

PASSION FISH

(THE LOUISIANA PROJECT)

Original Screenplay by
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1 INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY - CU WOMAN'S HAND

It is dark in the room. The hand lies on top of a white sheet, dream-twitching-

ECU EYES

Closed, eyeballs flicking around under the eyelids in the REM state of a dream-

CU OTHER HAND

Trembling, raising off the bedsheet, fingers spreading, touching the bedrail to the side, grasping the metal, the bedrail shaking noisily-

ECU EYES

The eyes pop open, staring straight up. We hear the WOMAN GASP-

CU HAND

Lets go of the bedrail and reaches through it, clawing air, searching for something-

NIGHT TABLE

Glass of water, Kleenex box, some remote-control devices. We hear desperate GRUNTING, off, then the hand appears, groping, knocking the glass of water over with a loud CRASH. The hand steadies, finds the top of the table, finger-walks till it closes on one of the remotes. We PAN as it grabs hold and brings the device back to the face of MAY-ALICE. She fumbles with the buttons in a panic, breathing rapidly. We hear the STATIC of a TV SET from the foot of the bed. May-Alice hits a button again and again-

MAY-ALICE

Come, Goddammit! Help me!
Why don't you come?!

We PAN away from her, TILTING UP as we go, till we see a TV set mounted up in a nook in the wall facing her bed. May-Alice doesn't have a call button, she has the TV controls, and is changing channels rapidly. When we settle on the TV she gives up, the TV resting on a soap opera. Two WOMEN, one black, one white, sit on a couch in a living room set, talking. The white woman is played by May-Alice (Scarlet)-

1 cont.

RHONDA

(TV) You didn't recognize him?

SCARLET

(TV) No. Do I know him?

RHONDA

(TV) Look, I'm not a doctor, and I don't know anything about your condition, but I think it would be better if I didn't tell you those kinds of things.

SCARLET

(TV) It's all so strange. All I remember is---- I wasn't happy, was I?

MAY-ALICE

We are above her, doing a SLOW-ZOOM in at her face as she starts to watch the show with a kind of horror-

RHONDA (off)

(TV) Scarlet---

SCARLET (off)

(TV) You keep calling me that. It sounds like some other person--

RHONDA (off)

(TV) Isn't there anything you can remember?

TV SCREEN

We are still ZOOMING IN SLOW on the screen as the soap camera SLOW ZOOMS into a CU of Scarlet-

SCARLET

(TV) There is something- it's more like a dream than anything that really happened. I'm walking down a hallway- it's dark- and it's so quiet I can hear my footsteps echoing. The hallway is very long, it seems never to end--

MAY-ALICE

We HOLD on her face now-

1 cont.

SCARLET (off)

(TV) All the time I'm walking I have this feeling that when I reach the end of the hall I'll find something---

May-Alice frowns, seeing something wrong-

TV SCREEN

The soap camera PANS OFF Scarlet onto a CU of Rhonda's face. Rhonda is moved by this reverie, a single tear rolling down her cheek-

SCARLET

(TV) -it's very frightening at first, but if I can stand up to it, face it, it could be something wonderful. And then I have this feeling that even though I can't see anybody or hear anybody, that I'm not alone. Somebody is with me.

MAY-ALICE

Indignant-

MAY-ALICE

That's my close-up. He gave her my fucking close-up!

LIGHTS FLICK ON and May-Alice squints against the sudden glare. She turns her head and we SHIFT to see the white hip of NURSE QUICK leaning up against the bedrail. We stay in May-Alice's POV, never really seeing Nurse Quick's face as she moves around the bed-

NURSE QUICK

Is something wrong?

May-Alice holds out the control device-

MAY-ALICE

I thought this was the call button.

NURSE QUICK

Do you know where you are?

MAY-ALICE

Yeah, I'm in the fucking hospital. I was here yesterday, wasn't I?

NURSE QUICK

You've been here for a while.

1 cont.

May-Alice frowns, trying to remember clearly-

MAY-ALICE

My legs fell asleep. I wanted to get up-

There is a long pause. Nurse Quick touches May-Alice's forehead, lifts one of her eyelids with her thumb-

NURSE QUICK

Do you know who you are?

MAY-ALICE

(pissed, nods toward the set) She's
the one with the amnesia, not me! Just
help me sit up, alright?

NURSE QUICK

You had the halo taken off yesterday.
Do you remember? (May-Alice shakes
her head no) I'm going to call Dr.
Miles, he'll give you something to
calm you down-

MAY-ALICE

I don't need to be calmed down,
I need to be helped up! You
did something to me, didn't you?
You gave me a shot and my legs went
to sleep.

NURSE QUICK

I'm going to call Dr. Miles-

MAY-ALICE

No! You give me a straight fucking
answer! What did you do to me?

NURSE QUICK

(leaving) I think he's on the floor--

MAY-ALICE

No!

May-Alice holds herself up on her elbows, struggling mightily, tilting and grabbing the side of the bed. With her other hand she yanks at the sheet. We PAN down with her gaze- her legs are pale and held in braces, feet splayed at an odd angle, a catheter tube full of bright yellow urine snaking from the side of the bed over her thigh and disappearing up under her hospital gown. We PAN back to her face, arms starting to shake as she looks and Nurse Quick's hands appear just in time to catch her before she bangs her head collapsing backwards-

1 cont.

NURSE QUICK
I'll get Doctor Miles. He'll go
over it with you again.

We start to PAN and TILT back up to the TV screen-

MAY-ALICE (off)
What am I doing here?

NURSE QUICK (off)
You had some head trauma. And sometimes
the medication makes it hard to remember-

MAY-ALICE (off)
What happened to my legs?

We reach the screen. A MAN is smiling at a woman in a hospital
corridor. The reverse angle shows us Scarlet again. The sound
of their VOICES is drowned out by May-Alice, SCREAMING-

MAY-ALICE (off)
WHAT IS WRONG WITH ME? WHAT IS WRONG
WITH ME?!!!

2 INT. SWIMMING POOL - DAY - (OPENING CREDITS BEGIN)

May-Alice sits on the submerged steps of a swimming pool, a
THERAPIST'S hands supporting her gently from behind. We HEAR but
don't see the SWIMMING ACTIVITIES of other patients and
therapists around them. The hands let go, letting May-Alice sit
on her own-

THERAPIST
Try to hold your position without
using your arms- that's it- now turn
your head to the left, very slowly-

May-Alice starts to fall sideways, thrashing the water with her arms,
panicking. The therapist's hands hold her-

THERAPIST
I'm right here. I won't let you drown.

MAY-ALICE
I knew there was a catch.

3 INT. THERAPY ROOM - DAY - (CREDITS CONTINUE)

May-Alice is long-sitting inside low parallel bars, wheelchair
beneath her, her legs straight out and suspended at the ankles
in cloth stirrups hung by bungee cords from the bars. She tries
to do a dip, pushing her body up with her arms. Her arms tremble
straining, and she gives up. A THERAPIST pauses, blocking the FG-

3 cont.

THERAPIST

It's not going to get any better unless you keep at it, May-Alice.

MAY-ALICE

Then it's not going to get any better.

THERAPIST

(points) Look at Carlos- he's doing ten reps already, with weights on his shoulders.

MAY-ALICE

Carlos is a monster. Carlos should be in the fucking circus.

THERAPIST

You're just as good a candidate for rehab as he is.

MAY-ALICE

Right. Can you take me back to my room now?

THERAPIST

No.

MAY-ALICE

My shoulders hurt.

No comment from the therapist-

MAY-ALICE

You're going to make me stay here?

THERAPIST

Go back to your room if you want. You know the way.

May-Alice glares, tries to pull herself forward to free her legs, grimly struggling. But she can't unlock her knees and almost falls from the chair trying. She leans back, breathing hard. We hear a MALE VOICE, huffing from one to ten in Spanish next to her-

THERAPIST

If you had some upper body strength you wouldn't have any trouble with that.

MAY-ALICE

(closes eyes) Fuck you. (raises voice)
And fuck you too, Carlos.

4 INT. THERAPY ROOM - DAY - (CREDITS CONTINUE)

May-Alice is in a hands-and-knees position on a mat, in a body sling, supported by bungies attached from her back and butt up to the ceiling. The legs of a THERAPIST pass-

THERAPIST

How are we doing?

MAY-ALICE

I feel like I'm in a live sex show for marionettes. How much longer?

THERAPIST

Another five minutes. Try to find your center of gravity and work on keeping your head up-

MAY-ALICE

You get off on this, don't you?

5 INT. BEDROOM - DAY - (CREDITS CONTINUE)

May-Alice sits in bed, moping. A DR. wipes the frame and sits off, at the foot of her bed. As they talk we TIGHTEN on May-Alice-

DR.

Hi. I'm Dr. Kline-

MAY-ALICE

Shrink.

DR.

I'm a psychologist.

MAY-ALICE

You've got the voice.

DR.

Do I?

MAY-ALICE

I was under analysis for seven years.

DR.

Well- I'm I'm going to to ask you a few questions about yourself-

MAY-ALICE

Are you going to make me walk?

DR.

No, May-Alice-

5 cont.

MAY-ALICE

You gonna make it so I can pee without
this fucking plastic stuck up inside me?

DR.

I'm not a urologist.

MAY-ALICE

Then go peddle it somewhere else.

DR.

You're angry.

MAY-ALICE

Oh, Christ-

DR.

No, that's good. You're going to need
your anger-

MAY-ALICE

Leave me alone.

DR.

This isn't just about you, you know.
The other people in your life--

MAY-ALICE

There aren't any other people in my life.

A pause-

DR.

Well. How did that happen?

MAY-ALICE

Look, I feel shitty enough without
you rubbing it in, so just vanish, all
right?

The Dr. wipes frame as he leaves. May-Alice goes back to her
moping-

6 INT. PT ROOM - DAY - (CREDITS CONTINUE)

May-Alice lies on a mat, surrounded by others who we see only
pieces of. A therapist strolls through the FG and BG
intermittantly, calling out instructions to the group. May-Alice
is face-down, struggling-

THERAPIST

Okay, raise yourselves up onto your
elbows- that's it- not too much-

6 cont.

THERAPIST (cont.)

-side-to-side with your head- now push your body back till your elbows are under your shoulders. That will give you the leverage. That's really good, Chuck. I want you to roll to the left now, very slow- under control- that's it- and go right to the supine elbows position, using your momentum- don't lie back. Now, from the elbows we extend the arms, keeping balance, walking up to a sitting position- wonderful. Now, leaning forward, those of you with your legs still crossed, leaning forward, keeping balance--

May-Alice has only gotten to her elbows. She starts to cry-

7 INT. HALLWAY - DAY - (CREDITS CONTINUE)

May-Alice sits on her chair at a pay phone, installed low on the wall, shooting glances around her as she talks into the receiver-

MAY-ALICE

No, I don't want you to visit, I don't want you to sue anybody else. I just want out of this fucking boot camp--- I'll sign anything- it's like a fraternity here, all these gang members shot in holdups, motorcycle casualties, hang-gliders, rugby. They have water fights in the hallway at night--- I want to go home. No, home home. Down there. I still own it, don't I?-- You're my business manager, you're supposed to know this stuff-- Harry, just square it with the insurance and get me out of here!

8 INT. AIRPORT - DAY - (CREDITS CONTINUE)

We watch a trio of STEWARDESSES pass, seeing them only from the knees down, wheeling their little luggage racks behind. They lead us to a WHEELCHAIR being pushed in the opposite direction. We see dead legs in braces, feet placed on the stirrups. Someone in a blue uniform is pushing, finally parking the chair in a patch of sun by a large window. We see planes taxiing outside-

8 cont.

ATTENDANT

(off) Somebody will come for you when
it's time to board, Miss Culhane-

We SLOW TILT UP till we see May-Alice, alone, staring blankly. A
pair of FAN'S BODIES crowd the screen to either side of her-

FAN #1

Scarlet?

FAN #2

We read all about your tragedy in
the Digest.

FAN #1

We were so shocked-

FAN #2

You're one of our favorites-

FAN #1

Could you sign this?

May-Alice nods, signs the offered slip of paper, gives them a
weak smile as she returns it-

FAN #1

Thank you so much. You're going to
make a wonderful comeback, I just
know it.

FAN #2

Enjoy your flight.

They exit frame. May-Alice searches in a side pocket of the
chair, comes up with a pair of sunglasses, puts them on. MUSIC
from a slow Cajun fiddle BEGINS. We ZOOM IN tighter, tighter on
her sunglasses, till one dark lens fills the frame and we FADE TO
BLACK:

MUSIC CONTINUES. OPENING CREDITS END. TITLE APPEARS.

WE FADE UP TO:

9 CU NAMECARD - INT. LOUISIANA AIRPORT - DAY (MUSIC CONTINUES)

The name 'CULHANE' hand-written in marker on the card. We PULL
BACK to see an older black DRIVER in a livery uniform waiting,
holding the sign as PASSENGERS file by. We PAN to see a STEWARDESS
pushing May-Alice, still wearing her shades, up to the driver-

DRIVER

Miss Culhane?

9 cont.

May-Alice nods-

DRIVER
(smiles) Welcome home.

MUSIC ENDS

10 INT. THERAPY ROOM - DAY

A trapeze bar hangs before us. Hands grip it from below, then May-Alice pulls up into the shot, holding her upper body at a forty-five degree angle, straining-

LOUISE
(off) Hold it there as long as you can.

Not very long. May-Alice's arms shake, she drops out of frame with a thud. LOUISE, a physical therapist, steps into the shot-

LOUISE
That's as much as you can do?

2-SHOT

May-Alice lies back on a training table, the trapeze bar swinging above her. Charts mapping the muscles and nerves of the human body adorn the walls. A section of plastic spinal chord is mounted like a sculpture. Louise looks at May-Alice's legs-

MAY-ALICE
I don't have any upper body strength.

LOUISE
We gonna get you some.

Louise glances at the chart she carries-

LOUISE
Car accident-

MAY-ALICE
Fucking taxi cab. I was getting out of one when another comes along and sideswipes it. Hit me, took the door right off. Fucking kamikazees.

LOUISE
Mmmmn.

MAY-ALICE
I was going to have my legs waxed.

10 cont.

LOUISE
New York City.

MAY-ALICE
(defensive) Yeah.

Louise starts to move May-Alice's legs into various positions-

LOUISE
Says you some kind of actress.

MAY-ALICE
Some kind. I was on daytime.

LOUISE
Daytime?

MAY-ALICE
Soap operas.

LOUISE
(nods) Some my patients watch those.

MAY-ALICE
Right. We always got lots of letters
from shut-ins.

LOUISE
I might even have seen you. What bring
you down Louisiana?

MAY-ALICE
I heard what a brilliant therapist
you were.

Louise gives her a look-

LOUISE
Might not be New York City, but we
do all right. Even get you legs waxed
here, you want.

MAY-ALICE
I didn't realize the hair would keep
growing.

Louise tries to flex May-Alice's foot, frowns-

MAY-ALICE
I have a house here. It belongs
to my family.

LOUISE
Vacation house-

MAY-ALICE

I grew up here. Lake Arthur Parish.

LOUISE

(smiles) Could have fool me.

MAY-ALICE

Thank you. I spent a fortune losing my accent.

LOUISE

Okay- there two kinds of therapy I'm going to work on you. One is to strengthen the muscles you still have control over, keep your back lined up right, increase your range of motion. The other is to control the circulation and tone in the areas you've lost the use of.

MAY-ALICE

Don't kill yourself.

LOUISE

Excuse me?

MAY-ALICE

I'm not the wheelchair Olympics type.

LOUISE

(sighs) May-Alice, you're a T-10, complete spinal lesion- whatever movement and sensation you've lost because of that isn't never coming back. But the rest of your body, rest of your life- that's whatever you you want to make it.

MAY-ALICE

Right, Coach.

LOUISE

Now I don't know what you were like before the accident-

MAY-ALICE

You mean my 'pre-morbid personality'?

LOUISE

(a little smile) You been reading the literature.

MAY-ALICE

Look, I know the whole routine and-

10 cont.

MAY-ALICE (cont.)

I'm not buying into it. I don't want you people coming to my house, I don't want your pep talks, I don't want anything more than what satisfies the insurance company.

LOUISE

(perservering) All right. But next time you come in bring your people, we show them the passive excercise routine-

MAY-ALICE

I don't have any 'people'. Not left alive.

LOUISE

Nobody down here with you? Nobody at this house?

MAY-ALICE

Just me.

LOUISE

We gonna have to do something bout that, aren't we?

11 EXT. LAKE, HOUSE - DAY

A WS of a house set along on a wide expanse of green, facing a calm lake with islands of cypress popping up in the distance. A van pulls up in front-

EXT. HOUSE - CLOSER

A strong-looking woman in a nurse's uniform, DRUSHKA, is wheeling May-Alice down a ramp from the side of the van to the front of the house. She pauses at the door, frowning-

DRUSHKA

No ramp.

MAY-ALICE

No.

DRUSHKA

The house has not been prepared.

MAY-ALICE

I figure we'll sort of work our way into it.

Drushka frowns again, takes the side panel off the chair-

11 cont.

DRUSHKA

An old house.

MAY-ALICE

Not that old.

DRUSHKA

Old houses are dirty.

MAY-ALICE

I had my manager call to get it cleaned.

Drushka huffs as she picks May-Alice up in her arms-

DRUSHKA

There should be ramp.

