

SANDAL ' S ACRE

SANDAL'S ACRE

FADE IN:

EXT. SANDAL'S ACRE - DAY

An opaque liquid is dripping from the end of a copper tube.

The background is fuzzy; figures moving about, children squealing.

The liquid drips into the top of an old medicine bottle.

A hand lifts the bottle replacing it with a new bottle without losing a drop.

A cork is plunged into the full bottle.

A grunt of satisfaction escapes.

A homemade, handwritten label is crookedly splayed on the outside:

It reads WILLOW EXTRACT ELIXIR.

EXT. ORANGE GROVE - DAY

RAMI RAZLUND flicks his squinty miser-eyes over his truck. The wind rustles his restless greying hair. At 63 bachelorhood is all over his unkempt, rumped work clothes.

He's about to inspect his orange groves.

RAMI

Sandal, take me to the pump house.
I need to make sure the water
levels are correct.

SANDAL WOODS, a thin, tall man of refined and gentle disposition, pulls his baseball cap low over his pool blue eyes as he hops up into the cab of the late model Chevy TRUCK.

Rami hoists his melon ripe belly up into the passenger seat next to him.

RAMI (cont'd)

Are we going to finish spraying
today?

SANDAL

Well, Rami, I don't know? I heard it's threatening rain in the early afternoon.

RAMI

Let's get a leg up then.

The truck roars off down the access road to the orange grove.

EXT. ORANGE GROVE - DAY

Row upon row of orange trees, their trunks painted white with lime, glisten in the sun.

MEN work among the trees -- spraying -- wearing masks and suits --

Tanks of pesticide strapped to their backs.

Rami's Chevy drives along the access road in a swirl of dust.

INSIDE THE TRUCK

Rami rolls up his window.

Sandal scopes the grove hoping all is in order.

RAMI

I just don't like all this new technology. Costs a lot of money.

SANDAL

I think it will save you money in the long run.

RAMI

It might. It might.

SANDAL

One man could do the whole grove in a day.

RAMI

Aw, come on, Sandal, isn't that stretching it a bit?

SANDAL

I've looked into it. You'd actually harvest more per hectare than you are now.

RAMI
How much more?

SANDAL
Maybe ten percent.

Rami laughs.

RAMI
Sandal, what are you trying to do?

SANDAL
Huh?

RAMI
Your orange cider vinegar business
would dry up.

SANDAL
We don't have an orange cider
business, Rami.

RAMI
I'm just joking with you, Sandal.
Just joking.

The Chevy comes to a stop near a huge above ground concrete pool.

A pump motor chugs -- diesel smoke churning into the air -- water jets from a PIPE into the pool.

SANDAL
I fixed it early this morning.

RAMI
Ahh. Nice work, Sandal.

SANDAL
Thanks.

Rami inspects the motor -- the water pipe --

Tries to force his fingers through the jetting water.

RAMI
How many men we gonna need this
harvest?

SANDAL
Well, that's a problem, sir. I've
had ads in the local paper, put
fliers up in all the stores in
town, on telephone poles...

RAMI

Well?

SANDAL

I talked to some of the returning migrants and they say they're getting paid better in Jefferson County.

RAMI

Aw, for Pete's sake.

Rami slaps his thigh with his hat several times.

RAMI (cont'd)

So, what's the answer? Pay them more? I won't.

SANDAL

The oranges need to be picked.

RAMI

I know. I know.

SANDAL

I have an idea they'll go for.

Rami straightens up all ears -- squaring himself in front of Sandal.

SANDAL (cont'd)

Pay them a bonus for working harder.

RAMI

What, heh?

SANDAL

Pay the men a bonus for picking above a set quota per day.

RAMI

I see.

SANDAL

You'll have to make it generous.

RAMI

How generous.

SANDAL

Say, a buck a bushel.

Almost shouting.

RAMI

WHAT? Have you lost your mind,
Sandal? I'll go dead broke with a
hair brained scheme like that.

SANDAL

I've done the figures. You should
actually end up with your crop
picked ahead of the other groves,
with the cost just about the same
because you'll need less manpower.

RAMI

I don't believe it.

SANDAL

I'll show you.

Suspicious.

RAMI

You bucking for a raise?

SANDAL

Just doing my job.

Rami heads back toward the Chevy.

Sandal follows.

EXT. SANDAL'S HOUSE - DAY

Sandal's house is a small, clapboard cottage that looks like
it's never been painted.

The windows are open, letting the thin curtains flutter.

The grounds around the cottage look like a disorganized
English garden with flower beds exploding -- Zinnias, Day
Lilies, Sweet Basil -- many other varieties.

A rabble of CHILDREN rumble out of Sandal's cottage like a
tidal surge.

ADAM -- a vigorous 10 year old -- flutters a scarf like a
carrot in front of

CIERRA -- a lithe 8 1/2 year old -- whose long straight
braided hair is being pulled by

JOEY -- a 6 1/2 year old fire plug of a kid.

Sandal's pregnant wife, Alice, stands in the doorway -- a rosy cheeked woman of simple disposition and clarity, who always says 'do the chores, take care of today, and tomorrow will take care of itself.'

The children run dizzily around the sparse backyard, playing a game of chase. There is much laughter and gaiety.

Alice fills the kitchen door.

The screaming children squeeze past her, back into the house.

She smiles at their great exuberance.

INT. SANDAL'S HOUSE KITCHEN - DUSK

Alice washes dishes at the sink.

Sandal sits at the kitchen table going over figures with a calculator.

SANDAL

If we had the same workers as we had last summer we could get this done in record time.

ALICE

I'm so proud of you, Sandal.

SANDAL

Why? Just doing my job.

ALICE

No, your not. This is Rami's job.

SANDAL

Well, I'm the foreman so it kind of is my job.

ALICE

Look at you, Honey, stewing over his groves -- his oranges -- his profit.

He puts up a hand.

SANDAL

When I think about it you know I get angry.

(beat)

I'm just grateful to have this job. So many out of work.

ALICE

But this is home time. You don't
get paid to work at home.

SANDAL

I know, Sweetie. If he would just
look at this.

He waves the white sheet of paper -- figures scribbled all
over it -- as if surrendering to an unseen enemy.

ALICE

You're a good man, Sandal Woods --
I'm proud of you.

Sandal moves towards her -- putting his arms around her
pregnant belly -- kissing her neck.

She giggles -- girlishly.

A little face appears at the door.

JOEY

I don't feel good.

Alice wipes her dishwater hands on her apron and feels the
little boy's forehead.

ALICE

I think he's got a fever.

Sandal feels the boy's forehead.

SANDAL

Hmmmm, where do you hurt, Joey.

JOEY

My head hurts.

SANDAL

That's all.

JOEY

I don't weigh anything anymore.

ALICE

What do you mean, Sweetie.

JOEY

I'm floating.

SANDAL

Better take his temperature.

Alice pulls the thermometer off a shelf.

Sandal shakes it a few times -- sticks it in the boy's mouth.

They wait.

He pulls it out -- squints at it -- whistles.

Scooping the child into his strong arms he motions for Alice to pick up the phone.

SANDAL (cont'd)
Call the Doc.

EXT. SANDAL'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A CAR pulls up in front of the Sandal house.

A grey haired Dr. DANIEL MURPHY, gets out, looks at the Sandal house, shakes his head wearily, retrieves his medical bag from the backseat and strides briskly up the walkway as the door opens before he makes it to the porch.

ALICE
Oh, Doc, thank you for coming.
Thank you so much. It's Joey.

Dr. Murphy bounds up the steps -- through the door -- Alice following him inside.

INT. SANDAL'S HOUSE LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The other kids' faces are peering through the banister -- each having secured a stair --

As the Doctor bursts into the room.

Sandal is kneeling beside the couch -- Joey is supine, covered with a course army blanket.

The Doctor takes charge feeling Joey's head.

DOCTOR
When did you last take his
temperature?

SANDAL
About two minutes ago.

DOCTOR
Is it stable.

SANDAL
No, it's been going up.

DOCTOR
Pain?

SANDAL
Don't think so.

The Doctor takes his stethoscope out of his bag -- listens to Joey's chest.

He looks in Joey's ears.

DOCTOR
Say, aaaaa.

The Doctor tries to get Joey to open his mouth so he can see his throat.

Joey is limply conscious but can't cooperate.

The flashlight makes shadows on the wall behind them.

The Doctor feels his neck for glands.

DOCTOR (cont'd)
When did this start?

SANDAL
This evening. He was running around all afternoon -- ate a good supper -- didn't he, Alice?

ALICE
That's right.

DOCTOR
How are the other kids?

SANDAL
Fine.

DOCTOR
Any of you kids feeling sick?

ADAM
No.

Cierra shakes her head 'no.'

DOCTOR
I think we should get him to the hospital.

SANDAL

I don't have insurance.

DOCTOR

I know that, Sandal -- but I just don't think there is a choice.

Sandal looks at Alice.

The kids move off the stairs and hug around their Momma's skirt.

ALICE

We'll do whatever we have to.

DOCTOR

The county hospital has an indigent program.

ALICE

Doc -- we're not indigent -- we'll find a way -- we always have.

SANDAL

We'll do okay, Doc.

DOCTOR

Well -- I'll help all I can.
Sandal -- can I talk to you on the porch for second.

Sandal looks at Alice -- puzzled -- concerned.

She nods -- it's okay.

Sandal and the Doctor go outside.

EXT. SANDAL'S HOUSE PORCH - CONTINUOUS

The Doctor squares off in front of a bewildered Sandal.

DOCTOR

I don't want you getting into any more trouble -- Sandal. If you need any help just ask me.

SANDAL

Doc -- you know we don't like asking help. We like to pay our own way.

DOCTOR

It's admirable -- really. But sometimes you have to ask for help.

SANDAL

And we're going to make sure that Joey gets anything he needs.

DOCTOR

Sandal -- you can't black market that elixir -- they'll throw you in jail.

SANDAL

Look, Doc -- I know people laugh at me, and all. I know what they think. But my father and his father always made the willow elixir -- and sold it. It's just supposed to make you feel good.

DOCTOR

Well -- the Sheriff doesn't share your medical opinion and neither do I. At the least it's fraud -- at the worst it could harm people long term for all you know. Sandal -- don't do it.

SANDAL

So -- you know about the new batch?

DOCTOR

No, I don't. But I know this is how you've raised extra cash in the past.

SANDAL

It's not moonshine.

DOCTOR

I know.

SANDAL

It's not got any alcohol in it. It's just an extract from a plant in my garden. I know it looks like I got a still behind the house -- that's what they're really upset about -- isn't it?

(beat)

I mean, they sell bottled water, for heaven sakes.

DOCTOR

Yes, but they don't say it'll make
you feel better.

SANDAL

Well, they imply it. I've heard
they even fill those bottles up
with tap water.

DOCTOR

Okay -- but please -- Sandal -- if
you need help.

(beat)

Look -- here's what we'll do. I'll
be available all night if you need
me. If his temperature goes up
over 104 you call me immediately --
put a wet sheet over him. You got
that?

SANDAL

Yes. And thank you, Doctor.

As the Doctor hurries toward his care with a wave --

DOCTOR

I think you're a good man, Sandal.

Yells after him --

SANDAL

Thank you, Doc.

INT. SANDAL HOUSE LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Sandal sleeps next to the couch.

Alice sleeps in a chair, Cierra snuggled in her lap.

