

VOYAGEURS

Story by

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## TEASER

EXT. MISSISSIPPI RIVER - SUNSET

The red, white, and blue of the AMERICAN FLAG reflects off the roiling water of the mighty MISSISSIPPI RIVER.

Amid muted flashes of LIGHTNING glimmering inside a bloom of distant purple thunderclouds --

An ANCIENT WHITE FISHERMAN casts his line into the river, upsetting the reflection. The ripples re-arrange the red and white stripes into the watery blue "X" of the CONFEDERATE FLAG.

A pair of HEADLIGHTS emerge from the road above and a RICKETY OLD PICKUP lumbers past.

It turns off the main road at an old brick grain silo with the STARS & BARS painted on its backside.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

The weight of a dozen DAY LABORERS sags the rig to its axles as it chugs through a field of sugar cane.

At a dank old farmhouse, the men pile out of the truck to where --

A QUEUE of farmhands already stretches into the yard.

Moving amongst this grimy assemblage --

Every sun-scorched face is battle worn and etched with the trauma of toxic masculinity.

As we near the farmhouse's battered doorway - THUMPING MUSIC emanates from within.

INT. FARMHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Roy Orbison's "Oh, Pretty Woman" is blaring so loud the thin walls are shaking.

THREE TATTOOED MEN with guns chat in Spanish over the noise.

A fourth man (30s, White), with TWO GOLD TEETH, counts a pile of cash.

They all keep one eye on the unlit kitchen where a RED CIGAR GLOW emanates from a HULKING BLACK SHAPE named SPIDER.

Along the wall --

The yellow brick road full of jittery, sweaty faces comes to a terminus at a marred BEDROOM DOOR at the end of the hall.

Not even Roy Orbison's legendary falsetto can drown out the violence happening in there.

Thudding. Shrieking. Slapping. Crying.

Then --

The door swings open.

A TWEAKER - face scratched and dripping with blood - emerges.

The others stand aside as he exits the dark room, buckling his belt.

INT. BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

DEE (16, African American) retches into a mildew-caked sink.

A small GREEN SPIDER TATTOO, freshly inked, is visible on the still raw flesh of her shoulder.

GIRL'S VOICE (O.S.)  
(slurred)  
Yo, new girl.

AMITY (18, Asian) leans in the doorway, glassy-eyed and only wearing a hoodie.

AMITY  
You're bleeding.

Dee touches the FRESH BLOOD soaking through her underwear.

Shaking violently, her BLOODSHOT EYES start to ping-pong.

A cacophony of SOUNDS reach her all at once: MEN LAUGHING AND ARGUING, SEX, DOORS SLAMMING...

Grabbing Dee by the wrist - Amity's fingers move over a BRACELET in the form of a COILED SERPENT.

AMITY (CONT'D)  
Your love venom wear off already,  
baby girl? Spider will hook you up  
good, it's still early...

Dee's eyes finally stop at the small window hanging above the squalid bathtub.

As she flings the window open --

AMITY (CONT'D)  
 (whispering)  
 Yo, what the fuck, girl?

Rousing from her chemical hypnosis, Amity closes the door.

DEE  
 I can't be here.

AMITY  
 Shhh! Spider will kill your ass!

As Amity reaches out a hand, Dee grabs it.

Hard.

DEE  
 You don't have to come. But you're  
 not stopping me.

Sobering-up by the second, Amity turns on the faucet.

AMITY  
 Bitch, if you go out there you're  
 killing us both!

Dee considers this for a BEAT.

DEE  
 Do whatever you want.

Amity looks on as Dee begins worming her way out the window.

EXT. FARM - MOMENTS LATER

The two teenage girls run for their lives as they thrash and  
 claw their way through the thick canebreak.

Emerging onto a dirt road scratched and bloodied --

HOARSE SHOUTS waft through the soupy night air.

DEE  
 Run!

A MOTOR REVS nearby.

Behind them --

TWO HEADLIGHTS erupt out of the darkness.

The truck looks like BIGFOOT - monster tires with absurd suspension.

As it barrels toward them, stalks of cane are obliterated by its tread.

Dee motions toward the canebreak to the left.

DEE (CONT'D)

You go in there, I'll go over here!

AMITY

I can't! If we beg him, maybe  
he'll --

Dee grabs Amity by the shoulders and gets in her face.

DEE

You're not dying tonight. Now go!

As Amity disappears into the dark morass, Dee darts across the path as --

The approaching headlights ILLUMINATE HER FACE...

**END TEASER**

ACT I

... BECOMING THE FACE of JO TRUTH (16, African American), Dee's identical TWIN, running towards us. Her EYES SURGE as if witnessing the headlights themselves.

EXT. ATHLETIC FIELD - NEW ORLEANS - DAY

Stumbling to the grass, her pupils readjust and she catches her breath. Barking out commands, she continues dribbling the ball with her stick.

Picking up speed --

Red-faced WHITE GIRLS sprint up the field toward her, swatting at the ball with their FIELD HOCKEY STICKS.

A HULKING DEFENDER throws her a vicious hip check.

HULKING DEFENDER  
Want some more, black bitch?

With a SPIN MOVE, Jo leaves her in the dust.

She only has the goaltender to beat.

Faking a forehand shot, she toe-draggs the ball to the end of her stick and issues a wicked BACKHAND past the goalie and into the back of the net!

The only Black girl on the field --

Jo stands out as she is immediately mobbed by her ecstatic teammates.

INT. TEAM BUS - NIGHT

Laughing and singing echoes throughout the jubilant bus.

Alone up front - Jo watches the cane fields blur past. An ORANGE GLOW catches her attention, coming from a circle of people tossing books into a bonfire... *America 2025*.

SIERRA (16, White) grabs Jo's bare, unmarked shoulders.

SIERRA  
That was the sickest backhand,  
Truth. Did you see the goalie's  
face?

VALENTINA (16, Latina) holds up Jo's torn, grass-stained jersey.

VALENTINA

Look at this dedication, ladies.  
Truth wears the C for a reason.

(to Jo)

We all owe you one.

Their eyes hold for a BEAT.

JO

(smiling)

Y'all wanna do something for me?

From her backpack she produces a sheath of CAMPAIGN POSTERS.

Over a hard-boiled photo of Jo looking like a young Pam Grier are the words: **Vote for the TRUTH!**

JO (CONT'D)

Stick one of these on any blank  
wall you see.

EXT. ST. BENEDICT'S - NIGHT

Ornate lanterns line both sides of the footpath winding  
through the quiet, idyllic campus.

Jo stops to check her phone.

It's three models outdated - an antiquity - and the screen is  
cracked.

There's one voicemail.

SIERRA

You coming?

JO

I'll be right up.

Left alone - she holds the phone to her ear.

MALE VOICE

(over phone)

Hello Ms. Truth, my name is Dave  
Kline with Governor Edwards'  
office. As you know, the governor  
will be visiting St. Ben's next  
week to give a keynote address on  
youth public service and I am very  
pleased to inform you that you have  
been selected to deliver the  
evening's introductory remarks...



JO  
 Why do I need to be here tomorrow  
 night?

