

IF BEALE STREET COULD TALK

Written for the Screen and Directed by

Barry Jenkins

Based on the Book by

James Baldwin

First, OVER BLACK, before anything else, we HEAR...

"Of course, I must say I don't think America is God's gift to anybody.... If it is, God's days have got to be numbered."

FADE IN:

...on a young man and young woman, both black, both twenties, both smiling.

1 EXT. RIVERSIDE PARK - DAY 1

It would be twilight, the sound of the city winding down around this couple, nothing but their footsteps and the muted hum of this secluded eden above the city.

The couple winds along the slope of a descending path, find themselves on a landing overlooking the Hudson River.

A gentle embrace.

YOUNG MAN

You ready for this?

YOUNG WOMAN

Yes.

(and)

Ain't nothin' else in the world I'm more ready for.

And as they draw closer, locked in a kiss...

...the sound of metal clanging, of feet shuffling and mens' voices filling a tinny room, then...

2 INT. NEW YORK CITY CORRECTIONAL FACILITY - DAY 2

The same young couple eyeing each other across glass, the young man on the one side in the jail smocks with tired eyes. On the other, a thin girl, a gentle wonder about her.

This is TISH (19, black, warm), the voice heard "before anything else" and Alonzo "FONNY" Hunt (22, also black, breakable).

TISH

Alonzo...

Fonny's eyes startled at the sound of his proper name, something sharp, a warning in its use: she never calls him Alonzo.

TISH
 Alonzo... we're going to have a
 baby.

Fonny going blank, *completely* blank as that news washes over
 him, just across that glass and yet, instantly so far away
 from here.

TISH
 I'm glad Fonny, I'm *glad*.
 Don't you worry.

FREEZE FRAME:

...on Fonny's face, still frozen in contemplation, the look
 of a life changing.

*"I should have said already: we're not married. That means
 more to him than it does to me, but I understand how he
 feels. Fonny is twenty-two. I'm nineteen."*

RESUMING:

Fonny closing his eyes, just a moment to himself, then:

FONNY
 You sure?

TISH
 No. I ain't sure, I'm just trying
 to mess with your *mind*.

Fonny smiling now, coming back to her:

FONNY
 What we goin' to do?

TISH
 Well... we ain't goin' to drown it.
 So I guess we'll have to raise it.

Fonny throwing his head back, a big, shocking laughter, a joy
 in his face initially unfathomable:

FONNY
 Did you tell my daddy?

TISH
 Not yet.

FONNY
 You tell your folks?

TISH

Not yet. But don't worry about them, I just wanted to tell you first.

FONNY

Well, I guess that makes sense. My daddy and 'nem can't keep nothin' to theyselves, better this way.

(and now)

A *baby*.

Something in this repetition carrying Fonny away from here, away to that place beyond Tish. His eyes cast down:

FONNY

What you gonna do?

TISH

I'm going to do just like I been doing. I'll work up to just about the last month. And then, Mama and Sis will take care for me, you ain't got to worry. And anyway, we have you out of here before then.

FONNY

You sure about that?

TISH

Of course I'm sure.
I'm *always* sure about that.

A man coming up behind Fonny, doesn't even bother to touch him, from his dress, clearly a guard.

Fonny's eyes going down at the man's presence, looks through that glass again at his lover. His eyes coming back, that overwhelming smile again. Tish matching it, the two of them standing in unison on either side of the glass.

Fonny raises his fist to the glass. Tish does the same.

Off Tish watching Fonny move away, disappear through a door on the other side...

3

INT. TISH'S HOME - DAY

3

A simple Harlem apartment, modest but expansive as far as these things go, a proper living room, kitchen big enough to fit a small dining table.

At the end of a hall running through the kitchen and away from the living room, three bedrooms.

Tish sitting before a cup of tea, staring at the wispy steam rising off it. A beat, then...

...the sound of the front door opening, of footsteps on wood flooring and...

VOICE (O.S.)
(calling out)
How you doin' Lil' Bit?

A moment later, SHARON (40s but could pass for younger) enters, a shopping bag at her side. Just in the way she looks at her, Tish's mother.

SHARON
How is he?

TISH
He's just the same. He's fine. He sends his love.

SHARON
Good. You see the lawyer?

TISH
Not today. I have to go on Monday, after work.

SHARON
He been to see Fonny?

TISH
No.

A sigh from Sharon as she places a bag of groceries on the counter, begins unloading things. Tish watches as Sharon goes about her work, rinsing and placing and setting things here and there.

The two sharing this space in silence a moment, Sharon humming as she alternates the spray of water rinsing vegetables, when...

TISH
Mama...?

SHARON
Yeah, Lil' Bit?

Tish not going further and Sharon not pressing.

Sharon turning off the tap, turns and looks at her daughter. Watches her a long beat. A very slow realization, then:

4

INT. TISH'S HOME, TISH'S BEDROOM - DAY

4

A simple bed and bed-side table, dresser-drawer at the foot of the bed with an oversized mirror atop it. Heavy curtains in here. It's day but cool and dark.

Just stillness a moment, Sharon and Tish sitting in silence. The news Tish just relayed... hit Sharon like a ton of bricks.

A *muted* ton of bricks, like a wave. As it passes through her, Sharon puts a hand to Tish's forehead, gentle.

That same hand on Tish's shoulder now:

SHARON

Tish, I don't think you got nothing to cry about.

(and now)

You tell Fonny?

TISH

I just told him today. I figured I should tell him first.

SHARON

You did right. And I bet he just grinned all over his face.

TISH

(laughing)

Yes.

(wipes a tear)

He sure did.

SHARON

You must be - let's see - you about three months gone?

TISH

Almost.

SHARON

What you cryin' about?

Sharon pulling Tish fully in, the curiosity over, all mothering now.

SHARON

Now listen, you got enough on your mind without worrying about being a bad girl and all that jive-ass shit. I sure hope I raised you better than that.

SHARON (CONT'D)

If you was a bad girl you wouldn't be sitting on this bed, you'd long been turning tricks for the warden.

Tish picking her head up, wiping more tears, getting herself back together:

SHARON

Now you and Fonny be together right now, married or not, wasn't for that *damn* white man. So, let me tell you what you got to do. You got to hold on to that baby, don't care what else happens or don't happen. You got to do that, 'cause we gonna get Fonny out. And that baby be the best thing that ever happened to him. It's going to give him a whole lot of courage.

(beat)

You hear me?

TISH

Yes, Mama.

SHARON

Now, when your Daddy and Ernestine get home, we going to sit at the table together, and I'll make the family announcement. I think that might be easier, don't you?

TISH

Yes.

Sharon rises from the bed.

SHARON

Take off them streets clothes and lie down for a minute. I'll come get you.

Sharon opens the door.

TISH

Mama?

TISH

Thank you.

SHARON

(smiles)

I don't know what you thanking me
for. This a family, ain't it?

CUT TO:

5 INT. TISH'S HOME - DAY - CONTINUOUS 5

Sharon in the hallway just outside Tish's door, closing the door gently behind her.

She moves to take a step down the hallway but...

...stops -- a hand to her chest, the facade of control gone, takes a moment to process: *Tish... is having a baby.*

A beat, then...

CUT TO:

Light under a door, a shadow along the floorboards.

REVERSE ANGLE:

6 INT. TISH'S HOME, TISH'S BEDROOM - DAY - SAME 6

Tish staring at that door, watching her mother's shadow, neither of them breathing. The light beneath the door shifts, moves on down the hall.

Tish takes off her coat, her shoes -- slowly, all that tiredness overtaking her again. As she gets her shoes to the floor...

...the doorbell rings. From somewhere out there, we can hear Sharon yell:

SHARON (O.S.)

Be right there!

And yet, the SOUND of feet approaching, Sharon at this bedroom door again. A quick knock and she's entering.

SHARON

Here.

Drink this.

Sharon carrying a saucer, has a small water glass and a shot glass beside it. Sharon takes the brown liquid of the shot glass, pours it into the water.

And then... she's gone again, out that door, feet clicking along the hall that leads to the front door. From the SOUND of the banter, a man entering, in a good mood:

MAN (O.S.)
Forgot my keys, Tish home yet?

CUT TO:

7

THE HALLWAY

7

From just outside Tish's bedroom door, through the kitchen, a view of Sharon and this "man" (Tish's father, JOSEPH) having a hushed conversation at the edge of the living room.

SHARON
(sotto voce)
Shhhh, she's taking a little nap.

JOSEPH
She see Fonny?

CUT BACK TO:

TISH -- listening from behind that bedroom door.

INTERCUT

SHARON
Yeah. She saw him. She saw the inside of the Tombs, too. That's why I made her lie down.

JOSEPH
What about the lawyer?

SHARON
She going to see him Monday.

Sound of feet moving throughout the house now, of the fridge door opening and closing. Tish downing her water and brandy.

JOSEPH
How much you think them damn lawyers is going to cost us before this thing over?

SHARON
Joe, you know damn well ain't no point in asking me that question.

JOSEPH
Well. They sure got it made, the rotten motherfuckers.

SHARON

Amen to that.

Tish lying back on the bed, looking up and into those curtains. Somewhere out there, the sun setting.

As she rubs her belly, lets her thoughts wonder...

CUT TO BLACK.

"Fonny used to go to a vocational school where they teach kids to make all kinds of shitty things..."

8 INT. HARLEM VOCATIONAL SCHOOL - DAY - MONTAGE 1 8

See a "slightly" younger Fonny working at a table-saw, a raw piece of timber split down the trunk atop his work station.

"...like card tables and hassocks and chests of drawers which nobody's ever going to buy."

9 INT. HARLEM VOCATIONAL SCHOOL - NIGHT - MONTAGE 1 9

"But Fonny didn't go for it at all and he split, taking most of the wood from the workshop with him."

Looking out through the open shop-gate, a worn-out pickup truck illuminated in flash light beams as Fonny wonders the empty shop floor.

10 INT. RESTAURANT KITCHEN - NIGHT - MONTAGE 1 10

Fonny wiping sweat from his face as smoke fills the air.

"He started working as a short-order cook - so he could eat - and he found a basement where he could work on his wood and he was at our house more than he was at his."

11 INT. BASEMENT APARTMENT - DAY - MONTAGE 1 11

Simple, at best seems a squatter's refuge, a pallet in the corner of the room, a handmade dining table.

"Fonny gave Mama one of his first sculptures."

In the center of the space, Fonny working at two saw-horses, sanding a suggestive piece.

CLOSE ON: a small, wooden sculpture there.

"It seemed a strange figure for him to do, or, at least, it seemed strange until you thought about it."

ANGLE ON: Fonny.

"You see, Fonny had found something that he wanted to do, and this saved him from the death that awaited the children of our age. And though it took many forms..."

CUT TO:

12 STILL IMAGE SERIES 12

...period, still photography of the drug fueled, post-Civil Rights era blight that will come to plague America's inner-cities for decades on end.

"...the death itself was very simple and the cause was simple, too: the kids had been told that they weren't worth shit... and everything they saw around them proved it."

CLOSING STILL IMAGE: Gordon Parke's "Ellen Crying."

END MONTAGE 1.

13 INT. TISH'S HOME, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT 13

A woman we've not seen before entering the apartment now, slender, taller, a few years older than Tish but still young.

This is Tish's sister, ERNESTINE.

ERNESTINE

Where's Tish?

Sharon and JOSEPH (a little older than Sharon, a large, yet subtle presence) over near the kitchen, Joe nursing a beer looking in on his wife preparing supper. Both their faces opening at the sight of Ernestine.

SHARON

She's home. She's lying down.

Ernestine setting her purse down, continuing over to...

THE KITCHEN

ERNESTINE

She all right?

SHARON

She's tired. She went to see Fonny.

ERNESTINE

How's he taking it?

SHARON

Taking it.

ERNESTINE

Lord, let me make myself a drink.
You want me to cook?

SHARON

No. I'll get into the pots in a
minute.

ERNESTINE

She see Hayward?

SHARON

No. She's seeing him on Monday,
after work.

ERNESTINE

You going with her?

SHARON

I think I better.

ERNESTINE

Yeah. I think so, too, I'll call
him from work, before you all get
there.

JOSEPH

You know... Tish says she thinks
that lawyer wants more money.

ERNESTINE

Daddy, we paid him his retainer,
that's why ain't none of us got no
clothes. And I know we got to pay
expenses, but he ain't supposed to
get no more money until he brings
Fonny to trial.

SHARON

He says it's a tough case.

JOSEPH

Shit. What's a lawyer *for*?

SHARON

To make money.

JOSEPH

You got that right.

ERNESTINE

Well. Anybody talk to the Hunts
lately?

SHARON

They don't want to know nothing about it, you know that. Mrs. Hunt and them two *camellias* is just in disgrace. And poor Frank ain't got bail no money.

ERNESTINE

Well. Let's not talk too much about it in front of Tish. We'll work it out somehow.

JOSEPH

Shit. We *got* to work it out. Fonny's like one of us.

SHARON

He *is* one of us.

All heads turning here at a bit of light out in the living room, the sound of footsteps approaching. A moment later and Tish appears, hair mottled and cajoled, just woke up:

ERNESTINE

Well hello there, baby sister.

A kiss on the cheek and a hug between Tish and Ernestine: these too clearly love each other.

SHARON

You want a lil' snack, baby?

TISH

No thank you, I'm okay.

SHARON

Well alright then, if y'all want to eat, better get your behinds out of my kitchen, this food ain't gon' fix itself. Come on now, take your business into the living room.

Tish and Ernestine shuffling away from here, leaving their mother to her kitchen. Sharon looking to Joe there, the man shrugging a "what'd I do" face:

SHARON

Do I come down to your job and watch you work?

Joe smiling as Sharon turns away from him, all sly eyes and persuasive hips as we CUT TO...

A RECORD NEEDLE

...lowered deftly to the third cut on a pristine LP.

14 INT. TISH'S HOME - NIGHT - LATER

14

Ernestine lowering that needle, a freshly lit cigarette in her left hand as something soulful and heavy overcomes the room (Nina Simone, etc.).

The lights dimmed now, vibe changed as Ernestine looks back at the family gathered at the dining table, Joe, Sharon and Tish, the remnants of dinner laid out before them.

Ernestine closing her eyes, swaying to the rhythm as though somewhere else altogether:

ERNESTINE

(sotto)

Sing to me Nina, *sing*.

Sharon rising from the dining table as Ernestine approaches, gets to collecting dishes as Ernestine sits back to the table. Joe drifting into the kitchen as well, the music pacing everything.

Sharon reaches up to an obscure cupboard, just above the stove, kind of cupboard that's rarely opened. Fetches a dusty, ornate bottle from there.

JOSEPH

What you doin' with that?

SHARON

What you *think*? Get the good glasses.

Sharon moving back over to the dining table with Tish and Ernestine, sets that bottle of French Brandy to the table.

Ernestine's eyes going from Sharon's to Tish. Ernestine's eyes... *smiling*. Ernestine's eyes never leaving Tish.

SHARON

(at Joe)

You the man of the house, start pouring.

JOSEPH

(faux accent)

But of course, Madame.

Joe setting a nice enough snifter before each of them, goes around the table in turns and pours a little brandy into each. As he bends to pour Tish's...

SHARON
Just a lil' bit for Tish, now.

JOSEPH
Alright, what's the deal?

Sharon looking to Joe, then at Ernestine, then at Tish. She smiles at Tish:

SHARON
This... is a sacrament. And no, I ain't gone crazy. We're drinking to a new life.
(beat)
Tish is gonna have Fonny's baby.

