

FADE IN:

EXT. DEEP FORK RIVER - DUSK

A murky river meanders through a shadowy bank of trees.

EXT. PRAIRIE HOMESTEAD

In the dusty yard the wind blows dresses on the clothesline.

SUPER - "NEAR THE DEEP FORK RIVER, INDIAN TERRITORY, 1900."

INT. WINDOW

Through the gritty film of an upstairs window we see bleached out sky, and hear the sucking cursing sound of WIND.

THE SOUND OF A BAWLING CALF rises from somewhere.

UPSTAIRS BEDROOM

RACHEL WHITESIDE (30's aged beyond her years) presses a rolled rag against the windowsill to keep out the dust. Her LABORED BREATHING is like the groaning wind outside.

Through the window, she can see the corral. The calf's bawling climbs over the pitch of the wind.

Rachel turns, eclipsing the window with her hugely pregnant BELLY.

PARLOR

YOUNG ALTHEA (12, pigtails, homespun dress) gazes out the window. Her older sister ESTALEEN stares daggers into her back as the calf begins a piteous honking wail.

INT. KITCHEN

Young Althea fills a teat bag with milk from a bucket.

EXT. - MOMENTS LATER

She halts on the wooden porch steps with the teat bag in hand.

She sees...

THE SUN

setting in a fiery ball. The sky is ablaze with color -- exquisite beyond all telling.

On the opposite horizon...

THE FULL MOON

rises, reflecting the crimson of the setting sun.

For a moment she stands there, transformed by the prairie's turning beauty.

The calf bawls.

She starts up the rise to the corral. Dust swirls. Her braids snap violently in the wind.

At the pen she sees...

THE CALF

on the far side, its head lifted and cocked, its nostrils flared.

Young Althea reaches between the slats to pull the latch. The wind wrenches the gate from her hand. Milk sloshes on her skirt.

The calf comes barreling toward her. Nudges fiercely at her milk-soaked skirt.

The girl's face fills with terror. She clutches the teat bag to her breast.

Hysterical, she claws at the gate to open it, but the latch is jammed.

The calf forces his snout between her legs.

Young Althea begins to scream.

INT. UPSTAIRS BEDROOM

Rachel lies on the bed in a stupor. Hears the FAR OFF SCREAMS.

PARLOR

Estaleen looks up from the sampler she is sewing; startled.

EXT.

Battered by the wind, Rachel trudges heavily across the pasture, reaches the...

CORRAL

where Young Althea's screams turn to grateful sobs at the sight of her mother.

Rachel slaps the girl hard across the mouth.

Unlatches the gate, passes into the corral, forcing Young Althea back.

The teat bag drops.

The calf struggles to get at the bag under Rachel's hem.

Young Althea and her mother lock eyes.

The frenzied calf turns his hind end toward its obstacle...

HOOMP...H...

The calf KICKS Rachel in her swollen belly. Grabs the teat bag, victorious. Trots away.

Rachel's hands fall to where her belly should be. The mound has shifted to the side.

Beneath her feet, a wet spot spreads, darkening the red dust.

INT. UPSTAIRS BEDROOM - NIGHT

In the dismal lamp light, a BLACK MIDWIFE hums a soothing hymn, dampens a clean cloth in a basin.

On the bed, Rachel moans in labor.

The Midwife places the cloth on Rachel's forehead. Rachel throws it off.

RACHEL
(her teeth gritted)
...Christ Almighty get out of
there...Lord God, take it, take it,
take me...Almighty Holy Christ
Jesus...

Young Althea stands nearby, her fist crammed in her mouth, tears streaking down her cheeks.

Outside, the wind howls.

PARLOR

Estaleen kneels at the hearth, hands clasped, praying.

BEDROOM - LATER

Rachel rocks on all fours, her face in the pillow, weeping silently as the blood pours.

The wind outside becomes HORRIFIC SCREAMING as Rachel gives birth.

MOMENTS LATER

Dead quiet. The Midwife lifts the...

GHASTLY NEWBORN

into the air. Its head and neck are bruised and swollen, so grotesquely misshapen it doesn't appear to be human.

RACHEL

(face to the wall)

Take it out to the ravine and smash
its head in. I never wanted to
give birth to a monster such as
that.

DAY

The Midwife settles the swaddled infant against its mother's back. Blows out the lamp, opens the curtains. Morning light streams in.

Unseen, Young Althea goes to the bundle, takes it.

EXT. DEDMEYER HOUSE - DAY

SUPER - "TULSA, AUGUST 1920."

WILLIE WHITESIDE (black, 9 years old) troops through the light rain to the screened side porch of a stylish two-story Craftsman-style bungalow.

He clutches an envelope, pressing it under one arm.

I/E. SCREENED PORCH

ALTHEA WHITESIDE DEDMEYER (grown now to a volatile beauty) sizes up the child through the screen.

ALTHEA

Yes?

WILLIE

This here where Graceful Whiteside
work?

ALTHEA

Who?

WILLIE

Do a woman name Graceful work here,
ma'am?

He tries to look past her into the house.

ALTHEA

Did you say "Whiteside?"

WILLIE

Yes, ma'am. Is Graceful here?

ALTHEA

She's gone for the shopping. I'll
give her a message, or... I guess
you can wait.

WILLIE

I got a letter I'm suppose to
deliver.

He hands the envelope off to Althea, then tears out running.

Althea glances at the name scrawled on the front: "Miss
Graceful Whiteside." The color drains from her face.

ALTHEA

Boy!

Willie stops at the curb.

ALTHEA

This name here. 'Whiteside' is
Graceful's last name? You're sure
of that?

WILLIE

(grinning)

I guess so, ma'am. That's all of
us last name.

Althea stares after him as he runs away, out of sight.

Althea looks at the envelope again, carries it into the...

KITCHEN

where she places it on a small table. She sits before it,
not touching it, staring, appalled.

LATER

Althea stands at the porch threshold, waiting, watching
through the screen.

GRACEFUL WHITESIDE (black, 19, tall, strong-boned) glides past Althea with barely a nod, unloads wet packages onto the counter.

ALTHEA
 (handing Graceful the envelope)
 A letter came for you. Return address from "The Tulsa Star."

Graceful glances at the return address on the envelope, dismisses it, then slips it into the apron of her rain-spattered maid's uniform.

ALTHEA
 You're wet. You'd better get out of those things.

Graceful starts toward the back hall.

ALTHEA
 Graceful?

Graceful halts, meeting her gaze.

ALTHEA
 You didn't tell me your last name is Whiteside.

GRACEFUL
 (puzzled)
 It was on the agency papers.

ALTHEA
 No it wasn't. I mean, I believe I would have noticed.
 (averts her eyes to the floor)
 Please clean up that mess you tracked in before you start dinner.

Graceful nods, disappears into the back hall.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

FRANKLIN DEDMEYER (portly, well-starched) fumbles with his tie and top button in the dresser mirror. He sports a mass of thick combed-down curls.

In bed in her finery, Althea looks up from a novel.

ALTHEA
 A boy came today.

FRANKLIN
 (prying the shirt collar)
 Damn this thing.

ALTHEA
 Brought a letter to Graceful.

FRANKLIN
 Well.
 (pulls the button finally)
 Ran into L.O Murphy this afternoon.
 I don't know. He acts like he
 knows a little too much about that
 unfortunate business Saturday
 night.
 (frowning, shaking his
 head)
 You'd think he'd keep a little
 tighter lip, the way the papers are
 talking.

Below him, the folded paper reveals part of a headline:
 "Lynching."

FRANKLIN
 He bragged for an hour on that new
 strike of his, says they're pumping
 thirty thousand a day.

Althea stares out at the rain.

FRANKLIN
 L.O. swears this field is going to
 be as big as Cushing, bigger than
 Glenn Pool, but you know what a
 braggart L.O. Murphy is.

Franklin's suspenders clink softly on the carpet as his
 trousers fall.

FRANKLIN
 (reaching for his
 nightshirt)
 Jim Dee call?

ALTHEA
 (coloring)
 What?

FRANKLIN
 He left word he wants me to come to
 Bristow, says he thinks he's found
 a seep.

Althea touches the back of her hand to her throat.

FRANKLIN

Gypsy's got most of the lease land
sewed up down there, but...

(his eyes flash)

Jim's hot for me to come down.

He seems to wait for a sign of her approval, but she feigns interest in the book.

FRANKLIN

Nobody's cattin' down in that
direction lately, but maybe that's
a good sign. Or not.

(smoothing his hair)

I don't put too much credence in
it. Those old Deep Fork bottoms
don't seem likely, if you ask me.

ALTHEA

Where?

Through the mirror Franklin sees Althea throw off the covers.

FRANKLIN

What's the matter with you, Kitten?
You sick?

ALTHEA

It's suffocating in here. I can't
breathe, can't you open a window?

FRANKLIN

It's raining.

He comes to her with concern, feels her forehead for a fever, but she shrinks back, shakes her head.

ALTHEA

Just crack the window a little at
the bottom.

Franklin obeys his wife. The room fills with the roar of pounding rain.

HALLWAY - LATER

An elegant ghost in white silk, Althea wanders in the dark, touching the smooth edges of wood, porcelain, marble...

She floats in front of a gilt mirror, where she catches her reflection.

IN THE MIRROR

her white oval face and its delicate features stare back at her, deformed by the chiaroscuro of the reflected stained glass window behind. She moves slightly and catches another reflection.

GRACEFUL

Ma'am? You all right?

Althea jerks around.

ALTHEA

What the devil's the matter with you? Sneaking up on me in the dark!

Graceful responds with a level gaze.

ALTHEA

Don't you sully up on me, girl.

Graceful turns to leave.

ALTHEA

Did you close the windows in the library? I'd better not find rain on my carpet in the morning, you hear?

(catching herself,
stricken)

I'm sorry. You startled me, that's all. Graceful?

But Graceful is gone.

EXT. DEDMEYER HOUSE - ROSE GARDEN - DAY

Althea prunes a rose hedge.

Moppy-headed branches fall to her feet.

NONA MURPHY (20's, a well-dressed floozy) appears in her periphery.

NONA

I hope you haven't killed the poor things.

Her eyes fall on Althea's dirty smock and gardening gloves.

NONA

Honey, I hate to say it, but you look like a field hand.

(fanning herself with her
lace gloves)
'Course, you don't look a bit worse
than L.O. did when he got home
Saturday night.
(peering over Althea's
shoulder toward the
porch)
That road was pure mud.

ALTHEA
What are you looking at? What do
you want, Nona?

NONA
(focusing back on Althea)
Why, the party, Althea!

Althea lops off a plump blossom.

NONA
We got to celebrate that new
strike! L.O. aims to have the
biggest shindig this town's ever
seen.

Althea works in the opposite direction.

Nona follows her.

NONA
We're gonna need to hire some more
Negro help, and they're every one
slow as sand. L.O. says that whole
bunch in Little Africa's just
worthless. He says Tulsa ought to
have a few more necktie parties,
show 'em their place.

Althea picks up an arm load of thorny branches, carries them
to the fence, drops them in a pile.

NONA
Of course, that scalawag the other
night...

EXT. RURAL ROAD - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Nona smiles in a crowd of white spectators.

NONA V.O.
...was white as my foot, but he was
sure defiant as a bad Nigra. You
should have seen him.

A young white man stands with his hands tied behind him, a noose around his neck, the other end of the rope looked over a tall road sign.

NONA V.O.

He was guilty as sin, you could see
that in those brazen eyes.

Nona swigs from a flask, hands it to her husband, L.O. MURPHY (big-bellied, much older). L.O. drinks, shakes his fist, yells along with the mob.

A dark figure in a slouch hat weaves through the crowd.

L.O. shoves his way toward the lynching.

The figure in the slouch hat sidles up to Nona, presses himself into her.

NONA V.O.

I told L.O. on the way home, I
said, if ever a man was a cold-
blooded killer...

Her eyes flash up at JAPHETH WHITESIDE (20's , lean, hungry).

NONA V.O.

...he was.

Japheth's eyes -- full of glittering evil -- pour down her body. Together he and Nona turn to face the lynching in progress.

BACK TO SCENE

EXT. DEDMEYER HOUSE - ROSE GARDEN - DAY

ALTHEA

(following Nona's gaze)
Who are you looking for, Nona?

NONA

Well I told you, I just want to
borrow your girl for the party.

ALTHEA

(her back turned for the
house)
I don't know if I can spare
Graceful. We'll have to let you
know.

Nona stares exasperated after Althea, then takes one last look around.

INT/EXT. DEDMEYER HOUSE

Althea tracks mud through the French doors.

INT. KITCHEN

Althea looks around. No one is there.

She walks to the

PANTRY

but sees no one. She peers through the open back door, through the

SCREENED PORCH

and sees...

GRACEFUL AT THE WASHSTAND

her hands smooth and efficient running a bedsheet through the wringer into a galvanized tub.

Althea watches as if in a trance, imagines...

THE SOUND OF A BABY'S CRY

in the distance. Althea flinches, as though chilled.

Graceful looks up, gazes at Althea blankly. The tirade from the night before stands in the air between them.

Althea seizes on a basket beside Graceful.

ALTHEA

Those wet clothes will turn rancid
in this heat, Graceful.

Graceful hoists the basket to her hip and takes it out the screen door to the clothesline.

EXT. YARD

GRACEFUL

Man come while ago.
(pinning clothes)
He's sittin' in the front room.

Althea whips her head around, confused for an instant. Then she brightens, springs to life.

INT. BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Water pounds into a porcelain tub.

PARLOR

A lanky man slumps under his hat in a high-backed chair. His sleeves are dirty and rolled up, his denims streaked with grease.

BATHROOM

Althea sprinkles rose water from a vial, leans back in the tub.

PARLOR

The man shifts. The clock's minute hand thunks forward.

BEDROOM

Althea brushes her hair at the dresser. A lavender dress lies on the bedspread.

PARLOR

Althea sweeps in, a vision in lavender. She is beaming.

Japheth looks up.

Althea's smile fades. Clearly this is not who she expected.

ALTHEA

Yes? What is it?

JAPHETH

You don't know me?

Althea shakes her head slightly.

JAPHETH

Look close.

He rises, saunters over, staring boldly.

Althea steps back, prepared to shout, to push, if need be.

The uncomfortable closeness forces her to look away. He follows her gaze.

The mirror traps their images together. The recognition is instant and awful.

JAPHETH
(grinning)
Good to see you again, Sister.

ALTHEA
(turning away)
I'm afraid you'll have to leave.

JAPHETH
(appraising her)
Some warm welcome after -- what's it been, fifteen, sixteen years? I was so little, I didn't even remember what you looked like.
(surveying the parlor)
You've done well by yourself. Of course, Ma told us that. She harped on that quite a bit.

He sits again, makes himself comfortable.

ALTHEA
What do you want?

JAPHETH
Bite to eat, maybe. That'd be a start.

Althea steadies herself.

JAPHETH
I told Estaleen you'd faint when you seen me. You going to prove me right?

He watches her, then settles back in the velvet.

JAPHETH
Her and Ma always told me, 'Letha's tough as a hickory stick.' I can remember that from before I could crawl.

ALTHEA
Tell me what you want.

JAPHETH
Stomach feels like an old shriveled up twist of jerky. You're not too mean to feed me, are you? I'd hate to go back and tell 'em that.

Althea blankly, sedately, leaves the room.

SCREENED PORCH

Graceful stands at the washer, turning the wringer handle.

She looks up, sees Althea.

ALTHEA

You can finish later.

PARLOR

ALTHEA

I've told the girl to prepare dinner. I don't feel well, and if you'll excuse me, I'm going upstairs to lie down.

Althea proceeds out of the room, reaches the

STAIRCASE

where she sees Graceful only feet away coming from the back hall.

JAPHETH (O.S.)

(singing, loudly)

Letha Jean Whiteside! That high-and-mighty act's not fooling your own flesh and blood!

Graceful stares at Althea, whose face is frozen in fear.

Japheth appears in the parlor doorway, his eyes quickly reducing the women.

JAPHETH

I've come to stay awhile.

(pouring over Graceful)

You might as well have your nigger girl fix me a bed.

