

FADE IN:

EXT. FRANK STREET, HURIN INDIANA, 1964 - DAY

PAUL LACKEY, 15, walks down a blacktop road. BRIAN LACKEY, 11, walks beside him, trying to match strides. The boys' shoes make sticking noises as they lift from the hot tar.

Paul shoulders an empty newspaper delivery bag. It reads "Hurin Clarion." Paul carries a ledger pad.

They pass dilapidated houses, the windows stained with dust from a cement plant's smoke stacks that loom on the horizon. Junk cars sit in front yards, sunflowers growing out of their broken windows.

An old dog sleeps in the dirt. It barely lifts its head as the boys pass.

BRIAN

Hey Paul. How come folks don't say "Hurin" right? They don't say the "H", so it sounds like "urine".

PAUL

Believe me, they're sayin' it right.

BRIAN

Look!

Brian hops into a patch of roadside weeds and emerges with a Black Label beer bottle and a mud-stained calendar.

Brian raises the bottle to eye level - it's only half empty.

PAUL

Brian, you better not.

Grinning, Brian holds the bottle tauntingly close to his mouth, and opens wide. Paul smacks it out of his hand.

BRIAN

Hey!

Paul grabs at the calendar but Brian backpedals out of reach. Brian unfolds it. His eyes widen.

BRIAN (CONT'D)

Titties!

PAUL
Dammit, Brian, give it here.

BRIAN
Look at the lady for July. Hey!
Your birthday's five days from now.

PAUL
No it's not. Give me that.

He finally manages to snatch it. He slaps away Brian's efforts to get it back.

PAUL (CONT'D)
This is last year's calendar. My
birthday's in three days.

Brian quiets and purses his lips.

BRIAN
How you gonna get the money by then?

Paul rolls the calendar up, stuffs it in his carrier's bag, and heads down the road. Brian hurries after him.

BRIAN (CONT'D)
Who's next?

PAUL
You know who.

BRIAN
How much does he owe?

PAUL
A lot.

BRIAN
Enough for the rent, maybe.

PAUL
Stop worryin' 'bout that. You don't
have to pay 'til you're 15.

BRIAN
I ain't worried. By then I'm gonna
have a job makin' good money.

One of Brian's shoes sticks in the tar, and his sockless foot comes out of it. He grabs the shoe and hops after Paul.

BRIAN (CONT'D)

Wait. Will dad really kick you out?

PAUL

He did Eddie.

Topping the hill, they come upon two frame houses facing across from each one neat as a pin, the other warped and sagging, its yard featuring an historic appliance exhibit.

BRIAN

Why does Old Man Enochs even get the paper? He don't know how to read.

PAUL

He likes to piss on it.

EXT. HOGSETT HOUSE - DAY

MRS. HOGSETT, 70, cracks open her front door, listens, then steps out gingerly and eases onto a porch swing. She cools herself with a balsa wood fan that sports a picture of Jesus.

EXT. ENOCHS HOUSE

ROSCOE ENOCHS, an old coot in the John Carradine tradition, comes out onto his porch. He aims his rifle and fires.

EXT. HOGSETT HOUSE

The porch swing chain breaks, spilling Mrs. Hogsett onto the floor. She scrambles inside, just before the next rifle blast. A quarter-sized hole appears in the door frame, which is pockmarked with other slug craters.

EXT. ENOCHS HOUSE

Paul and Brian watch as Roscoe goes back inside.

BRIAN

I'm thinkin' maybe now's not the best time to collect.

PAUL

Shut up and wait here. And don't
try to play with Mike.

MIKE, a large monkey, patrols the Enochs front yard, chained to a tree. Seeing Paul, he screeches and bares his teeth. Paul gives Mike a wide berth on the way to the front door.

Old car parts and stacks of magazines clutter Roscoe's front porch. Paul bangs on the door, rattling the glass.

Roscoe sticks his head out. He squints at Paul, then snorts.

ROSCOE

I know you. Snot-nosed Lackey kid,
always throwin' my paper in the
yard.

PAUL

I come to collect, Mr. Enochs.

ROSCOE

You throw my paper in the grass
where it sits in the dew and the
monkey shit, and you expect me to
pay you?

PAUL

I aim for the house, but Mike always
swats it down.

Roscoe steps out, rifle in hand. He aims the rifle at Paul.

ROSCOE

(sinisterly)

Maybe I'll teach you a lesson about
hittin' what you aim at.

Paul backs away, his eyes on the rifle. He turns and runs down the street, Brian hurrying after, while Roscoe laughs.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

Main Street is one way; dogs sleep in the left lane. The boys pass tattered storefront awnings with faded names: "Pemberton's Swap Shop," "Hurin Furniture Sales."

Trash cans bearing the message "City of Hurin - Christ Is Our Savior" guard each deserted intersection.

FRONT OF POOL HALL

Fake columns frame thick glass with gold lettering reading "Recreation & Ammunition". On the handle of the screen door, a caption under a picture of a pack of cigarettes reads, "Come In, It's KOOL Inside."

LEROY HUNSUCKER, 17, leans against the storefront. A pile of cigarette butts lies by his feet.

DOWN THE STREET

Brian pulls at the back of Paul's shirt.

BRIAN

He scares me.

PAUL

Leroy's alright.

FRONT OF POOL HALL

Leroy exhales a smoke ring.

LEROY

Hey, Bobsey Twins.

PAUL

Hey Leroy. I heard you stabbed a kid seventeen times t'other night.

LEROY

Might be I did.

PAUL

How's come seventeen times?

Leroy grins. He's missing some teeth.