The air heavy in here for a beat, no one moving. Sharon reaches a hand to Joe's shoulder.

SHARON
(softly)
Drink.

Joe staring at Tish, frozen in the moment of that news.

Tish staring back, holding his gaze, only openness.

Joe puts his glass down. Then he picks it up again. He's trying to speak but he can't. A moment more of this awkwardness, then...

...a smile more sweet than bitter developing in Joe's face.

JOSEPH
That's a hell of a note.

Joe takes a drink of his brandy, a good, deep swallow:

JOSEPH
Ain't you going to drink to the little one, Tish?

Tish nodding, takes the lightest sip of that brandy, still rouses a cough in her, Ernestine patting her on the back.

JOSEPH
How long this been going on?

SHARON
About three months.

ERNESTINE
Yeah. That's what I figured.

JOSEPH
Three months!?

TISH
Since September.

JOSEPH
While you two was running around
looking at places?

Joe asking this question as much to himself as to anyone else. The women understanding, allowing that question the proper space to drift out, refract.

After a moment, after a few more long sips:

JOSEPH
You sure you want this baby?

TISH
Yes, and Fonny wants it *too*. It's
our baby, don't you see? And it's
not his fault that he's in jail,
it's not like he ran away.
(pleading)
And we've always been best friends,
ever since we were little, you know
that. And we'd be married now,
if-if--

SHARON
Your father know that.
He's only worried about you.

JOSEPH
Don't you go thinking I think you a
bad girl, or any foolishness like
that. I just asked you that because
you so young, that's all, and--

ERNESTINE
(raising her glass)
Un-bow your head sister.

SHARON
To the newborn.

JOSEPH
I hope it's a boy, that'd tickle
old Frank to pieces, I bet.
(a thought grabbing him)
Tish, do you mind... if I break the
news to him?

TISH

No daddy, I don't mind.

ERNESTINE

(with attitude)

I sure would like to be the one to tell them sisters.

SHARON

Joe, why don't you just call up and ask them all over here? Hell, it's Saturday night and it ain't late and we still got a lot of brandy in the bottle. And now that I think about it, it's really the best way to do it, call they asses on over here, Joe.

Joe looking to his wife, had already started for his coat, but... considering Sharon's proposal:

JOSEPH

You know you right love, let's get them over here.

Joe turning down that long hall adjoining the bedrooms. As his footfalls pad away, we stay here, with these women listening to Joe on the phone down that hall.

Beat.

Joe coming back down that hallway now, re-enters the living room, takes a seat at the one recliner in here:

JOSEPH

Mrs. Hunt... is getting dressed.
(smiles at Tish)
Come on over here, daughter.

Tish rising from her spot on the couch, moves from mother to father, sits beside Joe, head rested to his shoulder:

JOSEPH

You're a good girl, Tish.
I'm proud of you.
Don't you forget that.

ERNESTINE

She ain't going to forget it.
I'll whoop her ass if she do.

SHARON

But she's *pregnant!*

A big, way deep down laugh from all of them at this, Ernestine and Sharon both throwing their heads back.

As the laughter subsides...

ERNESTINE

Shall we *dress* for Mrs. Hunt?

Another laugh now, something in the room spreading.

JOSEPH

Look. We got to be *nice*, okay?

ERNESTINE

Oh we'll be nice; Lord *knows* we'll be nice, you *raised* us right. It's just you didn't never buy us no *clothes*. But Mrs. Hunt and them sisters, they got *wardrobes*. Ain't no sense in trying to compete with them.

JOSEPH

I didn't run no tailor shop.

ERNESTINE

Well who's fault is *that*?

Ernestine rubbing her father's head playfully as she moves on from the living room, Joe smiling at her touch.

Head resting at Joe's shoulder, eyes lingering across this room, Tish appears to be somewhere else, lost in the drift:

"The very first time Fonny and I made love was strange."

15 EXT. TISH'S HOME - DAY - MONTAGE 2 15

Sharon at the top of the stairs at Tish's stoop, Fonny at the bottom of the steps, Tish between the two.

"It was the day he gave Mama that sculpture."

16 EXT. HARLEM, SIDEWALK - DAY - MONTAGE 2 16

Tish and Fonny moving down the sidewalk, hand in hand.

"I dumped water over Fonny's head and scrubbed Fonny's back in the bathtub, in a time that seems so long ago."

17 INT. TISH'S HOME, BATHROOM - DAY - MONTAGE 2 17

A sunlit glow through the curtained window, two children together in a bubble strewn bathroom -- YOUNG TISH and YOUNG FONNY, five and seven years old, respectively.

"I don't remember that we ever had any curiosity concerning each other's bodies. Fonny loved me too much."

Innocent -- the bathroom door wide open -- the children playing just as Tish described.

LATER

The children toweling off, casual, oblivious.

"And that meant that there had never been any occasion for shame between us."

18 INT. C TRAIN - DAY - MONTAGE 2 18

Just a beat this moment, this downtown train packed as they are bound to be.

The couple standing, wedged together in the center aisle of this train, oblivious to everything around them, Tish fully leaned into Fonny's embrace.

"We were a part of each other, flesh of each other's flesh - which we so took for granted that we never thought of the flesh."

Just the shimmy of the train, that rocking side to side. Tish's eyes distinctly, noticeably staring at Fonny's lips, looking up into them.

"And yet, it was no surprise to me when I finally understood..."

As he parts his lips to speak...

FREEZE FRAME:

"That he was the most beautiful person I had seen in all my life."

RESUMING: Fonny continuing whatever it is he's saying here, can't make it out above the howl of the tracks and chatter of the crowd.

Off Fonny repeating himself... and Tish not responding, still lost in those lips...

19

EXT. STUYVESANT PARK - NIGHT - MONTAGE 2

19

The light falling, getting on to dusk.

Fonny and Tish moving, slowly tracing the paths of this park, passing the wayfarers so integral to the charm of this place.

Somehow, the two not touching here: Tish's arms folded about herself, Fonny's hands clasped behind his back.

FONNY

I've slept in this park sometimes.

(off her look)

No, it's not a good idea.

Fonny reaching into his coat pocket now, retrieving a cigarette. Gestures to Tish:

TISH

No thank you.

(and innocently)

Why did you sleep in the park?

Fonny taking a quick beat to get his cigarette lit:

FONNY

It was late. Didn't want to go home. Didn't want to wake up none of you neither.

Check's Tish's response: clearly she's never assumed someone she loves has had to sleep in this park.

FONNY

But I got me a pad down here now. I'll show it to you, you want to see it?

TISH

(after a nod)

I'd like that.

These two still walking, circling a path around the park. Fonny reaches an arm out, pulls her in close:

FONNY

You all right?

TISH

Yeah.

FONNY

Good.

(and)

FONNY (CONT'D)

You want to eat down here or you want to wait till we get back uptown? Or you want to go to the movies or you want a little wine or you want a little pot or a beer or a cup of *coffee*?

(and, a smile)

Or you just want to walk a little more before you make up your mind?

Fonny's grinning now, warm and sweet, brings his arm back from around her and takes her hand in his, swinging it like a little boy; a *happy* little boy.

END MONTAGE.

20

INT. TISH'S HOME, FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

20

The doorbell ringing, resounding throughout the apartment. Seems no one's here at first, then...

...Ernestine appearing, dressed the same as before, didn't bother to change. Gets to that door and...

ERNESTINE

Alice, how do you do, only way to get to see you people is to call an emergency summit, now you know that ain't right?

A hollow kiss on the cheek from MRS. HUNT (50 but attempting to look younger... and it shows). As she passes, reveals two young women, similar to Tish and Ernestine in age.

The girls moving past Ernestine with a look, something middle school about it all. Coming up behind them is FRANK (50s, handsome but tired). He and Ernestine share a genuine hug, move together into...

THE LIVING ROOM

...enter the space and find an odd bit of domestic spacing: Sharon with a hand on her hip, watching from near the kitchen. Joe standing with Tish in his embrace at his side. Mrs. Hunt and her girls stand on the opposite side of the room, a semi-circle with their hands doing various awkward things.

The Hunt women are all over-dressed.

FRANK

So you saw my big-headed boy today?

TISH

Yes. He's fine. He sends his love.

FRANK

They ain't giving him too hard a time, is they? I ask you like that because, you know, he might say things to you he won't say to me.

VOICE (O.S.)

Lovers' secrets.

Tish's eyes cutting to the source of that voice: ADRIENNE, the older of the two Hunt sisters (with SHEILA being the other), sitting on the couch now, crossing her legs and folding those arms with a shit-eating smirk.

TISH

Well. He hates it, you can see that. And he should. But he's strong. He'll be alright... but we've got to get him out of there.

SHEILA

If he'd done his reading and his studying when he should have, he wouldn't be *in* there.

FRANK

What you know about it you--

JOSEPH

You bring that six-pack man?

JOSEPH

Or I got some gin and we got whiskey and we got some brandy. Ain't got no Thunderbird though--
(and, to Mrs. Hunt)
I'm sure you ladies won't mind?

MRS. HUNT

Mind? Frank does not care if we *mind*.

SHARON

Mrs. Hunt, what can I get you, sugar? I can offer you some tea, or coffee; and we got ice cream, and Coca Cola.

ERNESTINE

Yeah Mrs. Hunt, I can make you an ice-cream soda. Come on Sheila, you want to help me?
(grabbing Sheila)

ERNESTINE (CONT'D)

Sit down Mama, me and Sheila got it.

Sharon taking Sheila's place now, Mrs. Hunt having sat beside her daughters on the couch there:

SHARON

Lord, the time sure flies. We ain't hardly seen each other since this trouble started.

MRS. HUNT

Don't say a word. I have been running myself sick, all up and down the Bronx, trying to get the very best legal advice I can find. I just pray and pray and pray that the Lord will bring my boy to the light. That's all I pray for, every day and every night.

A long pause from Mrs. Hunt here, moment of reflection:

MRS. HUNT

And then, sometimes I think that maybe this is the Lord's way of making my boy think on his sins and surrender his soul to Jesus.

SHARON

You might be right. The Lord sure works in mysterious ways.

MRS. HUNT

Oh yes. Now he may try you. But he ain't never left none of His children alone.

SHARON

What you think of the lawyer Ernestine found, this boy Hayward?

MRS. HUNT

I haven't seen him yet.
(defensive)
I just have not had time to get downtown. But I know Frank saw him--

SHARON

What you think Frank?

FRANK

(shrugs)

It's a white boy who's been to law school and he got them degrees. I ain't got to tell you what that mean: it don't mean shit.

MRS. HUNT

You're talking to a *woman*.

FRANK

I'm hip, and it's a mighty welcome *change*.

(pause)

Like I was saying, it don't mean shit and I ain't sure we're going to stay with him. On the other hand, as white boys go, he's not so bad: he's young and hungry, so he's not as full of shit now as he may be when he's *full*.

MRS. HUNT

But I keep trying to *tell* you, that it's that negative attitude, you're so full of hate. If you give people hatred, they will give it back to you. Every time I hear you talk this way my heart breaks for my son, sitting in a dungeon which only the love of God can bring him out of.

SHARON

He's not talking hatred, Alice. He's just telling the truth.

MRS. HUNT

I trust in God, I know He cares for me.

Beat.

ADRIENNE

Mr. Rivers, exactly what is the purpose of this meeting? You haven't called us all the way over here just to watch my father insult my mother?

TISH

Why not? It's Saturday night. You can't tell what people won't do if they get bored enough.

TISH (CONT'D)

Maybe we just invited you over to
liven things up?

ADRIENNE

I can believe that you're that
malicious... but I can't believe
you're that stupid.

Off Tish, CUT TO...

21 INT. SPANISH RESTAURANT - NIGHT

21

At a table more to the side than the back – none of *that* shit
– find Fonny and Tish, a continuation of their date begun in
the previous “Montage 2.”

FONNY

(calling out)

*Pedrocito, que pasa? ¿Podemos tener
algún servicio, por favor?*

Tish looking on wide-eyed, has never seen him speak Spanish.

A server (PEDROCITO, 20s) approaching, a smile on his face:

PEDROCITO

(mocking)

“Servicio, servicio.”

(and at Tish)

*Senorita, how may I help you, I'm
sorry your company tonight is less
than desirable but this can't be
helped.*

FONNY

No se puede evitar, mi culo.

Laughter from the two of them:

PEDROCITO

*Oye, estás con una mujer,
encantadora!*

Tish in heaven here, eyes fixed on Fonny, roving from him to
Predocito and back. As the men continue their banter,
jostling and joking like old friends, their voices drift off
the soundtrack:

*“I had never seen Fonny outside the world in which I moved. I
had seen him with his father and his mother, and I had seen
him with us.”*

ANGLE ON: FONNY

...face spread wide in a smile, looking from Predocito to Tish and back, from Pedrocito to us – right at us – his eyes alight with some mixture of joy and pride.

*"I had certainly never seen him in the world in which **he** moved."*

CUT TO:

22 TISH AND FONNY

22

...leaving the restaurant, the meal finished, Pedrocito and a few other Spanish men gathered near the exit to see them off.

As Tish looks on...

*"Perhaps it was only now I was able to see him with **me**, because even though he was turned away from me, laughing... he was holding my hand."*

As Fonny leads Tish out onto the sidewalk...

PEDROCITO

(calling out)

A very good night Señorita! You are always welcome here.

23 EXT. MINETTA LANE - NIGHT - MOVING

23

The holding of hands, a knowing smile playing about Fonny's face as he watches Tish. Anticipation.

FONNY

Tish....

TISH

Yes?

FONNY

Come and see my place, won't you?

TISH

But... it's late.

FONNY

It ain't far.

Tish looking at him as they continue walking, studying his face for a clue, then:

TISH

Okay, Fonny.
(and again)
Okay.

24

INT. TISH'S HOME, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - RESUMING

24

Ernestine and Sheila returning from the kitchen carrying platters of drinks; the smile on Ernestine's face is pure delight, the one on Sheila's? Not so much.

Ernestine setting down her tray, raising her glass:

ERNESTINE

Happy landings.

Everyone going quiet now. Everyone... *waiting* and, in the space of this waiting, everyone's eyes slowly, definitively drawing themselves to...

TISH

All eyes on Tish, for once alone in the room, neither her parents nor Ernestine beside her.

Tish rises, nervous hand running down her waist to smooth her dress. She takes a step, just a small one, symbolic, toward Frank:

TISH

I called this meeting. I had Daddy ask you all to come over so I could tell you what I had to tell Fonny this afternoon.

Mrs. Hunt setting down her ice-cream float. Sharon taking a sip of her Brandy. Ernestine... smiling.

TISH

(deep breath)

What I had to tell Fonny this afternoon is... that Fonny's going to be a father.

(and)

We're going to have a baby.

All at once in this room, several things: Mrs. Hunt's eyes leaving Tish, lowering, eyes to the floor; Frank and Joe turning to one another, holding each other's gaze in silence; Sheila and Adrienne rolling their eyes in contempt; Sharon and Ernestine making eye contact, a wink, a sip.

FRANK

(to Joe)

You and me? We fixin' to go out and get *drunk*.

A huge laugh of joy from Frank, the claspings of hands between these two.

FRANK

(at Tish)

I'm glad. Don't you worry, I'm mighty--

MRS. HUNT

And *who* is going to be responsible for this baby?

TISH

The *father* and the *mother*.

Mrs. Hunt staring, something smoldering in her.

FRANK

You can bet that it won't be the Holy damn Ghost.

