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The Secret Life of Bees

By Gina Prince-Bythewood

[Footsteps Shuffling]

[Objects Clattering]

[Humming]

[Man]

Deborah?

- Where you been?

- I'm sorry. I'm sorry, T.

- Are you cheating on me?

- No, no! I'm not cheating on you.

- What...

- Stop it! What are you doing?

- T! Stop it!

- You ain't leaving me!

- Who is it?

- Nobody! It's you! I hate you!

T. Ray, just let me go!

- [T. Ray, Indistinct]

- No!

T. Ray, damn it!

Get off me!

Lily!

[Gunshot]

[Lily Narrating]

I killed my mother when I was four years old.

That's what I knew about myself.

She was all I wanted,

and I took her away.

Nothin' else much mattered.

[Buzzing]

[Buzzing Continues]

[T. Ray Snoring]

- T. Ray!

- What?

There's bees in my room!

Hundreds of 'em! You've gotta see!

- What is it? Jesus Christ, Lily.

- They're in my room! Come see.

What?

Goddamn it, Lily.

This ain't funny.

But they were here.

They were flyin' everywhere.

You wake me again,

I'm gonna get out the grits.

You hear me?

Goddamn it.

[Lily Narrating]

The bees came the summer of '64...

The summer I turned 14 and my whole life
went spinnin' off into a whole new orbit.

Lookin' back on it,

I wanna say they were sent to me.

I wanna say they showed up like
the Angel Gabriel appearing to the Virgin Mary.

I know it's forward to compare
my small life to hers...

but I have good reason

to believe she wouldn't mind.

So, um, my birthday is tomorrow.

- [Utensils Clatter]

- Most girls want...

one of them little silver charm bracelets
they have down at the mercantile.

Think I'm the only girl in junior high
doesn't have one.

But I was just thinking you could tell me
about my mother instead.

All you ever said is she's from Virginia
and she's an only child like I am.

I don't even know what
her favorite food was...

and what she liked

to do and...nothin;

- You wanna know about your mama?

- Yeah.

Mm-hmm.

She used to spend hours
lurin' roaches and whatnot...
out of the house with graham crackers
and marshmallows.

[Chuckles]

Swear to God.

She was a lunatic about savin' bugs.

[Door Closes]

Here you go.

Hey, Lily! Nice ass!

[Laughing]

Oh!

Gotcha.

Rosaleen.

Look at this thing fight.

- What you doin' with that?

- Catching bees to show T. Ray.

He thinks I'm making it up.

Get yourself stung,

don't come cryin' to me.

- Come fix this.

- For the future... [Indistinct]

What'd they do?

Drop the atom bomb or somethin'?

Hush.

It does say that there are those
who are equal before God...

shall now also be equal

in the polling booths...

in the classrooms,

in the factories...

and in hotels and restaurants

and movie theaters...

Holy shit.

And other places that provide
service to the public.

[Man]

Today, July the 2nd, 1964...

President Johnson signed

the Civil Rights bill into law.

Fifteen, 16, 17, 18...

When's my hair gonna

look like yours?

I bet mine used to drive you crazy the way
it goes off in 11 wrong directions.

I bet you used to brush it a hundred times a day
just to get it to lay down.

I bet you did.

- [T. Ray] Lily!

- [Panting]

Lily!

Lily!

- Who you out here with?

- What?

- Who's out there?

- Nobody. There's no one here but me. It's just me.

Get up from there.

Get in here.

No! You think you're grown? Huh?

Out there doing God knows what.

You'll get yourself pregnant

and then what? Huh?

Huh?

[Panting]

[Bottle Cap Falls To Floor]

You can go.

Mornin'.

How long your dad

keep you on these grits?

Hour.

[Sighs]

Look at ya.

Happy birthday.

I didn't know you made me a cake.

Of course I did.

It's your birthday.

- How big a piece you want?

- Real big.

[Door Closes]

You should be in the stand already.

It's a big peach day.

- Takin' her to town with me.

- What for?

She needs a training bra.

She gots to get measured.

How much something like that cost?

Happy birthday.

[Lily]

So what's in town anyway?

I'm registerin' to vote.

Rosaleen, news said a colored man in Mississippi
was killed for doing that.

Good thing we ain't

in Mississippi then.

I saw you scribblin' one of your stories
in the stand yesterday.

Go on. Tell it.

All right.

So The Supremes,

they're heading down Highway 4...

because they're going to Charleston
for a real big concert.
But suddenly, their back tire blows up...
and they go skiddin' across the road
and into a ditch.
So then two are saying
that Diana's burnin' the peach cobbler.
But she blocks the oven and she says, "I'm the
lead singer, and it's done when I say it's done."
So I don't know what to do.
The Supremes are having a fight in my kitchen.
- But then suddenly we hear...
- Hey.
Ain't you Terence Ray's little girl?
Yes, sir. Lily.
Daddy know you out here with her?
Rosaleen works for us.
Whole lot of niggers been
coming through here today.
You wouldn't be going to
that secret meetin', would ya?
Well, hell, we ain't gotta
worry about this one.
Can't register to vote
if you can't write your own name.
Tell me, Lily. She a smart nigger
or a dumb nigger?
- Please, mister, we really need...
- Answer me, girl.
R-O-S-A-L-E-E-N.
No!
[Screams]
- Rosaleen! Stop! [Screams]
- Put her there!
[Grunts]
Apologize!
[Screams]
Stop! No!
- Apologize!
- [Lily] Rosaleen, just apologize!
Help! Somebody help!
- Quiet.
- [Sobbing]
- Can somebody help?

- Apologize.

Daddy!

Your black ass gonna apologize
one way or the other.

Rosaleen. Rosaleen.

- [Chattering]

- [Police Radio Chatter]

- Thank you, Sheriff.

- You have to help her.

- [T. Ray] Get in the goddamn truck.

- I ain't restin'...

- till your nigger apologizes.

- I'm sorry, Frank!

- I promised her!

- Get in the goddamn truck.

She dumped snuff juice

on a white man...

on Frank Posey, for Christ's sake.

I wouldn't be surprised

if he flat-out kills her.

You don't mean that.

He wouldn't really kill her.

Sheriff s gonna take her to the hospital.