But Sierra is out the door and gone - her shit-eating grin  
 still hanging there in the doorway like ectoplasm.

JO (CONT'D)  
 Now who's the bitch!

INT. ACADEMIC BUILDING - NEXT DAY

Throngs of white blouses and knee-high skirts scurry past a  
 giant mural of the VIRGIN MARY.

Entering the main commons --

Jo can see three of her campaign posters plastered to the  
 bulletin board across the atrium.

From afar, her three black faces are a stark anachronism  
 against the surrounding white marble walls.

And the white marble faces of her classmates.

On one of the posters, several of Jo's teeth have been filled  
 in with black ink, making her look like a goofy grotesquerie.

As she stares into the poster's eyes, her eyes, familiar  
 waves of anger and embarrassment wash over her until --

A MASSIVE FULL COLOR CAMPAIGN POSTER of an ICY BLONDE catches  
 Jo's attention: ***KIMBERLY LAKE live and in person tonight at  
 6:00 PM in the student theater!***

The only male in sight is MR. JACOBY (70s, White), dean of  
 students.

JO  
 Good morning, Dean Jacoby.

Squinting through his spectacles, he mumbles a reply.

JO (CONT'D)  
 I'm looking forward to finally  
 meeting with you next week.

MR. JACOBY  
 Oh yes, as am I, Ms. Truth.

Awkward pause.

JO

Did your meeting with Kimberly Lake go okay?

MR. JACOBY

Oh, fine. Just fine. She's a very impressive candidate. I look forward to a vigorous election.

JO

Speaking of which, I took it upon myself to receive several bids for fixing the pipes in the dormitory bathrooms.

He gives her a look like she'd just spoken to him in Swahili.

JO (CONT'D)

I also have a proposal for the athletics department that I'd like to present to you at our meeting.

He pats her on the shoulder.

MR. JACOBY

Very impressive... I'll be waiting.

She stares after the old geezer as he shuffles out the door.

JO

Sure you will.

EXT. ATHLETIC FIELD - DAY

COACH WILLIAMS (40s, White) watches Jo from her perch atop the OBSERVATION TOWER.

COACH WILLIAMS

Everybody watch Truth's footwork.  
Look how quick - look how natural.

**SERIES OF SHOTS:**

- 1) With remarkable hand/eye coordination - Jo stick handles the ball between a series of cones.
- 2) Her FOOTWORK is balanced & elegant - as if she's dancing.
- 3) Another ball control drill: Jo toe-draggs the ball between the legs of a teammate and rips off a shot on net.
- 4) In a full sprint toward a loose ball, Jo gets there a fraction ahead of a teammate & hip checks her out of the way.

INT. STUDENT THEATER - NIGHT

A throng of classmates are circled around KIMBERLY LAKE (16, White).

KIMBERLY

As student body president, I will stop at nothing to ensure that only real history is taught here at St. Ben's.

Jo squeezes her way through the rapt faces to size up her competition.

KIMBERLY (CONT'D)

There are radical elements right here on campus who would have us feel ashamed for being white.

A smattering of BOOS ring out.

KIMBERLY (CONT'D)

And they actually think WE are the racist ones.

As if by gravity, her gaze lands on Jo.

KIMBERLY (CONT'D)

No matter what the radical Marxists say, we know that America is not a racist nation.

CHEERS RING OUT.

KIMBERLY (CONT'D)

(to the crowd)

We will not be silenced or censored by the woke mob! And when Governor Edwards steps foot on campus next week, he will hear our voices!

Her presence having been detected - dozens of white faces are turned toward Jo.

She takes a deep breath and reaches into her backpack.

Handing out campaign flyers --

JO

If you wanna be pissed and bitter, vote for her. If you want renovated bathrooms and healthier food in the dining hall, vote for Truth.

INT. DORMATORY - NIGHT

The corridor is dim and totally deserted.

Jo passes one closed doorway after another.

*Weird.*

JO

(into phone)

Yo, Dee, return my damn calls. Are we still on for tomorrow? I'm coming all the way up there, so you better be there.

Shaking her head, she reaches her door.

Stepping into the pitch blackness of her room, she flips ON the light switch as --

GROUP OF GIRLS

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!!!!

She nearly stumbles back into the hallway in fright.

JO

Y'all scared the shit outta me!

Sierra wraps her in an embrace.

Jo is subsumed by the girl's wavy blonde hair.

SIERRA

Happy Sweet 16, my sista from another mista! And future President of the United States!

Her teammates begin pouring into the room.

Including Valentina.

Jo soaks in the girl's dark eyes and long black hair.

VALENTINA

Happy birthday, Jo.

She holds out a cupcake with a candle burning in the middle.

JO

(coy)

Thank you.

SIERRA

Time to make a wish, Truth.

JO  
Okay. Got it.

She blows out the candle with gusto.

JO (CONT'D)  
My wish is that we kick St. Thomas'  
ass on Monday! Fuck the Tommies!

The room ERUPTS in whooping and hollering.

SIERRA  
We also got you a little something  
extra.

She produces a small black box.

JO  
Seriously, y'all...

Opening the box - she removes a silver necklace featuring the ornate St. Benedict crest of a cross and an open door.

JO (CONT'D)  
I love it. Thank you!

She clasps it around her neck.

SIERRA  
O captain! My captain!

INT. DORMITORY - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Jo and Valentina stuff their faces with birthday cake.

Sitting with their backs to the wall, music and laughter spills out of the dorm room.

VALENTINA  
Kimberly is a queen bitch. I  
seriously don't know how you  
restrained yourself from knocking  
her scrawny ass right through the  
window.

JO  
That's what she was hoping for.  
They were all watching to see what  
I'd do.

VALENTINA  
But you 'aint no sucka.

JO  
Nope. I 'aint no sucka.

They bump fists and do an elaborate handshake.

JO/VALENTINA  
(together)  
*That's cuz we worked hard for this  
shit muthafucka!*

JO  
We did. We *do*. Sometimes though, I  
don't know. I feel like I've turned  
my back on my... nurture.

A beat.

VALENTINA  
Hmmm, I feel ya. Nature or nurture,  
the unanswerable question... What  
*isn't* in debate though?  
(Jo looks up)  
Is that this place is so. Fucking.  
Predictable.

Holding Valentina's gaze --

JO  
That's why we're gonna make it  
unpredictable. The administration  
is gonna hate me when they see my  
to-do list.

VALENTINA  
Seriously, though. Do you think you  
can beat her?

Jo shrugs and offers an earnest reply.

With a mouth full of cake.

Valentina stares at her and then BUSTS OUT LAUGHING.

She takes a humongous bite of cake and then responds to Jo  
unintelligibly.

Laughing so hard, Jo does a spit take and sprays cake and  
frosting onto Valentina's face.

Screaming in laughter, Valentina returns the favor.

Writhing on the ground, they both struggle to breathe through  
the hysterics.

INT. DORM ROOM - NIGHT

Jo, Valentina, and Sierra dance to Doja Cat until their gaze falls toward the doorway.

KIMBERLY  
Happy birthday, Jo.

