

DOLORES CLAIBORNE

screenplay by

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based on the novel by

Stephen King

THIRD DRAFT
3/21/94

OPEN ON

A HOUSE. A large, impressive summer home. Real wealth. But the paint's peeling. The roof needs work. A faded, tarnished quality that's more than just out of season.

CUT TO

STAIRS. Steep, majestic, bare wood. A grand old house. We're looking up, but it's an odd angle, we can't quite see the top. SOUNDS coming now -- two people struggling -- something metal CRASHING against wood -- and then, a moment later, our curiosity dispelled by --

A VOICE (OS)
(an old woman's scream)
-- Dolores, no! -- Leave me be! --
Leave me! -- Duh-lorrrr-issss--

SUDDENLY INTO FRAME

VERA DONOVAN, 75, hurtling toward us -- a tumble of pink flesh and nightgown -- mid-air -- falling -- a brutal, glancing header on the stairs -- her body jerked by the impact -- spinning now -- a horrible sort of cartwheel -- bone on wood -- head -- hip -- shoulder -- and then, as fast as it started, it's over.

ON THE LANDING

VERA'S BODY sprawled there. Legs twisted beneath her. Her neck at an angle it hurts just to look at. Blood already pooling on the hardwood floor. And then -- the body moves -- tries to anyway -- a palsied, halting effort, and --

AT THE TOP OF THE STAIRS

A WOMAN stands beside a fallen wheelchair. Staring down in shock. Trying just to breathe. Her housedress torn, hair tangled. She is fifty-five years old and looks every day of it. She is DOLORES CLAIBORNE.

VERA'S VOICE (OS)
(a whisper from below)
Dolores...

DOLORES hesitates. Frozen there. God knows what she's thinking. And then, suddenly she's in motion -- rushing down the stairs and --

CUT TO

A KITCHEN DRAWER whipping open -- pulled so violently that it flies off it's housing -- KNIVES and CLEAVERS CLATTERING across the floor -- a TEA KETTLE SCREAMING on the stove --

WIDER TO FIND

DOLORES, panicked, staring down at the KNIVES at her feet. Eyes scanning wildly around the room -- looking for something -- What? -- A CAST IRON POT on the back of the stove -- she grabs for it -- her arm grazing THE TEA KETTLE -- burned -- recoiling -- the kettle falls -- hot water spilling -- she jumps back -- no time to think -- something -- anything -- and there it is -- A LARGE MARBLE ROLLING PIN and --

CUT TO

THE LANDING. Vera's body as we left it. Motionless now.

DOLORES standing over her. Wielding the ROLLING PIN. Raising it over her head. Poised to strike, when --

A VOICE (OS)

(out of nowhere)

Dolores Claiborne!

BEHIND HER

SAMMY MARCHANT, the postman, coming fast through the room.

SAMMY

What the hell're -- my God --
(he sees the blood)

-- What've you done? --

(mailbag falling as

he rushes toward her)

-- put it down, Dolores! -- you
hear me? -- just put it down!

DOLORES lowers the rolling pin. SAMMY pushing past her.

SAMMY

-- Jesus, Dolores...

(stopping cold)

My God...omigod...

He's seen the body. He turns to DOLORES. He backs away.

SAMMY

...you killed her.

CLOSE UP -- THE ROLLING PIN slipping from her hand and --

CLOSE-UP -- THE ROLLING PIN hitting the floor. Rolling across the landing and out of sight. The sound of it CLATTERING DOWN THE STAIRS as we --

CUT TO

NEW YORK CITY -- THE SIXTH AVENUE CANYON in your face. Looking uptown -- thirty blocks to the park and --

FORTY-EIGHTH ST. VENDORS packing the sidewalk. Suits and Secretaries -- lunch on the fly, and --

FIFTY-THIRD ST. CONSTRUCTION WORKERS ripping up concrete. Oblivious to the TRAFFIC and a STEEL DRUM BAND banging away for quarters, and --

FINALLY TO

FIFTY-SIXTH ST. But now we're high above. Looking down. Forty stories up at least. Quiet suddenly. Until --

WOMAN (OS)

Cuts?

PETER, 40, fashionably casual, enters THE FRAME. And now we realize we're looking through a window. His window.

PETER

Just the description of the campaign plane. Annie's got a great picture.

WIDER TO FIND

PETER'S OFFICE. Manhattan media. Framed magazine covers on one wall. If it's not Vanity Fair it's damn close.

WOMAN (OS)

And that's it?

PETER

I said I liked it four times already.

SELENA ST. GEORGE standing there. Early thirties. A great haircut but she chews her nails. She wears Donna Karan but doesn't take care of it. She stabs out a cigarette.

SELENA

What happened to, "wonderful?"

PETER

It's wonderful.

SELENA
So I get the Murdoch piece?

PETER
C'mon, Selena. You're six months
ahead of your contract.

SELENA
I'm on a roll. Use me.

PETER
This is not a roll, it's a crusade.
Hit a beach. Eat something solid.
Take a breath for crissake.

SELENA
I want this piece. I've already
prepped it. I deserve it.

PETER
Wait a minute...

SELENA
There's a book here goddamit.
(trying to soften)
C'mon Peter...I need this one.

PETER
I've got a dozen writers to keep
happy, Selena. You know that.

He smiles. An appeal. She's not buying it.

SELENA
Great. So now you're not only not
fucking me anymore, you're not
giving me the good assignments.

His smile folds. A SECRETARY appears in the doorway.

PETER
What is it, Ellen?

SECRETARY
(a paper in hand)
There's a fax for Selena...

SELENA
The travel agent?

SECRETARY
No, it's a clipping from the Bangor
Daily News.

They've got no clue --

SECRETARY

(reading it)

"Socialite Dead, Housekeeper Held
For Questioning. Mrs. Vera Donovan,
of Little Tall Island, Maine--"

(stopping as--)

SELENA rips the page from her.

SELENA

Where's the cover sheet?

(scanning it)

Who sent this?

SECRETARY

This is all we got -- that's--

(hearing something

behind her)

Maybe it's coming through now --

PETER staring as SELENA pushes through the doorway.

PETER

What story is this?

SELENA already gone. PETER looks to the SECRETARY who gives him a "damned if I know" look.

CUT TO

A FAX MACHINE. A page just coming through. No name, no number, no details. Large, handwritten letters:

ISN'T THIS YOUR MOTHER?

REVERSE TO FIND

AN OUTER OFFICE. SELENA ripping the fax from the machine. Balling it quickly in her hand. Tossing it sharply into the garbage as she heads back away --

PETER

(in the doorway)

What's going on?

SELENA

Nothing.

(brushing past him)

Just some crank. It's nothing.

CUT TO

SELENA'S OFFICE. Smaller than Peter's. Cluttered.
The day after deadline. SELENA circling her desk.
Gathering things into her large black bag as she whips
off instructions to HER SECRETARY.

SELENA
Download my Murdoch files and tell
Research I want everything they can
get their hands on --

PETER
(in the doorway)
-- Selena? --

SELENA
-- anything that's not going to
make it here by Saturday should
be in L.A. when I get there Sunday.

HER SECRETARY scribbling away as PETER moves into the room.
He holds the crumpled FAXES, smoothing them in his hand.

PETER
Selena.

SELENA
What?

PETER
What are you doing?

SELENA
(zipping her bag)
I'm prepping a major cover story.

PETER
This woman -- the housekeeper --
the one they're holding...

SELENA turns sharply. PETER with the faxes.

SELENA
I don't believe you.
(flaring)
You're going through my garbage?

SECRETARY
(backing from the room)
I'll just start on these calls...

SELENA
(hand out)
Could I please have my mail back.

PETER

Selena...this is this morning's paper. A woman was murdered...

SELENA

Can I have them back please?

PETER hesitates. No mistaking her tone. Watching her take them from him. Watching her head for the door.

SELENA

(her parting salvo)

You owe me the Murdoch.

PETER left there. Alone. Confused.

CUT TO

AN EMPTY GLASS. A BARTENDER'S HAND INTO FRAME delivering a FRESH DRINK -- vodka with a lemon wedge.

A MIDTOWN BAR. Business lunch rush. SELENA at the rail. MANHATTAN TRAFFIC through a window in the BG.

BARTENDER

How about a menu, Selena?

SELENA

I doubt it.

PETER (OS)

Club soda please.

PETER slides in beside her. She doesn't turn.

SELENA

I accept your apology.

PETER

You told me your mother was dead.

SELENA

You told me you were leaving your wife.

PETER

It is your mother, isn't it?

(beat)

I can't believe you told me your mother was dead.

Now she turns. Hardly intimidated.

SELENA

You want to talk about the piece?
I'm here. You want a personality
profile? I'm really not up to it.

PETER

Okay. The piece. It's only taken
me the better part of a year to
pull this thing together. It's a
major, major story.

SELENA

You talked me into it.

PETER

Look, on your game, you're the best
writer I've got.

SELENA

What is that supposed to mean?

PETER

I'm worried about you.

(she rolls her eyes)

Selena...you and I...everything
that's happened -- I hardly think
it's out of line for me to be
concerned about you.

SELENA

Am I getting the damn piece or not?

PETER

I can't -- let me finish -- I don't
pretend to know what's going on
here, I don't want to pry, but this
is obviously something that--

SELENA

What do you want me to do?

(incredulous)

Go hold her hand?

PETER not sure what he wants. The BARTENDER delivers his
club soda. SELENA involved with a cigarette.

PETER

Look, nobody has to be in L.A.
until next week. Right now, you
say it's fine -- it's not a problem.

(intimate here)

I'm just worried that two days from
now -- five days -- next week --
this is gonna sink in, that's all.
I can't afford to have this fuck
up because it's not the best you.

PETER warming her up. He's there for her.

PETER

I mean, let's just make sure this is what you think it is. Doesn't that make sense?

SELENA

What are you saying? If I don't go see my mommy I can't have the piece?

Silence his answer. She'll get no response, as we --

CUT TO

AERIAL VIEW -- A FERRY BOAT. We're in Maine. A cold day in March. An old, slow car-ferry chugging through whitecaps toward LITTLE TALL ISLAND.

CUT TO

MOVING POV -- THE TOWN OF LITTLE TALL approaching. The one village on the island. A small, working class summer town bunkered down for the winter. Fishing boats. A ferry slip.

SELENA on deck. Alone. Smoking.

CUT TO

THE LITTLE TALL PIER. The FERRY tied in. DOCKWORKERS unloading. SELENA'S RENTAL CAR pulling off the slip.

CUT TO

THE RENTAL CAR on Main Street. Stopped at a red light.

INSIDE THE CAR

SELENA at the wheel. She's tight. Spacing out, as she takes in the surroundings. Her eyes wander to the sidewalk.

HER POV

A WOMAN of forty standing on the corner. Staring at her. A look of curious recognition.

BACK TO

SELENA turning away sharply. A van behind her HONKING its horn. She hits the gas. The car jumping away and --

CUT TO

AN OLD MUNICIPAL BUILDING. A pokey, all-purpose facility at the center of town. A sign above the door:

LITTLE TALL ISLAND TOWN HALL

CUT TO

INSIDE THE TOWN HALL. Whatever charm this building once had has been renovated out of it over the years. The kind of place that holds everything from Bingo to the local zoning board hearings. Quiet at the moment.

DETECTIVE JOHN MACKEY on the phone in a temporary office just off the lobby. He's fifty. A big presence tightly wound into a small package. Always a suit and tie. A bad leg. A cane he'll never get used to.

MACKEY

(on the phone)

...so he keeps the lab open, that's what they get paid for...

His eyes settle on something outside the room --

CUT TO

THE LOBBY OF THE TOWN HALL. SELENA standing there alone. Unnoticed by a SECRETARY typing behind a counter.

MACKEY (OS)

Can I help you?

SELENA turns. MACKEY behind her.

SELENA

I'm looking for Dolores Claiborne.

MACKEY

And you are?

SELENA

I'm her daughter.

MACKEY hesitates. Turns to the SECRETARY --

MACKEY

Could you please call up for Frank?
Ask him to come right out.

SELENA

Is she here? I tried to call from
the airport -- your phone lines --
it's been impossible.

MACKEY

We've had a busy day.

SELENA

Well, is she here or not?

MACKEY

The constable will be right down.
(he tries a smile,
not his best weapon)
I'm Detective Mackey, Maine State
Police.

SELENA too tight to press it. She'll wait.

SELENA

Can I smoke?

MACKEY

It'll be our secret.

She roots in her bag a moment. She'll find a cigarette but
no lighter. His eyes never leave her.

MACKEY

It's Selena, right?
(she looks up)
We've met before, Miss St. George.
You may not remember me -- you were
about twelve...
(he pulls a lighter,
strikes it for her)
What year was that? The eclipse?
Must've been what? Seventy-five?

SELENA pulls back. Off balance now.

MACKEY

I was the investigator.
(beat)
When your father died. We met at
the hearing.

No time to react as -- **CONSTABLE FRANK STAMSHAW** enters.
He's forty. In uniform. The only cop on the island.
A simple lawman.

FRANK
What's up, John?

MACKEY
Miss St. George is here...

FRANK
Selena?

SELENA staring. Who is this?

FRANK
Frank Stamshaw...
(offering his hand)
Marshall's brother? Jonesport High?

SELENA
Right. Sure.
(faking it)
Of course.

FRANK
Been a while, I guess.

SELENA
Quite a while. Yes.

FRANK
Be honest, I'm kinda surprised to
see you. Your mom's been pretty firm
about us not trying to contact you.
(to Mackey)
I didn't know she'd made any calls.

SELENA
She didn't call. I saw the Bangor
paper. It was faxed to my office.

MACKEY
And where is that?

SELENA
I came up from New York.
(enough of this)
Look, is she here or not?

FRANK
She's right upstairs.

SELENA
Is she under arrest?

FRANK
Technically no. Detective Mackey
came over last night, so we're just
getting started.

SELENA

Started on what?

MACKEY

We've scheduled an inquest for Monday morning at nine-thirty. We'll take the weekend to try and sort things out.

SELENA

But you kept her overnight.

MACKEY

Your mother, Miss St. George, is refusing to cooperate at this point. We had her spend the night -- we thought she might want to talk to us but apparently that is not the case. We've advised her to get an attorney. She has declined.

SELENA

What are we into here?

FRANK

Well, that's what we're trying to get a handle on. Vera Donovan is dead. There was an autopsy this morning in Machias. She died from a fall, that much we know.

MACKEY

Your mother was the only person with Mrs. Donovan at the time.

SELENA

That was her job, wasn't it?

MACKEY

I'm afraid, Miss St. George, there's a little more to this than what you may have read in the paper.

Off SELENA'S reaction we --

CUT TO

FRANK STAMSHAW'S OFFICE. Cluttered and homey. DOLORES, alone, in the corner, straightening up a pile of newspapers. The door opens behind her.

FRANK

Dolores?

(seeing her working)

Dolores, what're you doing?

DOLORES

(still at it)

Straightin up this friggin mess is what I'm doing. Gorry, but this place is a dump.

FRANK

Jesus, Dolores, you're a suspect not a maid -- just leave that be now -- there's someone to see you.

She half-glances back. SELENA in the doorway.

DOLORES

I told you, I don't want no lawyer.

FRANK

It's your daughter, Dolores.

A beat. DOLORES seriously thrown.

SELENA

Mother?

DOLORES

Selena?

(beat)

My God...lookit you -- you cut your hair -- I didn't...

(stunned, she turns to Frank--)

You call her? -- That what you did? Jeezly-crow but you got some nerve.

FRANK

She's here on her own, Dolores.

DOLORES hesitates. Joy stronger than anger for the moment.

DOLORES

Lookit you -- Selena -- I'm just...

(crossing to her)

My God...is it really you?

SELENA

It's me mother.

DOLORES gathers SELENA in her arms, holding her tightly. SELENA allows this -- frozen at first -- finally joining the embrace because it's more awkward not to. DOLORES pulls back to find FRANK and MACKEY watching from the doorway.

DOLORES

Well, I guess you two've had your stunt for the day.

DOLORES drawing herself up. Trying to settle.

DOLORES

You can wipe off that smile, Frank. You may be a hot-shot town cop these days, but it hasn't been too long since I seen you runnin around in a saggy diaper with that same foolish grin on your face.

FRANK

Dolores, please -- we did not call your daughter.

DOLORES

(re: Mackey)

'N your pal there -- I c'n read you easier'n an underwear ad in the Sears catalogue.

SELENA

Mother.

(Dolores turns)

Why don't you get your bag?

CUT TO

TOWN HALL PARKING LOT. SELENA unlocking her rental car. DOLORES waiting. FRANK and MACKEY standing there.

FRANK

I know you've been living at the Donovan house, Dolores, but it's a crime scene now, so I'm afraid it's off-limits for the time being.

DOLORES opens her door. Ignoring him.

FRANK

(to Selena)

We'd prefer your mother remain on the Island the next four days. If there's some pressing reason to go t'mainland you give us a call. You need a place to stay, I'm sure--

DOLORES

I got my own house and you know it.

(turning back)

And if I decide to make my grand escape to South America I'll make sure t'let you know first.

FRANK

I'd appreciate it.

DOLORES

That it then? Or're you planning
on followin us home?

MACKEY

One last thing, Mrs. St. George--

DOLORES

My name is Claiborne.

(right on him)

I changed it back after Joe died n
you know it. Dolores Claiborne.

MACKEY

I'm very sorry, Ms. Claiborne. I'm
sorry, but I really think'd be for
the best if you found yourself some
legal representation.

DOLORES

So you're sorry, are you?

(getting in the car)

I'll bet the last time you were
sorry was when you needed to use
the pay-toilet and the string on
your pet dime broke.

She SLAMS the door. SELENA left standing there.

FRANK

You better talk to her, Selena.

SELENA stares around. She looks trapped.

SELENA

The motel's still open, right?

FRANK

Not till May. It's off season.

SELENA

What about the Inn in Jonesport?

FRANK

Devereux's? No...burned down must
be four years ago.

(pause)

We're kind of releasing her in your
care here.

SELENA nods. Too claustrophobic to even say good-bye.
FRANK and MACKEY watching her get into the car, as we --

CUT TO

THE RENTAL CAR on the road. Rough island countryside.

CUT TO

INSIDE THE CAR. SELENA driving. DOLORES staring at her. Awkward silence, until --

DOLORES

I'm just muzzy here tryin to think what to say.

(beat)

All grown up -- lookin so...

(beaming)

You turned out a beautiful woman, Selena.

(overcome)

I just can't believe you're here.

SELENA

That makes two of us.

A cold pause. DOLORES sensing the chill.

SELENA

I'm sure there's a very good reason for why you'd go out of your way to antagonize them like that.

(pause)

There is a good reason, isn't there?

DOLORES

Sometimes bein a bitch is all a woman has to hold onto.

SELENA looks over. Then back to the road.

DOLORES

It's a nice car.

SELENA

It's a rental.

DOLORES

You pay by the day or by the week?

SELENA

I assume that's your way of asking how long I'm staying.

DOLORES

Gorry, you're more nervous than I am.

SELENA

I've got to be in Los Angeles Monday.
It's a big story. I'm trying to get
out of it, but it may not be possible.

DOLORES

You want -- up here -- to get to the
house --

(the road)

-- you're gonna miss the turn.

SELENA flustered. Locking the brakes.

DOLORES

Just swing around -- just...

The car pulls a wide, jerky turn. SELENA a lousy driver.

DOLORES

I guess you don't remember the way.

SELENA

It's only been fifteen years.

A pause. DOLORES turns away. Eyes to the road.

DOLORES

I didn't kill her.

(beat)

I didn't push her down that friggin
staircase. That's what you want to
know, ain't it? 'N I'm tellin you
-- I did not murder that bitch any
more n' I'm wearin a diamond tiara
right now.

(silence)

What'd they tell you 'fore you came
up to get me?

SELENA

They said you refused to talk to them.
They said they kept you overnight
because they were worried you might
hurt yourself.

DOLORES

Frank Stamshaw, gorry ain't he dumb.
"Hurt myself."

(amused by this)

I spent more'n enough Sunday mornins
watching that boy in church, his
finger so far up his nose it was a
miracle he could get it out without
callin for help.

SELENA

How smart does he have to be, mother?
He's got an eyewitness who puts you
standing over a dead body with a
rolling pin.

Now DOLORES goes quiet. Not much air left in here.

DOLORES

I always knew Vera Donovan'd just
be about the death of me -- knew it
the first time I saw her. Goddam
old bitch has really stuck her gum
in my gears this time.

SELENA reaching for a cigarette. Fumbling for it. She's
getting edgier by the moment --

DOLORES

I'm scarin you, ain't I?

SELENA

Look, I'm not the one in trouble.

DOLORES

I did not kill Vera Donovan.

SELENA

Then there's nothing to worry about,
is there?

DOLORES

Not that she's not better off dead.

SELENA

There's a great defense strategy...

DOLORES

She's been bad for so long.

SELENA

Okay.

(snapping)

Look, I just spent four days on
deadline. I don't expect you to
have the slightest idea what that's
like, but I'm...I'd just...

(trying to settle)

I'm just a little stressed, okay?

(beat)

All right?

DOLORES nods. SELENA driving in silence, as we --

CUT TO

A HOUSE. Dolores's house. We're at the East end of the island; the most barren, hardscrabble real estate on Little Tall. A perpetual, hard salt wind off the North Atlantic. There's nothing extra out this way; trees, weeds, even rocks don't make it without being strong. A punished and colorless landscape.

The town road runs along the water. The coastline nothing but rock. Woodsmoke from a few nearby houses. A pitted, dirt driveway leaves the road, rising slightly a hundred yards or so up a small crest. At the top of this crest is a four acre parcel of land surrounded by scrub-meadow and brambles. The driveway fizzles out at the center of a dirt yard. There's a tool shed and a roofless, tilting garage. The property is littered with forty years worth of debris: a useless old pick-up truck, rusted steel drums, tires, etc.

The house itself is basically a two-story, gray wooden shack. Weatherbeaten shingles of various design evidence additions and half-assed attempts at remodeling over the years. There is a front porch. Paint peels from the window trim. Nobody has lived here in quite some time.

IN THE DRIVEWAY

DOLORES and **SELENA** outside the car. Staring at the house.

DOLORES

Spooky, ain't it?

(silence)

Can't stand out here all day.

DOLORES looks over. **SELENA**, arms crossed, trying to take it all in. Fifteen years is a long time.

CUT TO

A BROKEN WINDOW. Vandalized. The **CAMERA MOVING** along now the side of the house to find **GRAFFITI** -- a crudely painted skull and crossbones.

FINALLY TO

DOLORES ON THE FRONT PORCH. At the door. Fiddling with keys. **SELENA** behind her, a pocket book and a large black leather bag slung over her shoulder.

DOLORES

Friggin little bastards --

(trouble with the lock)

I got'n idea who they are too.

SELENA

(impatient)

Here. Let me try.

DOLORES hands SELENA the keys. Steps back. Turns around to look off the porch and --

HER POV

THE YARD. The field beyond it. The ocean beyond that. Barren, gray, foul weather that suddenly changes, as we --

MATCH CUT INTO

FLASHBACK

We're looking down off the porch. The same spot, but now the fog, the cold, and nineteen years have just disappeared. It is the Summer of 1975. It is hot and clear. The garage is standing. The pick-up truck very much alive.

THIRTY MEN are coming toward the house from the far distance. They are in formation. A search party, moving slowly, struggling solemnly through the meadow and brambles beyond the property.

A TWELVE-YEAR-OLD GIRL steps off the porch. Watching the men. Tensely, quietly, edging forward.

DOLORES, age 36, stands above her on the porch. She doesn't see the girl moving away because her eyes are locked on the search party in the distance. The quiet broken suddenly by --

A SEARCHER'S VOICE (OS)

Hey, Sheriff! Over here! Over here!

DOLORES

Selena!

THE TWELVE YEAR OLD GIRL turns back. Frightened.

DOLORES

Get in the house. Right now.

OUT OF FLASHBACK AND

BACK TO -- THE PRESENT

SELENA

(confused, at the door)

I am in the house.

DOLORES turns back. Shaken and trying to hide it.

CUT TO

INSIDE THE HOUSE. Front door opens to the living room. Beyond that a dining room. Off that, the kitchen. One first-floor bedroom. Two more upstairs. A museum-like quality: threadbare furniture, dust, wind breezing through the broken window -- a fully furnished house that no one's lived in for a decade.

SELENA in the living room. This about the last place on earth she wants to be. Struggling with that, as --

DOLORES

(busying around)

It's cold, I know -- thank God I kept the electric up --

(turning on a lamp)

There's clean linens last I looked.

(opening shutters)

I got matches, we'll have hot water pretty quick.

(pulling a curtain)

I tried to sell two years ago, but ain't nobody with halfa wit wants a place out here...

(over her shoulder)

Longer you stand there, the more boogery it's gonna feel.

SELENA

It's dead.

DOLORES turns. SELENA holding the phone.

DOLORES

Gorry, it's off three years at least.

SELENA

(hanging up)

I guess I'd know that if I called more often.

DOLORES

You called Vera's last Christmas.

(another lamp)

You just forgot, that's all.

SELENA

The lines go both ways, mother.

DOLORES

Selena, please...

SELENA

You've always had my numbers.

DOLORES
All I said was you forgot.

SELENA
The bottom line is I need a phone.

DOLORES
We can go into town. Market closes
at six on Thursdays.

SELENA
I'll go now.
(checks her watch)
I can just catch them at the office.

DOLORES
You don't know what we need.

SELENA
I'm assuming it's everything.

DOLORES
You'll want a hand.

SELENA
I'll be fine.

SELENA already pulling her keys. DOLORES nods. If she's hurt it doesn't show. Back to work. Just like always.

CUT TO

AN UPSTAIRS BEDROOM. Selena's old room. Frozen in it's girlish, high school decor. DOLORES has made up the bed. She is unpacking for Selena. Pulling carelessly rumpled garments from the large black bag and folding them into neat, perfect piles on the bed. DOLORES, just now finishing with the clothes, reaches deeper into the bag and --

A SERIES OF SHOTS -- the contents of Selena's bag as DOLORES places them on the dresser. A chaotic collection of stuff -- the personal detritus of Selena's life.

A LAPTOP COMPUTER -- much used and abused.

CIGARETTE PACKS -- a messy collection. Open packs. Empty packs. A variety of brands. Lighters. Matches.

HALF A DOZEN TRAFFIC TICKETS -- balled up and forgotten.

THREE SMALL TAPE RECORDERS -- journalist quality. Tangled headphone wires. Loose batteries. A few ruined cassettes. Half a dozen new, blank tapes.

A FLASK -- scuffed and well-traveled.

NOTEBOOKS -- disorganized to say the least. Pages hanging out. Balls of paper. Scribbled notes on cocktail napkins.

AND THEN...

PILLS -- lots of pills. A dozen prescriptions at least. Vial after vial. Old stuff. New stuff. Labels from different pharmacies. "NOT TO BE REFILLED" typed on more than a few of them. Quite an ugly little grab-bag.

THE CAMERA FINDS

DOLORES staring at this assortment of objects from Selena's bag. Clearly not the personal essentials of a healthy soul. DOLORES absorbing this. A piece of hope crushed quietly inside her. She grabs the bag. Sweeps the pills back where they came from. She sits on the bed. Wounded deeply. Turning toward the open door, as she hears --

A FIVE-YEAR-OLD-GIRL (OS)
(somewhere in the hallway)
...you count a hundred! -- you count
-- no peeking! -- don't peek! --
(playfully continuing
as she gets closer--)

DOLORES staring toward the door and --

FLASHBACK

The little girl. In the hallway. A gorgeous, happy five-year-old SELENA. A game of hide and seek. Giddy, as she searches for a place to hide.

And then, a voice from downstairs -- Dolores's voice -- a much younger Dolores -- the classic sing-song countdown -- "five, ten, fifteen, twenty, twenty-five, thirty, thirty-five..."

The little girl scrambles away down the hallway, out of sight and --

OUT OF FLASHBACK

As we were. DOLORES sitting on Selena's bed. Trying to catch her breath. Frozen there, as we --

CUT TO

A VIEW OF BLUE ROCK COVE. Dusk. A moment of this, before a PIECE OF PLYWOOD slides in, blocking the vista.

DOLORES alone in the LIVING ROOM. Boarding up one of the broken windows. BANGING IT into place -- BANGING with her hand, when suddenly, she turns --

DOLORES

There you are...

SELENA entering behind her with grocery bags. She's been drinking.

DOLORES

(rushing to help)

Here -- lemme --

(taking a bag)

I started to get worried...

SELENA

(struggling with the bags)

These calls -- it ended up longer than I thought.

DOLORES

You must be starvin.

SELENA loses one of the bags -- it falls --

SELENA

-- oh shit --

DOLORES

I got it. Not to worry...

DOLORES already on the case. Pulling paper towel from the bag she's carrying -- kneeling quickly to staunch the leak.

DOLORES

You go on. I'll take care of this.

SELENA

I asked her for double bags -- you would've thought I was speaking Swahili...

DOLORES

It's just the milk. There's 'nother whole quart here.

(no problem)

Go on. You go warm up.

SELENA turning away. Heading up the stairs. DOLORES cleaning the mess.

SELENA

There should be a fifth of Scotch
in there. I wasn't sure you'd get
the heater going.

(calling down as
she disappears
upstairs--)

I got some chops...there's pasta
...potatoes...

DOLORES hoisting the bags. Lugging them --

INTO

THE KITCHEN. Bags to the counter. DOLORES unpacking,
reaches in and pulls out a BOTTLE OF SCOTCH -- Johnny Walker
Red -- she puts it down instantly, as if it were on fire --
undone by its presence -- staring at it until --

SELENA (OS)

It's not like you, mother.

DOLORES turns. SELENA holding the black bag.

SELENA

Start a job, quit halfway. I mean,
if you're gonna unpack for me, well,
I expect you to do it all.

(she's pissed)

And frankly, mother, I don't remember
asking you to go through my things.

DOLORES

I could see how tired you were.

SELENA

Well, it just so happens I've got
a pill for that...

SELENA starts pulling out bottles. She is angry.

SELENA

Just so you don't feel you missed
anything...

(first of a series)

This is Inderal. It's for panic
attacks.

(next)

This is Seconal. It's for sleep.
Sort of your all-purpose coma thing.

(next)

Here's my Halcion. You sleep, but
you dream. My travel favorite.

(next)

Fioronal -- migraines.

(MORE)

SELENA (cont)

Tylenol with codeine...

(next)

Abhh...Dexedrine. One for waking up.
Two for deadlines.

(next)

Here we go -- my Valium. Crucial.
Sort of the anchor of my stash.

(she'd go on, but--)

DOLORES

Stop.

(a heavy pause)

Would you rather potato, or the
noodles?

SELENA

(pure chill)

Surprise me.

SELENA walks. DOLORES watching her go.

CUT TO

FOOD ON A PLATE. SOUNDS of cutlery and --

DOLORES and SELENA at the DINNER TABLE. Two silent,
alienated faces. SELENA a few fingers deep into the Scotch.
Neither of them as hungry as they should be.

DOLORES

(finally)

Must be a lot of pressure. All them
famous people. Talkin to 'em.

SELENA

Please...

DOLORES

You were in the same room -- I
framed the picture -- you and
Richard Nixon.

SELENA

He was selling a book.

DOLORES

I saved all your articles. Drugstore
in Jonesport puts em aside for me. I
used to read them to Vera -- when she
was clear enough to listen.

SELENA uncomfortable with this.

DOLORES

I got a scrapbook -- it's up at Vera's. You'll see when we go over. All your articles and your cards too.

SELENA drains her drink. Looking for a cigarette.

DOLORES

You've done so well for yourself. I hate to think of everything this place must be for you -- all that gormy shit comin back on you.

SELENA

Is that what you think? How well I've done?

DOLORES

Hell, even Miss Vera Kiss-my-back-cheeks Donovan couldn't help but be impressed. The look on her face the day you had that first Picture-On-The-Cover story -- you woulda thought she'd passed a brick.

SELENA pouring another drink. She's not sober anymore.

DOLORES

Maybe you oughta slow down.

SELENA

Believe me, I know my limit.

DOLORES

That's what your father used to say. God, but he was a nasty drunk.

SELENA looks over. Some line just crossed.

DOLORES

I only said he was a nasty drunk.

SELENA

What did he have to be happy about?

DOLORES

I 'spose when you're born mean, and dumb, and hurtful as can be, what the hell's there to look forward to 'cept making everyone else as miserable as you are.

SELENA

(impulsively)

Is that why you killed him?

Dead air. Just an awful silence.

SELENA
Bad question, I guess. Occupational hazard.

DOLORES stands. Begins to quietly clear the table.

SELENA
(she is drunk)
Don't feel too bad, Mom. I asked Jean Harris the same thing once.

DOLORES moving away from the table and --

INTO

THE KITCHEN. DOLORES laying the dishes in the sink.

SELENA (OS)
But seriously, mother...
(calling in)
Did you kill him?

DOLORES takes the blow. She steadies herself against the counter, this her only concession to the moment.

AT THE TABLE

SELENA with a cigarette now. Nervously fiddling with a PORCELAIN CREAMER on the table as DOLORES returns.

SELENA
I'm sorry.

DOLORES silently clearing the table, when her eyes move past SELENA suddenly, toward the front door and --

DOLORES'S POV -- FLASHBACK

The front door will open. The bright haze of a summer sunset will blow out the landscape beyond. This light will come only through the door. The rest of the house -- still in the "present" -- will remain dark.

JOE ST. GEORGE will enter the house. He is thirty-five. A scrappy build. A bad haircut. He is coming home from work. He's thirsty and dirty. Standing in the doorway unlacing his boots.

(Note: Selena has no idea what her mother is seeing behind her. Dolores will continue to relate to Selena as if this were not happening, trying to ignore this "presence" as the scene progresses.)

SELENA

Look, let's face it, mother -- we barely know each other. We've hardly spoken in years. And that's as much your doing as mine.

JOE in stocking feet, banging the mud from his boots in the doorway.

SELENA

You didn't kill Vera? Great. You've got nothing to worry about. You did, then you deserve whatever comes. Just let's not pretend we're in some goddam Norman Rockwell family reunion.

DOLORES barely listening -- immobilized by Joe's presence.

SELENA

I'm sorry, mother. But that's where we are. As for Dad, the few memories I have, I'd like to keep.
(sensing distraction)
Are you listening to me?

DOLORES focuses. Forcing herself.

DOLORES

That creamer. In your hand. It was part of a set. From your grandmother. There was a pitcher went with it.

SELENA

What are you talking about?

JOE laying his boots on the porch.

SELENA

Mother...?

DOLORES

"What did he have to be happy about?"
That's what you said, wasn't it?
(drifting)
Having a load on and someone to blame for his troubles was all Joe St. George needed for a good time...
(turning into VOICE
OVER as we go into--)

FULL FLASHBACK

THE HOUSE. Suddenly full of light. The decor different. We are in the Summer of 1972. SELENA, hearing her father, rushes out from the kitchen. She is nine. A gorgeous child.

DOLORES (VO)

I was sposed to be thrilled to get him...

(pause)

He said he loved me n I believed it.

SELENA

We made tapioca!

JOE

Get out...

SELENA

We did. It's not instant either.
And whipped cream too.

JOE

Next thing you'll tell me you made it just for me.

SELENA brightens suddenly. He's fooling.

JOE

There's that St. George smile...
(he kisses her)
Don't you look just like your grandmother.

SELENA gallops across the room. Out the door. Into the sun.

CUT TO

THE KITCHEN. DOLORES (age 33) making dinner. Humming to herself as JOE enters. She looks over, offers a smile.

JOE

(opening the refrigerator)
Soda's warm.

DOLORES

I only got home a half hour ago.
It went in first thing.

JOE

It's hard enough drinkin this shit cold.

He pulls a pudding from the refrigerator.

DOLORES

Hello to you too.

JOE

Where's the paper?

DOLORES
 Theo called about the chain winch.
 (good news)
 He'll go as high as fifty dollars.

JOE
 I ain't selling.

DOLORES
 It's not worth thirty. You said so
 yourself.
 (no answer)
 Ain't that the whole point a A.A.?
 Helping out your buddies?

JOE
 You know, Dee, it's goddam miracle
 I can get through the day without you
 right there tellin me what to do.

DOLORES
 (fuck it)
 Suit yourself. Paper's on the sill.
 We'll eat about six, I guess.

JOE turns away. DOLORES starts laughing.

JOE
 What's so fuckin funny?

DOLORES
 (trying to stop)
 Your pants -- they're split clear
 the way up....

