

IT HAPPENED IN SILENCE

Written by

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Based on the award-winning published novel by

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INT. DOBBS HOUSE - STUDY - NIGHT

ARDITH DOBBS, 28, long, flowing hair, stretches a white dress onto the floor. With her mouth full of pins, she kneels in a silk bathrobe on the floor. Driven, she applies this attention to style not only to this dress but to her life.

SUPER: "GEORGIA, 1921"

A phonograph behind her plays "Look for the Silver Lining" as OLIVER, 5, in fine-tailored play clothes, speeds into the room with a toy crow, knocking over her roll of fabric.

OLIVER  
Mommy! Look!

She pulls the dress up off the floor, holds it to her very pregnant bosom and sashays over to a dressing mirror.

ARDITH  
Oliver! Out!

With a beaming smile, she flings off her robe and pulls the white dress over head.

ARDITH (CONT'D)  
Perfect.

Ardith reaches for a second garment on a desk. She studies the fabric, an exact color match for her dress, and disapprovingly gazes at it.

ARDITH (CONT'D)  
Let's see.

Grabbing a pair of scissors from the desk, she makes a few snips. She nods approvingly, sets her scissors down, and then moves confidently back to the mirror.

ARDITH (CONT'D)  
I'm ready.

Like a queen about to be crowned, she pulls the pointed hood over her head. Slowly the eye slits align with her eyes to show her in full Ku Klux Klan regalia.

EXT. STEWART MOUNTAIN - DAY

WILLOW STEWART, 16, thick, red, braided hair, searches the mountain for any remaining wildflowers. Brawny, athletic, she seems to be more on a mission than out playing.

In the distance she can hear five distinct clangs of a dinner bell. Alert, she sprints back to her home, holding two freshly picked flowers.

WILLOW (V.O.)

My one wish is to hear Mama say my name again. Willow.

In a sturdy yet well-worn dress, Willow bounds over a log as she makes her way through the woods.

WILLOW (V.O.)

People's voices create colors in my mind, and Mama's is creamy peach. I want her to tell me everything will be fine, that she is just worn out and resting.

EXT. STEWART RESIDENCE - CONTINUOUS

On the porch of a ramshackle log home, her father stands by the dinner bell. His back is turned away from Willow, who notices his stance and picks up the pace to enter the house.

INT. STEWART RESIDENCE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Willow bolts straight through the home to see her mother and sister RUTHY, 10, a waifish brunette in a flowered shift.

RUTHY

You come sit with mama now.

Wide-eyed, Willow spots a red-haired woman tucked under a quilt. The covers rise slowly with a strained inhale, pause, and long exhale.

Willow points at the bed, and with hand gestures, asks Ruthy if she has spoken. Willow is mute.

RUTHY (CONT'D)

She's still sleeping. Breathing really bad.

Putting one flower in a bottle on a dilapidated cedar chest, Willow rests the other one next to it. Willow gingerly approaches the bed and rests her hand on her mother's.

WILLOW (V.O.)

I hope Mama knows it's me. Her *silent gift* as she calls me.

Pointing out a series of commands to Ruthy, the younger sister exits.

WILLOW (V.O.)  
 When it was clear as moonshine I'd  
 never speak, Mama and I created a  
 hand signaling language.

Voices emanate from a warped window near the bed. Willow  
 peeks up to see two groups of men carrying a large coffin and  
 a small one.

EXT. STEWART RESIDENCE - CONTINUOUS

Willow's father, POPPY, 40ish, weathered and worn by a life  
 in coveralls, comes out from a nearby shed to greet them.  
 Behind them, an older couple, LUCILE and EVERETT, 50s, two  
 roly-poly folks, convivial even in these circumstances.

LUCILLE  
 We came when we heard the bell.

POPPY  
 Not sure how much longer it'll be.

EVERETT  
 Where is Luther Jr?

POPPY  
 In the shed.

INT. STEWART RESIDENCE - BEDROOM

From the cedar chest, Willow grabs a pale brush and tries to  
 touch up her mother's hair.

WILLOW (V.O.)  
 I hope God listens to our prayers  
 in deciding the fate for that box.  
 That we won't need it. Calling home  
 one Stewart kin member this day is  
 pain enough.

Willow sets the brush down and then sits on the edge of bed.  
 She takes her mother's hand and presses it to her heart, then  
 rests her hand on the quilt where her mother's heart is.

WILLOW (V.O.)  
 Poppy, Ruthy, and my little  
 brother, Billy Leo, understand me  
 sometimes.

She starts to sob and choke up.

WILLOW (V.O.)

If my thoughts are simple enough,  
like following water skeeters  
across a pond's surface, they  
understand me. But for my  
opinions, I need Mama or Briar.

Lucille and Everett enter the room quietly behind Willow. She senses them and rests her mother's hand back on the quilt. Lucille lightly brushes her hand on Willow's back, who responds by leaning her head on Lucille's shoulder.

LUCILLE

Sorry about your baby brother.

EVERETT

(whispering)

Your Pa is looking for ya.

Willow grabs the remaining flower from the cedar chest and heads out.

EXT. STEWART RESIDENCE - CONTINUOUS

Willow steps down the stairs, but her father speaks to the grim-faced coffin carriers.

POPPY

I can't say how much this means.

Spotting her father engaged, she slips past and heads to the shed that he just exited.

INT. SHED - CONTINUOUS

Willow reverently opens the wooden, windowless shed door. In the center, as if on an altar, a wood box contains chunks of ice. Water drips slowly from the corner of the box.

WILLOW (V.O.)

Poppy is the first Luther in our  
family. My older brother, Luther  
Jr., died fifteen months ago.

Atop the ice sits a quilt, with dead baby Luther swaddled in it. Willow places her last flower on the baby's body. A bottle labeled Camphor sits next the altar. She pops the rag from the top of the bottle and swabs the baby's face.

WILLOW (V.O.)

Now our new Baby Luther isn't with  
us anymore.

She stares at a deformed mining helmet hanging in the shed.

EXT. - MINE ENTRANCE - DAY - FLASHBACK

A group of miners head out of the mine. A BLACK MINER yells to a miner resting by the side of a rock, reading a note.

BLACK MINER  
Cave in! Briar, come quick. Your  
brother's in there.

BRIAR STEWART, early 20s, lean and strong as his axe pick,  
shoves the note into his pocket.

BRIAR  
Luther!

He grabs his helmet and rushes in.

INT. STEWART RESIDENCE - BEDROOM - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

A coal-covered Briar breaks the bad news to his parents,  
awakened in their bed. An ornate lamp dimly lights the room.

BRIAR  
The roof was unstable after the  
blast. Luther was helping with the  
timber--

POPPY  
-- Where is his body?

BRIAR  
The shaft collapsed for a good  
length.

POPPY  
Where is his body!?

Briar shakes his head.

EXT. SHED - DAY - FLASHBACK

In mourning clothes, Poppy ties up the family horse. Willow  
stands nearby. Briar carries the deformed helmet. Poppy  
slowly takes it from him, grimacing.

POPPY  
(tersely)  
You should have been there.

BRIAR

Pops?

POPPY

You should've saved him!

He chucks the helmet at Briar and then tackles him to the shed wall. Willow panics, unable to scream, motions to the house, but ends up flinging herself on to her father.

WILLOW (V.O.)

Poppy is a good man. He's done become hardened since the Great War.

EXT. STEWART MOUNTAIN - DAY - FLASHBACK

Willow cuts wild asparagus, hears footsteps, glances back. Briar approaches, dressed for traveling, carrying a knapsack.

Willow signals a message pointing down the road with a "what's up" shrug.

BRIAR

I'm gonna hit the rails.

Willow gives him a questioning sign.

BRIAR (CONT'D)

I dunno. I hear they have plenty of jobs out west. Plenty of country out there I need to see.

Willow points fiercely to the ground meaning to stay here.

BRIAR (CONT'D)

Poppy won't let up. You seen that.

With a strained look, Willow tries to convey in her face the pain of him missing. Briar embraces her.

BRIAR (CONT'D)

If the time is ever right, I'll be back.

He disengages and heads down the road, not looking back.

Willow stomps her foot.

He continues.

She stomps harder, but he treks out of view. She slumps her head and sobs.

INT. SHED - DAY - END OF FLASHBACK

A knock on the door interrupts Willow's thoughts. Poppy stands at the door with AUNT EFFIE, late 40's, emotionally shaky, and UNCLE VIRGIL, late 40's, who hobbles on a bum leg.

POPPY

Aunt Effie and Uncle Virgil are  
here to see Luther. C'mere,  
Pumpkin.

Aunt Effie hugs Willow, while Virgil strokes her head. She heads out with her father.

EXT. STEWART RESIDENCE - CONTINUOUS

By now a crowd of people has appeared, ready to support the Stewarts. Willow and Poppy stand near a corner of the house.

POPPY

I need you to take Jacca and fetch  
a preacher.

Willow shoves her hand into her pocket to retrieve a scrap of paper and pencil and begins to scrawl on it. Poppy watches.

POPPY (CONT'D)

No. No doctor. Just a preacher.

INT. STEWART RESIDENCE - KITCHEN - LATER

Aunt Effie and Lucille pack a small lunch for Willow. On a cupboard, a shelf of well-worn books overlooks the ladies. Willow enters, pulls "Black Beauty" off of it and places it in a canvas messenger bag.

LUCILLE

Willow, hun, will you be all right?

Willow gives a despondent affirmative head shake.

AUNT EFFIE

Ya know, Ray Finch had to go way  
into Cartersville for medicine for  
his mule and swore he saw a man  
that looked like Briar.

Willow's eyes perk up and she retrieves Black Beauty out of the bag and cracks open the book. An envelope with a letter addressed to her with no return address is firmly pressed between the pages. Willow slides out the paper and reads.



WILLOW (V.O.)  
 Willow, back from out west. Gotta  
 steady job. Love, Briar.

She turns it around to see it written on the back of a receipt from the "Pearson-Gysse Lumber Company" with an office in Cartersville.

WILLOW (V.O.)  
 Deep inside my heart, a tiny voice,  
 one I don't recognize, speaks in  
 golden tones. It says Mama won't  
 pass if all of her children are  
 home by her side.

Willow folds the letter and slips it back in the book, which she places in the bag with the meal her aunts have prepared.

EXT. TIMBERLAND MOUNTAIN - DAY

In blue work britches and shirt, Briar surveys a dense forest of pines being axed by prison laborers in striped work clothes. Not manning an axe, Briar stares urgently into a thick pile of brush.

BRIAR  
 (loud whisper)  
 Daryl!

No reply, and a tense, angry look overwhelms Briar's face.

BRIAR (CONT'D)  
 Bathroom break over boy. Back at  
 it.

Daryl's disembodied voice emanates from a large shrub.

DARYL  
 Mr. Briar. I gots problems.

BRIAR  
 Your darn right you do. Taggert  
 will be here any moment.

DARYL  
 Over here.

Briar moves into the sweetshrub to see DARYL, a strong Black man, age 20, in prison stripes, backed up near a rock.

BRIAR  
 You're not fixing to do something  
 foolish, are you?

DARYL

No sir.

A huge copperhead, barely visible, coiled, has its head pointed at the convict.

BRIAR

That's a big son of a bitch.

DARYL

What do I do?

BRIAR

If'n you have any fast left in you,  
jump back behind that boulder when  
I yell. Can you do that?

DARYL

Yeah.

Briar grabs a long stick and gets ready to swat at it.

BRIAR

Ready and...

A shotgun blast erupts behind Briar, striking the snake.  
TAGGERT, 40ish, sunglasses, oozes authority and irritability.  
He pops the shells from on horseback and secures his shotgun  
to the saddle.

TAGGERT

That piss break is costing us. Make  
sure that boy misses the next two  
water breaks.

BRIAR

Yessir.

TAGGERT

Don't need to be wasting time on no  
snake.

Briar waves Daryl back to the work line.

TAGGERT (CONT'D)

Got a supply run for you later.

Taggert gallops off. Briar catches up to Daryl.

DARYL

How'd you become a trustee?

BRIAR

Charm. It ain't much, but sure  
beats swinging an axe. Today must  
be payday.

DARYL

Why you say that?

BRIAR

Cause Taggart let you live.

EXT. TIMBERLAND MOUNTAIN - WORK GANG LINE - CONTINUOUS

Daryl resumes his place on the line swinging an axe as Briar supervises the work gang. A loud whistle blurts three times.

BRIAR

Wash up!

The prison-striped men secure their axes and head toward their camp.

DARYL

How much longer you got?

BRIAR

Two months. Unless one of you run.

DARYL

Taggart on one side, snakes on the  
other. Where's to run?

INT. DOBBS HOUSE - STUDY - DAY

Oliver's voice desperately seeks his mother Ardith's attention. She busily pens a letter on her rolltop desk.

OLIVER (O.S.)

Mommy!

ARDITH

Hush up!

Oliver persists, causing Ardith to slam the pen down and clutch her temples.

ARDITH (CONT'D)

Josephine! Please take care of him.

JOSEPHINE, a light-skinned Black, heavily pregnant, her hair wrapped in a kerchief, dashes by the door frame.

JOSEPHINE  
Coming, Miss Ardith.

A knock on the front door causes Ardith to look at the time. She rubs her belly, and can hear husband William answer it.

WILLIAM  
Honey, it's Frank and Teresa.

Footsteps lead to Ardith's study. Ardith's husband, WILLIAM, mid-twenties, handsome, refined with distinctive cleft chin, leads FRANK, late 20s, dandyish, and TERESA, late 20s, a finishing-school success, into Ardith's study.

ARDITH  
Frank, so glad you could get away from the city attorney's office to bring Teresa here.

FRANK  
You look lovely.  
(looking at William)  
You picked out a name yet?

ARDITH  
(interjecting)  
Katherine with a K.

FRANK  
We're in trouble now. We gave them the vote, and by darn they think they have the right to name their babies.

WILLIAM  
We're still discussing names. Anyway, Frank, we should go meet with York.

They depart, and Teresa sits on a chair opposite Ardith.

TERESA  
Gave us the vote? The law passed alright. Did you vote last fall?

She shakes her head no.

TERESA (CONT'D)  
I didn't vote either. If we don't get a chance this fall, I'll organize a women's march like Atlanta has never seen.

ARDITH

Speaking of marches, let's talk about the Daisy Ladies Society. I'm thinking of leading a march.

TERESA

As Kligripp? A secretary doesn't organize marches.

ARDITH

You forgot that I am also the Klabee. And, as treasurer, I'm in charge of where the funds need to go.

TERESA

You're that too?

A knock on the door frame interrupts them. Josephine, motherly and stoical, with Oliver holding onto her hand, peeks into the room.

JOSEPHINE

Miss Ardith, I'll be taking Oliver outside.

Ardith waves her on, and Oliver pulls Josephine out. Ardith gapes incredulously at Teresa.

ARDITH

See that head rag? I explicitly forbid her to wear those in the house! See how she disrespects me.

EXT. STEWART MOUNTAIN - STEWART COMPOUND DAY

Poppy leads Jacca, an old horse that has seen better days, out to the front of the house. Willow, wearing a riding dress with split skirt, with calf-high boots, and her messenger bag, intercepts them in the yard.

POPPY

I have something for you.

Secretive-like, Poppy reaches into his pocket and pulls out a square wrapped in cloth. He gives Willow a peek at a stash of peanut brittle he has been saving.

POPPY (CONT'D)

It's a special treat for the ride.

Willow studies Jacca's leg, noticing a bandage wrapped around it.

POPPY (CONT'D)  
She got caught in the corral.

Clamoring along the trail, a peddler's wagon can be heard approaching the Stewart House. Poppy and Willow look to a wagon pulled by two horses. Holding the reins, Mr. COBURN, late 50s, a crooked broker of flimflam and housewares.

COBURN  
Whoa! You damn bitches!

The wagon stops, and Coburn hops out to meet the Stewarts.

COBURN (CONT'D)  
Good day Sir! Got some specials--

POPPY  
-- Not today, Mr. Coburn.

COBURN  
Well, I have some candy for the little lady.

He motions to Willow, and Poppy waves his hands "no sale."

POPPY  
No, she is off to find a preacher.

COBURN  
A preacher?

Willow stares suspiciously at him, as Poppy quietly explains to Coburn the circumstances.

WILLOW (V.O.)  
We are always the last stop on Mr. Coburn's circuit. Mama will give him supper when it's late and he parks his wagon by the house. I caught him looking in my window once. Said he heard a ghost.

Poppy motions for Willow to join the conversation.

POPPY  
Mr. Coburn said he knows a few traveling preachers down in Helen. I want you to follow him.

Willow tilts her head back hesitantly. She then gesticulates that she can go do this alone.

POPPY (CONT'D)

No. You have never been off the mountain alone. I'd rather you go with Mr. Coburn.

COBURN

Besides, that old mare there. She might get spooked at all them automobiles in Helen. Hitch her up front with my team. She'll do fine.

Resignedly, Willow gives an okay nod.

WILLOW (V.O.)

The Lord has always lit my path. Mr. Coburn is always lit on any path.

COBURN

Say, why doesn't she ever speak a word?

POPPY

Willow.

