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The Help

By Tate Taylor

WILLIAM FAULKNER wrote of Mammy Callie after her death:

"...she gave to my family a fidelity without stint or calculation or recompense and gave to my childhood an immeasurable devotion and love".

JACKSON, MISSISSIPPI 1963

INT. AIBILEEN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

AIBILEEN, black, 53, sits at a table in a small, green kitchen. She wears a yellow dress with black piping and grips a tattered spiral notebook.

Although cracked, the window behind her is crystal clear. Three framed portraits hang on the wall above her: John F. Kennedy, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and an UNKNOWN YOUNG BLACK MALE wearing thick glasses.

Aibileen swallows hard.

AIBILEEN

I was...born in 1911...on Piedmont Plantation in Cherokee County.

An UNSEEN WOMAN interviews Aibileen.

WOMAN (O.C.)

Did you know as a girl, growing up, that one day you'd be a maid?

AIBILEEN

Yes, ma'am. I did.

WOMAN (O.C.)

And you knew that because?

AIBILEEN

Momma was a maid. My grandmother was a house slave.

WOMAN (O.C.)

Oh.

The woman repeats Aibileen's answer slowly as she writes.

WOMAN (O.C.) (CONT'D)

A...House...Slave. Uh-huh. Okay.

Aibileen squeezes the notebook in her lap.

WOMAN (O.C.) (CONT'D)

Now, did you ever dream of being something else?

Aibileen gulps. She doesn't answer. The room is quiet.

WOMAN (O.C.) (CONT'D)

Well then, what's it feel like, to raise a white child when your own child's at home...being looked

after by somebody else?

2.

Aibileen's hand trembles as she sips from a glass of water. She glances sadly up to the picture of the young black male.

FADE TO BLACK:

AIBILEEN (V.O.)

I done raised seventeen kids in my life. Lookin' after white babies, that's what I do.

INT. LEEFOLT HOME - MAE MOBLEY'S ROOM - MORNING

MAE MOBLEY LEEFOLT, 2 1/2 years old, lies in a crib, crying. AIBILEEN enters. Her dark black skin contrasts angelically with a brilliant white work dress, white panty hose and shoes

AIBILEEN (V.O.)

I know how to get them babies asleep, stop cryin' and go in the toilet bowl before they mommas even get outta bed in the mornin.'

Aibileen lifts Mae Mobley out of her crib and pulls her into her expansive bosom.

AIBILEEN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Babies like fat. They like big fat legs too. That I know.

Aibileen sits with Mae Mobley in a rocking chair.

AIBILEEN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I work from eight to four, six days a week. Ninety-five cents an hour comes to a hundred seventy-two dollars ever month. I do all the cooking, cleaning, washing, ironing and grocery shopping, but mostly, I take care a baby girl...And law, I worry she gone be fat. Ain't gonna be no beauty queen either.

Mae Mobley reaches up and touches Aibileen's face. Aibileen kisses her and whispers in her ear.

AIBILEEN (CONT'D)

You is kind. You is smart. You is important.

Mae Mobley's mother, ELIZABETH LEEFOLT, 21 and lanky, enters wearing a green dress very much under construction. Pins and double-stick tape hold it all together.

Elizabeth has pointed features and a nest of teased, brittle hair.

ELIZABETH

Aibileen, bridge club's in an hour!
Did you finish the chicken salad?
3.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

Oh, and Hilly's deviled eggs. No paprika!
Elizabeth rotates around like the Tin Man.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

Does this dress look homemade?

AIBILEEN

I reckon when you finish, it won't.
Elizabeth exits with her pinned hemline sloping at a good twenty degree angle. Aibileen shakes her head.

AIBILEEN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Miss Leefolt still don't pick Baby Girl up but once a day. The birthin' blues had got holt a Miss Leefolt pretty hard. I done seen it happen plenty a times...once babies start havin' they own babies. And the young white ladies of Jackson...Oh, law, they was havin' some babies.

INT. JACKSON JOURNAL NEWSPAPER - OFFICE - SAME DAY

A smoking RECEPTIONIST, 50, leads EUGENIA "SKEETER" PHELAN, 23, across a smoke-filled news office. Even the light bulbs have yellowed.

AIBILEEN (V.O.)

But, not Miss Skeeter...
Skeeter has very frizzy blond hair cut short above her shoulders. She carries a red satchel.

AIBILEEN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

No babies...No man...And not lookin'.
She wears flats, careful not to add more than a centimeter to her towering height. Dressed well, Skeeter tugs on her unfamiliar attire.

INT. MR. BLACKLY'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

The receptionist and Skeeter enter the office of MR. HAROLD BLACKLY, 68. He has greased, grey hair and the face of a mean man. Smoke pours into the room.

MR. BLACKLY

Shut the Goddamn door!

He snaps his fingers over a chair. Skeeter sits down.

MR. BLACKLY (CONT'D)

They announced last week
cigarettes'll kill you.

4.

Mr. Blackly pours a pack of nuts into his mouth.

MR. BLACKLY (CONT'D)

(CHEWING)

Okay, let's see what you got.

Skeeter quickly hands Mr. Blackly a resumé. He skims it over, marking it violently with a red pen.

MR. BLACKLY (CONT'D)

"Murrah High Editor, Ole Miss Rebel
Rouser Editor, double major, Junior
League editor...Damn girl, didn't
you have any fun?"

SKEETER

Is that...important?

Mr. Blackly sighs, hands the resumé back to Skeeter.

MR. BLACKLY

You got any references?

Skeeter nods slowly. She takes a deep breath and pulls a letter out of her satchel. She hands it to Mr. Blackly. Mr. Blackly snatches the letter and reads it quickly, mouthing the words as he does. He drops the letter on his desk, and looks to Skeeter, flabbergasted.

MR. BLACKLY (CONT'D)

That...is a rejection letter.

Skeeter's face flushes hot and quick.

SKEETER

Not exactly. Missus Stein-

MR. BLACKLY

-STEIN?! Missus who?

Skeeter points toward the letterhead.

SKEETER

Elaine Stein, Senior Editor at
Harper and Row Publishing. In New
York. I'm going to be a serious

writer, Mr. Blackly. So, when I applied to Harper and Row, Missus

STEIN WROTE-

MR. BLACKLY

-She told you "no."

SKEETER

Until I gain some experience, Mr. Blackly! See, it says it right there at the end. "Great potential...Gain some experience and please apply again."

Mr. Blackly pours the rest of the peanuts in his mouth.

5.

MR. BLACKLY

Oh, Christ...I guess you'll do.

Can you clean?

SKEETER

Clean?

Mr. Blackly sees cigarette smoke bleeding under his door.

MR. BLACKLY

Clean!

Mr. Blackly pulls up a box filled with letters and newspapers. He slams it down in front of Skeeter.

MR. BLACKLY (CONT'D)

Miss Myrna's gone shit-house crazy on us, drunk hair spray or something. Read her past columns and all these letters. Answer them just like she did, nobody'll know the damn difference.

Skeeter forces a smile.

MR. BLACKLY (CONT'D)

You know who Miss Myrna is?

SKEETER

(COVERING)

I read her articles all the time.

MR. BLACKLY

Articles? Ha! It's a cleaning advice column, Miss Phelan. Eight bucks a week. Copy due Thursday.

Mr. Blackly picks up the phone and starts yelling at someone.

Skeeter excitedly grabs the box of letters and leaves.

INT. HOLBROOK HOUSE - BATHROOM - SAME DAY

HILLY HOLBROOK, 22, white and hefty, sits on a closed toilet seat in a well-appointed bathroom. She's covered in red plaid and bows and has a round face topped by a perfect beehive.

HILLY

(SCREAMING UPWARD)

Momma! We're late for bridge!

Hilly carefully rolls toilet paper out from its holder. She raises a pencil and places the tiniest dot imaginable on the first and second sheets of paper.

AIBILEEN (V.O.)

Miss Hilly was the first of the babies to have a baby. And it must a come out of her like the eleventh commandment. `Cause once Miss Hilly had a baby, ever girl at the bridge table wanted one too.

6.

She carefully rolls the paper back up in the roll.

HILLY

Mিনny! Go get Momma!

INT. HOLBROOK HOUSE - ENTRY FOYER STAIRWELL - SAME TIME

MINNY JACKSON, 33, black, plump and in uniform, rolls her eyes beneath a crystal chandelier. She shouts up the mahogany stairwell.

MINNY

Missus Walters?! You need help coming down?

MISSUS WALTERS, 60, passes quietly behind Minny.

MISSUS WALTERS

I'm down!

Minny jumps with a yelp, spins around.

MISSUS WALTERS (CONT'D)

Been down.

MINNY

Gone give me a heart attack!

Missus Walters ambles toward the closet door. Minny quickly tries to turn her toward the front door. Missus Walters resists.

MISSUS WALTERS

Minny, I'm getting my coat.

Missus Walters opens the closet.

MINNY

It's ninety degrees out there,
Missus Walters.

Missus Walters pulls out a red, wool coat with cheetah print collar.

The early stages of Alzheimer's have appeared, but Missus Walters is still quite proud at eighty percent capacity.

AIBILEEN (V.O.)

Once Missus Walters' arteries went hard, Miss Hilly moved her and Minny in with her. Fired the maid she had just to make room. See, Minny about the best cook in Mississippi, and Miss Hilly wanted her.

Hilly's approach is marked by the whishing sound of her plaid, fat thighs.

7.

She nonchalantly grabs the coat from her mother and carries it out the door.

Mিনny and Missus Walters follow. Minny carries a chocolate pie. Hilly barks over her shoulder.

HILLY

Mিনny, William took Billy out for ice cream. So, hurry back and get Billy down for his nap. No dilly dallying.

MINNY

Yes, ma'am.

Mিনny raises the pie behind Hilly's beehive, dreaming of smashing it into her head.

AIBILEEN (V.O.)

Mিনny my best friend. A old lady like me lucky to have her.

INT. LEEFOLT HOME - BATHROOM- SAME DAY

Aibileen kneels next to Mae Mobley who sits on a small children's training toilet.

MAE MOBLEY

No!

AIBILEEN (V.O.)

It's a tricky thing...you try to make a baby go in the toilet bowl

before it's time. If theys can't
get the hang of it, theys get to
thinking low a theyselves.

Mae Mobley sticks her lip out.

AIBILEEN (CONT'D)

You drunk up two glasses a grape
juice, I know you got to tee-tee.

MAE MOBLEY

Nooo.

Mae Mobley shakes her head.

AIBILEEN

I give you a cookie if you go.

Tee-tee immediately sprinkles into the bowl.

AIBILEEN (CONT'D)

Mae Mobley! You going!

Aibileen and Mae Mobley laugh excitedly as Elizabeth storms
into the bathroom in her finished dress. The hemline now
slants in the other direction.

8.

ELIZABETH

Aibileen, the girls are pulling up,
and the table isn't set!

MAE MOBLEY

Mae Mobley go, Momma!

ELIZABETH

Get in your room! Right now!

Mae Mobley rises behind Aibileen's leg.

MAE MOBLEY

I sorry.

Elizabeth reaches down and scoops up Mae Mobley like a sack
of potatoes.

Mae Mobley looks to Aibileen over her mother's shoulder, her
eyes have welled up.

Aibileen mouths "I love you" and blows her a kiss.

INT. LEEFOLT HOME - DINING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The Leefolt's small, wood paneled, two bedroom "ranch" is
destined to become income property one day.

FIVE YOUNG WOMEN, early 20s, and Elizabeth hover around two
collapsible card tables arranged in the living room.

Aibileen methodically arranges grapes on a platter of chicken
salad resting on Elizabeth's dining table. The table has a
small L-SHAPED CRACK in the middle.

AIBILEEN (V.O.)

I lost my own boy, Treelore, right
before I started waitin' on the
Leefolts...

Elizabeth glances anxiously to the dining table then catches
eyes with Aibileen, nodding ever so slightly.

CLOSE ON:

Aibileen carefully slides the platter over the L-SHAPED CRACK
making sure it's hidden.

AIBILEEN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

After Treelore died, a bitter seed
was planted inside a me. And I
just didn't feel so accepting
anymore.

Hilly enters the front door holding Missus Walters coat.

HILLY

Hey, girls!
9.

YOUNG WOMEN

(IN UNISON)

Hey, Hilly!

Minnie follows behind holding the pie and Missus Walters' arm.

HILLY

(over her shoulder)
Put Momma in a chair before she
breaks a hip.

MISSUS WALTERS

I'm not deaf yet, Hilly.

Minnie spies Aibileen in the corner and gives her a "here we
go" look as she lowers Missus Walters into a chair.

Hilly approaches Aibileen with the coat.

HILLY

Aibileen, I want you to have this
coat. It's too big for Momma now
and it's way too expensive to put
in the coat drive.

Hilly extends the coat with a smile.

HILLY (CONT'D)

All yours.

Aibileen takes the coat.

AIBILEEN

Thank you, Miss Hilly.

HILLY

Go on. Try it on.

INT. LEEFOLT HOME - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Minnie plows through the swing door and reaches for Hilly's deviled eggs.

Aibileen rushes in behind her wearing the cheetah collared coat. The sleeves are about a foot too short.

AIBILEEN

Hold on! Those are Miss Hilly's.

Aibileen pulls another plate of eggs out of the fridge.

AIBILEEN (CONT'D)

Gots to have paprika on `em.

Minnie takes an egg. It disappears in a single bite.

MINNY

Forgive me, Lord, but I'm gonna have to kill that woman.

10.

Aibileen removes the coat and lays it over a chair.

AIBILEEN

Watch yo mouth, Minny.

MINNY

Looks like a walking Christmas present with all them bows.

Aibileen shakes with silent laughter.

MINNY (CONT'D)

And, now she gone to puttin' pencil marks on the toilet paper.

AIBILEEN

Oh, law! Did she?

MINNY

Uh-hum. But, I carry paper in from my own damn house. That fool don't know.

INT. LEEFOLT HOME - LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME

Elizabeth and Hilly cackle with a group of girls as Missus Walters sits on the couch watching "Guiding Light."

Skeeter suddenly rushes through the front door.

SKEETER

Hey, girls.

GIRLS

(IN UNISON)

Hey, Skeeter.

JOLENE FRENCH, 24, approaches and hugs Skeeter.

JOLENE

Well, if it isn't Long-Haul-Skeeter. We didn't think you'd ever leave Ole Miss.

SKEETER

Well, it's supposed to take four years, Jolene.

Skeeter spins around to Hilly and Elizabeth with a sigh.

SKEETER (CONT'D)

Sorry I'm late. I had to stop by the cleaners and pick up my black dress.

Hilly and Elizabeth look at Skeeter with concern.

SKEETER (CONT'D)

What?

11.

HILLY

About supper club tonight...Honey, Stuart had to cancel.

SKEETER

Again?

Hilly places her hand on Skeeter's shoulder.

HILLY

He can't get off the rig, Skeeter. It's offshore! Stuart is a very successful oil man.

SKEETER

I'm starting to think this Stuart is a figment of your imagination.

ELIZABETH

Raleigh called his cousin down in Hattiesburg. He'll drive up.

SKEETER

The cousin with one eye?!

Elizabeth nods.

SKEETER (CONT'D)

I guess his black patch will match my dress. Just forget it.

Skeeter storms off. Hilly glares at Elizabeth.

HILLY

One eye?!

INT. LEEFOLT HOME - LIVING ROOM - LATER THE SAME DAY
Aibileen clears the dining table as bridge begins.
Hilly, Elizabeth and Skeeter sit with Jolene. Skeeter takes a
deep breath and belts out her news.

SKEETER

I got a job today... at The Jackson
Journal!

Everyone looks at Skeeter as if she just threw up on herself.
Finally, Hilly pats Skeeter on the leg.

HILLY

They'd be a fool not to hire you.
Jolene raises her glass.

JOLENE

To Skeeter...and her job. Last
stop `til marriage.
Hilly kicks Jolene under the table.
12.

SKEETER

The Miss Myrna column. Have y'all
read it?

HILLY

Well, no! But, I bet the poor
girls without any help, in South
Jackson, read it like the King
James.
Everyone laughs. Skeeter's forehead crinkles.

SKEETER

Elizabeth, would you mind if I talk
to Aibileen? To help me answer
some of the letters? Just until I
get a knack for it.
Aibileen clears dishes as if she hasn't heard a thing.
Elizabeth gets very still.

ELIZABETH

Aibileen? My Aibileen? What can't
you just get Constantine to help
you?
Skeeter looks to her lap and shakes her head.

SKEETER

Constantine...quit us.

ELIZABETH HILLY

What?! Oh, my gosh!
Skeeter nods her head sadly.

HILLY

I'm so sorry, Skeeter.

SKEETER

I really don't want to talk about
it. Okay?

The girls nod.

SKEETER (CONT'D)

Anyway...I don't know how to answer
these letters.

Elizabeth looks to Aibileen.

ELIZABETH

Well...I mean as long as it doesn't
interfere with her work.

A phone rings. Elizabeth nods to Aibileen.

INT. LEEFOLT HOME - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Aibileen rushes in the kitchen and answers the phone.

13.

AIBILEEN

Leefolt residence.

INT. FOOTE ESTATE (INTERCUT) - KITCHEN - SAME TIME

CLOSE ON:

Pink, fuzzy slippers anchoring bare, sexy legs stand on a
black and white check floor.

CELIA FOOTE (O.C.)

Ah-hem. Hello, is Elizabeth in?

Rising up a slim torso, sizeable cleavage bursts out of a
pink robe's collar.

AIBILEEN

She having bridge club right now.

May I take a message?

CELIA FOOTE, 28, peroxide blonde, stands in all her country
girl glory.

She speaks with a thick, unrefined, Southern accent, mired in
insecurity.

CELIA

Please tell her Celia Foote called
again. I'll call back tomorrow.

AIBILEEN

Yes, ma'am.

Celia nervously twists herself around in the phone cord.

CELIA

Ah-hem. Miss?

"Miss" strikes Aibileen as very odd.

CELIA (CONT'D)

I'm looking for some help at my house. You know any maids looking?

AIBILEEN

No, ma'am.

CELIA FOOTE

Okay. Celia Foote. Emerson 6-8-4.

Bye, now.

Celia hands up the phone with a frown and sips from a coca-cola bottle.

INT. LEEFOLT HOME - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Aibileen enters the living room with a coffee pot.

14.

ELIZABETH

Who was that on the phone?

AIBILEEN

Miss Celia Foote called again.

Elizabeth leans over and touches Hilly's arm.

ELIZABETH

I've never called her back, Hilly.

HILLY

She can't take a hint, can she?

JOLENE

Who's Celia Foote?

HILLY

That tacky girl Johnny married.

ELIZABETH

Girl? I heard she's twenty-eight.

JOLENE

Oh my God!

HILLY

Uh-hmm, worked concessions at a LSU game and sold him a hotdog. And, boy, he got a whole lot more.

All the girls laugh.

SKEETER

Could have been you, Hilly.

HILLY

And live thirty minutes outside of town? Anyway, I ran into her at

the beauty parlor, and she had the nerve to ask if she could help with the children's benefit.

SKEETER

Aren't we taking non-members? The benefit's gotten so big.

HILLY

Yes, but we're not telling her. Everyone laughs but Skeeter. Aibileen pours Skeeter a cup of coffee. Skeeter looks up decidedly and smiles.

SKEETER

Thank you, Aibileen. Hilly begins squirming in her seat, obviously making a point. Elizabeth leans over.

ELIZABETH

Oh, Hilly, I wish you'd just go use the bathroom.

15.

HILLY

Ah-hem. I'm fine. Missus Walters shouts out from the sofa.

MISSUS WALTERS

She's upset cause the nigra uses the guest bath, and so do we. Elizabeth turns to Aibileen.

ELIZABETH

Aibileen, go check on Mae Mobley. Aibileen disappears. Elizabeth leans into Hilly.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

Just go use mine and Raleigh's. Hilly hiss-whispers.

HILLY

If Aibileen uses the guest bathroom, I'm sure she uses yours too.

ELIZABETH

SHE DOES NOT! Aibileen turns the corner in the hall and stops.

HILLY

Wouldn't you rather them take their business outside? Skeeter sees a reflection of Aibileen listening off of a picture in the hall. Skeeter tries to change the subject.

SKEETER

Did y'all see the cover of "Life"
this week? Jackie's never looked

MORE REGAL-

HILLY

-Tell Raleigh every penny he spends
on a colored's bathroom, he'll get
back in spades when y'all sell.
It's just plain dangerous.
Everybody knows they carry
different diseases than we do. I
double.

Elizabeth takes a puff of her cigarette and fidgets with her
cards.

ELIZABETH

I can't ask Raleigh until tax
season. But, it would be nice.

HILLY

That's why I've drafted The Home
Help Sanitation Initiative.
16.

SKEETER

"The Home"...the what?!

HILLY

As a disease preventative bill that
requires every white home to have a
separate bathroom for the colored
help. I've even notified the
Surgeon General of Mississippi.
I'll pass.

Skeeter again glances at Aibileen. Their eyes meet.

SKEETER

Maybe we ought to just build you a
bathroom outside, Hilly.
The room grows eerily quiet.

HILLY

You ought not to joke about the
colored situation.
Hilly leans in toward Skeeter.

HILLY (CONT'D)

I'll do whatever it takes to
protect our town. Your lead,
Jolene.

Jolene suddenly looks to a wall clock. She jumps up and throws her cards to the table.

JOLENE

I have to skedaddle! Gotta get over to the station!

(EXCITEDLY)

Daddy's letting me do the weather tonight!

EXT. FOOTE ESTATE - BACKYARD - SAME DAY

Celia delicately prunes two rosebushes. Her long pink fingernails wrap easily around a pair of sheers. As Celia stands back to admire her work, we widen to see the Foote estate. Ancient oaks dripping in Spanish moss surround a perfectly manicured lawn. "Tara" pales in comparison. Oddly, the two rosebushes have been planted in the center of the lawn, jeopardizing the Antebellum Feng Shui.

AIBILEEN (V.O.)

Now, Miss Celia had her a man. `Bout the best lookin' man in all of Mississippi. But, no baby and no friends.

JOHNNY FOOTE, 23, Celia's ridiculously handsome husband, sneaks up behind her as he removes his jacket and tie.
17.

JOHNNY

Roses look like weeds next to you. Celia turns with a yelp. She slaps him playfully.

CELIA

Johnny, you scared the daylights out of me!
Johnny begins kissing her neck.

