

MATTIE

Revision 2

TERRI L. BEA

The book
Mattie Prophet

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FADE IN:

SERIES OF SHOTS

EXT. SMALL SOUTHERN TOWN - DAY 1

People mill around on corners and in front of stores. A few wait at a bus stop, while others window shop or sit around talking. A dirty RED TRUCK races through the center of town, almost hitting a man. It stops in front of an old-fashioned SHERIFF'S STATION.

INT. SHERIFF'S STATION 2

SHARON WALTON, middle-aged and neatly groomed, stands at the desk of PAUL MILFORD. Dapper, seasoned. She holds an empty cake pan. *

INT. SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT - MORNING 3

PAUL *

That husband of your sure preached us into a frenzy this morning...he is a good man and them boys of yours are coming along real fine. Didn't see your daughter this morning, is she alright?

Sharon winces but gives Paul a quick smile. *

SHARON

Thank you for asking...the poor dear suffers from dreadful headaches...they upset her to no end. She's at home resting right now.

She changes the subject. *

SHARON

But if you want to talk about something good, I nearly got my hand bit off. *

She plops the pan playfully on the counter. *

The Paul prepares to respond *

He's interrupted by the bell on the door OS.

(CONTINUED)

Two straggly, dirty young men come in, SLAMMING the door behind them.

They see Sharon and pull their hats off, exposing their matted hair. *

The oldest, MARSHALL, acknowledges Sharon first. *

Marshall saunters up to counter looking at Sharon with lust. *

Sharon backs away disgusted.

Marshall snickers *

MARSHALL

I hate to interrupt Sheriff, but uh...we found something you might want to see.

Paul shakes his head in amusement. *

PAUL CONT'D

I'm not interested boys.

Marshall pats his brother on the shoulder. *

MARSHALL

Oh I think you'll be real interested Sheriff.

Paul shakes his head reluctantly *

PAUL

Marshall I ain't interested in seeing no damn deer just take it on home you don't need me to approve your dinner for you. *

Marshall fakes a shocked expression. *

Paul explains to Sharon. *

PAUL CONT'D

These boys will eat anything walking, flying or swimming, they don't care how long its been out on the road and for some strange reason, they feel compelled to come share the news with me. *

Sharon looks disgusted directing her attention to the truck parked outside. *

(CONTINUED) *

PAUL CONT'D

So what is it this time? skunk,
possum, giraffe...

*
*

he turns his nose up in disdain

*

ROY

no sir Sheriff...more like coon!

Marshall smirks at his secret

*

MARSHALL

Don't recon we could eat it
either...meat too tough!

Sharon shivers under Marshall's cold gaze, clutching her
purse tightly.

MARSHALL

Besides...I don't like dark meat!

Paul gives Marshall a shove on his shoulder, getting his
attention, speaking to him sharply.

*

PAUL CONT'D

That's enough! Come on...let's get
this over with. Let's go see
what's got you boys panties all up
in a bunch!

*
*

He comes from behind the counter and begins pushing the boys
out the door a head of him with Sharon attempting to follow
them.

PAUL CONT'D

I'm sure this ain't something you'd
be interested in seeing Sharon so
you might as well stay here.

Sharon stops at the door.

EXT. SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT - MORNING

4

The men walk down the steps with the boys racing to a back
of a truck.

Marshall looks proud as he grabs a black tarp draped over
the back of the truck. His first attempt get stuck, he
pulls harder until it is released.

Paul steps back in shock. A shoe rolls from the flat bed to
the ground.

*

(CONTINUED)

Sharon steps outside.

Paul looks up to see Sharon on top steps. He puts his hand out to stop her from continuing. *

PAUL *
Stay right there.

Paul grabs the tarp to cover the body. He speaks sharply to Marshall. *

PAUL CONT'D
Get that stupid look off your damn
face. If I find out you had
anything to do with this.

Marshall leans against the truck nonchalantly shrugging his shoulders and looking unconcerned. He spits on the ground.

MARSHALL *
Like I said...we found him on the
side of the road.

Paul looks at Roy who quickly puts his head down. *

He obviously does not believe them. *

PAUL *
Find anything else? *

Roy perks up then.

ROY
Yes sir!

Roy runs to the cab of the truck and quickly comes back carrying something before handing it to the Sheriff. *

Sheriff's back is still to Sharon so she can't see what he's been given.

Sharon is increasingly nervous as she tries to see what the men are doing. *

She calls out to the Sheriff.

SHARON *
Is everything alright Sheriff?

Paul turns around to respond to her. In his hand he is holding a baseball bat. *

Sharon gasps out loud backing up against the door. *

(CONTINUED)

She covers her mouth with her trembling hands!

Paul is taken aback by her response.

He answers her question suggestively.

PAUL

Seems we've got an incident...but I
don't guess there's anything for
YOU to be concerned about.

He watches her reaction before turning to give the boys
instructions.

Sharon clutches the railing, stepping forward visibly
shaken.

SHARON

Sheriff, I wonder if I might have a
word with you a moment please?

Paul ignores her.

Sharon calls out to him louder nearly falling down the
steps.

SHARON CONT'D

Now! Please...Sheriff!

Everyone looks up at her.

Paul takes a deep annoyed breath before addressing the boys
again.

CLOSE UP OF PAUL'S AGITATED FACE

PAUL

Wait here!

Paul takes two steps at a time angrily.

WIDE SHOT ON STAIRS

PAUL CONT'D

What is it?

Paul stands breathing heavily from anger.

Sharon turns her face ashamed.

CLOSE UP ON SHARON

(CONTINUED)

EXT. CHURCH - MORNING

7

There is somber organ music playing in background, a church steeple can be seen in a small part of town.

BEHIND THE CHURCH AND BETWEEN ABANDONED HOMES

*

BETTY JEAN VOICE OFF CAMERA

*

BETTY JEAN
Mattie! Mattie where are you girl?

EXT. HIDING PLACE - MORNING

8

Mattie, a pretty, slender girl, wearing a flowered dress is cowering behind a building next to the church . She is frightened, panting and trembling in fear, her eyes are filled with terror.

*
*
*
*

CLOSE UP OF BETTY JEAN'S SHOES

*

Betty Jean's shoes are crunching over the rocks.

*

CUT AWAY TO MATTIE HIDING

*

Mattie tries to dig deeper into the shadows.

*

BETTY JEAN OFF CAMERA

*

POV MATTIE LOOKING OUT AT BETTY JEAN

*

SHOT OF BETTY JEAN'S DRESS

*

BETTY JEAN
Mattie? I know you're in there...come on out now child.

*
*
*

Mattie emerges reluctantly.

*

Betty Jean, a heavy, strong woman dressed in dark clothing, is frowning at her.

*
*

FADE OUT

*

FLASHBACK

*

EARLIER AT THE CHURCH

*

*
*
*
*
*
*

INT. CHURCH - FUNERAL MORNING CONTINUOUS

9 *

FADE IN

*

A funeral is being held inside a small church. People are viewing a body at the front of the church. Mattie is fidgeting behind a tall girl who is crying hysterically. Mattie looks around before finally focusing her attention on the casket.

*

CLOSE UP OF MATTIE

*

MATTIE VO

I don't think I've ever been so scared...

CUTAWAY: CONGREGATION

*

Mattie turns again to look around at the congregation. She spots two familiar women. One is average height and weight, while the other one is short and fat. Both fanning and exaggerating their grief.

MATTIE VO CONTD

It looks like they are here...they Show up even if they didn't know the person. Every funeral has their own special group of they's.

*

*

*

*

*

The short heavy woman pretends to faint, the taller woman responds immediately. She attempts to catch the shorter woman, but misses.

MATTIE VO

They are the hummers, criers, fainters and catchers. Our fainter-catchers were Ms. Lou Mae Cartel and Ms. Francine Kelley.

*

The shorter woman hits the floor.

Ushers rush over to the pew to try and help the shorter woman who is now wedged between the pews, she is flailing her arms and legs.

Mattie returns her attention to the casket.

CUT AWAY OF CASKET

*

MATTIE VO CONTD

Today we burying my brother Sam, Jr.

(CONTINUED)

CLOSE UP: SAM'S BODY *

Sam's body is in a black suit with a red flower in his lapel. *

WIDE:SHOT OF CHURCH *

ZOOM IN:MATTIE *

OVER THE SHOULDER: BETTY JEAN IS COMFORTING ANNIE WHILE SITTING IN THE PEW. *

CLOSE UP: MATTIE IS LOOKING DOWN AT SAM *

Mattie stands over him with fresh tears flowing freely down her face. *

POV FROM CASKET *

MATTIE VO CONTD
He was my hero.

FADE OUT *

FLASHBACK 7 YEARS EARLIER *

EXT. EARLY MORNING - THE FARM *

10 *

FADE IN *

Sam, a young strong, handsome man, wearing worn jeans and a t-shirt is running athletically through a grassy meadow. *

Mattie, is running purposefully behind him. *

WIDE:SAM CROSSES A MAKE SHIFT BRIDGE OVER A CREEK *

He approaches a large farm *

ZOOM IN: A PRETTY YOUNG GIRL WITH RED HAIR IS PLAYING OUTSIDE WITH HER BROTHERS *

Sam stops just outside the fence surrounding the farm *

The young girl sees him *

ZOOM IN: THE GIRL SMILES WARMLY AND WAVES *

CLOSE UP: SAM SMILES AND WAVES *

ZOOM OUT: MATTIE IS NEARING THE BRIDGE *

(CONTINUED)

Mattie steps onto the bridge and immediately loses her footing

*
*

CLOSE UP SAM'S FACE SMILING

*

Sam hears Mattie's scream and quickly turns to run toward her

*
*

FADE OUT

*

INT - MATTIE'S KITCHEN MORNING

11

FADE IN

*

The kitchen is old and country.

Annie, a pretty woman, tall and lean. She is disheveled and looks confused as she sits at the table staring nervously at her husband.

*
*
*

WIDE SHOT OF KITCHEN

*

Her husband, Sam, Sr., a tall mountain of a man, is brooding and pacing back and forth angrily glaring at his only son.

*
*

Sam, Jr. is standing in front of his father in wet clothes afraid.

*

Annie is trying to get Mattie's wet clothes off and dry her off putting dry clothes on.

Mattie is trembling staring tearfully between her father and brother.

*
*

ANNIE

Sam, they alright...nobody got hurt, they both alright...no harm was done.

Sam Sr. stops in his tracks and points a stern finger at his wife.

CLOSE UP OF SAM SR'S ANGRY FACE

*

SAM SR.

That's the problem right there, you always defending him, always protecting him...how can I make him mind, if I can't learn him right from wrong.

CUTAWAY: SAM JR WITH HEAD DOWN LOOKING SAD

*

(CONTINUED)

The man sternly addresses his son.

WIDE EVERYONE IS STARING AT YOUNG SAM *

SAM SR.

I done told you, ain't I? Stay
your tail away from that
creek...ain't I done said,
it? Time after time, now you
almost got your sister
killed! What was you doing down
there this time? Huh?

The young boy doesn't say anything he turns to look at his
sister then bravely back at his father.

SAM SR. CONTD

So you goin stand there like you
don't hear me? Then git yo tail
out that door fetch me a
switch..I'm goin to teach you to
mind me once and for all...go on
git!

The young boy turns to his grandmother for help but finds
none. *

Sam Sr. starts pulling his son out of the kitchen *

Betty Jean shows up blocking his exit *

CAMERA CUTS BETWEEN SAM SR AND BETTY JEAN'S STERN FACE *

Sam Sr. relents and steps aside for his mother to enter. *

Everyone in the room stands still as Betty Jean tries to
figure out what's going on. *

BETTY JEAN

What happened? *

WIDE SHOT OF KITCHEN *

Mattie runs to Betty Jean for comfort clinging to her
desperately.

YOUNG MATTIE

Daddy fixing to whip Sammy! It
wasn't his fault...I wasn't paying
attention grandma, I fell in the
creek...now daddy fixing to whip
him!

(CONTINUED)

BETTY JEAN
What? The creek, what on earth was
y'all doing out there?

CUT-IN:OF SAM SR. *

Sam Sr. grabs his son roughly by the arm.

SAM SR.
I'm taking care of it mama, he
won't be going back down there...he
is goin to mind me from here on
out!

CLOSE UP OF ANNIE *

Annie pleads with her husband. *

ANNIE
Please Sam...

WIDE SHOT OF KITCHEN *

Betty Jean walks toward Sam Sr. who reluctantly lets his son
go. *

SAM SR. CONTD
Mama this my boy and I know what's
best...

CLOSE UP:BETTY JEAN'S ANNOYED EXPRESSION *

Betty Jean narrows her eyes angrily at her son daring him to
say another word. Sam turns his face from her glare. Betty
Jean challenges him.

BETTY JEAN
You've got to know what's right
before you can do what's best! *

Betty Jean softens her expression as she looks down at her
scared grandson.

BETTY JEAN
What was you doing out there boy?

Sam, Jr. looks from his daddy to his grandma. He has tears
in his eyes but he wills them to not fall as he responds to
Betty Jean with conviction.

SAM, JR.
I...I had to do something *

He looks lovingly at his sister.

(CONTINUED)

FADE OUT

*

FLASHBACK EARLIER

FADE IN

*

EXT. EARLY MORNING - THE FARM CONTINUOUS

12

*

Sam is standing outside the fence of surrounding the farm. He is waving at Emily who is smiling and waving in return.

*

*

*

Mattie falls into the creek

*

Sam turns to run to help her.

*

END OF FLASHBACK

*

FADE OUT

*

INT. KITCHEN - EARLY MORNING CONTINUOUS

13

*

FADE IN

*

CLOSE UP OF SAM JR

*

SAM, JR. CONTD

But when she fell in, I fetched her out.

He slowly returns his somber attention to his angry father.

SAM, JR.

I guess that's all that matter.

CUT AWAY TO BETTY JEAN

*

Betty Jean nods her head slowly at Sam Jr.

BETTY JEAN

I guess you right bout that.

WIDE SHOT OF THE KITCHEN AND ALL OF THE SOMBER FACES

*

Sam Sr. pulls his son out the kitchen, into the back room and slams the door.

Mattie attempts to run after them

Betty Jean stops her and shaking her head to correct her.

*

(CONTINUED)

BETTY JEAN

Leave it be...

FADE OUT SLOWLY

Sam, Jr.'s cries can be heard in the distance.

END OF FLASHBACK

INT. CHURCH - FUNERAL CONTINUOUS

14

Mattie is staring down at Sam's body

MATTIE

This don't even look like my
brother. This boy all pale and
fat, like he got stung by a
bee. Maybe this ain't him.