JOE feels around. She's right.

JOE
 You're pretty goddam frisky all
 of a sudden, Dolores. Ever since you
 started working for Vera Donovan.
 What's the deal? You kiss that rich,
 summer ass all day long you got
 nothing left for me?

(she's still laughing)
 Your father used scrape my old
 man's boat, so don't be gettin high
 n' mighty with me.

DOLORES
 (not laughing now)
 You still had the boat we wouldn't
 need the extra money.

JOE tightens instantly. DOLORES retreats to the stove.

A WOODBOX in the corner. JOE bending over it. Feeling back to the rip in his pants --

JOE
(amused himself)
I guess it is pretty fuckin funny
though, ain't it?

DOLORES putting on the cabbage. Starting to giggle again.

DOLORES
Looks like you sat down i--

JOE swinging -- out of nowhere -- a chunk of rock maple in his hand -- hard into the small of her back and -- DOLORES groans -- so much sudden pain she can't get a sound out. Dropping against the stove. Barely catching herself there. Eyes wet already with how much it hurts.

JOE
Why the hell do you make me do it?

He tosses the log back into the box. Takes his paper and pudding and leaves the kitchen.

DOLORES just now starting to breathe. Hobbling toward a chair. Barely making it. Serious, serious pain.

CUT TO

A POT OF CABBAGE ON THE STOVE. Boiling over.

DOLORES still in the chair. Trying to rise to turn it down. But she can't. Too much pain.

In the BG, JOE in the LIVING ROOM, reading the paper as the TELEVISION runs the nightly news.

DOLORES
(even this hurts)
Selena! Selena, come in here!

She waits. SELENA enters. An empty pudding cup in hand.

SELENA
He ate one already...

DOLORES
I just want -- could you turn down
the heat under the veg.

SELENA
Why don't you do it, Mommy?

DOLORES

I'm restin.

JOE

(from the next room)

That's right, she ran her mouth until she got tuckered out.

(he starts to laugh--)

DOLORES sitting there listening. Stealing over, as JOE'S LAUGHTER builds and builds, and we...

TIME CUT

A BEAUTY PAGEANT ON TV. Swimsuits in fuzzy black and white.

JOE on the couch. Watching in the dark.

IN THE KITCHEN

DOLORES scraping dinner dishes. Hobbling through it. Still suffering from the earlier blow. She drops A CUP -- it CRASHES to the floor.

JOE (OS)

(pissed)

Goddamit... That better not be one of my mother's dishes.

BACK TO

JOE on the couch. The BEAUTY PAGEANT on TV.

JOE

You oughta take at a look at this, Dee. You might want to see what an ass is s'posed to look like.

(pause)

Guys on the boat, always talking, everybody saying how ugly you are. You know what I do? I come right to your defense. I say, "Shit, she may be ugly now, but you should've seen her when I was drinking."

CUT TO

A PORCELAIN MILK PITCHER AND CREAMER. DOLORES'S HAND reaching in for the pitcher and --

CUT TO

JOE ogling the swimsuits on TV.

JOE

My mother warned me you were gonna
let yourself go. Fat ass, lousy--

WHAM! -- out of nowhere -- the MILK PITCHER slamming against
the side of his head -- shattering -- blood -- JOE recoiling
in pain -- BELLOWING from the hurt and --

DOLORES standing there. Over him. Waiting a moment until
the BELLOWING subsides into a groaning whine.

DOLORES

Guess what, Joe? I ain't feelin
tired anymore.

JOE starts to stand -- stopping cold, as DOLORES pulls
AN AXE from beneath her apron --

DOLORES

If you don't want this in your head,
Joe, you better sit back down.

He hesitates. Crouched there, clutching his ear, blood
and milk dripping down his face.

SELENA (OS)

Mommy?

SELENA, in pajamas, on the stairs. Peering into the dark.

DOLORES

(eyes on Joe)

You go on back to bed honey. Go on.
Your father n I're havin a little
discussion here.

SELENA

Is everything all right?

DOLORES

Ayuh. Isn't it, Joe?

JOE

Uh-huh. Right as rain.

Silence. And then the sound of SELENA climbing the stairs
back to her room. Her door closing shut.

JOE

You broke my mother's pitcher.
Oh, bitch, ain't you gonna get a
payback.

DOLORES frozen there, still holding the axe. JOE pulls his
hand away from his ear and there's blood all over him now.

DOLORES

I'll tell you this, Joe St. George:
You can go on as long as you like
sayin whatever hurtful things you
need to say, but your days of hittin
are over. You ever do it again,
one of us is goin to the morgue.

JOE staring at her. And then she hands him the axe.
Just like that. Hard to tell who's more surprised.

DOLORES

All I ask is that you do it quick
and don't let Selena see the mess
once it's over.

DOLORES closes her eyes. JOE holding the axe in his blood-
covered hands. And he's really thinking about it. DOLORES
standing there. Waiting, until --

JOE

(finally)

Make yourself useful, woman. Bring
me a towel for my head -- I'm bleedin
all over my goddam shirt.

DOLORES opens her eyes. JOE slipping the axe under the
couch. The BEAUTY PAGEANT playing in the BG, as we come --

OUT OF FLASHBACK AND

A WASH RAG being dipped into soapy water.

DOLORES (55) at the kitchen sink. SELENA still at the table
in the BG. We're back in the present.

DOLORES

That was one lesson he got the first
time. Maybe the only one.

SELENA silent. Unnerved. Pushing out her cigarette.

DOLORES

You had a long day. You must be
awful tired.

SELENA

What do you want me to say?
(derisively)
"Thanks for sharing?"

SELENA pushes away from the table. DOLORES quietly back
to the dishes as SELENA heads upstairs.

CUT TO

THE EAST END COASTLINE. The next morning. Not far from the house. SELENA walking across the raw, tough landscape. Suddenly, she stops --

DOLORES down below. Alone on the rocks. Staring at the cold, wind-blown surf.

SELENA

Mother!

DOLORES turns to see SELENA climbing down toward her.

SELENA

I've been looking all over!

(as she comes)

My God, it's freezing -- What are you doing out here?

DOLORES

I just been thinkin.

(eyes to the water)

Just chewin things over.

SELENA finds a cigarette. She'll try to light it in the wind.

SELENA

I hope you've been thinking about making some plans.

DOLORES

I've got my Sociable Security. I can still work. I don't need much.

SELENA

Jesus Christ, mother -- what you need is a lawyer. Those guys -- that State Police detective -- they don't say get an attorney unless they mean it.

DOLORES

It's you I'm worried about, Selena.

SELENA

Mother, please --

DOLORES

You're my daughter -- I know that prob'ly feels like something better left alone, but it's true --

SELENA

-- Oh Christ, spare me the --

DOLORES

-- You're still my Selena. You're still my Good Girl and I can't help bein worried for you.

SELENA stalled by this. Uncomfortable, touched, angry; all of it at once. DOLORES reaching out for her hands. Taking them before she can pull away.

DOLORES

I can't help that no matter what I do.

SELENA

Mother...your hands...

DOLORES'S HANDS. Raw and creased and so worn out they're bleeding from the crackedness.

SELENA (OS)

What happened to your hands?

DOLORES pulling them away. Embarrassed.

SELENA

They look terrible, Mother. What happened to them?

DOLORES

Vera Donovan's what happened to 'em. Twenty-two years of Vera Donovan.

DOLORES turns away. Eyes back out over the water and --

WE PAN AROUND FROM THE OCEAN and into --

FLASHBACK

THE DONOVAN HOUSE. The same angle we saw in the first shot of the movie. But what a difference -- it's a bright sunny day in the Summer of 1972. Fresh paint -- manicured gardens new roof... A GROUNDS CREW at work; cleaning windows, mowing the lawn, readying the house for the season.

DOLORES (VO)

I guess you want to know somebody's life you look at their hands...

CUT TO

DOLORES'S HANDS -- twenty years younger, before they were ruined -- in her lap, clutching a dimestore handbag.

DOLORES is 33. Dressed in her Sunday best. Sitting in the FOYER OF THE DONOVAN HOUSE. Suddenly, A DOOR OPENS across the room. A LOCAL GIRL comes running out. She is weeping.

VERA (OS)

(calling after her)

Look on the bright side, dear! Your mother may be angry, but just think of the fun you'll have telling your friends what a bitch Vera Donovan is!

DOLORES watches the LOCAL GIRL flee the house in tears.

VERA (OS)

Next!

CUT TO

DONOVAN HOUSE SITTING ROOM. VERA DONOVAN in her chair, working a needlepoint sampler. Early fifties. A white-glove, pure-flint WASP.

VERA

I do not pretend to be an easy woman to work for, Dolores.

DOLORES across from her. Bag in her lap. Her game face.

VERA

This house has a number of rules. I'm sure you've heard them secondhand but I'll tell you in person so we can avoid a teary scene later on.

DOLORES nodding yes. Their dialogue fading, as we hear:

DOLORES (VO)

And she did have her ways -- did she ever. I don't know where she got her idears, but I do know she was a prisoner of 'em....

(continuing as we--)

CUT TO

SERIES OF SHOTS -- DOLORES WORKING FOR VERA THAT SUMMER

DOLORES (33) cleaning a bathroom.

DOLORES (VO)

...All the tubs had to be scrubbed out with Spic n Span. No Lestoil, no Top Job, no Mr. Clean. Just Spic n Span. God help you, she caught you with anything else...

DOLORES ironing.

DOLORES (VO)

...there was a piece of gauze you were supposed to put over before you starched. Never did a goddamn thing, so far as I could ever tell, but look out if she passed by and you didn't have that scrap hanging on the board...

CUT TO

THE DONOVAN LAWN. A bright Summer afternoon. JACK DONOVAN, mid-fifties, a prosperous businessman in golf togs, driving balls out into the surf.

DOLORES down the slope, hanging miles of white sheets on the line.

DOLORES (VO)

...But the sheets, now. That was one thing you didn't ever want to get wrong.

VERA appears at a second floor window with binoculars, peering down as Dolores hangs the sheets.

DOLORES (VO)

You coulda cut off her high-flown snobbish nose and she still woulda been able to smell a sheet that'd hung outside from one baked in the dryer... Course everything had to be hung perfect over the lines, and you had to use six pins on each one -- not four -- six.

VERA

Six pins, Dolores! You mind me now! Six, not four!

DOLORES (VO)

Her husband, he only came up once all summer, most a which he spent ignorin her anyway...

VERA
 Jack! -- Jack, it's four-thirty!
 (she's lonely)
 Don't you want a cocktail?

JACK just keeps driving golf balls into the ocean, as we --

CUT TO

THE SITTING ROOM. DOLORES putting white, winter slip covers on the furniture. A CHAUFFEUR and HANDYMAN carrying luggage out to the car in the BG.

VERA
 Dolores...

DOLORES turns. VERA in the doorway. Chanel and Vuitton.

VERA
 I'm sure your winter schedule is rather hectic, but I need someone to touch up the house once a week. Dusting. Keeping the nice company.

DOLORES
 I could do that.

VERA
 Eight dollars a week was what I had in mind.

DOLORES
 That'd be fine.

VERA
 Then I'll see you next Memorial Day.

DOLORES nods. VERA shoulders her bag and walks.

CUT TO

WHITE SLIP COVERS being pulled from the furniture.

THE DONOVAN HOUSE MAIN ROOM. A Spring day. DOLORES and TWO OTHER MAIDS waxing the stairs. WORKMEN busy in the BG. opening the house for the summer. As we hear:

DOLORES (VO):
 That winter Jack Donovan passed on.
 He died in a car crash in Baltimore.
 (MORE)

DOLORES VO (cont)
 I wasn't sure what to expect from
 Vera -- but gorry if she didn't show
 up in high spirits.

DOLORES and the MAIDS looking down to see --

VERA
 (a grand entrance)
 Dolores!

DOLORES
 Up here, Missus Donovan.

VERA
 I believe I've told you more than
 once I want those Welcome mats facing
 with the letters out and not in.

DOLORES
 Yes ma'am.

VERA
 I'll not have to say it again this
 Summer, will I?

DOLORES
 No ma'am.

CUT TO

DOLORES'S HANDS. Young hands laying wet sheets onto the
 CLOTHESLINE. Steam rising in cold winter air.

DOLORES (VO)
 Later on, after she moved up full-
 time, she offered me the job and I
 took it. I took it and I knew what
 kind of hell it was gonna be...

The YOUNG HANDS reach away and return as....

OLD HANDS. Swollen and raw. The same clothesline.
 The same drudge. But twenty years have passed.

DOLORES (VO)
 (matter-of-fact, again
 she is not a whiner)
 Your fingers're wet and they're cold.
 But you go on to the next one, and the
 next, and the next...

DOLORES at fifty-five, working in the bitter cold.

DOLORES (VO)

...Even after she had her stokes,
weak as she was, she'd still find the
bitchery some days...

VERA, a crippled seventy-five, at the upstairs window.

VERA

(yelling down)

Six pins! Remember to use six pins!
Don't you let the wind blow my good
sheets down the yard!

DOLORES listening. Going through the motions.

DOLORES (VO)

...Your fingers turn red, and they
slow up, and you got snot leakin
off y'nose, and you know it's only
December and by February the skin's
gonna be cracked so bad it'll break
open and bleed if you clench a fist.

VERA

Mind me, now! You better because
I'm watching and I'm counting!

DOLORES bearing down. Just plain shit work.

DOLORES (VO)

...And there's not a goddam thing
to do 'cept go on to the next. So
that's just what you do.
(fading as we--)

DISSOLVE OUT OF FLASHBACK AND

BACK TO -- THE PRESENT

DOLORES AND SELENA, as they were, out on the East End rocks.
DOLORES rubbing her hands. SELENA putting out a smoke.

SELENA

Nobody made you stay there.

DOLORES

I needed the money.

SELENA

Not in the beginning. Not eight
dollars a week.

DOLORES

That's when I needed it most. Not
for me -- for you.

SELENA

Oh, that's perfect, Mother...
So it's my fault.

Disgusted, SELENA turns away. Climbing back for the house.

DOLORES

(following her)
That's not what I meant.

SELENA

Nothing like a big steaming bowl
of guilt for breakfast.

DOLORES

(trying to keep up)
You think your father cared whether
you ever got off this befriggid
Island?

SELENA

Here we go...

DOLORES

I put that money -- every week I
put it away in your account.
For school. To get you the hell
outta this place once and for all.

SELENA

Well, it worked like a charm!

SELENA stops suddenly --

FRANK and MACKEY standing there, watching them.

FRANK

Morning, ladies. A little morning
walk?

DOLORES

Nope, we're just packing up the speed
boat so's I can make my big escape.

DOLORES will keep walking. FRANK and MACKEY falling into
step with her. SELENA in the rear.

DOLORES

Somethin we can help you with?

FRANK

We need a hair sample, Dolores.

DOLORES

How's that?

MACKEY

(struggling to keep up)
We need a piece of your hair, Miss Claiborne. We're running some tests. Just a small clipping would be fine.

DOLORES

Would it now?

FRANK

You don't have to do this, Dolores.
(to Selena)
It's up to her. We'd appreciate it, is all.

SELENA

I think we'll take a pass on that.

DOLORES

Bring your scissors, did you?

MACKEY

Matter of fact, I did.

SELENA

Mother, I really don't think this is wise.

DOLORES

It's okay, Selena. I got nothin to hide. Let these boys have their fun.
(she stops, turns
to face Mackey)
You want it? You cut it.

MACKEY thrown by this. Really thrown.

DOLORES

Take any piece you like. I ain't doing any beauty pageants this week.

MACKEY pulls a pair of scissors from his pocket. He moves toward her. Awkward here. Awkward with women. He fumbles for a moment. Snips. Backs away quickly. Handing the sample to FRANK who has an evidence bag.

DOLORES

Anything else?

MACKEY

We spoke to Shelia Jolander last night. She told us she heard you on more than one occasion threaten to kill Vera Donovan. Is that true?

DOLORES

If she'd been there everyday 'stead a once a week, she'd a heard plenty more than that. Vera at the end, the way she got, it's a wonder I didn't say it every hour.

Dead silence. SELENA finds a smoke. MACKEY staring.

DOLORES

You go ahead, Mr. Mackey, you scribble that down in your pad there. You make a note on that. Long as you write down that sayin a thing, and doin it 're two separate things.

(a smile)

But then, your wife prob'ly already told you that.

MACKEY

(she hit a nerve)

My wife, Miss Claiborne, died twelve years ago. Bone cancer.

(pointedly)

Natural causes.

FRANK

(jumping in)

Okay. I think we'll press on here.

DOLORES

I'll need to get into Vera's house. I got things up there I'll need. Clothes and my personals.

FRANK

We can go over tomorrow. We're shipping out Vera's body this afternoon. Her nephew in Baltimore is holding the funeral Monday.

DOLORES

Ain't that lovely. Twenty years that little piss squirt never once came up n visited.

FRANK

Why don't we say around one o'clock tomorrow?

DOLORES

Fine by me.

FRANK gets into the PATROL CAR and starts it up. MACKEY lingers at the passenger side. His eyes locked on SELENA,

measuring her. She turns away. He slowly eases himself into the car. FRANK puts it into gear -- starting to turn around.

SELENA

(quietly to Dolores)

What the hell're you doing? Why are you making an enemy out of that guy?

DOLORES

I ain't makin one. I'm keepin one.

SELENA

And what is that supposed to mean?

FRANK working his way through a three-point turn. MACKEY staring through the windshield. His eyes locked on SELENA as the car completes the turn.

DOLORES

You gonna tell me you don't remember him?

SELENA

That's what he said when I met him.

(lost)

Who the hell is he?

DOLORES, incredulous, stares at SELENA as THE PATROL CAR WIPES THE FRAME and we --

FLASHBACK

JOHN MACKEY as a much younger man. A spit-polish Maine State Police uniform. No cane. No limp. An ancient DISTRICT ATTORNEY and bespectacled MEDICAL EXAMINER seated beside him.

It is the Summer of 1975. We are in a dreary, old HEARING ROOM on the mainland in the Washington County Courthouse. An inquest in progress. A JUDGE, at a desk, presiding. No jury. A DOZEN PEOPLE in the gallery.

DOLORES (36) seated in a folding chair across the aisle.

MACKEY

That's all well and good, Miss St. George, but...

(shuffling papers)

It says here -- you stated that at the time of your father's death, you were working as a maid at the hotel in Jonesport?