Mrs. Hunt shooting Frank a look of disgust, then rising, begins slowly crossing the room:

MRS. HUNT

I guess you call your lustful action love. I don't. I always knew you'd be the destruction of my son. The Bible says: "Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire and covetousness."

(and)

That child is borne of sin, the Holy Ghost will cause it to shrivel in your womb. But my son will be forgiven. *My* prayers will--

WOMP!

From nowhere and everywhere, Frank here standing over Mrs. Hunt having knocked her senseless, sprawled to the floor.

ADRIENNE

Her heart!

FRANK

I think you'll find it's still pumping. But I wouldn't call it no heart.

Frank does not look remorseful, more sad than anything, sad over *everything*.

FRANK

Joe, let the women take care of her
and come on with me.

Joe hesitating, still shocked by the violence:

FRANK

Please man, come on.

SHARON

Go on with him, Joe.
Go on.

Ernestine moving past Sharon, has a bottle of rubbing alcohol
and a hand full of cotton balls.

SHARON

Go on. We don't need you here.

Joe nodding at his wife in ascent, eyes on Mrs. Hunt as he
rounds the living room, takes his coat from a chair-back, a
hand to Frank's shoulder just ahead of him.

The women all watching as the men exit, the door slowly
closed behind them.

Coming back to the living room, an undeniably potent image:
these six women alone now in this house, having bared witness
to the past moment's events.

Mrs. Hunt getting to her feet slowly, free hand bracing
herself as she lowers to the couch.

TISH

That was a terrible thing you said
to me. It was the most terrible
thing I've heard in all my life.

ADRIENNE

My father didn't have to slap her.

SHEILA

She's got a weak *heart*.

SHARON

She's got a weak *head*, the Holy
Ghost done softened y'all brain,
child: did she forget it was
Frank's grandchild she was cursing?
I know some men would have cut that
weak heart out of your body and
gladly gone to hell to pay for it.

SHEILA

I don't think you have the right to sneer at my mother's faith.

ERNESTINE

Oh don't give me that bullshit, you so shamed you got a Holy Roller for a mother, you don't know what to do. Y'all make me sick.

ADRIENNE

You make me sick. Maybe my mother didn't say it exactly like she *should* have, but he didn't have to--

TISH

My father doesn't hit my mother.

SHARON

Baby your mother a lot smarter than hers.

ADRIENNE

And who do you funky niggers think you are? She only asked one question: 'Who's going to raise this baby?' And who is? Tish ain't got no education and God knows she ain't got nothin' else. And Fonny ain't *never* been worth a damn, so *who* is going to take care of this baby?

TISH

I am, you dried up yellow cunt, and you keep on talking, I'm going to take mighty good care of you.

Adrienne putting her hands on her hips in response, in Harlem an unmistakable challenge. Ernestine pounces:

ERNESTINE

Adrienne? Baby? May I tell you something, Sweetie-pie?

Ernestine puts one hand very lightly against Adrienne's cheek.

ERNESTINE

Oh, sugar. From the very first day I laid eyes on your fine person, I got hung up on your Adam's apple. I been dreaming about it; it's delicious.

ERNESTINE (CONT'D)

I just can't tell, Sweetie, if I want to tear it out with my fingers... or my teeth. It is a thing of beauty. And if you touch my sister, I'm going to have to make up my mind pretty quick, so...

Ernestine moves away from Adrienne, gestures at Tish.

ERNESTINE

...touch her. Go on, *please*.

SHEILA

I knew we shouldn't have come.

ERNESTINE

My. I must have a dirty mind, Sheila. I didn't know that you could even say that word.

SHARON

Ernestine.

ADRIENNE

Come on Sheila, let's go.

Adrienne moving and Sheila following, the two of them helping Mrs. Hunt to her feet.

MRS. HUNT

I sure hope...

(dramatic sigh)

...that you're pleased with the way you raised your daughters.

Sharon just staring at Mrs. Hunt here, says nothing, the whole thing a wonderful spectacle now:

MRS. HUNT

My girls won't be bringing *me* no bastards to feed, I can guarantee you that.

ERNESTINE

That's because won't nobody fuck 'em.

SHARON

Ernestine.

Sharon cocking her head now, finally perplexed by all this. Stares at Mrs. Hunt a long moment:

SHARON

But the child that's coming... is your grandchild. I don't understand you, it's your *grandchild*. What difference does it make how it gets here? The child ain't got nothing to do with that; don't none of us have nothing to do with that.

MRS. HUNT

That child....

Looks from Sharon to Tish, starts for the door:

MRS. HUNT

(moving)

That child....

Tish and family watching as the Hunts make their way out silently, everything different now. As we watch them go...

"It's astounding the first time you realize a stranger has a body."

25

INT. BANK STREET FLAT - NIGHT

25

Fonny and Tish standing in this basement apartment. From their dress, a continuation of their dinner at the Spanish restaurant.

"The realization that he has a body makes him a stranger."

We take the place in as Tish does: a small, low room, but for a fireplace. Just off the room is a tiny kitchenette and a bathroom. There's a wooden stool and a couple of hassocks and a large wooden table and a smaller one.

On the small table, a few empty beer cans and on the large one, tools. The room smells of wood; there's raw wood everywhere.

In the far corner, a mattress on the floor covered with a Mexican shawl. Fonny's pencil sketches are pinned on the wall. The only other item: a photograph of Frank.

"We were to spend a lifetime in this room."

Fonny standing across the room from Tish. She's watching him; they both know she's watching him.

Fonny crossing to the palette there, takes up that Mexican shawl, walks over to Tish, drapes it over her head and shoulders. Grins and steps back:

FONNY

I be damned, there's a rose in
Spanish Harlem.

Tish smiling, blushing, girlish, how could she *not*?

FONNY

Next week, I'm going to get you a
rose for your hair.

Just a foot of space between them, eyeing each other as they
no doubt have many times before. Something different about
this time, though. Fonny spells it out:

FONNY

We're grown up now.

Tish nods, can't speak right now, too much going through her
mind to get there.

FONNY

And you've always been mine, no?

Again that nod.

FONNY

And you know... that I've always
been yours, right?

Tish thinking, so much thinking right now:

TISH

I never thought about it that way.

FONNY

Think about it now.

TISH

I just....

Tish's lips quivering now, whatever emotion this is it's
coming upon her fast and heavy, pushing and pulling:

TISH

I just know that I love you.

She's crying now, Fonny closing the space between them,
removing that shawl and pulling her into him.

FONNY

I love you too... but I try not to
cry about it.

Fonny laughing, a sweet laugh, a smile and then another kiss, harder this time, the passion of it removing that lightness.

FONNY

(serious)

I want you to marry me.

(at her shock)

That's right. I'm yours and you're mine and that's it.

Fonny holding Tish away from him now, a bit of space to take her in, to read her. She's processing.

FONNY

Now, I've got to try to explain something to you.

Fonny leads Tish (gently) over to his worktable:

FONNY

This is where my life is, my *real* life.

Fonny picks up a small piece of wood. There's the hope of an eye gouged into it, the suggestion of a nose.

FONNY

This might turn out all right one day, it might not. I don't know a thing about it yet.

He puts it down again, very gently, looks at Tish with his little smile.

FONNY

Now, listen, I ain't the kind of joker going to give you a hard time running around after other chicks and shit like that. I smoke a little pot but I ain't never popped no needles and I'm really just a square, but....

Fonny taking a moment to gather his thoughts, looks at her very quietly, very hard.

FONNY

I live with wood and stone. I got stone in the basement and I'm working in here all the time and now I'm looking for a loft where I can *really* work. So, all I'm trying to tell you is... I ain't offering you much.

FONNY (CONT'D)

I ain't got no money and I work at odd jobs just for bread because I ain't about to go for none of their jive-ass shit. And that means that you going to have to work, too. And when you come home most likely I'll just grunt and keep on with my chisels and maybe sometimes you'll think I don't even know you're there. But don't ever think that, not ever. You're with me all the time -- without you, I don't know if I could make it at all. And when I put down the chisel, I'll always come to you. I'll always come to you, 'cause I need you, understand?

(and)

Is that all right?

TISH

Yes. Of course it's alright.

I love you.

Fonny not smiling, instead just watching her, the openness of their eyes here. He pulls her in close, kisses her, with more feeling than before. Tish gives herself over to him.

Fonny taking her hand, leading her away from the center of the room, over to that palette. Turns his back to it, sits on the edge before pulling Tish down to him, a bit awkward at first but settling in, her body at his feet, head at his lap.

Fonny caresses her cheek, leans down over and kisses her, the heat between them mounting.

His hands finding their way, undoing Tish's blouse, exposing her, the shock of everything at first a start on Tish's face, then an agreement, a joining.

Fonny pulling Tish onto the bed, undressing her, carefully, gently, kissing her the whole way.

Fonny rising, scans the room and retrieves that shawl. Moves back to the bed, takes a warm look at Tish there, covers her with the shawl. Disappears away from the room.

Beat; a beat here with Tish as she listens to Fonny in the bathroom, the sound of him pissing, the toilet flushing, quickly running water.

A brief moment of quiet then... Fonny reappearing, Tish watching him as he moves through the space, approaches the one lamp in this room and...

DARKNESS

...but not BLACK, the street light through the windows there, a generous angle in this basement apartment, a muted quality to the light, just enough to make them out.

Fonny over in the corner now, sifting through a crate. Lifts the needle on a record player, triggers a lilting, sparse bit of jazz.

He drifts over to her now, slips beneath the shawl, his body atop hers but bearing his own weight. Looks down to her:

FONNY

Now don't be scared.

(and)

Don't be scared. Just remember that I belong to you. Just remember that I wouldn't hurt you for nothing in this world. You just going to have to get used to me. And we got all the time in the world

Tish meeting his eyes, nodding without moving. Fonny looking down at her now, down her body as he maneuvers beneath that shawl:

FONNY

Hold onto me.

Off a clinched, guttural exhale from Tish's lips, her throat, her gut...

CUT TO:

A RECORD SPINNING -- the needle spinning listlessly at the end of the groove.

26

INT. BANK STREET FLAT - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

26

Breaths, all breaths and pants and sighs from somewhere deep, a thirst for air to keep from drowning in release.

Fonny holding himself just above Tish, both shaking, both sweating, from the shape of Tish's back, everything tense, pushed to its limit.

That shawl gone now, wadded in a ball in some impossible location away from them. Fonny looking down at the space between their naked bodies. He can be such a little boy, that guilty smile:

FONNY

(sotto)

I'm sorry to have made such a mess.
But I guess you don't want to have
no baby right away and I didn't
have no protection.

TISH

(whispered)

I think I made a mess too. Isn't
there supposed to be blood?

(a flash of shyness)

It was my first time. Did you know?

From Fonny's endearing look: of course he did.

FONNY

(sotto)

I had a hemorrhage. Should we look?

TISH

(whispered)

I don't mind.

(and)

Why are we whispering?

That smile again:

FONNY

(sotto)

It's what people do when they
screw.

Even Tish not naive enough to go for that, smacks him
playfully, Fonny laughing it away:

TISH

I like lying here like this.

FONNY

I do too. Do you like me?

(and)

I mean - when I make love to you -
do you like it?

TISH

You just want to hear me say it.

FONNY

That's true.

(and)

So....

TISH
So what?

FONNY
So why don't you go ahead and say
it?

Fonny kisses her. Clearly he's a man in love.

TISH
Well... it was a little bit like
being hit by a truck...
(and)
...but it was the most beautiful
thing that ever happened to me.

A long, silent beat, then...

FONNY
Yeah.
(and)
For me, too.

27 INT. C TRAIN - NIGHT 27

Despite the lack of a crowd, Fonny and Tish standing at the center of this car, wedged against one another, Fonny holding, *protecting* Tish.

28 EXT. TISH'S HOME - DAY (DAWN) 28

Fonny and Tish arriving on her stoop, hand in hand, the sun rising over Harlem.

We see these quick beats as Tish describes them:

"I thought Fonny would leave me there, but he took me by the hand and said...."

Fonny, directly at us, all mouth and lips:

FONNY
I'll see you in.

29 INT. TISH'S HOME - DAY 29

Ernestine on the couch, nursing a cup of coffee. At the SOUND of a key in the front door... a delicious smile on her face.

ERNESTINE
You're just in time for coffee.

Tish and Fonny enter -- Tish leading, removing her key from the lock but... Fonny quickly stepping past her, faces up on Ernestine with purpose.

<p>TISH</p> <p>We was--</p>	<p>FONNY</p> <p>Good morning, Miss Rivers, I'm sorry we comin' in so late. Can I speak to Mr. Rivers, please? It's important.</p>
-----------------------------	---

These two standing side by side, hand in hand, a unit. That smile in Ernestine's eyes again:

ERNESTINE

It might be easier to see him if you come inside out that hall.

TISH

Sis, we--

FONNY

--want to get married.

Both Ernestine and Tish looking at Fonny with wild eyes, his heart racing, that blurted out, forced its way out of him:

ERNESTINE

Then you *better* have some coffee, come on in here.

Ernestine turning, leading the two of them into the apartment.

From somewhere inside:

SHARON (O.S.)

Now *where* have you two been 'till this hour of the morning?

CUT TO:

30

THE KITCHEN

30

...Ernestine at the dining table nursing a cup of coffee, Sharon at the pot preparing another, by the looks of things preparing quite a few.

As Fonny and Tish edge closer:

SHARON

Don't you know better than to be behaving like that? I declare, we was just about to call the police.

Sharon looking across the kitchen at Ernestine, the two exchanging a look that makes this clear: they are *not* upset, having a good time with this.

That lost on Fonny though, he's nervous as hell:

FONNY

I'm sorry Mrs. Rivers, it's all my fault.

Tish inching closer to Fonny, right on his hip...

FONNY

I hadn't seen Tish for a few weeks and we had a lot to talk about; *I* had a lot to talk about, I kept her out.

SHARON

Talking?

...Tish inching away from Fonny.

FONNY

(nervous)

We....

The room dead quiet. In Sharon's eyes, expectation:

FONNY

We... want to get married.

(all downhill now)

That's how come I kept her out so late. I love Tish. That's why I stayed away so long. I even....

(looks to Tish, a pain)

...I even went to see other girls and, I did all kinds of things, to kind of get it out of my mind.

(checks Tish: still down)

But I could see I was just fooling myself. I didn't love nobody else but her. And then I got scared that maybe she'd go away or somebody else would come along and take her away and so I came back.

(squeezes her hand)

I came *runnin'* back. And I don't have to go away again. She's always been my girl, Mrs. Rivers -- you know that. And... I'm not a bad boy. You know that. And you're... you're the only family I've ever had.

A long, pronounced silence.

SHARON

Now see, *that's* why I can't figure out why you callin' me Mrs. Rivers all of a sudden.

(and at Tish)

I hope you realize, Miss, that you ain't but eighteen years old.

ERNESTINE

That argument and a subway token will get you from here to the corner.

SHARON

(at Ernestine)

What do you think about all this?

ERNESTINE

Me? I'm delighted to be rid of the little brat. I never *could* see what all the rest of you saw in her, I swear. Take some sugar Fonny, you're going to need it if you intend to tie yourself up with my sweet little sister.

SHARON

(calling out)

Joe! Come on out here, lightning's done struck the poorhouse! Come on now, I mean it!

Fonny taking Tish's hand, as much to protect himself as to comfort her. Sound of Joe approaching, Tish and Fonny opening their stance to face him.

