Where the Heart Is

By Lowell Ganz
(LIQUID DRIPS)

TIM:
deathtrap to California?

WILLY:
You saying I'm not?

TIM:
You won't make it past that tree.

WILLY:
leaving today?
She's in the bathroom.
Why don't she just move into the damn
bathroom? Get all the little photos.

NOVALEE:
I'm ready.
Now, hold on. Now I gotta go.
We'll miss you, Novalee.
The floor's missing.
He got the whole car for $80.
He had to fix everything on it.
And here's the best part:
No fives.
- You and your fives.
- What fives?
On my fifth birthday, my mama ran off
with an umpire and never came back.
After I dropped out of school and was
waiting tables, a lady went crazy.
When I tried to calm her, she jumped
at me and cut me from wrist to elbow.
- What's that got to do with fives?
- Took 55 stitches to close her up.
I don't like fives.
That's it. Let's hit it! Let's go!
Hon?
Will you take a picture
with my new camera?
Wait.
All right, let's go, let's go.
Come on, come on.
- Sweetie, call me, okay?
- All right.
Bye.

**NOVALEE:**
All right, bye.
Finally, it's already five.
Five?
I hope we can find a place
that overlooks the ocean.
Hell, you can't see the ocean
from Bakersfield.
Well, maybe a pond, then.
I want to get one of those tables
with an umbrella over it...
...where we can sit with the baby
and watch the sun go down.
I've never lived anyplace
that didn't have wheels.
Hey. Hey.
(ROCK MUSIC PLAYS OVER RADIO)

**WILLY SINGS:**
Sometimes I wonder
Will I ever make it home
(NOVALEE SNORES)
Sometimes I wonder
Will I ever make it home
I been gone so long
Hey!
Hey, Novalee. Wake up!
You sound like a damn pig!
What the hell's the matter with you?
And where are your shoes?
That's just great. That's great.
My feet are swollen.
I had to take them off.

**NOVALEE:**
Ooh!
Want to feel the baby?
Here.
Feel that?
WILLY:
No.
Right there.
Feel that little "bomp, bomp, bomp"?
That's where the heart is.
Couldn't prove it by me.
- Ooh!
- Would you...? The hell...?
Wal-Mart. I can go to the bathroom.
(TIRES SQUEALING)
(HONKING)
(CAR SQUEAKS)
- All right, hurry up.
- Hon.
- I'm gonna need money.
- They gonna charge you to pee?
I have to get some house shoes.
I gotta get some kind of shoes.
- All right, get you some house shoes.
- Come on.
Get you some green polka dot house shoes.

WILLY:
sure to notice you.

ANNOUNCER:
Attention, Wal-Mart shoppers.
- Bathroom, bathroom?
- All the way back.
Thank you.

MOSES:
a beautiful child here.
An award-winning picture.
It might end up on a cereal box.
Steve, look at me.
Say "cheese" for me.
Cheese.

WOMAN:
Do you mind?
(HUMS)
(TOILET FLUSHES)
(KNOCKS)
Thank you.

NOVALEE:
Ahh!
(NOVALEE MOANS)
Mommy!

PATTY:
- Hm?

PATTY:
- Sorry.
Five dollars and 55 cents.
No!
Ma'am!
Ma'am. Ma'am?
You left these at the counter.
And your change.
Are you all right?
Uh-huh.
I just...
My boyfriend...
...went to get the car fixed.
He'll pick me up.
Well, have a nice day.
Hey.
Ruth Ann Mott!
Just look at you.
Little Ruth Ann!
I haven't seen you
since your mama passed.
What's that, 10, 11 years?
- I'm not...
- Don't you remember?
I'm Sister Husband.
Oh, you remember me.
You used to call me "Telma" because
you couldn't say "Thelma."
Can you say "Thelma"?
- Thelma.
- Good. Oh.
Good Lord, look at you.
Having a baby.
You just move home, Ruth Ann?
See, I'm not...
You know what they say:
Home is where your history begins.
Home is where they catch you
when you fall.
That's what Brother Husband said.
Brother Husband?
Was he your husband?
No, he was my brother.
A real man of God.
You read the Bible?
Not as much as I should.
Good. I think that's good.
Folks read too much of it,
they get confused.
That's why I like to hand out just
one chapter at a time.
That way, folks can deal
with their confusion as it comes.
Come on. Come on.
You're coming with me. Come on.
I'm not gonna let you
get away empty-handed.
Now, on behalf of the Merchants
and Businessmen's Association...
...of the city of Sequoyah, Oklahoma,
I give you this basket of gifts...
...and merchandise.
- Thank you.
You got discount coupons and matches,
a map of the city, emery boards.
Oh, yeah. Now, you see this
little appointment book?
I ran out of these last week, so I
had to put my appointments in one.
If you're not an alcoholic,
you'll know they aren't yours.
No, ma'am, I'm not.
Good. I think that's good.
Oh, oh, yeah, one more thing.

NOVALEE:
What is that?
This is a buckeye tree.
Brings you good luck.
Here, take it.
There.
Well, goodbye, Ruth Ann.
It was real nice to see you again.
And welcome home!
I'm in the phone book.
You come and see me anytime you want.
And bring that baby.
(TRUCK BACKFIRES)
Excuse me.
Would you like a picture of your baby?
I'm not... I mean, I'm still...
Well, I mean, after.
- Oh.
- Of course.
What kind of camera is that?
This is a Rollei. There are not many
made like this here.
It's a beauty.
My name is Moses. Moses Whitecotton.
Novalee Nation.
That's a good, strong name.
A name's important. Have you
picked out a name for your baby yet?
Well, I was thinking
about "Wendi" with an "I."
Oh, don't you dare. Give that baby
a name that means something.
A good, sturdy name.
Here.
I'm here the first Friday
of every month, 12 to 6.
Take care.
And remember...
...give that baby a name
that means something.
I will, I promise.