12 INT. HOUSE - DAY

Drushka carries May-Alice across the threshold like a newlywed, steps in and begins to look around disapprovingly. We PAN with her gaze to see a new orthopedic bed still half-assembled, chairs covered in plastic- Drushka passes into the frame again, still carrying May-Alice. We FOLLOW them to look into the bathroom-

DRUSHKA

Is too narrow.

We FOLLOW them back, past some stairs-

MAY-ALICE

You'll be up there. Have the whole floor to yourself. Throw parties, whatever-

Drushka gives her a stony look. They step into a little living room area. A new TV set, VCR, etc., sit across from the couch, half out of their boxes-

MAY-ALICE

Why don't you just throw me on the couch for now?

Drushka carefully lays her on the couch, a pillow under her head. She crosses to the TV, runs a finger across the screen, leaving a slash in the layer of dust-

MAY-ALICE

There's a guy from the video store in Lafayette supposed to come hook all that up.

DRUSHKA

(looks at finger) Old houses are dirty.

13 CU REMOTE CONTROL PANEL - INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

May-Alice's fingers pushing the channel button-

TV SCREEN

Flicking on to the soap we've seen before-

MAY-ALICE

Sitting propped up on the couch, wearing sweatpants and sweatshirt, holding a white wine spritzer in her hand, the wine and seltzer bottles on an easily reachable low table, a bag of sour-cream-and-onion potato chips open on her lap. We hear a VACUUM CLEANER approaching. May-Alice turns up the sound with her remote. The vacuum comes closer. More volume from the remote. The vacuum keeps coming till Drushka is there pushing it in front of May-Alice. May-Alice moves her head slightly to try to see around her. Drushka props the vacuum against her thigh, spreads her arms wide and shouts-

DRUSHKA

Germs!

14 INT. BATHROOM - DAY

May-Alice is in her chair in the narrow bathroom, struggling with a jerry-rigged bar installed to help her transfer to the toilet. She finally makes it onto the seat, resting a moment, when she hears a SQUEAKING NOISE. We PAN with her gaze to the window. Drushka is outside with a squeegee on a pole, washing the window. She mouths the word 'germs'. We PAN back to May-Alice, who covers her face with her hands-

15 INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

May-Alice sits staring at the TV. Drushka appears and lays a tray of food on the low table in front of her. May-Alice looks at it suspiciously-- some thoroughly-steamed vegetables surrounding a smoking pile of what looks like boiled sawdust-

DRUSHKA

You eat now.

MAY-ALICE

What exactly is this?

DRUSHKA

Kasha. Big fiber. Is good for stool.

15 cont.

MAY-ALICE

Yeah, it looks like it might have something to do with that.

DRUSHKA

You must eat.

May-Alice pours herself some wine, no seltzer this time-

MAY-ALICE

Kasha, huh?

16 INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

May-Alice sits doubled over in a plastic chair in the shower, her face close to her knees, while Drushka, wearing plastic gloves, reaches in to scrub her back hard with a soapy washcloth-

MAY-ALICE

That hurts.

DRUSHKA

You must be clean.

MAY-ALICE

I'm clean enough. It hurts.

DRUSHKA

You think this is pain? At home, I do one hundred abortion, illegal, no drugs. That is pain.

May-Alice turns her head as best she can to try to get a look at Drushka. Drushka scrubs, sulking-

MAY-ALICE

(quietly) May I please get out now?

17 CU REMOTE CONTROL - INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

The remote held loosely in May-Alice's hand-

TV SCREEN

The familiar soap is on-

MAY-ALICE

Looking bad, a bit drunk in her rumpled sweatsuit. Her hair is a mess, her eyes bleary. She's drinking wine with ice cubes-

17 cont.

-floating in it from a large Coke glass. Drushka clumps in with a bucket of water and a sponge and a bottle of Murphy's Oil Soap-

MAY-ALICE

Little cleaning?

Drushka ignores her, begins to wash the walls, scrubbing hard. May-Alice looks back to the screen, then back to Drushka-

DRUSHKA

Germ.

MAY-ALICE

It's important that we have clean walls. I'll be climbing them soon.

18 CU REMOTE CONTROL - INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Finger on the channel button. We TILT UP to May-Alice's face, blank as she watches. Drushka clears her throat, off. We PAN over to where Drushka stands in her nightgown, arms folded across her chest, eyes angry and tired-

MAY-ALICE

Can you hear this?

DRUSHKA

Is three in morning.

MAY-ALICE

I'll turn it down.

DRUSHKA

You must sleep.

MAY-ALICE

I'm not tired.

DRUSHKA

Is night. You must sleep.

MAY-ALICE

I got the rest of my life to sleep.

Drushka snorts, wheels and clumps away. May-Alice shoots a defiant look after her, then deliberately turns the volume up-

19 CU BREAKFAST TRAY -INT. LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Hi-fiber cereal, half a grapefruit, tomato juice, very yellow scrambled eggs. We TILT-UP to May-Alice, looking down at it,-

19 cont.

-bleary-eyed and nauseated by the sight. We PAN from her to Drushka, standing with the remote held hostage in her hand-

DRUSHKA

Eat.

MAY-ALICE

I'm not hungry.

DRUSHKA

Is good breakfast. Eat.

MAY-ALICE

I'm not hungry. I'm not even awake.

DRUSHKA

No eat, no TV.

MAY-ALICE

Weren't you in Ilsa, She-Beast of the Gulag?

DRUSHKA

Eat.

May-Alice lifts a forkful of egg, looks at it carefully, looks at Drushka, then flicks it deliberately-

WALL

Splat! The eggs hit the wall making a nice Rohrshach design, then dribble downward. We PAN SLOWLY back to Drushka, watching the wall, expressionless. She turns to May-Alice-

DRUSHKA

I call agency. They send new person tomorrow.

She lays the remote on May-Alice's tray as she passes out of the room. May-Alice pushes the food away, stone-faced, lifts the remote and hits the on button-

20 TV SCREEN

The soap we've seen before is on. We hear the PERKY NURSE-

PERKY

(off) -before I found Him I'd get like really depressed and all, you know, like I'd try to go on a diet-

20 cont.

As Perky crosses in front of the screen we PAN up and begin to FOLLOW as she paces back and forth in front of May-Alice-

PERKY

-and I'd starve myself and like throw up a lot and everything but the minute I went off the diet I'd gain back all the weight I lost and then some and I'd feel so weak and worthless and- you know- like- like-

MAY-ALICE

Pudgy?

PERKY

Pudgy! Yes! And then I found Him and it like clicked in my head that He loves you whether you're like pudgy or skinny or short or tall or really smart or kinda stupid or all healthy and athletic or like- you know, like--

MAY-ALICE

Crippled?

PERKY

Physically challenged, you know? And then it clicked in my head that I had like this vocation, this calling, which was like helping people, and it's all connected because that's what He did on the cross, and if you can give of yourself to His lowliest creatures-

May-Alice holds out the remote and clicks it. We hear a new voice coming from where Perky just was. LAWANDA, an eager Black caretaker crosses back in front of May-Alice, flipping through a copy of TV Guide as she chatters-

LAWANDA

Do you know that Blake?

MAY-ALICE

Different show.

LAWANDA

I just hate her. How about Lucinda?

MAY-ALICE

Lucinda?

20 cont.

LAWANDA
Lucinda on the story. Do you know
her?

MAY-ALICE
Different show.

LAWANDA
Raven? Dominique?

MAY-ALICE
Different show.

LAWANDA
It's the same network though. She's on
right after you-

MAY-ALICE
There's not like a room where they
store us all in between shows-

LAWANDA
What about that Erica? I hate her too.
She was here right now I swear I'd slap
her face for what she did to that poor little-

May-Alice clicks the remote to change the channel-

21 TV SCREEN

Same show, days later. We hear WEEPING off, then a new nurse,
PHOEBE, passes on front of the screen and we FOLLOW as she paces
woefully across the room-

PHOEBE
I'm really sorry.

MAY-ALICE
You hate this job.

May-Alice is in different sweat pants and shirt, rumpled, her
hair stuffed under a baseball cap. She barely shifts her eyes from
the screen as she talks to Phoebe-

PHOEBE
No, it's not that. I mean, I do
hate this job, but that's not what's
so terrible.

MAY-ALICE
Problems with your boyfriend?

21 cont.

Phoebe nods, weeping-

MAY-ALICE

Well, you shouldn't let some big dope
get you all hysterical.

PHOEBE

(defensive) He's not a big dope!
He's not even American.

MAY-ALICE

Ahhhh. What's his name? Derek?

PHOEBE shakes her head no-

MAY-ALICE

Jean Claude?

She shakes no again-

MAY-ALICE

(snaps) Paolo.

PHOEBE nods yes, weeping even harder-

MAY-ALICE

Have you let this guy borrow money?

Huge bawling. May-Alice sighs, holds out the remote, clicks it-

22 TV SCREEN

Same show, days later. A new voice, KIT, starts as we begin to
PAN back to the couch-

KIT

(off) You wouldn't believe what a
fuckhead this guy was. Anyhow, he
ditches me down in Morgan City, this
is like the lowest pit of Hell, right-

Kit is sitting next to May-Alice on the couch, both watching
the screen, Kit smoking. She takes the bottle from May-Alice
and pours herself a drink-

KIT

-and I'm flat out there for a couple
weeks till I meet this biker, they
call him Blacktop, and we take off.
You like bikes?

22 cont.

MAY-ALICE

Mmmmmn.

KIT

Anyway, he gets disability checks from the government- he was in some psychological drug experiment thing when he was in the Army and something went wrong- you know what it's like to sleep with somebody with a ten-inch inch hunting knife strapped to his thigh?

MAY-ALICE

Mmmmmmn.

KIT

He was an alright guy, though, as long as he stayed on the medication. When he'd skip a couple doses though-- (whistles). Anyway, he had to go back in for a refit on the steel plate in his head and I took up with this musician- you know heavy metal? This is beyond that- a guy I know who was electrocuted once working on the rigs says he sees the same blue flashes when Duane plays. You ever been electrocuted?

MAY-ALICE

Uhn-uh.

KIT

He's got this thing about not washing, Duane, but hey- musicians, right? You don't mind if I smoke, do you?

May-Alice clicks the remote. She closes her eyes-

23 EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DAY - BUS

A bus wipes the frame, leaving CHANTELLE, a black woman in her 30's standing on the side of the road with a suitcase-

CU CHANTELLE

She looks across a flat stretch of green field-

CHANTELLE'S POV

May-Alice's house, an old car parked in front of it-

24 DOOR

Chantelle's hand appears to KNOCK, wait, KNOCK HARDER. Nothing.
We TILT DOWN as she reaches for the doorknob, turns it-

25 INT. HOUSE - DAY

A blast of backlight as Chantelle steps in. We FOLLOW her around, honing in on a STATIC SOUND from the living room. May-Alice is on the couch, half covered, sweaty, debris from junk food scattered around, lying with her face covered by her arms. Chantelle crosses to the TV, caught between stations, searches, then crosses to the couch to find the remote to turn it OFF. She frowns at the empty wine bottles on the floor. May-Alice lifts her arms, eyes red from crying. Chantelle sits on the arm of the couch-

CHANTELLE

I'm Chantelle.

MAY-ALICE

Didn't think they'd send another one.

CHANTELLE

How long have you been without somebody?

May-Alice frowns at the TV-

MAY-ALICE

I dropped the remote. I think it's behind the couch.

May-Alice tries to sit up, her arms shaking with the effort. She barely makes it, seems dizzy-

CHANTELLE

You ought to have a ramp out there.

Chantelle crosses to the far wall to get the wheelchair. The egg stain is still there. She looks to May-Alice-

MAY-ALICE

Breakfast.

Chantelle brings the chair over-

MAY-ALICE

I think I peed on myself.

CHANTELLE

I'll help you wash up.

Chantelle helps her into the chair-

25 cont.

MAY-ALICE
Listen, Sherelle-

CHANTELLE
Chantelle.

MAY-ALICE
If you got any problems? Personal
problems? I don't want to hear them.

Chantelle pushes her out of frame-

26 INT. BATHROOM - DAY

May-Alice is in the bathtub, washing herself, while Chantelle sits
on the toilet lid watching her-

MAY-ALICE
You been doing this long?

CHANTELLE
No. You?

MAY-ALICE
(a small smile) You are a nurse,
aren't you?

CHANTELLE
Yeah. But I never did this caretaker
thing before. Stay over at somebody's
house.

MAY-ALICE
Well, I'll tell you Shondelle, it's
a snap.

CHANTELLE
Chantelle.

MAY-ALICE
All the things I can't do, you do them
for me.

CU MAY-ALICE

We SLOWLY TIGHTEN on her as she speaks-

MAY-ALICE
These days that's almost everything.
Can't go anywhere by myself, can't
cook anymore, can't work anymore,
can't shit without an enema, can't-

26 cont.

MAY-ALICE (cont.)

-have sex I can feel unless I really
get into blow jobs-

She catches herself-

MAY-ALICE

Sorry. You're probably some big
Christian, right, and I just put my
foot in my mouth-

2-SHOT

CHANTELLE

(deadpan) None of my business what
you put in your mouth, Miss Culhane.

May-Alice almost smiles-

MAY-ALICE

Chantelle, huh?

CHANTELLE

Chantelle.

MAY-ALICE

What did they tell you about me at
the Agency?

CHANTELLE

(shrugs) You're a T-10.

MAY-ALICE

What else?

CHANTELLE

Said you had your own money so the pay
was better than the state cases.

MAY-ALICE

Did they tell you I was a bitch?

Chantelle considers, then plunges ahead-

CHANTELLE

On wheels.

27 INT. DINING ROOM - EVENING

May-Alice is parked at the dinner table, watching as Chantelle lays a
TV dinner in front of her-

27 cont.

MAY-ALICE

Lean Cuisine. Miss Perky must have left this. She was the second or third one they sent over. There any wine in there?

Chantelle pulls out a bottle that is two-thirds empty-

CHANTELLE

Just this.

MAY-ALICE

The last one was a real sponge. Surprised she left me anything.

CHANTELLE

(pointedly) I don't drink.

MAY-ALICE

Well good for you. They'll be holding a case of this for me at Ernie's in town. They bill me.

She watches as Chantelle pours her a drink-

MAY-ALICE

I like it cold.

28 INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - CU REMOTE

The remote in Chantelle's hand, passed to May-Alice-

MAY-ALICE

Hey, you found my umbilical chord.

May-Alice is tucked into her nest on the couch-

CHANTELLE

You got a way to call me if you need something?

MAY-ALICE

(waves remote) I turn the volume way up. Look, I got no idea what the last one left you up there-

CHANTELLE

I'll be fine. Good night, Miss Culhane. (starts to leave)

MAY-ALICE

Chantelle? I don't usually wet myself.

28 cont.

CHANTELLE
Don't worry about it.

29 TOP OF STAIRS - NIGHT

Chantelle steps up into the shot, and we FOLLOW her down the hall and into her room. Her suitcase is on the unmade bed. She looks around- rock posters, Haitian art, black candles. She puts her head in her hands, trembling, and starts to cry-

FADE TO BLACK:

FADE UP TO:

30 INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - DAY

Chantelle is hauling heavy metal posters out of her room. She pauses at the top of the stairs as she sees something out the window, below-

31 EXT. HOUSE - DAY

May-Alice's UNCLE REEVES stands in front of the house, checking it out like a potential buyer. The front door opens and Chantelle steps out-

CHANTELLE
I help you?

REEVES
I was wondering if May-Alice might be in? Nobody seems to answer your telephone.

CHANTELLE
She's asleep.

REEVES
Ahhh.

CHANTELLE
You know her?

REEVES
I'm her uncle. Her uncle Reeves.

They speak low so as not to wake May-Alice. We FOLLOW Reeves as he casually pokes into drawers and cabinets, searching for something, Chantelle watching him with her back against the refrigerator-

CHANTELLE

You don't look old enough to be anybody's uncle.

REEVES

You're so kind. I was something of an afterthought in the family. May-Alice's father was already in high school when I was born.

He closes a drawer, not finding what he's searching for-

REEVES

What time does May-Alice usually rise?

CHANTELLE

Noon or so.

REEVES

Sensible girl. Noon would suit me fine. But as long as there is real estate to be bought and sold in the Crescent City, I have no rest. (he smiles ruefully) Real estate. This is what our dreams come to.

CHANTELLE

Can I help you find something?

REEVES

I'm poking around, aren't I? I lived here for a spell- just after May-Alice's parents passed on. Bachelor days.

CHANTELLE

If you're looking for those bottles, I threw all that away.

REEVES

(face falls) I see.

CHANTELLE

Wasn't so much left. (sees his shakiness) Got some white wine cold in here.

32 cont.

REEVES

(sighs) That might be pleasant.

He watches Chantelle pull out a bottle and pour him a glass-

REEVES

My brother- May-Alice's father- was an amateur flyer- he was quite a sportsman, actually. This house was once filled with his trophies, on every wall, until I was compelled to donate them to a local museum of natural history. Their eyes seemed to follow me from room to room.

Reeves watches the glass as Chantelle brings it to him, a disapproving-mother look on her face-

REEVES

They were flying down to the Keys, for the bonefishing I believe, not the marlin- May-Alice's father was a great admirer of Mr. Hemingway. He flew everywhere, hunting, fishing-

CHANTELLE

And her mother went along?

REEVES

May-Alice's mother was a great admirer of May-Alice's father. 'Whither thou goest, I shall go'.

He sips the wine, makes a face-

REEVES

At the service at least three people rose to comment on what an excellent pilot my brother was.

Reeves frowns at the wine-

REEVES

Not my drink, I afraid.

33 INT. DARKROOM

DARKROOM LIGHT comes ON as Reeves steps in, followed by Chantelle. A layer of dust on everything, a few old photos clipped to an overhead line to dry, curled and yellowing. Reeves picks up a camera from next to the sink, looks at it-

33 cont.

REEVES

I built this myself. When I was younger, photography was quite an obsession of mine. Have you ever seen the work of Mr. E.J. Bellocq?

CHANTELLE

Don't think so.

REEVES

It's very striking- anyhow, photography remained an avocation and not a way of life.

He kneels, pulls a nearly full bottle of bourbon from between dusty bottles of chemical fixer. He smiles and wiggles the bottle at Chantelle-

REEVES

Improves with age.

34 INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Chantelle busts ice cubes into a tupperware bowl. We FOLLOW her to the living room, Reeves and May-Alice yakking in good spirits-

REEVES

My friend Jason got his first taste of financial independence and was gone with the proverbial wind.

MAY-ALICE

He inherited money?

REEVES

The only thing Jason is in line to inherit is a Naugahide dinette set.

May-Alice is laughing as Chantelle enters and lays the ice on the table in front of them. May-Alice has her wine bottle and Reeves his bourbon, half empty now-

REEVES

No, Jason has made his mark in the world of commerce.

MAY-ALICE

Jason never worked a day in his life.

REEVES

You remember he was something of a potter? Well he came up with a scheme to manufacture homoerotic delftware-

34 cont.

MAY-ALICE
(laughing) Go on-

REEVES
Dinner plates with little Dutch
boys painted in compromising positions-

MAY-ALICE
Nooo-

REEVES
Perversion is rampant in our society.

MAY-ALICE
You're better off without him.

REEVES
I keep telling myself that.

Chantelle steps out, leaving us with May-Alice and her uncle. A
long, sobering pause-

REEVES
I was so sorry to learn about
your affliction, May-Alice.

May-Alice tries to shrug this off-

REEVES
I always wanted you to be the one
who went away and became famous and
was always happy.

MAY-ALICE
At least I went away.

REEVES
And now this.

MAY-ALICE
Reeves, if you start to cry I'm
going to throw my drink at you.

35 INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Chantelle paces back and forth, in and out of the frame. She
is agitated, jumpy. She sits on her bed, head in her hands-

36 INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Chantelle appears with the bowl of half-melted ice. She scoops
her hand into it and rubs a bit on her face, closing her eyes-

37 INT. LIVING ROOM -NIGHT

Reeves is asleep, sitting on the couch, head thrown back.
May-Alice is nodding off in her chair. Chantelle enters, crossing to lay a blanket over Reeves, then to wheel May-Alice to her bedroom-

MAY-ALICE

(half awake) That's my uncle Reeves.
Idn't he great?

CHANTELLE

He's real- (searches) literary.

MAY-ALICE

(laughs) Reeves has been literary
ever since he was a boy. Didn't go
down real big in the family.

CHANTELLE

Takes all kinds.

MAY-ALICE

He gave me his camera. Idn't at sweet?

38 INT. KITCHEN - DAY - CU GRAPEFRUIT

A half-grapefruit staring up-

MAY-ALICE

May-Alice staring down at the grapefruit, in the same outfit
she went to bed in, pushed close to the table-

CHANTELLE

Glances at May-Alice studying the grapefruit, then goes back
to looking at a shopping list-

CHANTELLE

You need me to cut that up for you more?

MAY-ALICE

I can't deal with grapefruit in the
morning.

CHANTELLE

We don't have any eggs. I got em on
the list.

MAY-ALICE

I can't deal with breakfast at all.

38 cont.

Chantelle sits, pulls the grapefruit in front of her, sprinkles it with sugar and starts to eat-

MAY-ALICE

There's still a car out front, isn't there?

CHANTELLE

Light brown. Says Buick on the side.

MAY-ALICE

Good. The last one took it in to Lafayette a couple times, afraid she might have sold it.

CHANTELLE

Anything you need before I go?

MAY-ALICE

I can change the channels myself.

CHANTELLE

Should we- should I help you in the bathroom before-

MAY-ALICE

(snorts) I was the best voider in my rehab group. Thought they'd give me a fucking medal or something.

CHANTELLE

Bathroom's not set up too well-

MAY-ALICE

Keys should be in the car.

Chantelle nods, stands with the list-

CHANTELLE

I'll try to get back as soon as I can.

MAY-ALICE

Don't kill yourself.

Chantelle stops by the door-

CHANTELLE

You neither.

39 EXT. ROAD - CAR - DAY

The Buick approaches us on a country road, starts to buck, coughs and dies right in front of us-

40 INT. CAR

CHANTELLE

Damn.

39 EXT. CAR

Chantelle steps out, slams her hand on the hood-

CHANTELLE

Damn!

She looks back the way she came, then down the road. Shakes her head, starts walking in the same direction she was driving-

41 INT. BATHROOM - DAY

May-Alice has just flushed and is wriggling back into her sweatpants, still seated on the bowl. The chair is just in front of her, but there are no special rails built in and the space is very narrow. She tries to do her usual transfer, pulling on the towel rack to the side to begin her swing, but the rack tears right out of the tile and May-Alice falls backward off the bowl onto the floor, landing hard on her hip and shoulder, knocking the air out of her lungs. She wheezes for breath-

42 EXT. ROADSIDE - DAY - SHOES

Chantelle's shoes sit abandoned in the roadside grass. We PAN over to her feet, toes working. We hear a CAR APPROACHING-

SUGAR

SUGAR LEDOUX, a handsome black man about Chantelle's age, sticks his head out of the window of a pickup hauling a horse trailer, and smiles as he comes to a stop-

CHANTELLE

Stares back at him-

SUGAR

SUGAR

I sure hope you need a ride.

43 INT. CAR

Sugar driving Chantelle into town-

SUGAR

Break down?

CHANTELLE

No gas. (Sugar smiles) Don't be smirkin at me. Lady I work for left it on empty. Thought I could make it to town.

SUGAR

You're not from here. I can tell.

CHANTELLE

(grumpy) Yeah, an you are. I can tell.

SUGAR

Somebody in a bad mood. Must have walked three, four miles.

No response-

SUGAR

What you do for this lady you work for?

CHANTELLE

Take care of her, I guess.

SUGAR

White lady.

CHANTELLE

Mmmmmmn.

SUGAR

Old?

CHANTELLE

You a detective?

SUGAR

You a nurse?

CHANTELLE

I was. Almost.

SUGAR

Pay must be real good, get a fine-looking young woman live out with some sick old white lady.

Chantelle gives him a look-

CHANTELLE

Pay's all right.

SUGAR

Well, I hope you stay working round here.

CHANTELLE

If you're trying to be charming, don't be wastin it on me. What's that smell?

SUGAR

Smell?

CHANTELLE

More from the back, but it's up here too.

SUGAR

(laughs) That's horse, darlin.

CHANTELLE

You got a horse back there?

SUGAR

I take care of em. Put shoes on their hooves, exercise em for their owners-

CHANTELLE

And you givin me grief about I take care of a white lady? (looks out)
This the town?

SUGAR

Most of it. Where you want me to leave you?

CHANTELLE

Here is fine.

SUGAR

You want me to find you some gas, run you back out-

CHANTELLE

I can manage myself.

Sugar stops the pickup, offers his hand-

SUGAR

Sugar.

CHANTELLE

What?

43 cont.

SUGAR
Sugar LeDoux. That's me.

CHANTELLE
You gotta be kiddin.

SUGAR
Real name is Ulysse. Ma mere aime
beaucoup les classiques. What's your
name?

CHANTELLE
(getting out) Chantelle.

SUGAR
Chantelle what?

CHANTELLE
Chantelle-who's-got-no-time-for-any-
French-talkin-Louisiana-cowboys.

SUGAR
(calling) Do you dance, Chantelle?

Chantelle turns, face serious-

CHANTELLE
No. Not anymore.

Sugar watches as she walks away-

41 INT. BATHROOM - DAY

May-Alice is struggling to pull herself up on the toilet again, pulling on the edge of the sink, but she doesn't have the strength. She is crying, and when she gives up pulling and just hangs by her arms she starts to scream-

MAY-ALICE
Shit! Shit! Shit! Shit!

44 EXT. MARINA - DAY - CU GAS PUMP HANDLE

Somebody is pumping gas into a large metal can-

CHANTELLE
(off) Excuse me--

REVERSE - WIDER

We shoot past RENNIE TOUSSAINT, a white man around 40, who is-

44 cont.

-filling several gas cans from pumps next to the edge of the lake.
He looks up to see Chantelle several feet away-

CHANTELLE

Will that gas work in a car?

Rennie looks at the pump as if it's a tough question-

RENNIE

It's gas.

CHANTELLE

So it would work. That was a stupid question, right?

RENNIE

Question isn't stupid unless you already know the answer. It work fine in a car.

CHANTELLE

I guess I'll need about two gallons.
Can I buy one of those cans?

RENNIE

(looks at them) Them're mine.

CHANTELLE

You don't work here?

RENNIE

Don't nobody work here. Old Hebert own the pumps, but he mostly drinks and sleeps and leave the box out for people put their money in. He sleepin now.

CHANTELLE

People just leave their money for what they take?

RENNIE

You not from here, are you?

CHANTELLE

No.

RENNIE

And your car is broke down somewhere thout no gas. You wait two shakes, I take you there, put some in.

44 cont.

CHANTELLE

Well- I got all this stuff, sittin
at the liquor store-

RENNIE

We run by there, pick him up. (He
glances at the pump price) I pump
you two gallon, that's three dollar
twenty.

Chantelle crosses to a cigar box set on a little stand between
the pumps. An old fishing reel serves as a paperweight to keep
the bills from blowing away. She lays the money in-

CHANTELLE

Nobody ever stole some?

RENNIE

Doesn't nobody want to deal with Hebert,
he hear you been skimmin his bar money.
(caps the gas can, hangs the pump)
That Ernie's liquor store or Lanois'?

45 INT. HOUSE - DAY

May-Alice is on the floor between the bathroom and the living
room, dragging herself forward on her elbows with great effort,
crying. She stops to rest, laying her cheek flat on the wood
of the floor, breathing hard-

46 EXT. ROADSIDE - LATE AFTERNOON

Rennie is funneling gas into the tank of the Buick, his pickup (a
general contracting ad and number hand-painted on the side)
parked ahead. Chantelle is loading groceries into the back seat-

RENNIE

This used to belong to Mr. Culhane,
live out by the lake.

CHANTELLE

S'his daughter's now.

RENNIE

May-Alice. Word is she stuck in her bed.

CHANTELLE

Paraplegic.

Rennie frowns, lays the can down, puts the cap on the tank-

46 cont.

RENNIE

How she doing?

CHANTELLE

(shrugs) I just started out there.

Chantelle hefts a case of wine bottles into the seat-

CHANTELLE

Place could use some work- it wasn't set up for somebody in a chair.

Rennie reaches into the glove compartment of his pickup and comes out with a card-

RENNIE

I do carpentry, little plumbing, fix your roof-

CHANTELLE

(takes card) I'll talk to her.

RENNIE

You maybe wanna have this old car looked at. Doesn't nothing like to sit for twenty years.

She slides into the front seat, turns the key. The engine comes roughly to life-

RENNIE

You find a Evangeline's just north of her place on the highway, you can gas up.

CHANTELLE

Thanks a whole lot. I'll tell her you said hi.

RENNIE

(shrugs) She won't remember me.
(taps hood) Bonne chance.

47 INT. LIVING ROOM - EARLY EVENING

May-Alice has reached the couch and managed to pull herself up into a sitting position at the base of it. She rests, breathing heavily, then we HEAR the CAR PULLING IN. She finds the remote control, flicks the TV ON, tries to compose herself. We hear CHANTELLE ENTER, lay a box down. She steps into the room. May-Alice won't take her eyes off the TV-

47 cont.

CHANTELLE
I'm really sorry I'm so late-

MAY-ALICE
I need a glass of wine-

CHANTELLE
The car didn't have any gas in it,
it broke down-

MAY-ALICE
With ice.

CHANTELLE
I had a terrible day.

MAY-ALICE
Mine was a scream. If you just bring the
bottle in I can pour my own.

Chantelle is not in the mood for this. She sits on the edge of
the couch-

CHANTELLE
(quietly) I'm not your waitress.

MAY-ALICE
What are you then?

CHANTELLE
Will you look at me?

Nothing from May-Alice-

CHANTELLE
Will you please look at me?

May-Alice looks, fierce, very close to crying again-

MAY-ALICE
I didn't think you were coming back.

CHANTELLE
Course I was.

MAY-ALICE
How should I know that?

CHANTELLE
Cause I told you I would. I'm
going to bring in the rest of the
groceries. If you want a drink it's
on the table in the kitchen.

47 cont.

MAY-ALICE

I can't make it out there.

Chantelle looks for the chair, then to May-Alice. Concerned, she kneels by her-

CHANTELLE

You're all sweaty. Where's your chair?

MAY-ALICE

I couldn't get back into it in the bathroom. It was easier to come out here.

CHANTELLE

You fell?

May-Alice tightens up, mad again. Chantelle pulls a pillow from the couch, lays it on the floor, then takes May-Alice behind the neck and back and lays her down on the floor-

CHANTELLE

I need to look at your legs-

MAY-ALICE

I didn't hit hard-

CHANTELLE

I need to look at your legs-

MAY-ALICE

No-

May-Alice struggles with her arms as Chantelle tries to pull her sweatpants down, but has no strength left. Chantelle backs off-

CHANTELLE

Please. You could be hurt.

May-Alice goes deadpan, lays her arms across her face. Chantelle gently pulls her pants down, tilts her from side to side, feels down her legs-

CHANTELLE

You got a big bruise under your hip.
I don't think anything is broken.
We should take you in for X-rays.

MAY-ALICE

No.

CHANTELLE

There's no way for me to tell for sure if-

47 cont.

MAY-ALICE
(screams) No! Godammit, it's my
fucking body and I said no!

Chantelle backs off, sits against the couch-

CHANTELLE
I'm not much good at this, am I?

MAY-ALICE
(musing bitterly) Yeah, I've been
thinking about a career change
myself. Aerobics instructor, mail
carrier- who knows, maybe something
on the oil rigs--

CHANTELLE
You thought I stole your car?

MAY-ALICE
I thought you drove back to the
Agency and told them you were quitting.

CHANTELLE
I need this job.

A silence. May-Alice still has her hands over her eyes-

CHANTELLE
(stands) I'll get you some dinner.

MAY-ALICE
(quietly) Could you pull my pants up
first?

FADE TO BLACK:

FADE UP TO:

48 INT. STAIRS - DAY

Chantelle sits halfway down the stairs, brooding. We hear the TV
SET below. Chantelle makes up her mind, stands-

CHANTELLE
(to herself) Here I come, ready or not-

49 INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

May-Alice sits in her chair watching the soap. She turns to
look into the hall- we PAN with her gaze to see Chantelle step in
with a thin exercise mat, dumbbell, chest expander piled in her arms-

49 cont. REVERSE

Looking past Chantelle to May-Alice-

MAY-ALICE
You going to toss those?

CHANTELLE
Taking them out with us.

MAY-ALICE
Us?

CHANTELLE
Us. You and me.

MAY-ALICE
Out?

CHANTELLE
Outside.

MAY-ALICE
I don't like the sound of this.

Chantelle lays the equipment down and begins to wheel May-Alice toward the door-

CHANTELLE
Got to get some strength in your arms.

MAY-ALICE
Why?

CHANTELLE
Cause I'm not going to take you to the potty and wipe your butt every four hours and pretty soon you're gonna be too weak to do it for yourself. How's that?

May-Alice squints as the chair is tilted over the threshold and out into the sun, bumping down the few steps. Her eyes adjust slowly and she doesn't like what she sees-

CHANTELLE
When was the last time you were outside?

MAY-ALICE
They used to park us out on the roof at the rehab hospital.

CHANTELLE
You need sun.

49 cont.

MAY-ALICE

Raisins need sun. Alfalfa needs sun. You leave people outside they get skin cancer.

CHANTELLE

You swim?

MAY-ALICE

Not willingly.

CHANTELLE

Can you swim in this lake?

MAY-ALICE

You mean with the snakes?

Chantelle checks out the lake as they reach the edge-

CHANTELLE

Maybe I'll find you a pool. (hands her the dumbbell) Let's see what you can do.

May-Alice looks at her, then deliberately drops the weight to the ground beside her chair-

MAY-ALICE

That's what I can do. Now push me back in.

CHANTELLE

Push yourself back in.

MAY-ALICE

Don't pull that motivational crap on me! I want to go back inside!

CHANTELLE

I'll have some lunch ready when you get there.

Chantelle heads back up to the house-

MAY-ALICE

Get back here! Goddammit, get back here and bring me inside! Chantelle! It's uphill!

CHANTELLE

(over her shoulder) Yeah, so's life.

MAY-ALICE

Chantelle! (to herself) I can't do it myself.

49 cont.

She turns to look at the water, the dock-

MAY-ALICE

Fuck.

50 UPSTAIRS HALLWAY

Chantelle stands at the top of the stairs, looking out the window to the yard. We hear May-Alice calling-

MAY-ALICE

(off) Chantelle! Chantelle! Godammit,
get out here!

51 EXT. LAKE - AFTERNOON - CU FROG

A big frog stares from the edge of the water-

MAY-ALICE

May-Alice stares back at the frog, morose-

MAY-ALICE

Beat it.

FROG

Staring-

MAY-ALICE

MAY-ALICE

I said beat it, asshole.