FADE OUT

THREE DAYS EARLIER FLASHBACK

FADE IN

EXT - MATTIE'S HOUSE CONTINUOUS

15

WIDE SHOT

ZOOM IN ON MATTIE SITTING ON PORCH

Mattie throws a rock at a bird. Bird flies away.

CUT AWAY SAM'S FRIENDS ACKNOWLEDGE MATTIE WITH A WAVE

CUT AWAY TO MATTIE

CLOSE UP OF MATTIE

Mattie rolls her eyes as she ignores the boys and continues
throwing rocks

CUT AWAY OF SAM COMING OUT ONTO PORCH

CLOSE UP OF SAM

SAM, JR.

Ma, I'll be back after while.

Sam waits for her response

(CONTINUED)

ANNIE

How long is "after while" ? You bet
not get in any trouble you hear me?

SAM, JR.

Yes ma'am...

Sam hurries down the steps playfully pushing Mattie out of
his way. *

WIDE SHOT *

SAM, JR. CONTD

Move out the way big head!

WIDE SHOT: SAM RUNNING DOWN ROAD

Sam runs up to greet his friends then they walk away. *

FADE OUT *

MATTIE VO

He was healthy when he left the
house that morning.

FADE IN *

EXT. MATTIE'S HOUSE - LATER THAT EVENING CONTINUOUS 16 *

A dirty red truck pulls up the driveway, the driver blows
his horn.

MATTIE VO CONTD

Then life shook our family tree
causing precious fruit to fall... *

Marshall jumps out and runs up the steps to the house. He
anxiously bangs on the door. *

OS ANNIE and MATTIE *

Mattie is standing behind her mother while Marshall is
explaining and pointing at his truck. *

MATTIE VO CONTD

I heard the man say they found this
"boy" on the side of the road and
wanted to know if he belonged to
us.

Roy gets out on the passenger side and walks around the back
of the truck. *

(CONTINUED)

CLOSE UP OF ANNIE WATCHING FROM DOOR *

Marshall steps aside *

WIDE SHOT ANNIE OPENS DOOR *

Marshall starts walking back toward truck *

Annie steps out onto the porch shaking, finally she bolts
down the steps. She falls and getting up with a limp toward
the truck *

WIDE SHOT *

Mattie runs out after her. *

Roy pulls the tarp off Sam's body. *

CUT IN ANNIE *

Annie screams

The two men quickly begin lifting Sam from the flatbed of
the truck to carry him toward the house.

Annie and Mattie crying and screaming behind them.

Betty Jean meets them at the door unaware of what has
happened.

BETTY JEAN

Oh God what happened to
him? Sam!!!

The two men lay Sam on the couch in the living room.

ROY

I'm sorry for your loss.

MATTIE VO CONTD

Then they just turn and walk away,
leaving us to our screamin' and
hollerin'!

FADE OUT SOUNDS OF MOURNING FADE INTO THE DISTANCE *

END OF FLASHBACK

FADE IN SOUNDS OF CHURCH ORGAN IN BACK GROUND *

INT. CHURCH - FUNERAL CONTINUOUS 17 *

Mattie reaches out and slowly places her hand on top of Sam's hand.

Suddenly as if Mattie's hand is glued to Sam she stares forward in a trance. The sounds of the church choir and cries of mourners slowly fade into the background as they are replaced by muffled voices. *

FADE OUT MUFFLED VOICES IN A DISTANCE *

VISION INT. BARN - LATE AFTERNOON

FADE IN BLURRY IMAGES FLASHING AROUND IN FRONT OF MATTIE *

ANGLE ON: INSIDE BARN WITH SAM AND FOUR BOYS *

OS: Mattie standing behind Sam *

Sam is standing in front of the young men while they are arguing with him. *

CGI BLURRY *

All of their faces are blurry except Sam's *

Sam is disappointed *

CLOSE UP: SAM'S FACE *

MATTIE VO *

He thought they were his friends. *

CUTAWAY: OF THE BOYS ARE IRRITATED WITH SAM *

Sam, Jr. finally pushes past them and heads for the barn door. *

A large male presence steps inside of the barn blocking his exit. *

Sam turns looking around the barn until he sees a girl in the corner crying. front of him. *

Sam gives his attention back to the large presence in front of him and tries to push him out of the way. *

The other boys in the barn also try to remove the unwanted man from the barn, but to no avail. *

The large man gets past the boys and displays a bat in his hand, he holds it out toward Sam. *

(CONTINUED)

MATTIE VO CONT'D

Our daddy gave him that bat, he
just wanted it back.

Sam reaches for it and the man pulls it away jokingly.

The man approaches him still laughing swinging the bat
playfully.

Sam is exasperated and makes a final attempt to retrieve the
bat.

Emily calls out to Sam momentarily distracting him.

Sam steps into the man's swing.

Everyone in the room is suddenly very quiet as Sam takes the
impact from the bat on the side of his head and falls to the
ground.

Emily screams

ZOOM IN: TOWARD CEILING AND FLYING BIRDS

MATTIE VO

His last thought...was how very
much he loved that girl's hair.

END OF VISION

INT. CHURCH - FUNERAL CONTINUOUS 18

Mattie jerks from the trance yanking her hand from the body
nearly toppling over the casket. She doesn't wait to look
around for help, but instead runs frantically from the
church.

EXT. HIDING PLACE - MORNING CONTINUOUS (SAME DAY) 19

Mattie is standing in front of Betty Jean.

BETTY JEAN

Are you OK baby?

Betty attempts to hug Mattie who pulls away from her
embrace.

Betty slowly reaches for Mattie again, this time managing to
pull her into a comforting hug.

Mattie succumbs to her sorrow crying in pain-filled spasms.

(CONTINUED)

MATTIE

I saw...I saw what happened to Sam!
I saw what they did to him...he was
with...with a girl, uh..uh white
girl!

Betty holds Mattie tighter, stroking her hair and kissing her face as her broken granddaughter screams her recount of the vision.

MATTIE CONTD

He was in a barn with a bunch of
people and one of them hit him with
his bat!

Mattie searches Betty Jean's face for help.

Betty Jean looks away as if searching her own mind for clues.

She speaks softly to herself.

CLOSE UP BETTY JEAN

BETTY JEAN

Damn it...I thought folks were just
making it up...but, but I guess I
was just hoping they were.

CUT AWAY TO MATTIE WHO IS SHOCKED

Mattie shakes her head stepping back from Betty Jean.

MATTIE

What?

WIDE:

Betty Jean face is pain-stricken

BETTY JEAN

You can't tell a man who he can and
can't love...no matter how anyone
else feels about it.

Mattie trembles under the bright sun, she doesn't know what to say.

MATTIE

Grandma...you know who killed Sam?

(CONTINUED)

BETTY JEAN

No...but I think I know why.

MATTIE

Grandma...I know what she looks like, he was there to see some white girl with red hair and...we could...could find her, I know what she looks like?

BETTY JEAN

Find her? Find her for what?

Betty Jean throw her hand up to cut Mattie off

Betty Jean turns away anxiously

BETTY JEAN CONT'D

Before you go getting any crazy thoughts in your head...just leave it alone! Do you hear me?

CUT IN MATTIE

MATTIE

Leave it alone! This girl knows who murdered my BROTHER!!! if we find her...then, then...

CUTAWAY: BETTY JEAN CONFRONTS HER ANGRILY

BETTY JEAN

Then what? What do you think that child will say Mattie? Even if it were true when that child is standing in front of her mama and daddy what do you think they will TELL her to say?

WIDE

Mattie's mouth falls open stunned

BETTY JEAN CONTD

You don't know enough yet to do anything and it just might be that God isn't through talking, either.

Betty Jean places her hands on Mattie's shoulders and Mattie pulls away

(CONTINUED)

MATTIE

I've got to do something...

*

BETTY JEAN

Mattie, this gift will need you to wait and to listen...

*

*

Mattie winces she shakes her head defiantly.

MATTIE

Gift? knowing my brother was beat to death is a gift?

*

*

BETTY JEAN

Mattie...

Betty Jean lovingly turns Mattie's face toward her.

BETTY JEAN CONTD

Let's talk about this later, right now...we've got to get back in there or your mama...well your mama will wonder.

Mattie backs up several steps before responding. A panicked look on her tear stained face.

MATTIE

I can't go back in there grandma...I can't!

Betty Jean reaches out to her pulling her into a comforting embrace. Squeezing her tightly.

BETTY JEAN

And that's ok, I understand.

Mattie sits on top step as Betty Jean enters the church.

EXT. CEMETERY - AFTERNOON (SAME DAY)

20

RANDOM SHOTS OF CEMETERY

*

Family and friends gather around burial site.

Betty Jean is weeping softly while holding Annie's hand.

*

CLOSE UP OF MATTIE

*

Mattie stares down at Sam, Jr.'s closed casket.

(CONTINUED)

MATTIE VO CONTD

One dark moment wrote a sudden,
unwanted ending to our families
story and penned an uncertain
beginning to mine.

*
*
*
*

The family begins leaving the grave side.

INT. MATTIE'S HOUSE EVENING

21

RANDOM - SOMBER

*

Family and friends have gathered in the kitchen eating and talking.

An older woman hugs Mattie who is sitting at a table crying softly.

Random person sets a plate of food in front of Mattie

*

Mattie smiles up at them but politely pushes it away.

*

CUT AWAY

*

Betty Jean is talking quietly to some of the guests.

CUT AWAY

*

Annie sits alone in the corner staring at the wall not saying a word, several people walk over to her and attempt to speak to her only to have her respond with silence.

*

CUT AWAY

*

Mattie excuses herself from the room. Walks down the hall to her bedroom steps inside and quietly closes the door.

*

*

FADE OUT

*

INT. MATTIE'S BEDROOM - LATE NIGHT

22

DREAM SEQUENCE INT. DARK BARN

FADE IN

*

EXT. BARN - NIGHT 23 *

FADE IN *

SOUNDS OF HORSES AND FARM LIFE *

RANDOM SHOTS OF THE FARM AND BARN *

CLOSE UP OF MATTIE STANDING AT THE DOOR OF BARN *

CLOSE UP OF HER HAND PUSHING OPEN THE DOOR *

Mattie is standing outside of an abandoned barn, she suddenly hears muffled voices coming from inside. There's a light surrounding the door frame, she moves towards the door. She pushes the door open slowly. *

INT. BARN - NIGHT 24 *

Mattie steps inside of the barn to find a some young men gathered around Sam...they have their backs to her. *

OVER SHOULDER SHOT OF MATTIE STANDING BEHIND SAM *

Sam, Jr. is standing with a sad expression on his face. *

A man steps out of the shadows with a bat raised in his hands. *

Sam doesn't acknowledge the attacker, he never changes his expression, he continues to stare intensely at Mattie. *

Mattie runs towards the man screaming for him to Stop! She slips and falls as Sam, Jr. is struck. *

END OF DREAM SEQUENCE *

INT. MATTIE'S BEDROOM - MORNING 25 *

Mattie sits up in her bed trying to muffle her anguished cries. *

INT. HALLWAY- EARLY MORNING 26 *

Mattie is preparing to walk into the bathroom, but she hears Annie having a conversation in the kitchen. She can't hear anyone else's voice. She walks toward the kitchen. *

INT. KITCHEN - EARLY MORNING 27

Annie is sitting at the table rocking back and forth. She is clutching a cup of coffee spilling it on the table. *

She is talking but no one is in the room. *

ANNIE

You don't think I know what you're doing...I've known all along. You still gambling...you still drinking, but I stayed with you...I stayed... *

FADE OUT *

FLASHBACK

INT. SEVERAL YEARS EARLIER KITCHEN - MORNING 28

FADE IN *

Food is on the stove cooking.

Annie is standing with her back against the kitchen door. She is standing in front of Sam Sr., who is carrying a duffel bag.

SAM SR.

Move out my way Annie...now I don't have time for your foolishness.

Annie shakes her head in anger.

ANNIE

I stayed with you, when you said you would change...I believed you...now, now I'm having a little...a little trouble remembering...that's all it is...I just forget sometimes, so you can't leave. *

Annie grows increasingly angry *

ANNIE CONT'D

Do you hear me...You CAN'T LEAVE ME NOW! I need my husband and these...these babies need their daddy, so you might as well put that bag down. SET IT DOWN! *

Annie pushes Sam away from the door and tries to slap him *

(CONTINUED)

Sam grabs her hand and pushes her into the door threateningly.

SAM SR.

Annie, I ain't goin say this but one more time...now you are goin move out my way and I ain't goin ask you again.

Annie begins to whimper like a small child.

ANNIE

You said you loved me...you said...

SAM SR.

I didn't know you was going to lose your damn mind! Now you got my mama to help you so...

ANNIE

You called her here...I didn't ask her to come here...I didn't need her, I needed YOU!

SAM SR.

Annie Mae, please girl can't you get it through your thick head...I can't deal with this...I...I don't know how to help you...I just can't...

Annie starts crying.

Suddenly Betty Jean walks into the room

Sam shoves Annie aside.

Annie grabs Sam's arm desperately.

BETTY JEAN

You're wasting your time crying over him Annie, to him your tears sound like keys in a jail cell...you can't keep a man who want to be free!

Sam turns to see his mother glaring at him, he hangs his head in shame.

SAM SR.

Mama you don't understand...I tried everything I know...I gave all I had to give...

(CONTINUED)

Betty Jean storms across the room and calmly but directly confronts him.

BETTY JEAN

What you want...a pat on the back? What do you think will happen after you leave here boy? You think we'll disappear as soon as you walk out that door? Somehow what we need now, we won't need later after you've gone? NO son, when you leave they're will always be ONE question that only YOU will be able to answer...why aren't you man enough?

Annie becomes more agitated crying louder

ANNIE

Please Betty Jean...he got to stay I need him!

Betty Jean walks away bored with both of them. She pours herself a cup of coffee

WIDE SHOT

BETTY JEAN

Girl...open that door and let him go and worry about what's left!

SAM SR.

Mama...I, you don't understand...

BETTY JEAN

Annie Mae Them kids will be home soon, and there ain't no sense in trying to explain why they aint got they daddy or they're supper.

ANNIE

Sam? Please!

END OF FLASHBACK

INT. KITCHEN - EARLY MORNING CONTINUOUS

29

Mattie walks into the kitchen slowly.

Annie is still whispering to herself, but when she hears Mattie come in she stops.

(CONTINUED)

Annie is clutching her coffee cup tightly, it has spilled on the table. *

Mattie walks over to the sink and grabs a cloth to clean up the spill. *

MATTIE

Sam's gone ma...he can't come back.

Annie relaxes her grasp around the cup before she acknowledges Mattie.

ANNIE

He might come back... *

Mattie stands uncomfortably staring at her mother not sure what to say. *

MATTIE

Mama do you want me to stay with you today? I can...I can help you clean around the house. If you want me to I'll stay. *

Annie stares into the cup and says nothing. *

Betty Jean walks into the kitchen curious about Mattie's confused expression and then sees that Annie is staring blankly at her cup and then suddenly understands.

BETTY JEAN

Mattie come on...you're going to be late for school. I'll walk with you. Annie, I'll be back in a few minutes.

Annie mumbles to herself. *

ANNIE

He'll be back someday.

Mattie is about to respond, but Betty Jean pushes Mattie toward the door. Annie looks up and watches them walk down the driveway. *

FLASHBACK - SEVERAL YEARS EARLIER *

INT. KITCHEN - EARLY MORNING CONTINUOUS 30 *

Sam Sr., is walking down the driveway *

Annie stands at the door crying. *

Betty Jeans slams her hand down on the counter angrily. *

BETTY JEAN *

Pull yourself together gal, your
children will be home soon! *

END OF FLASHBACK *

EXT. THE ROAD - MORNING CONTINUOUS 31 *

Mattie and Betty Jean start down the road towards the
school. Surrounded by farms and sounds of the country,
Mattie's mind is racing. Betty Jean is focused ahead. *

BETTY JEAN *

When I came back to this God
forsaken place it was hard...so
hard. Seemed like everything wrong
in my life, met me at that train
station. *

They continued to walk with Mattie looking on as Betty Jean
talked. *

BETTY JEAN CONTD *

God always got His hand in the
affairs of men, turning them
around, picking them up and putting
them down where he wants them. *

Mattie prepares to interrupt Betty Jean, but Betty Jean
stops her before going on. *

BETTY JEAN CONTD *

After almost fifteen years of
nothing your daddy finally calls
me... *

MATTIE *

Fifteen years! *

BETTY JEAN *

He said Annie needed help so, I
came back. *

(CONTINUED) *

MATTIE

Why did he leave grandma?

BETTY JEAN

The reason I give you won't amount
to much at all...the reason will
only mean something coming from
your daddy.

As they walk the scenery becomes more rural, more houses and
fences along the road.

BETTY JEAN

I had hoped your daddy and I could
work out our differences between
us. Our relationship had always
been a hard pill to swallow. But
when he left...

Mattie stops walking.

Betty Jean stops also with a pained expression.

BETTY JEAN CONT'D

Seem like God works best in the
middle of mess...messy lives, messy
families...he can pull something
beautiful out of it...take
something that looks finished and
dead and breathe life into it.

MATTIE

Grandma...

BETTY JEAN

Everything this family has ever
gone through or will ever go
through will be because of what God
is going to do through YOU Mattie!

Mattie's mouth falls open speechless, Betty Jean slowly
turns to begin walking. Mattie grabs her arm quickly.

MATTIE

Me?

BETTY JEAN

I see it now. it's like a huge
puzzle...this piece goes here, this
one fits with that one...and if any
of the steps are missed, any of the
pieces skipped, then you will never
see the big picture. God is going
to use your gift to not only bring

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

BETTY JEAN (cont'd)
peace to our family, but He is
going to use it to do something
great in this world!

MATTIE
Grandma...

BETTY JEAN
It's not just our lives that will
be changed by Sam's
death...someone's next steps are
waiting for your direction, God's
instruction...they need your help
Mattie!

They both stop near a turn in a road that leads to Mattie's
best friend Nikki's house.

MATTIE
Who ever it is must be a monster.

Betty Jean reaches to grab Mattie's hand and pulls her close
enough to kiss Mattie's forehead.

BETTY JEAN
Maybe...or maybe they're just as
scared as you are and just need
help to do the right thing.

MATTIE
Yes ma'am Betty Jean turns to begin
walking back home as Mattie
continues up the road to Nikki's
home.

EXT. NIKKI'S HOUSE - MORNING

32

The small home resembles a trailer, it's yard is
unkempt. There is a small welcome mat lying at the front
door.

Mattie is about to knock on the door when it flies open.

SUE ANN, a tired, tall, dirty disheveled woman Nikki's older
sister, stumbles out running into Mattie. Sue Ann has matted
hair, her clothes are in disarray.

SUE ANN
To hell with all of y'all! I will
be glad when you DEAD!

Mattie tries not to fall down the steps.

(CONTINUED)

Sue Ann pushes her. *

SUE ANN CONTD

What you looking at you dumb hefa,
get off my porch! *

NIKKI, a strong, shapely attractive young girl, jumps in
between them defending Mattie by aggressively confronting
Sue Ann. *

NIKKI

Just take your nasty tail on away
from here! Go on! LEAVE! *

Sue Ann turns her attention to Nikki who does not back
down. Sue Ann laughs sinisterly, before backing up slowly. *

SUE ANN

I'll be back Nikki and I won't be
in as good of a mood as I am right
now! You think your better than
me? You aint nothing...you ain't
better than me! You going to end up
needing me, you just wait and see. *

Sue Ann storms off the porch and down the road angrily.
Nikki watches her leave. *

NIKKI

I'm sorry Mattie...it, it's been a
rough morning... *

Nikki still distracted watching Sue Ann who is still yelling
as she storms down the street. *

MATTIE

Are you OK? *

NIKKI

I hate her! Is that wrong Mattie,
is it wrong to hate your own flesh
and blood sister? To hate someone
who is a part of you, cause I hate
her! *

MATTIE

I, I don't know...I guess God
understand, if we do, but he'd
rather we didn't. Where's Cilla and
your mama...are they OK? *

Nikki turns with tears in her eyes, she moves closer to
Mattie to whisper. *

(CONTINUED) *

NIKKI

Sue Ann got into a bad fight with
mama. I thought, I thought we was
going to lose mama last night. I
got to stay and clean up...I got to
help my mama.

*
*

MATTIE

Oh Nikki, you can't keep missing
school, you won't pass.

Nikki moves toward the door, she opens it a little and
starts crying quietly.

NIKKI

I...I'm all mama got...

MATTIE

Please don't cry Nikki, I'll help
you clean.

Nikki closes the door and abruptly turns toward Mattie.

NIKKI

No Mattie...YOU go to school!

MATTIE

Then I'll come over later and give
you the lesson...OK?

Nikki hesitates for a minute.

NIKKI

OK, but...

Nikki steps inside the house.

NIKKI CONTD

If Sue Ann is here, please, promise
you'll go on home. I don't know
what she liable to do. Mattie I'm
sorry we couldn't make it to Sam's
funeral, I'm so sorry. Mama even
felt well enough to bake a cake and
everything, but, Sue Ann...I hate
her Mattie...I know it's wrong.

Nikki closes the door leaving Mattie to stare at the ratty
screen door.

FADE OUT

*

EXT. THE SCHOOL HOUSE

33

FADE IN

*

Mattie sees the school and a few children milling around outside the door.

MATTIE

The school was mostly made up of the "have nots" and those that "had a lot less than that". Since I didn't really stand out, the other kids just ignored me. The other kids did...but not Matilda.

Mattie stops at the door as she sees a group moving toward front of the school with Matilda heading up the pack.

MATTIE VO CONTD

Matilda Jackson lives in this big white house on an old plantation with her mother and four sisters. I guess out of the four she could be considered the most attractive, none of them looked alike, but Matilda certainly stood out. She was yellow, I don't mean, light skinned, I mean yellow like a big-mouthed banana.

The group passed by Mattie without incident, all except Matilda who glared at Mattie before walking into the school.

MATTIE CONTD

She has gray-yellow eyes and her mouth looked as if it were split from ear to ear. I imagined if she laughed hard enough she could swallow her own head.

INT. SCHOOL HOUSE

34

Mattie calmly walks into the school and heads for her desk and begins pulling out her books.

MATTIE VO CONTD

Matilda was always surrounded by girls who liked the attention her looks gave them. It was easy to understand that they hoped whoever Matilda didn't want, would want them as a kind of consolation prize.

(CONTINUED)

Matilda whispers something to a friend and they start laughing as Mattie continue to try and ignore them.

MATTIE VO CONTD

She and I been fighting since we were in kindergarten. I'm not even sure why we don't like each other or why we fight all the time after while you stop wondering about the reasons and just wait for an opportunity.

The teacher is at the black board writing the assignment and the class is relatively quiet other than random chatter from the other students. Matilda walks over to the desk in front of Mattie and motions for the child who is sitting there to move. She plops down in front of Mattie and begins tapping on the book that Mattie is trying to read. Mattie ignores Matilda.

MATILDA

You know you can't read.

Mattie looks up from the book long enough to give Matilda a dirty look.

MATTIE

If your eyes weren't so yellow you could see I'm trying to ignore you.

Mattie lifts the book so that now it's blocking Matilda from her view. Matilda snatches the book out of her hands and throws it on the floor.

MATILDA CONTD

So you think you're funny! You sure got a lot of jokes...so let me ask you this Ms. Funny as Hell, who you think goin to keep me from kicking your butt now that your brother's dead?

FLASHBACK

EXT - MATTIE'S HOUSE EARLY MORNING CONTINUOUS

35

*

Matilda is standing in the front yard of Mattie's home with her older sisters, Matilda has a bruise under her eye and a swollen lip. Sam, Jr. and Mattie are standing on the porch with Sam, Jr. standing in front of Mattie.

(CONTINUED)

SAM, JR.

What y'all want with Mattie?

ROSE

Sam this ain't got nothing to do with you, this between Mattie and Matilda.

SAM, JR.

Y'all need to take your sister and get on home.

ROSE

We can't do that Sam, it ain't right what Mattie did...

SAM, JR.

Well if y'all come here planning on jumping on my sister that ain't fixin to happen' so I think y'all best be moving along.

Mattie stands beside Sam, Jr. with her hands on her hip, glaring at Matilda who is giving Mattie and equal dose of evil eye. The sisters finally decide to go home.

SAM, JR.

Mattie gal...I sho wish you would stay out of trouble.

MATTIE

I didn't do nothing she started it...she always starting it!

Sam, Jr. is frustrated and turns to walk into the house.

SAM, JR.

Just leave that yellow girl alone for God's sakes Mattie...

Mattie stands on the porch a little while longer watching the girls walk down the drive. She mumbles under her breath.

MATTIE

I didn't start it...

END OF FLASHBACK

INT. SCHOOL HOUSE CONTINUOUS 36 *

Matilda gets close to Mattie's face and pokes her forehead with her finger. Immediately upon touching Mattie's forehead Mattie goes into a trance.

VISION SEQUENCE

INT. MATILDA'S BEDROOM LATE NIGHT 37 *

The bedroom is decorated with flowers and stuffed animals.

Pretty yellow curtains are blowing from a light breeze coming from an open window.

Matilda is sitting up in the bed staring at the door. *

Mattie is standing in front of the door.

MATILDA VO

Please not tonight Lord. Please
don't let him come in here
tonight. I've been good, I
have...I've tried real hard to be
good!

The door cracks open slowly. Mattie steps out of the way. Matilda, climbs deeper into the bed with a terrified look on her face as she pulls the covers up over her chest.

MATILDA'S VOICE OFF CAMERA *

MATILDA

Please...no, no...please!

CLOSE UP OF DOOR *

The door opens

A tall skinny man, named Patterson comes through the door with a lustful look on his face. *

He slips in and quietly closes the door behind him.

CLOSE UP OF HIS FACE *

CUT AWAY TO MATILDA'S TERRIFIED FACE *

Matilda digs deeper into her covers *

He begins to slowly approach the bed.

(CONTINUED)

MATILDA

Please no!

Mattie tries to walk or speak and can't do anything as she watches the Patterson reaches for the covers. *

Matilda turns her head and begins to cry.

MR. PATTERSON *

My pretty girl...such a pretty,
pretty girl...

Mattie begins to shake trying desperately to escape the vision.

FADE OUT *

END OF VISION

INT. SCHOOL HOUSE CONTINUOUS

38 *

FADE IN *

Mattie comes to from the vision, clutching either side of the desk. *

Matilda staring at her with a smirk on her face.

Mattie leans forward close enough to kiss Matilda, but instead whispers in her ear.

CLOSE UP OF MATTIE'S PLEASED FACE *

MATTIE

Who will save you from him tonight? *

Mattie sits back in her chair with a smug grin on her face.

Then she smiles wickedly before speaking matter of fact fiddling with a pencil on her desk. *

MATTIE CONT'D *

My pretty, pretty girl.

Matilda seems to not understand right away. Slowly she stands up from the desk. *

Mattie laughs pushing her chair back to stand and retrieve her book before plopping back in the chair watching Matilda sputter speechless. *

(CONTINUED)

MATILDA

What are you talking about?

Mattie pretends to read her book. Matilda yells at her.

MATILDA CONT'D

What are you talking about!

Mattie never responds just smiles

Matilda steps back clumsily bumping into another child who comes to see the commotion.

Matilda and the child collide

The teacher turns to see what is going on

TEACHER

What are you doing?

The teacher races over to see what is going on.

Matilda tries to straighten up, she turns quickly to look at Mattie and elbows the teacher accidentally

Teacher gets hit and responds angrily

TEACHER

What the hell! Matilda, what is going on here?

Matilda staring at Mattie

MATILDA

I'm...I'm sorry...I...can I go to the bathroom? I've got to...to pee!

TEACHER

Yes! go ahead and hurry back!

The teacher straightens her dress before addressing the rest of the class.

TEACHER

Sit down all of you!

CUT AWAY MATTIE SMILING TO HERSELF

MATTIE VO

The rest of the school year was rather uneventful. Matilda didn't bother me at all after that day, as a matter of fact, she went out of

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MATTIE VO (cont'd)
her way to not come any where near
me.

INT. ON THE ROAD - LATER AFTERNOON

39

MATTIE VO
Nothing is more self satisfying
than the fresh air and sunshine
beating on your skin and the sweet
sweet sound of your enemies cries
ringing in your ear.

*
*
*
*
*

Mattie is skipping and twirling down the road, laughing
merrily to herself.

She starts towards Nikki's house, but hears sounds of
arguing coming from the house and decides not to stop, but
instead heads home.

INT. MATTIE'S KITCHEN

40

Betty Jean and Annie are sitting outside on the porch
talking while peeling potatoes for dinner.

Mattie rushes up the steps grinning from ear to ear.

MATTIE VO.
I was about to explode I was so
excited. I just had to tell
someone what happened...

*
*
*

Betty Jean looks up smiling at Mattie

*

BETTY JEAN
Looks like somebody had a good day
today, huh Annie? What's goin on
gal, what got you all bright as the
sun?

*

Mattie begins to explain what happened, going back and forth
between Annie and Betty Jean, sharing every detail of the
confrontation and ultimately the vision.

MATTIE VO
You know how it gets quiet before a
storm? Well that's how it was on
that porch. Clouds rolled in right
as I was talking and I didn't even
see them come in...

*
*
*
*

(CONTINUED)

Annie picks up her bowl of vegetables, looks at Mattie with a knowing look, shakes her head as if in pity and walks into the house, leaving Mattie to a furious Betty Jean.

Betty Jean walks down steps and breaks off a switch from a tree

*
*

MATTIE VO CONTD

My grandma commenced to beating on my behind until I didn't have a tear left in my head. She was going on and on about how God's gifts are supposed to heal NOT hurt and how I should be ashamed of myself for letting the devil use me that way.

Mattie stands sobbing in front of her Betty Jean.

*

MATTIE VO CONTD

She said some other stuff too, but I blocked it out, until she said something that I was sure I miss understood...

MATTIE

You want me to what?

Betty Jean, puts her belt back on the door and turns around to respond to a shocked Mattie.

BETTY JEAN

You heard exactly what I said...I want you to apologize and that's what we are about to do...right NOW!

MATTIE

Apologize! But grandma, she started she's always saying something all mean and hateful! It's not fair!

Betty Jean closes the front door and starts heading down the steps.

BETTY JEAN

Come on here Mattie...

Betty Jean turns around once.

BETTY JEAN CONTD

Do I have to repeat myself?

*

Mattie stubbornly pouts down the steps, stomping her feet all the way. Betty Jean continues walking down the drive with Mattie mumbling and murmuring behind her.

EXT. THE ROAD - MID EVENING

41

MATTIE VO CONT'D

It was the longest walk of my life.
It was only a mile along a dirt
road, but I could hear my steps
echoing in my ears like a death row
inmate on his way to the chair.

*
*
*
*
*
*

The road finally turned off to a long driveway. There were acres of farmland. They passed through an open gate and began to walk up a tree lined driveway.

MATTIE VO CONTD

The plantation the Jackson's family
lived on was generations old. It
belonged to the Patterson family,
they were one of the first to own
slaves. Mr. Paul Patterson, treated
his workers real good and even
became good friends with Gentry
Jackson, Matilda's great, great,
great, great grandfather.

*
*
*
*
*

Mattie continued to stall, pretending she had to tie her shoe, or that she'd hurt her ankle

Betty Jean snatched her by her shirt and pulled her yelling the whole time.

*
*

MATTIE VO CONTD

When Mr. Jackson was freed, Mr.
Patterson let him stay and whatever
he worked to produce was his. When
Mr. Patterson finally died, they
were allowed to stay with someone
from the Patterson family always
overseeing the land.

*
*
*
*
*
*

Mattie stops to tie her shoe again that's not untied.

*

Betty Jean storms over to slap her on the head.

*

Mattie jumps up rubbing her head and continues the journey up the driveway.

(CONTINUED)

MATTIE VO CONTD

Mr. Patterson's great great great
grandson was overseeing the farm
now and never missed a visit but
rumor had it that he wasn't as
nice as the Patterson's before him.

Mattie and Betty Jean step on to the porch and knock on the
door.

MATTIE VO CONTD

I was trying to come up with a
proper apology, like, I'm sorry
you're an ugly mean, yellow hefa.
Or maybe I could just barf my
apology on her shoe.

Mr. Patterson, a tall, gaunt, haggared man, opens the door.
After a few minutes a man comes to the door.

He smiles at Betty Jean.

MATTIE VO CONTD

From the moment he opened the door,
I knew I'd seen before. There was
something familiar about his eyes.

CLOSE UP PATTERSON

MR. PATTERSON

Betty Jean, well it's been a mighty
long time...how on earth have you
been?

CUTAWAY BETTY JEAN

BETTY JEAN

Yes, sir, a long time. I'm fine,
just fine, how are you and your
family?

POV BEHIND PATTERSON

From inside the house Matilda

Matilda's voice off camera

MATILDA

Who is it!

After a few minutes she pushed her way between the man and
the door to see Mattie and Betty Jean standing on the porch.

WIDE SHOT

(CONTINUED)

MR. PATTERSON

Oh we're doing just fine...what's left of us that is. You know they've entrusted me to look after things, so I thought I'd stop by to check up on the farm. Everything seems to be growing surprisingly well.

He attempts to stroke Matilda's hair

She shrinks away from his touch with a look of disgust

He pretends not to notice and continues speaking casually

He steps outside the door Matilda standing inside behind him

CLOSE UP

MR. PATTERSON

What brings you by?

WIDE: OF CONVERSATION ON PORCH

BETTY JEAN

Well it seems Mattie and Matilda had a little bit of a disagreement earlier today in school and I'm here to make sure some wrongs are made right...that's all.

MR. PATTERSON

Well her mama isn't home but maybe I can help. I think she can trust me to handle a childhood quarrel. What where they fighting about?

SHOT OF BETTY JEAN WITH A SAD MATTIE BEHIND HER

BETTY JEAN

Well now Mr. Patterson you know how children are...be mad today and friends tomorrow.

MATTIE VO CONTD

They kept going on about lessons and carrying on about treating your enemies right, but I couldn't get past the familiarity behind that man's eyes and the striking similarities he and Matilda had...like he could be her..

(CONTINUED)

Betty Jean elbows Mattie, who was staring with her mouth wide open at Mr. Patterson.

BETTY JEAN

Isn't there something you want to say Mattie? Something you want to say to Ms. Matilda.

Betty Jean gives Mattie a stern look before returning a soft smile to Mr. Patterson and Matilda.

MATTIE

Oh...Matilda...I'm, I'm so sorry!

Matilda, continues to glare at Mattie.

Mr. Patterson opens the door for Matilda to come out.

MR. PATTERSON

Now Matilda, Ms. Mattie is stretching out her hand to make amends with you, seem like the Christian thing to do would be to accept. Don't you think so?

Matilda suddenly looked worried, even afraid.

She steps out, extends her hand reluctantly and speaks softly.

MATILDA

Me too.

MR. PATTERSON

Now that is just wonderful. Isn't that wonderful Betty Jean, that's how all of us should be. Forgiving one another, always be ready and willing to forgive. That's, Matilda...a good girl, my pretty, pretty girl!

Matilda's face shoots a look at Mattie

Mattie ducks her head in shame

Matilda's expression crumbles slightly but when Patterson looks at her she rebounds quickly

Betty Jean notices the exchange and tries to change the subject.

(CONTINUED)

BETTY JEAN

Well, I recon Mattie and I best be getting along then. Good day to the both of you.

MATTIE VO

My enemy was in front of me broken, battered in front of me and I couldn't take my eyes off of her, cause for the first time...I could see her!

Betty Jean, placed her arm around Mattie's shoulders and begins to usher her towards the steps but changes her mind suddenly.

She turns to address Mr. Patterson.

BETTY JEAN

Mr. Patterson...I wonder if you'd please...may I have a word with you. Alone, please, for just a moment.

Mr. Patterson smiles nodding apprehensively.

He follows Betty Jean down the steps out of ear shot of the girls.

CUTAWAY MATTIE AND MATILDA ON PORCH

Mattie and Matilda stand staring at each other both afraid to speak

Mattie turns to look at Betty Jean then back to Matilda, she takes a tentative step forward and reaches carefully for her hand.

CLOSE UP OF THEIR HANDS TOUCHING

WIDE SHOT OF PORCH

Matilda stands stone faced looking at Mattie

Mattie sincerely squeezes her hand

MATTIE

Matilda...I'm, I'm so so sorry...I didn't, I mean...

Matilda snatches her hand away and rushes inside the house, slamming the door behind her.

CUTAWAY BETTY JEAN AND PATTERSON

(CONTINUED)

Camera focuses on Betty Jean and Mr. Patterson *

WIDE SHOT *

Betty speaks nonchalant *

BETTY JEAN

Seems God has blessed my Mattie
there with a gift. A gift that He
uses to show her things. *

Mr. Patterson looks amused. *

MR. PATTERSON *

See things, what kind of things? *

Betty Jean pulls shoulders back bravely *

BETTY JEAN *

Well, let's just say...she can see
secret things...hidden
things. Things done in the dark
that people think they getting away
with, but God sees it. *

Mr. Patteson looks questioningly at Betty Jean *

MR. PATTERSON *

And? If there is something you are
trying to say Betty Jean...I'd
rather you'd say it and stop
beating around... *

Betty Jean cuts him off speaking harshly. *

BETTY JEAN *

There are some secrets so evil God
won't let you hide them, Mr.
Patterson! He'll snatch the covers
off and expose it! *

Mr. Patterson looks embarrassed. He quickly becomes
indignate. *

MR. PATTERSON *

I think you best be running along
now Betty Jean it's getting late
and around these parts things can
get ugly pretty quickly... *

He threatens *

(CONTINUED)

MR. PATTERSON CONT'D
It can be down right dangerous
after dark..so tread lightly.

Betty Jean looks uninterested as she steps past him to call
Mattie.

BETTY JEAN
Come on Mattie, we need to be
heading home now.

Betty Jean continues walking past him with Mattie quickly
following behind her.

CLOSE UP

Mr. Patterson stares after them eyes narrowed and sinister.

AERIAL SHOT OF BETTY JEAN AND MATTIE WALKING AWAY

Mattie and Betty Jean walk down the driveway

CLOSE UP OF MATTIE LOOKING BACK TOWARD HOUSE

Mattie looks back somberly

CUT AWAY OF MATILDA'S WINDOW

Yellow curtains blowing out an open window.

WIDE SHOT OF MATTIE AND BETTY

Mattie reaches for Betty Jeans hand

FADE OUT

DREAM SEQUENCE

INT. DARK BARN

42

SOUND OF HORSES IN DISTANCE

FADE IN

Mattie is standing next to a barn.

A truck is parked a few feet away and two men are loading a
body onto the truck.

Mattie begins to run toward the truck, calling out to the
men, who don't hear her and begin to get inside their
truck.

(CONTINUED)

The truck pulls away, but the back door is open and Mattie can see the body slipping through the open door.

Mattie tries to run faster, but the body begins to roll from the open door, hitting the ground. She screams when she sees its Sam staring at her.

END OF DREAM SEQUENCE

FADE TO BLACK

*

INT. MATTIE'S KITCHEN - EARLY MORNING

43

FADE IN

*

Mattie is washing dishes at the kitchen sink

Annie comes in looking a little lost.

*

Mattie watches her for a moment, drying her hands off before interceding.

MATTIE

You OK mama? What you looking for?

Annie, doesn't acknowledge Mattie right away and instead sits at the table, still seeming very confused.

MATTIE CONTD

Mama? Are you alright?

Annie stares straight ahead.

ANNIE

I thought I heard Sammy in here.
Could have sworn I heard him call
my name. I heard it clear as a
bell.

*

Mattie moves toward her slowly.

*

MATTIE

Ma...Sammy ain't here. You just
missing him that's all.

*

*

Annie slowly turns her head to look at Mattie.

ANNIE

Miss him? You miss something you've
lost...I know where Sammy is...I
just thought I heard him call my
name..

*

*

*

*

Annie turns back towards the table to sit down.

*

*

(CONTINUED)

ANNIE

I missed my daddy. I missed him
cause I knew I'd never see that
mean ole rattle snake again. But I
ain't missing Sammy...no, I know
right where he is. Just thought I
heard him calling my name is all.

MATTIE

Let me get you some tea mama.

Mattie strokes Annie's hair lightly before turning to begin
brewing her tea.

Betty Jean walks into the kitchen.

CLOSE UP

BETTY JEAN

Mattie, don't forget Nikki's gift
is in the living room on the table.
And don't you be there worryin that
poor child's mama to death, you be
polite you hear me?

WIDE SHOT OF KITCHEN

Mattie places cup of tea on the table for Annie, and looks
shocked.

MATTIE

I completely forgot. Can I go now
please?

BETTY JEAN

Go on.

CLOSE UP OF ANNIE

Annie stirs the tea not looking up

ANNIE

Please tell Bev I said hi...you
hear me? Tell her I said hi and
that I plan on making her some of
that pea soup she likes so much as
soon as I get a chance too.

MATTIE

Ma, Nikki's mama's name is...

Betty Jean holds her hand up to interrupt Mattie and shakes
her head as if to say, just go with it.

(CONTINUED)

Annie looks up and notices Betty Jean's gesture, she puts her head down angrily

CLOSE UP OF MATTIE

MATTIE CONTD

OK, yes ma'am

CUT AWAY OF BETTY JEAN

BETTY JEAN

Go on so you can get back before dark.

WIDE SHOT OF KITCHEN

MATTIE

Yes, ma'am

Mattie hurries to get the package, kisses both Betty Jean and Annie before rushing out the door.

CUT AWAY OF ANNIE'S ANGRY FACE

ANNIE

Why you always do that?

WIDE SHOT

Betty Jean walks to the stove to pour water for tea. She sits at table not looking at Annie, she just stirs her tea.

BETTY JEAN

What Annie? What do I always do?

ANNIE

You always making me feel foolish, making me look stupid in front of people, why you always do that?

Betty Jean keeps her attention on her cup until finally Annie becomes upset and jumps from the table.

CLOSE UP OF ANNIE

ANNIE

I will not spend one more second in this room with you SAM until you start doing right by me...DO YOU HEAR ME?

CUTAWAY OF BETTY JEAN

(CONTINUED)

Betty Jean slowly sips her tea and does not look at Annie.
Finally, she briefly acknowledges Annie.

BETTY JEAN

I'll do better Annie, I
promise...now sit down and finish
your tea...please.

CLOSE UP ANNIE

Annie smiles softly and pulls the chair back out and slowly
sits down.

ANNIE

I love you Sam, The Lord knows that
I do. But you have got to treat me
better. I know you will, won't you
Sam...yes I know you will.

Annie and Betty Jean sit at the table drinking their tea in
silence.

FADE OUT

EXT. NIKKI'S HOUSE - PORCH AFTERNOON

44

FADE IN

Cilla a curly haired, small for her age, friendly child
answers the door.

MATTIE

Well Ms. Cilla, what you doing
answering the door? Where is your
Nikki?

CILLA

Today her birthday...you coming in
Mattie?

Mattie grabs the handle, laughing lightly.

MATTIE

As soon as you let me in.

INT. NIKKI'S HOUSE - KITCHEN

45

The house is scarcely decorated. The walls have holes in
them some are patched up with wood, but others have not been
fixed.