I/E. CLEOTHA WHITESIDE'S HOUSE (TULSA'S GREENWOOD DISTRICT) - DAY

A tiny yellow shotgun house on a hill in the thriving black district. CLEOTHA WHITESIDE (black, 50's, a solid, determined woman) slops dishwater onto the marigolds and zinnias beside the back step.

She squeezes her apron, gazing toward Tulsa's white downtown, her face tight with worry. She hangs her apron on a nail beside the door as she passes through the small

KITCHEN

where her daughter, JEWELL (15, dutiful, sweet-faced and slender), stands at the table, ironing. Jewell takes the hot iron from the stove, presses it against her school dress.

CLEOTHA

Mind those peaches don't cook down too far.

JEWELL

Yes, ma'am.

Cleotha reaches the

BEDROOM

where she takes her hat from a knob atop the dresser.

She touches a framed photograph.

INSERT - PHOTOGRAPH

A large smiling dark-skinned man in a Pullman uniform.

BACK TO SCENE

Cleotha dons and pins her hat in one motion as she goes on into the

FRONT ROOM

where Willie lies belly-down on the linoleum gazing out through the screen door.

CLEOTHA

Willie, get up from there, now. Go see what you can put yourself useful about.

She steps to the mirror, adjusts her hat in the wavy glass, watches the boy.

CLEOTHA

Miss Clay give y'all any homework?

WILLIE

Yes, ma'am.

CLEOTHA

Time I get home I want to see every bit of it done and you washed up for bed.

I want to see your tomorrow clothes
laid out and your today clothes on
the line and clean dishes in the
dishpan.

JEWELL
(following behind her)
Where you going?

CLEOTHA
That's for me to know and you to
wonder about. Y'all go on and do
like I say.

Cleotha stops at the front door, her chest dense with worry.

CLEOTHA
(to Willie)
You sure, now, you took that letter
to the right house? The lady say
it's the right place where Graceful
stay?

WILLIE
Lady say she gonna give it to
Graceful.

CLEOTHA
All right, son. That's fine.

EXT.

Cleotha heads down Elgin Avenue, a clean, prosperous street
of small houses. In the rusty light, well-dressed black
homeowners walk here and there, or drive their fine
automobiles.

EXT. ARCHER STREET

Cleotha hurries along a bustling business area full of
tinkling music and soft voices floating in the air.

She comes to a street sign that marks the crossroads of
"Greenwood/Archer" and turns.

Red brick buildings line both sides of the street, well-lit
with candescent lights.

Cleotha steps inside a building with an ornate front window
where the gold lettering reads, "The Tulsa Star."

INT. THE TULSA STAR - PRESSROOM

HEDGEMON JACKSON, a tall, eager young black man wearing a leather apron operates a loud, clacking linotype.

He doesn't hear Cleotha enter the outer office.

CLEOTHA
(booming)
Hedgemon.

He jumps, then recognizes her in the dim light.

CLEOTHA
Come out here now. I got a bone to
pick with you.

OUTER OFFICE

Cleotha looks through the large front window, across the street, where the Dreamland Theater has just let out.

HEDGEMON
Anything wrong, Miz Whiteside?

CLEOTHA
What sort of story you put in that
letter to Graceful?

HEDGEMON
Why, just what you told me, ma'am,
just could she come home,
somebody's waiting to see her.

CLEOTHA
Whose name did you sign to it?

HEDGEMON
Why just... I just signed it, you
know.

CLEOTHA
Sign it what?

HEDGEMON
Uh... My name. I just sign
Hedgemon T. Jackson.

CLEOTHA
What makes you think my daughter's
going to pay one bit of attention
to anything Hedgemon T. Jackson got
to say on any subject?

Cornet music wails from somewhere.

HEDGEMON

I didn't mean to think nothing,
ma'am. You requested me to make
that letter, I just...

The linotype goes KALACK KALACK.

CLEOTHA

Just what?

HEDGEMON

I put it in there, like you ask me.
Just, 'Your mother Mrs. Ernest
Whiteside request the honor of your
presence--'like that.

CLEOTHA

Oh, Lord.

HEDGEMON

I didn't make out like it was me
looking for her.

Cleotha stares out onto the darkening street.

HEDGEMON

But you could let her know Hedgemon
Jackson would be proud to see her.

EXT. GREENWOOD - NIGHT

Cleotha strides purposefully down Greenwood Avenue as if she'll march right into white town and fetch her daughter home. She comes to the end of the street, to the train tracks. It's as if she has come to a wall.

Cleotha stares across at the bright lights of downtown Tulsa. She takes one step toward the tracks, stops. She can only turn around and go back the other way.

INT. DEDMEYER HOUSE - MAID'S ROOM - NIGHT

Graceful lies on her cot, sleeping. Her door opens slowly to reveal the outline of Japheth's sinister frame.

ALTHEA'S BEDROOM

Althea lies in bed, Franklin beside her, snoring softly. She wakens suddenly, stares into the darkness. She listens for a moment, but all she can hear is Franklin.

She gets out of bed in her bare feet, walks softly to the door. She grasps the knob, then lets it go, suddenly. She turns the lock, walks quickly back to bed.

INT. DEDMEYER HOUSE - DINING ROOM - DAY

Japheth sips coffee from a china cup, reads the Tulsa Daily World newspaper.

INSERT - HEADLINE: "BELTON LYNCHING PROBE CONTINUES"

BACK TO SCENE

Japheth smiles, dabs a biscuit in molasses.

Snaps the paper, reads on:

INSERT - "REWARD OFFERED FOR ARREST OF LEADERS OF ORDERLY MOB. WITNESSES TO BE ASKED TO TELL ALL THEY KNOW."

BACK TO SCENE

Franklin enters.

Japheth doesn't look up. He folds the paper aside.

Franklin stares at him, perplexed.

JAPHETH

Girl cooks up a good biscuit, don't she?

(sips coffee)

I've drunk better creekwater, though.

(smiles at Franklin)

I'm going to have to guess Letha didn't say a word to you. Is that right?

FRANKLIN

'Letha'?

JAPHETH

Oh, I mean Althea. We used to call her Letha. I'm Japheth, her baby brother.

Japheth rises to shake Franklin's hand. Entirely baffled, Franklin obliges him, then seats himself to one side.

FRANKLIN

Well, I guess Gracie took care of you.

JAPHETH

It was all laid out before I came
in. Paper and all.

FRANKLIN

(reaching for the gravy
spoon)

I don't know if Althea will be
down. She took one of her sick
headaches last night. They put her
right in the bed.

JAPHETH

(slurping coffee)
You're in the oil business.

Franklin stops mid-bite.

JAPHETH

Got any openings for an ace tool
pusher?

FRANKLIN

(wiping his mouth)
Well, I, uh...

ALTHEA

No!

Both men are startled by her sudden appearance.

She has a vulnerable look about her, with her hair falling
loose about her shoulders.

ALTHEA

You know Jim Dee won't have anybody
but Ben Koop on his rig.

JAPHETH

Morning, Sister.

FRANKLIN

Darling, there you are.
(he rises to seat her)
Come sit down. I thought you were--

ALTHEA

Franklin, where is Graceful?

FRANKLIN

Why, she's in the kitchen, or--

ALTHEA

I couldn't find her.

FRANKLIN
She'll be in, darling.

ALTHEA
Excuse me.

Althea leaves the table, avoiding Japheth.

BACK HALL

Althea opens the maid's room door.

MAID'S ROOM

A tiny cubicle with a bare, narrow cot, and an empty pine shelf below a mirror. Two wooden coat hangers swing on a stretched rope in the corner.

FRANKLIN
(behind Althea)
Darling?

Althea turns to her husband, astonished.

Japheth's sylphlike form stands behind him.

FRANKLIN
I don't know what got into that girl. I thought we had a pretty fair hand in her. Thought she might stay awhile.

BEDROOM

Franklin packs a bag.

ALTHEA
You can't go off and leave me.

FRANKLIN
Darling, I told you. I got to meet Jim Dee in Bristow.

ALTHEA
But I can't stay here without help.

FRANKLIN
We can send for a new girl in a day or two when I get back, or you can call the Murphys.

ALTHEA
I wouldn't call Nona Murphy if she was the last floozy on earth.

Franklin continues packing.

ALTHEA
 (gritting her teeth)
 I won't stay here with that
 monster.

FRANKLIN
 Monster? That's a pleasant way to
 talk about your brother.

Althea paces.

ALTHEA
 Out of here. I want him out of
 here.

Franklin cocks his head, confounded.

FRANKLIN
 He's gone already, Althea. Took
 off after breakfast. He's not in
 the yard or anywhere.

ALTHEA
 Thank God.

FRANKLIN
 I'd like to know why you've got a
 brother I've never heard of.

Althea begins to pack a small trunk.

ALTHEA
 I'll tell you on the train.

FRANKLIN
 No, Thea. I'm not haulin' you out
 to some nasty creekbottom.

She ignores him.

FRANKLIN
 Thea, now, I've already put my foot
 down.

He takes his bag and leaves the room. Althea rushes to the
 closet, pulls down a large hatbox.

I/E. JITNEY - DAY

A streetcar jam-packed with black passengers riding in tense
 silence through the streets of white Tulsa.

Graceful stares out the smudged window.

ON THE STREET

White people everywhere bob with henlike struts in and out of doorways.

A white man in a houndstooth suit props his foot on a shoeshine box. The young bootblack, DICK ROWLAND, snaps his rag across the leather toe in syncopated rhythm.

The white man glances up at the passing jitney, leers at Graceful in the bus window.

INT. MAID'S ROOM (FLASHBACK)

In the darkness of the cubicle, Japheth's dark, lean form looms behind Graceful on her cot, breathing heavy, his hand over her mouth.

BACK TO PRESENT DAY

Graceful struggles to contain her emotion. She looks at the passengers in the jitney, their faces full of solemn strength. She sits straighter, bites her lip.

EXT. CLEOTHA'S HOUSE

Graceful approaches the yellow shotgun house.

EXT. PORCH

She reaches for the door knob; it's locked. She drops her bundle and takes the blue envelope from her pocket. Scans the letter's swirly script.

INSERT - THE LETTER'S SIGNATURE

"Yours, most truly / Hedgemon T. Jackson, Esquire."

BACK TO SCENE

She shakes her head, tempted to laugh.

EXT. SUNDAY CHURCH - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Long-legged Hedgemon pursues Graceful -- in her Sunday best -- down the church steps as the congregation lets out.

HEDGEMON

Miss Graceful, if you'll allow me
to accompany you forthwith--

Some of the Congregation witness Hedgemon's gangly chase.

Embarrassed, Graceful clenches her Bible, makes a beeline for the street.

HEDGEMON
(calling after her)
Miss Graceful--

BACK TO PRESENT DAY

EXT. CLEOTHA'S HOUSE

Graceful sits on the step to read the letter in earnest.

HEDGEMON (V.O.)
To all interested parties, let
these presents hereby be made
known...

GRACEFUL
Lord, Hedgemon.

HEDGEMON (V.O.)
Therefore, the honor of said lady's
presence is forthwith invited and
duly requested to appear at her
earliest convenience in the home of
Mrs. Ernest Whiteside, her mother.

Graceful stands, peering down the hill.

INT. THE TULSA STAR

Graceful approaches the editor's desk.

MR. SMITHERMAN glances up from beneath his green eyeshade.

GRACEFUL
Is Hedgemon working today?

MR. SMITHERMAN
Mr. Jackson has gone uptown to make
a delivery.

GRACEFUL
When will he be back?

Mr. Smitherman continues to write.

MR. SMITHERMAN
I couldn't say. He'll be in at
four to run the presses.

Graceful stands beside the desk, uncertain what to do next.

MR. SMITHERMAN

If there is something I can do for you, Miss Whiteside, I'll be pleased to render my services, but if not I really must finish my editorial.

GRACEFUL

I got to see him, Mr. Smitherman.

Mr. Smitherman caps his fountain pen, places it carefully before him.

MR. SMITHERMAN

Oklahoma shook hands with the state of Georgia last weekend, as you may know.

GRACEFUL

What do you mean?

MR. SMITHERMAN

Two lynchings, now. These are not yet common occurrences here in the state of Oklahoma. Not yet.

GRACEFUL

Two?

MR. SMITHERMAN

You didn't know they lynched a colored man from Arcadia last Sunday?

(she reacts to "Arcadia")

In less than twenty four hours they found a loose Negro to match the white boy they hanged Saturday.

GRACEFUL

(her fear growing)

My brother T.J. been working at Arcadia.

MR. SMITHERMAN

It wasn't T.J.

(checking his notes)

The young man's name was Everett Candler.

Graceful is relieved; the name means nothing to her.

MR. SMITHERMAN

(picking up his pen again)
 However, lest anyone think that
 lynch law is going to be applied
 equally between the two races here
 in this Promised Land, there will
 soon be another Negro lynching. You
 can rest assured.

EXT. GREENWOOD

Graceful searches the street; tensions are high.

OUTSIDE THE DRUGSTORE

the DRUGGIST sweeps around a gathering of men.

OUTSIDE THE DREAMLAND THEATER

the PROJECTOR MAN -- on a ladder -- drops a letter from the
 marquee.

A Model T belches slowly by. A WORRIED DRIVER looks out from
 a passing touring car.

But the street is busy with delivery wagons drawn by
 blindered drays, shiny new trucks carrying box goods.

DOWN THE AVENUE

a battered Nash truck advertizing "Delroy's Garage" careens
 recklessly.

As it passes, Graceful recognizes Willie waving wildly out
 the window.

The truck suddenly stops, backs up all the way to where she
 stands.

DELROY (black, 40's, saggy-eyed, with a mechanic's cap)
 sticks his head out of the cab.

DELROY

'Mon, girl, get in!

I/E. DELROY'S TRUCK

GRACEFUL

Where's Mama?

DELROY

Her and Jewell took the train down
 last night.

GRACEFUL
Down where?

DELROY
(a protective glance at
Willie)
Arcadia.

GRACEFUL
Arcadia! Uncle Delroy, what
happened?

DELROY
Some business down there Sunday.

WILLIE
(his brown eyes shining)
You get that letter?

GRACEFUL
(a forced playfulness,
fighting down her own
fear)
You the one brung that letter?
Come all that way by yourself? My
lord, you gonna be grown and gone
before I get a chance to turn
around.

Willie ducks his head, grins.

They cross the train tracks. A TRAIN ROARS.

INT. TRAIN CAR - DAY

Althea swats a fly. Franklin sits across from her looking
away.

ALTHEA
I never told you because... Oh, for
God's sake, Franklin, I was
ashamed.

FRANKLIN
Lot a people grow up poor, Thea.

ALTHEA
When I told you I had no family, I
was telling the truth.

FRANKLIN
Dead people don't usually show up
for breakfast.

ALTHEA

In the finer families, you mean.

The whistle shrieks, the engine grinds down.

EXT. BRISTOW STATION

Althea follows Franklin off the train, looks around.

The depot's brick is etched in white letters: "Bristow."

In the crowd she sees...

JIM DEE

sun-baked, hatless, his khaki shirt open at the throat, striding toward her. His eyes lift to meet hers, then casually land on Franklin.

EXT. MAIN STREET, BRISTOW

Althea watches Jim Dee crank the motor of a Model T.

Franklin offers the front seat of the open car to Althea; she takes the rumble seat in back.

I/E. TIN LIZZIE

Jim Dee drives full tilt -- about thirty -- along a bumpy county road.

Althea tries to hold her bonnet on. The wind beats her chignon to pieces.

The men talk in front.

LATER

The road turns to wagon-rutted dust; the lizzie backfires and slows.

Althea shifts her gaze from Jim Dee to...

A PUMP JACK

dipping rhythmically like a rocking horse...

The treeless fields are thick with wildflowers.

ALTHEA TRANSFORMS

with the prairie -- its salmon-colored earth, waving buffalo grass, turquoise sky.

Her hair is wild, her skin bright pink. She casts her bonnet aside in a gesture of elation.

Franklin glances back at Althea, alarmed at her reverie.

FRANKLIN
(handing her his boater)
Thea, put this on.

