



“RETRIBUTION: A MINI SERIES”
EPISODE 1: SECRETS & LIES
WRITTEN BY JADE MADISON SCOTT

Transcription Note:

When the Busybodies speak the purple indicates Tal Minear speaking, the blue indicates Inez Jacobs-Hinton speaking, and the red indicates the two are speaking in tandem.

**Scene One
Introduction**

HOST

WGC Productions presents-
(Retribution Theme)

Retribution: A Miniseries. You are now listening to episode one. Transcripts for this episode can be found at wgcp productions.com. Enjoy yourself, now.

(Retribution Theme Fades Out)

**Scene Two
Town Square: Day**

(It is a dusty old western town. The BUSYBODIES, a gaggle of old women and gossips, a greek chorus of sorts, linger around.)

BUSYBODIES

Sweet Lord above-

MS. BETTY

Sweet Lord in His eternal love

BUSYBODIES

It is hot. Sweatin' through my Sunday's best.

MS. BETTY

And it's only Tuesday.

BUSYBODIES

Hot enough to make the devil sweat. Hot enough to drive a man from his wife and into the arms of some lusty sinner. Hot enough to-

CLETUS

Hotter than a bitch

BUSYBODIES

Cletus!

CLETUS

Sorry, Lord. But it is ain't it? Ain't never know it to be this bad an' I lived here near my whole life. Nearly five whole families have fled the town. The heat killed their prospects and future hopes. What could have driven Him in His eternal kindness to this I'll never know.

MS. BETTY

So you ain't heard?

BUSYBODIES

Heard what?

MS. BETTY

Well, I don't like to gossip, but I think you oughta' know since you're a farmer and this drought and heat might just kill all your crop. It would only be good neighborly kindness. Willow Gravis-

CLETUS

The butcher's daughter?

BUSYBODIES

That little girl? What's she got to do with anything? Why she's so shy she once ran off stage right in the middle of the Christmas pageant. Baby Jesus had no mama for the rest of the show.

MS. BETTY

She's...in a family way.

BUSYBODIES

That little girl?

MS. BETTY

Not little anymore. Her Daddy, when he found out, he was furious. Yelling and screaming all night. I just couldn't fall asleep. That was six or seven months ago now. Course she never leaves the house, but I see her through my curtains every so often and she is very, very swollen.

CLETUS

Who did that to her?

MS. BETTY

That's the question of the century. She won't say. A situation like that, a father who won't claim his child, it just ain't right. And when things ain't right things don't work...like the weather. Of course, that's just what the pastor says.

BUSYBODIES

Will the drought ever end if the child remains unclaimed?

MS. BETTY

I can't say for sure, but I don't see why it would start again unless the dog comes forward.

(TERRA enters carrying a bucket. She pumps the water spout in the middle of town.)

BUSYBODIES

What is she doing pumping that water spout like that? Don't she know there's a drought? Ain't right for her to be working. Look what she's wearing. Dressing like a man. Who does she think she is?

MS. BETTY

How Terra McHale's parents simply haven't keeled over and died from shame and disappointment I'll never know. Why if my girl was 27, unmarried, and playing in the dirt for a living.... I could never be that strong.

TERRA

Hello there. Awful hot morning we're having isn't it, Ms. Betty?

MS. BETTY

Yes indeed, deary. You really oughtnt' be working in this heat.

TERRA

I gotta. Otherwise, all my crops would die and we just wouldn't want that now, would we?

BUSYBODIES

What a girl. What a strange, vicious girl.

CLETUS

Why don't you let me pump that for you, Ms. Terra? Wouldn't want you to hurt yourself, would you?

TERRA

I spend my days and nights toiling in the soil doing backbreaking labor to raise my crops. This is a pump. Sure to say I won't hurt myself, but thank you for your thoughtfulness, Cletus.

CLETUS

Course Ms. Terra. Just trying to lend a neighborly hand.

(To the BUSYBODIES)

Miserable girl.

(CLETUS exits. IRVING, a charming, puppy-dog-of-a-man, enters.)

IRVING

Morning Cletus, looking as lovely as ever. Morning Ms. Betty. I thought the drought was causing this heat but it is clearly you. And you too Ms. Caper and you too Mrs. Donahue.

IRVING

Maybe if we ran all you lovely ladies out of town we'd poor folk finally stand a chance. Course with none of y'all in town what's the point of being here.

BUSYBODIES

Oh, Irving. You really are the most charming young man. Even when you were a boy your smile would send us all to pieces. How is it you haven't been snatched up yet?

IRVING

I wonder that too.