CELIA (CONT'D)

You're home early.
Celia pushes him back.

CELIA (CONT'D)

Johnny, I can't get any of your old friends from school to call me back.

JOHNNY

Oh, who cares, honey. We got all we need right here.
Johnny kisses her again and lowers her to the grass.

CELIA

Johnny, honestly!

JOHNNY

Doctor's orders.

Johnny starts kissing Celia's breasts. She becomes uneasy and rolls out from under him.

CELIA

I don't know what's taking us so long. I'm sorry.

Johnny brushes hair from Celia's face.

JOHNNY

Hey, we've never done it in the yard. Maybe that's the trick.

Celia seductively bites her lower lip.

CELIA

Watch my hair.

Johnny's hand slides up her thigh.

INT. LEEFOLT HOME - KITCHEN - LATER THAT DAY

Bridge over, Skeeter smokes while watching through a window as Minny arrives in Hilly's car. Skeeter blows smoke toward Hilly and Elizabeth saying good-bye.

18.

A sermon plays over an old AM radio nestled between canisters of sugar and flour.

Aibileen enters with a stack of dirty coffee cups.

SKEETER

Aibileen?

Aibileen becomes nervous at the sight of Skeeter alone.

AIBILEEN

Yes, ma'am.

SKEETER

I had hoped to ask you myself if you could help me with the "Miss Myrna" letters...

AIBILEEN

Yes, ma'am.

SKEETER

So...Would you help me?

Aibileen nods and looks out to Elizabeth on the street.

AIBILEEN

Miss Myrna gets it wrong lotta times. Be good to get it right.

SKEETER

Thank you, Aibileen. I plan on splitting the pay with you, too.
Aibileen doesn't respond. She grabs a basket of rolls.

SKEETER (CONT'D)

Listen...all that talk in there today. Hilly's talk I mean...I'm sorry you had to hear that.
Aibileen quickly turns her back to Skeeter. A gospel choir begins singing on the radio.

SKEETER (CONT'D)

Is that Preacher Green's sermon on the radio?

AIBILEEN

Yes, ma'am, it is.

SKEETER

That reminds me so much of my maid growing up.
Aibileen starts wiping down a serving tray.

AIBILEEN

Constantine and me...were in church circle together.
19.

Skeeter turns to Aibileen as she puts out her cigarette.

SKEETER

She loved me like you love Mae Mobley.

AIBILEEN

Yes, ma'am.
Skeeter moves closer to Aibileen.

SKEETER

Aibileen? How could she just quit like that?
Aibileen stops wiping and looks up to Skeeter...

AIBILEEN

Quit?

SKEETER

Yes. When I got home from school last week, Momma said she had quit. Back in March to go live with her people up in Chicago. She didn't leave me a note or anything.
Aibileen turns and resumes wiping the tray.

SKEETER (CONT'D)

Could you do that to Mae Mobley?
Aibileen slowly turns back to Skeeter.

AIBILEEN

No, ma'am. I couldn't...

SKEETER

Do you have an address for her or
anything?

Aibileen shrugs her shoulders, reeling it all back in.
Just then, Elizabeth walks into the kitchen holding papers
stapled together. She looks between Aibileen and Skeeter.

ELIZABETH

I'm sorry. Did I interrupt
something?

Skeeter and Aibileen shake their heads.

Elizabeth hands Skeeter the papers. Home Help Sanitation
Initiative is written on the cover.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

Hilly wants this put in the League
newsletter.

Skeeter nods.

20.

SKEETER

Aibileen, I'll drop by at ten
tomorrow to get started on Miss
Myrna.

Elizabeth looks at Aibileen.

ELIZABETH

Tomorrow is silver polishing day,
so y'all make it quick, okay?

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - LATER THAT DAY

Skeeter speeds down a country road lined with ancient oak
trees in a white Cadillac.

AIBILEEN (V.O.)

I knew I had said too much to Miss
Skeeter, but Constantine's story
weren't mine to tell. Some things
a girl shouldn't have to know about
her own mother.

Her frizzy hair swirls about as she passes a truck full of
cotton.

INT. CADILLAC (FANTASY SEQUENCE) - SAME TIME

Skeeter looks ahead and sees an OLDER BLACK WOMAN walking with a LITTLE BLONDE GIRL, 6. They hold hands.

The black woman smiles and waves as Skeeter passes. When Skeeter looks in her rear view mirror, they're gone.

Skeeter suddenly stops the car just short of an intersecting gravel road.

Skeeter slowly turns down the old road.

EXT. CONSTANTINE'S HOUSE - DAY

Skeeter's car pulls into the overgrown yard of an old shack with a rusted-out tin roof.

Two clapboard rooms are separated by an open breezeway. The front door is cracked open.

Skeeter gets out and walks toward Constantine's home.

INT. CONSTANTINE'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Skeeter enters to find only a small bed, dresser, table, rocking chair and a wood burning stove.

Past intruders have long since taken anything of value.

21.

As Skeeter approaches Constantine's bed, an OPOSSUM scurries out from underneath.

Skeeter screams as the opossum runs out the door. Her eyes suddenly catch something.

Lying on the bed is an OLD CORN PIPE.

Skeeter picks it up and brings it to her face. Her eyes begin to well up.

EXT. PHELAN PLANTATION - MOMENTS LATER

Skeeter pulls in front of a grand antebellum home and parks to the side of her family's graveyard.

Skeeter carries her black dress up the stairs of a covered porch.

An old black man with white hair, JAMESO, 70, tightens a porch swing.

SKEETER

Hey, Jameso.

JAMESO

Hello, Miss Eugenia.

INT. PHELAN PLANTATION - ENTRY FOYER - MOMENTS LATER

Skeeter walks through the front door.

SKEETER

Momma!

If the Smithsonian had wished to assemble the perfect antebellum home, Skeeter would be standing in it.

INT. PHELAN HOME - PARENTS' BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Skeeter enters and looks around curiously at an ARRAY OF WIGS resting atop a dresser.

SKEETER

Momma?

Skeeter's mother, CHARLOTTE BOUDREAU CANTELLE PHELAN, 50, glides into the room wearing a wig. Her floral print dress has a gazillion perfectly pressed pleats.

Charlotte turns to a mirror and adjusts an auburn-colored, 'pixie' cut.

CHARLOTTE

Is this a little too young?

SKEETER

It's a little too everything.

22.

Charlotte removes the wig with a sigh. Only now do we realize her decision to wear wigs isn't elective. Thinning hair detracts from her perfectly made up face.

Charlotte puts on a classic bouffant/flip in dark brown.

SKEETER (CONT'D)

Much better.

CHARLOTTE

Your daddy bought me this dress in '58.

SKEETER

Mom, I want to ask you about

CONSTANTINE-

CHARLOTTE

-Right after Ole Miss won the Sugar Bowl.

Charlotte unzips the dress and takes it off.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

Come on, you try it on.

SKEETER

What really happened?

Charlotte winces with pain and grasps her stomach.

CHARLOTTE

I told you...she went to live with

her people in Chicago...Now,
Skeeter, your mother is dying, and
she wants to see you in this dress.
Charlotte stands in her slip and bra holding the dress.
Skeeter begins taking off her clothes.

SKEETER

How could she just take off without
telling me?

CHARLOTTE

I told her not to write you. I
didn't want you upset in the middle
of final exams. Honey, we were
just a job to her. With them it's
all about money...Did I tell you
Fanny Peatrow got engaged? After
she got that teller job, her mother
said she was just swimming in
proposals.

SKEETER

Good for "Fat Fanny Peatrow."
She lowers the dress over Skeeter's head and zips it.
23.

CHARLOTTE

This looks precious on you! Four
years ago my daughter went off to
college, and what did she come home
with?

SKEETER CHARLOTTE

A diploma. A pretty piece of paper.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

Hilly and Elizabeth have such
lovely children.

SKEETER

They dropped out of college to
become housewives, Mother.

CHARLOTTE

If only you'd show a little
gumption, Eugenia...

SKEETER

Well, I did get a job today.

CHARLOTTE

You did?

SKEETER

Writing...for The Jackson Journal.
Charlotte plumps up the dress around Skeeter's behind.

CHARLOTTE

Great. You can write my obituary.
"Charlotte Phelan dead. Her
daughter still single."

SKEETER

Momma, would it really be so
terrible if I never met a husband?
With that, Charlotte grabs Skeeter's hand and takes her to a
love seat. They sit. This is serious.

CHARLOTTE

I need to...ask you something,
Skeeter. I read the other day
about how some girls...get
unbalanced, start thinking
these...well, unnatural thoughts.
Charlotte begins to twist the handkerchief she holds.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

Are you...do you...find men
attractive? Are you having
unnatural thoughts about...
Charlotte shuts her eyes tight.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

Girls or...or women?
24.

SKEETER

Oh my God!

CHARLOTTE

Because, this article says there's
a cure, a special root tea.
Skeeter jumps up.

SKEETER

Mother, I want to be with girls as
much as you wanna be with Jameso.

CHARLOTTE

Eugenia!
Skeeter storms out of the room.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

(SHOUTING)

Carlton's bringing Rebecca to
dinner. Try to look presentable!

INT. PHELAN PLANTATION - DINING ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

The Phelan dining room is lit solely by candles.

The Phelan's new maid, PASCAGOLUA, 40, rolls a cart of casseroles around the table.

Charlotte sits at the head of the table. She's having a bowl of broth.

Skeeter sits next to her Father, ROBERT PHELAN, 60.

Skeeter's brother, CARLTON, 25, sits next to his fiancé, REBECCA, 21. They're perfectly groomed with Hollywood good looks.

CARLTON

What the hell do you know about cleaning a house, Skeeter?

SKEETER

It's a start, Carlton.

CARLTON

(MOCKINGLY)

I thought you wanted to write books.

ROBERT

Leave your sister alone, Son. I'm proud of you, Sweetheart.

Charlotte scoops up some broth with a spoon.

25.

CHARLOTTE

Oh, the irony of it all. Givin' advice on how to keep up a home when she...

Charlotte's spoon goes in her mouth.

Pascagolua tries to scoop some sort of casserole covered in almonds onto Skeeter's plate. Skeeter stops her.

SKEETER

Oh! No, Pascagolua! You couldn't have known this...But, see, I'm allergic to almonds.

PASCAGOLUA

Sorry, Miss Eugenia.

SKEETER

Last time I had an almond, I stopped liking men.

Charlotte glares at Skeeter. Carlton lets out a chuckle.

Rebecca is mortified.

REBECCA

Oh my Lord.

SKEETER

It's okay, Rebecca. They have a special root tea now.

CHARLOTTE

You have pushed it, Young Lady!
Pascagolua scurries off. Skeeter turns to her father...

SKEETER

Daddy, what happened to Constantine?

The room grows silent. Carlton looks down to his plate.

ROBERT

Ah...well, Constantine went to live with her family. People move on, Skeeter. But I do wish she'd stayed down here with us.

SKEETER

I don't believe you.
Skeeter looks to her mother who immediately busies herself with scooping up more broth.

SKEETER (CONT'D)

Mother, did you...fire her?

CHARLOTTE

You wouldn't understand. Not until you've hired help of your own.
26.

SKEETER

She raised me!
Charlotte slaps the table and stands.

CHARLOTTE

SHE DID NOT!
Skeeter's eyes fill with tears...

SKEETER

She worked here for twenty-nine years.
Charlotte presses both hands to her stomach.

CHARLOTTE

It was a colored thing, and I've put it behind me.
Charlotte passes behind Rebecca and kisses her head.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

Excuse me, Rebecca. My daughter has upset my cancerous ulcers.

As Charlotte leaves the room, Rebecca looks at Skeeter like she's the worst person on earth.

Skeeter gets up and storms off into the entry foyer.

INT. PHELAN PLANTATION (FLASHBACK) - ENTRY FOYER - NIGHT

Skeeter, 13 and lanky, wears a party dress. Despite a tight bun, her strong-willed hair has started to frizz.

Skeeter's father and brother race down the stairs with suitcases. Carlton wears a varsity sweater.

SKEETER

Good luck down there, Carlton.

CARLTON

Have fun at the dance, Skeeter

Legs.

Robert and Carlton race outside as Charlotte enters, healthy and glowing.

CHARLOTTE

Eugenia! You've grown another inch since breakfast. Go put on a dress that fits before that boy and his daddy come pick you up.

A horn blows. Charlotte kisses Skeeter on the cheek and then looks over to CONSTANTINE, 50.

27.

Constantine stands tall. Her skin is black as night. Her eyes have a striking honey colored hue to them. She wears a white sleeping gown.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

Pray Carlton doesn't like LSU, Constantine. It's so far. It might be the last we see of him.

The horn blows again. Charlotte is out the door.

Skeeter turns to Constantine who is all smiles.

CONSTANTINE

Gone be just you and me all weekend.

EXT. PHELAN PLANTATION (FLASHBACK) - PATIO - MOMENTS LATER

Skeeter sits at a picnic table smoking a cigarette.

Constantine smokes tobacco out of a corn pipe.

SKEETER

I just couldn't tell her I didn't get asked to the dance.

CONSTANTINE

Some things we should just keep to ourselves.

Skeeter looks down to her long, bony legs.

SKEETER

I'm already taller than the boys' basketball coach. How tall are you, Constantine?

CONSTANTINE

I'm five-thirteen, so quit feeling sorry for yourself.

SKEETER

Momma was third runner up in the Miss South Carolina pageant.

CONSTANTINE

"Miss" what? Shoot, Child! You gone be "Miss Something Better."

Constantine grabs Skeeter's hand and presses her thumb firmly to her palm.

CONSTANTINE (CONT'D)

Now you listen. Your momma didn't pick her life. It pick her, and she done even know it. You gone do something big with yours. Bigger than your momma or your brother.

Constantine lets go of Skeeter's palm and wipes a tear from her face.

28.

SKEETER

What about you? What did you want to be, Constantine?

Constantine laughs.

CONSTANTINE

Oh, Child! We don't get to pick. This pick us, and that just how it is.

Tight on Skeeter's face as Constantine gives her a big hug.

INT. PHELEN PLANTATION - SKEETER'S BEDROOM - NEXT MORNING
Skeeter lies in bed staring holes into the ceiling as a rooster announces the morning.

A sudden revelation washes over her. In a flash, Skeeter is out of bed and running down the stairs.

INT. PHELAN PLANTATION - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Pascagoula tends to a skillet full of eggs next to a black and white TV resting on the counter.

CLOSE ON TELEVISION:

Jolene French attempts to deliver the weather on WLBT.

JOLENE

Sunny skies and a high of ninety-eight today with ninety-nine percent humidity. There's a slight chance of afternoon showers so y'all carry an umbrella.

Jolene pivots to camera, lowers her chin and smiles.

Skeeter runs past Pascagoula with a phone and disappears inside the pantry.

INT. HARPER AND ROW PUBLISHING - OFFICE - NEW YORK - LATER
ELAINE STEIN, 45, hard but stylish, talks on the phone in a large corner office. She lights a cigarette and swivels her chair toward the Manhattan skyline.

MISS STEIN

What gave you this idea, Miss Phelan? I'm...curious.

INT. PHELAN PLANTATION (INTERCUT) - PANTRY - SAME TIME

Skeeter sits on a huge sack of flour. A millennium's supply of can goods fills the shelves.

29.

SKEETER

I was...well, I was raised by a colored woman. I've seen how simple it can be and...well, how complex it can be, too...between the families and the help.

MISS STEIN

Continue.

SKEETER

I'd like to write something from the point of view of the help. These colored women raise white children, and then twenty years later those children become the employer. It's that irony, Miss

Stein, that we love them and they love us yet...we don't even let them use the toilet in the house.
Miss Stein's swivels her chair back around and sits up.

MISS STEIN

I'm listening.

SKEETER

Margaret Mitchell glorified the mammy figure who dedicates her whole life to a white family but no one...ever asked Mammy how she felt about it. There is both undisguised hate for white women and an inexplicable love, but nobody ever talks about it down here.

MISS STEIN

So, a side to this never before heard.

SKEETER

Yes!

Charlotte knocks on the pantry door.

CHARLOTTE (O.C.)

Skeeter, who are you talking to in there?

Skeeter covers the mouth piece and opens the door.

SKEETER

Go! Away!

Skeeter slams the door.

SKEETER (CONT'D)

So, yes, their side of the story.
Skeeter leans back against the shelves.
30.

MISS STEIN

Who was that?

SKEETER

My mother. She just dropped by to-

MISS STEIN

Look, no maid in her right mind would ever tell you the truth. That's a hell of a risk in a place like Jackson, Mississippi. I watched them try to integrate your bus station on the news. Oy! They

jammed fifty-five Negroes in a jail
 built for four.
Skeeter panics.

 SKEETER

 I already have a maid.
Skeeter can't believe what just came out of her mouth. Miss
Stein rises and sits on the edge of her desk.

 MISS STEIN

 Really? A negro maid has already
 agreed to talk to you?
Skeeter blinks hard. No turning back now.

 SKEETER

 Yes, ma'am...

 MISS STEIN

 Well...I suppose I could read what
 you come up with. The book biz
 could use a little rattling.

 SKEETER

 You'd do that?

 MISS STEIN

 I'm saying I'll let you know if
 it's even worth pursuing.

 SKEETER

 Oh, thank you, Miss Stein!

 MISS STEIN

 And for God's sake, you're a twenty-
 four-year-old educated woman. Go
 get an apartment.
She hangs up.

INT. LEEFOLT HOME - KITCHEN - LATER THAT DAY

Skeeter sits across the table from Aibileen, reading the
'Miss Myrna' letters.

 31.

Outside, winds howl, and the sky grows dark. Jolene's
forecast appears to be a bit off.

 SKEETER

 "Dear Miss Myrna, How do I remove
 the rings from my fat, slovenly
 husband's shirt collar when he is
 such a pig and sweats like one
 too..."

 AIBILEEN

Which one she want a get rid of?
Them rings or the husband?
Skeeter chuckles and shrugs her shoulders.

AIBILEEN (CONT'D)

Tell her a vinegar and Pine-Sol
soak. Then let it set in the sun a
bit.

Skeeter writes this down.

AIBILEEN (CONT'D)

Bout an hour. Let it dry.

Skeeter keeps writing. Aibileen notices something outside.
Hilly walks into the Leefolt backyard with her son, BILLY, 3,
perched on her hip.

A CONTRACTOR, 30s, follows holding a set of plans.

Skeeter turns to the open window. It's already started to
sprinkle outside.

HILLY

Build it just like the one at my
house, right against the garage.

The contractor nods. Lightning strikes, thunder cracks.

HILLY (CONT'D)

Oh, mercy!

Hilly is off and running with Billy. Skeeter seizes the
moment.

SKEETER

Aibileen, do you ever wish you
could...change things?

Aibileen turns slowly from the window.

SKEETER (CONT'D)

I mean, all that talk yesterday and
now with what Hilly's up to.

Aibileen's eyes fall to the floor.

32.

AIBILEEN

Everthing's fine.

SKEETER

My momma fired Constantine. Thank
you for telling me that.

AIBILEEN

I never tolt you that!

Aibileen jumps up as another crack of thunder sounds out.

SKEETER

Aibileen, I have an

idea...Something I want to write about...But I need your help.

Skeeter rises.

SKEETER (CONT'D)

I want to interview you...about what it is like to work as a maid.

Aibileen stops at the refrigerator, gripping the life out of its handle.

SKEETER (CONT'D)

I'd like to do a book of interviews about working for white families. Show what it's like to work for, say...Elizabeth.

Aibileen begins to perspire. She grabs the counter to steady herself, then moves toward her chair.

AIBILEEN

You know what'd happen to me if Miss Leefolt knew I was tellin' stories on her?

SKEETER

I was thinking we wouldn't tell her. The other maids will have to keep it secret, too.

AIBILEEN

Other maids?

SKEETER

I was hoping to get four or five. To really show what it's like in Jackson. To see what y'all get paid, the babies, the bathrooms, the good and the bad.

Aibileen shakes her head.

AIBILEEN

They set my cousin Shinelle's car on fire just cause she went down to the voting station.

33.

SKEETER

A book has never been written like this, Aibileen.

AIBILEEN

`Cause they's a reason. I do this with you, I might as well burn my

own house down.
Bam! The front door slams shut.

INT. LEEFOLT HOME (INTERCUT) - LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME
Soaking wet, Elizabeth and her husband, RALEIGH, 25, stand
toe to toe.

RALEIGH

I put up with the new clothes and
all the damn trips to New Orleans,
but this takes the goddamn cake!

ELIZABETH

It'll confuse Mae Mobley if she
sees Aibileen going inside. And we
can't risk her health.

KITCHEN:

Aibileen hears Mae Mobley crying, but she is frozen.

LIVING ROOM:

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

Hilly spoke to the Surgeon General!
She also said it'll add value to
our home!

RALEIGH

Great! Mae Mobley can just go to
college in that bathroom, too.

ELIZABETH

Honey, Hilly's covering the
cost...and said you can just do
William's taxes to pay her back.

RALEIGH

We don't take orders from the
Holbrooks!

INT. LEEFOLT HOME - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS
Raleigh storms in and is surprised to see Skeeter.

RALEIGH

Skeeter? How you doing?

SKEETER

Fine.

34.

RALEIGH

Fix me a sandwich, Aibileen.
Raleigh storms out as Elizabeth charges into the kitchen.

ELIZABETH

Aibileen, Mae Mobley's crying her eyes out!

Aibileen runs off. Elizabeth sees Skeeter and tries to compose herself.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

Skeeter...Hello. I'm sorry but I think it's best if you leave now.

Skeeter gathers her things.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

And...I don't think this Miss Myrna thing is gonna work out with Aibileen.

INT. HOLBROOK HOUSE - DEN - LATER THAT DAY

The storm has escalated. The Holbrook house is without power. Hilly runs around lighting candles.

Missus Walters lies on the couch while Minny fans her with a newspaper.

MISSUS WALTERS

You're making it a lot hotter flapping your arm like that.

Minny stops and begins squirming with discomfort. Missus Walters notices her looking out to the garage bathroom. Lightning strikes. Leaves blow across the yard. Hilly plops down in a chair with a candle.

HILLY

That should do it. Minny, go get me and Momma some iced tea.

Minny hesitates. She gulps.

MINNY

Uh...Miss Hilly?

HILLY

Yes.

MINNY

Never mind.