Sandal wakes with a start -- blankly looks around--

SUDDENLY --

Realizes why he's not in his bed.

He feels his son's forehead.

He puts the thermometer in Joey's armpit.

He waits.

Alice stirs -- opening her eyes without moving, afraid of
waking Cierra.

Is Joey worse?

Sandal pulls the thermometer out -- tries to see it but can't.

He tries to find a patch of moonlight -- can't -- hurriedly gets up -- stumbles into the kitchen -- flicks on the light.

SANDAL

Oh, no. NO.

He rushes to Joey's side -- feels his body.

ALICE

What? WHAT?

SANDAL

It's a hundred and five.

ALICE

Oh -- dear Jesus -- no.

SANDAL

I gotta call the Doctor.

ALICE

Hurry.

Sandal dials.

He waits.

There is no answer -- it's busy.

SANDAL

Busy. His phone is busy.

ALICE

What time is it?

SANDAL

I don't know. Ten thirty, maybe?

ALICE

Wait a few minutes and call him back.

INT. DOCTOR'S HOUSE - SAME

The Doctor is on the phone -- laughing.

DOCTOR

Ah, Sis -- that's too funny. So --
what's he going to do now?

Obviously the Doctor is not hanging up soon.

He's stretched out on the couch with his shoes off.

EXT. SANDAL'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A lone, tiny light is shining through the living room window.

INT. SANDAL'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Sandal and the whole family are gathered around Joey.

Sandal has the phone to his ear -- its busy signal is heard
by all in the stillness.

Alice brushes a tear that rolls down her cheek.

The kids miss nothing and start sobbing.

Sandal slams his hand down on the old fashioned cradle.

He looks panicked for an instant -- then regains his
composure.

SANDAL

Get the wet sheet over him. I'm
going to try it.

ALICE

Oh, Sandal -- don't.

SANDAL

It's all I've got.

ALICE

It's not medicine.

SANDAL

We don't know that. My father
swore by it.

ALICE

Try the Doctor again -- please.

Alice spreads a wet sheet over Joey's frail, still body.

Sandal dials the number -- the busy signal blares into the
silence.

Sandal rises sharply -- tall and determined -- he marches into the kitchen.

He comes back with the little bottle labelled Willow Elixir Extract.

He pulls the cork -- places a tablespoon at the opening and tries to pour it.

His hands shake.

He tosses the tablespoon aside and lifts his son's head off the pillow.

SANDAL

Here, son -- drink a little sip of
this -- it won't hurt you.

He makes this last statement more for the family and himself than for comatose Joey.

Joey sputters -- swallows -- more sputtering.

EXT. SANDAL'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Crickets and night sounds croak up a symphony of calm and peace.

The light SUDDENLY shifts.

There is a lot of movement in the Sandal house -- shadows flicker across the curtains like an old time movie.

INSIDE:

Bodies fly from all directions as they all descend around the couch.

Joey's eyes twitch open -- he looks around.

JOEY

Mom? -- Dad? -- What happened?

ALICE

Joey -- thank God.

She bursts into tears -- hugs his neck --

The phone rings.

SANDAL

Hello? -- Yes -- Oh, hi, Doc --
Yes -- I was trying to call you --
No, everything's just fine. Just
wanted to call and tell you that
Joey's fever's broke -- Thanks for
everything -- Bye.

He hangs up and tenderly puts his arms around his little family who are all hugging Joey.

INT. SANDAL HOUSE BEDROOM - LATER

Sandal and Alice are in bed.

The night is quiet -- moonlight filling the tiny room.

ALICE

What are you thinking?

SANDAL

My father swore by that stuff.

ALICE

Have it tested.

SANDAL

I'm afraid to. It could change our
lives forever.

ALICE

Good.

SANDAL

I don't know? I want to teach my
children to work hard. To be
thankful people.

ALICE

So?

SANDAL

This elixir could make us rich.

ALICE

Sandal -- it is just as important
to teach our kids how to handle
money. Right now they aren't --
because we don't have any.

She chuckles.

SANDAL

I know.

ALICE

Look -- find out what's in it.
Then you can decide. I know you
will do what's right.

SANDAL

My father's rolling over in his
grave right now.

They both enjoy the thought -- come closer together -- let
the silence of the night cover them.

EXT. ORANGE GROVE - MORNING

Sandal jogs up the gravel drive as Rami is getting into the
Chevy.

RAMI

You're late, buster.

SANDAL

I know.

RAMI

And -- so?

SANDAL

One of the kids -- Emergency.

RAMI

Sorry to hear that -- but I've got
a business to run here.

SANDAL

I know -- it won't happen again.

RAMI

It's not like you have to do
anything but fall out of bed and
you're here.

SANDAL

Feels like it some days -- sure
does.

EXT. ORANGE GROVE - DAY

Sandal and some WORKERS are at the irrigation pool.

The pump is not working.

Sandal has the pump pulled apart and is greased up -- filthy.

SANDAL

I'm going to need a new belt for sure. Hopefully this does the trick. You boys can get back to work.

MAN 1

Sure, boss.

Rami drives up.

RAMI

Sandal -- I thought you had that up and running -- darn.

SANDAL

I did.

RAMI

So -- why's it down?

SANDAL

Don't know exactly.

RAMI

Well -- time's money.

SANDAL

Doing the best I can here.

Beat.

RAMI

What?

SANDAL

Nothing.

RAMI

If you can't handle this I can get somebody else.

SANDAL

I can handle it.

RAMI

We've got lots to do.

SANDAL

I know.

Rami storms off in a screech of tires and dust.

Sandal looks after him with a tired face.

He goes back to work on the pump -- slides himself up under a section where he's been working --

SUDDENLY --

The pump shifts and comes down on his outstretched arm.

There is a snapping sound like a branch cracking under applied weight --

Sandal emits a loud scream of pain.

SANDAL (cont'd)
Aaaaaa -- HELP. Aaaaaa -- HELP.
Somebody. HELP.

Men come running from all directions.

They quickly lift the pump off his forearm.

It's broken badly -- bleeding profusely.

One of the men quickly tears his shirt to make a tourniquet and winds it around Sandal's arm above the elbow.

The men pick him up -- carry him to a flat-bed truck nearby.

INT. SANDAL'S HOUSE KITCHEN - DUSK

Alice is feeding the kids.

The back door opens and Sandal stands in the doorway with a newly cemented cast on his right arm.

The kids all bounce up in unison running for the door screaming 'Dad' 'Daddy'

He hugs them with his left arm -- smiles up at Alice grimly.

Alice catches the pain in his eyes.

Sandal sits at the head of the table.

SANDAL
Who wants to sign my cast?

Everybody at once 'me' 'me' 'me', Daddy.'

Cierra stands at the end of the table looking up at Sandal, her blue eyes -- big -- expectant.

Sandal produces a pack of magic markers and holds them out to her wanting her to pick her color.

She carefully chooses red -- pulls the top off -- scribbles on the cast.

SANDAL (cont'd)

OK, OK, your name's not that long.

CIERRA

Ciiiiieerrraah. See?

Adam and Joey are lined up ready to sign.

Joey's next -- signs his name in big block letters.

SANDAL

That's really good, Joey.

Adam signs his big John Hancock and all stand back to admire their handiwork.

Alice demands a marker.

Sandal holds the pack up for her to choose.

She picks purple --

She writes --

TO MY SANDAL.

I LOVE YOU,

Alice

Adam reads --

NATE

TO MY SANDAL -- I LOVE YOU --
Alice.

SANDAL

That's nice -- that's really sweet.

ADAM

That's corny.

CIERRA

No, it's not. It's beautiful.

Blowing Alice a kiss --

SANDAL
And I love you, too.

ADAM
Euwwww.

CIERRA
Me, too.

Sandal hugs and kisses Cierra.

SANDAL
Men shake hands.

He extends his hand to Adam -- then Joey -- they shake --

SANDAL (cont'd)
And sometimes they hug.

He pulls them all to him and hugs them, cast and all.

EXT. RAMI'S HOUSE - MORNING

Rami's house is a Victorian 19th century Mansion -- set back from the road.

Rami watches from his porch as Sandal leaves his cottage -- walks along the road side -- up the long walk -- up his steps and to stands before him.

Rami sits in a rocking chair -- reading a book -- puffing on a pipe.

RAMI
Haven't seen you in a couple of days.

SANDAL
You got my message.

RAMI
I knew you broke your arm, Sandal. It happened on my property. I know everything that happens on my property. Cost a dear penny, too. What happened to you? I just left you -- everything was fine.

SANDAL
I'm not sure what happened.

RAMI

You weren't being careless were you, Sandal?

SANDAL

You know me -- I don't take chances.

RAMI

There's always that first time -- a slip of judgement -- you were tired, remember? Joey was sick, I believe? You came in late to work.

SANDAL

Rami, I'm going to have to take off till this heals. I mean -- I can do some things like hire the men and stuff but I'm not going to be driving the tractors and stuff like that.

RAMI

I see --

SANDAL

I can't.

RAMI

Soooo, what am I going to do?

SANDAL

I'll be here. I just can't do all the stuff.

RAMI

You mean you can't work --

SANDAL

I can --

RAMI

No -- you can't --

SANDAL

Rami -- I have to --

RAMI

It's not a matter of have to -- it's a matter of can you --

SANDAL

I can.

Rami sighs, a deep finishing breath --

RAMI

We'll see. But I'm telling you right now it better not affect the production.

SANDAL

No, no, sir -- it won't.

RAMI

So, when are you going to grace us with your presence?

SANDAL

I'm still sore. Can you give me a few more days?

RAMI

What? --

SANDAL

Rami, it didn't just break -- I tore ligaments -- I might have to have other operations -- physical therapy.

Rami sits back -- just stares at Sandal, not saying a word but sending a clear message that Sandal's job is certainly in jeopardy.

RAMI

And I'm supposed to pay you? --

BLACK OUT:

EXT. ORANGE GROVE - DAY

Rami pokes his head over the wall.

A garden -- looking like a tangled hodgepodge of every plant imaginable -- greets him.

Sandal's trying to trowel with his left hand.

RAMI

Hey, Sandal, when you coming back to work?

SANDAL

I told you I just needed some time.

RAMI

And so you're out here hoeing?
Looks like you're feeling a whole
lot better.

SANDAL

I just couldn't stay inside
anymore.

RAMI

Well, glad to see you cleaning this
dump up.

SANDAL

It's staying just the way it is.

RAMI

Sandal -- I've threatened for the
last time about this weed infested
acre of yours -- I'm taking you to
court if I have to.

SANDAL

I can't stop you, Rami -- do what
you must.

RAMI

Oh, come on, Sandal -- look at this
mess you call a cultivation -- and
the insects -- my God -- the
insects. Do you know how much
insecticide I've had to use to ward
off an infestation? --

SANDAL

I know that's what you say but if
you'd diversify --

RAMI

My God -- man -- be reasonable. If
I let my groves go you'd be out of
a job -- this is valuable land --
Sandal -- it's not much -- granted --
- but you could grow all your
vegetables and the children could
help tend it -- Now there's an
idea. When my father willed this
land to your Dad he had no
intention of it becoming an eye
sore.

The children scream out of the house chasing the dog, who's
got a doll flopping between its teeth.

SANDAL

We have a small garden up near the house.

RAMI

Peanuts. You could grow enough produce to make a little extra cash at the fresh market.