JOSEPH

(measured)

I'd like you to tell me exactly what you mean young lady by walking in here this hour of the morning. If you want to leave home, then you leave home, you hear? But as long as you in my house, you got to respect it. You hear me?

Joe's gaze shifting to Fonny. Fonny *immediately* releasing Tish's hand, takes a deep breath:

FONNY

Mr. Rivers, please don't scold her. It's all my fault, sir.

FONNY (CONT'D)

I kept her out. I had to talk to her. I asked her to marry me. That's what we were doing out so long. We want to get married. That's why I'm here. You're her father. You love her. And so I know you know - you have to know - that I love her. I've loved her all my life. You know that. And if I didn't love her, I wouldn't be standing in this room now - would I? I could have left her on the stoop and run away again. I know you might want to beat me up. But I love her. That's all I can tell you.

Joe looking at the boy, that same poker face as Sharon:

JOSEPH

How old are you?

FONNY

I'm twenty-one, sir.

JOSEPH

You think that's old enough to get married?

FONNY

I don't know sir, but it's old enough to know who you love.

JOSEPH

You think so?

FONNY

I know so.

JOSEPH

How you going to feed her?

FONNY

How did you?

Joe's jaw tightening. Ernestine pushes a cup of coffee in his direction.

JOSEPH

You got a job?

FONNY

I load moving vans in the daytime
and I sculpt at night. I'm a
sculptor. We know it won't be easy.

They stare at each other again. Joseph picking up his coffee
without looking at it, sips it without tasting it.

JOSEPH

Now, let me get this straight. You
asked my little girl to marry you,
and she said--

FONNY

Yes.

JOSEPH

And you come here to tell me or to
ask my permission?

FONNY

Both, sir.

Both men measuring each other. Joe puts his coffee down.

JOSEPH

What would you do in my place?

FONNY

I'd ask my daughter. If she tells
you she don't love me, I'll go away
and I won't never bother you no
more.

Joe looks hard at Fonny, a long look, as though he wants to
knock Fonny down, as though he wants to take him in his arms.

JOSEPH

(at Tish)

You love him, Tish?

TISH

Yes.

Joe looking from Fonny to Tish, the two of them joining
hands, Tish to the side of but *just* behind Fonny, likely the
first time Joe has ever seen a man between him and his
daughter.

A weighted, but *lovely* silence around the room. All of them
slipping into the inevitability of this moment as we...

31

CUT TO BLACK. 31

And OVER BLACK, super-impose a period specific case-file, frame within the frame against BLACK: yellowed paper with brown horizontal lining, a hand written police report. We see this text as Tish narrates:

"Mrs. Victoria Rogers, née Victoria Maria San Felipe Sanchez, declares that on the evening of October 5, between the hours of eleven and twelve, in the vestibule of her home, she was criminally assaulted by a man she now knows to have been Alonzo 'Fonny' Hunt, and was used by the aforesaid Hunt in the most extreme and abominable sexual manner, and forced to undergo the most unimaginable sexual perversions."

CUT TO:

32

A PHOTO

32

...still this frame within the frame against BLACK, a photo of Victoria Rogers, not crime related.

Dressed simply, looking right at us. A portrait. We'll cycle through a series of these portraits as Tish continues:

"I have never seen her. I know only that an American-born Irishman went to Puerto Rico six years ago and there, met Victoria, who was then eighteen. He married her and brought her to New York."

IMAGE 2: Victoria and her Irishman, standing in front of the New York courthouse.

"Having pumped three children out of her, he left."

IMAGE 3: A simple establishing image of Orchard Street.

"Her 'home' is on Orchard Street; Orchard Street, if you know New York, is a very long way from Bank Street."

IMAGE 4: An establishing image of Bank Street.

"Orchard Street is damn near in the East River and Bank Street is practically in the Hudson."

IMAGE 5/SERIES: Alternating stills of Orchard and Bank streets to illustrate their distance from one another.

"It is not possible to run from Orchard to Bank Street, particularly not with the police behind you. Yet, Officer Bell swears he saw Fonny 'run' from the scene of the crime."

IMAGE 6: Rather than Victoria, a face we've not seen before, a red-headed, blue-eyed officer staring right at us.

"This is possible only if Officer Bell were off duty, for his "beat" is on the West Side, not the East."

IMAGE 7: Fonny in cuffs, being forced into a squad car by the aforementioned Bell.

*"And yet it is now up to the accused to prove – **and pay** for proving – the irregularity and improbability of this sequence of events."*

END SEQUENCE.

33

INT. LAW OFFICE - DAY

33

Tish and Sharon sitting beside one another in a very typical, very oak strewn law office.

Across from them, a man who's name we've heard but not met: HAYWARD (30s, white), Fonny's lawyer.

HAYWARD

Well, as you know, this is a very difficult case.

TISH

That's why my sister hired you.

HAYWARD

And you're beginning to think that her confidence was misplaced?

TISH

No.
I wouldn't say that.

SHARON

We miss him, that's all. This is...
it's *getting* to us.

HAYWARD

I can certainly understand that, and I'm doing all I can to get him back to you just as fast as I can. But Mrs. Rogers' refusal to reconsider her testimony has left us in a very tough place.

(beat)

And now she's disappeared.

TISH

Disappeared? But...

SHARON

How can she just disappear?

HAYWARD

This is a very big city, a very big country, for that matter -- people disappear. I don't think she's gone very far, they certainly don't have the means for that. But her family may have returned her to Puerto Rico. In any case, in order to find her, I'll need special investigators, and--

SHARON

That means money.

HAYWARD

Unfortunately....

TISH

(sotto)

That filthy *bitch*.

Sharon reaching a hand to Tish's back:

SHARON

How much money?

HAYWARD

I'm trying to keep it as low as possible, but... special investigators are... *special*. And they know it.

SHARON

Puerto Rico?

HAYWARD

We don't know for sure, but it's a strong possibility. Anyway, she and her new man disappeared some days ago from the apartment on Orchard Street.

TISH

But doesn't it make it look bad for her story, to just disappear like that? She's the key witness.

HAYWARD

Yes. But she's... *'a distraught, ignorant, Puerto Rican woman, suffering from the aftereffects of rape. So her behavior is not incomprehensible.'*

(beat)

You see what I mean?

Hayward watching Tish, makes sure she gets what he's saying.

HAYWARD

And she's only one of the key witnesses in this case. You have to remember this Officer Bell; *his* was the authoritative identification of the rapist. It's Bell who swears he saw Alonzo running away from the scene of the crime. And I have always been of the opinion - we discussed this when your sister first brought me on - that it's his testimony which Mrs. Rogers continually repeats--

TISH

If he saw Fonny at the scene of the crime, then why did he have to wait and come and get him out of the house?

SHARON

Tish.

(and to Hayward)

You mean - let me get you straight now - that it's that Officer Bell who tells her what to say?

HAYWARD

Exactly.

TISH

You're saying--

SHARON

That there's no way of getting at the truth in this case?

Off both their nonplussed faces:

HAYWARD

If I didn't believe in Alonzo's innocence, I would never have taken the case.

TISH

Call him Fonny.

HAYWARD

Excuse me?

TISH

Call him Fonny. When you call him Alonzo, I see the judge and bars and chains. I know you're doing my sister a favor and this is a very fancy law office, but... if you're doing this, you've gotta be family, call him Fonny, please.

Hayward digests this, accepts it -- ingests the burden.

HAYWARD

I understand.

(and)

Now, you and Fonny insist that you were together, in the room on Bank Street with an old friend, Daniel Carty, that's the alibi. Your testimony, as you can imagine, counts for nothing, and Daniel Carty has just been arrested by the DA's office and I've not been allowed to see him, they're holding him incommunicado.

Hayward rummages through the papers on his desk, a nervous tick.

HAYWARD

What they're doing is really against the law, but... Daniel has a record. They obviously intend to make him change his testimony. And, I do not know this, but I'm willing to bet that that's why Mrs. Rogers has disappeared. So. You see. I'll do the best I can, but... the situation is bleak.

SHARON

How soon do you need the money?

HAYWARD

We're already tracing Mrs. Rogers. I'll need the money as soon as you can get it. I'll also force the DA's office to allow me to see Daniel Carty, but...

HAYWARD (CONT'D)
 they'll throw every conceivable
 obstacle in my way.

SHARON
 So... we're trying... to buy time.

HAYWARD
 In a word... yes.

34 INT. NEW YORK CITY CORRECTIONAL FACILITY - DAY

34

Fonny and Tish across that familiar divide.

FONNY
 The fuck we going to do about Mrs.
 Rogers? Where the fuck did she go?

TISH
 (calming)
 I don't know. But we'll find her.

FONNY
 How you going to find her?

TISH
 We're sending people to Puerto
 Rico. We think that's where she
 went.

FONNY
 And suppose she went to Argentina?
 Or Chile? Or *China*?

TISH
 How's she going to get that far?

FONNY
 They can give her the money to go
 anywhere!

TISH
 Who?

FONNY
 The DA's office, that's who!

TISH
Fonny--

FONNY
 You don't believe me? You don't
 think they can do it?

TISH

I don't think they *have*.

FONNY

How you going to get the money to find her?

TISH

We're all working, all of us.

FONNY

Yeah. My Daddy's working in the garment center, you're working in a department store, your Daddy's working on the waterfront--

TISH

Fonny, *listen*--

FONNY

Listen to what? What we going to do about that fucking lawyer? He don't give a shit about me, he don't give a shit about nobody! You want me to die in here? You know what's going on in here? You know what's happening to me? To *me* in here?

Fonny's head going down to that desk, has to hide the moisture we clearly see falling to the table-top before him, wiped as quick as it falls, gotta stay a man.

FONNY

I'm sorry, baby. I don't mean none of that for you. I'm sorry. I love you. You know that, I'm sorry.

TISH

I *do*. And I understand what you goin' through, I'm with you baby.

Fonny nodding that in, convincing himself. That smile again.

FONNY

How's the baby coming?

TISH

It's growing. I'll start showing more next month.

Eye each other across this glass, Fonny trying to hold it together, but...

FONNY

Get me out of here, baby. Get me out of here, *please*.

TISH

I promise, baby, I promise.

FONNY

I'm sorry I yelled. I wasn't yelling at you.

TISH

(a tear forming)
I know.

FONNY

Please don't cry. Please don't cry... it's bad for the baby.
(and a smile now)

Make they skin all wrinkled, come out lookin' like a old man, be givin' birth to a baby Red Foxx.

Something between a laugh and a cry at that, tear and the laugh at once:

FONNY

That's right, give us a smile.

Tish wiping another tear, composing herself, a nice smile:

TISH

Is that all right?

FONNY

You can do better than that.

Tish sticking out her tongue, crossing her eyes.

TISH

Is this better?

FONNY

Yeah, you *nut*, give us a kiss.

Tish's palm to her lips, placed flat against the glass. Fonny meeting it with his palm, then carrying it back to his lips.

FONNY

You still love me?

TISH

I'll *always* love you.

FONNY

I love you, baby. I miss you. I miss everything about you, I miss everything we had together, everything we did together, walking and talking and making love; baby, get me out of here.

TISH

I will. Hold on.

FONNY

I promise. You take care of yourself out there.

TISH

I will Fonny, you know I will.

Fonny raising his fist to the glass, Tish meeting it.

CUT TO BLACK.

"Fonny had been crossing Lenox Ave when he ran into Daniel. They had not seen each other since their days at the vocational school."

35

EXT. LENOX AVE - DAY

35

Fonny and the aforementioned DANIEL standing on the sidewalk.

A lot of laughing and high-fiving from the two but we don't hear any of it, instead, Tish's narration:

"Time had not improved Daniel."

ANGLE ON: DANIEL

"He was still big, black, and loud; at the age of twenty-three, a little older than Fonny, but he was already running out of familiar faces. So... they grabbed each other on the avenue."

DANIEL

Wow! What's happenin'?

FONNY

Why you asking me, man?

DANIEL

Because, like the man says about Mt. Everest: 'You're there.'

Fonny laughing at that, we can quickly tell he loves this cat.

FONNY

Come on. We got some beer at the pad. You remember Tish?

DANIEL

Skinny little Tish?

FONNY

Yeah. She's still my girl. We going to get married, man. Come on and let me show you the pad. And she'll fix us something to eat, I told you we got beer at the house.

Fonny throwing a hand behind Daniel's neck jovially.

"And though he certainly shouldn't be spending the money, he pushes Daniel into a cab and they roll on down to Bank Street: where I am not expecting them."

36 INT. BANK STREET FLAT - DAY 36

Tish looking on with surprise as Fonny and Daniel push into the apartment still laughing their asses off.

JUMP CUT TO:

37 MOMENTS LATER 37

Daniel and Tish exchanging hugs of greeting, Fonny gesturing and explaining this run in but, again, we hear none of it, instead:

"But I could not be indifferent to Daniel because I realized, from Fonny's face, how marvelous it was for him to have scooped up from the swamp waters of his past, an old friend."

CUT TO:

38 EXT. BANK STREET - DAY - MOVING 38

Moving with Tish as she walks along the sidewalk, shopping bag at her shoulder.

CUT BACK TO:

39 INT. BANK STREET FLAT - DAY 39

Daniel and Fonny with fresh beers before them. A record player going as the two squat on the floor.

DANIEL

(both wishful and mocking)
So, you really going to get
married?

FONNY

Well, yeah, we looking for a place
to live; we looking for a loft
because that don't cost no whole
lot of bread, you know, and that
way I can work without Tish being
bugged to death. This room ain't
big enough for one, ain't no
question about its being big enough
for two, and I got all my work here
and in the basement.

Fonny lights a cigarette as he speaks:

FONNY

They got lofts standing empty all
over the East Side, man, and don't
nobody want to rent them, except
freaks like me. And they all fire
traps and some of them ain't even
got no toilets. So, you figure like
finding a loft ain't going to be no
sweat.

He takes a drag, hands it to Daniel.

FONNY

But man, this country really do not
like niggers. They do not like
niggers so bad, man, they will rent
to a leper before they'll rent to a
nigger, I swear.

Fonny lights another cig, keeps this one for himself. Daniel
takes a sip of his beer.

FONNY

Sometimes Tish and I go together,
sometimes she goes alone, sometimes
I go alone. But it's always the
same story, man. And now I can't
let her go alone no more because,
dig, last week we thought we had us
a loft, the cat had promised it to
her. But he had not *seen* me. And he
figures a black chick by herself,
way downtown looking for a loft,
well, he *know* he going to make it
with her.

FONNY (CONT'D)

He thinks she's propositioning him, that's what he really thinks. And she comes to tell me – just so proud and happy – and we go on over there. And when the cat sees me, he says there's been some great *misunderstanding*, he can't rent the loft because he's got all these relatives coming in from Rumania like in half an hour and he got to give it to them. Shit. And I told him he was full of shit and he threatened to call the cops on my ass.

Fonny looking away, up at that small window looking up out at the sidewalk from this low vantage:

FONNY

(to himself)

I'm really going to have to try to figure out some way of getting some bread together and getting out of this fucking country.

DANIEL

How you going to do that?

FONNY

I don't know yet.

(beat)

Tish can't swim.

Fonny and Daniel whoop and rock with laughter. After a moment:

DANIEL

(soberly)

Maybe you could go first.

FONNY

Nah.

(and)

I don't think I want to do that.

I'd be too scared.

DANIEL

Scared of what?

A long, *long* beat. The cigarette and the record are finished. There's nothing to hide behind.

FONNY

Just scared.

