

It's Not the Heat...

by  
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FADE IN:

EXT. RURAL HOUSE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE -- DAY

No clouds. No Trees. No cover. Just a simple one-story house in the middle of a frying pan.

The sun beats down onto black asphalt...heat waves rise up and distort the scene.

THE THERMOMETER ON THE PORCH READS 103.

A CRASH inside the house.

VOICE (O.S.)

God dammit!

INT. HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

Cluttered with years and years worth of old newspapers and junk. Boxes piled on top of every available surface. No lights on...the house is dark...hot and dark.

LIVING ROOM

The remains of a TV tray and a bowl of soup lie shattered and spilled on the floor. A larger piece of bowl rocks back and forth...SMASH...it's obliterated by the business end of a wooden cane.

OBEDIAH THIGPEN, damned near 90, brandishes the other end.

OBEDIAH

You bitch! You dirty stinkin' coon  
bitch! YOU can't clean in this heat?

He swings the cane at nothing in particular.

OBEDIAH

Back when the world was a better  
place, you'd be LIVIN' outside.

(mocking)

"I cain't clean in this heat...you  
betta turn on your air conditioner  
before you drop dead"

He punctuates his rant by smashing more of the bowl.

OBEDIAH

I tell you I ain't never seen one of  
you that was worth the salt it'd  
take to tan your hide!

He storms out into the kitchen. The soup sinks into the floor.

A creaky FEMALE VOICE also about 100...

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)  
She leave, Obie?

OBEDIAH (O.S.)  
Yeah she left. And god damned good  
riddance if you ask me.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)  
I was gonna ask her to give me a  
bath. Braid my hair.

Obediah comes back in the room limping. He's got an almost  
antique broom and dustpan.

OBEDIAH  
I can give you a bath...

He bends down...back creaks...and sweeps up the broken bowl.  
Heads back to kitchen...

OBEDIAH  
But the braids...you on your own.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)  
I don't want my hair down...

OBEDIAH (O.S.)  
Well then put it in a bun...

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)  
...it gives me a headache...

OBEDIAH (O.S.)  
Then just CHOP OFF YOUR GODDAMN HEAD!

Silence. Obediah comes back in the room with a towel.

OBEDIAH  
Inez? Inez I'm sorry I didn't mean  
to yell. It's this goddamn heat!

He bends down...knees pop...and wipes up the soup. Back up  
and back to the kitchen. He stumbles a bit.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)  
Well you're the stubborn old coot  
who won't turn on the air conditioner.

BATHROOM

The floor is literally alive with muck.

Obediah clicks on the light. Shoves the stopper in the very  
nasty tub and turns on the water.

OBEDIAH

Oh no. Oh NO! Not on your life,  
Inez. See the power company jacks  
up them prices whenever they's a so-  
called heat wave. We'll be paying  
5...6 times the normal price.

He clicks the light off and leaves the water running.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)

Ah...you stingy. You never run the  
air. You gonna drop dead of heat  
stroke if you ain't careful.

BEDROOM

Obediah pokes his head in the doorway.

OBEDIAH

Horse shit. I used to work in this  
heat...worse heat than this...

He grabs a ragged nightgown out of the closet.

OBEDIAH

When I built them highways back for  
the state. You know one day I clocked  
in at 7 in the morning a dug a damn  
hole for 12 straight hours.

BATHROOM

Water runs...

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)

I know that. You tell that story  
every summer...and the day just get's  
longer and longer. You dug that  
hole for only 8 hours last year.  
OW! Be careful!

OBEDIAH (O.S.)

I wouldn't have to do this by myself  
if that damn nigger bitch...

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)

You KNOW I don't like that word.

Two shapes...blurry in the the heat waves rising up from the  
floor between the bathroom and living room...move closer.

BEDROOM

Like the rest, it's covered in filth and clutter. A nasty  
bed sheet lies atop the bed. It used to be white...

OBEDIAH (O.S.)

Oh, yeah. I forgot...you all uptown  
and classy! Miss Inez Fancy-pants.  
Of the Charleston Fancy-pants...you  
treated your coloreds like kings...

The sheets seem to squirm...

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)

The times have changed, you ol' coot.  
And maybe if you hadn't called her  
that, she'd be here helping and  
cleaning.

OBEDIAH (O.S.)

I TOLD you she left because I wouldn't  
turn on the air.

The bed sheets are covered with roaches...

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)

WELL YOU SHOULD HAVE DONE IT BECAUSE  
YOU'RE HURTIN' ME.

And maggots...

OBEDIAH (O.S.)

WELL IF YOU'D STOP SQUIRMING I'D  
HOLD YOU BETTER...

And God knows what else...it's putrid.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)

WELL IF YOU'D STOP PINCHING I'D NOT  
SQUIRM...

A splash from the Bathroom.

BATHROOM

Obediah turns off the water. Looks down at the tub.

OBEDIAH

There. You happy now?

He answers himself...in the FEMALE VOICE.

OBEDIAH

(INEZ's Voice)

Much. I'd be happier if my hair  
were in braids...

(himself)

I should just fill that tub with  
gasoline and light you afire.

(MORE)

OBEDIAH (CONT'D)

(Inez)

You'd go plum crazy if you didn't  
have me.

(himself)

That's probably true.

He laughs. Stumbles. Dizzy.

OBEDIAH

(Inez)

Obie, you ok?

(himself)

I don't know. This heat...

(Inez)

You drink any water today?

(himself)

YES Dr. Inez.

(Inez)

Well you couldn't have drunk much.

He stumbles.

OBEDIAH

(Inez)

Obie. Turn on that air conditioner  
right now!

He collapses to his knees.

OBEDIAH

(himself)

Yeah. Yeah I think you're right.  
I'll turn it on...

He falls...leans against the tub.

OBEDIAH

(himself)

I just wanna rest for a sec...

(Inez)

You dang fool, you fall asleep you  
ain't never gonna wake up.

He reaches in the tub. Pulls back a black, rotten, dripping  
hand...kisses it.

OBEDIAH

(himself)

That's why I need you, girl. You  
take care of me.

He closes his eyes.

FADE OUT: