

BELOVED

Written by

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Based on the Novel by

Toni Morrison

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FADE IN...

EXT. 124 BLUESTONE ROAD - DAWN.

It is winter in Ohio. A house sits isolated beside a barren field. The field stretches beyond, until a line of distant woods stops it. Around the back of the house stands a rundown STORAGE SHED, a cold house, a privy and a water pump. A porch with a single door serves as the only entrance.

Camera begins a slow move toward the house as we;

SUPER - OHIO, 1865

WE HEAR SOUNDS from inside the house - BUMPS, A CHAIR FALLING OVER...and FEET RUNNING on wooden floor boards.

CUT TO:

INT. 124 BLUESTONE ROAD - DAWN.

C.U. - THE HANDS OF TWO BROTHERS HOLDING EACH OTHER AS THEY RUN DOWN THE STAIRS..

BULGAR (13 yrs. old) and HOWARD (14 yrs. old) run down the steps from the second floor. They are fully dressed, carrying a small bag of belongings.

HOWARD

We gonna need food. Wait here.

Bulgar reluctantly lets go of Howard's hand as the latter runs into the kitchen. Alone, he edges towards the front door, when suddenly;

THE DOOR SLOWLY CREAKS OPEN on it's own. Scared, he steps away slowly.

INT. KITCHEN - DAWN.

Howard is trying to toss some food into a bag. He spots A CAKE sitting on top the wooden table, with some pieces already eaten. He finds a knife and approaches the table.

He is about to cut into the cake when he sees TWO TINY HAND PRINTS appear on the cake's surface. Howard stops cold - dropping the knife.

INT. FRONT ENTRANCE - DAWN.

Howard exits the kitchen and takes Bulgar's hand;

HOWARD

Come on!

DENVER (OS)

Bul?

The boys look up the stairs and see their baby sister, nine year old DENVER.

DENVER

Where you goin?

The brothers are brokenhearted at the sight of her. They love their sister. But there are stronger forces here.

A MIRROR on a wall beside Howard cracks down the middle.

HOWARD

We gotta go!

Bulgar looks up to Denver. They exchange a look of deep affection and pained longing. He wants to take her.

HOWARD

Bye, Denver. You take care.

DENVER

Bye? Bul?

Bulgar is starting to cry. He rushes up the steps and hugs his sister. He kisses her hard then breaks away. Denver's outstretched hand misses his shirt and hangs mid-air.

DENVER

No..Bul...

Bulgar flies down the steps and disappears out of the house holding Howard's hand once more.

Denver sits alone at the top of the stairs. She sadly looks up and weeps, as if to the house itself:

DENVER

Now what you go and do that for?

EXT. ROAD TO THE TRAIN - DAWN.

THE VOICE OF SETHE HUMMING A MELODY carries over the images of:

The two boys running for their lives towards the train, holding hands all the way. Howard is the first to reach it. As it passes by, he throws his bag upon it and jumps in. Bulgar races beside it as Howard reaches for him.

C.U. - HOWARD'S HAND reaching for BULGAR's...They connect.

WIDE SHOT - The boys are on the train as it leaves town.

On it's route, the train passes a ramshackle GRAVEYARD.

CAMERA MOVES SLOWLY INTO THE GRAVEYARD until it reaches A HEADSTONE, made with flecked pink stone. Upon the headstone is only one word:

BELOVED.

EXT. 124 BLUESTONE RD. - CONTINUOUS.

Camera moves slowly towards the side exterior of 124, into a Close-Up of a WOMAN looking out of a second floor bedroom window. It is SETHE, mother of the two boys and Denver. She hums her melody, softly, sadly, with a resigned understanding of why her boys are running away...and a deep pain that is too constant to notice.

FADE OUT;

FADE IN:

INT. 124 - BABY SUGGS BEDROOM - LATER THAT DAY.

BABY SUGGS, grandmother and mother-in-law to Sethe, sits in her bed fondling colored fabric of BRIGHT GREEN..It is the only vibrant color in an otherwise drab surrounding. Suggs is bed-ridden, exhausted to her bones - her face a mosaic of suffering and sacrifice and tested faith.

BABY SUGGS

Ya know what I'd love to see? I loved to see me some lavender. You got any lavender? Or even pink - pink'll do.

Sethe is placing folded laundry into a dresser. She stops and checks her pockets for rags or swatches...She looks around the room..

SETHE

No. Sorry.

BABY SUGGS

Ah, winter in Ohio is especially rough if you've got an appetite for color.

Suggs goes back to contemplating her green until;

SETHE (OS)

Oh wait...

Suggs looks up to see Sethe sticking her pink tongue out at her. Suggs smiles.

BABY SUGGS

Oh, that's fine. Fine.

Sethe lets out a small laugh. She walks toward the window, stretching her body. Her expression changes as she thinks of her boys. Baby Suggs reads her like a book.

BABY SUGGS

They'll be all right. I'm surprised they lasted here this long.

SETHE

I don't know. Maybe we should have moved.

BABY SUGGS

What'd be the point? Not a house in the country ain't packed to the rafters with some dead Negro's grief. We lucky our ghost is a baby. My husband spirit come back? Or yours? Don't talk to me! Ha..You lucky. You got one child left, still pullin at your skirts. Be thankful. I had eight. Eight with six fathers. Every one of them gone from me. Four taken, four chased and all, I expect, worrying somebody's house into evil. My first born - alls I can remember of her now is how she loved the burned bottom of bread. Her little hands..I wouldn't know'em if they slapped me. Can you beat that? Eight children and that's all I remember.

SETHE

(returning to her work)

You remember Halle.

BABY SUGGS

Oh, I remember bits and pieces of all

of'em I guess..Halle, of course..I had Halle a lifetime. Almost twenty years... My two girls, sold and gone before I could even a heard about it, and them without their grown up teeth yet. My third child, my son after Halle...I let that straw boss have me for four months so's I could keep that boy. Next year, he had him traded for lumber anyway and me pregnant with his child. I couldn't love that child. I wouldn't. Not any of the rest either. God take what He would....and He did...

SETHE

The boys wouldn't have left if Halle were here.

BABY SUGGS

Those boys didn't even know him. You had six whole years of marriage to my Halle Fathered every one of your children. A blessing. I learned hard that a man's just a man, but a son like that...like Halle..now that's somebody.

Sethe's mixed feelings show all over her face. Although she loved Halle, there is clearly something unresolved in her.

SETHE

Just got a few more things to do, then I'll start supper.

Sethe exits.

EXT. 124 BLUESTONE RD. - LATE DAY.

Denver is playing in the front yard by herself.

Sethe is pumping water into a bucket for clothes washing. A gentle breeze carries a LEAF into the bucket. Sethe sees it floating atop the water for a moment, then picks it up.

C.U. of SETHE as the image triggers a feeling - and the feeling a memory - from long ago.

Sethe looks around her and finds she is no longer standing in the barren field of 124...but rather-

MEMORY;

EXT. SWEET HOME - LATE DAY.

A stunning vista of the plantation SWEET HOME - sun beating

down on groves and rows of gorgeous sycamores for as far as the eye can see. Sethe's figure dwarfed by the majestic landscape.

Sethe looks frightened. Her breathing grows shallow. She hears something;

THE SOUND OF A WAGON'S WHEELS - rolling over a road, growing louder, coming towards her

INTERCUT;

C.U. OF A WAGON WHEEL MOVING RAPIDLY ON A ROAD. CAMERA PANS UP TO THE MAN DRIVING THE WAGON - A STERN WHITE MAN WEARING A DISTINCTIVE HAT...

SETHE TURNS away from the sycamores towards the road to see;

END OF MEMORY;

EXT. 124 BLUESTONE - LATE DAY.

A MAN driving a horse and wagon with two children in the back, coming up Bluestone Road. He wears no hat.

Sethe breathes easily. She looks around her -the reality of 124's barren field has returned. The memory of Sweet Home's sycamores have vanished.

Denver is playing near the road. As the wagon nears 124, Denver looks up and smiles. The Man whips the horse hard so as to ride past the house faster. The children stare at Denver and 124, with horror and curiosity.

The stares of the children destroy Denver's smile. She watches them go, then turns to hide her upset and sees her mother watching her.

Sethe looks to Denver with empathy and impotence: wanting to ease her daughter's pain and knowing full well she cannot.

Hurt and angry, Denver runs past Sethe, towards the woods.

EXT. WOODS - LATE DAY.

Denver runs with a purpose, knowing exactly where she is going.

She reaches FIVE BOXWOOD BUSHES planted in a ring. The tall bushes stretch toward each other four feet off the ground, forming a round, emerald room in the center, seven feet high, with walls fifty inches thick of murmuring leaves.

This is Denver's private place. She bends low and crawls

through the leaves into the center. Once there, this lonely child wipes away her tears and tries to pull herself together. She lays her face against the cool earth.

INT. 124 BLUESTONE RD. - NIGHT.

Denver walks to her room in her night dress. She passes the opened door of her mother's bedroom and peeks in:

INT. SETHE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT.

Sethe kneeling by her bed, as if praying...

Beside Sethe, A WHITE DRESS KNEELS as well, with it's sleeve around Sethe's waist. Like two friendly grown-up women, comforting each other in prayer.

Denver tip toes away.

INT. DENVER'S ROOM - NIGHT.

Sethe enters to check on Denver, whom she thinks is asleep. She leans over and kisses her forehead, only to discover she is awake;

DENVER

Mama?

SETHE

What is it baby?

DENVER

You think maybe when daddy comes, he could talk to the baby ghost. Maybe make her behave and then people won't be scared of here no more.

SETHE

I don't know.

DENVER

Why won't she ever settle?

SETHE

She's mad like a baby gets mad. You forgetting how little it is. She wasn't even two years old when she died. Too little to understand.

DENVER

For a baby she throws a powerful spell.

SETHE

No more powerful than the way I loved her.

Hearing her mother say this, moves Denver.

DENVER

What do you pray for Mama?

SETHE

Oh, I don't really pray anymore. I just talk.

DENVER

About what?

SETHE

Oh, about time. How some things go. Pass on. Some things just stay.

DENVER

What things?

SETHE

Like, the place I was at before here - Sweet Home. Even if that whole farm and every tree and blade of grass on it died - it'll still be there. Waiting. And if you go and stand in the place where it was, what happened there once, will happen again.

DENVER

If it's still there, waiting, that mean nothing ever dies?

SETHE

Nothing ever does. That's why I had to get my children out. No matter what. That's why you can never go there.

DENVER

You never tell me all what happened. Just that they whipped you and you run off pregnant with me.

SETHE

You don't need to know nothing else.

DENVER

(nods)

I saw a white dress kneeling next to you when you was praying.

SETHE

White? Maybe it was my bedding dress. Describe it to me.

DENVER

Had a high neck. Whole mess of buttons coming down the back.

SETHE

Buttons. Well, that's not my bedding dress. I never had a button on nothing. What else?

DENVER

A bunch at the back. On the sit down part.

SETHE

A bustle?

DENVER

I don't know what it's called.

SETHE

You say it was holding on to me. How?

DENVER

Kneeling next to you while you were praying. I mean, talking. It looked just like you.

SETHE

Well, I'll be.

DENVER

I think it was a sign. I think maybe baby's got plans.

SETHE

What plans?

DENVER

I don't know, but that dress holding onto you got to mean something.

SETHE

Maybe. Maybe it does.

Sethe smiles sympathetically for her lonely child. They hear a sound in the house - floor boards creaking.

DENVER

She's crawling again.

Sethe nods and holds her daughter's hand as they listen.

FADE OUT;

SUPER: 1873.

FADE IN;

EXT. 124 BLUESTONE ROAD - DAY.

C.U. - PAUL D. GARNER.

Paul stands on the road, gazing up at the house. Grateful he's arrived, cautious about what he'll find, he steps towards the porch. His clothes are ragged. His feet sore and blistering in his shoes.

EXT. THE PUMP - DAY.

Off to the side of the house, Sethe washes her feet and legs at the pump. She looks up and sees Paul's figure walking towards the house. The sun blazes in her eyes. She can't make out who it is, or whether or not he's even real. As he reaches the porch, Paul disappears from view.

Sethe walks towards the front of the house. When she is little more than forty feet away, she stops - still not certain Paul is a real man or an hallucination of the past.

SETHE

Paul? Paul D.? Is that you?

PAUL

(smiles)

What's left.

(He rises)

How you been girl, besides barefoot?

Sethe jams her balled up stockings into her pocket. She smiles like a little girl, not able to believe her eyes.

SETHE

You looking good.

PAUL

Devil's confusion. He lets me look good
long as I feel bad.

SETHE

How long has it been?

PAUL

'Bout eighteen years, I figure.

SETHE

Eighteen years.

PAUL

And I swear I been walking every one of them. Mind if I join you?

He begins taking off his shoes.

SETHE

You want to soak them? Let me get you some water.

PAUL

No, uh, uh. Can't baby feet. A whole more tramping they got to do yet.

SETHE

You're not leaving right away, are you? You stay awhile.

PAUL

Well, long enough to see Baby Suggs, you..Where is she?

SETHE

Dead.

PAUL

Aw no. When?

SETHE

Eight years now. Almost nine.

PAUL

Was it hard? I hope she didn't die hard.

SETHE

Soft as cream. Being alive was the hard part. Sorry you missed her though. Is that what you came by for?

PAUL

That's some of what I came for. The rest is you.

Sethe doesn't know what to do with her eyes when he says this..she looks away instinctively. Paul realizes that may have sounded too intimate so he leans back and sighs:

PAUL

The truth be known, I go anywhere these days. Anywhere they let me sit down.

SETHE

Come on inside.

PAUL

Porch is fine. Cool out here. Sit with me.

Like a nervous little girl, Sethe takes a sit beside a man for the first time in years, folding her sweat stained skirt beneath her.

PAUL

So Baby Suggs is gone. Somehow never thought death would find her.

SETHE

It finds everyone.

PAUL

We managed well enough without meeting it.

SETHE

I suppose.

Awkward pause. Sethe tries to find the words to a difficult question - but one that is foremost in her mind;

SETHE

I wouldn't have to ask about him, would I?...You'd tell me if there was anything to tell, wouldn't you?

Paul knows instantly she is asking about Halle.

PAUL

You know I would. But I don't know any more about what happened to Halle now than I did then.

Something about Paul's expression might suggest he's keeping something from her. He turns his gaze outward as he says;

PAUL

You must think he's still alive.

SETHE

No. I think he's dead. It's just not being sure that keeps him alive.

PAUL

What did Baby Suggs think?

SETHE

Same. Ha, listen to her, all her children dead and she felt each one go the very day and hour it happened.

PAUL

When she say Halle went?

SETHE

1855. Same day my baby was born.

PAUL

You had that baby, did you? Damn, never thought you'd make it. Running off pregnant.

SETHE

Had to. Couldn't be no waiting.

PAUL

All by yourself too.

SETHE

Almost. A white girl helped me.

PAUL

Then she helped herself, God bless her.

Awkward silence.

SETHE

We got spare rooms. You could stay the night, if you had a mind to.

PAUL

You don't sound too steady in the offer.

SETHE

Oh it's..it's truly meant. I just hope you'll pardon my house.

Paul smiles a warm, touched smile that after all that they've survived, Sethe is worried about what he'll think of her home.

PAUL

My house. I like the sound of that.

Sethe smiles, then rises to escort him in.

INT. 124 BLUESTONE ROAD - DAY.

Sethe opens the front door and enters, with Paul behind her, hanging his shoes by the laces over his shoulder. As he follows her in;

A POOL OF RED, UNDULATING LIGHT forms around him. It worries him.

PAUL
You got company?

SETHE
On and off.

The light undulates faster and faster, extending all the way to the kitchen at the end of the hall. Frightened, Paul steps back out the door.

PAUL
Good God! What kind of evil you got in there?

SETHE
It's not evil..It's just..just sad. Come on. Just step through.

Sethe reaches out her hand. Paul tentatively takes it and is lead through the red light of the hallway, through to the kitchen where it ends.

As he walks through, we can see Paul affected by the light. It is sad. A sadness that touches him, welling up inside until tears are brimming in his eyes. He reaches the normal light of the kitchen and steps out of it.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY.

Paul turns back to find the red light in the hall is gone.

PAUL
I thought you said she died soft as cream.

SETHE
(busying herself in kitchen)
Oh that's not Baby Suggs. That's my daughter. The one I sent ahead with the boys before I run off.

PAUL
She didn't live?

SETHE
No.

PAUL
The boys too?

SETHE
No, they alive - they run off before Baby Suggs died. The one I was carrying when I left Sweet Home is all I got left.

Still affected by the light, Paul eases himself down at the table, finding something to say.

PAUL

Well, probably best..If a Negro boy got legs he ought to use them. Sit down too long, somebody figure out a way to tie them up.....

(the image disturbs Sethe)

You by yourself then?

SETHE

Me and Denver... my daughter.

PAUL

No man?

(Sethe shakes head "no")

And that's all right by you?

SETHE

It's all right by me...I cook at a restaurant in town. Sew a little on the sly....

She places a bottle and a glass on the table before him. The light jarred him. He snatches the bottle to drink and calm himself down. She jokes.

SETHE

You look more done in by a walk through my front hall than all those eighteen years of walking put together.

PAUL

Got that right.

INT. SECOND FLOOR OF 124 - MORNING.

Denver, all of eighteen years old now, and beautiful, is buttoning up her dress when she hears the voice of a man down in the kitchen. She stops. Her face lights up.

DENVER

Daddy?

She runs down the white staircase.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING.

As Denver runs into the kitchen, we hear:

SETHE (OS)

Won't you stay a little while? Can't

nobody catch up on eighteen years in a day.

Denver appears expectantly, down the white staircase that leads from the second floor. She looks at Paul wide eyed. They turn to her with gentle smiles;

SETHE

Baby, this here's Paul D. Garner...Paul, this is my Denver...Paul's the last of the Sweet Home men.

Denver's heart sinks.

PAUL

Good morning Miss Denver. It's a pleasure.

DENVER

Good morning, Mr. D.

PAUL

Garner, baby. Paul D. Garner.

DENVER

Yes sir.

PAUL

Glad to get a look at you. Last time I saw your mama, you were pushing out the front of her dress. She's a fine looking young lady, Sethe. Fine looking. Got her daddy's sweet face.

DENVER

You knew my father?

PAUL

Knew him. Knew him well.

SETHE

Of course he did. I told you, he's from Sweet Home. Paul may stay with us a while. Won't that be nice, having an old friend stay a spell?

But Denver reacts with surprise and dismay. Paul is not her friend. Paul, right now, is more of an intruder.

PAUL

If that's all right with you, that is?

DENVER

We have a ghost here, you know.

PAUL

We met. But sad, your mama said. Not evil.

DENVER

No sir, not evil. But not sad either.

PAUL

What then?

DENVER

Lonely.

SETHE

I don't see how it could be lonely spending every minute with us like it does.

DENVER

It's my sister. She was just a baby when she died in this house.

PAUL

Reminds me of that headless bride back behind Sweet Home. Remember that Sethe? Used to roam them woods regular.

DENVER

(annoyed, resentful)

Mama doesn't like talk about Sweet Home. Says it was never sweet and it sure wasn't home.

SETHE

Girl, mind yourself!

PAUL

Now, now, she got it right there, Sethe.

SETHE

But it's where we were. All together. It's where I met your father. And it comes back on us whether we want it to or not....

DENVER

Then why don't you ever tell me about it?

Sethe pauses - unnerved and irritated by Denver's challenge.

SETHE

Denver, start up the stove. Paul must be hungry.

PAUL

Don't go to no trouble on my account.

SETHE

Bread's no trouble. The rest I brought back from where I work. Least I can do, cooking dawn to noon, is bring dinner home. You got any objections to pike?

PAUL

If he don't object to me I don't object to him.

He addresses his humor to Denver who offers no response. She crosses to the stove and works on lighting it. She's mad.

DENVER

Where's he going to sleep? Baby Sugg's room got no sheets or nothing.

SETHE

We'll figure it out.

DENVER

Maybe you should stay with mama, Mr. Garner. Then you two can talk about Sweet Home all night long.

SETHE

(explodes)

What's the matter with you! I never knew you to behave like this!

PAUL

Leave her be, Sethe. I'm a stranger to her.

SETHE

That's just it. She got no cause to act up with a stranger.

Denver collapses where she stands, sobbing out loud. Sethe moves to her.

SETHE

Baby, what is it? Did something happen?

Denver moves away. Sethe registers this rejection.

DENVER

I can't no more! I can't no more!

SETHE

Can't what? What can't you?

DENVER

I can't live here! I don't know where to go or what to do but I can't live here. Nobody speaks to us. Nobody comes by. Nobody even knows I'm alive.

PAUL

What she talking about 'nobody speaks to you'?

SETHE

It's the house. People don't...

DENVER

It's not! It's not the house! It's us! It's you!

SETHE

Denver!

PAUL

Leave off, Sethe. It's hard for a young girl living in a haunted place. That can't be easy.

SETHE

(growing irritated)

It's easier than some other things. Come here, baby..

Denver allows herself to be held.

PAUL

I'm a grown man with nothing new left to see or do and I'm telling you it' ain't easy. Maybe you oughta move.

SETHE

No!

PAUL

Sethe!

SETHE

No. No moving. No leaving. It's all right the way it is.

PAUL

You going to tell me it's all right with this child half out of her mind.

SETHE

(holding Denver in her arms)

I got a tree on my back and a haunt in my

house and nothing in between but the daughter I'm holding in my arms. No more running - from nothing! I will never run from another thing on this earth, you hear! I took one journey and I paid the ticket but let me tell you something, Paul D. Garner; it cost too much! Do you hear me?! It cost too much! Now sit down and eat with us or leave us be!

Sethe's sudden outburst startles Paul. He watches as Sethe ushers Denver out to the keeping room off the kitchen to quiet her down.

Alone, Paul is disturbed by Sethe's words. He fishes out a pouch of tobacco and concentrates on it, searching for smoking papers he knows he doesn't have...waiting for Sethe to return.

When she does, she heads straight for the stove. She spits on her finger and touches it to check it's heat. She then begins to make bread from flour, soda and salt - keeping her back to Paul throughout - as the scene continues;

PAUL

What tree, Sethe?

SETHE

Huh?

PAUL

What tree on your back? I don't see nothing growing on your back.

SETHE

It's there all the same.

PAUL

Who told you that?

SETHE

White girl. That's what she called it. I never seen it and never will. But she said that's what it looked like. A chokecherry tree. Leaves, branches. That was 18 years ago. Could have cherries by now for all I know...

PAUL

I don't follow.

Sethe pauses. Something in her decides to tell Paul D, although she keeps working on the bread to stay in control;

SETHE

I had milk, see. I was pregnant with Denver but I had milk for my baby girl that I sent ahead with the boys. I hadn't stopped nursing her when I sent her and the boys ahead of me. Anybody could smell me long before they saw me. Nothing I could do about it. All I knew is I had to get my milk to my little girl. Nobody was going to nurse her like me. Nobody was going to get it to her fast enough or take it away when she had enough..nobody knew she couldn't pass her air if you held her up on your shoulder, only if she was lying on your knee..Nobody knew that but me...

