

Black Heart, Blue Eyes
By
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FADE IN ON:

A SOARING TEXAS LANDSCAPE - MORNING

SUPER: Abilene, Texas. Home of Big-Hair, Big-Hearts and Even Bigger Steer. As well as the *Dyees Airforce Base*, *Abilene Christian University*, *Cutter Petroleum* and - last but not least - lots of Guns.

Soaring through a cloudless sky. Tumbleweeds and red-baked soil far beneath. Little boy TIMMY narrates:

TIMMY (V.O.)

My Dad moved to Abilene when I was just a shrimp. He works for the Air Force, so we move around a lot. But he's not a pilot. Even though I wish he were. It'd be awesome to soar through the sky. I saw the *Blue Angels* do it once. They rolled, and roared, and flew real high.

The sun rises at an accelerated pace. Like the famed *Blue Angels*, it's soon the centerpiece of the sky.

The view continues to scroll. Over wheat fields, bales of hay. Water towers, oil machinery and wells.

TIMMY (V.O.)

There ain't much else to do out here. Sure, it's fun when there's a twister and it rains. That's when the frogs come out, make love and tadpoles. I like to scoop 'em up in a jar. Mom don't always like it. But I put them in my room and watch 'em grow.

Past the farm lands: brick and mortar suburbs. The sun reaches its Apex, starts to set.

TIMMY (V.O.)

But one year, Halloween came early. Kevin told me all about it at School. He said there were kids who knock on folks' doors at night, and ask to come in. My friend Joey says they're called *Black-Eyed Children*, 'cause there ain't no white in their eyes. But I know the truth. They ain't really kids. I call 'em ghosts. I like tadpoles and horny toads a lot better. Cause they're not half as scary. When you get to know them, at least.

Evening and shadows grow. The view descends towards a HUGE HOUSE. One that towers over all the rest.

INT. CUTTER MANSION - EVENING

Tacky and ornate furnishings everywhere. The fireplace mantel bristles with gold plaques. Lettering on the largest reads: **CUTTER PETROLEUM, CEO OF THE YEAR.**

JIM CUTTER (50s) relaxes on a leather Laziboy: cowboy boots propped up high. A cheesy hat provides shade.

News BLARES on TV. Jim yells into a land-line phone:

JIM

Barry, I don't give two shits about the "rules". We're gonna continue Fracking, come Hell or High Water. Or both. No matter what that Libtard "official" says. What's he gonna do, kick us out? That'd leave this town's labor force high and dry. So unless he wants to explain hisself to every Tom, Dick, Harry and Mary at the bar why they ain't got jobs, he'd be wise to leave brass tacks to me.

Jim listens to the VOICE on the other end. Annoyance on his face.

JIM

He said what?!? Well, fuck him sideways with a goat dildo. I'm tellin' you, the stress level's safe. That limp dick can shove "Contamination Levels" up his ass. Go get on the phone with Fred. You know, on the Engineering chain? Tell him, he better call his good ole pal at the EPA. Dig up dirt on that so-called "officer", and fax it to me today. I'll blackmail that bastard for every cent he has. If that Yankee Trump can do it, so can I.

Jim SLAMS down the receiver.

SUE CUTTER (30s, platinum blonde and petite) trots into the room, dripping with jewelry and trophy wife attitude. Tottering on five inch heels.

SUE

Jim, when the Hell you gonna join the Twentieth century and buy a cell?

She wobbles over to her husband's chair, wedges in between his legs. Jim cradles her hips with rough hands.

JIM

It's the *Twenty-First* century, Sue. And I don't want no dag-blammed smart phone anyhow. I'm smart enough as it is.

SUE

Of course you are, Dear.

JIM

Besides, those gadgets always break.

Sue kisses Jim's cheek. Then glances at the block of metal Jim calls a "phone". The dial tune HUMS. The receiver dangles off the table's end.

SUE

The way you handle them, that's true.

JIM

(leers)

Lemme *handle* you...

He gives Sue's love handles an affectionate squeeze.

Then the news catches his eye. Jim looks over his wife's bony shoulder at the TV screen.

A nebbish Reporter (LOUIS GOLDMAN) stands before a school, his pinched face perfectly framed:

REPORTER GOLDMAN

Louis Goldman here. I'm reporting from just outside *Will Roger's Elementary School*. It's now Day Five of the search for three missing children that once frolicked in these halls. Young boys, on the verge of life - and second grade.

Jim squints at the TV. Cranes his neck for a better view.

SUE

Hey! Don't ya wanna look at me?

JIM

Darlin', hold your pretty horses. I'm just catching up on the news.