ALTHEA
(obeying)
I should have brought a parasol.

She smiles flirtatiously, but he disapproves.

Dust rises a distance behind them, catching Althea's eye.

The car sputters and stalls in the thicket, close to the river.

FRANKLIN
(opening his door)
C'mon Jim, let's have a look at
this thing.

ALTHEA
Where are you going, Franklin?
Wait!

FRANKLIN
Stay put, Althea. Now, I mean it.

The two men disappear in the tangled scrub, leaving Althea alone in the car.

She straightens her hair and clothes.

Chirring insects dive around her. Clutching tree branches hover as if closing in.

She loosens her collar to breathe. Fans herself with the boater, her anxiety mounting.

She rises to escape the car, but finds no suitable footing. She scrambles unladylike out and over the door.

Her skirt catches the door handle, rips; she falls sprawling.

She forces herself up, shakes her skirt out, heads for the thicket.

She stumbles and claws her way through the branches toward the LOW MURMUR of voices.

MOMENTS LATER

Althea bursts through to the river bank where Franklin and Jim Dee stand.

They are jolted by the sight of her -- bleeding, dirty, her clothes torn.

ALTHEA

(to Franklin)

You are really beyond belief. I can't dream you'd carry me out into the absolute bojack and walk off.

FRANKLIN

Thea, for God's sake.

ALTHEA

Take me back to town this instant!

FRANKLIN

I told you to wait in the car, now, we'll be done here in a minute.

He turns away, dismissing her.

LATER

Althea -- calmer -- cleans herself up.

FRANKLIN

(to Jim Dee)

I thought this whole country'd been gone over with a fine-toothed comb.

Althea follows his gaze to a thin rainbow line on the water.

FRANKLIN

Last time I heard somebody found a seep was back in Fourteen or Fifteen.

Jim Dee stares, containing himself.

FRANKLIN

(his excitement building)

If there is another big strike coming, another Glenn Pool under this useless prairie, I don't know why this wouldn't be it right here.

He turns his face up and grins broadly at the late afternoon sky.

Althea catches her husband's rising excitement, tries to guess at Jim Dee's thoughts.

FRANKLIN

First thing, we got to do is get the lease filed.

Jim Dee skips a rock, heads downstream.

FRANKLIN

Jim! Where you going?

JIM DEE

Don't go back the way you came. Can't leave any sign of a trail.

EXT. ROAD

The lizzie heads back in the setting sun.

Althea rides in back again, holding the misshapen boater on her head.

Up ahead, a man stands like a lanky X in the road.

The Ford grinds and sputters to a halt.

JAPHETH

(sauntering over)

Evenin' fellas. Could you give a man a lift?

INT. BRISTOW HOTEL - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Jim Dee and Franklin discuss business over an elegant -- though tense -- dinner.

A slicked-back Japheth listens attentively, chewing his steak.

Althea wears a fresh evening suit. She looks radiant in the chandeliers' light.

FRANKLIN

And when you find Ben Koop, have him see if he can't lay his hands on a Fort Worth spudder.

JIM DEE

I told you already, that formation's too cavey. We can't machine dig. We're going to have to build a r--

FRANKLIN

--A rig's a lot of time, a lot of money, Jim. That's bound to be a shallow sand--

JIM DEE

--I said we're going to have to build a rig.

Franklin chews on this, changing the subject. He'll argue this point in private.

FRANKLIN

Well, I'll get over to Sapulpa first thing in the morning, get the lease squared away.

(to Althea)

Your brother can see you home.

Althea tries to cover her rage, her disbelief.

Jim Dee's eyes trace her neck.

Feeling his eyes, she glances back, only briefly, but Japheth catches the exchange.

JAPHETH

Pardon, me, but who's going to stay down on the Deep Fork, protect that seep from some other 'catter nosing around?

Franklin and Jim Dee freeze on this, considering it.

JIM DEE

Nobody knows a thing but us right here at this table.

Japheth takes in with a sweeping glance the other lease hounds in the room, some of whom seem to be listening.

FRANKLIN

(holding his voice down)

He's got a point. Somebody better stay down there.

JAPHETH

Sister, I guess you're gonna have to see yourself home.

ALTHEA

(turning on her husband)

I am not staying in that house by myself!

FRANKLIN

I told you, darling, we'll get you
a new girl.

JAPHETH

(in perfect imitation)
Yes, darling, we'll get you a new
girl.

ALTHEA

(to Franklin)
I don't want a new girl. I want
Graceful!

JAPHETH

Oh, somehow I don't think that
girl's coming back.

Japheth raises his glass to her, reveling in her disgust.

EXT. CANDLER HOUSE - ARCADIA - NIGHT

Delroy's truck stops in the yard of a ramshackle house with a sagging front porch. A wan yellow light emanates from the back.

Delroy looks over to Graceful.

DELROY

We here.

The front window of the house is smashed, the facade dotted with bullet craters.

GRACEFUL

What happened here?

INT. CANDLER HOUSE - KITCHEN

Willie sits half asleep at an oil-cloth covered table.

Graceful -- fatigued and fearful -- stands behind him caressing his neck, looking around the room.

A single kerosene lantern burns atop the table. There are three homemade chairs.

A dented washtub full of dish suds sits on the counter.

Cleotha -- at the woodstove -- spoons up a bowl of black-eyed peas.

CLEOTHA
 Willie, get up to the sink and wash
 now. Y'all need to --

There is a tapping at the back door.

Cleotha's spoon falls back into the pot.

GRACEFUL
 (whispering)
 Mama, what is it? What's --

CLEOTHA
 Hush!

They listen.

The tapping comes again. This time, a clear pattern.

Relieved, Cleotha hurries toward the door.

She lifts a corner of the flour sack covering the window,
 peers out. Still apprehensive, she slides back the iron
 bolt, turns the wooden block on its nail, then fiddles with
 the skeleton key in the slot below the doorknob.

Graceful and Willie watch, fearful.

Delroy slips into the room. Everyone takes a breath.

CLEOTHA
 (to Delroy)
 How's he doing?

DELROY
 Hungry.

CLEOTHA
 I'll send something out in a
 minute. Sit down and eat now. You
 got to rest.

DELROY
 I'm not tired.

CLEOTHA
 You're tired all right.

WILLIE
 Mama, I'm hungry.

CANDLER BOY (O.S.)
 Me too. We all hungry.

In the doorway to the front room, a little CANDLER BOY, 6, stands protectively near his two siblings, a toddler, and slightly older girl, shyly sucking her fingers.

CANDLER BOY
We want something to eat.

He comes into the kitchen, climbs up into a chair.

Jewel follows him in.

JEWELL
I'm sorry, Mama.
(tries to lift the boy
down)
He woke up when y'all come in, and
then he woke up the little ones.

CLEOTHA
That's all right. Help them to
wash up. Y'all might as well eat
too.

Jewell's face brightens at the sight of Graceful. She runs to her.

The sisters quickly embrace, but Cleotha holds Graceful's eye.

GRACEFUL
Whose are they?

Jewell waits for Cleotha to speak.

GRACEFUL
Mama, what are we doing here?

Cleotha shoots her a warning look, then turns away to the cookstove.

LATER

Graceful stands in front of Cleotha at the back door holding a cloth-covered crate.

Cleotha's hushed speech is drowned out by the sound of Delroy and the children gulping buttermilk, clinking spoons, clattering crockery.

Cleotha unbolts the door.

CLEOTHA
Listen good outside. Make sure
nobody's out there to follow you.

You understand?
 (Graceful nods)
 What's the matter with you?

GRACEFUL
 Nothing.

CLEOTHA
 That smokehouse is just straight up
 the rise. Three quick taps --

GRACEFUL
 I know.

EXT. SMOKEHOUSE

Graceful stands before the shack outlined against the faintly
 lightening sky.

The door opens. She is pulled in.

INT. SMOKEHOUSE

T.J. (black, 22, lean and fierce) sits on a haystack swigging
 buttermilk from a quart jar.

Graceful holds up a kerosene lamp, to have a look around.

GRACEFUL
 It stinks in here.

A smashed still sits in the corner. Broken shards of liquor
 bottles are strewn about the floor.

GRACEFUL
 What kind of business you got
 yourself mixed up in, T.J.?

T.J. gobbles cornbread. His leg sports a fresh white
 bandage.

GRACEFUL
 What happened to your leg?

T.J. shakes his head.

GRACEFUL
 How come you hiding?
 (no response)
 Whose place is this?
 (she waits)
 What you got to do with that
 lynching?

T.J. continues eating.

GRACEFUL
Answer me, T.J.!

T.J.
What you don't know, can't nobody
make you tell.

GRACEFUL
(probing)
Mr. Smitherman says they're fixing
to lynch another black somebody.

T.J.
They always fixin' to lynch another
black somebody.

GRACEFUL
The whole family's in danger out
here, T.J. And I'm supposed to
wait till we get you home to find
out why?

T.J.
I ain't goin' home. We're goin'
north, to Osage County.

GRACEFUL
Who?

T.J.
Delroy's takin' me. You know he
got that little spit of land.

GRACEFUL
What about Mama and them?

T.J.
Y'all will go back home, quiet,
soon as Miz Candler come back.

GRACEFUL
Why she leave her kids?

T.J.
To bury Everett.
(leveling a look at
Graceful)
They had to bury him with his
tongue bulging out. Now, you wanna
ask some more questions?

Graceful shakes her head, but T.J.'s memories are loosed; he speaks as if seeing the pictures in his mind.

T.J.

Took him out the Oklahoma City jail and hung him west of town. Hung him and shot him, I don't know what they shot him for, the hell of it, I guess. He was already dead.

(his tone is mocking, oily with bitterness)

He didn't get no nice big crowd and the police directing traffic like that white boy in Tulsa. Just seven honkies in a coupla coupes, that's all it takes to lynch a black man.

T.J. reaches for more cornbread, winces as pain shoots through his leg.

GRACEFUL

T.J.!

T.J.

They don't care which nigger they lynch, neither. Could be the one done the crime. Could be some other poor sucker.

INT/EXT. DELROY'S TRUCK - DAY

Graceful gets in beside T.J. and Delroy, Cleotha following her to the open window with a bundle.

CLEOTHA

(to Graceful)

Keep him off that leg. There's plenty of bandages and salve, and there's some money I had put back, and I don't want to hear nothin' about it.

Graceful nods. Takes the bundle from her.

CLEOTHA

That's good. You do just like that. Keep your face straight and your mouth tight and you'll be just fine. Sooner this mess'll be over and you can come home.

MONTAGE - ALTHEA LANGUISHES IN SOLITUDE

-- INT. DEDMEYER HOUSE - NIGHT - Althea prowls the rooms of her house in darkness.

-- PARLOR - DAY - She lies on the fainting couch. The hours tick away on the mantel clock.

-- DINING ROOM - She drifts, ghostlike, past the breakfast table, avoiding her own gaze in the mirror.

-- BEDROOM - NIGHT - Moonlight streams over her. She tosses and turns in the twisted bedclothes.

DREAM -- YOUNG ALTHEA

She stands sobbing at the riverbank, her homespun dress covered in blood. Suddenly she lifts an indistinguishable shape above her head as if to fling it down. The hands of a black woman reach above her head to take the shape from her.

-- BEDROOM - NIGHT - The sobs in Althea's nightmare become her sobs in the bedroom.

-- BEDROOM - DAY - She lies on her unmade bed, a wet cloth over her forehead. Her hair is wild and uncombed, her housedress wrinkled.

-- MAIDS ROOM - She stands at the open door, staring onto the empty room.

END OF MONTAGE

INT. DEDMEYER HOUSE - DAY

Althea strides away from the maid's room with sudden purpose.

EXT. LATER

She prances down the front walk, her effort doubled by a tight-at-the-knee hobble skirt and high-heeled kid leather shoes. Her hair is coifed under a large ostrich feather hat.

WHITE RESIDENTIAL STREET

Althea's gait remains brisk, but her steps are short and awkward. Her feathers are in a flurry. Beads of perspiration glisten on her face.

TRAIN TRACKS

Out of breath, limping, Althea reaches the rise just short of the rails. She marvels at what lies before her -- the vista of Greenwood, lit by the morning sun.

The prosperous black community is bustling with workday activity. She can see the fancy marquee for the Dreamland Theater, the drugstore, various shops, and finally, the Tulsa Star in the distance.

GREENWOOD AVENUE

Althea's pace slows. Her feet are bleeding through her white shoes.

Tears stream down her determined face.

Outside the grocery, a black man in an apron pushes a broom down the walk. He sees Althea, stops, as do other passersby. A frightened woman holds back her children.

Althea continues past, defiant.

LATER

Althea passes under a brightly-lettered sign that reads: "Bryant Drug Store."

A woman in a flowered dress steps out after her.

WOMAN IN FLOWERED DRESS

(seeing her feet)

You want a bandage or anything,
ma'am? We got everything right
here.

Althea looks briefly down at her blood-soaked shoes, aimless panic showing on her face.

Just ahead she can see the plate-glass window of the Tulsa Star office, reading: "Fearless Exponent of Right and Justice. Oklahoma's Largest Circulation Weekly." She strains forward.

INT. TULSA STAR

Althea steps into the front office. The desk is empty, the door at the back of the room shut tight. She sees the telephone on the wall, and breathes a sigh of relief.

She takes a step forward, but the pain stops her.

ALTHEA

Help? Can somebody help me?
Please?

Outside, a fruit seller calls down the street.

FRUIT SELLER (O.S.)
A-a-pples! P-e-e-aches!

She walks gingerly to the low gate, pushes it open, limps to the desk, lowers herself into Mr. Smitherman's chair, removes her hat.

She lowers her head to the crook of her arm, dissolves into tears.

LATER

MR. SMITHERMAN
Might I be of some assistance,
ma'am?

Althea raises her head as if waking from a deep sleep.

Mr. Smitherman nearly drops his steaming cup of coffee and sack of bread: There's a white woman sitting at his desk.

ALTHEA
(smiling weakly)
If I could trouble you for a sip of
water, sir?

Mr. Smitherman just stands there, staring at her.

ALTHEA
(rising to her feet)
I've been walking...

She gasps, drops back to the chair, and raises the bottom half of her skirt to look at her feet.

Blood oozes from her shoes; she begins to cry again.

Mr. Smitherman averts his eyes from her bare legs, quickly sets down the cup and bread sack. Quits the room.

LATER

Mr. Smitherman has returned with a cup of water.

She is unaware of him, still surrendered to her fit, with wails and spasms.

He gives her a wide berth on his way to the wall telephone.

MR. SMITHERMAN
Get me Dr. Blanchard.

LATER

DR. BLANCHARD, a handsome light-skinned black man in a vested herringbone suit and silk tie, stands over Althea, who now lies on her back the length of the desk.

Her feet are bandaged to the ankles with clean white gauze.

DR. BLANCHARD

(to Althea)

I'd recommend having those dressings changed tomorrow, or the day after. They're going to suppurate rather severely.

MR. SMITHERMAN

(to Althea)

Is there somebody you'd like us to telephone?

Althea looks up into two men's faces, fascinated.

ALTHEA

Thank you, I...

She sits up slowly, to the edge of the desk.

ALTHEA

My maid, Graceful. I have to find her.

The men exchange suspicious glances.

ALTHEA

Graceful... Whiteside. I just want her to come back to work for me. Can you take me to her?

The men consider this.

EXT. CLEOTHA'S HOUSE

Althea hobbles up the steps to the front door. The two men wait at the car behind her.

Cleotha opens the door. Althea is a fright in her ostrich feathers and bandaged feet. Her chignon is loosey-goosey, her face a mess.

Willie peers around his mother at Althea.

WILLIE
 This here Miz Dedmeyer, Mama.
 (to Althea)
 This here my Mama.

ALTHEA
 Hello. Mrs....
 (the name sticks in her
 throat)
 ...Whiteside?

Cleotha nods.

A long look passes between the two women.

CLEOTHA
 Would you like to come in?

ALTHEA
 No, thank you.

Cleotha acknowledges Mr. Smitherman and Dr. Blanchard, who wave apologetically.