As Minny turns, Missus Walters calls out to her.

35.

MISSUS WALTERS

You go on ahead and use the guest bath, Minny. It's okay.

HILLY

Oh, for crying out loud. It's just a little rain. She can go get an

umbrella up in William's Study!

MISSUS WALTERS

I believe she was working for me
before you dragged us both here.

Minnie looks outside just as wind slams an aluminum lawn chair
against the garage bathroom.

Boom! Another crash of thunder. Large hail stones begin
falling in the yard.

MINNIE

I'm gone get your tea.

INT. HOLBROOK HOUSE - BATHROOM - SECONDS LATER

Minnie sneaks into the guest bath with a candle and shuts the
door. She carefully lowers the seat and sits. Relief
spreads across her face.

There's a knock on the door. She freezes.

HILLY (O.C.)

Minnie?

Minnie panics, staying completely quiet.

INT. HOLBROOK HOUSE (INTERCUT) - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Hilly leans into the bathroom door.

HILLY

MINNIEYYY, are you in there?

MINNIE

Yes, ma'am...

HILLY

Are you sitting down?

Minnie gets up quickly and flushes the toilet. Hilly beats on
the door.

HILLY (CONT'D)

GET OFF OF MY TOILET!!!

Outside the house, an eerie, groaning sound, much like a
freight train, intensifies.

The top of a huge tree snaps off and falls against the house,
shattering a window.

36.

Minnie crouches down and covers her head. A draft sucks the
candle's flame toward the bottom of the door.

INT. LEEFOLT HOME - MAE MOBLEY'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Aibileen sits with Mae Mobley against an interior wall,
holding a mattress on top of them and humming in her ear.

AIBILEEN (V.O.)

On top a Minny losin' her tenth
job, eighteen people died in
Jackson that day. Ten white.
Eight black.

EXT. PHELAN PLANTATION - SAME TIME

Skeeter stands in her backyard facing Jackson. Cool winds
head toward the dark, swirling horizon.
In the distance, lightning strikes.

EXT. FOOTE ESTATE - FRONT PORCH - SAME TIME

Celia leans on the porch railing, gazing helplessly as the
relentless hail storm pummels her two rosebushes.

AIBILEEN (V.O.)

God don't pay no mind to color or
class once he sets a tornado loose.
Within seconds, the rose blossoms are gone.

INT/EXT. BATHROOM/BACKYARD (INTERCUT) - THREE MONTHS LATER

Aibileen uses the newly completed bathroom Hilly has built in
the garage. The walls consist of unpainted plywood with a
small window hugging the ceiling.
Beads of sweat glisten on Aibileen's forehead under a single
bulb hanging above.

AIBILEEN (V.O.)

Soon after, that bitter seed inside
of me had sprout and was growing
fast...

Well into her second pregnancy, Elizabeth exits the house
with Mae Mobley at her side. She wears an awful, homemade
maternity dress.

ELIZABETH

Hurry, Aibileen. Mae Mobley's up,
and I'm off to the doctor.
Aibileen reaches behind and flushes the toilet. Mae Mobley
gets excited and points to the garage bathroom.

37.

MAE MOBLEY

Aibee bafroom, Momma!
Mae Mobley walks toward the bathroom and calls out.

MAE MOBLEY (CONT'D)

Aibee?

Elizabeth grabs her and forces her down on the back step.

ELIZABETH

No!

AIBILEEN

Be right there, Baby Girl.

Aibileen pulls up her panty-hose.

EXT. BUS STOP - LATER THAT AFTERNOON

Aibileen waits with YULE MAY, 45, as well as other maids and black males at a bus stop. Yule May is tall, pretty and graceful. Her hair is pulled tightly into a bun.

Skeeter walks down the sidewalk toward them. She and Aibileen catch eyes. Skeeter waves.

Yule May inches away from Aibileen. One BLACK MAN in particular looks with concern as Skeeter walks up.

SKEETER

Afternoon, Aibileen.

Aibileen nods nervously, looking at the other domestics.

SKEETER (CONT'D)

Can I talk to you?

A bus pulls up.

AIBILEEN

You got some "Miss Myrna" questions for me?

SKEETER

No.

Yule May and others board. Skeeter grabs Aibileen's arm.

SKEETER (CONT'D)

Please.

Aibileen signals to Yule May to go on ahead without her.

AIBILEEN

Yes, ma'am.

The bus pulls away.

38.

SKEETER

Please let me interview you. I know it's scary, but I really believe this has to be done. We'll be careful.

AIBILEEN

This already ain't careful, Miss Skeeter. You not knowing that is what scares me most. I'm sorry.

Skeeter hands Aibileen a piece of paper with her phone number written on it. Aibileen turns and walks off down the sidewalk.

EXT. BUS STOP - LATER THAT NIGHT

Dark outside, Aibileen approaches another, more integrated bus stop.

AIBILEEN (V.O.)

I know pretty well what happens if the white ladies found out we was writing about them. Womens, they ain't like men. Women don't beat you with a stick. Naw, they like to keep they hands clean. Got a shiny set a tools they use, sharp as witches' fingernails.

As Aibileen ambles toward a bench, TWO WHITE WOMEN in nurse uniforms push in front of her and sit.

INT. MISSISSIPPI LAW LIBRARY - NEXT MORNING

Skeeter sits at a long table surrounded by books piled high as if to provide a shield of sorts.

Lying before her, is an old, thin, onionskin booklet curling at the edges. It's titled:

"Compilation of Jim Crow Laws of the South"

Skeeter opens the booklet and begins reading.

AIBILEEN (V.O.)

Any person printing, publishing or circulating written matter urging for public acceptance of social equality between whites and negroes is subject to imprisonment.

INT. AIBILEEN'S HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Aibileen sits at a table wearing a nightgown. She carefully combs and styles her wig for work in the morning.

Her real hair is bound tightly in dozens of tightly bound nubs.

39.

The rotary wall phone rings. Aibileen hangs the wig on her chair and answers.

INT. MINNY'S HOUSE (INTERCUT) - HALLWAY - SAME TIME

Minny is hysterical.

MINNY

Oh, Aibileen! I went and did it
now!

Minny wraps a hand up in the phone cord.

MINNY (CONT'D)

Miss Hilly been tellin' everybody in
town I stole a candelabra! That's
why I can't get no job.

AIBILEEN

Everybody know you honest, Minny.

MINNY

Oh, but I got her back...I did
something awful, Aibileen.

AIBILEEN

What you did?!

EXT. HOLBROOK HOUSE (FLASHBACK) - DAY

Minny stands on Hilly's porch holding a chocolate pie.

MINNY (O.S.)

I cain't tell! I ain't tellin'
nobody! I done a terrible awful
thing to that woman. And now she
knows what I did!

Hilly answers the door and snarls at Minny. Minny presents
the pie and says "I am sorry."

Hilly waves Minny inside.

INT. MINNY'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

MINNY

She got what she deserve, Aibileen.

But, now I ain't gone never get no
work again...Leroy gone kill me.

Minny's husband, LEROY, 40, approaches behind Minny. Minny
slowly turns...

INT. AIBILEEN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Aibileen hears a loud slap and Minny's phone dropping to the
floor. Yelling and screaming follows.

40.

AIBILEEN

Minny!

She can't bear to listen and hangs up the phone. She sees

Skeeter's phone number taped to the wall.
Aibileen's breath becomes heavy. Anger wells inside her.
She picks up the phone again and begins to dial.

EXT. AIBILEEN'S HOUSE - NEXT NIGHT - DUSK

Wearing a black scarf over her hair and clutching her red satchel, Skeeter approaches a small, one-story wood structure. White paint peels, hydrangeas fill the yard. Skeeter spies an old pickup truck parked on the side of Aibileen's house, completely covered in years of dust. Skeeter checks over her shoulder several times. The porch steps creak under her big feet.
Aibileen quickly opens the door and waves her inside.

INT. AIBILEEN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Aibileen wears the same yellow dress she wore in the first scene.

SKEETER

I parked way up on State Street and caught a cab here like you asked.

AIBILEEN

Got dropped two streets over?
Skeeter nods.

SKEETER

Aibileen, I now know it's against the law for us to meet like this.
Skeeter stares Aibileen up and down. Aibileen self-consciously flattens out her dress.

SKEETER (CONT'D)

I've never seen you out of uniform before. You look nice, Aibileen.

AIBILEEN

Thank you.
Aibileen motions for Skeeter to sit on a narrow sofa behind a coffee table covered in hand-tatted lace. A tray holds a teapot, two cups that don't match and cookies resting on folded napkins.
As Aibileen pours the tea, her hand shakes.

41.

AIBILEEN (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. I've never had a white person in my house before.
Skeeter sips her tea.

SKEETER

I've never been in a colored person's home before. I think we're both doing great. This tea is really nice.

Aibileen watches as Skeeter takes a bite of the cookie.

AIBILEEN

Miss Skeeter, What if...What if you don't like what I got to say? About white peoples?

SKEETER

I...this isn't about my opinion. It doesn't matter how I feel.

AIBILEEN

You gone have to change my name. Mine, Miss Leefolt's, everbody's.

SKEETER

Everybody? So, you know other maids who might be interested?

Aibileen is quiet for a moment. She shakes her head.

AIBILEEN

It gone be hard.

SKEETER

What about Minny?

AIBILEEN

Minny got her some stories, sho nuff. But, she ain't real keen on talking to white peoples right now.

INT. AIBILEEN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER
We continue with the interview seen on page one.

SKEETER

What does it feel like, to raise a white child when your own child's at home, being...looked after by somebody else?

AIBILEEN

It feel...Uh.

Aibileen glances up to the framed picture of Treelore.

SKEETER

Is that your son?

42.

AIBILEEN

Yes, ma'am. He dead two years now.
Got run over at the lumber yard.
Lungs were crushed.

SKEETER

I'm so sorry. That's horrible.
And, Aibileen, you don't have to
call me "ma'am." Not here anyway.

Aibileen nods. Skeeter stares at her list of questions.

SKEETER (CONT'D)

Do you want to talk about the
bathroom? Or, about Elizab--Miss
Leefolt? Anything about the way
she pays you? Has she ever yelled
at you in front of Mae Mobley?

Aibileen shakes her head.

AIBILEEN

I'm sorry, I-

Aibileen covers her mouth with her hand. Skeeter becomes
disgusted with herself.

SKEETER

No, I am.

She pulls out a stack of Miss Myrna letters.

SKEETER (CONT'D)

Let's just do a couple of Miss
Myrna letters, and I'll run on...

AIBILEEN

I thought I might write my stories
down and read them to you.

SKEETER

Well, sure I guess.

AIBILEEN

It no different than writing down
my prayers.

SKEETER

You don't say your prayers aloud?

AIBILEEN

Prayer like electricity. It keep
life going. Writing it down make
it more powerful. Lot a ailing,
sick peoples in this town.

SKEETER

I'm sure.

AIBILEEN

I didn't get a chance to pray for

Treelore.

43.

AIBILEEN (CONT'D)

God took him fast `cause he didn't want to argue with me. He was just twenty-four years old. The best part of a person's life.

SKEETER

Oh, Aibileen.

AIBILEEN

But he'd like we's doing this. He always said we gone have a writer in the family one day...After my prayers last night, I got some stories down too.

Skeeter nods. Aibileen opens her notebook and reads.

AIBILEEN (CONT'D)

My first white baby to ever look after was named Alton Carrington Speers. It was 1938, and I'd just turned fourteen years old. Daddy had left us, so I dropped out a school to help momma with the bills.

INT. MOUNT ZION BAPTIST CHURCH - MORNING

A congregation of three hundred stand singing lively with the large choir.

Aibileen stands next to Yule May and is whispering in her ear. Yule suddenly leans back, shocked, shaking her head "no."

Minnie watches from two pews back. Her curiosity is peaked.

AIBILEEN (V.O.)

Alton's momma died a lung disease. I loved that baby, and he loved me. That's when I learned I could make children feel proud of theyselves.

INT. HARPER AND ROW PUBLISHING - OFFICE - NEW YORK

Miss Stein sits at her desk reading Aibileen's stories.

AIBILEEN (V.O.)

Alton used to always be asking me how come I's black...

INT. AIBILEEN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

AIBILEEN

It just ate him up, so one time I told him it cause I drank too much coffee. Oh, law, you should a seen his face.

44.

Skeeter laughs as she writes down Aibileen's story.

SKEETER

This is great. You have no idea how much I appreciate this...But I just have to ask. What changed your mind?

AIBILEEN

(WITHOUT PAUSE)

Miss Hilly Holbrook.

INT. JUNIOR LEAGUE HEADQUARTERS - MORNING

Hilly stands at a podium banging a gavel. The pleats of her navy blue sailor's number fan out like an accordion. A room full of JUNIOR LEAGUE MEMBERS sits up and quiets down. Half the girls are pregnant and most all drink TAB and are smoking. Skeeter sits in the back next to Elizabeth.

HILLY

We're running behind on our "coat drive," girls. So hurry up and clean out those closets...But our Christmas Benefit, however, is right on schedule as y'all have already filled all our baked goods raffle slots.

The girls applaud, turning to each other with praise.

HILLY (CONT'D)

Y'all think we can put a dent in the African Children's hunger this year?

More applause. Those who aren't pregnant, stand. Hilly beams. Elizabeth nudges Skeeter out of her chair.

HILLY (CONT'D)

Now for some exciting news...I wanted y'all to be the first to know...My William is seeking

election to the State Senate this
November!

Now, even the pregnant women stand. Elizabeth grabs
Skeeter's arm and pulls herself up.

HILLY (CONT'D)

He's runnin' on a platform of
health. Protecting our children.
Protecting our way of life. So, I,
with William, have drafted The Home
Health Sanitation Initiative.
This sets off a room of whispers.
45.

HILLY (CONT'D)

Skeeter, when can we expect to see
the initiative in the newsletter?
I gave it to you a month ago.
Everyone turns to Skeeter. Elizabeth panics.

ELIZABETH

I gave that to you myself!

SKEETER

I, ah...Well, I-

HILLY

Would you please stand, Skeeter?
As Skeeter rises, several women shake their heads.

SKEETER

I'll have it in there soon.
Skeeter glances at the initiative tucked in her satchel.

EXT. LEAGUE HEADQUARTERS - PARKING LOT - LATER THAT DAY
Skeeter turns a corner and sees Hilly leaning on her car.

SKEETER

Hilly? Do you need a ride?
Hilly shakes her head with little emotion.

SKEETER (CONT'D)

I'm sorry about the newsletter.
Hilly nods. A soft smile begins to form.

SKEETER (CONT'D)

With Momma being sick and-
Hilly erupts with excitement.

HILLY

He's coming! Oh, Skeeter, he's
definitely coming this time. This
Saturday night.

SKEETER

Oh, Hilly, he's cancelled twice before. Maybe it's a sign.

HILLY

Don't you dare say that!

SKEETER

You know I won't be his type.
Hilly grabs Skeeter by the shoulders.
46.

HILLY

It's your time, Skeeter. And damnit, I'm not going to let you miss this just because your mother convinced you you're not good enough for somebody like him.

INT. MINNY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - MORNING

Minny is again wearing her maid's uniform. She puts two plates of food down on the kitchen table. She sits next to her daughter, SUGAR, 15. Sugar wears a brand-spanking-new maids's uniform.

MINNY

Eat up, Girl. Miss Woodra's like to not feed ya on try-out day.
Sugar takes a bite of toast.

MINNY (CONT'D)

I still say you're too young to be waitin' on white peoples...Now, Sugar, I want you to listen to me, and you listen to me good.
Minny grabs Sugar's face and looks her right in the eyes.

MINNY (CONT'D)

These are the rules for working in a white lady's house.
Sugar jerks her face away and sticks her lip out.

MINNY (CONT'D)

Rule Number One: Don't you ever let White Lady find you sittin' on her toilet.
Sugar nods.

MINNY (CONT'D)

Number Two: You keep your nose out of White Lady's problems, and don't

cry to her with yours. White
people ain't your friends.

EXT. RURAL BUS STOP - LATER THAT MORNING

Mিনny steps off a bus and walks down an old country road.

MINNYY (V.O.)

Number Three: When you're cooking
white food, taste it with a
different spoon. They see you put
the tasting spoon back in the pot,
might as well throw it all out.
Spoon, too.

47.

EXT. FOOTE ESTATE - LATER

Mিনny approaches the Foote estate. She stops just short of
stairs leading up to the front porch.

MINNYY (V.O.)

Four:

fork, same plate every day.

Mিনny takes her first step on the stairs.

MINNYY (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Five:

people do they own spanking.

Mিনny slowly raises her hand to knock on the front door.

MINNYY (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Six:

Mিনny knocks.

MINNYY (CONT'D)

(TO HERSELF)

Number six, Minny. Number six.

The door flies open. Celia Foote answers. She's covered in
tight pink clothes. Flour covers her face and hair.

CELIA

Hey there! I'm Celia Rae Foote.

Aibileen said you'd be on time.

Mিনny looks down disapprovingly to Celia's bare feet.

CELIA (CONT'D)

Can I get you a cold Coca-Cola?

MINNYY

No, thank you. I'm Minny

Jackson... You...cooking something?

CELIA

One of those upsidedown cakes from the magazine. It ain't workin' out too good. Come on in.

INT. FOOTE ESTATE - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Mিনny enters behind Celia gawking at the flour massacre.

MINNY

What in the hell-
Mিনny catches herself.

MINNY (CONT'D)

(TO HERSELF)

Tuck it in, Minny. Tuck it in.
48.

CELIA

I guess I have some learnin' to do.

MINNY

(STUPID SMILE)

You sure do.

INT. FOOTE ESTATE - DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Mিনny and Celia enter a huge dining room. Minny gawks at a dusty mahogany table surrounded by twelve chairs.

CELIA

Johnny's momma wouldn't let me decorate a thing. If I had my way, this house would have wall to wall white carpet with gold trim and none of this old stuff.

Mিনny spies a framed battle-worn Confederate flag complete with bullet holes.

MINNY

Where you from?
Celia lowers her head in shame...

CELIA

Sugar Ditch. It's near Memphis.

MINNY

I know Sugar Ditch. My cousin live there.

Celia changes the subject.

CELIA

Let's go meet Oscar!
Celia grabs Minny's hand. Annoyed, Minny pulls it away.

INT. FOOTE ESTATE - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER
Minny stands at the base of a massive, stuffed Grizzly bear.
It clears the twelve-foot ceiling by an inch.

CELIA

Johnny's granddaddy shot him up in
Montana back in 1910 with Teddy
Roosevelt.

Celia points to fifteen guns mounted behind Oscar.

CELIA (CONT'D)

We got five bedrooms and bathrooms
here in the main house. The pool
house has two more beds and baths.
49.

MINNY

When you gone have some chillins,
start fillin' up all these beds?
Celia swallows hard. She places her hand on her stomach.

CELIA

I'm pregnant now.
Minny steps back and surveys Celia.

MINNY

Gone be eatin' for two. Double the
cookin'.
Celia slumps her shoulders as she looks around the house.

CELIA

I know it's an awful lot to do.
Five other maids have already
turned me down...Can I at least
give you some bus money?

MINNY

When you hear me say I don't wanna
clean this house?

CELIA

What? So...You'll do it?!
Before Minny can nod. Celia throws her arms around her.
Minny backs away.

MINNY

No huggin', now. No huggin'.

CELIA

I'm sorry. This is my first time

hiring a maid.

MINNY

We got to talk about some things
first. I work Sunday through
Friday.

Celia bites her pinky nail.

CELIA

You can't come at all on weekends.

MINNY

Okay. What time you want me here?

CELIA

After eight, and you have to leave
at four.

MINNY

Okay. Now what your husband say
you can pay?

Celia looks away.

50.

CELIA

Johnny doesn't know I'm bringing in
help.

MINNY

And what's Mr. Johnny gone do if he
comes home and finds a colored
woman up in his kitchen?

CELIA

It's not that I'd be fibbing. I
just want him to think I can do
this on my own...I need some help
'til I get the hang of it. I need
a maid.

MINNY

A course you do. Last one done got
shot in the head.

Mিনny sniffs the air.

MINNY (CONT'D)

Miss Celia, I think you done burned
up yo cake.

INT. FOOTE ESTATE - KITCHEN - SECONDS LATER

Celia grabs a rag off the sink and jerks the cake out of the
oven.

CELIA

Oww! Dawgonit!

She drops the burnt cake on the floor.

MINNY

You can't use no wet towel on a hot pan.

Mিনny grabs a dry towel and picks up the cake.

MINNY (CONT'D)

I'll take this burnt up cake with me so Mister Johnny don't see it.

INT. LEEFOLT HOME - MAE MOBLEY'S ROOM - MORNING

Aibileen removes Mae Mobley's wet cloth diaper on a changing table. Mae Mobley's behind is covered with inflamed diaper rash.

Aibileen shakes her head. Elizabeth enters the room.

ELIZABETH

I'm off, Aibileen. Don't forget Raleigh wants pot roast tonight.
51.

AIBILEEN

Yes, ma'am.

Aibileen's eyes narrow.

INT. AIBILEEN'S HOME - KITCHEN - LATER THAT NIGHT

Skeeter works with a typewriter now. Aibileen, more casually dressed than before, waits for Skeeter to finish typing.

AIBILEEN

I reckon I'm ready...to talk about Miss Leefolt now.

Skeeter stops typing and looks up. She nods.

AIBILEEN (CONT'D)

Baby girl don't get her diaper changed `til I get there in the morning. That's `bout ten hours she gots to sit in her mess. I be so worried about her on my day off. I always come in an hour early on Mondays.

INT. PHELAN PLANTATION - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Charlotte sits at a table sorting through mail as Skeeter enters and grabs an apple

AIBILEEN (V.O.)

Miss Leefolt pregnant again, too.
And, law, I pray this child turn
out good. It a lonely road if a
momma don't think theys child is
pretty.

Charlotte glances down disapprovingly at the dingy, huarache
shoes on Skeeter's feet. Skeeter heads for the door.

CHARLOTTE

Where are you going, Skeeter?

Skeeter turns.

SKEETER

Bible study.

CHARLOTTE

On a Saturday night?

SKEETER

Momma, God doesn't care what day of
the week it is.

Skeeter walks out the back door as Charlotte shakes her head.
52.

EXT. JOLENE FRENCH'S HOUSE - GARAGE - DAY

Hilly, Elizabeth and Jolene French stand with Hilly's
contractor. He unrolls a set of bathroom plans.
Hilly and Elizabeth look to Jolene and nod approvingly.