LEROY

It was my birthday! One for each year! Besides, once I started, it felt so good I couldn't stop.

Leroy flicks another butt onto the sidewalk and grabs a cigarette pack from the rolled-up sleeve of his t-shirt.

PAUL

You been in Fats?

Paul nods toward the entrance.

LEROY

Shit yes. Was wantin' a game of snooker, but there weren't nobody in there but old Zeke.

PAUL

You see our Dad inside?

LEROY

You needin' your daddy, are you?

PAUL

Just needin' to know where he ain't.

INT. POOL HALL

Dim flourescents hang low above dusty tables covered with mold-green felt. Dark stains cover the wood floor. Along the wall, battered brass spittoons sit beside wooden benches.

Paul and Brian step in, the door crashing shut behind them. They blink as their eyes adjust to the light.

Way in the back, ZEKE ISLEY, 60, peers up from behind saloon doors. Above him, a carved wooden sign reads, "Toilet".

At the sound of flushing, the doors bang open. Zeke steps out, belly jiggling. As he walks, he runs his fingers through hair as greasy as the pool room floor.

ZEKE

Hey! No children in the pool hall!

BRIAN

We're not children.

PAUL

Don't have a conniption fit, Zeke. I just got somethin' to ask you about.

ZEKE

Why? Do I look like I know anything?

BRIAN

No.

PAUL
Shut up, Brian.
(back to Zeke)
It's about somebody you know.

Zeke scowls at Paul, then takes a blood-red rag from his back pocket and wipes at the wood on one of the tables.

ZEKE
I don't know anybody. Who is it you think I know?

PAUL
Old Man Enochs.

ZEKE
And what is it I'm s'posed to know about Roscoe Enochs?

PAUL
You and him used to fish at the river. You was friends or somethin'.

ZEKE
Roscoe Enochs don't got no friends.

PAUL
May be. But if you been around him, maybe you know him some.

Zeke spits on his rag and starts wiping down a chalkboard.

ZEKE
I reckon I know old Roscoe well enough to stay the hell away from him.

He takes a pouch of Red Man out of a pocket, measures a chaw and sticks it under his gum.

ZEKE (CONT'D)
The hell you askin' about him for?

Paul hesitates.

PAUL

You know how Roscoe likes to take
pot shots at folks. You ever hear
tell of him hittin' anybody?

Zeke spits, missing the spittoon.

ZEKE

He's a mean rat bastard and a good
shot, or used to be. If he meant to
hit a feller, likely they'd be hit.
You done quizzin' me now?

PAUL

Just one more.

ZEKE

Shit fire Hattie, you ask more
questions than a wife on pay day.
What is it?

PAUL

Where'd he get the monkey?

Zeke stops cleaning and looks down, his face lost in memory.

ZEKE

Mail order. After Rosemary left his
ass. Must be thirteen years now.

The front door opens. Zeke regains his scowl.

ZEKE (CONT'D)

Now go on out of here, no children
in the pool hall!

EXT. FRANK STREET

Paul and Brian walk slowly along the deserted street.

BRIAN

You think Dad's home?

PAUL

Brian, I'm tryin' to think.

BRIAN

Did you kill those kittens yet?

EXT. LACKEY HOUSE - NIGHT

Paul and Brian approach a small frame house that rests on cinder blocks. The yard sports patches of dirt where the grass won't grow.

A battered black pickup sits on a spot of gravel.

PAUL

Let's go around the back.

EXT. LACKEY HOUSE - BACK PORCH

Paul motions Brian to wait, then steps lightly onto rickety porch steps. He kneels by a cardboard box where a mother cat nurses kittens. They mew when Paul picks the mother up.

Paul grabs a gas can, unscrews the lid, sprinkles gas onto the porch. The smell sends the mother cat running. Paul takes the box of kittens to the back yard, Brian following.

BRIAN

Dad told you to kill 'em yesterday.
And with a rock, not with gasoline.

PAUL

I figured a way around it, I think.
She won't leave 'em in the open.
And she won't take 'em back to the
porch 'cause of the smell.

Paul backs toward the porch, towing Brian by the arm.

After a moment, the mother cat comes up to the box. She hesitates, then takes a kitten in her mouth and trots away toward an open field.

BRIAN

She's eatin' her young!

PAUL

No, that's how momma cats carry
their babies. She's takin' it
somewhere safe. Pretty soon she'll
be back for the others.

Paul walks up to the back porch door, holds it open for Brian, who stares a moment at the field, then turns to go in.

INT. LACKEY HOUSE - KITCHEN

Ancient appliances, sink with a hand pump, a single light bulb on a frayed cord dangling from the ceiling.

BILL LACKEY, 50, sits at a yellow Formica table sopping gravy. He has a sizable paunch, a burr haircut, and a face permanently creased in a sneer.

Paul and Brian walk up to the table and stand behind chairs where fiesta ware plates have been set out.

LACKEY

Where the hell you boys been? Your chicken necks are gettin' cold.

The boys sit in unison.

PAUL

Been collectin'. Dad, we still got a little problem.

LACKEY

Your mother's in the back bedroom with one of her sick headaches.

(beat)

And "we" don't got a problem, you do. Your rent's due in three days, and you owe from last month.

PAUL

I may not have it. Mr. Enochs pulled a gun on me when I tried to collect.

Lackey slaps his hands on the table, rattling plates, and points at Paul with a chicken neck.

LACKEY

You got more than the paper route. There's the dogcatcher, pays a dollar for each stray you bring 'im.

PAUL

There ain't any strays left to catch.

LACKEY

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For the complete script please contact Jennifer Brooks at
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