CLEOTHA
 Graceful's not here, Miz Dedmeyer.
 She taking care of a sick relative
 out of town.

ALTHEA
 I see. When will she be back?

CLEOTHA
 I can't say for sure.

ALTHEA
 You see, she left my employ without
 a word, a single word. And I
 really must have her back.

CLEOTHA
 I don't know when to expect her,
 ma'am.

WILLIE
 (to Althea)
 What's the matter with your feet?

CLEOTHA
 Willie, you go on in the house.

ALTHEA

Will you let her know I'd like her
to come back to work? Just as soon
as she can.

CLEOTHA

(gesturing toward the two
men)
They takin' you home?

ALTHEA

Yes.

CLEOTHA

Willie, get my purse. I'm going to
go for a ride.
(to the two men)
I'll sit in the back with Miz
Dedmeyer.

She takes her purse and heads out to the car. Althea
follows.

EXT. OIL TOWN IN OSAGE COUNTY - DAY

A sprawling, filthy oil boomtown of makeshift shelters,
canvas tents, clapboard stores. The unpaved street is
crowded with white oilfield workers.

Graceful hurries along, sidestepping mud holes and mule
droppings, but especially avoiding the men.

She passes a family of Osage Indians in a farm wagon, enters
a mercantile store.

INT. STORE

Graceful watches the white store owner press his thumb
against the scales as he weighs her order. The owner's wife
eyes her suspiciously from behind the counter.

Graceful steps away from the nearby shelves, displays her
hands to the woman, claims her purchases carefully, with
barely controlled anger, and leaves quickly.

EXT. OIL TOWN STREET

Graceful, rushing out of the store, bumps into a white DRUNK
ROUSTABOUT, who grabs her around the waist.

DRUNK ROUSTABOUT

Whoa, there, little heifer!

Graceful pulls away from him in loathing, darts into a nearby alley.

ALLEY

Graceful vomits violently. She leans back against the store building, and trembling, wipes her face. After a moment she composes herself, enters the street again.

T.J.'S CAMP - OUTSKIRTS OF TOWN

A large canvas tent, smoking campfire, evidence of lengthy occupation -- discarded food tins, stacks of firewood, slatted crates for sitting. T.J. moves with a slight limp as he tends the fire.

T.J.

You get my sugar?

Graceful drops the packages on the scuffed ground near him, goes into the tent.

T.J. paws quickly through the packages.

T.J.

Graceful!

Graceful appears at the tent opening.

GRACEFUL

I'm not toting no thirty pounds of sugar out from town.

T.J. glares at her, but Graceful stares right back at him.

GRACEFUL

You aim to start that moonshine business again, don't expect me to help you.

T.J.

We got to get some money somehow. You want to go to work in the bawdy tent maybe?

GRACEFUL

I want to go home to Tulsa.

T.J.

Nobody stopping you.

Graceful meets his eyes a moment, retreats inside the tent.

INT. CANVAS TENT

Graceful sits on a pallet of blankets; she touches a hand to her swollen breasts, lowers her palm to her belly. Her face is stony, but the dim light shows tears trailing down her cheeks.

EXT. T.J.'S CAMP - LATER

In the tall grass along the creek bank a good way from the tent, Graceful sits back, wiping her face with her skirt hem after being sick.

T.J. calls her name in the distance.

T.J. (O.S.)
Graceful! Where you at!

Graceful turns as she recognizes a second voice.

HEDGEMON (O.S.)
Graceful!

MOMENTS LATER

Hedgemon stands with T.J. in the littered yard. Graceful comes from behind the tent.

T.J.
Where the hell you been?

GRACEFUL
(to Hedgemon)
What are you doing here?

HEDGEMON
Mr. Dedmeyer's looking to see you.

T.J. throws down his opened tin can, storms over to Graceful.

T.J.
That white man you worked for?
What's he want?

Graceful and Hedgemon look only at each other.

HEDGEMON
He wants you to go back to work for them.

Graceful shakes her head, sensing trouble.

EXT. GUSHER HOTEL - DAY

Graceful waits outside in the crowded, noisy street. She can see Hedgemon through the plate glass window. He removes his hat and keeps to the door until the desk clerk motions him in.

LATER

Franklin approaches Graceful on the sidewalk, Hedgemon a few paces behind.

FRANKLIN

(with too much gusto)

There you are, Gracie! Thank goodness, we've been hunting all over! I was about to decide you'd left the country!

His words land on the sidewalk.

GRACEFUL

Mr. Dedmeyer, I can't go back to work for y'all.

FRANKLIN

If it's about money, I'm sure we could make a better arrangement, say, twenty-five a week?

A generous sum. Graceful absorbs the shock. She is careful not to be swayed by Hedgemon's pleading eyes.

GRACEFUL

(to Franklin)

How many people I got to be cooking for?

FRANKLIN

(confused)

Why, two of course.

(realizing)

No, no, it's just Mrs. Dedmeyer and me. There's a train with a colored car this evening. I'll leave your ticket at the window. All right?

Graceful gazes down the filthy shanty town street, full of strangers. A dark tunnel to nowhere.

Franklin and Hedgemon shift their weight, man-fidget.

Graceful turns back to them, her face changed: She'll go.

Franklin claps his hands together.

Hedgemon, unable to get Graceful to look at him, puts his hat back on and grins.

INT. DEDMEYER HOUSE - DAY

Althea comes down the staircase in time to greet Franklin at the front door. Graceful enters behind him.

FRANKLIN
Look who I found, Thea.

Graceful carries her few worldly goods in a burlap sack. She glances at Althea, sees that her eyes are wet.

GRACEFUL
Ma'am.

FRANKLIN
It's a good thing, too. People could starve to death around here.

GRACEFUL
I could fix something...

FRANKLIN
Tell you the truth--

ALTHEA
(to Graceful)
You must be tired.

GRACEFUL
I'll just put my things up.

Althea nods, smiles slightly.

ALTHEA
You'd better wash up. Trains are filthy places.

GRACEFUL
Yes, ma'am.

Althea cannot contain her relief and gladness. She casts about for a justifying reason.

ALTHEA

And then, oh goodness, there's just so much to be done, there's um, the laundry, and Nona Murphy has been here practically every day, Lord what a persistent creature, and of course, you've got to fix Mr. Dedmeyer something decent to eat.

She smiles a glittering smile at her husband, turns to bestow it on Graceful, who is already making her way down the hall.

Franklin hangs his hat, catches Althea by the hand before she can breeze away. He pulls her to him, raises her chin.

FRANKLIN

Happy now?

ALTHEA

Why, yes. Yes, of course. Why do you say such a thing?

EXT. MURPHY MANSION - NIGHT

Blowing autumn leaves. A circular drive leads through old oaks toward a baroque monstrosity of a house, looming over a sweeping lawn.

Elegant Pierce Arrows and Rolls Royces pull up, depositing guests at the double doors. The strains of a waltz rise louder every time the doors open.

INT.

L.O. Murphy, in warbonnet, white tie and tails, struts through the chandeliered ballroom.

L.O.

(exhorting the orchestra)
Crank it up, boys. I want them to hear you clean up to Skiatook.

Under the salon archway stands a masked southern belle in gossamer...

ALTHEA

watches -- with anticipation -- as the masqueraders enter the front hall and hand their hats and wraps to the black servants.

L.O. greets everyone with varying degrees of enthusiasm: an aviator and a ballerina; dance hall girl and bank robber;

rodeo stars; baseball players; pioneers; two can-can girls, both of whom receive kisses from L.O.

THE SHERRIF enters, dressed as a Rough-Riding Teddy Roosevelt. L.O. slaps him on the back.

Althea glances toward the terrace, where Franklin mingles with other men in the torchlight.

Near the French doors a plinking minstrel in blackface draws laughter and applause from a small crowd.

Murmurs rise throughout the hall as a Spanish Flamenco couple sweeps in.

Nona -- maskless-- appears suddenly at Althea's side. She wears a fringed, white buckskin skirt and feathered headdress. Her skin is stained a deep copper color.

NONA

You'll never guess who that is.
None other than oil baron E.W.
Marland and his adopted daughter,
who is also, by the way, his wife's
niece, but his, uh, constant
companion.

Althea flicks open her silk fan, concealing her face as she stares hard at the front entrance.

A severe woman in a long, black dress enters.

NONA

Now who do you think she's trying
to be, Carrie Nation? Oh, Lord, no,
it's a suffragette! On account of
the women's vote Tuesday.
(leaning in, a false
intimacy)
L.O. said he'd spank me if I tried
to register, but what L.O. don't
know could fill a liberry.

Althea pulls away, casts her searching gaze around the ballroom.

NONA

Oh, lookee! It's Chief Bacon Rind!

Through the front doors a dignified, heavysset Indian man in a brimless fur hat, suit coat, beaded amulet and hoop earrings passes austerely into the ballroom. He is followed by a short, round woman in a blanket.

NONA

You'd think those Osages with all
their oil money could afford
tailors and dressmakers. Oh,
watch, watch this!

L.O.'s feathered warbonnet sweeps behind him like duck wings
as he makes an auspicious approach toward the Chief, a fellow
Indian, as it were.

L.O.

There you are, Chief! Welcome!
Welcome!

Nona skips over to the threesome in her bare feet.

Disgusted, Althea guides her hoop skirt toward the terrace.

EXT. TERRACE

Franklin doesn't see her watching him from the ballroom.

He's laughing, drinking bootleg bourbon from a shot glass,
smoking a fat cigar in the midst of other boisterous men in
their shirtsleeves.

INT. BALLROOM

Waltzing costumes whirl nightmarishly around Althea.

Graceful glides through the blur with a tray of hors
d'oeuvres.

Althea watches her as if in a trance.

FRANKLIN

(stopping her)

Ah! Here you are, my darling.

He bends to kiss her forehead.

FRANKLIN

(holding her at arm's
length to admire her)

You'd put the crown jewels to
shame.

He presses her to him.

ALTHEA

Dance with me.

Franklin's face is flushed with happy secrets and bourbon.

FRANKLIN

And why wouldn't I want to dance
with the most beautiful woman in
the world?

He bows, takes her hand, begins to whirl her around the dance floor to an elegant waltz. The bell of her hoop skirt sweeps the parquet floor. For a moment they are a vision.

MOMENTS LATER

The orchestra swings into a fox trot. Distracted, Althea cannot keep up. She tears off her mask and walks away.

Franklin trails after her.

FRANKLIN

Thea, what's the matter? Darling--

Althea hurries across the ball room and enters...

LIBATION/DINING ROOM

An elderly black champagne server stands at attention behind a gold-rimmed crystal punch bowl.

Althea ignores the startled glances from the men in the room and makes her way to the champagne table.

ALTHEA

Two please.

The old man ladles champagne punch into two gold-rimmed goblets.

Franklin rushes up behind her. Already sipping, she hands him a champagne.

FRANKLIN

Are you all right?

ALTHEA

We're celebrating, aren't we? One ought to have champagne to celebrate, don't you think?

Franklin's eyes dart around at the men looking at her.

ALTHEA

But this masquerade is nothing. It's a pale little tea party compared to the ball we're going to give when the Deep Fork well comes in.

Althea's lovely image is framed in the mantel mirror as if by a painter. Graceful appears behind her, carrying a tray of goblets, her shoulders bowed by the weight.

GRACEFUL
 (to the old man)
 Want me bring anything else from
 downstairs?

The old man shakes his head.

Althea watches Graceful's hands remove the goblets from the tray. She opens her mouth, searching for some appropriate exchange she can make, but finds nothing.

NONA
 (entering)
 Althea Dedmeyer, aren't you a
 caution? Go and dress up like the
 ladiest lady, come in here and
 drink this naughty champagne, I
 declare.
 (to Franklin)
 Your wife is so bad!

As Graceful goes by, Nona takes a fresh champagne off her tray.

Althea bites her lip.

FRANKLIN
 Looks like we're all bad. If the
 law gets a good whiff at this party
 we might all be spendin' the night
 in jail.

NONA
 I wouldn't worry about that, sir.
 Sheriff's right out yonder on the
 terrace imbibing some good bonded
 bourbon right alongside L.O. and
 the others, and they're sayin',
 'Where's Franklin Dedmeyer, where's
 our new baron of Deep Fork?'

FRANKLIN
 The dull conversation of those oil
 men, Miz Murphy, tempts me from
 present company about as much as an
 invitation to dine on a mess of
 swamp rabbit could tempt me away
 from a feast of pheasant under
 glass.

ALTHEA
 (under her breath)
 Don't be an ass.

NONA
 (purring up at Franklin)
 Guess who just came through the
 door?
 (gazing at Althea)
 None other than that handsome
 partner of yours.

Althea steps toward the ball room but instantly stops herself. Nona's eyes are riveted on her.

NONA
 That scamp don't have a sign of a
 costume on. But he's got somebody
 with him dressed up wild enough to
 shut that room like a door.

Althea glances through the doorway but cannot see Jim Dee anywhere.

NONA
 Fella might just walk away with
 that little prize L.O.'s gonna give
 away at midnight.

Franklin starts for the ball room.

ALTHEA
 Franklin!

Franklin turns back and offers his arm.

FRANKLIN
 Ladies, shall we?

Althea takes his arm. Nona squeezes up close against his other side.

NONA
 Franklin Dedmeyer, you are the long-
 leggedest thing. I'm gonna have to
 stand on my tiptoes to keep up with
 you.

INT. BALLROOM

Althea sees...

Jim Dee's tawny head just inside the entrance. He is wearing work khakis and a knotted red kerchief.

But her eyes -- as well as all others in the room -- are drawn to the spectacle beside him.

It is Japheth -- loose-limbed, scarecrowish, slouched near the wall. His head is cocked sideways, hands tied behind his back, a thick rope around his neck. He has painted himself half black, half white. His tongue -- coated black -- juts out in a ghastly way.

The silent room begins to buzz.

Chief Bacon Rind strides out, followed by the woman in the blanket.

A few guests edge quickly out the front door. Others whisper excitedly to one another.

Graceful stands near the service entrance, her glazed stare at once cold and terrified.

The old champagne server hurries past her. Graceful wheels and follows him out through the service door. There are no other servants in sight.

Nona saunters up to Japheth.

NONA

Law, child, you like to scared the
servants to death comin' in here
lookin' like that. They think
we're getting ready for another
Tulsa necktie party.

Franklin moves to confront Jim Dee, leaving Althea alone.

JAPHETH

Hello, Letha.

Althea looks as though she teeters on a precipice; she stares, unsteady and horrified.

NONA

(to Japheth)

Oh, here comes the sheriff!

The Sheriff approaches in his Teddy Roosevelt costume.

Japheth flops his head to his shoulder again, shuts his eyes, and pushes his tongue out from his lips.

NONA

Evening, Mr. President!

L.O. and a cowboy in chaps are close on Otis's heels.

NONA

Oh, c'mon now, where's y'all's sense of humor? What a bunch of old party poopers.

JAPHETH

(lifting his head,
grinning broadly)

Nice to see you again, sir. I guess you don't remember me, there was such a crowd.

(to Nona)

Mrs. Murphy, I wonder if you couldn't untie me here. Such a kind hostess...

Nona fumbles with the rope at his wrist, as he continues...

JAPHETH

It was some trick tying 'em. 'Course I didn't have any trouble with this--

(touching the noose)

We got practice with these type of knots, isn't that right, Mr. Murphy?

The crowd of masqueraders creep forward, straining to hear.

Althea continues to stare at the macabre sight of her brother.

JAPHETH

(imitating L.O.'s bluster)

The niggers better keep their heads down. Been hearin' good things about this new Klan. Folks are joining to the tune of a thousand a week down in Texas.

L.O.

See here, who are you? Who let this fellow in? Sam? Where's that doorman?

All eyes remain on Japheth.

L.O.

Jim Dee, did you bring this abomination? I'll have the lot of you tossed out.

FRANKLIN

(to L.O.)

Listen here, friend. Let's take a deep breath.

JAPHETH

(mocking)

Listen here, friend, let's not say anything to make us sorry.

L.O. whips around on Japheth, who merely smirks at his raised fists.

L.O. lunges.

