll be sending you back to hell. Directly.

The Tree-Beast moves faster than the dozer and stalks him. But Fart is savvy and vengeful. Locking one wheel, he pivots the dozer in a circle, keeping the blade high and between them, except when he slams the blade on the earth to taunt the thing.

FART

(continuing)

Gonna run you down and chop you up.

Agitated, the Tree-Beast closes. Fart uses the heavy blade to rip scars in the trunk and tear at the roots.

FART

(continuing)

Got a saucy cocktail just for you, Jack.

He draws a Molotov cocktail from a milk crate filled with them. Lighting it, he throws it hard. The bottle smashes against the Tree-Beast's trunk and roars into flame. The thing whips the flames with its limbs.

Fart throws another, and then another. The trunk of the Tree-Beast blazes. It twists and thrashes about blindly lashing at the flames.

FART

(continuing)

Time for you to die and stay dead.

The dozer rams into the Tree-Beast and knocks it to the ground. Tearing off several limbs, the dozer rolls completely over it, then pivots back around in a circle and stops.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The flames on the trunk of the Tree-Beast have nearly died out. There are great welts of scar tissue. Its remaining limbs and roots lash angrily as it writhes in the dirt.

FART

I bet that hurt.

Rumbling the dozer forward, he cleaves off a root with the blade. Fart laughs. But the Tree-Beast quickly flips itself onto the bloody root stump, ramming its other roots underneath the dozer. It lifts the huge machine.

Fart panics and hits the gas while still in forward gear. The dozer's momentum adds leverage to the lifting roots, and the dozer rolls up and over onto its back.

Although the driver's cage protects him from being crushed, the gasoline bombs tumble and break. Dazed, Fart clenches the neck of one of the unbroken bottles and pulls out a lighter.

FART

(continuing)

You killed my brother.

He strikes the lighter. The dozer cab explodes in flames. The Tree-Beast reaches into the cab, extracts the flaming Fart, and rips him apart.

INT MANSION CELLAR

Susie puts an arm around the boy.

EXT MANSION REAR LAWN

The Tree-Beast creeps to a spot not far from the cellar doorway, where it digs its roots into the soil. Then it massages its wounds.

INT MANSION CELLAR

Without warning, as the others turn from the door, Rachel bolts outside.

EXT MANSION LAWN

The Tree-Beast sways back and forth while massaging its wounds. Suddenly, it wrenches itself out of the ground and rushes away at full speed.

EXT MANSION FRONT DRIVE

Rachel is in her SUV. It starts. She hits the gas. Gravel flies from the rear wheels.

The Tree-Beast enters and slams the SUV on one side. It rolls sidewise across the lawn. Snatching it up, the Tree-Beast pulls out Rachel. Dazed, bleeding from a bad cut on her face, she screams in inarticulate rage.

With careful precision, the Tree-Beast rips off her head. As the hideous imp stalks back, it tips her body up and dabs blood over itself. Like perfume.

INT MANSION CELLAR DAWN LAST DAY

The morning sun washes the sky with red as Golem stands in the doorway. The Tree-Beast stalks back to its spot not far from the cellar. It throws Rachel's body away. Golem turns from the light.

GOLEM
Rachel's dead.

SUSIE
I'm sorry, Larry.

Golem rubs his eyes.

GOLEM
Will it stop now?

MATTHEW
No.

GOLEM
Why?

MATTHEW
Because it embodies the sins of
our fathers.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GOLEM

I don't understand. What do we do?

SUSIE

Do you still have your phone, Matthew?

Embarrassed, he pulls his portable phone from a pocket. Susie looks at him with an expression of "Well?". He dials, waits, then speaks.

MATTHEW

Yes, I'll hold.

She kicks his ankle.

EXT MANSION LAWN

The Tree-Beast is still. Its bark splits and peels away to reveal a lighter color underneath.

INT MANSION CELLAR

Fascinated, Golem watches the Tree-Beast shed its skin. Matthew waits on the phone. Susie prowls the cellar. Matthew cuts off the phone.

MATTHEW

They said ten minutes.

SUSIE

And they believed you?

MATTHEW

It seems Bad Jack had a busy night.

They look out the doorway.

GOLEM

Shedding its skin like a snake. I don't think it can move right now.

SUSIE

Then let's get out of here.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MATTHEW

Wait.

SUSIE

We're getting him out of here
now.

MATTHEW

We'll be in the open.

SUSIE

I can't cringe in this tomb any
longer.

GOLEM

The house sits on a hill. If we
slip round back and stay low,
the rise of the land will keep
us hid for a ways.

MATTHEW

Let's go.

EXT MANSION REAR LAWN

The Tree-Beast reveals a final shape. Under the peeling
bark, it is stark white, the color of death. As its
wounds drop away with the skin, it loses the smaller
branches and roots.

SOUND: SIRENS BLARE IN THE DISTANCE

EXT MANSION DRIVE

Susie, Matthew, and Golem run down the drive toward the
road. Golem carries the Staff.

EXT MANSION REAR LAWN

The bark splits and falls off revealing a huge,
mouthless face with enormous, inhuman eyes.

EXT TREE-BEAST'S P.O.V.

Susie, Matthew, and Golem appear as long, dark shapes.
They are moving away.

EXT MANSION REAR LAWN

Unable to pursue them, the Tree-Beast lashes about in rage.

EXT TWO-LANE ROAD BY MANSION

Three squad cars screech to a halt. Matthew, Susie, and the boy run to them and climb in.

INT SQUAD CAR

As the survivors pile in, the Sheriff and a Deputy stare at the Tree-Beast.

SHERIFF
Hell's walking.

DEPUTY
(frightened)
Hell's running our way,
Sheriff.

EXT MANSION DRIVEWAY

The Tree-Beast rushes down the driveway.

EXT TWO-LANE ROAD BY MANSION

The squad cars turn and speed away. Enraged, the Tree-Beast pursues them down the road.

INT SQUAD CAR

The Sheriff uses the radio.

SHERIFF
(into mike)
Hold on, boys, slow it down.

SUSIE
Slow down! Are you insane?

SHERIFF
We've got a plan to trap and
kill it.

SUSIE
Then drop off the boy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHERIFF

I can't drop off anyone. If we miss this opportunity, more people will die. That's not going to happen.

She subsides.

SHERIFF

(continuing)

Where's Rachel?

SUSIE

Dead dead dead.

EXT TWO-LANE ROAD

They stay almost within reach of the monster. Following at full speed, its limbs stretch out toward the cars, while its great roots tear gouges in the asphalt.

SHERIFF (O.S.)

Let's do it, men.

The first two patrol cars, one with the Sheriff, Susie, Matthew and Golem, accelerate to top speed and disappear down the highway. The naked evil pursues the third car.

INT THIRD PATROL CAR

Deputy Bagsby drives.

SHERIFF (O.S.)

Good luck, Deputy Bagsby.

BAGSBY

(to himself)

Don't want no damned luck, Sheriff. I just want the raise you promised.

EXT TWO-LANE ROAD

Bagsby turns onto a short road leading to a commercial gravel pit.

EXT GRAVEL PIT ENTRANCE

With sheer walls that protrude from the earth in the shape of a giant "C", one opening serves as entrance and exit.

The patrol car enters. The Tree-Beast can be seen following in the distance.

EXT GRAVEL PIT

Bagsby goes straight across the pit to the opposite wall. Sliding to a stop, he jumps out, runs to the wall, and grabs hold of a cable dangling from the top. There's a rig at the end of the cable which he straps on.

EXT TOP OF GRAVEL PIT

MEN at the top of the wall cut on a winch, and the Deputy rises.

EXT GRAVEL PIT ENTRANCE

Several dozers and a crane with a bucket are parked to one side of the entrance. The Tree-Beast slows at the entrance. Wary, it considers the situation with its new eyes.