She'll be fine.

Goddamn it. What the hell

were you thinkin'?

Don't you leave this room, you hear?

I gotta settle payroll with...

You don't scare me.

- What'd you say?

- You're a coward.

My mother would never let you touch me!

[Screams]

That goddamn woman

give a shit about you.

She loved me.

- [Laughs]

- I hate you!

Now you listen here.

Truth is, your sorry mama,

she ran off and left you.

On the day she died, she come back

for the rest of her things...not you.

That ain't true.

It's not.

[Door Opens, Closes]

- [Vehicle Door Closes]

- [Engine Starts]

[Vehicle Departs]

[Chattering]

[Woman On P.A.]

Dr. Cash, please call the page.

Dr. Cash, please call
the page operator.

[Door Opens]

Rosaleen.

They beat you again?

We gotta get you out of here.

- I can't get out of here. I'm in jail.

- You shouldn't be.

That's gotta go.

Rosaleen.

[Sighs]

- This is crazy.

- Oh, it'll be all right.

[Sighs]

It'll be all right.

- [Man Clears Throat]

- Shh.

[Woman On P.A., Indistinct]

- A white girl come by here?

- Uh, no, sir. Nobody. I ain't moved from this spot.

[Man]

When I was born

My daddy said I was broken

Beginning of the end

- You gals be careful now.

- The life I hadn't chosen

[People Vocalizing]

[Fades]

Let me get this straight.

You got us goin' to Tiburon...

'cause your mama got a picture

with that town written on the back?

That's it?

T. Ray said my mother left me

way before she died.

Well, it's not true.

He only made it up to punish me.
I know he did.
Knowing your daddy,
he could do a thing like that.
And my mother could never do
what he said she did.
Huh.
I get it.
You ran off 'cause of
what he said, didn't you?
It ain't had nothin' to do
with me being in jail.
And here you got me worrying myself sick
about you getting in trouble 'cause of me.
So what you fixin' to do? Go door-to-door
askin' folks about your mama?
- That's your bright idea?
- I don't exactly have a plan, all right?
Well, you sure had one
back at the hospital.
Comin' in there and sayin',
"We gonna do this, and we gonna do that."
And I'm supposed to follow you
like some dumb nigger like they said.
Well, you are dumb pouring your spit
on that man's shoe like that...
and dumber not to say you're sorry
if sayin' it will save your life.
That man was gonna come back
and kill you or worse.
And I go and I get you out of there,
and this is how you thank me?
Well, fine.
[Water Splashing]
Are you all right?
I feel like I've been beaten
with a stick.
You have been beaten, remember?
But not with a stick.
I know you can't understand.
Apologizing to those men
would've just been a different way of dyin'...
'cept I have to live with it.
If I can find someplace open,

I'll buy us some food.
What we gonna do for beds?
Find a motel, I guess.
Lily, there ain't gonna be a place
that'll take a colored woman.
Well, what about
the Civil Rights Act?
Ain't nothin' but a piece of paper.
[Horn Honking]
[Chattering]
Excuse me, sir.
Are you serving food today?
Oh, yes, ma'am. We have
a Sunday plate special: Barbecued pork.
Um, we'll take two of those,
please, and two Cokes.
I don't believe
I've seen you before.
I'm not from here.
I'm... I'm just visiting my grandmother.
[Woman]
Your daddy's gonna be so proud of you.
- Afternoon, Carol.
- Hi.
- Why, don't you two look smart.
- When we get home...
You come on in, and I'll wrap
those up for you to go.
[Bell Jingles]
- [Door Opens]
- [Bell Jingles]
Miss, you change your mind?
- Where did you get those?
- Oh, I know what you mean.
Virgin Mary's pictured
as a colored woman.
But, see, the woman that makes
the honey is colored herself.
Best honey in South Carolina.
What is her name?
August Boatwright.
- Do you know where she lives?
- [Chuckles]
Darnedest house you ever saw. Painted like

Pepto-Bismol. Your grandma's probably seen it.

[Chattering, Laughing]

[Lily]

What do you think's goin' on?

[Sighs]

Look like they dressed for church.

- Bye-bye!

- [Lily] You think one of them's August?

- [Horn Honks]

- Whoever she is, I hope she make honey...
better than she picks out paint.

I like it.

[Cello:

Now, don't go gettin'

your hopes up, all right?

They got nowhere else to go.

[Stops]

[Footsteps Approaching]

Yes?

- Are you August Boatwright?

- No.

I'm June Boatwright.

August is my sister.

- You came to see her?

- Hi. I'm May Boatwright.

I'm August's sister too.

[Chuckles]

Is she expecting you?

Um, I just saw some honey at the store,
and the man said that...

You come for honey?

Why didn't you say so?

Come into the parlor. I'll go get her.

Then after that she gonna go get

September and October.

[Door Closes]

Who we got here?

I'm Lily and this is Rosaleen.

We need a place to stay.

You see, my mother died of tularemia when
I was little, and my daddy just got killed...
in a tractor accident on our farm in
Spartanburg County, so me and Rosaleen...

she's our housekeeper... we're on our way
to Virginia to stay with my Aunt Bernie.
'Cept I don't have money
for a train ticket or a motel...
and not that anyone
would take in a Negro woman...
even though it's a violation
of the Civil Rights Act.
- Looks like you've been beaten.
- She fell down some steps when we were leavin'.
Must've been a lot of steps.
[Humming, Whimpering]
[Crying]
May, honey, go on out to the wall
and finish your crying.
[Sobbing]
Is she all right?
I'm sorry.
We can't help you.
We can't have 'em living
on the side of the road.
Why don't you call your aunt,
see about her sending you some train fare?
I would, but she just had a real big operation
and she's still stayin' in the hospital.
So maybe Rosaleen and I could just work
for the money, and then just be on our way.
Well...
I guess Rosaleen can help
May in the kitchen...
and you can help me and Zach
with the bees.
August.
We have the cots in the honey house.
- Thank you.
- You're welcome.
- I hope y'all like the smell of honey.
- [Door Opens]
It can be a bit overwhelming at first...
- but you'll get used to it.
- [Door Closes]
Zach and I sleep out here come in December
when we harvestin' honey round the clock.
It can get hot out here,

so you wanna keep that on.

You'll have to use

the bathroom in the house.

We never lock the door, so just come on in
whenever you need to.

- There you go.

- This ain't charity. I'll pay you back for it.

Oh, yeah, you can work it off.

I imagine y'all two wanna rest up.

If you get hungry, there's some sweet potato
biscuits on the stove. They're May's specialty.

Thank you again, Miss August.

[Door Closes]

I'm sure sorry to hear about T. Ray.

Aunt Bernie too.

I know it wasn't right to lie,

but I didn't have a choice.

How come you ain't say nothin'

about your mama or show that picture?

Ain't that why we're here

in the first place?

If they knew I ran away,

they'd have to call T. Ray to come get me.

Then they'd find out you a fugitive

and they'd have to call the police.

I feel like I'm where I'm supposed to be.

I really do.

I just need some time to figure out why,

so don't say anything.

Your secret.

You do what you want with it.

They're so cultured.

I never met Negro women

like them before.

- Just us dumb ignorant ones.

- That's not what I'm sayin'.

Guess I never met Negro women

like them neither.

- How much land did she say they got?

- Twenty-eight acres.

It's like it's got its own spot in the world,

where the outside don't come in.

Well, that's a good thing.

We'll be safe here, right?

[May Humming]

[June]

This is bullshit.

You know she in
some kind of trouble.

Well, who's gonna
take 'em in if we don't?

- No one around here.

- [Continues]

So what if that trouble follow 'em?

I need to do this, all right?

[Woman]

I went down to the water

All night long

I put my feet in

All night long

And I went down

To the water

All night long

And I put my dreams in

All night long

And what you did to me

I:

I can't take no more

I'll take these bad things

And I'll

Lay them at the shore

[Vocalizing]

[Fades]

[June]

You gonna break my car?

[Man]

No, I'm not gonna break your car.

I'm just askin:

lookin' a little confused.

[Singing On Radio]

It is hotter than a pot of rice, and you got nerve
to give me a hard time? Give me that wrench.

- No, you get it.

- Not gonna play, June Bug?

You gonna play?

- Come here.

- No. What?
- Come here now.
- What are you doing?
- You know what we doing.
- I don't dance.
- Oh, you're dancin' now.
- No, I don't. I don't dance.
- No, no. Get off.
- Come here. [Laughs]
- Come on, June.
- Don't you pick me up. [Laughing]

Stop it.

Place a beehive on my grave

And let the honey

soak through

When I'm dead and gone

- That's what I want from you

- Oh, thank you.

The streets of heaven

are gold and sunny

- But I'll stick with my plot

- [August] Mornin;

- Mornin'.

- You sleep all right?

- Yes, ma'am.

- Come on. Grab yourself a chair.

- Okay.

- Hey.

- This one's yours.

- Thank you.

- So, who's that man out there?

- [August] Oh, that's Neil.

He teaches at the school

where June teaches music.

- He's sweet on her.

- It seems like she's sweet on him too.

Yeah, but she won't say so.

He tried every which way to get her

to marry him, but she won't.

- How come?

- Too scared.

[Scoffs]

May, June might think that's a little personal.

Hell, I'll tell any folk that'll listen

I threw my man out.

Put his brain in a bird

and the bird'll fly backwards.

[Laughs]

[Laughs]

[May]

Mmm.

How come y'all got names
from a calendar?

Our mama loved spring and summer.

We had an April too, but...

she died when she was little.

[Sobs, Hums]

[Sobbing]

- You ain't gonna fix that car.

- I'm gonna fix it.

- What set May off?

- [Water Running]

She upset 'cause
you won't marry Neil.

See that? You should go on and marry me
and quit upsettin' your sister.

Get out of here.

No, woman, you promised me pancakes,
and I ain't leavin' till I get 'em.

You must be Rosaleen. Neil.

- And you must be Lily.

- Yes, sir.

- What's burnin'?

- [Sizzling]

Don't worry.

We'll just make you another one.

- [Clattering]

- Or how about some grits?

No. Thank you.

That's... That's all right.

I'm just not really hungry.

Then let's get to work.

Check on May.

I'm going to the N.A.A.C.P. Offices.

We're canvassing voters this morning.

Uh, wait.

What about my pancakes?

Uh, wait.

What about my pancakes?
The batter's right there
by the griddle.
Now how could beauty be so evil?
I've been stung so many times,
I have immunity.
They barely even hurt me.
But since you don't, you need
to know beeyard etiquette.
- Beeyard etiquette?
- You see...
the world's really
just one big beeyard.
The same rules work in both places.
Don't be afraid, as no life-lovin' bee
wants to sting you.
But don't be an idiot.
That's why we wear long sleeves and long pants.
And don't swat.
Don't even think about swattin'.
And above all, send the bees love.
- [Bees Buzzing]
- Every little thing wants to be loved.
Let's go.
[Vehicle Approaching]
[Buzzing]
Now, we'll constantly
be checking the hives.
We have to make sure the queens have enough
room to lay their eggs, otherwise we get swarms.
What do you mean, a swarm?
When you get a queen and a group
of independent-minded bees...
that split off and look for another place to live,
then you get swarms.
And I lose my bees.
So, what we have to do is...
take out the frames
filled with honey...
and put in empty ones.
Now, the smoke, it calms the bees...
and it masks the alarm scent
released by the guard bees.
Why, you ain't scared a lick, huh?

I love you. I love you. I love you.

I love you. I love you.

All right.

Easy movement.

See right there, Lily?

That's the queen... the large one.

[Chuckling]

That wall behind the house...

Why does it have little pieces
of paper in it?

Oh, well, that's May's wall.

She made it herself.

I guess you noticed

she a little different, huh?

She sure gets upset easy.

She had a twin sister, April.

- The one who died.

- Mm-hmm.

It's like the two of them were
one soul sharing two bodies.

If April got a toothache,

May's gum would plump up red.

One time my father used
a belt strap on April.

I swear, welts rose up
on May's legs too.

[Chuckles]

When April died, it was like the whole world
became May's twin sister.

And we tried for years
to get her help...

but the doctors just kept
telling us to put her away.

So June and I come up with
this idea of the "wailing wall."

- What kind of wall?

- The "wailing wall," like the one in Jerusalem.

The Jewish people go there to mourn. See,
they write their prayers on tiny pieces of paper...
and then they tuck 'em in the wall.

And that's what Miss May does.

Those bits of paper are
all the heavy feelings May carries around.
Seems like the only thing

that helps her.

Poor Miss May.

Yeah. Poor Miss May.

That's Zach's car.

He must be in the honey house.

Why don't you go in and say hello.

All right, this one's dedicated
to all my honeys.

Oh... Don't worry.

You my honey too.

[Laughs]

Baby, I need your lovin'

Got to have all of your lovin'

Baby, I need your lovin'

Got to have all of your lovin'

[Chuckles]

I w... I was just singin'.

I'm Lily.

I'm staying with Miss August
and them for a while.

Oh. Well, um, I'm-I'm Zachary Taylor,
her godson.

Zachary Taylor was a president.

[Chuckles]

Yeah, so I heard.

Come here. Look.

See? "Zachary Lincoln Taylor."

Uh, Miss August told me about
you bein' here helpin' out.

She didn't mention anything
about you being white.

Maybe she didn't notice.

[Tuning]

[Classical]

Ooh.

- Mmm, mmm.

- Just put it in.

Miss August, you know

I got stung today, right?

Did you? Where?

Right there.

Probably can't see it much.

[Chattering]

No, I'm telling you that

they don't intend on voting.

[Neil]

But you gotta see it from the other side.

[Woman]

The time is right

- I'm gonna pack my bags

- [Sniffles]

And take that journey

down the road

'Cause over the mountain

- I see the bright sunshine

- Go. Let it go.

- But I want to live inside the glow

- [Giggling]

Yeah, yeah, yeah

I wanna go

to the place where

I am nothing and everything

That exists between

- Here and nowhere

- [Whispering, Indistinct]

I wanna go the place where

Time has no consequences

Oh, yeah

- Hear the poppin'?

- Yeah.

- The sky opens to

- It's from capping. Now you try.

- Whoa. Whoa.

- I'm sorry.

I wanna go to beautiful

Beautiful

- Put the uncapped frames in the spinner.

- Beautiful, I wanna go to

- Pushes out all the honey.

- Beautiful, beautiful

Beautiful

I wanna go to

beautiful, beautiful

- Miss August says you can run like Wilma Rudolph.

- [Zach Laughs]

Yeah, in a championship game

I was running everywhere like...

- Uh, hey, hey. [Laughs]

- Oh, no!

Beautiful

I wanna go to

Beautiful, beautiful

Beautiful

I wanna go to

Beautiful

Hmm.

- You want me to light your candle?

- Yes, ma'am.

You all enjoy.

Thank you, Miss May.

She calls it a candlestick salad.

She's been making 'em for me
since I was little.

- It looks like...

- Yeah. Yeah, I know. I know.

[June]

May?

So, what's your favorite
subject in school?

English. I was plannin' on
being a writer.

I don't really think I got much of
a future now, being an orphan and all.

Don't writers, like,
just imagine things you don't see?

You should imagine yourself
having a future.

That's what I do.

- Playing professional football?

- [Sighs]

Why do white people always think sports
is the only way we could be successful?

I wanna be a lawyer.

I'm sorry. I just thought
'cause you were good at it.

I've never heard of a Negro lawyer.

You never heard of
Thurgood Marshall?

- No.

- Forget it.

All right. I'm picturing you
as a lawyer.

Take the case of a girl who's wrongly accused
of hurtin' somebody.
At the very last minute, you get the truth by
trickin' the real bad guy on the witness stand.
You bust his ass with the truth.

Yeah.

Zach, the ass-bustin' lawyer.

[Laughs]

Oh. Thank you, May.

- Here.

- No gravy.

- Smells good.

- Mm-hmm.

So how are things coming
with you, Lily?

Things are coming fine,
Miss June. Thank you.

- I made banana daisy...

- You've been here almost a week now.

Your aunt must be worried.

If you want us to leave,
me and Rosaleen will be on our way.

Oh, heavens to Betsy, Lily. Nobody wants you
to leave till you're good and ready.

Why do you put a Negro Mary
on your honey?

You mean why is she black...
or why is she on the honey?

- I guess both.

- [May] Tell her, August.

- I'm Sugar Girl.

- I'm Cressie.

- I'm Doll.

- And I'm her daughter, Violet.

And I'm Greta, Zachary's mama.

Mmm, I love Sundays.

What the hell kind
of church is this?

It's been a while since
we told the story of our Mary.

Mm-hmm.

And since we have visitors here who've
never heard it, I thought we'd tell it again.

- That's right. Tell the story.

- Mm-hmm.

[August]

Back in the days of slavery...
our people would go
to the praise house on Sunday...
and ask the Lord
to send them rescue.

One day a slave named Obadiah
was loading bricks onto a boat...
and he saw somethin' that had
washed up on the shore.

Movin' closer...

- he saw that it was the wooden figure of a woman.

- [Women Affirming]

Her body was growin'
out of a block of wood.

- A black woman...

- [Affirming]

With her arm lifted up
and her fist balled out.

- Mmm.

- [Affirming]

Obadiah knelt down on
the wet sand before her...

- and to his shock he heard her voice clear as day.

- Mm-hmm!

- She said, "It's all right."

- "It's all right."

- "I'm here."

- "I'm here."

- "I'll be taking care of you now."

- [Affirming]

And Obadiah knew at that moment
that God had sent her.

Now, everyone knew the mother of Jesus' name
was Mary, and that she was strong...

- Come on.

- And constant and had a mother's heart.

- [Affirming]

- And here she was...

sent to them across
the same waters...
that had brought them
there in chains.

- Seemed like she knew everything they suffered.

- Everything!

And so the people went up

one at a time...

and touched their hand

to her chest...

wantin' to grab on to

the solace in her heart.

- Mary filled their hearts with fearlessness.

- She filled their hearts!

And if they ever grew weak...

they had only to touch

her heart again.

[Women]

Touch her heart!

- Touch her heart.

- [Women] Touch her heart.

["Amazing Grace"]

[Deborah's Voice]

Touch her heart.

Lily.

Hail Mary, full of grace,

the Lord is with thee.

- [Voices, Indistinct]

- No!

- I'm your husband!

- Lily!

...and blessed is the fruit

of thy womb, Jesus.

[Deborah's Voice]

Just let me go!

- [Voices, Indistinct]

- No!

[Women]

... pray for us sinners now...

and at the hour of our death.

- Amen.

- Lily!

- [Stops]

- [Gasps]

- [Gunshot]

- No!

June, what's gotten into you?

- Oh!

- [Women Murmuring]

Lily.

Girl, since when
you started faintin'?
Could I get some water?

- Of course.

- Wait. Um...

Rosaleen, could you get it, please?

This your room?

- Blue is my favorite color.

- Mine too.

Birds of a feather.

- Sorry I messed up your church.

- Oh, that's all right.

We go on all day if somebody
don't stop us.

I just hope you all right.

I think it was the heat.

Felt like it was
90 degrees in there.

Yes, the heat.

Heat'll make a person
do strange things.

[T. Ray Grunts]

[Grunts]

[Radio:

[Woman] I've made my reservation
I'm leaving town tomorrow
I'll find somebody new
and there'll be no more sorrow

[Exhaling To Beat]

That's what I do each time
but I can't follow through

[With Radio] I can't break away
though you make me cry

I can't break away

I can't say good-bye

No, I'll never, ever
break away from you

No, no

No, no, no, no

No, no, no, no

No, no, no, no

- [Turns Off]

- Who can think with all that?

Well, that's your problem...

You think too much.

Try going with your feelings

once in a blue moon.

You won't believe what

people in town are sayin'.

Sayin' Jack Palance is coming to Tiburon,

and he's bringing a Negro woman with him.

[Laughs]

What in the world?

- Who's Jack Palance?

- He's a movie star... a white one.

I ain't never heard...

I... I have never heard of him.

They say his sister lives here.

He's comin' to visit her...

and he intend to take this woman

to the theater on Friday.

- White folks talkin' about standin' guard outside.

- [August] That's just talk.

And these idiots are determined

to fight this law till they...

Shh, shh, shh. Shh.

[Humming]

- Miss May?

- Mm-hmm?

I saw how nice you did

Rosaleen's hair...

and I was wonderin' if maybe

you could help me with mine.

That'll be easy.

Hmm.

[Sniffles]

It's ironic how white people

hate us so much...

when so many of 'em

been raised by black women.

- Place a beehive on my grave

- Ooh.

June Bug! June, I know you hear me.

If I make this shot, you'll give me your hand?

Watch this.

- [Laughs]

- What you laughin' at?

You think somethin' bein' an impossibility
makes you think about it even more?

- Like what?

- I don't know.

Like... kissin'.

That ain't impossible.

When I was 15, I made
a 7 UP cake for this boy.

After that,

he kissed me all the time.

What'd it feel like?

Like I was gonna burst.

Miss May, I know you get
real sad sometimes.

My daddy never feels.

He never felt anything.

I had rather be like you.

A worker bee weigh less
than a flower petal...

but she can fly with a load
heavier than her.

But she only lives
four or five weeks.

Sometimes not feelin' is
the only way you can survive.

- [Ball Hits Backboard]

- [Grunting]

[Laughs]

You want me to help you
make a 7 UP cake?

- [Bees Buzzing]

- Hold that.

- It's purple.

- Yeah.

When the weather turns hot,
the flowers, they start to dry up.

The bees, they start sucking
on that elderberry.

That makes purple honey.

There. See?

People'll pay two dollars a jar
for purple honey.

[Chuckles]

[Chattering Softly]

[Radio:

- [Woman] I'm so lonely

- You all right?

- [Chattering, Arguing]

- [August] She'll be fine.

[Chattering, Arguing Continues]

- [Neil] Because.

- [June] No. Why?

- Why does it always have to come back to this?

- Because I love you and you me.

Neil, I don't wanna get married.

I don't wanna get married.

That's what people in love do.

I don't wanna be married today

or tomorrow or ever.

It's about that time!

- What are you so scared of?

- I'm not scared of anything!

Then you are the most

selfish bitch I ever met.

What?

What did you just say to me?

- Oh, Lord.

- What did you just call me?

How dare you call me that, Neil.

Neil, I'm talkin' to you.

You better turn around

and listen to me right now.

You better come back here

and apologize right now!

Don't you ever plan on comin' back then!

I don't even need you in my life!

How dare... Don't come back!

- [August] Don't worry, May.

- [Grunts] Don't come back!

[Lily] I bet they'll be back holdin' hands

on the porch swing tomorrow.

I don't know, Lily.

Some people rather die than forgive.

And June is one of 'em.

She still hasn't forgiven me for paintin'

the house, and that was 10 years ago.
Well, how come, if your favorite color is blue,
you painted the house so pink?
[Sighs]
That was May's doin'.
She was with me the day
I went to the paint store...
and she latched onto this sample
called Caribbean Pink.
Said it made her wanna dance
a Spanish flamenco.
I thought it was the tackiest color
I ever seen in my life.
But if it could lift May's heart,
then I guess she ought to live in it.
Well, that was sure nice of you.
Well, some things
don't matter that much, Lily.
Like the color
of a house and whatnot.
But liftin' someone's heart...
now that matters.
- Were you ever in love?
- [Chuckling] Course I was.
- But you didn't love him enough to marry him.
- Well, I loved him enough.
I just loved my freedom more.
I can't think of one thing I'd rather have
than somebody loving me.
Where are all the bees?
[Buzzing]
You hear that?
They're coolin' the hive.
That's the sound of 100,000
bee wings fannin' the air.
People have no idea about the complicated life
goin' on inside a beehive.
Here. Let me help you with that.
See, bees have a secret life
we don't know anything about.
[May Screaming]
[Screaming Continues]
[Laughing, Screaming]
[May]

Yeah!

[August]

Well, if this ain't the livin' end.

- Now come over here. You gonna get wet.

- [Screams]

[Screaming, Laughing]

Oh, Lord, Lord!

[All Screaming]

- Would you keep it down?

- [Laughing]

- Keep it down! I'm practicin'.

- You come over here, you gonna get wet.

[Shrieks]

- Oh, damn it to hell!

- Run, Lily!

Oh, damn it to hell!

- How dare you!

- [Laughing]

- [June] You out of your mind?

- All right now, June.

[August]

Come on, June.

[Both Laughing]

[Crying]

[Sniffles, Moans]

- Where you goin', June?

- June?

- Come on back.

- [Laughing]

Oh. Miss May.

Got thirsty.

- [Refrigerator Opens]

- [Liquid Pours]

I saw a roach.

The roaches will
follow this right out the door.

Works every time.

Miss May?

Did you know a Deborah?

Deborah Owens?

She's a white woman from Virginia.

It would've been a long time ago.

Oh, yes.

Deborah Owens.

She stayed out in the honey house.

She was the sweetest thing.

[Sniffs]

[Humming]

Think I'll go out

to the wall for a while.

[Laughing]

Give it back!

[Laughing Continues]

[May]

Zach! Come back here.

Thank you.

Hey. Lily, come ride with me.

Uh, I gotta drop some honey off

to Mr. Forrest. I want you to meet him.

Oh, I gotta talk to Miss August.

You know where she is?

Uh, she went to Columbia to go pick up
a new blade for the spinner.

Oh.

[Radio:

Thought a new notebook might

help you start writin' again.

Whoa.

My mother stayed in

the honey house, just like me.

What? When?

I don't know.

I don't know anything about her.

Maybe it was before I was born.

Or maybe she left me like my daddy said.

So, wait.

You mean to tell me...

all that stuff about your aunt...

and... and just passin' through...

You made that up?

Why not just tell the truth?

'Cause I'm afraid the truth

is gonna wreck everything.

[Continues]

[Chattering]

[Man]

There he is.

And who might
this pretty young lady be?
This is Lily.
She's stayin' with Miss August.
- You stayin' in her house?
- Yes, ma'am.
Well, Miss August is a good friend of mine.
I hope you're enjoyin' yourself.
- Yes, sir.
- I have an appointment with the dentist.
Okay.
- [Zach] What you working on?
- Run-of-the-mill stuff.
Hey, I got somethin' for you.
Wanna head up to the office?
Are you, uh, lookin' forward
to school gettin' started up?
Yes, sir. And football season...
Oh, yeah.
We're lookin' forward to that.
[Woman]
Hello. Operator.
I'd like to make a call
to Sylvan 7-1710.
Hold while I connect
your call, please.
[Line Ringing]
[T. Ray]
Hello? Hello!
Look what he gave me.
I'm startin' my law library.
That's nice.
[Exhales]
Hey.
Lily, I know you're scared
the truth is gonna wreck things.
Findin' out the truth
is only half of it.
It's what you do with it
that matters.
Right?
[Sighs]
When's the last time
you seen a movie?

I don't remember.

Come on. We gonna go see Surf Party.

- But what...

- But nothin'. Come on. Let's go.

- [Chattering]

- [Car Horn Honking]

- One adult, please.

- Here you go.

[Man]

It can't hurt, you know?

[Man #2]

One adult and one child.

[Man On Screen]

Everybody waxed up?

- This is a surfboard.

- [Woman] You're kidding.

This is the nose.

The sides are called rails.

Thank you.

- The first step is...

- [Man] Come on!

Hey, boy!

- We're gonna teach you a lesson, boy!

- Hey! It's not his fault!

Let him go!

Shut your mouth, nigger lover!

- [Woman] Where are they takin' him?

- Get him in the truck.

- [Man] Just trying to gather up all the pieces.

- You're wastin' time!

- You know who took him.

- Is that right?

- Yeah, that's right.

- All right. Now hold on here, folks.

Soon as we know anything,

we'll get back to you.

Neil, counselor, ladies.

Come on. Let's go.

I'm gonna get some men together.

We'll look ourselves.

If you'll have me,

I'm willin' to help.

[Engine Starts]

May doesn't need to know about this.

[Engine Starts]

[Sighs]

Nah, it'll be too much.

[June]

Black boys don't come back, August.

[August] He's gonna be found,
and he's gonna be all right.

- [June] How could you say that?

- I have to.

Please let him be okay.

Lily's gonna look so pretty in this.

[Humming]

August, where are your scissors?

Uh, in my room.

- Hey, Greta.

- Hey, May.

You been to see Mary?

[Crying]

Zach is still missin'.

[No Audible Dialogue]

We have to pray, May.

You understand?

We got to pray, May.

[Crying]

- [June] Who was at the door?

- May, was somebody at the door?

Greta.

No news on Zach.

Why didn't you tell me?

You all right?

[Inhales, Exhales]

May?

May!

Answer me, May.

You all right?

What's happened to her?

I never seen her like this.

- May?

- May?

May.

I'm all right.

Glad to see you can talk.

Come on, Sister.

We gonna run you a nice hot bath.

I need to go to the wall.

May?

Where's May?

Her bath is ready.

She's still out there.

May?

May?

May!

May?

May!

- May?

- May!

- May?

- May!

[June]

Come on, May.

May?

May?

June?

[June]

May!

June! June!

[Gaspings]

May!

[Shrieking]

- Oh, my God.

- Oh, my God! August!

[Both Gasping]

August.

No! [Sobbing]

Oh, no!

- [Sobbing] Oh, no!

- Oh, May.

[June] We gotta get her out.

We gotta get her out.

[Retching, Coughing]

[Sobbing]

May!

Why you do that?

Sweet Mary.

Zach!

Zach.

[Sighs]

Oh.

I'm so sorry.
Miss May did what she did
'cause of me.
Come on, now.
It was May who did it.
[Sighs] It's all right.
She wouldn't want you blaming yourself.
Oh. It's gonna be okay.
It's good. It's good.

[May's Voice]

Dear August and June...
I'm sorry to leave you like this.
But I know Zach is okay.
My heart is telling me so.
I hate you bein'sad...
but think how happy I'll be
with April, Mama and Papa.
I'm tired of carrying around
the weight of the world.
I'm just gonna lay it down now.
It's my time to die...
and it's your time to live.
Don't mess it up.

[Chuckles]

Love, May.