Franklin, Jim Dee and several others rush forward, grab Japheth's arm. They struggle to hoist him, but he worms himself downward. They half drag, half carry, him out of the hall.

The ballroom is silent, the servants vanished. The place where Japheth stood is empty.

The silence slowly turns to murmurs as people turn back to the party.

A clarinet tootles a few aborted notes. The piano joins, and soon the orchestra swings into a tinkling ragtime. The ball continues, now laced with scandalized excitement. Loud and bawdy laughter bounces around the room. A man with a penciled mustache steps to the bandstand and begins to croon. Servants reappear.

HALLWAY

Althea leans against the wall, her eyes closed, tears flooding her cheeks.

BALLROOM

L.O., Franklin, Jim Dee and the others breeze back in, adjusting their clothing, wiping sweaty lips.

L.O. dusts himself off. Straightens his white warbonnet.

L.O.

More wine, Sam, more wine! Fetch up some bottles of that French stuff.

(doesn't notice Nona slipping outside)

We're sparing no expense, this evening.

FRANKLIN

(to Jim Dee)

Why in God's name did you let him come in here looking like that?

JIM DEE

Hell, man. I didn't know he was going to do that. Nobody knows what's in that weird head. A sane man couldn't dream it.

FRANKLIN

You rode in the car with him.

JIM DEE

He must have had that noose in his pocket or something. All I knew, when he came to the car he had his face painted up. Said it was for the party.

FRANKLIN

Looks to God like you could have--

JIM DEE

Listen, we got bigger troubles than that loco brother-in-law of yours. That hole's swoll up like biscuit dough. I told you that formation's too cavey.

FRANKLIN

All right, pull the damn spudder. You'll get your goddamn rig.

(calmer)

Send Koop to Bristow Tool, tell 'em to put it on my ticket.

JIM DEE

I didn't come here to ask your permission, your lordship. I already been to the tool supply. They cut us off.

FRANKLIN

What?

JIM DEE

Won't turn loose of a tong or a timber until you come in and pay them something on the note.

FRANKLIN
 (looking around the
 ballroom)
 Have you seen Thea?

JIM DEE
 I haven't seen your wife. I'm
 trying to tell you something.
 Don't you hear me? We're finished.
 Done. Unless you get hold of some
 money someplace, we're not sinkin'
 another inch of pipe.

Jim Dee has dropped the bomb; he leaves Franklin there,
 rocked.

Franklin looks around him, at the glitter, the opulence.
 L.O. strolls up, slaps him on the back.

INT. DEDMEYER HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Althea sits at a small wooden table in the dim moonlight, her
 face in her hands.

Graceful sees Althea's back and shoulders shudder with
 spasms, and turns to go, but Althea jumps up.

ALTHEA
 Oh, there you are! Thank God! I
 was looking all over.
 (wipes her face quickly)
 I'm sorry about everything this
 evening. I should never have let
 Nona Murphy have you.

GRACEFUL
 I'm a domestic who work in the
 kitchen and keep the house clean.
 I'm not no slave to loan out to the
 neighbors.
 (ignoring Althea's
 reaction)
 I was going to tell you in the
 morning, but I might as well say it
 now. I'm giving my notice.

ALTHEA
 You can't.

Graceful meets her gaze, turns to go back down the hall.

MAID'S ROOM

Althea follows Graceful into the cramped room.

ALTHEA
Graceful, listen. I need you.

GRACEFUL
There's other help, ma'am.

ALTHEA
But you've just come back home.
(lightly)
You know something? My name when I
was a girl growing up - my family
name is Whiteside. Isn't that
funny?

Graceful looks past her toward the dark hall.

GRACEFUL
I'm not going to stay anywhere that
man come around.

ALTHEA
What man? Not Mr. Dedmeyer?

GRACEFUL
Your brother.

ALTHEA
He won't be here.

GRACEFUL
He's your brother.

ALTHEA
No he isn't. Not really. He's
just...some person...
(changing the subject)
How about this. Just stay till
Christmas. Two months. It'll be
too hard to find somebody right
before the holidays.

GRACEFUL
How you know he won't come?

ALTHEA
He won't, that's all.

Graceful avoids Althea's gaze, goes to the small table where
she keeps her personal things -- a small picture of her
family sits there.

GRACEFUL
I can't just stay two months and
then go.

ALTHEA
Why not? What more can I do?

GRACEFUL
Nothin', ma'am.
(lying)
Y'all been fine, just...

ALTHEA
Hsssssht!

Althea grabs Graceful's arm and holds it tight. They listen.

A door snicks shut.

A man's shoe clicks on the tile one cautious step.

The two women listen in mutual fear, not breathing.

Footsteps creak up the stairs.

They both recognize the sound; both breathe their relief in union.

FRANKLIN (O.S.)
Thea? Are you here?

The women share a long moment. A wall has come down.

EXT. MURPHY LAWN

Nona hikes up her buckskin skirt and kneels beside Japheth on the grass.

NONA
(hissing)
The fools.

Japheth blinks up at her, only the white half of his face visible in the moonlight, the blood glistening in black streaks.

NONA
I never dreamed for a minute they'd
act like that!

The white half of his face grimaces.

NONA
Most of them was right out there on
the Red Fork road with us, now
butter won't melt in their mouths.

He struggles to his feet, walks away.

NONA
Where are you going? Wait!

EXT. RIVER BANK

Nona culls her way out of the scrub to find Japheth washing himself beside the water.

Water drips off his face. His eyes burn with hatred.

NONA
You all right?

He doesn't answer.

Nona stands preening behind him, smoothing her hair, brushing off her buckskin.

NONA
(with a trilling laugh)
D'ja ever see such a bunch of
hypocrites?
(her voice drops an
octave, imitating L.O.)
'Dedmeyer! Did you bring this
abomination?'
(tenderly, mocking
Franklin)
'Now, listen here, friend, let's
just calm down a minute.'

Japheth stays crouched, seething at the glowing refineries across the river.

NONA
Sanctimonious frauds. Like the
Sheriff wasn't out there that night
shouting orders like an old army
sergeant.
(mimicking a gruff voice)
'Y'all fetch that rope over here!"
(no response again from
Japheth)
You see his face? All shocked and
revolted.

She laughs and caresses his shoulder.

NONA
You gonna be all right?

She draws close to him to examine the still-oozing cut above his eye, the bruises along the bridge of his nose.

NONA

Well, I got to get back, L.O.'ll
 have my hide!
 (turning to go)
 Ring me up Monday. Regular time,
 all right?

The surprise of his sudden movement flashes on her face. He grabs and pulls her down with one leaping movement.

LATER

Japheth strips off his bloody shirt, ties her belly around a boulder.

With great effort he drags her lifeless weight over the sandbar, wades out.

His arm around her chin, he swims her out until he reaches the heart of the river -- where he lets her go.

The white buckskin gleams for only a moment before disappearing.

INT. HOTEL TULSA - DAY

A hotel captain carries a message tray through the bustling splendor of the lobby, to a corner table where Franklin and L.O. sit smoking cigars.

HOTEL CAPTAIN

Delo Corporation?

Franklin reaches for the small folded paper, but L.O.'s hand is quicker.

L.O.

Seein' as how I'm the new
 partner...
 (holding it away to see
 it)
 Huh. We're wanted out at the
 location.

Franklin tips the captain.

L.O.

(claps the table)
 Ha ha! I knew it!

L.O. bolts up, stubs out his cigar, straightens his tie, and disappears. Franklin rises to follow him.

FRONT DESK

On his way out, L.O. tips his hat to Althea, who is elegantly dressed.

The clerk passes her a small note from the mailbox.

THE NOTE

reads, "Come with them. J.D."

Althea blushes, wads the note as Franklin approaches.

EXT. DEEP FORK WELL

A fully outfitted cable rig stands in a litter-fouled clearing near the river. The rig's crosshatched grid towers above the leafless trees nearby. Its belching engine boiler can be heard from a distance.

DERRICK FLOOR

Roughnecks hustle back and forth. One glances up to a rig hand who balances himself on a girt forty feet above, holding on to one of the sway braces. Below, a derrick man sets the rig irons.

In the engine house, the tool dresser, BEN KOOP bends over the boiler, ties it to the engine.

Jim Dee strides the length of the platform, shouting orders.

FROM A DISTANCE

Japheth watches from behind the wheel of a shiny Model T. His hair is slicked back under a new hat and he is smiling.

DERRICK FLOOR - LATER

Jim Dee sees L.O.'s Pierce Arrow cruise to a stop down below.

He watches as L.O., Franklin, and Althea head toward the rig, but his eyes stay on Althea, her attire: she wears a veiled broad-brimmed hat and a man's duster.

Althea's looks through her veil at the drill pipe pounding up and down.

MOMENTS LATER

L.O. struts past Althea and Franklin, past Jim Dee, into the belthouse.

L.O.
 (to Jim Dee)
 How many feet more, you reckon?

Jim Dee folds his arms, watches Franklin guide his wife onto the planks.

JIM DEE
 (to Franklin)
 What the hell'd you bring her out here for?

He gestures to Ben Koop, to cut the steam engine. Ben Koop shoots him a look: Are you crazy?

JIM DEE
 Koop! Cut it off!

Ben Koop nods once, and obeys.

The rig gives one last whoof and groan, goes quiet.

JIM DEE
 Ain't you heard it's bad luck to bring a woman on a rig?

FRANKLIN
 (laughing)
 Aye, Cap'n. See, darling, I told you he'd give us a hard time. Watch your hem there.

He positions Althea like a store mannequin beside the bull wheel.

FRANKLIN
 You don't have to stop for us, buddy. We're glad for the noise.

Jim Dee peers through the netting that spills over Althea's hat. He appraises her coat, her shoes, turns away, disgusted.

He sees L.O. pouring over the logbook.

The rig roars.

Ben Koop pumps the forge bellows, minding his own business.

FRANKLIN
 We're glad to put up with a little grease for the privilege of seeing it, isn't that right, darling?
 (yelling)

Crank her up, Benny!
 (to Jim Dee)
 Thea's never watched a well blow
 in.

Ben Koop pretends not to hear him, waits to see what Jim Dee's going to do.

Franklin starts toward the logbook.

Jim Dee, madder than hell, picks up an iron tong.

FRANKLIN
 (oblivious)
 Let's have a look at that logbook.

JIM DEE
 (brandishing the tong,
 stepping in front of him)
 I want to know what you're up to.

Franklin looks baffled.

FRANKLIN
 (laughing)
 Up to? You're the one called us
 out here.

JIM DEE
 Called you? I ain't called you for
 nothin'.

He turns on Althea.

JIM DEE
 What have you got on that ugly
 widow's hat for?

ALTHEA
 (startled, her face still
 hidden by the veil)
 Why, to protect my complexion.

JIM DEE
 Look like you're ready for a
 funeral.

Althea unties the netted veil and rolls it up to the hat's wide brim, displaying her lovely face to him.

It seems to make him angrier; he searches for anywhere else to look.

FRANKLIN

Darling, don't you want to sit in the car? When that gusher blows she'll rain crude from here to Christmas.

JIM DEE

What makes you so all-fired sure she's coming in? Did I say a goddamn word about any goddamn show?

FRANKLIN

Watch your language in front of my wife. You're treading dangerous ground, buddy.

JIM DEE

You call me buddy one more time you're going to be wearing this tong for a hat.

FRANKLIN

What's got into you?

ALTHEA

(hissing, suddenly)
Listen!

Japheth's Model T chugs into the clearing. Stops nose to rear behind the Pierce Arrow. Japheth steps out.

JAPHETH

Good morning, people.
(to Althea, tipping his derby)
Sister.

Althea glares.

JAPHETH

What good luck to find y'all here together.

JIM DEE

What the hell do you want?

JAPHETH

Just thought I'd drive out and have a look.

FRANKLIN

You've been banned from this location.

JAPHETH
How's that?

FRANKLIN
You damn well know what I'm saying.

Ben Koop reaches for a shotgun propped in the corner of the engine house.

JAPHETH
This location's like home. Me and Letha grew up not six miles from this here spot, ain't that right, Letha?

Althea stares, looking suddenly like a little girl playing dress up.

Ben Koop strides along the walkway, cradling the twelve-gauge.

JAPHETH
(smiling, to Ben Koop)
You intend to use that, you better be ready to shoot Sister, too. She's a witness.
(raising his hands, fingers spread)
I'm unarmed.

FRANKLIN
Trespassing is grounds to shoot a man in this state. This is my well site.

JAPHETH
Whose well?
(smoothly, to Jim Dee)
Your partner wouldn't be keeping anything from you, would he?

L.O. suddenly recognizes him.

L.O.
It's that son of a bitch!

Japheth's smile widens.

L.O.
Where's my wife, you bastard!

JAPHETH
I don't know anything about your wife, Murphy.

I'm here on oil business.
 Dedmeyer's lying to you.
 (training on Jim Dee)
 Both of you. He never filed the
 lease under Delo Corporation.

L.O.
 (coming toward him)
 I'll wring your goddamn neck.

JIM DEE
 (stepping in front of
 L.O.)
 Let's hear him.

JAPHETH
 (to L.O. and Jim Dee)
 He filed the lease in his own name.
 Franklin H. Dedmeyer, sole owner
 and proprietor. Go to Sapulpa and
 check, if you don't believe me.

Franklin recoils; it's a bald-faced lie.

JAPHETH
 (to Franklin)
 But don't feel too bad about
 jackin' over your partner. He's
 been jackin' you over for years.

Franklin glares back, confused.

JAPHETH
 Oh don't tell me you didn't know
 he's been screwing your wife.

ALTHEA
 Monster!

JAPHETH
 I was born one, right? Ain't that
 what Ma said?

ALTHEA
 Shut up!

JAPHETH
 (matter of factly)
 Shut up? Maybe you'd like to bash
 my head on the rocks.
 (to Franklin, Jim Dee)
 What kind of little girl takes it
 in her head to murder her own baby
 brother?

Japheth's face changes. He begins to speak in alternating voices.

JAPHETH
 (a high-pitched girlish whine)
 I saw her, Mama, I saw her.
 (rasping like an old crone)
 Shut your mouth, Estaleen.
 (girlish)
 She was going to beat his brains out, Mama!
 (crone)
 Get out of my sight!
 (girl)
 She had that ugly baby slung up over her head right over the rocks.
 (Japheth laughs like a madman, continues in the girl's voice)
 If that old colored midwife hadn't stopped her, she'd a smashed him like a gourd.

Althea watches him, the horror of her life's guilt laid bare on her face.

FLASHBACK - YOUNG ALTHEA

She lifts the misshapen baby above her head to fling it down. The midwife's hands reach up to take the baby from her.

BACK TO SCENE

Japheth descends further into his maniacal outburst.

JAPHETH
 (crone)
 Shut up! Shut up!
 (girl)
 I won't shut up! I saw it!
 (coming back to himself)
 Hunh.
 (spits)
 Saved by a nigger on the day I was born. Funny, ain't it?

ALTHEA
 (in a whisper)
 What do you want?

JAPHETH

There's that question, again.
(crooking his neck up the
derrick)

Oh, just a little piece of the
action.

(to Althea)

Reckon you're gonna get double your
share.

(nodding at Franklin)

Half from him.

(then at Jim Dee)

And half from him.

JIM DEE

Shut your lyin' mouth.

Franklin looks at his wife, his eyes searching.

JIM DEE

(nodding toward Ben Koop's
shotgun)

Koop!

Ben Koop and the rig hands converge on Japheth.

Japheth backs toward the Model T.

JAPHETH

Hey, now, I'm a reasonable man.
I'm willing to talk.

The men close in. He scrambles into the car.

MOMENTS LATER

Japheth drives out of the clearing, stops.

JAPHETH

(out the window)

From what I hear, Murphy, you might
try Kansas City when you get around
to lookin' for your little trollop
of a wife. I heard she ran off
with a cornet player.

Althea reaches out for Franklin; he flinches.

ALTHEA

Franklin?

He turns his back, strides away.

INT. DEDMEYER HOUSE - DAY

MONTAGE - "ALTHEA AND GRACEFUL IN MUTUAL ISOLATION."

-- Althea sits up in bed reading a novel, her hair uncombed, deeply depressed. Franklin's side of the bed is neatly made.

-- Graceful goes about her duties in a kind of leaden remoteness.

-- Graceful places a tray of food outside Althea's door.

-- Graceful stands at the back door, staring out at a gray rain.

-- A bright, sunny day. Church bells ring. A nativity scene lies below in the churchyard.

-- Graceful takes away a tray of uneaten food outside the bedroom door.

-- Graceful sits weeping at the kitchen table.

INT. DEDMEYER HOUSE - DAY

Graceful sits at the kitchen table, her hand on her swollen belly. She looks up.

Althea stands, staring at her.

Graceful rises slowly from her chair. Her maid's uniform hikes up below her breasts. She reaches to pull it down over her belly.

GRACEFUL

Ma'am?

ALTHEA

My word.

GRACEFUL

Will you be wantin' supper ma'am?

ALTHEA

When's that baby due?

Graceful doesn't answer.

ALTHEA

Looks soon to me.

GRACEFUL

Not soon.

ALTHEA

I guess you've taken care of things? Somebody to--

GRACEFUL

I got a fryer cut up in the icebox. Do chicken sound good to you?

ALTHEA

How are you going to have the baby? I mean, what do colored girls usually do?

GRACEFUL

Some have a midwife, some go to a doctor, some just have the child.

ALTHEA

What about you?

GRACEFUL

I haven't made up my mind. Just deal with it when it come along.

ALTHEA

You can't do that.
 (with purpose, striding to the sink)
 You have to...
 (thinking, running the spigot)
 Plan for it.

She turns, looks at Graceful, sees her misery, but misunderstands its source.

ALTHEA

Graceful? You don't have to go back to your mother's house. Wouldn't a colored doctor come here? I mean, you could have it here as far as I'm concerned.

Graceful opens the icebox, not responding.

GRACEFUL

You want your supper upstairs?

ALTHEA

No, no, the dining room will be fine.

MONTAGE - "ALTHEA PREPARES FOR THE BABY."

-- Althea buys second-hand maternity dresses at the Ladies' Auxiliary League.

-- Althea unwraps a new feathertick mattress, puts it on the maid's cot.

-- Althea asks the milk man for another quart of milk.

-- Graceful hoists a laundry basket. Althea tries to help her, nearly knocks her back.

-- Althea carries a laundry basket behind Graceful out to the clothesline. Stands chattering away as Graceful hangs them on the line.

END OF MONTAGE

INT. DEDMEYER HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Graceful cuts vegetables at the sink.

Althea sits at the small table, fiddling with a salt cellar.

ALTHEA

You'd think he'd have finished by now. Wouldn't you think he'd be tired of hanging around that trashy Bristow town? I'd bet he'd give anything for one of your fried pies.

Graceful puts the vegetables in water, reaches for the flour tin.

ALTHEA

(shaking her head)

Doesn't it look like he could come home on a Sunday, at least?

EXT. DEDMEYER HOUSE - DAY

Althea rocks on the porch swing, watches Graceful sweep the porch.

She gazes at the pokeweed and dandelions under the rose hedge.

ALTHEA

Graceful, what am I going to do? He's not going to come back.

Graceful's movements are heavy and slow.

GRACEFUL

He seem like a good man to me.
He'll be back if he think it's
right. 'Bout the time you get used
to him bein' gone.

ALTHEA

(hopeful, as if Graceful's
words are prophetic)
Will he?

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

Graceful thumps the dust mop back and forth across the
hardwood floor.

She lets go the handle and groans, leans her full weight on
the polished breakfront. Her back rises and falls in
shuddery breaths.

The pain passes. Graceful stands straight and tall, catches
Althea's eye in the mirror.

ALTHEA

Do you want me to call a doctor?

Graceful tries to catch her breath.

ALTHEA

(rounding the dining room
table)
I told you we had to make some
arrangements.

Graceful nudges the head of the fallen dust mop out from
under the breakfront with her foot.

Leans, grunting, to pick it up.

ALTHEA

(snatching it up)
What are you doing? Give me that
thing.

She leans it up against the wall.

ALTHEA

Well, here we are. What did I tell
you?

Althea looks around helplessly.

ALTHEA

Get into bed. You can't have it
standing up like an old milk cow.

Graceful groans and leans on the breakfront again.

Althea reaches out and Graceful instantly grabs her hand,
squeezing tight. Althea waits for a signal from somewhere,
what to do. She leads Graceful forward.

MAID'S ROOM

Graceful sits on the edge of the narrow cot, leaning into the
pain, groaning.

ALTHEA

Lay down. Aren't you supposed to
lay down?

Graceful shakes her head, confused, exhausted. Althea lowers
Graceful slowly on her side as another labor pain begins.

GRACEFUL

(grunting)
My back. Push my back.

After a moment's hesitation, Althea reaches over and puts her
palms on Graceful's lower back.

GRACEFUL

(through gritted teeth)
Harder, ma'am, harder.

Graceful wails with pain. Slowly, the wave passes.

GRACEFUL

(panting)
That helped. Some.

She lies still, her eyes closed.

ALTHEA

I'll put on some water.

Graceful moans, reaches for her hand.

GRACEFUL

Here it comes. My back, ma'am,
please.

ALTHEA

(leaning over her)
I can't get a good grip from here.

Althea helps Graceful to turn, then presses against her back with all her weight.

LATER

Althea props Graceful up, places a pillow behind her head.

Graceful grunts deep in her diaphragm as she bears down.

ALTHEA

Lean back, brace yourself.

(at Graceful's knee,
chanting a sing-song)

Oh it's coming, it's coming, here
it comes, good, honey... You're
doin' good... oh... Oh... Here it
is now, Graceful. Push...

(puffing)

Almost, almost.

Her chant rises with Graceful's groans.

ALTHEA

Here it is. One push, now. Here
it comes. We're so close now.
C'mon. Come, baby. Push, mama,
push.

(gasping)

It's here.

The baby comes. Althea reaches down, grasps the baby.

ALTHEA

(half-laughing, half-
crying)

A boy.

Breathing hard, Althea gently lays the infant on the sheet, then takes the hem of her dress and begins to wipe his face.

Caught up in her own exhilaration, Althea beams at Graceful...

Whose face is twisted in a sorrow that goes to the heights and depths of the world.

Althea sees her, as if for the first time.

INT. DEDMEYER HOUSE - DAY

In the front foyer, early morning sunlight shines through the circular stained glass window.

SUPER - "MAY 31ST, 1921"

Franklin descends the staircase, straightening his tie. Althea waits expectantly at the landing, his boater in her hand. He takes the hat, breezes past to the front door.

ALTHEA

Graceful's making your fried pies for dessert tonight. You'll be home, won't you?

FRANKLIN

Jim Dee's coming up from Bristow.

A tension passes between them.

FRANKLIN

We'll see. I'm supposed to meet him at the hotel.

He dips his head to receive her kiss on his cheek, then closes the door. She stares after him.

KITCHEN

Graceful cooks bacon at the stove. Her baby sleeps inside a pillowed basket at her feet.

Althea palms her hair as she enters from the dining room.

ALTHEA

Do you think you could make fried pies for dinner?

Graceful forks the bacon, turns it, the grease pops and sizzles.

ALTHEA

(rushing forward to move the baby)

Watch out! Dear lord, what's the matter with you?

She adjusts the baby's blanket, tucks his tin rattle into a corner of the basket. She looks up at Graceful, who meets her gaze, turns back to the bacon.

Althea goes to the window. The rose garden is in riotous bloom.

ALTHEA

You were right. He came back. But he's not really here.

INT. STAR OFFICE (GREENWOOD DISTRICT)

Hedgemon Jackson works at the great press table. He darts forward to lay down fresh newsprint, then jumps out of the way.

INT. WHITESIDE HOUSE - KITCHEN

Cleotha stands stirring a kettle of greens at the stove.

Jewell -- at the table -- hems a pink prom dress by hand.

INT. DELROY'S GARAGE

Delroy slides out from underneath an automobile, wipes his hand with a red oil rag.

EXT. DOWNTOWN TULSA STREET

DICK ROWLAND tosses his polishing brush into his shoeshine box.

DICK
 (to a nearby bootblack)
 Watch my stuff. I been holdin' it
 for an hour.

He darts across the street between automobiles, wagons, streetcars, to the tall brick "Drexel Building."

INT. DREXEL BUILDING - TOP FLOOR

In a shabby hallway a washroom door marked "Colored."

DOWNSTAIRS

Dick Rowland sprints through the lobby, catches the elevator before it closes.

ELEVATOR

A young blonde in a crisp uniform, SARAH PAGE, operates the door. She doesn't see Dick coming.

He jumps in, just in time. His sudden presence takes her off-guard. A flash of terror comes over her as the door closes, seizing them together.

Without thinking, he throws his hand out to steady her.

She screams.

DICK
 It's all right. I'm just--

SARAH
 (trying to pull away)
 Let go of me!

DICK
 (his hand still grasping
 her shoulder)
 I'm just trying to get up to the
 colored convenience, ma'am.

She stares, overtaken by panic.

He can't seem to let go of her. She screams again.

As the door opens again, a guard stands at the ready, his club out.

EXT. TULSA COUNTY COURTHOUSE - LATER

A crowd of white men gathers.

Japheth stands among them wearing a slouch hat. He carries the Tulsa Tribune newspaper.

INT. STAR OFFICE

Mr. Smitherman studies the Tribune's front page open on his desk.

Hedgemon looks out from the back room, hearing voices from outside.

T.J. passes by the window, among some well-dressed black business owners and other residents of Greenwood, armed with shotguns, pistols and rifles.

HEDGEMON
 Where they goin'?

Mr. Smitherman looks down at the Tribune's headline: "TO LYNCH NEGRO TONIGHT."

MR. SMITHERMAN
 I surmise they're going downtown to prevent the good citizens of Tulsa from lynching a shoeshine boy.

HEDGEMON
 You know Dick Rowland's innocent. He wouldn't touch a white girl.

MR. SMITHERMAN
 When did guilt or innocence ever matter to a lynch mob?

(reaching for his hat)
 Stay here. Don't leave until I
 come back.

INT./EXT. COURTHOUSE

From a jail cell on an upper floor, Dick Rowland watches through the window as a white mob gathers below.

From within the milling crowd on the courthouse lawn, Japheth sees the Greenwood men approaching, ten abreast.

The Sheriff comes out of the courthouse. The Greenwood men stop, as one. From their numbers, Mr. Smitherman steps forward, addresses the Sheriff.

MR. SMITHERMAN

These men have come to offer their services, Sheriff. They'll help you protect your prisoner.

SHERIFF

Well, now, I appreciate that, but I believe we've got everything well in hand. I don't aim to let them take that boy.

MR. SMITHERMAN

Recent history shows you might not be able to stop them.

The sheriff levels a look at him -- watch yourself.

SHERIFF

I've got five deputies with shotguns stationed at the top of the stairs. This bunch won't take him.

A WHITE MOBSTER in oil-blotched overalls goes to T.J., who carries a .22 pistol.

WHITE MOBSTER

What you aimin' to do with that gun, nigger?

T.J.

I aim to use it if I have to.

WHITE MOBSTER

Like hell you will.

The white man grabs T.J.'s arm, causing his pistol to fire.

A gunfight breaks out.

INT. PROM HALL (GREENWOOD DISTRICT)

The high school prom is in full swing.

Jewell, in her pretty pink prom dress, dances with a handsome young man in a dark suit.

The staccato sound of gunfire stops the dancing couples.

Jewell stares at her date, confused.

EXT. DEDMEYER HOUSE - NIGHT

A lamp burns in the upper window.

INT. BEDROOM

Althea sits propped up in bed, holding a gardening book, not reading, but listening.

The bedside clock reads straight up midnight.

The downstairs phone rings.

LIBRARY

Graceful and Althea both reach for the phone.

Althea jerks the phone from its cradle.

ALTHEA

Hello?

HEDGEMON (O.S.)

Graceful?

Althea, surprised, hands the receiver to Graceful, stays by her side.

GRACEFUL

(phone)

Where they at? Where's T.J.?

(stricken)

Did anybody go by Mama? I'll be there in a little bit.

Althea is baffled.

GRACEFUL

Yes, I'm comin', Hedgemon.

She hangs up, and breathes, trying to absorb the terrible news.

ALTHEA
What is it?

GRACEFUL
(not looking at her)
I got to go.

ALTHEA
Where?

GRACEFUL
Home.

ALTHEA
Is something wrong?

GRACEFUL
They havin' trouble.

MAID'S ROOM

Graceful stuffs clothing into her burlap sack. The baby cries unattended on the bed.

ALTHEA
(in the doorway)
What kind of trouble?

GRACEFUL
He say it's a war.

ALTHEA
A what? War with who?

GRACEFUL
(not wanting to say it)
White folks.

ALTHEA
(not comprehending it)
Who told you that? Why would he say that?

Graceful pulls one of her plain dresses off the hanger.

Again, the distant sound of the telephone.

INT. HOTEL TULSA

Franklin stands at the phone by the elevator.

INT. DEDMEYER HOUSE - PARLOR

Althea picks up the receiver, out of breath.

INTERCUT - TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

FRANKLIN

Darling, I'm sorry to wake you.

The endearment brings a smile to Althea's lips.

FRANKLIN

I wanted to tell you not to wait up for me. There's some serious trouble downtown.

ALTHEA

What is it?

FRANKLIN

Oh, some Negroes tried to-- Never mind. I'll tell you when I get home. But listen, Thea. Don't let Graceful come up here. Maybe you'd better put her and the baby in the basement. Just to be safe.

ALTHEA

The basement!

FRANKLIN

(watching, hearing, commotion out the window)
I know, it sounds crazy. But it is crazy. The whole town is mad. I've never seen anything like it.

ALTHEA

She's on her way, she's getting dressed.

FRANKLIN

Well go talk some sense into her. Tell her they're shooting every Negro on sight.

ALTHEA

What? Come home.

FRANKLIN

I can't. Somebody's got to...

ALTHEA
 (hearing gun-popping
 through the receiver)
 Got to do what? Franklin, come
 home.

FRANKLIN
 I have to go. I'll be home as soon
 as I can.

He hangs up.

INT. DEDMEYER HOUSE - MAID'S ROOM

Graceful stuffs cloth diapers in the burlap sack. The baby
 is bundled up.

ALTHEA
 What do you think you're doing?
 You can't take that baby up there.

Graceful sits down on the cot, stares straight ahead.

For an instant, her mask holds, then the smooth features
 crumple and she begins to sob. She holds herself erect, head
 high, chest heaving.

Althea reaches an awkward hand toward her, stops.

GRACEFUL
 (calmer, trancelike)
 He say white men are shoutin' from
 the train station about they going
 to come in and shoot everybody in
 their beds. He thinks they might a
 got T.J., he's not sure.

ALTHEA
 Who's T.J.?

GRACEFUL
 My brother.

She rises heavily, finishes stuffing the burlap sack, jerks
 the tie strings closed.

ALTHEA
 What are you going to do up there?

GRACEFUL
 Somebody got to tell Mama.

ALTHEA
 (grabs Graceful by the
 arm)
 You can't get through downtown.
 Didn't he tell you that?

Graceful looks at Althea's hand on her arm.

ALTHEA
 They're shooting every Negro on
 sight. What do you aim to do, wag
 that baby through it?

Graceful turns to the wall.

ALTHEA
 All right. Tell me what you want
 done. I'll go.

Graceful levels her eyes at Althea.

GRACEFUL
 They shootin' whitefolks too.

BEDROOM

Althea pulls from her closet a floor-length green evening
 dress.

ALTHEA
 Here, put this on.
 (seeing Graceful's
 hesitation)
 Or you won't get through white
 town. We've got to cover you up.

Graceful takes the dress.

ALTHEA
 Hurry up!

LATER

Althea kneels on the rug, slides her gardening shoes out from
 under the bed. Puts them on.

GRACEFUL
 Ma'am?

Graceful stands in the doorway. Transformed by the green
 satin gown, she is breathtaking, majestic.

ALTHEA
 Good gracious God.