FROG

Gets the drift, darts off into the water-

MAY-ALICE

May-Alice makes a face, looks around-

MAY-ALICE

Just what I need. Fucking Nature.

52 EXT. LAKE - EVENING

A beautiful sunset colors the water of the lake-

MAY-ALICE

Watching the sun go down. She seems to have chilled out a bit. Chantelle appears behind her with a cup of something, offers it. May-Alice looks at her, takes the cup-

CHANTELLE

Hot tea.

May-Alice drinks a bit. Chantelle sits on the ground by her and looks over the lake-

MAY-ALICE

Water gets clear this time of year.
I saw some fish.

CHANTELLE

Yeah?

MAY-ALICE

Couple herons, too.

CHANTELLE

There really snakes in here?

MAY-ALICE

Were when I was little. We kind of ignored em. (shrugs) Kids aren't scared of anything.

CHANTELLE

I was scared of stuff.

MAY-ALICE

Well- at least they're not scared of everything.

CHANTELLE

I was watching you. All day.

A silence-

CHANTELLE

Am I fired?

MAY-ALICE

Don't leave me places.

CHANTELLE

Will you do something to get stronger?

52 cont.

MAY-ALICE

Why do I need to be stronger?

CHANTELLE

Cause the next one you get might not be so nice as me.

MAY-ALICE

Right. And you're Florence Fucking Nightingale.

CHANTELLE

You got a telephone. Any time you want you can get rid of my ass. But if I'm gonna stay here I got to be able to do my job.

May-Alice scowls, looks away from her-

CHANTELLE

You gonna try it?

MAY-ALICE

(evenly) Don't leave me places.

53 EXT. YARD - DAY - CU WEIGHT

A five-pound barbell weight, suspended by a rope tied through the center hole, slowly rises. We TILT UP with it till we see May-Alice, working her forearms by rolling the weight up on a length of broom-handle. She reverses her grip to slowly lower the weight, then sees something that makes her drop the whole thing-

MAY-ALICE'S POV

Two women are getting out of a car by the house. One sees her, waves and calls-

PRECIOUS

May-Alice!

MAY-ALICE

Stuck in her chair under the shade of a huge tree, the lake behind her, she realizes she is trapped-

MAY-ALICE

Oh shit.

53 cont. WOMEN

Approaching. They are TI-MARIE and PRECIOUS ROBICHAUX, sisters in their late 30's who have mastered the art of smiling and taking mental inventory at the same time-

TI-MARIE

We're so glad we caught you at home!

PRECIOUS

We've been so naughty about not visiting-

TI-MARIE

We weren't sure if you-

PRECIOUS

We weren't positive you'd remember us.

TI-MARIE

Precious, that's the character she played, not May-Alice. You remember us, don't you darlin?

They have reached May-Alice, who looks stricken. Her eyes shift beyond them- Chantelle coming behind them, a bag of potato chips and bottle of wine in hand. She slows as she sees the company. May-Alice makes little jerking gestures with her hand, trying to warn Chantelle of something. The sisters watch, wondering if this is only a tic or what-

CHANTELLE

Hello?

MAY-ALICE

(forced smile) Chantelle, these are my old friends, Ti-Marie and Precious Robichaux. Chantelle is my- uhm- assistant.

SISTERS

Hello. / Pleased to meet you.

CHANTELLE

Would you like to stay for lunch?

May-Alice closes her eyes in defeat-

54 EXT. BACK PATIO - DAY

May-Alice in her chair, the sisters in theirs, around a small circular table. Things are awkward between them-

54 cont.

TI-MARIE

We've been following your program.

PRECIOUS

Everybody is so proud of you.

TI-MARIE

There are so few people from here
to be recognized on a national level.
Unless you read the sports pages.

PRECIOUS

Edward reads them out loud to me.

TI-MARIE

Edward is her husband.

PRECIOUS

(sparkles) Twenty years next May.

TI-MARIE

Precious has inertia confused with romance.

PRECIOUS

And Ti-Marie changes husbands like
Edward changes automobiles- a new
one every four years.

TI-MARIE

Anthony lasted five.

PRECIOUS

It took you a year to find him
to serve the papers. (brightens,
to May-Alice) Of course, we're
very provincial compared to the
goings-on on your television
program- what was it called?

MAY-ALICE

The Young and the Stupid.

PRECIOUS

(frowns, to Ti-Marie) Was that it?

TI-MARIE

It's a joke, Precious.

55 INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Chantelle has thrown everything from the fridge and the cabinets
onto the table, hoping for inspiration-

55 cont.

CHANTELLE

Lunch. Damn- what do these people
eat for lunch?

54 cont. EXT. PATIO - DAY

The sisters digging in now-

PRECIOUS

And you never married, did you?

MAY-ALICE

Once.

PRECIOUS

Oh. (pause) And were you blessed?

MAY-ALICE

Pardon?

PRECIOUS

Children?

TI-MARIE

She wants to know if you had children.

PRECIOUS

I don't need an interpreter,
Ti-Marie, I do speak English-

MAY-ALICE

I never had children.

PRECIOUS

What a shame. And now you ca-

TI-MARIE

Precious, slow down, darlin-

MAY-ALICE

I thought about having them, but I
never really did anything about it.

PRECIOUS

You were always so eccentric
at school-

TI-MARIE

She means different-

PRECIOUS

I just knew you'd do something-
original with your life.-

54 cont.

PRECIOUS (cont.)

-Didn't we always used to wonder
how May-Alice was going to end up?

MAY-ALICE

And now you know.

There is an uncomfortable silence. Chantelle arrives with a
50's-looking tray laden with cream cheese and olives spread on
crackers and tomato soup served in three very different bowls.
Not even the spoons match. Smiles freeze on the sisters' faces-

TI-MARIE

And what have we here?

CHANTELLE

We haven't unpacked the china yet-

PRECIOUS

Moving is such a bother.

TI-MARIE

You haven't moved in twenty years,
Precious.

PRECIOUS

Well I can empathize, can't I?

MAY-ALICE

Could you bring some more wine, Chantelle?

We FOLLOW Chantelle back into the kitchen, hearing their VOICES
as she goes-

PRECIOUS

(off) She is a jewel, isn't
she? Wherever did you find her?

TI-MARIE

(off) Did her people work for your parents?

MAY-ALICE

(off) She works for an agency.

PRECIOUS

(off) Ahhh-

TI-MARIE

(off) You don't see as much colored
help these days.

PRECIOUS

(off) It was the Sixties.
Those riots up North-

54 cont. EXT. PATIO - DAY

Continuing-

MAY-ALICE

Right. How you gonna keep em down on the farm after they've burned Chicago.

PRECIOUS

Did they burn Chicago too?

TI-MARIE

It's a joke, Precious.

PRECIOUS

Well ours down here have certainly caught the attitude.

TI-MARIE

Precious and Edward have a Guatemalan woman-

PRECIOUS

Spanish-

TI-MARIE

She speaks Spanish, darlin, she's from Guatemala.

MAY-ALICE pulls a pad from the pouch on her chair and scribbles something on it. Precious reacts to her first taste of soup-

PRECIOUS

Oooh. It's warm.

They look at her-

PRECIOUS

I thought it was gazpacho. I wasn't expecting-

MAY-ALICE

Campbell's.

PRECIOUS

(breathless apology) Just a little surprised. Excuse me. My husband, Edward, can't tolerate truly hot soup. He's very sensitive-

TI-MARIE

Edward? Sensitive?

PRECIOUS

You are so critical of him! Just because he's faithful and steady-

54 cont.

TI-MARIE

Steady? He's practically comatose.

PRECIOUS

Edward is in perfect health-

MAY-ALICE

It's a joke, Precious.

Chantelle appears to set a bottle of wine and three mismatched glasses on the table-

MAY-ALICE

Chantelle? I just thought of something else we need at the market.

Chantelle takes the note from May-Alice, exchanging a look. We FOLLOW her into the house as she unfolds it-

PRECIOUS

(off) I remember when we were here last. Your parents, God bless them, were still with us. Some sort of soiree--

MAY-ALICE

(off) A slumber party.

PRECIOUS

(off) Oh, yes. I remember now-

56 CHANTELLE'S POV - CU NOTE

The note reads- 'Help! Get them out of here!'

54 EXT. PATIO - DAY

Reminiscing-

PRECIOUS

Laurel Pettibone was there, and Stacy Lee Ellis, and who was that girl? The one with the hair?

TI-MARIE

We all had hair, Precious-

PRECIOUS

No, this is the one with the hair. Who we were so awful to? She wore it in that enormous braid down her back like some sort of peasant woman-

54 cont.

MAY-ALICE
(quietly) That was me.

PRECIOUS
May-Alice, I couldn't have been you-

MAY-ALICE
There was a picture I had of Joan
Baez, took me hours to get the same
effect-

PRECIOUS
Perhaps I misremember. I'm thinking
of somebody we just tortured-

MAY-ALICE
(smiles) That was me.

An awkward silence. It's about to get heavy, but Chantelle
arrives in the nick of time-

CHANTELLE
Miss Culhane, it's 2:15- it's time
for your injections.

MAY-ALICE
(picks up) Right. My injections.

PRECIOUS
Oh dear- have we overstayed our
welcome?

MAY-ALICE
If I don't have the spasms they
only take about an hour-

TI-MARIE
(rising) We were just passing through,
anyway-

PRECIOUS
And now that we know where you are-

MAY-ALICE
(to Chantelle) You think I'll need
the restraints today?

CHANTELLE
I've got them set up. (to sisters)
Excuse us, please-

May-Alice gives a brave little wave as Chantelle sweeps her away
on the chair. We HOLD on the sisters, their smiles slowly
fading. Finally-

54 cont.

PRECIOUS

That was her with the strange
hair, wasn't it?

57 INT. KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

May-Alice wheels into the kitchen to find Chantelle replacing
all the food she pulled out that afternoon-

MAY-ALICE

I feel like I've been picked clean
by buzzards.

CHANTELLE

You hadn't seen them for a while-

MAY-ALICE

Since I boarded with them at Grand
Couteau. I thought the soup bit was
brilliant.

CHANTELLE

Opened the can and heated it up.
What's so brilliant about that?

MAY-ALICE

I thought- you know- you were
trying to help me get rid of them.

CHANTELLE

I can't cook.

MAY-ALICE

Sure you can.

CHANTELLE

There some rule, all black people
got to know how to cook?

MAY-ALICE

Darlin, down here there's a rule
everybody got to know how to
cook.

58 INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

May-Alice is watching something with a creepy suspense score.
She sees Chantelle wandering out in the hall, unsettled about
something-

MAY-ALICE

You want to watch with me?

58 cont.

CHANTELLE

What is it?

MAY-ALICE

Bette Davis and Joan Crawford pretending they're the Robichaux sisters.

Chantelle comes in and stands next to May-Alice, arms folded across her chest. She reacts to a sudden zing on the screen-

CHANTELLE

Whew.

MAY-ALICE

Yeah. And you thought I looked bad.

Chantelle sits in the wheelchair a few feet from May-Alice, half-watching the show-

MAY-ALICE

Chantelle? Do you have to wear that uniform all the time?

CHANTELLE

I thought you wanted it on.

MAY-ALICE

I thought you wanted it on.

CHANTELLE

The Agency said I should wear it.

MAY-ALICE

Fuck the Agency. It's so-- nursey.

CHANTELLE

I am a nurse. Not an 'assistant'.

MAY-ALICE

I don't know what else to call you. You're not my servant-

CHANTELLE

Thank you.

MAY-ALICE

And you're not my housekeeper, or my babysitter-

CHANTELLE

And I'm not your friend-

An awkward pause as the truth of this sinks in-

58 cont.

MAY-ALICE

Caretaker?

CHANTELLE

Chantelle. Just tell em- 'This is Chantelle.' Let them figure out the rest.

They watch the show for a moment-

MAY-ALICE

You know, you can go out at night if you want.

CHANTELLE

Outside?

MAY-ALICE

Into town. You know- Lafayette, whatever.

CHANTELLE

I'm fine out here.

MAY-ALICE

It must be so boring for you.

CHANTELLE

It's a job, it's supposed to be boring.

MAY-ALICE

(smiles) 'Oh no, Miss Culhane, it's never boring working for you.'

Chantelle gives her a flat look-

CHANTELLE

You want me to be that way, I can try.

MAY-ALICE

No. You have to be totally straight with me, okay? Whatever you got on your mind, I want to hear it.

CHANTELLE

Yeah?

MAY-ALICE

Yeah.

CHANTELLE

You sure?

MAY-ALICE

Positive.

58 cont.

CHANTELLE
(considers, then-) You drink too much.

MAY-ALICE
No I don't.

A long pause. May-Alice takes a deliberate sip of wine-

CHANTELLE
This the one where she feeds her
sister a rat?

FADE UP TO:
FADE TO BLACK:

59 INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY - CU MAY-ALICE

May-Alice asleep on the couch. Daylight spills on her face.
We HEAR a HAMMER BANGING outside. May-Alice opens her eyes,
raises her head slightly to look around-

MAY-ALICE'S POV

Chantelle sits in the wheelchair, by the window, looking out
moodyly-

MAY-ALICE, CHANTELLE

MAY-ALICE
Chantelle?

CHANTELLE
You woke up.

MAY-ALICE
Somebody's pounding on my house with
a large blunt object. Of course I
woke up.

CHANTELLE
He's been doing it for a long time now.

MAY-ALICE
He? Who's he?

CHANTELLE
Guy I hired to build a ramp, fix up
the bathroom. You told me you wanted
to, and I think he's giving a good deal-

MAY-ALICE
Why'd he have to start so early?

59 cont.

CHANTELLE

It's past noon, Miss Culhane.

May-Alice pulls herself to a sitting position, still groggy-

MAY-ALICE

Would you call me May-Alice?

CHANTELLE

You mean when your friends aren't here?

MAY-ALICE

All the time.

CHANTELLE

(shrugs) Whatever you want.

May-Alice looks toward the hammering, looks at her wrinkled, crumb-littered sweatpants and t-shirt-

MAY-ALICE

How long have I been wearing these?

CHANTELLE

Since Monday.

MAY-ALICE

What's today?

CHANTELLE

Thursday.

MAY-ALICE

I kind of gross you out, don't I?

CHANTELLE

Is this a trick question?

May-Alice smiles. Chantelle pushes the chair over by her-

CHANTELLE

Come on. He hasn't started on the bathroom yet.

60 EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Rennie pushes the beginnings of a ramp flush with the front doorsill, the door propped open, then closes it to check the clearance. When he opens it again May-Alice sits there in her chair, fresh clothes, hair brushed, amazed to see who it is-

MAY-ALICE

Rennie?

60 cont.

Hi. RENNIE

It's Rennie, right? MAY-ALICE

Yeah. It's me. RENNIE

Hi. MAY-ALICE

Hi. RENNIE

Uhm-- wow. How are you? MAY-ALICE

I'm fine. Older. How are you? RENNIE

I'm uh-- so you're a carpenter? MAY-ALICE

Bit of this, bit of that. RENNIE

Uh-huh. Oh- Chantelle wondered if you wanted to come in for something to drink- lemonade, iced tea- MAY-ALICE

Sure. RENNIE

Great. (can't get over it) Rennie. MAY-ALICE

(smiles) May-Alice. RENNIE

61 KITCHEN

May-Alice is subdued, shy around Rennie. Chantelle sits by the fridge, sipping iced tea, watching them at the table-

You have a family, I guess. MAY-ALICE

Mmmmn. RENNIE

61 cont.

MAY-ALICE

How many kids?

RENNIE

Five.

MAY-ALICE

Wow. I didn't know people had that many any more.

RENNIE

(shrugs) Us coon-asses do.

MAY-ALICE

You still go out in your father's boat? I suppose you got your own now-

RENNIE

That's mostly what I do. Take tourists into the bayou, point out the gators and snakes. Beats chasing around the oil patch like my father.

MAY-ALICE

(nods) Five kids. I know your wife?

RENNIE

Don't see how you'd of met. (stands) Well-- thanks. Later you might want to show me what you need in the bedroom.

Chantelle snorts a laugh and May-Alice shoots her a dirty look-

MAY-ALICE

We got all these rails and things from the gimp catalogue but I never got round to having them installed.

RENNIE

I'll take a look. (leaving) That's a nice boat you got sitting out front.

MAY-ALICE

Hasn't been run for twenty years.

RENNIE

Ought to somebody check it out some time.

He's gone. May-Alice turns to Chantelle-

MAY-ALICE

Why didn't you tell me it was him?

61 cont.

CHANTELLE
He somebody special?

MAY-ALICE
At least he's not in jail.

CHANTELLE
You know him from school?

MAY-ALICE
From before I went off to Grand Couteau.
He was real wild- we all had crushes
on him, but he was- you know- his
father wore alligator teeth around his
neck and had all these tattoos. Rennie'd
come over and sell fishbait to my father.

CHANTELLE
White trash.

MAY-ALICE
It's more complicated than that.
Dey was le vrai chose Cajun, darlin.
Rennie Toussaint- five kids. Jesus.

May-Alice catches sight of herself in the reflection of her glass-

MAY-ALICE
I look like shit, don't I?