Paul listens, half dreading where he thinks this story's going.

PAUL

We was talking about a tree, Sethe.

Sethe works faster. It is the work, taking an action - any action - that allows her tell the story numbly, without the pain of reliving it...without the images attacking

SETHE

Schoolteacher's boys drag me into the barn and took my milk...

....yet, the images come anyway.

INTERCUT: FLASHES OF MEMORY attack as SETHE TELLS HER STORY...

JUMP CUT TO:

INT. BARN - A NIGHT REMEMBERED.

- Sethe being raped, beaten, held down by SCHOOLTEACHER'S BOYS in a barn with a loft...

SETHE (IN KITCHEN)

..Held me down in that barn and took it.

JUMP CUT TO:

Sethe screams and is smacked across the face.

SETHE (IN KITCHEN)

They were like boulders on me. Their hands over my mouth and on my shoulders and my legs.

JUMP CUT TO:

One of the boys holds her face and mouth and head as the two others hold down her body and ravage her....

SETHE (IN KITCHEN)

I couldn't move. Alls I could see was the loft above their heads.

JUMP CUT TO:

Her mouth covered, her head immobile - she stares up at the loft.

END OF MEMORY IMAGES.

PAUL

The loft?

INT. KITCHEN - PRESENT DAY.

Sethe squeezes her eyes to erase the image and works harder on the biscuit dough...The flashes of IMAGES STOP...

SETHE

I told Mrs. Garner on them. She had that lump on her neck and couldn't speak but her eyes rolled out tears, I remember. Them boys found out I told on 'em and Schoolteacher made one open up my back, and when it closed it made a tree.

PAUL

They used cowhide on you?

SETHE

And they took my milk.

PAUL

They beat you and you was pregnant?

SETHE

And they took my milk!

Sethe has separated the dough into biscuits which she slips into the stove. As she rises, Paul steps gently behind her. He slowly caresses her breasts from behind, pressing his cheek against her back.. He rubs his cheek against it, feeling the scars beneath the dress. Raising his fingers to the hooks, as Sethe cries silently, he undoes her dress which slips down to her hips, exposing the sculpture her back has become.

PAUL

Aw Lord, girl.

Grateful to have her body be someone else's responsibility for the moment, Sethe closes her eyes as Paul touches every ridge and leaf of her tree with his mouth. The tenderness is almost unbearable.

Suddenly, PAUL'S LEGS BEGIN TREMBLING. He pauses and looks down...He realizes it is not his legs that tremble, but rather;

THE FLOORBOARDS THEMSELVES ARE PITCHING, GRINDING, SHOVING the house from side to side.

Sethe slides to the floor, struggling with her dress.

On all fours, Denver crawls in from the keeping room as if trying to keep the house together.

Paul, falling, reaching for an anchor, begins to shout;

PAUL
GOD DAMN IT! HUSH UP! Leave this place
alone! Get the hell outta here!

A table rushes at him but Paul grabs it's leg. Managing to stand at an angle as the house continues to pitch, he holds the table by two legs and bashes it about, wrecking everything, screaming at the house;

PAUL
YOU WANT TO FIGHT, COME ON! GOD DAMN IT!
SHE GOT ENOUGH WITHOUT YOU! SHE GOT ENOUGH!

The quaking slows to an occasional lurch but Paul does not stop whipping the table around until everything it is absolutely still. He leans against the wall, panting.

Sethe is crouched by the stove. A mixed expression of relief and guilt - the expression of a mother whose disobedient child has been sent away. But a child she loves nonetheless.

Denver looks frightened. More alone than ever, now that her one companion is gone.

All three are breathing together as if to the same beat, like one tired person.

LAP DISSOLVE:

INT. KITCHEN - LATER THAT DAY..

Denver walks through the broken furniture and dishes. At the stove, she ashes over the fire and pulls the pan of biscuits

from the oven,

EXT. 124 BLUESTONE RD. - CONTINUOUS.

A shirtless Paul D. is by the water pump washing himself.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS.

Denver lifts the fallen jelly cupboard, it's contents laying in a heap in the corner of the bottom shelf. She takes out a jar. She looks for a plate and finds half of one by the broken table. She picks it up as she hears Paul enter through the front door.

INT. BABY SUGGS BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS.

Sethe prepares a bed for Paul. Baby Suggs quilt is on the bed. She hesitates whether or not to leave it there.

Paul stands by the door with his shoes in his hands, his shirt hanging open down the front.

Sethe is surprised to see him there - she feels awkward.

SETHE

Why don't you...take a rest..I'll call you when we're ready.

PAUL

Sure you don't want me to help clean up?

SETHE

No..you'd just get in my way. Denver and me'll do it.

They stand in silence, looking at each other for a moment. The awkwardness they both feel strike them suddenly as funny. Paul starts smiling. Sethe covers her mouth to conceal it.

And then, just as quickly, the urge to laugh subsides - and the fear they feel takes it's place.

Paul slowly closes the door and places his shoes on the floor. Sethe watches him. Paul crosses to her. He moves in to kiss her. They approach each other's lips like two burn victims, trying desperately not to hurt the other with their touch.

EXT. 124 BLUESTONE RD. - CONTINUOUS.

Denver sits on the porch steps, alone once again. Miserably eating the biscuit and jelly off of a half broken plate.

INT. BABY SUGGS BEDROOM - MINUTES LATER.

Sethe and Paul lay in bed, after lovemaking. They are still fully clothed. The lovemaking was fast and finished quickly. Now, there is an awkwardness that is without humor or excitement - but sits like a chasm between them.

As Sethe lays there, SHE REMEMBERS:

MEMORY:

EXT. THE CORN FIELDS OF SWEET HOME - A DAY REMEMBERED.

A brilliant bright yellow and green corn stalks in a tiny corn field.

Sethe and a slightly older HALLE - handsome, strong - run through the field until Halle stops them at an isolated spot.

HALLE

How's this?

SETHE

Here?! out in the open?!

HALLE

Look around - can you see anybody?

Sethe looks and can see nothing through the corn stalks. She shakes her head no.

HALLE

Then nothing can see us neither.

He takes off his shirt. Sethe giggles as she gets on the ground, keeping her ankles crossed.

Halle lays her back and gently separates her legs. She giggles. Halle pauses before laying on top of her.

HALLE

You are a beautiful sight.

SETHE

Don't talk stupid.

HALLE

You're my wife now! I can talk as stupid as I like about you!

(she giggles)

I ain't never loved nothing like you before, Sethe.

(Sethe is moved)

And after I get mama out...then I get us out too. And you'll see, baby girl...

(smiles)
we're gonna have us a liiife..

He sings the word "life", so that Sethe laughs. Then, Halle lowers himself slowly to her and they begin to make love. As camera pans up to a HILL above the field, we hear Sethe ask;

SETHE (O.S.)
You sure nobody can see?

We hear Halle grunt "uh-huh" as we arrive on the hill where a GREAT TREE sits.

EXT. GREAT TREE ON THE HILL - DAY.

Beneath the tree, PAUL D, SIXO and Paul's brothers Paul A. and Paul P. are pouring water over heads and watching;

POV; Unbeknownst to Halle and Sethe, their lovemaking is in clear view to anyone on the hill...

PAUL A
Damn. I don't get why she picked him.

PAUL D
Halle's got that way about him. That way a woman feels he's doing it all for her, not for himself at all.

PAUL A
I can't see nothing so special about Halle.

PAUL F
What about what he's doing for his mama?

PAUL A
Fool thing, if you ask me. By the time he buys it, freedom won't mean a thing to somebody that old and worn.

SIXO
Freedom mean something anytime it come.

The men watch the corn stalks swaying to the lovemaking.

A YOUNG PAUL D., in particular, watches with tender yearning.

INT. KITCHEN AT SWEET HOME - EARLY EVENING.

MR. GARNER, the man who owns and runs Sweet Home. He offers cooked corn to the men.

MR. GARNER
Raccoon must've got into my corn. Damaged

a few so, no use throwing them out...

The men looks to each other, suppressing a laugh.

MR. GARNER

Sethe, get the butter there.

Everyone looks at each other as they thank No. Garner and begin to smear butter on their corn and eat.

A NEIGHBORING FARMER visiting the Garner's cautions him;

NEIGHBORING FARMER

You spoil these nigger boys.

GARNER

Maybe you got boys on your farm. My nigger's are men. Not a boy among'em. Bought 'em thataway, raised'em thataway.

NEIGHBORING FARMER

Beg to differ Garner. Ain't no nigger men.

GARNER

Not if you scared. But if you a man yourself, you'll want your niggers to be men too.

NEIGHBORING FARMER

Wouldn't have no nigger men around my wife.

GARNER

Neither would I..Neither would I.

Sethe hides a smile as she hands a piece of corn to Halle. Paul A and Paul F hesitate as they think of eating the corn which the lovers consummated. But Sixo digs right in.

Paul D eats slowly, his eyes never leaving Sethe as she moves Around the kitchen, her eyes never leaving Halle...Paul's Attraction and love for her are apparent.

END OF MEMORY;

INT. SETHE'S BEDROOM - EARLY EVENING.

C.U. on PAUL, on his back, turned away from Sethe.

What began as Sethe's memory, has blended into Paul's.

Sethe rises off the bed, breaking the thick silence between them:

SETHE

I'll call you when there's something to eat.

She exits, leaving Paul alone on the bed.

EXT. 124 BLUESTONE RD. - THE FOLLOWING DAY.

We see the house now. No creaking or sounds of breaking furniture. Just the sound of Paul D. singing.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY.

Paul is singing as he fixes the table he broke while driving the baby ghost away.

Denver is sweeping the floor - irritated by Paul's presence and voice.

They both hear the front door open as Sethe arrives home from work.

They look to each other to see which one will make a move for Sethe first. Paul knows enough to bide his time with Denver. He watches as she places the broom down and exits the kitchen.

EXT. 124 BLUESTONE RD. - NIGHT.

Paul and Sethe sit on the porch together. Sethe is sewing. Paul nervously gets up his nerve to ask:

PAUL

Sethe.

(she stops and looks)

I was thinking of looking for work around here. What do you think?

SETHE

Ain't much. River mostly. And hogs.

PAUL

Hogs is fine.

Paul moves to where Sethe is sitting.

PAUL

I don't need much, Sethe. Eat, sleep, sing a little when it strikes me. I don't ask for more to..to live somewhere.

Sethe realizes what he is asking and tentatively responds:

SETHE

All right. It's...it's fine with me.

PAUL

Your girl Denver. Seems she's of a different mind.

SETHE

Don't worry about her. She's a charmed child. Nothing ever touch her too bad. From the beginning. Everybody I knew dead or gone, but not her.

(pause)

You got to know something, though - this here ain't no better life. It's just not that other one. What I do here - all I ever do - is keep Denver from that other..So if you stay, there's no more talk about Sweet Home or anything else. I won't let the past in my yard again. Getting me and Denver through this here life is all that matters. You understand?

PAUL

Dangerous to love anything that much, Sethe. Best thing is to love everything just a little bit..that way, when it breaks or runs off or gets taken, well maybe you'd have a little love left over for the next one.

SETHE

Don't be asking me to choose, Paul D. There ain't no choice here.

PAUL

That's the whole point. I'm not asking you to choose. Just want to know if there's some space for me. Want to know if it's more than "you can stay", "it's fine"..more like, "I want you here Paul".

Beat. Sethe is frightened by the prospect of feeling for him.

SETHE

Maybe we should leave things the way they are.

Sethe rises to enter the house when Paul's words stop her:

PAUL

How are they?

SETHE

We get along.

PAUL

What about inside?

SETHE

I don't go inside.

PAUL

Sethe, if I'm here with you, with Denver, you can go anywhere you want. Jump, if you want to, 'cause I'll catch you. Go as far inside as you need - I'll hold your ankles. Make sure you get back out. I'm not saying this because I need a place to stay. I told you, I'm a walking man, but I been heading in this direction for seven years. When I got here and sat out there on the porch, waiting for you, well, I knew it wasn't the place I was heading toward. It was you. We can make a life girl. A life.

SETHE

(scared)

I don't know. I don't know.

PAUL

Leave it to me. See how it goes. No promises, if you don't want to make any. Just see how it goes, all right?

Sethe's heart is twisted. She wants to cry...because she feels hope...and because she feels fear.

SETHE

All right. We'll see how it goes.

PAUL

You willing to leave it to me?

SETHE

Well..some of it.

PAUL

(smiles)

Some?...Well okay...some.

Sethe manages a smile.

INT. DENVER'S BEDROOM - NIGHT.

Denver lies curled up in her bed. Alone.

Sethe enters and crawls in unexpectedly. Denver looks up,

surprised to see her.

DENVER

What is it? What's wrong?

SETHE

Nothing. Nothing's wrong. Lay back down.

Denver obeys, unsure.

DENVER

You think baby ghost's really gone?

SETHE

Don't know.

DENVER

I miss her.

Sethe lets out a small laugh.

DENVER

I do. Baby Suggs told me baby ghost would never hurt me. She was my sister. When I was little, after the boys left, I used to think that she and me both were waiting for daddy to come. And once he did, she wouldn't be mad no more.

(Sethe listens sadly)

They hear Paul singing out on the porch. Denver grimaces.

DENVER

Wish he'd shut-up...He's ruined everything.

SETHE

No, he hasn't. He won't.

(hesitates)

He..he wants to takes us to the carnival next Thursday...

Denver's eyes light up with excitement then caution.

DENVER

You mean, go out where they'll be other people?

SETHE

Dress up a little bit. Wear our hats. What do you think?

DENVER

(downplaying her excitement)

Maybe....

SETHE

Maybe...All right...all right.
(difficult for her to say)

Can I ask you something?
(Denver nods, her back to Sethe)

I was wondrin'..What you think about
us...maybe... maybe thinking we could
start...if we got an idea to, thinking we
could start.. countin' on...
(she stops)

DENVER

On what mama? Countin' on what?

Sethe can barely bring herself to say. To hope. To imagine.
Paul? But, for Denver, she forces herself and whispers;

SETHE

Something.

EXT. CARNIVAL - DAY.

Paul and Sethe and Denver walk among the hundreds of black townspeople gathered for the carnival.

A sign reads COLORED THURSDAY...TWO PENNIES ENTRANCE FEE.

Paul is in high spirits. Saying hello to anyone whose eye he catches. Willing, eager to get anything for Denver she wants. Feeling a little more like a normal man in a normal life.

Denver is excited but worried. She doesn't want to like Paul but can't help the thrill she's feeling. And when one or two passersby shout out;

VARIOUS PASSERS-

BY

Hey Denver!...Hi there Denver!

Denver heart almost weeps with joy.

Sethe walks cautiously. Overdressed for the occasion, it is her first outing among neighborhood folk in many years.

She catches the eyes of some of the women she knows...ELLA and LADY JONES..good Christian women who nod in their acknowledgement yet are holding back something. A judgement? A repulsion?

Paul doesn't notice them and for this Sethe is glad.

MONTAGE of SCENES...the various carnival acts, all performed

by a WHITE TROUPE; magic, clowning, fire swallowing, spitting ribbons, acrobats forming pyramids...

Our trio take it all in like water to the thirsty.

At one point, A WHITE CARNIVAL BARKER shouts to the children;

CARNIVAL BARKER
All Pickaninnies free!!

The phrase stabs Sethe and Paul a bit. But Paul whispers;

PAUL
Two pennies and an insult well spent in
my opinion to see the spectacle of
whitefolks making a spectacle of
themselves.

Sethe can't help but let out a small laugh - and with that laugh, a sudden sensation of relief...

Paul buys Denver some licorice, peppermint and lemonade.
Holding the lemonade for her, Paul asks;

PAUL
Mind if I take a sip?

Denver agrees. Paul takes some lemonade then wipes the rim where he sipped with a small napkin and gently hands it back to her. Denver, in spite of herself, is starting to like him.

END MONTAGE.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY.

Our trio are leaving the carnival, walking three astride with distance in between each. The sunlight casts strong shadows.

Sethe's eyes glance towards the ground behind them and sees;

THEIR THREE SHADOWS ARE HOLDING HANDS.....as they walk home.

FADE OUT;

FADE- IN.

EXT. A STREAM AND THE BANK BESIDE IT - DAY.

WIDE ANGLE of a BEAUTIFUL, WIDE STREAM (more like a small river) with a MULBERRY TREE standing tall on the bank before it. There is not a soul in sight as the stream moves gracefully beneath the sun.

SUDDENLY;

A FULLY DRESSED YOUNG BLACK WOMAN EMERGES FROM THE MIDDLE OF THE STREAM LIKE A GODDESS ARISING OUT OF SPIRITUAL WATERS... SHE WEARS A STRAW HATT A WHITE DRESS WITH BUTTONS, A LACE COLLAR AND NEW SHOES. SHE WALKS OUT OF THE WATER TO THE BANK.

Exhausted, sopping wet and breathing heavily as if from asthma, she sits, leaning against the mulberry tree. She seems too tired to even hold her head upon her neck. Yet her skin is like new lineless and smooth. Glowing.

Although racked with pain, SHE IS SMILING. Smiling the way travellers smile when they have finally arrived after a long and arduous journey.

EXT. WOODS - DAY.

The Young Black Woman makes her way through the woods. She passes by Denver's BOXWOOD BUSH secret place. Then continues forward, as if with a specific direction in mind.

EXT. 124 BLUESTONE ROAD - LATE AFTERNOON.

Sethe, Paul and Denver approach 124. Denver is the first to see.

DENVER

Look. What is that?

All three look to see;

THE YOUNG BLACK WOMAN sitting on a stump not far from the steps of 124.

As the three approach, the Young Woman lifts her head and stares directly at Sethe.

The two women exchange a moment in their eyes - Sethe, curious yet warm...The Young Woman, happy yet there is a hunger in her stare.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER.

The Young Woman seated on a chair as Denver refills a tin cup of water. The Young Woman drinks greedily, cup after cup.

SETHE

You from around here?

The Young Woman shakes her head NO. She reaches down and takes off her shoes, which Sethe notices as new. Sethe bends down to pick them up. The Young Woman never lets her eyes leave Sethe.

PAUL

Those shoes look brand new.

SETHE

What might your name be?

The Young Woman speaks in a low, rough voice;

BELOVED

Beloved.

Sethe drops the shoes. Denver sits down. Paul smiles;

PAUL

Beloved. You use a last name, Beloved?

BELOVED

Last. No..just Beloved..

(she spells it)

B..E..L..O..V..E..D...

As she spells it we see sethe's reaction; she is deeply touched. Then Denver's - who looks both amazed and curiously excited.

Sethe hangs her own hat on a peg then approaches Beloved.

SETHE

That's a pretty name Beloved. Take off your hat and I'll make us something. We just got back from the carnival over near Cincinnati-

But Beloved has fallen asleep upright in the chair.

PAUL

Miss...Miss, you want to lay down?

Her eyes open to slits. Paul is about to help her when Denver rises;

DENVER

I'll take her up. She can sleep in baby Suggs room - that all right Mama?

SETHE

Course.

Denver eases Beloved onto her feet, which Sethe and Paul notice do not have a line or sore on them.

PAUL

(whispers to Sethe)

Look at her feet? They're not walking

feet. More like she rode from somewhere
all the way here.

Yet, Beloved can barely stand upon them as Denver escorts her
to the white staircase. Beloved starts coughing.

PAUL
Sounds like the croup.

SETHE
Is she feverish, Denver?

DENVER
No. She's cold.

SETHE
Then she is. Fever goes from hot to cold.

PAUL
Could have the cholera.

DENVER
(adamant)
She's not sick!

Denver helps her up the stairs. Sethe and Paul register
Denver's defensive reaction.

INT. BABY SUGG'S ROOM - SAME TIME.

Denver eases Beloved into the bed. Beloved falls asleep the
second she hits the pillow. Denver gently - cautiously -
strokes Beloved's forehead and cheek.

INT. BABY SUGG'S ROOM - NIGHT.

Denver stands vigil beside Beloved, wrapped beneath a quilt.

INT. BABY SUGG'S ROOM - THE FOLLOWING DAY.

Denver watches her sleep, wiping her hot forehead with cold
cloths...

INT. BABY'S SUGG'S ROOM - NIGHT.

Denver washes out Beloved's underwear and stockings...She
hears Beloved murmuring. She moves quickly to her side.

DENVER
Beloved? Beloved I'm here...what is it?

BELOVED
Heavy..this place is heavy.

DENVER

Would you like to sit up?

Beloved shakes her head no. She takes hold of Denver's arm and wraps it around her own body. Denver sits up against the pillow as Beloved snuggles her body into Denver's arms and falls back asleep. Denver holds her, lovingly.

INT. BABY SUGGS ROOM - DAYS LATER.

Denver has not left her bedside. She places another quilt upon her, tucking it in around the sides. As she does this, Beloved's eyes open for a brief moment, catching the sight of Denver over her. She smiles. Denver gratefully smiles back.

DENVER

Can I get you anything? Are you hungry?

Beloved looks over to a plate of half finished food - Denver's meal. Denver picks up a piece of sweet bread and feeds her. Denver is thrilled.

THE FOLLOWING SCENES TAKE PLACE OVER SEVERAL WEEKS;

INT. KITCHEN - THE NEXT DAY.

Denver places sugar between two pieces of bread and gives the sandwich to Beloved, who, no longer feeling sickly, accepts it with a bright smile.

EXT. HEN HOUSE - ANOTHER DAY.

Denver explains how to pack mud in the cracks of the hen house as Beloved listens attentively, eating jelly out of a jar.

INT. HEN HOUSE - ANOTHER DAY.

Denver explains to Beloved how to warm the chicks with their skirts as the latter eats something sweet. They both giggle at the softness of the chicks.

INT. DENVER & BELOVED'S BEDROOM - ANOTHER DAY.

Denver is showing Beloved how to make her bed.

DENVER

..then you fold it over like this see.
This here used to be where my brothers
and me slept. I was always at the top.

BELOVED

How you get so smart?

DENVER

I ain't so smart.

BELOVED

Yes you are!

DENVER

Well, I used to go to Lady Jones. She'd teach us with songs how to spell and count.

BELOVED

You don't go no more?

DENVER

No I...I had to stop going.

BELOVED

You so smart. Tell me about your brothers.

DENVER

Well...they're names were Howard and..

As Denver continues, Beloved steps towards her and begins to touch her face - examining her lips, her nose, her skin as if it were a rose to admire. Denver drinks in the attention, her heart expanding with love with every touch from this strange creature.

DENVER

..and....and Bulgar...At night, we used to..crawl into bed together..I'd lay down on Bul's lap and Howard would tell us die-witch stories. He said they would protect us...And if I learned them, they would protect me if ever they were gone...

