

ACT I

SETTING: *The living room of the Combs home, a poor mountain cabin in the rural hamlet of Mud Creek, KY. There are three doors – one leading to the front porch, one leading to the kitchen/bedrooms and one leading to the house’s most recent addition, a bathroom. There is a wood-burning stove and the furniture includes a rocking chair and a cracked leather couch with an afghan draped over it. A beautiful “Sunburst” quilt hangs on one wall. Leaning against the wall next to the front door is a wooden ladder. Above the entrance to the kitchen is a small door that leads to an attic space. It should be noted that although this is a poor home, it is a neat home.*

AT RISE: *A warm summer’s day. The front door is open, revealing a somewhat tattered screen door. IDA MAY COMBS, a seventy-something grandmother and owner of the cabin, is seated in the rocking chair piecing together a new quilt. We hear the sound of a car approaching rapidly. IDA MAY looks up from her work and listens intently. We hear the squeal of tires as the car rounds a curve. Recognizing the car by its sound, IDA MAY goes back to her work. We hear the car screech to a halt and a chicken squawk in fear.*

IDA MAY

(Shaking her head)
It’s a wonder she ain’t kilt nobody yet.

(JUANITA JENKINS appears on the porch. She yells through the door.)

JUANITA

Ida May? You home?

IDA MAY

Where else would I be?

(JUANITA enters carrying a cosmetics sample case.)

IDA MAY (cont.)

It's a wonder you ain't kilt nobody yet, Juanita.

JUANITA

What're you talkin' about?

IDA MAY

Your drivin'. I reckon the biggest mistake them cosmetic folks ever did was give you that fancy car. It's like puttin' a loaded gun in the hands of a two-year-old.

JUANITA

I drive just fine, thank you.

IDA MAY

That ain't what Darryl Webb said when you parked your car in his livin' room.

JUANITA

That warn't my fault, Ida May. I was just tryin' to avoid hittin' that big, dumb hound dog of his. And dang if I didn't warn Darryl after I kilt the first two that he needed to keep them dogs penned up. But he didn't listen and sure 'nough that dumb coon hound started chasin' my car again... It was either the dog or the house. I reckon I did the Christian thing and hit the house.

IDA MAY

Yessir. A loaded gun.

(JUANITA puts down her sample case and heads toward the kitchen.)

JUANITA

You got a CoCola? The air conditioner's broke down in my car and it's hot as hell out there.

IDA MAY

In the Frigidaire.

(JUANITA exits into the kitchen. IDA MAY continues her sewing.)

JUANITA (O.S.)

Why is it, I wonder, that air conditioners always pick summertime to break down in? Seems to me wintertime would be... What on earth?

(JUANITA reappears in the doorway holding a soft drink can.)

JUANITA (cont.)

What the hell is this?

IDA MAY

A CoCola.

JUANITA

No it ain't. It's a *diet* CoCola what tastes like the bottom of an outhouse! Who put this in your Frigidaire is what I'd like to know.

IDA MAY

Cindy, I reckon. Her and Jackson went to the grocery for me a few days back.

JUANITA

Ida May, listen to me. Never, *never* let your grandchildren do your food shoppin' for you. They don't know nothin' about nutrition. Oh, they run on all the time 'bout your cholesterol level and blood enzymes and what not, but before you know it, with them in charge, you're eatin' *margarine* and *low-fat* mayonnaise and drinkin' diet CoCola what tastes like the bottom of an outhouse. Then you wake up one mornin' weighin' sixty pound lookin' like one of them poor African children you see in them ads in People magazine and they rush you to the hospital and the doctor tells you you're sufferin' from malnutrition... And then you die.

(JUANITA pops the top and takes a long drink.)

IDA MAY

I ain't too worried 'bout Cindy tryin' to kill me.

JUANITA

Why not?

IDA MAY

Because I'm her family. And family don't hurt family, leastways not in my house.

JUANITA

What about Luther?

(JUANITA finishes off the can. IDA MAY looks up.)

IDA MAY

What about him?

JUANITA

It's just that there was a lot of talk when Luther died. Some folks like to think maybe you kilt him.

IDA MAY

What folks? Folks like *you*, maybe?

JUANITA

No... but I wouldn't blame you none if you did. Lord knows I hate to speak ill of the dead, but Luther Combs was a no-good, wife-beatin' drunk and why you put up with him as long as you did is beyond me.

IDA MAY

You know very well that Luther Combs got liquored up, walked out in the middle of the woods and shot his stupid self. It's in the public record. And just because folks talk, Juanita, don't mean you have to listen none.

JUANITA

Well, hell, don't get in a tear about it. I only brought it up because you was sayin' all that about how in your house family don't hurt family...

IDA MAY

Luther warn't family. Luther was my husband. Family is *blood*, younguns and whatnot. None of my younguns would ever hurt me and I'd never hurt none of them. No mommy would.

JUANITA

Well, now, I don't know about that. I recall one day in high school learnin' all about some Greek mommy who done kilt her children.

IDA MAY

What are you talkin' about? There ain't no Greeks in Mud Creek, Kentucky!

JUANITA

Hell, I know that, Ida May! Ain't I lived here all my life, just like you? These folks lived in "A-thens." That's a town way over near Lexington. Anyway, this Greek mommy – her name was "Medalia" – she had some sort of complex. Y'know? One of them psychiatric things Oprah likes to run on about?

IDA MAY

Who's Oprah? Another Greek?

JUANITA

Lord no! Oprah's that big, black gal what has her own talk show on television. Ain't you never seen the Oprah show, Ida May?

IDA MAY

Girl, you know I cain't watch nothin' up here. We ain't got no reception.

JUANITA

Well, why ain't you got you a satellite dish yet? It ain't like you cain't afford one these days...

(JUANITA tapers off when IDA MAY looks at her.)

IDA MAY

The Combs family ain't nothin' but poor mountain folk, Juanita. The only money we got comin' in is from what quilts I can get sold off. Remember that.

JUANITA

Yes, ma'am.

(IDA MAY looks back to her sewing.)

IDA MAY

Now tell me some more 'bout this here Greek woman.

JUANITA

That's right. Medalia. So, Medalia was married to this fella named "Edpus" and Edpus was so ornery that he give Medalia what they call an "Edpus complex" and... oh! I almost forgot the most important part. Edpus and Medalia also had them a daughter named "Electronic." Or was it "Electricity...?"

IDA MAY

What kind of fool name is that? That ain't in the Bible.

JUANITA

Them Greeks don't set much store by Bible names. They ain't Christian like us. I reckon they're A-rabs...or Catholic, maybe. Anyway, Edpus and Medalia have this daughter named Electronic and by and by she grows up until one day Edpus falls in love with her.

IDA MAY

Her own daddy falls in love with her?

JUANITA

Yep. And get this – Electronic falls in love with him, too.

IDA MAY

Where'd you say these folks was from...?

JUANITA

'Course when Medalia her mommy found out 'bout the whole thing she was madder'n hell and she up and shot Electronic. Just like that. Shot her dead.

IDA MAY

She kilt her own child?

JUANITA

Yep. Boom, boom. Right between the eyes.

IDA MAY

Well, that ain't right, shootin' her own blood like that...

JUANITA

Of course it ain't. The Bible says "Thou shalt not kill."

IDA MAY

She shoulda kilt her husband. She shoulda blowed his damn head off. That's what I'd a done....

(IDA MAY goes back to her sewing. JUANITA studies her a moment.)

JUANITA

Huh.

(Beat. Suddenly she stands up and heads for the kitchen.)

I need another CoCola. You want one?

IDA MAY

No.

(JUANITA exits into the kitchen.)

JUANITA (O.S.)

Where's Ronnie at? Workin'?

IDA MAY

Hell, no. He done hurt his back again

(JUANITA reappears in the doorway with a soft drink can. She pops the lid.)

JUANITA

Seems like Ronnie's back's been hurt most of his life.

IDA MAY

He's a weak man, like his daddy.

JUANITA

Maybe. But I'm thinkin' it all started with that time when we was in high school and a bunch of us went drinkin' and Ronnie ended up fallin' out of Birddog's pickup truck and landin' smack on that big rock what's on the side of Dobb's Road. Lord, was he ever hurt bad! Lord, was we ever *drunk*! Back in them days I could put away so much beer they called me "The Keg Queen." Huh...