INT. AIBILEEN'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Skeeter's typing slows.

AIBILEEN

Miss Leefolt be spending so much
time keeping up with the society
ladies, she done forgot the child
she got now.

Just then Minny barges through the kitchen back door.

MINNY

Aibileen!

Minny stops cold in her tracks at the sight of Skeeter.

MINNY (CONT'D)

Yule May told me what y'all up to.
Aibileen nods. Minny's face hardens.

MINNY (CONT'D)

Medgar Evers live five minutes
away. They blew up his carport
last night. For talking!
Minny scowls at Skeeter.

MINNY (CONT'D)

What makes you think colored people need your help? You white. Why you care?

AIBILEEN

We all working for the same thing.

MINNY

(TO SKEETER)

Maybe you just want to get her in trouble.

Skeeter is petrified. Her face reddens.

SKEETER

I want to show her perspective...so people might understand what it's like from your side.

MINNY

Well it's a real Fourth of July picnic.

53.

MINNY (CONT'D)

It's what we dream a doing all weekend long, get back in they house to polish the silver. And we just love not getting minimum wage or Social Security.

SKEETER

I know, Minny. Maybe things might CHANGE IF-

MINNY

What law's gonna say you gotta be nice to your maid? And another thing, I don't want my children going to school with white kids. And I don't care a thing about votin.' Only thing black mens get elected to is Deacon of the church.

AIBILEEN

You don't have to do this, Minny.

MINNY

You damn right I don't! You two givin' me the heart palpitations.

Minny storms out the back door. Skeeter looks like she might get sick.

AIBILEEN

And that was a good mood.

Mিনny immediately storms back in the kitchen.

MINNY

All right...I'm gone do it. I just want to make sure you know this ain't no game we're playing here.

Skeeter nods, trembling as Minny slides a chair in the middle of the kitchen and sits.

MINNY (CONT'D)

(TO SKEETER)

Slide your chair out from under that table and face me. I want to see you square on at all times.

Still trembling, Skeeter slides her chair from the table and just sits there staring at Minny.

MINNY (CONT'D)

I's got to come up with your questions, too?!

SKEETER

Let's begin...begin with...with where you were born.

Aibileen grabs her notebook and begins writing.

54.

MINNY

Belzoni, Mississippi on my great-auntie's sofa. Next!

INT. AIBILEEN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - HOURS LATER

Mিনny talks a mile a minute. Aibileen continues writing.

AIBILEEN (V.O.)

Once Minny got to talking `bout food, she liked to never stop...

MINNY

I put the green beans in first, then I go on and get the pork chops going cause, mmm-mmm, I like my chops hot out the pan.

Just as Aibileen fills the first notebook, Skeeter hands her another from her satchel.

AIBILEEN (V.O.)

But when she got to talking about the white ladies, it took all

night...

INT. AIBILEEN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - SUNRISE

The first signs of morning sun filter into the kitchen.

MINNY

"Oh, Minny, I'm gone give you a week paid vacation." Now, I ain't had no paid vacation in my life. A week later, I come back and they'd moved to Mobile. "Miss Lazy Fingers" scared I'd find a new job before she moved...

Minny spins around to Aibileen with sudden realization...

MINNY (CONT'D)

We gots to get more maids!

Minny stands. Skeeter's eyes widen with hope.

AIBILEEN

I know, but it hard, Minny.

Mind racing, Minny flies out the door without a word.

Aibileen turns to Skeeter.

AIBILEEN (CONT'D)

You gone and done it now.

55.

INT. HARPER AND ROW PUBLISHING - OFFICE - NEW YORK - DAY

Miss Stein discusses Aibileen and Minny's stories with Skeeter on the phone.

MISS STEIN

I like this "Sarah Ross." She can kvetch but not complain too much.

INT- PHELAN PLANTATION (INTERCUT) - PANTRY

Skeeter nods rapidly as if she knows what "kvetch" means.

MISS STEIN

And this "Bertha"...she's got chutzpah. I'll give her that.

SKEETER

So...you liked it?

MISS STEIN

Eugenia, Martin Luther King just invited the country to march with him in D.C. this August. This many negroes and whites haven't worked together since "Gone with the

Wind."

SKEETER

Does this mean you'll publish it?

MISS STEIN

I never said that. My advice is to write it fast before this civil rights thing blows over. I need it by New Year's, and don't send me anything more until you have twelve maids.

SKEETER

Twelve?

MISS STEIN

At least.

INT. AIBILEEN'S KITCHEN - THAT NIGHT

Minny, Aibileen and Skeeter sit at the kitchen table.

MINNY

Aibileen and I done asked everbody we know. Thirty-one maids. Everbody too scared, think we crazy...

SKEETER

Then we might as well stop!
56.

MINNY

I got plenty a stories, Miss Skeeter. Just write`em down and invent a maid that said it. We already making up everbody's name. Make up the maids, too.
Skeeter jumps up from her chair.

SKEETER

We can't do that!
Aibileen and Minny lean back.

SKEETER (CONT'D)

I mean...I would never do that. It wouldn't be real. It's wrong.

AIBILEEN

Don't give up on us, Miss Skeeter.
Skeeter softens and sits back down.

SKEETER

I'm sorry. Thank you both for

trying.

INT. JACKSON JOURNAL NEWSPAPER - OFFICE - DAY
Skeeter delivers the "Miss Myrna" columns to the receptionist, who hands her back a paycheck.

INT. FOOTE ESTATE - KITCHEN
Celia and Minny stand at a fried chicken assembly line.

MINNY

What can you cook?

Minny dips pieces chicken in an egg wash, then drops them in a paper bag. A puff of flour rises out of the bag.

CELIA

I can cook corn pone, boil potatoes, and do grits.

Minny bursts out laughing.

CELIA (CONT'D)

We didn't have electric current where I was raised.

MINNY

Well, I reckon if there's anything you ought to know `bout cooking...

Minny holds up a can of Crisco.

57.

MINNY (CONT'D)

It's this. The most important invention since they put mayonnaise in a jar. You don't even know the things you can do with this here can.

Celia peers into the skillet as Minny spoons out a mound of Crisco.

CELIA

How pretty. Looks like frosting.

Minny rolls her eyes and hands Celia the bag of Chicken.

MINNY

Shake that.

Celia starts shaking the bag.

CELIA

This is fun!

INT. FOOTE ESTATE - KITCHEN - LATER
Minny sits down at the table with a plate of chicken. Celia

sits down next to her.

CELIA

Looks so good! I'm starved.
Aggravated, Minny stands.

MINNY

You supposed to eat in the dining
room, Miss Celia. That how it
works.

Minny grabs Celia's plate.

MINNY (CONT'D)

Here, I'll take your plate in the
dinin' room for ya. Want tea?

CELIA

I'm fine right here, Minny.
Minny sits back down with a sigh. Celia touches her arm.

CELIA (CONT'D)

I'm real grateful you're here.

MINNY

Miss Celia, you got a lot more to
be grateful for than me.
A car is heard pulling up in the driveway. Minny panics.

MINNY (CONT'D)

Mister Johnny?!

58.

CELIA

Oh, no! Hide!
Minny slides down underneath the kitchen table.

CELIA (CONT'D)

Oh...It's just the florist. Johnny
must have sent me flowers.
Minny pulls herself up off the floor. She's mad.

MINNY

Miss Celia, I ain't playin' around
no more! He gone catch me here and
shoot me dead right here on this no-
wax floor! You gots to tell him.
Ain't he wondering how the cooking
so good?

CELIA FOOTE

You're right. Maybe we ought to
burn the chicken a little.
The doorbell rings. Celia runs off to answer.

MINNY

Minnie don't burn chicken.

INT. PHELAN PLANTATION - KITCHEN - DAY

Skeeter sits with a towel draped across her shoulders. Charlotte, now in an auburn wig, squirts mounds of goo from a pink tube onto Skeeter's hair.

CHARLOTTE

This is bound to work, Sweetie. It even smells expensive.

She begins twisting Skeeter's hair into gooey spikes.

SKEETER

I feel the hope in your fingers. Skeeter resembles a papier maché starfish.

CHARLOTTE

How can you not know his last name?

SKEETER

He's William's cousin. That's all I know.

CHARLOTTE

That's just so sweet of Hilly. Charlotte takes a drag from her cigarette, then lifts up a silver machine complete with power cord and rubber hose.

SKEETER

What is that?!

59.

CHARLOTTE

The Shinolator! It cost eleven dollars. I'm a good mother. Charlotte puts a shower cap device on Skeeter's head and reads from the Shinolator manual.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

"The Miracle Straitening Cap" must remain on the head for two hours."

SKEETER

Two hours?!

Charlotte flips a switch and takes another drag. The machine groans to life. Skeeter's cap inflates.

CHARLOTTE

I'll have Pascagoula bring you a magazine.

Skeeter snatches her mother's cigarette and takes a drag.

INT. PHELAN PLANTATION - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Skeeter sits under the Shinolator buried in a magazine.
Pascagoula enters and sets down a glass of tea.

SKEETER

Thanks, Constantine. Do you think
this dress is cute?

Skeeter holds the magazine up to Pascagoula. Only now does
she realize what she's said and done.

SKEETER (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. Thanks, Pascagoula.

Pascagoula nods and starts to walk away then turns.

PASCAGOLUA

I knew Constantine. She was a
mighty fine woman.

INT. PHELEN PLANTATION - SKEETER'S BEDROOM - LATER THAT DAY
The Shinolator was a success. Skeeter's hair is straight,
silky and beautiful.

SKEETER

Holy shit.

CHARLOTTE

You've shrunk five inches. You'll
be able to wear heels tonight.

Charlotte looks down to the huarache shoes on Skeeter's feet
and rushes to the closet.

60.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

You're not leaving this house in
those awful, Mexican, man shoes.

Charlotte pulls out a dress and pair of heels.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

What time is he picking you up?

SKEETER

He's meeting me at Hilly's. Can I
take the Cadillac?

CHARLOTTE

We promised Carlton the Cadillac
tonight. So, William's cousin will
just have to come get you himself.

SKEETER

I'll take the truck.

CHARLOTTE

It's hooked to the motor grader.

SKEETER

I'll drive slow.

EXT. PHELAN PLANTATION - FIELD - LATER THAT AFTERNOON
Skeeter pulls away in a rusted 1941 Chevy farm truck with a huge motor grader attached. Charlotte runs next to the truck. Her wig is askew.

CHARLOTTE

Don't mope. Remember to smile!
Skeeter floors it. Charlotte runs faster.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

And, don't sit like some squaw
Indian. Cross! Your! Ankles!
Skeeter leaves her mother in a cloud of dust.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

(SHOUTING)

I love you!

INT. FARM TRUCK - COUNTRY ROAD - MOMENTS LATER
Chunks of mud fly off the tires. The June sun has set the truck's interior at a stubborn 115 degrees.
Skeeter has no choice but to lower her window. The Shinolator meets its match.
A mangy, STRAY CAT suddenly jumps out in the road. When towing 10,000 pounds of farm equipment, slowing down quickly isn't an option.

61.

A loud thud sounds out from the truck's grill.

INT. HOLBROOK HOUSE - PARLOR - LATER THAT NIGHT
Hilly, her husband, WILLIAM, and Skeeter's date, STUART WHITWORTH, drink high balls and eat cheese in the Holbrook parlor. Gold swag curtains hang on the windows.
Balding and pudgy, only William's family money once made him a desirable bachelor. Stuart, on the other hand, is very handsome, the "Marlboro Man" in a well-tailored suit.
Yule May (who we met earlier at church with Aibileen) now works for Hilly. She clears empty glasses.

WILLIAM

With your daddy's endorsement, I
can win that Senate seat.
Stuart feigns interest.

STUART

I'll talk to him.

Ice slams against Stuart's teeth as he downs his drink. Hilly pats William's leg then turns with concern to a grandfather clock announcing half past the hour. The front door flies open. Skeeter enters completely out of breath and sweaty. Her HAIR HAS TRIPLED IN SIZE. She waves.

SKEETER

Hey.

As Hilly races toward Skeeter, William and Stuart stand. Stuart is as tall as he is handsome.

HILLY

Boys, we'll be right back. Y'all talk about quarterbacks or something. Yule May, get Miss Skeeter a Coca Cola.

Yule May runs off. Hilly pulls Skeeter down the hall.

INT. HOLBROOK HOUSE - BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Skeeter sits on the toilet downing a Coca-Cola. Hilly twists the last of Skeeter's hair into giant rollers.

HILLY

Skeeter, you don't even have on lipstick!

Skeeter dabs her armpits.

62.

SKEETER

It was so goddamn awful. I hit a cat.

Hilly sprays Final Net.

HILLY

Well...What do you think of him?

Skeeter applies lipstick. Hilly removes the rollers.

SKEETER

He looks handsome.

Skeeter stands up and does a twirl for Hilly.

SKEETER (CONT'D)

All right, give it to me. One to ten?

Hilly sprays Skeeter with perfume and stands back.

HILLY

Seven.

SKEETER

Really?! Seven?

Hilly nods, lets out a little squeal.

HILLY

Honey, you're beautiful. Just go on out there...you're gonna do great. It's your time, Skeeter. I just know it.

Hilly hugs Skeeter.

INT. ROBERT E. LEE HOTEL - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Hilly, William, Stuart and Skeeter sit at a round table adorned with white linens, silver and fine china.

The room buzzes with Jackson's elite all trying to be noticed as a JAZZ QUARTET plays softly in a corner.

A WAITER approaches. Stuart leans into Skeeter without making eye contact.

STUART

You want a drink?

SKEETER

Just water, please.

STUART

(TO WAITER)

Double Old Kentucky straight...with a water back...Make that two backs. 63.

SKEETER

THANKS?! So...you went to Alabama?

Stuart nods. Hilly rolls her eyes.

HILLY

"Roll Tide." We still love him. Hilly pinches Stuart on the cheek.

SKEETER

Now you're in the oil business. Hilly says you're a rigsite leader.

STUART

The money's good. If that's what you really want to know.

SKEETER

That's not what I-

Skeeter and Hilly watch as Stuart's and William's eyes fix on the front of the restaurant.

Celia and Johnny have entered. Celia wears a tight green dress and the reddest lipstick ever put in a tube.

STUART

Isn't that your old boyfriend,

Hilly? Johnny Foote?
Hilly scowls.

STUART (CONT'D)

Who's his girl? Lord, she's hotter
than Delta asphalt.

Celia spots Hilly and gives a self-conscious wave.

HILLY

William! The Lieutenant Governor
just walked in.

Hilly jumps up and pulls William away. The waiter returns
with Stuart's drink and the water backs.

STUART

So, what do you do with your time?

SKEETER

I write a...a domestic maintenance
column for the Jackson Journal.

Stuart smirks, taking a huge sip of his drink.

STUART

You mean housekeeping?

Skeeter nods and grabs her water.

64.

STUART (CONT'D)

Jesus, I can't think of anything
worse than reading a cleaning
column. Except maybe writing one.

INT. ROBERT E. LEE HOTEL - LOBBY - SAME TIME

Hilly and William finish shaking hands with the Lieutenant
Governor. As he walks away, Hilly shouts out.

HILLY

We'd love your support on election
day!

Celia and Johnny walk up. Hilly stiffens.

JOHNNY

Hilly, you look lovely tonight.

HILLY

Thank you, Johnny.

JOHNNY

William, have you ever met Celia?

William steps forward and shakes Celia's hand.

WILLIAM

Nice to meet you.

Hilly grabs the crook of William's arm.

HILLY

Sweetie, we need to go order our dinners.

Celia musters up all the courage inside her.

CELIA FOOTE

Hilly, did you ever get the messages that I've been calling you?

HILLY

I did not.

CELIA FOOTE

Well, I would love to help with the benefit. I have a lovely hand if you need invitations addressed.

HILLY

"Save the dates" were mailed weeks ago...You didn't get one?

Celia shakes her head.

HILLY (CONT'D)

Mail's a lot slower way out there in the country, huh?
65.

HILLY (CONT'D)

(TO WILLIAM)

Now, come on, before they run out of Trout Almondine.

Hilly pulls William away. Johnny grabs Celia's hand.

INT. ROBERT E. LEE HOTEL - DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

STUART

Sounds like a ploy to find a husband...becoming an expert on keeping house.

SKEETER

Well, you must be a genius. You figured out my whole scheme.

Skeeter fumes as Hilly and William return and sit.

HILLY

What'd we miss?

STUART

Isn't that what you women from Ole Miss major in? Professional husband hunting?

SKEETER

I'm sorry, but were you dropped on
your head as an infant?

Stuart blinks and then smiles, somewhat impressed. Desperate
to change the subject, Hilly claps her hands.

HILLY

Who? Is? Hungry?

Skeeter stands.

SKEETER

Not me! A kiss from God couldn't
turn this `frog' into a `prince.'
Tables begin to stare.

STUART

Or you a `princess,' Sweetheart!
As Skeeter walks away, she purposefully slides her purse into
a glass of water, knocking it over into Stuart's lap.

INT. HOLBROOK HOUSE - DINING ROOM - MORNING

Hilly and William each have a section of newspaper in their
face as Yule May clears breakfast dishes. Yule May lingers
nervously.

66.

HILLY

Run on, now, Yule May. Got a big
crowd coming for Miss Leefolt's
baby shower.

YULE MAY

Miss Hilly, I would like to ask you
and Mister William something.
Hilly lowers her paper and nods. Yule May begins wrenching
her hands.

YULE MAY (CONT'D)

My twin boys finished high school,
both on the honor roll...My husband
and I have been saving for years to
send them to college.

HILLY

Okay...

Only now does William lower his paper.

YULE MAY

We are short seventy-five dollars
on one of the tuitions.
William stands up, kisses Hilly on the cheek.

WILLIAM

Well, I'm late. Gotta go.
William leaves.

HILLY

Go on...

YULE MAY

Now...We're faced with having to
choose. Which son gets to go...if
we don't find all the money.
Hilly draws in a deep breath as does Yule May.

YULE MAY (CONT'D)

Would you consider givin' us a
loan? I'll...I'll work for free
until it's paid off.

HILLY

That's not working for free, Yule
May. That's paying off a debt.

YULE MAY

Yes, ma'am.

HILLY

As a Christian, I'm going to do you
a favor.
Yule May's eyes widen as a hopeful smile forms.
67.

HILLY (CONT'D)

God doesn't give charity to those
who are well and able. You need to
come up with this money on your
own. You'll thank me one day.
Hilly raises the paper up to her face as Yule May exits.

INT. WHITE GROCERY STORE - LATER THAT MORNING

Minny and Aibileen, in uniform, push carts side by side in
the grocery store. The white shoppers are dressed casually.
Other maids in the store (all required to be in uniform while
shopping) keep quietly to themselves.
White women smile and chat with one another as they meander
down the aisles as if the black maids aren't even there.
Minny suddenly spots Celia in the produce section. She pulls
Aibileen close as they peer around the corner.

MINNY

That's her.
Aibileen's mouth drops open at the sight of Celia's shorts

and tight sweater. Celia is having trouble selecting produce.

MINNY (CONT'D)

Lord, she's trying to shop.
Celia walks up to a maid, grabs her, and pulls her to the tomatoes. The maid, clearly uncomfortable, selects a tomato, hands it to Celia, and scurries away.

CELIA

(SHOUTS OUT)

Thanks, Doll!

MINNY

Miss Celia just don't see `em. The lines. Not between us, Miss Hilly, nobody.
Aibileen just nods.

MINNY (CONT'D)

What you so quiet for? I know you got a opinion `bout all this.

AIBILEEN

You gone accuse me a philosophizing.

MINNY

I ain't afraid a no philosophy.
68.

AIBILEEN

I don't believe in lines anymore.
Lines is in our heads `cause people like Miss Hilly try to make us believe they there.
Celia squeezes a canteloupe with another scared maid.

MINNY

Oh, they there. I know. I get punished for crossing them.

EXT. BUS STOP - MOMENTS LATER

Aibileen and Minny continue their conversation while waiting with several other maids at a bus stop in front of the store.

AIBILEEN

Lotta of folk think if you talk back to your husband, you crossed a line...need to be punished.

MINNY

You know I ain't studying no line

like that.

AIBILEEN

Cause it ain't there. `Cept in
Leroy's head. Lines between black
and white ain't there either.

Minnie and Aibileen watch as Celia exits the store with her
groceries and prances toward her car.

MINNY

So, I ain't crossing no line if I
tell Miss Celia she ain't good
enough for Miss Hilly? Tell her
she ain't in Miss Hilly's league?

AIBILEEN

All I'm saying is kindness don't
have no boundaries.

Just then, MYRLIE EVERS, 30, (Medgar Evers wife) approaches
the bus stop with her three Children. SONS, 10 and 3, and a
DAUGHTER, 8.

Aibileen and Minny nod as the Evers walk past and sit on a
bench.

AIBILEEN (CONT'D)

Law, the Evers children have gotten
so big!

MINNY

(QUIETLY)

Cause they happy. Myrlie got her a
good man...And you better not try
to say they ain't no line between
her Medgar and my Leroy.

69.

AIBILEEN

No. You got me.

A bus pulls up and the doors open. Minny, Aibileen and the
other maids step aside to let the Evers family board first.

EXT. HOLBROOK HOUSE - BACK YARD - LATER THAT DAY

Aibileen has come along to aid Yule May with Elizabeth's baby
shower.

A table is set in the middle of the yard covered in white
linens and Hilly's best sliver.

Hilly's son sits on her lap. The other girls' children wear
bathing suits jumping noisily in and out of two plastic kiddie
pools.

Yule May clears cake plates while Aibileen removes crumbs with a sterling crumb scraper.

Mae Mobley wanders up to the table. Her belly almost looks distended crammed inside last year's one piece.

MAE MOBLEY

Mae Mo hungry, Momma.

Elizabeth turns to Mae Mobley but never gets up.

ELIZABETH

She's always hungry.

All the women laugh except for Skeeter.

SKEETER

You know she can hear you,
Elizabeth?

Elizabeth looks down to her plate. Aibileen sets down the scraper and kneels down to Mae Mobley.

AIBILEEN

I'm on cut you some cake, Baby.

ELIZABETH

Aibileen, we gave that scraper to
Hilly and William for their wedding
present. Chantilly!

AIBILEEN

It so pretty.