EXT. PORCH - EARLY EVENING.

Everyone is sitting on the porch after dinner.

Beloved, looking strong and fit, eats a cane stick - gnawing at it to the flax, keeping the strings in her mouth long after the syrup had been sucked off. It makes Denver laugh, as she licks her cane stick. It makes Sethe smile, to see them both happy.

It makes Paul disgusted.

INT. KEEPING ROOM - NIGHT.

Paul confronts Sethe as she sews.

PAUL

You gonna just feed her, from now on?

SETHE

Denver likes her. She's no real trouble.

PAUL

But don't she have a home? Some place to go?

SETHE

Didn't mention one. I thought we'd wait until her breathing got better. She still sounds a little lumbar.

PAUL

She breathe like she can eat, she could blow this whole house down. And all those sweets.

SETHE

Sometimes the body needs that sugar for strength when it's trying to recover after an illness.

PAUL

But that's just it. She don't seem sick. Something funny about her.

SETHE

Funny? How?

PAUL

Acts sick, sounds sick but she don't look sick. Good skin, bright hands and strong as a bull.

SETHE

She can hardly walk without holding onto something.

PAUL

That's what I mean. Can't walk but I passed by Baby Sugg's room this morning and saw her lifting the rocker with one hand.

SETHE

You didn't?

PAUL

Don't tell me. Ask Denver. She was right there.

At that moment, Denver passes by on her way to the kitchen.

SETHE
Denver. Come in here a minute.

Denver enters the keeping room.

SETHE
Paul says you saw Beloved pick up the
rocking chair in Baby Suggs room with one
hand. That so?

Denver looks at Paul with a hard gaze;

DENVER
I didn't see no such thing.

From Paul's expression we can tell Denver is lying...and
whatever fragile connection they were building, is swiftly
destroyed.

INT. SETHE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT.

Sethe is getting ready for bed. Denver sticks her head in:

DENVER
Have you seen her? I can't find her.

SETHE
Who?

DENVER
Beloved.

Sethe shakes her head. Denver exits anxiously. The mentions
of Beloved's name stir a MEMORY in Sethe:

MEMORY:

EXT. GRAVESTONE YARD - A DAY REMEMBERED.

Sethe talks to the HEADSTONE ENGRAVER as he works in the hot
sun. His YOUNG SON helps him.

SETHE
She need a marker. Somethin' to tell me
where she is. But I ain't got no money.

The Engraver eyes her body.

ENGRAVER
What you got then?

Sethe is embarrassed by his lascivious tone, especially in

front of the young boy.

The Engraver rises, takes a step toward Sethe and touches her hip, curling his hand around to her back.

ENGRAVER

What you want it to say?

SETHE

I was thinking what the preacher say at the funeral. Dearly Beloved.

ENGRAVER

(touching her)

For ten minutes I give you one word for free.

His hand glides down to her buttocks. Sethe can't help but see the Young Boy watching the scene.

END of MEMORY.

INT. SETHE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT.

As the memory starts to fade from her mind, Sethe suddenly feels someone else's presence. She looks up to find:

Beloved standing by the door - watching her.

SETHE

Oh!...I didn't know you were there.

BELOVED

Can I help?

SETHE

Help what, honey?

Beloved kneels before her on the floor and finishes buttoning up Sethe's night dress.

BELOVED

Where you go in the morning?

SETHE

Work. I work in a restaurant.

BELOVED

What time you go?

SETHE

Little after the sun come up. I like to make a loaf of bread before I go. How you feelin'?

Beloved nods, absorbing the information.

SETHE

You remember your mother at all?

BELOVED

(scratching back of her head)

I remember a woman who was mine and I
remember bein snatched away from her.

Sethe, nods, understanding such things. She cautiously reaches out to stroke Beloved's face. Beloved responds like a puppy, pressing her cheek against Sethe's hand. Sethe is moved.

INT. KITCHEN - PRE DAWN.

Sethe enters the kitchen to make bread before she leaves for work. She finds Beloved waiting for her, placing out her cooking things on the table. Beloved looks up and smiles.

BELOVED

I'm helpin make your bread.

EXT. 124 BLUESTONE - EARLY EVENING.

Beloved waits anxiously at the window for the sight of Sethe coming home from work....

When she sees her, she runs through the house, out the door to meet her.

Denver appears at the door, upset by Beloved's loss of attention in her.

EXT. PORCH - EVENING.

C.U. - SETHE, as she leans her tired head against the porch, sitting on the step. She closes her eyes and is about to drift off, when;

BELOVED'S HAND gently touches her shoulder, settling there.

Sethe looks up and smiles, patting her hand. Beloved stands above her as Denver takes a seat on the step.

Beloved searches Sethe's eyes and asks;

BELOVED

Where your diamonds?

The question surprises Sethe...and startles Denver.

SETHE

Diamonds? What would I be doing with diamonds?

BELOVED

On your ears.

SETHE

Wish I did.

(beat)

Hmm..come to think of it, I had some crystal once. A present from Mrs. Garner - woman I worked for at Sweet Home.

DENVER

I never saw you with no earrings.

SETHE

Gone. Long gone.

BELOVED

Tell me...Tell me about your diamonds...

Sethe hesitates. Beloved kneels at her feet.

DENVER

(to Beloved)

Ma'am don't talk about Sweet Home.

BELOVED

(ignoring her)

Tell me...Tell me about your diamonds.

Denver awaits her mother's reaction with great interest. Sethe looks at Beloved sweet, innocent expression and something in her resistance, eases:

SETHE

Well..this lady I worked for in Kentucky gave them to me when I got married..

Denver is both interested and slightly hurt at her mother's willingness to tell Beloved what she'd never tell her:

SETHE

..What they called married back then. I remember going up to her in the kitchen to tell her. I'd help her make ink for Mr. Garner in the kitchen. I was fool enough to think I was going have some kind of ceremony...maybe even a new dress..

(CONTINUES AS WE CUT TO;)

Sethe's continues telling Beloved, an attentive audience...

Denver, more attuned to Beloved's interest than the story, is disturbed at her mother's telling of it.

INT. KITCHEN - ANOTHER EVENING.

Camera moves up from the mended legs of the table Paul broke to;

A suspicious Paul glares at Beloved as they eat dinner.

Beloved is ever ready to pass Sethe a bowl or napkin or whatever she needs. She is "shining" - for Sethe, and for Sethe alone.

Denver notices it as well.

It is raining outside. Both Denver and Beloved are wet from the rain. Denver's hair is all tangled.

SETHE

Best unbraid that hair.

DENVER

Tomorrow.

SETHE

Today's always here. Tomorrow never.

DENVER

It hurts.

SETHE

Comb it everyday, it won't..

BELOVED

Your woman never fixed up your hair?

All three look to Beloved, puzzled by her question, which is clearly intended for Sethe. Paul's getting more annoyed.

PAUL

What?

SETHE

My woman?..You mean my mother?

Beloved nods. Paul and Denver exchange a curious look.

SETHE

If she did I don't remember. I don't think I saw her but a few times.

BELOVED

Tell me 'bout her.

Paul and Denver look to Sethe, waiting to see if she'll answer.

SETHE

..I remember once, she picked me up and carried me behind the smokehouse... The only thing I do remember in fact...

Paul is disturbed by Sethe's carefree storytelling - how it contradicts her words to him that first day and worried it will lead to no good...

Once again, Denver is surprised to hear what she's never heard before. She looks to Paul and knows what he is thinking. Paul looks back and knows Denver realizes it. But Denver returns his glance with a defensive dismissal of the eyes.

SETHE

...She opened up her dress and right on her rib, right here, was a circle and a cross burnt right into the skin....

PAUL

(interrupts her)
Sethe.

SETHE

What?

Paul doesn't want her to continue but doesn't want to say so.

PAUL

Any more beans?

Sethe rises to get him more food and she continues:

SETHE

...anyway, she points to this mark and says to me "This is your ma'am. I am the only one whose got this mark now. The rest all dead. If something happens to me and you can't tell me by my face, you can know me by this mark"..Scared me so... I couldn't think of anything to say so I said "Yes Ma'am..but how will you know us? Mark me too. Mark the mark on me too."

DENVER

Did she?

SETHE

No. She slapped my face. I didn't understand it then. Not until I had a mark of my own...

Paul is disturbed. He can see Sethe getting upset. He is mad at Beloved for her damn questions..

BELOVED

What happened to her?

Something inside of Sethe stops, a wall erected. Something unwanted is coming into her consciousness. Paul notices it. She rises;

SETHE

Don't know. Everybody done?

Sethe collects a few dishes and crosses to the sink as Paul asks:

PAUL

Well, as long as we're all asking questions, getting to know each other..

(to Beloved)

Why don't you tell us a little bit about yourself?

Camera follows Sethe as she arrives at the sink, placing the dish inside. We hear the others O.S.:

DENVER (O.S.)

(defensively)

She don't remember nothing.

PAUL (O.S.)

You be surprised what you start remembering once you start talking.

BELOVED (O.S.)

Can I have some more pudding?

Camera stays on Sethe as we drown out the voices at the kitchen table. She is staring out the window above the sink as if watching the MEMORY BEING RELIVED IN HER YARD;

POV - OUT THE WINDOW;

MEMORY:

EXT. A LARGE TREE IN A FIELD - A DAY REMEMBERED.

A CROWD of people surround a tree. SEVERAL WHITE MEN are preparing to hang a group of black men and women standing in line, awaiting their turn.

Among the crowd is A CHILD (SETHE) holding the hand of an OLDER BLACK SLAVE WOMAN (NAN). Nan is pointing to a WOMAN (SETHE'S MOTHER), who is one of the people waiting in line to be hanged. Nan whispers to Sethe:

NAN

That's your mama - right there.

Little Sethe looks up and sees her mother - her face a mask of courage and rage and tears. She looks straight ahead - not at anyone in particular, especially not her daughter.

NAN

..I'm telling you, small girl Sethe...Me and your Mama was taken by the men many times..She threw them other babies away..the others from the whites, without names, she threw them away..But you she gave the name of the black man. She had her arms around him, child. The others, she did not put her arms around. Never...Never...

The child Sethe listens, watching her mother move further down the line.

END of MEMORY as WE CUT BACK TO:

INT. KITCHEN -

Sethe, the memory passing, hears the voices in her kitchen:

PAUL (O.S.)

Ain't you got no brothers or sisters?

BELOVED (O.S.)

I don't have nobody.

She finds Paul interrogating Beloved who eats a second pudding. Denver tries to interfere.

DENVER

She has us now!

PAUL

You been here five weeks, we still don't know nothing bout you..

SETHE

Paul, Stop it. Denver bring those dishes.

PAUL

What was you looking for when you came here?

BELOVED

This place. I was looking for this place
I could be in.

PAUL

Somebody tell you about this place?

At the sink, both Sethe and Denver pause, obviously interested.

BELOVED

She told me. When I was at the bridge,
she told me.

Paul looks quizzically at Sethe, who shrugs;

SETHE

Must be somebody from the old days.

PAUL

How'd you come? Who brought you?

BELOVED

I walked here. A long, long, long, long
way. Nobody bring me.

PAUL

You had new shoes. If you walked so long
why don't your shoes show it?

SETHE

Paul D. stop picking on her.

PAUL

I want to know! Where'd you get them
shoes and that dress you had on?

BELOVED

I take the shoes! (coughs) I take the
dress! (coughs) The shoe strings don't
fit! I...

Suddenly, she begins to CHOKe on a raisin from the pudding
and falls backward, off the chair.

Denver and Sethe rush towards her. Beloved thrashes around
until they help her turn over and spit up the raisin.

She breathes in Sethe's arms as Denver wipes up the mess,
glaring at Paul.

SETHE

You all right?

BELOVED

(whispers)

I want to go to sleep now.

DENVER

Come to my room. I can watch out for you
up there.

Sethe gets Beloved to her feet. Denver takes her up the
staircase to her room - glaring at Paul.

When the girls have gone, Sethe turns on Paul as she cleans
up.

SETHE

What's the matter with you?

PAUL

I don't understand what the hold is. It's
clear why she holds onto you, but I just
can't see why you holding on to her.

SETHE

What you care who's holding on to who?
Feeding her is no trouble. And she's nice
company for Denver.

PAUL

We was just starting to feel a little
like a family ourselves.

SETHE

Is that what's got your teeth on edge?

PAUL

I can't place it. It's a feeling in me.

SETHE

You wanna feel somethin!? ... Feel how it
is to have a bed to sleep in and somebody
there not worrying you to death about
what you got to do each day to deserve
it. And if that don't get it, feel how it
feels to be a colored woman roaming the
roads with anything God made liable to
jump on you. Feel that!

PAUL

I know every bit of that, Sethe. I wasn't
born yesterday and I never mistreated a
woman in my life!

SETHE

Well, that makes one of you in this

world.

PAUL
(surprised)
One? Not two.

SETHE
No. Not two!

PAUL
What Halle ever do to you? Halle stood by
you. He never left you.

SETHE
Ha, what'd he leave then if not me, huh?

PAUL
I don't know but it wasn't you. That's a
fact.

SETHE
Then he did worse - he left his children.

PAUL
You don't know that.

SETHE
HE WASN'T THERE! He wasn't where he said
he would be! I had to pack my babies off
ahead of me, on their own, so I could
stay behind to look for him...Underground
agent said by Sunday we had to leave..
Sunday came and he wasn't there.

PAUL
He couldn't get out of the loft, I expect.

Forgetting himself, Paul let that slip out.

SETHE
Loft? What loft?

PAUL
(hesitates)
The one over your head... The one in the
barn.

Sethe stops dead cold. It's no use...

The MEMORY TAKES OVER:

INT. BARN - THE PAST.

Violent, rapid images of Sethe being raped and beaten held

down by SCHOOLTEACHER'S BOYS. Sethe, pinned down, stares up at the loft...Camera rises up...

There, in the loft, hides HALLE...The expression on his face is that of a man broken in two...

END of MEMORY.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT.

Sethe wraps her arms tightly around herself and asks;

SETHE

He saw? He told you he saw?

PAUL

You told me. The day I came here. You said they stole your milk. I never knew what messed Halle up. That was it, I guess. I seen him the day after you left. Says where you been Halle? All he says to me was "the loft". I asked him what he meant not going with you but he never answers me. But I knew was something broke him. Not one of them years of Saturdays, Sundays and nighttime extra never touched him. But whatever he saw go on in the barn that day broke him like a twig.

SETHE

He saw them boys do that to me and let them keep on breathing?

PAUL

A man ain't a Goddamn ax, Sethe. Chopping, hacking, busting every Goddamn minute of the day. Things get to him. Things he can't chop down cause they inside him. The last time I saw him, I knew he was broken for good...

SETHE

What did he say?

PAUL

Nothing.

SETHE

What did you say? Didn't you say anything to him?

PAUL

I couldn't.

SETHE
 Couldn't?! Why the hell not?!

C.U. on PAUL who doesn't want to explain - or even remember -
 as we cut to:

MEMORY:

EXT. SWEET HOME - DAY.

PAUL HAS A BIT IN HIS MOUTH CHAINED TO A WAGON.

He is being lead away from Sweet Home with other black men,
 by Three white Men. The bit jerks his head back, saliva
 spills uncontrollably out of his mouth. His hands are chained
 behind him. His feet chained together at the
 ankles....Another chain is connected to an iron belt and
 stretches to a wagon. He is being lead away with forty five
 other prisoners...

PAUL (VO)
 I tried to kill Brandywine - man
 Schoolteacher sold me to. Don't know what
 possessed me...Me and about 45 other
 prisoners were being walked from Kentucky
 to Virginia...then on to Georgia. Two
 places I don't ever want to see again.

He is lead past the milk shed, when he sees:

HALLE, alone with a crazed faraway look in his eyes, sitting
 by the butter churn. HALLE'S FACE IS COVERED WITH BUTTER AND
 CLABBER. He sticks his hands in the churn and continues to
 cover his face with the sticky, slippery, white substance
 covering his face and head, squeezing it through his hands.

The White Men laugh. Paul is aching to scream out to him but
 the iron bit holds down his tongue.

As Paul is lead past Halle, A ROOSTER named MISTER is SITTING
 ON A TUB in the sun shrieks with an almost arrogant glee.

WHITE MAN
 Look at Mister there...
 (referring to the rooster)
 You go tell these niggers where to go
 there Mister! Crow'em right outta here!

Mister crows and the white men laugh.

Tears of rage and humiliation stream down Paul's face. He
 struggles to keep a view of Halle, until he is out of sight.

END OF MEMORY.

EXT. PORCH. - EARLY EVENING.

Paul approaches Sethe, touching her gently.

PAUL

I didn't mean to tell you that.

SETHE

I didn't plan on hearing it.

PAUL

I can't take it back but I can leave it alone.

Sethe, instead of collapsing from the information, she seems hardened.

PAUL

Let's do that..let's leave it alone now.

SETHE

(more to herself)

Let it alone. Just sit down and leave it be! Yeah that would be nice. Would be even nicer to lose it altogether - if I had my choice. Halle did. Other people's brains stopped, went crazy. How sweet that would have been. Me and Halle squatting by that churn, smashing cold lumpy butter in our faces, not a care in the world..

PAUL

Sethe, don't do this..

SETHE

What a relief to just stop it all right there, huh?!! Close it shut! Squeeze that butter...But I had three children on their way to Ohio and nothing would have changed that! And you tell me he didn't leave me!!

Sethe exits O.S. Paul is left alone on the porch until Beloved runs out of the house giggling with Denver in pursuit. As Denver passes, Paul sarcastically remarks;

PAUL

Guess she's feeling better, huh?

Denver gives him a quick, disdainful look, then continues after Beloved.

The two girls run towards the woods.

EXT. BOXWOOD BUSH ROOM - NIGHT.

Beloved is dancing beneath a bright moon. Denver is an attentive, grateful audience.

DENVER

Where'd you learn to dance?

BELOVED

Nowhere. Look at me do this!

She puts her fists on her hips and skips.

BELOVED

Now you! Come on! Come on!

She takes Denver's hand and places another on her shoulder. As they dance, Denver laughs harder and harder - a giddiness from the dizziness and the gratitude she feels for Beloved's attention.

They spin and fall to the ground, like two lovers nestled. Beloved catches her breath as Denver asks;

DENVER

Why you call yourself Beloved?

BELOVED

In the dark my name is Beloved.

DENVER

What's it like where you were before?

BELOVED

(a thoughtful expression)

Dark. I'm small in that place. I'm like this here.

DENVER

Were you cold?

BELOVED

Hot. Nothing to breathe there. No room to move.

DENVER

How did you get here?

BELOVED

I wait; then I got on the bridge. I stay there in the dark, in the daytime, in the

dark in the daytime. Long time.

DENVER

All this time you were on the bridge?

BELOVED

No. After. When I got out.

DENVER

Why'd you come here?

BELOVED

To see her face.

DENVER

Ma'am's? Sethe's?

BELOVED

Yes. Sethe.

And with that, Denver takes a breath of courage to ask the question she's been longing to ask:

DENVER

You my sister, ain't you? You really are.

Beloved looks at her and smiles. They are so close she leans in curiously and - touching Denver's face - kisses her on the lips.

DENVER

You won't leave us, will you?

BELOVED

No. Never. This is where I am.

DENVER

I knew it. I knew. First time I saw you
and you said your name. And when you
touched me - real gentle. And familiar.
Like I'd felt that touch before.

Smiling, Beloved moves to touch Denver's cheek when suddenly, Denver sits up cross legged and urges Beloved;

DENVER

Don't tell mama. You musn't tell her who
you really are. I don't know what she'd
do! Please, you hear?

Suddenly, Beloved's face turns to rage as she rises up as well;

BELOVED

Don't tell me what to do? Don't never
tell me what to do!?

DENVER

But...but I'm on your side. I want to
protect you...

BELOVED

(stands above Denver)

She's the one! She's the one I need! You
can go but she's the one I have to have!

Beloved abruptly drops to her knees and crawls out the
boxwood bush room as Denver's pleads;

DENVER

No. Beloved please! Don't go! I didn't do
nothing! We were dancing! Don't go!....

INT. DENVER'S & BELOVED'S ROOM - DAWN THE FOLLOWING DAY.

The room is still dark from the night but the sun is rising
outside.

Suddenly, Beloved awakens with a start. She senses something.
She rises and looks out the window to see;

POV;

SETHE WALKING ACROSS THE FIELD.

Beloved quickly grabs her clothes and exits to follow her, as
Denver awakens just in time to see her go.

EXT. WOODS EARLY MORNING.

Sethe is dressed as if for church as she makes her way through
the woods with a specific destination in mind.

Soon, she comes upon;

EXT. A CLEARING IN THE WOODS - EARLY MORNING.

Sethe steps out of the woods and into an open clearing. A
LARGE ROCK sits in the clearing like a pulpit above the pew's
of grass and weeds.

Sethe remembers the place as it was... She hears the VOICES
OF A CROWD...a gathering of people though the clearing
remains empty. She crosses to the rock and sits. Camera moves
up to reveal -

MEMORY:

BABY SUGGS, vital and strong, standing on the rock,
preaching:

BABY SUGGS

I'm not here to tell you all to clean up
your lives and sin no more....I'm not
here to tell you we're the blessed meek
and are glorybound!...I'm here to tell
you that the only grace we can have, is
the grace we can imagine...And if you
cannot see it, then you shall not have
it...

END OF MEMORY.

C.U. on SETHE as she remembers Baby Suggs words, sitting
alone in the clearing - the images of the past gone.

EXT. WOODS - SAME TIME.

Beloved has found her and watches from a hidden place...

Camera moves beyond her to find;

Denver, having followed Beloved, watches her from a distance.

EXT. A CLEARING IN THE WOODS - EARLY MORNING.

Sethe remembers Baby Suggs advice:

BABY SUGGS (V.O.)

..God lead you home... So now, lay'em
down, child. Sword and shield..Don't
study war no more. Lay all that mess
down. Sword and shield...

SETHE

Lay'em down...sword and shield.

Sethe weeps...She slides to the ground and holds her head to
weep. She covers her head from God and cries AS SHE LETS THE
MEMORIES COME..memories she can no longer fight from coming;

CUT TO:

SETHE'S MEMORIES;

EXT. SWEET HOME - A NIGHT REMEMBERED.

SETHE IS IN THE SAME BENT OVER POSITION only here, her back
is exposed and she is being beaten by the Schoolteacher's
boys. The BOY BEATING SETHE never stops with the whip for a
second as he rants;

BOY BEATING SETHE
NIGGER TRASH..OPENING YOUR MOUTH...

SECOND BOY
YOU GONNA KILL HER! YOU BETTER STOP!

BOY BEATING SETHE
I'LL KILL HER ALL RIGHT...NEVER OPEN HER
MOUTH 'BOUT ME AGIN....

They beat her mercilessly.

EXT. FIELD - NIGHT.

Sethe, tear stained, bloody and very pregnant fights her way through a corn field as she makes her escape..