The mood is sucked right out of the room.

JO  
Kimberly. Thanks.

Kimberly casually glances around the room at the Beyoncé and Prince posters.

KIMBERLY  
And congratulations also on being  
picked to introduce Governor  
Edwards. That's quite an honor.

SIERRA  
Damn straight. Our girl gonna turn  
some heads.

KIMBERLY  
I was thinking about doing it.  
(bodychecking Jo)  
But since my dad and Governor  
Edwards went to college together,  
it just wouldn't have looked right,  
you know?

The smile on her lips doesn't reach her eyes.

KIMBERLY (CONT'D)  
Besides, I'm happy they picked you.  
Everyone likes a feel good story.

**END ACT I**

**ACT II**

INT. DORM ROOM - NEXT MORNING

The alarm clock issues a SHRILL SCREAM.

Sierra's face (upside down) drops from the top bunk.

SIERRA

Jo? Wake up!

Jo's hand smacks the clock - which reads 5:45 AM.

Jo flops back onto the mattress, sweating.

Still upside down - Sierra's exaggerated frown looks like a demented smile.

Jo checks her phone.

SIERRA (CONT'D)

Any word from your sis?

Shaking her head --

JO

I'm gonna kill that bitch if she no shows. Like, seriously kill her.

SIERRA

I bet Valentina would visit you in prison...

Jo shoots her a glance.

They both bust out in giggles.

INT. BUS - DAY

Sound asleep, Jo's head rests against the window.

DRIVER (O.S.)

Welcome to Baton Rouge, ladies and gentlemen. We'll be arriving at the terminal shortly.

Yawning, she reaches for her phone.

An OLD WHITE MAN is staring at her from across the aisle.

Looking down at her texts - still nothing.

EXT. SAMMY'S - DAY

Sitting on a bench outside the nondescript wooden building --

Jo stares across the street at the dense green wall of Southern magnolias - home to a million mosquitoes.

She SLAPS one of them on her black and blue arm.

Her legs also bear ugly hockey bruises and scratches.

With a paperback of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* in her hand - she sneaks a glimpse through the window.

A massive SHRIMP COCKTAIL tantalizes her.

JO

No.

She buries her nose back in the book, which is meticulously highlighted and underlined.

She tries to focus on an illustration of Huck and Jim floating down the Mississippi river...

*Can't help it.* She sneaks another peak at the shrimp.

INT. SAMMY'S - DAY

Jo's plate is a graveyard of shrimp carcasses and oyster shells.

The WAITER (20s, White) drops off Jo's check.

WAITER

Can I grab a box for you?

He motions to the UNTOUCHED PLATE across the table.

JO

I don't suppose there's any way I can return it, is there?

He glares at her for a BEAT.

WAITER

You mean send it back? Was there something wrong with it?

Staring at the check --

JO  
My idiot sister was supposed to be  
here...

WAITER  
If we fry it, you buy it.

JO  
Okay then.

WAITER  
You can pay whenever you're ready.

Out of her peripheral vision --

She watches him maneuver himself between her table and the door.

When she turns to look at him in full - he masks his microaggression by feigning to wipe a table.

She grabs her purse.

JO  
You take cash?

EXT. NORTH BATON ROUGE - DAY

As the bus pulls away, Jo is left in a cloud of exhaust.

Assessing the street like it's a hockey field, she makes a beeline for the big two-story house on the corner.

EXT. HALFWAY HOUSE - DAY

A sign reads: **Mother Teresa Juvenile Re-Entry Center.**

Jo climbs the rickety porch and rings the doorbell.

Nothing.

She tries the door. Locked.

JO  
Goddamn...

Just then, the lock clicks and the door opens a crack.

From the inner gloom --

A TEENAGE GIRL (Latina) covered in tattoos stares at her for a BEAT.

TATTOO GIRL

Hey. Didn't think you'd be back.

When she disappears inside, Jo is left focusing on the open door.

*Didn't think you'd be back?*

INT. HALFWAY HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Entering, Jo's eyes adjust to the unoccupied living room.

This places makes her dorm room look like Versailles.

VOICES emanate from behind a closed set of double doors.

On the wall: PHOTOS of the female residents.

They are all covered in neck tattoos, face tattoos, or intricate piercings.

All in all, a rough lot.

INT. HALFWAY HOUSE - UPSTAIRS - MOMENTS LATER

Jo peers into various unkempt bedrooms.

At the last bedroom on the left --

A PURPLE HOODIE is crumpled on the floor.

The name "Truth" is stitched on the back.

Rummaging through the various items --

JO

Damn, what a slob...

Lifting the mattress on the bed - a NOTEBOOK falls to the floor.

It's a DIARY.

Jo thinks about opening it.

Doesn't.

On the wall --

A CALENDAR.

Written in black Sharpie on Saturday August 22nd: **LUNCH W/ JO JO.**

Thinking for a BEAT --

Jo flips to the back of the diary.

CLOSE ON: There is an entry every day for the past several weeks.

But the final entry is on August 17th.

Five days ago.

INT. HALFWAY HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

The double doors in the house's main room are now OPEN.

Crossing toward the front door --

Jo sees a dozen of the house's residents seated in a circle, fanning themselves from the thick heat.

A WOMAN (40s, White) with bright RED HAIR is leading the group in a discussion.

Seeing Jo - she pauses and stares.

Although only a micro-expression, Jo registers the look of recognition in the woman's eyes.

Before Jo can pinpoint it - she's at the door.

EXT. NORTH BATON ROUGE - DAY

Walking down a weed-choked sidewalk among rows of ramshackle homes --

Jo once again checks her phone.

Nothing from Dee.

But there *is* a text from Coach Williams: Practice 7:00 AM

*Great.*

EXT. STRIP MALL - DAY

Through a dark glass window pasted with "Payday Loans" posters, Jo watches as --

CORA, her mother (early 30s), slides a stack of greenbacks under a security slot to a waiting customer.

INT. PAYDAY LOANS - CONTINUOUS

Jo stares across the lobby until Cora sees her. She notices a corner of the Confederate flag poking out from underneath a "We Don't Call The Police" sign on the wall.

Cora whispers something to her co-worker who looks out at Jo, annoyed.

Jo approaches the glass window --

CORA

Well if it ain't 'Lil Owl, the birthday girl. Wasn't expecting to see you.

Off Jo's look --

CORA (CONT'D)

You don't look good. What's the matter, are you sick?

JO

Mama, have you talked to Dee?

Cora's expression changes.

CORA

She came to the house a while back. Asking for money, like always.

JO

When?

CORA

Dunno. Maybe two weeks ago. Why?

JO

We were supposed to meet for lunch, but she never showed. And she hasn't been answering her phone for three days.

Cora guffaws as a Customer steps to the window.

CORA

Child, your sister's been in trouble every damn day of her life.

She issues a curt nod in Jo's direction.

CORA (CONT'D)

Been a lot worse since you ran off down to that school and left her all alone, though.

JO

She's been gone from the Mother Teresa house for a few days already, too. Nobody knows where she is.