62 INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Chantelle sits at the table, reading a letter she's just written.
We hear the TV PLAYING from the living room. Chantelle folds the
letter, puts it in an envelope, starts to address it. Halfway
through she loses heart, pushes it away from her-

63 INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

May-Alice sits on the couch, wearing sweatpants and a t-shirt,
the TV playing a LOCAL CAR COMMERCIAL. She drinks wine out
of the bottle. She puts the bottle down, thinking. She puts her
hand between her legs, watching it studiously, then puts it under
her t-shirt to hold one of her breasts. She holds it there,
and looks forlornly back at the TV set-

64 INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

May-Alice is loading Reeves's camera with film while next to
her Chantelle fools with an answering machine she has just
pulled from the box and set up-

64 cont.

MAY-ALICE

Reeves used to let me mix chemicals for him in his first darkroom. That was a big deal, him taking me seriously-

CHANTELLE

(into machine) Hi. May-Alice isn't here right now. If you'd like to leave a message, wait till after the beep and leave your number.

MAY-ALICE

May-Alice is always here- they know that. And what if it's for you?

CHANTELLE

Won't be anybody calling me. Listen, what if the car's gonna take more than a day to fix?

MAY-ALICE

(shrugs) Stay over, I guess. Be a nice break from me.

CHANTELLE

I should tell em to leave the time they called, huh?

May-Alice pushes the message button, speaks into the machine-

MAY-ALICE

May-Alice has crawled into a hole to die. If you'd like to leave a message, forget about it.

65 INT. DINER - DAY

Chantelle sits at the counter of the diner. There are horsey things on the walls around her, menu items like 'Backstretch Burger' on the menu listed above her. We PAN to include Sugar, paying for something at the register. He sees her, comes over-

SUGAR

It's Chantelle-who-don't-have-time-for-me.

CHANTELLE

Sugar.

SUGAR

Only thing good here is breakfast, and that's long over.

65 cont.

CHANTELLE

What you doing in here then?

SUGAR

(raises thermos) Coffee machine's bust over to work. Come on with me, get some real food.

CHANTELLE

I got to be somewhere.

SUGAR

You got time to burn, girl. I seen that old car of your white lady's sitting over by the Bourgeois Brothers garage. Them boys slower than a three-legged mule.

Chantelle looks around the diner as if considering-

SUGAR

Can't tell you what to do with the rest of your life, Chantelle, but I know you don't want to be spending no five hours of it in here.

66 EXT. YARD - DAY

May-Alice is on her chair by the edge of the lake, taking pictures with the camera Reeves gave her. She puts the camera to her eye, pans it-

MAY-ALICE'S POV - THROUGH LENS

We PAN from the lake toward the house, till we STOP with a man staring between the cross-hairs, May-Alice reflexively tripping the shutter-

MAY-ALICE

Startled, she lets the camera down-

MAY-ALICE'S POV - LUTHER

LUTHER, a black man in his 40's who looks like he's been sick for a while, stands looking at her a few feet away, eyes hidden behind shades-

66 cont. 2-SHOT

May-Alice is scared, tries not to show it-

MAY-ALICE
Hello?

LUTHER
(steps closer) Chantelle here?

MAY-ALICE
Uhhm- (considers lying) -no. She
went to town.

LUTHER
You the lady she's working for?

MAY-ALICE
Yes.

He nods, looks back toward the house-

MAY-ALICE
I'm not sure when she's going to be back.

He steps almost next to her, looks out over the lake, then
glances at May-Alice-

LUTHER
You afraid of me?

MAY-ALICE
(lying) No.

LUTHER
Don't be. (frowns) She okay?

MAY-ALICE
Chantelle? Sure. She's fine.

LUTHER
Happy?

MAY-ALICE
Well, happy I don't know. I mean-
she seems okay. She lives- you
know- upstairs. I don't really
know what goes on upstairs. I
don't know if she's happy. (shrugs)
I don't know Chantelle.

LUTHER
No reason you would.

MAY-ALICE

I just live with her twenty-four hours a day. (sighs) Was she expecting you?

LUTHER

Don't think she wants to see me.

MAY-ALICE

Oh.

Luther steps closer to the water, pulls his shades to rub his eyes-

LUTHER

Nice to live near water.

MAY-ALICE

Yeah, I suppose it is.

He turns and looks at her carefully-

LUTHER

You can't feel anything in your bottom half?

MAY-ALICE

That's the general idea.

LUTHER

I felt that once. Started in my feet, then up to my knees- I remember thinking how when it reached my heart I'd be dead.

MAY-ALICE

What happened?

Luther puts his shades back on-

LUTHER

Oh, I did some more of whatever it was I was messed up on- shot me right past into somewhere else. (turns) She finished with the de-tox?

MAY-ALICE

(surprised but hiding it) Uhm- yeah. I guess so.

LUTHER

(nods) She makes up her mind to do something you don't want to be in her way, Chantelle.

MAY-ALICE

I've noticed.

LUTHER

Well that's good, she's keeping straight. (sighs) I don't think I'm going to wait around.

MAY-ALICE

Don't mind me-

LUTHER

I can't do this yet. You tell Chantelle I'm sorry. (starts away)

MAY-ALICE

Who do I say came to call?

He turns to answer, walking backwards-

LUTHER

Bad news. She'll know who you mean.

We HOLD on May-Alice. She takes a picture of him leaving-

67 EXT. EVANGELINE DOWNS - DAY

Chantelle and Sugar are eating red beans and rice from plastic containers at trackside. Horses are being exercised on the turf-

SUGAR

How's that for you?

CHANTELLE

It's fine.

SUGAR

Made that myself.

A silent pause-

SUGAR

So all the women up north so hard to get next to, or is it just you?

CHANTELLE

Just me. You bet on these horses or just take care of em?

SUGAR

Sometimes I bet em. Only for the fun of it.

67 cont.

CHANTELLE

What's fun about losing your money?

SUGAR

If you win that's fun cause you make the money and if you lose that just show you how much you don't already know bout horses. You learn something, which is always fun. But if you don't risk nothing you can't get nothin.

Chantelle just shakes her head. Sugar smiles-

SUGAR

Come see my office.

68 INT./EXT. STABLE

A girl of about 15, ALBERTINE, is brushing down a quarter horse. She nods to Sugar as he steps in with Chantelle-

SUGAR

Hey darlin. Albertine, say hi to Chantelle.

ALBERTINE

Lo.

CHANTELLE

Nice to meet you.

SUGAR

Albertine's my first girl. She stays with me most of the summer.

CHANTELLE

You got more?

SUGAR

Let's see- by Albertine's mama, which was my first wife, I had her and a boy, Henri. Henri got him a basketball scholarship to LSU-

As Sugar talks he stoops by an unshod horse, lifts its foreleg and holds a horseshoe against the hoof to check the shape-

SUGAR

Then with my second I had Cecile and Eugenie, they live out by Breaux Bridge now. Don't see enough of them. Then let's see-

68 cont.

ALBERTINE

Rosalynn-

SUGAR

Yeah, by Rosalynn there was Andre,
Delia and Lorenzo. Lorenzo just
startin up school now.

Chantelle notices a goat standing nearby-

CHANTELLE

What's this?

SUGAR

You never seen a goat?

CHANTELLE

I know what it is. What's it
doing in here?

SUGAR

It's just a mascot- like a companion
sort of. These thoroughbreds get real
high-strung, they like to have them
somethin around for company, help chill
them out.

Chantelle bends to look the goat in the eye-

CHANTELLE

I know how you feel.

Sugar puts the shoe in fire tongs, steps over to the white hot
coals of the fire in front of the stable, and holds the shoe into
the heat-

CHANTELLE

You really do that, huh? Like
in the cowboy movies.

SUGAR

I'm a blacksmith.

CHANTELLE

(bit of a smile) You a black somethin,
alright.

69 INT. CLUB - NIGHT

We TRACK through a fairly large club, crowded, most all of the
patrons black. A ZYDECO BAND PLAYS in the center, and dozens of
couples are up and dancing. We find Chantelle sitting at a
table alone, watching. She looks to her right-

69 cont. CHANTELLE's POV - SUGAR

Talking and laughing with a couple who stand at the edge of the dance floor-

CU CHANTELLE

Considering him-

CHANTELLE's POV - SUGAR

He turns and meets her eyes. He smiles, comes over, bringing Chantelle back into a 2-shot. He bends and says something we can't hear because the MUSIC is so loud. He leads her out onto the floor and we FOLLOW. Sugar starts to show Chantelle how to dance to this music, Chantelle checking out the others on the floor and slowly getting into it. She allows a smile to cross her face-

70 EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Chantelle and Sugar sit on the hood of Sugar's car out in the club parking lot. We hear MUSIC from inside, VOICES and LAUGHTER from people coming out to their cars-

SUGAR

You move real nice. I wish I could dance with you and sit and watch you at the same time.

CHANTELLE

You don't ever stop, do you?
Pouring that stuff on.

SUGAR

(serious) I don't say nothin I don't mean.

CHANTELLE

(looks away) Alright. Sorry.

SUGAR

Don't be sorry. Just don't be so suspicious.

CHANTELLE

Man been married twenty-five times, got himself more children than a field got clover- how'm I sposed to trust you?

70 cont.

SUGAR

I never ast you to trust me, darlin.
I just want you to be with me. Have
some fun.

CHANTELLE

I already had enough fun to last me a
lifetime.

A pause. He looks at her seriously, then smiles-

SUGAR

Would you spend the night with me?
You don't have to like it.

Chantelle laughs. They look at each other for a long moment.
Sugar kisses her. Chantelle sighs, scared that she's so
interested-

CHANTELLE

You probably live in the swamp, right?
Got dead raccoons and shit hanging in
your house-

71 INT. MAY-ALICE'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

May-Alice drinking wine, on the couch watching TV. She sighs,
turns the set off. She sits brooding for a moment, then yells-

MAY-ALICE

Aaaaaahhhhhh!

Alone. She reaches over for her chair-

72 EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

A floodlight illuminates the wet grass of the lawn. May-Alice
wheels into the shot, stops. The bottle of wine she was drinking
is in her lap. She listens to the night around her, then yells
again-

MAY-ALICE

Aaaaaaaaaaaaaahhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!

A slight echo from the lake. May-Alice takes the bottle and
finishes it off. She drops it on the ground, pushes on out of
the shot-

73 INT. DARKROOM - NIGHT

TOTAL BLACKNESS. We hear WHEELCHAIR CLUNKS, DOORS OPENING-

73 cont.

MAY-ALICE

(off) Dammit-

CLICK. The RED DARKROOM LIGHT comes ON and we see May-Alice wheel into the room. There is just enough room for her to maneuver around the tables and sinks. May-Alice wheels over to where the chemicals are stored. She smiles, grabs a bottle of bourbon from a lower shelf-

MAY-ALICE

Reeves.

May-Alice puts the bourbon on the table behind her, then hoists a large bottle of chemical up onto her lap, palming a layer of dust off the label to read it-

74 INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Chantelle and Sugar are making out hot and heavy on the bed, still with most of their clothes on. Sugar kneels and starts kissing his way up Chantelle's leg, pushing her dress up as he does. Chantelle strokes his head, into the passion, then tears come and in a moment she is weeping. Sugar leaves off and comes up to hold her. She breathes deep, trying to get control-

CHANTELLE

Sorry.

SUGAR

I made love to women who weren't satisfied, but you the first that come out and cried about it-

CHANTELLE

Naw. It's just me.

Sugar kisses her cheek, takes a finger and rubs a tear from her face, licks it off-

SUGAR

I been wonderin what you taste like.

CHANTELLE

Yeah?

SUGAR

More salt than sugar, so far.

CHANTELLE

(smiles) I'm not- I don't think this is gonna happen. Not tonight.

Sugar looks down towards his dick-

SUGAR

Yeah. You kind of took the wind outa my sails, there.

CHANTELLE

Poor baby.

SUGAR

It got feelins too, you know.

CHANTELLE

That right?

SUGAR

If I'm lyin I'm dyin.

Chantelle puts her head on his chest-

CHANTELLE

Can I sleep right here tonight?

SUGAR

Mmmmn-hmmm.

CHANTELLE

What's that name of yours? The real one?

SUGAR

Ulysee. Like Ulysses, the guy in the story went off to fight in the Trojan wars with an army, and he's the only one makes it back alive.

CHANTELLE

A survivor.

SUGAR

Yeah. He was that.

CHANTELLE

You know the whole story?

SUGAR

It's a long one.

CHANTELLE

Tell it to me?

75 INT. MA'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Early morning sun slanting into the empty room-

CHANTELLE
(off) May-Alice? May-Alice?

Chantelle steps into the room, searching-

CHANTELLE
Damn.

76 EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Chantelle outside on the lawn, calling toward the lake-

CHANTELLE
May-Alice!

No answer. Chantelle looks to the side sees-

CHANTELLE'S POV - TRACKS

Wheel tracks in the grass lead toward the shed that houses the darkroom. We TILT till we see the discarded wine bottle. Chantelle steps into the shot, scoops up the bottle, heads for the shed-

77 INT. SHED

DARKNESS. The outside door opens, spilling light, and Chantelle steps in-

CHANTELLE
May-Alice?

MAY-ALICE
(inside) Don't come in.

CHANTELLE
You all right?

MAY-ALICE
(inside) Shut the outside door first.
I'm printing.

Chantelle shuts the outside door, plunging us into TOTAL DARKNESS again-

MAY-ALICE
(inside) Are you in the dark?

CHANTELLE

I can't see a thing.

MAY-ALICE

(inside) You can come in then.

CHANTELLE

I can't see the doorknob.

MAY-ALICE

(inside) Down to your right, about as high as your hip.

We hear FUMBLING, then a door opens on the RED LIGHT of the darkroom. We FOLLOW Chantelle in. May-Alice sits with tongs in hand, a timer clicking on the table next to a printing tray full of fixer, a large print starting to form beneath it-

MAY-ALICE

You get in late?

CHANTELLE

It's morning.

May-Alice looks up-

MAY-ALICE

Really?

CHANTELLE

I stayed in town. They're not finished with the car.

MAY-ALICE

(shakes her head) No sense of time in here.

Chantelle lays the empty wine bottle down on the table, lifts the bourbon bottle, nearly empty-

CHANTELLE

I see you've been busy.

MAY-ALICE

I don't need a sermon.

CHANTELLE

You think you could get through a day without a drink?

MAY-ALICE

Sure.

CHANTELLE

Okay. Today. Twenty-four hours, starting right now. You got enough problems with your liver and kidney without-

MAY-ALICE

Hey, you're the addict, not me!

Chantelle is taken totally off balance. She speaks quietly-

Chantelle

What do you mean by that?

The timer goes BING! May-Alice lifts the print out of the tray with the tongs and turns it toward Chantelle. The photo is of Luther when he first surprised May-Alice-

CHANTELLE

He was here?

MAY-ALICE

In the afternoon.

CHANTELLE

Hope he didn't scare you. He wouldn't hurt anybody, Luther.

MAY-ALICE

I'm glad to hear it. He didn't seem too healthy.

The photo hasn't fixed, Luther's image darkening till the whole print is black. May-Alice looks at it-

MAY-ALICE

This is the only part I can't remember how to do.

CHANTELLE

I cleaned up. Finished detox a month ago.

MAY-ALICE

Or maybe the fixer is worn out-

CHANTELLE

Am I fired?

MAY-ALICE

Fired? For what?

CHANTELLE

Lying.

77 cont.

MAY-ALICE

I told you when you came here I didn't want to hear about your problems.

CHANTELLE

I lied to the Agency. Gave them my records from back in Chicago, told them I'd been off in Europe for two years. (sits) Luther had some restaurants, owned a big car- it was fun living high. Exciting. Then we got to free-basing, and everything else kind of fell away. Luther lost his business, and I lost- well-

MAY-ALICE

What stopped you?

CHANTELLE

I guess I didn't want to die.

May-Alice takes this in-

CHANTELLE

(hesitant) I need this job.

MAY-ALICE

You're not fired.

May-Alice wheels back from the table, looks at the bourbon bottle-

MAY-ALICE

And if I'm not gonna drink today, I might as well go to bed.

FADE TO BLACK:

FADE UP ON:

78 INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

May-Alice on the couch with her head in her hands. We hear CHANTELLE COME IN-

CHANTELLE

How you feeling?

MAY-ALICE

Like shit.

Chantelle sits by her-

78 cont.

MAY-ALICE
How did you do it?

CHANTELLE
At first I was in a hospital. No place
to score. It's back in the real world
that's hard.

MAY-ALICE
This isn't the real world.

CHANTELLE
I know.

79 EXT. LAWN - DAY

May-Alice lies on her back on a mat, working out with
handweights-

CU MAY-ALICE

Her face tight and determined-

80 INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY - CU REMOTE CONTROL

May-Alice's fingers punching channels impatiently-

CU MAY-ALICE

Frowning at the TV. She shuts it off, looks back toward the
kitchen-

81 INT. KITCHEN - REFRIGERATOR

The refrigerator door opens. We PAN around, looking for booze.
All gone-

MAY-ALICE

In her chair, disappointed-

82 EXT. HOUSE - DAY

May-Alice wheels down to the dock, camera in her lap. She pauses
to pull a bottle of seltzer from a pouch on the chair, drinks-

83 EXT. YARD - DAY - VARIOUS SHOTS

May-Alice shooting pictures of whatever moves and some things that don't. We see some of them THROUGH THE LENS. Finally she hears the sound of a MOTOR KICKING and DYING-

84 EXT. YARD - VIEWFINDER POV

Looking through the camera we PAN around till we HOLD on the dock, where a man squats by an old boat tied up there. SNAP! The shutter falls to capture the moment-

CLOSER - VIEWFINDER POV

We can see now that the man is Rennie, tinkering- SNAP!

CLOSER - VIEWFINDER POV

Right behind him now. Rennie turns- SNAP!