SANDAL

My wife's pregnant -- Rami -- and I put in 10 to 12 hours a day in your orange groves.

RAMI

Well, so? Are you saying you're not satisfied? What -- Sandal? -- I'm not paying you enough? -- Plus all the oranges you can eat, besides.

SANDAL

(aside)

The blemished ones.

Rami barely hears the remark -- is about to respond -- changes his mind and takes a completely different tact.

RAMI

And another thing, Sandal, I don't want to see those kids climbing the wall. It can only mean that one day they venture into my groves and pick my fruit -- or worse -- break an arm or leg.

He pointedly refers to Sandal's accident -- implying carelessness.

SANDAL

They know not to bother you.

RAMI

Well, you see that they don't. --

With that Rami starts to instruct the laborers that have come with atomizers to spray the trees.

RAMI (cont'd)

Start down there and move up the rows -- down wind -- down wind.

Sandal catches Joey as he runs by -- lifts him off the ground to squeals and peels of laughter -- the other kids, yelling 'me next' 'me next.'

Rami's attention is divided between Sandal -- his kids -- the men --

RAMI (cont'd)

One per row. Alternate rows and don't miss a tree. The worm flies are especially bad this year with all the rain we've had. Good news and bad.

Rami slides off the wall to concentrate on his work.

EXT. ORANGE GROVE - CONTINUOUS

The men start spraying up and down the rows.

Rami inspects the water channels -- goes over to the water valve -- opens it to let water rush down the channels into the grove.

EXT. SANDAL'S ACRE - DAY

Sandal is bent over with the children in a circle intent on explaining some wonder of an ant hill that's working in their tangle of green.

SANDAL

You see how they work together. If you work together you can get things done quickly.

JOEY

Like chores?

SANDAL

That's a good example.

ADAM

You all can help me weed the garden.

CIERRA

I'll help.

SANDAL

That's the spirit.

JOEY
I'll help, too.

ADAM
But don't pull up the flowers like
you did last time.

JOEY
I love flowers.

CIERRA
I'll watch him.

They all laugh and Sandal squeezes Joey in a bear hug.

INT. SANDAL'S HOUSE KITCHEN - EVENING

Sandal and the kids are seated at the kitchen table.

Alice is putting the bowls of soup in front of the children.

SANDAL
Let's be thankful.

They all bow their heads.

SANDAL (cont'd)
Mighty Creator of heaven and earth -
- we humbly thank you for all
you've provided -- how you've not
forgotten us -- our health -- the
clothes on our backs -- the food on
our plates. In all this abundance
we thank you.

They all start talking at once -- passing bread and butter.

Alice helps Joey butter his bread.

SANDAL (cont'd)
Momma -- this is the best soup
EVER.

ALICE
You always say that --

SANDAL
And I always mean it.

CIERRA
I would like some jam on my bread,
please?

JOEY

Me, too.

ADAM

I'll get it.

Adam leans back in his chair and barely touches the jam jars on the pantry shelf behind him.

As he leans he loses his balance -- tumbles out of sight.

There is a moment of silence before Adam bounces up -- embarrassed but unhurt -- righting his chair.

The family laughs as Adam plucks a jam jar from the shelf -- triumphantly opens it -- passes it to Sandal.

EXT. RAMI'S HOUSE - SAME EVENING

There are no lights on in the house.

A faint glow comes from a TV in the downstairs living area.

INSIDE RAMI'S HOUSE

Rami is sitting in front of his TV with a microwaved TV dinner.

He tries to open it and watch the TV at the same time -- burns his fingers.

RAMI

Darn things. Somebody should make
these more consumer friendly.
Stupid -- fool thing --

He fumbles with the packaging -- it's hot.

He burns his fingers again attempting to open it.

When he finally pulls the tin foil back the whole thing slips out of his hands onto the floor.

RAMI (cont'd)

That's it -- that's enough.

The TV is tuned to some self help GURU -- we hear his spiel.

Rami sort of cleans up the mess on the TV tray -- scooping the food back in the tin foil.

GURU

(vo)

And right now we're including in this offer an added bonus book called -- Seven Ways To Unleash Your Prosperity. We all have the potential but few of us really ever put into motion the principles that will release us to achieve unlimited success in whatever we set our hearts and minds to do --

Rami punches the remote -- the TV flicks off -- is silent.

He sits for a bit -- thinking -- then moves his huge belly in a slow motion exercise to get out of his chair.

RAMI

Well, I'm going to self help myself to McDonald's. Don't know why I try these silly things -- never works.

He opens his front door disappearing into the dusk as it closes behind him.

INT. SANDAL'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The sounds of night are softly evident as Sandal tucks his children into their beds.

The boys in one -- Cierra in another.

It's a loft of the house just above the living room.

The window is open -- the curtain blushes in the faint breeze.

SANDAL

Father God -- fill this room with Your joy and Your peace.

(beat)

Good night my sweet princes and princesses. Tomorrow is a new adventure so get all the good sleep you can so you will be ready to run as fast as the adventure demands.

Adam pipes up.

NATE

Dad -- you always say the same thing when you're tucking us in.

SANDAL

And that's because I want you to
always remember it.

Joey sits up.

JOEY

I have it mesmerized.

Sandal laughs.

SANDAL

That's memorized --

JOEY

Ya, mesmerized --

NATE

Memorized -- you store it in your
brain --

JOEY

I think my brain is full --

ADAM

It can't be --

JOEY

I think mine is --

CIERRA

Mine, too --

JOEY

I can't sleep --

SANDAL

Okay -- OKAY -- let's calm down.
Lie down, Joey.

He lies down -- squeezes his eyes shut as if that will help
him fall asleep.

Sandal walks to the ladder -- puts his finger on the light
switch.

SANDAL (cont'd)

Good night my lovely angels.

They all chime in together 'good night, Daddy.'

He clicks the light off.

INT. SANDAL'S HOUSE - MORNING

There is a loud knocking on the front door.

Sandal appears in his pajamas, in slippers, carrying a large cup of coffee.

He opens the door -- Rami's frame looms large -- blocking the light.

Rami hands Sandal a piece of official looking paper.

SANDAL

What's this?

RAMI

The municipality has decided -- with my recommendation and complete consent -- to authorize the clean up of unkempt lots and properties within its jurisdiction. That would -- I think -- put your acreage in that category.

SANDAL

Let me see this.

Sandal takes the piece of paper -- scrutinizes it --

Hands it back to Rami.

SANDAL (cont'd)

Looks like I might need to get some clarification.

RAMI

Be my guest. Says right here to contact the Mayor's office if you have any questions.

SANDAL

I'll do that --

RAMI

You mean you're going to put up a fight to save those weeds?

SANDAL

They're not weeds -- Rami. Some are herbs that make our food taste yummy -- some are medicinal -- some birds prefer the seeds of certain plants -- some very beneficial insects that eat other insects flourish in certain environments.

RAMI

Like the mosquitos that just love that algae filled pond?

SANDAL

Yes -- well -- the insecticides killed off the larvae eating fish that used to thrive in the pond --

RAMI

Oh, so, now that's my fault? --

SANDAL

Actually -- it is-- yes --

RAMI

I make a living working very hard. My oranges are renowned for their crisp -- juicy meat. My taxes pay for much of what happens in this county. Your kids' schooling -- in fact -- is subsidized by my hard work.

SANDAL

We home school.

RAMI

-- That explains it --

SANDAL

What? --

RAMI

Why the little rascals are always at home.

SANDAL

Rami, -- I think you've overstayed your welcome on my doorstep.

RAMI

Yes, I have -- good luck.

He points to the paper in Sandal's hand.

SANDAL
I don't believe in luck.

RAMI
Too, bad -- you'll need it.

Rami smiles with a broad, knowledgeable smile that has 'gotcha' written all over it.

Sandal closes the door -- softly.

He walks back into the kitchen reading the fine print.

INT. SANDAL'S HOUSE KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Alice is cleaning up the dishes.

Joey, and Adam are seated at the table -- coloring.

SANDAL
I have to go to the court house.

ALICE
I heard.

SANDAL
Every leaf on every tree is
different even though it gets it's
nourishment from the same sap.
Every snowflake is different --
yet its melted water can fill an
ocean.

ALICE
Honey -- what can I do?

SANDAL
Pray --

ALICE
For what? --

SANDAL
For wisdom --

ALICE
Okay -- I can do that.

SANDAL
I didn't want to be sharp with that
man but it's so hard. He's not
nice -- he's -- I don't know what
he is.

ALICE

Unhappy -- Jealous -- Lonely.

SANDAL

You'd think the world was created
just so he could grow oranges. I
don't think he eats anything else.
Juice flows in his veins --

ALICE

Vinegar you mean.

They chuckle.

SANDAL

Well, I've got to go.

Alice raises her face in the air for a kiss -- Sandal
tenderly accommodates.

INT. MAYOR'S OFFICE - MORNING

Sandal is shown into the Mayor's office.

The MAYOR rises from behind his desk -- a plumpish man with
well fed cheeks.

MAYOR

Mr? --

SANDAL

You can call me Sandal.

MAYOR

Ah -- yes -- Rami told me about
you.

SANDAL

All good I hope.

MAYOR

-- He seems to have a small problem
that we'd like to address which I
think will benefit the whole
community.

Sandal pulls the document out of his pocket -- unfolds it --
lays it purposefully in front of the mayor.

SANDAL

I suppose you are referring to
this.

MAYOR

Ummm -- yes -- as a matter of fact.
How soon can you comply?

SANDAL

Exactly what is the problem.

MAYOR

Well -- for one -- it's an eye
sore.

SANDAL

It's a natural garden --

MAYOR

I think natural is the word we are
having some trouble with here --
it's cultivated weeds according to
Rami.

SANDAL

Have you been out there?

MAYOR

Frankly -- no -- I haven't.

He busies himself -- shuffling papers.

MAYOR (cont'd)

Mr. -- ah -- Sandal -- I really
don't think you have a leg to stand
on. Rami could press for damages
if he's inclined.

SANDAL

I have one acre -- he's got
thousands -- and you're telling me
that my acre of cattails and
ragweed are causing him to lose
sleep at night?

MAYOR

I think it's more -- you're on the
same road -- next to his house sort
of thing.

SANDAL

An eye sore --

MAYOR

Yes. He's put a lot of money into
his house and property.

SANDAL

So he has --

MAYOR

Well, you have a week to think about it --

SANDAL

What's to think about. I have a week before you send in the county weed eaters.

MAYOR

Nicely put -- Mr. Sandal -- nicely put. Now -- if you will excuse me -- I have work to do. My duty to the people calls me.

SANDAL

Thank you for your time then.

He waves the notice at the Mayor as he picks it up to leave.

SANDAL (cont'd)

Yes -- the people's business.

In a rare fit of angst Sandal crumples up the notice and tosses it aggressively on the Mayor's desk - surprising himself --

MAYOR

That's not fair -- Mr. Sandal. I would do the same for you.

SANDAL

I'll keep that in mind.

Sandal leaves the Mayor's office without ceremony -- closing the door behind him.

The Mayor picks up the phone making a magnanimous gesture behind him.

EXT. SANDAL'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Sandal walks up the road in front of his house.

Rami drives by -- stirring up a huge cloud of dust that almost obscures Sandal -- coats the roadside plants with another misting of dirt -- makes them almost appear white.

Sandal stops -- blinking back the dust.

He opens the gate to his yard -- carefully latching it behind him.

