

FADE IN:

EXT. PICNIC AREA, LAKE CHARLES, LA - DAY, 1970

The moon is already visible in the early evening sky. Lush beauty of Southern Louisiana surrounds a public picnic area.

Between two ancient trees is strung a brown paper banner which reads: "Happy 18th Birthday, EDISON!"

EDISON HEBERT, thin, Buddy Holly-looking, young man stands carving his initials into the trunk of one of the trees.

Several MEN are playing Cajun MUSIC on an accordion, banjo, and washboard in a grove of old ficus trees.

Young COUSINS dance around, spinning each other wildly. Lady, the Hebert family dog, chases the children.

Gathered around a picnic table are the extended Hebert FAMILY, aunts and uncles, as well as a family friend who is a priest, FATHER PATRICK, who wears his collar.

ROY HEBERT, face flushed with heat and drink, his unkempt hair poking out from his head, regales them with stories between mouthfuls of crab and slugs of beer. ROY has gotten in and out of sticky situations for forty years on his keen ability to charm.

AUNT COLIE, a tight-lipped woman in her late 40s, hustles about the table picking up empty beer bottles and plates.

ROY

You know I can't bet against
dem Saints. So, I put ten on the
Saints, and 100 bucks on the Bears.

Everybody ROARS.

FATHER PATRICK

But did you win?

ROY

Damned if those Saints didn't lose
but they beat the God damned
spread too! Shit!

Aunt Colie raises eyebrows at his language and stomps off.

Edison puts the finishing touches on his carving.

INSERT: EDISON HEBERT WAS HERE.

Edison glances up into the leaves above his head. A foot in a red, high topped sneaker dangles there. Edison gives it a tug and a smile.

EXT./INT. CYPRESS TREE - SAME

CHARLIE HEBERT, up above the gathering, hugs a limb as he watches the picnic below him. He's about eight years old and far too serious for his age. He has the eyes of a ninety year old but the face of a Vienna Choir Boy.

Edison comes through a thicket of leaves.

EDISON

Hey, Shrimp!

CHARLIE

I-I d-don't need a b-babysitter.

EDISON

Where'd that come from? Time for cake.

CHARLIE

She promised.

EDISON

I know.

CHARLIE

So'd he.

EDISON

He always does.

CHARLIE

But she promised this time.

EDISON

Come on, let's go get some cake so we can go home.

Charlie turns his attention to the twilight sky.

CHARLIE

I wish I was turning 18 today. You
can do anything, go anywhere!
Why don't you?

EDISON

And just where would you go?

CHARLIE

Why, I'd go and explore the moon.
And I wouldn't come back until
I'd explored each and every crater
up there.

EDISON

Mama and Daddy'd miss you.

CHARLIE

I'd send them post cards.

EDISON

Yeah, well, what about me?

CHARLIE

You'd be with me! We'd be known
all over the world as the famous
Hebert brothers who explore the cosmos!

EDISON

Sounds great, but what do you say
right now we explore my birthday cake?

EDISON

backs out of tree and offers Charlie his hand. He pulls him
down then spins him around.

EDISON

So, you want to go to the moon, huh?

Charlie SQUEALS with pleasure.

INT. HEBERT FAMILY 1962 STATION WAGON - NIGHT

Roy is swerving the vehicle along a deserted two lane road.

Gemma sits in the front passenger seat.

CHARLIE,

asleep, huddles against Edison who intently watches as Roy comes terrifyingly close to the ditch along the pavement then over corrects and ends up on the left side of the lane. Lady WHINES.

Oncoming headlights approach, a semi driver HONKS a horn. Roy narrowly misses him.

GEMMA

Lord, Roy! Stay in your own lane.

ROY

Don't tell me how to drive, gal.
I ever gotten in an accident?

GEMMA

There was the Chrysler you totaled,
the Olds you smashed into a tree,
and...

ROY

I meant have I ever gotten in one
with you and the boys in the car?

EDISON

There's a first time for everything.

ROY

You say something, boy?

CHARLIE

(waking up)

What, Daddy?

ROY

Some wise-crack, I'm sure. That's
okay, y'all know I'd never put my
boys in danger. Cause you know---

Another car goes by and HONKS.

GEMMA

Just keep the wheel even, Roy.
It's a straight road from here

to home.

EXT. SHOULDER ALONG ROAD - SAME

Roy pulls the car over with a SCREECH and gets out.

ROY

Fine, you want to drive, gal?
Go ahead. Let's see how fast you
put us in that canal.

GEMMA

(inside car)

You know I don't know how!