Her dress hangs torn at the back - her wounds open and bleeding. Her feet already swollen and blistered. She is in agonizing pain. She moves like a figure in a nightmare.

CUT TO:

A SERIES OF IMAGES IN WHICH WE SEE SETHE STRUGGLING THROUGH DAYS AND NIGHTS OF WALKING AND HIDING, IN VARIOUS LOCATIONS AS SHE MAKES HER WAY ACROSS THE STATE.

THE FINAL IMAGE IS:

EXT. ONION FIELD - DAY.

Sethe falls to the ground unable to move - her contractions have started and the pain is unbearable.

Her breasts are leaking on her sweat stained body. Her legs are scratched and bleeding from moving through broken twigs and rock. On her back, the tree is starting to form.

She lays there waiting for death. Until a VOICE ASKS:

AMY (OS)
WHO THAT BACK THERE!

Sethe can not answer as she hears TWO FEET moving through the field. She clutches her pregnant stomach as if somehow she might hide it from whoever might be coming to harm her.

A RAGGEDLY LOOKING WHITE GIRL with arms like cane stalks and enough hair for five heads steps through into view.

AMY
Look there. A nigger. If that don't beat
all...

Sethe can not speak for fear.

AMY

Man, you 'bout the scariest looking
something I ever seen. What you doing
back up here?

Sethe manages to control her breath and push out the word;

SETHE

Running.

Amy looks at Sethe's swollen, bloody flesh at the end of her
legs.

AMY

Them the feet you running on? My Jesus
my...

SETHE

(semi-delerious)

Am I in Ohio?

AMY

Ohio! Fool girl - you in Kentucky. You
'bout a thousand miles from Ohio.

SETHE

(murmurs to herself)

I'm still in Kentucky.

AMY

You got anything on you, gal, pass for
food?

SETHE

No, ma'am.

AMY

I like to die I'm so hungry. Thought
there might be huckleberries. That's why
I come up here. You having a baby?

SETHE

I expect this baby ma'am is gonna die in
these wild onions.

Amy doesn't know what to do with that information. So..

AMY

Well, I got to eat something.

Any stands and looks as if she's about to leave when Sethe,
feeling the girl is safe, stops her with a question.

SETHE

Where you on your way to, miss?

AMY

(eager to tell)

Boston. Get me some velvet. It's a store called Wilson. I seen pictures and they have the prettiest velvet.

SETHE

Boston - is that far?

AMY

Farther than Ohio.

SETHE

Must be velvet closer by.

AMY

Not like in Boston. Be so pretty on me. You ever touch velvet? Or even seen it?

SETHE

If I did, I didn't know it. What's it like?

Sethe desperately wants her to stay - to not be alone. Amy kneels back down to her, curious now;

AMY

What they call you?

SETHE

(lies)

Lu.

AMY

What you gonna do, just lay there and foal?

SETHE

I can't get up.

AMY

What?

SETHE

I can't get up.

Amy wipes her nose and looks up beyond Sethe.

AMY

There's a house back yonder. Well, not a house with people in it - more like a

lean-to near the river.

SETHE

How far?

AMY

Make a difference, does it? You stay here, snake might get you.

SETHE

Well, he may come but I can't stand up, let alone walk...and God help me, I can't crawl.

AMY

Sure you can Lu..come on..

Amy helps Sethe turn over onto all fours.

EXT. ONION FIELD - DAY...MINUTES LATER.

Amy walks beside Sethe as the latter painfully crawls, taking moments to stop and let the pain go through her.

AMY

Come on Lu! You got to move faster than that. You won't get to Ohio til you ninety years old, you keep moving that ways.

INT. LEAN-TO - EARLY EVENING.

Amy makes a pile of leaves for Sethe to lay on and some rocks for her to put up her feet. She talks non-stop as she works.

AMY

Never know it to look at me but I used to be a good size. Nice arms, everything. That was before they put me in the root cellar...

She eases Sethe onto the leaves then lifts her feet onto the rocks.

AMY

...Mama worked for these people here to pay for her passage but then she had me and died right after so I had to work for'em.. I was fishing off the Beaver once and a nigger floated right by me. I don't like drowned people, do you? Your feet remind me of him. All swole like.

Amy props Sethe up from behind when she notices

AMY

You all bloody back here. Gal you a mess.
Undo your dress - let me see.

Sethe makes a tremendous effort just to turn to her side as
Amy undoes her dress;

AMY

Lord, I ain't never seen a poorer excuse
for a-

Amy sees Sethe's back and, for a moment, is speechless. Then:

AMY

Jesus...It's a tree Lu..A chokecherry
tree. I had me some whippings but I don't
remember nothing like this. Glad I ain't
you.. what God have in mind I wonder.
...You thank your Maker I come along.
Spiderwebs all I can do for you. What's
in here ain't enough. I'll look
outside...Maybe I ought to break them
blossoms open and let the pus run..

(rises)

(smiles)

That you ain't dead yet Lu's a miracle.
Make you a bet..You make it through the
night, you make it all the way...

INT. LEAN-TO - NIGHT.

To Sethe's amazement, Amy begins to massage her feet and legs
the pain of which causes Sethe to cry.

AMY

It's gonna hurt now..Anything dead coming
back to life hurts. Stop wiggling, girl.

(sings)

"WHEN THE BUSY DAY IS DONE AND MY WEARY
LITTLE ONE ROCKETH TO AND FRO; WHEN THE
NIGHT WINDS SOFTLY BLOW AND CRICKETS
CHIRP AGAIN; WHERE'PON THE HAUNTED GREEN
FAIRIES DANCE AROUND THEIR QUEEN THEN
FROM YONDER MISTY SKIES COMETH LADY
BUTTON EYES..."

(talks)

Don't up and die on me in the night, you
hear me Lu? I don't want to see your ugly
face hankering over me. If you do die,
just go on off somewhere where I can't
see you, hear?

SETHE

I'll do what I can, miss.

Amy continues singing.....

EXT. PATH LEADING TO RIVER - DAY.

Sethe is trying to walk, holding on to Amy at first, then a tree.

AMY

Cause of me, you up and walking. See,
Jesus - Lu made it through..I'm good at
sick things, ain't I?

SETHE

Yeah, you good...

AMY

What's that all over your dress?

SETHE

Milk..Got to get my milk to my baby girl.

AMY

You got another baby waiting for you?

SETHE

(stops and touches belly)
I think this one is dead.

Amy doesn't know what to say, so she says:

AMY

You hungry?

Sethe keeps trying to walk;

SETHE

I ain't nothing but in a hurry, miss. Got
to meet someone...help bring me and my
milk to my baby girl...

AMY

You want shoes?

SETHE

Say what?

AMY

I figured how...

CUT TO:

Amy cutting two pieces from Sethe shawl then filling them

with leaves and tying them over her feet -

CUT TO:

EXT. RIVERBANK - DAY.

Sethe and Amy walk towards the river when then see:

A SMALL, ABANDONED ROWBOAT with oars.

AMY

Jesus looking at you, girl!

Sethe can't believe her eyes. She walks right into the water when suddenly, her own water breaks and her labor begins... She doubles up in pain;

AMY

What you doing that for!? Ain't you got a brain in your head? Stop that right now! I said stop it, Lu. You the dumbest thing on this here earth, LU!..LU!

Sethe, on her knees, crawls into the boat and props her feet up. Water leaks in wherever it can, rising up as high as her waist. Amy takes her position to assist.

AMY

Oh Jesus, I'm awful sorry 'bout the braggin...I need you here now..Come on Jesus...don't be getting lost on me now.

Sethe screams in agony as the child pushes through. Amy curses;

AMY

Damn daddies never around 'cept for the fun part. Biggest joke God made on woman was giving men the planters 'stead of the soil...!! PUSH!

SETHE

(gasping)

PULL!!

Amy's strong hands pull Denver's head out and up, to meet Sethe's eyes. Sethe cannot believe this creature made it through..Amy rinses it with water then, wrapping it in her skirt, holds it up to Sethe..

AMY

My Lord...She's never gonna know who I am. You gonna tell her? Who brought her into this world. You better tell her, you hear! You say MISS AMY DENVER. Of Boston.

SETHE

That's pretty. Denver. Real pretty.

EXT. BANKS OF THE OHIO RIVER - DAY.

Sethe awakens, mud-caked, on the banks of the river. Her baby girl crying beside her. Amy is gone. She rises, painfully, picks up her child and continues on her way.

CUT TO:

MONTAGE - MORE DAYS AND NIGHTS OF SETHE, NOW WITHOUT AMY - A NEW BABY STRAPPED TO HER BODY - MAKING HER AWAY ALONG THE OHIO RIVER...THROUGH HOT SUNNY DAYS AND RAINY NIGHTS WITHOUT PROTECTION...SEARCHING FOR FOOD AND SHELTER...

FINAL IMAGE IS:

EXT. RIVER BANK - OAK TREE - NIGHT.

A thunderstorm cracks across the sky and floods the river.

Sethe is sitting beneath the oak - the rain soaking her as she breast feeds her baby. She cries out loud - but her sobs and tears are lost in the rain and thunder.

EXT. RIVERBANK - LATER THAT DAY.

Sethe walks downriver with Denver tied to her chest. She stops when she sees:

A FLATBED gliding down river. She can't make out if they're white people or not, so she hides behind a tree until it passes;

Waiting behind the tree, we see that Sethe is sweating a fever. But Denver seems to be doing fine.

She sees the flatbed pass her and continues on her way. She sees;

THREE COLORED PEOPLE - AN OLDER MAN and two boys - fishing.

She approaches cautiously.

One of the boys is the first to see her. Sethe's bloody and torn clothes and her feverish face make her quite a sight to the young boy. He taps the Old Man on the shoulder and motions for him to turn around.

The Old Man takes in Sethe and instantly knows where she's been and why she's there.

STAMP PAID
Headin cross?

SETHE
Yes sir.

STAMP PAID
Anybody know you coming?

SETHE
Yes sir. My mother-in-law over in...

Stamp Paid raises his hand to stop her. He looks around to see that no one else is in sight, then motions for her to sit on a rock. As she does, he gets a water jug and hands it to her - she drinks like a madman in the desert. The Boys watch in fascination. Stamp Paid turns to one of them and says:

STAMP PAID
Take off that coat?

BOY
Why?

STAMP PAID
You heard me?

The Boy slips out of his jacket, complaining.

BOY
What am I gonna wear?

STAMP PAID
You want it back...

He unties the baby from Sethe and wraps it in the coat.

STAMP PAID
..then you go head and take it off this baby. And if you can do that, then go 'way somewhere and don't come back.

EXT. RIVER - DAY.

On a flatbed, Stamp Paid crosses the river with Sethe, her baby and the two boys.

EXT. OPPOSITE RIVER BANK - DAY.

Stamp Paid helps Sethe walk up a very steep bank while the Boy without a jacket, carries the baby who wears it.

INT. BRUSH-COVERED HUTCH - DAY.

Stamp Paid leads Sethe and the others into the hutch.

STAMP PAID

Wait here. Somebody be here directly.
Don't move. They'll find you.

SETHE

Thank you. What's your name - so I can
remember you right.

STAMP PAID

Name's Stamp. Stamp Paid. Watch out for
that baby, you hear?

She nods as he and the boys exit.

LAP DISSOLVE:

LATER - SAME LOCATION:

Sethe is asleep with the baby when ELLA enters the hutch;

ELLLA

Saw the sign a while ago but I couldn't
get here no quicker.

SETHE

What sign?

ELLA

Stamp always leave the old sty open when
there's a crossing. Knots a white rag on
the post if it's a child too.

(kneels)

My name's Ella..Where you headed?

Ella empties a sack with a wool blanket, cotton cloth, two
baked sweet potatoes and a pair of men's shoes.

SETHE

My mother-in-law's. Name's Baby Suggs. She
got my other three children I sent ahead.

ELLA

When was this one born?

SETHE

Yesterday. I hope she makes it.

ELLA

Hard to say.

(gives her men's shoes)

Let's try to get these on your feet.

EXT. 124 BLUESTONE ROAD - NIGHT.

Baby Suggs rises off the bench on the porch when she sees Sethe coming up the walk. She runs to her and embraces Sethe and the baby, tears in her eyes.

BABY SUGGS

Oh my Lord...My sweet Lord thank you.

Baby Suggs welcomes Sethe into the house, kissing her hard on the lips....Sethe can't believe she's in her arms.

BABY SUGGS

Where's Halle?

Sethe looks at her with confusion and exhaustion.

SETHE

He wasn't there.

A flash of fear is quickly transformed into pragmatism.

BABY SUGGS

Well, he be along presently, I'm sure.

SETHE

Where are the children?

BABY SUGGS

Not now. You too ugly looking to wake 'em up in the night. First we get you well..

INT. KEEPING ROOM - NIGHT.

Baby Suggs bathes Sethe - first her face, her body...hands, arms, legs...

When she gets to her unrecognizable feet, she touches them.

BABY SUGGS

You feel this?

SETHE

Feel what?

BABY SUGGS

Nothing..

Baby Suggs notices roses of blood on Sethe's back...She looks and covers her mouth when she sees the remnants of the whipping.

BABY SUGGS

Girl...

INT. KEEPING ROOM - LATER THAT DAY.

Baby Suggs with two other grown women attend to Sethe's back - greasing it and pinning double thicknesses of cloth to the inside of a newly stitched dress...

INT. KEEPING ROOM - STILL LATER THAT DAY.

Sethe, sitting in bed with her new dress and her wounds dressed waits for her children.

Baby Suggs opens the door and the boys are ushered in. Sethe welcomes them to her arms...They run to her, jumping on the bed. The startle causes some pain but Sethe doesn't care.

The Little Girl (Beloved) is crawling and ushered toward her mama.

BABY SUGGS

Already crawling - ain't that somethin?
..Come on, baby girl..right this
way..Mama's waiting..

Sethe picks her up and the tears flow. She can't stop kissing them - their necks, their heads, their hands...The Boys inspect her strange looking feet and ask;

HOWARD

Pappie come?

SETHE

Soon.

Baby Suggs seems doubtful but appreciates the lie for the children.

BABY SUGGS

All right boys - mama's home now, you be
seeing her all the time..Go downstairs
and get your supper...Go on...

Sethe hugs and kisses them as if for the last time - as if she still doesn't believe she can just get out of bed, walk downstairs and be with them. The Boys leave as Sethe cradles the Little Girl.

Sethe anxiously undoes her dress and carefully guides her breast to the Little Girl. She winces with pain and smiles - she got her milk to her baby girl.

Baby Suggs gathers the rags Sethe wore when she first arrived.

BABY SUGGS

Nothing worth saving here.

SETHE

Oh wait..Look and see if there's
something knotted up in the petticoat.
Wedding present. From Mrs. Garner.

Baby Suggs finds TWO CRYSTAL EARRINGS.

BABY SUGGS

Be nice if there was a groom to go with
it. What do you think happened to him?

SETHE

I don't know. He wasn't where he said to
meet him at. I had to get out. I had to.
He'll make it. if I made it, Halle sure
can.

BABY SUGGS

(skeptical)

Well put these on - maybe they'll light
his way.

As Sethe takes the earrings, the Little Baby Girl reaches for
them.

Through her eyes, we see them sparkle and shine - like
diamonds.

Baby Suggs hands gently massage Sethe's neck as she says;

BABY SUGGS

Whatever happens now...God lead you home.
So now lay'em down Sethe...Sword and
shield..Don't study war no more. Lay all
that mess down. Sword and shield...

Sethe surrenders herself to Baby Suggs firm, safe hands -
letting go of the "diamonds", one of which lands in the hands
of the Little Girl...who plays with them in fascination...

END OF MEMORY.

CUT BACK TO:

PRESENT DAY;

EXT. A CLEARING IN THE WOODS - DAY

Sethe is remembering these last images, she eases her own
hand up to her neck - rubbing herself the way Baby Suggs did.
She realizes how much she misses her...and wonder who can
touch her now and help her "lay it all down". And then, quite

suddenly;

AN IMAGE FLASHES ACROSS HER MIND;

- PAUL GENTLY EASING HIS HANDS AROUND SETHE FROM
BEHIND...TENDERLY KISSING SETHE'S BACK

Paul...There is Paul. Sethe realizes, as IMAGES FLASH ACROSS
HER MIND'S EYE:

- PAUL SITTING ON THE PORCH THE FIRST DAY HE ARRIVED.
- PAUL BATTLING THE BABY GHOST.
- PAUL SINGING AS HE FIXES THE KITCHEN TABLE.
- SETHE WRAPPED IN PAUL'S BIG ARMS AS THEY LAY IN BED.

Sethe rises from the ground, as if with a new realization.
She begins to walk out of the clearing and into the woods,
her pace increasing with each image....

EXT. WOODS - DAY.

Sethe walks through the woods, passing Beloved unawares - who
has fallen asleep by a tree. Beloved is awakened as Sethe
walks by, and gets to her feet to follow.

Further on, Sethe passes a sleeping Denver, who also awakens
upon hearing the footsteps of her mother, followed by
Beloved. Sethe walks on, unaware of them following her.

EXT. FIELD OF 124 BLUESTONE - DAY.

Wide angle of Sethe walking well ahead of Beloved and Denver.

Sethe is walking with great purpose and energy.

INT. 124 BLUESTONE ROAD - DAY.

Sethe enters and runs through the house to the kitchen;

SETHE
Paul? Paul, you home?...

Paul sits in a tub under the white staircase. He smiles.

Sethe is relieved...grateful to find him there, for her.

PAUL
Where else would I be on a Sunday off?

Sethe smiles, almost in tears.

PAUL
Why don't you come on in here?

SETHE
Paul D. What if the girls came in?

PAUL
I don't hear nobody.

SETHE
I have to cook.

Paul D. stands up in the tub and holds Sethe against his wet, naked body.

PAUL
What you gonna cook?

SETHE
(loving his body and his
attention)
I thought I'd make some snap beans.

PAUL
Oh yeah.

SETHE
Fry up a little corn?

PAUL
Yeah.

He kisses her - and that's exactly what she wanted.

SETHE
Oh Paul...

PAUL
I'm right here baby.

SETHE
Thank you Lord.

Camera slowly moves out of the kitchen as Sethe and Paul begin to make love, revealing;

Beloved watching from the doorway, unknown to Sethe or Paul. She is disgusted, envious...and runs out..

EXT. 124 BLUESTONE ROAD - DAY.

Beloved runs out of the house and heads back for the woods. She passes Denver as if she weren't there.

EXT. STREAM IN THE WOODS - DAY.

Beloved reaches the stream and steps in. She begins to violently hit the water around her, then begins hitting her own face and head, clawing at it as if to escape from the boundaries of flesh. Suddenly she submerges herself underwater and holds herself there, as if to drown herself...

She bursts out of the water, gasping for air...Slowly, her rage subsides, replaced with a calm, ruthless understanding

EXT. THE FIELD OF 124 BLUESTONE RD.- DAY.

Beloved is walking back toward the house. She stops.

She looks back at the house to the kitchen window - knowing Paul and Sethe are in there. She approaches the kitchen window and looks in.

POV - Sethe is drying off Paul's body and rebuttoning her dress.

Camera moves slowly into a C.U. of Beloved, this time her focus is on Paul.

INT. 124 BLUESTONE ROAD - EVENING.

The inhabitants eat dinner in silence.

Denver awaits a look from Beloved. As Beloved passes her a bowl of peas with a smile, Denver is satisfied.

Beloved then turns to Paul, offering him the bowl.

BELOVED

You have brothers or sisters?

Caught off guard, Paul looks to Sethe - whose expression asks him to be nice.

PAUL

We don't talk about that.

Beat.

BELOVED

Sethe told us you been walking for eighteen years. Where you been all that time?

Paul is about to get mad when he looks to Sethe again, reels it back in and answers curtly, but politely;

PAUL

Lots of places. I don't remember them
all. Don't remember much about anything.

BELOVED

You be surprised what you start
remembering once you start talking.

Hearing his own words echoed back to him, annoys him.

PAUL

Well not me. What's gone is gone. No good
come from bringing it back.

Pause. Paul focuses on his dinner, suddenly ill at ease. He
can't help looking, covertly, at Beloved and finds Beloved
staring right back at him...It makes him shiver.

INT. SETHE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT.

Sethe is asleep.

Paul is restless - tossing and turning as we Intercut;

Dream Images flashing across his mind...

- RAIN POURING DOWN A TRENCH. A MUDDY POOL FORMING AROUND A
BLACK MAN'S FEET.

- IRON CHAINS FED INTO METAL ANKLE CUFFS.

- PAUL D. ON HIS KNEES BEFORE A WHITE GUARD crotch.

WHITE GUARD (OS)

YOU HUNGRY NIGGER?

Paul awakens.

INT. KITCHEN - DAWN.

Sethe enters to find Paul asleep in the rocker by the stove.
She stirs him.

SETHE

Paul?...Paul?

PAUL

(waking up)

Mmmm. What?...

SETHE

I called you two or three times but I
gave up round midnight. I thought maybe
you went out somewhere.

PAUL
Damn. I'm sorry honey...

SETHE
I'll make some breakfast - you get
yourself washed up.

Sethe begins to make breakfast as Beloved enters the kitchen and sees Paul has slept in the rocker. She looks at him with a smile, as if she knows more than she's letting on. Paul registers the look.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT.

Paul is asleep in the rocker...He is restless...HE DREAMS:

EXT. A ROAD IN VIRGINIA - DAY.

Paul is chained by the ankles to forty-five other men. He hands are shackled. In his mouth, an iron bit...

The men are being led by WHITE GUARDS with rifles.

Camera follows them under a burning sun as they approach;

A TRENCH. One thousand feet long. Five feet deep. Five feet wide.

Camera tilts down to reveal, within the trench;

WOODEN BOXES, with scrap limber roofs and a door of bars fitted on them like a cage that opens up to a wall of red dirt stretching two feet above the top of the bars themselves.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT.

Paul awakens...his face and body drenched in sweat.

EXT. FIELD BETWEEN 124 AND THE STOREROOM - NIGHT.

Paul D. walks across the field with a thin blanket over his nightclothes - walking toward the storeroom.

In the window of her bedroom, Sethe watches him - sensing he is moving further and further away from her.

In the window of Denver's room, Beloved watches Paul as well - with a pleased expression.

CUT TO:

PAUL'S MEMORIES;

EXT. A FIELD IN GEORGIA - DAY.

A RIFLE SHOT. A WHITE GUARD SHOUTS;

WHITE GUARD
Hiiiiiii!

EXT. TRENCH - DAY.

Three white Men walk along the trench unlocking the cage doors one by one...

One by one, the Black men emerge and stand in a line in the trench.

When all are assembled, A SECOND RIFLE SHOT signals them to climb out of the trench to the ground above.

Waiting for them above the trench, is one thousand feet of chain. Each Black Man bends over and waits as the First Man on line threads the chain through his leg iron, passing it to the second and so on...