(She takes a sip of her drink.)

Where is he, then, if he ain't workin'?

IDA MAY

He went over to McKee to see the doctor.

JUANITA

The one you see for your arthritis?

IDA MAY

Yep. I told Ronnie to ask for the same prescription.

(JUANITA starts to laugh and shakes her head. We hear the sound of a car approaching. IDA MAY looks up and listens for a moment.)

That's Jackson's truck. You got somethin' for me?

JUANITA

Oh, lord. I plumb forgot. Here...

(She opens her sample case, takes out a bottle of hand lotion and gives it to IDA MAY. IDA MAY holds it in her hand for a moment as if weighing it.)

IDA MAY

It seems lighter than usual.

JUANITA

Well, it ain't. There's just as much in there as there's always been.

(IDA MAY stands up stiffly, rubbing her knees.)

IDA MAY

I'll be right back.

(IDA MAY exits into the bathroom and closes the door. JUANITA drains her drink then heads to the kitchen for yet another one. We hear the approaching truck stop. Two figures appear on the porch, JACKSON BENNETT and his wife, CINDY TAYLOR BENNETT. They are both in their late twenties. CINDY opens the door and pokes her head in.)

CINDY

Granny?

(She enters. JACKSON follows her in wearing a ball cap. JUANITA reappears from the kitchen.)

Oh, hey, Juanita.

JUANITA

My lord, Cindy Taylor, if you ain't the spittin' image of your mommy. I could a swore for a second there that Janelle herself was comin' through that door...

(She hugs CINDY.)

Hey there, Jackson.

JACKSON

Hey, Juanita. Kilt any more dogs lately?

JUANITA

Not lately. How's your daddy? He outta the hospital yet?

JACKSON

Comin' home tomorrow.

JUANITA

That was a mighty bad accident, havin' that still blow up in his face like that. He was lucky he ain't blowed up with it.

CINDY

Juanita, where's Granny? I got somethin' to show her...

(We hear a toilet flush. IDA MAY enters from the bathroom.)

Hey, Granny.

IDA MAY

(To JACKSON)

Take your hat off in the house, boy. Ain't your mommy learned you no better?

(JACKSON removes his cap. CINDY kisses IDA MAY on the cheek.)

How's my girl?

CINDY

Just fine. Hey, guess what I...?

IDA MAY

You ain't been bothered none by the mornin' sickness, have you?

JUANITA

Mornin' sickness? Well now, Cindy – are you pregnant finally?

CINDY

Yes, ma'am, I am.

JUANITA

That's wonderful. Why ain't you told me, Ida May?

(IDA MAY retakes her seat in the rocking chair.)

IDA MAY

I ain't had the chance. You was too busy runnin' on about that Greek gal Oprah...

JUANITA

I done told you a thousand times, Oprah ain't a Greek!

IDA MAY

Oh, that's right. She's a colored.

JACKSON

Now, Ida May, I reckon you don't know this, you bein' uneducated and all, but you ain't allowed to call 'em *colored* these days. These days you have to call 'em *blacks* or *African-Americans*. I learned me that up at the Federal Penitentiary.

IDA MAY

What the hell are you talkin' about?

CINDY

He's right, Granny. Callin' folks *colored* ain't political. You cain't do it no more.

IDA MAY

Says who? I been callin' 'em *colored* all my life and I reckon I'll do it to the day I die.

CINDY

But I don't want you sayin' things that ain't political in front of my baby!

IDA MAY

That baby cain't hear nothin' yet!

CINDY

Oh yes it can. I read about it in a magazine. Some doctors say a baby can hear just about as soon as it's conceived.

IDA MAY

That's the damn dumbest thing I ever heard in my life.

CINDY

No it ain't. And another thing – I don't want you cussin' no more in front of my baby neither. I won't even let Jackson do it.

JACKSON

She makes me pay her fifty cent every time I slip. I swear that child's gonna have its college education paid for before it's even born.

IDA MAY

A Bennett? Goin' to college?

CINDY

That's right. We're gonna give this baby all the opportunity we never got. What do you have to say about that?

IDA MAY

Shit...