

A L A B A M A S T O L E N

written by

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EXT. SMALL CHURCH - NIGHT

SUPERIMPOSE: "ALABAMA, 1993"

Dusk has just come to an end.

JOHN (African American, 28) stands atop a wooden ladder rested against a modest church seemingly in the middle of nowhere -- His sweat-drenched shirt and skin are dappled with flecks of SKY BLUE PAINT. He carefully paints around a stained-glass window.

YOUNG PASTOR CARMICHAEL (African American, 35) shuffles out of the church, pocket watch in one hand, cigar in the other. Sharply dressed for the Lord.

YOUNG PASTOR CARMICHAEL
You're a good man, John. Bless
you for your hard work today.

JOHN
Not a problem at all, Pastor
Carmichael.

YOUNG PASTOR CARMICHAEL
Go on home now. I admire your
determination, but I can't leave
until you leave, and Daphne's
cooking tenderloin and buttermilk
biscuits tonight...

John descends the rungs, paint can in hand.

JOHN
I'm sorry. I really thought I
could finish before sundown. I
guess the night will always win.

YOUNG PASTOR CARMICHAEL
If that's true, you've wasted the
whole day slapping on that color.

JOHN
I never thought to ask, why blue?
I've only ever painted churches
white...

John reads the paint can: "HAINT BLUE"

He proceeds to cap it and pack up.

YOUNG PASTOR CARMICHAEL
That's Haint Blue. The only color
in the spectrum God put a little
extra somethin' in. You don't
know about haints?

JOHN

(coy)

I just don't think I believe in that stuff...

YOUNG PASTOR CARMICHAEL

Seeing ain't always believing, my brother. Haints are nasty spirits. And folks these days are messin' 'round with them like they're neighbors... Witch doctors popping up all over the South once again... There's one that lives close by. Reverend Glover, he goes by. The man lost his whole family, but folks are saying he sacrificed them. I mean what kind of a monster does that to his own children?

Carmichael somberly ponders. John breaks the silence.

JOHN

I best be heading back. Viv ain't been doing too good this week.

YOUNG PASTOR CARMICHAEL

She ain't been cursed, has she?

He's only half-joking.

JOHN

NaW, just baby stuff.

Carmichael pulls out his wallet and slips out some bills.

YOUNG PASTOR CARMICHAEL

Here. It ain't all of it, but it's just enough to keep the haints off ya'. I'll catch you tomorrow.

John stuffs the notes and picks up his tools and ladder.

Carmichael stands by his pristine CAROLINA-BLUE '90 CADILLAC BROUGHAM and watches John head towards a small, rickety house in the distance -- the only other sign of civilization.

EXT. JOHN'S HOME - NIGHT

Relying entirely on moonlight, John crosses the grass and approaches his dark house by an APPLE TREE and LAKE. Black windows.

He quietly lays his ladder down and creeps up the steps to the porch. A DRY, CHESTY COUGH bursts inside the house.

INT. JOHN'S HOME - NIGHT

He enters, catching a split-second glimpse of TWO PEOPLE sat in the kitchen before the candle is quickly blown out. Pitch black.

A chair SCRAPES across the floor.

John reaches out and flicks the light switch on.

A MAN swiftly glides towards him, APPLE in hand -- it's a startling surprise. This is **REV. GLOVER** (African American, 40s). A razor thin mustache over a shark smile with permed hair slicked to the side -- A man stuck in the 1920s.

John looks over Glover and then his wife **VIVIAN** (African American, 28) still seated in the kitchen. She holds a handkerchief to her mouth. It drapes loosely over her knuckles.

Glover slowly strolls by John, counting the splotches of paint on him. John is fuming. Glover looks back at Vivian. John GRABS Glover's arm, ready to throw him out --

VIVIAN
(coughing)
John!

A small CRIMSON VIAL slips from Glover's sleeve and CRACKS on the floorboards.

Blood leaks out and insidiously seeps between the cracks in the floorboards.

Glover takes a patient bite out of the crunchy apple.

John releases Glover. Glover slips a fine handkerchief from his pocket, still scrutinizing John's paint marks.

REV. GLOVER
Well, haint you a mess all over.

Glover slowly lowers to the floor and lays the handkerchief on the blood. It quickly absorbs it.

John looks over at Vivian, vexed but desperate for a clue. She's surrounded by a dozen baskets of apples.

John opens the door and Glover slips out. Door closes.

JOHN
(firm)
What did you do? Viv?!

Silence.

John storms over to Vivian and sees her BANDAGED HAND poorly hidden beneath her handkerchief. He removes the handkerchief and peels open the bandage. A clean, crimson slice parts her palm.

He SLAMS the table. Vivian jumps.

JOHN

I don't want you dealing with that man no more! You hear!

VIVIAN

The Reverend's helping me --

JOHN

We can't trust him. People are talking --

Vivian stands revealing her large baby bump pushing her dress to the limit.

VIVIAN

(aggressively)

So, what? You want me to summon the Gods myself? Dance in the basement hollering ooga-booga 'til something happens --

John turns and storms back towards the front door.

There's a sudden SPLASH on the kitchen floorboards.

VIVIAN

John! Wait! JOHN!!

John turns back. Vivian stands in a puddle, legs akimbo.

Vivian grabs her pregnant stomach. There's a clench. Discomfort multiplying. She tries to smile through the sudden pain.

VIVIAN

It's happening! John, it's happening!

A wave of excitement rushes over their faces.

John jumps into action bolting to the kitchen to kiss Vivian, then dashes upstairs.

INT. BATHROOM

John spins the bath taps. Water GUSHES.

LATER

Vivian BATTLE CRIES inside the bathtub. John is kneeling beside the tub, sleeves rolled high.

JOHN

Just a little more, baby! Push!

John reaches in the water and pulls out a SCREECHING INFANT. He is smitten.

JOHN
(to baby)
Look at Momma.

John looks up at Vivian.

Vivian lays slumped in the tub. The blood-red water level high up on her face. She slowly submerges. Lifeless.

John instinctively turns the infant towards his chest, holding back tears. The baby GURGLES in the silent void of their bathroom...

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