As they connect each other to the chain, Camera Pans down the line of men and while not a word is spoken, WE HEAR THEIR THOUGHTS...thoughts to themselves, or, if possible, through their eyes to the man beside them:

BLACK MAN ONE
(VO)
I'm a make it..

BLACK MAN TWO
(VO)
New man. New man...

BLACK MAN THREE
(VO)
Steady now, steady.

BLACK MAN FOUR
(VO)
Help me... this mornin's bad.

DISSOLVE TO:

THE BLACK MEN ARE CHAINED AND KNEELING IN A STRAIGHT LINE.

The White Guards walk passed them. one White Guard stops in front of the man beside Paul D. He turns to him.

WHITE GUARD
Breakfast? Want some breakfast nigger?

BLACK MAN ONE

Yes sir.

WHITE GUARD
Hungry nigger?

BLACK MAN ONE
Yes sir.

WHITE GUARD
Here you go.

The White Guard unzips his fly and undoes his pants and moves a step closer to the Black Man's mouth.

Paul D. looks ahead, trembling...He vomits...The Guard steps away as another Guard steps in and hits Paul on the shoulder with a rifle..

EXT. FIELD - DAY.

The Black Men work...sledge hammers in hand...

As they work, miraculously, THEY SING.."They sing about the women they knew, the children they had been...they sing of bosses and masters and misses...of mules and dogs and the shamelessness of life...They sing of sisters long gone. They sing love songs to Death."

INT. TRENCH - NIGHT.

A torrential downpour. The men in the wooden cages watch the rain filling the trench, corroding the red dirt wall around them.

Bugs and human debris swirl around their legs and feet. Mud covering them through the cracks of the scrap lumber roof.

Some finds rest. other's minds are long gone.

Camera finds Paul...HE IS SCREAMING. But there is no sound coming from his mouth. Tears flow down his face, but when he touches them, he realizes;

They are tears of mud. He looks up and the wooden planked roof is breaking under the power of the rain..He looks down and the water is up to his thighs.

Suddenly, the chain linking his feet is pulled and he is knocked down..He gets up, searches through the mud for the chain and notices it's slack..He pulls as well....

One by one the men in the boxes realize the chain's end is being undone by the rain, as camera tracks down towards the last box to the dirt wall, into which the chain has been

locked...It is giving way within the muddy wall.

THE MEN BREAK THROUGH THE ROTTED WOOD ROOFS TO FREEDOM...

WIDE ANGLE;

AS THE MEN CLIMB OUT OF THE MUDDY COFFINS, GRASPING FOR A HOLD, CRAWLING WITH EVERY MUSCLE OF THEIR BODIES - TO GET OUT OF THE TRENCH before mud and water drown them....

Paul climbs with the will of ten men, with every ounce of strength he has left...

END of MEMORY.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. COLD ROOM - A WINTER NIGHT.

Paul D. is wide awake. The memories won't let him sleep.

Winter has arrived and the night is cold. He lies underneath a thin blanket in yet another sleeping place, even further from the house. He adds newspapers under and around his body to stay warm.

He looks as if he has given up on sleeping altogether. He hears the door to the cold room open. But he does not turn to look.

PAUL

What do you want in here?

Beloved enters the cold room.

BELOVED

I want you to touch me on the inside part
and call me my name.

She hoists up her skirt and turns her head away.. Paul stares at a silver lard can so as not to look.

PAUL

When good people take you in and treat
you good, you ought to try to be good
back. You don't....Sethe loves you. Much
as her own daughter. You know that.

BELOVED

(drops her skirt)

She don't love me like I love her. I
don't love nobody but her.

PAUL

Then what you come in here for?

BELOVED

I want you to touch me on the inside part.

PAUL

Ever since you come here - feel like I got a new devil to face.

BELOVED

You have to touch me. On the inside part. And you have to call me my name.

PAUL

Ain't no chains on me no more. I don't have to do nothing...Now, go back in that house and go to bed.

Paul continues to stare at the lard can - like Lot's wife, he's fearful what turning to look will do.

BELOVED

Call me my name.

Beloved moves closer, right up behind him, entwining her arms around his body, like chains..

PAUL

No. Ain't no chains on me...

BELOVED

Call me.

PAUL

...Ain't no chains on me...

BELOVED

I'll go if you say it.

Tears well up in his eyes. Paul can feel her warmth. He surrenders.

PAUL

Beloved.

Beloved presses her body against his. He turns and grabs her, kissing her with a passion bordering on hatred.

EXT. COLD HOUSE - NIGHT.

Denver sits outside the cold house - and listens to the sounds of lovemaking. And cries.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT.

Sethe, Denver, Paul and Beloved eat dinner...in silence.

INT. COLD HOUSE - ANOTHER NIGHT.

Beloved is wrapping her body with a blanket as Paul lies on his bed of newspapers - their lovemaking finished. Beloved gives him a final look - no tenderness or affection or even friendliness. Just a cold look, void of respect or even attraction.

She exits the cold house, leaving Paul alone. He is on the verge of tears.

INT. SETHE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT.

Paul stands above the sleeping Sethe - his guilt driving him mad. He wants to touch her, to wake her, to ask for forgiveness and help. But he can not and buries his head in his hands.

EXT. SAWYER RESTAURANT - LATE AFTERNOON.

Paul waits outside in the cold, cupping his hands and breathing inside to keep them warm. He is rehearsing:

PAUL

Look here Sethe..You ain't gonna like
what I got to say but I got to say
it...See, it's not the..a man
can't...what I mean is, it ain't really
me..see, it ain't weakness, the kind of
weakness I can fight, that girl is doing
it. I know you think I never liked her
nohow, still don't, but she is doing it
to me anyway. Fixing me, Sethe, she's
fixed me and I can't break it...

Sethe appears, exiting the back door of the restaurant with a scrap pan in the crook of her arm. To her surprise. she finds Paul waiting for her.

SETHE

Man, you make me feel like a young girl,
you coming by to pick me up after work.
Nobody ever did that before. Better watch
out, I might start looking forward to it.

She tosses the bones and skins from the scrap pan into a heap before four dogs who wait there as if by appointment.

SETHE

Got to rinse this out.

She enters the restaurant. Paul watches the dogs eat - watching them getting what they wanted. Sethe re-appears with a cloth over her head.

SETHE

You get off early or what?

PAUL

I took off early.

SETHE

Anything the matter?

PAUL

In a way of speaking.

SETHE

Not cut back?

PAUL

No, no. They got plenty of work with them pigs..More they can handle. I just..

(Sethe waits)

You ain't gonna like what I'm about to say, Sethe.

Sethe steps forward to hear what Paul came to tell her. There is no apprehension or anger in her look. Instead, a calm resolve - as if she were already able to accept whatever he had to tell her without it being anyone's fault. As if she already knew he came to say he was leaving her. She smiles.

SETHE

Well say it, Paul D...whether I like it or not.

Paul knows what she's expecting. And when he sees her diminished expectation, the melancholy without blame in her eyes....he can't tell her about Beloved. He is filled with respect and admiration for her in that moment. Something pops into his head and out of his mouth that wasn't planned;

PAUL

I want you pregnant, Sethe. Would you do that for me?

Sethe breaks up with laughter. Paul joins in.

SETHE

You came by here to ask me that!? You are one crazy-headed man. You right; I don't like it!...Don't you think I'm a little too old to start that all over again?

She slips her fingers into his.

PAUL
Think about it.

Paul lifts them, putting the tips of her fingers on his cheek. He smiles broadly;

She laughs, shaking her head. A burden transformed into a gift, so suddenly. They begin walking.

Sethe and Paul catch and snatch each other's fingers, stealing quick pats on the behind, joyfully. Paul throws his arm around Sethe and squeezes. She lets her head touch his chest. They stop and stay that way for a moment - not breathing. Sethe closes her eyes. Paul looks up to the trees lining the roadside like defending arms against attack. Softly, suddenly, it begins to snow. Sethe opens her eyes:

SETHE
Mercy.

EXT. BLUESTONE ROAD - EARLY EVENING.

On the road towards 124, Paul and Sethe run hand in hand. Snow falling all around them.

SETHE
I been on my feet all day, Paul D.

PAUL
Where I been? Sitting down!?

SETHE
Stop! I don't have the legs for this!

They slow to a walk.

PAUL
Then give'em to me.

Before she can stop him, Paul hoists Sethe up over his shoulders.

SETHE
You need some babies..somebody to play with in the snow.

PAUL
I sure would like to give it a try. Need a willing partner though.

SETHE

I'll say..Very, very willing.

They continue laughing and moving down Bluestone Road when they are jolted by the appearance of;

Beloved. Waiting in her usual place for Sethe. Her hands wrapped in a long shawl, waiting to be given to Sethe. Her eyes only on Sethe, not even acknowledging Paul's presence.

Sethe gets herself down from Paul.

SETHE

Crazy girl. You out here with nothing on.

She takes the shawl from Beloved's hands and wraps it around her shoulders.

SETHE

You got to learn more sense than that.

She walks on ahead with Beloved. Paul, suddenly icy cold and filled with anger, walks behind.

EXT. 124 BLUESTONE ROAD - NIGHT.

Denver waits on the porch. Sethe and Beloved walk by her.

SETHE

Evening, girl.

Sethe and Beloved enter the house. As Paul approaches, he stops before Denver. Their eyes meet. Paul stares at her, as if to ask - "Who's ally are you?"...Denver, unnerved by his look, runs into the house. Paul waits on the porch until, a moment later, Sethe re-appears.

SETHE

Now I know you not sleeping out there tonight, are you Paul D.?

(Paul doesn't reply)

You come upstairs tonight. Where you belong...and stay there.

As if healed by her strength, Paul's face melts into relief.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT.

Denver is cleaning the dishes. Beloved sits like an angry, upset five year old with her fingers in her mouth.

BELOVED

She likes him here...

(to Denver)

Make him go away.

DENVER

She'd be mad if he leaves.

Beloved didn't consider that. Her fingers move violently in her mouth as if something were bothering her...until, finally, she pulls out a back tooth...her lips slightly bloody.

DENVER

OOoo..didn't that hurt you?

BELOVED

It's like my dreams...I get two dreams, see..One, I exploding...BUUOOGGG...The other I being swallowed. Sometimes it's hard to keep my head on my neck, or these legs connected to my hips...One day I think I might wake up and I'll be in pieces..

(Looks at tooth)

Maybe it's starting.

DENVER

(cleans Beloved's mouth)

Oh stop. It's just a tooth. Probably wisdom. Does it hurt?

BELOVED

Yes.

DENVER

Then why don't you cry?

BELOVED

What?

DENVER

If it hurts, why don't you cry?

Beloved, eases herself into Denver's arms, and cries...

EXT. WINDOW OF 124 - NIGHT.

We see Sethe and Paul united as the snow begins to pile up.

INT. SETHE'S BEDROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT.

Sethe lies with Paul, in the dark, her face looking up to the ceiling. Paul is asleep.

On her face are reservations. She rises, crossing to the window to look out.

At the same time, Beloved appears silently at the doorway of the room, looking at Sethe - hurt and sad. She walks by without Sethe noticing her.

Sethe takes a breath at the window, watching the snow fall. Then, as she moves back to the bed,...

Camera moves ahead of her to:

A DIFFERENT BED IN WHICH HALLE IS TRYING TO FALL ASLEEP. A YOUNGER SETHE CRAWLS IN BESIDE HIM.

WE ARE IN MEMORY;

INT. HALLE & SETHE'S SWEET HOME LIVING QUARTERS - NIGHT.

Sethe, Halle and the baby girl (Beloved) sleep together by the wall. The boys sleep together under a window. Halle is trying to sleep but Sethe is awake...

SETHE

What you think about Schoolteacher?

HALLE

He white, ain't he?

SETHE

I mean, is he different like Mr. Garner was?

HALLE

How was he different?

SETHE

Well, he and Mrs. Garner - they ain't like other whites I seen before. Mr. Garner always spoke soft, for one. Mrs. Garner too.

HALLE

Don't matter. Loud or soft, what they say is the same.

SETHE

Mr. Garner let you buy out your mother. Found that house for her to live in from those friends of his in Ohio...

HALLE

Yep. He did.

SETHE

Well?

HALLE

If he hadn't, she would have dropped in his cooking stove.

SETHE

Still, he did it. Let you work off her fee, lending yourself out on Sundays. He could of said no. He didn't tell you no.

HALLE

No, he didn't tell me no. She worked here ten years. If she worked another ten, ya think she would have made it? I pay him for her last years and in return he got you, me and three more coming..

SETHE

He always treated you fair. Called you all men - said he never wanted niggers on his farm.

HALLE

That's just it. We was men because he said so. We was men because we was on his land. You think he be calling us men if we ever walked off his land?

SETHE

When we walk, don't matter what they call you. You'll be free.

HALLE

Sethe..baby girl, that ain't gonna happen. Not by walking, anyway.

SETHE

What you mean?

HALLE

Schoolteacher in there told me to quit lending myself out.

That phrase "...while the boys is small"..causes Sethe to look at her sleeping boys..

SETHE

But..then..how you gonna buy yourself out? Or them?

(points to the children)

Or me?

Halle raises himself up to face her, to give her the final blow.

HALLE

Ain't gonna be no buying us out, like I
did with mama. Or them. As far as
Schoolteacher concerned, ain't no other
life ahead for any of us but this one.

Sethe understands, looks to her sleeping children and is
frightened.

SETHE

Halle....what we going to do?

HALLE

(whispers)

Sixo, ya know he creeps out at night..he
says the way they took my ma'am..he says
freedom is that way. He and Paul A. got a
plan. They heard of this man, what they
call an underground agent...if we do what
he says, don't need no buy out.

SETHE

You mean...? But what if we caught?
What'd they do to us? To the children?

HALLE

Same thing they're doing now, honey -
only quicker.

EXT. SWEET HOME - A DAY REMEMBERED.

Sethe carries a big basket of berries as young Howard and
Bulgar run ahead of her. She turns in the opposite direction
and walks along the side of the house to the back entrance of
the kitchen.

She passes the open window of the classroom and hears;

SCHOOLTEACHER

(OS)

Which one are you doing?

BOY (OS)

Sethe?

Hearing her name, Sethe stops and peeks through the window.

Schoolteacher is standing over the student, who has been
writing in a notebook. Schoolteacher licks his finger and
thumbs a couple of pages before saying;

SCHOOLTEACHER

No, no. That's not the way. I told you to
put her human characteristics on the

left; her animal ones on the right. And don't forget to line them up.

Although Sethe doesn't entirely understand, something about the words disturb her. She looks to her children.

INT. MRS. GARNER'S BEDROOM - A DAY REMEMBERED.

Mrs. Garner is sick in bed with a goiter. Sethe enters with some soup.

MRS. GARNER

I don't think I can swallow that.
Too thick. I'm sure it's too thick.

SETHE

Want me to loosen it up with a little water?

MRS. GARNER

No. Take it away. Bring me some cool water, that's all.

SETHE

Yes ma'am...

Sethe helps her drink a glass of cold water.

MRS. GARNER

Yes, you can have quite a few.
(drinks)

Mmmm. Thank you Sethe. Now tell me, I know Halle's no trouble but the others, the Pauls and Sixo - how's my brother-in-law handling them? All right?

SETHE

Yes Ma'am. Look like it.

MRS. GARNER

They do what he tells them?

SETHE

They don't need telling.

MRS. GARNER

Good. That's a mercy. I know he's no Mr. Garner. But after he died, I had no else to turn to. I would've had to sell one. It wasn't even enough selling Paul F. And in my condition. I needed help. People said I shouldn't be alone here with nothing but Negroes. And he is a learned man being a schoolteacher...

As Sethe fills Mrs. Garner's basin with fresh water, she looks out the window and sees:

SCHOOLTEACHER outside with his students, we notice HE WEARS A VERY DISTINCTIVE HAT as Mrs. Garners description continues;

MRS. GARNER

...I know his ways might be a little more strict but as long as the men do as they're told I'm sure it'll be fine. All right, I'm through.. Talking makes me tired.

SETHE

Yes ma'am.

INT. BARN - A NIGHT REMEMBERED.

Sethe lies beaten and raped, her clothes torn, her body aching and sweaty. She struggles to get to her feet and exit the barn.

INT. HALL AND SETHE'S LIVING QUARTERS - NIGHT.

Sethe opens the door to find her children asleep. She is about to wake them when;

She notices Mrs. Garner's light is on in her bedroom window.

Sethe, blind with rage, decides there's one thing she must do before she takes her children to the meeting place.

INT. MRS. GARNER'S BEDROOM - NIGHT.

Mrs. Garner lies ailing through a sleepless night when her bedroom door opens. Sethe enters - her appearance tells all.

MRS. GARNER

My God Sethe..what happened to you?

EXT. SWEET HOME - NIGHT.

Sethe carried her baby girl in one arm, her two boys by the hand with the other...They move as fast as they can.

EXT. CORN FIELD - NIGHT.

They arrive at the meeting place where A WOMAN crouching in the field is waiting.

WOMAN

Hurry up. You're late.

SETHE
 (hands her the children)
 Here!

HOWARD
 But ma'am...

SETHE
 Just go with her! Do what I tell ya!

Sethe carefully hands her baby girl to the woman.

SETHE
 Put sugar water on that cloth for her to
 suck so she won't forget me til I come.

WOMAN
 Where you going?

SETHE
 Halle wasn't there. I gotta go back.

WOMAN
 You crazy..

SETHE
 Take em out. Now! I'll get there myself.
 I got her milk...I'll get there...Don't
 worry.

She kisses her baby girl, a little too hard perhaps, waking
 her...along with the boys...

SETHE
 Go..Go! Now!

Sethe disappears back into the corn field leaving the Woman
 holding the baby girl... as Bulgar cries out.

BULGAR
 Mama?

EXT. CORN FIELD CLOSER TO SWEET HOME HOUSE - NIGHT.

Sethe exits the corn field and heads for her living quarters
 when suddenly;

THE FOUR BOYS appears from out of nowhere..two restraining
 her, one holding a horsewhip....

BOY WITH HORSEWHIP
 You nigger bastard..

Sethe struggles and is about to scream out when she is

slapped and muffled and dragged into the corn field to be beaten.....

END OF MEMORY;

INT. SETHE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT.

Sethe awakens, sweating from having fallen asleep and reliving her past nightmare. She sits up and realizes where she is. She looks beside her and sees Paul asleep. She lays down, pressing her body against his so that there is no space between - enfolding her arms around him.

EXT. PIG SLAUGHTERHOUSE - DAY.

Pigs are crying in the chute as Paul, Stamp Paid and twenty other workers push and prod them towards the slaughterhouse.

Although steeped in pig shit on a wintry day - his hands numb from the cold - Paul D. is in high spirits. HE SINGS as he works much to the amusement of his fellow co-workers.

CO-WORKER 1

Hey - you like this work so much maybe
you best get in the chute with the
others. You ain't got much more sense
than they do.

The men laugh. Paul smiles and brushes it off.

PAUL

Ain't just a job reason to sing. Other
things a man's got to look forward to
that a job just a way to spend your day
til the good times arrive.

CO-WORKER 2

Good times? Ain't no such day.

STAMP PAID

Now, now...it's all a state a mind, right
Paul D. If you can think it, it can
happen.

PAUL

More than that. When a man can make plans
then a man can make good times happen.

CO-WORKER 1

Oh the man's got plans! You saving up for
a gold mine, boy.

(more laughter)

PAUL

Better then gold, my friend. Me and my woman's planning on starting a family.

Stamp Paid's face registers sudden concern.

PAUL

New life. Born free, hear! Now if that don't define a good time, I don't know what does.

CO-WORKER 2

Nothing born free ever again.

PAUL

What you talkin? Nobody owns us no more. Nobody gonna own my children neither.

CO-WORKER 2

Children inherit what come before'em. Just cause you can't see no chains, don't mean they not there. We're not free men. We're somewhere between freedom and chains. And as long as the world is white, that's where we're stayin.

The truth of this causes the men to be silent as they continue working. Stamp Paid looks at Paul, confused by what he should do.

EXT. PIG SLAUGHTERHOUSE - LATER THAT DAY.

The men are on break. Paul sits alone enjoying a lunch packed by Sethe...Stamp Paid approaches and sits beside him.

STAMP PAID

May I?

PAUL

Free country. No matter what anybody says.

STAMP PAID

I like the way you think, boy. Good. Good to think that way. Friend of mine, Baby Suggs was her name...sort of became a preacher in these parts..that was her way of thinking too. When she was at her best, that is.

PAUL

You knew Baby Suggs?

STAMP PAID

Oh yes...You're not one of her Sweet Home men, now are you?

PAUL

Yes sir...Me and my brothers and her son.

STAMP PAID

Oh, I see now.

PAUL

Sethe told me she died soft as cream.

STAMP PAID

Well...maybe on the outside.

PAUL

Why is that?

Stamp Paid looks at him with sympathetic, sudden understanding.

STAMP PAID

You don't know, son, do you? See I had to figure that out first.

PAUL

Know what?

Stamp Paid pulls out AN OLD NEWSPAPER CLIPPING from a bag he carries with him all the time. He hands it to Paul who looks to see:

A DRAWING OF A YOUNG BLACK WOMAN beneath a HEADLINE; MURDER!
RUNAWAY SLAVE KILLS CHILD....

PAUL

Who is it?

STAMP PAID

That there's a picture of Sethe.

PAUL

Sethe?

(studies it)

Nah, that ain't her mouth. I can see where you might think it around the eyes but that there ain't her mouth. Besides, why would some black woman's picture be in the paper?

STAMP PAID

You don't read son, do you?

(Paul shakes head NO)

You want me to read to you?

Paul senses something terribly wrong...and doesn't know

whether to say yes or no.

EXT. 124 BLUESTONE RD. - EARLY EVENING.

Sethe is sweeping the porch.

Paul appears on the road. When he sees Sethe on the porch in the distance, he stops.

Sethe sees him and smiles - but something about his slow approach to the house sends off an alarm within her.

Paul makes his way to the porch. He stops before her.

SETHE

Already fed the girls. You eat?

(he shakes NO)

Want something?

Paul doesn't answer. Instead, he steps up to her as he removes the clipping from his pocket and hands it to her.

Sethe's heart stops beating for a moment - not having seen this image for many years. But she's survived worse than the telling so she faces him.

SETHE

Best you come inside.

She rises and enters the house. Paul follows.

INT. KITCHEN - EARLY EVENING.

Paul sits at the table. Sethe begins her story seated before him.

SETHE

I don't have to tell you about Sweet Home. What it was. But maybe you don't know what it was like for me to get away from there.

She looks for a response but expects none.

SETHE

I did it. I got us all out. Without Halle too. Up til then it was the only thing I ever did on my own. Decided. And it came off right like it was supposed to..