He watches Rami turn his Mercedes into his driveway and into the open garage.

INT. SANDAL'S HOUSE KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Sandal enters the kitchen.

Alice is at the table gluing the sole of a shoe back together with a glue gun.

ALICE
How did it go?

SANDAL
Not good --

ALICE
Oh, no --

SANDAL
-- you know the Mayor and Rami are old buddies. I wouldn't expect him to side with me on anything -- especially if Rami is on the other side.

ALICE
But what's fair -- what's right? --

SANDAL
What does that have to do with the price of coffee in China?

ALICE
Isn't there some court -- some mediation -- some sort of small claims court or something that deals with these sorts of things?

SANDAL
This is a municipal ordinance. I guess I could take them to court but -- what -- the court in this county is going to be fair minded?

ALICE
I don't know? Why wouldn't they?

SANDAL

Um -- because Rami pays their salaries?

ALICE

He does not. The county pays their salaries --

SANDAL

And who pays the county? --

She thinks a bit --

ALICE

Rami's taxes --

SANDAL

We actually get money back and haven't paid taxes since our third child.

They fall silent --

ALICE

But it's an herb garden.

SANDAL

I tried that -- they all think I'm some kind of green peace sort of nut.

ALICE

Oh, that's silly --

SANDAL

We have one week --

ALICE

One WEEK?

SANDAL

Our secret garden is going to get uprooted.

ALICE

Not if I can help it --

SANDAL

There might be a lot at stake.

ALICE

Isn't there something we can do?

SANDAL

Short of violence -- no.

ALICE

It just makes me want to scream.

SANDAL

I'm sorry -- Alice -- I just get so mad at this sort of thing. Some people have the power to fit everybody through their square hole.

ALICE

When are you going to tell the kids?

SANDAL

It's not when -- it's how?

EXT. SANDAL'S ACRE - DAY

The kids are playing in the weeded field.

They've made secret paths through the tall grass -- hollowed out little caves in low hanging trees and bushes.

Today they are playing as if it were a jungle in Africa -- at any moment a wild animal may appear and attack.

They are being stalked by a tiger that is so clever it is invisible -- moving all around them.

ADAM

The tiger I saw was huge and it had very big green eyes that glowed in the dark.

CIERRA

Did it have nice soft fur?

ADAM

Yes, and you can pet it if you are a kid.

JOEY

I've petted it before.

ADAM

You couldn't have -- not yet.

CIERRA

I want to. My turn next.

ADAM

When we see it you sure can. But
remember it might have cubs.

CIERRA

It's a mother?

ADAM

Yes -- and it's very protective of
its cubs.

JOEY

I saw the cubs, too.

CIERRA

Now I know you've never petted it.

JOEY

But I did.

CIERRA

You couldn't have. It would eat
you alive if you got near its cubs.

JOEY

No -- it's a tame tiger. Isn't it
a tame tiger, Adam?

ADAM

I don't know for sure. I said it
might have cubs.

CIERRA

See Joey. MIGHT.

JOEY

But I know what I saw.

CIERRA

Right. So show us where.

JOEY

All right -- I will.

Joey takes the lead -- carefully feeling his way through the
tall grass and thick underbrush.

SUDDENLY --

-- there's a quick movement -- a rabbit is startled from its
hiding place, and all the kids start to scream.

Joey stands, crying.

Cierra screams and screams.

Adam takes off through the brush -- fast after him.

Cierra and Joey follow as best they can -- Cierra screaming --
Joey crying.

They get to a clearing and see their father racing toward
them with Alice close behind.

SANDAL

Adam -- Adam -- what happened?
Are you all right? Where's Joey
and Cierra?

The Adam points in all directions.

Joey comes blubbering into view.

JOEY

It's a tiger -- A huge tiger -- I
saw its eyes -- they glow in the
dark.

Alice zeros in on the screams and plunges into the brush.

A rabbit dizzily runs from the brush in a mad dash to get
away from the frantic kids.

Sandal sees it -- relaxes.

SANDAL

It's only a rabbit.

Alice has reached Cierra who calm down immediately when she
see her mother.

She hugs her to her apron breast and Cierra stops crying.

SUDDENLY --

-- there is a new commotion in the brush -- it sounds like a
bull elephant rampaging through the tall grass --

Everyone turns -- kids' eyes big as saucers --

The great rustling gets closer -- LOUDER --

UNEXPECTEDLY --

Rami breaks through the tall grass and brush, breathing --
rather wheezing -- heavily.

RAMI

What -- what's wrong? I heard
screams -- Who's hurt?

Everybody freezes.

There is a strange embarrassment between the adults.

SANDAL

Rami -- thank you.

RAMI

Well, it's not -- I shouldn't have
butted in -- None of my business
really -- I -- I'm just going back
over to my place now.

He points in the direction of his mansion -- turns to go.

JOEY

Mr. Rami?

He hears the little voice and turns --

JOEY (cont'd)

Thank you for trying to save us
from the tiger.

There is another awkward silence as Rami looks at the little
boy quizzically -- then at the family -- as he shakes his
head, turning toward home.

SANDAL

I think that's the very first time
Rami has ever climbed over his
wall.

ALICE

Certainly the fastest.

They chuckle at the thought.

INT. RAMI'S HOUSE PORCH - MINUTES LATER

Rami has sweat marks on his shirt from his exertions over the
wall.

RAMI

Maria -- a lemonade -- pour favor.

MARIA -- about 35 -- a plump Mexican with a pleasant face --
brings a pitcher of lemonade and glass full of ice out on the
porch -- sets them on the table.

RAMI (cont'd)
Muchos gracias.

MARIA
Senior Rami -- why do you look so tired?

RAMI
Oh -- I thought I heard somebody screaming for help.

MARIA
Momma Mia.

RAMI
It was just those rascal kids of Sandal's pretending they were being stalked by tigers or something. -- Crazy kids.

MARIA
No -- Senior -- you don't know what you are missing.

RAMI
-- really, Maria? I'm sure you're satisfied with all the advantages you can afford your eight kids?

MARIA
No comprende.

RAMI
Never mind. Thanks for the lemonade.

He sips his lemonade.

RAMI (cont'd)
Just plain irresponsible -- having so many kids.

He takes another sip and looks off toward Sandal's acre.

He looks out over his huge orange grove.

The workers are busy with crates -- ladders -- tractors -- trailers -- and more crates.

He closes his eyes in satisfaction.

EXT. SANDAL'S ACRE - DAY

A tractor trailer -- motor running -- with a bush hog and other equipment loaded behind it -- sits on the road in front of Sandal's house.

Sandal is out in the yard talking to the DRIVER -- a squat, firm man with big hands.

DRIVER

I can't help it. Here's my orders.

SANDAL

But the Mayor said I had a week.

DRIVER

That's not my concern, Sir. See for yourself.

The driver juggles a handful of papers, -- shoving them in Sandal's direction.

INT. SANDAL HOUSE KITCHEN - EVENING

The family is seated around the evening meal.

CIERRA

And I give thanks for this food,
and for my brothers and the new
baby when it comes -- and for my
Dad and my Mom.

There is a long silence during which Cierra -- having finished her prayer -- takes a drink of water -- spreads her napkin in her lap -- starts to butter her bread -- as the rest of the family sits -- heads bowed -- not knowing she's finished.

CIERRA (cont'd)

Ooops, Amen.

She beams.

EXT. RAMI'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The lights are out -- a single candle moves in the house from window to window as it finds its way up to the second floor and disappears into shadows.

INT. RAMI'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Rami is in his pajamas carrying a candle into his bathroom.

He looks at himself in the mirror -- runs his fingers through his tangled hair -- turns the cold water on and splashes his face -- rubbing it.

He puts the back of his hand to his forehead.

He takes a thermometer out of the medicine cabinet -- sticks it under his tongue.

EXT. SANDAL HOUSE - LATER

Great laughter and squeals are heard -- the lights are burning brightly throughout the small house.

It's warm in contrast to Rami's cold darkness.

INSIDE SANDAL'S HOUSE

The family is finishing supper.

Everyone takes their plate to the sink.

CIERRA

Is it my turn?

ALICE

No, I think Adam and Joey do dishes tonight.

ADAM

Aw, Mom. Cierra, you can take my place if you want to?

He pulls a hard candy out of his pocket and waves it in front of her.

CIERRA

Adam -- I know what you're trying to do.

JOEY

Ya, Adam. Cierra -- don't take it.

ADAM

Cierra -- Cierra -- yum-yum --
mmmmmmmm.

SANDAL

Am I going to have to make some new
rules around here?

He musses up Adam's hair and everybody grabs Adam around the waist and ankles -- tackling him to the floor.

Cierra has the piece of candy unwrapped by this time and pops it in her mouth.

EXT. RAMI'S HOUSE - LATER

A car pulls up outside Rami's house.

Dr. Murphy -- with his little black bag -- gets out of his car and walks swiftly up the walk -- mounts the stairs and knocks on the front door -- looking for some sign of life in the dark house.

A candle makes its way to the front door.

Rami opens the door.

RAMI

Come in -- Doc.

DOCTOR

Why are all the lights out?

RAMI

Save money.

DOCTOR

You? Never. What's wrong?

He enters.

INT. RAMI'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Rami collapses on the couch in the living room.

The Doctor kneels -- opens his bag -- takes out a thermometer and pops it into Rami's mouth.

DOCTOR

Sore throat?

Rami shakes his head 'no.'

DOCTOR (cont'd)

Any other pain -- discomfort?

Shakes his head 'no' again.

DOCTOR (cont'd)

Hmmm.

The Doctor feels for swollen lymph nodes in Rami's neck.

He takes out the thermometer.

DOCTOR (cont'd)

Not good. 103.

RAMI

Doc -- the world's starting to twirl.

DOCTOR

What have you taken -- anything?

RAMI

Aspirin.

DOCTOR

I want you to go to bed. Where's your housekeeper?

RAMI

In the cottage.

DOCTOR

I'll tell her. I want her to keep an eye on you.

RAMI

K.

The Doctor helps Rami up with one hand and picks up the candle with the other -- he helps him walk toward the stairs.

EXT. RAMI'S COTTAGE - MINUTES LATER

The Doctor knocks loudly on the cottage door --

A light comes on --

The door opens --

Maria squints in the porch light --

DOCTOR

Maria?

MARIA

Yes.

DOCTOR

Rami is very sick -- He has a high fever. I need someone to keep an eye on him tonight. Call me immediately if there are any changes.

MARIA

I can do that.

The Doctor walks back to his car.

Maria steps inside -- grabs a robe -- exits while putting the robe on -- walks swiftly toward the house.

She waves good-bye to the Doctor as if to say -- 'I've got the situation in hand.'

EXT. RAMI'S HOUSE - LATER

The Doctor's car pulls up outside Rami's house.

He gets out with his bag and hurries toward the house.

Maria meets him at the door.

INT. RAMI'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Maria talks the whole way up the staircase.

MARIA

He talks -- he makes no sense -- He thinks I'm an angel sent from God. He is very sick -- a very sick man. I don't know what to do?

DOCTOR

It's alright -- Maria. You did the right thing.

INT. RAMI'S HOUSE BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

The Doctor bends over the sick man.

RAMI

Ah -- you've come for me. You've come. Take me -- take me. I'm ready to go -- where's Momma?

(MORE)

RAMI (cont'd)

I thought she was coming with us?
Wait -- who are you? You live in
the box don't you? That
refrigerator box downtown --

The Doctor takes the thermometer from under his arm and whistles.