85 EXT. DOCK - DAY

Rennie stands in the old flat boat, his tools spread out on the dock beside him. He has the housing off the motor as May-Alice wheels up-

RENNIE

People been cuttin your grass all these years had sense theyd've brought this inside. You got you some rust. Couple three parts I can have her running, though.

MAY-ALICE

Chantelle ask you to fix this?

RENNIE

Just thought I'd do it.

MAY-ALICE

(wary) Oh.

RENNIE

Live on the water, you want a boat.

A pause as she watches him work-

MAY-ALICE

So how's your father these days?

RENNIE

Dead.

MAY-ALICE

Oh.

RENNIE

Started him a fight in Smokey's
over to Port Arthur, couple
roughnecks put him away in the
parking lot. (shrugs) That's the
way he lived it. (points to boat)
Some day I get her runnin, I take
your friend and you out, see the
neighborhood.

MAY-ALICE

Sure.

RENNIE

You never did like it much down here.

MAY-ALICE

The place was alright- I just
had a problem with who people
expected me to be.

RENNIE

I know how that is. You miss up there?

MAY-ALICE

(thinks) No. You're going to be
alone you can do without forty
million people reminding you of it.

RENNIE

Are you okay? (she frowns)
You seem a little upset or somethin-

MAY-ALICE

I'm fine. I just started- a diet.
Makes you cranky, your blood sugar
and all that. (tentative) So- did
you ever get away from here?

RENNIE

Drafted. Sent me to the Philipines,
guard ammunition on its way to the war.
The work part was boring. The rest
was like Port Arthur on payday night.

A silence-

RENNIE

Everybody here was real proud how you did on the TV.

MAY-ALICE

Sure.

RENNIE

I never did see your program. Arlene won't have it in the house.

MAY-ALICE

A critic.

RENNIE

No television, no radio, no liquor, no card playing- won't sing a song less the Lord's name is in it.

MAY-ALICE

That's serious.

RENNIE

She took religion between the second and third babies. Her people were like that but she'd run off from them when I met her. (shakes his head) She got the kids in it with her now. They pray for me a lot.

MAY-ALICE

I was married for a little bit. An actor. That should have been the tip-off right there. Finally told him 'There's only room for one child in this apartment, and that's me.' (looks at Rennie) So was I snotty to you when we were kids?

RENNIE

(thinks) You weren't much of anything to me. We just kind of looked at each other. I think you were real nice to the people you knew. Different- you know- but real nice.

MAY-ALICE

Then how'd I get like this?

Rennie isn't sure what she's asking. He steps onto the dock, scooping up his tools-

85 cont.

RENNIE

I'm layin cement today over at
Landry's. I be by in a couple days.

MAY-ALICE

Bye, Rennie.

We HOLD on May-Alice, watching Rennie walk away toward the house.
She pulls out the seltzer, looks at it, drops it on the ground-

86 INT. DARKROOM - DAY

May-Alice desperately searches the lower shelves, pulling each
bottle of chemicals out and laying it on the floor, searching for
more of Reeves' stash-

87 INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Chantelle is working on the letter again. She gives up, tears it
and the envelope in two, crosses to toss them in the trash. She
is not in a good mood. May-Alice rolls in from outside, agitated
and sweaty-

MAY-ALICE

Alright, the game's over.

CHANTELLE

What game?

MAY-ALICE

Where'd you put all the liquor?

CHANTELLE

Threw it away.

MAY-ALICE

It's in the trash?

CHANTELLE

I poured it out, put the bottles
in the bin.

MAY-ALICE

You poured it out?

CHANTELLE

(coolly) The recycle people don't
want nothin left in the bottles.

MAY-ALICE

Look, Chantelle, I'm not ready
for this. When I get stronger-

CHANTELLE

You keep drinking you won't get any stronger.

MAY-ALICE

Okay- the deal was 24 hours, right? Ernie's closes at nine- if you're going to have any here by early tomorrow morning-

CHANTELLE

I'm not getting you any more.

MAY-ALICE

What?

CHANTELLE

You want it you can get it yourself.

MAY-ALICE

I can't drive.

CHANTELLE

Well that's something to work toward, isn't it?

MAY-ALICE

(pissed) Don't hand me that condescending bullshit, just go in and get me some fucking wine!

CHANTELLE

Just listen to yourself-

MAY-ALICE

No! You listen to me!
I want you to do what I tell you-

CHANTELLE

(moving away) Dream on, girl-

MAY-ALICE

Who made you the fucking warden?

CHANTELLE

(turns on her) And who made you the queen of the whole damn world? Sit around feeling sorry for yourself, TV-watchin dried-up miserable old witch! You can't keep from drinking one lousy day and you not even a drunk yet, you're just spoiled! Girl, I wake up most days and I want to get high so bad I can't even breathe-

87 cont.

MAY-ALICE
Cocaine is different-

CHANTELLE
Bullshit! What do you know
about it?

She starts out of the room-

MAY-ALICE
Where are you going?

CHANTELLE
I can't be around your shit, you
understand that? I'm going away from
you!

We HOLD on May-Alice as Chantelle slams out. May-Alice is angry and scared. She grabs the dish-drying rack, filled with plates and silverware, and flings it across the room. SMASHING and CRASHING-

MAY-ALICE
(screams) Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!

88 EXT. HOUSE - EVENING

A WS of the house as the sun sets-

89 INT. KITCHEN - EVENING

We start on the floor, broken bits of plate still scattered about. The wheelchair wheel bumps over one-

CU SKILLET

The lid is pulled off with a wash of steam to reveal a colorful jambalaya finished in the skillet. We WIDEN to see May-Alice pull it off the burner, then dish it into a serving platter with a wooden spoon. She wheels it over to the table. Beyond her we see the counters crowded with boxes and wrappers and utensils, cabinet doors open, things spilled. The table is set for two, steaming soup in the center, cornbread, red beans- a real feast. Chantelle steps in in the BG, looking down as she steps in broken crockery, then looking around to survey the scene. Both she and May-Alice are subdued, embarrassed about their outbursts-

CHANTELLE
You been cooking.

89 cont.

MAY-ALICE

Gotta do something to keep busy.

CHANTELLE

Smells good.

MAY-ALICE

Sit.

Chantelle considers, then takes a place at the table. She examines the china-

CHANTELLE

Nice plates.

MAY-ALICE

I broke most of the other stuff.

CHANTELLE

You did a number on em-

MAY-ALICE

(points) That's okra gumbo there.
You start with some of that.

CHANTELLE

Thank you. (looks around) We'll
have to get Rennie over to lower
the cabinets.

MAY-ALICE

I was going to make biscuits
but I couldn't reach the flour.

She rolls over to the refrigerator, opens it and stares in,
sighing-

MAY-ALICE

Chantelle?

CHANTELLE

Yeah?

MAY-ALICE

Iced tea or Koolaid?

90 INT. DARKROOM - DAY

Under the red DARKROOM LIGHT we see the picture of Rennie turning
around at the dock starting to develop in a tray-

90 cont. MAY-ALICE

Watching it, tongs in hand. There is a KNOCK-

CHANTELLE
(off) May-Alice?

MAY-ALICE
Yeah?

CHANTELLE
(off) We got company.

MAY-ALICE
Damn. Who is it?

CHANTELLE
(off) They say they're from Daytime.

91 EXT. PATIO - DAY

May-Alice wheels out to find DAWN, KIM and NINA standing awkwardly on the patio. Dawn is black, Kim and Nina white. Dawn and Nina are roughly May-Alice's age, while Kim is just beyond ingenue. Chantelle hangs back by the door to watch. Dawn steps forward to hug May-Alice-

MAY-ALICE
Dawn-

DAWN
Hi baby. So good to see you.

KIM
May-Alice-

Kim kisses her cheek-

MAY-ALICE
You tracked me down.

KIM
We're on a junket. They expanded it to New Orleans this year.

Dawn sees that Nina is hanging back shyly-

DAWN
May-Alice, this is Nina Crosley-

MAY-ALICE
Hi.

91 cont.

NINA
(shakes her hand) Hi.

KIM
She's playing you.

DAWN
Scarlet.

MAY-ALICE
I'm back in the story?

DAWN
Vance thought it was time.

NINA
I'm pregnant.

MAY-ALICE
Oh- sorry- have a seat, please-

NINA
No. Scarlet's pregnant. On
the show.

MAY-ALICE
Oh. Wow.

NINA
I've been auditing Lamaze classes.
Me personally. For- you know-
preparation.

MAY-ALICE
I had a hysterectomy.

NINA
Oh, I'm sorry-

MAY-ALICE
On the show. Scarlet. In
my third season..

NINA
(worried) A hysterectomy-

DAWN
(idly) Took the crib and left
the playpen.

Chantelle laughs. Dawn is suddenly a self-conscious, and gets back her
somewhat regal manner-

91 cont.

DAWN

(smiling) Something my mother used to say.

KIM

Was she southern?

DAWN

(shrugs) She was from the South Side-

NINA

(sitting) Maybe that's why the baby had to be by Zon-Dar.

MAY-ALICE

I haven't been keeping up lately-Zon-Dar?

NINA

He went back to his planet.

MAY-ALICE

Ah. Well. This is- uhm- a great surprise. Why don't you all have a seat. Would you like something to drink?

Kim looks to Chantelle-

KIM

Do you have sassafras tea?

Chantelle looks to May-Alice who looks to Dawn-

DAWN

She read it somewhere.

NINA

(to Chantelle) Wine spritzer?

CHANTELLE

(looks to May-Alice) We don't have anything alcoholic. I'll just bring a bunch of stuff out-

Chantelle retreats into the house-

MAY-ALICE

She's uhm- Chantelle- isn't really my maid or anything.

NINA

Oh, I'm sorry-

91 cont.

KIM

I thought she was like a family retainer.

MAY-ALICE

Right- so- you all drove over together?

KIM

May-Alice, this country is so- it's so laden, you know?

MAY-ALICE

Laden? With what?

KIM

Oh, just- atmosphere. Portent. It's like the air is thick with- with- what is it thick with?

DAWN

Humidity.

KIM

Right. It's liquid and heavy with history and tradition. It's- fecund.

May-Alice looks to Dawn for help-

DAWN

Must be great for the soil.

92 EXT. PATIO - DAY (LATER)

Kim steps out onto the lawn, drink in hand, gazing romantically into the distance-

KIM

'This land, deep and inviolate, paid for in blood, infused with the life-spirit of those who would endure on its face, standing in mute and eternal reproach to the cheap intransigent babble of the towns that fester in its nether parts; this land, whispering with overripe breath its tale of original sin.'

WOMEN - PATIO

Chantelle has cleared the refrigerator of drinks- pitchers and bottles cover table. They are a bit stunned by Kim's outburst-

NINA

That's amazing. Who wrote that?

KIM

(turning) I forget.

May-Alice, orange soda in hand, shakes her head-

MAY-ALICE

That's why I never had kids. After surviving me as a mother they'd grow up and write more of that twisted gothic shit.

DAWN

You'd be a great mother.

MAY-ALICE

Dawn, I couldn't keep a pet turtle alive. And then when I was married it was to that- that actor-

Chantelle steps out with more ice for drinks-

DAWN

He was on the show.

NINA

He played Zon-Dar.

MAY-ALICE

He got you pregnant? He's got a sperm count of two-

NINA

So you didn't stay friends?

MAY-ALICE

The only good thing about this fucking accident is I don't have to pay alimony to the little creep anymore.

NINA

Oh. Wow.

Kim drifts back to them-

KIM

Does this place have a name?

MAY-ALICE

You mean Lake Arthur?

KIM

Author?

CHANTELLE

Arthur. Like the King. May-Alice
turning back into a cracker down here.

KIM

Actually, I meant the house. Does
your family have a name for it?

MAY-ALICE

You mean like Belle Rive?

KIM

Well-

MAY-ALICE

Does your apartment in New York
have a name?

KIM

14G.

MAY-ALICE

Right.

DAWN

(standing) Jeffrey calls our place
in the Hamptons 'Uncle Tom's Condo',
but that's just to be perverse.
May I use your bathroom?

MAY-ALICE

(points) Just to the left of the
kitchen.

Dawn exits-

NINA

I feel terrible.

Kim and May-Alice turn to look at her-

NINA

Here I am sitting having a nice time
in your back yard and I'm the one who
stole your part and had an affair
with your ex-husband and now I'm
carrying his baby.

MAY-ALICE

An affair?

92 cont.

NINA

Oh no- not in real life- he was-

She shoots a panicked look to Kim, who cringes-

NINA

-he was taken.

May-Alice looks to Kim, who looks back sheepishly-

MAY-ALICE

Taken?

KIM

He's grown a lot since you knew him. That's what I thought, anyway.

MAY-ALICE

You poor baby. How did it come out?

KIM

(shrugs) He went back to his planet.

93 INT. HOUSE - DAY

Dawn comes back through the kitchen. Chantelle is assembling BLTs-

DAWN

Can I help you with anything?

CHANTELLE

I'm fine.

DAWN

Uhm- Kim doesn't eat meat. And Nina's gonna open it up and scrape out that mayonaise.

CHANTELLE

How bout you?

DAWN

Oh, I'll eat anything.

Dawn leans on the counter, shy-

DAWN

You from around here?

CHANTELLE

(shakes her head) Chicago.

DAWN

Yeah? Me too. Cooley High.

CHANTELLE

Du Sable.

DAWN

Where'd you live?

CHANTELLE

(street name)

DAWN

Pill Hill. Father must be a doctor.
I come out of Cabrini-Green.

CHANTELLE

That's a long way up.

DAWN

Yeah. So- how is she?

CHANTELLE

See for yourself.

DAWN

I don't think I'd be able to handle it.

CHANTELLE

You and her good friends?

DAWN

We spent a lot of time together.
Work- you know.

CHANTELLE

Yeah.

DAWN

You two seem to get on pretty well.

CHANTELLE

(considers) We spend a lot of time
together.

94 EXT. PATIO - LATE AFTERNOON

Chantelle sits with the others now, remains of lunch lying in front of
them, a more reflective mood settling in-

KIM

I did Blanche, I did Laura, I
did Alma Summer and-

KIM (cont.)

-Smoke, I did Frankie in Member of the Wedding-

DAWN

Where was this?

KIM

Minnesota. In school.

DAWN

Minnesota, huh?

KIM

One more year on daytime, save my money, I'm gonna quit and go back to class. Do some theater.

DAWN

I heard that one before.

MAY-ALICE

I said that one before.

NINA

I didn't ask for the anal probe.

The others look at her. She is deep in thought-

NINA

Four years starving in New York, doing showcases that I had to pay for myself, that was my first big break. My first feature. This like zero-budget movie about people who are taken up into alien spaceships and given physicals against their will? I go in to the audition and the director is really like intense and mysterious and he has me sit with my eyes closed and like free-associate, right? We do these improv about the aliens representing all our primal fears and it's great, finally some real acting, and they tell me before I leave that I've got the part only I don't know what it is yet, but I'm so thrilled it's this feature, you know, not a student film or anything and my agent gives me a script and I go through looking for Margaret, the part they say I have, with my yellow underliner marker in my hand and it's drying out and finally I find only-

NINA (cont.)

-this one page with the corner folded over. I'm in a therapy group of these people who have had these alien physicals against their will and I've only got one line. "I didn't ask for the anal probe."

Nobody laughs. This is the story of somebody's life-

MAY-ALICE

Not much to build a character on.

NINA

But I'm a professional, right? I prepared. I had back-story for this woman, I knew that she'd been to the hairdresser just before the therapy group, that she didn't trust the guy who sat next to the fuschia, that she turned the TV set on the minute she got back to her apartment just for the sound of it, I even had my boyfriend at the time-- you know-- with a thermometer-

MAY ALICE

We get the picture.

NINA

For the sense memory, right? I was loaded for fucking bear. Then it comes time to shoot the scene and they do one take of the wide shot, and they stop just before my line. I was terrified they were going to cut it. They move in for close-ups, reaction shots, mostly things that mean I have to go sit outside cause the camera is set up where my chair is? By the time they get to me it's late and the crew is grumpy cause they're non-union and don't get paid extra for overtime and the lead actor is gone, he's got his shrink appointment, so I'm alone staring at a piece of tape on a stand next to the camera and the director says, "Let's try it a few times without cutting, and give me some different colors."

DAWN

(smiles) Colors.

94 cont.

NINA

I didn't ask for the anal probe.
I didn't ask for the anal probe.
I didn't ask for the anal probe.
I didn't ask for the anal probe.

A silence as they contemplate this. May-Alice breaks the ice-

MAY-ALICE

And to think you ended up with Zon-Dar.

95 EXT. DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

The women are getting into their car, Dawn driving, as May-Alice wheels out to see them off. Chantelle hangs back a little-

KIM

I won't forget this, May-Alice.
I really won't. The light and
the water and the smell of the
honeysuckle-

MAY-ALICE

Catalpha trees-

KIM

-the whole thing. It's been-

DAWN

Atmospheric.

KIM

-transcendant.

Dawn makes a face and sits in the car. She reaches out to take May-Alice's hand-

DAWN

You come back up, you tell me right
away. You promise?

MAY-ALICE

Promise.

NINA

(calling from rear) Bye Chantelle!

CHANTELLE

Waving as we hear the CAR REV, then PULL AWAY. She steps forward to stand by May-Alice, watching them go, brooding-

95 cont.

MAY-ALICE

I need a drink.

CHANTELLE

Too bad.

May-Alice looks at her-

MAY-ALICE

When you think I'll be strong enough
to have just a little?