I saw Mary
She was walkin' on the water
Smilin' at me
Hummin' her river song
And I tried wavin'
But she was walkin' away
She said that
she'd been waitin' on me
All day long
I tried to call her and said
Please come back
'Cause I didn't mean
to make you sad
She said
Well, don't you worry
'cause I'll see you again
But I hear my mother call
And I have to go
Place a beehive on my grave

And let the honey
soak through
When I'm dead and gone
That's what I want from you
The streets of heaven
are gold and sunny
But I'll stick with my plot
And a pot of honey
Place a beehive on my grave
And let the honey
soak through

Hmm.

[June]

I see you liked yours.

- Mm-hmm. It's the last one.

- Mmm.

- Mmm, girl, you did all right.

- [Rosaleen Laughing]

Aw. I'm the eldest.

- And the slowest.

- I'll make some more.

- You hear that, June?

- Hmm.

Think we might need
to change your name, Rosaleen.
From now on, we gonna call you July.

Hmm. I concur.

- Some more of these.

- [Chuckling]

Mmm.

[Indistinct]

Sure you gonna be
all right in here by yourself?
I don't mind sharing May's room.
Just wanna be near her spirit.
I'll be fine.

See you in the mornin' then.

[Door Opens, Closes]

Hey, Lily.

This is my mother.

[Sighs]

I know, honey.

Your mama was

Deborah Fontanel Owens.

You've known all this time?
I knew she had a daughter.
But I thought it couldn't be you.
But one look at you,
all I could see is Deborah at your age.
You knew her when she was little?
I took care of her.
Why didn't you tell me?
Somethin' told me you wasn't
quite ready to know about her.
I just wanted to give you a chance
to get on solid ground first.
T. Ray...
he told me that my mo...
He told me my mother
left me and ran away.
I don't have any memory of her, but...
I know he's lyin'
'cause some things aren't possible.
Children just don't have two parents
who refuse to love 'em.
- Is that what made you leave?
- [Shuddering]
I know what I did was wrong.
I just seem to do all the wrong things.
I don't mean to be a bad person,
but I just can't help it.
So that's why I gotta go.
I brought the outside in here.
And what happened
to Zach and Miss May...
If I'd never come here,
it would've never happened.
- Lily... Lily, that wasn't your fault.
- I wreck everything.
Yes, it was.
They were fightin' and screamin' and...
[Bawling]
She grabbed a gun, and he took it away from her,
and I just wanted to help her.
I just wanted to
give it back to her.
- And I killed her.
- Who, Lily?

My mother.
I killed my mother.
I'm unlovable.
Oh, Lily.
You listen to me now.
That's a terrible,
terrible thing for you to live with.
But you're not unlovable, child.
There's love all around you.
Gimme your hand.
I started takin' care of Deborah
when she was nine, back in Virginia.
Over seven years.
Till my grandmama died
and left me this place.
That's why June
resented you at first.
She never got over me
workin' in your mama's house.
How did my mother get down here?
She had an old friend from high school,
moved to Sylvan.
Told her there were jobs,
and men back from the war.
So she moved.
I think it was 'cause of me though.
I just think she wanted me nearby.
So my mother came to Sylvan,
met T. Ray and got married.
That's right.
But what I don't get
is why she married him.
[Chuckles] I think Deborah liked the fact
that he was decorated in the war.
She thought he was brave.
Said he treated her like a princess.
It's not the same T. Ray.
I can tell you that right now.
You know, Lily,
people can start out one way...
and by the time life get through with 'em,
end up completely different.
I mean, I don't doubt that he started off
lovin' her. Fact, he worshipped her.

But after about six months or so,
her love wore off.

But she married him?

But if the love had worn off,
why did she marry him?

Honey, Deborah was pregnant.

That's why.

She called me
soon after you were born.

I got letters and phone calls,
mostly about you.

How you were sittin' up
and takin' your first steps.

[Chuckles]

Playin' patty-cake.

But then the letters
start comin' less and less.

And one day she called me up...
and she said she was leavin' T. Ray.

- Thank you.

- Yes, ma'am.

[August] When I picked her up
from the bus station...
she didn't even look like herself.
She had gotten so thin.

I was with her when you picked her up
from the bus station, right?

She brought me along, didn't she?

No. She came by herself, honey.

- [Sighs]

- Why?

Why didn't she bring me?

[Sighs]

All I know, Lily,
is she was fallin' apart.

Depressed people do things
they wouldn't ordinarily do.

It was easy for her to leave me
'cause she never wanted me in the first place.

Lily.

After she was here
for a few months...

and started feelin' better, she...

she start talkin' about how much she missed you.

Then she went back
to Sylvan to see you.
She was just comin' for her things.
- I believe she came back for you.
- I'm goin' to bed.

Lily!

Now your mama
made a terrible mistake.
But I believe she tried to fix it.
Good night.

[Sighs]

Damn it, Deborah.

[Breathing Heavily]

[Screaming]

I hate you!

I hate your guts!

[Grunting]

Why didn't you love me?

[Sniffles]

Tiburon.

Lily.

What in Mary's name happened here?

Answer me.

T. Ray was right about my mother.

She left me.

[August]

Hi.

Hi.

I brought some
of your mama's belongings.
It's just a handful of things your mama left
when she went back to get you.
Been in this box...
You really loved her.
It was complicated.
But, yes, I did.
How was it complicated?
I was her nanny.
Things were different
in her world than mine.
We like to think
that love is pure and limitless.
But love like that
can't exist in a hateful time.

[Chuckles]

But she made me love her anyway.
There is no perfect love, Lily.
Your mama's pocket mirror.
If you look in here,
you see your mama looking back at you.

[Sighs]

Well, I'll be.
She was wearin' that pin
the day she got here.
There's just one last thing.
Hey.
Hey.

[Sighs]

- What happened to you?
- What about it?
It changed you, didn't it?
Sometimes, Lily, l...
I get so angry.
I just want to kill somethin'.
The men that took you...
they're angry like that too.
Makes 'em mean.
You have to promise me, Zach,
that you won't be like them.
I don't want to.
Me either.
No way I'm not
becomin' a lawyer now.
I'm gonna be one of them drum majors
Dr. King talks about.
I know you will.
And... 10, maybe
we'll be at your book signin'.
So don't forget our story, all right?
I won't.