DOCTOR

We need to get him cooled down.

INT. SANDAL HOUSE - LATER

Sandal gets up out of bed and goes to the window.

He sees the Doctor's car in front of Rami's house.

Alice raises on a elbow.

ALICE

What is it -- dear?

SANDAL

Rami's house. If I'm not mistaken
that's Doc Murphy's car.

ALICE

What time is it?

SANDAL

Three in the morning.

ALICE

It's not a social call.

SANDAL

No -- it's not.

ALICE

Maybe you should go over there? --

SANDAL

And do what? --

ALICE

I don't know? --

SANDAL

A light's on upstairs. That's not
a good sign.

They both look at the electric light that's on in the bedroom -- a sight not seen if Rami's in control of his faculties.

EXT. SANDAL HOUSE - MORNING

The Sandal kids are playing in the yard.

INT. SANDAL HOUSE - MORNING

Sandal and Alice are seated at the table looking out toward Rami's house.

Men are milling about the porch waiting for work orders.

SANDAL

Now that's not right --

ALICE

You should go over there --

SANDAL

What for?

ALICE

Find out what's happening.

SANDAL

Maybe I should -- I think you're right -- I should.

He's out the back door with his coffee before Alice can say another word.

EXT. SANDAL HOUSE - MORNING

The kids see Sandal stride out of the house and head for Rami's.

They follow.

EXT. RAMI'S HOUSE - MORNING

Sandal walks between the houses with his entourage of kids in tow.

He opens the gate and walks up to the men sitting on the porch.

All talk stops as they look at Sandal and the passel of kids surrounding him.

Maria comes to the front door.

MARIA
No work today.

MAN
Why not?

MARIA
Go home.

MAN
Should we come back tomorrow?

MARIA
I don't know -- Go home.

MAN
What's wrong?

MARIA
He very sick.

MAN
Well -- if that don't beat all.

MAN 2
Rami's never been sick a day in his
life.

MAN
This is awful sudden.

MARIA
Last night -- Doctor -- he say Rami
very sick.

MAN
With what?

MARIA
Don't know? -- Fever.

MAN 2
Darn -- I don't want to catch
anything that ain't got a name to
it. Come on -- Davie -- let's go
home.

Man 2 motions for the younger man to follow him.

They walk past Sandal and the kids.

The other men follow silently.

Maria turns her attention to Sandal.

MARIA

Can I help you -- Mr. Sandal?

SANDAL

I just came over to see if I could help -- if you need anything?

MARIA

You know Mr. Rami would want nothing from you.

SANDAL

I suspect that's true. But being his neighbor -- I wanted to extend whatever I could.

MARIA

From me -- thank you -- from him -- go home.

SANDAL

What's the matter with him?

MARIA

I told you -- high fever.

Sandal puts his arms around his children and turns them toward the street.

SANDAL

Let's go home -- kids.

INT. SANDAL HOUSE - LATER

Sandal sits at the table looking out the window.

SANDAL

What do you think?

ALICE

You know what I think -- Sandal.

SUDDENLY --

A diesel engine roars to life.

Sandal jumps to the window.

The tractor trailer is belching smoke from its pipes.

EXT. SANDAL HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Sandal sprints out of the house.

He rounds the truck fender as the Driver climbs down from the cab.

SANDAL
What are you doing?

DRIVER
Looks like you got a stay of execution.

SANDAL
What do you mean?

DRIVER
Till Mr. Rami gets his head clear we have no marching orders.

SANDAL
You're not mowing my acre? But I thought that was a Municipal decision? The mayor said --

DRIVER
Look all I know is that Mr. Razlund was to give the 'go' on this one.

SANDAL
Really?

DRIVER
Look -- I gotta get. Got another job waitin'.

Sandal salutes as the driver gets back into the cab and revs the diesel into motion.

Sandal watches as the big trunk lumbers off -- jerking into the next gear as it grinds down the road.

Alice steps out on the back porch -- her arms folded over her protruding belly.

She motions for Sandal to come inside.

INT. SANDAL HOUSE KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Sandal enters the kitchen wiping his brow.

Alice is at the sink drying the last few dishes.

ALICE
You have a decision to make.

SANDAL
I'm torn.

ALICE
I'm not going to tell you what to do -- Sandal.

SANDAL
I know. I could get into trouble for doing this -- you know?

ALICE
Who's going to tell on you?

He plops down at the kitchen table.

He puts his head in his hands.

SANDAL
I'm really angry. I'm so frustrated. Rami's rich -- why is he doing this to us? What's he got to gain?

ALICE
Maybe he's jealous?

SANDAL
Jealous of me?

ALICE
You should pity him. You have everything. God has been good to you -- you are blessed in every way.

Sandal gets up and smiles grimly at Alice.

He relaxes -- puts his arms around her waist -- gives her a little kiss on the neck.

SANDAL
Yes, I am blessed -- blessed to have you. How gently you beat good sense into me.

She giggles at the brush of his lips on her skin.

ALICE
You're being a pesty boy -- Sandal Woods.

SANDAL

Mmmm -- that explains things.

He rubs her tummy tenderly.

Making up his mind --

SANDAL (cont'd)

Well -- the kids will enjoy the activity.

ALICE

You're going to do it?

SANDAL

You softened me up just enough.

He gives her a little pinch.

ALICE

Ow.

She playfully slaps at him as he's going out the door.

EXT. SANDAL'S ACRE - LATER

Sandal cuts a long strip of bark off a willow branch.

His copper kettle's on the fire with a copper coil (like a distillery) coming off the kettle -- going into a bottle.

He cuts the strip of bark into six inch pieces then strips them into strings.

He opens up the top of the kettle and puts the strips of bark into the boiling water.

Adam comes out of the tall grass with a load of twigs for the fire.

ADAM

Can I do that?

SANDAL

I've just about got it. Thanks.
When you're a little bigger I'll let you do it.

ADAM

How does it work?

SANDAL

The liquid is a special recipe that boils the bark and mixes with the steam that flows into this coil and condenses. I then collect it in this little bottle. That's all there is to it.

ADAM

Is that what you gave Joey to drink when he was sick?

SANDAL

Yep.

ADAM

Is that for Mr. Rami?

Sandal studies his son.

SANDAL

Do you think I should help him?

ADAM

He's sick -- Dad -- of course -- you should help him.

SANDAL

But he's going to destroy our garden.

ADAM

I know -- but that's something else. He's sick -- Dad. He needs to get well. Maybe this medicine will help him see?

SANDAL

What do you mean -- Adam?

ADAM

He has eyes but he can't see.

SANDAL

Explain this insight to me.

ADAM

He can't see how beautiful our garden is.

SANDAL

Oh -- well -- I don't think this will help cure him of his nearsightedness.

ADAM

Dad -- do you want Mr. Rami to die?

SANDAL

Certainly not -- Adam.

ADAM

But you knew he was sick last night?

SANDAL

Well -- I can't answer why I waited so long -- but it wasn't because I wanted him to die.

ADAM

But if he died -- then our garden would be saved.

SANDAL

Don't ever say things like that. You will never regret what you don't say. Sometimes it's okay to keep your thoughts to yourself.

Alice comes out on the porch.

ALICE

Sandal? Sandal!

SANDAL

What?

ALICE

The Doctor wants to talk to you.

SANDAL

Coming. Here -- Adam -- you hold this under here like this till it's full.

ADAM

Thanks -- Dad.

Adam gently takes the little bottle -- making sure he doesn't spill a drop.

INT. SANDAL HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

The Doctor is waiting for Sandal.

ALICE

He's coming.

DOCTOR
This will only take a minute --
Alice.

Sandal enters.

SANDAL
I heard.

Beat.

The Doctor spreads his arms wide.

DOCTOR
I've run out of ideas -- Sandal --
I'm stumped. Sort of humbling for
a Doctor to admit he's stumped. I
just thought I might try that
potion you gave Joey.

SANDAL
I'll do anything I can.

DOCTOR
It's very nice of you -- Sandal.

SANDAL
It's the right thing to do.

DOCTOR
Well -- I know there is no love
lost.

SANDAL
Rami can be a little rough around
the edges sometimes but I think he
has a tender spot in there
somewhere.

They share acknowledgement.

Adam comes in with the bottle.

ADAM
Dad -- the bottle's full.

SANDAL
Thanks -- Adam.
(to the Doc)
Shall we?

He motions for the Doctor to step outside.

INT. RAMI'S HOUSE - LATER

The Doctor enters Rami's bedroom with the bottle of elixir.
Maria stands.

DOCTOR
Is he awake?

MARIA
Awake -- asleep -- who can tell?

The Doctor raises Rami's head off the pillow and the eyes flicker dull -- his face is a flushed -- a sweaty mask.

DOCTOR
Here -- I want you to drink this.

He puts the bottle to Rami's lips and the sick man takes a little swig -- then another -- then coughs as some goes down the wrong pipe.

DOCTOR (cont'd)
Maria -- make him drink some more
in a half hour. I'll check back
with you on his condition.

MARIA
Yes, sir.

The Doctor picks up his bag and leaves.

EXT. RAMI'S HOUSE - LATER

Sandal is standing by the Doctor's car, waiting.

SANDAL
So? Did he drink it?

DOCTOR
Barely. Two small swigs. Wetted
his tongue, really.

SANDAL
I'm --

He motions toward his cottage.

DOCTOR
Thanks, Sandal. I've got to look
in on Mrs. Kirby. If I can ever do
anything? Oh -- and don't spread
this little incident around.

SANDAL
Gotcha. Thanks, Doc.

The Doctor gets in his car -- drives off.

Sandal walks back to his house.

All his kids are on the front porch with Alice -- waiting for news.

Sandal climbs the front steps.

ALICE
How is he?

SANDAL
The Doc doesn't know -- says he wetted his lips -- that's about it. Not enough -- I don't know?

ALICE
Can we help?

SANDAL
Pray --

Cierra bows her head and folds her hands.

CIERRA
Dear God -- help Mr. Rami get well like you helped me get well -- Amen.

JOEY
I want to pray.

He closes his eyes then opens them.

JOEY (cont'd)
Bow your head and close your eyes.

They all do.

JOEY (cont'd)
Dear God -- Mr. Rami needs a new brain. Please give him a new brain -- Amen.

ALICE
OK -- kids -- let's go inside.
(to Sandal, chuckling)
A new brain.

SANDAL
I know -- that's funny.

Alice and Sandal exchange winks.

INT. RAMI'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Rami moans --

Maria stirs in her chair --

She comes to the side of his bed --

His eyes flicker --

He moans again --

She picks up the bottle -- holds his head off the pillow --
puts the bottle's lip to his lips --

He swallows hard once -- then several times --

She lays his head back on the pillow --

He groans.

EXT. RAMI'S HOUSE - LATER

The night sounds engulf the house.

INT. SANDAL HOUSE - LATER

The same night-sounds filter through the bedroom window and
catch Sandal sitting on the window box looking out on the
still air.

He's motionless -- eyes glistening in the moonlight.

EXT. ORANGE GROVE - NEXT MORNING

The trees bend with the weight of the ripe fruit.

Rami's house is seen through the waving branches.

INT. RAMI'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Maria is downstairs in the kitchen making toast.

RAMI (O.C.)
 (bellowing)
 Maria -- MARIA. I'm starving.

MARIA
 God help us.