(CONTINUED)

Nikki and her mother PAMELA, a sick, frail, but pleasant looking woman are in the kitchen and there is a pretty cake on the table.

Nikki hugs Mattie when she comes in the kitchen.

MATTIE

Happy Birthday! How does it feel to be an old woman?

Before Nikki can respond, her mother speaks up jokingly.

CLOSE UP OF PAMELA

MS. PAMELA

Chile it feels awful!

Everyone laughs at the joke.

Nikkie hugs Mattie

CLOSE UP OF NIKKI

NIKKI

Thanks for coming!

WIDE SHOT OF KITCHEN

Mattie quickly turns to acknowledge Nikki's mother.

MATTIE

How are you feeling?

MS. PAMELA

I'm tired, but I'm so thankful to God to be able to see another one of my baby's birthdays. So very thankful!

CUTAWAY TO DOOR SUE ANN'S STANDING OUTSIDE

Suddenly there are loud footsteps on the porch and the screen door is violently flung open.

MATTIE VO

The room became bitterly cold all we could do was hold our breath. We just stood there waiting for We stood anxiously, helplessly waiting for the "thing" to happen, waiting for the "moment" to arrive and while we were waiting we were praying, that it passed as quickly as it came.

(CONTINUED)

Sue Ann stands in the kitchen scouring the room.

She sees the cake on the table and laughs to herself. She walks over and sticks her finger in the icing, dragging it along the chocolate and plopping the icing into her mouth while glaring at Nikki and then her mother hoping one of the two would object.

Ms. Pamela grabs her hand.

CLOSE UP OF HER HAND

Sue Ann snatches it away

Nikki prepares to fight

Sue Ann backs down looking at Nikki then her mother

SUE ANN
Get yo hands off me!

CUT AWAY TO PAMELA

Pamela holds her frail hand up to stop Nikki

MS. PAMELA
It's OK Nikki, I'm alright. Sue
Ann just passing through right Sue
Ann?

WIDE SHOT

Sue Ann responds with venom in her voice

SUE ANN
I ain't never got no birthday cake,
didn't nobody every throw me no
party...where is my party mama?
Huh?

MS. PAMELA
Sue Ann its your sisters birthday,
I think you should show her the
proper respect...do to her what
you'd want done to you.

Sue Ann looks like a trapped animal.

She spins around adressing everyone in the room

SUE ANN
You mean do to her what's being
done to me don't you!!! Cause you'd
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

SUE ANN (cont'd)
have to treat her like a piece of
CRAP too!!

Sue Ann goes to grab the cake again

Pamela gets her strength and grabs her roughly by the wrist
squeezing it tightly until Sue Ann lets go.

CLOSE UP OF PAMELA'S ANGRY FACE

MS. PAMELA
Not today Sue...do you hear me?

CUT AWAY TO SUE ANN'S EMBARRASSED FACE

Sue Ann backs up slightly looking around the room.

SUE ANN
Go on eat your damn cake I hope you
all choke and die on it!!

Sue Ann stops to point a finger at her mother

SUE ANN CON'T
Especially you! What you got left
to celebrate anyway?

CUTAWAY TO PAMELA

MS. PAMELA
What do I have to celebrate? Life!

WIDE SHOT OF KITCHEN

Everyone standing nervously awaiting the end of the
altercation

Sue Ann continues defiantly

SUE ANN
I hate you! I hate you and can't
wait till your dead and gone!

CUT AWAY TO PAMELA

Pam speaks suddenly very tired

MS. PAMELA
I'm sorry to hear that Sue Ann,
nevertheless, you can hate me
tomorrow just the same.

WIDE SHOT

(CONTINUED)

Sue Ann pushes past her, brushing up against Nikki who is ready to jump on her at the first sign of trouble. Once she leaves the room, the room seems a little calmer.

Everyone continues with the festivities as if the Sue Ann drama never happened. *

They cut the cake and eat it laughing and joking. Ms. Pamela goes to a cabinet in the kitchen and pulls out a large brightly wrapped package and hands it to Nikki, who is pleasantly surprised.

CLOSE UP *

NIKKI

Mama! You didn't have to get me no present...when did you even have time? *

CUT AWAY *

MS. PAMELA

I have my ways, now you open it, go on.

Nikki eagerly grabs the box with Mattie and Priscilla watching with great anticipation.

Ms. Pamela leans against the counter, exhausted from the day.

CLOSE UP OF BOX *

Inside the box is a very stylish dress and some money.

WIDE SHOT *

NIKKI

Mama! It's wonderful! Thank you so much! I love it!

MS. PAMELA

The money is so that you and Ms. Mattie can go to the movies and see one of them new shows they got down there. The dress you can wear for church Sunday.

Nikki rushes over to hug her mother.

NIKKI

Oh mama thank you so much, what you say Mattie want to go to the movies tomorrow?

(CONTINUED)

MATTIE

I'd love too, just got to ask, but
but I'm sure they won't mind! Thank
you so much Ms. Pamela.

Mattie walks over to hug Pamela and immediately goes into a
trance. *

VISION SEQUENCE *

INT. PAMELA'S BEDROOM- NIGHT 46 *

Mattie is standing in Ms. Pamela's bedroom.

Mattie can not see, but hears Sue Ann's angry voice. A CHILD
CRYING OFF CAMERA *

Mattie can now see Pamela lying on the bed. *

Pamela is having trouble breathing. *

Sue Ann is hitting her with Nikki's torn dress over and over
again *

CLOSE UP OF SUE ANN *

Sue Ann is yelling *

SUE ANN

You ain't never bought me a dress,
but you'll take your last damn dime
to make sure that little whore's
got a dress! I hate you, I hate
you!

CUT AWAY OF PAMELA *

Pamela flinches when the dress hits her, but she can't fight
back *

Sue Ann tosses the dress over Pamela's face *

CUT IN SUE ANN *

Sue Ann leans in menacingly to speak into her mother's face *

SUE ANN CON'T

As soon as you dead, I'm putting
them tramps in the street! and I'm
going to throw your sorry tail in
the trash! *

WIDE SHOT *

(CONTINUED)

Sue Ann storms past Mattie out of the room *

ZOOM IN *

Pamela's slowly stops breathing and becomes still *

CRYING OFF CAMERA *

FADE OUT *

END OF VISION SEQUENCE

INT. NIKKI'S HOUSE - KITCHEN CONTINUOUS 47 *

FADE IN *

Pamela is still holding Mattie when Mattie comes out of
trance. *

Mattie pushes Pamela away from her and runs from the house. *

Nikki runs to the door calling Mattie's name. *

CUT AWAY *

Mattie running down the driveway *

AERIAL VIEW OF MATTIE RUNNING *

NIKKI CALLING HER OFF CAMERA *

EXT. THE ROAD - MID AFTERNOON 48 *

Mattie finally stops running, she wipes the tears from her
eyes. *

MATTIE VO *

Life can take you to a lonely place *

but a life filled with a purpose *

you don't understand and a destiny *

you can't explain can make you feel *

lost. *

INT. MATTIE'S HOUSE SAME DAY 49 *

Mattie walks in and doesn't see anyone in the kitchen, she
walks into the living room and finds Betty Jean reading from
the Bible out loud to Annie who is sitting quietly rocking
in a chair.

INT. MATTIE'S ROOM SAME DAY 50 *

Mattie walks past and slips into her room. She closes the door, undresses and climbs into the bed to continue crying into the familiarity of her pillow.

FADE OUT *

INT. MATTIE'S KITCHEN - EARLY MORNING 51

FADE IN *

Mattie, Betty Jean and Annie are in the kitchen eating breakfast. There's a knock at the door and Betty Jean stands to answer it.

Mattie stands to answer door *

She finds Nikki standing there and seems surprised *

She opens the door to let Nikki in. *

Nikki smiles and greets everyone, before addressing Mattie *

WIDE SHOT *

NIKKI

Why ain't you dressed? I thought we
was going to the show? *

Mattie looks away embarrassed. *

Betty Jean gives Mattie a questioning look. *

Mattie responds quietly *

MATTIE

I guess, I just thought...after
yesterday. *

Undaunted Nikki remains optimistic *

NIKKI

Girl please...everybody know you
crazy...come on, you going make me
late! *

CLOSE UP *

MATTIE

Sorry, I forgot to mention
it...mama, grandma...can I go to
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MATTIE (cont'd)
the movies with Nikki? Ms. Pamela
gave her enough birthday money for
the both of us?

CUT AWAY TO BETTY JEAN STANDING UP FROM TABLE *

Betty Jean walks over to squeeze Nikki's shoulders in a
friendly embrace.

CLOSE UP *

BETTY JEAN
You sure you wouldn't rather take
me baby...I'm a whole lot more fun! *

WIDE SHOT OF KITCHEN *

FADE OUT *

EXT. TOWN - EARLY AFTERNOON

52

FADE IN *

Nikki and Mattie are leaving the theater laughing *

They prepare to cross the street *

WIDE SHOT *

A truck is coming down the street toward them *

CLOSE UP OF NIKKI *

Nikki prepares to step into the street *

Mattie sees the truck and pulls Nikki out of the way *

The truck screeches to a halt a few feet ahead of them *

Mattie yells at the driver *

MATTIE
Watch were your going STUPID! *

The truck backs up slowly *

Both girls are angrily awaiting a confrontation *

The dirty window rolls down to expose a old scruffy
passenger named Vincent and an extremely handsome driver
named Jet *

(CONTINUED)

Jet is visibly shaken so Uncle Vincent speaks up quickly in a thick Cajun accent. *

Vincent snatches off his hat in respect. *

UNCLE VINCENT

I am sho nuff sorry young
lady...sho nuff, I'm teachin dis
here chuckle head to drive an he
ain't quite git it yet *

Nikki and Mattie both are momentarily speechless as they stare at Jet. *

Finally Nikki speaks up first *

NIKKI

I understand, but you were going
pretty fast *

Mattie blurts out *

MATTIE

You could have killed her *

Uncle Vincent nods his head respectfully *

UNCLE VINCENT

Yes 'm you sho nuff right...we
apologiz, but coult you young
misses plez hep us find Carlton
Farm...ben drivin most da night, we
mo los now dan when we started
ain't we Jett? *

Uncle Vincent elbows Jet who is staring at Mattie *

Jet nods his head, turning away shyly staring straight ahead. *

UNCLE VINCENT CONT'D

Gots to fine dis boy a job
somewhere les we gon starv to def *

Both girls are star struck and unable to speak *

Jet continues to stare straight ahead speaking quietly *

JET

I'm sorry miss ma'ams...I didn't
meant to scare you *

After a few moments of quite Mattie is the first to speak. *

(CONTINUED)

MATTIE

Oh she ok, she'll get over it...it
was only her pinky toe.

She laughs at her own joke

Nikki pipes up stepping in front of Mattie

NIKKI

I'm real good with directions if
you need me to tag along

The girls nudge each other playfully

Uncle Vincent chimes in

UNCLE VINCENT

No ma'am jus point us in da rit
direction pleas

Mattie smiles at Jet warmly

CLOSE UP OF VINCENT

Uncles Vincent notices and frowns catching himself quickly

MATTIE

Sure, just keep going down this
road here, bare left, you'll run
right into it about 3 miles along.
Can't miss it, it's one of the

Uncle Vincent puts hat on and tips it respectfully.

UNCLE VINCENT

We much obliged, ain't we Jet? Tell
the young Miss, thank you Jet.

Jet is staring intently at Mattie and jumps when Vincent
says his name.

JET

Yes ma'am much obliged...much
obliged.

Uncle Vincent shakes each girl's hand before pulling off.

Nikki grabs Mattie's arm

NIKKI

Girl he was GORGEOUS!!! and he was
staring at you the whole time. Why
didn't you say something?

(CONTINUED)

Mattie laughs slapping Nikki's shoulder

MATTIE

No he wasn't...was he?

Nikki pushes her

NIKKI

I don't know what he would see in
you when he got all this sexy
standing right in front of
him. You should have said
something.

Mattie starts to walk away

MATTIE

Say what, "will you marry me and
give me lots of beautiful chocolate
babies"?

WIDE:ROAD

Nikki turns to watch the truck drive down the road

CLOSE UP OF NIKKI

NIKKI

I would have stopped at give me...

They laugh as they continue toward the park to eat lunch.

WIDE SHOT OF THEM WALKING TOWARD PARK

SERIES OF SHOTS OF PARK

Mattie and Nikki are sitting on a park bench eating
sandwiches.

MATTIE VO

The images of Jet's beautiful smile
couldn't erase the shadows of
Nikki's mamas death...I couldn't
help but wonder if it were
happening right now. When Lord,
when?

Nikkie nudges Mattie when she sees she's no longer
listening.

Mattie smiles then something across the street catches her
eye. She jumps up from the bench.

WIDE SHOT OF STREET

(CONTINUED)

A young girl and her mother walk into a boutique across from the park. *

CUT AWAY BACK TO PARK *

Nikki is nervously holding Mattie's arm *

NIKKI

Mattie? What's wrong? What is it? *

Mattie pulls away and begins running quickly across the street *

Nikki catches up with her at the front door of the boutique *

MATTIE VO *

I knew it was her, had no clue how
I knew, but beneath her cascading
auburn tresses I knew it was the
red haired girl from my vision. *

Nikki is pulling on Mattie's arm *

CLOSE UP of nikki *

NIKKI

Girl are you crazy we can't afford
nothing in there. *

CUT AWAY OF MATTIE *

MATTIE

I can't afford not to. *

WIDE SHOT *

Nikki grabs Mattie's arm roughly blocking her entrance. *

NIKKI

You need to tell me what's going
on! *

MATTIE

I can't explain right now, but I
PROMISE as soon as I come out I
will tell you everything...I
PROMISE! *

Nikki relents and steps aside so Mattie can go into the store. *

CLOSE UP OF NIKKI *

(CONTINUED)

NIKKI

I've got enough crazy in my life
Mattie...I ain't trying to add no
more!

*
*
*

CUT AWAY MATTIE

*

MATTIE

I know and I'm sorry, but I'll be
right back I promise...

*
*

Mattie opens the door.

*

Nikki is staring in window

*

INT. STORE - AFTERNOON

53

*

BELL RINGS OFF CAMERA

*

Mattie tries to appear nonchalant awaiting an opportunity to
approach Emily.

*
*

Mattie bumps into a shelf.

*

Emily turns noticing the commotion. She recognizes Mattie
and turns away.

*
*

MATTIE VO

*

She looked like a porcelain doll, I
thought one threatening word from
me would send her face shattering
into a million pieces.

When Emily's mother walks away from her, Mattie emerges from
behind a shelf and slowly walks toward Emily.