BUSYBODIES

Oh, I see. You're sniffing 'round that girl again.

IRVING

What can I say? I'm hopeless. Now, don't mean to be rude, but my future's calling.

(IRVING starts to TERRA)

BUSYBODIES

If I were younger.... If he were older-

MS. BETTY

If he weren't so stupid he'd almost be perfect. Let's go, girls. Our bridge club is meeting soon.

(The BUSYBODIES exit)

IRVING

Hello Terra. You are a hard woman to find. Been looking for you all morning.

TERRA

Not now, Irving.

IRVING

I got you a present.

TERRA

Not now, Irving,

IRVING

Don't you at least want to know what I got you? Never met a woman who didn't like presents.

TERRA

Well, now you have.

(IRVING sighs until TERRA stops pumping)

Fine, what is it?

IRVING

Here.

(He hands her some seeds)

We barely have enough water down at the flower shop to keep the flowers we already have alive. Figured these seeds might fare better in your mighty pretty....mighty capable hands.

TERRA

This is really sweet of you, Irving.

IRVING

Sweet enough for you to rethink my marriage proposal?

TERRA

You do so well when you don't talk.

(TERRA turns back to pumping, but nothing is coming out.)

Come on you stupid....just a drop. Can you do that for me? Just a.....dangit you confounded lump of metal.

(She kicks the metal pump.)

IRVING

Terra, I think you're beating a dead horse, so to speak.

TERRA

What else am I supposed to do? I'm a farmer, Irving. I farm and farming needs water. It hasn't rained in months and my reservoir supply is running dangerously low. If I don't get water from somewhere my whole crop is gonna' die.

IRVING

So you'll just try again next year

TERRA

Next year? Won't be no next year. I can barely pay the mortgage now, and my parents hate that I'm doing this. They think I should be married off to someone I don't love making babies I don't want. Forced to spend my life pricking my thumbs with sewing needles to momentarily escape the cold numbness that exists there and dreading the day when that won't be enough.

IRVING

You're so pretty when you talk.

TERRA

I'm serious, Irving.

IRVING

I know.

TERRA

I'm getting desperate.

IRVING

How desperate?

TERRA

Irving, if you start talking all that nasty again

IRVING

No. None of that this time. Listen, I heard from my Momma who heard it from Ms. Laureli who heard it from Ms. Betty who heard it from the pastor who heard it from God that this here drought is 'cause something ain't right. I also heard Willow is eating for two now.

TERRA

Willow is pregnant? Willow Gravis? The butcher's daughter? I've never even seen her look at a man and she's managed to go and find one to have her? Well, good on her, I suppose. But what's a drought got to do with any of that?

IRVING

Ms. Betty says it's cause God doesn't like it when young girls and their children are left without fathers. Or that cause He's a father and all, he doesn't like bad ones. Something like that. The point is the rain won't come because someone's already come and gone.

TERRA

Irving!

IRVING

Sorry. It was too perfect.

TERRA

That mouth's gonna' get you in trouble.

IRVING

Hasn't yet. So, you believe it?

TERRA

Do I believe that Willow is gonna be a mother? No, but I could see it happening. Do I believe that one person could cause all this mess? Do I believe God Himself would stop the rain in order to drive out one man? Well, I don't know, more unbelievable things have happened.

IRVING

Glad to be a help.

TERRA

Hey, Irving...if it's not too much trouble

IRVING

You're the only trouble I ever want to be in.

TERRA

Nevermind.

IRVING

I didn't mean it. Thought it was funny.

TERRA

I was going to ask if you could go to Willow's and ask her to come over to my farm an hour or so after sunset. Don't have time to go myself and I'd like to talk to her

IRVING

Don't even need to ask.

TERRA

Thank you. I really appreciate it.

IRVING

I appreciate that you appreciate it.

TERRA

Bye, Irving.

(TERRA exits)

IRVING

I'm going to marry you one of these days, you know. We both gotta married some time, why not marry each other? We're gonna have a family, Terra.

(To himself while exiting)

A big family. With a coupla kids and a home, we'll be proud of.

(IRVING exits. Transition music.)

Scene Three
Saloon: Later

(BUSYBODIES, MS. BETTY, and CLETUS
gossip as it is all they know how to do.)

MS. BETTY

You'll never imagine what I saw today.

CLETUS

Did another family move out? Damn it. Without the rain who knows who's next.

MS. BETTY

No.

BUSYBODIES

What, Betty? Was it a rattler?

MS. BETTY

No. Cornelius McHale.

BUSYBODIES

Terra's brother? What's so special about him.

CLETUS

Never liked him. Always thinking he's better than us.