ANNOUNCER:

shoppers. It is 9:00...
...and Wal-Mart is closing.
Please bring your final selections to the checkout counters.
Wal-Mart will open again at 9 a.m. Tomorrow morning.
And, as always, thank you for shopping Wal-Mart.

(GROANS)
(NOVALEE COUGHS)
(TOILET FLUSHES)
(ROCK SONG PLAYS OVER RADIO)
- Hi.
- Hey.
You need a hand?
I need a lift.
So where are you going?
Anywhere but here.
Where are you going?
Vegas.
Cool.
Whoa, whoa, whoa. Hey, no, no.
Thanks.
(DANCE MUSIC PLAYS)
(THUNDER RUMBLES)

JOLENE:
You're almost out of gas.
Somebody stole my wallet last night right out my damn hotel room.
Maybe this will help.
Hey!
Well, I tell you what...
...you want it...
...come right on over here and get it.
Maybe I will.
Maybe you'll get yourself a nice big sunrise.
(SIRENS WAILING)
Shit.
Two hundred and eighteen dollars in your pocket...
...14 cartons of Winston Light 100s in a plastic sack in the trunk.
By the strangest damn coincidence, that's exactly what someone stole...
...from the 7-Eleven store
two hours ago.
Not to mention, Jolene,
how old are you these days?
- Fourteen.
- Huh?

**OFFICER:**
(GRUNTING)
(ALARM CLOCK RINGS)

**WORKER:**
the floors with wax.
(WORKERS CHATTERING)
(PUCKERS)
(ALARM CLOCKS RINGING)

**FORNEY:**
What do you want?
Uh...
I'm looking for a book.

**FORNEY:**
What kind of book?
About... About trees.

**FORNEY:**
Trees?
Yeah.
You know.
Forestry, environment?
What do you want to know about trees?

**NOVALEE:**
somebody gave me a buckeye tree.

**Buckeye:**
Horse chestnut,
belongs to the genus Aesculus...
...of the family Hippocastanaceae.
I think it's dying, my tree.
I could show it to the people who gave
it to me, but I'm embarrassed.
Here, look up buckeye in the index.
The what?
I'll start slower.
These are books. Are you with me?
- Hey.
- Here.
There. See, read.
"Leaf rot, root damage, ni..."
Nitrogen def... def...
Defic...
- Defic..."
- Deficiency, keep reading.
Also a book...
(GLASS BREAKS)
Excuse me.
(CRASHING)
I don't know how I made that mistake.
You don't look like Ruth Ann.
It's good to see you again,
you come right in.
I want you to meet my gentleman,
Mr. Sprock.
- Mr. Sprock? Mr. Sprock.
- Hm?
Oh, howdy do?
Buttermilk?
Dear Lord, we pray
that you will bless...
...this food to the nourishment
of our bodies.
And we pray, Lord,
for a safe delivery...
...and a healthy child
for our new friend.
And we ask forgiveness, Lord,
for the fornication...
...that Mr. Sprock and me have
committed again this afternoon.
Amen.
- Amen.
- Amen.
I'll come by every day
to take care of it.
Oh, good.
- If it's a bother...
— No, darling.
I meant that it's good
you'll be by every day.
Why, we'd sure be glad to see you.
Oh.
I don't know what kind of people you're
with that won't let you plant a tree.
Well, they're...
What'll happen
when you have your baby?
I'm not sure.
Let me help you there, Mr. Sprock.
Hey Rosita, how are you doing today?
Good.
The book in the library said the
highest spot is the best place.
Oh, you must have met Forney.
Who?
(MR. SPROCK WHEEZES)
You all right, Mr. Sprock?
Oh, I'm fine. A little emphysema.
Nothing serious.
Oh, you know, he makes that noise
whenever he exerts himself.
Who's thorny?
Forney. Forney Hall.
Brilliant man, lives in the library.
— Brilliant.
— There's no telling...
...what he might have done
if he'd finished school.
Why didn't he?
The Lord gives us obstacles.
(WHIMPERS)
(THUNDER RUMBLES)
(GROANS)
Ah!
(CRIES)
(SCREAMS)
(SCREAMS)
(PHONE RINGS)
(PEOPLE CHATTERING OUTSIDE)
I hope you're not hungry,
because it's Tuesday.
Friday is the best, they have bacon.
I'm Lexie, Lexie Coop.
- Hi.
- Hi.

Where'd these flowers come from?
All over. You're a big celebrity.
There are reporters here. Lean up.
See?
TV! They've been here all night.
- What for?
- For you.
They want to talk to you.
Me?
Everybody wants to talk to
the mom of the Wal-Mart baby.
Are they gonna arrest me?
What for?
For living in the Wal-Mart.
Arrest you?
Is the hospital gonna keep my baby?
Where is she?
Why would they keep your baby?
Because I can't pay.
It's like a restaurant...
...when you can't pay,
you wash dishes.
I don't know what they'll make me do.
No. No.
I'm broke. I got nothing.
I have no family, no job...
Now I got a baby.
I know what you need.
Yes, you're okay.
Look who we're going to see.
Say, "It's about time."
Does that help?
(CRIES)
Oh. Oh, yeah.
How can you love someone
so much you just met?
Forney's okay too.
The doctor stitched him up
and sent him home.
- Forney?
Mm-hm.
- The library guy?
- Yeah.

What happened to him?
He jumped through a plate-glass window
to deliver your baby.
That was him?

So. What are you going to name her?
Oh, that's right.

LEXIE:
with a name like "Americus"?

NOVALEE:
name that stood for something.

(AMERICUS CRIES)
I shouldn't talk, I named
my kids after snack foods.
- Brownie, Praline, Cherry, Baby Ruth.
- You got four?
- Yep.
- You aren't old enough.
I started when I was 15,
and I just couldn't stop.
I wanted to find the first one a dad,
but I got another baby.
I wanted to find them both a daddy
and so on and so on.
I think I'm going about this
the wrong way.

Hey, there she is.
That's the Wal-Mart mommy!
Now, how long were you living
in the Wal-Mart?

Uh...

Six weeks.
And what was it like?
You know.

Have you spoken to the father?
If I was you, I'd rule out
a career in broadcasting.
Why would anyone write anything
so hurtful?
What does it say?
"A baby born out of holy wedlock...
...is an abomination
in the eyes of God."
- My baby is not an abomination.
- Screw them.
"Midnight, Mississippi."
Oh, my.
This one's sad.
"I gave birth to a baby
in the back of a VW van...
...where I lived for a year.
My baby didn't make it.
I hope yours does.
I don't have much else to offer
but I know money might help...
...so I enclosed $10."
Do you believe that?
"Duda, Texas."
"I would send money,
but I don't have any.
What I can offer you is a good home."
Send her the $10.
Lexie, one of your kids is calling.
Which one?
I don't know.
Pez, Twinkie, one of them.

LEXIE:
I'll be right back.

LIL:

LEXIE:
Well, I hope you don't think this
kid's gonna call me "Grandma."
I'm sorry, but visiting hours...
Are when?
- Right now.
- Yes.
Mama?
I thought you'd be surprised.
How'd you know I was here?
There you are.
I saw your fabulous interview
on the television...
...and I hopped right in the car, and here I am.
I must have been in that damn car 10 hours, I'm telling you.
From where?
New Orleans.
I been living there about...
I guess I been living there about two, three years now.
- With Fred?
- Who?
Fred. The umpire.
(COUGHs)
That shithead? Oh, my God!
Jesus! What in God's name made you think of him?
Because he was the reason you left.
Left what?
Me.
Aw, geez, now. Sweetie, look.
That's water under the bridge.
I didn't drive 10 hours to reminisce with you.
- Why did you come?
- I thought you needed help.
You didn't look too good up there.
Living in the Wal-Mart is not my idea of a big success.
How are you gonna help?
I don't know.
- You got a man?
- No.
This isn't one of them artificial spermination things?
No.
Then where is the prick who put you in this mess?
California.
Well, that figures. All the pricks, they move to California.
They ought to call it "Prick-a-fornia."
Got a place to live?
Sweetie, you are going to need a place to take this baby. Maybe you should think about moving into Sears, or Kmart is really nice. Did you come here to make fun of me? God, no. Jesus! I didn't. I wanted... ...to help my child with her child, is all. You want me to go? No. All right, then. - When are they letting you out? - Tomorrow. Well, I'm not in any hurry to move on. Maybe I could find a place. You and me and the baby. You mean like a home? Home, apartment, whatever, until you get on your feet. I got me a little money. Oh, I got money. The president of Wal-Mart sent me $500. Why? He's not the father, is he? - No. - Oh, shit. No, he just wanted to be nice. They offered me a new job in any Wal-Mart in the country. Wow. So... I'm thinking... ...what with your money and my money together... ...we might find a real decent place. I don't want you to worry about anything anymore... ...because Mama Lil is here now. Why don't you come by and pick us up tomorrow? 9 a.m.? On the dot.
I got a lot of stuff to do.
We gotta get diapers,
and blankets, and a cradle...
- Mama?
- Yeah?
Thank you for coming.
You bet.
(AMERICUS CRIES)
It's okay, baby. It's okay.
Shh. Okay.
You should try to call
whoever is coming.
I don't know where she is.
I could call a cab for you.
Where are you going?
(AMERICUS CRIES)
Five hundred dollars,
I should have known.
(HONKS)
Hey.
Well, look at all this.
And look at you.
Oh, yes, you're just as cute today
as you were yesterday.
Maybe cuter.
Well...
You know that tree?
Your tree that you planted in my yard?
I'm trying to take care of it.
I don't have the feel for it.
I don't have the time either.
I thought that maybe if you and the
baby came with me for a while...
...you could take care of it for me.
It'd sure help me out a lot.
Okay.

MARY:

FORNEY:

MARY:
- I'm putting the dishes in the sink.
MARY:
- I'll be right back.
(KNOCKING)

MARY:
- We're closed!

MARY:
Forney!
Look...
Hi. Can I come in?
Uh, yeah.

MARY:
I need a towel.
They're in the bathroom.
- Is this a bad time?
- Yeah. No.
- I just wanted to thank you for...

MARY:
Give me two minutes!
I'll be right there!
- Sorry, l...
- That's okay, I...
I just wanted
to thank you for, well...
I guess you saved our lives,
me and Americus.
Americus?
You want to hold her?
- Oh.
- It's okay.
Oh. Oh, oh.
Moses Whitecotton gave me this
as a baby gift.
Uh-huh.
Hat.
All right. One, two, three, smile.

MARY:
- L...
All right. So...
- I'll see you soon.
- Uh-huh.
Oh, right.
- Bye.
- Bye.

MARY:
Forney!
- You may find...

PRISONER:
Look inside and find the part
(SIGHS)
Look inside and find the part
That's leading you
(GRUNTING)
What do you think?
Took me a whole month to get back
to my old size.
Oh, well, a little weight
on a woman's no harm.
What do you think of that? Breakfast?
No, before work I'm taking your truck
in to get those breaks checked.
I'm paying. Don't argue.
There's people at the door.
Oh, here, hold her.
Here. Here you go.
- Hello.
- Here you go.
- Who's a good girl?
- Yes.
I got her.
Yes?
Ma'am, we have come to bring the word
of God to the Wal-Mart baby...
...and to her young, unmarried mama.
We drove all the way up
from Midnight, Mississippi.
Well, you folks could have saved
yourself a trip...
...because the word of God has been
in this house a long time.
I thought that was over and done...
...people wanting to see
the Wal-Mart baby.
Bye, sweetie.
Mama will be back.
- Bye, Mr. Sprock.
- I made links.
Thank you.
Dear Lord, we pray...
...that you will bless this food...
...and we ask forgiveness...
...for the fornication
that Mr. Sprock and me...
...committed this morning
on this very table.
- Amen.
- Amen.
(BARREL RATTLES)

MAN:
We ain't open yet.
I know that, but I gotta get to work.

MAN:
- I'll leave you the key...
(LONESTAR'S "ONLY YOU" PLAYS)
I think I might be pregnant.
You know that guy I met last month?
Yeah, the good-looking mechanic.
I don't know what's wrong with me.
I didn't even want to be with him.
- Well, didn't he use anything?
- Just me.

NOVALEE:
I don't know what I'm gonna do.
This gypsy woman told me that
if you jump backwards nine times...
...before sunup,
you won't be pregnant.
So I jumped so far...
...I had to take a bus home,
and then I had twins.
The guy I'm seeing is pretty perfect.
Why's that?
Well, he's sterile as a cotton ball.
So it's permanent?
He had mumps when he was 15...
...and they went down on him.
Down where?
To his manly areas.
So they're...?
Oh, God, Novalee, no.
He's just shooting blanks, is all.
Girls like us don't get
the pick of the litter.
I don't think you're pregnant.
You'll have to wait.
- I'll see you.
- Bye.

KIDS:
Bye!
Ready to go?
(NOVALEE GRUNTS)
Are you finding what you want?
I don't know what they're
talking about.
I look up every other word...
...then I look them up
in the children's dictionary.
Takes me a half-hour to read a page.
Maybe it's hard to learn from books.
- I mean, it's photography.
- Hard for me, anyway.
Uh...
- Something wrong?
- Is there a ladies' room?
- Yeah.
- Okay, thanks.

NOVALEE:
Yes! Thank you, Lord!
Thank you so much!
Things went well?
You bet!
Oh, I've gotta go.
- Got a big date or something?
- No.
Oh, because I thought you were
sort of seeing somebody...
No, that's done. That's finished.
I'm done with guys like that.
Like what?
You know, good-looking, cocky...
...and look great in some tight jeans
and a white T-shirt.
Those guys are all wrong
for me, Forney.
I don't want that anymore.
I want a change.
No more men at all.
Oh.
(Glass breaking)
Forney, help me.
All right.
Who's that?
Novalee, I'd like you
to meet my sister.
This is Mary Elizabeth Hall.
She's the librarian.
Mary Elizabeth's a lot older than me.
I was still a kid
when she started drinking.
Oh, you're underselling that. Yeah.
I was 10 the first
time my father put her away.
Away? Where?
In a sanitorium back East.
So, what exactly are you looking for?
I'm looking for a gift for Sister
and Mr. Sprock.
- It's their anniversary.
- Anniversary?
Yeah, they've been "close"
for six years.
I was back East at college and...
- College?
- I was studying to be a teacher.
My dad died and my sister
couldn't be left alone.
She begged me not to send her away,
and said she'd kill herself if I did.
That was nine years ago.
So, what are you thinking?  
Candlestick holders? Picture frame?  
Good God. Who would buy  
somebody else's toupee?  
Oh, my gosh. Look at this.  
It needs a little cleaning, is all.  
Hey, Moses, you want to hear  
something funny?  
I wouldn't mind.  
Well, I was thinking that someday...  
I mean, a long time from now,  
I could...  
...maybe be a photographer.  
That's not funny.  
It's not?  
You don't hear me laughing.  
(COUNTRY MUSIC PLAYS)  
(ENGINE RUMBLES)  
("JINGLE BELLS" PLAYS)  
I never had a Christmas tree before.  
Not a live one.  
- You have one of those aluminum ones?  
- No.  
Those cost money.  
No, when I was 8,  
I was living with this old lady.  
She promised me we'd have  
a Christmas tree.  
And then she went  
and spent all her money...  
...on a set of bagpipes because...  
Well, I guess she was just insane.  
But she felt bad.  
So on Christmas morning,  
she found some green paint...  
...and she painted a Christmas tree  
on her living-room wall.  
Floor to ceiling. And that was  
my only tree till now.  

LEXIE:  
- Hey, Lexie.  
- Hi.
KID:
Hey, Lex. Hi, kids.
- Everybody say "hi."

KIDS:
- How do you feel?
- Ha! Mumps?
I got his mumps right here.
Go find us a good-looking Christmas tree that doesn't cost more than $40.
Have you heard from him?
You mean since he stole my brand-new pillows and left town on his Harley?
I guess that's what I meant.
You want us to wait and give you a ride?
No. You never know, maybe I can get knocked up again on the way home.
- Merry Christmas.
- Merry Christmas.
Why would a man on a Harley steal a woman's pillows?
Because he could, I guess.
You know...
...I cannot wait till Americus sees this tree.
Don't expect too much of a reaction.
After all, Americus is only...
- Hey, you know what?
- What?
Americus is exactly five months old today.
- What?
- Yeah, she was born July fifth.

SISTER:

NOVALEE:
I turned around and she's gone.
- What happened?
- She's gone! Americus is gone.
The front door was unlocked?
I went to the shed for decorations.
I was two minutes.
Is anything else missing? Money?
Is there anyone who might've taken your daughter?
Anyone who is mad at you?
There's a woman at work.
She says I park in her space, even though we don't have regular spaces.
But she wouldn't take Americus.
What about you, Sister?
Anyone have a grudge against you?
- Like who?
- Someone at the AA?
Anyone there might want to hurt you?
We're alcoholics. We're generally satisfied just to hurt ourselves.
Well...
Anyone could have her, and I don't know if she's scared or sick.
I don't know if she's hungry.
I know, honey. I know.
- I don't know...
- Excuse me. Excuse me.
- Is this always in the baby's crib?
- That's not my Bible.
Oh, Lord. Lord, I know who took her.
I know who took Americus.
- What?
- Yesterday, this woman came to the door.
She was here once before.
She and a man, they said that they wanted to give you the word of God.
I smart-mouthed them.
And they had Bibles with them.
Like that one.
They came from Mississippi.
Midnight, Mississippi.
They said my baby was an abomination.
Am I being punished, Forney?
For what?
Things I did.
I wasn't married when I had my baby.
Do you really think this is what you deserve?
Let me tell you about
what you deserve, Novalee.
If it were up to me...
(SIRENS WAILING)
(ENGINE STARTS)
We got a possible crime scene...
- My God!
- You can't...

FORNEY:

COP:
(AMERICUS GURGLES)
(CRIES)
The highway patrol spotted
Mississippi plates and stopped them.
They admitted they took her,
said we'd find her here.
Jesus Christ, another guitar player.
What's your name?
Willy Jack Pickens.
You didn't even have to make that up,
did you?
- What?
- You carry that to keep your balance?
You want me to play?
What the fuck do you think
I want you to do, call bingo?
One tune. Your best shot.
All right. Well, I wrote
this one myself.
- I have goose bumps already.
- Jesus Christ.
(WILLY PLAYS)
Sometimes it's hard
You don 't want to...
...look over your shoulder
'Cause you don 't want to
Remember where you've been
There'll come a time you'd die
If you could only hold her
I know that's where I am
So listen with all your heart
Hold it inside forever
You may find all your dreams
Have already come true
Look inside and find the part
That's leading you
That's the beat of the heart
What do you think?
It's gonna cost me $1000
to clean you up.
Pictures, another 200.
My name is Ruth Meyers.
Call me Ruth Meyers.
All right. All right.

RUTH:
please sign it? Thanks.
- I changed your name.
- You did?
You're Billy Shadow now.
One Willy in the business is enough.
Billy Shadow. I like it.
Here.
That spending money?
(WILLY PLAYS)
So listen with all your heart
Hold it inside forever
(GLASS BREAKS)
You may find all your dreams
Have already come true
Whoa!

RUTH:
two years to get you on the radio.
It's been two years!
- Then you know what?
- What?
It's gonna take three years.
(PHONE CLIKES)
("BEAT OF THE HEART" PLAYS)
You may find all your dreams
Have already come true
Look inside and find the part
That's leading you
WILLY SINGS ON RADIO:
That's the beat of the heart
(SISTER HUMS)
No one can tell you...
...how to get there
It's a road you take all by yourself
Americus, sing with me.
All by yourself
- Oh, that song!
- So listen with all your heart
(TURNS OFF RADIO)
It's catchey.
I don't know. Something about that
guy's voice rubs me the wrong way.
Americus, honey, what are you doing?
- Eating dough with my nose.
- Don't.
Forney's outside waiting.
(GIGGLES)
- How do I look?
- Great.
How do I look? You nervous?
Uh-huh.

FORNEY:
Are you ready to go?
- Forney!
- Oh!
Pony ride!
Well, if it doesn't rain.
It can't rain.
I'm shooting an outdoor wedding.
Do I look professional?
- You know what would help?
- What?
Bringing your camera.
Shit!
- Mama didn't say "shit."
- Yes, she did.
Here you go.
You take some beautiful pictures of
that wedding. You look great!
- Drive careful.
- Bye, baby.
- Bye.
- Bye.
Say bye to Mama.
AMERICUS:

SISTER:

FORNEY:

(WIND BLOWS)
Mommy, Mommy, storm's coming!
Weather channel just put out a tornado warning. We better get going.
You better pick these up.
Here you go.
I swear, I spent more on film than I got paid.
What is going on here?
Well, it turns out that the groom's former girlfriend...
...was a waitress at the reception.
This was right after the bride called her a cheap big-ass tramp.
Who's on the stretcher?
The waitress, after the bridesmaids jumped up and down on her.
You think they'll want these?
I took everything.
I better get moving.
I'll meet you two in the cellar.
I'm ready.
You certainly are.
Now you're all set. Got it?
Where are you going?
Dixie Merlin's still sick.
I'm gonna bring her some potato soup.
I'll be right back.
(PHONE RINGS)
Pick it up. Novalee, pick it up.
Pick it up.
(PHONE RINGS)

MAN ON TV:
County should take action as well.
I got you.

NOVALEE:

AMERICUS:

ROSANNA:
Hold on, I've got you.

MAN ON TV:
We interrupt for weather.
- Where's Grandma Sister?
- She's coming, honey.
My husband's painting a house on Commerce Street.
He'll be all right.
Do you want to play cards?
I want to play with my bear.
He's scared of the storm.
I'm gonna go look for Sister.
Sister?
Shouldn't we shut the door?
Sister's still coming. Let's wait.
(TORNADO SIREN WAILS)
Oh, God.
Novalee, come back!

AMERICUS:
- Novalee, please!
(GRUNTS)
(SCREAMING)
Come here! Come here!
Americus, come here!
(SCREAMING)
Hold on, Novalee! I've got you!
Americus, stay back!
Kids, stay back!
Hang on!
Get back, baby.
Mommy!
(PEOPLE CHATTERING SOFTLY)
Look, Mommy.

LEXIE:
reopen Wal-Mart here?

NOVALEE:
Structural damage.

LEXIE:
we'll never see you.

NOVALEE:
I gotta go. I gotta make a living.

LEXIE:
Where's this guy we're meeting?

NOVALEE:
Come on, honey.
Where is he?
We're still early.
Mommy, can I play?
You can play for a couple minutes,
but then we have to go.
- Trailer.
- Hm?
The place I rented in Poteau,
it's got wheels under it.
- Forney called me last night.
- Forney?
I figured Mary fell out a window.
He asked me to get you a job
at the hospital. I said:
"As what?
Brain surgeon on weekends?"
That boy does not want you to move.
It's just, he's so crazy
about Americus.
- Oh, give me a break.
- He is.
Forney is in love with you.
Tell me you don't know that.
It's just not like that with us.
I have seen him. He loves you.
He loves the way you walk.
He loves your hair.
He loves everything about you.
Forney and me, we're not that way. 
Forney's different from us. 
He went to college. 
His family had money. 
What are you trying to say? 
That you're not good enough for him? 
(HORN HONKS) 
I wonder what he wants? 
I don't know, he called last night and asked to meet. 
I said I was going out of town, but he still wanted to. 
Miss Nation? 
Uh-uh. Her. 
- Hi, I'm Ray. 
- Hi. 
Sister spoke of you often at the meetings. 
- Oh, both of you were... 
- Alcoholics. Yes, ma'am. 
- Ray, you used to... 
- Call in the middle of the night... ...and Sister would come and pick my sorry ass up... Excuse me. 
In whatever sleazy beer joint I was passed out in. 
She never gave up on me. 
Even after I got disbarred. 
You know, I once went into court and started defending the wrong person. 
Anyway, she's the one who helped me turn it all around. 
Get my license back. 
- Well, everything's in here. 
- What is? 
Sister's estate. 
- Estate? 
- Yeah. She left it all to you. 
The land, insurance on the trailer and contents, life insurance... ...even some oil stock her grandfather bought from the Comanches in 1909. 
Almost about $41,000. 
(GASPS)
Sorry.

(HAMMERS POUNDING)

LEXIE:
lasso your sister!
Mr. Sprock, I still don't
feel right about this.
Some of this should be yours.
The only thing I wanted I got.
That old kitchen table.
A lot of fine memories.
All right.
I think Ruth Meyers went
as far as she can with me.
My head's butting against the ceiling.
I want to break through.
And you're the guy. You're Johnny
Desoto. You've got the clout.
Well, I will say I'd have thought
you'd pick up more momentum...
...off of "Beat of the Heart."
Exactly. That was eight months ago...
...and here I am in Santa-freaking-Fe
still playing the damn clubs.
Oh, shit. I gotta go get ready.
I got a show.
You and Ruth Meyers got
some kind of a contract?
I just want to warn you, Ruth Meyers
can be a powerful ally.
She makes a hell of an enemy. Mess
with her and nobody will touch you.
Johnny, Ruth Meyers ain't got
that kind of clout. Come on.

(ELEVATOR DINGS)

(CLAPPING)
And the winner of this year's
Kodak first prize...
...for the greater Southwest area...
...she's from Sequoyah, Oklahoma...
...how about a real big hand for
Miss Novalee Nation. Congratulations.
Way to go.
I shot this picture
with a Rollei twin lens reflex...
...at F4, using ASA 125.
I took it to remember
a very dear friend.
She gave me that tree...
...and then she took me in when me
and my baby had no place else to go.
I'd rather be living again
with her in that trailer...
...than in the finest house
in Oklahoma.
Thank you.
(WOMAN GIGGLES)
All right, hold on.
We're almost there.
- Who's that?
- Who's what?
Ruth Meyers.
You, out.
Are you married?
- To her?
- Out.
I will leave when I am good and ready.
(GRUNTS)
So how's it going?
I got a call from an attorney
down in Albuquerque.
Hell, if this is about that girl...
It's about a guy named Tommy Reynolds.
- Who?
- Don't lie to me!
Oh! All right, Tommy Reynolds. What?
Says he was your cellmate in prison.
So?
He says he wrote "Beat of the Heart."
That is such bullshit.
I wrote that song.
He sold me his guitar, that's it.
I got the crap kicked out of me
for writing that song!
Shit!
What are we gonna do?
What are we gonna do?
We ain't gonna do nothing.
Maybe Johnny Desoto will help you out.
Ruth. Ruth Meyers!
Come on, I need your help with this.
Hey, Ruthie.
I bet if we went back to my room,
we could work it out.
You sexy sweet thing.
Oh, God!

NOVALEE:
Hi.
Hi, honey. Sorry, but I made it.
Was it a big inconvenience?
Novalee, I have five children.
Everything is an inconvenience.
Mind if I drive slow on the way home?
I'd like to pretend it's a vacation.
- You all right?
- I'm great.
Good.
Anything new here?
Oh, nothing. Unless you think
me meeting a guy is new.
Who? How?
Well, his name is Roger, Roger Brisco.
He's a CPA.
He has his own business in Fort Worth.
How'd you meet him?
We pumped gas together at Texaco,
and he drives a new Buick.
When his dipstick got jammed,
I helped him yank it out.
Yeah.
He told me my kids were beautiful,
so I know he likes me.
You never know. Soon maybe you'll
be taking pictures at my wedding.
Thank you.
You're welcome, honey. Bye.
Bye.
- Oh.
- What?
I didn't get Forney a gift
for watching Americus.
- I know what you can give him.
- What?
No, I'll give him...
...hotel slippers.
That's just what every man wants.
A nice pair of house slippers.
- Bye!
- Bye.
Forney.
(CAMERA CLICKS)
Hi.
What time is it?
It's late. Sorry.
It's all right.
How was your trip?
Great.
I better get her to bed.
No, that's okay. I'll do it.
Okay. There.
- Forney?
- Mm-hm?
I brought these for you.
Oh, thanks.
- Night.
- Night.
(PHONE RINGS)
Hello?
Hello, is somebody there?
Who?
Brownie?
Why, where is Lexie?
Brownie, is your mama there?
Brownie.
Brownie, let me talk to Lexie.
Put your mama on the phone.
Why, what's wrong?
I'm coming.
Lexie?
Are you both okay?
Stay here, honey. I'll be right back.
Oh, God.
(HORN HONKS)
Moses, can Lexie keep her things
in your barn for a while?
Sure. How come?
She doesn't have sick leave,
and she can't pay for her apartment.
Where they going to stay?

**PRALINE:**
We had this for lunch.
Finish it or you're gonna have it for breakfast.
No more.
Sorry, honey.
Eat your food, Brownie.
Want to eat?

**NOVALEE:**
Lex.
You all right?
I was supposed to work
until 4 that day...
...but I decided to skip my lunch hour
and get off at 3...
...because Roger was coming in
from Fort Worth.
I wanted to take a shower
and shampoo my hair.
I picked up the baby and the twins
from the daycare.
When I got home, I was surprised
that Roger's car was in the driveway.
He'd said he wouldn't be there
until after 4.
Brownie and Praline were home,
and I knew they'd let him in.
When I went inside...
...I heard a noise coming from
the back of the apartment...
...from my bedroom.
I set down the baby, and I ran to see.
There was something against the door.
I had to push.
And it was Praline.
She was crumpled on the floor...
...covering her eyes.
And Roger had...
...Brownie on the bed...
...and he had his...
And I flew at him.
I wanted to kill him,
and I would have.
I hit him twice,
and that's all I remember.
You know...
...he went after little Praline first,
and she threw up on him.
And that's when Brownie came in.
How did he find me, Novalee?
How'd a man like that find my kids?
How'd he know he could do
such a thing to us?
He had to be looking.
He was looking for women like me
who are alone...
...with children,
and women who are stupid.
And they saw through him.
They could tell he was evil.
And all I saw was a Buick.
Oh, God.
What am I gonna tell my babies?
What am I gonna say...
...to Brownie and Praline
when they ask me why this happened?
What am I supposed to say, Novalee?
You tell them...
You tell that our lives can change
with every breath we take.
We both know that.
And you tell them
to let go of what's gone...
...because men like Roger Brisco
never win.
And tell them to hold on like hell
to what they've got.
Each other...
...and a mother who'd die for them,
and almost did.
You tell them, we've all
got meanness in us...
...but we've got goodness too.
And the only thing worth living for
is the good...
...and that is why we've got to
make sure to pass it on.
Forney, if you feed a cow chocolate,
will you get chocolate milk?

FORNEY:
a cow around real fast...
...you'll get whipped cream.

AMERICUS:
Wow! You know a lot.

FORNEY:
I work in the library.

PARAMEDIC:
kept her alive this long.
You're welcome to ride along with us.
(KNOCKING)
How did you find me?
Small town.
You didn't come to the service.
I was worried.
Didn't mean to worry you.
Can I come in?
Okay.
You all right?
I couldn't stay at the library, l...
I understand.
I have to go away for a while.
Take Mary Elizabeth back to Maine.
Bury her in the family plot.
I'm so sorry, Forney.
Couldn't go to the service.
I had four white roses...
...and when I got to the service...
...they'd turned brown.
I couldn't take her brown roses.
Novalee.
Yeah?
I love you.
He told you he loves you, 
and you didn't say anything? 
I'm a dope. I'm such a dope... 
...but I was scared, 
I was confused. 
It's just strange. 
Don't take this wrong, 
but Forney is strange. 
When is he coming back? 
(HORN HONKS)  
- What was that all about?  
- Nothing. 
Nothing? Why was Ernie the Exterminator honking at you? 
I said I'd go out with him. 
You told him you'd what? 
I said I'd go out on a date with him. 
How'd that happen? 
Well, he's Brownie's soccer coach... 
...and he makes him laugh which, 
let's face it, nobody does. 
And that psychologist said it would be a good idea. I don't know. 
You don't think he's gonna wear that orange jumpsuit on our date, do you? 
You know, maybe it was a bad idea to tuck in the shirts. 
(CHATTERING IN AGREEMENT)  
Isn't there a championship banner? 
We're not the champions. 
We're just celebrating we lived through the season. 
All right. 
Well, here we go, then. 

NOVALEE: 
Smile. 
Do you know how to reach Forney? 
It's about legal work involving the library. 
I expect him back today or tomorrow. 
Forney's coming back? 
Sure. 
I just figured
with Mary Elizabeth gone...
...he'd want to pick up with his life again or go back to college. 
Hey, you know his great grandfather was governor of Maine?
No.
Sometimes things work out for the best.
Now he can get out of here and have a real life.
All right, let's take this picture.
We're all starting to smell.

(PHONE RINGS)
Hello?
Where are you?
When did you get back?
No, no, no. I'll come over.
I'll come there. Okay? Bye.
- Hi.
- Hey.
Come in.
- Sorry I called so late.
- No, no, that's...
How was your trip?
Good. Okay.
- You want to sit down?
- Sure.
I was starting to worry when you didn't come back.
I forgot how lovely it is there.
- Very different from here.
- I'll bet.
I drove over to Bowdoin.
- Mm-hm?
- Yeah.
I was gonna go for two hours, wound up staying two days.
Saw a couple of my old professors...
I forgot what a great library they have.
Have they hired a new librarian here?
Yeah. Mayor Albright's daughter.
Oh.
Well, it's okay. I wouldn't want
to go back there anyway. I hear they're hiring at the plastics factory. I could get a job there.
Are you okay?
What about teaching?
You wanted to be a history teacher.
Well, that was a long time ago.
If it's what you want...
What I want?
What I want is to be with you.
To be with you and Americus.
I love you. I love you so much.
- When we were together...
- That might've been a mistake.
Mistake?
I mean...
You made love to me because you felt sorry for me?
- No.
- Then what?
It was a bad decision, an impulse, what?
Forney.
Do you love me?
You are the best friend I have ever had.

**FORNEY:**
Just answer me.
You delivered my baby.
Do you love me?
No.
No, Forney, I don't love you.
Not that way.
(CRIES)
This place looks good.
It's nice and bright.
The carpet looks new.
My kids could make it a dump before the door closes.
Look, you can see the library.
Yeah.
Ever hear from Joe College?
He writes to Americus,
sends her books.
At the end, he writes: "Please tell your mother I extend my best wishes."
No. You written him back?
No. What could I say to him?
God, that you lied to him, for one.
That you love him and miss him.
That these have been a miserable three months...
...and that he should come back.
- Come back to what?
A job at the plastics factory?
Flipping burgers at Leda's Drive-In?
Driving a delivery truck?
- What about Wal-Mart?
- No.
It's okay for you, but it's not good enough for him?
No.
You never thought you deserved Forney, or that you were good enough for him.
I know your mom walked out on you and what that butthole, Willy Jack did.
But that is what makes them trash, not you.
- You still seeing Ernie?
- Sort of.
- You know, sort of.
- So you like him, or what?
I don't know. He's, you know, got kids of his own.
And the man kills bugs for a living, for goodness sake.
I don't think he's my type.
(MENDELSSOHN'S "THE WEDDING MARCH" PLAYS)
(LAUGHING)
You like that, huh?
(MALFORD MILLIGAN'S "MUSTANG SALLY" PLAYS)
Oh, you want to know how I knew Ernie was different, that he was the one?
- Sure.
- You can't tell.
- It's a secret.
- Okay.
- His daughter, Carol Anne...
- Uh-huh.
...is not his daughter.
His ex, Maxine, she had Carol Anne
before they met...
...and they had Cody.
She decides to split...
...and she didn't want Cody.
But not Carol Anne, either...
...until she finds out Ernie does,
and then she can bargain.
Ernie had this bright red,
fully restored '67 Camaro.
I mean, a beauty. And she wants it.
So he trades his car for her daughter.

**NOVALEE:**
Oh, my God.
When he told me that, I knew
he was the pick of the litter.
I am so happy I finally
found me a winner.
Oh, I'm also pregnant.
What?
All you want to do
Is ride around, Sally
Ride, Sally, Ride
(LEXIE LAUGHS)
- Hey.
- Where are your shoes?
What?
Why did we stop?
I'm hungry.
It wouldn't hurt to get something
inside you beside pills and whiskey.

**WILLY:**
Don't you start.
Suit yourself.
(BOTTLE BREAKS)
(GRUNTS)
Oh, shit!
NOVALEE'S VOICE:
Want to feel the baby?
Huh?

NOVALEE'S VOICE:
Feel that? Right here.
That "bomp" is where the heart is.
I don't feel nothing!
(GROANS)
(TRAIN RUMBLES)
(SCREAMING)
What do you think of my cake?
It's pretty as a picture.
Thank you. I saw it in a magazine.
Thought, "I could do that."
I'm ready for candles.

NOVALEE:
No candles.

LEXIE:
Why? It's her birthday.
Five days old, she got jaundice.
Five weeks, she got an ear infection.
Five months, she was kidnapped.
Five years,
I'm not lighting any fires.
Novalee, you're a pit.

ERNIE:

KIDS:
All right.
Come on, let's go!
Oh, I'll get those.
It's been a perfect day.
It's gonna keep being a perfect day.
Birthday cakes gotta have candles.
If you say so.
What is it? What do you see?
"Victim's Wheelchair Stolen"?
LEXIE:
"A legless man, W.J. Pickens... 
...was discovered in the men's room 
at a rest stop near Alva."
Oh, my gosh.
"Pickens, who lost his legs four 
months ago in a train accident... 
...had been trapped since Friday when 
he was robbed of his wheelchair."
Oh, my God!
(DOOR CLOSES)
(WILLY GASPS)
What did you say?
Novalee?
Yeah.
I can't believe it.
- How did you know I was here?
- Story in the paper.
I was coming to see you.
Sure.
I was.
What were you gonna do, Willy Jack?
Come back to the Wal-Mart? Think I'd 
still be there five years later?
No.
I just...
I gave birth at a Wal-Mart.
Was it a boy?
Was it a girl?
Is it all right?
It's a girl.
Americus, and she's mine.
You stay away.
Stay away from her? I can't even 
get out of this bed, Novalee!
Am I gonna run away with her?
If you think I'm gonna feel sorry...
I'll just get some new legs!
Then why are you coming after us?
Is there a problem?
I can hear you down the hall.
Sorry.
You need another shot?
No, let's wait.
I came back to tell you something.
You remember that last day,
that last day we was together?
Yeah, I remember.
You put my hand on your belly...
...and asked me if I could feel the
baby's heart, and I said no.
I lied.
Why?
Why does anyone lie?
Because we're scared
or crazy or just mean.
I mean, there's a million reasons
to lie, Novalee.
And sometimes you tell a lie so big,
it changes your whole life.
A lie so big, it makes you think:
"I'd do anything if I could just have
one chance to set it straight."
Just one chance to change it.
You don't know what I mean?
Yeah...
...I do.
(EMMYLOU HARRIS'
"BEYOND THE BLUE" PLAYS)
Oh.
(KEYS JINGLE)
Novalee?
Novalee!
Novalee.
What are you doing here?
L...
Is Americus all right?
Yes, she's fine.
When did you get here?
- I just drove.
- You drove?
All the way from Oklahoma?
Yeah... No, I first...
First I stopped in Tennessee.
I had to drop someone off,
an old friend...
...somebody who needed to go home.
- Oh.
Well.
I lied, Forney.
You didn't go to Tennessee?
No... Yes, I did go to Tennessee...
We're going to Sam's for some
coffee. Do you want to come?
Yeah. I'll catch up later.
- Okay.
- Okay.
It's too late, isn't it?
Too late?
For what?
I lied to you...
...when you asked me if I loved you,
and I said no.
- Remember?
- Yes.
I lied, Forney.
It wasn't true, l...
I love you.
It's just, I lied because...
...you deserved something better.
Something better than you?
Novalee, there isn't
anything better than you.
(MARTINA MCBRIDE'S
"THERE YOU ARE" PLAYS)

ANNOUNCER:
shoppers and wedding guests:
Our garden center is running a special
on potting soil and rakes.