GRACEFUL
I got to be goin', Ma'am.

ALTHEA
I'll just be a moment.
(handing her a hat and
veil)
Here. Put this on.
(helps Graceful put on the
hat, adjusts the veil)
Your hands. Wait.

Althea goes to a drawer, finds a pair of fine gloves.

GRACEFUL
Ma'am, I can't--

ALTHEA
Put them on or I won't let you out
of this house.

Graceful obeys.

GRACEFUL
Thank you, Ma'am.

ALTHEA
I hardly recognize you myself.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET

Althea and Graceful walk swiftly in silence toward the
Downtown skyline.

Graceful holds the blanket-wrapped baby against her.

Althea wears a simple housedress, her hair twisted in a loose
chignon.

INT. CLEOTHA'S HOUSE

Cleotha looks out the window. She rubs a dry saucer with a
dish towel. Paces back to the kitchen.

Willie sprawls on the floor. He eyes his mother, but
pretends to read a comic book.

They hear a motor outside. Cleotha rounds the doorway.
Willie sprouts to his feet.

EXT.

Delroy's Nash pickup stops in front of the house.

Cleotha rushes down the steps toward him.

CLEOTHA
 (still clutching her dish
 towel)
 Where you been? You've got to get
 down to the prom hall. Jewell's
 still down there. She never come
 home yet.

Delroy thinks about what to say on his way back to the truck.

DELROY
 Prob'ly keepin' the kids together,
 safe.

Cleotha doesn't cotton to the logic.

DELROY
 I'll bring her.

EXT. TRAIN TRACKS

Japheth and a handful of other white men sneak across the
 train tracks with kerosene cans.

They scuttle in the dark toward a closed juke-joint. In
 turns, they toss rocks and break a window.

Japheth's eyes gleam as he lights a firebomb, throws it
 inside. The others scramble away, but Japheth basks in the
 glow of the erupting fire for one proud, fulfilled moment,
 until the beckoning whistles of his accomplices tear him
 away.

INT. TULSA STAR

Hedgemon hears gunfire, looks out the window.

The fire in the distance grows bigger, brighter, but Hedgemon
 cannot see what is burning.

The street lamps are out up and down the street, the
 businesses shut down tight.

No movement at all. Only dark faces peering from doorways
 and windows, or gun barrels poking out from venetian blinds.

He hears white men's voices in the distance, taunting and
 cursing.

A few scattered gunshots.

He looks at the clock. It is after three.

He goes to the telephone, cranks the handle, jamming it a dozen times. The line is dead.

His eyes are suddenly caught by a movement outside.

A slim figure wearing a pink dress darts across the avenue.

Pop-pow.

EXT. TULSA STAR

The delicate, light-footed girl suddenly whirls, a lithesome half-turn in mid-air, like a dancer. She collapses in the street.

From her collarbone, a dark flower begins to bloom in the pink taffeta. It quickly spreads, etching itself irregularly across her chest.

Jewel lies alone in the street, her lips open, for only a moment. Hedgemon is there. He bends to scoop her in his arms as another scattering of gunfire erupts.

EXT. HOTEL TULSA

Franklin steps into the street, his head lifted, feeling the air.

Boys and men run helter-skelter in the streets.

He follows the flow of foot traffic to the crowd in front of McGee's Hardware where the big window is smashed.

Inside the hardware store, a police captain hands out guns and ammunition.

A MAN in a STRAW BOATER calls out to Franklin.

STRAW BOATER

Did you get deputized yet?

Franklin shakes his head, confused. The man wears a paper badge.

STRAW BOATER

Hell, man. Jump up there. They're deputizing every white man that's got a gun. If you ain't got one, they'll give you one. Here, pin this on.

(shoves a paper badge at Franklin)

There's a nigger army comin' from Muskogee, hadn't you heard?

Franklin turns away, revulsion rising in him. Crumples the badge and drops it.

INT. TULSA HOTEL

Franklin returns to the safe surroundings of leather and brass and cigar smoke.

White oil men and business magnates are gathered, L.O. Murphy among them.

MAGNATE

We ought to go in and clean out that nest of vipers. Turn that hell hole into an industrial district.

L.O.

(clipping the end of his cigar)

There's only one way to stop typhoid. Set a torch to every goddamn thing that's contaminated.

FRANKLIN

I was wonderin' where you were. Jim Dee stood me up again.

L.O.

When you gonna get rid of that insolent son of a bitch?

FRANKLIN

When I find a man half as good.

L.O.

Listen, go home and get your car. We're gonna need it come daylight.

FRANKLIN

For what?

L.O.

We got to clean up that cesspool of a nigger town. Should have done it a long time ago.

(revealing the holstered pistol underneath his jacket)

If you own a weapon you better bring it. The whistle's set to blow at daylight.

FRANKLIN
What are you talkin' about?

L.O.
By god, we're going to run the
niggers out of Tulsa.

FRANKLIN
What's the matter with you, Murphy?
This is none of our business.

L.O.
It's every white man's business.

A young man in SEERSUCKER rushes in.

SEERSUCKER
They're takin' the depot, c'mon!

L.O. and the others follow him out to the street.

Franklin hurries to the hotel telephone.

INT - DEDMEYER - LIBRARY

The telephone rings and rings.

EXT. GREENWOOD DISTRICT - ROOFTOP

T.J. watches as two white men conceal themselves behind a storage building and take potshots at residents. He aims his rifle, draws a bead, fires at the shooters. One of them drops; the other dives for cover.

EXT. DOWNTOWN TULSA STREET

Graceful carries her crying son as if in a trance.

ALTHEA
(taking the baby from her)
Here, let me have him.

Althea drapes Graceful's hands inside the folds of her skirt.

Althea covers the baby's head with the blanket, grasps Graceful's arm firmly.

They turn a corner, are swept at once into the raging current of white men flowing toward the railroad tracks.

A MAN WITH A BAT, hearing the baby's cries, takes notice of them.

MAN WITH BAT

You ladies better get off the street.

(to Graceful)

Them niggers are armed, ma'am, hadn't you heard?

A MAN sipping from a TIN FLASK elbows him in agreement.

MAN WITH TIN FLASK

I'd whip my wife if she come out here. Ain't no place for a lady.

MAN WITH BAT

(to Graceful)

Lady, you better take that baby someplace safe.

(to men ahead)

Y'all let her and the nurse through.

Althea's eyes flash. She glances down at her shapeless house dress, then at Graceful in the elegant gown.

The tide of humanity swells near the rail yard, where the steel rails seem to hold them back. The jostling crowd breaks Althea's grasp on Graceful's arm. The women are suddenly separated.

Althea searches the crowd. She chokes against the black smoke billowing into her eyes and throat.

A man stops to dip snuff, seizes on Althea.

SNUFF DIPPER

What'd you bring a baby out in this for?

(wipes his mouth on his sleeve, then runs, calling out)

Daylight's coming!

A red slit appears on the gray horizon, casting its fiery hues upon a grain silo atop a rise.

Althea starts toward it, trying to muffle the baby's cries.

White men push past her as she attempts to climb the small hill. She manages to reach a tin storage-shack, a momentary shelter, and gazes below her. Thousands moil in the rail yard.

Uniformed white men dam the swelling crowd with their shotguns.

Japheth slithers among the endless faces of men, little boys and women who stir and chafe at the line, as if before a land run.

A nightmarish whistle sounds, followed by a breath of stunning silence.

In an unstoppable wave, the white mob overruns the uniformed men and breaks across the railroad tracks.

Automobiles and oilfield trucks crammed with more armed men roar past the pedestrians.

Machine-gun fire comes from the high, square window of the silo.

Across the tracks...

IN GREENWOOD

Negro bodies fall on the street, riddled with machine-gun fire.

White rioters shatter glass storefronts, splash kerosene. Japheth stands among them, shouts orders to burn.

A well-dressed white woman lugs a bolt of cloth out through the dry goods' shattered door. She drops the bolt in the street, runs back in.

Flames now rise from a dozen buildings.

A pair of armed white men herd a black family in their nightclothes out the door of a little wood frame house. Even the children are made to keep their hands in the air as they head down the porch steps.

GREENWOOD ROOFTOP

T.J. fires his empty rifle once, twice. He searches his pockets, cursing.

A biplane roars over his head. From the cockpit a cannister drops, trailing fire, bombing a nearby building.

T.J. rolls over, crawls on his belly to the fire escape, shimmies down to the first rung.

DOWNTOWN RAILYARD

Althea shelters herself against the storage shack, turns her gaze from the biplane to the burning rooftop across the tracks.

She holds the baby to her chest.

 ALTHEA
Shhhhh. Shhhhhh.
 (singing)
Hush little baby... Don't say a
word...

Her voice dies beneath the thunder and rattle of gunfire,
shattering glass, the hiss and snap of flames.

Everywhere, the rolling, choking smoke.

Althea peels back the blanket, and places the knuckle of her
forefinger between the baby's lips.

He quiets, sucking hard, staring up at her.

For an instant, Althea sees Japheth.

QUICK FLASHES

In the maid's room, the empty hanger swings on the rope.

In the kitchen. Graceful saying she's not gonna stay
anywhere that man come around.

Graceful's sorrowful face when the baby is born.

BACK TO SCENE

Althea stares at the baby's light-skinned face.

EXT. GREENWOOD DISTRICT STREET

Graceful moves north, gliding among the white rioters and
looters.

They pour out of Johnson's Shoes toting boxes.

They stream like ants through the shattered doors of the
Confectionery Shop, carting vats of cherries and chocolate
syrup.

Newly deputized white men with shotguns and rifles patrol the
roads in open cars, disregarding the looting, the vandalism,
the violence.

Several white looters wrestle a piano through the doorway of
a two-story house.

I/E. SHERIFF'S CAR

The Sheriff drives away from the courthouse through the chaos with a deputy riding shotgun, his weapon poised out the windows. A very frightened Dick Rowland crouches in the back floorboard.

EXT. CARSON AVENUE

Franklin walks briskly home through the eerily quiet, tree-lined neighborhood.

EXT. CLEOTHA'S HOUSE

Hedgemon slowly climbs the steps to the yellow house. Jewell's pink prom dress spills over her lifeless body as he cradles her in his arms, bringing her home.

EXT. GREENWOOD'S MOUNT ZION BAPTIST CHURCH

Japheth calls from the front steps to a mob of fire-starters.

JAPHETH

The niggers got an arsenal in here!
Burn down the church!

The men do not hesitate before pitching glops of gasoline onto the wooden doors of the elegant new building.

EXT. GREENWOOD DISTRICT STREET

Japheth strides up the street, satisfied. He turns his head to see the church engulfed in flames.

Commotion across the street: a gathering in the yard of a fine brick home with a white picket fence. He saunters up.

EXT. DR. BLANCHARD'S HOUSE

Dr. Blanchard, in house robe and slippers, hands clasped on top of his head, descends his front steps toward the small armed mob inside the gate. A teenaged white boy with a pistol stumbles forward, laughing.

Behind him, Japheth whispers something into his ear. The boy laughs again, then raises his pistol and fires squarely into Dr. Blanchard's chest.

Dr. Blanchard falls dead into a splendid row of peonies.

The onlookers erupt, hooping and shouting.

Japheth turns away and moves on.

EXT. GREENWOOD DISTRICT STREET

Japheth pauses on a strip of dirt to watch the parade of destruction.

He spots Jim Dee among the HOME GUARDS, the deputized white men "cleaning out" Greenwood.

Japheth watches Jim Dee's group separate the women and children from the men. Once the prisoners are sorted, the Home Guards search the groups, take the contents of their pockets, and herd them into two different trucks. After extricating the inhabitants, the Home Guards set fire to the homes.

Japheth retreats to a narrow space between two houses, crouches low to gather himself.

Jim Dee joins two other Home Guards as they march their black male prisoners down the middle of the street, four abreast, arms high in the air.

The procession makes its way past Japheth's hiding place.

Pow. Jim Dee collapses in the middle of the dirt street, shot in the back. The two Home Guards look around, but the popping of gunfire comes from everywhere.

Triumphant, Japheth takes his thumb off the hammer.

EXT. GREENWOOD

Althea shields the baby from the smoke and misery all around. Her face is streaked with ash.

She passes the massive church of brick and stained glass, the grocery, the cafe... All burning.

She glimpses the back of the green satin dress, too far away. She begins to run, but Graceful disappears.

Dead bodies, both white and black, lie in the streets.

She comes upon a man in oil-stained khakis lying facedown in the road, his tawny hair matted, his back dark with blood.

She forces on, unwilling to ponder.

ELGIN AVENUE

Graceful climbs the hill toward her mother's house.

Up ahead she sees Hedgemon bounding down the slope toward her.

GRACEFUL
 (calling to him)
 What is it?

They meet in the middle of the block. He stands there, panting.

GRACEFUL
 What they do to T.J.? Where is he?

Hedgemon bends over, out of breath.

HEDGEMON
 Not T.J.

GRACEFUL
 Who, then?

He shakes his head, raises up, looks down at the fires in Greenwood.

HEDGEMON
 Hurry, we got to go.

He tries to lead her on, she slaps his palm away.

GRACEFUL
 Tell me!

HEDGEMON
 Last night, well, Jewell was at the prom. She didn't get home before the trouble...

Graceful takes off past Hedgemon, running up toward the yellow house.

HEDGEMON
 Graceful! Wait!

A screech of automobile tires.

White men yell.

DEPUTIZED THUG (O.S.)
 Stop right there, nigger! Put your goddamn hands in the air!

A small group of liquored up "deputies" hops out of the car.

DEPUTIZED THUG
 Wha'chu running for, nigger?
 Somebody grab that gal!

Several of them grab hold of Graceful's arms, her skirt. A FAT DEPUTY approaches her, fingers her dress.

FAT DEPUTY

Where'd you steal this dress, gal?
You been lootin' white ladies'
bedrooms?

Hedgemon makes a move.

DEPUTIZED THUG

Keep those hands up, nigger! I'll
shoot 'em off!

Hedgemon raises his hands high over his head.

The thugs holding Graceful begin to shove her, spin her around.

FAT DEPUTY

Get that white woman's dress off
that nigger!

The thugs laugh and pluck at the yards of material, jerking it, pulling at it. One grasps the lace collar, yanks it from her throat.

Graceful looks up into their faces -- greasy, wild-eyed. One in a PORKPIE HAT is virtually toothless.

The thugs rip her bodice away.

PORKPIE HAT

Whooooeee! Looka there, they're
going to strip the bitch.

She twists away but they are on her. They shove her to the ground, smashing her face into the earth.

At her back they tug at her skirt, whooping, laughing.

Althea rushes toward them from seemingly nowhere.

ALTHEA

Stop this instant! What in God's
name do you think you're doing?

FAT DEPUTY

We been deputized to round up
niggers. What is it? This gal
steal your dress?

(to Graceful)

Get up from there, gal. Stand up!

Hedgemon makes a move to help her.

PORKPIE HAT
Watch him, now, watch him!

He trains his gun on Hedgemon.

FAT DEPUTY
He's all right. You all right,
nigger? He's fine. He's a good
nigger. You a good nigger, boy?

PORKPIE HAT
Look out, don't get too close.
That wench's liable to bite your
pecker off.

ALTHEA
Leave her alone! Leave her!

FAT DEPUTY
Lady, you better stand back and let
us do our job.

ALTHEA
I'll have every one of you
arrested! Do you hear me? Sheriff
McCullough's a personal friend of
my husband.

PORKPIE HAT
Somebody shut that woman up.

ALTHEA
Touch me and I'll have you horse-
whipped. This girl works for me.

One of the younger deputies uses his gun barrel to try to pry
up one of Graceful's clamped arms.

YOUNGER DEPUTY
C'mon, let's see, now.

ALTHEA
Stop! Stop! Take your hands off
her!

Althea takes the blanket off the baby, holds it out to
Graceful to cover herself.

Graceful turns and stares at her from hooded eyes. Althea
recognizes the look of blame at once.

ALTHEA

It's not me! Graceful, I didn't do
any of this!

Graceful lifts her face. Dignified.

Across the street, Japheth watches Althea, his eyes burning
with hatred.