DANIEL

Scared of what might happen to
Tish?

FONNY

Yeah.

(then)

Scared of what might happen to both
of us - without each other. Like
Tish ain't got no sense at all,
man, she trusts everybody. She walk
down the street, swinging that
little behind of hers, and she's
surprised, man, when some cat tries
to jump her. She don't see the
world like everybody see it.

And silence falls again, Daniel watching Fonny:

FONNY

I know I might seem to be a weird
kind of cat. But I got two things
in my life, man - I got my
sculpting and I got Tish. If I lose
them, I'm lost. I know that. You
know, whatever's in me I didn't put
there. And I can't take it out.

DANIEL

I don't know if you so weird. I
know you lucky. I ain't got nothing
like that. Can I have another beer,
man?

FONNY

Hell yeah you can.

Fonny up and over at the icebox, opens two more cans.

DANIEL

I just come out the slammer, baby.
Two years. They *said* - they still
say - I stole a car.

(beat)

I mean I had a little pot on me
when they grabbed me but man, I
can't even *drive* a car.

Fonny returns, hands one of those beers to Daniel, Daniel
taking a long swallow, a devious smile:

DANIEL

But, then, it sounded a *whole* lot
better than that marijuana charge.

Daniel laughs and sips his beer.

DANIEL
(to himself)
Two *God damn* years.

FONNY
By the balls.

DANIEL
Yeah.
By the balls.

The loudest and longest silence, then CUT TO:

40 EXT. BANK STREET FLAT - DAY 40

Tish moving along sidewalk, the same as before, returning now with a paper sack of goods.

41 INT. BANK STREET FLAT - DAY - MOMENTS LATER 41

Tish entering, setting those goods to the counter, the little kitchenette off the entrance.

FONNY (O.S.)
You need some help in there?

TISH
No thank you, I'm fine.
(and)
Y'all good?

Tish leans to the left, around the curtained partition separating this kitchenette from the rest of the place. She can see them through the sheer but the gesture of this leaning out, Daniel and Fonny both send a put on smile and a wave.

She rolls her eyes, returns to the sink. As she watches them through the curtain, CUT BACK TO:

FONNY AND DANIEL

More hushed tones now.

FONNY
How long you been out?

DANIEL
About three months.
(and)
Man, it was bad. Very bad. And it's bad now.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Maybe I'd feel different if I had done something and got caught. But I didn't do nothing. They were just playing with me, man, because they could. And I'm lucky it was only two years, you dig? Because they can do with you whatever they want. *Whatever they want.* And they dogs, man. I really found out, in the slammer, what Malcolm and them cats was talking about. The white man's got to be the devil. He sure ain't a man. Some of the things I saw... I'll be dreaming about until the day I die.

Fonny puts one hand on Daniel's neck.

FONNY

That's alright, man. You out now, it's over, you young.

DANIEL

Man, I know what you're saying. And I appreciate it. But you don't know, the worst thing, man, the worst thing, is that they can make you so fucking *scared*. Just... *scared*, man.

Beat. The *heaviest* beat, then...

TISH

(calling out)
You cats hungry?

FONNY (O.S.)

(joking)
Yeah, we *starvin'*. Move it!

CUT TO:

42

INT. BANK STREET FLAT - NIGHT - LATER

42

The three of them caught mid-laugh, gathered around the lone wood table in this space. A few open bottles of beer about. And little Tish has made a feast: ribs and cornbread and rice, gravy and green peas.

DANIEL

It's nice to see you, Tish. You sure ain't gained no weight, have you?

TISH

You hush. I'm skinny because I'm poor.

DANIEL

Well, I sure don't know why you didn't pick yourself a rich husband. You ain't never going to gain no weight now.

TISH

Well, if you skinny, Daniel, you can move faster and when you in a tight place, you got a better chance of getting out of it. You see what I mean?

DANIEL

You sound like you got it all figured out. You learn all that from Fonny?

(at Fonny)

Maybe she can't gain no weight, but you sure will. You folks mind if I drop by more often?

FONNY

Feel free.

(winks at Tish)

Tish ain't very good looking, but she can sure get the pots together.

TISH

I'm happy to know I have some use.

Tish curling her lips at Fonny across the table. He smiles, starts chewing on a rib. They all do, letting the talk subside for a beat as they enjoy this meal, then...

...Fonny and Tish locking eyes across the table, absent Daniel, away from Daniel and...

"In complete silence, without moving a muscle, we are laughing with each other. We are together somewhere where no one can reach us, joined."

ANGLES ON: TISH AND FONNY

...alternating, both of them looking directly at us as Tish continues:

"We are happy, even, that we have food enough for Daniel, who eats peacefully, not knowing that we are laughing, but sensing that something wonderful has happened to us..."

which means that wonderful things happen... and that maybe something wonderful will happen... to him."

43

CUT TO BLACK. 43

And OVER BLACK, the sound of footsteps, hollow and reverberating, as though echoing down a long, slender hall.

As these footsteps continue to sound...

...a figure taking shape, like shoulders, the silhouette of something.

The entire image brightening now as, at the end of this hallway, a point of light emanating from the center.

Those shoulders approaching the light, as they near it, another sound rising, most similar to a wail; a *child's* wail.

The shoulders moving with more purpose now, picking up speed, furiously attempting to reach that light.

A wall of noise, the clatter of feet in this hallway, the ever present wail and, that point of light, no matter how fast we move or how loud those footsteps, never growing closer, an infinite, futile scramble as...

SMASH CUT TO:

44

SHARON

44

...standing above us, a wet towel in her hand, the look on her face one of concern.

45

INT. TISH'S HOME, BEDROOM - NIGHT

45

Tish's eyes closed, heavily asleep.

But her body clinched with tension, hand gripping at the sheet, feet kicking atop the covers.

A guttural, muted sound rising from Tish's chest as Sharon sits to the bed beside her, gently lays a hand to Tish's brow, caresses her head.

Slowly, Tish's eyes opening, drifting into consciousness. Sharon dabs the wet towel at Tish's temples, looks down at her lovingly:

SHARON

I know I can't help you very much right now - God knows what I wouldn't give if I could. But I know about suffering.

SHARON (CONT'D)

And I know that it ends. I ain't going to tell you no lies, like it always ends for the better. Sometimes it ends for the worse. You can suffer so bad that you can be driven to a place where you can't ever suffer again. And that's the worst. That's so much worse than any suffering.

Sharon setting that towel down, taking Tish's hands and enveloping them in her own.

SHARON

Try to remember that.

(and)

I know a lot of our men have died in prison: but not all of them. You remember that. And you ain't really alone in that bed. You got that child beneath your heart and we're all counting on you, Fonny's counting on you, to bring that child here safe and well. You the only one who can do it. But you one of us. Which mean you made of tough stuff. You understand?

TISH

Yes, Mama.

SHARON

Are you all right now? Can you sleep?

TISH

Yes.

SHARON

I don't want to sound foolish. But remember, love brought you here. If you trusted love this far, don't panic now, trust it all the way.

Sharon leans down, kisses her daughter on the forehead. Another caress with that towel then she rises, heads for the door. Turns off the light behind her as we...

CUT TO:

46

LATER

46

...and brighter, Tish waking in bed, having slept through the night.

47 INT. TISH'S HOME, KITCHEN - DAY 47

Tish dressed now, Ernestine already at the dining table thumbing through some paperwork, Sharon at the counter pouring a cup of coffee as Tish enters.

ERNESTINE
(without looking up)
Hey, Jezebel.

Tish sticking her tongue out at her sister as she passes, comes up behind Sharon and gives her mother a hug.

"Sis started calling me Jezebel after I got my job at the perfume counter. She said..."

ANGLE ON: ERNESTINE

ERNESTINE
(with a wicked smile)
You smell like a Louisiana whore.

48 INT. C TRAIN, DOWNTOWN - DAY - MOVING 48

The first time we've seen Tish take the train by herself. Crowded as the car is, she's incredibly alone. And visibly pregnant.

"The store thought that it was very progressive to give this job to a colored girl."

49 INT. BERGDORF GOODMAN - DAY - MOVING 49

Entering hurriedly through the main show-floor with Tish, passing her coworkers - her *white* coworkers - as she hustles to clock in...

50 INT. BERGDORF GOODMAN - DAY - LATER 50

Tish a bit more "made-up," standing behind the perfume counter.

"I stand behind that counter all day long, smiling till my back teeth ache."

As we draw closer to Tish, see the strain to keep that outward face...

"And it isn't only old white ladies who come to that counter to smell the back of my hand."

QUICK VIGNETTE: Tish and an aforementioned Old White lady, Tish's smile false as the color of this women's wig.

"Very rarely does a black cat come anywhere near this counter, and if he does, his intentions are often more generous and always more precise."

QUICK VIGNETTE: Tish at the counter, one of the aforementioned "Black Cats" approaching the perfume counter but not stopping, moves past it with a cautionary look thrown Tish's way.

"Perhaps for a black cat, I look like a helpless baby sister. And he doesn't want to see me turn into a whore."

QUICK VIGNETTE: Tish behind the counter as a different "Black Cat" approaches, comes right up to the counter.

"And yet some black cats come closer, just to look into my eyes, to check out what's happenin'. And they never smell the back of my hand."

QUICK IMAGE SERIES: Just as Tish describes it...

"A black cat puts out his hand, and you spray it, and he carries the back of his own hand to his own nostrils."

BACK TO TISH:

At the counter as a plain, middle-everything white man approaches.

"But a white man?"

QUICK IMAGE SERIES:

Just as Tish describes it...

*"A white man will take **your** hand, he will carry **your** flesh to **his** nostrils... and he will hold it there."*

Hold on this image, and on Tish looking without feeling, a forced smile to obscure, then...

"He will hold it there for a lifetime."

51 INT. SPANISH RESTAURANT - DAY

51

Tish and Ernestine together in a corner, the same table we've seen Tish and Fonny occupy countless times before (and Tish still dressed from her shift at Lord and Taylor's).

ERNESTINE

Well don't you smell nice.

Off Tish's rolled eyes:

ERNESTINE

You want the good news or the bad news first?

TISH

Bad news.

ERNESTINE

See that's how you know we family.

(and)

Bad news is, they found Mrs. Rogers, she's in Puerto Rico. Somebody's gonna have to go there to talk to her.

TISH

Which we'll have to pay for.

A nod yes from Ernestine.

TISH

Okay, what's the good news?

ERNESTINE

That... they found her, I guess?

TISH

How she get to Puerto Rico?

Ernestine shrugging, a sip of her beer:

TISH

I can't go to Puerto Rico.

Another look from Ernestine, more biting: obviously.

TISH

So Hayward?

ERNESTINE

Hayward's got to deal with Bell and the DA. Anyway, you can see that, for many, many reasons, Hayward can't go. He'd be accused of intimidating a witness.

TISH

But that's what they're doing--

ERNESTINE

It would take us until your baby is voting age to prove that.

ERNESTINE (CONT'D)

Look, mama and daddy don't know, I haven't talked to them yet, wanted to talk to you first.

Tish nodding at that, taking it all in. She goes cold:

TISH

Do you think she really was raped?

ERNESTINE

Tish... I don't know what's going on in that ingrown mind of yours, but that question don't mean a thing. As far as our situation is concerned baby, she was raped. That's it.

Ernestine takes a sip of her drink.

ERNESTINE

I think, in fact, that she was raped and that she has absolutely no idea who did it, would probably not even recognize him if he passed her on the street. I may sound crazy, but the mind works that way. She'd recognize him if he raped her again. But then it would no longer be rape, if you see what I mean?

TISH

I see what you mean. But why Fonny?

ERNESTINE

Because he was presented to her as the rapist and it was much easier to say yes than to try and relive the whole damn thing. This way, it's over for her.

TISH

And for us, too?

ERNESTINE

No. Not even.
It won't ever be over for us.

Tish taking a beat before this next part, fixes Ernestine in her sights:

TISH

What about Puerto Rico?

ERNESTINE

That's one of the reasons I wanted to talk to you. Before we talk to Mama and Daddy. Look. You can't go, no way you can. For one thing, without you, Fonny will panic. I don't see how I can go, I've got to keep lighting firecrackers under Hayward's ass. Daddy can't go, and God knows Frank can't go. That leaves Mama.

TISH

Mama?

A nod from Ernestine:

TISH

She don't want to go to Puerto Rico.

ERNESTINE

And she hates planes. But she wants your baby's father out of jail. She'll go.

TISH

And what do you think she can do?

ERNESTINE

She can do something no special investigator can do: she may be able to break *through* to Mrs. Rogers. Maybe not, but if she can, we're ahead. And if not, well, we haven't lost anything, and at least we'll know we've tried.

TISH

And what about Daniel? Daniel can vouch for us, Daniel knows Fonny was with him.

ERNESTINE

I told you. Hayward is seeing him tomorrow. He may have been able to see him today.

Tish nodding it all in, confirming it all in her head.

TISH

Some shit.

ERNESTINE

Yeah.
But we in it now.

52 INT. SHOWMANS JAZZ CLUB - DAY

52

Lot of regulars at the bar hovering over sad drinks.

As we take it all in, a pair of familiar faces appearing there in the back: Joe and Frank, each nursing what appear to be rocked up whiskey.

FRANK

What we going to do?

JOSEPH

Well, the first thing we got to do is to stop blaming ourselves. If we can't do that, man, we'll never get the boy out because we'll be so fucked up. And we cannot fuck up now, baby, and I know you hear where I'm coming from.

FRANK

I hear that but man, what we going to do about the money?

JOSEPH

You ever have any money?

Frank looks up at him and says nothing, merely questions him with his eyes.

JOSEPH

You ever have any *money*?

FRANK

No.

JOSEPH

Then why you worried about it now?

Frank looks up at him again.

JOSEPH

You raised them *somehow*. You *fed* them somehow, didn't you? If we start to worrying about money now, man, we going to be fucked and we going to lose our children. That white man, baby, he want you to be worried about the money. That's his whole *game*.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

But if we got to where we are without money, we can get further. I ain't worried about they money -- they ain't got no right to it anyhow, they stole it from us -- they ain't never met nobody they didn't lie to and steal from. Well, I can steal, too. *And rob.* How you think I raised my daughters? *Shit.*

But Frank is not Joseph. He stares down again, into his drink.

FRANK

What you think is going to happen?

JOSEPH

What we *make* happen.

FRANK

That's easy to say.

JOSEPH

Not if you mean it.

There is a long silence into which neither man speaks. Even the jukebox is silent.

FRANK

I guess... I love Fonny more than I love anybody in this world. And it makes me ashamed, man, I swear, because he was a real manly little boy, wasn't scared of nothing, except maybe his Mama. He didn't understand his Mama. And I don't know what I should've done. I ain't a woman. And there's some things only a woman can do with a child.

Frank sips his drink, tries to smile.

FRANK

I don't know if I was ever any kind of father to him -- any kind of real father -- and now he's in jail and it ain't his fault and I don't even know how I'm going to get him out. I'm sure one hell of a man.

JOSEPH

Well, he sure think you are. He loves you, and he respects you;

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

now you got to remember that I might know that better than you. Tell you something else: your son is the father of my daughter's baby. Now, how you going to sit here and act like can't nothing be done? We got a child on the way here, man. You want me to beat the shit out of you?

He says this with ferocity but, after a moment, smiles.

JOSEPH

Now I know some hustles and you know some hustles and these are our children and we got to set them free. So, let's drink up man and go on in. We got a whole lot of shit to deal with in a hurry.

CUT TO BLACK.

