

IF BEALE STREET COULD TALK

Written by

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Adapted from the novel by
James Baldwin

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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.

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

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...

INT. NEW YORK CITY CORRECTIONAL FACILITY - DAY

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 pretty 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 starting 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 Frank?

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.

FONNY (CONT'D)
(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...

INT. TISH'S HOME - DAY

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.

Along a hall running perpendicular to the living room, three
bedrooms.

Tish sitting before a steaming 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' Little One?

A moment later, SHARON (early 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 tosses her hat to the couch, begins toward the kitchen. Tish following, tracks over to where Sharon places the shopping bag, begins unloading its contents to the cupboard.

The two working in silence a moment, Sharon humming as she alternates the spray of water rinsing vegetables.

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.

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

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.

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. 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.

SHARON (CONT'D)

You got to hold on to that baby,
don't care what else happens or
don't happen. You got to do that.
Can't nobody else do that for you.
And we going to 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)

Am I getting through to you?

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?

SHARON

Yes, Tish?

TISH

Thank you.

SHARON

(laughing)

I don't know what you thanking me
for. I'm your mama, ain't I?

Sharon closing the door behind her, leaves Tish in here
alone. Tish taking off her coat and 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, "Be right there!"

Before she answers the front door, however, she's at this bedroom door again, a quick knock and she's entering.

SHARON
Here. Drink this.
Do you good.

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

And then she's gone again, out that door, heels 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?

SHARON (O.S.)
She's taking a little nap inside.

MAN (O.S.)
She see Fonny?

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

MAN (O.S.)
What about the lawyer?

SHARON (O.S.)
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.

MAN (O.S.)
How much you think them damn
lawyers is going to cost us before
this thing over?

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

MAN (O.S.)
Well. They sure got it made, the
rotten motherfuckers.

SHARON (O.S.)
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, let's 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..."

INT. HARLEM VOCATIONAL SCHOOL - DAY - MONTAGE 1

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."

INT. HARLEM VOCATIONAL SCHOOL - NIGHT - MONTAGE 1

"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.

INT. RESTAURANT KITCHEN - NIGHT - MONTAGE 1

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

"He started working as a short-order cook in a barbecue joint - 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."

INT. BASEMENT APARTMENT - DAY - MONTAGE 1

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: The mantle, a small, wooden sculpture there of a naked man with one hand at his forehead and the other half hiding his sex.

"The legs are long and wide apart and the whole motion of the figure is torment. It seemed a strange figure for him to do, or, at least, it seemed strange until you thought about it."

CUT BACK TO:

INT. BASEMENT APARTMENT - DAY - MONTAGE 1

Fonny here working on those table-saws as before.

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

CUT TO:

STILL IMAGE SERIES

...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 "Howl."

END MONTAGE 1.

INT. TISH'S HOME, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

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 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, Tish?

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.

INT. TISH'S HOME - NIGHT - LATER

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 sip 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 March.

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
Oh, 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.

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 whip 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."

EXT. TISH'S HOME - DAY - MONTAGE 2

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."

EXT. HARLEM, SIDEWALK - DAY - MONTAGE 2

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."

ANGLE ON: FONNY

DETAILS of him making his way along this walk, as strong as we've seen him, dressed in a red and black lumberjack coat, grey corduroy slacks and heavy shoes.

ANGLE ON: TISH

Those same DETAILS of her.

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

Fonny taking Tish's hand in his.

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

INT. SUBWAY CAR - DAY - MONTAGE 2

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

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

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. As he parts his lips to speak...

FREEZE FRAME:

"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...

EXT. WASHINGTON SQUARE PARK - DAY - MONTAGE 2

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

Not right now, 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)

You want to eat down here or you want to wait till we get back uptown?

FONNY (CONT'D)

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.

INT. TISH'S HOME, FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

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

Mrs. Hunt, 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)
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, Mr. 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 means: 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, Maybeline. He's just telling the truth.

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

FRANK
I don't know how God expects a man to act when his son is in a cage. Your God crucified His son and was probably glad to get rid of him, but I ain't like that. I ain't hardly going out in the street and kiss the first white cop I see. But I'll be a very loving motherfucker the day my son walks out of that hellhole, free. Oh, I'll be full of love, that day.