He motions to Willow to come over. She opens her mouth wide and Mr. Coburn looks in, and then shudders back.

COBURN

(laughs)

Well, no room for sassiness then.

POPPY

You don't know Willow.

Poppy proceeds to lead Jacca to the wagon team.

EXT. TIMBERLAND MOUNTAIN - WORK GANG LINE - MORNING

As the work gang hacks at the trees, Briar studies the inmates under his care and notices one, CLYDE, 60ish, lanky Black man favoring a foot. Taggert struts up to Briar with his whip to the ready.

TAGGERT

What's his problem?

BRIAR

Blisters sir.

Taggert hovers over Clyde.

TAGGERT

You need your mammy here to keep  
your shoe tied, boy?

CLYDE

No sir.

TAGGERT

Let me see what you crabbing about,  
John Henry.

Clyde slips his foot out to show a bleeding foot rubbed raw.

TAGGERT (CONT'D)

Piss on it.

Clyde and Briar lock eyes in confusion.

TAGGERT (CONT'D)

Dammit! I said piss on it!

BRIAR

Sir. We're wasting daylight.

TAGGERT

It heals cuts and blisters. You  
have two minutes or I'm whipping  
you red.

The convict steps behind a tree for his prescription. Taggert stretches the looped whip behind his neck to cradle his head.

BRIAR

Ain't never heard tell of piss  
being a cure.

TAGGERT

Cause you're a dumb mountain hick.

Taggert clutches his gut and winces.

TAGGERT (CONT'D)

Wasn't there a farm about three  
miles back? Sits off the trail?

BRIAR

I recollect it. Might be a bit  
farther though.

TAGGERT

You're gonna fetch me some milk.  
Stomach's full of fire ants today.

BRIAR

Alone sir?



TAGGERT

Buttermilk would suit as well. And ask about blackstrap molasses and biscuits.

INT. DOBBS HOUSE - DINING ROOM - EVENING

With a tablecloth and splashes of elegance, William and Ardith dine alone. Through the kitchen doorway, Oliver chatters to Josephine. William picks at his food.

ARDITH

You seem distracted.

WILLIAM

Oh, a bunch of northerners. That Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. Taking a look at our insurance policies here in Georgia.

ARDITH

Your policies? What for?

WILLIAM

Baby mortality rates have risen since insurance companies we started offering life insurance.

ARDITH

Ridiculous. Babies die just as often as they always have.

WILLIAM

They're saying fraud. They say people are digging up baby corpses or wherever they can find one.

ARDITH

But you've no need to worry.

WILLIAM

Several cities near Atlanta have saved tens of thousands of dollars because children are now insured.

ARDITH

You just need to show the nosy northerners that there's only a tiny portion of insured babies dying. As naturally happens.

Ardith sets down her utensils and dabs her lips with a napkin.

ARDITH (CONT'D)

If you give me another fifty advertisements, I can pass them out in north Marietta.

William rises and steps to a sideboard to pour himself a drink from a crystal decanter.

WILLIAM

Just be careful who you're giving the brochures to. They're calling us baby baiters. (beat) Maybe avoid following the obituaries.

ARDITH

It's so unfair. The parents are more than grateful for the life insurance money.

WILLIAM

Did I mention I have to go out tonight?

Josephine comes into the room and clears away the plates.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

That was a very good meal, Josephine.

He presents a winning smile, to which she returns a sly one.

JOSEPHINE

You're welcome, Mr. Dobbs.

ARDITH

Josephine, get Oliver ready for bed after you've cleaned up.

Josephine nods and waddles out of the room. William goes to a sideboard and removes a small ornate pocket pistol and conceals it in his jacket.

WILLIAM

The sheriff's going to get harder on petty criminals. He's proposing all crimes, no matter how minor, become felonies, so we get more work time out of the men.

Ardith struggles up, as William grabs his hat. She gives him a peck on the cheek.

INT. DOBBS HOUSE - HALLWAY - LATER

From Ardith's point-of-view, she watches Josephine slowly rub Oliver's back, sending him to sleep.

INT. DOBBS HOUSE - STUDY

Ardith pulls out a scrapbook from her desk. She flips to a page with newspaper reports of a passenger ship sinking. She looks at her reflection in the mirror and smiles.

EXT. TRAIL FROM STEWART MOUNTAIN - NIGHT

Coburn steals glances at Willow as he parks the wagon in a secluded forest clearing. He sings non-melodically "Peach-Pickin' Time Down in Georgia."

COBURN

There's a preacher preaches down in  
Georgia. Always happy to say, sweet  
peach. Will you love and obey?

Willow rolls her eyes.

COBURN (CONT'D)

We will continue on in the morning.

Willow grabs her pad of paper and writes quickly, shoving the note at Coburn.

COBURN (CONT'D)

Can't find preachers in the dark.  
We'll camp here. Hey, how about  
making some of that soup that your  
mama makes?

WAGON - LATER

Coburn tends a fire with a kettle, while Willow starts a pot to prepare a soup for them to eat. As she stands straight, she can feel Coburn breathing down her neck. She spins around and he grabs her close.

COBURN

Poor thing. Nobody's gonna want to  
marry a girl that can't talk.

Willow tries to wriggle out of his grasp.

COBURN (CONT'D)

I'm only wanting some company in my  
travels. I mean you no harm.

(MORE)

COBURN (CONT'D)

I can get you purty dresses and  
you'll have good food.

She stops her resistance. Thinking he has persuaded her, he loosens his grip. He moves his face in to plant a kiss but gets a face full of spit. She slams the pot into his head and sprints toward the trees.

COBURN (CONT'D)

Stop!

As she makes it to the first tree, a gunshot reverberates and she clutches her left arm. She turns to see Coburn pointing a pistol at her.

COBURN (CONT'D)

I nearabout kilt you and it's all  
on your head.

The gash in her arm starts to bleed, as he grabs her and drags her to the wagon. He dresses her arm with a rag and spots her eyeing Jacca. He then binds her hands together behind her back.

COBURN (CONT'D)

Hell-fire and damnation! You're  
more stubborn than a corpse.

He then takes his pistol over to Jacca and points his pistol at its head. Willows eyes grow fearful, as Coburn looks back.

COBURN (CONT'D)

We won't need this old mare none.

He smiles and then fires his pistol above the mare's head, spooking her. She takes off running.

COBURN (CONT'D)

That look is a bit hateful, you  
know. Don't trouble me none.  
Finally got rid of my wife. Her  
sass-back was well above her  
raising and I tired of it.

Coburn grabs the pot off the ground and sets it back on the wagon. Willow spots Death Cap Mushrooms near the wagon wheels. Coburn unties her hands, grabs the spilt carrots, horseradish, and Death Cap Mushrooms.

COBURN (CONT'D)

Finish the soup. I'm a bit hungry  
after all that. Gonna need some  
strength for later tonight.

Willow nods resignedly as Coburn sits by the camp fire. She studies the Death Cap mushrooms he presented to her.

WILLOW (V.O.)

Tales have it that right before folks die from everything inside of them shutting down, they claim Death Caps are the most delicious food they ever ate. There's not one healing herb in the world to turn our fates around if we eat these. God forgive me for what happens next.

She grabs the horseradish, chops the Death Caps and carrots, and proceeds to mix them together in the pot.

COBURN

It's a bit lonely on the road. You must know what that's like with your handicap.

Willow gives him a cross look.

COBURN (CONT'D)

What's wrong?

Willow brings the pot to the fire, and Coburn holsters his gun. She goes to take the kettle but Coburn waves her off.

COBURN (CONT'D)

I don't think so.

She sets the pot down and he pours the steaming water over the deadly concoction. He points to have her sit beside him.

COBURN (CONT'D)

I know us being together is new on you, but you'll come around. I'm thanking the Lord for a silent woman after my wife chewed my ears to nubs.

He stirs the soup with an oversized spoon.

COBURN (CONT'D)

I sure picked me a bad mountain to try to sell my wares. Your pap's probably so cheap he wouldn't give a nickel to see Jesus riding a bicycle.

Chuckling, he stirs the pot a few times and takes a heaping spoon of Death Caps soup out. He moves the spoon over to her lips. She turns her head defiantly.

COBURN (CONT'D)  
 I'll tame you, girl, you wait. I'll  
 ride you and tame you good.

He laughs and scoops the first bite into his mouth. He offers her a spoonful but she declines.

COBURN (CONT'D)  
 Delicious. Wasting food is a  
 downright sin. Didn't your Ma ever  
 teach you that?

Willow looks away from her foul captor.

EXT. TIMBERLAND MOUNTAIN CAMP - MORNING

Dutifully preparing an empty wagon, Briar makes sure that it is ready to go for a supply run. Taggert approaches him with Clyde, really hobbling, and another convict.

TAGGERT  
 Take these two back down to the  
 prison camp. Get me two fresh ones.  
 Gonna have to cut that one's  
 infected foot off.

He pulls out three letters and shoves them at Briar.

TAGGERT (CONT'D)  
 Drop this one at the Warden's  
 office, put this one in the mailbox  
 for my wife, and personally deliver  
 this one to Lily.

BRIAR  
 Miss Lily's Threads and Things?  
 Doing some sewing?

TAGGERT  
 Needling. That's for sho'.

Taggert laughs at his own joke. The two convicts hop in the back of the wagon as Taggert swaggers off. Briar hops in front and nudges the mules forward. Clyde grimaces in pain.

BRIAR  
 Gonna make it?

CLYDE  
 That fool is gonna cost me my foot.

BRIAR  
 What are you in for?

CLYDE

They got me for "walking without a purpose."

BRIAR

How long you get?

CLYDE

Two years, nine months.

BRIAR

Leave it to the good State of Georgia to give life purpose.

CLYDE

You rode the rails. How was that?

BRIAR

Free. But I miss home.

CLYDE

Why'd don't ya head that way?

BRIAR

I don't want my folks to know I've amounted to no good.

He lets the wagon travel a bit, while Clyde eyes him.

BRIAR (CONT'D)

Been making sure to send money to prove myself responsible. Hate for my Poppy know I am what he said.

EXT. DOBBS HOUSE - MID MORNING

Frank and Teresa Greer pull up in a nice touring car. Ardith wears a pale sleeveless chiffon shift and gently strokes her stomach on the porch. Frank exits to open Teresa's door.

FRANK

Morning Mrs. Dobbs. Today's the day.

Bubbly, Teresa jumps out and embraces Ardith.

TERESA

Guess what! Guess What? Deidre Barr from the northern Women of the Klan is going to be there!

ARDITH

She read your article?

TERESA  
 And heard that the whole Daisy  
 Ladies' Society will become  
 official members of the WKKK!

They embrace giddily. Frank opens the back door and they both  
 pile in.

ARDITH  
 (in folksy way)  
 My heart is a thumpin' gizzard.

Teresa gives her a quizzical look.

TERESA  
 Corny. Did you pick that up from  
 your nanny?

ARDITH  
 (composed)  
 I suppose I did.

TERESA  
 Best not use your maid's phrases in  
 front of Miss Barr.

EXT. MEETINGHOUSE - LATER

Frank's car pulls up to a meetinghouse where mostly women are  
 entering. Hopping out, he opens Teresa and Ardith's doors.

INT. MEETINGHOUSE - FRONT ROW - LATER

Sitting in the front row, Ardith notes Teresa's ramrod strait  
 posture and mirrors her. DEIDRE BARR, 50ish, a supremacist  
 with round-rimmed glasses, addresses the group of ladies.

ROSTRUM

DEIDRE BARR  
 I've always wanted to visit your  
 lovely state. I'm here because you  
 have a woman of justice among you!

FRONT ROW

Ardith and Teresa exchange happy glances.



DEIDRE BARR (O.C.)  
 Thanks to Teresa Greer of the Daisy  
 Ladies' Society, you have my  
 attention. Teresa, would you mind  
 standing?

Teresa stands to polite applause. She takes her seat. Like a  
 preacher, Barr's arms extend upward to heaven.

ROSTRUM

DEIDRE BARR  
 We are here to stay. History will  
 tell of our righteous fight to  
 safeguard the white race against a  
 rising tide of color.

Applause starts to rise over her speech.

DEIDRE BARR (CONT'D)  
 Who is ready to take the vow?

BACK ROW

Looking forward, all the women's hands shoot upward.

EXT. TRAIL FROM STEWART MOUNTAIN - AFTERNOON

Willow watches Coburn, dying from last night's dinner, take  
 his last breath in the fetal position. She prods him with the  
 toe of her boot until he rolls onto his back.

WILLOW (V.O.)  
 Lord, a man with a tarnished  
 character like his probably got  
 sent to Haints Holler.

WAGON

Willow examines her bandage, then hitches the horses up to  
 the wagon. She sits in the driver's seat and starts the team  
 moving, leaving Coburn's corpse.

EXT. ROAD TO HELEN - WAGON - CONTINUOUS

Willow steers the wagon along a compacted road. She squints  
 to the horizon and spots an oncoming car, she makes out the  
 word "Police" painted on the car hood. She stops the wagon  
 and signals the driver.

The car passes but slows and turns back to the wagon. As it pulls up behind it, Willow reaches into her bag and scribbles a note. SERGEANT VISSOM, 40ish, holds himself like a bag of flour in a cop's uniform, jingles coins in his pocket as he approaches the wagon.

VISSOM  
Are you driving this rig all by  
your lonesome?

Willow nods affirmatively.

VISSOM (CONT'D)  
You own this here wagon?

Willow scribbles in her note pad and holds for the suspicious Vissom to see.

VISSOM (CONT'D)  
The dead man is your kinfolk?

Willow shakes her head and starts a hand conversation, but realizing it is futile, writes another sentence for Vissom.

VISSOM (CONT'D)  
Mute, huh?

He steps back to look at the wagon.

VISSOM (CONT'D)  
Wagon is registered from South  
Carolina. (beat) A sparrow-sized  
girl, with torn dress and wounded  
arm. You got a mess of trouble  
behind ya.

A train whistle echoes in the distance, as she etches out another sentence for him to read.

VISSOM (CONT'D)  
A preacher? I can drop you off at  
the Center Baptist Church. Looks  
like you need some doctoring too.

He motions to her arm. She motions a gun and tugs on her clothes before commencing another note.

VISSOM (CONT'D)  
Okay, lets pull this wagon into  
this field. I'll drive you on into  
Helen and get you some help.

POLICECAR - LATER

Willow stares at the car, carrying only her messenger bag, as Vissom opens up the door.

VISSOM  
First time in a car?

She gives him a concerned look.

VISSOM (CONT'D)  
Think of it as a faster horse.

INT. POLICECAR

Willow studies the car interior like a visitor in a foreign land. Vissom enter the cab and starts the ignition.

VISSOM  
Can you draw a map so the coroner  
can go fetch the dead man?

As she gets out her notepad, Vissom puts the car into gear. She grips the dashboard, unaccustomed to a such a new ride. Vissom smiles.

VISSOM (CONT'D)  
Pastor Holcombe and his wife,  
Dorothy, will help you. You been to  
Helen before?

She dashes quickly on her notebook while still holding on to the car and flashes it to him.

VISSOM (CONT'D)  
Only to Folsom, huh? Not much to  
see there. A dry goods store that's  
more dry than good.

EXT. HILLTOP CLEARING - EVENING

A giant wooden cross is set on fire. Ardith stands with other new WKKK recruits bedecked in white Klan robes. Six male leaders, a Grand Titan, and Diedre Barr face the recruits.

DEIDRE BARR  
This is to remind you to act like  
Jesus Christ and serve the Klan.  
You are in God's army against the  
enemies of God's chosen people.

Table with bowls of water sit upon it. KLANSWOMEN step up to bowls, dip their fingers in, then touch their shoulders and head, then wave their hands in a circular motion in the air.

KLANSWOMEN

In body. In mind. In spirit. In life.

The new recruits complete the ceremony, walk past the leaders and shake their hands. Ardith leans towards Diedre.

ARDITH

I am Teresa Greer's friend. I want to thank you for the special invitation to tonight's ceremony.

DEIDRE BARR

Yes, I remember. Did you take one of the trolleys here?

ARDITH

Yes.

DEIDRE BARR

We invited Teresa to ride back with us. Why don't you come too?

One of the male leaders starts to extinguish the cross. The GRAND TITAN announces.

GRAND TITAN

You may now remove your regalia.

Ardith moves forward to allow other women to meet Deidre, and removes her robes. She starts calling out for Teresa.

ARDITH

Teresa!

The crowd starts to disperse. She moves through them looking for her friend. She peers into the neighboring trees and sees a reflection of herself, wearing mountain-folk attire. The reflection disappears.

DEIDRE BARR (O.C.)

(From a distance)

Ardith, are you coming?

INT. HOLCOMBE RESIDENCE - EVENING

Mrs. HOLCOMBE, 40ish, dressed as virtuously as her religious convictions, greets Vissom and Willow.

HOLCOMBE

Deputy Visson, nice to see you. Who have you brought with you?

Visson and Willow enter.

VISSOM

This here's Willow, and she's come to notify your husband he's needed up in the hills.

HOLCOMBE

My husband's gone at the moment, but won't you stay? With it being suppertime and all, I'll set two more plates.

Holcombe waits for a verbal reply. Willow grabs her messenger bag to retrieve her notebook.

HOLCOMBE (CONT'D)

Is she deaf and dumb?

VISSOM

She hears just fine and has a good hand at writing.

(smiles at Willow)

Just can't talk.

HOLCOMBE

Her ma and pa. Are they related?

Rolling her eyes, Willows dashes off a note and shows it to Holcombe.

HOLCOMBE (CONT'D)

Oh, that's good.

VISSOM

Willow was heading off Stewart Mountain when a peddler grabbed her and tried to have his way. She wrote that he's dead.

Holcombe throws a hand over her mouth. Willow jots another note quickly for her to read.

HOLCOMBE

Oh, you poor dear.

She drops an arm around Willow, a motherly embrace that she happily leans into.

HOLCOMBE (CONT'D)

Not more than an hour ago, Hank Fry came down the mountain near Moss Lick Knob. Hustled in here, telling my husband to pack the Good Book. That's where my Dean is right now. Preaching a funeral on Stewart Mountain.

Willow's shoulders slump, realizing part of her mission was in vain. She solemnly gazes at her notebook, pauses, then slowly writes for Holcombe and Vissom.

VISSOM

She mentioned her baby brother died. And, her mama's takin' ill.

Holcombe however steps back and leans her back against a table. She nervously hugs and unhugs her midsection, chews her bottom lip, and sadly surveys Willow.

HOLCOMBE

Child. I'm sorry. When Hank was leaving the mountain, he heard the dinner bell ring dozens of times, signaling an older person had passed. My husband left saying he had two funerals to preach.

Willow cradles her messenger bag and collapses.

EXT. COUNTY PRISON CAMP ENTRANCE ROAD - NIGHT

Briar's wagon approaches the entrance to a large fenced-in enclosure with charmless buildings.

CLYDE

You ain't never told me about the hold-up you pulled.

BRIAR

I pulled no hold-up.

CLYDE

Then what ya in for?

BRIAR

Vagrancy.

CLYDE

What?

BRIAR

That was my crime. I had forty cents on me when a policeman stopped me in Euharlee. The judge claimed a man needed to have a dollar on him to be legal to walk the streets.

Clyde laughs.

BRIAR (CONT'D)

The rub was that the day before, I'd hid my money near there, not putting my trust in a small bank.

A GUARD intercepts the wagon at the front gate.

BRIAR (CONT'D)

Trustee Briar Stewart dropping off two prisoners for infirmary. Picking up supplies.

GUARD

All right, Doc has gone home for the night. Y'all stay in your wagon by the garage for the night. Supply room opens at eight.

EXT. COUNTY PRISON CAMP GARAGE - LATER

Briar wheels an empty wagon over to the garage, alongside a cart covered with a tarp. Curiosity gets the best of Briar, and he leans from his wagon over to the neighboring wagon and peels back the tarp.

CLYDE

What you doin'?

Underneath, a dead Black prisoner wearing bloody prison garb lays next to a dead, bearded, white prisoner with a bullet wound to the head.

Two doltish PAID HANDS approach. Briar flips the tarp back, ducking into the wagon.

PAID HAND ONE (O.S.)

Alls I'm saying is, the camp does an awful lot of special burying these days.

The two men reach the cart and toss two shovels on top of the covered corpses.

PAID HAND TWO

And alls I'm saying is, we're paid ten dollars to dig holes, so shut up.

PAID HAND ONE

I got this work to keep Betty off my back.

They wheel the cart into a field behind the camp. Briar peeks over the side of the wagon to watch them leave.

PAID HAND TWO

If you don't wanna take five dollars home a couple times a month, let me know.

EXT. COUNTY PRISON CAMP - SECRET BURIAL GROUND

Briar and Clyde follow them to the far end of a field, walking in a dry ditch to stay out of view. The burying crew stops the cart, and starts shoveling.

PAID HAND ONE

Digging holes after dark. Something wrong going on here and I don't wanna have any more trouble with the law.

PAID HAND TWO

Warden said these two come in dead from working the pines.

BRIAR

(whispering)

The big feller. His name is Frederick Sharp. Brought him in last week for the doctor.

The white convict's body is moved by the men.

CLYDE

(whispering)

That other one never told us his name. Collapsed one day. Taggart made sure he stayed that way.

Briar and Clyde head back to the wagon, Briar helping Clyde hobble along through the ditch.

BRIAR

(whispering)

Pray your foot heels. Or, you be keeping them company 'til rapture.



EXT. CARTERSVILLE STREET - MORNING

Briar's wagon, loaded with supplies, sits outside the post office. Briar exits, retrieves a letter, and heads over to a shop across the street "Miss Lily's Threads & Things."

INT. MISS LILY'S STOREFRONT - CONTINUOUS

Lacy white curtains obscure the view of a hallway behind the front desk. A dour young girl, appearing too stylish for a bedspread store, minds the front reception.

BRIAR

I have a message for Miss Lily. Got to give it to her personally.

The girl gives him a hardened gaze and escorts him to the hallway.

INT. MISS LILY'S BACK ROOMS

The receptionist pulls back a curtain, revealing a sad group of girls, dressed fancifully. They force themselves to smile and stand at slumped attention. MISS LILY, 40, all business, including her dress, whirls around to see Briar.

MISS LILY

Relax girls. He has no money nor the time.

The girls slump back down into their seats.

BRIAR

Got a note from Taggart.

She scowls and snatches it. Curtly, she opens to thumb through a letter and some cash inside.

MISS LILY

Tell him I may have new *deliveries* in a few days.

BRIAR

Yes, ma'am.

EXT. CARTERSVILLE STREET - DAY

Ardith, with Oliver in tow, carries a basket of food. She walks past the post office and Briar's wagon. Oliver pays more attention to his toy dirigible than walking and nearly trips.

ARDITH  
Pay better attention, Oliver.

OLIVER  
My legs are walking as fast as they  
go, Mommy.

They continue along the store fronts. Travel posters in the windows of Ludlow Steamship and Train Travel Adventures catch her eye.

ARDITH  
Let's go in here for a second.

INT. LUDLOW TRAVEL AGENCY

A squirrley TRAVEL AGENT greets them as they enter. Oliver sails his dirigible in front of posters with sky views, one advertising Yellowstone National Park.

TRAVEL AGENT  
Good day! May I help you with something?

ARDITH  
Yes. I'm curious about the train trips for this summer. What would something like that cost for my husband and me?

The agent studies her swollen midsection.

TRAVEL AGENT  
For you?

ARDITH  
Yes. My husband and I have often talked of travel. You may know him. William Dobbs, two doors down?

TRAVEL AGENT  
Of course.

He shuffles over to the Yellowstone poster and pulls a brochure from under it.

TRAVEL AGENT (CONT'D)  
This trip takes fifteen days. Includes all of the meals and a sleeper car with a private study. That's \$220 dollars a person.

ARDITH  
That sounds wonderful.

She takes the brochure and smiles at it. Travel Agent finds a second brochure under a poster for Cuba.

TRAVEL AGENT

And, here is a delightful little promotion we are running now. A steamer from Miami to Havana.

Oliver's rambunctiousness knocks over the Yellowstone poster, causing the travel agent to swoop after it.

ARDITH

Oliver!  
(calmly to the travel agent)  
Yes, I'll take a brochure.

INT. WILLIAM DOBBS OFFICE - LATER

Oliver bursts into his father's business office. William, in a business suit, stands up from his desk to meet his family.

OLIVER

Daddy!

William scoops up Oliver while Ardith sets down her food basket.

WILLIAM

I have something for you.

He reaches inside his desk and pulls out a toy pipe shaped into a bird above the pipe's bowl. He blows into it and a loud bird sound comes out.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

I'm a canary.

Ardith slightly winces.

ARDITH

That's creative, darling. What a great *outside* toy.

Oliver skips to go outside as William spies Ardith's travel brochures.

WILLIAM

What do you have there?

She shows him and he browses over the Yellowstone brochure.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)  
Maybe one day. Right now, we have  
little ones to raise.

ARDITH  
(disappointed)  
We do.

He spots the other one that she holds.

WILLIAM  
Where's that one to?

ARDITH  
Oh, Havana.

WILLIAM  
Why would you ever get on a ship  
after what happened to your  
parents?

ARDITH  
The agent just handed me this  
brochure.

WILLIAM  
Speaking of brochures. I just had  
these printed up.

He hands her a brochure, which she quickly scans and smiles.

ARDITH  
A little swastika. For good luck.

WILLIAM  
Guess you're here for the car?

ARDITH  
Yes.

EXT. WILLIAM DOBBS OFFICE STREET

Oliver makes bird pipe noises and flies his dirigible to the  
car. William escorts Ardith to the driver's seat.

WILLIAM  
Stick to the hardtop roads. And no  
faster than thirty. If you hit  
anything, I don't want it to hurt  
Oliver or the B-A-B-Y.

Ardith rolls her eyes and slides into the driver's seat.

ARDITH  
We're going to be F-I-N-E.

INT. DOBBS CAR - LATER

Ardith turns down a gravel road, in defiance of William, while Oliver still plays with his new toys in the front seat. Irritated, she reaches into her pocketbook as she drives.

ARDITH  
I brought you candy to eat while I  
make my visits.

She hands some taffy to Oliver, which silences him. Ardith rehearses her spiel.

ARDITH (CONT'D)  
Good day, Fiona. I'm looking for  
new members to join the Women of  
the Knights of the Klan. Women who  
share our ideals and can afford the  
membership fee of ten dollars. In  
trade, we offer charity.

Oliver spots children playing outside and gets excited again.

OLIVER  
Can I go play with the boys?

ARDITH  
No. You have on new clothes. Just  
stay here.

She stops her car in front of a cracker-style house.

EXT. FIONA ELSMORE HOUSE

Ardith wobbles out of her car, with Oliver still inside. She opens the back door of the car to pull out a quilt, which she unfolds, revealing a pastel swastika sown into it, and folds it nicely again.

TWO YOUNG BOYS under the age of 12 that Oliver wanted to play with run up to her car.

ARDITH  
Hi, little ones. Is your mother  
inside?

YOUNG BOY #1  
Did you bring food?

ARDITH

I did.

She retrieves her food basket and hands the two boys a bread roll and they run off.

INT. FIONA ELSMORE HOUSE KITCHEN

Ardith steps into a small breezeway and pokes her head in.

ARDITH

Knock, knock. Fiona? It's Ardith.

No response, so Ardith moves forward.

ARDITH (CONT'D)

Yoo-hoo.

FIONA ELSMORE, late 20s, disheveled, and eyes swollen from crying, sits at a small table as Ardith slowly moves into the room. Fiona cradles a baby girl and stares blankly at a wall.

FIONA

I need your help.

ARDITH

Look. I brought bread, a ham, and some winter potatoes.

She sets the basket on the table and uncovers the basket.

FIONA

Roy is gone for good.

ARDITH

What? He's dead?

FIONA

No, he left us.

ARDITH

He'll be back. It's just his nervous condition. Give him time.

FIONA

The railroad cut his wages again.

ARDITH

When did he leave?

FIONA

Three nights ago. Finished his work shift and come home.

She runs a broken fingernail along the tabletop then shifts the limp baby to her other shoulder. Ardith takes a seat.

FIONA (CONT'D)

He woke up middle of that night  
a'screaming and making no sense.  
Ran out of the house and hasn't  
come back.

ARDITH

Do you want my husband's men's  
organization to find him?

FIONA

Roy told me straight up he was done  
trying. He's a broken man from the  
war and can't see his way out.

ARDITH

What do you want help with?

FIONA

I want you to find a home for Anna.

She hands the two-month-old off to Ardith, who has no choice but to take the tiny blanketed package.

FIONA (CONT'D)

She deserves better than this.

Fiona goes to a tan crockery jar on the shelf, takes off the lid, and brings out a handful of crumpled money.

FIONA (CONT'D)

I was saving this up to join your  
women's group, but I recollect you  
said there are folks that will take  
in babies for twelve dollars and  
adopt them out.

She drops the money on the table but faces away from Ardith.

FIONA (CONT'D)

That's what I need. A right good  
home for my baby girl.

ARDITH

Fiona, you're sure? Once they find  
her a new home, she can never come  
back.

Fiona squeezes her eyes tight and nods.

FIONA

Please. She's been sickly off and on. Can't keep paying the doctor three dollars every time.

ARDITH

What does she have?

FIONA

Whooping cough. But, that's passed. She's got a delicate stomach. Can't keep breast milk down, but she's fine with goat's milk.

ARDITH

If I hadn't come along, what were you going to do with Anna?

Fiona unfolds an old newspaper stacked on the counter and lays it in front of Ardith.

FIONA

A foundling home. Beck Infantorium.

Ardith's eyes grow wide

EXT. BECK INFANTORIUM - DAY - FLASHBACK

A younger Ardith in her country clothes leaves, sobbing, from a large home with a "Beck Infantorium" sign in front.

INT. FIONA ELSMORE HOUSE KITCHEN - END OF FLASHBACK

ARDITH

Um... you don't want them. They take mostly high-risk babies. Born in scandalous circumstances.

Ardith stands and steadies herself.

ARDITH (CONT'D)

I'll take her to the New Hope Charity Home. They do a nice job of tending the infants, and if I remember right, they might even have a goat or two.

FIONA

Thank you. Do I need to sign papers?



ARDITH

New Hope can keep this a secret if that's what you want. I assume you don't have a birth certificate.

FIONA

We don't. Um... I don't.

The baby slightly fusses as Ardith grabs a wicker baby basket.

ARDITH

You sure this is what you want? How will you explain it to Roy when he comes home?

FIONA

He ain't coming home! His daddy's rifle is missing and he ain't one for hunting after all he witnessed in the war.

ARDITH

Fiona, I don't know what to say.

EXT. FIONA ELSMORE HOUSE - DOBBS CAR - CONTINUOUS

The two boys run up to Ardith as she places the wicker basket with the baby on Oliver's lap by the passenger door.

YOUNG BOY #1

Hey, where are you taking our sister?

ARDITH

Here boys.

Ardith reaches into the car and hands them Oliver's dirigible and whistle.

OLIVER (O.C.)

Mommy!

She forces them into the hands of the boys to divert their attention.

ARDITH

Your mother has food inside for you, so skedaddle.

They slowly back away and soon turn and run to the house as Ardith heads to the driver's side.

INT. DOBBS CAR - CONTINUOUS

As the baby awakes to the start of the car engine, she thrusts her fingers through the blanket.

OLIVER  
Are we keeping her?

ARDITH  
We're taking her to... a hospital.

Ardith startles as she spots sores on the baby.

ARDITH (CONT'D)  
Hell's bells!

She reaches to the baby and tucks the blanket around her.

OLIVER  
What's wrong, Mommy?

ARDITH  
Impetigo. Don't touch her!

Increasingly distressed, Ardith takes a deep breath and shakes her head.

ARDITH (CONT'D)  
New Hope won't take her.

EXT. DOBBS CAR - CARTERSVILLE ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Ardith's car stops at an intersection. A road sign reads "Marietta, 5 Miles."

INT. DOBBS CAR

Ardith sighs and diverts her car off the Cartersville road.

EXT. BECK INFANTORIUM - MOMENTS LATER

Ardith pulls her car in front of the Beck Infanterium. She scoops the baby basket out of Oliver's lap.

BECK INFANTORIUM PORCH

The wide porch has a Baby Box. Ardith breathlessly hikes to the door and rings the bell. HERTA, late 50s, no-nonsense Mother Superior-type, greets Ardith at the door.

HERTA

Hello, I see you brought us a little one.

ARDITH

Yes, from a family in a pickle.

HERTA

Won't you come in?

Ardith shakes her head no, and motions to Oliver in the car.

ARDITH

The mother has run into hard times, and she's asked to have her baby adopted out. She paid twelve dollars.

HERTA

White parents?

ARDITH

Both white. She has impetigo.

HERTA

We take in sick babies as well as the healthy ones. The mother paid for relinquishment?

Ardith pulls out the crumpled 12 dollars. Herta grabs the money and takes the baby basket.

ARDITH

How many infants do you have at one time?

HERTA

We have room just now for three more.

She pulls back the blanket and examines Anna.

HERTA (CONT'D)

We'll get her healed and then find a good placement.

ARDITH

Thank you!

Ardith heads back down the porch stairs as Herta takes the child back into the house, but stops at the threshold.

HERTA

It was nice seeing you *again*.

Ardith freezes in her tracks and winces. She hears the door slam behind Herta. She nudges herself back to the car.

INT. HOLCOMBE GUEST ROOM - LATE MORNING

Willow studies the room after light hits her forehead. She senses her clothes are not her own but spots her messenger bag on a night stand. She hears Mrs. Holcombe and Officer Vissom speaking from behind the door.

HOLCOMBE

Poor thing is still asleep.

She sneaks out of bed to crack the door and peek out. She rubs her wounded shoulder, feeling a new bandage on it.

HOLCOMBE FRONT ROOM

VISSOM

I'll be on my way to deal with the peddler and all. I need her to draw another map.

HOLCOMBE

Why don't you try back in an hour.

HOLCOMBE GUEST ROOM

Willow backs away from the door, as she hears Vissom leave. She retreats back to the bed and kneels.

WILLOW (V.O.)

Dear Lord. My insides hurt.

She hears footsteps and peeks behind her. The door remains closed and she continues her prayer.

WILLOW (V.O.)

Why are all these bad things happening?

EXT. STEWART RESIDENCE - BEDROOM - DAY FLASHBACK

Willow sits in her mother's room as her MAMA, bright and animated, dotes on her daughter.

MAMA

I made you something.

She reaches under the bed on pulls out the riding dress she has been wearing and holds it up to Willow, who loves it. They embrace and Willow runs to try it on.

WILLOW (V.O.)  
And just like that, with her last  
breath, everything stops.

Willow re-enters wearing her new dress. Willow sends out a complex set of gestures showing how much she loves the dress and that she is happy with it.

MAMA  
I am glad you like it. You make  
everything beautiful.

Willow gives her mother a big embrace.

WILLOW (V.O.)  
Lord, I can't see a safe place for  
me outside of my hill family. The  
worst part of holding onto the  
memories is not the pain. Its the  
lonesomeness of it all.

INT. HOLCOMBE GUEST ROOM - END OF FLASHBACK

Noticing her dress hung on a hanger on a closet door. She stands to hold her dress, then embraces it.

WILLOW (V.O.)  
Memories need to be shared if they  
are to live on, and at home, I  
could do that.

EXT. ROAD TO TIMBERLINE CAMP - DAY

A dark forest overshadows Briar as he wheels his wagon forward. Behind a large tree he spots ILYA and CY, two young blonde boys who spy on him.

BRIAR  
You two going to say hi, or should  
I pretend I ain't seen ya?

The two boys saunter to the road. Their clothes are tattered, bodies emaciated.

BRIAR (CONT'D)  
When was the last time you boys  
ate?

ILYA

Three days.

Briar nods in his assessment and grabs a bottle of milk out of the wagon and hands it to the taller boy. Immediately, Ilya starts to chug it, then Cy swipes it from him.

BRIAR

Your folks working?

ILYA

Dead.

Briar grabs another milk from his wagon and hands it to them.

BRIAR

Seems like a lot of kids around here like you.

He points down the road.

BRIAR (CONT'D)

I want you two to head to the town down there. Go find the red brick church. Ask for Father Coyle. And, don't let the police see you.

They head off down the road and Briar smiles.

INT. DOBBS HOUSE - DINING ROOM - DAY

Ardith, Teresa, and NANCY, 30s, a blander knock-off of Teresa, take afternoon tea and read different newspapers. Josephine pours tea in each cup and leaves the room holding her belly. Teresa glares at her Atlantic Independent paper.

TERESA

Bedsheets and pillowcases? Leave it to a writer from New York to not see us for what we're about.

Nancy tucks her Miami Herald down.

NANCY

Good Lord. Listen to this garbage. Astonished Georgians watched in shock as robed Ku Klux Klan women took to the streets of downtown last evening.

ARDITH

How dare they! I bet a Catholic wrote that. Listen to this. A northerner for sure.

She snaps her paper.

ARDITH (CONT'D)

WKKK resembles a poison squad of whispering women. Bet he wouldn't of wrote that if saw the finishing school we set up in Fair Oaks.

TERESA

Frank said that Congress's investigation has helped him recruit men faster than ever.

She sips tea and then taps her finger on the table.

TERESA (CONT'D)

And higher-class members. They say they didn't know we were a true American organization until Congress stuck their noses in our doings and the newspapers carried the failed investigations.

Nancy folds her Herald and unfolds the Marietta Journal.

NANCY

We have our local paper to praise. Flag and Bible sales, our bake-off to support deserted children.

TERESA

That's what we need more of. Oh. Have you ladies tried this?

She points to an ad for Lysol by Nancy's thumb.

ARDITH

For complete Feminine Hygiene rely on Lysol.

NANCY

Yes, in my kitchen. Not my privates.

TERESA

It says it's recommended by leading gynecologists.

ARDITH

Just snake oil salesman. It's like that Gillette Company trying to get women to shave their legs and armpits. Shameful.

Ardith sighs in disgust, then daintily sips her tea. Nancy and Teresa look at each other.

TERESA

Frank likes my legs smooth. I've been shaving for two years now.

NANCY

Me too.

Nancy removes her lightweight jacket off one shoulder to show and rub her armpit. Ardith quickly conceals a wide-eyed look.

ARDITH

I meant that the ads of half-clothed women are shameful. Once I can see my legs again, I'll try out the newest razor.

Ardith grabs a tablet and pen to veer off topic.

ARDITH (CONT'D)

Let's get a list ready of *I Caught You's*.

TERESA

Me first. I don't know the man's name. Works at the Atlanta Pencil Factory. He's always on Davis Street, handing out pencils that read, "You won the vote - Use it."

NANCY

Does he seem to have a political leaning? I'd like to finally see women vote this fall.

TERESA

He's only handing them to Negro men and poor immigrants--

NANCY

-- Literacy Tests. Not sure a pencil's going to matter.

Teresa pulls a brochure from her pocketbook and puts it on the table.

TERESA

He's handing out information that may get more Negroes interested. Well, we don't need this man trying to change the voting numbers.



NANCY

I agree. Maybe a late-night visit will put him back on course.

TERESA

Absolutely.

NANCY

Ahh, this is a good *I Caught You*.

Ardith jots down the information onto her tablet. Nancy grabs a news article out of her pocketbook.

NANCY (CONT'D)

This priest named James Coyle performed a marriage last week between an Episcopalian girl and a Puerto Rican immigrant. Several days before the wedding, Ruth converted to Roman Catholicism. We can only assume under pressure.

All nod their head in disgust and Nancy takes the clipping.

TERESA

What do you have, Ardith?

ARDITH

Roy Elsmore, out on Chicken Ranch Road, deserted his wife and two boys. The wife, Fiona, went so far as to put her darling daughter up for adoption.

Nancy and Teresa sympathetically shake their heads.

ARDITH (CONT'D)

I'm sure Roy can be found and brought back.

Nancy jots something on paper.

TERESA

Oh, we can't have mothers being deserted.

She peeks up at the clock to notice she needs to go.

NANCY

Oh! I need to round up my kiddies and head home. We've had a good week, fellow Daisies.

Teresa nods affirmatively and they gather their belongings. Teresa holds her hand out to keep Ardith from rising.

TERESA

Stay there honey, we can show ourselves out.

They bid their good-byes and head out of the dining room. Ardith contentedly sighs and smiles. Josephine appears in the doorway, clutching her belly. Water dribbles onto the floor from her legs.

JOSEPHINE

Miss Ardith. I am sorry to disturb you, ma'am, but my baby is coming.

ARDITH

I see that.

JOSEPHINE

I was outside when this happened.

Her face scrunches and she leans on the door frame for support.

ARDITH

Okay. Head to your room and I'll call the doctor.

EXT. HOLCOMBE RESIDENCE - BACKYARD - DAY

Willow stands in the backyard of the Holcombe home dipping her toe into a puddle. Mrs. Holcombe exits the house to pleasantly meet Willow.

HOLCOMBE

Do you think you can eat something?

She nods and they return inside the home.

INT. HOLCOMBE RESIDENCE - DINING ROOM

Willow retrieves her bag from against the wall and sits at the table. She fishes for paper and her pencil.

HOLCOMBE (O.S.)

Pastor Holcombe won't be home until midday. Officer Vissom is on his way.

Willow spots a brochure on the table labeled Georgia School for the Deaf. She gives a stink-eyed look at it. Holcombe enters with two bowls of porridge.

HOLCOMBE (CONT'D)

Oh, I see you need some paper.

She sets the bowls down and retrieves a small pad and a new pencil from the sideboard. Willow hurriedly writes a note with her fresh supplies.

HOLCOMBE (CONT'D)  
Walk home? Nonsense. You just eat  
and relax.

She leaves while Willow takes a few quick bites but eyes the brochure. Holcombe returns but does not touch her food.

HOLCOMBE (CONT'D)  
I want to talk to you about  
something. We'd like to send you  
out to Cave Springs. To that  
school.

She guides the brochure to Willow, who shakes her head and slides it back.

HOLCOMBE (CONT'D)  
It's a right nice home for white  
girls. We pass the plate each  
Sunday, and a portion is set aside  
for young folks who need taking in.

Willow again shakes her head. She points to herself, makes a walking motion with her fingers and points to the door.

HOLCOMBE (CONT'D)  
I will tell you the truth, if you  
do the same.

HOLCOMBE RESIDENCE - FRONT PARLOR

She pulls Willow by the hand and leads her into the parlor and points to a couch. They sit.

HOLCOMBE  
Deputy Vissom and I are worried  
about you. We think you're a  
runaway, but afraid to tell us what  
you're running from.

She gently cups Willow's hands.

HOLCOMBE (CONT'D)  
I know about family loyalty. A  
lonely father might turn his  
attentions... might get the idea.

Willow shoves Holcombe's hands back in disgust. Holcombe stands.

HOLCOMBE (CONT'D)  
 You can't help what's going on at  
 your homestead.

Holcombe's hands start to flutter in search of a place to be.

HOLCOMBE (CONT'D)  
 God guided you off the hill and  
 into our hands. What a blessing the  
 Lord is bestowing. Think about it.  
 If a mute can get as much learning  
 from books as you have, imagine  
 what you could learn in school.

Dejectedly, Willow stares at a ticking clock. She grabs her  
 pencil and forcefully writes a note.

HOLCOMBE (CONT'D)  
 Sure, you can send your poppy a  
 note.

More composed, Willow starts a long note.

HOLCOMBE (CONT'D)  
 Lord Almighty! You write what you  
 have to.

She presents the completed note to Holcombe.

HOLCOMBE (CONT'D)  
 (reading out loud)  
 The preacher and his wife is taking  
 me to live at the Deaf School for  
 Girls in Cave Springs. You will  
 have to milk the herd without me.  
 Love Willow.

WILLOW (V.O.)  
 "Milk the herd without me" has  
 always been our kin's warning  
 message that we are in danger.

At the edge of an end table, Holcombe grabs an envelope and  
 hands it to Willow.

HOLCOMBE  
 There's seven dollars in there for  
 your first month at the home. After  
 that, you'll be assigned chores to  
 pay your way.

Off-screen, tires crunch on the gravel driveway. Holcombe  
 scans out the window.

HOLCOMBE (CONT'D)  
That will be Deputy Vissom. He's offered to drive you to your new home in Cave Springs.

Willow points urgently to her abdomen and squashes her knees together.

HOLCOMBE (CONT'D)  
Sure, you should use the outhouse before you go.

Willow departs.

EXT. HOLCOMBE RESIDENCE - FRONT YARD

With no intentions of using the outhouse, Willow creeps around the corner of the house to spy Vissom approaching the porch. He knocks and Holcombe meets him.

VISSOM  
Is she inside? Did she take to the idea of the deaf home?

HOLCOMBE  
She'll be right back. I think the idea set real nice with her.

VISSOM  
Not that she has any choice. Her father can try to find her, I guess. I'll wager within a few days, she'll want to stay after she's enjoyed indoor plumbing.

Vissom takes out Willow's map and unfolds it.

VISSOM (CONT'D)  
Her map led us to a field where the ground was chewed up from hooves and wagon wheels, but there were no poison mushrooms. No dead man.

Perplexed, Willow continues to spy.

HOLCOMBE  
Maybe she made a mistake. Maybe animals got to him.

VISSOM  
No blood.

He spits some tobacco on to the ground. Willow ducks back.

VISSOM (CONT'D)  
I'll talk to her on the way to the school.

HOLCOMBE  
She wrote a note to her father.

She hands it to Visson, who promptly tears it up. They both enter the home. Willow darts into some neighboring trees.

EXT. CAVE ENTRANCE - DAY

Briar dashes to an abandoned cave, fishing change from his pocket. He finds a large stone and shoves it to manifest a metal tin. He reveals a stash of coins and dollars.

BRIAR  
(to self)  
As payment for my services Mr. Taggert, I thank you.

He closes the tin and places the stone back over it. He stares at the abandoned cave.

EXT. MINE - FLASHBACK

Miners rush out of the mine and grab Briar.

EXT. TIMBERLAND MOUNTAIN - WORK GANG LINE - END OF FLASHBACK

Briar brings the wagon to halt as Taggert greets him, red in the face.

TAGGERT  
Where the hell you been, Stewart?

BRIAR  
Chesterfields, sir. Your lucky day.

Taggert snatches them and proceeds to pull one out.

TAGGERT  
Not what I asked. Why the hell it take you so long to get back?

BRIAR  
Tried to take a shortcut going down, sir. Got slowed by a jumble of logs. No work crew in sight, but somebody's doing a heap of cutting.

TAGGERT

Don't pee down my leg and tell me  
it's raining, boy.

He taps out a cigarette from the pack and lights it. After inhaling deeply, he draws close to Briar's face and blows.

TAGGERT (CONT'D)

I'm gonna be watching you. And next  
trip into Cartersville... ain't  
gonna include you.

BRIAR

Yessir. Miss Lily says probably new  
girls this week.

Taggert grabs a vial of aspirin and pops two in his mouth.

TAGGERT

Good. Get back to chopping wood.  
And, you ain't getting supper.

EXT. DOBBS HOUSE - BACK YARD

Ardith chuffs as Oliver tosses a ball, landing far away. She waddles to the ball and tosses it back to the boy.

ARDITH

There you go.

DR. HUGO GRANGE, 60, tiredly and sternly exits the house and motions to Ardith.

DR. GRANGE

Mrs. Dobbs. Come see.

ARDITH

What is it Dr. Grange?

He just motions for her to come, and moves back inside.

ARDITH (CONT'D)

Oliver. Throw the ball against the  
shed.

A baby's cry emanates from the house, and Ardith nervously enters the home.

INT. DOBBS HOUSE - JOSEPHINE'S ROOM

Josephine sleeps with her newborn lying in a ratty crib. Her spartan room includes a mirror, shelving, and pegs for her clothes. Two tiny windows permit a light breeze. As Ardith enters, Dr. Grange fetches the swaddled babe from the crib.

ARDITH  
Well, what is it?

Dr. Grange smirks and hands her the babe.

DR. GRANGE  
It's a Dobbs.

Ardith pulls the covers back to reveal the baby's light skin and resembles William. Grange cleans up as Ardith incredulously studies the newborn.

ARDITH  
Dr. Grange. Hugo. You can see my predicament here. I need your help.

DR. GRANGE  
No way to turn back time, Ardith.

ARDITH  
That's quite clear. But let's look forward. This baby will create a great deal of pain in our lives. With William's career. Our community *associations*.

DR. GRANGE  
What is it you want me to do?

ARDITH  
I need you to certify that this baby was born dead. Deformed even.

He steps back and crosses his arms.

DR. GRANGE  
I can't do that. What do we tell Josephine?

ARDITH  
She committed a sin! God gave her a hideous child! It died, and we needed to bury him.

She stomps her foot.



ARDITH (CONT'D)  
 Isn't that what you do with babies  
 that are malformed?

DR. GRANGE  
 It is not. Ardith. You need to talk  
 to William and sort this out.

Ardith scowls and agitatedly places the babe in the crib.

ARDITH  
 How is Melvin? He still sneaking  
 into widow Fraser's house at night?  
 A *Catholic's* house.

DR. GRANGE  
 What does that have to do with the  
 problem at hand?

His body and fists tense.

ARDITH  
 Would be a shame if the local  
 Klavern learned of this.

DR. GRANGE  
 What do you suggest?

ARDITH  
 First off, I can pay you for all of  
 this trouble. One hundred fifty  
 dollars. In cash. Today.

DR. GRANGE  
 I am not going to let you hurt that  
 baby.

Ardith's mouth falls open and applies fake southern charm.

ARDITH  
 How dare you think that? As if I  
 would. You only need to buy me some  
 time. Give Josephine enough  
 anesthesia to keep her knocked out.  
 Just two more hours. While she's  
 asleep, you do a little extra  
 doctoring to make sure this can't  
 happen again. And Lordy, don't let  
 her die.

INT. ARDITH'S CAR - LATER

Ardith scowls and reaches over to a bassinet sitting on  
 Oliver's lap. She cringes back in disgust.

EXT. ARDITH'S CAR

Ardith pulls up to the Beck Infanorium where Herta waters her roses. Stiffly, Ardith retrieves the baby carrier and approaches Herta. Ardith negotiates with Herta, who at first shakes her head no.

EXT. BECK INFANTORIUM

ARDITH

It'll be our secret. And you'll make money and save yourself the trouble of a burial.

HERTA

We've never had this request before.

ARDITH

But you must have what I'm looking for. You deal in all types of... er... situations here.

HERTA

We take in the sick and poor in spirit. So yes. Many precious souls depart before we find them homes. (sighs) I'll be right back.

Herta enters the house. Ardith glances at her watch. Herta returns with a bundle wrapped in a white sheet.

HERTA (CONT'D)

A boy, right?

ARDITH

Yes.

She retrieves the baby from the basket, as Herta places her bundle in it.

HERTA

We must keep the poor dears on ice until we can provide a proper burial out back. Is there a birth certificate?

Ardith reaches into her purse and slides some cash into Herta's hands along with the baby.

ARDITH

The family is looking for privacy. I added extra because you've been so accommodating.

HERTA

Not a problem. There's times we  
don't get the legal paperwork.

Herta stashes the money in her pocket. Ardith shakily returns to her vehicle as Herta takes the newborn inside.

INT. ARDITH'S CAR

Disturbed, Ardith takes terse breaths and natters to herself.

ARDITH

William, you hypocrite.

She slightly shakes her head.

ARDITH (CONT'D)

Night-riding.

She grips the steering wheel firmly.

ARDITH (CONT'D)

You like lies. This'll feel good.  
Not revenge. Justice.

Oliver curiously reaches into the bassinet.

OLIVER

Mama, why is he cold.

ARDITH

(angrily)  
Silence! Leave it alone!

EXT. NACOOCHEE TRAIN STATION - DAY

Willow peeks out from behind some trees at a train waiting to be boarded. She spots two policeman on a platform slap each other on the back and leave. Willow tidies herself up and approaches Nacoochee's post office.

INT. NACOOCHEE POST OFFICE

An introverted CLERK sorts the mail as Willow enters. She searches around the room for a postcard.

CLERK

Help you, miss?

Willow points to a post card hanging on the wall.

CLERK (CONT'D)  
 Cat got your tongue?

Willow casts him a mean look. He opens a drawer and pulls out a stack of cards.

CLERK (CONT'D)  
 That'll be a penny plus another to send it.

She selects one that reads, "Welcome to White County, Georgia" and pulls out Mrs. Holcombe's dollar. He gives her change and stamp for the card.

CLERK (CONT'D)  
 Just drop it in the slot.

Willow steps to an empty counter and begins to write. She shudders as she spots something outside the window.

EXT. NACOOCHEE TRAIN STATION

Visson addresses the two policemen that Willow saw on the train platform. He motions to describe her height and looks.

INT. NACOOCHEE POST OFFICE

Willow views her pursuer and steps back from the window and tucks the post card in her bag. Clandestinely, she slips out.

EXT. NACOOCHEE STREET

Willow hustles out of the post office. She rounds a corner to find a sleeping man in a straw hat. She adroitly sweeps it off his head and tucks her red hair under the cap.

She rounds a second corner near some moving boxes and spots a small black blanket. She whips it around her shoulders creating a makeshift shawl.

INT. NACOOCHEE TRAIN STATION

With faux confidence, she strides to the ticket booth. The TICKET ATTENDANT bemusedly greets her.

TICKET ATTENDANT  
 Where to?

Willow points on a nearby map to Cartersville.

TICKET ATTENDANT (CONT'D)  
Three dollars and eighty-one cents.

She produces four sweaty dollar bills, which the attendant takes warily. He returns a colorful ticket for her.

EXT. NACOOCHEE TRAIN STATION PLATFORM

Visson stands on the platform looking toward the train engine. Willow ducks behind a large couple as they are about to reach the conductor, she tugs on the woman's shoulder causing them to stop, while she stealthily jumps ahead of them and on to the train.

INT. MARIETTA BOUND TRAIN - LATER

As the train starts to move, Willow peeks out the window to see Visson still on the platform. She is in the clear. Willow motions to a vacant seat across from ALICE BURNS, a polished Yankee, late 20s, in fancy blue suit with feather hat.

ALICE  
It's free. But be warned, I'm all worked up and might talk your ears off.

Willow sits across from her.

ALICE (CONT'D)  
I'm Alice Burns.

She sticks out her hand and Willow accepts it. Willow pulls out some paper and starts to write and shows it to Alice.

ALICE (CONT'D)  
I think I would die if I couldn't talk.

Willow writes back. Alice chuckles. She fumbles inside her blue bag and retrieves a Big Chief Pencil Tablet which she hands to Willow.

ALICE (CONT'D)  
I'm not sure why your school hasn't given you more of these, but an independent young lady like you shouldn't be carrying around scrap paper to express herself.

Willow gets emotional as she holds her gift. Willow quickly opens it and scribbles something.

ALICE (CONT'D)  
You're welcome. Your eyebrows say  
you got red hair to match. You're  
covering up a fiery spirit. Don't  
let any man take it away from you.

Contentedly, she crosses her feet at the ankles.

ALICE (CONT'D)  
A word to the wise. Write what you  
want to say, not what others force  
you to say.

The train whistle blasts, causing Willow to startle.

ALICE (CONT'D)  
Do you live in Marietta?

Willow shakes her head no, lets out a loud sigh, and  
scribbles in the pad. Concernedly, Alice studies Willow.

ALICE (CONT'D)  
I am not from around here. I am  
visiting my husband. He is a lawyer  
for the new Legal Aid Society.

Children on a neighboring row again startle Willow. Alice  
studies her.

ALICE (CONT'D)  
Do you need some help young friend?

Willow resignedly shakes her head no. Alice again reaches  
into her bag and pulls out a business card.

ALICE (CONT'D)  
Here is my husband's card. If you  
need help, you can write or call me  
here.

She readily accepts and comfortably slouches in her seat,  
closing her eyes.

INT. STEWART RESIDENCE - WILLOW'S BEDROOM - FLASHBACK

Willow awakes to see her mother smiling, leaning over her in  
her bed. Her father enters the room and warmly reaches down  
to Willow's shoulder.

POPPY  
Time to wake up.

INT. MARIETTA BOUND TRAIN - END OF FLASHBACK.

Alice shakes Willow's shoulder again, causing her to stir.

ALICE  
It's time to wake up. We are in  
Marietta.

Willow earnestly shakes her hand in gratitude.

ALICE (CONT'D)  
Remember, call me if you need help.  
We could all use a friend.

EXT. MARIETTA TRAIN STATION - LATER

Willow watches as Alice is greeted by her husband and they walk away. As Willow strolls through the platform, a large POLICEMAN grabs her from behind.

POLICEMAN  
Willow Stewart.

He pulls off her hat and spins her around.

POLICEMAN (CONT'D)  
Sure as shootin' you're the gal  
they're all in a fuss about.

Willow's look of horror changes to painful sadness.

POLICEMAN (CONT'D)  
Should'a went to the girl's home.  
Now, your going to jail until the  
judge decides what's best for ya.

EXT. TIMBERLAND MOUNTAIN - DAY

Briar and TUCK, a large Black inmate, walk along the turpentine barrels with axes in their hands. Clouds threaten rain around the inmates.

TUCK  
I piss in the barrels ever so  
often.'Bout the only way to get the  
mad out, without getting killed.

BRIAR  
Hopefully Taggert keeps the  
contract, or we're back bustin'  
rocks and he's our prison guard.

Briar and Tuck start to situate themselves to where they will start chopping. Briar fixates on his ax handle.

EXT. STEWART MOUNTAIN - DAY - FLASHBACK

Briar grips his coal pick handle as he returns home. A devilish Willow greets him by chucking a berry at him. Briar drops the axe and a friendly game of chase ensues.

EXT. TIMBERLAND MOUNTAIN - END OF FLASHBACK.

Tuck elbows Briar to get his attention.

TUCK

You thinking 'bout the gals back at Miss Lily's? Got a stupid smile on your face.

BRIAR

Naw. Was thinking 'bout my baby sister, though she ain't a baby no more. She's sixteen now.

TUCK

She have a sweetheart?

BRIAR

Not when I left fifteen months ago. Could've changed by now.

They work together on a sapling trimming back branches.

TUCK

Your sister better looking than you? (smirks) Might need to come calling one day.

BRIAR

Willow's a beaut. A rose with red hair.

TUCK

Where you live again?

BRIAR

Hold on there. She can't talk.

TUCK

Not a word, or she shy?

BRIAR

Not nary a one. Never has. Never will.



TUCK

She dumb?

BRIAR

Not at all. She's smarter than the rest of the family. Reads everything she can lay her eyes on. A great writer. And we've a made-up hand speaking.

TUCK

Show me something.

Briar rests his axe and proceeds to show Tuck mimicking casting a fish line.

BRIAR

That there means "Let's go fishing."

Clawing his fingers, Briar moves his hands up and down.

BRIAR (CONT'D)

This is "A storm's a-brewing, we need to hurry."

TUCK

How many of these do you have?

BRIAR

Me and her can talk all day. Specific names, she's got to write down. Like if she reads something in the newspaper--

A disembodied voice emanates through some thick brushes.

TAGGERT

-- What the hell you two blabbing about?

He emerges through the brush carrying two dead rabbits. One ear in each hand.

TUCK

Just talking about Briar's sister, sir.

Briar nudges Tuck to stop that conversation.

TAGGERT

Yeah? What about her?

BRIAR

She's ten years old yesterday.

TAGGERT

Oh.

(Holds up rabbits)  
Cook's gonna put a little extra in  
my stew tonight.

Taggert heads along the workline.

TAGGERT (CONT'D)

Finish up out here and head in.

As Taggert is out of earshot, Tuck turns to Briar.

TUCK

Sorry.

BRIAR

Close. S'okay.

INT. DOBBS HOUSE - STUDY - EVENING

William sits, fiddling with a pipe while stroking sleeping  
Oliver's hair. Ardith reclines on a loveseat.

WILLIAM

I still don't understand how it all  
went so wrong.

Agitatedly, he taps his pipe on the end table.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

You let Dr. Grange sterilize her?  
Josephine needed to be sedated when  
she found out.

ARDITH

He said she would die if she tried  
childbirth again.

William suspiciously eyes her as she fidgets.

ARDITH (CONT'D)

We'll buy a burial plot. A nice  
Colored cemetery over in Buckhead.

Silence. He closes his eyes slowly.

ARDITH (CONT'D)

But she may not be able to go. Dr.  
Grange had to sedate her again. She  
tore out stitches earlier, dropping  
to the floor and throwing herself  
around.

WILLIAM

The poor girl. She may be temporarily insane.

ARDITH

The medication can do that. She just needs some time.

WILLIAM

She was yelling to Dr. Grange that the baby isn't hers. That this was all unfair.

He knocks the ashes out of his pipe into a glass ashtray.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Doesn't seem like something a mother would say.

ARDITH

She wakes up to discover the babe never took a breath. Heartbreaking.

Ardith caresses her large belly avoiding eye contact.

WILLIAM

What's going through that head of yours, Ardith? You have that I'm-planning-something look on your face.

Ardith pivots to a sitting position.

ARDITH

I'd hate to lose Josephine. She's such a dear to have around. Maybe she could have some time to heal at the Atlanta Orphan's home. She could feed the poor abandoned babies. You know. Feel like she's saving children.

WILLIAM

Seems a bit cruel.

ARDITH

Lying in her room crying all day, delirious with crazy thoughts, might be crueler.

William heaves sleeping Oliver up as he rises from the chair.

ARDITH (CONT'D)

We have to drive near Leonard Street on the way to the cemetery.

(MORE)

ARDITH (CONT'D)

After, we could take Josephine to the home.

WILLIAM

I've never seen him so tired.

ARDITH

Big day.

William turns to step out of the room, but pivots around to Ardith.

WILLIAM

Did you take the car out today?

Ardith resets her face into a look of innocence.

ARDITH

Uhh, I did take it. To the bank. I had to deposit the women's Klan dues.

WILLIAM

To the bank? The gauge shows the tank almost empty.

ARDITH

And... I drove out in the country. Wildflowers are blooming. Didn't realize I'd gone that far.

WILLIAM

Leave the pleasure rides for the weekend. We'll have a picnic. A country drive might be nice.

Williams leaves.

INT. DOBBS HOUSE - JOSEPHINE'S ROOM - MORNING

With a small tray of food, Ardith taps the door open with her foot. On the bed, Josephine, curled up in a ball, gazes emptily. The dead baby lies at the foot of the bed.

ARDITH

How are you feeling? Here's some eggs, toast, and tea.

JOSEPHINE

(mumbling)

It hurts. I need to talk to Dr. Grange.

She sits the tray by the bed, taps on a pill box marked "Bayer Heroin" and hands Josephine a pill.

ARDITH

This will help until Dr. Grange arrives.

Suspiciously, Josephine takes it with a sip of tea.

JOSEPHINE

The doctor butchered me.

ARDITH

You were going to die, Josephine. The birth took so long. I didn't know about Twilight Sleep. The drugs sedated the baby, and he stopped breathing. Dr. Grange said it's rare.

JOSEPHINE

(sobbingly)

It doesn't answer why he cut me so's I never have another child.

ARDITH

If you got pregnant again and tried to deliver, you would bleed out and die. Dr. Grange saved your life.

JOSEPHINE

He ruined me for good.

A knock on the door and Dr. Grange appears in the room.

DR. GRANGE

How is our patient today?

ARDITH

She's upset of course. It's all so unexpected.

DR. GRANGE

Are you in pain?

He sets his black bag on the floor and takes a few steps closer to her. She recoils and tucks against the boards on the wall.

JOSEPHINE

Don't come near me! You had no right to do the things you done!

His eyebrows bunch together, and his face reddens.

DR. GRANGE

I had to make a difficult decision,  
Josephine. I'm never happy when  
childbirth goes wrong.

She spits at him. Ardith taps at his arm.

ARDITH

She should calm soon. I gave her a  
heroin tablet a moment ago.

Josephine throws the cup against the wall.

JOSEPHINE

I'm not gonna calm! I hate you  
both. You know what you done and  
soon everyone will know!

ARDITH

What is it you think we did, JoJo?

She spits at Ardith, then points to the lifeless child.

JOSEPHINE

I don't knows everything you done,  
but I do know that baby ain't none  
of mine.

DR. GRANGE

Having a baby die is upsetting.  
Those sleep drugs can change the  
mind for days after. Feeling quite  
disconnected is not unheard of--

Josephine carefully sits up in bed with a vicious smile.

JOSEPHINE

-- I may be a dumb Colored girl to  
you, but I understand what gets  
passed down to a child.

She wipes the tear-induced snot from her nose.

JOSEPHINE (CONT'D)

My baby would be white.

Ardith leans back and Dr. Granges stands stiffly.

ARDITH

Why would you think that, JoJo?

JOSEPHINE

Never call me that again! You the  
worst mother I ever met.

Her eyes fixate on Ardith with a wild stare.

JOSEPHINE (CONT'D)  
Quinn raped me. Several times when  
he stayed here last fall.

DR. GRANGE  
Quinn?

ARDITH  
My husband's brother.

JOSEPHINE  
My daddy is white, and my mama was  
half white. I's three-quarters  
white. That don't add up to me  
having a half-brown baby!

She throws a book at Ardith and misses.

ARDITH  
You should've told me about Quinn.  
I'm sorry. But be that as it may,  
this poor baby is yours.

JOSEPHINE  
You lying!

She lunges at Ardith. Dr. Grange grabs her midsection. She lets out a painful scream and crumbles to the floor. While he holds her down with his leg, he reaches into his bag and pulls out a syringe filled with liquid and plunges it into her backside.

DR. GRANGE  
Outside Ardith!

EXT. DOBBS HOUSE - JOSEPHINE ROOM

Josephine howls and curses. Dr. Grange steps outside with Ardith and slams the door.

DR. GRANGE  
How do you propose we solve this?  
I'll lose my license if she talks.

Ardith stares blindly, then sways over to him.

ARDITH  
Take her to that colored asylum  
outside of town. Check her in as  
insane. Then no one will believe  
what she says.

DR. GRANGE

To an asylum? This just sinks me deeper into the lies.

ARDITH

She's going to keep talking.

DR. GRANGE

You should get her baby back. Tell her the truth. You thought it was William's.

ARDITH

(mockingly)

Then why did you have to sterilize her, Doctor Grange?

He shudders back and sickeningly glances at Ardith.

DR. GRANGE

Help me get her into my car.

INT. JAIL CELLS - DAY

Willow dejectedly walks by an empty cage, as a JAIL GUARD leads her to the door. As she steps in, the guard hands her a tablet and chalk.

GUARD

You'll be here 'til Judge Henry hears your case th'safternoon.

He leaves and Willow sits on a wooden bench.

WILLOW (V.O.)

I don't count running from Mr. Vissom a bad thing. He was about to send me off to a place I most likely couldn't have left. Seems like kidnapping to me. But I did take Mrs. Holcombe's church money. I'll send it all back to her if I can just get to Briar.

Willow hears quiet sobs in the pen next to her; a Black woman curled on a bench. As she studies the woman, she notices red stains along her legs. Josephine flips over on her side holding her belly.

JOSEPHINE

Help. Me.

Boggled, Willow etches out a message and flashes it to JoJo.



JOSEPHINE (CONT'D)  
I had my baby stole from me, and  
now they trying to send me away.

Wiping the slate, Willow dashes a second message.

JOSEPHINE (CONT'D)  
The doctor told the police I was  
outta my mind. I was just  
distressed. They done me wrong.

Josephine sits up and holds her head as the guard re-enters.

GUARD  
The judge left for the day and will  
see you both tomorrow. Food comes  
around in about two hours. Those  
pails in the corner of your cells  
are your bathroom. Settle in.

Willow reaches out to hold Josephine's hand.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

In a small country courtroom, the guard leads Josephine with Willow hanging on to her elbow. JUDGE HENRY, a portly good ol' boy snacking on peanuts, sits behind a small table. The guard sits Willow on one side, Josephine on the other.

GUARD  
Willow Stewart, age sixteen.  
Arrested for insufficient  
guardianship, irresponsible  
conduct, and possibly becoming a  
menace to society.

Shakily standing, Willow rises as the guard hands the judge paperwork.

GUARD (CONT'D)  
She can't talk, or don't want to.

HENRY  
Can you talk.

Willow shakes her head no and holds up her tablet and chalk.

HENRY (CONT'D)  
Write something in your defense.

She fills the entire tablet with a lengthy description.

HENRY (CONT'D)  
Mother died, trying to find  
brother.

The guard taps the file, and the judge flips it open.

HENRY (CONT'D)  
Briar Stewart. Serving time at the  
County Prison Camp. On a turpentine  
gang.

Confused, Willow starts to write, then erases and writes  
again.

HENRY (CONT'D)  
Let's see. Done five months and has  
four months more. (beat) Criminal  
tendencies must run through your  
kin. Because here you are too.

She dashes out another message.

HENRY (CONT'D)  
Because I'm not a bad man, I'll  
help you both out. You can serve  
two months in a labor industry and  
that will reduce his time by two  
months. You'll both get out  
together.

She starts another note, which the judge annoying disrupts.

HENRY (CONT'D)  
You'll pay your debt to society  
where we see fit, girl. And, help  
your no-good brother too.

He starts to look around and grabs a binder behind him.

HENRY (CONT'D)  
Looks like we have two labor  
requests. One new today.

He adjusts his spectacles.

HENRY (CONT'D)  
There's a seamstress job in  
Cartersville, and this one today.  
Local woman here needs a nanny. A  
Mrs. Ardith Dobbs.

Josephine bolts upwards, clutching her stomach.

JOSEPHINE

Lying Jezebel done killed my baby  
and sent me here. She the one needs  
arrestin'!

HENRY

Quiet down! Take her out of here.

The guard grabs her arm and leads her out.

HENRY (CONT'D)

What's your choice?

She quickly jots on the board, as the guard returns.

HENRY (CONT'D)

I sentence you to two months'  
labor. At a place called Miss  
Lily's Threads & Things. Get her  
transportation to Cartersville.

INT. GUARDS CAR - LATER

Willow solemnly sits in the seat next to the guard.

GUARD

You really can't talk at all?

She shakes her head.

GUARD (CONT'D)

When you get out of custody, you  
can cleanse your evil ways by  
joining the women's branch of the  
Klan. Put you on the right path of  
wholesomeness.

He proudly taps on the steering wheel.

GUARD (CONT'D)

We don't have to stay secret  
anymore. We sponsor parades,  
picnics, even beauty contests. Last  
year, the wife and I showed up at  
Christmas parties for orphans, me  
wearing a Santa suit and handing  
out gifts. We're what America is  
all about.

The car stops in front of Miss Lily's Threads & Things.

INT. MISS LILY'S - BACK ROOM

Two depressed girls work on a quilt as Lily, bedecked in a sun dress, greets Willow and the guard.

GUARD

Here is your requested labor.

He hands Lily the paperwork, and she studies Willow.

MISS LILY

You might be right for this type of work. I'm Miss Lily.

The guard leaves, and Lily struts around Willow.

MISS LILY (CONT'D)

Never had a mute girl here before.  
I'll run a bath. Get you cleaned up  
and into a pretty dress.

EXT. TIMBERLAND MOUNTAIN - DAY

As Briar inspects a line of convicts, a wail comes out causing him to jump down to Tuck, grabbing his nose, reeling on the ground. A fellow convict holds his hands on his head.

BRIAR

Shit! What happened here?

TUCK

Walked into his damn swing.

Briar and Tuck struggle to control the bleeding. Taggart arrives to pistol whip the other convict, whose pleas are ignored. Tuck gets up on one knee.

TUCK (CONT'D)

It's my fault.

Taggart evaluates Tucks face.

TAGGERT

Nose is busted. Have the cook look  
at it.

Tuck stumbles off, while Taggart brandishes an axe, staring angrily at the scared offending convict.

BRIAR

Tuck says he wasn't looking where he was going. 'Member, we need all the convicts working. Just two days more and you prob'ly get a bonus.

Taggert sends a stink eye Briar's way and throws the axe at the convict's feet and struts away.

BRIAR (CONT'D)  
All right everyone. Suppertime soon. Get your branches loaded up.

TIMBERLAND MOUNTAIN CAMP - MORNING

Taggert comes out of his tent, stretches, and laces up his boots, while Briar approaches him.

BRIAR  
You sending the wagon into town this morning?

TAGGERT  
You wanna go?

BRIAR  
Sure thing.

Briar starts to head to the supply tent.

BRIAR (CONT'D)  
Okay. I'll get ready. No new workers, right?

TAGGERT  
Naw. We're making out okay with these S-O-Bs, though I thought about losing the one that hit Tuck.

BRIAR  
Tuck'll pull through. I better get headed out.

TAGGERT  
Ha! You must be out of your mind, boy. You ain't goin' alone.

BRIAR  
Okay, who do you want me to take?

TAGGERT  
(laughs)  
Me.

EXT. CARTERSVILLE ROAD - LATER

Briar guides the wagon. Taggert sits beside him, stuffing a wad of tobacco into his cheek.

TAGGERT

You from round here, ain't you?  
Some peckerwood town to the east?

BRIAR

Was. Upside of Helen. Nothing much  
left for me there.

TAGGERT

You mentioned a sister.

BRIAR

Aw. Got none that care. Where you  
from?

TAGGERT

Tallulah Gorge. Not too many Negros  
or Indians there.

EXT. CARTERSVILLE STREET - LATER

The wagon waits in front of the mercantile, across from Miss Lily's. Taggert emerges from the post office reading official mail. He starts to laugh and heads over to Miss Lily's. Briar traipses out of the mercantile with a full load that he dumps into the wagon.

TAGGERT

Hey, Briar!

Briar glances over to Miss Lily's to see Taggert with two gals trailing behind, both with their heads down, dressed up in frilly dresses and floppy hats.

TAGGERT (CONT'D)

Guess what?

BRIAR

What?

TAGGERT

Seems you got your sentence  
shortened. Ha! You're getting out  
in two months now.

BRIAR

You jawing nonsense. What you mean  
reduced?

TAGGERT

Seems you do have family that  
cares. Someone's working off two  
months of your time.

BRIAR

Who?

One gal lifts her head, revealing red hair behind the large hat. Willow and Briar lock eyes in shock.

INT. DOBBS HOUSE - HALLWAY

Ardith, Oliver, and William enter their home, as William affectionately scoops up Oliver. Ardith holds her stomach and rests, holding on to a small hallway table.

ARDITH

For a colored cemetery, that was more than to be expected.

William nods and takes Oliver into an adjoining room. A hard contraction causes Ardith to tremble, as her water breaks. Panicked, she looks for William.

ARDITH (CONT'D)

Umm, call Dr. Grange. We need to go to the hospital.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - LATER

A young NURSE helps Ardith, reeling from harsh contractions into bed.

ARDITH

Dr. Grange here yet?

NURSE

Dr. McCorbin is delivering today. Dr. Grange is away. Said he had family business in Tennessee.

ARDITH

That weasel.

NURSE

What?

ARDITH

Umm... where did the weeks go?

NURSE

It surprised us too. He came by yesterday late and said he'd be taking some time off.

Ardith convulses after a strong contraction.

ARDITH  
Is this other doctor good with the  
sleep medications?

The nurse checks the paperwork and tosses it onto the table.

NURSE  
We have you going through the birth  
without sedation.

ARDITH  
That was never the plan! I cannot  
go through this awake.

The nurse leaves, and a sharp contraction causes Ardith to  
scream. Tall DR. MCCORBIN pops into the room.

MCCORBIN  
Mrs. Dobbs, I'm Doctor McCorbin.

ARDITH  
(gaspingly)  
Start the Twilight Sleep!

MCCORBIN  
Your husband doesn't want that for  
you. He said your nanny just lost  
her child because of it.

ARDITH  
Damnation! That's not what killed  
her baby.

Surprised, McCorbin then moves to the foot of the bed and  
readies the stirrups.

MCCORBIN  
When a woman is heavily sedated,  
the baby may quit breathing. Scoot  
down here and put your feet in the  
stirrups. I need to check on  
things.

ARDITH  
No! I can't do this!

MCCORBIN  
Your husband said you're a strong  
woman.

ARDITH  
No! I'm not strong at all. You have  
to give me something!



MCCORBIN

I want you to take in long, cooling  
breaths. Hum a favorite song. Or  
think of a place that's calming,  
peaceful, and picture yourself  
there.

The nurse re-enters to assist, as Ardith grumbles to herself.

ARDITH

Appalling. Frightful. Sorrowful.  
Mournful. Horrible.

McCorbin and the nurse look quizzically at each other.

MCCORBIN

She's reciting the Klan's month  
names.

ARDITH

Alarming, Furious, Fearful,  
Hideous, Gloomy, Bloody.

EXT. OUTDOOR REVIVAL - DAY - FLASHBACK

In a patched dress, a downhome Ardith sits transfixed, next  
to CLEM, late teens, trying to put his hand on her thigh. She  
stares at PASTOR GATOR TYRE, late 20s, slickly clean.

TYRE makes eye contact with her and she smiles. Clem notices  
the attraction.

EXT. BACK WOODS - NIGHT

Tyre gazes seductively into Ardith's eyes, pulling open the  
top of button of her dress.

TYRE

Sissy Belle. I will take you away  
from this.

ARDITH

But --

TYRE

-- Clem is your brother. And, you  
won't need to worry about your pa's  
attentions either. I'll take you  
away from all of it.

EXT. CLIFFSIDE DAY

Tyre waits alongside a trail as Ardith, packing a knapsack, approaches him, with a concerned look on her face.

ARDITH  
I think I'm pregnant.

TYRE  
Clem's?

She shakes her head no. Bolting up the path at Tyre, Clem attacks, threatening to push him off the precipice.

CLEM  
I'll kill you!

Ardith watches the two scuffle closer to the edge. She closes her eyes, then charges, pushing both of them over the cliff.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - END OF FLASHBACK.

MCCORBIN  
Almost there, Mrs. Dobbs. Push again.

ARDITH  
No! He's dead. I didn't mean to.

A baby's cry breaks her train of thought.

MCCORBIN  
Mrs. Dobbs. There's nothing to worry about. He's not dead.

The doctor brings the baby to rest on his mother's shoulder.

MCCORBIN (CONT'D)  
You have a healthy baby boy.

EXT. CARTERSVILLE STREET - OUTSIDE MISS LILY'S - DAY

Standing by the wagon, Taggart beams. Agape, Willow begins her frantic hand signals.

BRIAR  
Why are you here?

WILLOW (V.O.)  
We need you at home.

BRIAR  
Why?

WILLOW (V.O.)  
Mama had a baby that died. Papa  
will forgive you.

BRIAR  
Not now.

Taggert impatiently slaps Willow's hands silencing the conversation. The sting causing her to recoil.

TAGGERT  
What the hell you two doing?!

BRIAR  
Don't touch her!

Taggert shoots Briar an incredulous look.

BRIAR (CONT'D)  
You can't have her.

TAGGERT  
Says you?

BRIAR  
I'll serve out my four months. She  
only come here to bring bad news  
about my kin.

TAGGERT  
The kin you don't have?

BRIAR  
Ain't seen hide nor hair of 'em in  
over a year.

Willow and Briar begin gesturing together.

WILLOW (V.O.)  
Why are you sending me away?

BRIAR (V.O.)  
The man means to have his way with  
you.

Briar desperately stares at Taggert.

BRIAR  
I'll do anything.

Taggert removes the letter that earlier caused him to chuckle.

TAGGERT

Says here, judge sentenced her to two months. This place or another.

BRIAR

What other place?

Willow dashes off another gesture communique. Taggert stomps his foot to silence it.

TAGGERT

Knock it off!

Taggert takes a long slow inhale.

TAGGERT (CONT'D)

Can't have a trustee I can't trust. Stewart you gonna pay.

The boss guides the other girl up into the wagon. Miss Lily arrives to the commotion. He points to Briar and Willow.

TAGGERT (CONT'D)

Don't move. I'll shoot you both if I have to hunt you down.

He swaggers to Lily.

TAGGERT (CONT'D)

I'm taking the brunette. Call the sheriff and get this one reassigned. And never bring me a mute girl again. Shit! Half the fun is listening to 'em scream.

EXT. DOBBS HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - LATER

From a policecar, a MUSTACHED POLICEMAN guides Willow, highly fearful, to the front door of the Dobbs residence.

MUSTACHED POLICEMAN

You'll work off your two months here. Maybe you'll want to stay longer as a paid maid.

Willow doesn't respond, as he knocks on the door. William answers the door and steps out to greet them.

WILLIAM

Yes? May I help you?

MUSTACHED POLICEMAN  
 Sheriff says you looking for a  
 nanny. This girl became available  
 in the penal system.

WILLIAM  
 Oh? That's quick.

MUSTACHED POLICEMAN  
 One more thing. She can't talk, but  
 she can read some and write a few  
 words.

WILLIAM  
 This will suit Mrs. Dobbs just  
 fine.

The policeman exchanges the arrest papers with a handshake.  
 The officer departs, and William escorts Willow to  
 Josephine's old room. He studies the paper as they walk.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)  
 Ah. You are Willow Stewart.  
 Welcome. My name is William, my  
 wife is Ardith, and we have Oliver,  
 who's five... and a newborn yet to be  
 named.

He opens the door to the outside room and they enter.

INT. DOBBS HOUSE - JOSEPHINE'S ROOM

Willow studies the room and rests her bag on the bed.

WILLIAM  
 Everyone is napping right now. You  
 can use the outside washroom and  
 toilet.

Gingerly, she sits on the bed.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)  
 Settle in. I will come get you when  
 they wake up.

He leaves. She buries her head in her hands and melts down.

EXT. CHATTAHOOCHEE BRICK COMPANY ENTRANCE - EVENING

Taggert steers the wagon, as Briar and Miss Lily's gal ride  
 in the back. Crestfallen, Briar stares at her, she lifts her  
 head up to show her spiteful face. Taggert brings the wagon  
 to a stop in front of a decrepit industrial brick company.

TAGGERT  
Stewart! Out!

BRIAR  
Need me to get something Boss?

TAGGERT  
Your ass outta the wagon. Your new home. Rourke pays me a dollar for rejects like you.

Taggert hops out as Briar slowly leaves the wagon. A new prison boss, ROURKE, with a bullwhip greets Taggert at the gate as Briar walks up.

TAGGERT (CONT'D)  
The brick ovens will be a nice change of pace for you. Mr. Rourke says he lost three men last week.

BRIAR  
Boss, look--

TAGGERT  
-- You know what they call this place, dont'cha?

BRIAR  
The ghost factory.

TAGGERT  
Boo.

Taggert laughs, jumps to the front of the wagon and heads out.

ROURKE  
Rule one. The only response you will ever utter is 'Yessir.' Is that clear?

BRIAR  
(mumbling)  
Yessir.

ROURKE  
What!?

BRIAR  
Yessir!

ROURKE  
Go to the guardhouse and get your clothes.

(MORE)

ROURKE (CONT'D)

Wait there until they get back from  
taking a body out to the back gate.

INT. GUARDHOUSE - LATER

Briar stands alone waiting for the guards. A knock on the guard door disrupts his stare. An old TAILOR brings two suits into the office.

TAILOR

Thank heavens, someone is here.

BRIAR

Beg pardon?

TAILOR

I promised these hours ago.

He hands Briar the guard uniforms.

BRIAR

Don't worry about it. You're not a  
minute too late.

TAILOR

Once again, so sorry.

Briar politely shows the tailor out, and studies the delivery.

EXT. CHATTAHOOCHEE BRICK COMPANY ENTRANCE - LATER

A uniformed officer who fails to make eye contact with the gate attendant quickly strolls out of the compound.

BRICK YARD GUARD

Callin' it a day?

Incognito, Briar picks up the pace.

BRIAR

Take care now.

INT. DOBBS HOUSE - BEDROOM - MORNING

Ardith peeks out the window and hears Oliver laughing.

EXT. DOBBS HOUSE

Willow spins Oliver around, and he dizzily tries to chase her. He loves his new friend.

INT. DOBBS HOUSE - BEDROOM

A soft knock reveals the smiling faces of Teresa and Nancy. Ardith holds up a finger to shush them. They sneak up to the crib.

NANCY  
Oh, he's darling.

Ardith motions them to join her in the study.

INT. DOBBS HOUSE - STUDY

Ardith reclines, as the other two take chairs up next to her.

TERESA  
We have so much to tell you.

ARDITH  
Like what?

TERESA  
We finished all the baby robes and hoods. They're first-rate.

ARDITH  
My soul-n-sense! You still had hundreds to make.

After a brief moment, Nancy and Teresa turn serious.

NANCY  
Since you are busy with a new baby we decided to turn finances over to Clara Blair.

ARDITH  
No. I'm treasurer and secretary. It will be no problem.

Oliver can be heard giggling outside. She taps Nancy's leg.

ARDITH (CONT'D)  
Thanks to your husband, by the way.

NANCY  
I heard she doesn't talk. Doesn't bother you having another criminal?

ARDITH  
She hardly did anything wrong. Came looking for a preacher for a funeral. Decided to look for her no-good brother. That was her mistake.

(MORE)



ARDITH (CONT'D)

Then made herself appear to be a runaway, taking money from a preacher's wife up in Helen.

Nancy reaches for her purse and hands Ardith a folded flyer.

NANCY

We're making final plans for the bake sale this weekend. One of the Grand Dragon's Hydras will be speaking about the fight for Americanism.

ARDITH

I'll be there. What can I do?

The doorbell rings, causing the women to scramble. Ardith checks the baby as Nancy goes downstairs.

TERESA

I bet it's Clara.

Ardith gives her a half scowl. As Nancy lets in an unexpected guest. A sad Fiona, wringing her hands, steps into the study.

ARDITH

Fiona? Whatever are you doing here?

FIONA

Roy come home night before last.

Nancy and Teresa concerningly look at Fiona, as Ardith tries to physically hustle them out of the house.

ARDITH

Thank you for coming. I should--

FIONA

-- I came here to ask for my baby girl back.

Ardith stumbles trying to gain composure.

ARDITH

We can talk about that, Fiona. Let me see my friends to the door.

NANCY

Where did your baby go?

FIONA

Mrs. Dobbs took her to be adopted out. My husband was missing. I lost my mind, but now we want her back.

Nancy consolingly rubs Fiona's arm. Her eyebrows raise.

NANCY

That shouldn't be too hard if it wasn't that long ago. Where did you take her?

Ardith dizzily wobbles back down into her chair.

ARDITH

The New Hope Charity Home, of course. But it's been quite a while now. You gave full permission to find her a new home.

TERESA

I can call on Shirley. She'd remember you coming by.

ARDITH

No! I'm sorry. I need to go out there with William to get life insurance payments. We can drive out tomorrow and sort this out.

FIONA

You mean pick up my baby?

ARDITH

Yes.

She rubs her temples in pain.

ARDITH (CONT'D)

How did you get here?

FIONA

A man give me a ride over.

NANCY

I'll tote you back.

The baby cries and Ardith rises.

FIONA

Thank you, ma'am. And as soon as I can save up another ten dollars, I'm going to join your ladies' group.

Nancy and Teresa say their good-byes and help Fiona out. Ardith leans her head against the door jam.

EXT. DOBBS HOUSE

Willow glances to the window of the crying baby, and then at Oliver, who kicks the ball in her direction. She gives it a boot and he scrambles after it.

WILLOW (V.O.)

Miss Ardith has the motherly instincts of a cowbird. That bird lays her eggs in another bird's nest and lets that fill-in mama feed and raise her babies. She seems happy to have me here, but I know she wishes I could suckle that new baby too.

Oliver kicks the ball back, and Willow grabs it and playfully bounces it on his head. He laughs joyously.

OLIVER

How come you can't talk?

Instinctively, Willow opens her mouth. Oliver stands on his tippee toes and peeks in.

OLIVER (CONT'D)

Does it hurt?

She makes a so-so sign, and Oliver grabs her hand.

OLIVER (CONT'D)

Lets go inside and look at books.

They skip inside.

INT. DOBBS HOUSE - HALLWAY

Oliver runs to his room, but Willow, unnoticed, pauses in the hallway to see Ardith rocking her baby in the study.

INT. DOBBS HOUSE - STUDY

ARDITH

(to self)

Sissy Belle Strunk, you sure got yourself in some sour pickle soup.

INT. DOBBS HOUSE - HALLWAY

Oliver grabs Willow's hand and they scamper outside.

EXT. DOBBS HOUSE

Under a big shade tree, Oliver nestles next to Willow as he points out pictures in his book.

OLIVER

I like you Miss Willow. You're good  
to me like Miss JoJo.

Willow kisses him on the head.

INT. DOBBS HOUSE - DINING ROOM - EVENING

William, Ardith and Oliver eat dinner, as Willow brings in a carafe of water.

ARDITH

I want you to leave your dress out,  
and I will have it steam cleaned.  
In the meantime, there is a trunk  
in the basement with dresses.  
Please find several that fit. You  
may not wear any kerchiefs.

Willow acknowledges her command.

WILLIAM

I have a meeting tonight with the  
Odd Fellows.

ARDITH

Oh, that's right.

An awkward silence.

ARDITH (CONT'D)

I was thinking of a name for the  
baby.

WILLIAM

Oh?

ARDITH

Yes. Karl with a K.

WILLIAM

Seems like a fine name.

They both awkwardly sip from their cups.

ARDITH

Oh, I need the car tomorrow. I want  
to take the baby to see Dr. Grange.

WILLIAM  
What's the matter?

ARDITH  
Seems to be really fussy.

Behind their backs, Willow angrily gestures a cradle sign as a retort. Off-screen a baby fusses and Willow huffs to attend to it.

INT. ARDITH DOBBS STUDY - LATER

Willow rocks the baby contentedly, she reaches into her pocket and pulls out the stamp she bought. She ponders and starts to peruse the desk and finds an envelope. She tugs it out and a newspaper clipping follows with it.

WILLOW (V.O.)  
Preacher Gator Tyre still missing.  
Sissy Belle Strunk sought for  
questioning.

Willow notices a secret compartment in the desk. She pulls it out to spot several different clippings. One clipping has a picture of Ardith captioned Sissy Belle Strunk.

WILLOW (V.O.)  
She made herself from a sow's ear  
into a silk purse and outsmarted  
them all.

She shoves the clippings back into their hiding place, and resets the desk. She starts to write "Mr. Luther Stewart" on the envelope. Pauses. Scratches that out, and retrieves Mrs. Burns card from her pocket to write a new address.

INT. ARDITH'S CAR - MORNING

Willow cradles Karl, as Oliver holds on to her. Ardith angrily drives the car and grumbles to herself. Oliver recognizes the outside of the Beck Infantorium.

OLIVER  
It's the place Miss JoJo's baby is  
from.

ARDITH  
Shh!

EXT. BECK INFANTORIUM

Ardith brakes hard, and exits the car determinedly. She retrieves an empty baby basket from the trunk and enters the infanorium.

INT. ARDITH'S CAR

OLIVER  
I need to pee-pee.

Willow nods and places Karl in the baby carrier.

EXT. BECK INFANTORIUM

Willow leads Oliver behind a bush. A cacophony of baby cries emanates from an open window. She peeks in to see Ardith negotiating with Herta.

ARDITH  
Then give me one you have. I need a girl that's two months old, with brown hair. Her mother won't know.

HERTA  
Thirty-five dollars.

ARDITH  
Here. How can you stand all of this crying?

HERTA  
After a while, you only hear the ones that need your attention. I'll get you the girl.

EXT. BECK INFANTORIUM - ICE HOUSE

Willow backs away, and hears Oliver talking to himself. She spots a baby's knit cap by the icehouse. The ice house door is cracked open; Willow peeks inside.

INT. ICEHOUSE

She steps inside and recoils. Six dead babies lie on the ice. She falls backwards trying to scream but to no avail. She bolts out of the shed.

## EXT. BECK INFANTORIUM

Oliver finishes doing his duty. Willow, still with horror on her face, grabs him and trembles to the car.

OLIVER  
You sick?

## INT. ARDITH'S CAR

Willow stares in horror as she tightly cradles Karl. Oliver, oblivious, plays with a toy.

OLIVER  
This is where we came when Miss  
JoJo's baby died.

Ardith enters with a full baby basket.

OLIVER (CONT'D)  
Do I get a sister too.

ARDITH  
No, she belongs to someone else.

## EXT. BACKWOODS WHOOPEE SPOT - DAY

With a car parked in a presumed secret spot, an unseen couple can be heard being intimate in the backseat. Briar sneaks up to the car in his underwear. The fellow's clothes lay outside the car.

BRIAR  
(whispering to self)  
Don't mind the coonhounds coming.  
Fear your wife when you tell her  
about your change of clothes.

He swaps out his stolen guard clothes, for the man's coveralls and shirt.

## EXT. POND - LATER

Briar ties up the guard's jacket around a rock and plops it in a pond.

## EXT. DOBBS HOUSE - DAY

Willow ambles by an outdoor burn pit, to find the charred remains of her riding dress. Disconsolate, she grabs a scorched hem and clutches it to her.

EXT. DOBBS HOUSE SHADE TREE

As William totes his pipe and reads the paper, Ardith stiffly holds the baby. Oliver zips around them in a playful mood.

ARDITH  
(annoyed)  
Oliver, go tell Willow to start  
your bath.

As Oliver runs off, stern-faced Teresa and Nancy appear from around the house.

ARDITH (CONT'D)  
Hello, ladies.

William rises to greet them and pulls two vacant chairs under the shade.

TERESA  
How's the little one?

ARDITH  
Fussy. Settling down.

NANCY  
Good. First few weeks are the  
hardest. (deep sigh) We need to ask  
you a few questions.

ARDITH  
Sure thing. William will you take  
Karl for a moment.

William picks up the infant and walks off.

NANCY  
We need to ask you a few questions  
about the Elsmore baby.

ARDITH  
Oh, that dust-up.

TERESA  
Where did you take their baby? We  
called the New Hope Charity Home,  
and they never saw you.

Ardith fidgets and then sits erectly.

ARDITH  
That baby was so sick. I took it to  
a little-known place that handles  
hard-to-adopt babies.



NANCY  
What's the name?

ARDITH  
Oh, it's not registered, I don't think. Just a good-hearted woman trying to help a few sickly babies get a new home.

Nancy and Teresa look grimly at each other.

TERESA  
The Elsmores' say you brought a baby girl that wasn't theirs.

Ardith nervously taps her chair.

ARDITH  
You all know what it's like to have a baby. You're half out of your head. The poor dear said Roy had killed himself, and she was left with no way to care for the ill baby.

Pitifully shakes her head.

ARDITH (CONT'D)  
I really don't think she had time to recognize her daughter before she handed her to me.

Nancy draws in a long breath.

NANCY  
The Legal Aid Society is bringing the Women's Klan into this. That's a big problem.

ARDITH  
I'm sure the lawyers will find that I did nothing wrong. I do feel sorry for Fiona and Roy.

She stands to end the conversation.

ARDITH (CONT'D)  
If you will excuse me, I need to feed Karl.

Teresa and Nancy also rise.

TERESA  
Of course. But one more thing. We have replaced you as Klabee.  
(MORE)

TERESA (CONT'D)  
 Clara Blair will take over as  
 treasurer. Would you mind grabbing  
 the ledger before we leave?

Ardith throws her hand to her chest.

ARDITH  
 Whatever for? I do a fine job of  
 accounting.

NANCY  
 A new rule from the Grand Dragon.

INT. DOBBS HOUSE - HALLWAY

Ardith storms up to her study. She spies Willow helping  
 Oliver in the bath.

ARDITH  
 (to self)  
 If she wasn't mute and dumb, I  
 would blame her for this mess.

INT. DOBBS HOUSE - STUDY

She goes to her desk and retrieves a leather-bound ledger.  
 She tears a few pages out and stashes them in her hidden  
 compartment.

EXT. DOBBS HOUSE

Ardith marches out to Nancy and Teresa and passes them the  
 book.

ARDITH  
 Here you go. If Clara has questions  
 have her come by.

TERESA  
 We're trying to make this go away  
 as soon as possible so it never  
 reaches the courts.

ARDITH  
 Thank you.

They turn without bidding her goodbye. William joins her  
 outside the home. Pensively, she avoids eye contact with him,  
 but he tails her back to the shade tree.

WILLIAM  
 What was all that about?

ARDITH

Fiona Elsmore is on our charity list. Last I visited her, she said she'd been abandoned by Roy. She practically shoved the baby girl in my car and begged me to find a better home. The adoption place I took the baby to had already found a new placement by the time I went back two days ago.

WILLIAM

You went to the doctor that day, I thought.

ARDITH

Seems some busybody lawyers are stepping in. I guess they might want to press charges.

WILLIAM

Charges? If you were securing an adoption for them, what are they charging you with?

William grasps hands.

ARDITH

Using my membership in the Klan to garner favor.

She circles one hand in the air to express what a silly accusation.

WILLIAM

I don't get it.

ARDITH

To garner favor so I could take her money and her baby. I feel sorry for her. She gave me the twelve dollars she was saving toward our club dues to find a good home for that little girl.

WILLIAM

When was this?

ARDITH

Before Josephine had her baby.

WILLIAM

The day you ran the car out of gas?

Ardith nods.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)  
And you took Oliver?

ARDITH  
You know I love having him around.

He shoves his hands in his pockets.

WILLIAM  
No, Ardith. I don't. Right now I'm  
not sure I know you.

William leaves, rubbing the back of his neck.

INT. DOBBS HOUSE - JOSEPHINE'S ROOM - NIGHT

A small crib sits by Willow's bed. Karl grips her finger while he quietly nurses a bottle. A rustling outside her window causes her to peek through the curtains.

JOSEPHINE'S ROOM WINDOW

Willow briskly opens the curtains. She sees Josephine's anxious eyes peer back at her.

JOSEPHINE'S ROOM

Willow startles backwards, then returns to the window and motions Josephine quietly in.

JOSEPHINE  
Bless your heart for letting me in.  
I done escaped from that nuthouse.

Willow retrieves her notebook and jots a message for JoJo.

JOSEPHINE (CONT'D)  
I left the notion I'm heading to  
Virginia to be with my mama.

Willow signals "what gives."

JOSEPHINE (CONT'D)  
I'm here to find out what happened  
to my baby.

Her eyes drop to Karl sleeping in the cradle. Her face pinches together.

JOSEPHINE (CONT'D)  
 I bet Miss Ardith angry she got a  
 boy. She only bought clothes for a  
 little girl baby. Katherine...

Nurturingly, JoJo picks up the sleeping Karl.

JOSEPHINE (CONT'D)  
 You know where my baby's at?

Earnestly, Willow drafts a lengthy note.

JOSEPHINE (CONT'D)  
 Depositing home? You think my boy's  
 still there?

Willow shrugs and dashes a follow up note.

JOSEPHINE (CONT'D)  
 I got a story that needs telling to  
 the law, but I don't know who to  
 trust.

Maneuvering to lock the door, Willow retrieves Alice Burns'  
 husband's card.

JOSEPHINE (CONT'D)  
 I need to know that man 'cause I  
 sure been wronged.

Karl starts to fuss. Willow gestures to the bottle and that  
 Ardith does not produce enough. Josephine unbuttons her  
 blouse and pulls Karl close.

JOSEPHINE (CONT'D)  
 (to Karl)  
 You poor dear.

Willow motions, "Where will you go?"

JOSEPHINE (CONT'D)  
 I don't have no place to go.

Willow goes to her closet and pulls out an extra blanket.

JOSEPHINE (CONT'D)  
 You sure? Mrs. Ardith not right in  
 the head.

Willow acknowledges. Josephine lays on the bed, and is tucked  
 in nursing Karl. Willow lays next to her under her own  
 blanket.

EXT. CAVE ENTRANCE - MORNING

Briar returns to where he had hidden his stash of money. He heaves the stone to reveal his tin, and he quickly opens it shoves the money in his pockets, and runs.

INT. DOBBS HOUSE - SEWING ROOM - EVENING

Looking quite buxom, post-pregnancy, Ardith models herself in a new bodice. She hears a car pull up, and she elegantly leaves to greet William.

INT. DOBBS HOUSE - DINING ROOM

From a decanter, William pours a tumbler full of gin. Ardith enters, but William fails to notice her flirtatious poses.

ARDITH  
How was your day?

WILLIAM  
Not the best.

Seeing he is in a somber mood, she enters the room. He takes a belt and steadies himself against the sideboard.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)  
I want you to take the baby and go on a trip. Get away for a while.

ARDITH  
Whatever for?

WILLIAM  
The Legal Aid Society is not backing down. They're bringing in prominent lawyers from D.C.

She grips the back of a chair, and he refills his glass.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)  
To interview you and find out what happened out at that place you took the Elsmore baby to.

ARDITH  
My lands! This is so blown out of proportion.

WILLIAM  
If you're not here, you can't be interviewed. We hope the story will die down and go away.

He scratches his neck. Ardith stomps her foot.

ARDITH

Just where do you think I should go?

WILLIAM

A train tour would take you three weeks to complete. Up to Chicago, out to Yellowstone or Denver. Like in that brochure you brought home.

ARDITH

Three weeks? You can't be serious. I have duties with the Daisy Ladies. And you and Oliver? How will you get by?

WILLIAM

Oliver is no problem. Willow's here, and I could even take him to work some days.

ARDITH

You've figured this all out without talking to me?

WILLIAM

The Klavern is going to do what it can to keep this out of the papers. But the inquiry won't be dropped.

Ardith sits down and cradles her head.

ARDITH

I don't think I can do this alone. I'll take Willow with me.

He shakes his head no.

WILLIAM

You said Karl's less fussy. You can handle him.

Ardith scowls and tosses a hand in the air.

ARDITH

Are you sure you don't want her here for other reasons?

WILLIAM

Don't be dramatic.

ARDITH

Your brother Quinn had no trouble  
messing with the help.

WILLIAM

What!?

ARDITH

Josephine told Doctor Grange and me  
that she was raped by Quinn last  
August. And not just once.

William goes to refill his glass, then rests it behind his  
neck.

WILLIAM

Starting right now, you are going  
to tell me every secret you've been  
keeping from me.

ARDITH

Josephine's baby looked just like  
Oliver! Both the doctor and I  
thought you fathered him.

William slams the tumbler down and clenches his fists.

WILLIAM

The hell? Dr. Grange knows me from  
the brotherhood. He suspected me?

ARDITH

Well, he did.

He shades his eyes and painfully stares at Ardith.

ARDITH (CONT'D)

I heard of this discreet place  
north of here, mostly hidden away,  
that would take illegitimate babies  
and find good homes for them.

WILLIAM

Wait. Her baby was alive?

ARDITH

Yes. But what would his life be  
like being a white child and raised  
by a half-colored gal? The doctor  
kept her asleep while I went to  
acquire and bring back a dead baby.

WILLIAM

Dear Lord, Ardith. The poor girl  
went crazy because of you.



ARDITH

I thought she would be sad, of course, but would stay on and feed our new little one.

William shakes his head.

WILLIAM

Do you realize what's at stake? We will be ostracized. My insurance company will be inspected! The Klan would banish--

ARDITH

-- William, I'm too important. We're too important. Our Klan brothers and sisters will never turn their backs on us.

William rolls his eyes and stomps to the door, but suddenly wheels around.

WILLIAM

Why did you sterilize her?

ARDITH

You don't believe your vows to cleanse the country?

WILLIAM

Yes, but not giving away babies, lying to women, and bringing them a replacement child or-for goodness' sake! -a dead one!

ARDITH

The doctor and I may have made a mistake. But that healthy boy has easily found his way into a good home by now.

WILLIAM

You're leaving tomorrow. Get packed! Take Willow if you need to. I am staying at the Grand Dragon's apartment tonight.

He leaves and Ardith slumps in her chair.

INT. JOSEPHINE'S ROOM - LATER

JoJo, in despised kerchief, rocks and nurses Karl, as Willow reclines on the bed. Ardith whips the door open, startling them.

ARDITH  
What in Sam Hill?

JOSEPHINE  
You've a right handsome boy.

ARDITH  
Wha...? How are you even here?

JOSEPHINE  
I was let out.

ARDITH  
Uh-huh.  
(to Willow)  
How dare you keep such a secret.

Willow evades eye contact. Ardith rests her hands on her hips. An evil smile creeps out on Ardith's face.

ARDITH (CONT'D)  
Yes. Lord have mercy, yes.

She taps her head and nods sinisterly.

ARDITH (CONT'D)  
Mr. Dobbs has bought us a great  
getaway. Tomorrow, Willow, you and  
I and the baby are traveling for  
three weeks. Start packing.

Willow's eyes round and she stares at JoJo.

ARDITH (CONT'D)  
And Josephine. I am hiring you back  
too. Another nurse for baby Karl  
will be perfect.

JOSEPHINE  
Never been outta Georgia, ma'am.

ARDITH  
You will secretly come with us  
since Mr. William will send you  
back to the asylum. He doesn't much  
care for you.

JOSEPHINE  
Won't someone need to look after  
Oliver?

ARDITH  
Oh, Oliver is staying here with Mr.  
William. Let's not say anything to  
the boy.

INT. DOBBS HOUSE - HALLWAY - MORNING

Proceeding down the hallway, Willow comes across a scrap of paper. She picks it up to read, "The St. Louis Home for Wayward Girls, 40 Harrison St, two blocks from train stn." Willow incredulously gazes at the note.

ARDITH (O.S.)  
Willow, come here with your bag.

INT. DOBBS HOUSE - DINING ROOM

Ardith coolly stares at Willow as she enters the room.

ARDITH  
Need to see what you're packing.

Willow sets her bag on the table; Ardith dumps its entire contents. Ardith picks up her notebook and pencil. Opens the pages and runs her finger down the jagged seam where pages are missing.

ARDITH (CONT'D)  
I'll just take these. No need to write your answers anymore. Josephine does enough talking for both of you.

Ardith finds independent paper scraps and wads them up in a ball in front of Willow.

ARDITH (CONT'D)  
I planned a special stop in St. Lou. If you need anything... you'll get it there.

Before Ardith hauls off with the notebook, Willow motions to write, which Ardith acquiesces.

ARDITH (CONT'D)  
Silly Willow. You are indebted to me. You'll stay in line if you know what's best for your brother. Leave.

Willow departs. Ardith segues to the sideboard and withdraws a small fancy pistol that she slides into her purse.

ARDITH (CONT'D)  
Yes, indeed. Your services will no longer be needed.

## INT. MARIETTA SECONDHAND STORE - LATER

Freshly outfitted, Briar sports a change of clothes. He steps up to the register, another customer steps in behind him.

BRIAR  
Might you direct me to the Dobbs'  
home?

The clerk shrugs but the CUSTOMER behind him interjects.

CUSTOMER  
You kin to William or Ardith?

BRIAR  
Mrs. Dobbs is my mama's cousin.

CUSTOMER  
Well, I just saw them pile out at  
the train station.

BRIAR  
Train Station! Where?

CUSTOMER  
Three blocks that way.

Briar takes his change and races out of the store.

## EXT. MARIETTA TRAIN STATION - TRAIN ENGINE

A CONDUCTOR and ENGINEER study a time table and then their watches.

ENGINEER  
How did we get behind?

CONDUCTOR  
We'll be okay, just skip the block  
at Sulphur Springs.

ENGINEER  
As long as we get out of here on  
time.

## EXT. MARIETTA TRAIN STATION

William unloads the car as a train porter prepares a trolley with all the luggage. Oliver holds on to his father. Willow goes to use the restroom.

## INT. MARIETTA TRAIN STATION - WAITING AREA

Briar reads a large foldout train schedule, obscuring his face. As Willow exits the bathroom, she is accosted by Briar, who hustles her around a corner. At first, Willow aims to punch then embraces her brother.

BRIAR

Where are you going?

Willow spells out the letters on her hand.

BRIAR (CONT'D)

Colorado?

Willow motions that she is in peril and points to his schedule.

BRIAR (CONT'D)

Nuh-uh. I'll be on that train and won't let anything happen to you.

She shakes her head no, and motions for him to go home.

BRIAR (CONT'D)

I am not going home without you.

Willow motions that people are on the look out for him.

BRIAR (CONT'D)

I will be riding the blind. Don't worry about me.

The train whistles and she cries. Josephine enters and taps Willow.

JOSEPHINE

Willow. It's time to go. I'll be in the Colored car. Don't let Oliver know I on it.

Josephine leaves. Willow embraces Briar, then stands back and motions "I love you." She races off without looking back.

## EXT. MARIETTA TRAIN STATION - PLATFORM

As the conductor makes a boarding call, Willow takes Karl with her into the train car. William tepidly gives Ardith a hug and hands her an envelope.

WILLIAM

I also put a bit more cash in an envelope in your suitcase.

ARDITH  
You're a dear.

WILLIAM  
Oliver, give her a hug.

He gives an unenthusiastic hug, and then holds on to William.

ARDITH  
You should go before everyone is  
staring at us.

WILLIAM  
That's my plan.

She gazes strangely at them, as they unceremoniously head to their car. Ardith peeks in the envelope and pulls out a note. She reads the letter and her mouth drops. She spins around and races to the head of the engine.

INT. ARDITH'S CAR

As William steers across the tracks, he comes to a dead stop. Ardith furiously stares at him in the middle of the tracks.

EXT. RAILROAD CROSSING

Ardith, shaking the note, points at William.

ARDITH  
What do you mean start over!

William angrily slams the door and confronts her.

WILLIAM  
The Klan wants me in front of  
tribunal because of you!

ARDITH  
Impossible!

WILLIAM  
I've been exiled from the  
brotherhood. I'll be run out of  
business!

Oliver cries out for his father. The conductor and engineer, panicky, come to the commotion.

CONDUCTOR  
We need you to please move your  
car.

Ardith shows them the back of her hand. In the background, Briar makes a dash for the baggage car blind spot.

ARDITH  
I'm good for you!

WILLIAM  
Our whole marriage is built on a lie--

ENGINEER  
Get this damn car moving!

ARDITH  
No!

WILLIAM  
You are built on a lie, Sissy Belle Strunk.

Ardith staggers back, as the conductor continues to yell and Oliver ferociously cries. William heads back to the car.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)  
I don't like leaving Karl with you to raise but I have no choice. Just like you once did, Oliver and I will recreate ourselves, and you won't find us.

Stunned, Ardith watches him drive off. The conductor and engineer still bicker at her frantically.

CONDUCTOR  
We gotta go! We gotta go!

Ardith somberly walks back to her train car as the conductor and engineer scurry to the engine.

INT. TRAIN CAR

Ardith, flushed, arduously sits across the compartment facing Willow, who rocks Karl. With an evil glint, she stares down Willow.

ARDITH  
Interesting conversation I had with Mr. Dobbs. Seems some people know more than they should. (beat) But I know something you don't.

TRAIN CAR - LATER

Willow moves down the aisle, as Karl fidgets. The train comes to a halt. The conductor enters to make an announcement.

CONDUCTOR

We will be making a fifteen minute stop here. Feel free to step outside.

Awakening the sleeping Ardith, Willow motions that Karl is hungry. Ardith waves her off.

ARDITH

Take him to JoJo, and get him fed.

EXT. SULPHUR SPRINGS WATER TOWER.

The train crew proceeds to fill the engine with fresh water. The conductor yells up to the engineer

CONDUCTOR

Double-time this. The 375 will be right on our tail.

EXT. TRAIN CAR

Leaning against a train car, JoJo motions for Willow to join her.

JOSEPHINE

You doing okay with Miss Ardith.

Willow shakes her head no.

JOSEPHINE (CONT'D)

That boy you were talking to in the station. He's hiding back on the baggage car.

Perked up, Willow starts to look back.

JOSEPHINE (CONT'D)

Here, hand me Karl. You'll need to hustle to find him.

Before Willow has a chance to run, a train whistle cuts the air, long and insistent.

EXT. BAGGAGE CAR TOP

Briar and a few hobos lie flat out of the conductor's view.



BRIAR  
What's going on?

He peeks over the top to see a panic-stricken conductor staring behind the train. Briar looks at a white puff of smoke barreling through the trees. He starts to push his fellow travelers.

BRIAR (CONT'D)  
Shit! Get off! Get off! That train  
is gonna hit us!

SULPHUR SPRINGS WATER TOWER.

The conductor takes out a pistol and shoots it in the air. The engineer lays out a long whistle.

EXT. TRAIN CAR

Willow spots the impending doom and grabs Josephine. The sound of two train whistles blaring and wheels screeching overpoweringly deafens them.

EXT. FORREST VIEW

The sound of wheels squealing and the smashing of metal echo through the forest. Screams from passengers of the two collided trains tear through the sky. Then silence.

SULPHUR SPRINGS WATER TOWER.

Chaos surrounds Willow as she examines the destruction strewn around her. She hears Karl crying under debris, and quickly frees the child to console him.

ARDITH  
(breathlessly)  
I. Hate. You.

Bloodied and crazed, Ardith staggers toward Willow.

ARDITH (CONT'D)  
I know you. I was you!

Defiantly, Willow puts her hand up. Ardith stops, evilly grins, fiddling with her torn handbag.

ARDITH (CONT'D)  
So you know about Sissy Belle  
Strunk? Then this shouldn't  
surprise you.

Ardith shakily draws her pistol and aims it at Willow's head.

ARDITH (CONT'D)  
Put down Katherine.

JOSEPHINE (O.C)  
That's Karl.

Ardith gasps as Josephine daggers her with a makeshift shank. Ardith whirls around in agony. JoJo tosses her weapon and yanks Ardith's gun away. Ardith drops to her knees and points a shaky finger toward Willow.

ARDITH  
Jesus will protect me. He heard my  
vow. Get some white men to help me!

Ardith falls backwards, then closes her eyes.

ARDITH (CONT'D)  
(weakly)  
William? Where's my baby Katherine?

Willow lays Karl on Ardith's chest and wraps her hands around the baby. Her arms then fall limp.

JOSEPHINE  
She's gone.

JoJo pitches the gun away and motions to Karl.

JOSEPHINE (CONT'D)  
How we going to get him home?

Willow points to her then to the baby.

JOSEPHINE (CONT'D)  
I'll get arrested for stealing a  
baby!

Willow shakes her head no. They proceed through the wreckage.

#### TRAIN WRECKAGE

As JoJo plods back through the wreckage, she speaks to a HOBO on behalf of Willow, trailing behind holding Karl.

JOSEPHINE  
We are looking for a young man  
riding the blind. Brown hair,  
wearing a brown cap.

HOBO

We ain't had time to jump. Best you  
not see what's left.

Willow falls to the ground with Josephine comforting her.

HOBO (CONT'D)

I gotta get. Folks will pilfer that  
train and we'll get blamed for it.

He leaves, and Josephine stands and tugs on Willow's arm.

JOSEPHINE

We need to go. Now is our time to  
be free.

EXT. STEWART MOUNTAIN - DAY

Willow slowly saunters up the trail to her home. She studies  
her surroundings with a smile and smells the wildflowers,  
picking a few.

WILLOW (V.O.)

I left JoJo in Memphis. She called  
Alice Burns who helped me get a  
ride back to Georgia.

EXT. STEWART RESIDENCE

Willow saunters up to her home, and spots her father  
whittling on the front porch. He sees her and drops his knife  
and rises.

POPPY

Willow? Willow!

They race toward each other and heartily embrace. Ruthy runs  
out the door and joins them in their grasp. Poppy steps back  
to reveal Willow's mother smiling. Willow drops to her knees  
and her mother runs out to her. Willow grips her mother  
tightly.

MAMA

Willow, Willow, Willow.

Her mother grasps her face, and Willow motions a question.

MAMA (CONT'D)

It was Uncle Virgil. Another  
stroke.

Mama casts a quizzical gaze over Willow's shoulder.

MAMA (CONT'D)

Briar.

Willow shakes her head solemnly. Her mother then points behind her. Willow turns and her mouth drops. Poppy turns to see what everyone is looking at. Limping, Briar apprehensively approaches the crowd.

Poppy steps up to Briar, who looks down, fighting tears, unable to make eye contact. Poppy warmly gazes at his son.

POPPY

Welcome home son.

Briar buries his head on his father's shoulder. Willow and her mother join them. They enter the house.

INT. HOLCOMBE RESIDENCE

Mrs. Holcombe opens a letter containing seven dollars.

WILLOW (V.O.)

I sent an anonymous letter repaying Mrs. Holcombe the seven dollars and a note saying, judge not, that ye be not judged.

INT. BURN'S LAW OFFICE

JoJo sits behind a receptionist desk, and greets Alice Burns bringing in a basket of lunch. She hands JoJo a sandwich.

WILLOW (V.O.)

Mr. Burns helped JoJo adopt Carl. With a C. He also got her a job working in his law office in Washington D.C.

INT. STEWART RESIDENCE - KITCHEN - LATER

Willow writes in a journal on the kitchen table, while Briar roughhouses with Ruthy. Poppy and Mama look happily at the scene in their house.

WILLOW (V.O.)

I keep writing JoJo. Mr. Burns said that my letters and JoJo's help has been a gem to the Legal Aid Society.

EXT. MISS LILY'S - DAY.

A realtor places a "For Sale" sign on Miss Lily's storefront.

WILLOW (V.O.)

After Mr. Burns talked with some of the gals at Miss Lily's, the State shutdown her store. She burned her files. However, she blabbed about her biggest client -- Mr. Taggart.

EXT. TIMBERLAND MOUNTAIN - DAY

Inmates cheer as federal agents haul away Taggart.

WILLOW (V.O.)

Skimming off of contracts cost Taggart something fierce. But not as much when an anonymous tip revealed a secret convict graveyard.

EXT. GRAVEYARD - DAY

Inmates dig up the graves that Briar spied on previously.

WILLOW (V.O.)

Now the Georgia State house promises to look at this once they get into session. We'll see.

EXT. CHAIN GANG

Taggart swings a hammer, smashing rocks between other inmates.

WILLOW (V.O.)

But they offered up Mr. Taggart as proof they'll get to the bottom of this.

EXT. BECK INFANTORIUM - DAY

Police haul Ms. Beck away in chains.

WILLOW (V.O.)

I cried hallelujah when JoJo wrote me to say they shut down that awful Mrs. Beck's place. Mr. Burns found that several babies were used for insurance fraud by a Mrs. Dobbs.

EXT. DOBBS HOUSE - DAY

Movers bring boxes into the house.

WILLOW (V.O.)

Nobody knows what happened to Mr. Dobbs or Oliver. I sure hope that little boy grows up and remembers JoJo and me. And maybe, just maybe, he will choose to do good.

INT. STEWART RESIDENCE - KITCHEN

Briar motions for her to come join the fun outside the house.

WILLOW (V.O.)

One day, I might write about all that's happened. The whole world seems to be holding on to secrets One sort or another. Staying silent when words should be said. Someday, I hope to understand why that is.

Briar and Ruthy grab Willow's hands and they dash out the door.

**THE END**