MS. BETTY

He is better than you, Cletus. He's young and rich and smart. He's worlds better than you. But, it's what he was saying

CLETUS

No young upstart is better than-

BUSYBODIES

Shut up, old man. (To MS. BETTY) Saying what? Saying what?

MS. BETTY

He was holding a letter and muttering to himself. Violent whispers that whipped up gooseflesh on my arms. Talking something vicious about his sister.

CLETUS

Don't know why y'all all surprised. They both crazy.

CLETUS

Sides you should never trust a man that only wears suits. Ain't healthy.

BUSYBODIES

Oh, how I pity the McHale's. Blessed by man and cursed by God. Terrible people in terrible states.

CLETUS

Acts of God.

BUSYBODIES

Miserable states.

(Transition Music)

Scene Four
Terra's Kitchen: Dusk

(TERRA's kitchen is a pretty simple place. It has a table, some chairs, and a nice homey feeling to it. NEIL, Terra's older brother, is sitting at the table reading a letter. He's a bigger ball of anxiety than usual. TERRA enterst.)

NEIL

And where have you been? Do you know what time it is?

TERRA

The time I wanted to come home.

NEIL

It's eight o'clock at night.

TERRA

I was trying to get some water, and I was selling off the last of my eggs and vegetables. Here.

(TERRA places some money on the table)

I don't need to explain myself to you, you know.

NEIL

This isn't enough to get you through a week let alone make up for the amount of produce you lost

to the drought.

TERRA

I sold what I had. What's wrong with you? You're not this tightly wound, usually.

NEIL

Mother and Father have written me. Asking about you. Asking about your farm.

TERRA

What are you planning to tell them?

NEIL

What can I tell them? I've been lying to them since I practically got here, saying that you were the best farmer in the county because you said you needed a little more time to get "the hang of things".

TERRA

I did need more time.

NEIL

Oh sure, growing a modest amount of vegetables is all well and good, but now there's a drought and you're selling a few dollars worth of food? How can I go from best farmer in the county to telling them you're teetering on the bank of bankruptcy. Brink of bankruptcy? Oh, who gives a cuss. Father thinks I'm doing such a good job watching over you. He thinks I'm practically a saint for leaving home for three years to watch over you in your...time of crisis.

TERRA

I'm not in-

NEIL

He wants me to take over the printing business. He says that when you come to your senses and get married, I can start to run things. Thinks I'm suited for it. Wants me to move back to Boston. What will he do when he finds out I've been lying to him for months now? Bye Bye Boston. Bye Bye Future. Oh, I need a seltzer.

TERRA

So, you are going to tell them?

NEIL

No. No that wouldn't be right, would it? Would it? No, it wouldn't.

TERRA

Thanks, Neil. That's why you're my favorite.

NEIL

Favorite what? Family member? Brother? Abused task monkey?

TERRA

You're just my favorite.

NEIL

Tell me you found water, at least?

TERRA

No, but I think the drought may be kinda divine retribution of sorts.

NEIL

Did you get heat stroke while you were out?

TERRA

Talk of the town is that the butcher's daughter, Willow, don't know if you ever met her but she's pregnant.

NEIL

Pregnant?

TERRA

Yes. Apparently, it was the handiwork of some rogue gentleman caller.

NEIL

Oh.

TERRA

Stop blushing, Neil. I'd have thought you've never heard of these things before.

NEIL

It's just so...untoward.

TERRA

Maybe in Boston, but things are different here, thank God. I think if I find the father then I'll bring back the water. Bring back the water I'll save my farm, I'll save your skin with Daddy. I'll save us both. Won't that be nice? I'll save us both.

NEIL

So what exactly are you going to do? Can't make a man be a father. He might not even be in town anymore. How are you even going to figure out who it is?

(There is a knock on the door)

TERRA

I'll ask...and calm down. You're liable to scare her.

(TERRA exits to open the door)

NEIL

Her?

TERRA

(Distant)

Well, I'll be. Come in. Come in.

WILLOW

(Distant)

Thank you.

TERRA

(Distant)

Must admit I didn't think you'd come.

(WILLOW and TERRA enter)

WILLOW

Oh! I didn't know that we wouldn't be alone.

TERRA

Yes, I'm sorry. I should have mentioned, this is my brother.....Come on, introduce yourself.

NEIL

McHale. Cornelius Jacob McHale. Most people just call me Neil for short. Course some people call me Cornelius too. It's all preference at this point. Nice to meet you.

WILLOW

Nice to meet you, Mr. McHale.

TERRA

Neil, this is Willow.