CHANTELLE

Never.

May-Alice scowls, looks after the departing car-

CHANTELLE

You miss it much?

MAY-ALICE

Drinking?

CHANTELLE

Acting.

MAY-ALICE

(considers) It's the only thing I was
ever good at.

FADE TO BLACK:

FADE UP TO:

96 INT. BEDROOM - DAY

May-Alice is long-sitting on her bed, surrounded by clothes-

MAY-ALICE

Chantelle? Chantelle?

Chantelle enters-

CHANTELLE

Yeah?

MAY-ALICE

I think I need help dressing. Do
my legs look weird?

CHANTELLE

(shrugs) Bit pale.

MAY-ALICE
More than the rest of me?

CHANTELLE
Naw. I guess not.

May-Alice holds up an expensive-looking dress-

MAY-ALICE
What about this?

CHANTELLE
(shakes head) Shorts. S'what I'm wearing.

MAY-ALICE
Do you have some I can borrow?

CHANTELLE
Yeah.

May-Alice looks across into her mirror, grabbing a handful of hair-

MAY-ALICE
Look at this. Think you can do anything with this?

CHANTELLE
I'm not a hairdresser.

MAY-ALICE
You had friends, right?
Friends, women friends, help each other with their hair?

CHANTELLE
My friends don't have your kind of hair.

MAY-ALICE
Right.

CHANTELLE
And we don't have time for any cornrows.

MAY-ALICE
What am I doing this for? Why do I give a shit?

CHANTELLE
He likes you.

MAY-ALICE
You think he does?

CHANTELLE

He asked you to go out on his boat.

MAY-ALICE

He asked you out too.

CHANTELLE

He's not after me.

MAY-ALICE

He's not after me, either. He just asked us out to be nice.

CHANTELLE

He asked you out. He asked me to come along. Now if you don't want me to-

MAY-ALICE

No. You have to come. (looks at hair) I feel like I'm fucking thirteen years old. I'm pathetic.

CHANTELLE

You're not pathetic.

MAY-ALICE

He's just asking us out to be nice.

CHANTELLE

Sure.

MAY-ALICE

Or he just wants to show us his boat. Men get off on that, showing women their machines.

CHANTELLE

Yeah.

MAY-ALICE

Or maybe he really is after you.

CHANTELLE

You're pathetic.

97 EXT. BAYOU - DAY

May-Alice sits in her chair lashed down on the front of the flat boat. Chantelle sits beside her, and Rennie steers with the motor in the rear. He cuts the motor down to an idle and they drift, deep in a mangrove bayou-

CHANTELLE

Are we lost?

RENNIE

No.

CHANTELLE

How can you tell?

RENNIE

(shrugs) Been comin in here all my life.

MAY-ALICE

(points) Look-

THEIR POV - HERON

An enormous blue heron flaps up ahead of them, gathering speed over the water till it lifts and soars over the treetops-

BOAT

RENNIE

Saw one of those take off with a four foot snake in his mouth. My papa almost swallow his tobacco chew.

MAY-ALICE

It meant something to him?

RENNIE

Everything meant somethin to him. Had alla them coon-ass superstitions. Catch something in his traps, whatever it was, cooter, gator, possum- he cut the stomach open, see what was inside. Tell the future.

CHANTELLE

There lots of snakes in here?

RENNIE

This Cottonmouth Heaven in here. I find some for you.

CHANTELLE

Don't go out of your way.

98 EXT. BAYOU - DAY - VARIOUS SHOTS

The boat moving through the trees.

Animals appearing along the shoreline- snakes, armadillo, gators, nutria, birds.

May-Alice, Chantelle and Rennie pointing, reacting.

99 SHORE - DAY

The boat is pulled up on the little beach of a small island. We are getting near the Gulf, wider stretches of water between mangrove islands. We PAN to see Chantelle and May-Alice lying on a blanket by the water. Rennie standing beyond them, fishing-

MAY-ALICE AND CHANTELLE - CLOSER

Chantelle is poking the skin on May-Alice's legs to see if she's gotten too much sun already-

CHANTELLE

I never went out on any boat. Not my father's style, nature stuff. Course maybe if he had boys-

MAY-ALICE

You had sisters?

CHANTELLE

Naw. He wanted sons, all he got was me.

MAY-ALICE

Tough on your mother.

CHANTELLE

I lost her when I was 14. Diabetes.

MAY-ALICE

You still close to your father?

CHANTELLE

(frowns) I married right out of high school and he didn't want me to. When we split up it was like "I told you so" and who needs that, right? Then later, when I took up with Luther- (sighs) We don't talk anymore.

Chantelle covers May-Alice's legs with a towel-

MAY-ALICE

I wasn't talking with mine when they crashed. I'd just gone up North against their will. My mother would sneak in my room at night and say how she could see my side of it but she was in this position, and couldn't I just help keep the peace? She never stood up for me. Or for herself. She hated flying. But she went along.

Rennie squats next to them with a big catfish in his hand-

RENNIE

Lunch.

CHANTELLE

Ooooh. Nasty-looking.

MAY-ALICE

She's from Chicago.

Rennie slices the fish's belly-

RENNIE

Let's check out what the future got in store for us.

CU FISH

Rennie's knife probes out the stomach, slices it open- two little silver fish, intact, slip out-

SHORE

MAY-ALICE

What's that mean? Is it good?

RENNIE

Passion fish. Hold out your hands.

CHANTELLE

Whoah-

RENNIE

It's real bad luck not to.

They gingerly hold out their hands and he places a fish in each palm-

RENNIE

You squeeze that little fish tight
now and think bout somebody you
want some loving from.

May-Alice and Chantelle look at each other, make a disgusted face,
then squeeze their fish-

CHANTELLE

You're makin this shit up, right?

RENNIE

Ever since there been Cajuns they
been squeezin the passion fish.
Some says you got to swallow em raw-

CHANTELLE

I don't need it that bad.

100 CU FISH SKELETON - LATE AFTERNOON

Lifted on a stick. We WIDEN to see Rennie taking the fish
carcass to wedge it between some half-submerged rocks.
Chantelle is packing up the remains of the picnic-

RENNIE

Leave this baby for the crayfish.

MAY-ALICE

What is this island, Rennie?
Does it have a name?

RENNIE

Despair.

CHANTELLE

Nice.

RENNIE

Story is, there was a slave woman
went crazy out here. Lost her only
daughter to pneumonia, run off from
her people and holed up here.

He dips to one knee by May-Alice. She puts her arms around
his neck and he scoops her into his arms, standing-

RENNIE

Trappers come by in their pirogues,
they hear her moanin and cryin
bout her lost baby. Despair.

100 cont.

Rennie places May-Alice in her chair. Chantelle adjusts her legs and slides the side panel in-

CHANTELLE
(slaps a mosquito) What did she live on?

RENNIE
Oh- bird's eggs, fish- everything
that walks, flies, hops or crawls
out here got a use. It's all
good eatin.

Rennie gives the motor cord a pull. The engine sputters and dies. Tries again. Dies. Again. Nothing.

CHANTELLE
(swats again) Something broke?

RENNIE
Yeah.

CHANTELLE
Can you fix it?

Rennie pops the cowl off the motor-

RENNIE
Gonna take a little time. I'm
real sorry.

MAY-ALICE
No hurry.

CHANTELLE
(waving bugs away) Sure. We'll
just feed the bugs while you fix it.

Rennie bends and scoops a double handful of mud from the bank, dropping it on deck next to May-Alice. He starts to rub it on her legs-

RENNIE
Here. Better do this, keep them
skeeters off you-

CHANTELLE
(teasing) That looks like fun.

Rennie tosses a handful of mud toward Chantelle-

RENNIE
Help yourself.

100 cont.

Chantelle makes a mock insulted look to May-Alice over Rennie's head, then silently mouths 'He likes you' -

MAY-ALICE

Shhhhhhh.

101 EXT. BAYOU - NIGHT

Rennie steers with the motor running slow, pointing a flashlight to see ahead as they wind through the narrow bayou -

CHANTELLE

We getting there?

RENNIE

Gettin somewhere.

CHANTELLE

Great.

MAY-ALICE

(happy) Your kids must love being out here with you.

RENNIE

Arlene won't let em come. Says the devil lives out here. That's why the trees won't grow straight.

MAY-ALICE

That's too bad.

RENNIE

You getting cold up there?

CLOSER - MAY-ALICE AND CHANTELLE

Chantelle is worried that they're lost, but May-Alice is having a great time -

MAY-ALICE

We're fine up here.

A low-hanging branch scrapes across the deck. Chantelle starts and grabs May-Alice's hand -

MAY-ALICE

Just fine.

102 EXT. BAYOU - NIGHT - VARIOUS SHOTS

The moon through the tops of the mangroves.

The flashlight playing on the trees and water ahead.

Rennie steering, searching.

Chantelle watching for snakes.

May-Alice smiling, taking in the night.

103 EXT. DOCK - NIGHT

Rennie stowing gear from the boat as Chantelle unlocks the wheels to push May-Alice back to the house-

RENNIE

I'll take care of all this. I'm
really sorry.

MAY-ALICE

I loved it. It was wonderful.

CHANTELLE

A thrill a minute.

MAY-ALICE

You want to call from the house?
Your wife- ?

RENNIE

She knows where I am. She's not worried.

MAY-ALICE

Right. Well- good night.

CHANTELLE

Night.

RENNIE

Good night.

We TRACK AHEAD as Chantelle wheels May-Alice away-

MAY-ALICE

His wife's not worried.

CHANTELLE

Should she be?

MAY-ALICE

Why worry about some cripple, got
a freezer compartment for a pussy-

103 cont.

CHANTELLE

Don't be that way.

MAY-ALICE

Look at me. Pitiful.

She holds her hands in front of her face-

MAY-ALICE

My palms are all sweaty. (makes
a face) And they smell like fish.

CHANTELLE

(smiles) Passion fish.

She pushes May-Alice out of the shot-

104 SUN - DAY

There is NO SOUND. We TILT DOWN from a bright sun in a blue sky to see Rennie, soundlessly pounding nails into the dock in front of the house. We watch his back muscles move for a moment, then PAN across to where May-Alice sits, wearing a sundress, her legs hanging over the edge of the dock. She is watching Rennie, smiling. She stands, walks over, kneels behind him, touching his back. He turns, smiles- they kiss. We hear Chantelle's VOICE, off, from some distance-

CHANTELLE

(off) May-Alice! May-Alice!

May-Alice looks out across the lake, shielding her eyes from the sun-

105 ISLAND, CHANTELLE AND GIRL - DAY

NO SOUND but Chantelle's VOICE. Chantelle stands waving from the shore of a little island across the water, holding onto a LITTLE GIRL with her other hand-

CHANTELLE

May-Alice, it's okay! I found her! I
found her!

Chantelle's VOICE, much closer, FADES IN-

CHANTELLE

May-Alice. May-Alice.

106 INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

May-Alice starts awake on the couch. She is dressed in shorts and a sleeveless t-shirt. Chantelle is sitting next to her-

CHANTELLE

You okay?

MAY-ALICE

I was dreaming. You were in it. You were on that island- and you had a little girl with you-

Chantelle tightens-

CHANTELLE

Don't dream that anymore, okay?

MAY-ALICE

It's a dream. How can I control that?

CHANTELLE

Try. (stands) It's time to go.

107 EXT. CAR, TOWN - DAY

May-Alice's car back on the road, her wheelchair folded and roped into the trunk, moving through town-

108 INT. CAR - DAY

Chantelle driving, May-Alice strapped into the passenger seat-

CHANTELLE

We got to get you one of those vans, got the platform that drops down-

MAY-ALICE

I'd look like fucking Robocop-

CHANTELLE

It's not any picnic lugging you in and out of this thing.

MAY-ALICE

(sees) Jesus, there's Rennie-

109 THEIR POV - STORE

Rennie steps out of the Pic'n'Pay with his arms full of groceries, preceded by his WIFE and a mess of CHILDREN-

109 cont. INT. CAR

Chantelle watches May-Alice for a moment, gauging her reaction-

CHANTELLE

Anything you want me to pick up while
you're at the session? May-Alice?

MAY-ALICE

(still watching, distracted) Maybe
some more film.

They drive on, May-Alice looking into the side mirror to keep
an eye on Rennie as they leave-

110 INT. THERAPY ROOM - DAY

Louise is working May-Alice's arms and trunk as she lies on
the exam table-

LOUISE

These seem better.

MAY-ALICE

She's moody, you know? I mean she's
very professional, it doesn't get
in the way of my life-

LOUISE

Which is?

MAY-ALICE

What?

LOUISE

Activities of daily life? What do
you do all day?

A long pause, May-Alice trying to think what she's been doing-

MAY-ALICE

I've started taking pictures.

LOUISE

Uh-huh.

MAY-ALICE

Outside, mostly. She wants me to
buy an electric chair, one of those
ones that's like a trail bike.
She's into high-tech, Chantelle.
Not to make her job easier or
anything, just, you know- for me.
(sighs) I wish she'd open up a-

MAY-ALICE (cont.)
-little more. She's carrying a lot
of weight around, but she won't
let anybody close.

LOUISE
You've gotten a little more flexible.

MAY-ALICE
What?

LOUISE
Especially in your neck and shoulders.

MAY-ALICE
She's been all over me about my drinking.

LOUISE
Give me some resistance.

May-Alice tightens her arm and Louise tries to pull it away-

MAY-ALICE
I used to have a few glasses of wine
with dinner, another while I learned
my lines for the next day, then fall
asleep. The rest of the time I was
working.

LOUISE
Now the other one.

MAY-ALICE
Then when I had the whole day to face--

LOUISE
You're getting stronger.

MAY-ALICE
If I ask her for a drink now she won't
give it to me. Like she's the boss.

LOUISE
You think it's something you can
handle on your own?

May-Alice thinks for a long moment-

MAY-ALICE
No.

Louise presses on May-Alice's belly, looking for swelling-

LOUISE

How's your bowel function?

MAY-ALICE

Fine if I eat at the same time every day.
I almost feel like we could be friends,
only there's so much garbage in
between us.

LOUISE

Any shortness of breath? Pain in
the lungs?

MAY-ALICE

(shakes head) So what do you think?

LOUISE

I'm not done yet.

MAY-ALICE

I mean about her. Chantelle.

LOUISE

(sits against table) I'm a physical
therapist, May-Alice, not a marriage
counselor.

MAY-ALICE

Right.

Louise takes her legs and stretches them back toward her head-

LOUISE

Take a deep breath.

May-Alice takes a deep breath, holds it. Her feet are almost
in her face-

MAY-ALICE

Doc?

LOUISE

Call me Louise. Little bald guys with
glasses who smoke cigars and play
poker are called Doc.

MAY-ALICE

Did you ever fall in love with a
married man?

111 INT. SUGAR'S BEDROOM - DAY

Chantelle sits on Sugar's bed, putting her clothes back on. We hear the SHOWER from the adjoining bathroom. She calls-

CHANTELLE

Sugar? I got to go! Sugar?

112 INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Albertine is laying her lunch out on the table as Chantelle steps in. Chantelle is surprised. Albertine is used to this-

CHANTELLE

Oh! Hi-

ALBERTINE

Hi.

CHANTELLE

I'm Chantelle-

ALBERTINE

I remember.

Chantelle smiles, watches Albertine sit to eat-

CHANTELLE

Sugar said you were at the track-

ALBERTINE

Workouts are over. Post-time not till 5:30.

Chantelle sits against the counter, searching for words-

CHANTELLE

Albertine- when your parents split up- and Sugar wasn't around- were you mad at him?

ALBERTINE

(shrugs) Both of em.

CHANTELLE

You stay mad long?

ALBERTINE

Naw. I figure they just people. They got their problems, I got mine.

CHANTELLE

You got problems? At your age?

112 cont.

Albertine gives her a shy smile-

ALBERTINE
I'm working on some.

113 INT. BEDROOM - DAY - VARIOUS SHOTS

Impressionistic shots of Chantelle and Sugar making love-

114 INT. CAR - EVENING - CU CHANTELLE

Daydreaming as she drives-

MAY-ALICE
(off) Chantelle? Chantelle?

SIDE ANGLE 2-SHOT

May-Alice is watching the road ahead, a little worried-

CHANTELLE
Yeah?

MAY-ALICE
Could we drive on the right side of
the road for awhile?

Chantelle swerves-

CHANTELLE
Sorry. Spaced out.

MAY-ALICE
So what did you do while I was with Louise?

CHANTELLE
Oh- just killed time.

115 INT. HOUSE - NIGHT - CU ANSWERING MACHINE

May-Alice's hand appears to punch the Message button. The VOICE of
DR. BLADES, deep and stern, comes on. We WIDEN to see
May-Alice, then Chantelle entering through the doorway beyond her-

DR. BLADES
Hello, I'm calling for Chantelle---
This is her father speaking. It's
5 o'clock on Thursday. Denita
and I would like to visit you this
weekend. Please give me a call.

115 cont.

May-Alice clicks the OFF button. She looks back to Chantelle, frozen in her tracks-

MAY-ALICE
Denita?

CHANTELLE
(quietly) My daughter.

116 EXT. ROADSIDE - DAY

We see the same bus Chantelle got off of her first day pull away, leaving DR. BLADES, a stern-looking man in his 60's, and DENITA, a little girl of 10. We SHIFT to include Chantelle in the FG, watching them from our side of the road-

SIDE VIEW - ROAD

Denita moves first, looking both ways and then starting across. Dr. Blades lifts their big suitcase and follows more cautiously-

117 INT. KITCHEN - DAY

May-Alice is wheeling around fixing an elaborate lunch. She hears the CAR APPROACH, does one last touch, takes a deep breath and hurries out of the shot-

118 INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

May-Alice sits at the table with Denita and Dr. Blades as Chantelle brings in the food. May-Alice is being very southern and charming-

MAY-ALICE
Chantelle is such a wonder in the kitchen.