SELENA, age 12, in the WITNESS BOX. She is clearly nervous.
Back straight. Mouth dry.

SELENA

Yes.

MACKEY

I spoke to Mrs. Deveraux at the hotel, and she told me that until that week, your mother had not permitted you to spend the night. I was simply wondering why your mother allowed you to stay on the mainland through the week on this particular occasion?

SELENA hesitates. Eyes swimming out toward DOLORES.

MACKEY

Were there problems at home perhaps?

(beat)

Your mom and dad, that's a happy situation?

(pressing)

Miss St. George?

SELENA

The eclipse.

(quietly)

Because of the eclipse. The hotel was full. So the money -- they said we'd make twice as much.

(tears welling)

She, my mom, she let me stay...it was just -- just for the money...

MACKEY

So this was all about money?

SELENA crying now. MACKEY about to continue, when --

DOLORES

(jumping in)

My God, You Honor, how long're you gonna let this go on?

MACKEY

The sooner this girl starts telling the truth, the sooner we'll be done.

DOLORES

If he's out to torture somebody, I'd be happy to get back up on the hot seat.

MACKEY
 (turning on her)
Mrs. St. George...

DOLORES
 Hell, forget the missus, anybody
 who's gonna 'cuse me of killin my
 husband can go right ahead and call
 me Dolores.

LAUGHTER throughout the room. Nervous LAUGHTER that builds
 as the JUDGE joins in. MACKEY just burning as his moment
 slips away, and we come --

OUT OF FLASHBACK AND

BACK TO -- THE PRESENT

THE VANDALIZED WINDOW. Shards of glass all around the frame.

DOLORES reaches in -- she'll try and pull out one of the
 shards --

DOLORES
 So don't be talkin to me about
 makin enemies. No sir and no ma'am.
 (the glass breaks off
 in her hand)
 That sonofabitch's been waitin a
 long time to pick over my bones.
 (tossing the shard
 into a cardboard box)
 Hand me that axe.

SELENA, behind her, on the porch. She turns -- there's
 THE AXE (the same one we saw Dolores hand Joe 20 years
 earlier.) She picks it up carefully and hands it over.

THE WINDOW as DOLORES rakes THE AXE around the frame --
 shattered glass SPLINTERING TO THE PORCH as we --

CUT TO

THE TOWN OF LITTLE TALL. Main Street. DOLORES AND SELENA
 getting out of the rental car.

DOLORES
 I'm gonna get some putty and a new
 pane. Maybe I'll see if I can't
 find us a steak.
 (hopefully)
 Have us a nice meal?

SELENA

I'll meet you back here.

DOLORES nods. Sets off, as we --

CUT TO

MAIN STREET. Quiet. No traffic. DOLORES heading for the market. Her expression one of steely determination. And now, as she proceeds, we see why --

A MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN coming down the sidewalk. Struggling with a dawdling CHILD. She sees DOLORES. She freezes.

DOLORES

Afternoon, Pam. Any steaks left down at Shafer's?

PAM tightens her grip on the CHILD'S hand. Turning abruptly for the street -- anywhere but here.

PAM

I'll pray for you, Dolores.

(hurrying off)

That's the best I can do.

DOLORES hangs tough. Shoulders her bag and keeps on walking.

CUT TO

TWO FOURTEEN-YEAR-OLD PUNKS outside THE BARBER SHOP. Young, townie jerks sharing a cigarette. They look up as DOLORES approaches.

PUNK #1

Hey, Miss Claiborne.

DOLORES nods as she passes. She knows them.

PUNK #2

Kill anyone else today?

DOLORES

Not just yet. But when I change my mind, I know exactly where I'm gonna start.

THE PUNKS ditch their smoke. DOLORES watching as they rush back into the BARBER SHOP.

CUT TO

A PAYPHONE in the rear of the local gin mill. It's dark.
A JUKEBOX low in the BG. SELENA juggling a vodka and a
cigarette, on the line with PETER, her editor.

SELENA

It's a small domestic drama up here,
Peter. It'll be over Monday morning.
I can be in L.A. Tuesday.

PETER (OS)

Selena...these family things, I've
been through it, they take a lot out
of you.

SELENA

I'm telling you it's not a problem.

Dead air. SELENA waiting as we --

CUT TO

PETER at the other end of the line in his New York office.
Staring out the window. Speakerphone on his desk.

SELENA'S VOICE

(over the speaker)

Look, we both want me to do this
story, Peter. I'm telling you I'm
out of here Monday at the latest.

PETER hesitates. Trapped.

SELENA

Are you there?

PETER

I've given the piece to Maursen.

CUT TO

SELENA at the payphone. A bodyblow.

PETER'S VOICE

I'm sorry...I had to pull the trigger.
(struggling here)

I just wasn't -- it's nothing to do
with you, you know that --

SELENA

Jesus, Peter....

PETER'S VOICE

It's the pressure -- you know that
-- there's heat all over this one --

SELENA
You goddamn pimp --

PETER'S VOICE
Selena, wait a minute --

SELENA
-- sending me up here --

PETER'S VOICE
-- I never promised you --

SELENA
-- you shipped me out to make it
easier!

PETER'S VOICE trailing away as she lowers the phone.
His explanation garbled and small as she slowly hangs up.
She stands there a moment. Dazed.

CUT TO

THE BAR. Booths and a rail. A few hardcores spread out
in the dark. SELENA comes out from the phone. She spots
up near the BARTENDER.

SELENA
(an empty glass)
I'll do this again.

She's fishing for money as the BARTENDER tops off her vodka.

MACKEY (OS)
Put that on my tab.

It's MACKEY standing slowly from the booth behind her.

SELENA
I don't think so.

SELENA lays cash on the bar. The BARTENDER makes change.

MACKEY
(the stool beside her)
Do you mind?

SELENA
Shouldn't you be off somewhere
analyzing my mother's hair?

MACKEY
I was thinking how hard it must be
for you. Protecting her, that is.

SELENA looks over. MACKEY taking his time.

MACKEY

She's a hardy soul, isn't she?
Hell, she might just live another
fifty years. Next eclipse is due
in '96. She gets away with it this
time, she might actually have a
chance to kill someone else before
she's through.

(beat)

That something you want to worry
about for the next twenty years?

(beat)

She needs help, Selena.

SELENA drinks up. Looks over at him.

SELENA

This really is a thing with you,
isn't it?

MACKEY

You know how it is. We're probably
more alike than you'd care to believe.

(beat)

We live alone. We have our work.
I have no children. My cases are
my family. In thirty years, I've
handled eighty-six homicides.
I've closed eighty-five of them to
my satisfaction.

SELENA

You sent that fax to my office,
didn't you?

(silence his answer)

You sonofabitch.

SELENA finds her bag. Rushing to leave.

MACKEY

Anytime you want to talk...

(as she goes)

She's dangerous, Selena.

SELENA walking. And gone. MACKEY watching her leave.

CUT TO

THE DINNER TABLE. Night. DOLORES and SELENA over steaks
and beer. SELENA quiet and withdrawn. DOLORES trying to
bring her out.

DOLORES

You were a wonderful cook.

SELENA

Please. I can't even defrost.

DOLORES

You were. You'd put supper on the table three nights outta five. I was workin, I'd come back, you'd have the house clean, your homework done and food on the table.

(beat)

You're just outta practice, that's all. You find someone to look after you'll see, it'll all come back.

SELENA

Someone to look after?

DOLORES

You must have boyfriends. Beautiful woman like you, smart and out in the world. They must be just flockin around you like flies.

SELENA laughs dismissively. Sips her beer.

DOLORES

You tellin me there's nobody?

SELENA

I'm telling you there's a lot of nobodies.

Silence. They go back to their food. And then, suddenly -- the sound of a REVVING ENGINE and GUNSHOTS from outside --

DOLORES

Those sonsabitches...

SELENA frozen, just paralyzed, as TWO MORE SHOTGUN BLASTS ring out in the distance. DOLORES already in motion -- striding for the front door and --

CUT TO

A PICK-UP TRUCK at the bottom of the driveway. A bunch of DRUNK LOCAL YAHOOOS piled on the thing. No faces. LAUGHTER and VOICES and another GUN BLAST shooting into the sky and --

DOLORES on the porch -- grabbing THE AXE that's laying there.

DOLORES
 (screaming down)
 Come on up you little ass pickin
 squirts! I know who you are!
 Chester Lavelier n the rest of ya's!
 Come on up, ya got somethin to say!

A VOICE (OS)
 (from the truck)
 Get offa Little Tall Island, you
 goddamn murderin bitch!

DOLORES coming fast off the porch, as THE TRUCK spins back onto the road. Tires SCREECHING as it weaves wildly away from the house. DOLORES watching them go. Venom in her eyes. Planting the axe firmly in a log. Turning back finally --

TO SEE

SELENA through the screen door. Inside the house. Crying. Tears building from someplace deep -- emotions she can't control. She turns away and --

CUT TO

SELENA in the BATHROOM DOORWAY beneath the stairs. Blowing her nose. Still crying. Trying to get it together.

DOLORES
 (entering behind her)
 It's a bad place, here. For you.
 It's a bad place and you took it with
 you, didn't you? You didn't leave
 it at all. Here I thought you got
 clear away and you didn't, did you?

SELENA is silent. Fighting the tears just makes it worse. DOLORES looking on helplessly, as THE PHONE BEGINS RINGING from the living room. DOLORES, shocked, turns --

THE OLD PHONE in it's cradle, across the room. It RINGS again, but SELENA can't hear it because this is a --

FLASHBACK

THE PHONE. RINGING again. A HAND reaching in.

SELENA at thirteen, answering the phone. It is the Winter of 1976. Night. We're in the living room.

SELENA

Hello?

A VOICE (OS)

(over the phone)

Did you help your mother kill your
dad, or did she just do it herself?

SELENA ashen. Terrified. Paralyzed.

DOLORES, age 36, rushing out of the kitchen -- seeing
SELENA and knowing instantly what's happened --

DOLORES

(grabbing the phone)

Who is this? Who is it?

(furious)

I find out who's makin these calls,
I swear I'll hang your privates
from Battiscan Light!

(dial tone and--)

DOLORES turns back to find SELENA weeping.

DOLORES

Oh, honey...please...it's okay...

SELENA

Get away from me! -- lemme alone!

SELENA flailing free -- out of control -- sobbing now --

DOLORES

Selena -- please, honey --

SELENA

-- just get away! -- get away!
(continuing as--)

She completely loses it -- DOLORES helpless -- SELENA
exploding into a seizure of panic and fear and anger
and shame and -- a TABLE goes over -- things falling --
flailing around with all the pain and fury a thirteen-
year-old girl can muster -- weeping uncontrollably, and
it's horrible and only getting worse, as SELENA runs past
her mother, toward the stairwell, and --

DOLORES whirls after her and we come --

OUT OF FLASHBACK AND

SELENA standing in the bathroom door. Drying her eyes.

DOLORES

(undone now)

...It was a bad patch. You had a bad patch n now you're feelin it all over again.

SELENA

"Bad patch?"

(incredulous)

I had a fucking nervous breakdown, Mother.

DOLORES

No... No honey... It was a hard time and you got through...

(beat)

You needed a rest, that's all -- you snapped back just fine.

(pure denial)

Gorry, you can't have a nervous breakdown and get a full scholarship to Vassar College -- you just had a bad patch --

SELENA

What am I doing?

(pushing past her--)

I must be out of my mind to come back here.

SELENA pushing past DOLORES. Rushing back out of the house. The door nearly SLAMMING OFF IT'S HINGES as she disappears.

DOLORES left there alone. Frightened. Hurt. Trying to get a grip when she hears A CAR ENGINE starting from outside. DOLORES moves slowly toward the door. Opens it to the --

THE BLINDING SHOCK of headlights and the SCREEN GOES WHITE from the glare, and then BLOOMS BACK into the details of a daytime --

FLASHBACK

DOLORES'S POV looking down off the porch. A bright, hot day in the Summer of 1975. THIRTY MEN are coming toward the house from the far distance. In formation. A search party, moving slowly, struggling solemnly through the meadow and brambles beyond the property.

SELENA, age twelve, steps off the porch. Watching the men. Tensely, quietly, edging forward.

DOLORES, age 36, stands above her on the porch. She doesn't see SELENA moving away because her eyes are locked on the search party in the distance. The quiet broken suddenly by --

A SEARCHER'S VOICE (OS)
Hey, Sheriff! Over here! Over here!

DOLORES
Selena!

SELENA turns back. Frightened.

DOLORES
Get in the house. Right now.

SECOND SEARCHER'S VOICE (OS)
Jesus, shit... Lookit this!

DOLORES and SELENA staring at each other.

SELENA
What did you do to him, Mommy?

A tough pause. DOLORES wiping at a single tear.

DOLORES
Not a thing, honey. I swear it.

The sound of THE MEN RUSHING across the field (OS) as SELENA breaks the moment and runs into the house.

DOLORES turning back to the field as the light gets sucked out...and the Men disappear...the sound fades and we...

MATCH FRAME DISSOLVE TO --

SELENA'S HEADLIGHTS raking the porch as THE RENTAL CAR pulls out onto the road and speeds away.

CUT TO

A WELCOME MAT. Somebody's front door. DOLORES kneels down, turning the thing around the way it's supposed to go.

THE DONOVAN HOUSE FRONT DOOR. The next day. SELENA, FRANK STAMSHAW and a DEPUTY waiting for DOLORES to straighten the mat out to her satisfaction.

CUT TO

THE DONOVAN FRONT ROOM. A solemn procession: FRANK leading the way. DOLORES behind him. SELENA, carrying an empty duffel bag, hanging back.

THE MAIN STAIRWAY. MACKEY on the landing. Watching them approach. He's been working hard; proof of that littered around the room: a ladder, a workbench covered with plastic bags, tape cordons off a section of broken railing, the wheelchair, tagged as evidence, at the bottom of the stairs.

MACKEY

I'm going to ask you to step very carefully on the way up. We've got plastic down, we're still taking blood samples.

FRANK motions for DOLORES to go ahead. She hesitates.

MACKEY

If you'd feel more comfortable, Ms. Claiborne, you can always use the back stairs.

DOLORES starts climbing. Fuck him.

CUT TO

A PICTURE OF SELENA. A framed, magazine photo.

A GUEST ROOM UPSTAIRS. Dolores's room. Pleasant enough. SELENA staring at her picture on the nightstand.

FRANK

(searching a closet--)
...another pair of shoes here.

DOLORES

No. That's it.
(looking around)
I need my scrapbook. I think it's in Vera's room.

CUT TO

VERA'S ROOM. Classic WASP clutter meets invalid despair. A hospital bed with antique nightstands. Everything as it was the day of her death: bed unmade, medication, etc.

MACKEY

(holding the scrapbook)
So what's this?

DOLORES in the room. FRANK behind her. SELENA at the door.

DOLORES
It's Selena's articles. I'd read
em to Vera. She liked it.

MACKEY checking it out. Taking his time. DOLORES forced
to wait. Looking around the room and --

FLASHBACK

The room. Six months earlier. Night. The blue
light of a silent television.

The scrapbook open on the bed.

VERA sitting there too. A crippled, 75-year-old
woman propped up in bed, crying like a child.
DOLORES behind her, stroking her hair. Trying
to soothe her. Stroking and soothing, on and on.
Two strange birds, in their nightgowns, all alone.

OUT OF FLASHBACK AND

DOLORES, as she was, still waiting for MACKEY to digest
the scrapbook. She glances around --

DOLORES
Jeezly crow --

MACKEY looks over -- DOLORES moving angrily for the bed.
Picking up a bed pan --

DOLORES
Gorry, couldn't you even clean up
after her? What kinda people are you?

MACKEY
You put that down right now.

DOLORES
You gonna tell me this is evidence?

MACKEY
That's exactly what I'm telling you!

DOLORES tosses it toward him. He jumps back. It CLANGS to
the floor.

FRANK
(stepping in)
Okay, okay...everybody cool down.

DOLORES
That scrapbook is mine.

FRANK looks to MACKEY. An appeal. Let's get this over.

CUT TO

THE FRONT DOOR. Minutes later. FRANK on the front steps. DOLORES, clutching the scrapbook, exits the house. MACKEY holding the door for SELENA.

FRANK
So we'll see you day after tomorrow.
Nine a.m. Town Hall.

DOLORES
Don't put your fur up, Frank. I'll
be there.

MACKEY
I have a feeling we could wrap this
up right now, Miss Claiborne.

DOLORES turns back. MACKEY waiting for her.

MACKEY
It's not going to be like last time.

DOLORES
Is that so?

SELENA
(taking her arm)
Mother, let's just go, okay?

DOLORES
(shaking her off)
You listen to me, Mr. Grand High
Poobah of Upper Butt Crack, I'm just
about half-past give-a-shit with
your fun n games. My husband's
death was ruled an accident and you
know it better'n anyone.

MACKEY
"Death By Misadventure," to be exact.

DOLORES
You ask around, I'm sure there's
people'd tell you I had plenty of
reasons to kill my husband. But Vera?
Why the hell would I kill her? All I
am is out of a job and a nice room to
sleep in.

MACKEY

But you don't need a job, do you?

(beat)

Motive?

(he smiles)

I'd say one million, six-hundred thousand dollars was quite a motive.

DOLORES

What?

MACKEY

Your mother's a wealthy woman, Selena.

DOLORES

What the hell're you talkin about?

MACKEY

I spoke to Vera's lawyer in Baltimore last night. She left you everything. Every last cent.

DOLORES pale, just stricken. SELENA shocked into silence.

DOLORES

She can't do that... You're lyin.

MACKEY

You're a millionaire, Ms. Claiborne.

FRANK

John, I'm not sure -- this ain't hardly the place --

MACKEY

Back off, Frank.

DOLORES

That's plain crazy! She'd never do that -- never!

MACKEY

She keep it a secret from you too, Selena? Or maybe you knew about it. Cause this will, I mean, hell, it's only eight years old.

DOLORES turns and starts walking. Fleeing.

MACKEY

(calling after her)

You want to wait for the District Attorney, Monday morning, or should we go take care of this now?

DOLORES grimly striding as fast as she can away from the house. Past Selena's car. Walking toward the road.

CUT TO

INSIDE SELENA'S CAR. SELENA at the wheel, driving away from the Donovan house on the town road. She's alone. She pulls to a stop. Leaning over and throwing open the passenger side door.

SELENA

Get in the car, Mother.

DOLORES walking up the road. Ignoring her.