*
*

Mattie tentatively approaches Emily slowly touching her
shoulder.

*
*

Emily's shoulders tenses, she turns to acknowledge Mattie.

*

Emily nervously smiles but is not happy to see Mattie.

*

MATTIE

I'm Mattie, Sam's sister.

Emily looks over her shoulder toward her mother

*

OVER THE SHOULDER: SHARON IS STANDING AT DISPLAY

*

She turns back to Mattie

*

(CONTINUED)

EMILY

I know who you are, Mattie. *

Mattie steps in closer to whisper *

MATTIE

I need to talk to you.

EMILY

I can't possibly imagine what you *
and I would need to talk about. *

Emily attempts to walk away in a cavalier fashion. *

Mattie grabs her arm pulling her back into the fray. *

MATTIE

Did you just say, "I can't possibly *
imagine?" Really? Well I imagine *
we could start with how my brother *
ended up a barn with you the day he *
was killed? *

Emily's eyes grow wide before she immediately regroups and *
attempts again to blow Mattie off. *

EMILY

I have no clue what you are talking *
about or what barn you are *
referring to my dear. *

Mattie steps up closer to Emily *

CLOSE UP TO MATTIE *

MATTIE

Let me say this in a way you can *
understand...I know you were with *
my brother the day he was killed! I *
saw you...in fact my dear, I can *
tell you what you were wearing. *
Right down down to the fabric of *
your dress and the yellow *
flower in your hair! So don't play *
with me! *

CUT AWAY CLOSE UP OF EMILY'S FACE *

Emily's is shocked and begins to cry *

MATTIE VO

And though I hadn't intended for it *
to happen, her porcelain face *
started to fall like rain. *

(CONTINUED)

Mattie quickly grabs Emily's arm and pulls her into a corner of the store.

MATTIE

Calm down and tell me what happened!

*
*

Emily wipes her tears with her hand, collecting herself and looking around nervously.

EMILY

I don't...I don't know anything!

*

WIDE SHOT SHARON LOOKING AROUND FOR EMILY

*

The store clerk is talking to her

*

Sharon appears puzzled when she doesn't see Emily but finally acknowledges clerk.

*
*

CUT AWAY TO MATTIE AND EMILY

*

Mattie peeks around the corner and sees Sharon talking to clerk.

*
*

Mattie returns attention to Emily

*

MATTIE

I don't have time to play this stupid game with you. TELL ME WHO killed my brother!

*
*
*

Emily stares at Mattie in total disbelief.

EMILY

What do you want from me?

Mattie paces anxiously

*

MATTIE

I want you to tell me who killed my brother...I'm pretty sure I know why, I just need to know who!

Emily stops fidgeting long enough to look intrigued by Mattie's comment.

*
*

EMILY

Really? You know...why?

*

MATTIE

It's obvious because he was seeing you and...

*
*

(CONTINUED)

Emily smiles a half smile chuckling under her breath. Finally, she pushes a finger into Mattie's chest defiantly.

EMILY

Yeah, that's what I thought you would say! I will concede you may have somehow seen me that horrible day, but you are just as blind as anyone else in this backward, hateful town!

MATTIE

Excuse me, I KNOW...

EMILY

Why don't you just admit that you DON'T and save me the embarrassment of having to watch you fumble over your bigotry. I don't know what you want to hear, but I don't have anything to tell you.

Emily attempts again to walk past Mattie

Mattie blocks Emily's exit this time pushing her back firmly.

MATTIE

If I'm wrong then tell me what happened, I have the right to know who killed my brother? My mama got the right to know why her son died and if it didn't have nothing to do with him being with you, then what was it? Because they telling us he died Natural...I KNOW it wasn't!

Emily paused, her face softening.

Emily places her hand on Mattie's shoulder before looking to see if anyone was within earshot.

EMILY

Mattie, I loved Sam, with everything in me I loved him and losing him stole my heart away. I wake up every night wishing I was some where alone with him in our own little world where there are no dividing walls to climb or rivers to cross just to steal a kiss. But I can't cause he's gone from me forever.

(CONTINUED)

Emily leans against a wall with tears in her eyes. *

EMILY CONTD

Sam was everything to me...so if I
have to believe his death was
natural, in order to find peace in
my brokenness, then my beautiful
Sam died naturally,
peacefully...Mattie you must learn
to live with that so you can move
on. *

Emily attempts to walk away. *

Mattie blocks her exit *

MATTIE

All I've learned so far is that my
brother liked crazy white girls. *

Mattie pokes Emily's chest.

MATTIE CONTD

No matter how you slice this pretty
little lie you telling, my brother
would be alive if it weren't for
YOU, so either you led him there to
die or you two were ambushed,
either way...YOU know how, what,
when, why and more importantly WHO
and unless you tell me... *

Emily and Mattie both see that Emily's mother is walking
quickly toward them.

Mattie let's go of Emily. *

Emily runs off to intercept her mother. They speak in
hushed but obviously angry tones. *

Emily's mother looks over Emily's shoulder at Mattie and
says one or two more words before conceding to walk away. *

Emily returns quickly to Mattie.

EMILY

Mattie I loved Sam...but if, If I
tell you... *

Emily turns to look sadly at her mother who is standing at
the register. *

(CONTINUED)

EMILY

It will kill my mother
Mattie...he's all she has left.

Emily looks at Mattie desperately.

EMILY CONTD

He's the only one she has.

Before Mattie can say anything, Emily rushes off to meet her mother. They both walk out of the store quickly.

Bell rings

Mattie stands looking confused (CLOSE UP)

EXT. OUTSIDE OF STORE

54

Nikki anxiously greets Mattie when she exits the store.

Nikki quickly ushers Mattie to a nearby park bench

NIKKI

OK, spill it, what was that about?
Ain't she that Preacher's daughter

Mattie looks up in surprise.

MATTIE

You know her?

NIKKI

I don't know her, I've seen them a few times when I've come into town to get mama's medicine. Her daddy Pastor's a church. Sometimes she comes with her brothers...so, what's going on?

MATTIE

Brothers? How many?

NIKKI

Most I've seen 3, I ain't sure why...what's going on?

Mattie stares off into the distance. Nikki shakes to get her attention.

NIKKI CON'T

(MATTIE!)

(CONTINUED)

MATTIE

I'm sorry...come on let's go, I
need to get out of here.

Mattie and Nikki start heading home.

CUT AWAY TO ROAD

INT. ON THE ROAD - LATE AFTERNOON

55

Girls are walking slowly home. Nikki is listening as Mattie
talks excitedly.

MATTIE VO

I told her everything I could think
of that made sense to repeat. I
told her about the vision I had at
the funeral and the one I had at
the school about Matilda. She
didn't say a word...like she was
afraid to stop me.

Nikki slows her pace and finally stops staring at Mattie
intently as if she was somehow different.

NIKKI

When did it start, I mean had it
ever happened before?

Mattie shakes her head vehemently,

MATTIE

No never...the first time was at
the funeral. I think I would have
remembered something like that.
After that it was Matilda then...

Mattie pauses abruptly turning away from Nikki quickly
afraid she'll see the truth.

Nikki notices her hesitation and grabs Mattie's arm.

Nikki looks at Mattie intently.

NIKKI

Then what? Anything about me,
Mattie?

Mattie looks away briefly swallowing hard.

(CONTINUED)

MATTIE VO

Have you ever known a punch was coming and you just couldn't help but close your eyes? I didn't know what to say or even how to say it.

Nikki, places a hand on Mattie shoulder looking her straight in the eyes.

NIKKI

Have you ever had a vision about me?

MATTIE VO CON'TD

I said what I knew to be truth...NO

Mattie responds flatly.

MATTIE

No...I've never had a vision about you.

Nikki frowns weakly.

Mattie quickly changes subject walking away.

MATTIE

So do you think it could be one of her brothers, or maybe her father?

NIKKI

Well she's got more than one brother. She said it's the only one her Mother has and she has more than one son. and I doubt if the Pastor would have killed anybody.

Mattie stopped to respond to Nikki with disgust

MATTIE

Why not? His daughter messing around with a black boy...maybe he was afraid of the church would find out and he'd lose his members.

Nikki continued walking slowly shrugging her shoulders.

Nikki stops and turns to answer Mattie and then begins walking.

NIKKI

I don't know Mattie, I would like to think that in a world filled

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

NIKKI (cont'd)

with so much hatred, there are a few people who really do operate in a Godly kind of love.

Mattie follows her sadly

MATTIE

Who Then?

NIKKI

I don't know...

Mattie and Nikki stand at the fork in the road.

NIKKI

Mattie maybe you just need to go up there and I don't know...look around see what you can find out.

MATTIE

I was thinking the same thing, do you think you can come with me?

NIKKI

I don't know...with mama and Priscilla, it's just hard to get away, you know that...I'll try OK?

MATTIE

OK...Nikki...I had a great time, I really did, thank you for letting me come with you.

Nikki and Mattie hug each other tightly.

NIKKI

Your my best friend, I love you and with everything painful going on in my life, I needed to see that the sun is still shining somewhere.

MATTIE

I love you too...do you want me to walk with you a little while longer?

NIKKI

No...you go on home, before somebody snatch your little frail behind!

(CONTINUED)

MATTIE

Girl, they might get snatched!

Mattie turns one last time to watch Nikki walk home.

MATTIE VO

In the secret places of my heart, I
prayed and prayed that the vision I
saw of Nikki's mama was for some
horrible moment in the far off
future...Please Lord...just a
little more time...please Lord!

INT. MATTIE'S HOUSE EARLY EVENING

56

Mattie walks in the house to find Betty Jean asleep in a
rocking chair.

Betty Jean is clutching her bible in her hand while she
sleeps in the chair.

Annie sits quietly in a chair next to a window staring
blankly.

Mattie walks over to Annie and kisses her lightly on the
forehead.

Annie looks up and smiles.

CAMERA CLOSE UP OF BRUSH LYING ON TABLE

Mattie picks up the brush that's lying on the table and
begins brushing Annie's hair.

MATTIE

You like it when I brush your hair
huh mama...

Mattie hums a hymn quietly.

HUMMING OFF CAMERA

FADES OUT

INT. MATTIE'S BEDROOM LATE EVENING

57

FADES IN

Mattie is asleep tossing and turning, finally she stiffens
up in the bed, flat on her back.

(CONTINUED)

Her eyes flickering between opened and closed as if instead of sleep, she is in another trance.

VISION SEQUENCE *

INT. BEDROOM- NIGHT

58

Mattie is in her bedroom. She sees a light shining through her closed bedroom door. She stands to walk toward the door and hears music. When she opens the door the light disappears and all she sees is darkness. She begins walking and on the floor she sees illuminated footsteps ahead of her. She follows the glowing footsteps to the kitchen. Once she enters the kitchen the entire room lights up. Two chairs are at the table, one is occupied by a shimmering light that flickers like fire. Mattie walks around the light. She places her hand through the light.

SPIRIT

Mattie please sit.

Mattie seats in the unoccupied chair across from the SPIRIT.

CLOSE UP OF THE CUP *

CGI shapes in the liquid *

A cup appears in front of her, steam rolling out of it like billowing clouds, eventually the clouds of smoke pass leaving a dark liquid.

SPIRIT

You have questions? *

Mattie stares into the cup as it transforms *

MATTIE

who am I? *

SPIRIT

Chosen *

The cup continues to transform as if breathing *

MATTIE

Why me? *

The cup begins to boil and Mattie can see shapes like people in the cup. *

Mattie is startled by the image but is unable to move her chair. *

(CONTINUED)

SPIRIT

Because I have chosen YOU...will
you drink from this cup Mattie?

The liquid in the cup turns to women, men, children all
clamoring in the cup trying to get out screaming help us,
help us.

MONTAGE images of war, death, disease, sin.

MATTIE

What can I do?

SPIRIT

You will warn them of my return,
and encourage them to hold on.

Mattie shakes her head frantically.

SPIRIT

Will You drink from this cup
Mattie?

Mattie looks up at the Spirit and begins to cry. Finally she
places her hands on the cup and brings it to her lips.

FADE OUT

END OF VISION

INT. MATTIE'S BEDROOM LATE EVENING

59

Mattie sits up in the bed frightened panting heavily.

Betty Jean is calling her name as if from a great distance.

After a few moments Betty Jean bursts through the door
startling Mattie.

BETTY JEAN

Mattie, Mattie, come quick...hurry
up now!

Mattie jumps from bed and follows Betty Jean into the
kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN - EARLY MORNING

60

Nikki is standing in the kitchen clinging to Cilla *

Cilla has her arms wrapped tightly around Nikki's neck *

Annie is trying to get Cilla to let go *

Both girls are crying uncontrollably *

MATTIE

Nikki what happened? *

Nikki is too winded and upset to speak *

Betty Jean finally manages to get Cilla away from her and
Nikki collapses into a chair. *

Annie rushes to bring her a cup of water. *

Mattie kneels down in front of her *

Betty Jean carries Cilla out of the room to console her. *

MATTIE

Nikki...what happened? *

Nikki looks at Mattie with swollen blood shot eyes. *

There is a bruise under Nikki's eye and dirt on her face. *

Annie offers her the water and she drinks it slowly *

Nikki finally address Mattie *

NIKKI

She's dead Mattie...my mama, my
mama is dead...she's dead.

FADE OUT *

FLASHBACK *

FADE IN *

Nikki is walking home and stops suddenly *

NIKKI VO

I could hear Cilla crying from the
road, she never cries like that
unless Sue Ann did something to
her. So, I ran... *

FADE OUT *

(CONTINUED)

END OF FLASHBACK

INT - MATTIE'S KITCHEN NIGHT CONTINUOUS

61

Nikki looks at Mattie with glazed eyes filled with pain.

NIKKI CONTD

It was like my feet was stuck in
mud, Mattie...I just couldn't get
them to move.

Mattie is holding her breath and nodding slowly not wanting
Nikki to stop talking.

FADE OUT

FLASH BACK CONTINUOUS

EXT. NIKKI'S HOUSE - NIGHT

62

FADE IN

Nikki runs onto the porch. She can hear her sister
screaming. She yanks on the door and nothing happens, she
fumbles around for the key in her pocket, she drops it,
picks it up and attempts to unlock the door, the knob turns
but does not open, finally she shoves her body against the
door.

INT. FLASHBACK NIKKI'S HOUSE - NIGHT

63

Nikki falls over the furniture that has been turned over

NIKKI VO

The whole house was torn up, the
lights were busted out...I didn't
know what had happened. I called
out to mama, but she didn't
answer. I couldn't breath I was so
scared Mattie...I, I couldn't
breath.