Mrs. Hunt puts her head in her hands as Frank slowly crosses the room again, sits near Joe at the dining table.

ADRIENNE
Mr. Rivers, exactly what is the purpose of this meeting?

ADRIENNE (CONT'D)

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. 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...

INT. SPANISH RESTAURANT - NIGHT

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:

TISH AND FONNY

...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**, for he was turned away from me, laughing... but 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.

EXT. AVE A AND ST. MARKS - NIGHT - MOVING

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.

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

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 gin and tonic. 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 going 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. You 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. 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. I
knew it.

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."*

INT. BANK STREET FLAT - NIGHT

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, you know?

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

But... I live with wood and stone.
I got stone in the basement and I'm
working up here all the time and
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. 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 okeydoke.
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 shit and maybe sometimes you'll
think I don't even know you're
there. But don't ever think that,
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?
Is that all right, Tish?

TISH

Yes. Of course it's alright with
me. 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.

She's naked.

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, fully naked, Tish watching him as he crosses the room, the full of 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 slipping beneath the shawl with Tish, 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

Don't be scared.
Hold onto me.

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

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. BANK STREET FLAT - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

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. Shall 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.

INT. SUBWAY CAR - NIGHT

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

EXT. TISH'S HOME - DAY (DAWN)

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

Come on.

CUT TO:

TISH'S FRONT DOOR OPENING

...Ernestine revealed there, an initial look of recognition
followed by... a knowing smile.

INT. TISH'S HOME - DAY

Still in this threshold, Ernestine just within, Tish and Fonny just beyond.

ERNESTINE
You're just in time for coffee.

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

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:

THE KITCHEN

...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.

FONNY (CONT'D)

She's always been my girl, 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. 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.
(and)
Yes, yes, yes, yes, 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...

CUT TO BLACK.

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 March 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:

A STILL PHOTO

...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.

INT. LAW OFFICE - DAY

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 (late 30s, white), Fonny's lawyer.

HAYWARD

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

TISH

That's why my sister hired you.

HAYWARD

And you are beginning to feel now that her confidence was misplaced?

Hayward smiling through that: he *gets* it. Lights a cigar.

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, as you ladies know, the very greatest difficulty has been caused by the refusal of Mrs. Rogers to reconsider her testimony. And now she has disappeared.

TISH
Disappeared? But...

SHARON
How can she just disappear?

HAYWARD
This is a very big city, a very big country, for that matter, a very big world. People disappear. I don't think that she has gone very far, they certainly do not have the means for a long journey. But her family may have returned her to Puerto Rico. In any case, in order to find her, I will need special investigators, and--

SHARON
That means money.

HAYWARD
Unfortunately....

TISH
(sotto)
That filthy bitch.
(and again)
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*, I'm afraid, and they know it.

SHARON
Puerto Rico.

HAYWARD
We don't know that she's returned there, but it is a very vivid possibility. Anyway, she and her new man disappeared some days ago from the apartment on Orchard St..

TISH

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

HAYWARD

Yes. But she is 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 is only one of the key witnesses in this case. You have forgotten the testimony of Officer Bell; his was the really authoritative identification of the rapist. It is Bell who swears that he saw Alonzo running away from the scene of the crime. And I have always been of the opinion - you will remember that we discussed this - that it is 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. Now, the two of you insist that you were together, in the room on Bank Street, along with an old friend, Daniel Carty. Your testimony, as you can imagine, counts for nothing, and Daniel Carty has just been arrested by the DA's office and is being held incommunicado. I have not been allowed to see him.

Hayward rises and paces to the window.

HAYWARD

What they are 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 am willing to bet that *that* is how and why Mrs. Rogers has disappeared. So. You see. I will make it as easy as I can. But it will still be very hard.

SHARON

How soon do you need the money?

HAYWARD

I've begun the operation already of tracing the lady. 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 they will throw every conceivable obstacle in my way--

SHARON

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

INT. NEW YORK CITY CORRECTIONAL FACILITY - DAY

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)

FONNY (CONT'D)

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 walking down Seventh Avenue when he ran into Daniel. They had not seen each other since their days at the vocational school."

