

TEXT PORTFOLIO V.1

by

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Based on, "Searching for the Wrong Eyed Jesus"

AUTHOR'S NOTE:

This screenplay is derived from a scene from the documentary "Searching For the Wrong Eyed Jesus" found here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-c5It2AwUUo>

Please watch the clip before reading.

The documentary chronicles alternative country star Jim White's travels through the American South as he muses on the nature of Southern culture and its relation to religion, storytelling, and music.

In the clip above, renowned southern novelist Harry Crews makes a cameo appearance and recalls the influence story telling had on his childhood.

This screenplay is an elaborated and extended version of the story Mr. Crews tells. In that sense, it's something of a Russian nesting doll: A screenplay about a story told about the nature of stories from within a documentary film, served up to you with a healthy bit of artistic license.

I have also rearranged portions of Harry Crew's monologue in order to contextualize it within this new format.

FADE IN:

EXT. A DESOLATE COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

A road of packed gravel extends before us, winding into the horizon, flanked by dense columns of willow tress. They arch above as long strands of green moss drip from the canopy. Shafts of golden sunlight pour through gaps in the foliage.

In the distance, a rhythmic CRUNCHING sound. FOOTSTEPS on the gravel...coming closer.

The tip of gnarled walking cane SMACKS into the gravel right before us.

ELDERLY MAN (V.O.)
(Southern drawl)
Truth of the matter was, stories
was everything, and everything was
stories.

The speaker is HARRY CREWS, a gnarled, southern grizzly bear of a man. Hobbled by age and injury, he leans heavily on the cane as he propels his broken body ever so slowly down the DESOLATE ROAD.

HARRY CREWS

Everybody told stories, it was a way of saying who they were in the world. It was their understanding of theyselves.

A few halting cords of a LONE BANJO rise up to punctuate his speech.

HARRY CREWS (CONT'D)

It was lettin' theyselves know how they believed the world worked. The right way...and the way that was not so right.

FLASHBACK - EXT. RURAL FARMHOUSE 1930'S - DAY

A YOUNG HARRY CREWS (10) sits on a dilapidated porch, staring off into a wide expanse of open pasture. His clothes are threadbare and torn, his body emaciated by poverty.

ELDER HARRY CREWS (V.O.)

When I was a boy the Sears Robuck Catalogue, a great thick thing, came to everybody's mailbox in the South, I mean everybody's.

Something in the distance catches YOUNG HARRY's attention. He sits BOLT UPRIGHT:

There! A billowing swirl of copper colored dirt raising up from behind a distant row of willow trees. YOUNG HARRY lurches from his rocking chair and sprints towards the treeline.

EXT. A DESOLATE COUNTRY ROAD 1930'S - CONTINUOUS

YOUNG HARRY CRASHES through the treeline tumbling onto the road...and is nearly trampled to death by an ON COMING MAIL TRUCK. The truck SLAMS its breaks, SKIDDING to a halt. Its bumper comes to rest just inches from YOUNG HARRY'S threadbare shorts.

A leathery, tanned arm extends from the mail truck's cabin.

It holds a buddle of assorted enveloped and magazines out to YOUNG HARRY.

Unfazed by his near neath experience, YOUNG HARRY snatches the mail from the hand and dashes back through the treeline.

The outstretched hand hangs limp for a moment, and then slowly unfurls a middle finger to the shaking branches in the treeline, the point marking YOUNG HARRY's exit.

INT. RURAL FARMHOUSE 1930'S - CONTINUOUS

The screen door flings open, in bursts YOUNG HARRY.

He is immediately set upon by his elder brother JEB, 14 and equally threadbare, hiding behind the front door.

JEB snatches the loot from YOUNG HARRY, casually stiff arming his younger brother's attempt to snatch it back, and turns his attention to the prize: THE SEARS ROEBUCK CATALOGUE.

JEB tosses the rest of the mail onto an old box spring sofa and thumbs the pages until he finds the holy grail: the section marked WOMEN'S ATTIRE.

ELDER HARRY CREWS (V.O.)
First thing that stuck us was that
everybody in the Sears Roebuck
Catalogue was perfect...

SERIES OF SHOTS - THE PERFECT PEOPLE

As ELDER HARRY CREWS narrates, pages of the Sears Roebuck Catalogue flip past us in rapid succession. On each page a Norman Rockwellesque portrait of All-American beauty:

-- A young teen smiles, flashing a perfect set of white teeth.

-- A Stoic business man in a well tailored suit.

-- A prim housewife in pearls and white summer dress tends to dinner roasting on an electric stove top.

-- The page stops on a portrait of a RADIANT YOUNG WOMAN with red, curly hair. She's adorned in a spring frock, smiling broadly at a young DAPPER MAN in a green suit. He's crossing the town square to greet her. He clutches a bouquet BLUE BONNETS in his left hand.

ELDER HARRY CREWS (V.O.)
Wasn't any bald heads, everybody
has all the fingers an' toes that
was comin to 'em. Nobody had any
opens and running sores on their
bodies.

SERIES OF SHOTS - THE NOT SO PERFECT PEOPLE

As ELDER HARRY CREWS speaks, a series of grainy black and white images flash before us:

-- A rough, unshaven farmhand tips the brim of his hat with a mangled lump of flesh that used to be his right hand.

-- An angelic girl of seven smiles for the camera, but her right eye is an unseeing, milky white dollop engulfed in a crater of puckered scare tissue.

-- A seemingly handsome man of 25 grins at us from atop a plow horse, and reveals a row of teeth blackened by years chewing tobacco and neglect.

ELDER HARRY CREWS (V.O.)
In other words, in our world
everybody was maimed and mutilated,
whereas everybody in the Sears
Roebuck Catalogue world was
perfect.

YOUNG HARRY and JEB gaze down upon the RADIANT YOUNG WOMAN in the catalogue.

ELDER HARRY CREWS (V.O.)
And so we jus' started telling
stories about 'em... We give 'em
names. Said where they was from.
We'd turn over the page and say...

JEB points to the RADIANT YOUNG WOMAN on the page and says something we don't actually hear to YOUNG HARRY.

ELDER HARRY CREWS (V.O.)
We'd say, "See that young girl
standing all pretty in a spring
frook there..?"

SPFX: The still image of the RADIATE YOUNG WOMAN beneath JEB's thumb begins to shimmer like a mirage...

FADE IN:

EXT. TOWN SQUARE 1930'S - DAY CONTINUOUS

The catalogue comes to life.

The RADIANT YOUNG WOMAN stands beneath the awning of the local FEED STORE. From over her shoulder, we see the bustling town square of a rural community. Model T cars and horse drawn carts pass each other on a packed earthen road.

ELDER HARRY CREWS (V.O.)
And so we'd turn about forty pages
back and then say, "And see this
fella here, the one standing all
stern like behind her? That's her
daddy. Yhea. He ain't smiling none.

Behind the RADIANT YOUNG WOMAN her father, an imposing middle
aged man with an handlebar mustache haggles with the FEED
STORE clerk.

ELDER HARRY CREWS (V.O.)
Ya know how come he lookin' kinda
stern and mean looking like
that...?

From across the street, a model T pulls away from the curb,
revealing a DAPPER YOUNG MAN standing in a sharp, GREEN SUIT
- a lady's man.

THE RADIANT YOUNG WOMAN spots him and a smile streaks across
her face. She waves to him.

The DAPPER MAN waves back and crosses the square to meet her.
He clutches a bouquet of BLUE BONNETS.

ELDER HARRY CREWS (V.O.)
Its 'cause this fella over here in
green suit with the sharp creases
in the pants, he's a seeing that
girl, that man's daughter...

The DAPPER MAN hands The RADIANT GIRL the blue bonnets and
kisses her hand.

The girl's father notices the DAPPER MAN, glowers, and comes
to stand by his daughter's side.

Nervously, THE DAPPER MAN dries his palms on the sides of his
sharply pressed pants and extends a hand to THE FATHER.

BEAT.

THE FATHER stares at DAPPER MAN's outstretched hand...and
defiantly thrusts both of his hands into his front pockets.

Message received.

The DAPPER MAN lowers his hand.

THE FATHER locks eyes with him and spits a large wade of
tobacco dangerously near the DAPPER MAN's shined shoes.

Sensing a showdown, The RADIATE WOMAN hooks her arm under THE DAPPER MAN's arm and leads him down the walkway, away from THE FATHER.

She looks back at her father and mouths the words "be nice" before rounding a corner and disappearing from his sight.

ELDER HARRY CREWS
...Yhea. He's a seeing that
girl...and he's doing wrong by
her...

THE FATHER watches them go, jaw clenched, eyes smoldering with anger.

EXT. THE OUTSKIRTS OF TOWN - NIGHT

The door of an old Model T opens, and out steps the DAPPER MAN. He looks around sheepishly for moment before making his way to an unlit, inconspicuous house on the corner.

Halfway to the front door he suddenly stops, snaps his fingers as if remembering something, and returns to his car.

He leans into the front seat and withdraws a bouquet of BLUE BONNETS.

A RED LIGHT flicks on from inside the house.

ELDER HARRY CREWS (V.O.)
Yhea. He's being...nasty.

Its a shade of RED known to men world round.

The silhouette of a woman presses itself seductively against the window.

The DAPPER MAN knocks three times, the door opens, and in he goes.

ELDER HARRY CREWS (V.O.)
But he's gonna fix that fella.
Gonna fix him good, yes sir. You
best believe it.

From across the street THE FATHER steps out from the shadows. He pulls a cigar from his vest pocket and in process reveals the curved handle of a COLT.45 REVOLVER attached to his hip.

He lights the cigar.

And waits.

EXT. THE LOCAL WHORE HOUSE - LATER

The whorehouse door opens and the DAPPER MAN exists, sans flowers.

Whistling Dixie, he makes his way back to his car.

Across the street, the shadowy perch from which THE FATHER once stood is now empty...

...save for the smoldering husk of a discarded cigar.

Now at the car, the DAPPER MAN is about to open the driver side door when he suddenly freezes in place.

From O.S. the cold, steel barrel of COLT .45 presses into the base of the DAPPER MAN'S skull.

There's an OMINOUS CLICK as a gnarled thumb cock's the revolver's hammer.

The DAPPER MAN closes his eyes and swallows hard.

FADE TO WHITE:

PRESENT DAY - EXT. A DESOLATE COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

ELDER HARRY CREWS hobbles down the road beneath a canopy of willow tress. Shafts of golden sunlight light his way onward.

ELDER HARRY CREWS

Truth of the matter was, stories
was everything and everything was
stories. Everyone told stories, it
was a way of understanding the
world and theyselves.

A LONE BANJO plays in the distance.

ELDER HARRY CREWS (CONT'D)

Stories is how we find the golden
tooth in God's crooked smile.

FADE OUT.

(CONT'D)