Hilly begins bouncing William Jr. on her knee.

HILLY

Aibileen, are you enjoying your new
bathroom over at Elizabeth's?

Hilly nods with a tight smile and glances to the ground at
Skeeter's red satchel.

70.

HILLY (CONT'D)

Nice to have your own, isn't it?

AIBILEEN

Yes, ma'am.

HILLY

Separate but equal. That's what
Ross Barnett says, and you can't
argue with the Governor.

SKEETER

Not in Mississippi. Birthplace of
modern day government.

Hilly narrows her eyes at Skeeter and turns to Aibileen.

HILLY

Aibileen, did you know that me and Mister Holbrook arranged for that bathroom? Sent the boys over and the equipment, too.

Hilly stays on Aibileen, waiting for her to say something. Skeeter fumes, hoping Aibileen doesn't say it.

AIBILEEN

Yes, ma'am...And I thank you.

Hilly smiles and nods.

HILLY

Well...You. Are. Welcome.

Hilly shoots Skeeter a last look. William Jr. leans into Hilly and hugs her.

AIBILEEN (V.O.)

One thing I got to say about Miss Hilly, she love her children.

Always tellin' them they smart and beautiful. Can't go more than ten minutes without givin' one a kiss.

Hilly kisses her son gently.

AIBILEEN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

And, law, do they love her back.

When she starts up on me, I just try and think a my sweet Treelore and how much he loved me. That kind a love makes me cry. Even when it going to Miss Hilly.

Hilly again glances to the red satchel, staring quizzically at the worn booklet of The Jim Crow laws sticking out.

INT. HOLBROOK HOUSE - KITCHEN - LATER THAT DAY

Yule May washes dishes as the women are heard saying their "good-byes" on the street. Skeeter slips into the kitchen.
71.

YULE MAY

May I get you something?

SKEETER

No, thanks...

(HUSHED)

Yule May, I wanted to talk to you.

Yule May turns off the sink faucet making sure Hilly is still cackling out on the street.

YULE MAY

I know what you want to ask, Miss Skeeter. Aibileen and Minny already did.

Yule May closes the kitchen door.

YULE MAY (CONT'D)

I'm trying to get my boys off to college. It's worthwhile what y'all doing, but my boys are worth more.

SKEETER

I understand.

HILLY (O.C.)

What do you "understand," Skeeter?

Skeeter and Yule May turn to find Hilly standing in the swinging door leading into the dining room.

SKEETER

Ah...Yule May was just telling me how excited she was that her boys were going to go to college.

HILLY

Is that true, Yule May?

YULE MAY

Yes, Ma'am.

Skeeter notices that Hilly is holding the booklet of Jim Crow laws in her hand.

HILLY

Did you also ask Miss Skeeter if you could borrow money?

SKEETER

Of course not, Hilly!

Hilly approaches Skeeter.

HILLY

Skeeter, I'm starting to think you're intentionally not putting my initiative in the newsletter.

Eyes down, Yule May hurries out of the kitchen.

72.

SKEETER

Not at all. I'm just so busy right now with Mom.

HILLY

Skeeter...I'm sorry about your mother. And I know you must be so

worried.

Hilly holds up the Jim Crow booklet.

HILLY (CONT'D)

But I'm worried about you. All this carrying on lately and now you're reading this stuff?

SKEETER

My dad had me get that for him.

HILLY

I mean, around your friends is one thing...But, believe it or not, there are real racists in this town! If the wrong person caught you with this...you'd be in serious trouble.

Skeeter snatches the booklet from Hilly.

SKEETER

Thanks, Hilly! And thanks for going through my things.

INT. PHELAN PLANTATION - SKEETER'S BEDROOM - NEXT DAY

Skeeter types feverishly while smoking a cigarette. Keys type

out:

Skeeter picks up Hilly's document and shakes her head. She

types:

INT. HOLBROOK HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Yule May vacuums. She pulls the sofa away from the wall to clean beneath it.

Noticing something on the floor, Yule May leans over.

She rises holding a SMALL RUBY RING. Years of dust and hair blanket the pitiful gem set in ten karat gold.

The vacuum seems to roar louder now. Yule May breathes heavily. She shoves the ring into her uniform pocket.

INT. PHELEN PLANTATION - SKEETER'S BEDROOM - THAT AFTERNOON

As Skeeter bangs away on her typewriter, Charlotte bursts into the room, stuck somewhere between panic and joy.

73.

CHARLOTTE

Skeeter!

SKEETER

What?!

CHARLOTTE

Don't panic, but there's a very tall man named Stuart here for you.

SKEETER

He's a drunken asshole, Mother. You wouldn't like him.

Charlotte pulls a sun dress out of Skeeter's closet.

CHARLOTTE

Skeeter, love and hate are two horns on the same goat. And, you need a goat!

INT. PHELAN PLANTATION - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Skeeter, Charlotte and Stuart sit in the living room.

Pascagoula serves finger sandwiches.

Stuart looks nice in khaki pants, a blue blazer and a red tie. His nose is pink from working in the sun.

No one says a word. Finally...

CHARLOTTE

Stuart, would you like a cocktail?

Skeeter shoots her mother a "What the..." look.

STUART

No, Ma'am. Little too early.

SKEETER

Ha!

Charlotte moves on.

CHARLOTTE

What's your last name, Stuart?

STUART

Whitworth.

CHARLOTTE

Hmm...Where are you from?

STUART

Natchez.

CHARLOTTE

Really? Well, I know a Whitworth from Natchez...But he's a Senator up in Washington.

74.

STUART

Yes, Ma'am. That's my daddy.

CHARLOTTE

Who is?

STUART

Senator Whitworth. That's my father.

Charlotte's jaw drops to her string of pearls.

CHARLOTTE

Really?

Stuart nods. Charlotte stands, flustered yet joyful.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

Well...tell him I said "Hello"...I'm going to go see if Pascagoula needs some help in the kitchen.

Charlotte backs away behind Stuart's chair. She points at Skeeter violently, as if to say, DON'T MESS THIS UP!

EXT. PHELAN PLANTATION - BACK YARD - MOMENTS LATER

Skeeter and Stuart stand beneath an old Cypress tree as Charlotte peeps from an upstairs window.

STUART

Look. I know it was a few weeks back, but I came here to say I'm sorry for the way I acted.

SKEETER

Who sent you? William or Hilly?

STUART

Neither. I was rude, and I've been thinking about it a lot.

SKEETER

Well, I haven't. So, just go.

STUART

Now, look. I told Hilly I wasn't ready to go out on any date. I wasn't even close to ready.

Stuart shoves his hands in his pockets like a boy.

STUART (CONT'D)

I was engaged last year. She ended it.

Skeeter refuses to pity him.

75.

STUART (CONT'D)

We'd been dating since we were

fifteen. You know how it is.

SKEETER

Actually, I don't. I've never dated anyone before.

Stuart looks up and starts laughing loudly.

STUART

Well! That must be it then.

SKEETER

What?

STUART

I've never met a woman that said exactly what she was thinking.

SKEETER

I've got plenty to say...

STUART

Would you like to...come downtown with me and have dinner? We could talk... We could listen to each other this time.

SKEETER

I can't think of anything worse.

Stuart looks down and nods.

STUART

Then, I'm sorry. That's what I came to say and...I said it.

Stuart turns and walks towards his car, self-consciously weaving his strong fingers through his hair.

Skeeter looks up to her mother's empty window and shouts out to Stuart.

SKEETER

Just give me a minute!

Stuart turns.

SKEETER (CONT'D)

Let me get my sweater.

INT. ROBERT E. LEE HOTEL - DINING ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT
Skeeter and Stuart sit closely as the same waiter as before approaches.

STUART

What do you want, Skeeter?

76.

SKEETER

I'll have a Co-cola. Lots of ice.

STUART

No, I mean in life. What do you want?

Only now does Skeeter notice the tray of champagne the waiter is holding. Stuart nods as two glasses are set before them. The waiter leaves.

SKEETER

I want to be a journalist. Maybe a novelist. Maybe both.

STUART

I like that...I've been thinking about you. You're smart, you're pretty, you're...tall!

SKEETER

Pretty?

STUART

Yes. And I read your column. Very informative.

(SMILING)

I never knew Crisco got rid of diaper rash.

Skeeter laughs and slaps him playfully.

STUART (CONT'D)

I hope you get to write something really good, Skeeter. Something you believe in.

Stuart suddenly leans over and kisses Skeeter.

EXT. DRIVE-IN-MOVIE - ONE WEEK LATER

Stuart and Skeeter make out HARD in the back of the Holbrook's convertible. Hilly and William sit in the front. Hilly peers into the rearview mirror to get a better view. Proud of herself, she pats William's leg. William slides his hand up Hilly's leg. She jerks it away.

EXT. LEEFOLT HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Aibileen sits on the kitchen floor next to a bucket. She feverishly scours grease off the baseboards. Elizabeth's car pulls up. Aibileen smiles.

AIBILEEN

Baby girl home.

77.

The car door slams shut.

ELIZABETH (O.C.)

Aibileen! My trunk's full!

Aibileen rises slowly, placing a hand on her knee. Outside, Elizabeth suddenly shouts out hysterically.

ELIZABETH (O.C.) (CONT'D)

Mae Mobley! No! Stop!

Aibileen panics. She gets up, looks out the window.

INT. LEEFOLT BACKYARD - SAME TIME

Mae Mobley sits on Aibileen's toilet in the garage. Door wide open, pants around her ankles.

MAE MOBLEY

Me and Aibiee bafroom, Momma.

Elizabeth runs over and yanks Mae Mobley off, popping her hard on the behind.

ELIZABETH

It! Is! Not!

Mae Mobley begins to cry. Aibileen watches as Elizabeth hisses and yanks Mae Mobley hard on the arm.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

This is dirty out here! You'll catch diseases.

Elizabeth punctuates with three more slaps to her legs.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

No! No! No!

INT. LEEFOLT HOME - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Aibileen sits on the couch with Mae Mobley who eats a cookie. Mae Mobley's face is red and damp.

AIBILEEN

I'm here, baby girl. Aibee's here.

Aibileen kisses her on the cheek.

AIBILEEN (CONT'D)

You is kind. You is smart. You is important...You want me to tell you one a our secret stories?

Mae Mobley nods. The phone rings. Aibileen rises.

ELIZABETH (O.C.)

I got it!

78.

Aibileen sits back down and leans into Mae Mobley.

AIBILEEN

One day this wise Martian come down

to Earth to teach us people a thing
or two.

MAE MOBLEY

Martian? How big?

AIBILEEN

Oh, he about six-two.

MAE MOBLEY

What's his name?

AIBILEEN

Martian Luther King.

MAE MOBLEY

What did he look like?

AIBILEEN

Looked just like us, nose, mouth,
hair on his head. But, sometimes
people looked at him funny and were
just downright mean to him.

MAE MOBLEY

Why Aibee? Why was they so mean?

AIBILEEN

`Cause he was green.

Elizabeth suddenly barges into the living room.

ELIZABETH

Aibileen! Come on! We have to go
help Hilly. Now! Come on!

Elizabeth runs outside. Aibileen grabs Mae Mobley.

EXT. HOLBROOK HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Elizabeth wobbles briskly up the street holding her pregnant
belly. Aibileen and Mae Mobley follow.

A stream of people walk toward them, laughing.

They round a corner to see FIFTY OLD TOILETS, in every shape
and color imaginable, littering Hilly's lawn.

Some have towering tanks with chain pulls at the top,
providing amusement to the procession of cars driving by.

The Holbrook's station wagon sits in the driveway, doors
still open with LUGGAGE tied to the roof.

Two OLD BLACK MEN struggle to remove a toilet under William's
supervision.

79.

Aibileen hides her smile. Mae Mobley points.

MAE MOBLEY

Look! Look, Aibee.

Hilly flies out of her house as a REPORTER snaps a picture of her.

HILLY

Get out of here!

Hilly pushes him in the bushes and runs up to Elizabeth.

HILLY (CONT'D)

Skeeter! She put it in the newsletter. I specifically said old coats are to be dropped at my house. Not commodes!

Hilly faces the toilets again and screams.

HILLY (CONT'D)

She put it in the newsletter when she knew we'd be down at the beach.

Hilly steps up to Aibileen and points to the old men.

HILLY (CONT'D)

Go help those boys GET THOSE TOILETS OFF MY LAWN!

INT. BUS - LATER THAT NIGHT

Aibileen rides in the back of a bus with a YOUNG BLACK MAN.

Two white men sit right behind the white driver.

The bus slows to a stop in the middle of the road.

In the distance, blue lights flash in front of a road block.

A few people gather.

DRIVER

Y'all stay put. Let me find out what's going on.

As the driver gets up, a WLBT-TV news truck whizzes by followed by a police motorcycle. Aibileen leans in the aisle and looks ahead.

The driver returns. The young black man speaks up.

YOUNG BLACK MAN

What happen up there, Mister?

DRIVER

Colored people off. White people lemme know where y'all are going.

I'll get you as close as I can.

80.

As the young black man helps Aibileen down the aisle, a white passenger taps the driver on the shoulder.

WHITE PASSENGER

What's going on?

Aibileen and the young man walk down the stairs.

DRIVER

I don't know. Some nigger got
shot. Where you headed?

The bus door shuts and the driver backs away.

EXT. STREET - MINUTES LATER

Aibileen and the young man walk along a dark street. The
sound of cicadas and sirens fill the air.

YOUNG BLACK MAN

You all right? You close to home?

AIBILEEN

I be all right. My house is seven
blocks from here.

YOUNG BLACK MAN

Want me to walk you?

AIBILEEN

Naw, thank ya. I'll be fine...Law,

I hope this ain't as bad as-

Aibileen turns to discover the young man is gone. She stares
into the darkness. Scared, she begins to run.

She cuts through a yard and trips over a hedge. She falls
hard to her knees.

Terrified, Aibileen begins to sob. She sees Minny's porch
light and pulls herself up.

INT. MINNY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - SECONDS LATER

Minny sits with all five of her children, Sugar, LEROY JR,
12, KINDRA, 10, FELICIA, 6, and BENNY, 4. They all listen
anxiously to a radio on the table.

Aibileen opens the screen door and falls to the floor.

Minny jumps up to help her. She sees blood and grass stains
streaking the knees of Aibileen's panty hose.

MINNY

Aibileen! You okay?

Aibileen nods, trying to compose herself.

81.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Almost ten years serving as the
Field Secretary for the
NAACP...Medgar Evers is dead.

Aibileen swallows hard.

MINNY

KKK shot him! Hour ago. Right in front a his children, Aibileen.

AIBILEEN

We gone pray for the Evers. We gone pray for Myrlie.

Minnie raises her fists.

MINNY

We living in hell! We trapped. Our kids is trapped.

Minnie turns to Sugar.

MINNY (CONT'D)

Take your brother and sister and go get in my bed. Stay there!

Sugar leads the kids to the back of the house.

MINNY (CONT'D)

What they gone do to us if they catch us with Miss Skeeter?

AIBILEEN

We gone be careful.

MINNY

Hitch us to a pickup and drag us behind? Shoot me front a my kids?

AIBILEEN

We ain't doing civil rights with Miss Skeeter. We just tellin' stories like they really happen.

Minnie and Aibileen grab hands and squeeze hard.

MINNY

You a fool, old woman. A fool!

Aibileen hugs Minny.

MINNY (CONT'D)

I can't believe I'm on say this... But, I actually wish Leroy was home right now.

Aibileen and Minny laugh a little through the tears.

82.

INT. HARPER AND ROW PUBLISHING - OFFICE - NEW YORK

Elaine Stein sits at her desk flipping through the New York Times. She notices something, actually laughs.

CLOSE ON PAPER:

A picture shows Hilly standing among the fifty toilets in her front yard. A caption reads:

"Come on by, have a seat!"

Home of William and Hilly Holbrook, Jackson, Mississippi.

EXT. OFFSHORE OIL RIG - DAY

Stuart, on the deck of an offshore oil rig, laughs as he looks at Hilly's picture inside a local newspaper. He writes on the back of a postcard addressed to Skeeter:
I guess you potty trained Hilly!
Much love, Stuart.

EXT. JUNIOR LEAGUE - PARKING LOT - THREE DAYS LATER

Skeeter parks and gets out of her car. She suddenly finds herself face to face with Hilly.

HILLY

You are sick. Do not speak to me.
Do not look at me. Don't say hello to my children. How long had you been planning to humiliate my family?

SKEETER

That's not it, Hilly.

HILLY

You thought you were so clever, didn't ya? But I've already installed three of those old toilets in people's garages.

SKEETER

Technically, it was a typo, Hilly.

HILLY

I intend to tell Stuart he's ruining his reputation by associating with you. Jolene's yard boy saw you hanging around the colored bus stop.

SKEETER

I wasn't hanging-
83.

HILLY

I guess your car was in the shop? Skeeter looks away.

HILLY (CONT'D)

You know as well as I do, people won't buy so much as a slice of pound cake from an organization

that harbors racial
integrationists!

Skeeter steps forward.

SKEETER

Hilly, just who is that pound cake
money being raised for, anyway?

Hilly rolls her eyes.

HILLY

"The Starving Children of Africa."

Skeeter nods and walks away. Hilly shouts out.

HILLY (CONT'D)

Just so you know, Lou Ann Templeton
has taken your seat at bridge club.

INT. FOOTE ESTATE - LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Minnie walks in, notices it's eerily quiet.

MINNY

Miss Celia?

INT. FOOTE ESTATE - BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Minnie walks into Celia's bedroom.

MINNY

Miss Celia, you in here?

Minnie hears running water and muffled crying behind the
bathroom door. She presses her ear to the door.

MINNY (CONT'D)

Hello? You sick?

Minnie twists the knob. It's locked.

CELIA (O.C.)

I'm fine. Minny. Go on home for
the day.

MINNY

You mess up your hair coloring
again? I helped you fix it last
time, got it back real pretty.
84.

Celia yells at Minny for the very first time.

CELIA (O.C.)

I said go home, Minny!

Minnie sees water creeping out from under the door. She steps
back and charges, shoulder first.

INT. FOOTE ESTATE - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

The bathroom door bursts open with splinters of wood. Minny slips in a pool of watered down blood.

Celia sits against the wall in a bloody nightgown.

MINNY

Miss Celia!

Celia aimlessly moves the blood around with a wash cloth.

CELIA

There's so much blood. Why is there so much blood this time?

Minny crawls over, peers into the toilet bowl and gags.

CELIA (CONT'D)

Please, Minny. Will you get it out? I can't look at it again.

Shaken, Minny reaches for a trash can. She puts her hand on Celia's neck and pushes it down.

MINNY

Keep your head down.

INT. FOOTE ESTATE- BEDROOM - LATER THAT DAY

Celia lies in bed while Minny presses a cool rag to her forehead. Celia stares out of her bedroom window.

CELIA'S POV:

The two rosebushes stand in the middle of the front lawn. A DOCTOR enters the room.

DOCTOR

Give her another pill if she gets too agitated. There'll be more bleeding, but don't call me unless it's heavy.

Minny nods as the doctor leaves.

CELIA

We got married because I was pregnant. But it slipped out too.
85.

MINNY

That's just God's way. Next one's gonna catch.

CELIA

Johnny wants kids now. I thought if I was real still, brought somebody in to do the house and cooking, maybe I'd hold on to this one. Oh, Minny, what's he gonna do

with me?

MINNY

He gone have to get over this. He
needs to know this takes time.

CELIA

He doesn't know about this one, or
the one before...

Minny turns to Celia, stunned by this revelation.

CELIA FOOTE

Minny, you know how to play bridge,
don't you?

Minny nods.

MINNY

Yes, ma'am. I used to help Missus
Walters practice.

INT. LEEFOLT HOME - KITCHEN - MORNING

Aibileen holds a plate of grits covered in toasted
marshmallows, strawberries and three lighted candles.

AIBILEEN

Happy Birthday! Mae Mobley two
today!

Mae Mobley laughs as Aibileen sets down the grits.

MAE MOBLEY

Mae Mobley three!

AIBILEEN

You sure is, Baby Girl. Blow'em
out `fo they run up in your grits.

Mae Mobley blows out the candles.

MAE MOBLEY

How old are you, Aibiee?

AIBILEEN

Fifty-three.

MAE MOBLEY

Do you get burfdays?

86.

Mae Mobley picks up a candle and licks off the grits.

AIBILEEN

Gone be fifty-four next week.

MAE MOBLEY

Do you have some babies?

AIBILEEN

I gots seventeen of `em.

MAE MOBLEY

Where are the babies?

AIBILEEN

They all over town.

MAE MOBLEY

Aibee...You're my real mama.

AIBILEEN

Now, you know who your momma is.

MAE MOBLEY

I'm your real baby, Aibee. Those
other ones are just pretend.

EXT. FOOTE ESTATE - FRONT YARD - EARLY MORNING

Celia digs a hole next to the two existing rosebushes. A
closed shoebox and new rosebush wait to be planted.
Celia lowers the box in the grave, covering it with dirt.

INT. FOOTE ESTATE - LIVING ROOM - LATER THAT MORNING

Celia and Minny sit at a card table holding playing cards.
Two additional hands lay face up on the table in front of two
empty chairs across from them.

Minny lays down one of her cards then looks over to Celia's
hand.

She removes a card from Celia's and lays it down. She then
points to the hand next to Celia. Celia nods.

INT. JUNIOR LEAGUE - MEETING HALL - DAY

Hilly stands at her podium, tan and ready to lead. She holds
her gavel like a weapon.

HILLY

Okay. First order of business.

We're updating our newsletter.

Hilly stares right at Skeeter who sits alone in the back.
87.

HILLY (CONT'D)

We're adding a fashion column with
all the latest trends...Your
dresses better be cute at next
week's benefit!

The women applaud and tap each other on their thighs.

HILLY (CONT'D)

Now it's time to choose a new
editor for our new modern monthly.

Skeeter braces herself as hands pop up everywhere. Jolene French stands.

JOLENE FRENCH

I nominate Hilly Holbrook.

Jolene looks back and snarls at Skeeter.

HILLY

Jolene, you're the sweetest thing!

OTHER MEMBERS

I second. I third. All in favor
of Hilly, say "Aye."

The room erupts.

MEMBERS

Aye!

Skeeter's ousting took less than ten seconds. Elizabeth secretly turns to Skeeter from a few rows ahead.

ELIZABETH

(MOUTHING)

I'm so sorry.