SELENA

Get in the goddamn car!

SELENA, fed up, jumps out of the car and --

WE'RE ON THE ROAD

SELENA

(in pursuit)

You had no idea she'd left you the money?

DOLORES

I swear it.

SELENA

Over a million dollars, Mother.

DOLORES

(red hot here)

That bitch. That malicious, high-flown, harping bitch!

SELENA

Oh give it a rest already!

(she stops)

You can afford a lawyer now!

DOLORES wheels on her. But before she can respond --

THE PATROL CAR pulls up beside them. One look at FRANK and MACKEY and you know they've seen them fighting.

MACKEY

(rolling down his window)

Car trouble?

SELENA

(tightly)

We're quite fine. Thank you.

MACKEY nods to FRANK. The PATROL CAR pulls away. They are alone again.

DOLORES

I wish I had killed her...

(losing it)

Leaving me that money! I wish I had -- I wish I had killed her!

SELENA

What happened in that house?

DOLORES turning back to SELENA, as we --

FLASHBACK

A MOP moving over a hardwood floor.

DOLORES (55) laboring alone. A long hallway of work.

VERA'S VOICE (OS)

(from down the hall)

Dolores! Duh-lorrrrr-issss!

CUT TO

VERA'S ROOM. VERA, 75, in bed. Looking like hell.

VERA

I wet myself.

DOLORES

(pulling open the shades)

What else is new?

VERA

How long have I been out?

DOLORES

Since you last made sense? I guess about ten days.

VERA sourly watching DOLORES fuss around the room.

VERA

Just leave me wet, don't you?
When I'm not thinking straight
enough to keep on you, that's what
you do isn't it?

DOLORES
 Ayhuh. It's a reg'lar party round
 here when you're snoozin.

VERA
Where's my China pig?

DOLORES
 It's on the bureau where you had
 me put it last time we went through
 this nonsense.

VERA
 Are you being smart?

DOLORES
 No, Vera, if I'd been smart, I'd've
 gotten done workin for you a long
 time ago.

VERA
 I told you, I'm wet. And I want my
 China Pig. And I'm in no mood to
 listen to your back-chatter.

DOLORES
 Then I'd pack a couple of them fancy
 French pillows in your ears, or else
 I'd shut the hell up.

VERA turning away. Anger replaced by shame as DOLORES
 pulls down the sheets.

DOLORES
 (the bed a mess)
 Jesus H. Christ...

CUT TO

THE STAIRWAY. DOLORES carrying a tray of food upstairs.

CUT TO

VERA in her wheelchair. Staring at her breakfast. Her
 CHINA PIG on the table beside her. DOLORES making the bed.

DOLORES
 You're having a good day, Vera,
 might as well make the best of it.
 God knows, I'm tired of spoonin
 food into ya.

VERA

You're poisoning me, aren't you, Dolores? Slow but sure, that's what you're doing.

DOLORES

No, ma'am. When I get ready to settle your hash, I won't bother with poison -- I'll just shove you out the window and there'll be one less smelly bitch in the world.

VERA

Well, don't you have a hair across your ass today, Dolores Claiborne?

DOLORES

Don't go too far, Vera. Don't.

DOLORES gathers the soiled bedding from the floor.

VERA

I'll go as far as I damn well want, yes, I will...

(she's crying)

If this is what's going to pass as living, I'll damn well say what I like. Yes, I will...

DOLORES

I'll make some tea. You'll feel better.

VERA

No! -- No I won't! I won't feel better! I never will!

(sobbing now)

I'll never feel better again!

CUT TO

A TEA KETTLE. As it's set down on the stove.

DOLORES setting out the cups. A moment of quiet, suddenly broken as she hears the sound of SOMETHING CRASHING from upstairs. DOLORES shakes her head, another small crisis.

CUT TO

THE CHINA PIG on the floor in a thousand pieces. Loose change scattered everywhere.

VERA'S WHEELCHAIR disappearing through the door and --

CUT TO

DOLORES coming for the stairs. Looking up, and --

DOLORES

Vera! What the hell're you doing?

CUT TO

VERA wheeling herself along the hallway. Heading for the stairs and --

CUT TO

DOLORES starting up the stairs.

DOLORES

Vera, just stop now...
(picking up her pace)
You hear me?

CUT TO

VERA lurching along. She's not stopping. A determined look on her face. Straining from the effort and --

CUT TO

DOLORES running now -- about to top the stairs -- she slips and falls -- trying to catch herself and --

CUT TO

VERA still coming --

VERA

You get out of my way, Dolores!
You hear me? -- Out of my way!

CUT TO

DOLORES making her feet -- her dress catching beneath her as she does -- SEAMS RIPPING as she stands -- hobbled by her torn slip, but she's not stopping now --

DOLORES

Vera, you just stop this foolishness!
You're gonna hurt yourself!

CUT TO

VERA wheeling toward her -- crazed and determined and --
CUT TO

DOLORES rushing to block her path and -- VERA kicking at her -- striking -- DOLORES more surprised than hurt --

DOLORES
Vera, I said stop!

VERA ten feet from the stairs -- DOLORES rushing around, behind the wheelchair -- taking hold of the handles and starting to pull --

DOLORES
What in the name of God has got--
(not finishing this
because--)

She's falling -- on her ass as the wheelchair suddenly loses a hundred and fifty pounds of ballast and --

THE WHEELCHAIR CRASHING to the floor and --

VERA is standing and --

DOLORES struggling to get up -- frantic now and --

VERA is walking and --

DOLORES tangled in the wheelchair -- a wild grab and --

VERA
-- Dolores, no! -- Leave me be! --
Leave me! -- Duh-lorrr-issss --
(stepping out over
the stairs, as we --)

CUT TO

DOLORES hearing -- seeing -- the horrible fall that we witnessed earlier. Standing there helplessly beside the empty wheelchair. And in a moment it's over. Silence. DOLORES simply staggered. Trying just to breathe. Dress torn, hair tangled. And then, it gets worse..

VERA'S VOICE (OS)
(whispering from below)
Dolores...

DOLORES hesitates. Frozen there. And then, suddenly, she's in motion -- rushing down the stairs --

ON THE LANDING. VERA's broken body laying there.

DOLORES
(racing to her side)
Omigod... Vera... Omigod...

VERA struggling to take her hand.

VERA
Dolores...

DOLORES
Don't try to talk. I'm goin down-
stairs. I got to call the doctor.

VERA
No.
(her grip tightening)
No doctor. No hospital.

DOLORES
You'll be all right, Vera. You lie
still n don't move, you'll be fine.

VERA
Dolores Claiborne says I'm going to
be fine.
(her voice clear now)
What a relief it is to have a
professional opinion.

DOLORES shocked out of her panic by this response.

VERA
I'm as good as dead, and you know it
as well as I do. My back's broken,
I think. I can't feel much at all.

DOLORES
Why, Vera? -- Why'd you do this?

VERA
Because there's only one thing left
worth deciding, and that's whether
I'm going to die in my time or in
some hospital's. My time is now,
Dolores. I'm tired and I'm ready.

DOLORES unable to free her hand from VERA's grip.

DOLORES
-- let me go call, please, Vera --

VERA

(not releasing her)

-- I'm tired of pissing down my legs
and forgetting who came to see me
half an hour after they're gone.
I'm tired of seeing my husband's
face in the corners. I'm tired and
I want to be done. Will you help me,
Dolores? Will you please help me die?

DOLORES rocked. Lost there for a moment. Holding VERA's
hand to her chest. Reaching down to brush away a strand
of blood-stained hair from her cheek.

VERA

Please...don't make me beg...

DOLORES

(finally)

If that's what you want, Vera, I'll
help you.

VERA

Yes. Yes it is what I want.

(tears now)

God bless you, Dolores.

DOLORES kneels to kiss VERA.

DOLORES

Don't you fret.

VERA

(pain taking over now)

Hurry, Dolores. If you really want
to help me, please hurry...

CUT TO

A KITCHEN DRAWER whipping open -- pulled so violently that
it flies off it's housing -- KNIVES and CLEAVERS CLATTERING
across the floor -- a TEA KETTLE SCREAMING on the stove --
WIDER TO FIND

DOLORES, panicked, staring down at the KNIVES at her feet.
Eyes scanning wildly around the room -- looking for something
-- What? -- A CAST IRON POT on the back of the stove -- she
grabs for it -- her arm grazing THE TEA KETTLE -- burned --
recoiling -- the kettle falls -- hot water spilling -- she
jumps back -- something -- anything -- and there it is --

HER HAND reaching for A LARGE MARBLE ROLLING PIN and --

OUT OF FLASHBACK

BACK TO -- THE PRESENT

CLOSE-UP -- SELENA. Her expression skeptical. She shakes her head in disgust and turns OUT OF FRAME and --

THE ROADSIDE. SELENA marching back to the car. DOLORES in pursuit.

DOLORES

You don't believe me, do you?

SELENA

What difference does it make?

DOLORES

You think I killed her.

SELENA

I'm not your problem.

DOLORES

Even after what I told you.

SELENA

What I think doesn't mean shit!
It's the rest of the world you better
start worrying about.

SELENA gets back into the car. SLAMS shut the door.
DOLORES walking slowly back to the passenger side, as we --

CUT TO

THE JOHNNY WALKER RED BOTTLE. Nearly empty.

SELENA alone at the kitchen table. Night. Working on her laptop computer. Journalistic clutter all around her -- cassette recorder...notebooks...diskettes...

She sits back. She hits the "print" button. The WHIR of a portable laser printer as it begins to work.

CUT TO

THE FRONT PORCH. DOLORES alone, sitting in the dark. An old coat against the cold. The door opens behind her --

SELENA

I made a list of attorneys.

SELENA offers the sheet of paper.

SELENA

These are all big muscle firms.
New York, Philadelphia, Washington.
It could take a few days. That's
why on Monday you're not going to
say a word.

(beat)

Take it.

DOLORES will not. She stands. Past SELENA, to the door --

AND INTO

THE HOUSE. DOLORES finding the Scotch. She needs a shot.

SELENA

(entering behind her)

In case you missed it, I'm trying to
help you.

DOLORES

What you said this afternoon, about
it not makin a difference what you
think -- you're wrong.

(she downs the drink)

You think I give a fiddler's fuck
what anybody else says about me?
Some District Attorney, or a Judge
-- any of these lackwits in town?
I nursed myself offa that tit a long
time ago. It's you -- what you
think's the only thing left that's
important.

SELENA

I can't send you to prison!

DOLORES

You think that's the end of the world?

(pouring another drink)

What in God's name could they possibly
do to me ain't been done already?
Gorry, might be a relief. Sit n sleep.
Three meals served up everyday.

SELENA

Maybe you're just happier being
miserable. Is that it?

(beat)

Is that it, mother?

DOLORES

I want you to understand.

SELENA

I don't understand, mother. Vera's a bitch. She's abusive, she's mean, she's cheap -- Why not leave? Why not just walk? And Dad. Okay, he was a drunk. Maybe he was a lousy husband, but, I mean, come on --

DOLORES

(incredulous)

-- a lousy husband? --

SELENA

-- you think you were the first woman to be in an unhappy marriage? --

DOLORES

-- how can you? --

SELENA

-- maybe you're right, maybe he hit you --

DOLORES

You're defendin him!

SELENA

Nobody made you stay!

DOLORES

How can you say that?

SELENA

Because I know! Because I know when people hurt you, you can always leave!

Now there is silence. DOLORES standing there, shattered.

DOLORES

You're not responsible, Selena. You need to know that.

SELENA

Look, here's the goddamn list --
(throwing it down)
Do what you want with it.

DOLORES

You really don't remember, do you?

SELENA

(not listening)

You want to go to prison, knock yourself out.

SELENA turns around to find DOLORES staring at her.

DOLORES

That's why you're so unsettled,
ain't it? You honest to God
don't remember.

SELENA

"Unsettled?" Don't you mean,
"boogery," mother?

(superior here)

If you're attempting some sort
of meaningful analysis, perhaps
we'd better define our terms --

SELENA gathering her stuff into the bag. DOLORES rushing to
pour a shot.

DOLORES

(quickly)

-- we'll have another drink --

SELENA

-- it's a cornerstone of critical
thinking, Mother -- the ability to
communicate with an agreed-upon
vocabulary --

DOLORES

Selena. I'm asking you to talk
with me.

SELENA

I've had my fun for the night.

DOLORES suddenly in her path. Steel.

DOLORES

You sit down right this minute.

(no way out)

We are gonna sit at this table and
have a drink. N when we're through
-- when I'm through -- then you can
run upstairs n take whichever one
a those pills make you feel the best.

SELENA overwhelmed by this tone. Reluctantly folding.
DOLORES pulls a chair for her. SELENA sits.

THE GLASS OF SCOTCH -- Dolores's hand pushing it across
the table. It sits there a moment, and then...

A MAN'S HAND reaches in to pick it up, and --

FLASHBACK

THE DINNER TABLE. It is the spring of 1975. Sundown. JOE, age 38, at the table. He is unshaven. He wears a ratty t-shirt. He holds the Scotch like a threat.

JOE

Don't say a fucking word.

DOLORES, age 36, staring at him over her dinner. SELENA, age 12, between them. SELENA looks terrible -- pale, baggy clothes, hair stringy and unwashed.

JOE downs the drink. Savoring it.

DOLORES

'Fore you get too deep in that to make sense, I was wonderin if you took a look at her report card.

SELENA head down. No reaction.

JOE

I saw it. So what?
(pouring another one)
Everybody slips now n then.

SELENA

May I be excused?

DOLORES

Not till you tell me how an honor roll student who skips the whole seventh grade can go from straight A's to D's and C's in space of two semesters.

JOE

Oh, leave her alone already...
Hell, it's not like you were some great genius at school.
(he drinks)
Claibornes, shit... Wa'nt one a ya even born in hospital for crissake.

SELENA

May I please be excused?

JOE

Go on then. Go.

SELENA leaves the table quickly. DOLORES staring at JOE, watching him retreat into another Scotch.

CUT TO

THE DEVEREAUX HOTEL. Day. Spring of 1975. We're on the mainland, the town of Jonesport. The HOTEL an old, three-story clapboard affair not far from the pier where the ferry lets off. TWO TEENAGE GIRLS exit the hotel. Laughing and playful because the workday's over and they're free.

SELENA exits the hotel. Alone. Subdued. She starts down the street and then stops suddenly --

SELENA

Mom? What are you doin here?

DOLORES

(waiting for her)

I had some shoppin. I thought maybe you and I could ride back on the ferry together. You mind company?

Off SELENA's troubled reaction we --

CUT TO

THE FERRY. DOLORES and SELENA on the aft deck. Alone. A gorgeous Spring afternoon. The two of them standing there watching the gulls play in the wake of the boat.

DOLORES

Beautiful, isn't it?

(Selena nods)

You used to be beautiful too, Selena. Why ain't you anymore?

SELENA turns back. DOLORES waiting for her.

DOLORES

It's drugs, ain't it? And don't give me that look like I don't know what I'm talkin about.

SELENA

That's crazy...

DOLORES

There's nothing crazy about it. You've changed -- you're twelve-years-old and you're smokin pot and I want to know where you're gettin it from and how long it's been goin on.

SELENA

There's nothing "going on," okay?
(backing off)

Nothing.

DOLORES

Whatever trouble you're in won't change my love for you, Selena, but I can't begin helpin you out of it until you tell me the truth.

SELENA

I don't do drugs, mother.

DOLORES

Then what is it? Are you pregnant?

SELENA

Oh, get real...

DOLORES

You've let one a these pimple-faced Jonesport squirts go too far, ain't you? You gone too far and now you're pregnant.

SELENA

You're crazy.

DOLORES

You want to end up just like me? You want to be dumb and stuck and cleanin up after people your whole life? Is that what you want?

SELENA

I'm not pregnant.

SELENA turns away now. Leaning against the railing.

DOLORES

Then what is it, Selena? What the hell's going on with you?

SELENA

Leave me alone!

DOLORES

No I won't -- we're gonna ride this damn ferry back and forth till you tell me what's got you this way!

DOLORES moving to hold her -- SELENA pulls away -- stumbling free -- landing against the rail so hard she almost goes over -- DOLORES grabbing her sweater and pulling her back --

SELENA

...just leave me be -- let me go!
-- let me go! -- let me go!

DOLORES releases her. Standing there -- SELENA suddenly distracted because --

A NECKLACE has fallen to the deck -- the chain broken --

SELENA ashen as DOLORES gets to it first --

DOLORES

What're you doing with...

(staring at Selena)

This is your grandmother's cameo.

(shocked)

What'd you do? Did you go in your father's closet?

SELENA holding herself. Silent. DOLORES suddenly gripped by the fear of a terrible thought.

DOLORES

Omigod...

CUT TO

A BUREAU DRAWER. Whipping open. Sweaters there. HANDS searching quickly -- something buried in here -- a SAVINGS ACCOUNT PASSBOOK pulled from deep within.

DOLORES in her bedroom. Alone. Holding the passbook.

CUT TO

THE COASTAL NORTHERN BANK. Jonesport. Day.

CUT TO

INSIDE THE BANK. DOLORES at the teller's window, watching her TELLER confer with THE HEAD TELLER in the BG.

TELLER

(returning with the passbook)

I'm afraid you'll have to discuss your daughter's savings account with Mr. Pease.

DOLORES staring. Confused.

CUT TO

MR. PEASE, 40, a tidy, small-town banker, behind his desk. A glass partitioned office. The bank floor beyond. PEASE offers an account file for DOLORES' inspection.

PEASE

As you can see, Mrs. St. George, this account's been closed out by your husband and--

DOLORES

How can that be?

(ashen)

That's my life savings.

(passbook in hand)

How can that be, when I got the savings book right here?

PEASE

Well, you see, Mrs. St. George, that is -- was -- what we call a "custodial savings account." That means the child in whose name the account is held can -- could -- draw from it with either you or your husband to countersign --

DOLORES

But these don't show any goddamn withdrawals! How'd he get the money without the goddam passbook?

Heads starting to turn around the bank.

PEASE

Mrs. St. George, if I could ask you to keep your voice down --

DOLORES

I'll worry about my voice. You worry about the way this beshitted bank does business, chummy!

PEASE

(safety in paper)

According to this, your husband stated the passbook was lost. He asked to be issued a new one. It's common enough--

DOLORES

Common be damned! I opened this account! Who the hell you think put that money in the bank to begin with?

PEASE

(all eyes on them now)

Please, Mrs. St. George. I'm sorry, but I assure you that what we did was not only legal, but standard bank practice.

DOLORES

Maybe it's legal and maybe it ain't. What I can't believe is that "standard bank practice" means you don't make a single goddam phone call to the person whose name and number's right up top on the account!

PEASE

I'm very sorry, but--

DOLORES

You say you're sorry one more time, I'll kick your butt up so high you'll look like a hunchback.

PEASE sits back. DOLORES struggling to keep it together.

DOLORES

It's cause I'm a woman, ain't it? If it'd been the other way around, if I'd been the one passin off a fairy story how I'd lost the passbook and ast for a new one, if I'd been the one who started drawin out what took eleven years to put in, wouldn't you have called Joe?

Silence. PEASE squirming. DOLORES goes quiet.

DOLORES

I spose it's one a two things: either he buried in a Mason jar in the backyard or else he opened a new account. Which is it?

MR. PEASE

Mrs. St. George, I can't possibly... What you're asking, it's privileged information, the confidentiality of our customers is--

DOLORES

I know you don't have to tell me, but I'm hopin you'll think for just one moment about the grief and heartache you'd a saved me by makin one phone

(MORE)

DOLORES (cont)
 call. I'm askin please to tell me
 whether he's opened a new account
 here, or if I've got to start diggin
 holes around my house.

An agonizing pause. PEASE glancing around the bank.

MR. PEASE

(sotto)

You look like you could use a cup
 of coffee. Perhaps I could meet
 you -- say, half an hour?

DOLORES sits back. Starts breathing, as we --

CUT TO

THE CHATTY BUOY. A luncheonette. DOLORES waiting at a
 back booth. MR. PEASE making his way toward her. He's
 nervous about being seen. Slipping quickly into the seat.

MR. PEASE

It's still in the bank. Most of
 it anyway. Twenty-five hundred.
 That's the good part. The bad part
 is that the new account is in his
 name only.

DOLORES

Accourse it is. He sure didn't give
 me no new passbook to sign. That
 woulda tipped me off right there.

MR. PEASE

Most women wouldn't know one way or
 the other. Many women sign anything
 their husbands put in front of them.

DOLORES

Well, I ain't many women.

MR. PEASE

I've noticed.
 (he means this)
 Good luck, Mrs. St. George.

CUT TO

DOLORES'S ROUGH HANDS polishing ELEGANT SILVER.

VERA (OS)

As soon as the luncheon silver is clean, I want the guest rooms aired out --

THE DONOVAN DINING ROOM. Day. DOLORES, looking haggard and distracted, working with TWO OTHER MAIDS at the table. FINE CHINA and SILVER SERVICE spread before them.

VERA

(pacing around them)

I'll want to go over the linens for the daybeds in the study and the sun room...

CUT TO

THE DONOVAN MAIN STAIRWAY. DOLORES, looking beat, carries a stack of linens upstairs.

VERA

(behind her)

Must you look so trod upon, Dolores? In thirty-six hours you will have the uniquely thrilling experience of standing at the epicenter of a total solar eclipse!

(pause)

My God, I've got guests travelling eight hundred miles for something all you need do is look out the window.

DOLORES can't fake it. She's whipped.

CUT TO

VERA'S BEDROOM. DOLORES changing the sheets. Struggling to keep her emotions in check, as VERA busies around --

VERA

When the caterers arrive, I want you to make sure they have everything they need. I've made a list -- I want no last minute frantic runs to Jonesport. Do you hear me?

DOLORES does not hear her. DOLORES is breaking. It's no use. The tears are coming and coming fast. She sits on the bed and starts bawling. A wracking sob, muffled as she pulls her apron up over her face.

VERA staring at her. And then she moves for the door.

VERA
(calling down the hall)
Pamela! Could you put on some tea!

VERA closes the door. Moves to a chair across. Picks up her needlepoint. Begins to work.

DOLORES finally lowers the apron -- eyes raw, sniffing --

VERA
Are we quite finished?

DOLORES
I'm sorry, Mrs. Donovan. I truly am.

VERA
Vera.
(Dolores stares)
I insist that all women who have hysterics on my bed call me by my Christian name thenceforward.
(she pauses,
sewing away)
I'm hoping you're not going to tell me you've been careless enough to let that mean-spirited creature you live with knock you up again.

DOLORES
No ma'am.

VERA
So enlighten me, Dolores. What turns a stone-hard woman like yourself into the blubbering mess I see before me?

DOLORES
(mopping up)
Joe stole my money. I went to close out my account -- money I been savin for Selena -- three thousand dollars. I went to get it out and it's gone.

VERA
Planning on playing the stock market, were you?

DOLORES
I was gonna leave. Joe's out on a boat till at least tomorrow. I was gonna take Selena with me tonight
(MORE)

DOLORES
 before he gets back. I was gonna
 leave n use that three thousand to
 get us set-up someplace as far away
 from here as possible.

VERA
 Well, isn't that dramatic.
 (pause)
 Don't look to me, Dolores, all my
 money's tied up in cash.

DOLORES still trying to get it together.

VERA
 And why exactly are we running away?
 (no response)
 Go on, Dolores. Nothing's as bad as
 it seems.

DOLORES
Really?
 (beat)
 I'd say this might just ruin that
 notion once and for all. I'd say...
 (tears winning now)
 I'd say this...it might be just as
 friggin bad as it seems...

CUT TO

THE DECK OF THE FERRY. **DOLORES** and **SELENA** as we left
 them at the start of this sequence -- **SELENA** (13) has just
 been pulled back from the railing. **DOLORES**, holding **THE**
BROOCH in her hand, gripped by the fear of a terrible thought.

DOLORES
 Omigod. It's your father, ain't it?

SELENA blanches.

DOLORES
 (the idea building)
 He's been at you, hasn't he?

SELENA
What are you talking about?

DOLORES
 Omigod...

SELENA
 (wildly)
That's crazy...

DOLORES
 (gutshot)
 Oh, Selena...what's he done to you?

SELENA
 (panicked now)
 Nothing! -- that's just -- that's
 -- what you're saying -- it's --

DOLORES
 (over her)
He's been touching you, hasn't he?

SELENA
No! -- no -- no -- no...!

DOLORES trying to hold her, when SELENA slaps her hard
 across the face --

CLOSE-UP -- DOLORES'S SHOCKED FACE --

SELENA (VO)
You crazy old woman!
 (her adult voice
 coming in out of
 nowhere, whipping us--)

OUT OF FLASHBACK AND

SELENA jumping up from the table. DOLORES just stunned.

SELENA
 You crazy old lying bitch!

SELENA backing away -- every bit as freaked out as she
 was on the ferry -- total panicked denial --

SELENA
You'll say anything, to get out of
 it, won't you?

DOLORES
 Selena, no... How can you --

SELENA
-- does this shit just come to you,
 or do you actually work on it? --

DOLORES
 (blown back)
 -- no, Selena -- I'm only asking
 you to remember --

SELENA

-- I remember you hitting him!
That I remember! --

DOLORES

-- not talking about somethin doesn't
make it go away --

SELENA

-- I remember the blood coming down
his face! I remember the drinking!
I remember the fighting! But sex?
(backing away)
That detective -- he's right -- you
are dangerous!

DOLORES

(desperate)

Selena, no --

SELENA turns quickly -- into an end table -- a LAMP falls --
CRASHING to the floor -- the room suddenly that much darker.

DOLORES

Selena, you've got to believe me.

SELENA

No I don't!

SELENA, hysterical, backing for the stairs.

SELENA

I should never have come back!
Never! I knew it the whole fucking
time!

SELENA bolts up the stairs. DOLORES standing there as her
door SLAMS SHUT. And then silence.

CUT TO

SELENA in her room. Frantic. Pushing the bureau against
the door. Scanning THE PILLS -- a panicked search for the
right bottle. Finding it -- tearing it open -- throwing
down a Seconal -- then another. There's only one more left
and -- fuck it -- she takes that too.

CUT TO

DOLORES at the bottom of the stairs. Crushed. Moving
heavily back through the living room and --

INTO

THE KITCHEN. DOLORES just about to start putting things away, when she hears SELENA coming back down the stairs.

DOLORES
(turning back)
Selena?

SELENA (12) standing at the bottom of the stairs.
Dressed to go out. A backpack.

SELENA
Don't try and stop me...

WE ARE IN FLASHBACK

We're still in the living room, but it's a bright, Spring afternoon in 1975.

DOLORES (36) Standing near the kitchen. Bare feet.

SELENA
(backing for the door)
Mrs. Devereaux called, she needs extra help with the hotel because of people coming for the eclipse. I'm going to stay over a few days.

DOLORES
Selena, we talked about this--

SELENA
I don't care what we talked about!
(rushing out the door--)
I don't want to be here when you talk to dad about your crazy ideas!

DOLORES rushing to follow. Not as fast in bare feet. Through the front door and --

OUT INTO

The yard. DOLORES running off the porch -- heading across the field -- trying to cut SELENA off --

DOLORES
(yelling as she goes--)
Selena! Selenaaaa...!

SELENA already way ahead -- almost beyond earshot -- SILHOUETTED AGAINST THE SKY as she runs along the road to town and --

DOLORES running -- trying to chase -- tough without shoes --

DOLORES

Selena!!!

(stopping as--)

Suddenly -- DOLORES stumbles -- A CRACKING SOUND -- something giving way -- boards breaking -- DOLORES falling -- catching herself -- GASPING -- grabbing at the ground as her legs disappear beneath her -- and then scrambling back up -- standing slowly and staring down at --

A DRY WELL -- covered with rotting boards -- grown over with weeds and scrub -- a black hole there in the middle of nothing and --

MATCH CUT -- OUT OF FLASHBACK TO

THE ROUND KITCHEN TABLE. Cluttered with Selena's laptop, tape recorder, notebooks, etc...

DOLORES picks up her glass. Finishes the last of the Scotch. Begins gathering up Selena's things, as we --

CUT TO

THE LIVING ROOM. The next day. Daylight through the windows.

SELENA coming downstairs. Suitcase in hand. One foot in front of the other. Stopping as she sees DOLORES at the table. A wary silence.

DOLORES

For twelve hours sleep you don't look so good.

SELENA

What time is it?

DOLORES

It's close to one.

SELENA

Is there a three o'clock ferry on Sundays?

DOLORES

Three-o-five.

A pause. DOLORES stands.

SELENA
I need to be in L.A.

DOLORES
(moving off)
There's coffee.

SELENA
Did you hear me?

DOLORES
I packed your things.
(she turns back)
You had stuff lying around. It's
on the couch.

SELENA, hands shaking, finds a cigarette.

DOLORES
You'll want some coffee.

SELENA standing there as DOLORES pads out of the room.

CUT TO

THE PORCH. Later. SELENA comes out of the house. Bags
under her arms. It's cold, but she wears only a jacket.
Starting down the steps -- she stops --

AN ENVELOPE -- legal sized. Left there.

SELENA lowers the bags. Opens the envelope.

DOLORES
(on the porch now)
What is it?

SELENA
It's Detective Mackey's report.
(she offers it)
Here.

DOLORES
I don't want it.

SELENA
You don't want it.
(beat)
That's great. I'm terribly,
impressed.

DOLORES
Just leave it there.

SELENA
How remarkably brave, mother.

DOLORES has nothing to say. SELENA shoulders her bags. Report in hand, she strides to her car.

SELENA
(opening the trunk)
Since you seem unwilling to help yourself, I'm going to do it for you.
(all business now,
dumping the bag in
the trunk)

I'll speak to my secretary tonight. You'll have your phone turned on tomorrow.

(shutting the trunk)
I'll take the report. I'm going to fax it to a lawyer. You can expect a call tomorrow.

(she comes around
the car, stops at
the door)
And when you talk to the lawyer, mother, you damn well better do what they tell you.

DOLORES
You're gonna miss the ferry.

SELENA
You want to hang yourself? Go into that inquest tomorrow and start shooting your mouth off.

DOLORES
Don't you fret about me. I'll pull through like taffy.

SELENA
Don't give me that homespun bullshit!

Silence. DOLORES not about to say another word.

SELENA
I'm sorry mother...
(she gets into the car)
Sometimes being a bitch is the only thing a woman has to hand onto.

The door closes. Engine starts. In gear and --

DOLORES watching the car pull away. And then gone.

CUT TO

LITTLE TALL receding in the distance.

SELENA staring back from the deck of the ferry. A dead run, almost no one on board. She's cold, under-dressed.

CUT TO

THE SHORE. A CAR pulling up. MACKEY gets out. Eyes to the ferry as it pulls away.

SELENA on deck. Staring back. Contact and --

CUT TO

SELENA on deck. Breaking the look. Turning away, rushing for the cabin, as we --

CUT TO

THE FERRY SNACK BAR. Just inside the door. Windows to the deck. This place hasn't changed in thirty years. An old, sullen COUNTERMAN pouring coffee. No business.

SELENA at the counter as he delivers.

COUNTERMAN

One coffee. One dollar.

SELENA pays up. She lifts the cup. Staring at it.

INSERT -- THE CUP -- another throwback.

"LITTLE TALL, ISLAND OF ENCHANTMENT"

HOLDING ON THE CUP -- in the BG, TWO MORE CUPS pushed forward on the counter, as we hear --

COUNTERMAN (OS)

Okay...one coffee, one hot cocoa,
that'll be, sixty cents --

MAN'S VOICE

There you go...

SELENA turns to see --

JOE (38) dropping his coins on the counter.
Picking up the two cups. Heading out and --

SELENA staring. Simply immobilized, as --

JOE leaves the snack bar, Through the door and
out onto the deck.

SELENA watching through the window as --

JOE carries the cups out across the deck.

SELENA leaves the counter. Out the door and --

ONTO

THE DECK. SELENA in pursuit. Following him to the rear
of the boat. No passengers out here because it's cold.
And then she slows -- nothing could prepare her for what
she sees now --

YOUNG SELENA (12) waiting on a bench. JOE handing
her the cocoa. The ferry's wake foaming behind them,

JOE

Your hands're cold.

SELENA

I'm okay.

JOE

Here. C'mon -- gimme your hands...

The girl hesitates. Scared. Powerless.

ADULT SELENA walking toward them, shaken to her core.

JOE taking YOUNG SELENA'S hands in his. He glances
around and then, sure they're alone, he pulls her
hands down beneath his coat into his crotch.

SELENA
 (trying to pull away)
 It's okay. I'm fine. I am.

JOE
 No one's gonna see -- just...

SELENA
 My cocoa...it'll spill...

JOE
 I'll buy you another one.
 (guiding her hand
 into his lap--)
 That's it...just like that.

SELENA's eyes dart about the deck. Terrified to be seen and yet terrified to be alone with him.

ADULT SELENA shattered. Desperate for the memory to end and powerless to stop it. And there's no need to cut back and forth any longer, because the THREE OF THEM are all there simultaneously now.

JOE breathing more quickly now. Aroused. Adjusting his coat to cover his crotch. YOUNG SELENA near tears as she fumbles with him.

JOE
 No -- you're...
 (adjusting his body)
 Do it like I showed you -- nobody's
 gonna see us -- go on...

SELENA nods. Bearing down, when suddenly --

THE COUNTERMAN'S VOICE
 (from behind us)
 You want your change or what?

ADULT SELENA whips around.

THE COUNTERMAN standing there. Pissed off to be out in the cold. Four dollars in hand.

SELENA
 ...I...I don't care...
 (rushing past him)
 ...you keep it...

SELENA striding away. Away from him. Away from the bench. Away from it all. Anywhere but here, as we --

CUT TO

THE RENTAL CAR whipping through rain into a parking space.
A SMALL TOWN at night. SELENA jumping out of the car --
into the rain -- running across the street and --

A PUDDLE -- deeper than it looks -- up to her ankle in it
-- almost falling -- feet soaked --

ACROSS THE STREET

A PHARMACY. Closing time. A DRUGGIST just now pulling
down the metal security gates. Looking up, as SELENA comes
hobbling toward him -- ducking in under the awning --

SELENA

Thank God, you're still open...

(pulling out a
prescription--)

I drove like crazy -- they told
me in Machias, you were open late.

The DRUGGIST is a nice guy. It's raining and she's obviously
desperate. He takes the script -- looks at it.

DRUGGIST

(he can't help her)

Oh, I'm sorry, Miss, but Secenal...

SELENA

What do you mean?

(undone)

It's a perfectly good prescription.

I've got -- if it's ID you want --

(her bag)

-- it's not a problem -- I've--

DRUGGIST

It's from New York.

SELENA stops. Coming unglued. It's not going to happen.

DRUGGIST

It's a controlled substance. We
can't fill it from out-of-state.

SELENA

Well... Isn't there...

(broken)

What am I supposed to do?

DRUGGIST

There's a motel just down the way.
Maybe get some sleep -- I'll see
what I can do tomorrow.

SELENA

If I could sleep I wouldn't need
fucking prescription, would I?

The DRUGGIST shocked. Staring, as SELENA backs away,
into the rain, and we --

CUT TO

SELENA'S SUITCASE. Open on the back seat of THE RENTAL
CAR. SELENA digging through it. We're in front of the
PHARMACY. She's already taken off the wet shoes and is
now searching for...

SLIP-ON SNEAKERS. Finding one. Putting it on with one hand
while she digs for the other. There it is. It catches on
her foot -- she stops -- a CASSETTE TAPE stuffed inside -- a
piece of paper wrapped around it.

SELENA, confused, pulls on the second shoe. She pops the
tape into the car stereo. Hits "play," to hear --

DOLORES'S VOICE

I hope I'm doin this right, cause
I've never worked one a these before.
Gorry, but don't these Japanese make
the cunningest little gadgets --
(stopping abruptly as--)

SELENA shuts it off. Quickly starts the car. Pulls out.

CUT TO

THE RENTAL CAR speeding along through the rain.

CUT TO

INSIDE THE CAR. SELENA simply wired. Windshield wipers
beating. Cigarette going. Highway whipping past. Every few
moments she glances at the tape deck. Will she listen or not?
Finally, suddenly, impulsively, she hits the button and --

FLASHBACK

THE EAST END COASTLINE. The rocks near the house.
Dawn. Twelve hours earlier. DOLORES huddled over
the TAPE RECORDER. Surf pounding below her.