ROY

(yanking GEMMA's door open)
Sure, you drive us home. Hope
you feel like going for a midnight
swim. How you like that Charlie?
Wanna go for a dunk in the canal?

GEMMA

You're scaring him!

Roy pulls Gemma out of the car.

ROY

Come on, Gemma. Let's see you drive.

Roy tosses the keys down the road.

GEMMA

What? Are you nuts!

ROY

Yeah, I'm nuts and you're driving.

Roy gets in the passenger side and SLAMS the door shut.

ROY (CONT.)

Oh, and dear? You'll need the keys
to make the car go vroom vroom.

GEMMA

Dammit, Roy, don't be a fool!

INT. CAR - SAME

Roy looks back at Edison and Charlie who sit stiff and wide eyed in their seat.

ROY
Y'all ready to go for a joy ride?

EXT. ROAD - SAME

Gemma stumbles around the car and weaves down the road. A car whizzes by her.

Gemma, bathed in headlights, wipes tears from her cheeks.

GEMMA
God damn, drunken son of a bitch.

GEMMA

stoops and picks up the keys but falls down in the road. A semi, about a half a mile away BLARES down on her.

EDISON

jumps out of the car and helps her up and to the side of the road just as the truck passes. He leads her to the back passenger door, opens it and gently pushes her inside, closing the door.

ROY
(leaning out window)
'the hell you think you're doing?

Edison goes around the front of the car and gets into the driver's seat. He STARTS the car.

ROY(Cont.)
What are you giving me dirty looks for? She started.

EXT. HEBERT HOUSE - LATER

The Hebert wagon rolls up in front of the small wooden house. There is a "For Rent- Furnished" sign stuck into the

grass. A collection of various objects such as lamps and mirrors are strewn amidst cardboard boxes on the small lawn. Odd pieces of clothing have gotten free and float across the grass.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Roy, Gemma, and Charlie are sound asleep. Edison wakes Roy.

EDISON
Daddy, Daddy wake up.

ROY
Huh? Where we at?

EDISON
Home. I think.

ROY
Huh?

ROY

focuses on the "For Rent" sign on the front lawn.

ROY
What the hell?!

Roy opens his door and gets out. Edison follows as Gemma and Charlie stir in the back seat.

EXT. FRONT LAWN - SAME

Roy goes to the "For Rent" sign and tosses it on the ground.

EDISON
What do you think happened?

The car door SLAMS behind them and Gemma and Charlie approach them.

ROY
Fred La Fourche is what happened.
Never rent from your bookie.

Gemma and Charlie join Edison as Roy goes up to the front

door.

Gemma begins picking up objects from the grass.

AT THE FRONT DOOR,

Roy searches his pants pockets, then turns back towards Edison.

ROY
Give me my God damned keys!

LIGHTS turn on in the neighboring houses. Dogs BARK.

Edison pitches the keys to Roy, who tries the lock but it doesn't give.

ROY
(jiggling the knob)
Son of a bitch!

Roy heads for the side of the house.

GEMMA
Where are you going?

Roy turns the corner of the house.

ROY (O.S.)
Back door! Maybe the bum was too
cheap to change both locks!

Gemma continues collecting things and stuffing them into boxes while Edison begins trying the windows of the house.

CHARLIE

is picking around the shrubbery near Edison and finds his toy rocket ship. The top is cracked off and lies beneath a bush.

EDISON
(going to him)
We can fix it.

CHARLIE

No. It's busted.

EDISON

Yeah, but I can fix it. Let me see.

Charlie gives him the pieces and walks away, peering into one of the windows.

CHARLIE

takes in a bare room with two twin beds and a chest of drawers. Bare, that is, except for the ceiling which is covered with sparkling stars, and planets. On the walls are black and white photos of Charlie's heroes: astronauts.

Edison joins Charlie at the window.

EDISON

Wait here.

Edison leaves, while Charlie continues to stare at the photos in the room through the window pane.

INSERT PHOTOGRAPHS: BUZZ ALDRIN, NEIL ARMSTRONG, JAMES LOVELL, ALAN SHEPHERD.

Edison returns with a butter knife. He slips the knife between the panes of glass and jimmys the lock. Sliding it up he goes in and gestures for Charlie to follow, which he does.

INT. BEDROOM - SAME

Charlie and Edison waste no time in going to the walls and removing the photos.

CHARLIE

stands before one of Buzz Aldrin and stares for a moment, then delicately removes it from the wall. The history of the space race is on these walls, and Charlie reverently collects the pieces.

Edison on the other hand, is cautious not to tear them, but he works quickly and efficiently.

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