[Clears Throat]

I have you know I am now a registered voter.
- Really?
- I'll be castin' my vote for...
Lyndon Johnson and Hubert Humphrey.
I love you, Miss Rosaleen.
- Neil.
- Hello, ladies.

Hi.

Hi.

Didn't you call me here to talk?

I'm a little busy.

You ain't the only one busy.

I'm just supposed to stand
here and watch how busy you are?

No.

[Sighs]

I was...

I was wonderin' if you'd be
willin' to ask again.

Ask what?

This supposed to be funny?

June Boatwright, will you marry me?

Yes.

Yes?

Yes? Yes?

Yes.

[Laughing]

She said yes.

- Oh, my God.

- Good for you.

Come on. We're goin' to
the jewelry store right now...
pickin' out a ring before you
change your mind, all right?
What? You don't already have one?
Girl, come on.

How come you don't have one?

[Knocking On Door]

[Knocking Continues]

Well, well, well.

Look who's here.

Won't you come in?

Well, all right, goddamn it.

You wanna pretend

I'm making a social visit, we'll pretend.

I'm gonna take you out of here nice and quiet
or kickin' and screamin'.

Don't matter which one to me.

Have a seat if you want to.

So you been here the whole time?

With colored women?

- Jesus Christ.
- How'd you find me?
That map on your wall.
Came here, started askin' around.
Some old lady secretary at the law office
was more than happy to fill me in.
- Where's Rosaleen?
- She took off a long time ago.
Where'd you get that?
- Miss August gave it to me.
- Don't you lie to me.
I'm not lyin'.
She said it belonged to my...
I gave that pin to your mama
on her 22nd birthday.
Now you tell me right now.
- How'd this August woman get it?
- You gave this to my mother?
- Answer me.
- You did?
This is where my mother came
when she ran away from us.
She was wearin' it
the day she got here.
Miss August used to take care of her
when she was a little girl.
[Sighs]
[Sighs]
I looked for her
everywhere I could think.
And she was right here.
Jesus Christ, she was right here.
Goddamn you, Deborah!
You ain't leavin' me again!
- [Gasps, Shrieks]
- Get back here!
T. Ray, it's me, Lily!
Daddy!
You... You look like her.
My whole life's
been nothin' but a hole...
where my mother should've been.
It left me always achin'.
But I never thought about

what it did to you.
- We're goin' home.
- I'm stayin' here.
You think I'm gonna
walk out of here and leave you?
I don't even know these damn people.
I know them.
And August Boatwright
is a good person.
Now, what makes you think
she'd even want you here?
Lily can have a home here
as long as she wants.
Lily said you'd run off.
Well, I guess I'm back now.
Well, I don't really care
where you end up...
but Lily's comin' with me.
[Footsteps Approaching]
Everybody all right?
We all right.
This is Mr. Owens...
Lily's father.
He came here for a visit.
Mr. Owens...
you'd be doing Lily and us
a big favor by leavin' her here.
I made her my apprentice beekeeper.
She learnin' the whole business.
We love Lily.
We'll get her started in school.
We'll take care of her.
I promise you that.
Well...
good riddance.
[Engine Starting]
Stop! Stop!
The day my mother died, you said
she was only comin' back for her things.
Is that true?
No.
No. She was comin' for you.
Why did you lie?
'Cause she didn't come for me.

[Lily Narrating] I still tell myself
that when T. Ray drove away that day...

he wasn't sayin:

He was sayin:

with all these mothers. "
I have more mothers than
any three girls off the street.
They are the moons
shinin' over me.
I guess I have forgiven myself.
Although sometimes in the night,
my dreams will take me back to sadness...
- and I have to wake up and forgive again.
- [Praying]
But Mary is always there.
I feel her at unexpected moments.
She will suddenly rise.
And when she does,
she does not go up into the sky...
but further inside of me.
If you think
the sky is falling
Comin' undone
Hmm
All the pieces crumble
You're on the run
All the wrong you've taken
All the rules
you're breakin'
Don't you know
the solid truth is
It comes back to you
Don't you know
the sky is blue
Can't you see the sun
is breakin' through
Have a little faith in you
Don't you know
the sky is blue
Huh
Every time you
walk out that door

Cursin' the sky
Feelin' like
you've been cheated
Ripped from inside
Don't you know
the sky is blue
Can't you see the sun
is breakin' through
Have a little faith in you
Don't you know
the sky is blue
Come on
Mmm
Mmm
Mmm, yeah
Now you know
Hmm
[Chuckles]
Uh
Nah, nah, nah, nah, nah
Nah, nah, nah, nah, nah
nah, nah, nah
[Continues]
Hey
[Continues]
Don't you know
the sky is blue
Don't you know the sky is blue
Have a...
Have a little faith in you
Don't you know
the sky is blue
Don't you know the sky is blue
Hey
Don't you know the sky
Sky
I'm telling you
The sky is blue
Believe it whoo-hoo
Don't you know the sky
Sky
Sky
Sky
Hey

[Women Vocalizing]

Nah, nah, nah, nah, nah

Nah, nah, nah, nah, nah

Oh

Oh

Oh

Well, there's nothin'

you can do

Well, there's nothin'

you can say

'Cause everything just ain't

gonna go your way

If you're feeling

kind of strange

And you want to lay it down

And it's hard for you to keep

your feet on solid ground

- You gotta keep on

- Keep, keep marchin'

On

Keep marchin' on

- You just gotta keep on. Oh, yeah

- Keep

- Keep marchin'

- Keep marchin' on

Keep marchin' on

- Keep, keep on

- Keep marchin'

When a poor girl shine

And a rich girl cries

And the clown is

wearin'no makeup

You got to get up and run

You got to get up and strive

You got to put all your pride

into makin'it

- You gotta keep on

- Keep, keep marchin'

On

Keep marchin' on

- You gotta keep on. Come on now

- Keep

- Keep marchin'

- Keep on marchin' now

Keep marchin'on

- We gotta keep on

- Keep, keep marchin'

- You gotta keep on

- Keep marchin' on

This is something we gotta do today

is keep on marchin'

- On

- Keep marchin' on

Don't let nobody

tell you no different

Oh, no

Keep on marchin'

On