The WHITE CUSTOMER (male, 40s) looks at Jo as if she's an alien.

Cora mouths "sorry" to her aggravated co-worker.

CORA

(to Jo)

I can't talk about this right now.

JO

Mama, listen to me. Governor Edwards is coming to campus in a few days and I'm giving a speech in front of the whole school. I have to get back to campus. What are we gonna do about Dee?... I feel bad.

Cora seethes as she hands money to the Customer.

When the coast is clear --

CORA

For two years you're too ashamed to show your face around here and now you breeze in acting like the conductor of the goddamn Underground Railroad, ready to save the world?... Feel bad?

(shaking her head)

Those white folks sure are rubbing off on you.

Another customer arrives at the window.

CORA (CONT'D)

Get on back to Nola where you belong.

EXT. PAYDAY LOANS - MOMENTS LATER

Sitting on the sidewalk, Jo's hands are shaking.

JO  
You're not gonna fucking cry.

A BEAT.

On her phone, she FaceTime's Sierra.

SIERRA  
(on phone)  
Hey ya!

JO  
Hey.

Sierra purses her lips.

SIERRA  
Uh oh. Tough day with sis?

JO  
She never showed. And she's missing from her halfway house. Nobody has any idea where she is.

SIERRA  
Fuckkkkkkkkkkkkk, dude.

JO  
So I'm still up here. At this point I don't know if I'll even be back tonight. I can't just leave without finding her.

SIERRA  
What are you gonna do?

JO  
She's already OD'd once. That I know of. I have to find her, ya know?

Looking up at the minivan parked next to her --

The White Customer from earlier is eavesdropping through the open passenger window.

JO (CONT'D)  
(lowering her voice)  
She's probably strung out somewhere with fucking god knows who doing god knows what to her... I'm so glad I got out of here.

SIERRA

Is there anything I can do?

Distracted by the creep in the car, Jo considers this for a BEAT.

JO

Do you think you could call the hospitals around here? See if a Dee Truth has been admitted anywhere?

SIERRA

Done and done. And I'm fucking serious, just say the word and I'm on the first bus up there...

JO

Thanks.

As soon as they disconnect --

WHITE CUSTOMER (O.S.)

(gruff)

Hey.

She tries her damndest to ignore the haggard man.

Can't.

WHITE CUSTOMER (CONT'D)

You know the Book of Matthew?

JO

What?

WHITE CUSTOMER

*"And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather, fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell."*

All Jo can do is meet his gaze, flabbergasted.

WHITE CUSTOMER (CONT'D)

The Beast carries you. Just as sure as the sun it does. The good news is - I can keep you safe. If you need help.

JO

You need to get away from me.

The creep turns on the minivan's ignition.

WHITE CUSTOMER

The war out there is very real. And  
when you step onto that  
battlefield, I will pray for you.

*What the. FUCK?*

Watching him exit the parking lot --

She opens up her Uber app.

**End ACT II**

ACT III

INT. UBER CAR - DAY

The MALE DRIVER (20s/30s, White) never looks back as Jo hops into the back seat.

But he eyeballs her through the rearview.

DRIVER  
Bluebonnet Blvd?

JO  
Yes, please.

She's got the look of someone who could murder a motherfucker.

INT./EXT. UBER CAR - MOMENTS LATER

The car passes an upscale shopping mall and one chain restaurant after another.

The area looks nice and clean. Totally suburban.

JO  
What the hell?  
(to Driver)  
Is this all new?

DRIVER  
Brand new. They cleaned the whole area up.

He's still watching her through the mirror.

DRIVER (CONT'D)  
Not what you were expecting?

JO  
No.

She gnaws on her chapped lips, checkmated.

JO (CONT'D)  
So what happened to all the people who used to... hang around down here?

Still looking at her --

DRIVER

Is that who you're looking for?

She rubs her eyes... could this day turn into any more of a clusterfuck?

INT./EXT. UBER CAR - MOMENTS LATER

They enter a vacuous, weed-choked parking lot in front of an ABANDONED SHOPPING MALL.

Jo looks around, incredulous.

JO

This used to be the nice area.

DRIVER

Want me to go in with you?

She can feel the heat radiating off his male gaze.

JO

I'll be fine.

She pulls the door handle.

It's locked.

DRIVER

Are you sure?

JO

Can you open the door, please?

For the first time, she fully meets his gaze.

His eyes never blink.

With a CLICK, the door unlocks.

Once outside, she watches the car pull around to the side of the building.

It lingers there for a BEAT.

Then its tires BURN RUBBER and it's gone.

Heart pounding, she stares up at the behemoth structure looming over her.

EXT. ABANDONED MALL - DAY

Every entrance is boarded up and chained.

*How do you even get in this place?*

As Jo rounds a corner at the back of the building --

A BOY (teens, Asian) is sitting on a folding chair, rolling a lollipop around in his mouth.

BOY

What are you doing here?

Before she can respond he SPRINGS to his feet --

JO

Wait!

He DISAPPEARS through a door.

She stares at the side entrance.

At least she found a way in.

INT. ABANDONED MALL - MOMENTS LATER

It's pitch black.

As Jo's eyes adjust - she can make out faint candlelight emanating off the walls.

Hushed voices ECHO all around.

The floors and walls are covered in PISS and SHIT.

Practically gagging, she covers her mouth and nose.

Two people are HUMPING inside an old storefront.

Emerging into a candle-lit COMMONS AREA --

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

Now there's a face that always  
brightens my day.

STARTLED --

Jo turns to see a JUNKIE (20s, White) splayed out against an old fountain.

His gaunt face is covered in red sores.

DOZENS OF JUNKIES are spread out everywhere.

Looks like a coven of vampires.

He clambers to his feet, looking Jo up and down.

JUNKIE

Here for the usual, my love?

A small bag of WHITE PILLS unfurls in his hand.

Jo sees his lips moving - but her eyes are fixed on the thick layer of yellow tartar caked to his teeth.

All around her --

The shadows of the junkies look like GIANT SPIDERS crawling.

Hit with a bout of nausea, she puts a hand over her mouth.

Then she's RUNNING.

JUNKIE (CONT'D)

Hey!

EXT. ABANDONED MALL - CONTINUOUS

Emerging onto the sidewalk --

Jo RETCHES.

The metal door behind her slams shut.

Might as well be a portal to hell.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

Amid a chorus of buzzing cicadas, a RAILROAD TRACK runs behind rows of RAMSHACKLE HOMES and scrubby, weed-choked backyards.

In the distance - muted flashes of LIGHTNING illuminate the clouds.

As Jo's toe TOUCHES the IRON RAIL...

EXT. RAILROAD TRACKS - FLASHBACK

Jo (12) carefully places two PENNIES and one NICKEL on the same rail.

Further down the track --

Dee, her back to us, tip-toes on the rail like it's a balance beam at a gymnastics meet.

She is bathed in late afternoon sunlight.

JO

Here it comes!

Ahead of them - an OLD TRAIN barrels around the corner.

They scamper off the rails as the train's WHISTLE BLOWS.