She rises and begins to move about the room, circling Paul as she tries to find a way to explain it all;

SETHE

We was here. Each and every one of my babies and me too. I birthed them and I got 'em out and it wasn't no accident. I did that! I had help, of course, lots of that, but still it was me doing it; me saying, "Go on" and "Now!". Me having to look out. Me using my own head. But it was more than that. It was a kind of ...'thinking-about-myself' I never knew nothing about before. It felt good. Good and right. I was big, Paul, and deep and wide and when I stretched out my arms all my children could get in between. I was that wide. Look like I loved them more after I got them here. Or maybe I couldn't love 'em proper in Sweet Home 'cause they wasn't mine to love. But when I got here, when I jumped off that wagon - there wasn't nobody in the world I couldn't love if I wanted to....

DISSOLVE TO:

MEMORY... as SETHE NARRATES:

SETHE (VO)
I had 28 days...28 good days of free
life.....

INT. SETHE'S ROOM AT 124 - A DAWN REMEMBERED.

Sethe, out of habit, is awake before the sun has risen. She is fully dressed.

SETHE (VO)
...of getting up like I always did,
getting dressed before the sun came out,
and then realizing I had to decide myself
what to do with the day...

She sits on the bed, watching the sun rise.

INT. THE CHILDREN'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS.

Sethe watches her children sleeping, safely.

SETHE (VO)
...Days of watching my children sleep
away the morning...And taking care of my
baby like it was the most important thing
I had to do...

Denver is asleep in a bassinet. Sethe reaches in and picks her up. She sits by a window and breast feeds her as she hums

A MELODY. (This is the same melody we heard Sethe humming in the beginning of the film).

Sethe's melody carries itself over the following images;

EXT. 124 BLUESTONE ; WATER PUMP - DAY.

Sethe is carrying a bucket of water to the house. She sees:

Bulgar and Howard running and playing. Howard tackles his brother and starts tickling him. The two boys laugh hard.

Sethe watches, a moment of fear across her face;

SETHE (VO)

I'd hear my boys laughing a laugh I ain't never heard. And for a second I'd get scared - scared someone might hear them and get mad...

Sethe realizes, placing down the bucket:

SETHE (VO)

Then I remembered...and if they laughed that hard til it hurt, that would be the only hurt they had all day....

Sethe sobs, uncontrollably.

INT. 124 BLUESTONE RD. - DAY.

Ella teaches Sethe a new stitch as she chatters on.

SETHE (VO)

We had us days of company...

EXT. FIELD - DAY.

Another woman teaches Sethe the alphabet, as Sethe cradles Denver and the Little Girl (Beloved) crawls around her feet.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY.

Baby Suggs and Sethe cook with a kitchen full of men and women who have come for a visit.

SETHE (VO)

...of ease and real talk. Talks about the Fugitive Bill, Dred Scott or book learning...Talks as quiet or as stormy as we wanted...

Two men get into an argument to the amusement of the women.

EXT. CLEARING IN THE WOODS - DAY.

As folks gather to hear Baby Suggs preach, she introduces a smiling, shy Sethe to each one.

SETHE (VO)
 ...And when everyone would gather to hear
 Baby Suggs, I saw something I ain't never
 seen before in my whole life...

Alone for a moment, Sethe looks around at the crowd of faces;

Sethe's Melody stops as Baby Suggs stands on her rock and calls to the crowd:

BABY SUGGS
 Let the children come!

FROM OUT OF THE WOODS, CHILDREN RUN INTO THE CLEARING.

Camera follows the joyous exodus to reveal:

THE CLEARING IS FILLED WITH ADULTS the entire black community of the days when Sethe first arrived. The children run to their respective families;

BABY SUGGS
 (with joy)
 Let your mother's hear you laugh!!

The children, loving the game, laugh hard. The adults get a kick out of it.

Sethe watches her boys and hides her laughter.

BABY SUGGS
 Let the grown men come!!

OUT OF THE WOODS, A GROUP OF GROWN MEN COME INTO THE CLEARING.

BABY SUGGS
 LET YOUR WIVES AND YOUR CHILDREN SEE YOU
 DANCE!

The men form a circle and dance as the crowd supports them with a clapping rhythm. A SONG arises from the women to accompany to dance....

BABY SUGGS
 Now...you women...I want you to cry. For
 the living. For the dead....Just cry.

Camera follows those women who are not singing as one by one, they remember and weep...

Sethe watches...and weeps.

SETHE

....Something in me knew Halle was never gonna knock on our door. He was never gonna see what I saw that day. I saw what men look like...and I saw mothers, for the first time.

EXT. 124 BLUESTONE RD. - DAY.

Stamp Paid walks up to the porch carrying a TWO BIG BASKETS OF BLACKBERRIES ... his body dirty, scratched and bleeding.

SETHE (VO)

I think it was Stamp Paid who started it. He walked six miles to the riverbank, slid into a ravine, reached through blood drawing thorns, suffered mosquitoes, wasps and the meanest lady spiders in the State just to bring us those berries.

He places the baskets on the porch in front of Baby Suggs, Sethe who is holding Denver..and the Little Girl (Beloved).

BABY SUGGS

(laughs)

What a sight you are, Stamp.

STAMP PAID

Worth it though. Just one bite of these berries and you feel down right anointed.

He puts one into Denver's mouth.

SETHE

She's too little for that, Stamp. Her bowels be soup.

BABY SUGGS

It'll sickify her stomach..Now go wash up round back...crazy fool..

Stamp exits.

SETHE

It was real nice of him.

BABY SUGGS

He's a good one, no doubt of that. I can get three, maybe four pies out of this. Seems a shame just for us though. I'm gonna invite Ella and John over...

SETHE
How 'bout if I make a couple of chickens
to back it up?

SETHE (VO)
And that's how it began...

INT. KITCHEN - DAY.

Sethe and Baby Suggs and Ella and several other women cook.

SETHE (VO)
...Three pies became twelve...two hens
became five turkeys...

EXT.THE FIELD/124 BLUESTONE RD. - EVENING.

Various images of people gathered enjoying food and
drink...laughing and singing...

SETHE (VO)
...and Ella and John turned into almost
ninety others...

- Women serving up the food...
- Older men sitting and talking as they eat...
- Younger men playing with the children. Chasing them with
sheets on their backs, scaring them into laughter..
- A Man with a guitar playing a blues song and singing.

While Sethe enjoys her free life and, most of all, her
children - the boys running around her..Denver in her
arms..Her Little Girl (Beloved) by her side.. Baby Sugg's
visits with various guests, serving up the food...

SETHE (VO)
... Everybody ate so well and laughed so
much...

INTERCUT; Images of whispers exchanged between some of the
women:

SETHE (VO)
...it made them angry...

Women head to head with a remark or an eye of disapproval
towards Baby Suggs as she continues cooking and feeding....

SETHE (VO)
The pies, the turkeys...the bread pudding

and shortbread..the one whole block of ice brought all the way from Cincinnati - it made 'em mad...Loaves and fishes were Jesus's powers...they did not belong to an ex-slave who never had a white boy beat her, who had her freedom bought, who rented a house from white folks that hated slavery worse than they hated slaves...It made'em furious - her thoughtless generosity and un-called for pride...She had over stepped...offended them by giving too much...and they left their disapproval there so's you could smell in the air the whole next day...

EXT. THE FIELD/ 124 BLUESTONE RD. - THE FOLLOWING DAY.

Baby Suggs works the field, not far from Stamp Paid...

SETHE (VO)

Later on I wondered why no one warned us...why no one saw them coming and ran to 124 to tell us...

She chops at the soil over the roots of the pepper plants. She stops - sensing something is wrong. She looks up at a clear blue sky...She hears the birds and the stream way down beyond the woods..

She looks around and sees Bulgar, Howard and the Little Girl (Beloved) playing with loud voices by the side of the house.

She sees Sethe squatted in the pole beans with Denver in a bushel basket beside her.

The clog, clog of wood being chopped causes her to look over to Stamp Paid, helping out with the axe...

She returns to her work...but something is deeply wrong.

And then she hears it;

THE SOUND OF HORSES and A HORSE DRAWN WAGON coming from the distance. (The same sound Sethe heard in her first memory of the sycamores earlier on)

She rises up and looks;

POV;

EXT. BLUESTONE ROAD - DAY.

Far in the distance, FOUR HORSEMEN ARE RIDING TOWARD THEM. ONE DRIVES A WAGON and IS WEARING A DISTINCTIVE HAT - IT IS

SCHOOLTEACHER.....

CUT BACK TO:

EXT. THE FIELD OF 124 BLUESTONE - DAY.

Sethe continues working until she notices peripherally that Baby Suggs is standing stock still, staring at something.

Sethe rises and looks in the same direction;

CUT BACK TO:

EXT. BLUESTONE ROAD - DAY.

The Four Horsemen are closer...

CUT BACK TO:

EXT. THE FIELD OF 125 BLUESTONE - DAY.

Sethe's face freezes in terror as ...

Stamp Paid, in between chops, looks up and sees the two women..then turns his face to see the men.

BUT IT IS SETHE'S FACE WE CONCENTRATE ON - AS WE INTERCUT THE ONCOMING APPROACH OF THE FOUR HORSEMEN and HEAR HER WORDS:

SETHE (VO)

...There's a Look whitefolks get..a Look every Negro learns to recognize along with his ma'am's tit..That righteous Look that's like a flag going up the pole..the righteousness that announces the whip, the fist, the burning, the lie...long before it happens in the open...

Over the above speech, we see in Sethe's expression a death of soul - an instantaneous loss of hope for possibilities of joy and life. And with it, an insane rage.

Sethe grabs Denver out of the basket, then scrambles after the crawling Little Girl (Beloved), scooping her under her free arm...

SETHE

Howard!...Bulgar!

The tone of her voice cause the boys to freeze. She runs towards them, grabbing one by the hand and ordering the other to run in front of them. She moves and speaks with efficient clarity.

SETHE

The shed!...Get in the shed!...Run!

Baby Suggs and Stamp Paid watch helplessly -

EXT. 124 BLUESTONE -

The Four Horsemen - Schoolteacher, his Nephew, a Slave Catcher and a Sheriff - arrive at the house and dismount, tying their horses to the front gate (which is no longer there).

The Nephew scampers to the front of the house and peers in the window - he listens. Hearing nothing he motions for them to go round the side of the house.

Camera follows them as it reveals Baby Suggs and Stamp Paid standing exactly where we left them...Except;

They are both staring at the shed - out of which strange noises, thuds and the FRIGHTENED CRIES OF CHILDREN are heard....

Two Black Boys and several Woman are coming up the road. The Slave Catcher motions with his rifle for them to stop - and they do.

The men move towards the shed, meeting up with the Nephew as he runs past Baby Suggs and Stamp Paid...

POV;

Camera moves closer towards the shed, the sounds coning from within more audible now...

INT. THE SHED -

The Nephew opens the door. The Four Men enter....

Howard and Bulgar are bleeding in the sawdust, unconscious - a bloody shovel lays near them.

Sethe is holding a blood-soaked Little Girl (Beloved) to her chest with one hand...and Denver by the heels of the other. She is swinging Denver toward the wall planks, misses then tries again...

When out of nowhere, Stamp Paid rushes by the horrified white men and GRABS DENVER OUT OF SETHE'S HAND before she can swing her a second time...

Stillness.

Schoolteacher looks at the carnage...a bloody saw lies at

Sethe's feet, the weapon she used on her own child's throat.
The Nephew is paralyzed...horrificed.

NEPHEW

What she go and do that for?...What she
go and do that for?

Baby Suggs walks in. Whatever amount of God's grace she could
imagine and will into being, vanishes with one look into that
shed.

SHERIFF

You all better go on.
(to Schoolteacher)
Nothing here to claim, I guess.
Look like your business is over. Mine's
started.

Schoolteacher beats his hat against his thigh and spits in
the shed before exiting, followed by the catcher and the
nephew.

The Sheriff speaks to Sethe.

SHERIFF

I'll have to take you in. No trouble now.
You've done enough to last you....

Sethe doesn't move.

SHERIFF

You come quiet, here, and I won't have to
tie you up.

Meanwhile, Baby Suggs notices who breathes and who does not
and moves straight to the boys....

Stamp Paid extends his arm to Sethe.

STAMP PAID

Sethe. You take my arm and gimme yours.

Sethe turns to him, the first time she's looked into anyone's
eyes and sees Denver in his arms...A sound escapes from her
throat as though she'd made a mistake.

SHERIFF

I'm going out here and send for a wagon.

He exits. Baby Suggs rubs the boys' hands, tries to raise
their eyelids, spits on her dress and wipes away the blood as
they slowly regain a dazed consciousness..She whispers;

BABY SUGGS

I beg you pardon..I beg your pardon..

EXT. 124 BLUESTONE RD. -

Sethe, clutching the dead baby to her chest, is led out of the shed by Stamp Paid,

Outside, a throng of black faces have gathered who stop murmuring the second they see her. Among them are Ella and Lady Jones. They are shocked and pained.

Sethe is led past them to a waiting cart - in total silence.

Baby Suggs, at the same time, is getting the boys up the porch into the house. When Denver cries in Stamp Paid's arms, she stops..lets the boys sit and runs towards the cart.

Sethe is seated in the cart beside the Sheriff. Baby Suggs takes the crying Denver from Stamp Paid..She tells the Sheriff.

BABY SUGGS

Excuse me..but the child needs
nursin..needs the mother's milk..

SHERIFF

Then she's best come too.

Baby Suggs approaches Sethe who sees Denver crying and reaches for her without letting the baby go. Baby Suggs resists;

BABY SUGGS

One at a time!...And you gotta clean
yourself up!

But Sethe only wants her living child. The two women struggle as Stamp Paid does what he can..Finally, Sethe wins and takes Denver with her free hand, undoes her dress and nurse's her with a bloody breast..

Baby Suggs breaks inside. Breaks right in two, although from outwards appearances, she looks merely numbed by shock.

A WHITE BOY makes his way through the crowd with a pair of shoes and hands them to her..

WHITE BOY

Mama says Wednesday. She says you got to
have them fixed by Wednesday.

Baby Suggs looks at him not understanding..

WHITE BOY

You hear, Baby? She says Wednesday.

BABY SUGGS
(taking the shoes)
I beg your pardon..Lord, I beg your
pardon..I sure do....

CUT TO:

PRESENT DAY (END OF MEMORY) :

INT. 124 BLUESTONE ROAD - NIGHT.

Paul D. sits at the kitchen table. The story told. Sethe
looks out the window...and waits..

PAUL
Your love is too thick, Sethe.

SETHE
Love is or it isn't. Thin love ain't love
at all...I did stop him. I took and put
my babies where they'd be safe...

PAUL
Didn't work though, did it?

SETHE
It worked.

PAUL
How? Your boys gone, you don't know
where. One girl dead, the other can't go
farther than the yard. How did it work?

SETHE
They ain't at Sweet Home! Schoolteacher
ain't got'em!

PAUL
Maybe there's worse.

SETHE
It ain't my job to know what's worse.
It's my job to know what is and keep them
away from what I know is terrible. I did
that.

PAUL
What you did was wrong, Sethe.

SETHE
I should have gone back there? Taken my
babies back there?

PAUL

There could have been a way. Some other way.

SETHE

What way?

PAUL

You got two feet, Sethe. Not four!

That jumped out before he had a chance to choose saying it. Sethe has no response...The distance between these two people in this small room is suddenly vast.

Paul rises, playing with his hat...not knowing how to leave. But desperately needing to. He moves to the exit and stops..

PAUL

You can set aside supper for me... Might be late getting back...

Unable to look at her, he turns to exit. When Sethe speaks in a soft, forgiving tone, he stops to listen;

SETHE

After all I told you, Paul D. and after telling me how many feet I have, you think saying goodbye is gonna break me into pieces?

Paul turns to look at her and realizes she saw right through him...

SETHE

You're a sweet man.

Unable to bear it, Paul turns and leaves...

Sethe stands still, fighting tears, and whispers...

SETHE

So long, Paul D.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY.

Sethe is scrubbing the floor, with Denver trailing by with dry rags.

Beloved enters holding a pair of ice skates;

BELOVED

What do these do?

Sethe and Beloved look up. Sethe smiles;

SETHE

My Lord...where'd you dig up those?

DENVER

There for skating on the ice.
We have another pair and half of another,
I think.

BELOVED

Can we try them?

Sethe takes the skates and looks at them with a curious lightness:

SETHE

Go ice skating? Ha...

(beat)

Why not?

DENVER

You sure mama?

SETHE

Strikes me that after your man leaves, it
might just be the wrong time to be
scrubbing floors... might just be the
perfect time to go ice skating.

Denver and Beloved register hopefulness in the light of Sethe's attitude. Sethe speaks to Denver;

SETHE

Go get the shawls..and find me an old
shoe for that half a pair...

The girls get excited. Sethe tosses the scrub brush into the pail.

EXT. A FROZEN CREEK - DAY.

A bright, cold winter day. Beloved wears a pair of old skates. Denver wears the second pair and Sethe has one skate and one shoe..The two girls giggle and fall as they try to skate on the ice... helping each other up. Their skirts whirling...their laughter mingled with screams of delight.

Sethe, wearing only shoes, watches them and laughs.

DENVER

Come on, ma'am...try!

Sethe steps onto the ice and takes a few strides and promptly

falls on her rear. The girls scream with laughter. Sethe tries to get up and falls, their laughter infecting her as well. The girls try to help her and fall over each other in the trying.

Denver rises and tries an independent glide. The tip of her skate hits a bump and she falls, flapping her arms wildly. All three laugh so hard, they start coughing. Beloved goes to Denver's aid.

Sethe rises up on her hands and knees, her laughter shaking her chest and causing her eyes to tear in the cold air.

Beloved helps Denver, and falls as well. The two girls see Sethe laughing and play it up even more, a few more times...

Until, Denver notices something and motions Beloved to stop and look.

The two glide back to Sethe. Her laughter has stopped, but her tears have not... They gently, comfortingly, touch her shoulder.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT.

It is a snowy night outside the windows.

Sethe has laid out blankets and quilts in front of the fire in the stove. She has made sweet milk that she hands to the girls before taking her place in between them, on the floor, facing the fire; Denver, on her right, rests her head on her lap. Beloved sits on her left.

She looks over to Beloved who is staring at the fire. The illumination highlights her beauty and her profile; the chin, mouth, forehead - all copied and exaggerated in a huge shadow the fire threw on the wall. Sethe can't help but stare as another thought occurs to her;

BABY SUGGS (V.O.)

...All I remember is how she loved the bottom of burned bread. Her little hands...I wouldn't know 'em if they slapped me".

SETHE (VO)

..."Here. Look here. See this mark? If you can't tell me by my face, look here."

Beloved lifts her head towards the fire at the same time she leans back to rest on a propped-up pillow. In the flickering of the firelight, Sethe can see:

A SMILE OF A SCAR BENEATH HER CHIN.

Sethe knows before she's aware of it consciously. And just as it hits her, BELOVED BEGINS TO HUM A MELODY.

Sethe recognizes it as her own melody.

SETHE

I made that song up. I made it up and
sang it to my children...

Denver lifts her head from her mother's lap to look at Sethe, knowing what is happening....

SETHE

...Nobody knows that song but me and my
children.

Beloved turns to Sethe;

BELOVED

I know it.

A click. Sethe looks at her daughter, returned. "There is no gasp of astonishment - no exclaim for the miraculous. For what is truly miraculous is so, because the magic lies in the fact that you knew it was there for you all along."

DISSOLVE TO:

MORNING;

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING.

It's snowy white outside. The girls are still asleep in front of the stove. But Denver awakens upon hearing her mother load the stove with dry wood and begin to cook breakfast. Sethe hears her wake up and turns, as she beats eggs in a bowl;

SETHE

Back stiff?

DENVER

Ooh, yeah...Don't know if it's the floor
or the skating.

SETHE

Could be that fall you took.

DENVER

That was fun.

Beloved snores lightly beside her;

DENVER

Should I wake her?

SETHE

No, let her rest.

DENVER

She likes to see you off in the morning.

SETHE

I'll make sure she does. But first I'm going make up a nice, big breakfast against that cold outside.

DENVER

Won't you be late for work?

SETHE

Don't matter. First time I'll be late in nine years. No great trouble..Whatever goes on out there goes on with or without me showing up on time... don't matter...

(looks at the girls)

The world is in this room, baby. This is all there is and all there needs to be.

Denver smiles - but it is a cautious smile. Something about her mother's statement both elates and disturbs her.

EXT. BLUESTONE RD. - DAY.

A conflicted and contrite Stamp Paid walks through the snow down Bluestone road towards 124.

As he does, he remembers his last conversation with Baby Suggs;

MEMORY:

EXT. RICHMOND STREET - DAY.

A fall day. Leaves ankle high. Stamp Paid is walking when he sees baby Suggs carrying a carpetbag full of repaired shoes. He crosses over to her as he gets her attention;

STAMP PAID

You missed the Clearing meeting three Saturdays running.

Baby Suggs turns to her old friend - but there is no sign of welcome or recognition. There is a noticeable change in her demeanor. She continues walking. He follows;

STAMP PAID

Folks came.

BABY SUGGS
Folks come. Folks go.

STAMP PAID
Here, let me carry that.

He reaches for the carpetbag but Baby Suggs pulls it away.

BABY SUGGS
I got a delivery around here. Name of
Tucker.

STAMP PAID
(points)
Yonder. Twin chestnuts in the yard.

They walk a bit, until;

STAMP PAID
Well?

BABY SUGGS
Well what?

STAMP PAID
This Saturday - you coming to Call or
what?

BABY SUGGS
If I call them, and they come what on
earth am I going to say to them.

STAMP PAID
Say the Word!

Two whitemen raking leaves look up at the sound of Stamp
Paid's voice, which was too loud. So he whispers;

STAMP PAID
The Word. What you was put here to speak.

BABY SUGGS
That's the last thing they took from me.

STAMP PAID
But you got to do it. You got to. Can't
nobody Call like you. You have to be
there.

BABY SUGGS
What I have to do is get in my bed and
lay down. I want to fix on something
harmless in this world.

STAMP PAID

What world are you talking about? Ain't nothing harmless down here.

BABY SUGGS

Blue. That doesn't hurt nobody. Yellow neither.

STAMP PAID

You getting into bed to think about yellow?

BABY SUGGS

I likes yellow.

STAMP PAID

Then what? When you get through with blue and yellow, then what?

BABY SUGGS

Can't say. It's something can't be planned.

STAMP PAID

You blaming God. That what you're doing?

BABY SUGGS

No, Stamp. I ain't.

STAMP PAID

You saying whitefolks won. That what you saying?

BABY SUGGS

Those white things have taken all I had or dreamed. I'm saying ain't no bad luck in this world 'cept for white folks..They just don't know when to stop.

STAMP PAID

You saying nothing counts?

BABY SUGGS

I'm saying they came into my yard.

STAMP PAID

You saying God give up? Nothing left for us but pour out our own blood?

BABY SUGGS

I'm saying they came into my yard.

STAMP PAID

You punishing Him, ain't you?