She puts the toast on a tray with coffee -- cereal -- milk --
 a soft boiled egg.

MARIA (cont'd)
 Coming.

She juggles the tray out of the kitchen.

INT. RAMI'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Maria teeters into Rami's bedroom.

He's propped up waiting.

RAMI
 What took you so long? Have you
 seen the oranges? Why have the
 workers stopped? What in the world
 is going on around here?

MARIA
 You have been sick -- very sick.

RAMI
 And the whole place stops just
 because I have a little fever?

MARIA
 You were dying -- Mr. Rami.

RAMI
 Nonsense -- stop it. Me? Look at
 me this morning. Does this look
 like a man that is going to die?

MARIA
 Yesterday --

Rami motions for the tray.

RAMI
 Here.
 (takes the silverware)
 Leave me in peace.

She leaves.

RAMI (cont'd)
You can't depend on anybody.
(bellowing)
Call my foreman.
(muttering)
Do I have to think of everything?

He chops into the food with relish.

INT. RAMI'S HOUSE - LATER

Rami looks out his bedroom window.

He looks at Sandal's field untouched.

The Doctor enters.

DOCTOR
Well -- well -- this IS a miracle.

RAMI
I'm as strong as an ox.

He bangs on his chest like a gorilla.

DOCTOR
I want you back in bed.

RAMI
Doc -- Maria says I owe you my
life. Take it out of my wallet.

Maria comes in.

RAMI (cont'd)
Maria -- where's the tractor
trailer?

MARIA
He had other work -- he couldn't
wait for you.

RAMI
Get him on the phone -- no -- call
the Mayor.

DOCTOR
Rami --

RAMI
Doc -- I appreciate you -- believe
me. I've lost a day of my life.
Got to get back in the saddle.

He disappears into his walk-in closet.

DOCTOR

I have to talk to you. That
medicine I gave you last night --
Sandal brought it over.

RAMI

(from the closet)

Yeah -- yeah -- later -- Doc. It's
harvest time -- I've lost a day.

DOCTOR

Okay -- Rami -- Okay. I'll be back
to check on you.

RAMI

Thanks -- Doc. Wow -- I feel good.

He pops out of the closet carrying his work shirt --
buttoning his pants -- breezes by the Doctor.

RAMI (cont'd)

Doc -- you're the greatest.
Totally. Put everything on my bill
-- gas -- time -- medicine -- I
don't care. Wow -- I feel so good
-- give yourself a little bonus.

The Doctor shakes his head in disbelief.

INT. RAMI'S HOUSE FOYER - MOMENTS LATER

The Doctor walks across the foyer.

Maria holds the door open for him.

DOCTOR

He has no idea -- won't listen to a
word I say.

MARIA

It's like he never was sick.

DOCTOR

He's pushing himself -- he almost
died -- but I don't know a soul who
could talk to him.

MARIA

Always -- no moleste.
(do not disturb)

DOCTOR
Talk to you later.

MARIA
Asta la vista. Gracias.

The Doctor waves as he leaves the front porch.

INT. RAMI'S HOUSE - LATER

Rami's on the phone.

RAMI
Of course -- today. Look -- get
here as soon as you can. Good.

Maria comes in with furniture polish and a dust cloth.

RAMI (cont'd)
Maria -- have lunch for the crew.
They'll be here in half an hour.

MARIA
You can't work today.

RAMI
Of course! We're behind.

He walks out of the house.

EXT. ORANGE GROVE - LATE THAT MORNING

Rami directs a tractor with a load of orange crates onto a trailer.

Men swarm over the orange trees as the harvest is in full swing.

EXT. SANDAL HOUSE BACK PORCH - MORNING

Sandal watches the Pickers and Rami working.

Alice brings him a sandwich.

ALICE
They're back at work?

SANDAL
Yep. And Rami's raging like a
rogue bull.

ALICE

That was a quick recovery.

SANDAL

It was. You know -- Alice -- I should take samples of that willow elixir and get it tested.

ALICE

I thought we didn't want to get rich or something like that?

SANDAL

Yes -- well -- I might have something valuable right here in our back yard that might help a lot of people.

ALICE

I think it was Cierra's prayer.

SANDAL

I'm still taking it down to lab.

ALICE

When?

SANDAL

The sooner the better -- I'm thinking.

ALICE

Sandal -- it's tree bark -- for heaven's sake -- what's there to think about?

SANDAL

We'll never know if we don't take it. Joey and -- now -- Rami? I've used it on myself for years.

ALICE

You never told me that. I thought you gave Joey that elixir to make him feel like he was taking real medicine.

SANDAL

You are so funny --all these years my Dad's been out back distilling this stuff you thought he was practicing some black magic?

ALICE

I thought you were just amusing the children. They love it when you build fires and tell stories.

SANDAL

Ah-ha -- the truth comes out.

ALICE

I loved it, too.

SANDAL

Well -- I'm making a new batch in about five minutes -- want to come out and join me?

ALICE

Sure. Our million dollar batch.

SANDAL

Don't get your hopes up --

ALICE

I just might be hoping it fails for all our sakes -- for all you know.

SANDAL

That's my Alice.

He gives her a playful knuckle on the chin.

EXT. SANDAL'S ACRE - NOON

Smoke billows from below the still.

Drip -- drip -- drip -- as a little bottle catches the elixir.

The children run around gathering sticks for the fire.

Alice sets up a picnic area on a blanket nearby.

Sandal tends the operation.

SANDAL

More wood. Come on my trusty worker ants.

The kids work hard -- their little faces red from the effort -- out of breath.

JOEY

Whew -- this is hard work.

SANDAL

You're doing a good job -- Joey
ant.

He beams and rushes off to get more.

Cierra brings a few little sticks and gives them to Sandal
for immediate burning.

SANDAL (cont'd)

Thank you -- my little worker Sarah
ant.

ALICE

Lunch is ready.

A pile of sandwiches sit in the middle of the blanket with
paper plates spread around the perimeter.

The kids plop down around the sandwiches -- each reaching for
the food.

Sandal squeezes a cork into the top of the bottle of elixir.

SANDAL

Honey -- I just can't stand it --
I'm taking this to the lab.

ALICE

You're so funny.

SANDAL

I know -- but curiosity is killing
me.

ALICE

Remember -- curiosity killed the
cat.

Joey starts to cry.

Alice (cont'd)

Honey, what's wrong?

She kneels beside the youngster.

JOEY

I don't like cur-os-ity.

ALICE

Oh -- honey -- that's just an
expression.

SANDAL
Nobody's going to be killing
anything around here.

Adam snorts a muffled laugh.

He gets a glare from Sandal and sobers up immediately.

SANDAL (cont'd)
Okay -- I'm off. Wish me luck.

ALICE
You don't believe in luck --

SANDAL
You're right --

SANDAL (cont'd)
Keep the faith -- baby --

ALICE
I do.

She give him a thumbs up -- blows a kiss --

He's off.

EXT. DOWNTOWN - THAT AFTERNOON

Sandal walks downtown looking at the displays in the store windows as he strides past.

He enters a building that doesn't really have any characteristics.

A little sign by the door identifies LILSAC LABS.

EXT. LILSAC LABS - LATER

Sandal leaves the building with a bounce to his step.

EXT. ROADWAY - LATER

Sandal hitch hikes along the side of the road.

A semi truck with a bush-hog on its trailer passes him.

He turns as the truck passes.

It doesn't stop.

He turns back with his thumb out -- then turns with a SUDDEN knowledge --

He breaks into a sprint for home realizing it's headed for his acre.

EXT. SANDAL'S ACRE - AFTERNOON

Joey and Adam are by the rock wall of Sandal's acre and Rami's grove.

ADAM

I could lift you up and you could reach it.

JOEY

Mr. Rami said never to pick his fruit.

ADAM

But its on our side of the fence. So -- it's at least half ours.

JOEY

It's on his tree.

ADAM

It's soaking up our sunlight.

Joey thinks about this for a second.

JOEY

You're right.

Adam squats down -- picks Joey up on his shoulders.

He's just high enough to reach the branch.

He pulls the branch down -- down -- down -- he can almost reach the oranges.

SUDDENLY

There is a loud CRACK -- the whole branch of the orange tree tears off -- falls onto Sandal's acre -- dislodging some of the rock wall.

Joey falls backward - arms flailing -- hitting the ground -- knocking himself out.

Adam falls on his back knocking the wind out of himself.

There are YELLS on the other side of the rock wall.

A WORKER's face pops above the rock wall -- looks down at the boys.

Then Rami's cherry red face scowls down at them.

RAMI

What are you boys doing? Ah-ha --
destroying my trees. Trespassing --
Stealing -- in fact. A bunch of no
good thieves. Well -- we'll see
about this.

Rami disappears.

The worker is about to climb over and help when he disappears as if he's pulled down by an unseen force.

Adam is regaining his breath.

Joey is groaning beside him.

ADAM

Joey -- Joey -- wake up.

EXT. SANDAL'S HOUSE - LATER

A police car -- lights flashing -- sits in front of Sandal's house.

AROUND BACK

TWO POLICEMEN assess the situation.

Rami is on the Sandal side of the wall pointing and explaining what must have happened.

Adam -- head hung -- stands next to Alice.

Alice is holding Joey.

Cierra clings to one of Alice's legs.

POLICEMAN 1

So -- you found these boys sprawled
out on the ground with this tree
branch on top of them.

RAMI

Pretty much.

POLICEMAN 1

I don't see that they're intentions
were malicious.

RAMI

They destroyed private property.

POLICEMAN 1

Yes -- they did -- and you can file charges if you want to -- and I hope the judge throws it out on its ear as a frivolous lawsuit.

RAMI

How dare you call this frivolous. Do you have any idea how long it takes to grow an orange tree? This is my livelihood.

POLICEMAN 1

Looks like you're doing just fine there -- Mr. Razlund.

RAMI

What's your badge number -- sir?

ALICE

Officer -- I'm sure the boys didn't mean to break the branch off.

ADAM

No -- sir -- we only wanted two oranges -- and they were on our side of the wall.

POLICEMAN 1

What about that -- Mr. Razlund?

RAMI

Can't prove that one way or the other -- now -- can we?

ALICE

Do what you do -- Rami -- I have a young one to look after.

And with that Alice turns toward the house carrying Joey with Adam and Cierra dragging along.

MOMMENTS LATER

Sandal hops over the low front yard fence as the group is breaking up.

The police are in the front yard now.

Rami is on his front porch still scowling.

SANDAL
What's going on?

POLICEMAN 1
Oh -- Mr. Razlund is all in a tizzy
because your boys tried to pick
some oranges hanging over the wall
and pulled off the whole branch.
It's silly -- really -- but he's
all steamed up over it.

SANDAL
Thanks -- officers.

The two policemen get back in their patrol car -- they zoom
off as their radio calls them to another "crisis."

INT. SANDAL HOUSE - LATE THAT AFTERNOON

Adam is sitting in the living room with Sandal.

Joey is still in Alice's lap.

Cierra is curled up next to her.

SANDAL
So -- the oranges were really out
of reach.

ADAM
We reached 'em -- but Joey had to
get on my shoulders.

SANDAL
I see. Well -- I think we've all
learned a lesson here!

ADAM
I guess so.

ALICE
We've learned that Mr. Rami is not
a very nice neighbor --

SANDAL
We also learned not to touch
anything that belongs to him--

JOEY
But they were stealing our
sunshine.

SANDAL
How's that?