Nikki finally reaches the back bedroom door and pushes it
open

Cilla grabs her ankle from beneath the bed

Nikki pulls her out and picks her up right away.

Nikki's attention is drawn to her torn dress and the
lifeless body beneath it.

(CONTINUED)

NIKKI VO CONTD

I knew Sue Ann did it...I knew it
was her! I tried to help my
mama...but she was gone...just,
gone...

Nikki is trying to do cpr with Cilla crying in the
background

FADE TO BLACK

END OF FLASHBACK

INT. MATTIE'S KITCHEN - NIGHT CONTINUOUS

64

FADE IN

Nikki pauses to take another sip of water

Annie wipes Nikki's face with a wet towel

Mattie pats her hand trying to comfort her friend

MATTIE

How did you get hurt Nikki

Nikki shoots and angry look at Mattie as she recalls what
happened.

FADE OUT

FLASHBACK CONTINUOUS

FADE IN

INT. FLASHBACK NIKKI'S HOUSE - NIGHT CONTINUOUS

65

Nikki is lying beside her mother with Cilla lying quietly
beside her.

NIKKI VO

After a while I got up and I
couldn't think of anywhere safe for
us to go but here.

Nikki covers her mother and picks Cilla up and starts
walking out the house, closing the door behind her.

EXT. FLASHBACK - THE ROAD - LATE NIGHT CONTINUOUS 66 *

Nikki is holding Cilla's hand as they walk quickly through the dark. *

NIKKI VO CONTD

It was dark but I could hear Sue Ann. She was walking toward the house. She was with some dirty boy. *

Sue Ann stops on the path when she sees Nikki approaching. *

She is momentarily apprehensive, then a smug smile crosses her lips. She encircles the arm of the young man with her. *

SUE ANN

Well I guess if this tramps are out here...that means our mama must be DEAD! *

Sue Ann cackles mockingly as Nikki tries to walk past her. *

Sue Ann slaps Nikki as she attempts to push past her. *

Nikki stops moves Cilla to the side and attacks Sue Ann knocking her to the ground. *

Cilla screams *

The boy stands by amused *

NIKKI VO

I tried to just let it go...I tried to get Cilla some where safe, but I hate her Mattie... *

FADE OUT *

END OF FLASHBACK *

INT. MATTIE'S KITCHEN - NIGHT CONTINUOUS 67

Nikki's eyes are filled with tears as she stares intently at Mattie. *

Mattie is holding her hand tightly *

Annie is leaning against the stove crying softly *

(CONTINUED)

NIKKI

I tried Mattie...I tried to love my
sister, but I hate her...I hate
her!

Nikki puts her head to as she continues

FADE OUT

FLASHBACK CONTINUOUS

EXT. FLASHBACK - THE ROAD - LATE NIGHT CONTINUOUS 68

Nikki has gotten the best of Sue Ann and is punching her
over and over again until the boy finally picks her up and
throws her off of Sue Ann.

Sue Ann quickly gets up

Nikki slowly gets up and immediately looks for Cilla who is
crying hysterically.

Nikki grabs Cilla and begins quickly walking away down the
road.

Sue Ann begins screaming behind her.

SUE ANN

I bet not ever see you or that
heffa in my house again, you hear
me...that's my house, I don't have
no sisters! Stay out! Just leave
and don't ever come back!

FADE OUT

END OF FLASHBACK

INT. MATTIE'S KITCHEN - NIGHT CONTINUOUS 69

FADE IN

Betty Jean comes in kitchen

BETTY JEAN

I finally got that poor child to go
off to sleep. Nikki suga, did your
mama have any family?

Nikki lifts her weary head barely able to speak from sheer
fatigue.

(CONTINUED)

NIKKI

Yes ma, a sister...only met her a
few times. She live in New York I
think...I wouldn't know how to find
her.

Betty Jean crosses the kitchen to grab her coat, hat and
purse before addressing her.

BETTY JEAN

You just leave that to me. I will
take care of it.

Mattie becomes alarmed

MATTIE

Grandma where are you going at this
hour? It's so dark outside and...

Betty lifts her hand to cut her off.

BETTY JEAN

Going up to the house to see what I
can find and take care of Nikki's
mama until they come to pick her
up.

Nikki sits up to protest

NIKKI

Ms. Betty, Sue Ann won't let you...

Before Nikki could finish Betty Jean steps just outside the
door, she stops a moment to cast a brief response before
storming out of the door.

BETTY JEAN

Girl please!

Annie walks over and places her arms around Nikki's
shoulders.

FADE OUT

INT. MATTIE'S BEDROOM MORNING

70

FADE IN

Mattie is putting her shoes on, then stands to put her coat
on.

(CONTINUED)

Nikki wearily sits up in the bed careful not to wake Cilla who is lying asleep beside her. She prepares to get out of bed, but Mattie stops her. *

MATTIE

Lay down and get some rest...I'll be back OK?

NIKKI

You shouldn't go by yourself Mattie. *

Mattie stands to hug her friend *

MATTIE

Cilla will need to see you when she wakes up. I'll be alright. *

Nikki shakes her head wearily and lays down. *

Mattie walks toward the door, she looks back at Nikki and then closes the door softly behind her. *

FADE OUT *

EXT. THE ROAD - MORNING

71

FADE IN *

Mattie braces herself against the frost of the morning.

SERIES OF SHOTS *

Trees rustling as Mattie passes *

MATTIE VO *

Lord, I thank you for your spirit,
even as I walk on this road alone,
I thank you because I know you are
here...I know you are here, Amen. *

A car passes Mattie

She stops a moment to watch it drive by. *

MATTIE VO CONTD

When I could finally see the farm
from the road my heart began
pounding in my chest like a drum.

Mattie crosses the road and stands outside of the farm *

(CONTINUED)

MATTIE VO CONTD

What do I do now? What am I looking for Lord? Am I going to demand justice...Maybe this isn't about me delivering Justice, maybe I'm supposed to deliver...a message.

EXT. EMILY'S FARM - EARLY MORNING

72

Mattie runs along the fence toward the back of the farm. *

She climbs the fence in an area that appears vacant. *

Her shoe gets stuck and she hits the ground hard knocking the wind out of herself. *

She suddenly hears voices and scurries on her hands and knees behind a piece of farm equipment. *

MATTIE VO CONTD

I can't breathe...Lord help me
cause I just can't breathe! *

Mattie looks around the equipment and sees random workers standing within a few feet of her. *

One worker turns as if to walk in Mattie's direction *

WIDE SHOT OF THE HOUSE AS SHARON STEPS OUT *

Sharon calls out to one of the workers who stops just feet away from Mattie's hiding place. *

CUT IN *

Mattie is stiff as a board until the worker starts back in the direction of Sharon, the other worker follows suit. *

Mattie quickly crawls behind a large barn. She notices her pants leg is torn and her knee is bleeding. *

She crawls to the edge of the barn and sees a car pulling out of the driveway. *

MATTIE VO CONTD

I didn't move again until I heard
the car pull off down the
driveway.

Mattie tries to stand, but falls again wincing from pain. *

She presses her back against the barn and braces herself enough to stand. *

(CONTINUED)

She limps to the edge of the barn and peers around to see if anyone is there. *

She steps back against the barn and then slowly realizes where she is. *

Mattie turns to look up at the expansive barn as revelation overtakes her. *

Mattie reaches out to touch the barn and withdraws as if it is on fire. *

She is careful now not to touch it as she quietly and quickly runs to find the door. *

When she reaches the door she sees it is pad locked and chained *

MATTIE VO *

They locked it up hoping their
secret wouldn't take wings and
fly...locked up their demons. *

Mattie nervously looks around behind her and then tries to find another one into the barn. *

She hears something and panics she quickly runs finding a place behind a smaller barn. *

SOUND OF A CHILD SINGING *

Mattie hears the singing and realizes it is coming from inside the small barn. *

She crawls around to the side of the barn and sees a small window. *

She quickly grabs a crate and pulls it in front of the window. *

Her first attempt to stand on the crate sends the crate toppling over. *

She manages to get a better hold and stands on the wobbly crate until she can peer into the window *

OVER THE SHOULDER INTO THE BARN *

A man is sitting on the edge of a rickety old cot, rocking back and forth stroking a stuffed animal and singing to himself. *

Mattie continues to watch him intrigued by him *

(CONTINUED)

SHARON SPEAKS OFF CAMERA *

SHARON *
He didn't mean to do it *

OS SHARON BEHIND MATTIE *

Mattie is startled but steps down slowly and turns to face Sharon *

CLOSE UP OF SHARON *

Sharon steps toward her staring toward the window *

SHARON CONTD *
He didn't even know he'd killed *
him...he thought it was a game. He *
thought they were all just playing *
a game. *

CUT AWAY TO MATTIE *

MATTIE VO CONTD *
I didn't say anything...I don't *
know if it was because I was too *
afraid too or if I just wasn't *
supposed to. *

WIDE SHOT *

Sharon stares at the barn fumbling with her gloves finally taking them off all together. *

CUT AWAY INTO THE BARN *

INT. BARN MORNING

73

CLOSE UP OF THE MAN *

FADE OUT *

FLASHBACK

INT. BARN EARLY MORNING CONTINUOUS

74

FADE IN *

Sam and Emily are sitting in the barn on a bale of hay talking.

Sam kisses her. *

(CONTINUED)

CUT AWAY TO THE DOOR OF BARN *

Three young men open the door *

CLOSE UP OF SAM'S FACE *

FADE OUT *

END OF FLASHBACK *

EXT. EARLY MORNING - THE FARM CONTINUOUS

75

FADE IN *

Sharon is staring at the barn *

Mattie is staring at Sharon *

Sharon slowly turns to face Mattie *

SHARON *

You wouldn't believe how many dead
animals I've found in there. He
doesn't mean to kill them. He
just..he just can't help himself. *

Sharon turns away to stare at the barn *

FADE OUT *

FLASHBACK *

INT. BARN EARLY MORNING CONTINUOUS

76

Sam stands up to greet the boys *

Emily seems annoyed but not angry *

SHARON VO *

They liked Sam, we all did...he was
a good boy, but they'd heard some
folks weren't too happy about him
seeing my daughter. Who the hell
are they to judge? *

FADE OUT *

END OF FLASHBACK *

EXT. EARLY MORNING - THE FARM CONTINUOUS

77

Sharon is staring at Mattie angrily *

SHARON CONT'D *

He was a good boy...a real good boy
 and they had no right to threaten
 to hurt him...They had no right. So
 my boys were just trying to warn
 him, that's all...tell him to stop
 coming around so much, but...

Sharon fumbles with her gloves and begins to cry *

FADE OUT *

FLASHBACK *

INT. BARN MORNING CONTINUOUS

78

Sam is arguing with the boys *

Emily is pushing her brothers away *

SHARON VO *

I guess Sam that Em was worth it
 and he didn't want to stop seeing
 her. He was a brave boy to love
 that strong in this town.

(off camera) Sharon laughs sadly *

CUT AWAY BARN DOOR OPENS *

SHARON VO *

My boys tried to get him out of
 there...they hate him,
 because...they shouldn't hate their
 own...flesh and blood...

FADE OUT *

END OF FLASHBACK *

EXT. EARLY MORNING - THE FARM CONTINUOUS

79

Sharon is crying and staring pleadingly with Mattie *

SHARON CONT'D *

He's a part of them, he's a part of
 me Mattie...He's my brother!

(CONTINUED)

Mattie stands there too shocked to speak. *

Sharon steps toward her and attempts to touch her hand, but
Mattie pulls back and steps away. *

Sharon hangs her head and continues speaking sadly *

FADE OUT *

FLASHBACK

INT. BARN EARLY MORNING CONTINUOUS

80

Sam is lying on the ground with Emily at his side *

SHARON VO

The boys came and told me right
away. *

The man is in the corner staring at the wall, the bat
dangling at his side. *

CLOSE UP OF BAT AS IT SLIPS FROM HIS HANDS *

Sharon is standing at the door of the barn *

Emily is crying uncontrollably clutching Sam's body. *

Sharon turns to look at her brother in the corner *

SHARON VO

I didn't know what to do...I
promised our dying mother that I
would take care of him. But he'd
gone too far this time! I didn't
know what to do. *

Sharon walks out of the barn then moments later comes back
with two farm hands. *

SHARON VO

I thought if we could just get him
close enough to your house then
you'd find him...I didn't know what
else to do *

Sharon and the boys watch as the workers load Sam's body
onto a truck. *

Emily run's away crying hysterically *

CLOSE UP OF SHARON *

(CONTINUED)

Sharon watches as Emily runs away.

FADE OUT

END OF FLASHBACK

EXT. EARLY MORNING - THE FARM CONTINUOUS

81

Mattie is crying

MATTIE VO

She stood there looking at me as if I should reward her for her act of cowardice. As if tossing my brother on the side of the road was the least she could do. But even though I wanted to hate her, I wanted to scream at her and call her a monster...I couldn't, I couldn't!

Sharon took a tentative step closer to Mattie and hesitated

SHARON

I didn't find out until the next day that he didn't get home. That someone else found him, but I made it right away Mattie, I took care of it.

CUT AWAY

FLASHBACK

INT. SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT - MORNING CONTINUOUS

82

Paul is sitting on the edge of his desk rubbing his head

Sharon is sitting in chair in front of him crying uncontrollably

Paul storms out of the office

CLOSE UP OF SHARON CRYING

SHARON VO

He said he was disgusted with me, said that I should be ashamed of myself, but because he respected my husband too much to scandalize his name, he would do what he could to help me.

(CONTINUED)

FACE TO BLACK

END OF FLASHBACK

EXT. EARLY MORNING - THE FARM CONTINUOUS

83

Sharon returns her attention to the barn.

SHARON CONTD

I'm sorry Mattie...I didn't know
what else to do! My husband wanted
me to lock him up...told me to do
it years ago...but, but I couldn't,
I just couldn't...I promised
mother!

Sharon whimpers like a small child

SHARON CONTD

She made me swear to take care of
him...and that's what I've been
doing for 20 years, hiding stuff,
covering for him.

She stares oddly at Mattie as if they'd just bonded

SHARON CONTD

I had to Mattie...you understand
that don't you?

Sharon reaches for Mattie's hand unknowingly sending her
into a trance

Mattie stiffens eyes forward

FAST FORWARD random shots moving quickly

VISION SEQUENCE

EXT. HOSPITAL AFTERNOON CONTINUOUS

84

Mattie is standing on a patio of a beautiful sterile white
hospital.

A nurse walks past her along the patio pushing a cart
carrying a pitcher of lemonade and glasses, as well as an
ice bucket.

Mattie follows the nurse

The Nurse wheels in front of a woman her identity hidden by
the cart.

(CONTINUED)

When the cart is moved Sharon is seen sitting slumped over
in a wheel chair *

CLOSE UP OF SHARON'S SICK DISTORTED FACE *

PAN DOWN TO SEE SHE'S HOLDING A PIECE OF PAPER *

The nurse turns her chair toward the table and pours her a
glass of lemon aide, she puts in a straw. *

NURSE *

Now why are you reading that again,
it's only going to upset you. *

The nurse takes the paper from Sharon and places it on the
table *

NURSE CONTD *

Now drink your lemon aide...it's
starting to get chilly out so I
won't keep you out much longer *

CLOSE UP OF LETTER (DIVORCE DECREE) *

Nurse puts straw to Sharon's lip but she does not drink *

NURSE CONT'D *

See now you are upset. Just like I
said. Let's get you in from this
cold. *

Nurse grabs her chair and pulls her toward double doors. *

A tear slips from Sharon's eyes *

CLOSE UP OF MATTIE'S SAD FACE *

CUT AWAY *

FADE OUT *

END OF VISION *

EXT. FARM MORNING CONTINUOUS

85 *

FADE IN *

Mattie pulls her hand free from Sharon. *

MATTIE *

But someone will need to care for
him when you're gone. *

(CONTINUED)

Sharon looks down at her hand and then Mattie with gradual understanding and then dread. *

SHARON

You know something, don't you? Tell me, is there something going to happen to me. *

Mattie looks away for a moment and then returns a stern look at Sharon.

MATTIE

Yes, but you have time now to make things right. You can get him the help he needs before it's too late. You can do the right thing, right now.

Sharon quickly grabs Mattie's hand again. *

SHARON

What is it? What did you see? What will happen? Tell me Mattie!

Mattie pulls her hand away, backs up, and then looks up at the barn before returning her sad attention to Sharon.

MATTIE

What matter's now is that you do the right thing...it ain't about you, you got to think about your brother and my family, you got to do the right thing now before, it's too late!

Sharon starts sobbing uncontrollably. *

Mattie side steps her attempting to leave. *

Sharon grabs her arm desperately *

SHARON

If I do the right thing NOW Mattie will that stop whatever it is...if I do it NOW...will it some how stop it???? Mattie? *

Mattie pulls away. *

MATTIE

That's between you and God. *

Mattie quickly walks away *

(CONTINUED)

Sharon turns to call out to her. *

Mattie ignores her crying softly. *

SHARON

I promise Mattie, I'll make it
right...I'll do the right thing, I
promise. I always keep my
promises! *

Mattie walks down the driveway and never looks back.

MATTIE VO

It's funny no matter how dark
revenge and hatred makes you feel,
it always loses it's power when the
right kinda light is shining on
it.

SERIES OF SHOTS *

Sharon driver's opens door of car, both she and her brother
step out. *

MATTIE VO

Ms. Sharon took her only brother to
a mental institution and a few
months later she suffered a massive
stroke. *

She walks him to an awaiting attendant, she hugs him and
races back to the car with him looking on after her
confused. *

MATTIE VO CONT'D *

Emily went off to school and never
came back. *

EXT. MATILDA'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

86

MATTIE VO CONT'D *

Matilda and her family moved away,
leaving the evil behind them. *

Mr. Patterson is standing on the porch watching as they
drive away. *

EXT. NIKKI'S HOUSE - PORCH AFTERNOON 87

MATTIE VO

Sue Ann had a baby in her mama's
house.

Sue Ann is sitting in a rocking chair on the front porch
cuddling her baby on her lap

After a few minutes she and the child disappear

The rocking chair continues to rock without assistance.

EXT. THE ROAD - MID MORNING 88

Mattie is walking along the road, heading home. She passes
the fork in the road that led to Nikki's house and just kept
walking as if it were no longer an option.

MATTIE VO

Grandma found Nikki's aunt and she
came quickly to handle the
arrangements for the funeral. Then
afterward she decided it was time
for the girls to live. She said she
was taking them back to New York to
live with her.

EXT. CEMETERY - AFTERNOON 89

WIDE SHOT OF CEMETERY

Nikki, Mattie, Betty Jean, Cilli, Aunt and Annie along with
a few folks are standing around casket

Preacher prays and family disperses

Nikki and Mattie are holding hands walking along the lawn
toward an awaiting car.

CLOSE UP OF NIKKI

NIKKI

You'd better write to me every
chance you get!

CUTAWAY:MATTIE'S SAD FACE

Mattie doesn't answer right away.

CUTAWAY: NIKKI STOPS WALKING

(CONTINUED)

Nikki stops and stands in front of Mattie.

CLOSE UP MATTIE

MATTIE

You leaving cause I didn't tell you
aint' you?

CUTAWAY NIKKI STEPS IN TO HUG MATTIE

Nikki smiles warmly and then hugs Mattie close.

NIKKI

I'm leaving because I'm free to and
because I want Cilla to know what
being free feels like. I'm leaving
cause Mama would want us to Mattie.

Mattie nods her head sadly as they continue to walk to the
car.

Cilla pokes her head out car window

CILLA

Good bye Mattie...good bye I love
you!

Mattie leans in to kiss her chubby cheeks

MATTIE

I love you too. You do your best
and be a good girl

Cilla frowns

CILLA

Why eve'ybody always say I have to
be good

Everyone laughs

Nikki hugs Mattie again and this time Mattie goes into a
trance.

CUT IN

VISION SEQUENCE

NEW YORK - DAY 90 *
 *
 SERIES OF RANDOM SHOTS *
 *
 Big city, busy streets, many people on streets *
 *
 CUT AWAY LARGE HOSPITAL *
 *
 INT. HOSPITAL 91 *
 *
 Past visitors desk, hospital staff milling around, patients *
 in waiting rooms or in wheel chairs *
 *
 CUT AWAY *
 *
 Hospital room *
 *
 CUT AWAY *
 *
 Hospital door opens and someone walks in approaching a *
 hospital bed *
 *
 POV Curtain is pulled away and person looks down at male *
 patient *
 *
 POV Patient looks up at NIKKI *
 *
 PATIENT *
 I feel pretty good today Doc! *
 *
 Nikki smiles down at patient *
 *
 NIKKI *
 Good glad to hear it...you might *
 get to go home real soon! *
 *
 FADE TO BLACK *
 *
 END OF FLASHBACK *
 *
 EXT. CEMETERY - AFTERNOON (SAME DAY) 92 *
 *
 Nikki is staring at Mattie concerned *
 *
 Mattie stares blankly ahead and then slowly focus on Nikki *
 *
 Nikki is speaks gently *
 *
 NIKKI *
 Mattie? *
 *
 Mattie looks at Nikki and smiles *
 *

(CONTINUED)

MATTIE

I'm ok...I'm, I'm sorry

Nikki gives Mattie a questioning look

NIKKI

Is...everything, ok?

Mattie hugs Nikki hard and whispers

MATTIE

Everything is just fine

FADE AWAY

RANDOM SHOTS OF CEMETERY

ARIEL SHOTS

FADE TO BLACK

EXT. THE ROAD - MID MORNING - 1 YEAR LATER

93

FADE IN

Mattie is walking down the road, older, stronger with more purposeful steps.

MATTIE VO

School and work became my escape. I looked forward to going to work at Ms. Claire's shop on the days I didn't have class.

WIDE SHOT OF MATTIE WALKING UP TO SHOP

INT. MS. CLAIRE'S SHOP - MORNING

94

BELL RINGS OFF CAMERA

Mattie walks into a small gift shop

The shop is neatly decorated and nicely organized

A short, stout, friendly black woman, named MARTY is dusting a glass counter.

MARTY gives Mattie an acknowledging nod.

(CONTINUED)

MATTIE VO CONTD

Ms. Claire's belonged to Marty's
parents, Ben and Margaret Claire.

*
*

FADE OUT

*

FLASHBACK INT. MS. CLAIRE'S 10 YEARS EARLIER

95

FADE IN

*

Ben is hammering shelves onto the walls while his three
children and wife, Margaret watch.

*
*

MATTIE VO CONTD

One night Ms. Margaret found her
husband bleeding on the doorstep of
the shop. Story has it that some
folks didn't think it was a right
that a black man own his
own...anything!

*
*
*
*
*
*

Margaret is holding her husband crying loudly with Marty
standing in the background.

*
*

OVER THE SHOULDER

*

Small girl crying

*

FADE OUT

*

MATTIE VO

A few weeks later, the sign went
back up and Ms. Margaret reopened
the shop this time selling homemade
jelly and scarves. Of course folks
didn't like that idea no better.

*
*
*
*
*

FADE IN

*

INT. MS. CLAIRE'S SHOP - NIGHT

96

Margaret is preparing to close the shop

*

Three men push into the shop with bats

*

The men start tearing up and knocking things over.

*

Margaret races behind the counter to protect her children

*

Marty cowers under that counter

*

The men leave after threatening to come back

*

(CONTINUED)

MATTIE VO CONTD

It didn't stop Margaret...only made
her want it that much more. She
kept going and one day a man came
in that wasn't trying to take away,
but willing to give.

An older white man walks in neatly dressed and friendly

He and Margaret have a friendly conversation and she laughs

RANDOM SHOTS DIFFERENT DAY OF MAN COMING INTO STORE

WEATHER SHOTS SEASONS CHANGING

The man comes in carrying gifts, boxes etc.

SUMMER TIME EXT. CLAIRE'S SHOP

97

They are sitting in chairs outside of shop talking and
laughing

MATTIE VO CON'TD

Then one day he just stopped
coming...

Margaret is standing at the door looking out.

She turns to look at the clock

CLOSE UP OF CLOCK

CUT AWAY TO MARGARET

Margaret turns OPEN sign to CLOSED

OTS of Marty

Marty is standing in the stock room looking out at her
mother.

MATTIE VO CON'TD

After a few months another man
comes in, a younger version of the
older one with a message that the
man was his daddy and that he left
Ms. Margaret a lot of money and
some stuff for her shop.

The young man hands Margaret an envelope and escorts her
outside.

EXT. MS. CLAIRE'S SHOP AFTERNOON 98 *

A group of young men get out of a truck and begin carrying items into the store with the children all excitedly watching. *

FADE OUT *

EXT. MS. CLAIRE'S SHOP - NIGHT 99 *

FADE IN *

SOMBER *

Rain falling *

Marty walks up in a dark dress and coat to unlock the door. *

MATTIE CONT'D *

When Ms. Margaret died, Marty was *

the only one of the children *

willing to stay on and keep the *

shop running. *

Marty pauses for a minute she speaks over her shoulder loudly *

CLOSE UP *

MARTY *

When any of ya'll can pay the price *

my parent's did to open this *

store...then I'LL CLOSE IT! *

She unlocks door and walks in *

FADE TO BLACK *

END OF FLASHBACK

INT. MS. CLAIRE'S SHOP - MORNING CONTINUOUS 100 *

Marty points toward some boxes *

MARTY *

Those supplies finally came in. *

Mattie doesn't say anything but puts her bags down and gets straight to work *

(CONTINUED)

MARTY CONTD

What's wrong with you

Mattie looks up

MATTIE

I'm sorry did you say something?

Marty smiles and continuous speaking now excited

MARTY

Hey I got somebody coming in today.
Going to help fix things up around
here. Thought we could use a little
help since you can't seem to do
nothing but sweep and look cute.

Mattie smiles at the joke and continues to unload the box

MATTIE

Whatever. I'll be in the back
getting the soap down off that
rickety death trap will try not to
fall to my death.

Marty throws her dust towel at her

MARTY

You'll be clean!

They laugh as Mattie walks into the store room.

EXT. MARTY'S STORE ROOM

101

Mattie pulls a ladder up to a shelf and begins pulling items
off shelf.

After a few minutes the front bell rings.

BELL RINGS OC

Mattie hears Marty talking. Mattie carefully comes down off
the later carrying her basket of items.

Mattie has her head down looking at the basket when she
walks into the shop

EXT. MS. CLAIRE'S SHOP AFTERNOON

102

Marty is behind the register talking to Jet *

Jet is in front of the counter clutching his hat nervously
in his hand listening to Marty *

Mattie enters looking up from her basket *

She notices Jet and drops her basket sending items scattered
on to the floor *

Marty and Jet hurry to help Mattie pick up the items off the
floor. *

Mattie quickly kneels down to pick it up *

MARTY

Well Mr. Jedidiah can you fix
clumsy?

Jet starts to gather items and finally kneels down in front
of Mattie smiling warmly. *

JET

No ma'am recon ain't got nutin fo
dat, but if you pleas...call me
Jet. Jedidiah my Jesus name *

They laugh *

They retrieve all the items. *

Marty gets back to business *

MARTY

Well...Jet, I can't pay you much. *

Jet dusts his pants off *

Mattie is standing behind him watching *

Jet runs over to counter to get his hat and turns nervously
to speak to Marty *

JET

I don't require much ma'am. *

MARTY

Well...when can you start? *

Jet smiles happily, excited *

(CONTINUED)

JET *
when evr you see fit ma'am? *

Marty waves her hand dismissively *

MARTY *
Well you can start by stopping all *
of that Ma'am foolishness...I ain't *
yo mama. You call me Marty and *
this ole clumsy thang is Mattie *

Marty points over her shoulder at Mattie who is still *
standing in the shadows. *

Mattie steps forward *

Jet quickly goes over to shake Marty's hand *

JET *
Thank you...thank you very much *
ma'a...I mean Ms. Marty...thank you *

Jet shyly approaches Mattie to shake her hand *

JET *
Nice to meet you...official *
like...Ms. Mattie *

Jet extends his hand to Mattie *

Marty notices Mattie's apprehension and encourages her *

MARTY *
Girl shake the man's hand...what is *
wrong with you? *

Mattie jumps nervously and finally reaches to shake Jet's *
hand. Immediately, she is in a trance. *

VISION SEQUENCE *

INT. BAR NIGHT 103 *

MONTAGE: BAR *

People drinking, dancing, sitting on bar stools drinking, *
Jet is sitting on a stool facing a mirror looking angry. *

OVER THE SHOULDER MATTIE IS STANDING BEHIND JET *

Mattie's reflection is seen behind Jet in bar her face *
filled with horror. *

(CONTINUED)

Someone comes through the door, everyone begins to run,
screaming loudly. A large commotion and then shots ring
out.

*
*
*

Before Jet can turn his attention to the commotion a flash
goes off behind him.

*
*

Mattie screams

*

FADE TO BLACK

END OF VISION SEQUENCE

*

ROLL CREDITS

104

*