BABY SUGGS
Not like He punished me.

STAMP PAID
You can't do that, Baby. It ain't right.

BABY SUGGS
Was a time I knew what was.

STAMP PAID
You still know.

BABY SUGGS
What I know is what I see: a nigger woman
hauling shoes.

STAMP PAID
Aw, Baby.

He stops her, before the Twin Chestnuts of the Tucker house.

STAMP PAID
We have to be steady. "These things too
will pass". What you looking for? A
miracle?

BABY SUGGS
No. I'm looking for what I was put here
to look for: the back door.

They exchange a look of silence and finality. She turns and walks to the back door of the house and knocks. A moment later a White Woman appears, takes the carpetbag and keeps Baby waiting on the back steps while she goes in for a dime. Baby rests on the railing until the whitewoman returns.

MEMORY END.

EXT. 124 BLUESTONE RD. - DAY.

Now, Stamp Paid feels the need to find out what's going on inside 124 since he caused Paul to leave. He approaches the porch, then the front door. He raises his hands to knock - but he can't bring himself to do it.

He turns to walk away then stops. He turns back and with a force of will, KNOCKS LOUDLY upon the door. No answer. He KNOCKS AGAIN. Still no answer.

He steps back, trying to sense if anyone's there. He turns to leave when he sees;

TWO HEADS in the window. Denver and Beloved. Denver bolts away, but Beloved remains a moment longer - looking in Stamp Paid's eye, then disappearing into the house.

Stamp Paid is unnerved by her look.

INT. SAWYER'S RESTAURANT - LATE MORNING.

Sethe enters late, putting on her apron as SAWYER yells;

SAWYER

What the hell you thinking, girl?
Strolling in here this late?

SETHE

Don't talk to me, Mr. Sawyer. Don't say
nothing to me this morning.

SAWYER

What? What? You talking back to me?

SETHE

I'm telling you don't say nothing to me.

Sethe begins organizing her counter to make pies.

SAWYER

You better get them pies made!

Sethe ignores him as she begins. Sawyer is at a loss.

SAWYER

Not too sweet! You make it too sweet they
don't eat it.

SETHE

Make it the way I always do.

SAWYER

Yeah. Too sweet.
(he exits)

INT. ELLA'S HOUSE - DAY.

Ella opens the front door for Stamp Paid. He looks disturbed.

ELLA

Where you been keeping yourself? I told
John must be cold if Stamp stay inside.

STAMP PAID

Oh I been out.

Stamp takes off his hat and follows Ella, who is doing

laundry in the kitchen.

ELLA

Out where?

STAMP PAID

Was over to Baby Suggs.

ELLA

What you want there? Somebody invite you in?

STAMP PAID

That's Baby's kin. I don't need no invite to look after her people.

Ella shrugs and continues folding wet laundry on a line behind the stove. Stamp sits.

STAMP PAID

Somebody new there. A woman. Thought you might know who she is.

ELLA

Ain't no new Negroes in this town I don't know about. What she look like? You sure that wasn't Denver?

STAMP PAID

I know Denver.

ELLA

You sure?

STAMP PAID

I know what I see.

ELLA

Might see anything at all at 124.

STAMP PAID

True.

ELLA

Better ask Paul D.

STAMP PAID

Can't locate him.

ELLA

He's sleeping in the church.

STAMP PAID

The church!

ELLA

Yeah. Asked Rev. Pike if he could stay in the cellar.

STAMP PAID

It's cold as charity in there! What he do that for? Any number'll take him in.

ELLA

Can't nobody read minds long distance. All he have to do is ask somebody.

STAMP PAID

Why? Why he have to ask? Can't nobody offer? What's going on? Since when a black man come to town have to sleep in the cellar like a dog?!

ELLA

Unrile yourself, Stamp. It's only a few days he been there.

STAMP PAID

NO! Shouldn't be no days! You know all about it and don't give him a hand? That don't sound like you, Ella. Me and you been pulling colored folk out the water more'n twenty years! Now you tell me you can't offer a man a bed?! A working man who can pay his own way?

ELLA

He ask, I give him anything.

STAMP PAID

Why's that necessary all of a sudden?

ELLA

I don't know him that well.

STAMP PAID

You know he's colored? What else there to know?

ELLA

Stamp, don't tear me up this morning! I don't feel like it.

STAMP PAID

It's her, ain't it?

ELLA

Her who?

STAMP PAID

Sethe. He took up with her and stayed in there and you don't want nothing to-

ELLA

Hold on! Don't jump if you can't see bottom!

STAMP PAID

Girl, give it up! We been friends too long to act like this.

Beat. Ella knows he's right. She surrenders the truth.

ELLA

Well, who can tell what went on in there? I never even knew who Sethe was or none of her people.

STAMP PAID

You know she married Baby Suggs' boy.

ELLA

I ain't sure I know that. Baby never laid eyes on her till she showed up here. And how'd she make it and her husband didn't? And where is he? And how she have that baby in the woods by herself? Said a whitewoman help her. Shoot. You believe that? Well, I know what kind of white that was.

STAMP PAID

Aw, no, Ella.

ELLA

Anything white floating around in the woods - if it don't got a shotgun, it's something the Lord tells me I don't want no part of.

STAMP PAID

You was friends.

ELLA

Till she showed herself.

STAMP PAID

Ella.

ELLA

I ain't got no friends take a handsaw to their own children.

STAMP PAID

What's any of that got to do with Paul D.?

ELLA

What run him off? Tell me that!

STAMP PAID

I run him off.

ELLA

(surprised)

You?

STAMP PAID

I told him...Showed him the newspaper.
About Sethe. Read it to him. He left that
very day.

ELLA

You didn't tell me that. I thought he
already knew.

STAMP PAID

He didn't know nothing. And nobody.
Except her, from when they was at that
place Baby Suggs was at.

ELLA

He knew Baby Suggs?

STAMP PAID

Sure he knew her. Her boy Halle, too.

ELLA

And he left when he found out what Sethe
did?

(Stamp sits)

What you say casts a different light on
it, I guess...I thought-

Stamp knows what she thought.

ELLA

But you didn't come here talking 'bout
Paul. You came asking about a new girl.

STAMP PAID

That's so.

ELLA

Well, Paul D. must know who she is. Or
what she is.

STAMP PAID

You mind loaded with spirits. Everywhere
you look you see one.

ELLA

You know as well as I do, Stamp, that
people who die bad don't stay in the
ground.

Stamp can not deny this.

EXT. BLUESTONE ROAD - EARLY EVENING.

Sethe is walking home to her daughters. There is a serene,
introverted expression on her face...as if she were detached
from the world around her, safe inside. We hear her thoughts:

SETHE (VO)

Beloved, she my daughter...She mine. She
come back to me of her own free will and
I don't have to explain a thing.. She had
to be safe and I put her where I knew she
would be. But my love was tough and she
back now. She come back to me in the
flesh...I won't never let her go. I'll
explain to her, even though I don't have
to. Why I did it. How if I hadn't killed
her she would have died and that is
something I couldn't let happen to her.
When I explain she'll understand, cause
she understands everything already..And
she ain't even mad...When I put that
headstone up I wanted to lay in there
with you, put your head on my shoulder
and keep you warm and I would have if
Bulgar and Howard and Denver didn't need
me, because my mind was homeless then. I
couldn't lay down with you then. No
matter how much I wanted to. I couldn't
lay down nowhere in peace, back then. Now
I can. I can sleep like the drowned, have
mercy. She come back to me, my daughter,

DENVER'S VOICE OVER FADES IN OVER SETHE'S....

SETHE (VO)

my Beloved and she
is mine....

DENVER

Beloved is my
sister...

DENVER (VO)

..and she is mine...

FADE TO;

INT. 124 BLUESTONE ROAD - EARLY EVENING.

Denver is cleaning the kitchen, waiting for her mother. We hear her thoughts:

DENVER (VO)

..I swallowed her blood right along with my mother's milk. She played with me and always came to be with me whenever I needed her. Me and her waited for our daddy. I love her. I do. She never hurt me. I love my mother but I know she killed one of her own, and tender as she is with me, I'm scared of her because of it. All the time, I'm afraid the thing that happened that made it all right to kill her own, could happen again. Whatever it is, it comes from outside this house, outside the yard. So I never leave this house and I watch over the yard so it can't happen again ... I have to keep it away from my sister...I'll protect Beloved...'Cause She's mine...

BELOVED'S VO FADES IN OVER DENVER'S...

DENVER (VO)

Beloved..She's mine

BELOVED (VO)

I am Beloved

BELOVED (VO)

and she is mine...

EXT. 124 BLUESTONE RD. - EARLY EVENING.

Beloved, waiting for Sethe to come home, sees her approaching. We hear her thoughts:

BELOVED (VO)

I am not separate from her. There is no place where I stop. Her face is my own and I want to be there in the place where her face is and to be looking at it too...a hot thing..In the beginning I could see her. I could not help her because the clouds were in the way. But I could see her. The shining in her ears. I look hard at her so she will know that the clouds are in the way..I cannot lose her again. I see her face which is mine. It is the face that was going to smile at me in the place where we crouched before I come up out of the blue water. Sethe's is the face that left me. Sethe's sees me

in her and I see the smile. She is my
face smiling at me. It is the face I
lost. Now we can join..a hot thing.

Sethe comes to the waiting Beloved and smiles. She offers her hand and Beloved rises. Denver exits to them and smiles. She extends her hand to Beloved's free hand. The three women stand astride each other, arms around each other's waist as they walk toward the porch...

The dusk sunlight creates THREE SHADOWS - three figures holding each other the way Sethe saw the shadows at the carnival...Only they weren't Hers, Denver's and Paul's...They were Hers, Denver's and Beloved's....

INT. 124 BLUESTONE RD. - EARLY EVENING.

The girls rush into the house, and down the hall.

Sethe enters. Then turns back to the door.

C.U. ; OF SETHE'S HAND LOCKING THE FRONT DOOR AS WE HEAR:

SETHE (VO)

I AM BELOVED AND SHE IS MINE.. DENVER (VO)
SHE IS MINE...

OVER THE FOLLOWING CHORUS OF DIALOGUE, A MONTAGE OF IMAGES DEPICTING SETHE, BELOVED AND DENVER CLOSING UP THE HOUSE FROM THE OUTSIDE WORLD - LOWERING SHADES, LOCKING WINDOWS, BARRING DOORS.....

SETHE (VO)

TELL ME THE TRUTH.. BELOVED (VO)
CANNOT LOSE HER AGAIN.

SETHE (VO)
DID YOU COME FROM THE OTHER SIDE.

BELOVED (VO)
YES. I WAS ON THE OTHER SIDE.

SETHE (VO)
YOU CAME BACK BECAUSE OF ME?

BELOVED (VO)
YES.

SETHE (VO)
YOU NEVER FORGOT ME?

BELOVED (VO)

YOUR FACE IS MINE.

DENVER (VO)
DON'T LOVE HER TOO MUCH.

SETHE (VO)
DO YOU FORGIVE ME?

BELOVED (VO)
YOU HURT ME.

DENVER (VO)
I WILL PROTECT YOU.

SETHE (VO)
WILL YOU STAY?

BELOVED (VO)
WHY DID YOU LEAVE ME WHO AM YOU?

SETHE (VO)
I WILL NEVER LEAVE YOU AGAIN.

DENVER (VO)
WATCH OUT FOR HER; SHE CAN GIVE YOU
DREAMS.

BELOVED (VO)
WHERE ARE THE MEN WITHOUT SKIN?

DENVER (VO)
THE WHITEFOLK?

SETHE (VO)
OUT THERE. WAY OFF.

DENVER (VO)
DADDY IS COMING FOR US.

BELOVED (VO)
CAN THEY GET IN HERE?

SETHE (VO)
NO. THEY TRIED ONCE BUT I STOPPED THEM.
THEY WON'T EVER COME BACK...YOU MY BEST
THING.

EXT. 124 BLUESTONE RD. - EARLY EVENING.

CAMERA PULLS BACK FROM THE FRONT DOOR, NOW LOCKED AGAINST THE
WORLD, IN A SLOW MOVE...AS WE HEAR A BLEND OF THE THREE
WOMEN'S VOICES - THE OVERLAPPING, HAUNTED THOUGHTS OF THE
LIVING...

THREE WOMAN (VO)
 BELOVED..YOU ARE MY SISTER..YOU ARE MY
 DAUGHTER. YOU ARE MY FACE..YOU ARE ME..I
 HAVE FOUND YOU AGAIN..I WAITED FOR
 YOU..YOU ARE MY BELOVED. DON'T LOVE HER
 TOO MUCH...YOU MY BEST THING.. YOU ARE
 MINE..YOU ARE MINE..YOU ARE MINE...

BY THE TIME THE CAMERA REACHES BLUESTONE ROAD, THE VOICES ARE
 MIXED, UNDECIPHERABLE YET AUDIBLE...

...AUDIBLE TO STAMP PAID, WHO STANDS ON BLUESTONE RD.
 LISTENING TO THE HAUNTED VOICES OF 124. HE IS FRIGHTENED.

FADE -OUT.

FADE- IN:

EXT. CHURCH - DAY.

A cold day. Paul D. sits against the church drinking from a
 bottle when a voice causes him to look up;

STAMP PAID
 Howdy.

Stamp has his hands in his pockets, moving about.

PAUL
 You got any more newspaper in that pocket
 for me, just a waste of time. Ain't
 interested.

Stamp sits beside him.

STAMP PAID
 This is hard for me. But I got to do it.
 Two things I got to say to you. I'm a
 take the easy one first.

PAUL
 (laughs)
 If it's hard for you, might kill me dead.
 (he drinks)

STAMP PAID
 I come looking for you to ask your
 pardon. Apologize.

PAUL
 For what?

STAMP PAID
 You pick any house, any house where

colored live. Pick any one and you welcome to stay there. I'm apologizing 'cause they didn't offer to tell you. But you welcome anywhere you want to be. My house. John and Ella. Miss Lady Jones..anybody. You choose. You ain't got to sleep in no cellar and I apologize for each and every night.

PAUL

Well I...I did get offered one place but I just wanted to be off by myself a spell.

STAMP PAID

Oh yeah. Oh that's load off. I thought everybody gone crazy.

PAUL

Just me.

STAMP PAID

You planning to do anything about it?

PAUL

Oh yeah. I got big plans.

He drinks from the bottle like an angry, broken man. It stabs at Stamp's heart to see him like this.

A WHITE MAN in a horse and wagon drives up the path leading to the church. He leans stops before them and leans forward;

WHITE MAN

Hey!!

STAMP PAID

(on his feet)

Yes sir.

WHITE MAN

I'm looking for a gal name of Judy. Works over by the slaughterhouse. Said she lived on Plank Road.

STAMP PAID

Plank Road. Yes sir. That's up a ways. Mile, maybe.

WHITE MAN

You don't know her? Judy? Works in the slaughterhouse.

STAMP PAID

No sir, I don't, but I know Plank Road.
'Bout a mile up thataway.

Paul drinks from the bottle. The White Man addresses him.

WHITE MAN

Look here..There's a cross up there, so I
guess this here's a church or used to be.
Seems to me like you ought to show it
some respect, you follow me?

STAMP PAID

Yes sir..You right about that. That's
just what I come over to talk to him
about. Just that..

Paul offers no response. The White Man clicks his tongue and
drives off. Stamp breathes a sigh of relief.

PAUL

You remember your price, Stamp?

STAMP PAID

Never found out.

PAUL

I did. Down to the cent.\$900. Always
wondered though what Mrs. Garner got for
my brother Paul F. Must of been more than
nine hundred dollars cause she use that
money for Sweet Home for almost two
years. But then they hung my other
brother Paul A. up on a tree so I guess
he wasn't worth the same..I wonder what
was Baby Suggs worth? And Halle? I wasn't
surprised when I found out they tracked
down Sethe all the way to Cincinatti. Her
price must have been higher than all of
us - her being property that reproduced
itself without cost. A breeder.

STAMP PAID

No use thinking these things now.

PAUL

Oh but we got to. How we gonna know our
price in the future? How are children's
children's children gonna know what they
cost? Who's gonna tell them? What are
they gonna pay for us, if we free?

STAMP PAID

Children ain't gonna need to know that
kind of thing.

PAUL

They'll know. They'll know as soon as they born. Cause it's inside us, Stamp. It'll be inside them. We'll pass it down. Schoolteacher didn't just change the outside, he changed the mind..and the blood..and what it carries...and what it's worth..

STAMP PAID

I don't believe that. I won't.

PAUL

There was a rooster named Mister down at Sweet Home. Last time I saw Halle, with that butter all over his face and me with an iron bit in my mouth, I saw Mister - sitting on a tub. He loved that tub. Like king on a throne. He was a hateful thing. Bloody and evil..But he was better than me. Mister was allowed to be and stay what he was. Even if you cooked him you'd be cooking a rooster named Mister. But wasn't no way I'd ever be Paul D. again..Schoolteacher changed me. Was never no beating under Mr. Garner. Schoolteacher changed that. Why wouldn't a man run from that? Why wouldn't a man not work, kill, starve, pull out his own heart to stop feeling 'stead of feeling that? And it strikes me, it's got to be cause we were something else. And that something was less than a chicken sitting in the sun on a tub.

He drinks.

STAMP PAID

I said I had two things to say to you. I only told you one. I have to tell you the other.

PAUL

I don't want to know.

STAMP PAID

I was there Paul D...There in the yard. When she did it.

PAUL

What yard? When who-

And then Paul realizes he's talking of Sethe.

PAUL

Jesus.

STAMP PAID

It ain't what you think.

PAUL

You don't know what I think.

STAMP PAID

She ain't crazy. She love those children.
She was trying to outhurt the hurter's
all.

PAUL

Leave off..

STAMP PAID

She was only-

PAUL

Stamp, leave off I said! I knew her when
she was a girl. She scares me and I knew
her when she was a girl...

STAMP PAID

You ain't scared of Sethe. I don't
believe you.

PAUL

She scares me. I scare me. And that girl
in her house scares me.

STAMP PAID

Who is she? Where she come from?

PAUL

Don't know. Just shot up one day from a
stump.

STAMP PAID

She what run you off? Not what I told you
'bout Sethe?

Paul thinks a moment. Then, tears brimming in his eyes:

PAUL

Tell me something, Stamp. Tell me this
one thing. How much is a nigger supposed
to take?

STAMP PAID

All he can. All he can.

PAUL
Why? Why? Why? Why? Why?

FADE OUT;

FADE IN;

SPRING.

EXT. 124 BLUESTONE RD. - MORNING.

The sun shines on a warm April day..a day abundant with growth and renewed hope.

But a shadow appears to be hovering over 124. It looks more worn than before...neglected, abused.

A broken window...the front door off it's hinge...a front step splintered and dangerous.

INT. 124 BLUESTONE RD. - MORNING.

Camera opens on the front hall and moves through the house, revealing the same neglect inside;

Broken furniture, dusty floors, mess and disorder...

Camera enters;

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING.

Dirty pans, crusted food on the table, window curtains hanging askew...

Sethe sits hunched over, asleep, in a chair against the wall. She wears a dirty, torn dress that hangs on her body - which seems withered, frailer since we last saw her...In her lap lies a clean pretty dress she was in the process of sewing when she fell asleep from fatigue.

A LOUD CRASH wakes her up. Followed by a LOUD FRUSTRATED YELL. Her face registers fear. She realizes where she is, what time it is...and begins organizing breakfast...

She places the dress neatly on the chair, then grabs a cloth and wipes away the crumbs and dirty plates from supper, placing them in the sink...

She opens a pantry cupboard to reveal BARE SHELVES except for a SINGLE EGG and a bowl of HOMINY GRAINS about 1/4 full. She searches in a panic for more food - anywhere - opening cabinets, doors - places that never stored food. She realizes there is none left.

INT. DENVER'S ROOM - MORNING.

Denver finished dressing. She has been able to maintain a semblance of order about her person and room..

But as she steps out into the second floor hallway, we see the same disarray as downstairs...

She passes by Baby Sugg's old room and discovers;

BELOVED, sprawled across the bed, half naked. Her belly is huge, her body unwashed. She looks, and behaves, like a wild animal...

A broken lamp lies on the floor - pushed over by her leg as she shifted in bed. Her feet, overhanging the bed, are still touching the bedside table where the lamp sat.

She is awake now - making a small hole larger in Baby Sugg's old quilt.

DENVER

You shouldn't be in here?

Beloved jolts her head up to Denver. She doesn't like being looked at unawares...

BELOVED

What do you know about it? I sleep where I want.

DENVER

You best leave that quilt alone. That was grandma's quilt.

Beloved looks at Denver, then at the quilt - then abruptly tears the hole apart with one strong pull.

Triumphant, she gets out of bed and exits, passing Denver;

BELOVED

Breakfast ready? I'm hungry!

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING.

Sethe has prepared all the food that was left and placed it on one plate which she sets on the table. She stands at the stove, with her back to us, picking crusted pieces of food off the bottom of the pan.

Beloved moves straight to the chair in front of the place and begins to eat, shovelling the food into her mouth.

Denver sees her mother covertly eating the burnt pan crumbs,
as she pretends to wash the dishes.

SETHE

Morning.

DENVER

Morning, ma'am.

Sethe turns, not realizing Denver was there as well. Their
eyes meet. Sethe wonders if her daughter saw her eating the
pan crumbs. She smiles;

SETHE

You hungry?

Knowing there must be nothing left, Denver answers;

DENVER

No, ma'am.

Sethe looks relieved.

DENVER

I'll finish those. Why don't you sit
down?

Denver crosses to the dishes, taking the pan from her mother.
Sethe nods and crosses to the table, to sit down.

But as she sinks into the chair, Beloved kicks it away;

BELOVED

You don't sit with me!!

SETHE

Baby, don't be like that.

BELOVED

You don't sit with me!! I don't sit with
people who leave me!

SETHE

Don't talk like that. Your mama loves
you.

BELOVED

I had another dream last night.

(as she eats)

The dead man laying on top of me and I
had nothing to eat. And the ghosts
without skin stuck their fingers in me
and said Beloved in the dark and bitch in
the light..

SETHE

Don't say those things. You forget about those dreams..

BELOVED

You gave me the bad dreams. You left me behind...

SETHE

Mama told you - I'd give up my own life, every minute, every hour of it to take back one of your tears baby...My children my best thing. You my best thing!

BELOVED

You're weren't nice to me..you didn't smile at me..

SETHE

That's not true. I told you, I had to get you out, make you safe...so's you and me could be together on the other side, forever..

DENVER

Ma'am...

No one pays attention to Denver.

BELOVED

LIAR!

Beloved flings her plate at Sethe, hitting her hard across the eye..the plate breaking...

DENVER

MAMA!

SETHE

Hold back Denver - I'm fine..You..you go on upstairs. I'll do the cleaning up.

DENVER

But mama..

SETHE

Go upstairs I said!!