"The date for Fonny's trial keeps changing. This fact, of course, forces me to realize that Hayward's concern is genuine."

53 INT. HAYWARD'S OFFICE - DAY - MONTAGE 3 53

Hayward standing behind his desk, looking down on stacks upon stacks of paperwork.

"I don't think that he very much cared in the beginning. He'd never taken a case like Fonny's before, but... once into it, the odor of shit rose too high -- he had no choice but to keep stirring it."

54 INT. DOWNTOWN ASSOCIATION - DAY - MONTAGE 3 54

Hayward caressing a snifter of cognac surrounded by other lawyer types, a good old boy feel to it... with Hayward appearing out of place.

"It became obvious at once, for example, that the degree of his concern for his client placed him at odds with the keepers of the keys and seals."

ANGLE ON: HAYWARD

"He had not expected this and at first it bewildered... then frightened and angered him."

55 INT. TISH'S HOME - NIGHT - MONTAGE 3 55

The family engaged in what appears to be a spirited discussion, inaudible the whole of it, all Tish:

"It didn't help that I distrusted him, Ernestine harangued him, Mama was laconic and, for Joseph, he was just another white boy with a college degree."

56 INT. C TRAIN - DAY - MOVING - MONTAGE 3 56

Tish looking substantially more pregnant than we've seen her previously.

"And so... mama begins letting out my clothes..."

57 INT. UPPER WEST SIDE APARTMENT - DAY - MONTAGE 3 57

Ernestine sitting before a well appointed desk in the foyer of the most monied domicile we'll see all film, a young, pretty white woman pacing before her.

"Ernestine takes a second job as a part-time secretary to a rich and eccentric actress whose connections she intends to use."

CUT TO:

58 SPLIT SCREEN: the docks on one side, the garment district 58
on the other.

"And Joseph and Frank are coldly stealing from the docks and the garment center, selling the hot goods in Harlem or in Brooklyn."

59 EXT. HARLEM SIDE STREET - DAY - MONTAGE 3 59

Frank and Joe standing at the rear doors of a van we've not seen before, the two of them in conversation with other men as they gesture into the bed of the van.

*"They don't tell me any of this, of course. But I know it.
I know it."*

CUT BACK TO:

HAYWARD -- a look in his eyes, at once present and far away.

60 INT. DOWNTOWN ASSOCIATION, MENS ROOM - DAY 60

We begin in the Barbershop, Hayward just completing a simple trim, then...

...he rises, moves through a hallway.

As he does, we see more of this place -- old school, marble counter-tops, the finest wood, understatedly immaculate in that "old NY money" way.

Hayward lands at one of the many empty sinks -- there's no one else here. *Or is there?*

As he hovers above the basin, notes his finely coifed hair... a figure in the periphery catches his eye, Hayward looking up and to the right, locks eyes with a reflection in the mirror:

An elderly black man watching from the wings: dress shirt, a tie slipping beneath a black vest, the RESTROOM ATTENDANT.

The restroom attendant reaches past Hayward, turns on the tap.

After a moment for Hayward to properly rinse his hands, the restroom attendant extends a towel, stands at the ready as Hayward dries.

Hayward returns the towel to the attendant. *The evidence of things not seen.*

RESTROOM ATTENDANT

Have a good day, sir.

Hayward heads for the exit as we...

CUT TO BLACK.

And OVER BLACK, a new SOUND rising, like the city through a window, distant and present at once.

"I remember the night the baby was conceived.

It was the day we found our loft."

61

INT. CANAL STREET LOFT, STAIRWELL - DAY

61

Fonny and Tish following a third man we've not seen before (LEVY, tall, lanky, white).

Bare, industrial this place, looks more like a heavy machinery operation than residential housing.

And yet... here Tish is, holding Fonny's hand as they climb these stairs, this strange white man glancing back at them with a smile.

Levy reaches the landing, waits for them. He keys the lock, but...

LEVY

So... you read the ad, right?

62

INT. CANAL STREET LOFT - DAY

62

Levy leading Tish and Fonny into a massive, barren space -- cement floors, chipped paint, windows stained a thousand different colors by the weight of sun and time.

LEVY

Okay lady and gentleman, here we are.

Levy turns back to them as he moves deeper into the space, Fonny still following but Tish frozen, a mix of surprise and dread on her face.

LEVY

I know it's not much to look at but we're not done with it, see... you gotta imagine there's walls like over here...

(jogs a few feet away)

And *here*, see?

FONNY

Yeah Tish, it's not done, they still workin' on it.

Tish opens her mouth to speak, but... the sight has left her speechless.

TISH

Fonny...

(and)

I'm sorry, but... how we gonna make a *home* outta this?

Fonny comes back over to her, takes her by the hand:

FONNY

With *love* baby, I *know* we can.
Look here....

Fonny guides her back over near Levy, the three of them sharing the same vantage point now, looking directly toward the windows.

FONNY

Imagine we got walls *here* and *here*,
running all the way to the back,
right?

He moves away, into the center of the *apartment*, looks back to Tish and Levy:

FONNY

See, it won't be all this, we'll have our own space, it'll be us here and maybe some other young folks over there and there, like a community, right?

LEVY

Yeah, a community.

TISH

But... where we supposed to cook and sleep and bath, I mean... where my mama and 'nem gonna *sit*?

FONNY

Easy, we'll put a couch over here--

Fonny hustles over to the spot where the couch will go.

FONNY

--and the bed? We'll put the bed right back here so I can see you in that pretty light when the sun rises.

He's made his way near the window, arms wide to gesture just about where that sunlit bed is going to lay.

FONNY

And eatin'? Well, I think we should have the dining table over here--
(moves there)
--and really the only thing left is the fridge but, I ain't tryna throw out my back before we even had time to *make* a kid so Levy, help me with this fridge man.

Fonny runs back over to them, pantomimes opening a door. Game, Levy follows, the two of them moving past Tish, out that fictional door, then...

FONNY

1... 2... 3.

Fonny and Levy pantomiming as though they've just taken up opposite ends of that fridge, Levy backing through the imaginary door and past Tish, Fonny following with his "end."

FONNY
 (straining)
 I tell you what it was a *load*
 getting up those stairs, but what a
 man won't do for love, eh Levy?

LEVY
 Amen, brother.

They sit the "fridge" down in its place, the two of them
 huffing and puffing. Fonny locks eyes with her, expectant.

Tish tries her best to fight it, but... she smiles.

TISH
 You're quite crazy, you know that?

Fonny drifts over to her, takes her hand again:

FONNY
 Why yes, my dear, I do.

TISH
 But also...
 (beat)
 Quite cute.

63

EXT. CANAL STREET, ROOFTOP - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

63

The three of them standing on the roof of this building.

LEVY
 Don't worry about the neighbors.
 After five or six o'clock, you
 won't have any. All you got down
 here is sweatshops; place on the
 ground floor is legit.
 (and)
 Common decency requires I tell you
 that, the stairwell we came in on?
 Allows access to the building
 interior, not the sidewalk, so...
 in case of a fire...

FONNY
 ...our best bet is to come on up,
 hop to another building or ride it
 out up here?

A nod in the affirmative from Levy, looking from Tish to
 Fonny, expectant. The two of them dumbfounded, no telling how
 many places they've seen at this point, none of them yielding
 this result.

FONNY

Other than it being a firetrap,
what's the catch?

LEVY

What's that?

Fonny pausing a moment, debating, then...

FONNY

No offense Levy, but we been
lookin' a long time. Don't seem to
me like it's a reason for you to
treat two Negros so nice like,
clearly we ain't got a pot nor much
of a drink to make piss with;
pardon my French.

Levy looking away from Fonny here, briefly at Tish and then,
for just a moment, at their hands joined there.

LEVY

Look, with me, it's simple: I dig
people who love each other. Black,
white, green or purple, doesn't
matter to me, just spread love, you
know?

FONNY

So you a hippie? I didn't take you
for no hippie.

LEVY

Nah, I'm just my mother's son.
Sometimes that's all what makes the
difference between us and them.

Fonny pulling Tish into his side, the two of them lovely
together. And from the look on Levy's face, this *loveliness*
is exactly why the place will be their's.

LEVY

Keep in touch about getting that
deposit together, you hear?

A nod from Fonny, earnest.

FONNY

Will do, Levy.
Will do.

64

EXT. BLEECKER STREET - DUSK - MOVING

64

Walking with Tish and Fonny, this path from Soho to the Village.

Twilight out, the sun below the horizon, nearly night. That energy in the street when the day is ending; and *peacefully*. It would be a Friday, the feel of the eminent weekend and all that it promises.

A quiet, lazy pace these two, Tish leaned into Fonny as she's wont to do. No place in particular to hurry to; what else could possibly matter?

A beat of this walking then... Fonny stops; no reason, just stops walking mid-stride. Looks to the ground, and then to the sky.

Throws his head back and *shouts*, yells to the heavens.

He's still holding Tish's hand. And from the smile on his face, this is a joyous shout.

Tish looking into his face, the smile now spreading to her. Not a word spoken between them. Without thinking, Tish throws her head back as well, shouts the same as Fonny.

Those smiles wider between them as they pick up their walk again, looking from one to the other. Tish catching Fonny's eye.

Throws her head back once more and, again, *yells to the sky*.

Fonny stops, takes Tish by the hand, pulls her into him, a hand to her chin, speaks softly:

FONNY

You ready for this?

TISH

Yes.

(and)

Ain't nothin' else in the world I'm more ready for.

Fonny smiling, big, bright, a child's face. He is as happy as any man could be.

They're walking again, approaching a corner up ahead, an intersection with a small grocer on the corner.

TISH

I'm gonna grab some things for dinner.

A delay from Fonny, just watching her. Leans over to kiss her on the forehead:

FONNY

I'm'a grab me some smokes across
the street.

Fonny splitting off, moving into the crosswalk, a small cigar shop just across the way.

We stay here with Tish, watch Fonny go a moment, then...

65

INT./EXT. VEGETABLE STAND - NIGHT

65

Tish just inside the entrance of this place, a selection of Italian home goods set just onto the sidewalk, a full bakery with low-slung aisles of groceries and produce inside.

She's at the tomato stand, rummaging through it when we hear:

VOICE (O.S.)

I can sure dig a tomato who digs
tomatoes.

Tish turning to that voice, finds herself face to face with a small, greasy ITALIAN PUNK.

His hand on Tish, caressing her behind. He licks his lips, smiles.

ITALIAN PUNK

Hey, sweet tomato. You *know* I dig
tomatoes.

And now people are watching. Tish searching them, looking for help but people only stare, no one moves.

Tish goes to move past him, leaves the tomatoes there but the boy grabs her arm. Instinctively, she slaps him - *BAP!*

And at this moment, Fonny enters the store, grabs the boy by the hair, knocks him to the ground and kicks him something fierce. Takes him by the lapel and drags him out onto the sidewalk, tosses him in the gutter.

Tish screaming Fonny's name and, at first, we're not sure why, Tish grabbing a hold of him and, oddly, turning her back to Fonny's chest, reaches behind her and pulls him close to her, his chin at the crown of her head.

And then we see him: a uniformed officer hurrying across the intersection, eyes flaring, billy-club at the ready.

As he nears, we recognize him: this is the aforementioned, blue-eyed officer from Tish's remembrances, OFFICER BELL.

Tish holding the back of her head against Fonny's chest, both his wrists clutched in her two hands.

TISH
 (to Bell, frantic)
 That man there attacked me. Right
 in this store. Right now. Every-
 body saw it.

No one says a word.

Bell looking at them all, still staring but nobody speaking. Then he looks back at Tish. And Fonny. There is no pity in Bell's face.

OFFICER BELL
 (at Fonny)
 And where were you, while all
 this...

Bell's eyes drifting over Tish in exactly the same way the boy's had...

OFFICER BELL
 ...while all this was going on
 between junior there and your girl?

TISH
 He was around the corner, buying
 cigarettes.

OFFICER BELL
 Is that so, boy?

Tish's body jerking as Fonny's hands clench in her grasp:

TISH
 (sharp)
 He's not a boy, Officer.

Bell taking another look at Tish and Fonny as someone in the crowd gets the Italian Punk to his feet.

OFFICER BELL
 You live around here?

The back of Tish's head is still on Fonny's chest, but he's released his wrists from her hands.

FONNY
 Yes, on Bank Street.

OFFICER BELL

We're going to take you down, for assault and battery.

VOICE (O.S.)

Oh no you're not.

Tish, Fonny, Bell, everyone's eyes going to the shop now, a small, elderly ITALIAN LADY standing there with one hand on her hip, the other pointing sharply at Bell:

ITALIAN LADY

I know both these young people. They shop here very often. What the young lady has told you is the truth. I saw them both when they came. I was busy, I could not get to her right away; her tomatoes are still on the scale. And that little good-for-nothing over there attacked her. What would you do if a man attacked your wife? If you have one.

The crowd snickers. Bell flushes.

ITALIAN LADY

I saw exactly what happened. I am a witness. And I will swear to it.

OFFICER BELL

Funny way to run a business.

ITALIAN LADY

You will not tell me how to run my business. I was on this street before you got here and I will be here long after you are gone.

The Italian lady reenters the store and takes Tish's tomatoes off the scale and puts them in a bag.

OFFICER BELL

(to Fonny)

Well...

...be seeing you around.

FONNY

You may...

...and then again, you may not.

A beat of these two holding eyes as the crowd disperses. There's a dark, heavy promise in these eyes. It runs both ways.

66

EXT. BLEECKER STREET - NIGHT - MOVING

66

Tish and Fonny moving quietly down the sidewalk.

Fonny holds the bag of tomatoes in the crook of one hand; the other arm he entwines through Tish's. They walk slowly.

FONNY

Tish...

TISH

Yes?

FONNY

Don't ever try to protect me.

TISH

But you were trying to protect *me*.

FONNY

(heavy; quiet)

It's *not*...

...*the same*...

...***thing***.

Fonny takes the bag of tomatoes... and smashes them against the nearest wall. They make a beautiful, chiaroscuro mess of streaking red. But, mercifully, they hardly make a sound.

The two of them standing apart now, Fonny with his hands in his pockets, looking down at his feet, disgusted.

Tish with a hand covering her mouth, the other wrapped about herself. Fonny closing the space, takes her hand in his:

FONNY

Don't think I don't know you love me. You believe we going to make it?

Tish embracing him, a hand to his cheek, a very full kiss.

She draws back, starts to say something, but... he puts a finger to her lips. Smiles his little smile.

FONNY

Don't say a word. I'm going to take you out to dinner. At our Spanish place, you remember?

Tish nodding yes, holds his gaze. A beat of this, then...

67 INT. SPANISH RESTAURANT - NIGHT

67

Fonny and Tish escorted to their table in Pedrocito's restaurant, holding hands as they follow him.

FONNY

We have no money, but we are very hungry. And I will have some money in a couple of days.

PEDROCITO

In a couple of days, that is what they all say. And, furthermore, I suppose that you would like to eat *sitting down!*

FONNY

Why, yes, if you could arrange it, that would be nice.

PEDROCITO

(over shoulder)

And now, no doubt, you would like two margaritas?

FONNY

(as he sits)

Caught me again.

A wink and a laugh from Pedrocito as he disappears into the rear of this place. Fonny takes Tish's hand atop the table there.

All eyes; holding eyes, speaking with eyes, *loving* with eyes. And from this look, a plea, a promise, a thirst within...

CUT TO:

68 INT. BANK STREET FLAT - NIGHT

68

Fonny and Tish on the palette, making love.