DOLORES

...You're sleepin now, Selena, but I know when you get up you're gonna leave. By the time you hear this, I figure you're in California and by now it's all been said and done...
(continuing as we--)

CUT TO

SELENA driving. Tape still rolling --

DOLORES'S VOICE

...cause I'm through with keepin secrets anymore. You can forget about the lawyer cause I'm gonna go talk to those people tomorrow and I ain't makin a stink about it no more. I'm telling you now what I'm gonna tell them. I just thought you oughta hear it firsthand is all...
(fading into VOICE
OVER as we --)

FLASHBACK

VERA'S BEDROOM. The Summer of 1975. VERA sitting in her chair, needlepoint in her lap.

DOLORES (VO)

I was sittin there, like I tried to tell you, in Vera's room, just weepin away, and...

DOLORES on the bed. Mopping up tears. Bereft.

DOLORES

She says it ain't never happened. But she screamed n cried n denied it so bad I know it's true... I shoulda...the way she's been actin around him...I shoulda known it sooner...but my God...

VERA

How far has he gone, Dolores?

DOLORES

(not listening)

...he's always favored her...past couple years...hanging on her... puttin her on his lap...ridin her around when he couldn't be bothered for anyone else...

DOLORES starting to cry again.

DOLORES

He wa'nt always like this...
 (trying to believe)
 We started out -- it wa'nt a dream
 come true, but...

VERA

Has he fucked her?

DOLORES

I don't know!
 (through the tears)
 I don't know. But if he hasn't,
 he's plannin on gettin to it soon
 enough...he's working the boats...
 coming home...he'll be back tomorrow
 and I...
 (beat)
 Maybe I'm wrong...

VERA

What if you're right?

DOLORES looks up.

VERA

Husbands die everyday, Dolores.
 Why, one is probably dying right now
 while you're sitting here weeping.
 (knit one, purl two)
 They die and leave their wives their
 money. I should know, shouldn't I?
 Sometimes they're driving home from
 their mistress's apartment and their
 brakes suddenly fail.
 (a steely smile)
 An accident, Dolores, can be an
 unhappy woman's best friend.

DOLORES staring, as we --

CUT TO

FRONT PORCH. Night. DOLORES alone in the dark. Staring
 out over the water. FISHING BOATS dotted across the horizon.
 DOLORES just sitting. Thinking.

CUT TO

DONOVAN HOUSE LAWN. Cloudy skies. Buffet brunch. White linen and good silver. FORTY GUESTS, a Bloody Mary crowd. CATERERS and WAITERS scrambling to keep up. VERA, holding a paper bag, wafting through the assembled. Heading --

ONTO

THE PATIO. DOLORES hauling away a garbage can.

VERA

Dolores. Dolores Claiborne!

DOLORES

We're goin as fast as we can.

VERA

Please. Everything's charming.

DOLORES

I'm sorry the day's so gray.

VERA

Oh, we'll have our eclipse. Sunshine by three. You'll see.

(cheerful as can be)

I'm sending you home, Dolores. You've done a wonderful job and it's all under control and I want you to go and share this remarkable experience with your husband.

(Dolores confused)

He will be back, won't he?

DOLORES

I spose so.

VERA

I've got you two eclipse viewers and two reflector boxes.

(the bag)

I thought you and Joe might like them.

VERA offers the bag. DOLORES just staring at it.

VERA

Sometimes, Dolores, sometimes you have to be a high-riding bitch to survive. Sometimes being a bitch is all a woman has to hang onto.

DOLORES takes the bag. A look between them. Volumes unspoken.

VERA

Now go on home. Pam and Sheila can
clean up tomorrow.

(brightly)

Remember -- sunshine by three!

DOLORES

Thank you, Vera.

CUT TO

LITTLE TALL VILLAGE. Day. Still cloudy. Busy preparations
for the big event. Stores closing up. People on roofs.
Daytrippers loading onto fishing boats.

CUT TO

THE FRONT PORCH. Day. JOE sitting there. Sunburned and
dirty from the boat. The sky is gray and overcast.

JOE

What the hell're you doin back?

DOLORES

(coming from the car)

Vera gave me the afternoon off.
Welcome home to you too.

JOE

Where's Selena?

DOLORES

She's workin at the hotel.

She hands him a paper bag. He opens it.

JOE

Johnny Walker Red? What's this?

DOLORES

It's a present to celebrate the
eclipse.

(he's suspicious)

I've been feelin so good n relieved
I just thought I'd share some of my
happiness.

JOE

What've you got to feel happy about?
Somebody invent a pill to cure ugly?

DOLORES
You don't want it, I c'n always
pour it down the sink.

JOE
Fat chance.
(pulling it away)
What the hell is going on here?

DOLORES
I don't want to fight with you, Joe,
specially not today. I've got some
nice salami n Swiss cheese and water
biscuits.

JOE
Just make me a sandwich.

DOLORES
Fine. A sandwich for you, hors d'
oeuvres for me. Then we'll have a
couple drinks n watch the eclipse.
Mrs. Donovan sent down a viewer and
reflector thingamajig for each of us.

JOE
Shit, you think I give a fuck about
anything that rich bitch gave you?

DOLORES heads into the house. JOE already pulling out his
penknife to break the seal on the Johnny Walker.

CUT TO

THE KITCHEN. Later. DOLORES preparing lunch. The sound
of BOAT HORNS bleeding in from the distance.

JOE (OS)
Lookit em! Whole goddam island's
out there!

DOLORES moves to the window and --

HER POV

DOZENS OF BOATS dotted along the coastline. Party time.
The sky still gray, but even now, two hours before the big
event, the light seems odd and ominous.

CUT TO

JOE alone on the porch. Glass in hand.

JOE

Ain't nothin gonna happen that's any
more'n a thunderhead going acrost
the sun, and they're all just about
shootin off their pants.

(he drinks)

I hope it rains. I hope it comes
down s'hard it drowns em all!

CUT TO

DOLORES in the kitchen. Looking back from the window.

CUT TO

THE PORCH. Later. Lunch is finished. JOE working hard
on the Scotch. That strange sky beginning to brighten.

DOLORES

(clearing the food)

Vera said it'd be sunshine by three.
She might just be right.

DOLORES bending down to take his plate. JOE, without
warning, puts his hand to the back of her neck and pulls
her toward him. A kiss. DOLORES hesitates -- stiff for
a moment -- and then it's over.

JOE

Wa'ant half bad, was it Dolores?

DOLORES

Been a long while since that happened.
(really thrown by this)
I guess we're both fulla surprises.

JOE's hand slipping up inside her skirt.

JOE

Maybe you n me, Dee, maybe we can
get up to the dickens later on.
What do you think about that?

DOLORES

Maybe so. I'm gonna -- I got the
dishes...

(extracting his hand)

Why don't you see what you can make
of those viewers.

JOE

(back to the bottle)

Goddam eclipse -- I've seen dark
before. Happens every goddamn night.

DOLORES standing behind him. JOE spits off the porch.

CUT TO

THE KITCHEN. DOLORES standing there, watching the water just run. Horns of a dilemma. Steeling herself.

OUT THE WINDOW

THE SKY. An odd cast to it. The clouds have burned away. A strange, thin, rose tint starting to develop. HORNS on the boats starting to echo more frequently on the wind.

JOE (OS)

Well, here we go.

(calling in)

Ain't this what you n all the rest
of the fools've been waitin for?

CUT TO

THE PORCH. DOLORES coming out of the house. JOE fumbling with the reflector, drunkenly trying to figure it out.

JOE

(he's tanked)

Goddamn. She's disappearin all right.

DOLORES

Joe. It's time for the surprise.

JOE

What surprise? What in God's name're
you talkin about, woman?

DOLORES

You know the money in Selena's bank
account?

JOE

What about it?

DOLORES

You took it.

He lowers the reflector. He smiles. Then he looks at her and starts LAUGHING...

JOE

(cackling away)

Well, don't you look sour.

DOLORES
I guess that's pretty funny, ain't it?

JOE
I guess it is.

DOLORES
A real knee-slapper, huh?

JOE
Don't you worry your pointy little head about it. That money's just about fine.

DOLORES
Do I look worried?

JOE
(enjoying this no end)
Fooled you right and proper, didn't I, Dee?

DOLORES
You fooled me about a lotta things, Joe, but I guess I finally caught up with you.
(he's not laughing anymore)
You already spent five hundred of it. What'd it go for, Joe? Poker? Beer?

JOE
There you go, selling me short...

DOLORES
That was set aside for school, but I guess you figure you blown all our money you might as well run through her's while you're at it.

JOE
School, shit... You can't even wipe your ass for three grand these days. I'm gonna triple that money.
(drunken pride)
I'm buyin into a boat. Fedder's boat. He's selling me a share.

DOLORES
Ain't that just perfect. That damn tub spends more time in the yard than on the water.

JOE
It'd just kill you to support me wouldn't it, Dee?

DOLORES

I spent the day with the people at the bank. Turns out you weren't s'posed to do that -- lie to 'em, make 'em break their rules.

JOE

What the hell'd you go n do?

DOLORES

I got that money given right back to me in cash. All but the five hundred you pissed away --

JOE standing so fast the reflector CRASHES to the ground --

DOLORES

-- so you can just go fuck yourself! That is, if you can get that old limp noodle a yours to stand up.

He's on her -- fast -- hand to her throat -- her chair falling back -- she's gasping for air as --

JOE

I told you what'd happen if you didn't leave off bein fresh with me! I told you a million times!
(bearing down)
You believe me now? Do you?

DOLORES

(barely)
...yes...yes, Joe...

He throws her down. Hard -- down the steps and into the yard. She lands on her knees. She's staggered, looking around trying to get her bearings --

DOLORES

(eyes casting above)
...my God, lookit that... Stars.

THE SKY -- She's right. Stars twinkling against an ethereal purple background. A strange, accelerated sunset. The sun being swallowed by a huge, black, full-moon.

JOE

You'll see plenty of em, woman, you don't quit stallin.

(beat)

So where the hell's that money now? And believe you me, there better be every last cent of it!

DOLORES

I buried it...
 (her voice hoarse)
 ...out in...by the field...

DOLORES standing. Backing away, across the driveway.

JOE

Shit. Ain't that just like a woman.
 Well, why don't we just go out and
 get it back where it belongs.

DOLORES

You better save the big talk for your
 pals at the barber shop.

She's easing away now. Widening the gap between them.

DOLORES

Although I wonder if they're gonna
 think you're such a stud when they
 find out the only ass you can get
 your hands on belongs to your twelve-
 year-old daughter!

JOE blindsided -- too drunk to shift gears that fast.

JOE

What're you...?
 (weakly)
 I don't know what you're talkin about.

DOLORES

Really? Then how come you look like
 the devil just reached in and grabbed
 them little raisins you call balls?

JOE

She's a liar!
 (guilty wild)
 She's a little goddam liar and a
 tease! I'm gonna get my belt --
I am -- I'm gonna get my belt and--

DOLORES

How could you do it, Joe?

He stalls out. Crippled. Confirmation in his silence.

JOE

I'm gonna get my belt...

DOLORES

There's only one thing you're gonna
 get, Joe...

DOLORES starting to run now --

DOLORES

...n that's a long stretch in Shaw-shank prison for child molestin!

JOE

You goddam bitch...

Suddenly, it's a chase -- DOLORES out front -- ten yards ahead -- sprinting off the driveway and into the field -- JOE gaining ground -- stumbling in the darkness -- but even drunk he's faster than she is --

JOE

Think you can get away from me!

DOLORES cutting through the scrub -- the brambles -- and it's so dark -- and she trips -- falling forward and --

JOE diving -- grabbing a handful of dress and --

DOLORES scrambling free -- her dress tearing and --

JOE

-- you goddamn fuckin bitch --
(stumbling ahead--)

DOLORES running full out -- unconscious -- fear, pain, anger...none of it matters now -- running and running, and then, suddenly, everything she's got left explodes into a single effort -- she's jumping -- feet leaving the ground -- through the air -- landing hard in the shrubs and --

JOE (OS)

(from behind her)

-- you're mine now, Dolores --

DOLORES on her ass, turning --

JOE closing fast -- murder in his eyes --

JOE

-- and bitch're you gonna get your
payback n--
(not finishing
because--)

Suddenly, this terribly familiar CRACKING SOUND and --

WOODEN BOARDS, half rotten, breaking beneath his feet and --

JOE drunk and startled -- starting to drop -- the ground giving way below him and --

JOE
 -- noooooooo....!

He's grabbing wildly -- coming up with nothing but air,
 and --

DOLORES standing -- forcing herself to look -- freezing in
 terror as she sees --

JOE'S FACE hanging there at the cap of the well. Hands
 bleeding, clutching desperately at the rotten boards --

JOE
 Oh Christ, Dolores...
 (he's scared)
 It's the old well -- help me out --
quick -- 'fore I fall all the way in.

DOLORES standing there, not moving a muscle and --

JOE hanging there -- terrified -- and now this horrible
 look of comprehension coming over him --

JOE
 Oh, you bitch...
 (fear into panic)
 Oh you goddamn bitch...

He starts to clawing at the boards -- fingernails tearing
 against wood -- legs flailing below him, trying to find a
 grip -- snorting and wincing as he strains to pull himself
 out and then --

DOLORES. As she hears THE BOARDS GIVE WAY. As she listens
 to JOE'S SCREAM echoing down into the well. As she hears
 the dull, echoing thud of his body landing somewhere below.
 As she holds herself -- trying to get it together -- her
 eyes drifting above and --

THE SKY. Total eclipse. A thin wafer of brilliant light
 exploding from behind the moon's silhouette. Spectacular
 and clear. An exact moment. Beyond description.

DOLORES looking away before she's blinded. Standing there,
 totally wiped-out, when --

JOE'S VOICE
 (from the bottom of
 the well--)
 Duh-lorrrrr-iss...

She freezes. Oh God. Not that...

JOE'S VOICE

...help me, Duh-lorrrr-issss...help
me pleeease...

She can't take it. Backing away...stumbling...running and --

CUT TO

DARKNESS. At first, just SOUNDS -- HANDS rifling a work-
table...STUFF FALLING...panicked BREATHING --

DOLORES

-- omigod -- what've I done? --

Suddenly, the sharp beam of a powerful FLASHLIGHT swinging
around -- We're in THE TOOL SHED. DOLORES wielding the light.

CUT TO

THE ECLIPSE. Hanging there like a bullseye. The moon
just passing totality. But there's something strange
about this angle. And now, a second shadow passes over
the sun. DOLORES'S SHADOW -- she's standing somehow above
us. And then, light -- the flashlight beam -- in our eyes.
And now we realize we're looking up from deep inside THE
WELL: a tunnel of moss-covered stones rising above us.

The FLASHLIGHT scouring the darkness...

And we hear BREATHING...

And then, A HAND, bloody and trembling, rises INTO FRAME.
Fingers clawing for a handhold...

A SECOND HAND, strains above the first...

JOE'S FACE into the light. Moss and blood and dirt dripping
down over a demonic grin. He's climbing! Already halfway
to the top --

JOE

...take more'n that to kill me
Dolores...

DOLORES staring down in horror -- holding the flashlight
-- paralyzed with fear and --

JOE

(rock by claw)

...take mor'n that to get outta
what I got in mind for you...

DOLORES drops to her knees at the edge of the well. Black sky. Stars. JOE getting closer...

JOE
...you sorry fuckin bitch...

DOLORES can't look -- she turns --

THE FIVE-YEAR-OLD SELENA coming toward her across the field. Exempted from the eclipse somehow. Her own light. Smiling.

SELENA
(childish sing-song)
...five - ten - fifteen - twenty...
five - ten - fifteen - twenty...
(she will continue,
as she approaches--)

DOLORES just completely undone. Staring at the GIRL, as --
JOE keeps climbing -- almost to the top --

JOE
...I'm comin, Dee...n when I do,
you're gonna wish you'd never...
(every inch an effort)
...you're gonna wish you'd never
set eyes on me...

DOLORES frozen and --

FIVE-YEAR-OLD SELENA getting closer and --

SELENA
...five - ten - fifteen - twenty...
(over and over and--)

JOE'S HAND struggling for a piece of wood at the top and --

JOE
...cause I'm gonna kill you, Dee...
n' I'm gonna make it hurt...
(continuing and--)

DOLORES immobilized -- back and forth between them --

SELENA
(still coming)
...twenty - five - ten - fifteen...

JOE
...I'm gonna kill you slow, Dee...
n then I'm gonna have my payback
with that little mouthy bitch...

DOLORES can't move -- can't run -- can't think, and --

JOE clawing at the wood -- grotesque -- pain -- fury --
fear -- all of it at once and --

JOE

...cause it's just gonna be me n
her from here on in...nobody stickin
their nose in our business...

SELENA

...ten - fifteen - twenty - five...

JOE willing himself up -- another ten seconds and he's
gonna make it and --

DOLORES looking down at him and --

FIVE-YEAR-OLD SELENA coming closer and closer and --

JOE'S FACE there at the top -- a grin in there somewhere
behind the blood and swelling and --

A LARGE STONE rising in the air and --

JOE'S FACE, that nightmare expression changing for just an
instant into fear --

JOE

...you biiiitttch...you goddam
fuckin biiiitttcchhhhh--

DOLORES smashes the STONE down across his nose with every
ounce of energy she's got and --

HE'S FALLING -- backwards -- no chance to scream -- his
head cracking against the wall -- plummeting now -- beyond
the light, to a dull muddy thud far below.

DOLORES turns and --

The girl is gone -- no more Selena -- just the empty field
beginning to brighten as the sun fights it's way back and --

DOLORES standing now. Staring back over the field. As the
light begins to return. As the sounds of the party boats and
the birds begin to bleed back in. She looks down the well --

JOE'S BODY at the bottom. Bent and broken. He's dead.

OUT OF FLASHBACK TO

THE PRESENT

SELENA at the wheel of the RENTAL CAR. Going way too fast. Oncoming headlights. Windshield wipers beating. She is simply shattered. Too much to process, as she hears --

DOLORES'S VOICE

(from the tape deck)

...I burned my dress, dropped the whisky bottle out near the well and started askin folks if they'd seen Joe off on a bender anywhere. Other than Detective Mackey showin up n makin trouble, it was easier'n I thought.

(beat)

That's what happened, plain n true n I don't care no more who knows it...

SELENA speeding up -- as we --

FLASHBACK

CLOSE-UP -- DOLORES and the tape recorder --

DOLORES

...lyin ain't done me much good all these years. It ain't done me any good n it surely ain't helped you like I was hopin...