EXT. SEVENTH AVENUE - DAY

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."

INT. BANK STREET FLAT - DAY

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

JUMP CUT TO:

MOMENTS LATER

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:

EXT. BANK STREET - DAY - MOVING

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

CUT BACK TO:

INT. BANK STREET FLAT - DAY

Daniel and Fonny with fresh beers before them. A record player going, Les McCann's "Compared To What" playing 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 rolling 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 lights the cig, takes a drag, and 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 first, I swear.

Daniel drags on the cigarette, hands it back to Fonny, who drags on it, takes a sip of his beer and hands it back.

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. 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 wood and stone 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. Hands one to Daniel, Daniel taking a long swallow, goes dark:

DANIEL

I just come out the slammer, baby. Two years. They *said* - they still say - I stole a car. Man, I can't even *drive* a car, and I tried to make my lawyer - but he was really *their* lawyer, dig - prove that. And, anyway, I wasn't in no car when they picked me up. But I had a little grass on me. I was on my stoop. And so they come and picked me up, you know, it was about midnight, and they locked me up and then the next morning they put me in the lineup and somebody said it was me stole the car, that car I ain't seen yet. And so, you know, since I had that weed on me, they had me anyhow and so they said if I would plead guilty they'd give me a lighter sentence. If I didn't plead guilty, they'd throw me the book. Well...

(sips that beer)

...I was alone, baby, wasn't nobody, and so I entered the guilty plea. Two years!

Daniel leans forward, gets closer to Fonny.

DANIEL

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

He leans back and laughs and sips his beer, looks at Fonny.

DANIEL

Two God damn years!

FONNY

By the balls.

The loudest and longest silence, then:

DANIEL

Yeah.

LATER

...Fonny and Daniel still sitting on the floor, but their countenance shifted, suspended along the path running from apathy to defeat.

INT. BANK STREET FLAT - DAY - LATER

Tish in the kitchenette there, preparing a meal as Fonny and Daniel continue their talk in the main room.

FONNY

How long you been out?

DANIEL

About three months.

(and)

Man, it was bad. Very bad. And it's bad now. 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.

Tish in that kitchen, clearly listening to the whole thing,
right in here with them.

TISH

(calling out)
You cats hungry?

FONNY (O.S.)

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

INT. BANK STREET FLAT - NIGHT - LATER

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 figured.
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."*

CUT TO BLACK.

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:

SHARON

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

INT. TISH'S HOME, BEDROOM - NIGHT

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; if that helps. 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 worse.

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

SHARON

Try to remember that. And: the only way anything ever gets done is when you make up your mind to do it. I know a lot of our men have died in prison: but not all of them. You remember that.

SHARON (CONT'D)

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're strong. Lean on your strength.

(and)

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:

LATER

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

INT. TISH'S HOME, KITCHEN - DAY

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.

INT. 1 TRAIN, DOWNTOWN - DAY - MOVING

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."

INT. LORD AND TAYLORS - DAY - MOVING

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

INT. LORD AND TAYLORS - DAY - LATER

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."

INT. COLUMBUS CIRCLE PUB - DAY

Tish and Ernestine together in a corner of this dive, Tish still dressed from work. Kind of place where two women wanting to be left alone are afforded that wish.

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 Santurce, 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. 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 has no bearing on anything. 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 again. This way, it's over for her. Except for the trial. But then... it's really over, for *her*.

TISH

And for us, too?

ERNESTINE

No. Not even.
It won't 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.

EXT. COLUMBUS CIRCLE PUB - DAY

Tish and Ernestine on the corner here, Ernestine throwing an arm around Tish, the kid sister leaning into her.

They begin down the sidewalk this way, supporting one another. As they reach the corner, the sisters turn but...

...we continue across the intersection, moving along the crosswalk over lanes of traffic.

Across this intersection, another pub there, as much a dive as the one we've just left. As we near it, its open doors invite us into...

INT. 8TH AVE BERNIE'S - DAY - MOVING - CONTINUOUS

Drifting through this place, lot of regulars at the bar nursing 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*. But if we got to where we are without money, we can get further.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

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; now
you got to remember that I might
know that better than you.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

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."