Sethe's harsh tone is only for Denver. Denver exits the kitchen, afraid to leave them alone...

As she moves from the kitchen, she hears;

BELOVED (OS)
I want somethin' sweet.

SETHE (OS)
We don't have nothing sweet no more,
baby.

BELOVED (OS)
Not for me, you don't! You don't let me
eat the pies...

SETHE (OS)
No. Since mama lost her job, we don't
have no more pies..

Denver walks up the white stairs...

INT. BABY SUGGS' ROOM - DAY.

Denver has straightened up her grandmother's room. Cleaned
away the broken pieces of the lamp. Gathered the remnants of
the quilt..

She holds the quilt as she sits on the bed, facing the
headboard. SHE REMEMBERS:

MEMORY:

INT. BABY SUGGS' ROOM - A DAY REMEMBERED.

Baby Suggs, near death, lying in her bed, chuckles and
coughs;

BABY SUGGS
You mean I never told you about your
daddy? About the Bodwins who let me rent
this here house while I do my shoe
repairing? About your mother's feet, not
to mention her back? I never told you all
that?

A NINE YEAR OLD DENVER shakes her head.

BABY SUGGS
Is that why you can't walk down the steps
and out yonder by yourself?

Denver can't answer.

BABY SUGGS
Why you never go back to Lady Jone's and
learn your letters? You liked going there
I remember. Seeing the other children.
Then all a sudden, you stop.

DENVER

There was a boy there...said mama was a
jailbird...said he could prove it..

Baby Suggs face registers the pain of her granddaughter, hurt
by hurtful words.

BABY SUGGS

My Jesus my...What people won't say. Why
didn't you come and ask me?

(Denver shrugs)

'Fraid I'll tell ya, huh?

(Denver looks at her)

Come here, child..

Denver crawls into her arms.

BABY SUGGS

You got to go sometime. You got to go out
there by yourself sometime.

DENVER

But you said...you said out there, there
ain't no...what was that word?..no..de-
fense. No de-fense.

BABY SUGGS

There ain't.

DENVER

Then what do I do?

BABY SUGGS

Know it, and go on out the yard. Go on.

END OF MEMORY.

INT. BABY SUGGS' ROOM - DAY.

Denver has crawled up and snuggled against the pillow in the
same position as when she was nine in her grandma's arms.

INT. SECOND FLOOR LANDING - DAY.

Denver has changed into a clean, pretty dress and is
approaching the stairs when she passes Sethe's room. It's
door is open. She looks in..

Sethe stands with her back to the door, cleaned up, wearing
her best dress and the hat she last wore to the carnival.

Denver smiles, hopefully;

DENVER

Mama?

Sethe turns, startled, to reveal - it is BELOVED in Sethe's best clothes...When Beloved sees Denver, she smiles tauntingly and strikes a pose...

BELOVED

I look just like her.

Disgusted, Denver exits.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY.

Denver walks down the stairs, entering the kitchen;

Sethe is on her knees, picking up pieces of broken plate. As she moves the skin on her knees bleeds as it scrapes against pieces too small to clean.

DENVER

Mama let me help you.

SETHE

NO!...She wanted me to do it.

Sethe continues her work, without even looking at Denver.

Denver pauses a moment, realizing she is of no use here - but knowing she needs to help her mother somehow.

She looks up to the kitchen, where every cupboard door is open revealing empty shelves...SHE EXITS - HEADING FOR THE FRONT DOOR.

INT. FRONT HALL - DAY.

C.U. - FRONT DOOR.

Denver's hands slowly reaches towards the door lock - and OPENS IT.

EXT. 124 BLUESTONE RD. - DAY.

Denver opens the door, then pushes the broken screen door off it's hinge. She closes the door behind her.

She begins her walk from the porch to the road. The first time she's ever gone alone..not knowing what she will face beyond the perimeters of her home.

She reaches Bluestone Road and stops. She looks in either direction and sees not a soul. She takes a breath.

She begins to walk - to get help.

A block from the house, TWO BLACK MEN turn a corner and walk towards her.

Denver stops, frightened, not knowing what to do.

The TWO BLACK MEN pass her, tipping their hats, saying;

TWO BLACK MAN
Morning...Morning..

And they walk by. Denver's eyes speak the gratitude she never got her mouth open in time to reply. Heartened by the encounter, she picks up speed.

EXT. LADY JONES' HOUSE - DAY.

LADY JONES - a light-skinned black woman with gray eyes and yellow woolly hair - opens the door to find Denver.

LADY JONES
Why Denver..Look at you.

Denver manages to smile.

LADY JONES
It's been so long. It's so nice of you to come see me. What brings you?

Unfortunately, Denver can't manage anything beyond the smile.

LADY JONES
Well, never mind - nobody needs a reason to visit. Let me make us some tea. Come on.

Lady Jones takes her by the hand and leads her inside.

INT. LADY JONES' HOUSE - DAY.

Tea things sit on a table between them. Denver eats whatever she can. Lady Jones watches with care and concern.

LADY JONES
How's your family, honey?

Denver swallows a bite of something with some tea, then;

DENVER
I want to work, Miss Lady.

LADY JONES
Work? Start learnin your letters again?

DENVER

No. I mean work work.

LADY JONES

Well, what can you do?

DENVER

I can't do anything but I would learn it for you if you have a little extra.

LADY JONES

Extra?

DENVER

Food. My mama, she doesn't feel well. I couldn't stay away from her too long, cause of her condition but I could do chores in the mornings.

LADY JONES

Oh baby...I don't know anyone could pay anybody anything for work they did themselves...But if you all need to eat until your mother's well, all you have to do is say so...We have a church committee invented so nobody had to go hungry.

DENVER

No..No that won't do...

Lady Jones can sense something far more serious is going on.

INT. 124 BLUESTONE RD./ KITCHEN - DAY.

Denver brings four eggs, some rice and some tea onto the kitchen table.

Sethe's eyes well up. She looks at Denver as if for the first time. Her face an expression of gratitude. Suddenly;

BELOVED (OS)

RAAAIN!!! RAAAAIN!

Sethe and Denver rush out of the kitchen to see;

beloved running through the rooms, clawing at her throat, causing it to bleed...

SETHE

BABY!

Sethe and Denver rush towards into the keeping room. Sethe stumbles over a chair to get to Beloved, kneeling on the

floor, ripping at her own neck...

Denver gets her from behind and Sethe grabs her from the front, pinning her down - trying to stop her from hurting herself. Beloved screams and strikes out at Sethe, pulling her hair, clawing at her as well...

EXT. 124 BLUESTONE RD. - DAY.

Denver exits the house because she sees something unusual in the yard;

POV - THE STUMP;

On the same stump that Beloved first appeared, sits A BASKET OF EGGS. Denver crosses to it, lifts it and a PAPER flutters to the ground. She reads it;

M. LUCILLE WILLIAMS...

EXT. M. LUCILLE WILLIAMS HOUSE - DAY.

Denver returns the empty basket to M. Lucille Williams.

DENVER

Thank you.

M. LUCILLE
WILLIAMS

Your welcome..

INT. 124 BLUESTONE RD. - DAY.

Beloved eats ravenously from a bowl of white beans. Sethe sits in the corner, as if waiting to serve her...

EXT. 124 BLUESTONE RD. - DAY

Upon the stump, sits a plate of cold rabbit meat, which Denver brings inside.

INT. GRACE'S HOUSE - DAY.

Denver is returning a bowl to Grace, a friendly woman.

GRACE

No, darling. That's not my bowl. Mine's got a blue ring around it..Would you like to come in a spell?

INT. 124 BLUESTONE RD. - DAY.

Beloved sleeps curled up on the kitchen floor after eating - her mouth still dirty from the meal...

Sethe, unwashed, her hair uncombed, sits in her corner chair. She is trying to mend a torn dress.

Denver eats a little from the latest neighborhood gift. She hears her mother mumbling to herself like a madwoman.

SETHE

Nobody..no sir..that's right..nobody's going be doing that..nobody going be writing my daughter's characteristics on the animal side..no sir..I don't care..ain't laying that down..no sir. I refuse..that's right..that's right...

DENVER

Mama...Mama she's asleep. Why don't you eat something.

SETHE

She likes this dress...

DENVER

But you'll hurt your eyes doin it there. Come sit at the table.

Sethe considers this. She rises cautiously, then sits at the table. Denver rises and gets her some food, placing it before her.

DENVER

Please mama, eat something...

Sethe nods...Denver is getting more and more frightened of losing her mother completely...Instead of protecting Beloved from Sethe, she must protect her mother from Beloved.

EXT. THE BODWIN'S HOUSE; BACK DOOR - DAY.

A white family home in a white Ohio neighborhood.

JANEY WAGON, a benevolent black servant woman, opens the back door for Denver.

JANEY

Yes?

DENVER

May I come in?

JANEY

What you want?

DENVER

I want to see Mr. and Mrs. Bodwin.

JANEY

Miss Bodwin. They brother and sister,
darlin.

DENVER

Oh.

JANEY

What you want'em for?

DENVER

I'm looking for work. I was thinking they
might know of some.

JANEY

(smiles)

You Baby Sugg's kin, ain't you?

DENVER

Yes ma'am.

JANEY

I heard your mother took sick, that so?

DENVER

Yes ma'am..

JANEY

Well, come on in. You letting in flies.

INT. THE BODWIN'S HOUSE - DAY.

The house is filled with books and pearl white lamps and
glass cases filled with glistening things.

Denver pushes her feet into the soft blue carpet as she sits
with Janey.

JANEY

You know what? I've been here since I was
fourteen and I remember like yesterday
when Baby Suggs, holy, came here and sat
right where you are. Whiteman name of
Garner brought her. He and Mr. Bodwin
were good friends. That's how she got
that house you all live in. Other things
too.

DENVER

Yes ma'am.

JANEY

I never went to those woodland services
but she was always nice to me. Always.
Never be another like her.

DENVER

I miss her.

JANEY

Bet you do. Everybody miss her. That was
a good woman...Well, I don't know whether
the Bodwins think it or not but they sure
could use some extra help.

DENVER

(hopeful)

Ya think?

JANEY

They getting older now and I can't take
care of 'em like I used to. More and more
they keep asking me to sleep over night.
Now, I don't want to quit these people
but they can't have all my days and
nights too. I got my own family needs me.
It'll take some convincing but maybe you
could come after supper - take care of
your mama during the day, then earn a
little something at night, how's that?

DENVER

Fine. But what would I do at night?

JANEY

Be here. In case.

DENVER

In case of what?

JANEY

In case the house burn down or bad
weather slops the roads so bad I can't
get here on time or late guests needed
cleaning up after. Anything.

(laughs)

Don't ask me what whitefolks need at
night.

During Janey's lines, Denver looks about the house imagining
herself here at night...her eyes happen upon A STATUE OF A
BLACK BOY on his knees, his head thrown back farther than a
head could go, his mouth wide open like a cup and filled with
money for delivery tips. On the pedestal are the words' AT YO
SERVICE;

DENVER

They good whitefolks?

JANEY

Oh yeah. They good. Can't say they ain't good. I wouldn't trade them for another pair, tell you that. But you come back in a few days - give me a chance to lead'em to it. All right?

Denver nods, beaming gratefully - so gratefully that no words come, only tears... Janey reaches for Denver's hand and holds it warmly;

JANEY

What is it, child? What's the trouble with Sethe?

Denver looks at her and we know she needs to tell someone.

INT. ELLA'S HOUSE - DAY.

Ella has gathered all the women of the town for a meeting including Lady Jones, Janey Wagon, M. Lucille Williams, Grace;

GRACE

But is it really the daughter, Janey? The killed one?

JANEY

That what she say.

M. LUCILLE

WILLIAMS

How they know it's her?

ELLA

It's sitting there. Sleeps, eats and raises hell. Whipping Sethe every day.

GRACE

I'll be. A baby?

JANEY

No. Grown now. The age it would have been had it lived.

GRACE

In the flesh. And whipping her.

M. LUCILLE

WILLIAMS

Guess she had it coming a little.

ELLA

Nobody got that coming.

M. LUCILLE

WILLIAMS

But Ella- you can't just up and kill your children.

ELLA

No, and the children can't just up and kill the mama. What's fair ain't necessarily right...

(the women listen)

Now you all know how I felt about the whole thing. I know the rage Sethe felt in that shed that day. We all do. But what I could not understand, and still don't, was her reaction to it. Prideful. Too damn complicated for a black woman in her position before God. But whatever she done, I don't like the idea of past errors taking possession of the present. I don't cotton to sin moving in on a house, unleashed and sassy. Every day life takes enough, takes all a woman has. "Sufficient unto the day is evil thereof" and nobody needs more. Nobody needs a grown up evil sitting at a table with a grudge. As long as that ghost showed itself from a ghostly place, I respected it. But once it take on flesh and come into this world, well, the shoe's on the other foot now. I don't mind a little communication between worlds. But this here's an invasion.

The women agree.

GRACE

Should we pray?

ELLA

Uh-huh. First. Then we got to get down to business.

INT. 124 BLUESTONE RD.: KITCHEN - DAYS LATER.

Denver comes down the stairs, entering the kitchen.

Sethe, worn out, looking more beaten and ravaged than before, stands at the sink with an ICE PICK chopping up ice. Denver speaks to her, but she does not turn or acknowledge her.

DENVER

Mama?....Mama I'm going out..

(no response)

Mama, I got a job. Working over at the Bodwins at night. Mr. Bodwin coming over now to pick me up on his way back from town. I'll be staying there nights and coming back here for the daytime. We'll have some money, mama..Mama?

Sethe continues her action as if hypnotized. Denver approaches her from behind and whispers softly;

DENVER

I'm going help you, mama. Don't you give up yet.

Denver touches her gently, but Sethe acts as if she hears and feels nothing. Denver exits.

EXT. 124 BLUESTONE RD. - LATE THAT DAY.

Denver is sitting on the stump waiting for Mr. Bodwin when she hears;

THIRTY WOMEN, gathered together, walking up Bluestone Rd. towards 124, SINGING A HOLY SONG;

Denver is amazed by the sight as the women position themselves right in front of 124 - armed with bibles, crucifixes and whatever other symbols of heavenly power they could find.

INT. 124 BLUESTONE RD; THE KEEPING ROOM - DAY.

Sethe is rubbing a naked Beloved's forehead with a cool cloth filled with ice, when the two women hear the singing.

Beloved rises first and moves to the window to see.

EXT. 124 BLUESTONE RD. - DAY.

The women continue singing.

CUT TO:

EXT. FURTHER DOWN BLUESTONE RD. - DAY.

MR. BODWIN, sitting on a wagon pulled by a horse, is riding toward 124 when he hears the singing as well.

WE NOTICE THAT MR. BODWIN IS WEARING A HAT SIMILAR TO THE ONE SCHOOLTEACHER WORE on that fateful day.

CUT BACK TO:

EXT. 124 BLUESTONE RD. - DAY.

The women continue singing as:

Sethe and Beloved, her belly as big as a pregnant woman's, exit the house.

The women are stunned by the sight and slightly confused by the lack of fear between the women.

Sethe is holding Beloved's hand. Beloved is smiling brightly at the beautiful singing.

Denver looks to her mother;

Tears run down Sethe's face but she is not crying. The sound of the women's voices wash over her like a baptism. She looks to all the women, faces she remembers, faces she has missed although up until this moment was not conscious of missing.

Then, Sethe looks beyond the women and sees:

MR. BODWIN APPROACHING IN HIS WAGON. SHE SEES MR. BODWIN WEARING A HAT THAT LOOKS LIKE SCHOOLTEACHERS.

Sethe's expression turns to fear, then rage. In her ravaged mind, she thinks it is Schoolteacher coming back...

SETHE

No...No, he's not coming into my yard. He not taking my best thing...No..

She releases Beloved's hand and moves forward...

SETHE

No...no...no..

DENVER

Mama?

She passes Denver, feeling for the ICE PICK IN HER APRON.

SETHE

No...NO..NO..NOOOOOOOOOOOO!

As Mr. Bodwin reaches the thirty women who separate him from 124. HIS EYES FOCUS IN WONDER ON THE NAKED BELOVED AS;

SETHE RUNS TOWARDS HIM AND THE WOMEN, HER HAND EXTENDED HOLDING THE ICE PICK..

DENVER

MAMA...NOOOOOOO!

DENVER RUNS AFTER HER. SETHE REACHES THE WOMEN AND LUNGES FOR BODWIN BUT THE WOMEN SEIZE HER, CREATING A HILL OF BLACK PEOPLE. SETHE RISING TO THE TOP, HER HAND EXTENDED. DENVER REACHING HER FROM BEHIND, PULLING HER BACK AND PUNCHING HER OUT COLD AS THE BODIES FALL AROUND THEM....

Beloved watches from the house - watches Sethe attack and defend with the ice pick. And something within her is resolved. For a moment, we see a calm spirit instead of a wild animal. And a tear upon her face..

Then, just as quickly, she sprints around the side of the house and disappears from view.

The Women try to help Sethe as Denver cries for her mother. Mr. Bodwin looks on stunned.

WIDE ANGLE - OF A NAKED BLACK WOMAN WITH A FULL BELLY RUNNING THROUGH AN OPEN FIELD, REACHING THE WOODS THEN DISAPPEARING INTO THE TREES.....

FADE OUT;

FADE IN:

EXT. RICHMOND ST. - DAY. WEEKS LATER.

Paul D. is on his way to work when he sees;

A poised, confident Denver walking in the opposite direction. She spots him and smiles;

DENVER

Good morning, Paul D.

Paul is clearly impressed by the sight of her.

PAUL

Well, is it now? How you getting along?

DENVER

Don't pay to complain.

PAUL

You on your way home?

DENVER

No. Got me an afternoon job at the shirt factory. Figure between that and my night work at the Bodwins I might be able to put something away for me and mama.

PAUL

They treating you right over at the Bodwins?

DENVER

More than all right. Miss Bodwin, she teach me stuff..Book stuff. She says I might go to Oberlin. She's experimenting on me.

Paul smiles - wanting to warn her but deciding not to spoil the possibilities that lay before her.

PAUL

Your mother all right?

DENVER

No. Not a bit all right. Hasn't gotten out of bed since that day.

PAUL

You think I should stop by? Think she'd welcome it?

DENVER

I don't know. I think I've lost my mother, Paul D.

Silence.

PAUL

That girl...You know, Beloved...

DENVER

Yes?

PAUL

She gone like they say?

DENVER

Haven't seen her since that day. Ella thinks she might be waiting in the woods for another chance but..I don't think so. Mama thinks she's gone for good. Says she can feel it.

PAUL

You think she sure 'nough your sister?

DENVER

At times. At other times I think she was...more. But who would know that better than you. I mean, you sure 'nough you her.

She levels her eyes at him and he knows what she means.

PAUL

Well, if you want my opinion...

DENVER

I don't. I have my own.

PAUL

You grown.

DENVER

Yes sir

PAUL

Well, good luck with the job.

DENVER

Thank you.

They pass each other until Denver turns back;

DENVER

And Paul D...you don't have to stay 'way,
but be careful how you talk to my mama,
hear?

PAUL

I will.

Paul watches her walk away. He watches as a YOUNG BLACK MAN
runs towards her shouting;

YOUNG MAN

Hey, Miss Denver..Wait up!

He watches as the two young people, the future, walk
together.

INT. 124 BLUESTONE RD. - DAY.

Paul enters the house and hears HUMMING. He walks towards the
keeping room, whose door is ajar;

INT. KEEPING ROOM - DAY.

Sethe lies in bed with the remnants of Baby Sugg's quilt over
her, as she hums her melody and looks out of the window.

PAUL

Sethe?

SETHE

(turns to him)
Paul D.

She looks like she's dying.

PAUL
Aw, Sethe.

He approaches her.

SETHE
You shaved.

PAUL
Yeah. Look bad?

SETHE
No, You looking good.

PAUL
Devil's confusion. What's this I hear
about you not getting out of bed?
(no response)
I saw Denver. She tell you?

SETHE
She comes in the daytime. She still with
me, my Denver.

PAUL
(nervous)
You got to get up from here, girl.

SETHE
I'm tired, Paul. So tired. I have to rest
a while.

PAUL
(getting upset, shouts)
Don't you die on me!! This is Baby Suggs
quilt. Is that what you planning!?

SETHE
Oh, I don't have no plans. No plans at
all.

PAUL
Look - Denver be here in the day. I be
here in the night. I'm a take care of
you, you hear? Starting now.

Sethe looks at him - a long look - and sees in him that
thing, that blessedness, "that makes him the kind of man who
can walk into a house and make women cry, make women tell him

things they could only tell each other".

PAUL

What, baby?

SETHE

(cries)

She left me. She's gone again.

PAUL

Aw, girl. Don't cry...Me and you, we got more yesterday than anybody. We need some kind of tomorrow...

SETHE

She was my best thing.

Paul leans down and takes her hand, entwining his fingers into hers...

PAUL

You your best thing, Sethe. You are.

Sethe smiles, with tears in her eyes, looking almost surprised;

SETHE

Me?...Me?

EXT. THE CLEARING - A DAY OUT OF TIME.

A beautiful, sunny day. The clearing is full. Everyone looks bright and hopeful. Dressed in bright, summer clothes...

A robust Baby Suggs is on her rock giving her best Call, as camera pans the crowd of faces eager to believe

BABY SUGGS

..The only grace we can have, is the grace we can imagine. If you cannot see it, you will not have it...Here, in this place, we are flesh. Flesh that weeps, laughs, dances on bare feet in the grass. Love it. Love it hard. Yonder they do not love your flesh. They despise it. They flay it. O, my people, they do not love your hands. Those they only use, tie, bind, chop off and leave empty, Love your hands. Love them. Raise them up and kiss them. Touch others with them, put them together, stroke them on your face 'cause they don't love that either. You got to love it. You. Yonder out there, they ain't in love with your moth. They will

see it broken and break it again. What
you say out of it, they will not heed.
What you scream from it they do not hear.
No, they don't love your mother. You got
to love it. And the feet that need to
rest and to dance. The backs that needs
support. The shoulders that need arms,
strong arms I'm telling you! O my people,
out yonder they don't love your neck
unnoosed and straight. So love your neck;
put a hand on it, grace it, stroke it and
hold it up. Love all your inside parts,
love 'em..and the beating heart, love
that too. More than eyes or feet. More
than lungs that have yet to draw free
air, love your heart. For this is the
prize.

And with her twisted, broken old body BABY SUGGS BEGINS TO
DANCE AND TWIRL UP ON HER ROCK.

And the crowd gives her music, SINGING IN FOUR PART HARMONY.
CAMERA PANS THE CROWD OF BEAUTIFUL FACES singing together.
Among the crowd, we see FAMILIAR FACES...

WE SEE THE WOMEN WHO SANG AT 124...

WE STAMP PAID, ELLA, JOHN, and LADY JONES...

AND WE SEE SETHE, SURROUNDED BY ALL HER CHILDREN.

FADE OUT.