ADAM
It's not his fault. I told Joey
that they were our oranges because
they were stealing our sunshine.

SANDAL
(chuckling)
That's novel.

He looks over at Alice with a raised eyebrow.

INT. SANDAL HOUSE BEDROOM - NIGHT

Alice and Sandal are getting ready for bed.

Sandal starts to laugh.

ALICE
What are you laughing about?

SANDAL
Stealing sunshine.

He falls on the bed belly laughing.

SANDAL (cont'd)
Those oranges saw a whole field of
sunshine just over the fence --
they couldn't help themselves --
had to -- didn't you notice how
much warmer our backyard was after
Adam and Joey apprehended those
thieving oranges?

He's in spasms of chocking laughter on the bed.

Alice jumps on top of him and buries her head in his chest
laughing and tickling --

ALICE
I can't help myself either.

She starts to ripe off his shirt --

He laughs even harder as every touch tickles his -- now --
sensitive skin.

SANDAL
Don't -- stop -- STOP.

INT. SANDAL HOUSE HALLWAY - NIGHT

Outside the bedroom door three faces put their ears to the door.

Adam is trying to see under the door --

WHEN --

The door opens and Alice and Sandal stand in the doorway.

They grab all three kids and pile them on the bed -- all in a big pile of laughing gaiety.

EXT. RAMI'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Rami's house is dark.

A candle winds up the stairs to the second floor and disappear into Rami's room.

There's a brief flicker as it passes the bedroom window -- is stationary for a second -- then is blown out.

BLACK OUT:

INT. SANDAL HOUSE BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING

Sandal's sleeping face comes alive when

UNEXPECTEDLY

a great diesel engine ROARS to life.

His eyes pop open -- widening as he identifies the sound.

He jumps out of bed --

Rushes to the window.

EXT. SANDAL HOUSE - MORNING

The Driver is backing the bush-hog off the trailer.

Sandal runs out the front door in his pajamas.

He stands behind the bush-hog waving his arms in the air.

The bush-hog stops -- the Driver gets out.

DRIVER

Look -- mister -- I'm just doing what I'm paid to do -- nothing more -- nothing less -- let me get on with my job.

SANDAL

I thought --

DRIVER

Ask Mr. Razlund -- he called me last night -- I told him I could do it this morning.

SANDAL

But -- wait fifteen minutes.

The Driver checks his watch.

DRIVER

Take me about fifteen minutes to check the equipment. Ya -- sure.

Sandal runs over to Rami's house --

Bangs on the front door --

Rami opens the door dressed in overalls -- ready for work.

RAMI

I was about to ask when you were coming back to work. I see you still have the cast on.

SANDAL

It's about the bush-hog.

RAMI

Ah -- yes -- that -- good. Look -- Sandal -- you had a small reprieve while I was sick hope you enjoyed it.

He purses his lips condescendingly.

SANDAL

Rami -- it's only an acre -- a small patch -- my kids love it and we've cultivated all kinds of plants that --

RAMI

Exactly -- that produce seeds that the wind blows right into my fields -- and the Mosquitos are eating the workers alive. When are you coming back to work?

SANDAL

Doc says in a week or so.

RAMI

Good -- I need you -- the harvest is in full swing. Should be our busiest week. Good.

SANDAL

Rami -- please don't let the bush-hog mow our yard. I'm ---- begging you.

Sandal grabs Rami's arm and there is an awkward moment.

RAMI

Sandal -- it's out of my hands -- I'm just doing what the city wants.

SANDAL

You could stop it.

RAMI

I could -- I guess. But -- what would I tell the mayor -- or the city council?

SANDAL

Oh -- come on -- Rami -- you head the council.

RAMI

I head it --HEAD it -- that's the key word. I don't run it. We vote on everything. You don't know how much time we spent discussing the fate of your plot.

SANDAL

So -- that's it --

RAMI

I'm sorry -- Sandal -- really I am. Now -- I don't have anymore time to discuss this with you and it wouldn't do any good anyway.

SANDAL

There might be something very
valuable --

RAMI

Sandal -- it can wait. I've got to
go. Look forward to you coming
back to work.

He closes the door in Sandal's face.

Sandal stands -- motionless -- for a few seconds.

The diesel roars to life behind him.

He turns -- his shoulders slump -- he sees Alice and the kids
streaming out of the house.

They form a line against the bush-hog. They stand in front
of it defiantly.

He dashes from the porch.

EXT. RAMI'S HOUSE - DAY

Fingers slide a curtain back as Rami's face appears at a
window.

Rami looks without emotion.

Lets the curtain drop.

EXT. SANDAL HOUSE FRONT YARD - DAY

Sandal runs into the street.

He stands in front of the bush-hog -- his family stretched
out behind him -- his arms outstretched.

The Driver sticks his head out of the cab.

DRIVER

Look -- I'm just doing my job.

SANDAL

And I'm just doing what I have to
do.

DRIVER

Fine.

On an impulse Sandal leaps up on the fender of the bush-hog --

He forcefully opens the door of the cab pulling the Driver out.

They both tumble into the street.

There is a tussal which ends with Sandal getting clocked in the jaw.

The Driver dusts his hands off -- he climbs back in the bush-hog.

Sandal looks up at his family who have all gathered around him.

SANDAL

We can't stop them.

ALICE

Yes -- we can. We can lie down in front of that big machine and not budge.

SANDAL

They will haul us off. I don't want to have my family hauled off to jail for this.

ALICE

Some things are worth fighting for.

SANDAL

Yes-- they are. And we have fought in every legal way we can.

ALICE

What about the willow -- the lab -- our dreams?

SANDAL

Alice -- I don't know?

ALICE

If they do this you'll never know.

SANDAL

Then it did what it was supposed to do.

ALICE

So -- just like that -- you're giving up the fight.

SANDAL

No -- I've fought and lost.

ALICE

Come on kids -- back to the house.

She looks at Sandal with mixed emotions.

Sandal watches his little family trudge toward the house -- heads down.

SANDAL

God -- give me strength.

Sandal jumps up on the tractor, opens the door and pulls the driver out-- again.

They tumble to the ground.

Alice and the kids turn to watch in horror as the men grapple with each other.

The driver gets to his feet first -- as Sandal is staggering to his feet he takes a punch in the face that knocks him back to the ground.

Alice runs to his side -- the kids circling round -- Sandal nurses a bloody nose with his shirt sleeve.

DRIVER

Sorry about that.

The diesel roars to life -- the blades spin and whine -- the big machine lumbers through the gate into the garden.

Alice helps the wounded Sandal to his feet and they usher the kids into the sanctuary of their cottage.

INT. SANDAL HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

The whole family watches through the window as the bush-hog roars back and forth -- destroying everything in its path.

The kids are all crying.

Alice sniffles.

Sandal puts his hands on his children's shoulders -- then takes Alice's hand -- fingers tightening together.

INT. RAMI'S HOUSE - MORNING

Rami hears the bush-hog ROARING back and forth.

He turns the RADIO up and OPERA drowns out the noise.

EXT. SANDAL'S ACRE - NOON

The Driver smokes a cigarette --

The cab fills with smoke as the bush-hog plows through the tangled vegetation.

The elixir willow tree is plowed under -- the tangled green shrapnel spewing out from under the spitting monster as it devours everything in its path.

INT. SANDAL HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Alice gasps -- her hand up to her mouth -- as the bush-hog eats up the willow -- grinding it into an unidentifiable mush.

THE WILLOW IS GONE.

EXT. SANDAL'S ACRE - LATE AFTERNOON

The bush-hog is finished and the acre is totally flattened -- it's ground up.

The Driver swings the bush-hog toward the gate --

As he does he flicks a half smoked cigarette out the cab window --

It lands in a pile of brush next to the cottage.

INT. SANDAL HOUSE - DUSK

The whole family is seated in the living room.

SANDAL

I can't explain it to you any better than that. It's like when our Alfred died.

ADAM

I remember. I cried and cried.

JOEY

But we got a new doggy.

SANDAL

And we will get a new garden. Who can stop the rain from falling -- the sun from shining -- a seed growing?

(MORE)

SANDAL (cont'd)

So -- we plant a new garden. It will be fun. We are always grateful -- God is good -- and the birds will come back.

JOEY

And the rabbits.

SANDAL

Yes.

CIERRA

And the tiger.

ADAM

I'll lead you to the tiger's den. You might even play with her cubs.

JOEY

The cute kitties.

Joey claps his hands in anticipation.

EXT. RAMI'S HOUSE PORCH - DUSK

The Driver receives a check from Rami.

He stuffs it in his jacket pocket -- hurries down the steps to his waiting Semi -- which is still running.

Rami closes the door as it grinds off down the road.

INT. SANDAL HOUSE - DUSK

Sandal rises -- sniffing the air.

SANDAL

I smell smoke.

He hesitates -- then moves to the kitchen door.

SANDAL (cont'd)

Oh -- no! Alice -- get the kids out the front door -- quick.

Over his shoulder flames are lapping up the kitchen walls.

Alice spreads her arms -- pushes her kids toward the front door -- looks back to see what's wrong --

A look of horror comes over her face.

EXT. SANDAL HOUSE FRONT YARD - CONTINUOUS

Alice and the kids run into the street -- flames shooting out the back of the house.

Workers from the orange grove jump over the wall toward the fire.

Rami comes out of his house -- runs down the front steps -- out into the street -- to see what all the commotion is.

Sandal runs out the front -- around the side of the house -- unrolls the hose and turns the water on.

The flames flicker off the faces of the little family as they huddle in fear.

Rami's eyes reflect the fire as he squints at the tragedy.

Sandal and the five workers from the grove are doing all they can to save the little cottage.

The kitchen is destroyed and a wall of their bedroom.

EXT. SANDAL HOUSE - LATER

They get the fire under control but the damage is extensive.

The little family has not moved from their huddle in the middle of the street.

Sandal works furiously with the workers as they put out the final embers.

Rami looks from his front porch now.

He shakes his head --

Steps into his house.

The workers stream back to the grove.

Sandal walks -- exhausted and grim -- to his little family.

They embrace him -- crying.

He stands tall -- fragile -- against the thunderstorm and wind that's cropping up.

He pushes them toward the house.

A SIREN blares in the distance.

INT. SANDAL HOUSE - EVENING

They enter the front door.

The walls are smoke stained.

The siren ROARS up to the front of the house.

There's a KNOCK on the door.

Sandal goes to the screen door -- there looms the figure of a FIREMAN.

SANDAL

It's out.

FIREMAN

Sorry -- Sandal -- we came as soon as the alarm sounded.

SANDAL

It's okay --

FIREMAN

We'll just check and make sure --

SANDAL

Fine.

He goes back to his family who have all settled in chairs and the sofa.

ALICE

We can't stay here -- Sandal.

SANDAL

The kids' loft is intact -- we'll sleep here in the living room on the sofa bed.

ALICE

We can't stay here -- there's no food - the kitchen is gone.

Sandal looks around him at the little faces -- looking toward him for leadership.

He -- alone -- stands between them and the future.

SANDAL

Tomorrow we will pick up the pieces and go on. Tonight we need rest. Things will look different in the morning.

ADAM

Dad?

SANDAL

Yes -- Adam?

ADAM

I'm scared.

CIERRA

Me, too.

The all of the children start to sniffle and cry softly.

SANDAL

Alice -- let's bring all the mattresses in here.

She nods.

SANDAL (cont'd)

We're all going to sleep together in the living room tonight. It'll be fun -- like an adventure.

INT. RAMI'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Rami is in his night robe -- with a lit candle -- sitting on the edge of his bed -- letting his slippers fall off his feet.

He rubs his face -- feels his forehead -- stands -- reaches for the phone -- dials.

RAMI

Doc -- could you come over? I'm feeling hot -- please? -- okay.

He sits back down -- waiting.

EXT. RAMI'S HOUSE - LATER THAT NIGHT

Doctor Murphy's car pulls up in front of Rami's house.

The Doctor gets out with his black bag.

He looks next door at the bush-hogged yard.

He does a double take when he sees the burned back of the cottage.

Rami's front door opens --

Rami steps out of the darkness into the yellow brightness of the porch light.

RAMI
I'm hot -- Doc -- I'm boilin' up.

DOCTOR
Get inside.

The Doctor takes another look at Sandal's house -- then gives all his attention to Rami.

He enters the mansion.

INT. SANDAL HOUSE - NIGHT

Sandal peers out the front window.

The kids are all asleep on mattresses strewn around the living room floor.

SANDAL
It's the Doc.

INT. RAMI'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Rami gets into bed.

RAMI
I'm scared -- Doc.

DOCTOR
Let's see what we have here.

He puts a thermometer under Rami's tongue.

RAMI
(mumbling)
Give me another bottle of that stuff -- Doc. Maria told me about some stuff you had.

The Doctor waits a few seconds -- pulls the thermometer out -- looks at it -- shaking his head.

DOCTOR
103 -- Rami --

RAM
Give me some of that stuff -- you know -- that little bottle.

DOCTOR
Do you have any left?

RAMI
Maria threw out the rest.

DOCTOR
Can't get any more of it.

RAMI
Why?

DOCTOR
Sandal made it.

RAMI
NO!

DOCTOR
Sandal distilled it from some plant
in his back yard.

Rami's face goes pale.

RAMI
Doc -- go ask him to bring me
another bottle of that stuff.

DOCTOR
I see you finally bush-hogged
Sandal's acre.

RAMI
Doc -- you've got to help me --
I'm getting worse.

DOCTOR
I'll do what I can.

Maria is at the door.

DOCTOR (cont'd)
Keep a cold compress on his
forehead.

MARIA
Yes -- Doctor.

The Doctor leaves.

INT. SANDAL HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

There's a knock on the front door.

Sandal opens it.

SANDAL

Hi -- Doc.

DOCTOR

I'm sorry about your garden. What happened to your house?

SANDAL

We've had a horrible day of it -- come on in --

DOCTOR

No -- I'll be brief. Rami's got the fever again. I need some of that elixir.

SANDAL

Don't have any more.

DOCTOR

Can you cook up a little?

SANDAL

It's bush-hogged --I doubt I'd be able to find a single leaf of that willow.

DOCTOR

Maybe you have an extra bottle? Your Dad had boxes of the stuff.

SANDAL

Dad sold it all to clients. I did take a sample down to the lab -- yesterday.

DOCTOR

They're closed.

SANDAL

Can't be sure there's anything to it anyway -- Doc.

DOCTOR

I know.

A look passes between them.

SANDAL

I'll go out and look.

DOCTOR
Thank you -- Sandal.

The Doctor waits while Sandal gets his jacket and a flashlight.

EXT. SANDAL'S ACRE - NIGHT

Two little figures move cautiously away from the back of the house.

The Doctor and Sandal follow the flashlight into the mowed acre.

The beam ranges back and forth as they move slowly into the central part of the acre.

MOMENTS LATER

Sandal kneels down surrounded by fresh chipped green -- he takes a handful of fine ground mulch and lets it fall through his fingers.

SANDAL
Doc -- there's no way of knowing.

The Doctor looks around at the fresh mowed mess.

DOCTOR
This is a tragedy.

SANDAL
Maybe more than we can ever know.

A big bellied -- white ghost of a figure lumbers forward -- staggering into the circle of light.

Rami falters with fever -- his eyes glazed -- dull.

RAMI
(rasping)
Help me. Help me.

Sandal glances up at the Doctor shaking his head.

The Doctor rushes to support Rami.

SANDAL
I guess I could boil up handfuls of mulch around where I think it was -- but --

RAMI
(whispering)
Help.

Rami is too heavy for the Doctor and falls into the mulch.
Sandal scrapes up an armful of green twigs and leaves.
The Doctor attends Rami.

DOCTOR
He doesn't have long.

EXT. SANDAL'S ACRE - NIGHT

A fire's blazing under the still.

Alice and Maria stand in the glow -- faces flickering concern.

Sandal brings some twigs.

SANDAL
I've got to let it boil before I
can do anything.

DOCTOR
I'll get Rami back to his house.
Maria -- can you and Alice help me?

With great difficulty the two women and the Doctor manage to hoist Rami's sagging frame between them.

They move slowly across the field.

Sandal throws more twigs on the fire.

He puts the gathered tangle of bark and leaves into the still.

He puts a small bottle under the coil and waits -- poking the fire -- sending sparks into the clear dark sky.

INT. RAMI'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The Doctor sits beside Rami -- who's breathing heavily -- groaning.

DOCTOR
Maria -- bring the ice packs.

EXT. SANDAL'S ACRE - NIGHT

Alice is stoking the fire while Sandal holds the little bottle below the coil -- catching the precious drops as they dribble out.

SANDAL

That will have to do.

The bottle is half full as Sandal takes it from under the coil and runs with it across the field to Rami's house.

INT. RAMI'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Sandal rushes the bottle into Rami's room.

The Doctor takes the bottle -- gently raises Rami's head -- feeding the liquid into his mouth.

He gulps several times.

COUGHS

The Doctor continues to feed him the liquid till the bottle is empty.

DOCTOR

We should know within the hour.

SANDAL

I'll stay.

The Doctor looks at Sandal with great sympathy and thankfulness -- patting him on the back.

EXT. SANDAL HOUSE - DAWN

It's dawn.

INSIDE

The children are still asleep on the living room floor.

Alice sits in a chair nodding off where she sat vigil at the window looking out toward Rami's house.

The children are stirring.

Alice moves from her guard position at the window.

Adam looks around.

NATE
Where Dad?

INT. RAMI'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The Doctor opens his eyes with a start -- he shuffles his feet to wake them up.

Sandal opens his eyes -- watching the Doctor.

The Doctor goes over to Rami's bed.

The grey pallor tells everything -- but the Doctor feels his forehead and then his cheek out of habit.

DOCTOR
He's dead.

Sandal stands over Rami looking at his ashen face.

There is a long silence as Sandal and the Doctor ponder the night just passed.

SANDAL
God has a strange way with us--
doesn't He -- Doctor?

DOCTOR
Sandal -- thank you. You did
everything you could and more --
I'll make the arrangements.

SANDAL
Bless you -- Doc.

The Doctor packs up his little black bag and leaves.

Sandal stays behind looking out the window at the orange grove and the workers beginning to stack crates.

The sun is glowing on a beautiful orange morning.

INT. SANDAL HOUSE - DAY

There's a knock on the front door of Sandal's house.

Alice answers it.

A MAN in a suit -- carrying a briefcase -- stands in the doorway.

ALICE
Yes -- can I help you?

LAWYER
I'm here to see a Mr. Sandal Woods?

ALICE
Can I ask who you are?

LAWYER
I'm a lawyer.

ALICE
I'll tell him you're here.

EXT. SANDAL HOUSE PORCH - LATER THAT MORNING

Sandal sits on a bench on his porch.

The Lawyer spreads out a pile of papers in front of Sandal on a chair.

SANDAL
What's this?

LAWYER
It's a bit complicated. I don't exactly know where to begin?

SANDAL
Take your time.

LAWYER
Yes -- Rami didn't leave a will -- he has a niece who's his only living relative. She doesn't know a thing about oranges -- orange groves --

SANDAL
Really?

The lawyer shuffles some papers busily.

LAWYER
She's talked to the Doctor at length -- and -- well -- she would like to make a deal with you. She's moving in the next few weeks -- into the big house -- she was wondering if you would like to keep your position as foreman -- work with her --

SANDAL
I don't know?

LAWYER
It's all very up and up.

SANDAL
We can't stay here.

Sandal motions toward the burned out back of the house.

LAWYER
Yes -- I know.

SANDAL
We were leaving in a few days --
Alice has a sister.

LAWYER
Mr. Sandal -- might I propose a
solution?

SANDAL
I --

LAWYER
My client is willing to make you a
partner in the orange grove if you
will stay on. She also graciously
wants you to consider living in the
cottage next to the mansion.

SANDAL
Maria's?

LAWYER
Yes -- I believe so.

Sandal jumps up from the bench.

SANDAL
Alice! Alice!! Come here quick --
Come -- everybody. Kids -- COME!

There is great commotion in the house as the kids burst
through the screen door at their father's excitement.

Alice pushes in behind them.

SANDAL (cont'd)
Alice -- I don't know how to tell
you this.

ALICE

Oh -- my -- it's the elixir man.

SANDAL

No -- no! Come here -- look over there -- that cottage over there -- Maria's cottage -- it's -- ours.

ALICE

What are you talking about?

She shakes her head in disbelief.

SANDAL

We're partners with the new owner.

ALICE

Oh, my. Oh, my soul.

ADAM

That's our house?

SANDAL

Son, that's our new home.

ALICE

Our home?

They all look over at Rami's mansion -- wide eyed -- the little cottage in the back -- twice the size of their burned up one.

EXT. SANDAL NEW COTTAGE - DAY

A MAN in a lab coat walks up the path to Sandal's new cottage -- knocks on the door.

There is no answer.

He checks the address on his papers.

He looks around and decides to go round the back as he HEARS children playing.

EXT. BACKYARD - MOMENTS LATER

The man knocks on the side of the house as the children gather around him wondering what's going on.

Sandal gets up from his chair.

SANDAL

Ah -- the guy from the lab?

TECHNICIAN

Mr. Woods?

SANDAL

Yes.

TECHNICIAN

You left a sample with us to be analyzed.

SANDAL

Yes -- I did.

TECHNICIAN

Well -- here are the results -- I have them here --

He hands the sheet to Sandal.

SANDAL

Mumbo jumbo to me.

He hands it back.

TECHNICIAN

Let me see -- I can give you the bottom line.

SANDAL

Okay -- fire away.

The Technician scans the report.

TECHNICIAN

Some organic compounds -- We couldn't break them down further without more of the material -- All rather routine -- in my opinion -- though.

Thoughtful disappointment -- but relieved -- beat.

SANDAL

I understand.

TECHNICIAN

If you'd like we can take another look. Bring in another sample.

SANDAL

Um -- no -- no -- that's fine.

TECHNICIAN

Okay. Just sign here -- that I delivered the results.

Sandal signs.

The Technician leaves.

Alice walks up beside him.

ALICE

So -- Mr. Science what was in that little bottle?

Sandal looks intently at his wife with a twinkle in his eye -- the kids gather around them both.

Sandal spreads his arms wide.

SANDAL

Our future.

She looks out from the backyard -- with him -- at the orange grove.

EXT. SANDAL HOUSES - DAY

The two houses stand, side by side -- the burned out cottage against the mansion -- the little mowed acre against the orange groves -- spreading as far as the eye can see.

And there is a little green sprout of willow poking through the dried mulch on Sandal's Acre.

THE END