NEIL

Yes, I ascertained. I should...I should leave you ladies some privacy. Some....Nice to meet you Ms. Gravis.

Likewise.

WILLOW

Terra.

NEIL

(NEIL exits)

Forgive him.

TERRA

I assume things are different where you're from

WILLOW

No, that's not Boston. That's just Neil.

TERRA

(Beat)

So.....

I know what you're going to ask about

WILLOW

No. No. I just want to see how you're doing?

TERRA

In the three years you've lived here we've exchanged maybe a handful of words. Now suddenly and without reason

WILLOW

I know I could be a better neighbor so I'm trying. I'm trying?

TERRA

(She means this as an adjective)

You are.

WILLOW

Funny. I didn't know you were funny.

TERRA

Mmmm.

WILLOW

WILLOW/TERRA

So, Irving?/ How about this heat?

WILLOW

The heat?

TERRA

What about Irving?

WILLOW

I mean, he came to my house for you. Are you two tying the knot anytime soon? (TERRA laughs)

No?

TERRA

No. I mean, Irving and I...that would be like oil and water. Or sawdust and water. Or sewage and water. Speaking of water, I.... um, you hear about this drought?

WILLOW

Of course.

TERRA

It's about six or seven months long now.

WILLOW

Yes.

TERRA

You know, droughts don't really last that long round the territory, I heard. A month or two, sure. But seven....it's almost supernatural. How many, uh, how many months are you along now?

WILLOW

Seven or....hold on now. What's your meaning 'bout this?

TERRA

Don't mean to insinuate anything....except I do. You're seven months along, the drought's seven months along

WILLOW

You think I did all this? You think I'm a witch or something else like that? A sorceress?

TERRA

No. No, I think that when you got pregnant something changed....shifted, because of the father-

WILLOW

What about the father?

TERRA

Well, who is he?

WILLOW

That's none

TERRA

People are saying that...that because of the father

WILLOW/TERRA

This is no one's business but my own and I don't appreciate this at all/He's not here and the rain won't come back until he claims his child. His actions.

WILLOW

I knew you didn't invite me here because you wanted to be friends.

TERRA

Look, we can all be friendly when the rain comes down in spades but until then I need to start thinking about more than friendship.

WILLOW

Well, then we'll never be friends because I'm not talking.

TERRA

Willow, think about this-

WILLOW

You can go back and tell your little town friends that as far as anyone is concerned, and they shouldn't be because it's not their business, there is no father. I did this by myself. I'll raise it by myself and that will have to be enough for us both.

(WILLOW exits)

TERRA

Well, this isn't going to be easy.

(Beat)

Of course, I've never liked easy. Someone has to know something and I know someone who makes it their business to know everything.

(TERRA exits. Transition Music.)

Scene Five
Ms. Betty's Porch: Night

(TERRA is on the porch of MS. BETTY'S house in the middle of the night. It is simple yet it screams "anything you say on this property can and will be used against you". TERRA knocks on the door. No response. She knocks again. No response. She knocks once.)

MS. BETTY
(off-stage)

There better be a fire or a stroke. Otherwise, you're just being a rather awful fool by interrupting my bridge game.

(MS. BETTY opens the door)

Oh.

TERRA

Evening, Ms. Betty.

MS. BETTY

Child, what are you doing on my porch at this hour?

BUSYBODIES
(off-stage)

Who is it Betty?

MS. BETTY

Come see for yourself.

(BUSYBODIES enter)

BUSYBODIES

Miss McHale.

TERRA

Howdy, ladies. Sorry to bother you this late in the evening, course I wouldn't do it if it weren't awful important

MS. BETTY

Stop hemming and hawing and get to the point. I have tea in the kettle and money on the game.

TERRA

'Bout the the drought. Bout Willow.

MS.BETTY

And?

TERRA

Since you know so much....I was just wondering if you could tell me everything about what's happening' with her. Course, I wouldn't just bother you for no reason, but I think it's real important to ending' the drought and all, and, I mean you do know everything.

MS.BETTY

Stop flattering me, girl. Sit down, McHale. You look more uncomfortable than a Catholic at a Baptist revival. Sit. So, what you want to know about little miss, over there?

TERRA

Everything. Everything, you remember. Anything that can help me find the father.

MS.BETTY

The father? Why are you looking for him?

TERRA

Irving told me

MS.BETTY

You and Irving?

TERRA

It's not like that. Jesus, Ms. Betty....Sorry. All I'm mean is that

MS.BETTY

You'd better be sorry. You come around to my house. Interrupt my bridge. Raise your voice on my porch

TERRA

I know. I'm awful. But please this is serious.