FAT DEPUTY

(taking the blanket)
Gimme that.

He throws the blanket over Graceful's shoulders, covering
her.

All at once, the men notice the baby in Althea's arms.

YOUNGER DEPUTY

Wouldja look at that!

PORKPIE HAT

Yella as my daddy's toenail, ain't
it?

FAT DEPUTY

No wonder she's th'owing such a
fit!

YOUNGER DEPUTY

(referring to Althea)
She's a nigger?

FAT DEPUTY

Naw, she ain't a nigger, she's been
screwing niggers.

YOUNGER DEPUTY

That's a mulatter baby, sure
enough. Should we take her into
custody with the rest of 'em?

PORKPIE HAT

Can't take a white woman.

FAT DEPUTY

She's got a nigger baby.

ALTHEA

(thrusting the baby toward
Graceful)
It's not my baby. It's hers.

EXT. RIVERBANK - TWILIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Young Althea stands over the ravine, takes her misshapen baby brother by the feet, swings him, then, sobbing, she cradles him in her arms, like a doll, her mind changed.

Then just as suddenly, she lifts him in the air, over the rocks.

END OF FLASHBACK

Althea holds in her hands the power to undo sin -- her own sin -- the past.

She pulls her arms in, puts the baby over her shoulder, gently pats his back.

ALTHEA
(softly)
This baby's starving. He's got to nurse.

Graceful meets her gaze.

The whole history passes between the two women -- separate, skewed, held in common -- their bound-together lives.

ALTHEA
(to the thugs)
Let her go.

Althea cradles the baby horizontally, holds him out to Graceful.

After a long moment Graceful takes the child into her arms.

Out of the corner of her eye, Althea sees a shadow...

Japheth flies at her side, splashing liquid.

She reaches toward him.

YOUNGER DEPUTY
(smelling the gasoline)
Holy Christ!

FAT DEPUTY
Get back!

Japheth strikes a match.

GRACEFUL
No!

A white searing flash.

Hedgemon runs, throws himself on top of Althea, rolls her on the ground.

The flash has ignited Japheth's gasoline-soaked clothes. He runs flailing down the street, engulfed in flames.

WHITE RIOTER (O.S.)
Holy Smithers, would you look at
that!

Japheth drops, still burning.

A few curious men draw near his body.

Althea lies on the ground motionless, her eyes closed, her face scalded red, her lashes and eyebrows singed away.

Graceful kneels beside her, lightly touches her arm; Althea moans.

Graceful pulls her hand back.

WILLIE
(pounding down the hill)
Graceful!

Graceful rises, starts toward him.

Porkpie Hat raises his rifle butt, clubs Hedgemon to the ground.

GRACEFUL
(starting for him)
Hedgemon!

Willie grabs her around the waist, sobbing.

GRACEFUL
Willie? Where's Mama? Where's
Jewell and T.J.?

Willie cannot answer.

A passing oilfield truck crammed with black prisoners stops beside them.

Two white Home Guards stand in the crowded flat bed, their guns raised.

HOMEGUARD
 (to Porkpie Hat)
 We got room for a couple more, how
 many y'all got?

PORKPIE HAT
 Two nits, two lice!

A round of snorts and guffaws.

I/E OILFIELD TRUCK - LATER

Graceful and her baby are wedged in tight among the black
 prisoners.

Willie clings to her side, hiccupping his sobs.

PORKPIE HAT
 Hey gal! Catch!

He tosses the remains of the green dress at Graceful.

PORKPIE HAT
 It's ruirnt now, you might as well
 have it!

A military man calls up to the driver of the truck.

MILITARY MAN
 Take this load to the Fairgrounds.
 Convention Hall's already full.

The truck pulls away.

Graceful looks back where Althea lies unmoving, arms cast
 wide, eyes closed, her torso and face horribly scalded.

Hedgemon stands in the road with his hands on top of his
 head, Porkpie's rifle trained on him.

He stares hard at Graceful.

Graceful holds him in her sights until the truck turns and
 she can no longer see him.

INT. CLEOTHA'S HOUSE - BEDROOM

T.J. searches frantically through the dresser drawers.
 Cleotha stands in the archway watching him.

T.J.
 Those boxes of cartridges I had
 hid, what did you do with them?

Without waiting for an answer he turns and rushes to the chiffarobe, jerks the door open, paws through the dresses to dig around on the wardrobe floor.

T.J.

I had two full boxes, Mama! Twenty-two shells! Where they at?
(finds the shells)
You got to get out of here, Mama.

He rushes past her into the living room and goes to the window while he loads the gun.

T.J.

Go up to Skiatook or someplace.
Everybody's headin' north.

CLEOTHA

I can't carry your sister by myself.

T.J. turns to her.

He sees Jewell's body on the divan. She could be sleeping, but for her bloody prom dress.

T.J.

You're gonna have to leave her, Mama. White men's just down the street. They're gonna burn this house down.

CLEOTHA

We'll come soon as Delroy gets here.

T.J.

You ain't comin' with Delroy! He most likely dead! We're all gonna be dead! They're gonna kill all of us, but I'm gonna kill every goddamn one I see first.

CLEOTHA

(shaking her head in despair)
Don't! Don't let them do this to you.

T.J. squeezes past her, into the bedroom, goes out the rear door without looking back.

INT. DEDMEYER HOUSE - BEDROOM

Franklin stares at the crumpled maid's uniform on the floor, the discarded hat and shoeboxes tossed about the room.

HALLWAY

Franklin rushes in and out the upstairs doorways, searching.

FRANKLIN

Althea!

STAIRWAY

Franklin scrambles down, drunk with desperation.

FRANKLIN

Thea!

MAID'S ROOM

Franklin steps on the baby's rattle.

He sees diapers strewn on the bed and floor.

INT. CLEOTHA'S HOUSE

Cradling Jewell, Cleotha sings to her, as though putting her to sleep.

CLEOTHA

'Beulah Land, I'm longing for
you..."

The sound of boots on the porch.

The front window shatters.

Cleotha doesn't look up.

ARMED LOOTER

Anybody in there?

An ARMED LOOTER enters with a can of kerosene, followed by two men in overalls.

Cleotha looks up at them, continues to sing.

The men pause there, confused.

The two men in overalls creep through to the bedroom.

Cleotha continues to sing. Her voice is painfully beautiful.

The Armed Looter pulls down the curtains, piles them in the floor, douses them with kerosene.

The overalled men return from the bedroom, filling their pockets with trinkets. They pass by the framed pictures, discard the photographs, pocket the silver frames.

ARMED LOOTER

(adding doilies to the
pile)

Come on out, now, Auntie. We got
orders to take everybody in.

CLEOTHA

You're gonna have to burn me with
it.

The men look at each other, glance at the dead girl, turn, and slink out the door.

EXT. GREENWOOD

The oilfield truck carrying Graceful and the others continues down the ravaged streets.

Fires rage everywhere in the nightmarish landscape.

The Tulsa Star office is a gutted brick shell. Its great steel press still stands in the smoking rubble.

Home Guards march Delroy and other Greenwood men down the street.

Blackened timbers are all that remain of elegant houses, stores, churches.

The sun shines like a bright, ferocious coin through the smoke.

I/E. FRANKLIN'S CAR - DAY

Franklin drives through the riot area, bare-headed, sweating in the sun. He makes slow progress through the crowded streets. He sounds the horn at a stalled-out coupe in front of him.

The road is impassable.

In frustration, Franklin kills the motor, gets out and begins to walk.

EXT. GREENWOOD

Glass crunches beneath his feet.

Everywhere there are white Home Guards, black prisoners, burned-out buildings.

The pervading smoke makes him cough.

L.O. Murphy shouts at him from the passenger seat of a touring car.

L.O.
There you are, Dedmeyer! Where the hell you been? You damn near missed it. Get in!

Franklin climbs into the back seat. The floorboard is filled with firearms and ammunition.

L.O.
(drinking from a flask)
They're scattering fast.

He passes the flask to the driver, TOM, an oil man in a rumpled suit.

L.O.
They say you can see 'em for miles from a plane. Just streams of 'em, running like ants. Ain't that right, Tom?

TOM
(tips the flask, returns it)
Hell yeah.

Franklin's eyes comb the streets.

L.O.
(offering the flask to Franklin)
Tell you what, if they let 'em get down in them canebrakes we'll have to use dogs to flush 'em out.

Franklin cuts his eyes to L.O.

L.O.
Be a hell of a barbecue then, that right, Tom?

The driver grins, reaching for the flask.

FRANKLIN
Stop the car.

Tom keeps driving.

FRANKLIN

I said stop!

Tom pulls over, Franklin jumps out.

L.O.

What are you doing, Dedmeyer?
You're going to miss all the fun!

Franklin reaches through the window and grabs L.O. by the collar, smashes him with his fist.

He makes his way on foot, searching. The devastation is close and tangible.

He passes through a lot -- his feet sinking in the soft ash -- where burnt Negro corpses lie half buried in the charred remains of a building.

The yard is surrounded by acres of smoldering desolation.

Franklin looks at the death and wreckage in disbelief -- how could this happen? He looks down at his new cordovan shoes, covered in fine powder. He brings his sleeve up to wipe his face, notices blood on his knuckle.

FARM WAGON

Althea lies motionless among the injured, her eyes closed.

The wagon jounces past a flatbed truck bearing a hand-lettered sign: "COLORED" -- filled with bodies from Greenwood.

The flatbed stops; two pairs of white hands hoist Japheth's blackened body onto the pile in back.

EXT. FAIRGROUNDS

Thousands of black prisoners fill acre upon acre. Under watch by uniformed National Guardsmen, they stand in long lines for Red Cross help, or crouch in the sparse shade, or mill around in their nightclothes, bleary-eyed, having been snatched from their beds.

Graceful and Willie stand in line at the

RED CROSS TENT

where a polite white woman with a note pad and pencil stops in front of them.

POLITE WOMAN

Who do you work for, dear?

Graceful's baby wakes up crying. She pats his back to soothe him.

POLITE WOMAN

If you tell me the name of your employer, we'll try to get word to them. They can come sign for you.

Getting no answer, the woman moves on.

Graceful puts her finger to the baby's cheek, gently traces the line of it.

POLITE WOMAN

(to the next in line)

Who do you work for, Dear?

GRACEFUL

(blurting)

Mrs. Dedmeyer.

The woman turns back.

GRACEFUL

Mr. and Mrs. Franklin Dedmeyer.
Sixteen twelve, South Carson.

EXT. DEDMEYER HOUSE - DAY

SUPER - "SEPTEMBER 30, 1921"

KITCHEN

Graceful stands at the counter cutting out biscuits. Instead of her uniform, she wears a cotton print dress.

Althea sits at the small table, silhouetted by the window. She fingers the back of her bobbed hair, sips coffee.

ALTHEA

What time did you say they'd be here?

GRACEFUL

(putting biscuits in the oven)

About nine.

Althea looks out the window. Light pours over her skin -- tight, pink, and strangely smooth.

GRACEFUL

You want me to start your bacon?

ALTHEA

I'll wait till Mr. Dedmeyer gets up. You still haven't heard anything about your brother?

GRACEFUL

No, ma'am.

ALTHEA

It just seems strange. I mean, that you would leave without knowing what happened to him, if he's alive or...

GRACEFUL

Mama will send word.

ALTHEA

Yes. Of course.

(struck with a hopeful thought)

You know, we could build servants' quarters over the garage. You and your husband could...

Her voice trails off. They've been through this before.

Graceful begins to flour and fry chicken.

ALTHEA

Take some of that chicken with you for the train.

GRACEFUL

Thank you, ma'am. I already planned to.

ALTHEA

But he is bringing the baby, you said?

GRACEFUL

Yes, ma'am.

ALTHEA

Well. I suppose I should go start my bath. Mr. Dedmeyer will be up soon.

BATHROOM

Althea sits in the bathtub. Her face is contorted with weeping.

HALLWAY - LATER

Althea pauses, collecting herself. Franklin's voice echoes with Hedgemon's deep baritone in indistinguishable conversation.

Franklin steps out from the dining room.

FRANKLIN

Sweetheart. I was just coming up to see about you. Graceful's got your breakfast ready.

(at the hall tree)

I've got to get on to the hotel.

(hands a soft cloche hat to Althea)

It's a beautiful day. Maybe you should sit out in the swing a while.

ALTHEA

(touching her bare neck)

I don't know...

FRANKLIN

Some fresh air would be just the thing for you.

Althea takes the hat, turns to the mirror.

Franklin steps behind her, puts his hands on her shoulders.

FRANKLIN

You look beautiful.

(he kisses the back of her neck, speaks softly against her)

You'll be all right?

ALTHEA

(touching his hand)

Fine, darling. Thank you.

Franklin blows her a kiss at the door, leaves.

Althea turns back to the mirror, hangs the hat.

KITCHEN

Graceful washes dishes at the sink. Hedgemon sits holding the baby at the table. He stands up at once when Althea enters.

GRACEFUL
Miz Dedmeyer, this is Hedgemon.

ALTHEA
How do you do, Mr...?

She looks to Graceful.

GRACEFUL
Jackson.

ALTHEA
Mr. Jackson. I guess
congratulations are in order. Your
new job in Kansas City sounds
promising.

HEDGEMON
Yes, ma'am. Thank you. Mr.
Smitherman's a good man to work
for.

GRACEFUL
(taking the baby, showing
him to Althea)
Well. Here he is.
(she nuzzles her face
against him)
He's getting big, isn't he? Already
trying to cut a tooth, too. That's
how come he's drooling so bad.

Althea reaches out for him.

GRACEFUL
He'll get your dress wet, ma'am.

ALTHEA
That's all right.

She takes the baby, who smiles up at her, babbling.

GRACEFUL
He's going to be a big talker, too.
Aren't you, Theodore?

ALTHEA
(as if committing the name
to memory)
Theodore. Theodore Jackson.

GRACEFUL
 (looking in Althea's eyes)
 Hedgemon Theodore Jackson, Junior.
 After his daddy.

Slowly the old unspoken truth passes between them, who the baby's father is, how it will be now. Althea nods, accepting.

ALTHEA
 You'll come back to visit?

GRACEFUL
 My mama will be here in Tulsa. Her
 and Willie and Delroy all staying
 right here.

ALTHEA
 But I mean...here. Maybe you could
 bring the baby. Just, you know,
 from time to time.

GRACEFUL
 (still meeting Althea's
 eyes)
 Yes, ma'am.

The look passing between them is so full of hurt and love and sorrow, that at length Althea turns away; she begins to pace, patting the baby, who has begun to fret.

ALTHEA
 Mr. Jackson, I really don't know
 how to thank you. If you hadn't...
 I mean I...

The moment is awkward.

HEDGEMON
 It's all right, ma'am.

GRACEFUL
 I left the cover on the chafing
 dish, but them eggs already been
 cooked awhile.

ALTHEA
 Yes. Thank you, Graceful. How near
 ready are you?

GRACEFUL
 My things are all packed.
 (to Hedgemon)
 Honey, take the baby so Miz
 Dedmeyer can eat.

Hedgemon takes the fretting baby from Althea, who gives him over reluctantly. The baby instantly quiets.

GRACEFUL

(washing up)

He behaves better for Hedgemon than
he do for me. Of course, Hedgemon's
the one takes the most care of him.

Althea stands with empty hands while Hedgemon plays with the baby.

A small bundle wrapped in a bright scarf sits by the back door.

GRACEFUL

Don't you want to go in and eat,
ma'am?

ALTHEA

I'll eat after you...after while.

Graceful folds the tea towel, and takes one last look around the sparkling kitchen.

Satisfied, she goes to the door and picks up her bundle.

EXT. PORCH

Hedgemon carries the baby down the steps, leaving the two women alone on the porch.

Althea offers her hand to Graceful.

Graceful cannot speak, but reaches out herself.

The women clasp hands, for the first time in this way. For the last time, in this way.

Althea watches Graceful go down the steps to Hedgemon and the baby, watches them make their way slowly along the footpath through the rose garden.

At the garden gate, Graceful turns back, raises her palm toward Althea.

Althea raises hers in return.

FADE OUT.