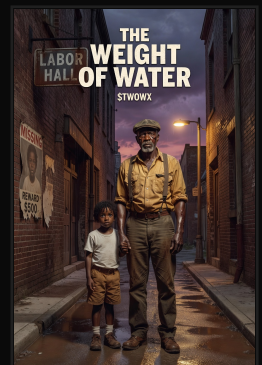


THE WEIGHT OF WATER

\$TWOX

Screenplay generated by bMovies



FADE IN.

INT. ELIJAH MOREAU'S SHOTGUN HOUSE - NIGHT

A single bulb hangs over a Formica table. ELIJAH MOREAU, late 50s, sits in a wife-beater and work pants, his forearms mapped with old scars. He holds a dog-eared primer. His lips shape each letter without sound.

The front screen door creaks. RUTH MOREAU, early 50s, steps inside carrying a paper sack of okra. She stops when she sees the book.

RUTH

You still playing schoolboy at this hour?

ELIJAH

(closing the primer)

Just passing time.

RUTH

Time don't need passing. It needs sleeping.
Marcus coming tomorrow. You gone be too
tired to watch him.

Elijah slides the primer under a stack of dock manifests. Ruth sets the okra down, washes her hands, and moves to the back room without another word. The bulb swings slightly. Elijah listens to the ceiling fan until the house is quiet again, then pulls the primer back out.

INT. ELIJAH MOREAU'S SHOTGUN HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Ruth and Elijah sit at the table over coffee. Ruth folds laundry.

RUTH

Silence kept this roof on for thirty years.
Don't go shaking the walls now.

Elijah nods once. He stares at his hands.

EXT. PORT OF NEW ORLEANS DOCKS - DAY

Elijah loads crates onto a pallet. Forklifts rumble past. He eats lunch alone on a piling, watching the brown river. Other longshoremen laugh in the distance. He keeps his head down.

INT. ELIJAH MOREAU'S SHOTGUN HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Elijah hides the primer under dock manifests when Ruth enters from the back room. He stands, stretches, and heads to bed without a word.

EXT. ELIJAH MOREAU'S SHOTGUN HOUSE - NIGHT

A squad car pulls up. DETECTIVE HARLAN SHAW, early 40s, steps out with two officers. He knocks. Ruth opens the door. Marcus stands behind her, fourteen, eyes wide.

HARLAN SHAW

Marcus Moreau. You're under arrest for arson
at the port warehouse.

Marcus looks at Elijah on the porch steps.

MARCUS

Grandpa-

Elijah says nothing. Harlan cuffs the boy.

INT. ELIJAH MOREAU'S SHOTGUN HOUSE - PORCH - NIGHT

Elijah sits alone on the steps. The river fog rolls in. He stays there until dawn.

INT. MAIN BRANCH PUBLIC LIBRARY - DAY

Elijah, cap pulled low, approaches the desk. MISS PEARL, late 60s, looks up.

ELIJAH

I need a reading card. In my name.

Miss Pearl studies him, then slides the form across.

MISS PEARL

Sign here.

Elijah prints slowly, letter by letter.

INT. MAIN BRANCH PUBLIC LIBRARY - CHILDREN'S SECTION - NIGHT

Miss Pearl sits with Elijah at a low table after hours. She corrects him gently.

MISS PEARL

"Warehouse." The 'h' is quiet.

Elijah repeats the word.

EXT. PORT OF NEW ORLEANS DOCKS - DAY

Elijah practices aloud on the loading dock at lunch, book hidden in his lunch pail. A coworker walks past; Elijah falls silent.

INT. ORLEANS PARISH COURTHOUSE - PRELIMINARY HEARING - DAY

Elijah sits on the stand.

ELIJAH

Marcus was with me that night.

The prosecutor rises.

PROSECUTOR

Where exactly?

ELIJAH

By the levee.

The prosecutor produces a time-stamped dock log. Elijah's shift is listed elsewhere. Harlan Shaw smiles from the gallery. The lie collapses.

INT. ELIJAH MOREAU'S SHOTGUN HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Ruth packs a bag.

RUTH

You lied and made it worse.

She leaves for Lena's house.

EXT. PORT OF NEW ORLEANS DOCKS - NIGHT

Harlan Shaw corners Elijah near the water.

HARLAN SHAW

Old union files don't stay closed forever.
Keep quiet or I reopen every one.

INT. ORLEANS PARISH JAIL - DAY

Lena visits Marcus. Elijah waits outside. A guard delivers news: Marcus tried to hang himself with a bedsheet.

INT. ELIJAH MOREAU'S SHOTGUN HOUSE - BACKYARD - NIGHT

Elijah burns the primer in the incinerator. He watches the pages curl until dawn.

INT. ELIJAH MOREAU'S SHOTGUN HOUSE - BACKYARD - DAWN

One unburned page remains. It lists witness names. Elijah folds it, stands, and walks toward the street.

INT. ORLEANS PARISH COURTHOUSE - COURTROOM - DAY

Trial. Elijah rises from the gallery.

ELIJAH

I saw the white boys. Three of them. Names
on this page.

He reads the names aloud, voice cracking. Harlan Shaw watches from the back, jaw tight. The judge calls a recess. Marcus is released into Lena's arms. Ruth steps forward and takes Elijah's hand.

EXT. PORT OF NEW ORLEANS DOCKS - WATER'S EDGE - DAWN

Elijah stands at the river holding the open primer. No longer hidden. A new ship comes in. He watches the water.

FADE OUT.