Its HEAVY STEEL WHEELS press down on the coins as if it was carrying the full weight of America in its cargo, until --

The copper and silver MALE FACES smash down into flat metal portraits, their CAUCASIAN FEATURES MELTING into a circular banality on the track...

Dee jumps back up on the rail as the last train car clatters past.

Jo bends down to inspect what's left of the coins.

Lincoln and Jefferson stare back up at her (at us) - pinned to the rail like bugs on a windshield.

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

Why they always gotta be white men?

BACK ON PRESENT:

Jo stands in front of a familiar peeling red fence.

She instinctively slides a loose board aside and slips through into a SMALL BACKYARD littered with a rusty old trampoline.

In front of her --

A SQUAT LITTLE HOUSE bathed in darkness.

INT. HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

"Gimme Some More" by Busta Rhymes is blaring.

MELVIN (30s, African American) is reclined in a filthy La-Z-Boy.

A bag of weed and a tinfoil cinch of something else sits on a side table next to him.

He stares at Jo from across the room.

The only source of illumination is a small RED LAMP.

Jo opens her mouth to speak, when --

A soft SNORE emanates from the big man.

He's SOUND ASLEEP. With his eyes open.

INT. JO AND DEE'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Closing the door and turning on the light, Jo takes in the cramped little room that used to seem so much bigger.

Two beds and two worn and battered nightstands.

Moving to the closet --

Jo reaches in and moves a pile of old junk.

She lifts up a LOOSE FLOORBOARD.

In the hollowed-out space beneath, she digs out the flattened coins - and an old photo of Cora and her Grandmother.

It is faded and heavily water-stained.

The older woman not only isn't smiling - she looks unsettled. Maybe even afraid.

JO

Dee Dee is in trouble, isn't she  
Grandmama?

Rubbing her wrist, Jo casts a furtive glance further into the hole.

A BEAT.

*Dammit Dee.*

Reluctantly, she thrusts her hand back down into the darkness.

When it emerges, she's holding a BRACELET.

Holding it up - she studies the pendant of a half-eaten GOLD APPLE.

Staring into its metal...

Slowly, methodically, she fastens the apple bracelet around her wrist.

JO (CONT'D)  
(whispering)  
Talk to me, little sister.

INT. HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Emerging from the bedroom, Jo is greeted by --

The business end of a PISTOL.

When he recognizes her, Melvin's eyes go wild.

MELVIN  
You tryin' to die?

Recovering from her terror --

JO  
Can you please lower that thing?

From this distance, Jo can see a LONG, THIN SCAR underneath his chin.

MELVIN  
Don't be sneakin' around a man's house, you hear?

JO  
This is *her* house.

Jo moves to leave, but Melvin holds out a meaty arm.

MELVIN  
What're you doing creepin' round up in here? Haven't seen your face in months.

JO  
Dee is missing from the halfway house.

He only shrugs.

MELVIN  
What do you care?

JO  
She's my sister. And she's missing.

MELVIN

Now that's some bullshit. The only one you care about is you. We all know it. Even your mama.

Jo practically bites her lip bloody.

JO

Melvin, have you seen her?

MELVIN

That cheap whore ain't been around since getting out of juvie. Except to ask for money.

She ducks under his arm.

JO

She was plenty cheap for you, wasn't she?

His face drops as she disappears into the kitchen.

MELVIN

I see you're getting a big uppity mouth down at that cracker school, ain't you?

Before she can respond, he GRABS HER JAW with a beefy hand.

MELVIN (CONT'D)

I'm getting real tired of how short y'all's memory is. It was your mama who came to me when y'all didn't have a pot to piss in after the hurricane.

As they grapple --

Jo delivers a knee into his sizable paunch.

Staggered, Melvin viciously claws at her face.

She lands a flush kick to the back of his knee, sending him CRASHING to the dirty linoleum floor in a heap.

MELVIN (CONT'D)

(groaning)

You cunt...

Blood trickles down Jo's nose as she regains her breath.

JO

She was at the Bon Marche Mall. Do you know anywhere else she might've gone?

Stoned and in disbelief --

MELVIN

You a narc or something? I said we ain't seen the bitch.

He groans and gets up on all fours.

MELVIN (CONT'D)

Get outta here, will ya? Go back to your Saltines.

Jo considers him for a BEAT.

Kneeling down, the blood from her nose drips freely.

JO

If you did something else to my sister, I'm gonna come back and make you depthroat that crack pipe until you choke.

**END ACT III**

ACT IV

INT. TRAIN STATION - NIGHT

CLOSE ON: Jo's reflection on the glass over the ticket window.

Dark marks are visible around her neck.

And her lip is puffy.

ATTENDANT

Destination?

JO

(snapping back to reality)  
New Orleans.

She pulls out her governor's speech --

JO (CONT'D)

Gretna terminal, please

ATTENDANT

Platform two.

Defeated, Jo limps to the large window near the main entrance.

Staring out into the blackness of a dark southern night - a FLASH OF RED spills over her face.

The color oscillates over her skin - as if reflecting her seething fury.

A POLICE CAR - CHERRIES FLASHING - tears into a parking lot across street.

A sign outside the building says **Third Precinct.**

Jo checks her watch.

Then heads for the exit.

INT. THIRD PRECINCT - NIGHT

Three MALE COPS (20s/30s, White) form a circle - badges shiny - muscles bulging - guns glistening.

Jo looks each of them in the eye as they do their best to pretend she's not there.

JO  
Excuse me?

The cop with a mustache finally looks at her.

Eyes narrowing --

COP #1  
Rough night?

She lowers her chin, trying to conceal as much of her bruised neck as she can.

JO  
I'm looking for my sister. Would you be able to tell me if she's been picked up or is being held somewhere?

COP #1  
She missing?

JO  
No. Well, I don't think so...

One of the other Officers slaps him on the shoulder.

COP #1  
You don't think so? Have you tried calling her?

JO  
She's not answering her phone. And she's been missing from her halfway house for days. Nobody knows where she is.

He tries to conceal his irritation.

COP #1  
Name and date of birth?

JO  
Last name Truth. First name Dee. D-E-E. Date of birth is today.

He types the information into the computer, two finger style.

A BEAT.

His eyes go from the screen... back to Jo.

Then back to the screen.

COP #1  
Are you feeling okay?

COP #2  
(stepping forward)  
Are you in some kind of imminent  
danger?

JO  
I already told you. I'm looking for  
my sister.

The three cops commiserate through a series of grunts and  
glances.

Tapping the screen --

COP #3  
You got I.D.?

Jo digs through her bag and hands him her card.

He holds it up to the light and uses both hands to check its  
thickness.

COP #3 (CONT'D)  
Hang on.

He takes Jo's ID back behind a glass partition.

He's joined by the RED-HEADED WOMAN from the Mother Teresa  
house.

They both look at her through the glass while speaking in low  
tones.

Cop #3 nods his head and taps Jo's I.D. card against his  
palm.

Returning to the front --

COP #3 (CONT'D)  
Sorry, miss. No word on your  
sister. We'll issue a bulletin and  
let you know if anything comes  
across.