INT. HAYWARD'S OFFICE - DAY - MONTAGE 3

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."

INT. BAR AT THE RITZ CARLTON - DAY - MONTAGE 3

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."

INT. TISH'S HOME - NIGHT - MONTAGE 3

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."

INT. SUBWAY CAR - DAY - MOVING - MONTAGE 3

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

"And so... mama begins letting out my clothes and I go to work wearing jackets and slacks."

INT. UPPER WEST SIDE APARTMENT - DAY - MONTAGE 3

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

CUT TO:

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

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

EXT. HARLEM SIDE STREET - DAY - MONTAGE 3

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 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."

INT. CANAL STREET LOFT - DAY

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

"It was off Canal Street and it was big and in good condition."

QUICK IMAGE: Levy showing Tish and Fonny the loft.

"There was a room for Fonny to work and, with all the windows open, you wouldn't die of heat stroke in the summer."

QUICK IMAGE: Tish and Fonny with Levy gazing out over the city from the industrial roof of the place.

"Levy only wanted one month's rent for deposit. When he told us, I thought Fonny would have a heart attack."

EXT. CANAL STREET - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

The three of them spilling onto the sidewalk. Tish instinctively taking Fonny's hand as Levy sizes them up.

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)

Any questions?

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

What's the catch?

LEVY

How you mean?

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

You got two weeks to make the
deposit. After that, no promises.

Fonny pulling Tish into his side, the two of them lovely
together. And from the look on Levy's face, fatherly, this
loveliness *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.

EXT. BLEECKER STREET - DAY - MOVING

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

Twilight out, the sun falling, 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 tomatoes 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, continuing on this little ways,
another ten feet and we're...

EXT. VEGETABLE STAND - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Tish standing near the entrance of this place, a selection of produce set just onto the sidewalk.

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! — spits in his face.

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 and, at first, we're not sure why, Tish grabbing a hold of Fonny 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.
1906 Bank Street.

OFFICER BELL
We're going to take you down, boy,
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, and I watched her choose her
tomatoes and her young man left her
and he said he would be right back.
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.

EXT. BLEECKER STREET - NIGHT - MOVING

Tish and Fonny heading back the way they came.

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

FONNY
Tish...

TISH
Yes?

FONNY
Don't ever try to protect me again.

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

Hush. 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...

INT. SPANISH RESTAURANT - NIGHT

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 margheritas?

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:

INT. BANK STREET FLAT - NIGHT

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."

INT. TISH'S HOME, KITCHEN - DAY

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."

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."

INT. TISH'S HOME - NIGHT

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.

INT. NEW YORK CITY CORRECTIONAL FACILITY - DAY

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?

FONNY (CONT'D)
(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."

EXT. SAN JUAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - NIGHT

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.

INT. SAN JUAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - NIGHT

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 Victoria and, it must be noted: for a black woman raised in the Jim Crow South, this 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.

INT. JAIME'S CAB - NIGHT - MOVING

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.

INT. HOTEL DEL RICO, SUITE - NIGHT

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.

INT. HOTEL DEL RICO, ELEVATOR - NIGHT - DESCENDING

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

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

INT. JAIME'S CAB - NIGHT - MOVING

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. I will take you wherever you wish and wait for as long as you like.

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...

INT. LA PIAZZA RESORT, LOBBY - NIGHT

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 dancefloor a raised band-stand.

INT. DISCOTECA LA PIAZZA - NIGHT

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*.

SHARON (CONT'D)

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; *I know* it.

Beat.

Not a long beat though – a quick one – just enough for Pietro
to glance at that photo, then at Sharon's desperate face.
Closes his eyes, and...

...releases 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:

EXT. RESORT LAPIAZZA - NIGHT

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.

INT. JAIME'S CAB - NIGHT - SAME

Sharon in the backseat here. Slouched down, cradled into
herself, sobbing.

Jaime outside the window, allowing her this moment.

INT. HOTEL DEL RICO, SUITE - DAY

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.'"*

INT. JAIME'S CAB - DAY - MOVING

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.

EXT. BARRIO - DAY

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.

EXT. BARRIO APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

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, if you please? 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 do not 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, Señora?