No need for any details beyond this: making love, making it all the way to and through the point of release, Tish holding on to Fonny, keeping him here, keeping him *in*.

Both their breaths subsiding after the act, Fonny's mouth close at Tish's ear, all whispers and...

FONNY

Tish.

(and)

Oh *Tish.*

CUT TO BLACK.

"We are beginning to have a somewhat acrid dialogue, this thing and I."

69 INT. TISH'S HOME, KITCHEN - DAY

69

Tish standing at the stove, preparing a simple meal, by the looks of her belly, very pregnant, a sign of the present.

QUICK IMAGE SERIES:

Just as Tish describes it...

"It kicks, and I smash an egg on the floor."

ANGLE ON: egg hitting the kitchen floor.

"It kicks, and suddenly the coffeepot is upside down on the table."

ANGLE ON: coffee spilling across the dining table, Ernestine jumping to avoid the burn as Tish doubles over.

"It kicks, and the perfume on the back of my hand brings salt to the roof of my mouth and my free hand weighs on the glass counter with force enough to crack it in two."

70 ANGLE ON: Tish at the perfume counter, doubled over in pain as a coworker rushes over.

TISH

Goddammit!

(and sotto)

Be patient. I'm doing the best I can. *Please.*

Tish gripping that perfume counter again, a guttural grunt.

"And then it hauls off again, like Muhammad Ali, and I'm on the ropes."

71 INT. TISH'S HOME - NIGHT

71

Empty, at least visually so, just the furniture and a muted light from the kitchen hitting the floor.

That hallway running towards the bedrooms directly before us, empty like the rest of this place. And yet, a sound echoing off the floors and walls here.

Distinct: it's the sound of vomiting.

A beat more of this sound and then a toilet flushing, running water. A moment later...

...Tish appears, clutching her stomach and forehead at once, approaching down that hall, holding onto the wall as she goes, moves past us and turns for the dining table.

Sits and, within moments, Joseph appearing from just inside the kitchen, had no idea he was there, sets down a warm mug of something, a wedge of lemon and bottle of honey beside.

He takes a seat opposite her, watches as she squeezes the lemon into the water, hangs her head over that cup a beat. His eyes, all sympathy: he'd carry it himself if he could.

72

INT. NEW YORK CITY CORRECTIONAL FACILITY - DAY

72

Fonny alone at the glass this time, phone at the ready, looking on as Tish waddles across the room.

FONNY

Here she come! Big as *two* houses!

Tish smiling as she sits to a stool, one of the few instances she won't mind folks calling out her weight.

FONNY

You sure it ain't twins? Or triplets?

(shit eating grin)

Shit, we *might* make history.

Fonny throwing back his head at his own joke, laughing loud enough the sound travels through that glass.

TISH

(at her belly)

Your daddy figure hisself a comedian.

Fonny calming, smiles at his love.

FONNY

You look good baby.

TISH

Thank you, honey.

FONNY

Better than anybody over here,
don't care how big you get.

TISH

Well as soon as *that* ain't the
truth somethin' wrong, you tell me
'cause I'm outta here then.

Tish settles on her stool there, head lolling slightly to the side. She's relaxed now. And in that relaxed state, takes him in, sees him better:

TISH

How you doin', husband?

FONNY

I'm good, wife.
(and)
You here now. I'm *all* good now.
You know I love you.

TISH

You know I love *you*.

A nod from Fonny.

TISH

No matter what happen with all of
this sh--

Tish's hand going to the glass, palm flat, the stool scooting back as she leans forward, all her weight going there.

Fonny shocked, his hand going to the glass as he shoots upright, helpless.

TISH

I'm alright.

FONNY

Tish.

TISH

I'm okay.

She looks up, manages a smile, a *smile* streaked through with pain and clipped breaths.

Fonny's hand still on the glass, was aligned perfectly with Tish's. Hers removed now, always a lady: smoothing her hair, looks to the guard who's appeared over her left shoulder.

TISH
 (at guard)
 I'm okay.
 (and at Fonny)
 I'm fine.

Fonny settling, something about this moment revelatory for him, the physical evidence of things he'd only assumed before. If that.

TISH
 You alright?

FONNY
 Me? I'm not the one just got punched by a midget inside they belly.

Tish and Fonny holding eyes a beat.

A second beat.

A *third* beat, and, finally... Tish cracking, a smile at the corner of her lips and then, a laugh, a hand to her belly to support the shaking and now, an all-out gutbuster of a laugh.

Fonny doing the same on the other side of that glass, the two of them laughing so hard together the others around them, on both sides of the glass, noticing.

The couple holding eyes as the laugh subsides, even as it fades the presence of it steady, all there in the lines at the corner of their mouths, same smiles they've exchanged since bathing together as kids.

Hold here a beat, a *noticeable* beat. If they never have another moment, they'll have had this. And like every moment, it'll have all been worth it.

CUT TO BLACK.

"Mama gets to Puerto Rico on an evening plane."

73

EXT. SAN JUAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - NIGHT

73

A majestic, period-appropriate Pan-Am jet freshly parked off the runway, unloading directly to the tarmac.

Dozens of travelers in some form of deplaning, descending down portable stairs.

Just a beat of this to recognize Sharon de-boarding amongst the others.

74

INT. SAN JUAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - NIGHT

74

From the first frame: *loud*, a cacophony of voices pushing an aggressive brand of Spanish in here. Families and their many possessions throughout this space, few people talking, everyone shouting.

With her overly done-up clothes and hair, Sharon sticking out, the darkest, most American figure in view. We find her at the front of a line, engaged with an AIRPORT STAFFER.

SHARON

Do you speak English?

A smile from the staffer, friendly, but no answer.

SHARON

I'm sorry but I don't speak any Spanish and I've had to come here unexpectedly. And I don't drive, you see?

More silence from the staffer and, it must be noted: for a black woman raised in the Jim Crow South, this is one of the few moments in Sharon's life she can be said to emit privilege.

SHARON

(desperate)

You see?

AIRPORT STAFFER

One moment Señora.

Sharon waiting, watching as the girl rounds this Hertz desk, moves off into the throng. Watching her as Sharon does, we get a good look at the terminal: many peoples of various shades - and all atop one another, hard to breathe - with all the possessions they could carry here staged without the promise of leaving or going, just... here.

VOICE (O.S.)

Señora...

Sharon turning, finds the airport staffer approaching, a shy, humble boy of about eighteen following close.

AIRPORT STAFFER

This is Jaime, your driver, he will take you to your hotel, tell him.

Sharon digging into her small clutch, retrieves a small piece of paper and hands it to the boy. He meets her eyes.

JAIME

It will be my pleasure, Señora.

75 INT. JAIME'S CAB - NIGHT - MOVING 75

Sharon in the backseat, staring out at this alien landscape, the sound of the paved but worn road beneath them.

She and Jaime eyeing each other in the rearview, each of them on the sly. Nervous, curious.

Finally:

JAIME

It is okay, Señora. You are safe with me.

76 INT. HOTEL DEL RICO, SUITE - NIGHT 76

Sharon's suitcase atop the bed, its contents spilled over.

Takes a moment to take it all in. Reaches down and grabs one item: a stylish, Cotton Club-esque hat.

Turns to the mirror behind her, sizes herself up, puts on the hat. Indifferent. Sharon takes the hat off, comes back to her reflection again. She's thinking, considering.

She puts the hat on again.

Beat.

77 INT. HOTEL DEL RICO, ELEVATOR - NIGHT - DESCENDING 77

Just a beat here with Sharon and the mirrored elevator door.

She's staring into her own eyes. She is not wearing that hat.

78 INT. JAIME'S CAB - NIGHT - MOVING 78

More sound, more jostling at these worn roads. Sharon looks... ridiculous, like the American tourist she is in a club dress and black shawl wrapped about her head.

More eyes in that rearview, from Jaime that same curiosity. When Sharon meets his gaze this time, neither looks away.

SHARON

Thank you for waiting.

JAIME

Of course, Señora.

Sharon holding this boy's eyes in the rearview, dumbstruck. The air thick with something, chaste, a connection.

Out the window, every now and then what's best described as a shanty-town arising in the distance. A small flame, a single light. The sound of the car's movement wed to these images, then...

79 INT. LA PIAZZA RESORT, LOBBY - NIGHT 79

Sharon standing in the foyer of a San Juan Resort Hotel, the lobby behind her, entrance of the subterranean nightclub before her.

The entry to the club runs clear through to a dance-floor, at the lip of the dance-floor a raised band-stand.

80 INT. DISCOTECA LA PIAZZA - NIGHT 80

Sharon sitting alone in a nightclub booth, the music louder now, much more ridiculous, a Puerto Rican cover of something wild and propulsive.

Sharon taking in the scene. It's early, not many people in this place, the other booths mostly empty. A man approaching now, a clear cocktail held aloft.

SERVER
Your drink Señorita.

SHARON
Thank you.

And as the man turns to move away:

SHARON
Excuse me.

SERVER
Yes, Señorita?

The man stepping closer.

SHARON
Well... I'm supposed to meet a friend here, but the flight I meant to take was overbooked, so I was forced to take an earlier one, I'm not sure he's here yet.

SERVER
Who is your friend?

SHARON

It's actually more the nature of business. I'm waiting for Señor Alvarez; Pietro Alvarez. I'm Mrs. Rivers. From New York.

A reaction from the server. Clearly something Sharon said struck a chord.

SERVER

Yes, Señorita. I will tell Señor Alvarez.

The man leaves. Sharon takes up her screwdriver, downs the balance of one half it.

Beat.

Sharon waits. In this waiting, a realization: this is the first time Sharon's been alone in a very long time. By herself at this booth, an older woman, a black, American woman, so alien to this place.

Sharon reaching into her clutch, retrieves a tasteful compact-looking contraption, it's contents a surprise: a row of immaculate Virginia Slims.

As she brings the first cig to her lips, lights it:

MAN (O.S.)

You Mrs. Rivers?

(and)

You waiting for me?

Sharon looking up from that cig, a slender, Latino man with a strained mustache standing before her. This is PIETRO, Victoria's boyfriend.

SHARON

Pietro? Pietro Alvarez?

PIETRO

Maybe. What you want to see him about?

SHARON

I don't especially want to see Mr. Alvarez. I want to see Victoria Rogers. I'm the mother-in-law of the man she's accused of rape.

Pietro shifting at that, Sharon the last person he assumed would walk into his club tonight. He takes a seat.

PIETRO

Well lady, you got one hell of a son-in-law, let me tell you that.

SHARON

I also have one hell of a daughter, let me tell you that.

PIETRO

Look, she's been through enough; *more* than enough. Leave her alone.

SHARON

A man is about to die for something he didn't do, can we leave *him* alone.

VOICE (O.S.)

Another drink, Señor Alvarez?

Both Sharon and Pietro looking up at that, the server returned.

PIETRO

It's on me, give the lady what she wants. And give me the usual.

On the bandstand, the Puerto Rican rockers launch into *Esta Bien Mi Nena*. The server moves away.

SHARON

Do you believe I love my daughter?

PIETRO

Frankly lady, it's hard to believe you *got* a daughter.

That said as a come-on. To her shock, Sharon is empathizing with Victoria.

SHARON

Do you think I would marry my daughter to a rapist?

PIETRO

You might not know.

SHARON

Son, listen: I know that she was raped, and I know... I *know* what women know. But I also know that Alonzo did not rape her.

PIETRO

Why you comin' to me? Shit, I ain't
nothin': Indian, wop, spic, spade,
that's me baby. I got my little
thing here and I got Victoria and
lady, I don't want to put her
through no more shit, I'm sorry.

Pietro pushing back from the table:

SHARON

No, *please*.

Sharon grabbing a hold of Pietro's hand.

With her free hand, Sharon reaching into her clutch, digging frantically. Retrieves a photo from there, a photo of Fonny and Tish, thrusts it toward Pietro.

SHARON

Look at them.
(and)
Look at them.

The music louder, more propulsive now, those kids on the bandstand letting into that song.

SHARON

Take this photo home; take it to Victoria. Take it and you ask her, you show it to her and you ask her, ask her to *study* it. Hold her in your arms; *do that*. I'm a woman, I know what women know, I know that she was raped. But I also know, *I know* that Alonzo did not rape her.

Beat.

Not a long beat though – a quick one – just enough for Pietro to glance at that photo, then...

...free his hand from Sharon's, leaves that photo with her as he disappears across the dance-floor.

Off Sharon watching him go, defeated, broken and embarrassed all at once...

CUT TO:

81

EXT. RESORT LAPIAZZA – NIGHT

81

Jaime waiting, pops to attention as...

...Sharon approaches, blows right past him, shocks him as she marches on. Jaime frozen to the spot, watches as Sharon reaches the gravel lot, plumes of light dust behind her, reaches the cab and lets herself into the back seat.

Jaime watching his cab for a beat, unsure what to do. Slowly, tentatively, he begins towards the cab. Reaches the passengers side door and... stops.

82 INT. JAIME'S CAB - NIGHT - SAME 82

Sharon in the backseat here. Slouched down, cradled into herself, sobbing.

Jaime outside the window, allowing her this moment.

83 INT. HOTEL DEL RICO, SUITE - DAY 83

Bright, bright daylight, peaceful and quiet. Sharon gazing out of her hotel window at Puerto Rican sun.

Below her, in the parking lot, that familiar cab and Jaime.

"When Mama wakes in the morning, Jaime is there waiting for her. She has become his responsibility because, as the man said about Mt. Everest: 'You're there.'"

84 INT. JAIME'S CAB - DAY - MOVING 84

The sound of rough gravel beneath tires, Sharon looking out the window of Jaime's cab at the passing slum.

Desolate out there, the San Juan found between resort towers, a cross between rural, hood and everything in between.

A beat of travel, then:

JAIME

I think it might be here. You say she is blond, yes?

Sharon nodding, focusing on the slum appearing up ahead, a sight to see even for a woman who's seen her share of hard places.

85 EXT. BARRIO - DAY 85

Jaime standing beside his cab, looking on as Sharon approaches what can only be described as poor, wretched, squalor.

From the look on his face, he does not want to allow her to make this walk alone and yet, Sharon continues on.

Sharon reaching the third level of this makeshift walk-up, rounds a banister and finds herself in a dim corridor, apartment doors on either side running back toward the sunlight.

She begins down the hall, the doors of all these places ajar to various degrees, Sharon peeking into each cautiously.

At the end of the hall, Sharon easing toward a cracked door. With care, she places her foot within the threshold, nudges the door wide as the space of her shoulders.

SHARON'S VIEW: within the room, a thin, blonde-haired girl going about cleaning. Sharon is staring. The girl is pregnant.

VICTORIA turns, feels Sharon watching. A brief beat of them facing one another, ten, twelve feet between them. From her indifferent look, Victoria has *no idea* who Sharon is.

SHARON

Mrs. Rogers?

Victoria's eyes narrow.

VICTORIA

No, Señora. You are mistaken. I am Sanchez.

They watch each other. Sharon is still leaning in the entry. Victoria makes a movement toward the door, as though to close it, but stops. She touches the crucifix at her throat.

VICTORIA

Excuse me, Señora, but I have work to do. I don't know any Mrs. Rogers. Maybe in one of the other places around here?

She looks at Sharon with bitterness. Sharon straightens and, for the first time, they are looking each other in the eye.

SHARON

I have a photograph of you.

Sharon takes out the photograph of Victoria and holds it up. Victoria walks toward the door. As she advances, Sharon moves from the threshold, meets her in the room.