EXT. PHELAN PLANTATION - FRONT PORCH - MORNING

Skeeter sits alone on the porch swing in her nightgown, shifting through the Miss Myrna letters.

Charlotte steps onto the porch.

CHARLOTTE

Honey, would you like me to drop
you off at bridge club on the way
to my doctor's appointment?

SKEETER

(COVERING)

No, Ma'am. It's been cancelled.

Mae Mobley's sick or something.

88.

INT. LEEFOLT HOME - LIVING ROOM - LATER THAT DAY

Bridge is underway at the Leefolt house. Aibileen enters holding a tray of coffee cups.

Elizabeth, Hilly, Jolene and several other girls giggle as they kneel down behind furniture.

AIBILEEN

Everything okay?

Elizabeth looks back. Her belly is huge.

ELIZABETH

Shhh!

There's a knock at door.

CELIA (O.C.)

Elizabeth, it's me, Celia Foote. I was in the neighborhood and thought I'd drop by.

The girls giggle more loudly now. Celia peers into the living room window.

The bridge tables are in plain view. Celia's face grows pinker than her sweater.

CELIA (CONT'D)

I...brought you a chocolate pie...My maid, Minny, made it. Hilly's face hardens...

INT. FOOTE ESTATE - KITCHEN - DAY

Minny stands at the sink shelling peas. A distinct red cut is perched above her swollen eye.

Celia sits at the kitchen table halfway through the pie.

CELIA

They made me stand there like the vacuum man. Why, Minny?

Minny freezes, keeping her face on the peas.

MINNY

Because they know about you getting knocked up by Mister Johnny. They mad you married one a they mens. Especially since Mister Johnny and Miss Hilly had just broke up, too.

CELIA

So, Hilly probably thinks I was fooling around with Johnny while they were still going steady.

89.

MINNY

Missus Walters says Miss Hilly still sweet on Mister Johnny, too. Celia suddenly slaps her thigh with excitement.

CELIA

No wonder! They don't hate me...They hate what they think I did!

MINNY

They hate you cause they think you're white trash! And don't be

takin' pies to those women!

CELIA

Well, I'm just going to have to let Hilly know I'm not a boyfriend stealer. In fact, I'll tell her Friday night at the benefit.

Celia rises and smiles like she just cured cancer.

MINNY

Now, Miss Celia...please don't be going to that benefit.

Celia gets some ice out of the fridge.

MINNY (CONT'D)

Did you hear what I said?

Celia places the ice in a towel and approaches Minny. She looks at the cut above her eye.

MINNY (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

CELIA

That looks bad.

MINNY

I got to get my work done.

CELIA

I know you didn't fall in the tub, Minny. Let me take a look.

Celia grabs Minny's hand. Minny pulls away.

Just then Johnny pulls up in the driveway. Celia and Minny turn to the window, then spring into action.

INT. FOOTE ESTATE - BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Minny sits crouched on the lid of the guest bath toilet as Johnny chases Celia around the house. Celia giggles.

90.

JOHNNY (O.C.)

Come here, Sexy!

CELIA(O.C.)

Johnny, you are bad! Bad! Bad!

Minny looks at the ridiculous image of herself crouching on the toilet in the bathroom mirror.

She raises Celia's ice rag up to her swollen eye.

INT. AIBILEEN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NEXT AFTERNOON

Skeeter enters quietly through Aibileen's kitchen door.

She is surprised to see twenty other black women standing

solemnly around the kitchen and the living room.
Aibileen approaches with a worried look.

SKEETER

What's wrong?

AIBILEEN

Yule May in prison, Miss Skeeter.
Gone be there four years.

Mিনny shouts out across the kitchen.

MINNY

Hilly Holbrook been sent from the
devil to ruirn all our lives.

INT. HOLBROOK HOME (FLASHBACK) - LIVING ROOM - DAY
Hilly and the usual suspects play bridge at Hilly's house.
Aibileen pours coffee an earshot away.

HILLY

Please! A nigra walks in a pawn
shop with a ring of such size and
clarity. It took'em all of five
minutes to figure out where she
worked.

Hilly leads the girls' nods of acknowledgement.

HILLY (CONT'D)

I knew that girl was a thief the
day she started.

INT. AIBILEEN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER
As Minny wipes her nose with her sleeve, Skeeter approaches.

SKEETER

I'll ask daddy to get her a good
lawyer.
91.

MINNY

She had a lawyer. A white lawyer!
But Miss Hilly friends with the
judge's wife. Whole thing took two
days. Arrested on Tuesday, in the
state pen by Wednesday.

AIBILEEN

The church gone send them boys to
college. Gone pass the plate `til
they graduate...

The women part, making way as Aibileen leads Skeeter to a

seat at the kitchen table.

PEARLY, 58, sits next to Skeeter and touches her arm.

PEARLY

I'm on help with your stories.

Another WOMAN walks over.

BLACK WOMAN

I'm on help too.

Another woman speaks from the living room.

BLACK WOMAN 2

We all are.

Women of all ages slowly rise up and nod their heads. Skeeter looks around in awe.

SKEETER

Thank you. I don't know what to-

MINNY

(STERNLY)

They doing this for Yule May.

INT. AIBILEEN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Skeeter sits and writes as Pearly begins the interviews.

PEARLY

Been there thirty-eight years and Miss Margaret still makes me put my hair up in a rag. Say she know coloreds don't wash theys hair. But, I love her. She love me too.

DISSOLVE TO:

CORA, 70.

CORA

I had been workin' for Miss Jolene's mother up `til she died. Then her daughter, Miss Nancy, asked me to come work for her. Miss Nancy a real sweet lady.
92.

CORA (CONT'D)

But her momma left it in the will that I had to work for her daughter, Miss Jolene. Miss Jolene a mean woman. Mean for sport. I tried to get another job, but in everbody mind, the French family and Miss Jolene owned me.

DISSOLVE TO:

CALLIE, 60, takes off her glasses and wipes her eyes.

CALLIE

I used to take a shortcut ever day to work at Doctor Dixon's house. Cut through this farmer's lower forty to get there. One day, that farmer was waitin' on me with a gun, said he'd shoot me dead if I walk on his land again. Doctor Dixon went and paid that farmer double for two a those acres. Told him he `bout to start farmin' too. But he bought it just for me. So I could get to work easy. He did.

Skeeter closes her eyes for moment.

When she opens them she sees A VISION OF CONSTANTINE STANDING BEFORE HER.

Constantine smiles and grabs Skeeter's hand. She presses her thumb firmly in her palm. When Skeeter blinks again, the vision is gone.

Standing in place of Constantine is GRETCHEN, 26.

GRETCHEN

All these colored women have been real nice, haven't they?

SKEETER

Yes. Very nice.

GRETCHEN

Well, they hate you. You know this? Every little thing about you. But you're so dumb, you think you're doing them a favor.

Skeeter and the other maids are taken aback.

SKEETER

You don't have to do this.

GRETCHEN

You know the nicest thing a white woman's ever done for me? Gave me the heel of her bread. These women are playing a trick on you.

They'll never tell you the truth!

93.

SKEETER

You don't know what they've said.

GRETCHEN

Say it, lady, say the word you think every time one us stands in front of you. Nigger.

Aibileen crosses over to Gretchen.

AIBILEEN

That's enough, Gretchen.

GRETCHEN

You just as dumb as she is.

AIBILEEN

Get out a my house!

INT. AIBILEEN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Aibileen sits with Skeeter on the sofa reading and answering Miss Myrna letters. Aibileen is dressed very nicely. Several flower arrangements are placed around the room. An unwrapped present rests on the coffee table.

AIBILEEN

Tell her to pour vinegar in her trash cans. Then them dogs will stay away.

As Skeeter writes this down, someone walks onto Aibileen's front porch. Skeeter becomes worried. Aibileen looks to a wall clock and smiles.

About a dozen letters and cards fall into a basket under the mail slot.

Aibileen jumps up and starts sorting through the cards.

AIBILEEN (CONT'D)

Today my birthday, Miss Skeeter.

SKEETER

Well, happy birthday, Aibileen. You should have told me.

AIBILEEN

And, from all over the county, my babies find they way home.

Aibileen stops on one card in particular. She sits back down next to Skeeter.

AIBILEEN (CONT'D)

Some even from overseas. Alton Spears lives in Paris now. Married him a real pretty French girl. Got five kids, too...they's my grandbabies.

Aibileen opens the card to find a twenty dollar bill inside along with a picture of the Spears family. Aibileen reads the card aloud.

AIBILEEN (CONT'D)

I still don't drink coffee. Happy Birthday. Love Alton.

Aibileen laughs and raises her hand to her mouth. Skeeter is touched.

The doorbell rings. Aibileen jumps up and opens the door. A delivery man greets her with two more vases of flowers. Aibileen looks out to the street where a white woman gets out of her car with a huge country ham. Two little girls in matching dresses jump out behind her.

The woman sees Aibileen on the porch and waves. Aibileen waves back and smiles.

Catching it all, the moment soon grows bittersweet for Skeeter. She wipes her eye.

INT. PHELAN PLANTATION - SKEETER'S BEDROOM - 3 WEEKS LATER
Morning light shines into Skeeter's room. Stuart has returned from the rig. Fully clothed, he and Skeeter sleep on Skeeter's bed.

Charlotte shouts Skeeter's name from down the hall.

CHARLOTTE (O.C.)

Eugenia?!

Skeeter's eyes pop open. She's groggy and hasn't fully realized the company lying next to her.

SKEETER

What?!

Stuart throws his arm over Skeeter. Reality sinks in. Skeeter rolls over to find Stuart, eyes shut, smiling.

SKEETER (CONT'D)

Oh my God! Oh my God!

When Stuart tries to get up, Skeeter flattens him reaches down and pulls the covers up over his entire body.

SKEETER (CONT'D)

Don't move a muscle!

Skeeter props up on her side and faces the door making sure the covers hide that she's clothed.

Charlotte enters and heads straight for Skeeter's closet.

CHARLOTTE

Morning, Sleepy Head.

SKEETER

Morning, Mom.
Charlotte pulls out a dress and lays it on the bed, right on top of Stuart.

CHARLOTTE

I thought you could take me to the doctor this morning and then we could get some lunch afterwards.

SKEETER

Sure!
Charlotte spies a LARGE TOE sticking out of the covers. It belongs to Stuart, but she assumes it's Skeeter's.

CHARLOTTE

(looking at toe)
Or...we could...go straight to Fanny Mae's for a girl day.

SKEETER

Great! I'll get dressed.

CHARLOTTE

When did Stuart leave last night?

SKEETER

Right after you went to bed.

CHARLOTTE

Well, I hope he knows he's welcome to stay in Carlton's old room.

SKEETER

I'm not really ready for that yet.

CHARLOTTE

"Bird in the hand," Eugenia. Bird. In. The. Hand...

Charlotte exits and shuts the door.

STUART

(under the covers.)

Chirp. Chirp.

Skeeter is mortified. Stuart sits up, grinning.

SKEETER

Oh my God!
Stuart tries to kiss Skeeter. She resists.

SKEETER (CONT'D)

My breath is horrible.

STUART

So is mine.

96.

Stuart embraces Skeeter and brings his lips close to hers.

STUART (CONT'D)

I love you.

SKEETER

I love you, too.

They kiss.

EXT. STREET - DOWNTOWN JACKSON - DAY

A bank's clock shows twelve noon in downtown Jackson. It's eerily quiet, not a soul on the street...

We hear archival footage of Walter Cronkite addressing the nation.

INT. FOOTE ESTATE - LIVING ROOM - SAME DAY

Minnie stands at the top of a tall step ladder vacuuming Oscar's head.

Celia runs into the living room. Tears stream down her face. Minny turns to Celia.

Cronkite tells the nation that John F. Kennedy is dead.

Minnie's eyes roll back in her head as she starts to faint. She grabs on to Oscar's body and slides down to the floor.

EXT. HOLBROOK HOUSE - SAME DAY

Hilly sits with her son William playing on a blanket on the front lawn.

A neighbor suddenly pulls up in his car stopping in front of Hilly. He leans out and tells Hilly the tragic news.

In complete disbelief, Hilly puts her hand over her mouth.

She then grabs William, pulls him in close as if he's somehow in danger.

EXT. BUS STOP - LATER THAT DAY

Aibileen huddles with a dozen other maids in a circle.

They're all crying. Some throw their hands in the air.

INT. PHELAN PLANTATION - LIVING ROOM - THREE DAYS LATER

Skeeter and Stuart sit solemnly with the Phelan family watching Cronkite's coverage of the Kennedy funeral.

Skeeter's dad wipes tears from his eyes. Stuart checks the time and leans into Skeeter's ear.

97.

STUART

Honey, I'm sorry, but I have to get down to the coast.

Skeeter nods as Stuart kisses her.

STUART (CONT'D)

I'll be back in time for the benefit. Love you.

SKEETER

You, too.

We hear Walter Cronkite's parting thoughts on JFK.

INT. AIBILEEN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - LATER THAT NIGHT

Minny, Skeeter and Aibileen sit quietly compiling stories. Aibileen and Minny look up to Aibileen's framed picture of John F. Kennedy.

Aibileen grows anxious. She suddenly jumps out of her chair and paces around the kitchen.

SKEETER

Are you okay?

AIBILEEN

The world done gone crazy, Miss Skeeter! And I'm scared! What if folks find out what we writing? Figure out Niceville really Jackson, and figure out who who?

SKEETER

Aibileen. We've changed all the names.

Aibileen snaps.

AIBILEEN

Y'all two gone sit there and tell me you one hundred percent without a doubt sure `bout all this?!

Skeeter looks away..

MINNY

No...So I been thinking...Maybe we need us some insurance.

Skeeter look to Minny.

MINNY (CONT'D)

I told God I'd never speak of it again. But we got no choice. It's time...Time to tell you both "the terrible awful" I did to Miss Hilly. It might be the only thing

to protect us.

98.

INT. HOLBROOK HOUSE (FLASHBACK) - KITCHEN - 6 MONTHS EARLIER
We continue with the earlier flashback where Minny arrives at Hilly's with her famed chocolate pie. Hilly leads Minny into the kitchen, Missus Walters follows behind.

Hilly slices a big piece and grabs a fork. She leans against the counter and takes a big bite.

HILLY

Nobody wanted to hire a sass-
mouthing, thieving nigra, did they?

Minny stands silent as Hilly finishes in three bites.

HILLY (CONT'D)

Pie's as good as always, Minny.

MINNY

I'm glad you like it.

Hilly cuts another piece for herself.

HILLY

If...I take you back, I'll have to
cut your pay five dollars a week.

Not expecting this, Minny leans away from Hilly.

MINNY

Take me back?

Hilly takes an even bigger bite from the second slice.

HILLY

What do you put in here that makes
it taste so good?

MINNY

That good vanilla from Mexico...

Minny's eyes narrow over a forced smile.

MINNY (CONT'D)

And...something else real special.

Missus Walters grabs a plate and reaches for the pie.

MINNY (CONT'D)

No, Missus Walters. That Miss
Hilly's special pie.

HILLY

Momma can have a piece.

Hilly slides the pie a little too fast down the counter
toward Minny. Minny stops it before it falls to the floor.

HILLY (CONT'D)

Cut her one.

99.

MINNY

(IMMEDIATELY)

Eat my shit.

Hilly calmly sets her plate down on the counter.

HILLY

What did you say?

MINNY

I said eat my shit!

HILLY

Have you lost your mind?!

Minny moves toward Hilly.

MINNY

No. But you're about to,
'cause you just did.

Minny nods smugly as she looks down at Hilly's slice.

HILLY

Did what?

Missus Walters immediately gets it. She bursts out laughing so hard she has to lower herself to the floor.

MISSUS WALTERS

Well, Hilly, that's what you get, I
guess. And you didn't just eat
one. You ate two slices!

Hilly starts to hyperventilate as everything sinks in.
As Minny leaves, Hilly runs to the sink and throws up.

INT. AIBILEEN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Aibileen and Skeeter are speechless.

AIBILEEN

You trying to get yourself killed?!

MINNY

No! I never planned to tell her!
I just wanted to see her take a
bite and leave so I could be done
with her. Forever! She was never
supposed to ask me back.

Minny eyes narrow.

MINNY (CONT'D)

And, then for less pay! That got
me even madder. And, then she went
slid that pie at me. Oh lord!
That was it! I just lost control,
Aibileen...you know how I get, now.

100.

MINNY (CONT'D)

So, before I knew it, it just came on out my mouth...and I had told her what was in that pie.

Aibileen looks to Skeeter shaking her head. Minny suddenly gets misty. She wipes her eyes.

MINNY (CONT'D)

I've asked God to forgive me. But, more for what happened to poor Missus Walters. Miss Hilly threw her in that nursing home just for laughing.

AIBILEEN

(GRAVELY)

We can't put that story in the book.

SKEETER

It's too dangerous, Minny.

MINNY

We need insurance! Hilly Holbrook can't never let people know that pie story is about her.

AIBILEEN

Exactly! If people find out "The Terrible Awful" was you and Miss Hilly, then we in trouble. Trouble there ain't words for!

MINNY

Right! But don't you see? Miss Hilly gone go to her grave convincing people this book ain't about Jackson. Then we safe, insured!

Minny gets up and walks toward Aibileen.

MINNY (CONT'D)

You brought me into this, and I'm on finish it! Either put it in or pull my parts out all together.

Minny storms out of Aibileen's kitchen.

INT. HARPER ROW PUBLISHING/PANTRY (INTERCUT) - DAY
Miss Stein talks to Skeeter on the phone.

MISS STEIN

The last editor's meeting is December 17th. If you want a chance of this getting read, I need it in my hands by then.

SKEETER

But that's in a week, Miss Stein!
101.

MISS STEIN

Otherwise it goes in The Pile. You don't want it in The Pile.

SKEETER

Yes, Ma'am.

MISS STEIN

And you must get a piece in about the domestic who raised you. It'll add something personal to it.
Skeeter nods with frustration.

INT. ROBERT E. LEE HOTEL - BALLROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

The African Children's Benefit Ball is well underway. The energy and look of the two hundred attendees feel like a throwback to the women's suffrage movement. Many older women wear heavy long black skirts and jackets.

Hilly wears swathes of maroon-colored taffeta. Ruffles clutch her throat. She stands next to Jolene French and a WLBT CAMERAMAN.

Dressed to the nines, Jolene raises a microphone and looks into the camera.

JOLENE

This is Jolene French reporting from the African Children's Benefit Ball, and I'm here with League President Miss Hilly Holbrook.

HILLY

Thanks, Jolene...

Three dozen servers stand in a line. Minny and Aibileen are among them.

Tables are covered with items donated for the auction.

On the baked goods table, Minny's famed chocolate pie promises to again be a big money maker.

Celia and Johnny enter the ballroom. Celia wears a hideous, pink and silver sequined gown. As usual, Celia's breasts

command attention.

The room locks on Celia as specks of light bounce off her dress and jiggle across the ceiling.

A TITILLATED OLD HUSBAND tips his martini onto his wife's shoe.

OLD HUSBAND

(a little too loudly)

Look at the jugs on that one!

102.

Other wives dig fingernails into husbands' arms. The man's wife responds louder.

OLD WIFE

Bosoms are for bedrooms and breast-feeding. Not occasions of dignity.

Celia downs a glass of champagne and leans into Johnny.

CELIA

Do you think I might have overdressed a little? It's supposed to be formal, but this looks like a funeral.

JOHNNY

You look gorgeous.

Minnie pulls Aibileen aside and points to Celia.

MINNY

Look what she got on.

Celia grabs more champagne from a passing server.

AIBILEEN

Lord have mercy. Ladies better hold onto they husbands tonight.

Celia catches eyes with Minny. She smiles and nods quickly and then looks away, careful not to tip off Johnny of their relationship.

MINNY

(REGARDING JOHNNY)

And that's the man that don't even know he's paying me.

Skeeter enters with Stuart. She wears a long-sleeved black velvet dress and her hair is being somewhat cooperative.

AIBILEEN

There's Skeeter and that must be Stuart. He's handsome... Missus Walters?!

Missus Walters enters wearing a floor-length blue beaded

gown, circa 1943. A white orchid wilts at her clavicle.

MINNY

Hilly can throw her in a home, but
she can't keep the taxis away.

INT. ROBERT E. LEE HOTEL - BALLROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT
Celia approaches Elizabeth and Jolene who talk next to a
punch bowl. Celia is now drinking some kind of pink drink
with an umbrella sticking out of it.

CELIA

Well, hello, Elizabeth.
103.

ELIZABETH

Hi.
Elizabeth's homemade maternity ball gown resembles a velvet
potato sack cinched with red ribbon.

CELIA

Those are lovely dresses.

JOLENE

Yours too.

CELIA

Really?! I was worried I was a tad
overdressed.
Jolene reaches out and pats Celia's shoulder.

JOLENE

Oh, no. You're just perfect.
Elizabeth pulls Jolene away. Celia downs her drink.

INT. ROBERT E. LEE HOTEL - BALLROOM - LATER THAT EVENING
The guests are now seated at twenty-eight round tables.
Scores of black servers dressed in tuxedos ferry plates.
Hilly makes her way to the podium.

HILLY

Everybody enjoying their dinner?
The room claps enthusiastically.

HILLY (CONT'D)

(FLATLY)

Let's give a nice round of applause
for all the men and women that have
helped make tonight possible.
Hilly mechanically gestures toward the servers in the room.

HILLY (CONT'D)

A cause I'm sure is dear to their

hearts as well.
Skeeter shakes her head as the less inspired applause dies down. Celia waves to Minny and jumps out of her chair.

CELIA

Woo-hoo!
Johnny grabs Celia by the arm and pulls her back down. Celia reaches for Johnny's glass of wine.

JOHNNY

Honey, maybe you've had enough to drink. Try to eat your dinner.
104.

CELIA

And have my stomach poke out?!

INT. ROBERT E. LEE HOTEL - LATER THAT EVENING

As Celia looks at the prize table's bids, Johnny and Stuart lean against a bar chatting with a few other bored men. Hilly suddenly slides next to Johnny completely ignoring Stuart.

HILLY

Why, Johnny Foote. I'm surprised to see you here. Everybody knows you can't stand parties like this. Hilly squeezes the crook of his arm.

JOHNNY

Celia wouldn't have missed this for anything.

HILLY

Where is that wife of yours? Out selling hotdogs?
Johnny looks away.