The Red-Headed woman still has her eyes glued on Jo.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - MOMENTS LATER

Jo sprints through the terminal.

PA VOICE  
Final boarding call for Greyhound  
232 to New Orleans.

On the far end of the platform, the doors to her bus are already closed.

Jo frantically swerves around other passengers like it's a hockey field.

JO  
C'mon, c'mon...

Just as the bus's hydraulic brakes lift --

She slams on the door.

INT. BUS - MOMENTS LATER

Collapsing into her seat, Jo looks like she'd played the best hockey game of her life.

And lost.

She reaches for her speech as it begins to rain.

TEXTS ON PHONE:

JO  
I've done all I can, coming home.  
Any luck w/ hospitals?

Selecting the HOPEFUL FACE EMOJI, she changes its white-default color to a darker shade before sending.

A BEAT.

SIERRA  
:(

JO  
K. Thx

INT. BUS - MOMENTS LATER

As the bus exits the terminal --

THE STORM SPLATTERS DOWN on its metal roof like liquid popcorn.

Through the rain-blurred window, Jo can see a TORRENT OF WATER spilling onto the causeway from an overflowing creek.

Fingering her bracelet - she fixates on the raindrops...

FLASH TO:

A WALL OF WATER pouring through a disintegrated levee. Jo can't even move. As it barrels down on her at 200 MPH --

DEE (O.S.)

Jo Jo...

The tsunami of water FREEZES in suspended animation. It's so close Jo could reach out and touch it. Turning around - the outline of a BEDROOM WINDOW, shaded in black. Flares of light seep around the edges like the sun's corona during an eclipse. Adjusting to the inner-dark, Jo's eyes gravitate to a LONE PAINTING adorning the wall: Caravaggio's Young King David, sword slung confidently behind him, holds the bloody and dripping head of Goliath in his left hand. Her senses becoming more acute - Jo registers the sound of someone COUGHING. And MOANING. All around her - SLEEPING GIRLS are sprawled around the floor - directly underneath the ominous painting.

JO

What's happening?

The GIRL on the bed next to her (TEEN, White) rolls over.

SLEEPING GIRL

Go back to sleep.

Jo bolts upright but the Girl grabs her by the shoulders.

SLEEPING GIRL (CONT'D)

Are you trippin'? You gotta be quiet!

Her sallow, emaciated face is covered in angry red sores.

JO

What... is this place?

Terrified faces are now boring in on her from all sides. Each of the girls has the green spider tattoo branded on their shoulder. Jo grabs her own shoulder. She stares at the spider tattoo on her arm! Her hand runs over the bracelet on her wrist. But it's not her half-eaten apple pendant. It's a serpent.

Directly overhead - A FULL-LENGTH MIRROR is attached to the ceiling. Jo REALIZES AT ONCE that it's not her own reflection staring down at her.

It's DEE's.

JO (CONT'D)

Dee Dee? What's happening? How am I... inside you?

DEE (V.O.)

I am you. And you are me. Remember?

SLEEPING GIRL

He's coming!

INVOLUNTARILY - Jo looks behind her to a BLACK RECTANGULAR HOLE gaping in the drywall.

JO

Where are you Dee Dee? How can I find you?

Inside the impenetrable blackness of this void, FOOTSTEPS draw near - accompanied by the high-pitched whistling of "Oh, Pretty Woman."

DEE (V.O.)

The Boundary Waters.

JO

What?

DEE (V.O.)

Turn your book upside down sister.

As the whistling echoes throughout the room, Dee speaks very quickly --

DEE (V.O.)

Turn it upside down and go to the headwaters. To the origin. Then go further. That's where you'll find me.

The last thing Jo sees through the rectangular hole: a RED CIGAR GLOW drawing near.

INT. BUS - NIGHT - PRESENT

Jo's eyes SNAP OPEN under a FLASH OF LIGHTNING.

SKIDDING, the bus FISHTAILS in the rainstorm, jolting her against the window. EYES WIDE, Jo reaches for the copy of Huckleberry Finn in her backpack.

She spins the book upside down, so now Huck & Jim on the cover are traveling upstream.

A long beat...

Grabbing her phone, she Googles "Mississippi River headwaters".

ON PHONE:

***Lake Itasca State Park - Clearwater County, MN.***

Expanding the map of Minnesota with her fingers - a THIN BLUE LINE catches Jo's eye.

The Mississippi River.

She follows the river downstream to Louisiana, and then traces it back upstream to Northern Minnesota.

Then, scrolling further up - The Boundary Waters.

***The Boundary Waters are a series of lakes and portages at the Minnesota/Canada border.***

JO

Go to the origin...

Closing her eyes, Jo methodically unhooks her St. Ben's necklace and places it in her backpack. Followed by her speech.

JO (CONT'D)

(rubbing her bracelet)

I'm coming sister.

She strides down the aisle, determined.

BUS DRIVER

Miss, please sit back down.

JO

I need to get off.

BUS DRIVER

Are you serious? I can't let you  
off here, miss.

(pointing outside)

The road up ahead has washed away.

JO

I said I need to get off. Will you  
please open the fucking door?

Cursing under his breath, he presses the button and the door  
slides open.

JO (CONT'D)

Thank you.

EXT. BUS - CONTINUOUS

Soaked to the bone within two seconds, Jo begins walking the  
opposite way - toward downtown.

The bus gets smaller behind her as it drives on to New  
Orleans.

Jo trudges forward against the rain, her hoodie pulled low.

An older model sedan pulls up next to her.

When the window rolls down, the smiling face of a WHITE MAN  
(40s) leers out at her.

WHITE MAN

Hey gorgeous. Didn't think anyone  
would be working on a night like  
this.

Jo keeps walking.

The Man keeps pace.

WHITE MAN (CONT'D)

Whoa, whoa, whoa. Where ya goin'?

She picks up her pace - to no avail.

WHITE MAN (CONT'D)

I got \$150. That enough for the  
whole thing?

Jo finally stops and looks at him in disbelief.

After a beat his smile fades as quickly as it first appeared.

WHITE MAN (CONT'D)  
Your pussy. How much? You speak  
English?

JO  
Get the fuck away from me, asshole!

Once again, she is running through the torrent.  
She hears his tires squealing.

WHITE MAN  
Hey, get your ass over here!

Turning down a narrow alleyway - Jo crouches behind a metal  
stairwell.

The sedan pulls up to the mouth of the alley.

A FLASH OF LIGHTNING illuminates the Man's head peering up  
over the top of the vehicle.

He holds an arm up over his head to see better.

WHITE MAN (CONT'D)  
Dirty gutter bitch!

His head disappears into the car and it PEELS OUT.  
Jo slinks to the ground, drenched and exhausted.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Bleary-eyed, Jo looks out the window as her former  
neighborhood blurs passed.

JO  
Thanks for coming to get me.

Behind the wheel --

CORA  
You need a ride back to Nola in the  
morning?

JO  
Mama, I already told you. I'm not  
going back to school until I find  
Dee.

CORA

Now you listen here. You're not missing that speech for the governor. You think this is the first time your sister's run off with some man? You need connections like this, so you can get a job that pays well because you're taking care of me when I'm old.