VICTORIA

Señora, I have my work to do. What do you want with me? I don't know you.

SHARON

I know you don't know me. Maybe you never even heard of me.

Victoria shifting, something resigned in her stance. A deep sigh, a dig into her pocket, reveals a pack of cigarettes:

VICTORIA

Do you smoke?

She extends the pack toward Sharon.

There is a plea in Victoria's eyes and Sharon, with a shaking hand, takes the cigarette and Victoria lights it for her. She puts the pack back into the pocket of her housecoat.

SHARON

I know you don't know me. But you must have heard of me.

Victoria looks briefly at the photograph of herself in Sharon's hand; looks at Sharon.

VICTORIA

Look. I ain't got nothing against nobody. But I got to ask you to get out of here.

SHARON

I'm here to try to get a man out of prison. That man is going to marry my daughter. And he did not rape you.

Sharon takes out the photograph of Tish and Fonny.

SHARON

Look at this.

Victoria turns away, sits on the unmade bed.

Sharon approaches her.

SHARON

Look at it, *please*. This is my daughter. The man with her is Alonzo Hunt. Is this the man who raped you?

Victoria will not look at the photograph, or at Sharon.

SHARON

Is this the man who raped you?

Victoria looks down at the photograph, briefly, then up at Sharon.

VICTORIA

It looks like him.

(and, coldly)

But he wasn't laughing when he was raping me.

That taking the air out of Sharon, her breath going shallow at its utterance, can *feel* Victoria calcifying in the moment.

SHARON

May I sit down?

Victoria says nothing. Sharon sits beside her, on the bed. After a beat:

VICTORIA

Look, lady, before you go any further, just let me tell you, you can't do nothing to me, I ain't alone here, I got people.

SHARON

I'm not trying to do anything to you. I'm just trying to get a man out of jail. An innocent man.

VICTORIA

Lady, I think you in the wrong place. Ain't no reason to talk to me. Ain't nothing I can do.

Sharon looks away from her, out the window, the scramble of her thoughts wrought clear on her face.

SHARON

(cautious)

How long were you in New York?

VICTORIA

Too long.

SHARON

Did you leave your children there?

VICTORIA

Listen. Leave my children out of this.

It's hot, Sharon takes off her jacket.

SHARON

Why did you come back here?

Victoria rises and walks to the window. Sharon follows, the two of them staring out at the sea together. A prolonged silence, a fleeting truce inspired by this view.

SHARON

Daughter... in this world, terrible things happen to you, and we can all do some terrible things.

Sharon is careful; she's close, watching Victoria.

SHARON

I was a woman before you was a woman – remember that. And I know, I *know*, you pay for the lies you tell.

She stares at Victoria. Victoria stares at her.

SHARON

You've put a man in jail, a man you've never seen. He's twenty-two years old, he wants to marry my daughter.

She releases Victoria's gaze, turns back to the window.

VICTORIA

I *did* see him.

SHARON

You saw him in the police lineup. That's the first time you saw him, the *only* time.

VICTORIA

What makes you so sure?

SHARON

Because I've known him all his life.

Victoria looking back to Sharon, huffing with a scorn that runs deep, runs certain and heavy.

VICTORIA

One thing I can tell, lady: you
ain't never been raped.

That statement registering viscerally: Victoria *has* been
raped. By *someone*.

VICTORIA

They took me down there and they
asked me to pick him out and that's
what I did, I picked *him* out.

SHARON

But you were... it happened in the
dark. You saw Alonzo in the lights.

VICTORIA

There's lights in the hallway, I
saw enough.

Sharon grabs her again, and touches the crucifix.

SHARON

Daughter... in the name of *God*.

Victoria looks down at Sharon's hand on the cross... and
screams: a piercing, impossible sound. She breaks away from
Sharon, runs to the door (which has remained open all this
time).

VICTORIA

Get out of here! Get out!

Victoria is screaming in Spanish. Doors open. People begin to
appear. Sharon hears the horn of Jaime's taxi.

One of the older women in the hall comes to the door, and
takes Victoria in her arms. Victoria collapses, weeping, into
this woman's breasts; and the woman, without a look at
Sharon, leads her away into the hall.

Everyone else is staring at Sharon. An interminable silence.
Off the sound of Jaime's horn...

HARD CUT TO:

87

INT. BANK STREET FLAT - NIGHT

87

Or is it day? Hard to tell, the light, the sound, the *tone* of
everything here suspended in that in-between place, neither
night nor day, present nor past.

Fonny is working on the wood. It is a soft, brown wood, it
stands on his worktable. The wall is covered with sketches.

His tools are on the table. He walks around the wood, terrified. He does not want to touch it. He knows that he must. But he does not want to defile the wood.

He stares and stares, almost weeping. He is waiting for the wood to speak. Until it speaks, he cannot move.

He picks up a chisel, he puts it down. He lights a cigarette, sits down on his work stool, stares, picks up the chisel again.

He puts it down, goes into the kitchen to pour himself a beer.

Comes back with the beer, sits down on the stool again, stares at the wood. The wood stares back.

He picks up the chisel again, and approaches the waiting wood. Touches it very lightly with his hand, caresses it. He listens.

He puts the chisel, teasingly, against it. The chisel begins to move. Fonny begins, and...

88 INT. NEW YORK CITY CORRECTIONAL FACILITY, CELL - DAY 88

Fonny lying here, eyes wide, staring at the ceiling.

A beat of him lying this way, unblinking, looking far off and away to that vision, then...

89 INT. NEW YORK CITY CORRECTIONAL FACILITY - DAY 89

Tish at the glass, waiting as Fonny approaches from the other side.

Seeing him in the light now, he looks different than we've seen him previously, decidedly worse: gaunt, thinned and bruised.

Fonny looks to Tish, looks *into* her as he takes up the phone:

FONNY
You all right?

TISH
Yes. I'm all right.

FONNY
The baby all right?

TISH
Yes. The baby's fine.

He grins. It is, somehow, a shock to Tish.

TISH

We got to get some meat on your bones, Lord, have mercy.

FONNY

Speak up. He can't hear you.

That playful, said with a smile, the best of Fonny.

TISH

(hesitant)

But listen... there's something I gotta tell you.

Fonny nodding, readying himself:

TISH

Mama came back from Puerto Rico. She found Victoria, but... the girl went crazy, they don't know where she is now.

Beat.

TISH

So the trial might get postponed.

Fonny holding Tish's gaze here, knows she's watching him, does everything in his power to keep it together, to not break, the strain on that receiver in his hand palpable.

TISH

Fonny...

FONNY

I'm fine.

A deliberate beat as Fonny changes before her, something warm seeming to drift away from him, drain from his face.

TISH

Hayward's not charging us no more, we almost got the money to bail you out.

Takes a moment, just enough for the delay to read:

FONNY

I figured you would.

Every word out of Fonny's mouth here bittersweet.

FONNY

Listen, I'll be out soon.

Tish's face, at once shocked and yet trying hard to mask it:

FONNY

I'm coming home because I'm glad I came, can you dig that?

Beat.

FONNY

See now? I'm an *artisan*. Like a cat who makes tables. I don't like the word artist. Maybe I never did. I sure the fuck don't know what it means. I'm a cat who works from his gut, with his hands. I know what it's about now. I think I really do. Even if I go under. But I don't think I will now. I know I won't.

He's far from her. Here *with* her, yes. But very far away.

FONNY

Baby, I love you. And I'm going to build us a great big table and our family gonna be eatin' off it for a long, long time to come.

(and)

And I'm all right, too. Don't you worry. I'm coming home. I'm coming home, to you. I want you in my arms. I want your arms around me. I've got to hold our baby in my arms. It's got to be. You keep the faith.

Fonny grinning now, something bringing him back:

FONNY

Don't you worry. I'll be home.

Fonny grins again, stands and extends his fist to the glass as always. A moment of those fists there, as though transferring the warmth through that barrier, then...

...Fonny bends to kiss the glass.

CUT TO BLACK.

"I saw Bell everywhere... and all the time. We spoke once."

90

EXT. GREENWICH VILLAGE - DAY

90

A very pregnant Tish moving down the sidewalk, a large Salvation Army bag of secondhand clothing and goods clutched at her chest.

She's a bit frantic, in a hurry as she double-checks where she is, gets her bearings.

A half a block with her this way, this hurried gate, then...

...she hits the corner, a stop sign at the crosswalk.

The streets full with the mid-afternoon rush. Tish taking it all in, glad for a brief respite here at the corner when...

...she looks across the roadway, sees a familiar face: Officer Bell.

Approaching up the avenue, taking his time, not a hint of hurry to him, the spitting image of "whistling Dixie."

Tish glancing down the block, could hang a left, walk the long way around but... rather than avoid him, she continues across the intersection, walks directly toward Bell.

That smile of his. That ridiculous fucking smile.

OFFICER BELL

Can I carry that for you?

TISH

No.

(and)

No thank you.

Tish looks into his eyes. There is something passing between them, deliberate and fierce.

Bell watching and Tish not looking away, nor betraying herself: gives him no emotion, just the veil.

OFFICER BELL

Well, you ain't got far to go. Sure wish I could carry it for you, though.

Bell steps closer now, close enough that Tish looks about herself, looks as though to see if anybody's watching:

OFFICER BELL

I ain't a bad guy. You ain't got to be afraid of me.

TISH
I'm not afraid.

Beat. An extended, unbearable beat.

OFFICER BELL
A good day to you, then, miss lady.

Tish holds her ground, watches Bell as he eases back along the walk from whence he came.

93

INT. BANK STREET FLAT - DAY

93

Tish entering, sitting in her chair, looking up out the small window, the sun faint, nearly night out.

That bag she was carrying sitting on the table beside her. She reaches for it and... lurches fully, doubles over like something strong and full of purpose just socked her.

The moment passing, Tish checking her watch and looking at the door again. A resigned sigh and she stands, looks down into that bag and begins pulling things from it.

A few small items at first and then, surprisingly, a block of wood. Takes the wood, walks it over to Fonny's work table, goes to set the block there.

She sits again. Tish's hand at her belly as the soft rain outside echoes through the room.

Beat. A considerable beat, long enough to feel uncomfortable, disorienting. As something seems to shift in Tish, an awakening...

CUT TO:

64

EXT. BLEECKER STREET - DUSK - MOVING

64

Moving with Tish and Fonny, this path from Soho to the Village again.

The light, the sound, all of it familiar: we're back with our couple in one their purest moments again, yelling to the sky.

As Tish bounds and leaps into Fonny's arms, we HEAR...

FONNY (V.O.)
I want to be in your arms...

CUT TO:

WATER

Looking up and through water -- **submerged** in water, the image refracted and reflecting a bright, white light.

FONNY (V.O.)
I want to hold you in my arms.

And a child -- a beautiful, brown child.

FONNY (V.O.)
I've gotta hold our baby in my arms. It's gotta be.

The baby's back to us, buoyed gently at the surface of the water by a pair of hands, hands we come to see are Sharon's as she appears above that water, lifts the baby...

FONNY (V.O.)
*It's **gotta** be.*

OUT OF THE WATER

And us with it, the image fixed to this baby, to its back -- equidistant, as though connected.

Water streaks and obscures our view, dripping from the child's back as we follow it up, up and over to...

Tish -- exhausted, laid back against the edge of that very simple bathtub.

Sharon hands the child to Tish.

It wails like hell as we CUT TO...

EXT. RIVERSIDE PARK - DAY

The beginning as ending, where this all started: two young lovers holding each other's gaze, looking *right at us*.

"We're still not married. After all that's happened, neither of us cares what that means. Fonny was once 22. I was 19.

CUT TO:

INT. TISH'S HOME, BATHROOM - DAY

Tish and Fonny as children, innocently playing in a bubble bath.

"But neither of us is young anymore. We can't afford to be.

Instead, we must live the life we've been given..."

CUT TO:

A child's face, staring wide-eyed and free.

INT. PENITENTIARY, VISITATION ROOM - DAY

"...And live it so that our children can be free."

A low hanging ceilinged room, hard light through the window reflecting off a poorly buffed floor.

That child still gazing plaintively, innocently at us. As he does, we CUT TO:

A MONTAGE OF STILL IMAGES

Of black men under systemic aggression and duress. Tish underscores the imagery.

*"There aren't enough hours in the day or judges on the bench to try all the cases brought against these men. The game has been rigged and the courts see it through: a trial is your **right**. But to bury you beneath the prison for forcing the judge and prison is the court's right to."*

CUT BACK TO:

INT. PENITENTIARY, VISITATION ROOM - DAY

"And so... like many of these poor men, Fonny took a plea."

Tish standing before a vending machine, holding the hand of the child we saw gazing plaintively.

The same girl, but... a woman now -- from the look and feel of her, four, five years on from the main thrust of the story that's come before.

Which, of course means that child is... Fonny and Tish's son, ALONZO JR.

Alonzo tugs at Tish's hand again, gestures across this room as... approaching from across the way, escorted by a guard we SEE...

Fonny -- like Tish, a little older here, but... unlike her, looks somehow younger than we last saw him. Less hair up top, clean shaven.

A quick, chaste hug and he sits opposite them --

TISH
I see you been eatin', good.

FONNY
(at Alonzo Jr.)
Look like I ain't the only one.

TISH
Nope: the apple don't fall too far
from the tree.

Fonny gestures at the table, an assortment of vending machine items spread there -- Honey Buns, Salt and Vinegar Potato Chips, powdered donuts, etc.

FONNY
Who all this for?

TISH
Who you think?

ALONZO
For you, daddy.

FONNY
Where you get the money to pay for
all this? You got a job now, man?
You runnin' numbers?

TISH
(to Alonzo)
Say dollar straight, dollar box.

ALONZO
Dollar straight, dollar --

FONNY
Hey don't be teachin' him that
mess.

A smile between them as the moment passes, nervous energy. Fonny takes in his son, notices the boy scribbling something furiously on a piece of drawing paper.

FONNY
(getting closer)
What's that?

He reads something scribbled many times across the paper, hard to make out in the child's handwriting.

ALONZO JR
That's wen you come home daddy.

Like a sledgehammer that, Fonny's eyes failing to mask the shock.

TISH

Ever since I told him... he just writes it everywhere.

Fonny goes dark at that, an acknowledgement.

Fonny runs his hand warmly atop Alonzo's head with one hand. With his other, reaches for one of those snacks.

FONNY

Well, I don't know about y'all but, I'm starving.

As he goes to open a bag of chips... Alonzo stops him, takes his hand.

ALONZO

No, you gotta say grace.

Fonny looks across at Tish with raised eyes, a smile.

FONNY

Well alright then.

Tish reaches across the table, takes Fonny's hand in hers. The child between them, they each take either of the child's hands in theirs.

Alonzo looks to his father:

ALONZO JR.

Close your eyes, daddy.

A playful smile from Fonny as he does as told.

The three of them holding hands across this table, eyes closed, plates of simple food before them. The child leads them in saying grace:

ALONZO JR. (CONT'D)

Thank you, God, for the food we are about to eat. And for all of your blessings that we have received. And for my daddy.

(beat)

In Jesus name, Amen.

TISH & FONNY

Amen.

The child opens his eyes, releases his parents' hands and begins to eat. Fonny's eyes locked on the child, oblivious, one with his meal.

Across the table though, Tish returning Fonny's gaze, the two of them locked into a silent exchange.

As the moment passes, the two of them taking up bags of junk food to begin this meal, we...

...quietly, *patiently*...

FADE TO BLACK.