Chantelle shoots her a look-

MAY-ALICE
I was never much of a cook to begin with, then with my misfortune- well- (to Denita) You like that, darlin?

DENITA
It's got rice in it.

MAY-ALICE
That's what makes it boudin.

118 cont.

DR. BLADES

We've never had somebody in the family work as a cook.

May-Alice senses the disapproval-

MAY-ALICE

Oh, we do share the cooking.
Mine just doesn't taste like much.

Chantelle sits stiffly between her father and daughter, on trial-

MAY-ALICE

Denita, it's just so nice to finally have you here in person. (looks to Chantelle) Chantelle talks about you so much I feel like I already know you.

119 EXT. PATIO - DAY

Dr. Blades stands watching as MAY-ALICE wheels around tapping wooden stakes into the ground with a croquet mallet, making a rectangle-

MAY-ALICE

You ever do any gardening, Dr. Blades?

DR. BLADES

Can't say that I have.

MAY-ALICE

Me neither. Don't think anybody in my family ever put a thing in the ground that wasn't a drill pipe.

DR. BLADES

My grandfather was a farmer.

MAY-ALICE

Yeah?

DR. BLADES

Sharecropper. Alabama.

MAY-ALICE

(nods) He must have had some stories.

DR. BLADES

None that he cared to pass on.

May-Alice lets this one lie. She moves to the next corner-

DR. BLADES

Do you think you'll continue to
employ my daughter?

MAY-ALICE

As long as she'll have me.

DR. BLADES

She told you I have legal custody
of Denita.

MAY-ALICE

(careful) She never got into the
details.

DR. BLADES

The court gave her to me when Chantelle
was- when Chantelle was unfit to be
a mother.

MAY-ALICE

Right.

DR. BLADES

Denita has got some school left this
year. But for her vacation- there
seems to be a stable work situation
here. A house-

MAY-ALICE

Well I'm not going anywheres. I
got this garden to deal with.

120 EXT. LAKE - DAY

Chantelle sits on the tethered flat-boat with Denita-

CHANTELLE

It's not really a swimming lake, baby.
People fish in it, look for animals-

DENITA

Animals?

CHANTELLE

All kinds of things. Raccoons, alligators-

DENITA

Real alligators?

CHANTELLE

Yeah, they're real. I even saw the nest
of one out there.

120 cont.

DENITA

They have eggs.

CHANTELLE

That's right. There's a man, a friend of ours, he knows all about where they live. Maybe some time he'll take you out and see all that.

DENITA

How big is it?

CHANTELLE

The lake? Oh, this one spreads all the way out to the ocean. You never seen the ocean, have you?

She shakes her head no-

CHANTELLE

Well, that's something we'll have to do.

Chantelle gets up her courage-

CHANTELLE

I been missing you so much.

Denita tightens, knowing heavy stuff lies ahead-

CHANTELLE

I just messed up. Grownups can do that. I got caught up in something bad, and I lost you.

Denita struggles not to cry-

CHANTELLE

You didn't forget about me, did you?

Denita shakes her head no-

CHANTELLE

You remember what I was like when I was sick?

DENITA

Yes.

CHANTELLE

Well, you're not ever gonna see me like that again. That's a promise.

121 EXT. PARISH PICNIC GROUNDS - EVENING

A mixture of black and white people stroll, eat, talk and dance at an outdoor dance. We shoot past the food tables where ladies are selling their homemade etouffee toward the back of the bandstand on which a zydeco band is playing-

FOLDING CHAIRS

Chantelle sits her father and her daughter down in seats in the first row of folding chairs that face the dance area and bandstand. She turns to check the band out-

BAND

We TRACK in past a kid playing a washboard, past the accordian player to the drummer. It is Sugar, who winks at Chantelle-

CU CHANTELLE

Uncomfortable to have her past and present in the same place. She gives a surreptitious wave-

MAY-ALICE

Sitting in her chair a bit removed from the audience, watching the dancers, tapping time with her hands. She has her camera in her lap. Rennie appears behind her, puts a hand on her shoulder, then sits on the grass beside her. He nods to the band-

RENNIE

Devil's music.

MAY-ALICE

I love it.

RENNIE

Last time I saw you before you went north was at one of these.

MAY-ALICE

Yeah? I must have sneaked over with Marcella DuChamps. My father didn't approve.

RENNIE

I never got up the nerve to ask you to dance.

MAY-ALICE

Right.

121 cont.

RENNIE

And then I heard you'd gone away
for good.

MAY-ALICE

Well- my dancing days are over.

The band finishes their number, the leader announcing the next band to play. May-Alice applauds. Rennie looks at her. She looks back and they get locked in that longing for a moment before May-Alice breaks it-

MAY-ALICE

How's your family?

RENNIE

(looks away) They're fine.

They sit in silence a moment, May-Alice feeling bad about rubbing it in-

RENNIE

I get you something to drink?

MAY-ALICE

Rennie?

RENNIE

Yeah?

MAY-ALICE

You don't have to have a job to do
or something to fix to come over
and visit.

RENNIE

Yeah?

MAY-ALICE

Yeah.

RENNIE

I'll maybe do that, then.

May-Alice looks away, a little shaky-

MAY-ALICE

Do it soon, okay?

Rennie takes hold of the arm of her chair as they watch the new band start to play-

121 cont. SEATS

Chantelle, Dr. Blades and Denita watching. Chantelle sees something, tightens-

SUGAR

Sugar is approaching, looking good, a big smile on his face-

CU CHANTELLE

She signals sideways towards her father and daughter with her eyes, gives her head a warning shake-

SUGAR

Slowing only slightly, he reads the signal-

SEATS

Chantelle worried as Sugar steps into the FG, looking down on them-

SUGAR

Excuse me-

REVERSE ANGLE

Sugar offers his hand to Denita-

SUGAR

Could I have this dance, young lady?

CU ACCORDIAN PLAYER

Singing and playing-

DANCE AREA

Sugar gallantly showing Denita the steps. She is embarrassed and thrilled at the same time-

CHANTELLE AND DR. BLADES

We shoot between them toward the band, seeing Sugar and Denita dance. Dr. Blades sneaks a look at his daughter-

121 cont. CU ACCORDIAN PLAYER

Playing and singing-

122 EXT. PATIO - NIGHT

May-Alice sits out under the light, looking out at the stars.
Chantelle steps out by her-

MAY-ALICE
They asleep?

CHANTELLE
I think so.

MAY-ALICE
Denita is beautiful.

CHANTELLE
Yeah. Listen, thanks- for today-

MAY-ALICE
Your old man is a tough nut.

CHANTELLE
Growing up I didn't have to be good,
I had to be perfect. What are
those?

WIDER

We shoot toward them through the stakes May-Alice pounded in
earlier-

MAY-ALICE
Oh- props.

CU MAY-ALICE

Musing-

MAY-ALICE
A good actress can improv on a bare
stage, but sometimes it's nice to
have props.

123 EXT. LAKE - MORNING

The sun coming up to burn off the mist on the water-

124 INT. DARKROOM - DAY - CU PRINT

Under the RED LIGHT of the darkroom, we look at a blank sheet of print stock lying in its chemical bath-

MAY-ALICE

This is the part that's like magic.

The print begins to darken into shape. It is a shot of Denita dancing with Sugar the night before. The timer goes BING!

INT. DARKROOM

Denita stands by May-Alice as she pulls the wet print out of the tray and puts it on the drying roller-

MAY-ALICE

Cute guy. You get his phone number?

Denita giggles. She looks at the dry prints laid on the table-

DENITA

You got pictures of alligators?

MAY-ALICE

No, but I'm gonna get some. Great subjects- they'll hold still for hours if they're not hungry.

Denita has picked up a photo of Chantelle-

CU DENITA

Looking at the photo-

MAY-ALICE

(off) That's nice, isn't it?

DENITA

Uh-huh.

2-SHOT

MAY-ALICE

(off) Course it's easier to get a smile out of an alligator than it is to get one from your mother. You keep that, darlin.

125 EXT. ROADSIDE - DAY

Chantelle stands with Dr. Blades by the side of the idling bus-

CHANTELLE

I'm fine now. I really am.

DR. BLADES

I'll be calling you and your lady at the end of the school year-

CHANTELLE

Can't I come up?

DR. BLADES

I don't think you should be back in Chicago-

CHANTELLE

You're not the damn parole board!

DR. BLADES

I am Denita's legal guardian, for as long as I think it necessary

Chantelle looks away, trying to control her anger-

DR. BLADES

This seems like a good place for you. You show me you can hold on here, we'll make some plans for Denita. (steps into bus) Goodbye.

CHANTELLE

(resigned) Bye, Daddy. Thanks for bringing her down.

The door closes and as the bus pulls away Chantelle finds the window Denita waves from. She follows a few steps, waving back, then stops to watch it go. The bus is nearly out of sight when we see a shiny big rental car slowing as it approaches from the opposite direction. It stops on the road by Chantelle and VANCE, a smiling TV producer, leans out of the window-

VANCE

Excuse me- where can I find Lake Arthur?

Chantelle points across the road-

VANCE

Right under my nose, huh? Actually, I'm looking for somebody. May-Alice Culhane?

126 INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Chantelle sits by the counter, a half-prepared plate of sandwiches next to her, eavesdropping. We hear LAUGHTER from the patio-

VANCE

(off) I don't know if it was the hysterectomy thing that threw her or what, but she comes back up and a week later she gives us notice-

Chantelle stands to look out the window, worried-

MAY-ALICE

(off) Was she good?

CHANTELLE'S POV - PATIO

May-Alice is wheeling around pulling up the stakes she laid out before. Vance stands nearby with a drink in hand-

VANCE

Well- yes. Not like you of course-

MAY-ALICE

Of course.

VANCE

It leaves quite a gap on the show.

MAY-ALICE

If you're hiring people like my ex-husband you got worse problems.

VANCE

Right. Uhm- can I use the head?

MAY-ALICE

(points) Be my guest.

We PAN away from the window as Chantelle busies herself with the sandwiches. Vance steps in, looks at her, clears his throat-

VANCE

Chantelle, right?

CHANTELLE

Uh-huh.

VANCE

She really seems good, don't you think?

CHANTELLE

I guess so.

126 cont.

VANCE

I mean she hasn't gained a lot of weight or anything. (confidential)
You think I have a shot with her?

CHANTELLE

A shot?

VANCE

Talking her into coming back to the show. You think she's ready?

CHANTELLE

(shrugs) Ask her.

VANCE

I might need an ally on this, Chantelle. She'd have to come up right away.

CHANTELLE

It's her life.

VANCE

We can't have her going to seed down here, can we?

We HOLD on Chantelle as Vance exits to the bathroom. She snaps open a tray of ice cubes with a loud CRACK, thinking-

127 EXT. SKY - HERON - DAY

A huge blue heron flaps over the islands-

128 EXT. DOCK - DAY

May-Alice sits in her chair at the edge of the dock, looking up at the heron, Vance standing behind her. She has her camera in her lap and occasionally snaps a picture as Vances pitches-

MAY-ALICE

You want me back on the show?

VANCE

(grins) You're going to love what Rose has come up with for you. A whole new direction-

MAY-ALICE

I'm still Scarlet- ?

VANCE

We do a big blitz about in response to the flood of mail May-Alice Culhane is returning to daytime-

MAY-ALICE

What about Nina?

VANCE

She's been gone for weeks. We sent Scarlet to the Mayo Clinic for observation. And we've hatched a great plan to bring you back in. We've found a scene from before where you leave Rhonda in the living room set and you actually walk over to the door-

MAY-ALICE

So we shoot a couch scene on the set-

VANCE

Right- you're back from the clinic, no improvement, then we cut to the tape of you actually walking to the door, and you go outside and we cut back to her watching from the doorway-

MAY-ALICE

I still have amnesia? And I'm pregnant?

VANCE

Bear with me a second- we hold on Rhonda's face, and then there's the sound-

MAY-ALICE

The sound of screeching brakes.

Vance's face drops-

VANCE

Rose called you.

MAY-ALICE

No, no. I'm just guesssing. Go ahead.

VANCE

There's a screech of brakes, Rhonda screams. Cut. Monday's show, first thing, there you are on a stretcher, flashing lights all around you, and the driver of the car that hit-

VANCE (cont.)
-you steps forward- guess who it is?

MAY-ALICE
Max.

VANCE
Rose did call you.

MAY-ALICE
No, really. Keep going. Max ran me over-

VANCE
And he says 'Scarlet, my God- '

MAY-ALICE
But I don't recognize him because of
the amnesia-

VANCE
No, you recognize his voice, see,
because the impact of the car-

MAY-ALICE
Ahhhhh-

VANCE
-cured the amnesia. A traumatic blow
like that-

MAY-ALICE
-can reverse the effects of what happened
when I fell down the elevator shaft.

VANCE
Exactly. So Max is there-

MAY-ALICE
And I remember him, but now I'm paralyzed.

VANCE
Right. That, and- well, Rose had to
go beyond that.

MAY-ALICE
Go beyond.

VANCE
See, they're doing a wheelchair thing
with Brenda St. Clair on Santa Fe
so we thought- you've lost the amnesia,
and you recognize Max's voice, but-

MAY-ALICE

I'm blind?

VANCE

It works like as a metaphor for Scarlet's-

MAY-ALICE

I'm paralyzed and I'm fucking blind?

VANCE

It opens up so many possibilities-

MAY-ALICE

Sure. I can run into walls in my chair, knock over props, have Max take me back so that twit Jessica can get it on with him while I'm in the room-

VANCE

None of this is chiseled in stone yet--

She whirls her chair to head toward the house, Vance hurrying to keep up with her-

MAY-ALICE

Why not put me in a coma, total fucking veg, so you can shoot a few angles of me in bed then I can come back here and phone in voiceover, Vance? Brain death- think of the metaphoric possibilities in that-

VANCE

I'd have to check with Rose-

MAY-ALICE

You do that!

VANCE

May-Alice!

The tone in his voice stops May-Alice. She lets him catch up with her-

VANCE

This is a chance that's not going to come around again. You'd better think about it. I'm at the Ramada in Lafayette. Call me.

We TIGHTEN and HOLD on May-Alice as we hear Vance walk away-

129 INT. LIVING ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

Chantelle sits on the floor in a pool of light. May-Alice has converted the living room into a little gallery- photos she had taken are everywhere, taped to the walls, spread out on the couch, even one propped over the TV screen. Chantelle looks around at them-

CHANTELLE'S POV

PANNING over the photos of the house, the yard, nature shots, till we come to one of Denita, in front of the house, smiling-

CU CHANTELLE

Looking at the photo. We hear a CAR START OUTSIDE, then PULL AWAY. Chantelle frowns, looks toward the window-

130 EXT. DOCK - EARLY EVENING

May-Alice is on her chair by the ramp Rennie has built to get her on board the flat-boat. Chantelle joins her-

CHANTELLE

Guess he isn't staying for dinner.

MAY-ALICE

Help me on board, okay? I want to go out.

131 EXT. LAKE - EVENING

The boat chugs towards us. Chantelle cuts the motor and they drift-

132 ON BOARD

May-Alice looks out over the water, thinking. Chantelle comes to sit beside her-

MAY-ALICE

We have to talk.

CHANTELLE

Yeah.

MAY-ALICE

Plans.

Chantelle is silent, waiting for the verdict-

MAY-ALICE

Vance asked me to come back to daytime.

CHANTELLE

You could do it.

MAY-ALICE

Yeah. I could.

She looks at Chantelle, trying to gauge what she's thinking-

MAY-ALICE

So what did your father say?

CHANTELLE

(shrugs) He thinks you're a good influence on me.

MAY-ALICE

(snorts) That's how much he knows.

CHANTELLE

I can't believe I still have to do whatever he says- like I'm thirteen years old!

MAY-ALICE

I was the faithful daughter in Lear once- whatsername- Cordelia. Not much you can do but play it straight till it's over. (looks at lake) Haven't spent a July down here since I lit out. Gets pretty steamy.

CHANTELLE

I bet it does.

MAY-ALICE

Think he'd let Denita stay with you this summer?

CHANTELLE

I have to have a job.

May-Alice looks at her for a long moment, decides-

MAY-ALICE

You've got a job.

CHANTELLE

(shakes her head) New York City? He wouldn't go for that.

132 cont.

MAY-ALICE

What's New York got to do with it?

CHANTELLE

Your show-

MAY-ALICE

What, are you kidding? Back to daytime? Darlin, it's either Friday nights at ten or nothing. One of those lawyer shows where they have hot sex with everybody in the office.

CHANTELLE

You turned him down?

MAY-ALICE

If I'm gonna be here I need you to stay working for me.

CHANTELLE

Bullshit-

MAY-ALICE

Girl, if I'm lyin I'm dyin.

They look at each other. The deal is struck-

CHANTELLE

So we're stuck with each other.

MAY-ALICE

For the time being.

They watch the sunset for a moment-

MAY-ALICE

Chantelle?

CHANTELLE

Yeah?

MAY-ALICE

You are gonna have to learn how to cook.

133 LONG SHOT - EARLY EVENING

Two women sitting on a boat in the middle of the lake as the sun goes down-

CLOSING CREDITS