Ahead of them - SIGNAL ARMS are lowered amid red flashing lights at a railroad crossing.

They watch the freight train begin rumbling past.

JO

Remember when grandmama taught Dee Dee and me how to see each other? Even when we weren't together?

Cora's grip on the steering wheel tightens.

JO (CONT'D)

I can't really explain it, but you know what I'm talking about. I have to try it again. She's in trouble, mama, I can feel it.

CORA

How many times do I gotta say it? Everything my mama told you about that stuff is pure hokum. Every damn word of it. If anyone should know that by now, it's you, 'Lil Owl.

Jo opens her mouth to reply, but thinks better of it.

Instead, she reaches for her mother's hand --

JO

What you said today isn't true. I'm not ashamed of you, mama. Or of Dee.

Cora clasps her daughter's fingers in hers and they both get lost for a BEAT in the blur of passing boxcars...

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY - FLASHBACK

Jo and Dee (6), MIRROR IMAGES OF EACH OTHER, hold hands in the wet grass - their flowery dresses fluttering in the wind.

They look up into the DARK SKY, singing --

DEE  
*Who run the world? Girls!*

JO  
*Who run the world? Girls!*

In UNISON, the identical twins make like Beyoncé from her "Run the World (Girls)" video, pop-lock-struttin' in rhythm while squealing at the top of their tiny lungs.

As the wind kicks up --

They grab hands.

JO/DEE  
(in unison)  
I love you sister.

A BEAT.

JO  
How did you know I was going to say  
that too?

Dee holds out her wrist bearing the serpent bracelet.  
Following suit - Jo extends out her apple bracelet.

DEE  
Because we are the same, remember?

Reaching for the apple, Dee SNAPS the two pieces together on  
her wrist --

DEE (CONT'D)  
I am you.

The both stare at the serpent eating the apple...

JO  
And you are me.

Jo lays back on the grass, pulling Dee down next to her,  
their four little eyeballs fixing upwards on the quickly  
forming clouds.

JO (CONT'D)  
Tell me again Dee.

DEE  
Again?

JO  
 (giggling)  
 Yes. Again.

Dee shifts into a sing-song-y voice.

DEE  
 The older twin is more important...  
 so the younger twin comes out first  
 to prepare the way.

JO  
 That's because the most important  
 people arrive later than everyone  
 else, right? That's what mama says.

DEE  
 Yup. Or, as some say, the older  
 twin is higher, deeper in the  
 mommy's tummy, and so has been  
 there longer. Either way, the  
 firstborn is younger and the second  
 born is older.

Dee reaches for Jo's hand --

DEE (CONT'D)  
 Most of the world doesn't see it  
 this way --

JO  
 (interrupting)  
 But that's how the Nyarofolo people  
 see it. Right Dee Dee? The people  
 in Africa, they know I'm the older  
 one because I came out second?

FROM ABOVE: Dee nods, the twins' curly black hair spilling  
 together into the green grass like cracks on an emerald ring.

They both SMILE wide until --

The heavens SPLIT OPEN with a CRACK OF THUNDER.

The girls SCREAM with excitement --

AS LIGHTNING FLOODS the sky and the rain pours down on them  
 like a GREAT WAVE crashing on a beach.

CORA (O.S.)  
 C'mon girls. Inside!

Jumping up they clasp hands and run together toward their  
 back porch - the WIND RISING UP behind them like a HURRICANE.

DEE  
 Pikesville.  
 (her voice sounds strange)  
 That's where I was captured.

JO  
 What?

DEE  
 A farm house. Sugar cane  
 everywhere. On all sides.

JO  
 (playing along)  
 Okay, a farm house... Do you  
 remember anything more specific?  
 Or where it is?

DEE  
 It's by the river. And there's one  
 of those big tall grain things  
 right by the turnoff.

Thinking --

DEE (CONT'D)  
 There's a Confederate flag painted  
 on it.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jo jolts awake and silences the alarm on her phone.

She looks at the other small bed across the room.

12 year old Dee sits on the mattress in a faded yellow sun  
 dress.

Hands folded in her lap, she's looking out the window. Like  
 she's waiting.

When Jo blinks - she's GONE.

INT. HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Walking downstairs she sees her mama FAST ASLEEP on the  
 couch, TV remote in hand.

She pulls the blanket over the sleeping woman.

JO  
I love you, mama.

CUT TO:

Jo's hand grabbing cash out of a COOKIE JAR --

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Jo silently closes the front door just as Melvin is pulling up.

Before he can even get out of his truck, Jo disappears around the corner of the house and is swallowed up by the night.

**END ACT IV**



EXT. BUS STATION - PIKESVILLE, AR - DAY

Jo thanks the bus driver and steps onto the platform.

Te'Ata is waiting for her.

And she's watching Jo like a mother hen.

JO  
I swear I'm fine.

Not convinced --

TE'ATA  
I'm Te'Ata, by the way.

JO  
Jo.

TE'ATA  
I know you're probably not hungry,  
but you really should eat  
something. Do you like waffles?

INT. WAFFLE HOUSE - DAY

The Woman SERVER (40s, White) delivers large waffles to Jo and Te'Ata.

SERVER  
Enjoy, ladies.

JO  
(to Te'Ata)  
Mind if I eat this quick? I'm kinda  
in a hurry.

TE'ATA  
Not at all.

Te'Ata begins removing vials of DARK LIQUID from her bag and lines them up in a nice neat row on the table.

When eight vials are in a row, she begins dispensing a measure of each into one of the restaurants large plastic cups.

With a mouth full of waffle --

TE'ATA  
It's an elixir for muscle  
relaxation... for when you feel  
stressed.

Off Jo's look --

TE'ATA (CONT'D)  
I'm really into homeopathy.

Jo nods her head in obvious agreement.

JO  
You live here?

TE'ATA  
In Pikesville? Nah. I'm on my way  
up to Memphis.

JO  
What's in Memphis?

Te'Ata sheepishly puts a hand on her Bible - which rests on  
the table next to her plate.

TE'ATA  
You promise not to laugh?

JO  
(shrugs)  
I'll tell you my secrets if you  
tell me yours.

Te'Ata stares at her waffle.

TE'ATA  
I'm going to a tent revival.

She waits for Jo's reaction, practically cringing.

There is none.

TE'ATA (CONT'D)  
I lost both of my parents this  
year. I'm just looking for some  
kind of meaning, I guess.

JO  
I'm so sorry.

TE'ATA  
Do you know the Bible?

JO  
My mama read it to us growing up.

TE'ATA  
Us?

Jo sets her fork down.

The Waffle House suddenly has the gravity of Jupiter.

JO

Yeah, I have a sister. My twin.  
She's missing. Kidnapped, maybe.  
That's what I'm doing all the way  
out here.

Te'Ata looks at her, dumbfounded.

JO (CONT'D)

I owe my sister a lot. Everything,  
really...

TE'ATA

So you're saying she's here?

Jo sits back with a sigh.

JO

No. I don't know. She was here. A  
couple days ago. I think.

Te'Ata's expression says everything.