HILLY (CONT'D)

Oh, you know I'm teasing you. We dated long enough where I can do that, can't I?
Johnny walks away leaving Hilly no choice but to acknowledge Stuart. She and Stuart never look each other's way.

HILLY (CONT'D)

(FLATLY)

Stuart.

STUART

(FLATTER)

Hilly.

Hilly walks away as Jolene approaches the podium.

JOLENE

I've got the list of winners!

INT. ROBERT E. LEE HOTEL - BALLROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Jolene finishes up the winners list.

JOLENE

I hope you enjoy your new set of tires, Missus Atwell. Now, on to the baked goods.

Jolene flips a page.

105.

JOLENE (CONT'D)

Oh, yum! Yum! The highest bid in baked goods goes to Minny Jackson's chocolate pie. Congratulations, Hilly Holbrook!

The room erupts in applause. Hilly now sits at a table with her family, Missus Walters, and the Leefolts.

Skeeter and Stuart sit at a table full of elderly people they don't know.

Minny clears dishes nearby. Hearing her name, she becomes very alert.

HILLY

What? I didn't bid on anything.

Minny turns to find Hilly smiling at her tightly.

HILLY (CONT'D)

Well, wasn't that sweet. Someone signed me up for that pie.

SKEETER

(TO STUART)

Oh, no.

Celia rushes up behind Hilly, her voice slurred.

CELIA

Congratulations, Hilly! I didn't know you're a fan of Minny's pies.

Hilly remains calm. Celia grabs Hilly's long sleeve.

CELIA (CONT'D)

I've wanted to talk to you all night. Minny told me why you won't be my friend. You think me and Johnny went behind your back.

HILLY

Let me go!

Hilly stands up and pulls away. A ripping sound cuts through the air.

Celia stares at Hilly's torn cuff in her hands.

STUART

Oh, God.

CELIA

I'm so sorry.

HILLY

(GRITTED TEETH)

What are you trying to do to me?

What are you and that nigra up to?

106.

Jolene announces another round of winners loudly over the microphone, forcing Celia to raise her voice.

CELIA

I don't know what you-

HILLY

-You liar! Who did you tell?!

Jolene loses her place on the list. The room grows quiet but Celia is still yelling.

CELIA

Hilly, I got pregnant after you and
Johnny broke up!

The room echoes with Celia's words. Across the room, women's noses wrinkle.

MISSUS WALTERS

Oh, shit.

HILLY

Shut up, Mother.

Stuart belts out with a laugh. Skeeter pinches his arm. Celia is mortified. Sweat beads on her forehead.

CELIA

Johnny never cheated on you...At
least, not with me.

Celia starts to breathe heavily. Her eyes start to water.

HILLY

Johnny would never-

CELIA

And I'm sorry I thought you'd be
tickled to win that pie.

HILLY

You tell that nigra if she tells

anybody, I will make her suffer.
Horrified, Skeeter catches eyes with Minny and Aibileen.
They all immediately look away.
Johnny makes his way over. Celia holds her breath, shaking
her head back and forth.

JOHNNY

Celia, what's wrong, Honey?

CELIA

Uh-oh.

Celia leans over and vomits on the fleur-de-lis print carpet.
The entire room gasps in horror.

107.

JOHNNY

Oh, shit!

Johnny tries to pull Celia back. She pushes Johnny away and
runs for the bathroom. He follows.

Hilly marches over to Aibileen who is standing nearby.

HILLY

Get that cleaned up before it
starts to smell.

AIBILEEN

Yes, ma'am.

INT. ROBERT E. LEE HOTEL - KITCHEN - LATER THAT NIGHT

Minny's daughter, Sugar, stands over a large commercial sink
filled with sudsy water, washing dishes.

Minny approaches from behind as Sugar holds court with five
other young girls.

SUGAR

That big-boobed lady Momma works
for was drunker than an Injun on
payday. Upchucked in front a
everbody!

As the girls all laugh, Minny pops Sugar hard on the back of
her head.

MINNY

Don't you never let me hear you
talking bad about the lady who puts
food in your mouth. Clothes on
your back! You hear me?

Minny storms off.

SUGAR

(TO HERSELF)

You do it all the time.

EXT. ROBERT E. LEE HOTEL - PARKING LOT - LATER THAT NIGHT
Hilly and William walk to their car. Missus Walters follows closely behind, holding Minny's pie.

HILLY

Just come on home and stay with us tonight, Mother.

MISSUS WALTERS

No thanks, I got a pie to eat.
Hilly spins around and sees the pie.
108.

HILLY

You throw that pie away right now!

MISSUS WALTERS

I spent good money on this. Won it just for you...

HILLY

You?! You signed me up?

Missus Walters steps up to Hilly.

MISSUS WALTERS

I may have trouble remembering my own name and what country I live in. But there's two things I can't seem to forget. That my own daughter threw me in a nursing home...And that she ate Minny's shit.

Missus Walters winks at Hilly and ambles to a waiting taxi cab.

INT. FOOTE ESTATE - BEDROOM - NEXT AFTERNOON

Celia lies in bed with the covers pulled over her face.
Minny enters carrying a tray of food, setting it down next to two other trays of uneaten food.

MINNY

Ain't Mister Johnny gone wonder how dinner got on the table if you laid up in bed?

Celia pulls the covers off her head and sits up a little.

CELIA

The way Hilly looked at me. Like I was trash on the road.

Celia pulls a letter out from under the covers.

CELIA (CONT'D)

She billed me for her dress. In lieu of payment, she's asked that I send two-hundred dollars to the African Children's Fund and then she banned me from all future League events.

MINNY

She don't count. Don't judge yourself by the way she see you.

CELIA

I'm not right for this kind of life, Minny. I don't need a dinner table for twelve people.

109.

CELIA (CONT'D)

I couldn't get two people over here if I begged. She called me a liar and accused me of getting her that pie. I wouldn't have thrown up if it wasn't for that! I can't do this anymore to Johnny. I'm going back to Sugar Ditch.

MINNY

You gone leave your husband cause you threw up at some party?

Celia sobs.

MINNY (CONT'D)

Lord, I reckon it's time you knew.

INT. FOOTE ESTATE - BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Celia stares at Minny, wide-eyed and disgusted.

MINNY

Miss Hilly thought you knew `bout "The Terrible Awful," that you were making fun a her. It's my fault she pounced on you. But if you leave Mister Johnny, then Miss Hilly done won the whole ball game. Then she done beat me, and she done beat you.

Celia lies there. Minny's concerned she's said too much.

CELIA

Thank you. For telling me that.

INT. ROOSEVELT HOTEL - NEW ORLEANS - ONE WEEK LATER
Stuart lies on a bed inside the Presidential Suite of the Roosevelt Hotel. He's on the phone with Skeeter.

STUART

Hey, Honey.

INT. PHELAN PLANTATION (INTERCUT) - KITCHEN - SAME TIME
Skeeter talks to Stuart. Pascagoula cooks breakfast.

SKEETER

Stuart! How are you calling me?
Aren't you on the rig?

STUART

What if I told you I have twenty-
four hours in New Orleans?
110.

STUART (CONT'D)

That I'm in the Presidential Suite
of the Roosevelt Hotel...That we
have dinner reservations in the
Blue Room tonight and lunch
tomorrow at Galatoires.
Skeeter becomes troubled...

STUART (CONT'D)

Did you hear me? I spoke to your
dad, and he's gonna have Jameso
drive you down right now.

SKEETER

Oh, Stuart.

STUART

What?

SKEETER

I have to work.

STUART

Work in the car. Jesus, Skeeter,
it's a cleaning column.

SKEETER

I have a deadline, Sweetie. You
should have asked me about this.

STUART

I'm trying to be romantic...

SKEETER

I'm sorry, Honey. I can't come.
Stuart shakes his head and hangs up the phone.

INT. FAYE BELLE'S HOME - LATER THAT NIGHT

Aibileen and Skeeter sit across from, FAYE BELLE, 101, palsied and gray skinned and hunched in a wheelchair. Aibileen grabs Faye Belle's hand stirring a sudden flash of memory. Her voice is coarse and hard to understand.

FAYE BELLE

I remember hiding with Miss Lilia in a steamer trunk while Yankee soldiers stomped through Master's house. We were both four. Eighty-five years later she died in my arms. We's were friends `til the end. Her grandson still pays my rent. Buys all my groceries too.

INT. AIBILEEN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - LATER THAT NIGHT

The manuscript sits before Aibileen, Minny and Skeeter.
111.

SKEETER

I have one more story to type, but other than that, we are done.

AIBILEEN

Law, look at all them pages. Two-hundred and sixty-six of `em.

MINNY

Now we just wait and see? Hopin' Missus Stein publish it?
Skeeter nods.

MINNY (CONT'D)

What story you got left to type?

SKEETER

Mine.

Aibileen looks at Skeeter.

AIBILEEN

If your momma won't tell you, I reckon I will.

INT. PHELAN PLANTATION - BEDROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Red-eyed, Skeeter enters Charlotte's room. A bowl rests on

the bedside table with a wet rag draped over the side. Charlotte is wig free and terribly thin. Her collarbone protrudes long and narrow, but her eyes are as sharp as ever.

CHARLOTTE

Have you been crying? You know that ages your skin, Dear.

SKEETER

Mother, I need to talk to you about Constantine.

CHARLOTTE

Oh, Eugenia. That was so long ago.

SKEETER

Well, I have to speak to her.

CHARLOTTE

Now, you look. I was good to Constantine. Oh, she talked back plenty of times, and I put up with it. But, Skeeter, she didn't give me a choice...

SKEETER

What...happened?

112.

INT. PHELAN PLANTATION (FLASHBACK) LIVING ROOM - DAY
Charlotte, much healthier, scurries around the house adjusting flower arrangements and straightening pictures.

CHARLOTTE (V.O.)

I was hosting a D.A.R. luncheon. Constantine was to do the floors that morning so they'd be dry in time.

Charlotte finds Constantine mopping the foyer very slowly. The effects of arthritis are apparent.

CHARLOTTE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Well, the floors were soaking wet when the first guest arrived.

A guest unnecessarily grabs a table for balance, making a point about the damp floor...

INT. PHELAN PLANTATION (FLASHBACK) DINING ROOM - DAY
Charlotte sits with twelve women at the dining table as Constantine pushes the casserole cart around and begins serving lunch.

As the guests sip coffee, each woman grimaces and turns to

Charlotte.

CHARLOTTE (V.O.)

Then, she burned the coffee. She had gotten so old, Skeeter.

Charlotte shoots Constantine a look. Constantine nods sorrowfully. She picks up a woman's plate and begins filling it with food from the cart very slowly.

Constantine strains to lower the plate in front of the woman. Her hands tremble.

CHARLOTTE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Her mishaps were becoming a daily occurrence, and I had had it.

The plate tilts causing peas to pour into the woman's lap.

WOMAN

Watch out!

With that, Charlotte stands up and slaps the table with her hand.

CHARLOTTE

Get a hold of yourself, Constantine!

Constantine slowly looks to Charlotte. Totally exhausted, she grips the casserole cart with both hands to steady herself.

113.

CHARLOTTE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

And that's when it happened.

Constantine wets herself.

Slowly the women begin realizing what's happening. The two women closest to Constantine gasp and quickly move away from her.

Another woman rises from the table covering her mouth with a napkin and leaves the room.

Just now realizing what has happened, Constantine looks down at her soiled dress. No one says a word. No one comes to Constantine's aid.

Constantine looks to Charlotte.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD (FLASHBACK) - MOMENTS LATER

Constantine hobbles with a cane down a gravel road still wearing her soiled dress. She turns and looks one last time at the Phelan Plantation...

CHARLOTTE

I told her she couldn't work here

anymore and to go on home.

INT. PHELAN PLANTATION - BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER
Skeeter trembles. Charlotte won't look at her.

SKEETER

How could you humiliate her like that?!

CHARLOTTE

I didn't mean to.

SKEETER

Why didn't you help her?

CHARLOTTE

I was upset. I didn't know what else to do.

SKEETER

So you just threw her away? That woman did you the biggest favor of your life. She taught me kindness and self respect and you just threw her away like a broken appliance. Charlotte starts to cry. Skeeter isn't affected.
114.

CHARLOTTE

I didn't throw her away, Skeeter. Your daddy went to her house the very next day to give her her job back. But she had already moved to Chicago. Left everything behind.

SKEETER

`Cause she didn't have anything anymore. You broke her heart!

CHARLOTTE

Please don't do this to me, Skeeter. I feel terrible. And you have to remember, they're not like us. They are different. Charlotte gets defensive.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

And you idolized her too much! You always have!

SKEETER

I needed somebody to look up to. Skeeter turns to leave.

SKEETER (CONT'D)

I have to go find her. She needs me.

CHARLOTTE

We finally found the address of her daughter in Chicago...so we sent Carlton up there to go get Constantine.

Skeeter turns back to her mother.

SKEETER

And?

CHARLOTTE

When he got there...she was dead, Eugenia. I'm so sorry, Honey.

Charlotte tries to comfort her. Skeeter rejects her mother's hand.

SKEETER

Why didn't y'all tell me all this?

CHARLOTTE

I knew you'd blame me...when it wasn't my fault. It just happened, and it was so unfortunate. I'm sorry, Eugenia.

SKEETER

When did she die? How long had she been in Chicago?

115.

Charlotte pulls the white basin closer, hugs it to her side.

CHARLOTTE

Two weeks.

Skeeter stands, never turning as she exits.

EXT. PHELAN PLANTATION - PATIO - MOMENTS LATER

Skeeter stands on the back patio crying. She slowly walks off into the yard.

AIBILEEN (V.O.)

Constantine's story finally made it in our book. But the reason she got fired did not. Miss Skeeter just couldn't put that kind a shame on her own mother.

EXT. BOOKSTORE - DOWNTOWN JACKSON - SIX MONTHS LATER

The front window of a bookstore displays many of the nation's top selling books.

A clerk sets a tiny stack of books in the far corner.

AIBILEEN (V.O.)

They printed a few thousand copies
with the worst advance Miss Stein
had ever seen.

The stack is "The Help," in hardcover. It's wrapped in pale blue. A white peace dove spreads its wing under the title.

INT. MINNY'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Mিনny stands over the stove frying chicken as Sugar enters with the day's mail. Minny snatches the mail from her and sees an envelope from Harper and Row.

Mিনny tears it open. Her eyes go wide.

AIBILEEN (V.O.)

We got four hundred dollars. Got
another four hundred when it got
printed. Divided thirteen ways
that came to sixty-one fifty-three
a person.

Mিনny hugs Sugar and runs out the screen door with her check as the chicken sizzles.

INT. AIBILEEN'S HOME - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Aibileen and Minny hug each other as they jump up and down with checks in hand.

116.

AIBILEEN (V.O.)

Mিনny got so excited she burnt up a
skillet of chicken.

EXT. FOOTE ESTATE - FRONT PORCH - DAY

Mিনny knocks on the door holding bags of groceries.

MINNY

Come on, Miss Celia! Get out a
that bed and let me in. It's
twelve noon. I did all the
shopping just like you asked.

The door slowly opens. Celia steps out onto the porch, looking beautiful, still dressed tacky.

MINNY (CONT'D)

Well, look at you, Miss Celia.

INT. FOOTE ESTATE - DINING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Celia leads Minny into the dining room. The table, set beautifully in silver and crystal, is covered with delicious looking casseroles and fried chicken.

MINNY

What's all this?

CELIA

I cooked it all by myself. I wanted to do something special. I wanted to say "thank you."

INT. FOOTE ESTATE - DINING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Celia and Minny dine, and Minny's enjoying it.

MINNY

Greens got just the right amount a hock taste to `em. That's a good pot liquor, Miss Celia. Who taught you to cook like this?

Minny winks as she dunks a piece of corn bread in the greens.

MINNY (CONT'D)

Corn bread's happy now.

Celia lays down her fork.

CELIA

Are you happy, Minny?

MINNY

Why you ask such a funny question?

117.

CELIA

Are you?

MINNY

A course I's happy. You happy too. Big house, big yard, good husband.

CELIA

You know, if I were you, I'd give it right back to him. I'd hit him over the head with a skillet and tell him to go straight to hell...

Minny starts to protest but is tired of excuses.

MINNY

Maybe I will.

Celia jumps up.

CELIA

I almost forgot the dessert.
Minnie smiles softly as Celia disappears into the kitchen.

INT. LEEFOLT HOME - LIVING ROOM - LATER THAT DAY
Aibileen irons as Elizabeth enters with shopping bags.
She races to the television and turns it on. As the tube
warms up, we hear the conclusion of a Tide commercial.
WLBT's lunchtime show, "People Will Talk," continues.
INTERCUT WITH STUDIO, LEEFOLT HOME, HILLY'S HOME, AND ALL
OTHER VIEWERS' HOMES.

INT. WLBT TELEVISION STUDIO - MOMENTS LATER
Jolene French sits on the set of Jackson's morning show. A
MALE HOST watches as the show runner counts down.

SHOW RUNNER

Five, four, three, two, one.

MALE HOST

Welcome back to "People Will Talk."
And do we have something to talk
about. Jolene has quite a book to
review.

Jolene shakes her head, visibly upset.

INT. HOLBROOK'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME
Hilly watches Jolene on television as her new maid,
ERNESTINE, pours a cup of coffee with her right hand.
118.

Ernestine's left arm is missing. The maid pickings for Hilly
have gotten slim.

HILLY

Why are you frowning, Jolene?
Hilly leans over and taps her television.

HILLY (CONT'D)

You don't look cute that way.

LEEFOULT HOUSE

MALE HOST

It's called "The Help." A new book
by an anonymous author.
Aibileen jerks her head toward the television.

MALE HOST (CONT'D)

Touching and enlightening, it's
filled with testimonials from
Mississippi's own housekeepers.

INT. FOOTE ESTATE - LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME

Mিনny watches transfixed as she and Celia eat dessert in front of the television.

CELIA

Look how cute that dress is.

MALE HOST

Takes place in the fictional town of "Niceville." The book is dedicated to C and T. If you're out there C and T, we'd love to have you on the show because Niceville sounds like Jackson, if you ask me.

The host starts laughing. Jolene snaps.

JOLENE FRENCH

It's not Jackson! It's a disgrace to the South! A disgrace to good Southern women who've spent their lives taking care of their help.

LEEFOLT HOME

Smoke rises from the shirt Aibileen is ironing. She snaps to attention, pulls the iron off the burned shirt.

MALE HOST

But did you read that ending?

JOLENE FRENCH

I know I personally treat my help like family, and every one of my friends does the same.

119.

MALE HOST

(INTO CAMERA)

Bertha, if you're listening, I have a new found respect for what you do. And, believe me, I'll be passin' on dessert at your table!

FOOTE LIVING ROOM

Mিনny walks like a zombie over to Celia and gathers her dirty plate, never taking her eyes off the television.

JOLENE FRENCH

Do not buy this book! Ladies of Jackson, do not support slander with your husband's hard earned-

Poof! Jolene disappears by way of a Seal-Lily ice cream commercial.

HILLY'S HOME

HILLY

Don't cut her off like that.

LEEFOLT HOME

ELIZABETH

What's that book called, Aibileen?

AIBILEEN

I...I wasn't paying attention.

INT. BOOKSTORE - LATER THAT DAY

Stacks of "The Help" rest on tables in the store.

Elizabeth enters, pick up two copies and pulls them close to her body.

She races to the register like a teen buying a Playboy.

TIME LAPSE PHOTOGRAPHY

Back at the table of books, we see in rapid succession the books quickly disappearing by the hands of Jacksonians.

INT - AIBILEEN'S HOME - KITCHEN - THAT NIGHT

Aibileen, Skeeter and Minny sit at the table. Aibileen's phone rings off the wall, but she won't answer.

SKEETER

I knew nothing about it. Miss Stein's P.R. Department called the station directly.
120.

AIBILEEN

Ever maid callin' to say they white lady's gone and bought the book. They so scared.

MINNY

`One-arm-Earnestine' said Miss Leefolt brought a copy over to Miss Hilly in less than a hour. She better read it quick and start the "this ain't Jackson crusade."

SKEETER

Don't count on it. In her one year at Ole Miss she never cracked a book.

MINNY

Oh, she gone read it. Especially
after that man made such a stink on
the tee-vee. She gone read it.

INT. LEEFOLT HOME/HOLBROOK HOME (INTERCUT) - DAY
Elizabeth and Hilly read the book aloud over the phone with
each other.
They stop and nod with speculation.

INT. BUS - DAY
A bus is filled with domestics en route to work. Everyone is
either reading the book or having it read to them.

INT. NURSING HOME - NIGHT
Missus Walters reads to a group of women in the home.

INT. PHELAN HOME BEDROOM - NIGHT
Charlotte lies in bed reading the book next to Robert, who is
asleep.
As she turns a page, her face reveals a dawning realization.
Troubled, she starts to wake Robert but doesn't.
Charlotte trembles as she brings the book in close to her
chest.
She slides down to her pillow and stares at the ceiling.

EXT. PHELAN PLANTATION - PORCH - DUSK
Skeeter sits on the swing with Stuart who's just arrived from
the rig, still wearing his dingy work clothes.
121.

STUART

That month felt like a year. I
missed you so much.

SKEETER

Me, too.

STUART

Skeeter, I told Daddy I'm not going
back on the rig.
Stuart nonchalantly pulls out a ring from his front pocket
and places it in Skeeter's lap.
A huge diamond is surrounded by twelve small sapphires.
Skeeter's smile quickly fades as she raises the ring.

SKEETER

Stuart...I have to tell you

something.

STUART

How about "yes?!" I had this with me down in New Orleans, you know. Skeeter touches Stuart's face.

SKEETER

I'm serious...and...you have to promise not to tell anyone.

STUART

Hang on. Did you say `yes'?

SKEETER

Yes.

Stuart hugs Skeeter. She pulls back.

SKEETER (CONT'D)

But listen. Can I have your word? Skeeter has again ruined Stuart's big moment.

STUART

Sure. You have my word.

EXT. PHELAN PLANTATION - PORCH - MOMENTS LATER

Stuart storms off the porch, dumbfounded. Finally.

STUART

This is what you've been writing for the last twelve months?! What happened to the cleaning column?

SKEETER

I did both.

122.

Skeeter approaches Stuart.

STUART

So, the talk in town? I said they were dead wrong. Told them you were too smart to get mixed up in anything like that.