Our man Louie continues:

REPORTER GOLDMAN

Kevin Roach, Timmy Faske and Joe Wagner, Junior were - I mean are - their names. Fueled by community fears and prayers, hope continues for their safe return.

SUE

(snorts)

Their families *wish*. Didn't they disappear right after that nasty flood? You ask me, they washed away!

JIM

Shhh. Boys are missing. Show respect.

Jim SLAPS Sue's ample ass for emphasis.

Behind her, Louis Goldman plasters on a new expression. Less "worried", more "astute."

REPORTER GOLDMAN

Coming up next: protests continue over *Cutter Petroleum Industry's* use of hydraulic fracturing for new wells. Is this procedure truly safe? Or the ultimate in corporate greed?

Jim SNARLS. He grabs the remote. Snaps the TV off.

JIM

Jew bastard doesn't know what he's yammering about. He better shut the Hell up. Or stick to cryin' about kids.

Sue smiles, glad her TV competition is banished.

SUE

Finally, you turned that off. Wanna try something new, and turn me *on*?

JIM

Darlin', you're just chock full a good ideas tonight. But I got a toads-load of paperwork to read through. I'm meeting the Regulators in the morning. A businessman's gotta be prepared!

Sue grabs Jim's crotch. Reluctant, he pushes her away.

JIM

Go do your nails at *Brenda's*.

SUE

That's silly. It's 7PM!

JIM

Then skee-daddle over to the church for the Pastor Westland's evening sermon.

SUE
But it's Tuesday.

JIM
Then Hell - catch a matinee!

Sue pouts and grabs her Rhinestone purse. She shoots a sultry Marilyn Monroe look over her shoulder.

SUE
Okay. I'm going. When I come back, you better be right here. Wearing just that hat, those boots and a great big smile!

She flounces out the door. Jim watches her hourglass figure ripple 'til she's gone. He GROANS.

JIM
I'm stupid for letting her go, ain't I?

He grabs several folders off the floor.

JIM
Jim old boy - that girl's gonna be the DEATH of you. But a sweet, sweet passing it'll be.

He settles back into his recliner, and skims through the folders' pages. Loads of engineering stats and diagrams.

JIM
This is thicker than a phone book! When are the bean counter boys gonna learn? Numbers and science don't count for two chiggers in a tic-tac box. It's the people's *emotions* a man's gotta earn!

DING-DONG! The door-bell rings. Jim squints towards the frosted windows.

SOMETHING dark and short waits on the porch.

JIM
Sue Ellen Cutter, is that you? You lose your Pink Cadillac keys again?

No response. The figure fidgets silently.

JIM
God-Darnit, Woman. Answer me! You know I love you to pieces, Sue. But sometimes you're so scatterbrained, you'd forget your head if it wasn't attached to your bleached hair!

Still nothing. Jim throws down the papers, and lock-step marches to the door.

JIM

Honey, turn the knob. It ain't locked.
You afraid of breaking those nails?

He flings the door open. IT'S NOT SUE OUTSIDE.

TIMMY (7) stands like a statue on the porch. Oily hair. Filthy clothes. Head down. Jim stares, gives him the eye.

JIM

Who are you - the Good Humor Man? Black
Cat got your tongue, Boy?

Tim doesn't stir an inch.

JIM

Well, I guess you're at the wrong house.
We didn't order any Mimes today.

Jim moves to close the door. Timmy's hand shoots forward, almost like it's independently alive. The hinge crushes his little fingers. The flesh turns dark, doesn't bleed.

Timmy keeps his head down, doesn't even flinch. But busted kid fingers just won't do.

So Jim cracks the door back open. Timmy's battered hand slides free.

JIM

You wanna sell Boy Scout Cookies? Is that
the deal?

Timmy shuffles a ratty shoe. His big toe peeks out from a hole. He won't look Jim in the eye.

TIMMY

(mumbles)
No. Can I use your phone?

JIM

(chuckles)
It's a land-line, Boy. Do you even know
what one a' those looks like?

TIMMY

I gotta call my Mom. Let her know where I
am.

JIM

Why - are you lost?

TIMMY

Me and my friends were just playing. We lost... track of time.

Jim glances at his once-white porch. Muddy footprints cover every inch.

JIM

What you were playin' with - hogs?

TIMMY

It was kinda muddy, on a count of the storm. We were just collecting tadpoles. Now we gotta call our families. There ain't no doubt. They're mighty scared.

Jim SIGHS and steps aside.

JIM

Okay. But stay in the living room, on the wood part of the floor. Don't go running everywhere. The missus'll be back in an hour. I don't need mud tracked across her prize shag rug!

Timmy looks up at Jim and smiles.