JO (CONT'D)

I've already tried everything I can  
think of. The half-way house. My  
mom. My step dad. The police.  
Everybody is fucking worthless and  
unreliable. That's why I'm here.

TE'ATA

How do you even know where to start  
looking?

Jo slumps back in the booth, exhausted.

JO

I look inside, I guess. Because...  
(a long beat)  
Then she might tell me.

Te'Ata digs around in her bag and produces a small vial of  
DARK LIQUID.

TE'ATA

Here. Put this in your Sprite.

Jo turns it over in her hand.

TE'ATA (CONT'D)

Don't worry. It's just an energy  
tincture. I made it yesterday.

JO

You made this?

TE'ATA

I promise it's safe. Totally  
organic.

Jo empties the liquid into her soft drink.

JO

I trust you. And I'm desperate.  
But seriously, I have questions!

TE'ATA

It's kind of a long story. I'm good  
at growing things. I make natural  
elixirs and stuff. I'll tell you  
all about it sometime.

As they share a laugh - Jo flags down the Server.

JO

Excuse me, can I ask you a  
question?

SERVER

Sure can, darlin'.

JO

I'm looking for a farm around here.  
Where they grow sugar cane?

SERVER

Lots of those around...

JO

It's somewhere by the river. And I  
think there's a grain silo with a  
Confederate flag painted on it?

The Server's rehearsed joviality disappears in a blink.

SERVER

That's the Watson place. Out on 61.

She looks from Jo to Te'Ata.

SERVER (CONT'D)

What business do y'all have out  
there?

Jo clocks her change in demeanor.

JO  
I'm just looking for someone.  
Thank you.

EXT. WAFFLE HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

As soon as they're out the door --

TE'ATA  
Okay, that wasn't weird at all...

Jo is already looking at Google Maps on her phone.

TE'ATA (CONT'D)  
Jo, you can't go out there by  
yourself.

JO  
I'll be fine. She's not there  
anyway. I'm just re-tracing her  
footsteps. To see if I can get any  
information.

Te'Ata looks across the street at the bus station.

Pulls out her own phone.

TE'ATA  
Well, I'm coming with you then.

JO  
Te'Ata, no. I can't ask you to do  
that. Besides, you've got a bus to  
catch.

Te'Ata holds up her phone.

TE'ATA  
Just switched busses.

Jo wants to protest further.

She also really wants the company.

TE'ATA (CONT'D)  
Don't try to talk me out of it.  
I'm coming with you.

That settles that.

JO

Highway 61 goes right through town,  
so it must be a couple miles south  
of here.

TE'ATA

We walking?

JO

We are now. That energy thing you  
gave me is like a miracle!

EXT. HIGHWAY 61 - DAY

Bathed in late summer sunlight --

The Black girl and Brown girl are dwarfed by the Mississippi  
River flowing beside them as they voyage UPSTREAM against its  
white current.

TE'ATA

Did you know they call this 'Ol Man  
River?

JO

(nodding)

I'm reading Huckleberry Finn right  
now. Fuck every 'ol white man.

Te'Ata giggles.

But Jo wasn't trying to be funny.

JO (CONT'D)

I hate water.

TE'ATA

What? You hate water?

Staring out into the current --

JO

My grandmama died in Hurricane  
Kristina. Mama, Dee, and I almost  
did, too. Like, we barely made it  
out.

TE'ATA

Whoa. From the flooding?

JO

And all the crazy motherfuckers who  
overran the city.

(MORE)

JO (CONT'D)

Actually, I take that back. All of the crazy motherfuckers who were *allowed* to overrun the city. That was no accident. They wanted all that brown water to wash away all the brown people. And for anyone left, it was Lord of the Flies shit.

Under her breath --

JO (CONT'D)

It was like being in a war...

FLASH TO:

The Man in the minivan watching her as he pulls out of the parking lot --

BACK ON:

Te'Ata looks over at Jo.

TE'ATA

A war?

JO

(shaking her head)  
Just talking to myself. Like the lunatic I probably am.

A BEAT.

JO (CONT'D)

Like my grandmama.

Off Te'Ata's look --

JO (CONT'D)

When you tell me about your tinctures, I'll tell you about my grandmama and her magic.

TE'ATA

Deal.

Below them on the river bank, the same Ancient Fisherman tosses his line into the water.

Pays the girls no mind whatsoever.

TE'ATA (CONT'D)

His wrinkled white ass is as old as the river.

As Te'Ata giggles again - Jo grabs her arm.

JO

Look.

Up ahead --

The BRIGHT BLUE "X" of the Stars and Bars casts a shimmering reflection across the water's surface.

The Confederate flag is kept freshly painted on the back side of the silo.

The girls trudge on in silence until they reach the turnoff.

Thick rows of cane line both sides of the driveway.

TE'ATA

Are we doing this?

Jo takes a moment. And a deep breath.

JO

Hells yes we are.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Up ahead at the end of the driveway - a BARN is visible. From this vantage point, the girls can make out another flag, an American flag, painted on the front side of the silo.

Jo and Te'Ata stand in front of a section of thick canebreak that's been gouged by large FRESH TIRE TRACKS.

JO

This must be where it happened.

Te'Ata mutters a prayer under her breath as they continue on.

Reaching the clearing --

A giant MONSTER TRUCK is parked in front of the barn.

Two legs in grease-stained jeans are splayed out underneath the hulking vehicle.

Hearing their footsteps in the dirt --

The MAN (30s, White) slides out from under the truck on a creeper.

Sweaty and shirtless - he is lean and angular, his movements abjectly predatory.

Sunlight gleams off his TWO GOLD TEETH as he stares at Jo like a tiger about to rip its evening meal to pieces.

Hers is a face he's seen before...

PREDATOR  
(leaping forward)  
How many fucken' times do I gotta  
get rid of you?

Jo grabs Te'Ata's hand.

JO  
C'mon, let's go!

Turning and burning back the way they came --

PREDATOR  
Where the fuck y'all think you're  
going?

EXT. CANEBREAK/MISSISSIPPI RIVER - CONTINUOUS

Tears are already flooding down Te'Ata's face.

JO  
It's okay. Just run as fast as you  
can!

Instinctively, Jo drops back, allowing Te'Ata to run ahead of her.

Behind them --

A massive engine ROARS to life.

TE'ATA  
Please, Lord Jesus. Save us!

Guided by the Stars and Bars on the grain silo at the edge of the canebreak - Jo dares a glance over her shoulder.

A massive DUST PLUME trails behind the monster truck as it barrels down on them.

TE'ATA  
Which way do we go?!

At the end of the driveway --

Jo looks left. Then right.

TE'ATA  
Jo?! Which way???

With the monster truck nearly upon them --

Jo grabs Te'Ata's hand again.

JO  
North.

They sprint across the road to the edge of the riverbank.

The truck skids to a stop behind them.

Still holding hands, Jo and Te'Ata look down at the great river flowing below them.

Then they look at each other.

It's now or never.

With the Predator lunging forward --

They JUMP.

SMASH-CUT TO  
BLACK.

**END PILOT**