Skeeter reaches to calm him. He pulls away.

STUART (CONT'D)

That joke you played on Hilly with the toilets. Hell, that's funny. But this? I don't understand why you did this...why you even care.

SKEETER

What?

STUART

Things are fine around here. Why stir up trouble?

SKEETER

I'm not stirring up trouble, Stuart. Trouble's already here.

STUART

I guess it is.

Skeeter grabs his arm.

SKEETER

I had to tell you. You needed to know.

Stuart shakes his head and pulls away...

STUART

I guess I don't really know you, Skeeter. And I can't marry somebody I don't know.

Stuart looks down at the ring.

STUART (CONT'D)

That was my grandmother's.

Skeeter hands the ring back. Stuart shoves it in his pocket.

STUART (CONT'D)

Don't worry. I won't tell anyone.

SKEETER

Just leave.

INT. PHELAN PLANTATION - BEDROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Charlotte sits in bed next to Robert who is fast asleep. She hears a door closing outside.

123.

CHARLOTTE

Skeeter?! Come in here, please.

After a few moments, Skeeter enters.

SKEETER

You okay? Can I get you anything?

CHARLOTTE

Come here, Eugenia. I want to tell you something.

SKEETER

Me, too.

CHARLOTTE

You go first.

SKEETER

Stuart proposed.

CHARLOTTE

Finally!

SKEETER

You knew?

CHARLOTTE

Of course. He had to ask Daddy for
your hand.

She lifts Skeeter's ring hand. Seeing her bare finger,
Charlotte's smile fades. Skeeter prepares for the worst.

SKEETER

Just say it.

CHARLOTTE

What did you do?!

SKEETER

Nothing!

Skeeter stands to walk away.

CHARLOTTE

Young lady, I'm talking to you!
Skeeter sits back down...

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

Stuart'll come around. It's a funny
dance.

(points to Robert)

Took this one a year. Anyway, my
news. After a long talk with your
daddy, I've made a decision. My
health's been on the uptick these
past few weeks. And I know the
doctor says it's some kind of last

STRENGTH NONSENSE-

124.

Charlotte starts coughing. Skeeter hands her a tissue.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

But, as I said, I made a decision.
I have decided not to die.

SKEETER

Oh, Momma.

Charlotte slaps her palms as if throwing the cancer away.

CHARLOTTE

Too late. I tried calling Fanny
Mae's so I could make your hair
appointments for the next twenty
years, but they wouldn't allow it.

Charlotte raises Skeeter's ring finger.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

I certainly can't leave you now.

Skeeter laughs and hugs her mother. Robert never stirs.

EXT. GROCERY STORE - PARKING LOT - DAY

Hilly drives in front of Jitney Jingle grocery store. She wears a scarf on her head and big sunglasses. One-armed Ernestine rides in the passenger seat.

Hilly slows in front of the store's big glass entrance. She hurriedly waves Ernestine out of the car.

AIBILEEN (V.O.)

The voters of Hinds County had
spoke. Mister Holbrook wasn't gone
have no political career.

One-Arm Ernestine races to the storefront and removes William's campaign poster taped to the window.

INT. HOLBROOK HOUSE - BEDROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Hilly reads the book in bed. William is fast asleep. Suddenly, her eyes widen, her breath becomes heavy. She slowly turns a page and freezes. Her face turns white. Hilly balls both fists, looks to the ceiling and screams louder than humanly possible.

THE SCREAM CONTINUES OVER:

INT. SKEETER'S BEDROOM - SAME TIME

Skeeter lies in bed sleeping. Her eyes pop open.

125.

INT. AIBILEEN'S BEDROOM - SAME TIME

Aibileen lies in bed sleeping. Her eyes pop open.

INT. MINNY'S BEDROOM - NEXT MORNING

Minny lies in bed sleeping. Her eyes pop open. But, this time, Hilly's scream fades as knocks at the door grow louder. Knocking that has actually stirred Minny awake.

Sugar and Kindra enter, jumping in bed with Minny.

SUGAR

Momma, there's a white man at our
door!

MAN (O.C.)

Minny Jackson! Are you in there?!

Minny covers the girls with a blanket. She puts on a robe and

grabs a bat from behind the door.

MAN (O.C.) (CONT'D)

I can hear you. Open the door.

INT. MINNY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Mিনny approaches the door.

MINNY

Who there?

MAN

Johnny Foote. Minny Jackson, I
want to talk to you. Open up.

Mিনny slowly opens the door. Johnny is all smiles.

JOHNNY

Finally, I meet Minny Jackson...

As Johnny enters, Minny raises the bat and swings. Johnny
turns and stops the bat with his hand.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

What the hell are you doin'?!

Mিনny lets go of the bat and cowers on the floor, raises her
hands in front of her.

MINNY

Please don't hurt me! My babies
are in the house.

Johnny drops the bat and pulls Minny up from the floor.

JOHNNY

Calm down, girl. I'm not here to
get you.

126.

He suddenly throws his arms around her and squeezes hard.

INT. MINNY'S KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Johnny and Minny sit at her kitchen table.

JOHNNY

When I finally confronted Celia
about you, she told me about the
baby. All of them. You saved her
life.

MINNY

I don't know about that.

JOHNNY

Well, I know the day you came to
our house, she started getting
better. And I'm not just talking

about the cookin' either.

MINNY

You knew I was there?

JOHNNY

Fried chicken and okra on the first night? Y'all should have at least put corn pone on the table.

MINNY

I couldn't make you eat anymore corn pone, Mister Johnny.

JOHNNY

Next morning, I snuck back up to the house, peeked in the window, and there you were. Given ol' Oscar a wipe down.

Mিনny smiles for the first time.

MINNY

So I ain't losing my job?

JOHNNY

You have a job with us for the rest of your life, if you want it.

INT. LEEFOLT HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Bridge is underway at the Leefolt house with the usual suspects, except Skeeter. LOU ANN TEMPLETON has taken her place.

Aibileen nervously pours coffee.

JOLENE FRENCH

I heard that Betty character might be Charlene.

127.

HILLY

It's not Jackson, and that book is garbage. I bet the whole thing's made up by some nigra.

Aibileen begins pouring coffee into Hilly's cup.

LOU ANN TEMPLETON

And, Jolene, didn't your momma leave Cora to you in her will?

JOLENE

Well, yes...But that's not odd is it? Happens all the time, right?

A sudden realization washes over Jolene.

LOU ANN TEMPLETON

Did anybody ever figured out who C
and T are?

HILLY

The book is NOT ABOUT JACKSON!

Aibileen spills a few drops of coffee on Hilly's plate. Hilly
looks up to Aibileen slow and deliberate.

HILLY (CONT'D)

You spilled some, Aibileen.

Aibileen takes the cloth from the coffee pitcher handle and
dabs the spilled coffee.

Aibileen glances at Hilly. A secret burns between them.

HILLY (CONT'D)

Get me a new plate. One you
haven't soiled with a dirty cloth.

EXT. MOUNT ZION CHURCH - EVENING

Aibileen and Minny walk into the church parking lot wearing
their Sunday best.

Minny takes note of all the cars.

MINNY

We late? Looks like Bible study
done already started.

AIBILEEN

No. We ain't late.

INT. MOUNT ZION BAPTIST CHURCH - MOMENTS LATER

As Minny and Aibileen enter the church. Four-hundred members
stand at once. The congregation begins to clap.

128.

Minny and Aibileen look around trying to figure out the
source of adulation. They both start clapping too.

Aibileen steps up to a woman in the last pew.

AIBILEEN

Who we clappin' for?

The woman laughs.

WOMAN

Honey, we clappin' for you.

The woman raises a copy of "The Help." Aibileen notices a
copy of the book in each member's hand.

Aibileen looks to Minny, realizing she's in on it.

A REVEREND approaches, hands Aibileen a copy of the book.

REVEREND

Aibileen, this is an important time for you and our church. We know you couldn't put your name in here, so we all signed our own. The Reverend then hands her a box wrapped in white paper, tied with a blue ribbon.

REVEREND (CONT'D)

This is for the white lady. Tell her we love her like family.

INT. AIBILEEN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Skeeter sits between Aibileen and Minny on the sofa thumbing through her signed book.

Hundreds of signatures cover the pages.

AIBILEEN

Churches over two counties signed our books. All for you and me. Aibileen points to the inside back cover.

AIBILEEN (CONT'D)

Doctor King signed it, too. He readin' our book.

Aibileen glances proudly at the framed portrait of Dr. King.

MINNY

We did something. We did something good.

SKEETER

It's beautiful.

Skeeter closes the book and sets it down regretfully.
129.

AIBILEEN

What's wrong?

Skeeter pulls a letter out of her purse.

SKEETER

I got a job offer from Harper and Row...in New York.

AIBILEEN

Congratulations!

MINNY

That real good, Miss Skeeter.

SKEETER

I not taking it. I just wanted to share it with you both. There's no one else I can tell.

AIBILEEN

What you mean you not takin' it?
This is what you been dreaming of.

SKEETER

I can't leave you two right when
things are getting bad from a mess
I created. I set out to write a
book to make white people thankful.
But in the end, what we should say
is "sorry."

AIBILEEN

If bad things happen, they ain't
nothing you can do about it. And
if they happen, at least now theys
a reason behind it. A reason we
can wrap our heads around and be
proud of...

Skeeter nods with little relief.

AIBILEEN (CONT'D)

Now, I don't mean to rub salt in
your wound, but...you ain't got a
good life here in Jackson. Plus,
your momma's getting better-
Minnie aggressively chimes in.

MINNY

You ain't got nothing left here but
enemies in the Junior League. You
done burned ever bridge there is.
And you ain't never gone get
another man in this town, and ever
body know it. So don't walk your
white butt to New York, RUN IT!

Minnie leans over, placing her hand on Skeeter's for the first
time since knowing each other.

130.

MINNY (CONT'D)

And you listen to me. I'm on take
care a Aibileen, and she gone take
care a me.

Skeeter nods.

AIBILEEN

Go find your life, Miss Skeeter.

EXT. PHELAN PLANTATION - NIGHT

Skeeter stands next to the barn smoking a cigarette reading the Harper and Row offer for the hundredth time.

Tires crunch gravel down the drive. Skeeter sees a car moving toward her with the headlights off.

Worried, Skeeter looks toward her home. Charlotte can be seen in an upstairs window.

Skeeter soon recognizes the car as Hilly's.

Hilly parks, lights a cigarette and gets out of her car.

Skeeter charges toward her.

SKEETER

What are you doing here?

Hilly screams and throws her lit cigarette at Skeeter.

HILLY

Don't you get an inch closer!

Hilly's a mess. Her shirt is half tucked. Her shorts strain to contain a newly developed layer of fat.

A horrible fever blister burns hot on Hilly's upper lip.

HILLY (CONT'D)

I've contacted my lawyer, Hibbie Goodman. He's the best libel attorney in Mississippi. You're in big trouble, Missy. And you're going to jail.

SKEETER

You can't prove anything, Hilly.

HILLY

I one-hundred-percent know you wrote it `cause nobody else in town is as tacky as you. Those nigras of yours are in a lifetime of trouble.

SKEETER

Exactly who are you talking about?

You don't know anything.

131.

HILLY

I don't, do I? You tell Aibileen, the next time she wants to write about my dear friend Elizabeth...uh-huh. Remember her? Had you in her wedding? Let's just say, Aibileen ought to've been a little bit smarter before putting in the L-

shaped crack in poor Elizabeth's dining table. And that nigra, Minny? Do I have plans for her.

SKEETER

Careful, Hilly. Don't give yourself away now.

HILLY

That was not me WHO ATE THAT PIE!
Hilly storms up the porch steps. Skeeter follows.

SKEETER

I did not invite you here!
Skeeter yanks Hilly's arm hard.

HILLY

I've come to tell your mother what a hippie you've become. She's gonna be disgusted by you.
Skeeter can't help but laugh.

SKEETER

You're telling my mother on me?
Hilly opens the door. Skeeter grabs her. They struggle.

SKEETER (CONT'D)

You get out of here!
Charlotte suddenly appears. Skeeter lets go of Hilly.

CHARLOTTE

Why, Hilly...It's been such a long time, Dear. Everything okay, you two?
Hilly is shocked by Charlotte's frail appearance.

HILLY

Missus Phelan, I'm...I'm here to-

CHARLOTTE

Hilly, you're a mess. Are you ill?
Hilly self-consciously licks her fever blister.

HILLY

Well, I...I didn't have time to get fixed up before-
132.

CHARLOTTE

Darling, no husband wants to come home and see this.
Charlotte peers closely at Hilly's cold sore.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

And that...that is horrendous.

HILLY

Missus Phelan, I'm here-

CHARLOTTE

You know, Hilly. If I didn't know any better, I'd say you've been eating too many...SWEETS?

Hilly's face turns purple with embarrassment. Charlotte moves in for the kill.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

In fact. I'm sure of it. Now GET OUT OF MY HOUSE...before we all get one of those on our lip.

Hilly looks back and forth between Skeeter and her mother, not knowing what to say.

Hilly runs out of the house as Charlotte sashays quietly into the living room.

Shocked, Skeeter stands alone in the foyer. Hilly sprays gravel across the Phelan yard as she speeds away.

CHARLOTTE (O.C.) (CONT'D)

Eugenia?

SKEETER

Yes, Ma'am.

CHARLOTTE (O.C.)

Come in here, please.

Skeeter gulps as she heads toward the living room.

INT. PHELAN PLANTATION - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Charlotte pats the sofa as Skeeter enters and sits.

SKEETER

Ma'am?

CHARLOTTE

Do you have plans tomorrow? Bible study? Anything like that?

SKEETER

No, Ma'am.

133.

CHARLOTTE

Good. We're going shopping.

Skeeter lets out a big sigh of relief.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

`Cause no single daughter of mine is going to New York, representing the great state of Mississippi,

without a proper cosmopolitan wardrobe.

SKEETER

What?

CHARLOTTE

I'm very proud of you, Eugenia.

SKEETER

How do you know about New York?

CHARLOTTE

A friend of Constantine's told me.

Charlotte reaches down and pulls up her copy of "The Help".

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

Would you do me the honor of signing my copy?

Skeeter nods. Charlotte hands Skeeter a pen. Her hand trembles as she signs the book, never having guessed how good it would feel.

INT. LEEFOLT HOME - KITCHEN - MORNING

Aibileen washes dishes as the phone begins to ring. She answers. Minny screams on the other end of the line.

EXT. GAS STATION (INTERCUT) - SAME TIME

Minny stands barefoot inside a phone booth, her lip swollen, face bleeding. Her kids stand outside, crying.

MINNY

They fired Leroy last night! And when Leroy ask why, his boss say Mister Holbrook told him to do it. Said his nigger wife the reason.

AIBILEEN

Oh, Law!

MINNY

He try to kill me with he bare hands! He threw the kids in the yard, lock me in the bathroom, and say he gone set the house on fire.
134.

AIBILEEN

Where are you now?!

MINNY

The gas station. I climbed out the window, and we all ran here.

AIBILEEN

I'm on come there now.

MINNY

Wait, Aibileen...I'm pregnant.

AIBILEEN

Mিনny, now, you listen to me. That baby gone be fine, and you ain't never gone lose your job. Mister Johnny told you that hisself. They's more book money coming. Your baby ain't gone know about gettin' beat. You hear me? You free, Minny! You are free.

Minny lets out a chuckle of relief and wipes her eyes.

AIBILEEN (CONT'D)

You hear me?

MINNY

I hear you...

The Leefolt front door opens. Elizabeth calls out.

ELIZABETH (O.C.)

Aibileen?

INT. LEEFOLT HOME - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Aibileen enters to find Elizabeth and Hilly staring at her. Elizabeth is two weeks WAY PAST DUE.

AIBILEEN

Good morning.

Hilly licks her cold sore as she steps forward. She glides her hand across the L-shaped crack in the Elizabeth's table, drawing Aibileen's attention to it.

HILLY

Aibileen, the silver I lent Elizabeth last week.

AIBILEEN

It not polished good? Humidity been fighting me on polishing day.

HILLY

When you returned it, three pieces were missing out of the felt wrapper. A fork and two spoons.
135.

AIBILEEN

Lemme...lemme go look in the

kitchen, maybe I left some behind.

HILLY

You know as well as I do that silver's not in the kitchen.

Aibileen turns to Elizabeth.

AIBILEEN

You check in Mae Mobley's bed? She been putting things-

HILLY

Do you hear her, Elizabeth? She's trying to blame it on a toddler. Elizabeth won't look at Aibileen.

AIBILEEN

I ain't stole no silver. Elizabeth whispers to Hilly.

ELIZABETH

She says she doesn't have them.

HILLY

Then it behooves me to inform you that you are fired, Aibileen. And I'll be calling the police. They know me.

Mae Mobley enters the room.

MAE MOBLEY

Aibee, my froat hurts.

Mae Mobley coughs.

AIBILEEN

I go get her some syrup, Miss Leefolt.

HILLY

Elizabeth can take care of her child.

Elizabeth looks to Hilly, appearing somewhat upset with this suggestion.

ELIZABETH

I'll go get the couch syrup.

Hilly glares at Aibileen as Elizabeth runs down the hall.

HILLY

I won't tolerate liars!

Mae Mobley becomes scared and hides behind Aibileen's leg.
136.

AIBILEEN

I didn't steal no silver.

HILLY

I'm not talking about silver. I'm talking about those things you wrote about Elizabeth. Maybe I can't send you to jail for what you wrote, but I can send you to jail for being a thief. And your friend, Minny? That nigra's got a nice surprise coming to her. Johnny Foote listens to what I say. She's as good as-
Aibileen shouts, interrupting Hilly.

AIBILEEN

Woman!...I know something about you. Don't you forget that.
Hilly narrows her eyes.

AIBILEEN (CONT'D)

From what Yule May says, they's a lot a time to write letters from jail. Plenty a time to write ever person in Jackson the truth about you, and the paper is free.

HILLY

Nobody would believe something you wrote.

AIBILEEN

I don't know. Already sold a lot a books.
Fear floods into Hilly's eyes.

HILLY

Get out of here!

MAE MOBLEY

Don't go, Aibiee!
Aibileen kneels down as Elizabeth returns with the syrup.

AIBILEEN

Baby, you need to get back to bed. You got a fever.

MAE MOBLEY

Noooo! Don't go, Aibee. Please don't leave.

AIBILEEN

I gots to, Baby. I am so sorry.

MAE MOBLEY

Why? Are you going to take care of

another little girl?

137.

AIBILEEN

No, Baby, that's not the reason. I don't want to leave you, but...It's time for me to retire. You my last little girl.

MAE MOBLEY

Noooo!

AIBILEEN

Baby Girl, I need you to remember ever thing I told you. Okay? Do you remember what I told you?

MAE MOBLEY

To wipe my bottom good?

AIBILEEN

No, Baby. The other. What you are.

MAE MOBLEY

You is kind. You is smart. You is important.

AIBILEEN

That's right, Baby Girl.

Aibileen squeezes Mae Mobley for the last time. They both cry together. Hilly speaks up.

HILLY

You need to go now, Aibileen!

Aibileen rises up from Mae Mobley and turns to Elizabeth.

AIBILEEN

Give my sweet girl a chance.

Elizabeth avoids eye contact. Aibileen turns and walks away. As Elizabeth leans down to pick up Mae Mobley...HER WATER BREAKS. She glares at Hilly with shock and regret.

EXT. LEEFOLT HOME - MOMENTS LATER

Aibileen steps out of the house with her purse.

She walks stoically down the driveway. Tears stream down her face.

Mae Mobley runs to the living room window crying. She beats on the glass from inside.

MAE MOBLEY

Aibeeeeee! Don't go!

Aibileen never turns.

138.

AIBILEEN (V.O.)

Mae Mobley was my last baby. In just thirty minutes, I felt like my whole life was done. Of the thirteen maids, seven of us got fired. Several other maids got fired who had nothin' to do with our book. Guess our stories weren't so unique after all...But, like Minny, we was all free.

INT. HOLBROOK HOUSE - FOYER - DAY

Hilly, even fatter now, sifts through the day's mail.

AIBILEEN (V.O.)

And we's was a lot freer than Hilly Holbrook.

She comes across a piece from Celia Foote addressed to The Starving Children of Africa Fund. A smug smile forms. She opens the envelope to find a check for \$200.00 made out

to:

Hilly screams as she rips the check into pieces.

EXT. FOOTE ESTATE - YARD - DAY

Minnie folds laundry on a picnic table.

AIBILEEN (V.O.)

Ever so often, we all get a nice piece of book money in the mail. `Manna from heaven' we like to call it.

Minnie looks across the table and smiles at Celia who is holding and playing with Minny's newborn child.

EXT. CHICAGO - GRAVEYARD - DAY

Close on tombstone:

CONSTANTINE JEFFERSON

Born December 24th 1883

Died March 15th, 1963

A bouquet of flowers lay at the foot of the tombstone. A copy of "The Help" leans against it.

In the distance, a cab slowly pulls away with Skeeter inside.

INT. AIBILEEN'S HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Aibileen sits at her kitchen table, typing on Skeeter's old typewriter. We watch as keys write out the rest of Aibileen's voice over.

AIBILEEN (V.O.)

Thousands of our books went out all over the world. We had got paid to tell the truth and we just couldn't believe it...

Aibileen takes this last page out of the typewriter and places it behind two hundred other typed out pages. She looks up to the framed picture of Treelore and rises from the table with pride.

INT. HARPER AND ROW - SKEETER'S OFFICE - NEW YORK - DAY

Skeeter smiles as she reads from a book in her corner office. The Manhattan skyline rises behind her. She wears Pucci. Her hair is perfectly styled. She looks gorgeous. She sets the book down on her desk and picks up the phone. The book's cover reads:

"All My Babies"

By Aibileen Clark

Next to the book is a glass box. Constantine's corn pipe rests inside.

AIBILEEN'S NEW HOME - LIVING ROOM - FIFTEEN YEARS LATER

Aibileen, 70, rises from a sofa. Her hair is gray. Reading glasses hang on a chain from around her neck.

As she begins a slow walk down the hall, we see the surroundings of her new home for the first time. It's much bigger, well furnished and beautiful.

She passes a study lined with shelves of books. A copy of "The Help" and "All My Babies" are placed side by side.

At the end of the hall, Aibileen approaches the opened door of a brightly lit, sparkling white, bathroom.

She enters the bathroom and closes the door.