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
You might have known a nice little
boy, and he might be a nice man –
with you! But you don't know the
man who did – who *did* – what he did
to me.

SHARON
But are you... are you *sure* that
you know him?

VICTORIA
Yes, I'm sure! 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:

INT. BANK STREET FLAT - NIGHT

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.

FONNY
You cunt.

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...

INT. NEW YORK CITY CORRECTIONAL FACILITY, CELL - DAY

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...

INT. NEW YORK CITY CORRECTIONAL FACILITY - DAY

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.

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...

TISH (CONT'D)
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 table and a whole lot of folks going to be eating 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."

EXT. 14TH ST. AND 8TH AVE - DAY

A very pregnant Tish rising from the subway station, a paper sack clutched in her arms, gang of knickknacks spilling over the lip of it.

She's a bit frantic, in a hurry as she hits the sidewalk and looks up to double-check where she is, get her bearings.

A half a block with her this way, this hurried gate, then...

...she hits the corner, red-light 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 left, 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 to the light, sees it go yellow, but... rather than cross, she turns toward the avenue, turns to face Bell, meet him head on as he nears.

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

Good-night, then, miss lady.

TISH

Good-night, Officer.

INT. SPANISH RESTAURANT - DAY

The only time we've been here not focused on that side table so synonymous with Tish and Fonny.

Instead, find Tish huddled to herself in a table near the back, away from anyone else.

Tish staring at the plate before her, a simple paella. From the looks of it, she hasn't touched it. As he passes, Pedrocito deftly takes the plate without stopping.

A beat with Tish, the simple loneliness on her face, then...

...Pedrocito returning, appearing from the direction he'd escaped to, has a fresh plate in hand.

Sits it before her, the heat of it releasing waves of vapor into the air.

PEDROCITO

Señorita? Por favor. He and the muchacho need your strength. He will not forgive us if we let you starve. We are his friends. He trusts us. You must trust us, too.

He takes a glass, pours her a little red wine.

PEDROCITO

Wine is good. Just a little.
Slowly.

Tish nods, takes a sip of the wine.

PEDROCITO

It will be a boy.

Pedrocito grins; in some way a grin that recalls Fonny, that first night of Tish seeing the joy the men shared.

Tish looking after him as he moves away, attends to the few customers here.

A beat of her processing this moment, a suggestion of the warmth of the gesture coming over her, then...

INT. SEDAN - DAY - MOVING

Tish in the backseat but, not a cab, up in the front:
Pedrocito.

He won't let her walk, he's driving her home.

Tish startles in the back seat, Pedrocito's eyes going to the rearview:

PEDROCITO

I told you, it's a boy!

Tish smiling as she re-settles herself: this man is family.

A beat more of travel then... the car easing to a red light; nothing out of the ordinary, just a red light.

Tish lolling her head against the window, lets the light hit her face. Eyes wander away now, on the curb they're idling near. At a subdued, but distinct startle in her expression...

ANGLE ON: THE CURB

...Ernestine and her young actress there, the two of them close, the two of them more than close: the unmistakable look of intimacy as they cradle one another on the corner.

BACK TO TISH:

The car pulling away, Tish slumped down in that back seat as though hiding, pure instinct, her eyes straining to catch the last few glimpses of Ernestine and her lover.

Tish sitting upright as Pedrocito drives on.

Hold on her face, the fright of a child who's seen what she should not see. And that quickly giving way to awe and, ultimately, a smile.

INT. BANK STREET FLAT - DAY

Tish 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 as... the phone rings.

Tish's hand at her belly as she moves to the phone. Gets a hand on the receiver but takes a breath before picking it up, does so only after her breathing calms.

VOICE (O.S.)
(through receiver)
Hello, Tish? This is Adrienne.

Tish's face: Adrienne? Has she ever called here?

TISH
How are you, Adrienne?

ADRIENNE (O.S.)
Have you seen my father? Is he
there? When did you see him last?

TISH
Why? I haven't seen him, I know
he's seen Joseph, but I haven't--

The weeping through the phone startling Tish:

TISH
Adrienne? Adrienne talk to me,
what's the matter?

