

his sleeve, and he has to dance to get it out. Even then, he still keeps twitching, convinced another one is left behind.

At his feet, the gravel road has returned, smooth and dusty and comforting.

Ahead lies a tiny one-street town -- smaller even than Ashton -- with powerlines emerging from the woods to feed it. Dangling from the line above he sees two dozen pairs of shoes, their laces tied together.

He passes a sign that reads "Welcome To Spectre!"

#### **EXT. THE TOWN OF SPECTRE - DAY**

It's a main street with stores on each side: Cole's Pharmacy, Talbot's Five and Dime, Al's Country Store. Everything is old, but this isn't a ghost town. In fact, there's a group of about 20 CITIZENS spilling out to see Edward approach. Most are smiling. There are even a few tears of joy.

What's more, all of these people are barefoot.

#### **MAN'S VOICE**

Friend!

A forty-year old man named BEAMEN comes out of the seed store to greet Edward. Friendly but a little drunk, he's the closest thing the town has to a mayor. He's carrying a clipboard.

#### **BEAMEN**

Welcome to ya. What's your name?

#### **EDWARD**

Edward Bloom.

Beamen checks the clipboard. Not finding the name, he flips forward a few pages. Still looking...

#### **BEAMEN**

Bloom like a flower?

**EDWARD**

Yes.

**BEAMEN**

Oh. Here! Right here. Edward Bloom.  
We weren't expecting you yet.

Still confused...

**EDWARD**

You were expecting me?

**BEAMEN**

Not yet.

A helpful woman named MILDRED chimes in:

**MILDRED**

You must have taken a shortcut.

**EDWARD**

I did. It nearly killed me.

**BEAMEN**

Mmm-hmm. Life'll do that to you. And  
truthfully, the long way is easier,  
but it's longer.

**MILDRED**

Much longer.

**BEAMEN**

And you're here now, and that's what  
matters.

Beamen's daughter JENNY (8) hides behind her father, peering  
around to look at the handsome stranger.

**EDWARD**

What is this place?

**BEAMEN**

The town of Spectre. Best kept secret in Alabama. Says here you're from Ashton, right? Last person we had from Ashton was Norther Winslow.

**EDWARD**

The poet? What ever happened to him?

**BEAMEN**

He's still here. Let me buy you a drink. I'll tell you all about it. Hell, I'll have him tell you.

**EDWARD**

No. I've gotta meet somebody. I'm already running late.

He didn't mean it as a joke, but for some reason, everyone's laughing.

**BEAMEN**

Son, I already told you. You're early.

**INT. BEAMEN'S HOUSE - DAY**

Sitting at the kitchen table, Edward takes a second slice of apple pie. He and Beamen are joined by NORTHER WINSLOW (30), who fancies himself a cultured artist, though he's never left the state.

**BEAMEN**

Now tell me if that isn't the best pie you ever ate.

**EDWARD**

It truly is.