

LLOYD. Edith, they took Alvis away. The Sheriff came an' got 'im ... an' they ... they put 'im in th' nuthouse.

EDITH. Oh.

LLOYD. Yeah. I mean, it's proolly fer th' best, but—

EDITH. Shhhh ... I know.

(They sit in silence for a minute absorbing the news together.)

EDITH. What's th' other paper fer?

~~LLOYD. *(Hands her the papers.)* It's not good. Not good at all.~~

START

EDITH. *(Reading:)* "From th' U.S. Supreme Court, in pursuance of a judgement an' foreclosure a' said premises including Lots 365-369, fer a total a' 256 acres, duly made an' entered on April Nineteenth, Nineteen an' Thirty-five, will be sold fer auction—" *(Trails off.)*
... They're takin' th' farm?! How can they do that?! You said you an' Cuffy—

LLOYD. — It's too late. I juss ... I mean ... I ... I thought we'd be able t' catch up.

EDITH. Catch up?! Whadda ya mean catch up?!

LLOYD. We're ... we've been behind on th' mortgage fer a few months—

EDITH. — MONTHS?!

LLOYD. —an' these blasted dirt storms have ruined everything that even thought about growin'—

EDITH. — Sounds like a lot a' blamin' an' not a lick a' takin' responsibility t' me! *(Hitting him with the papers:)* What're we gonna do? I cain't provide fer this family with my sad lil cleanin' job at th' post office! Doochie an' I split miserable hours as it is! We ain't got nothin' saved! Nothin'! This sad excuse fer a house is ON th' land that th' government is *(pushing him:)* TAKING—FROM US, LLOYD!

LLOYD. *(Grabbing her arms, shaking her:)* I KNOW THAT!!! What am I suppose t'do?!? Tell me! I'm all ears, Edith! Whadda ya want from me?

EDITH. First, you'll git yer hands off me, Lloyd Alvis. Don't touch me a'gin, ya hear? I woulda liked th' truth, but I didn't git it, did I?! Ya didn't even TELL me we was in danger! Why would ya keep that from me?

LLOYD. I cain't control GOD! We ain't had rain in over six months! Whadda ya want me t'do?! HEY GOD, if you could please stop sending DIRT our way, that'd be mighty fine! It don't work that way. Cuffy ... an' ... an' Frank ... an' th' young 'uns ... we all

worked our pants off t'keep those cotton crops from dryin' up. Even th' tractor engines 're eat up an' ruined by th' grit. Seventeen dust storms since December! Seventeen, Edith! I cain't compete with acts a' GOD!

EDITH. God ain't here anymore.

LLOYD. That's blasphemous! I know things're rough right now an' you're hurtin', but I'll have none a' that talk in this house. Ya hear me?

(Grabs her by the arms again, but harder.)

D'ya HEAR me?

EDITH. *(Grabbing an ice pick from the counter and putting it to LLOYD's neck.)* You lay another hand on me ever agin, Lloyd Alvis an' I will put this through yer throat. Do ya hear ME? DO YA?! If ya know what's good fer ya, you'll git outta here an' give me some time t' think.

LLOYD. *(Shocked and shaken.)* I don't know what's happened t'you. My goodness.

EDITH. There is no goodness here.

(Stomp.)

END

ENSEMBLE. *(Low echo.)* There is no goodness here.

(Lights fade to blue and the guitar, hums, and beats transition us to . . .)

Scene Nine

(The farm. The family is working to salvage the sparse crop that is left before giving the land over to the government.)

DEBBIE. Why're we even pickin't this stupid cotton if th' guv'ment is takin' it?

EDITH. We ain't gonna leave nothin' fer 'em. They're takin' enough as it is.

FRANK. Might as well take all we can git b'fore they kick us out.

UNEX. Michael Lee, I'm pickin' here. Move somewhere else.

MIKE. I can pick here, too, Unex!

UNEX. Maaaa, tell him to stop callin' me Unex.

EDITH. If y'all don't stop yer fussin' an' fightin'—

UNEX. But, Ma, he—