THE PRESENT

CLOSE-UP -- SELENA crying as she drives --

DOLORES'S VOICE

...So it's time to spill the beans n be done with it...

FLASHBACK

CLOSE-UP -- DOLORES with the tape recorder.

DOLORES

I'm sorry Selena. I'm sorry n that's the best I can say. I'm sor--
(stopping abruptly,
as we cut to--)

THE PRESENT

CHAOS -- SELENA one hand on the wheel, the other BANGING the shit out of the cassette player -- RADIO on suddenly -- TOO LOUD -- and then a CAR HORN BLARES from outside and -- HEADLIGHTS from an oncoming car and --

CUT TO

THE CAR -- losing control of the car -- brakes locking up -- skidding in the rain -- spinning -- lights and --leaving the road -- fishtailing -- forward -- around -- and then, as fast as it started, it's over. The CAR in a ditch. Angled oddly, but no major damage.

CUT TO

INSIDE THE CAR. SELENA in shock. Wipers going as the rain beats down. WHITE NOISE coming from the tape deck. SELENA, trembling, looks around. And then she simply comes apart. Completely overwhelmed, as we --

CUT TO

A MAGISTRATE. A crusty, old up-country circuit official seated at a folding table. Warming up his hands.

MAGISTRATE

Okay, I guess I'm about half-thawed out from the ferry.

(papers before him)

Just so everybody's on the same page here -- this is not a trial....

A MEETING ROOM. We're in the basement of the Little Tall Town Hall. A large open space, this the room for Cub Scout banquets and Town meetings. Linoleum. Fluorescent lights. Seated in folding chairs, around the MAGISTRATE are:

DOLORES in her best dress.

A STENOGRAPHER, a woman of 30.

FRANK STAMSHAW in uniform.

DISTRICT ATTORNEY VOLES is 35. Ambition in a suit and tie. Mainlining coffee. Poring over Mackey's report.

MACKEY beside him. Confident and prepared.

MAGISTRATE

...This is a preliminary inquest required by law in all cases of death so deemed by the Medical Examiner's office, State of Maine, Third Circuit, Washington County, as "suspicious in nature."

(he turns to Dolores)

Miss Claiborne, they tell me you you've waived your right to counsel at this time. Is that correct?

CUT TO

SELENA entering in the back of the room. Slipping in quietly. Out of sight, in the shadows. She looks like hell. Not enough pills in the world. Listening as we go --

BACK TO

MAGISTRATE

It's up to you Miss Claiborne, but I can tell you, I've married people who brought lawyers with em.

DOLORES

No, sir. Thank you, Your Honor.

MAGISTRATE

Well, there's no need to be nice to me. Mr. Voles over there, he's the one you want to be polite with. He's come all the way here from the State District Attorney's office and he's the one who's gonna decide should he bring a case before the Grand Jury....

(continuing as--)

VOLES is still huddled over the report. He'll keep flipping pages, speed-reading. MACKEY, beside him, trying to contain his impatience, as we hear --

MAGISTRATE (OS)

He's gonna ask you some questions. At any point should you wish to either not answer, remove yourself from questioning, or reschedule this inquest until such time as you do have an attorney, it shall be so granted. We're clear on that?

DOLORES

(resigned)

Ayhuh.

MAGISTRATE

Mr. Voles...

VOLES

This report...

(looking up)

Detective Mackey obviously put in
a long weekend.

(where to begin?)

I wasn't expecting thirty pages...

MACKEY

(jumping the gun)

Your Honor, in the interest of
brevity, perhaps I might be able
to walk us all quickly through
the case.

VOLES staring at MACKEY. Just a hint of friction here.

VOLES

If it'll make things easier...

MAGISTRATE

What about you, Miss Claiborne?
You mind Mr. Mackey asking you the
questions?

DOLORES

I spose not.

CUT TO

SELENA. Still in the shadows. Paralyzed.

BACK TO

MACKEY

Samuel Marchant, Miss Claiborne.
The mailman. He told us he came
upon you holding a marble rolling
pin, in what looked to him to be
a, "posture of attack," over the
body of Vera Donovan. Is that true?

DOLORES

Yes it is.

(to the Magistrate)

I was goin to kill her, Your Honor.
She tried to do it herself but she
was still alive. She asked me to
put her out of her misery. I didn't
know if I could do it 'r not. By
the time I got back from the kitchen,
she was dead.

MACKEY

Just your good luck, I guess.

(beat)

Cause, we've got several witnesses who say they were present when you threatened the life of Vera Donovan. Is that true?

DOLORES

Course it's true.

(beat)

What the hell you need witnesses for? I told you myself on Saturday.

(to the Magistrate)

Hell, over the years, I told her I'd dump her out the window, leave her in the coal closet, run her down in the Chrysler... You name it.

MACKEY

What about throwing her down the stairs? Was that in your repertoire?

DOLORES

You askin if I did it, or said it?

(enough already)

Hell, why don't you just say what's on your mind.

MACKEY

Well, it's all right here...

(hoisting the report)

It's pretty simple, Miss Claiborne. Vera Donovan was a wealthy woman. You were the sole beneficiary of her estate. You threw her down the stairs because you knew there was one-million six-hundred-thousand dollars waiting at the bottom.

All eyes on DOLORES. She says nothing.

MACKEY

But it's not the first time this has happened, is it, Miss Claiborne? People have a tendency to take some bad falls when you're around, don't they?

DOLORES staring at MACKEY. You sonofabitch.

VOLES staring at MACKEY. Where the hell is he going?

MACKEY

You know what, Miss Claiborne, I doubt I'm the only who feels that way...

(he turns to the
back of the room)

Maybe you'd like to join us, Miss St. George?

SWING TO

THE BACK DOOR. SELENA standing in the shadows. Trapped.

MACKEY

This is Miss Claiborne's daughter, Your Honor...

SELENA hesitates. All eyes peering back at her. The door right behind her. So much easier to just walk.

MAGISTRATE

What the hell's going on here?

MACKEY

Why don't you come on up, Selena?

(he pulls a chair
for her--)

No need to stay back there.

SELENA can't get her feet to move. DOLORES just stunned.

VOLES with no clue what's happening, turns to MACKEY --

VOLES

(whispering)

John? What the hell're you doing?

MACKEY

It's an election year, kid. I'm getting you two murders for the price of one.

SELENA still standing there.

MAGISTRATE

Miss...if you could...

(impatient)

Either join us or leave the room.

SELENA will approach the bench. She will not look at her mother. A copy of the REPORT gripped tensely in her hand.

MACKEY holding the chair, but she won't sit down.

MACKEY

I see you've got the report.
You have a chance to look it over?

SELENA lost. Not sure what to say.

MACKEY

So what do you think?

SELENA

Of the report?

MACKEY

Yes.

SELENA

I think it's...
(weakly)
I guess it's pretty impressive.

MACKEY

Ring any bells for you?

SELENA can't find her tongue. About to break.

MAGISTRATE

(concerned for her)

Why don't you have a seat, Miss?
(before this gets
out of hand--)

Mr. Voles, maybe you'd like to--

MACKEY

(over him)

Your honor, if I might -- just for
a moment -- if we could let Miss
St. George amplify a little...

MAGISTRATE

Detective Mackey...

MACKEY

The report. You said it was
"impressive."

SELENA

Yes...

(broken)

...yes it's impressive.

MACKEY

Maybe we should finish what we
started seventeen years ago...

(gently here)

What do you think, Selena? Maybe
that's the best for all of us.
Maybe it's time for the truth.

SELENA focuses. MACKEY can taste it.

SELENA

The truth is my mother didn't kill
Vera Donovan.

MACKEY stiffens. Pressure drop.

MACKEY

I see. So you're sure about that.

SELENA

Yes.

MACKEY pulling it together. Wheels turning fast.

MACKEY

And your conclusion, it's based
on what?

SELENA

It's based on the fact that I know
my mother.

MACKEY

Of course...

(a sly, triumphant
smile--)

Mothers and daughters. What was
I thinking?

(almost amused)

Here we've come all this way --
Mr. Voles...The Magistrate...all
of us getting up early, running
around in the cold, and all I had
to do was ask you in the beginning.
And this...

(the report)

Hell, we might as well just tear
the damn thing up.

SELENA

(to the Magistrate)

There's nothing in that report that
says she did it.

(deeply felt)

These two women loved each other.

MACKEY

Now that's something I'd like to
hear about. That's something I
definitely missed in my investigation.
Going around, talking to people,
taking statements -- and somehow
that fact just slipped past me.

MACKEY focuses on SELENA now. In his sights.

MACKEY

Why don't you fill us in on that,
Miss St. George. How were they
together? From your observations.

(no response)

Let's start with the last time you
saw them together.

(silence)

When you'd visit -- Christmas,
birthdays...holidays -- How'd they
seem to get along?

SELENA lost. A deer in the headlights.

MACKEY

I mean, as you said, you know your
mother. So let's hear it.

(sadistic beat)

When was your last visit?

SELENA

(finally)

Fifteen years ago.

MACKEY

Well. You must have some memory.

(to the Magistrate)

Your Honor, I was in the room --
Miss Claiborne didn't even recognize
her daughter.

(turning to--)

Constable Stamshaw, you were there
with me, is that true, or not?

FRANK nods. Sadly. Almost reluctant.

STENOGRAPHER

Your Honor...

MAGISTRATE

Constable, for the record, could you
please speak up?

FRANK

No, sir. Miss Claiborne didn't
recognize her daughter.

SELENA looks to DOLORES for the first time -- I'm sorry.
They're fucked and they know it. Their first collaborative
moment since this story began and it's a plane wreck.

MACKEY

I don't have much more, Your Honor.
(cruising now)

The report is fairly detailed. I can recommend without reservation that this matter move to the Grand Jury.

MAGISTRATE

Mr. Voles, anything you want to get at here?

VOLES may not be happy with the way it's gone down, but he's heard enough. And he's about to say so, when --

SELENA

They did love each other.
(heads turn)

They did and I can prove it.

MACKEY

Maybe you ought to quit while you're ahead.

SELENA

Vera Donovan was sick and tired of living. She tried to kill herself and she failed. The only thing my mother's guilty of is thinking about trying to help her finish the job. And there's nothing in this report -- not one blood sample or "angle of inclination," or any of it that says any different.

(to Voles)

This report -- all of it -- it's worthless without a motive.

MACKEY

Well then, I rest my case.

SELENA

He says they hated each other.

MACKEY

We've got witnesses.

SELENA turns sharply to DOLORES --

SELENA

How long did you work for Vera?
(quick, mother)
How long?

DOLORES

Twenty-two years. Ten full-time.

SELENA

And what did she pay you?

DOLORES

Eighty dollars a week.

SELENA

Twenty-four hours a day? Seven days a week?

(Dolores nods)

Were there other, better-paying jobs you could've taken during that time?

DOLORES

Sure.

MACKEY

Is there a point here, Your Honor?

SELENA

These two women -- neither one of them could hold their tongue -- my God, they bitched and squabbled for years. No one's denying that. The question is why do they stay together? If they hated each other so much, why go through twenty years of hell?

(to Dolores)

Why nother?

DOLORES thrown. Not sure what to say.

SELENA

We know I never visited. Who did?

(beat)

In the past ten years, who else has been in that house?

DOLORES

Dr. Cullen came once a month.

SELENA turns back to the men. Building now.

SELENA

Why did they stay together?

(beat)

Because there was nobody else in the world who gave a damn whether they lived or died.

(finding it slowly)

I mean...really...is that what you do when you hate someone? Clean up their mess? Trade off your life at, I don't know, what is it --

(MORE)

SELENA (cont)
 fifty cents an hour? -- just to
 keep them going?

(welling-up)

They were all they had. And you
 don't think that's love?

MACKEY

That's all very touching, but what
 about the million-six?

SELENA

My mother never cared about money!

MACKEY

We're not talking about money.
 We're talking about a lot of money.

(it's laughable)

One-million-six hundred thousand
 dollars? Hell, you could buy this
 whole damn island and everyone on it.

SELENA

She never knew about the will.

MACKEY

Come on, Miss St. George...

(loving this)

The will is eight years old!

(no response)

You want us to believe they were
 best friends and alone for eight
 years and they never talked about it?

SELENA doesn't flinch. That's his best shot and she's
 not folding. Not now.

SELENA

Well then....I tell you what,
 Detective, somebody better go run
 for the S.W.A.T. Team -- somebody
 better lock down this building and
 get out the handcuffs, because we
 may be in the presence of one of
 the great criminal minds of the
 century!

The room is silent. SELENA hot now --

SELENA

I mean, think of it. For eight
 years she's a heartbeat away from
 being the richest woman on the island.

DOLORES frozen. Just like the rest of them.

SELENA

How many bedpans a day, Mother?
 (no answer)
 How many bedpans in eight years?
 Two a day?
 (no answer)
 Two a day?

DOLORES nods. Too stunned to answer.

SELENA

That's what? Let's be conservative,
 let's say, what? -- Five-thousand?
 (sounds right)
 Five thousand bedpans...throw in,
 I don't know -- say two-thousand
 sponge baths. God knows how many
 wet sheets and feedings and diapers
 and bed sores...

SELENA reaches over and takes DOLORES'S HANDS -- offering
 them to the room --

SELENA

These hands -- every day -- all that
 work -- every minute of it, just one
 choke hold away from a million dollars.
 (she gives Dolores
 back her hands--)
 Talk about a brilliant plan. She
 waits eight years and what does she
 do? Does she drug her victim?
 Smother Vera gently in her sleep?
 Let her drown in the tub? Starve
 her slowly?

MACKEY

We know what she did.

SELENA

But that's your theory isn't it?
 She waited eight years to throw her
 down the front stairs?

MACKEY

Yes. To look like an accident.

SELENA

An accident?
 (it's war now)
 She ransacked the kitchen to get
 a rolling pin! How is beating Vera
 to death going to look like an
 accident?

MACKEY staring at her. The smell of doubt in the room.

SELENA
But that's your theory, right?

MACKEY
I've seen all kinds of murders.
(backpedaling)
There's always an element of impulse.

SELENA
Oh, so it's an impulse and a plan.

MACKEY
That is not what I said.

SELENA
And she knew about the will but she
waited eight years.

MACKEY
She thought she'd get away with it.

SELENA
And why is that?

MACKEY
Because she'd done it before!

Silence. SELENA quiet and in control. VOLES listening.

SELENA
Mr. Voles, the only motive in this
room worth talking about belongs to
Detective Mackey --

MACKEY
-- wait a minute --

SELENA
-- Detective Mackey is under the
delusion that my mother murdered
my father twenty years ago --

MAGISTRATE
-- okay, let's just --

SELENA
-- he couldn't put a case together
back then, so he's trying it now --

MACKEY
-- that's got nothing to do with it --

SELENA
-- he's been waiting for twenty
years to get at her --

MAGISTRATE

-- I want order in this room --

SELENA

(grabbing the report)

-- that's why we've got the Warren Commission here --

BANG! - BANG! - BANG! - BANG! -- The MAGISTRATE'S hand beating against the table.

Silence. SELENA turns to MR. VOLES. Like a rock.

SELENA

My mother and I are leaving now. We're leaving and you can do whatever it is you want. But you better know, if you try and turn this man's obsession into a murder charge, I've got a long list of New York lawyers who'd just love to take this case apart in front of a jury.

SELENA turns to DOLORES.

SELENA

Get up, Mother.

MACKEY

Wait a minute...

SELENA

Get up, Mother.

DOLORES stands. Not sure if she's allowed to or not.

MACKEY

You're not going anywhere.

SELENA takes DOLORES'S ARM --

SELENA

Don't worry, mother, he can't hurt you anymore.

They will begin to move slowly toward the door --

MACKEY

(to the Magistrate)

You're not gonna let them just walk, are you?

The MAGISTRATE looks to VOLES for guidance and --

MACKEY

Your honor...

DOLORES and SELENA heading for the door -- as if at any moment the bubble will burst and --

MACKEY turning to see VOLES closing up shop --

MACKEY

What the hell're you doing?

VOLES

(gathering papers)

If I hurry, I can make it back to Bangor by lunch.

MACKEY

I've got the report!

VOLES

Come on, John. You don't have shit.

DOLORES and SELENA at the door and --

MACKEY, apoplectic, staring at VOLES --

VOLES

Look, I'm doing you a favor.

(it's a wrap)

Like you said, it's an election year.

(he closes his
briefcase)

I don't need to lose this case and
neither do you.

MACKEY standing there. Stricken, as we --

CUT TO

~~OUTSIDE~~ THE HEARING ROOM. DOLORES and SELENA as the door closes behind them.

DOLORES

(in awe)

Selena...you were so...you were
just...

(she stops because--)

SELENA looks ready to pass out. Spent down to the bottom. She left it all in the courtroom. DOLORES rushing to hoist her up, as we --

CUT TO

THE LITTLE TALL PIER. Day. SELENA, suitcase at her feet, finishing a smoke. DOLORES watching the FERRY load up.

SELENA

You still need a lawyer.

DOLORES, surprised, looks over.

SELENA

A tax attorney. You're rich now.

DOLORES

Don't you fret on that. You just go out to California and get started on that book.

SELENA

There is no book. No L.A..

(she turns back)

I don't have to go. It was lie.

(no self pity here)

The guy I work for -- it's pretty come apart all the way around.

DOLORES

So where'll you go?

SELENA

New York, I guess. I don't know.

DOLORES

Well, you're not stayin here.

SELENA surprised by this.

DOLORES

First time I sent you away, I was lyin to myself. I thought if could just get you outta here -- away from me n this place n everything that happened -- I thought you'd be fine. I lied to you n I lied to myself n I won't ever do it again.

(strong and plain)

This time's different. Now I know I'm doin the right thing. You can do anything you want, Selena, cause there's nothing any scarier than what you already been through.

SELENA feeling it. Letting it in.

DOLORES

I've done nothin for thirty years
but worry about you. But right
now, after what I saw today, I know
I don't ever have t'worry anymore.

SELENA comes to DOLORES with open arms. They embrace.
And it's real. And it's more than they can say out loud.
The FERRY HORN BLOWS -- all aboard.

DOLORES

Go on now...
(breaking it off)
You go on.

SELENA pulls away. Taking strength from DOLORES. Finding
her suitcase. Backing away slowly for the ferry.

DOLORES watching her go. Just standing there watching, as
the FERRY HORN BLOWS AGAIN, and we --

PULL AWAY and --

FADE OUT

THE END