Sound of Adrienne getting herself together on the other end,
stifling those sobs:

ADRIENNE (O.S.)
My Daddy was fired from his job two
days ago, they said he was
stealing, and they threatened to
put him in jail and with Fonny and
all he was just so... I don't know.
And he was drunk when he came home
and he cursed everybody out and
then he went out the door and ain't
nobody seen him since; Tish, don't
you know where my father is?

TISH	ADRIENNE (O.S.)
Adrienne, I swear to God, I	Tish, I know you don't like
don't--	me--

TISH
Adrienne, you and me, we had a
little fight, but that don't mean I
don't like you. You're Fonny's
sister. And if I love him, I got to
love you. And that don't matter
'cause I don't wish for nothin' bad
on nobody.

ADRIENNE (O.S.)
If you see him, will you call me?

TISH
Yes, of course I will, Adrienne.
Of course.

Tish slowly removing the phone from her ear, shock running
through her face when...

VOICE (O.S.)
What's wrong?

Tish looking to that voice, sees Sharon closing the apartment door behind her, removing her key from the dead-bolt.

SHARON

You look like you seen a ghost.

Tish hanging up that phone finally, leans her weight on the table there. After she does, not a kick, but... something.

SHARON

Tish, what's the matter with you?

TISH

(sitting)

That was Adrienne. She's looking for Frank. She said he, he got fired and he was real upset. And Adrienne, that poor child sounds like she's gone to pieces. Mama, has Daddy seen him?

Sharon's still; *still* standing, still watching. She's listening, yes, but also studying, evaluating.

SHARON

I don't know. But he ain't been by, no.

Sharon setting her bag down, crosses the room and puts a hand to Tish's brow:

SHARON

How you feeling?

TISH

Tired.
Funny.

SHARON

You want me to get you a little brandy?

TISH

Yes. Thank you, Mama. That might be a good idea. It might help to settle my stomach.

Sharon heads into the kitchen, knows just where Tish keeps the Brandy, rather than pour it brings the bottle and a small glass over, sits them beside Tish.

Sharon nodding at questions in her own head, studying Tish:

SHARON
Your stomach upset?

TISH
A little. It'll go away.

Sharon watching as Tish opens the bottle, takes a small sip from it, doesn't bother with the glass. Sharon moving to the kitchen.

SHARON
You see Fonny today?

TISH
Yes.

SHARON
And how was he?

TISH
He's beautiful. They beat him up,
but they didn't beat him, you know?

SHARON
I know baby, I know.

Sharon returning with a damp towel, rubs at Tish's temple:

SHARON
I think Ernestine's got the rest of
the money. From her actress.

A flash across Tish's face, mind alight. Doesn't say anything, wasn't about to say anything but... the doorbell rings, Sharon setting that towel down and moving over to get it. Opens it and, her back to Tish, obscuring whoever's there but... her voice, pure terror:

SHARON (O.C.)
What happen?

Tish standing, looking on as Sharon turns back inside, reveals Joseph coming in behind her, a heavy look about him:

TISH
What's wrong?

JOSEPH
It's Frank.
(and)
They found Frank.

TISH
Does Fonny know?

JOSEPH

I don't think so. Not yet. He won't know till morning.

TISH

I've got to tell him.

SHARON

You can't get there till morning, daughter.

TISH

I've got to tell him now--

SHARON

Tish, you *can't*--

TISH

I've got to....

Tish trailing off there, like she's been dazed, losing the train of thought as it's formed. She stares at the entry there, still open, the cement wall rising up to the sidewalk.

SHARON

How you feeling?

The sky opening... or something similar to it -- to the *sound* of it -- rising from Tish's chest, hand to her belly.

Joseph jolted, a step toward Tish and then a step back as Sharon reaches a hand to stop him, all calm.

Sharon putting a hand to Tish's shoulder, eases her the couple steps back to her chair, gently sits her there.

SHARON

(without looking away)

Call the ambulance, Joseph.

And as her father moves to the phone, his presence long gone from here, Tish looks to her mother, looks up to her, Sharon's image as strong and loving and in spirit as ever.

SHARON

Don't panic, baby. Remember, love brought you here.

Sharon smiles, and...

CUT TO BLACK.