MS.BETTY

Yes, and why is it so important to you? You always looked down on us for sharing our good information but here you are, begging.

TERRA

I don't beg.

(Beat)

Ms. Betty, please.

TERRA

Irving told me it was you who told him that the drought had to stop when Willow's baby's father claimed his child. I need to find that man.

MS.BETTY

Hmm.

TERRA

Haven't you ever loved something? Loved it so much that you put your whole heart and soul in it. Wouldn't you do everything to make sure it lives? Wouldn't you do everything? I love my farm, Ms. Betty. I'd do anything.

MS.BETTY

You think...You...I.....it's the fifth.

TERRA

It's....oh, it's the fifth.

MS. BETTY

He turned 32 three hours ago.

BUSYBODIES

Ezekiel. A fine boy. Always there to help. A good boy. May he rest and God bless the childless mother.

TERRA

I'm sorry Ms. Betty

MS. BETTY

He, um, it...Gravis is.....I don't....people don't come by the Gravis house.

BUSYBODIES

Gravis never lets anyone in. After his wife died that house became a fortress. A broken man is he.

MS. BETTY

Course I think the only time anyone comes up to the house is when Gravis orders flowers to put out back on his wife's grave. I always know when that is cause I can see her grave from my bedroom window. Always the nicest red lilies. JR used to deliver but his son does now.

TERRA

Irving delivers the flowers now?

MS.BETTY

Hmmm.

TERRA

I gotta go, but....I'll come back, maybe. If you would like.

MS. BETTY

I neither need nor want your pity, McHale. I'm not some sad old woman you have to care for to ease your guilt.

TERRA

Fine, then. Have fun with your bridge.

MS. BETTY

But you can't just leave now either. The art of information sharing is an old-time honored one. I gave you got, now what do you have to give to me.

TERRA

I don't have time for this.

MS. BETTY

Make time.

TERRA

I...uh...Irving proposed to me.

(TERRA runs off.)

BUSYBODIES

What? Wait, What? Why? When? Where? What? When? How? When? What? Girl!

(Transition Music)

Scene Six

Field: Night

(TERRA is pacing in the middle of an empty field. IRVING, in pajamas with a jacket, enters.)

IRVING

Why we stopin' here? Why'd you drag me out of bed at three in the morning? I was having the nicest dream....you were there, but not like this. Ain't even gonna hit me for making a crass joke 'bout you? Must be bad....Hey. Terra-

TERRA

You...you and Willow. You two? The kid's yours.

IRVING

The kid is....wait a minute-

TERRA

Asked Ms.Betty. She says you deliver flowers to them. You're the only person who goes to their house.

IRVING

That doesn't mean-

TERRA

Her father makes sure she doesn't leave the house. You're the only.... I thought....We're friends, Irving, despite anything we might say we are. You could have told me.

IRVING

Terra, think about what you're saying-

TERRA

So, you're telling me you and Williwow've never done anything-

IRVING

Well, no. I mean-

TERRA

See!

IRVING

But that was different. Me and Willow, it was like....we're not in love or in anything.

TERRA

Who said you had to be in love? You're a father now, Irving. Speaking of, your father know you been delivering seed with the flowers?

IRVING

That's only a little funny and no, he don't.

TERRA

You gonna tell him?

IRVING

No. I don't know. I'm not married and he's....he wouldn't like what I'd done.

TERRA

But you did it.

IRVING

I did it. You, uh, you think it'll have my eyes. Maybe it's a boy. Raising a boy'll be fun, but I always really wanted a girl.

TERRA

You need to go talk to Willow. Need to claim what's yours. End the drought.

IRVING

You think she'll have me.

TERRA

No, but you have to try.

IRVING

You're right I hafta'I gotta'You're a true friend, Terra McHale.

(IRVING kisses TERRA'S cheek and runs off in a frenzy. Retribution theme.)

Scene Seven

Closing

HOST

Thank you for listening to the first episode of Retribution: A Miniseries. Retribution was written and composed by Jade Madison Scott. Edited and directed by Cole Burkhardt. Terra McHale was played by Sophia Early. Willow Gravis was played by Sage Fortune. Irving was played by B. Narr. Cornelius McHale was played by Elijah Yale. Ms. Betty was played by Paige Alena. Cletus was played by Moses Princien. And the Busybodies were played by Tal Minear and Inez Jacobs-Hinton. The Retribution logo was designed by Julia Partick. If you wish to support the show and have access to behind the scenes exclusive subscribe to the [WGC Productions Patreon which can be accessed through the website.](#)