EXT TREE-BEAST'S P.O.V.

It sees something rising up the side of the pit.

EXT GRAVEL PIT ENTRANCE

The Tree-Beast rushes through the entrance. As it does, a huge explosion collapses the walls of the pit, heaving gravel into the entrance, and almost filling the gap.

EXT GRAVEL PIT

The explosion buries the Tree-Beast in gravel.

EXT GRAVEL PIT ENTRANCE

The dozers and crane suddenly roar to life. They work to secure the keep by piling more gravel in the gap.

EXT GRAVEL PIT

Using its roots and limbs, the Tree-Beast quickly extricates itself. It glances around the pit.

EXT TREE-BEAST'S P.O.V.

It can see nothing but the high walls of the pit on all sides.

EXT GRAVEL PIT

The Tree-Beast turns to where the entrance was. It tries climbing. Gravel slides from under its weight. The roots and limbs have nothing to grab, nothing to push against.

The faster it digs, and the more gravel it throws, then the further it sinks into that damned big pile of rocks. Frustrated, the Tree-Beast shakes itself free of gravel and stalks into the pit.

EXT TOP OF GRAVEL PIT

The Sheriff, Susie, Matthew, and Golem stand by the edge of the pit watching the Tree-Beast. The Sheriff holds a detonator.

SHERIFF
(to himself)
Just keep on truckin', Jack.
Right over those cross-hairs.

They see three shallow lines that stretch across the pit floor. The lines intersect near the center. The Tree-Beast stalks one way, and then another, coming closer to the intersecting lines.

Deputies and others join them at the edge of the pit. The watchers speak in whispers.

MATTHEW
It's looking for a way out.

GOLEM
It'll dig out if it gets enough
time.

SUSIE
Are you sure we're safe up
here?

SHERIFF
Absolutely.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Tree-Beast is almost in position.

SUSIE
How much explosive is down
there?

SHERIFF
Everything. Everything in the
county we could lay our hands
on.

She pulls Golem away from the edge.

SUSIE
Matthew. Come on.

MATTHEW
(to Sheriff)
It's going to hit the mark.

SUSIE
Matthew!

She backs further away dragging an unwilling Golem with her. In the pit, the Tree-Beast hits the mark.

SHERIFF
Got you.

He pushes the detonator switch. An explosion heaves a dense cloud of gravel into the sky. The Tree-Beast emerges from the cloud slowly turning end over end. Gravel rains over the top of the pit.

SHERIFF
(continuing)
Run!

They hide in cars, under trees, etc. As they run, the Tree-Beast slams down against the edge where they were standing, then slips back and falls into the pit. It crashes to the pit floor and lies still.

Susie, the Sheriff, and the others creep out into the open. They're looking pretty beaten up. The Sheriff glances around sheepishly.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHERIFF
Well, we got him.

Susie punches him in the stomach.

SUSIE
Absolutely!

She looks around.

SUSIE
(continuing)
Where's Matthew?
(calling)
Matthew!

GOLEM (O.S.)
(shouting)
Here he is.

They rush to the edge of the pit where Golem stands pointing downward.

SUSIE
Where?

Halfway down the pit wall, Matthew hangs unconscious from a cracked tree root that juts out from the gravel. He sways slightly, and the root looks none too strong.

GOLEM
That tree root's about to give way.

SUSIE
(turning)
Dammit, Sheriff, what--

The Sheriff isn't there. She glances around and finds him directing the repositioning of the winch to a spot over Matthew. Susie starts toward him but is stopped by Golem's hand on her arm.

GOLEM
It's still bleedin'.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SUSIE
Matthew's in trouble--

GOLEM
(interrupting)
Miss Susie, dead things don't
bleed.

They look over the edge of the pit. The Tree-Beast is motionless except for the blood seeping out of its wounds. Something catches their eye, and they see Deputy Bagsby being lowered down the pit wall to Matthew.

Susie and Golem run to the Sheriff. He speaks before they can.

SHERIFF
Give us a minute please.

GOLEM
It's still bleedin', Sheriff.

SHERIFF
We'll get back to--
(catches himself)
Are you sure?

GOLEM
Like a stuck pig.

They look down at Matthew, then at the Tree-Beast. Golem quickly exits.

SUSIE
What about Matthew?

SHERIFF
We're workin' on it.

Bagsby, almost in reach of Matthew, stretches out to grab his collar at the back of the neck.

SOUND: POPPING AND TEARING

The root is giving way. Bagsby twists about in the harness and reaches out. Just as the root gives out, he hooks

three

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

fingers in Matthew's collar. They sway together at the end of the winch. Bagsby can barely hold on.

BAGSBY

Any time.

SHERIFF

Start the winch, dammit!

They rise a couple of feet, then the inevitable happens. Gravity tears Matthew away. He lands still unconscious on the side of a pile of gravel.

SOUND: GRAVEL RATTLING AND GRINDING

Bagsby slowly looks around. The Tree-Beast pushes itself out of the scattered gravel and onto its roots. A great crack leaks blood down one side of its trunk, and not all of its limbs and roots have survived.

As the Tree-Beast rises, its movements shove gravel to the side. The gravel rolls over Matthew covering his legs and one arm, but leaving his head free.

SHERIFF

Get him up.

SUSIE

What about Matthew?

SHERIFF

That monster's hurt bad, so it ain't likely to put out any extra effort just now. Besides, the gravel's hiding Matthew.

(pause)

Unless we make a lot of noise and attract its attention.

Bagsby rises. Looking at the Tree-Beast, and then at the Sheriff, he motions upward vigorously.

BAGSBY

(between his teeth)

Don't need no raise. Just wanta get outta here.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Tree-Beast, feeling its wounds with a limb, stands where it is. Then it turns and hobbles towards the former pit entrance. With a sigh, Bagsby makes it to the top.

SUSIE

We've got to get Matthew!
There's no knowing how badly
he's hurt.

While the Sheriff paces, trying to get together a plan, Golem reappears carrying the Staff.

SHERIFF

I'll have to go down there and
get him.

GOLEM

I'll go.

SHERIFF

What? No, son.

GOLEM

Matthew said only the Staff
could kill it.

SUSIE

(reaching out)
Give me that.

Golem reluctantly surrenders the Staff.

GOLEM

It's all my fault.

SUSIE

Evil like this is not one
person's fault.

She heads for the winch. The Sheriff steps in front of her.

SHERIFF

Whoa, whoa, you're gonna bet
your life--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SUSIE
(interrupts angrily)
Matthew said only the Staff
could kill it.

Bagsby interrupts the Sheriff's reply.

BAGSBY
It's digging its way out.

The Tree-Beast has burrowed a large trench at the former entrance. Dirt and gravel fly out. Other gravel collapses only to be flung out. It makes slow but definite progress. Susie stares at the Sheriff.

SHERIFF
(grimly)
Let's do it.

EXT GRAVEL PIT

The winch lowers Susie into the pit. She touches bottom and signals to stop the winch. While unfastening the harness, she watches the Tree-Beast as it digs. It pays no attention to her.

Susie slips and slides her way over the pile of loose gravel to Matthew. Battered and bleeding, his eyes are open. Laying down the Staff, she kneels by him.

SUSIE
Matthew? Honey?

MATTHEW
I think I hurt myself, baby.

She clears gravel from around his head and shoulders.

MATTHEW
(continuing)
What a headache I got. It isn't
dead?

SUSIE
We put a big dent in it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MATTHEW

They must kill it.

SUSIE

I'll get you out, honey.

MATTHEW

Use the Staff.

SUSIE

Quiet, you're hurting yourself.

MATTHEW

Three blows with the Staff to
destroy it.

SUSIE

I know what needs to be done.
Now, shut up.

SOUND: MEN SHOUTING

Susie glances up to see the demon charging her. Grasping the Staff, she runs and waves her arms. It follows. When she is well away from Matthew, she stops and stands absolutely still. It stops.

SUSIE

(continuing)

How much can you really see?

It stalks toward her. As it nears, she reflexively blinks her eyes.

SUSIE

(continuing)

God! What have you stepped in?

EXT TREE-BEAST'S P.O.V.

Susie is a dark pillar.

SUSIE (O.S.)

You just keep getting worse.

EXT GRAVEL PIT

It stops again. They stare at one another.

SUSIE
Let's get this over with!

It reaches out. Susie fights nausea.

SUSIE
(continuing)
I'm going to be sick. Do you
mind if I vomit?

As the limb nears her, she slowly raises her arms until the Staff is over her head.

EXT TREE-BEAST'S P.O.V.

Dark, wispy lines wave above the dark pillar.

EXT GRAVEL PIT

The limb wraps her body and closes. Susie cries out in pain and slaps the Staff downward.

The limb releases her and the Tree-Beast lurches backward. White flame blasts a fissure along the limb exploding in a line from contact point to the trunk.

SUSIE
From me with love.

Wary and afraid, the Tree-Beast stalks her, shifting from place to place as it tries to keep the damaged limb away from her.

SUSIE
(continuing)
Learned a lesson? We'll see.

She walks to the abandoned squad car wiping her eyes.

SUSIE
(continuing)
I should've brought a gas mask.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Tree-Beast keeps its distance. From a pocket, she pulls out a bottle of Rachel's perfume and pours it on the hood and roof. The monster watches but stays put. She blows the perfume, then fans the fumes toward it with her hands.

SUSIE

I don't know which stink is worse.

(blows again)

Come on. Come get Rachel.

The Tree-Beast twitches. Suddenly, it lurches forward.

SUSIE

(continuing)

Remember, girl. No quick movements. And hold your breath.

It leaps on the car. It crushes and rips and tears at the car in a frenzy. Susie carefully circles behind it. While the monster rips the car to pieces, she raises the Staff like a baseball bat.

Susie edges her way forward. Then she stops. Disoriented, she bends over and her legs give way, and she falls to her knees on the gravel.

EXT SUSIE'S P.O.V.

The mammoth horror appears distorted by a dark haze. Everything spins and whirls in a sickening way. The monster no longer tears at the car. It turns toward her.

EXT GRAVEL PIT

The Tree-Beast turns to face her. She's still on one knee.

SUSIE

I . . . will . . . stand.

The thing attacks. Susie rolls to the side. A root slams down where she was. The Staff slips away from her

and slides under its huge eyes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Susie scrambles on her hands and knees to the Staff. Grabbing it, she rams one end into a huge eye. A split opens from top to bottom and blood spews from the split soaking her. She rakes the blood away from her eyes

EXT SUSIE'S P.O.V.

Her vision stops reeling and snaps to clarity.

EXT GRAVEL PIT

Susie stands without nausea, sets her feet, and slams the thing as hard as she can with the Staff. An incredible tremor shakes its every part. The bark rolls as though something boils beneath.

It staggers in retreat. She follows. Setting her feet again, she prepares to hit a huge root.

SUSIE

Die, you unholy freak.

Susie hits the root. Tall, white-hot flames burst from the point of contact knocking her to the ground. The flames burst through in more and more places. Scrambling to her feet, she runs.

Behind her, the satanic delinquent writhes, twists about, splits completely in half, and collapses to the ground, burning with the intensity of white heat.

At a distance, Susie stops to look back. She nods to herself, then discovers that one arm is burned. Trotting back to Matthew, she sits beside him.

SOUND: CHEERING

The men at the top of the pit are waving and cheering. She waves back.

MATTHEW

You are a mess, woman.

SUSIE

I guess I play too hard.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Sheriff shouts from the top of the wall.

SHERIFF

(shouting)

We'll have you out and in an
ambulance in two minutes.

SUSIE

I'll bet. Men!

FADE OUT