

PERDITION

by

Terry Rietta

Based on the novel
"The Live Goat" by Cecil Dawkins

terryrietta@yahoo.com

per·di·tion

noun

(in Christian theology) a state of eternal punishment and damnation into which a sinful and unpenitent person passes after death.

EXT. PASTORAL ALABAMA (1830'S) - DAY

Afternoon sun kisses the foothills of the Appalachians.

Hills, pastures, pines and hardwoods.

Pleasant UNPAINTED HOUSES of slivered wood sit above ground on rock pilings. Modest homes made by the Scots and Celts who've settled here.

A BOY (13) speaks with a soft Southern accent, touched by the Irish lilt of his parent's heritage.

This is DUNCAN.

DUNCAN (V.O.)

Cullen, Alabama was a pretty place any time of day. Old oaks leaning down. Big moss-feathered, slabs of stone. Soft grass that'll take the print of your foot and hold it.

EXT. CREEK - DAY

Travel the shallow, clear water running over rock and soil...

...and find a TOY BOAT spinning in a stone cage of rocks, unable to escape to open water.

Just past that rests a GIRL, 16. Laying motionless. Peaceful. A basket beside her with the lunch she'd meant to eat.

DUNCAN (V.O.)

In the spring, the bubbles don't seem to rise, but rather, hang like a string of beads. And Eily (rhymes with "highly") Jurdin looked like a part of it, just lying there. Like a girl in a tale.

A peppercorn SNAIL crawls up her porcelain shoulder, revealing deep purple BRUISES around the girl's neck.

A MAN sits on his haunches a few feet from the girl. Blends into the setting. Granite-faced, stoic and sporting blood on his pants. A few freshly caught RABBITS dangle from his belt.

This is LOREN. He surveys the area. A sound of movement in the woods takes his eyes to...

...DUNCAN, doe-eyed, in need of a bath and dressed in clothes a little too big for him.

He pushes through brush and as he takes in the scene his face goes white.

DUNCAN
Pa?

LOREN
Get the preacher.

DUNCAN
Is she...

LOREN
Go on now.

DUNCAN (V.O.)
Cullen had always been a pretty place, until that day.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - SAME

Duncan SPRINTS.

As he passes a FIELD, he sees himself much younger with Eily playing in the tall grass.

As he passes and OLD OAK, he sees them climbing the tree together laughing.

At a CHURCH, he sees Eily kissing a MAN behind a barn.

EXT. HUMBLE CHURCH - SAME

Duncan's fists POUND on the old oak door.

A WEATHERED, kindly man (40's) opens it. A cross around his neck and round spectacles on the end of his nose. This is PREACHER HITE.

The Preacher's face falls at the sight of Duncan standing there tear-stained and out of breath.

PREACHER HITE
What happened?

Duncan throws himself in the preacher's arms.

EXT. CREEK - LATER

Preacher Hite and Loren speak quietly while standing a respectful distance from the body.

Duncan stands further still, but listens intently.

PREACHER HITE
Outta get the sheriff.

LOREN
Half day's ride to Huntsville. And
it's gettin' dark. Animals'll get
at 'er if we just leave her out.

PREACHER HITE
Have you told Eustace?

LOREN
Came to you first. Better comin'
from you.

The preacher nods, understands.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - LATER

Loren rides on horseback, pulling an open cart.

IN THE CART

Duncan sits with Eily, holding her head in his lap.

DUNCAN (V.O.)
Not like anyone's life means more
than another, but with Eily...I
don't know. What happens when a
town loses its light?

EXT. EUSTACE JURDIN'S HOME - LATER

A stately two-story residence with a fresh coat of paint and
fresher flowers in the windows. The home of a wealthy man.

A FEW MEN, work the fields, tending to crops.

Preacher Hite walks a manicured path to find EUSTACE, (50's)
eating his supper on his porch. He lights up at a visit from
the preacher, but his smile fades at the solemn face looking
back.

Eustace looks past the preacher to see Loren driving the
horse pulled cart.

PREACHER HITE
(takes off his hat)
I'm so sorry.