Revealing: PITCH BLACK EYES. Jim YELPS, and jumps away.

Two other young boys (KEVIN and JOE) converge from opposite ends of the porch.

Tim steps towards Jim, supernaturally quick.

JIM

What in Holy Hell's wrong with your eyes?

TIMMY

Here. I'll help you see.

Timmy grabs Jim's hands. The Oil Barron stiffens. Kevin and Joe SLAM the door.

EXT. OPEN FIELD - JIM'S NIGHTMARE VISION - EVENING

Fracking MACHINERY provides the greasy backdrop. Gears bob up and down, far away.

Tim, Kevin and Joe tramp through puddles and tall weeds - their clothes old, but much cleaner than on the porch.

Each child cradles a JAR.

Timmy's already contains three TADPOLES. His bright blue eyes scrutinize them through the glass: they float in dirty water like black, fat sperm.

KEVIN

(points)

Over there!

His friends race over to a STREAM. Nothing big enough to bathe in. Just a temporary trickle, really - a remnant from the storm.

Kevin swishes his jar through cloudy water. Wild TADPOLES flee from the open mouth, wriggle away.

Joe rolls up his pant legs, removes his shoes. He steps forward towards the stream.

KEVIN

Oooo - your Mom's gonna be pissed!

JOE

She'll never know. I'm going in!

Joe takes a step. And disappears. Plunging straight down, past the water line - like an arrow shot into the earth.

No way the water's that deep. Timmy and Kevin run over:

TIMMY

Joe!

Underneath them both, the ground caves in.

The two boys plummet downward through a hole. It's like Alice in Wonderland... with less color, more despair.

They scabble at dirt to slow the descent. Their hands slip in oil as they fall.

SPLASH! A SCREAM. And then silence.

INT. CUTTER MANSION - EVENING

Jim stands rigid. Frozen in fright. Or a spell.

Timmy holds on tight to his hands, rocks back and forth.

He gazes up at Jim: eyes as black as crude oil 'round midnight.

Joe and Kevin grab at Jim's expensive clothes. STREAMS OF BLACK issue from the boys' fingers, and slither up.

The black slick spreads across Jim's skin, underneath (and over) his pants and shirt. Then it reaches his chin.

JIM

Please, God, no. It ain't my fault!

CLICK CLACK. Jim's terrified eyes flick to the porch. Another FIGURE waits outside. Sue's wandered home.

JIM

(yells)

Sue Ellen Cutter, Help!

The black substance flows into his mouth, chokes off his scream. And spreads across Jim's face, as well.

JIM

(to the boys)

What... what do you want? Money?

TIMMY

Company.

JOE

We're lonely.

KEVIN

Come and play?

The black stuff covers Jim's eyes. Black out. Still, several SOUNDS reach his ears:

- Sue Ellen's key CLICKS in the lock.
- The TV SNAPS ON by itself. It's Reporter Goldman again:

REPORTER GOLDMAN

No matter one's political views, it all comes down to one crucial question. Is Fracking safe? Only Time will tell...

- Sue Ellen SCREAMS.
- The boys LAUGH; their voices ring like tiny bells.

Then the LAUGHTER muffles and distorts. The black substance pours into Jim's ears.

INT. COLLAPSED WELL - NIGHT

Jim breaks the surface, mysteriously transported.

He thrashes, and attempts to tread water. Oil soaks his clothes, drags him down.

GASPING, he swings to his left. A rotting CHILD SKULL grins at him. It looks like Timmy; what flesh is left.

Joe and Kevin's corpses BOB on Jim's right. Jim HOWLS. The boys reach out with skeletal hands.

Circling Jim, they drag him down.

INT. CUTTER MANSION - EVENING

Sue Ellen stares around the living room. Her new nails pick spastically at her skirt. By the look on her face, she's horrified.

The TV (and Reporter Louis) BLATHERS in the background.

REPORTER GOLDMAN

Tomorrow, we'll bring you live to *Greig's Field and Farms*. A lonely plot of land where even now, a search party for the Missing Abilene Three is underway...

Sue Cutter notices Jim's abandoned cowboy hat on the floor. Pointing at it, she SCREAMS again.

SUE

Jim Cutter, you git over here this instant! What in tarnation did you do to my floor?

The view pulls away. Sue dwindles. Surrounded by muddy footprints, a cowboy hat, expensive furniture and not much more.

Past the roof, into the sky...

A SOARING TEXAS LANDSCAPE - MORNING

We travel anew across lonely Texan fields and dark skies.

TIMMY (V.O.)

But whether they're kids or ghosts or "Black Angels", the Black Eyed Children don't want much. All we really wanna do is play...

FINAL FADE OUT: