

THE HELP

by Tate Taylor

Based on the novel THE HELP

by

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DreamWorks

JACKSON MISSISSIPPI: 1963

INT. AIBILEEN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - EVENING

AIBILEEN, black, 53, stands at a kitchen sink washing dishes. She wears a yellow dress with black piping.

Two framed portraits hang on the wall above her: Jesus Christ and an UNKNOWN YOUNG BLACK MALE wearing thick glasses.

Aibileen swallows hard.

AIBILEEN

I was born in 1911...Chickasaw
County, Piedmont Plantation.

An UNSEEN WOMAN interviews Aibileen.

WOMAN (O.C.)

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

AIBILEEN

Yes, ma'am. I did.

WOMAN (O.C.)

And you knew that because?

AIBILEEN

My momma was a maid. My grandmomma
was a house slave.

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

WOMAN (O.C.)

A...house...slave.

Aibileen looks to the floor for a moment.

WOMAN (O.C.)

Do you ever dream of being something
else?

Aibileen nods sadly. The room is quiet.

WOMAN (O.C.)

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

AIBILEEN

It feel...

Aibileen's hands tremble as she glances sadly up to the picture of the young black male.

FADE TO BLACK:

AIBILEEN (V.O.)
I done raised seventeen kids in my
life. Lookin' after white babies,
that's what I do.

MAE MOBLEY (O.S.)
Ai-bee.

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

MAE MOBLEY LEEFOLT, 2 1/2 years old, stands in a crib calling out for Aibileen.

MAE MOBLEY
(sing-song)
Ai-bee.

AIBILEEN enters. Her dark black skin contrasts angelically with a light gray work dress, white panty hose and shoes.

MAE MOBLEY
Aibee!

AIBILEEN
Hi!

Aibileen lifts Mae Mobley out of her crib.

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

Aibileen sits down with Mae Mobley in a chair placing her on her lap.

AIBILEEN
Oh, Baby Girl.

AIBILEEN (V.O.)
Babies like fat. They like big fat
legs too. That I know.

Aibileen kisses Mae Mobley and whispers in her ear.

AIBILEEN

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

Mae Mobley leans back and repeats Aibileen's words.

MAE MOBLEY

You is smart. You is kind. You is impor-tant.

Aibileen hugs Mae Mobley.

AIBILEEN

Oh, that's so good.
(laughs)
That's so good.

Mae Mobley reaches up and touches Aibileen's face.

INT. AIBILEEN'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - NEXT MORNING

Aibileen lies in an old claw foot tub. Rust appears where the enamel has chipped. Several layers of linoleum are visible due to a hole in the floor caused by water damage.

Aibileen is not wearing her wig. She has salt and pepper hair bound in tight braids close to her scalp.

Aibileen leans her head back and closes her eyes.

EXT. AIBILEEN'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Aibileen exits a small one story structure with peeling paint. She is in full maid's uniform and is now wearing her wig.

AIBILEEN (V.O.)

I work for the Leefolts from eight to four, six days a week.

Aibileen passes two buses filled with maids going in opposite directions.

AIBILEEN (V.O)

I make ninety-five cent an hour. That come to a hundred eighty-two dollars ever month.

EXT. LEEFOLT HOME - SAME DAY

The Leefolts' small, brick, three bedroom "ranch" is destined to become income property one day.

AIBILEEN (V.O.)
I do all the cooking, cleaning,
washing, ironing and grocery
shopping, but mostly...

INT. LEEFOLT HOME - MAE MOBLEY'S ROOM - SAME DAY

Aibileen pulls a pink frilly dress on Mae Mobley.

AIBILEEN (V.O.)
I take care a Baby Girl.

The dress has become too small to button.

AIBILEEN (V.O.)
And Lord, I worry she gone be fat.

Aibileen pats Mae Mobley's belly.

AIBILEEN
Ooh, Mae Mobley.

Mae Mobley pats her own belly just as Aibileen did.

AIBILEEN (V.O.)
Ain't gonna be no beauty queen,
either.

Mae Mobley's mother, ELIZABETH LEEFOLT, 22 and lanky, enters wearing a lavender floral print dress very much under construction. Pins and double-stick tape hold it all together.

She has pointed features and a nest of teased hair.

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

AIBILEEN
Yes, ma'am.

ELIZABETH
Oh, and Hilly's deviled eggs. No
paprika!

Aibileen nods as Elizabeth rotates around like the Tin Man.

ELIZABETH

Does this dress look homemade?

AIBILEEN

I reckon when you finish, it won't.

Elizabeth exits with her pinned hemline sloping at a good twenty degree angle. Aibileen shakes her head.

AIBILEEN (V.O.)

Miss Leefolt still don't pick Baby Girl up but once a day. The birthin' blues had got holt a Miss Leefolt pretty hard. I done seen it happen plenty a times...once babies start havin' they own babies.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

A trail of dust is kicked up behind a blue Cadillac convertible as EUGENIA "SKEETER" PHELAN (23) drives down a rural road surrounded by farmland.

A song plays on the radio.

AIBILEEN (V.O.)

And the young white ladies of Jackson...Oh, Lord, was they havin' babies. But not Miss Skeeter.

The convertible passes a small A.M. radio station.

AIBILEEN (V.O.)

No man and no babies.

INT/EXT. CADILLAC / PHILLIPS 66 GAS STATION - CONTINUOUS

Skeeter pulls into a gas station.

TWO BLACK STATION ATTENDANTS rush over to help her. One cleans her windshield and the other puts gas in her car.

Skeeter looks ahead to customers standing outside an adjacent movie theater.

EXT. CAPRI MOVIE THEATER - SAME TIME

"Cleopatra" is written across the marquis. Below, a long line of WHITE WOMEN buy tickets and go inside.

The African-American theater patrons climb up a fire escape stairway and enter through a side entrance on the second floor. A sign reads:

COLORED ENTRANCE

INT/EXT. CADILLAC / JACKSON JOURNAL - MOMENTS LATER

Skeeter pulls into the lot of the Jackson Journal Newspaper. The Mississippi state flag flies atop the building.

INT. JACKSON JOURNAL NEWSPAPER - OFFICE - SAME DAY

A RECEPTIONIST leads Skeeter across a smoke-filled news office. Even the light bulbs have yellowed.

Skeeter wears flats, careful not to add more than a centimeter to her towering height. She carries a red leather satchel.

INT. MR. BLACKLY'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

The receptionist and Skeeter enter the office of MR. HAROLD BLACKLY, 60. He has greased, grey hair and the face of an overwhelmed man. Smoke pours into the room.

RECEPTIONIST

Eugenia Phelan, Mr. Blackly.

MR. BLACKLY

Shut the goddamn door!

The receptionist exits. Skeeter shuts the door behind her.

MR. BLACKLY

I guarantee you, one day they're gonna figure out cigarettes'll kill you.

Mr. Blackly snaps his fingers over a chair.

MR. BLACKLY

Okay, Miss Phelan, let's see what you got.

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

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

SKEETER
 Is that important?

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

MR. BLACKLY
 Do you have any references?

SKEETER
 Yes, sir. Right here.

She takes a deep breath and pulls a letter out of her satchel. She hands it to Mr. Blackly.

Mr. Blackly snatches the letter and reads it quickly. Flabbergasted, he drops the letter on his desk.

MR. BLACKLY
 This is a rejection letter.

SKEETER
 Not exactly. Miss Stein-

MR. BLACKLY
STEIN?!

Skeeter points toward the letterhead.

SKEETER
 Elaine Stein, Senior Editor at
 Harper and Row Publishing, in New
 York.

MR. BLACKLY
 Oh, Lord.

SKEETER
 I'm going to be a serious writer,
 Mr. Blackly. I applied for a job but
 Miss Stein just thought-

MR. BLACKLY
 (chuckles)
 -She said "no".

SKEETER

(stammering)

Well, until I gain some experience!
See, it says it right there, "Great
potential...Gain some experience and
please apply again."

Mr. Blackly swivels his chair and stands, barely. Mr. Blackly is quite short.

MR. BLACKLY

Oh, Christ, I guess you'll do. Can
you clean?

SKEETER

I'm sorry. Clean?

MR. BLACKLY

Clean!

Mr. Blackly points to a wire basket on top of a book cabinet that he can't reach.

MR. BLACKLY

Grab that basket.

Skeeter crosses to the cabinet, grabs the basket with ease and places it on his desk. The basket is filled with unopened letters.

MR. BLACKLY

Miss Myrna's gone shit-house crazy
on us, drunk hair spray or
somethin'.

Mr. Blackly hands Skeeter a blue notebook filled with past Miss Myrna columns.

MR. BLACKLY

I want you to read her past columns.
Then read these letters and you
answer 'em just like she would.
Nobody's gonna know the damn
difference.

Skeeter forces a smile. Mr. Blackly's phone rings.

MR. BLACKLY

You know who Miss Myrna is?

SKEETER

I read her articles all the time.

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

Mr. Blackly picks up the ringing phone.

MR. BLACKLY
 Hello? Lou Ann, honey, I can't talk
 right now.

Skeeter exits the office, carrying the basket of letters as
 Mr. Blackly continues on the phone.

MR. BLACKLY
 (into phone)
 I'm at work. What?
 (to Skeeter)
 Shut that goddamn door!

Beaming, Skeeter exits pulling the door behind her.

INT. HOLBROOK HOUSE - BATHROOM - SAME DAY

HILLY HOLBROOK, 24, white and meticulously groomed, sits on a
 closed toilet seat in a well-appointed bathroom. She wears
 an aggressive floral print dress covered in bows.

Her face is topped by a perfect red bouffant hairdo.

HILLY
 (screaming upward)
 Momma! We're late for bridge!

Hilly rolls toilet paper out from its holder. With a pencil,
 she places a dot on each sheet of paper, counting as she
 goes.

AIBILEEN (V.O.)
 Miss Hilly was the first of the
 babies to have a baby. And it must
 a come out a her like the eleventh
 commandment. 'Cause once Miss Hilly
 had a baby, every girl at the bridge
 table had to have one, too.

Hilly carefully rolls the paper back up in the roll.

HILLY
 Minny! Go get Momma!

INT. HOLBROOK HOUSE - ENTRY FOYER STAIRWELL - SAME TIME

MINNY JACKSON, 33, black, plump and in uniform, rolls her eyes and shouts up the mahogany stairwell.

MINNY
Missus Walters?! You need help
coming down?

MISSUS WALTERS, 60, passes quietly behind Minny. She's wearing a heavy winter coat.

MISSUS WALTERS
I'm down. Been down.

Minny jumps with a yelp, spins around.

MINNY
Gone give me a heart attack!

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

MINNY
Whoa, whoa, whoa, Missus Walters.
Here, let me help you. Let's take
that coat off. It's ninety-eight
degrees out there.

Minny gently helps Missus Walters out of the coat.

MISSUS WALTERS
Oh, is it?

MINNY
Yes, ma'am.

MISSUS WALTERS
Well, let's put my coat on then.

Missus Walters puts her coat back on. Minny helps.

MISSUS WALTERS
Thank you.

Hilly enters the room.

HILLY
Come on, Minny.

MINNY
All right.

Mিনny grabs Missus Walters' pocketbook off of a foyer table.

MINNYY

(to Missus Walters)

Here's your pocketbook. Oh, okay.
Let me get the pie. Hold on, Missus
Walters. Hold on.

Mিনny picks up a chocolate pie which is also resting on the foyer table and follows Hilly and Missus Walters out the door.

EXT. HOLBROOK HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The Holbrook house is a two-story brick with a huge, beautiful yard shaded by ancient oak trees.

Hilly, Missus Walters and Minny walk toward a station wagon parked on the street. Hilly barks over her shoulder.

HILLY

Mিনny, William took Billy over to
Brent's Drugs for an ice cream.
Hurry back and get him down for his
nap. No dilly dallying.

They pass a sign stuck in Hilly's yard that reads: YARD OF
THE MONTH!

AIBILEEN (V.O.)

Once Missus Walters' arteries went
hard, Miss Hilly moved her into her
house and fired the maid *she* had to
make room for Minny, too. See,
Minny about the best cook in
Mississippi, and Miss Hilly wanted
her.

Hilly reaches the car and gets into the passenger seat. Minny helps Missus Walters into the back seat.

AIBILEEN (V.O.)

I lost my own boy, Treelore, four
years ago. After that, I just didn't
want to live anymore.

Minnie hurries around to the driver's side of the car, pie in hand.

AIBILEEN

It took God and Minny to get me
through it. Minny my best friend.
(MORE)

AIBILEEN (CONT'D)

A old lady like me lucky to have her.

INT. LEEFOLT HOME - DINING ROOM- SAME DAY

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

AIBILEEN (V.O.)

After my boy died, a bitter seed was planted inside of me...

INT. LEEFOLT HOME - LIVING ROOM

Elizabeth leans over the sofa and pushes the curtains aside, watching for guests to arrive. The hem of her skirt is still uneven, but much improved from the earlier state.

AIBILEEN (V.O.)

...And I just didn't feel so accepting anymore.

Elizabeth steps back from the window and glances anxiously to the dining table--then catches eyes with Aibileen and nods.

INT. LEEFOLT HOME - DINING ROOM - SAME TIME

Aibileen knowingly slides the platter of chicken salad over the L-shaped scratch in order to hide it.

INT. LEEFOLT HOME - BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

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

MAE MOBLEY

No!

AIBILEEN

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

MAE MOBLEY

No.

AIBILEEN

I'll give you two cookies if you go.

Mae Mobley forms a smile as tee-tee sprinkles into the bowl.

AIBILEEN (CONT'D)
Mae Mobley, you goin'!

Aibileen and Mae Mobley laugh excitedly as Elizabeth storms into the bathroom.

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

MAE MOBLEY
Mae Mobley go, Momma!

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

ELIZABETH
(to Aibileen)
Set out the dessert forks, please.

Elizabeth storms off with Mae Mobley. Aibileen is clearly disappointed.

INT. LEEFOLT HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Hilly enters the front door. Minny follows behind holding the pie and Missus Walters' arm.

The BRIDGE CLUB MEMBERS chatter in the adjacent den.

HILLY
(to Minny)
Put Momma in a chair before she
breaks a hip.

MISSUS WALTERS
I'm not deaf yet, Hilly.

Minny lowers Missus Walters into a chair.

INT. LEEFOLT HOME - DEN - CONTINUOUS

Hilly steps into the den with a bolt of charisma, captivating the women.

HILLY
Hey, girls!

The girls squeal with excitement at Hilly's arrival.

Missus Walters calls out to Minny, who's headed to the kitchen.

MISSUS WALTERS

Oh, Minny. Will you see if Aibileen has some of that ambrosia?

Minny nods as she enters the kitchen.

INT. LEEFOLT HOME - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Minny enters and sets the pie on the counter as Aibileen adds sugar to a pitcher of iced tea.

Minny immediately spies a plate of deviled eggs on the counter and reaches for one.

AIBILEEN

Hold on! Those are Miss Hilly's.

MINNY

She looks like the winning horse at the Kentucky Derby. All them flowers and bows.

Aibileen laughs as she crosses behind Minny and opens the refrigerator. She pulls out another plate of deviled eggs and sets them on the counter.

AIBILEEN

(re: the eggs)

Gots to have paprika on them.

MINNY

Oh, forgive me, Lord, but I'm gonna kill that woman, Aibileen. Now she has gone to puttin' pencil marks on the toilet paper.

AIBILEEN

Did she?

MINNY

Mh-hm. But I carry paper in from my own damn house. That fool don't know.

Minny grabs an egg. It disappears into her mouth with a single bite. Aibileen nods laughing and leans into Minny.

AIBILEEN

Miss Leefolt got so much hair spray, she gone blow us all up if she light a cigarette.

MINNY
 (laughing, mouthful)
 And you know she will!

Minny grabs a small black and white TV off the counter and picks up a TV tray.

MINNY
 You got some ambrosia?

AIBILEEN
 You know I do.

Minny heads toward the living room.

MINNY
 All right. I'll be back.

The cord from the TV drags behind her. Aibileen picks it up and wraps it around Minny's arm.

EXT. LEEFOLT HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

The TV set rests atop the coffee table. On TV: THE GUIDING LIGHT plays.

In an armchair, Missus Walters watches as she eats from a plate of Aibileen's ambrosia.

Skeeter enters through the front door.

SKEETER
 Hi, Missus Walters.

Missus Walters stays glued to the TV.

MISSUS WALTERS
 (dismissive)
 I'm watching my story.

SKEETER
 Okay.

INT. LEEFOLT HOME - DEN - SAME TIME

Hilly is commenting on her own dress to Elizabeth and JOLENE FRENCH, 24.

HILLY
 Isn't it gorgeous?

ELIZABETH

Oh, it is.

Skeeter enters the den.

SKEETER

Sorry I'm late.

The girls turn. Elizabeth gasps; the women squeal as Elizabeth and Hilly hug her.

ELIZABETH

You're home!

SKEETER

I missed y'all, too.

Jolene hugs Skeeter.

JOLENE

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

SKEETER

It does takes *FOUR* years, Jolene.

Hilly spins Skeeter away from Jolene and looks her in the eyes.

HILLY

I've got a great summer planned for
you.

SKEETER

Great! I went ahead and picked up
my black dress at the cleaners this
morning.

Hilly and Elizabeth look at Skeeter with concern.

SKEETER

What?

HILLY

About supper club tonight.

SKEETER

What?

Hilly places her hand on Skeeter's shoulder.

HILLY

Honey, Stuart had to cancel.

SKEETER

Again?

HILLY

He got held up on the oil rig,
Skeeter. It's offshore.

SKEETER

Well, I'm starting to think this
Stuart is a figment of your
imagination. So, just forget it.
I'm gonna go get a plate.

Elizabeth and Hilly watch with concern as Skeeter walks to
the chicken salad buffet.

INT. LEEFOLT HOME - DEN - DAY

Bridge has begun. Hilly, Elizabeth, Skeeter and Jolene sit
at a table arranging their hands of cards.

Skeeter takes a deep breath and belts out her news.

SKEETER

I got a job today! At The Jackson
Journal!

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

HILLY

They'd be a fool not to hire you.

Jolene raises her glass as do the other girls. Large,
diamond wedding rings sparkle on each of the girls' fingers.

JOLENE

To Skeeter...and her job. Last stop
'til marriage.

Hilly kicks Jolene under the table.

SKEETER

It's for the Miss Myrna column.
Have y'all read it?

Jolene nods stupidly.

JOLENE

Hmmm.

SKEETER

Elizabeth, do you mind if I talk to Aibileen? Just to help me answer the letters 'til I get a knack for it.

Aibileen continues clearing dishes as if she hasn't heard a thing. Elizabeth gets very still.

ELIZABETH

My Aibileen? Why can't you just get Constantine to help?

Skeeter looks to her lap and shakes her head.

SKEETER

Constantine quit us.

ELIZABETH

What?!

HILLY

Oh, my gosh!

Skeeter nods her head sadly.

HILLY

I'm so sorry.

SKEETER

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

Elizabeth looks to Aibileen.

ELIZABETH

Well, I mean as long as it doesn't interfere with her work. I don't see why not.

A phone rings. Elizabeth nods to Aibileen.

INT. LEEFOLT HOME - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Aibileen enters the kitchen with a stack of dishes and sets them in the sink.

She answers the phone.

AIBILEEN

Leefolt residence.

EXT. FOOTE ESTATE (INTERCUT) - POOL - SAME TIME

High-heeled, colorful sling-backs anchoring bare, sexy legs stand at the edge of a sparkling swimming pool.

CELIA FOOTE (O.C.)
Hello, is Elizabeth in?

We rise up to yellow shorts, a slim torso and sizeable cleavage.

AIBILEEN
She havin' bridge club right now.
May I take a message?

CELIA FOOTE, 28, peroxide blonde, stands in all her country girl glory. She speaks into the phone with a thick, unrefined, Southern accent, mired in insecurity.

CELIA
Uh, yes, please tell her Celia Foote called again. I'll call back tomorrow.

AIBILEEN
Yes, ma'am.

Celia nervously twists herself around in the phone cord.

CELIA
A-hem. Miss?

"Miss" strikes Aibileen as very odd.

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

AIBILEEN
No, ma'am.

CELIA FOOTE
Okay. It's *Celia Foote*. Emerson 6-8-4. Bye, now.

As Celia hangs up, we widen to see the Foote estate. "Tara" pales in comparison. Celia stares at two rosebushes that have been oddly planted in the center of the lawn.

JOHNNY FOOTE, 26, Celia's ridiculously handsome husband, sneaks up behind her and grabs her on the rear.

JOHNNY
What's for lunch?

Celia turns with a yelp. She slaps him playfully.

CELIA
You scared the daylights out of me!

Johnny begins kissing her neck.

JOHNNY
Mm. It's lunchtime and I'm suddenly
hungry.

Johnny squeezes Celia's behind.

CELIA
(laughing)
Johnny! Honestly!

INT. LEEFOLT HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Missus Walters sleeps in the chair in front of the TV with the plate of ambrosia in her lap.

Aibileen crosses behind her and reaches for the plate of food, startling her awake.

MISSUS WALTERS
Oh! I'm still workin' on it,
Aibileen.

Missus Walters resumes eating as Aibileen enters the den.

ELIZABETH
(to Aibileen)
Who was that on the phone?

AIBILEEN
Miss Celia Foote called again.

Elizabeth stiffens then leans over and touches Hilly's arm.

ELIZABETH
I've *never* called her back, Hilly.

HILLY
She can't take a hint, can she?

JOLENE
Who's Celia Foote?

HILLY
That tacky girl Johnny married.
From Sugar Ditch!

SKEETER

It could have been you, Hilly.

HILLY

And live thirty minutes outside of town? No, thank you. Anyway, I ran into her at the beauty parlor and she had the nerve to ask if she could help with the Children's Benefit Ball.

SKEETER

Well, aren't we taking non-members? The benefit's gotten so big.

HILLY

Yes, but we're not telling her.

Everyone laughs but Skeeter. Aibileen begins refilling glasses of tea.

Skeeter is the only one to acknowledge this.

SKEETER

Thank you, Aibileen.

Hilly begins squirming in her seat, obviously making a point to Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH

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

HILLY

I'm fine.

Missus Walters breaks the uncomfortable silence as she shouts out from the sofa.

MISSUS WALTERS

Oh, she's just upset cause the nigra uses the guest bath, and so do we.

Elizabeth quickly turns to Aibileen.

ELIZABETH

Aibileen, go check on Mae Mobley.

Aibileen disappears. Elizabeth leans into Hilly.

ELIZABETH

Just go use mine and Raleigh's.

HILLY

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

ELIZABETH

(quickly)

SHE DOES NOT!

Aibileen returns down the hall from Mae Mobley's room. She and Skeeter catch eyes.

Aibileen ducks behind a corner in the hall so she can listen to the girls' conversation.

HILLY

Wouldn't you rather them take their business outside?

Skeeter tries to change the subject.

SKEETER

Have y'all seen the cover of *Life* this week? Jackie's never looked more regal-

HILLY

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

ELIZABETH

(re: her cards)

Pass.

HILLY

That's why I've drafted *The Home Health Sanitation Initiative*.

SKEETER

The what?

Aibileen continues listening in the hallway.

HILLY

A disease preventative bill that requires every white home to have a separate bathroom for the colored help. It's been endorsed by the White Citizen's Council.

SKEETER

Maybe we ought to just build you a bathroom outside, Hilly.

The room grows eerily quiet.

HILLY

You ought not to joke about the colored situation.

Hilly leans in toward Skeeter.

HILLY

I'll do whatever it takes to protect our children. *Your lead, Elizabeth.*

INT. LEEFOLT HOME - KITCHEN - LATER THAT DAY

Skeeter smokes while watching through a window as the bridge club girls say goodbye.

A sermon plays over an old AM radio. Skeeter enters the kitchen, taps out her cigarette.

SKEETER

Aibileen?

Aibileen becomes nervous at the sight of Skeeter alone.

AIBILEEN

Yes, ma'am.

SKEETER

Do you think you'd be willing to help me with those "Miss Myrna" letters?

AIBILEEN

Miss Myrna get it wrong a lot of times. Be good to get it right.

SKEETER

Thank you, Aibileen.

(beat)

All that talk in there today... Hilly's talk? I'm sorry you had to hear that.

The sermon continues to play over the radio.

SKEETER

Is that Preacher Green's sermon?

AIBILEEN
Yes, ma'am, it is.

SKEETER
That reminds me so much of my maid,
Constantine.

Aibileen starts wiping down a serving tray.

AIBILEEN
I knew Constantine. We were in
church circle together.

SKEETER
Have you seen her lately?

AIBILEEN
No, ma'am.

SKEETER
Did you know that she had quit us?

AIBILEEN
Quit?

SKEETER
I got home from school a week ago,
and my momma told me she had quit.
Back in March...she went to live
with her daughter, Rachel, up in
Chicago.

Aibileen leaves the conversation and quickly begins wiping
down a tray.

SKEETER
Did you hear that? Do you have her
phone number?

Elizabeth enters, holding some papers.

ELIZABETH
Well, there you are, Skeeter.

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

ELIZABETH
Hilly wants you to put her
initiative in the league newsletter.

Skeeter nods and turns to Aibileen.

SKEETER
 Aibileen, I'll drop by tomorrow to
 get started on those "Miss Myrna"
 letters.

Aibileen nods.

ELIZABETH
 Y'all make it quick. Tomorrow's
 silver polishing day. Okay?

EXT. PHELAN HOME - MOMENTS LATER

Skeeter pulls in front of a large two-story farm house with a
 huge wrap around porch.

She exits the Cadillac carrying a black dress wrapped in dry
 cleaner's plastic.

Skeeter walks past an old black man working in the yard,
 JAMESO, 70.

SKEETER
 Hi, Jameso.

JAMESO
 How you, Miss Eugenia?

Skeeter ascends the porch stairs and enters the home.

INT. PHELAN FARM - ENTRY FOYER - MOMENTS LATER

Skeeter walks through the front door.

SKEETER
 Momma!

The Phelan home is well appointed even though it serves as a
 working farm. Skeeter walks up a grand wood staircase.

INT. PHELAN HOME - SKEETER BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

She walks into her bedroom and throws her black dress on the
 bed and walks back out into the hallway.

SKEETER
 (Shouting)
 Momma?!

CHARLOTTE (O.S.)
 Whoo-hoo! Back here, honey!

INT. PHELAN HOME - PARENTS' BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Skeeter enters her parents' bedroom to find her mother, CHARLOTTE BOUDREAU CANTELLE PHELAN, 50, sitting at her dressing table wearing a wig.

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

CHARLOTTE
(indicating the wig)
Is this a little too young?

SKEETER
It's a little too everything.

CHARLOTTE
Oh, hell, you're right.

Charlotte stands. Her floral print dress has a gazillion perfectly pressed pleats. She walks into her bathroom.

INT. PHELAN HOME - MASTER BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Charlotte enters the bathroom where several other wigs rest on wig heads.

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

Charlotte then takes a deep breath and grabs a different wig.

INT. PHELAN HOME - PARENTS' BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Charlotte smiles as she enters in a classic bouffant/flip in dark brown. She does a twirl so Skeeter can see all sides of the wig.

SKEETER
Much better.

CHARLOTTE
Your daddy bought me this dress in '58.

Charlotte approaches Skeeter and tries to flatten her hair with her hands.

SKEETER
Momma, I want to ask you about Constantine-

CHARLOTTE

-Right after Ole Miss won the Sugar Bowl.

(re: her dress)

Come on, you try it on.

SKEETER

What really happened?

CHARLOTTE

Skeeter, your mother is sick, and she wants to see you in this dress.

Charlotte backs up to Skeeter.

CHARLOTTE

Unzip me.

Skeeter unzips the dress. Charlotte steps out of the dress and turns to Skeeter in her slip and bra.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

Come on.

Skeeter grabs the dress and turns so Charlotte can unzip her dress.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

Did I tell you Fanny Peatrow got engaged? After she got that teller job, her mother said she was just swimming in proposals.

SKEETER

Well, good for "Fat Fanny Peatrow."

CHARLOTTE

Eugenia, your eggs are dying. Would it kill you to go on a date? Just show a little gumption.

Charlotte raises the dress up around Skeeter.

CHARLOTTE

This dress looks precious on you! If we just take it in a little here, little there. Get your hair fixed.

SKEETER

I got a job today.

CHARLOTTE

Where?

SKEETER
Writing. For *The Jackson Journal*.

Charlotte angrily zips up the dress.

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

SKEETER
Mother, would it really be so
terrible if I never met a husband?

Skeeter exits the room with the dress hanging off her shoulders. Charlotte grabs a robe and follows her out on the landing.

CHARLOTTE
Skeeter! Skeeter!

Skeeter stops.

INT. PHELAN HOME - UPSTAIRS LANDING - CONTINUOUS

Charlotte stops Skeeter and pulls her to a love seat at the top of the stairs. They sit. This is serious.

CHARLOTTE
I need to...ask you something. I
read the other day about how some
girls get unbalanced, start thinking
these...well, *unnatural* thoughts.

Charlotte begins to twist the handkerchief she holds.

CHARLOTTE
Are you...do you...find men
attractive? Are you having
unnatural thoughts about...

Charlotte shuts her eyes tight.

CHARLOTTE
Girls or...or women?

SKEETER
Oh, my God!

CHARLOTTE
Because, this article says there's a
cure, a special root tea.

Skeeter jumps up and heads toward the stairs.

SKEETER

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

CHARLOTTE

Eugenia!

SKEETER

Unless, of course, you do!

Skeeter storms down the stairs. Charlotte shouts out over the railing to her.

CHARLOTTE

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

INT. PHELAN HOME - DINING ROOM - LATER THAT EVENING

The Phelan dining room is lit solely by candles.

The Phelan's *new maid*, PASCAGOULA, 40, is serving.

Charlotte sits at the head of the table. She's having a bowl of broth. Skeeter sits next to her Father, ROBERT PHELAN, 60.

Skeeter's brother, CARLTON, 26, sits next to his fiancé, REBECCA, 21. They're perfectly groomed with Hollywood looks.

Pascagoula stops at Carlton's place at the table and begins serving him. Skeeter watches Pascagoula's every move, seeming to compare her to Constantine.

CARLTON

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

Skeeter snaps to attention.

SKEETER

Well, it's a start, Carlton.

CARLTON

If you say so. I thought you wanted to write books.

ROBERT

Now y'all leave your sister alone. I'm proud of you, sweetheart.

Charlotte scoops up some broth with a spoon.

CHARLOTTE

Oh, the irony of it all. Givin'
advice on keepin' up a home when she
doesn't even--

Charlotte's spoon goes in her mouth. Pascagoula approaches Skeeter and sets down a plate of food. Skeeter stops her.

SKEETER

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

PASCAGOULA

Sorry, Miss Eugenia. I'll get you
another one.

SKEETER

You know, last time I had an almond,
I stopped liking men.

Charlotte glares at Skeeter. Carlton lets out a chuckle. Rebecca is mortified.

REBECCA

Oh, my Lord.

SKEETER

Oh, no, Rebecca, it's fine. There's
a special root tea now.

CHARLOTTE

You have pushed it, young lady!

Pascagoula scurries off. Skeeter turns to her father.

SKEETER

Daddy, what happened to Constantine?

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

ROBERT

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

SKEETER

I don't believe you. She would have
written and told me.

Skeeter looks to her mother, who immediately busies herself with scooping up more broth.

SKEETER
Did you...fire her?

CHARLOTTE
We were just a job to her, honey.
With them it's all about money...
Now you'll understand that once
you've hired help of your own.

SKEETER
She raised me!

Charlotte slaps the table and stands.

CHARLOTTE
SHE DID NOT!

Skeeter's eyes fill with tears.

SKEETER
She worked here for twenty-nine
years.

Charlotte presses both hands to her stomach.

CHARLOTTE
It was a colored thing, and I've put
it behind me.

Charlotte passes behind Rebecca and kisses her head.

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

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

Skeeter gets up and storms off.

EXT. PHELAN HOME - FRONT YARD - WILLOW TREE - MOMENTS LATER

Skeeter storms out of the house and runs under a willow tree
in the front yard. She looks across to an empty bench.

EXT. PHELAN HOME (FLASHBACK) - WILLOW TREE - EARLY EVENING

Skeeter, 15 and lanky, sits on the same bench under the
willow tree. Despite a tight bun, her strong-willed hair has
started to frizz.

Constantine approaches the willow tree. Her skin is black as night. Her eyes have a striking honey-colored hue.

She sits next to Skeeter.

CONSTANTINE

What you doin' hidin' out here,
Girl?

Skeeter turns to Constantine.

SKEETER

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

CONSTANTINE

It's all right. Some things we just
got to keep to ourselves, right?

Skeeter looks down to her long, bony legs.

SKEETER

All the boys say I'm ugly. Momma
was third runner up in the Miss
South Carolina pageant.

CONSTANTINE

I wish you would quit feeling sorry
for yourself. Now, that's ugly.
Ugly is something that grows up
inside you. It's mean and hurtful,
like them boys. Now you're not one
of them, is you?

Skeeter shakes her head.

CONSTANTINE

Well, I didn't think so, honey.

Constantine grabs Skeeter's palm, pressing it with her thumb.

CONSTANTINE (CONT'D)

Every day.... Every day you're not
dead in the ground, when you wake up
in the morning, you gonna have to
make some decisions. Got to ask
yourself, am I gone believe all them
bad things them fools say about me
today? You hear me? Am I going to
believe all of them bad things them
fools say about me today? All
right.

Constantine releases her hand.

CONSTANTINE (CONT'D)
 Hm? As for your momma? She didn't
 pick her life. It pick her. But
 you... you going to do something big
 with yours. You wait and see.

Constantine and Skeeter stand.

CONSTANTINE
 Come on. Go home with me till the
 dance over. Come on.

Constantine holds Skeeter's hand and puts her arm around her
 as they walk down the path toward Constantine's home.

END FLASHBACK

EXT. PHELAN HOME - FRONT YARD - WILLOW TREE - MOMENTS LATER

Skeeter looks toward the same dirt path. An idea washes over
 her. She forms a big smile.

INT. PHELAN HOME - PANTRY - DAY

Skeeter talks on the phone and fidgets with a phone cord
 which emerges from the casing of the closed pantry door.

SKEETER
 Miss Stein, you said in your letter
 to write about what disturbs me,
 particularly if it bothers no one
 else.

INT. HARPER AND ROW PUBLISHING (INTERCUT) - OFFICE - MORNING

ELAINE STEIN, 45, hard but stylish, sits atop her desk, her
 legs crossed, talking on the phone. She gestures for her
 assistant to bring her a cup of coffee.

SKEETER (V.O.)
 And I understand that now.

MISS STEIN
 Continue.

SKEETER
 I'd like to write something from the
 point of view of the help. These
 colored women raise white children,
 and then in twenty years those
 children become the boss.
 (MORE)

SKEETER (CONT'D)

We love them and they love us, but they can't even use the toilets in our houses. Don't you find that ironic, Miss Stein?

Miss Stein's interest starts to wane.

MISS STEIN

I'm listening.

SKEETER

Margaret Mitchell glorified the mammy figure who dedicates her whole life to a white family but no one...ever asked *Mammy* how she felt about it.

MISS STEIN

(heard it before)

So, a side to this never before heard.

SKEETER

Yes! Because nobody ever talks about it down here.

INT. PHELAN HOME - HALLWAY -DAY

Charlotte notices the phone cord leading into the pantry and knocks on the door.

INT. PHELAN HOME - PANTRY - SAME TIME

CHARLOTTE (O.C.)

Skeeter, who are you talking to in there?

Skeeter covers the mouth piece and opens the door.

SKEETER

Go! Away!

Skeeter slams the door.

MISS STEIN

Who was that?

SKEETER

My mother.

MISS STEIN

Look, no maid in her right mind is ever gonna tell you the truth. That's a hell of a risk to take in a place like Jackson, Mississippi.

SKEETER

I already have a maid.

Skeeter can't believe what just came out of her mouth. Miss Stein sits up straight.

MISS STEIN

Really? A Negro maid has already agreed to speak with you?

Skeeter blinks hard. No turning back now.

SKEETER

Yes, ma'am.

MISS STEIN

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

SKEETER

Thank you, Miss Stein!

MISS STEIN

Hey, hey, hey, all I'm saying is that I'll let you know if it's even worth pursuing. And for God's sake, you're a twenty-three year-old educated woman. Go get yourself an apartment.

INT. PHELAN HOME - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Skeeter suddenly runs out of the pantry bolting past Pascagoula who is at the stove making breakfast. Within seconds she's out the front door.

SKEETER (V.O.)

"Dear Miss Myrna..."

EXT. LEEFOLT HOME - BACK YARD - LATER THAT DAY

Skeeter sits in a chair with a writing pad and pencil reading the 'Miss Myrna' letters to Aibileen, who is taking laundry off a clothes line.

Wind is blowing and the sky is growing dark.

SKEETER

"Dear Miss Myrna, When I'm chopping onions, how do I keep tears out of my eyes?"

AIBILEEN

Shoot, that's easy. You tell her hold a matchstick between her teeth.

Skeeter writes this down.

SKEETER

Is it lit?

Aibileen smiles and shakes her head.

AIBILEEN

No, ma'am.

Commotion begins in Elizabeth's garage.

HILLY (O.S.)

Miss Leefolt said you could start right away. Build it just...

Aibileen spots Hilly walking into the carport with her son, BILLY, 4, perched on her hip.

HILLY

like the bathroom at my house. Let's see.

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

Aibileen tenses but continues her folding. Hilly points to a corner in the Leefolt garage.

HILLY

Right there. That will be nice.

CONTRACTOR

Yes, ma'am.

Thunder cracks. Trees sway wildly in the wind as a storm approaches. Rain begins to fall.

HILLY

Oh, my goodness, we got to run back to the car. Come on, Billy. Bye, Skeeter!

Aibileen and Skeeter watch as Hilly runs back to her car.

Skeeter turns to Aibileen, seizing the moment.

SKEETER
Aibileen. There's somethin' else I
want to write about...But I need
your help.

Skeeter rises. More thunder cracks. Aibileen keeps her head
down to the clothes she is folding.

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

Aibileen grabs a basket, gripping the life out of its handle.

SKEETER
I'd like to do a book of interviews
about working for white families...

Aibileen begins to perspire.

SKEETER
Show what it's like to work for,
say...Elizabeth.

Aibileen steadies herself against a chair.

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

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

AIBILEEN
Other maids?

Aibileen shakes her head and walks towards the house with the
laundry basket. Skeeter gathers her things and chases after
her.

SKEETER
Well, I was hoping to get four or
five. To really show what it's like
in Jackson.

INT. LEEFOLT HOME - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Skeeter follows Aibileen inside.

SKEETER

To show what y'all get paid, and the babies, and the *bathrooms*, the good and the bad.

Bam! The front door slams shut.

INT. LEEFOLT HOME (INTERCUT) - LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME

Elizabeth and her husband, RALEIGH, 25, stand toe to toe.

RALEIGH

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

ELIZABETH

Hilly spoke to the surgeon general. She also said it will add value to our home!

KITCHEN:

Aibileen hears Mae Mobley crying, but she is frozen by the altercation.

RALEIGH (O.C.)

I guess Mae Mobley will just have to go to college in that damn bathroom!

INT. LEEFOLT HOME - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Raleigh storms in the kitchen with Elizabeth on his heels.

ELIZABETH

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

RALEIGH

We don't take orders from the Holbrooks!

Raleigh and Elizabeth are surprised to see Skeeter.

RALEIGH

Skeeter? How you doin'?

SKEETER

Fine.

Mae Mobley begins crying in her bedroom.

RALEIGH
Fix me a sandwich, Aibileen.

Raleigh storms out.

ELIZABETH
Aibileen, Mae Mobley's cryin' her
eyes out!

Aibileen runs off. Elizabeth tries to compose herself.

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

Skeeter gathers her things.

SKEETER
Oh! Sure, sure.

ELIZABETH
And, this Miss Myrna thing isn't
gonna work out with Aibileen. I'm
sorry.

EXT. JACKSON - LATE AFTERNOON

Dark storm clouds loom over the city. A bolt of lightning strikes. The city loses power.

EXT. HOLBROOK HOUSE - LATER AFTERNOON

Rain pours over Hilly's darkened, two-story house. Specks of candle light dance in the windows.

INT. HOLBROOK HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME

Minnie uses a newspaper to fan Missus Walters.

MISSUS WALTERS
You're makin' it hotter flappin'
your arms like that, Minny.

Missus Walters stares out to the swimming pool. The strong winds have brought white caps to the pool's surface.

MISSUS WALTERS
Oh, look how big the waves are,
Minnie. Let's go the beach.

Missus Walters rises and heads toward the dining room window. Minny follows.

MISSUS WALTERS
Run and get Mister Walters. He
loves ridin' these waves. You know
we went to Biloxi on our honeymoon.

MINNY
Yes, Ma'am.

Missus Walter's confusion grows.

MISSUS WALTERS
Are we in Biloxi, Minny?

MINNY
No, Ma'am, we ain't.

Minny lowers Missus Walters into a dining table chair.

MINNY
Why don't you sit down here for a
spell. And then me and you, we'll
go down to the beach in a little
while. How 'bout that?

Hilly plops down in a dining table chair and fans herself.

Missus Walters notices as Minny looks out to the garage bathroom. A patio chair is blown against its door

Minny suddenly begins squirming with discomfort. Minny hesitates. Minny turns to Hilly and gulps.

MINNY
Uh...Miss Hilly?

HILLY
Mm-hm?

MINNY
Never mind.

As Minny turns back to the window, Missus Walters calls out to her.

MISSUS WALTERS
You go on ahead and use the inside
bath, Minny. It's all right.

HILLY

Oh, for crying out loud. It's just a little rain. She can go get an umbrella up in William's study!

Through the window, a large pool umbrella can be seen blowing past.

MISSUS WALTERS

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

Hilly glares at her mother--then looks to Minny.

Boom! Another crash of thunder.

MINNY

I'm just gone get your tea.

INT. HOLBROOK HOUSE - MASTER BATHROOM - SECONDS LATER

Minny sneaks into the master bath and shuts the door. She carefully raises the lid so as not to make any noise.

There's an immediate knock on the door. She freezes.

HILLY (O.C.)

Minny?

Minny stays completely quiet.

INT. HOLBROOK HOUSE (INTERCUT) - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Hilly leans into the bathroom door.

HILLY

Minny, are you in there?

MINNY

Yes, ma'am...

HILLY

And just what are you doing?

Minny's eyes narrow. She flushes the unused toilet. Hilly beats on the door.

Minny slams down the toilet lid to further antagonize Hilly.

HILLY
Get off of my toilet! You are fired,
Minnie Jackson!

EXT. HOLBROOK HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Minnie exits the house into the storm. She walks angrily down the sidewalk through the wind and rain.

Hilly appears at the doorway.

HILLY
Go on!

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

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

AIBILEEN (V.O.)
Eighteen people died in Jackson that
day. Ten white and eight black.
God don't pay no mind to color once
he decide to set a tornado loose.

AIBILEEN
Baby. It's okay. Aibee's here,
honey. Aibee's here.

She kisses Mae Mobley.

MAE MOBLEY
Daddy...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT/EXT. LEEFOLT HOME - BATHROOM/GARAGE (INTERCUT) - DAY

Aibileen struggles to pull her panty-hose back up inside the crude bathroom Hilly had built in the Leefolt garage.

Her knees brush against the door. There is no air conditioning. Sweat glistens on her brow. A small window hugs the ceiling, providing little ventilation.

Elizabeth exits the house with Mae Mobley at her side.

ELIZABETH
Hurry, Aibileen! Mae Mobley's up,
and I'm off to the doctor.

Aibileen reaches behind and flushes the toilet. Hearing the flush, Mae Mobley gets excited and points to the bathroom.

MAE MOBLEY

Aibee bafroom, Momma! Hey, Aibee.

Mae Mobley approaches the bathroom door. Elizabeth grabs her.

ELIZABETH

No, no honey. Promise me you won't go in there.

MAE MOBLEY

Yes, ma'am.

Aibileen emerges from her bathroom as Elizabeth leans over and fixes Mae Mobley's hair. Aibileen picks up Baby Girl.

AIBILEEN

I'm right here, Baby Girl.

Elizabeth heads toward her car.

ELIZABETH

Isn't it so nice to have your own, Aibileen?

AIBILEEN

Yes, Ma'am.

Aibileen watches as Elizabeth gets in her car. Mae Mobley lovingly glides her hand down Aibileen's cheek. Aibileen smiles and kisses her.

MAE MOBLEY

You're my real mama, Aibee.

Aibileen hugs her tightly.

EXT. BUS STOP - MOMENTS LATER

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

A bus pulls up. As the doors open, Minny is the first to step off. She is holding a chocolate pie. Minny is dressed beautifully in church-day attire.

She pretends not to notice Aibileen and Yule May.

YULE MAY
Is that Minny?

AIBILEEN
Minny?

Minny turns with a guilty smile as passengers board behind.

MINNY
Hey, Aibileen.

YULE MAY
Hi, Minny.

Minny ignores Yule May.

MINNY
Uh-hm.

AIBILEEN
Where you headed?

MINNY
I got some business ta tend to. So,
y'all just mind your own!

With that, Minny storms off. Yule May and Aibileen look suspiciously at one another.

YULE MAY
All right, then. Well, Bye!

Minnie briefly throws her hand in the air, never turning.

MINNY
Bye!

YULE MAY
Now, she's mad at me 'cause I got
that job at Miss Hilly's.

AIBILEEN
Don't worry about her. She's always
mad about something.

Yule May's eyes suddenly widen as she indicates someone approaching.

Aibileen turns to find Skeeter walking toward them. She and Aibileen catch eyes. Skeeter waves.

SKEETER
Aibileen!

Aibileen nods nervously, looking at the other domestics.

AIBILEEN

Yes, ma'am. Everything okay?

SKEETER

Oh, yeah, I just wanted to talk to you.

Yule May looks to Aibileen with concern.

AIBILEEN

You got some more "Miss Myrna" questions for me?

SKEETER

Oh no. I just wanted to talk about--

The BUS DRIVER honks the horn. Yule May and others board. Skeeter grabs Aibileen's arm.

SKEETER

We never finished our conversation at Elizabeth's. About the book I want to write.

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

AIBILEEN

Yes, ma'am.

Aibileen watches regretfully as the bus pulls away.

SKEETER

I'd really like to interview you, Aibileen. I know it's scary.

Aibileen slowly turns.

AIBILEEN

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

SKEETER

A book like this has never been written before.

AIBILEEN

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

SKEETER
I promise we'll be careful.

AIBILEEN
This already ain't careful, Miss Skeeter! You not knowing that is what scare me the most. Scare me more than "Jim Crow".

Skeeter tries to hand Aibileen a piece of paper. Aibileen nervously surveys the area. A woman pushing a baby carriage walks by and looks on with suspicion.

SKEETER
Here's my phone number.

Aibileen quickly grabs the paper and shoves it in her pocket.

SKEETER
And my car's here. I could take you home.

AIBILEEN
No, Ma'am.

Aibileen turns and walks away.

AIBILEEN (V.O.)
"No person shall require any white female to nurse in wards or rooms..."

INT. CAPITOL BUILDING - HALL OF GOVERNORS - MOMENTS LATER

Skeeter walks out of the law library into a long hall lined with portraits of Mississippi's past governors.

AIBILEEN (V.O.)
...in which Negro men are placed.

A blue booklet peeks out of her satchel.

EXT. CAPITOL BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

Skeeter heads down the stairs of the Capitol building.

AIBILEEN (V.O.)
Books shall not be interchangeable between the white and colored schools but shall continue to be used by the race first using them...

EXT. CAPITOL BUILDING - LAWN - MOMENTS LATER

Skeeter sits on a bench reading "The Mississippi Code of Conduct for Non-whites".

AIBILEEN (V.O.)
*No colored barber shall serve as a
 barber to white women or girls.*

INT. AIBILEEN'S HOME - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Aibileen sits in front of a mirror and tends to her wig.

AIBILEEN (V.O.)
*Any person printin', publishin' or
 circulating written matter urgin'
 for public acceptance of social
 equality between whites and negroes
 is subject to imprisonment.*

The phone rings.

INT. AIBILEEN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Aibileen enters and reaches for the phone. Next to the phone, Skeeter's phone number is taped to the wall. Aibileen answers.

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

Mিনny is hysterical.

MINNY
 Oh, Aibileen! I went and did it now!

Mিনny wraps a hand up in the phone cord.

MINNY
 I went to Miss Hilly's house this
 afternoon.

Aibileen knows this can't be good.

AIBILEEN
 Why, Minny?!

MINNY
 She's done told every white lady in
 town I'm a thief. Said I stole a
 candelabra. Oh, I got her back.

AIBILEEN
What you did?!

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

EXT. BUS STOP - EARLIER THAT DAY - FLASHBACK

Minnie storms away from the bus stop holding the chocolate pie leaving Aibileen and Yule May behind her in the distance.

MINNIE (V.O.)
I cain't tell! I ain't tellin'
nobody! I done a terrible awful
thing to that woman.

EXT. HOLBROOK HOUSE - EARLIER THAT DAY - FLASHBACK

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

MINNIE (V.O.)
And now she knows what I done! But
she got what she deserve, Aibileen.

Hilly answers the door and snarls at Minnie. Minnie presents the pie and says "I am sorry." Hilly waves Minnie inside.

END FLASHBACK:

INT. MINNIE'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

MINNIE
But now I ain't gone never get no
job again. Oh, Lord, Leroy gone
kill me.

Minnie hears something and lowers the phone.

MINNIE
Leroy?

LEROY (O.C.)
What you done did now, Minnie?

Minnie slides down against a wall as a frying pan is thrown at her.

INT. AIBILEEN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Aibileen listens helpless on the phone.

LEROY (O.S.)
Get off that phone, woman!

MINNY (O.S.)
Leroy, please!

AIBILEEN
Minnie? Minny!

LEROY (O.S.)
Come here!

Aibileen hangs up the phone. Her breath becomes heavy as she glances at Skeeter's number taped on the wall.

EXT. BAPTIST CHURCH - MORNING

Cars fill the lot of a quaint, white, country church. PREACHER GREEN can be heard inside.

PREACHER GREEN (O.C.)
Please open your Bibles to Exodus,
chapter four, verse ten. God having
asked Moses to free the
Israelites...

INT. BAPTIST CHURCH - MORNING

A congregation of two hundred listens intently. A large choir faces them.

Aibileen sits in the congregation.

PREACHER GREEN
Moses answered. "Oh, my Lord, I am
not eloquent. I am slow of speech
and slow of tongue." See, courage
isn't just about being brave.

CONGREGATION
Amen!

PREACHER GREEN
Courage is daring to do what is
right, in spite of the weakness of
our flesh. And God tells us,
commands us, compels us to love.
Amen.

He motions for the choir to stand.

CONGREGATION

Amen.

On Minny's children: LEROY JR., KINDRA and SUGAR. Sugar elbows Kindra. Minny, standing in the choir, gestures at her kids, cautioning them to behave.

PREACHER GREEN

See, love, as exemplified by our Lord Jesus Christ, is to be prepared to put yourself in harm's way for your fellow man. And by your fellow man, I mean your brother, your sister, your neighbor, your friend and your enemy.

Preacher Green signals a pianist to begin playing. The choir begins swaying with the music.

PREACHER GREEN

If you can love your enemy, you already have the victory.

ON AIBILEEN

PREACHER GREEN

Let's stand. All right.

The congregants around Aibileen stand and begin to clap in time to the music. Aibileen remains seated, deep in thought.

INT. AIBILEEN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN/LIVING ROOM - DUSK

There is a knock at the kitchen door. Aibileen quickly opens it and waves Skeeter inside.

AIBILEEN

Quick. Come in quick.

SKEETER

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

AIBILEEN

Got dropped two streets over?

Skeeter nods as Aibileen escorts her into the living room. Skeeter sits down on the sofa. Aibileen stands.

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

SKEETER

I know now that it's against the law
what we're doin'.

Skeeter stares Aibileen up and down. Aibileen self-consciously flattens out her dress.

SKEETER

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

AIBILEEN

Thank you.

On the coffee table sits a tray with a teapot, two cups that don't match and cookies resting on a plate.

As Aibileen pours the tea, her hand shakes. Some tea spills in the saucer and she wipes it up. Skeeter takes the cup.

AIBILEEN

I ain't never had no white person in
my house before.

Aibileen gathers herself.

AIBILEEN

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

SKEETER

This isn't about me. It doesn't
matter how I feel.

Aibileen sits on the arm of an arm chair.

AIBILEEN

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

SKEETER

Do you have other maids interested?

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

AIBILEEN

That gone be hard.

SKEETER

What about Minny?

AIBILEEN

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

INT. AIBILEEN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

We continue with the interview that began in scene one. Skeeter sits at the kitchen table taking notes.

SKEETER

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

Aibileen stands near the sink. She glances sadly up to the picture of Treelore.

AIBILEEN

It feel...Uh.

SKEETER

Is that your son?

Aibileen puts some spoons in a drying rack, then sits down at the table opposite Skeeter.

AIBILEEN

Yes, ma'am. Can we move on to the next question?

SKEETER

You know, Aibileen, you don't have to call me "ma'am." Not here.

Aibileen nods. Skeeter stares at her list of questions.

SKEETER

Do you want to talk about the bathroom? Or, anything about Miss Leefolt? How she pays you, or has she ever yelled at you in front of Mae Mobley?

AIBILEEN

I thought I might write my stories down and read 'em to you. It no different than writing down my prayers.

SKEETER

Okay. Sure.

Aibileen stands, crosses to a small table and picks up a journal. She takes out her glasses and unfolds them.

AIBILEEN

I don't say my prayers out loud.
Find I can get my point across a lot
better writing them down. I write
an hour, sometimes two every night.

Skeeter nods.

AIBILEEN

And after my prayers last night, I
got some stories down too.

SKEETER

Go ahead.

Aibileen puts on her glasses, opens her notebook and reads, nervously.

AIBILEEN

My first white baby to ever look
after was named Alton Carrington
Speers. It was 1925, and I'd just
turned fourteen. I dropped out of
school to help Momma with the bills.
Alton's momma died a lung disease.

(to Skeeter)

I loved that baby, and he loved me.
That's when I learned I could make
children feel proud of they self.
Alton used to always be asking me
how come I's black. It just ate him
up. Then one time I told him it
'cause I drank too much coffee.

Aibileen laughs as does Skeeter.

AIBILEEN

You should have seen his face.

Aibileen and Skeeter's laughter fades in realization of the line they have just crossed.

INT. AIBILEEN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - LATER THAT DAY

Skeeter has just finished her first session with Aibileen. She places her notebook inside her satchel.

SKEETER

This was just so great. You have no idea how much I appreciate your doing this with me. What changed your mind?

AIBILEEN

God. And Miss Hilly Holbrook.

INT. HOLBROOK HOUSE - DINING ROOM - DAY

Hilly reads the paper at the breakfast table, her hair set in pin curls. Her husband WILLIAM, dressed for work, also reads the paper.

Yule May clears breakfast dishes. She starts to leave but stops herself. With something to say, she sets a plate down on the table and wrings her hands nervously.

YULE MAY

Miss Hilly, I would like to ask you and Mister William something.

Both Hilly and William put their reading down.

YULE MAY

My twin boys graduated high school, both on the honor roll...Well, me and my husband, we been saving for years to send them to Tougaloo. We short about seventy-five dollars on one of the tuitions.

William conspicuously checks the time on his wristwatch and quickly stands.

WILLIAM

Whoo! I am late. I gotta get goin'.

He kisses Hilly and heads out of the room, leaving Yule May alone with Hilly.

WILLIAM (O.S.)

See you tonight, honey.

HILLY

Okay.
(to Yule May)
Go on.

YULE MAY

Well, now...We're faced with having to choose. Which son can go...if we don't find all the money.

Hilly draws in a deep breath as does Yule May.

YULE MAY

Would you consider givin' us a loan? I'll...I'll work everyday for free 'til it was paid off.

HILLY

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

YULE MAY

Yes, ma'am.

Yule May turns to leave.

HILLY

As a Christian, I'm doin' you a favor.

Yule May turns, her eyes widen with hope.

HILLY

God doesn't give charity to those who are well and able. You need to come up with this money on your own. 'Kay?

YULE MAY

Yes, Ma'am.

Hilly raises the paper up to her face to resume reading.

HILLY

You'll thank me one day.

EXT. MINNY'S HOUSE - DAY

Minny and Sugar exit their house and walk down the street. Both wear maid uniforms. The streets and lawns are crowded with other women, in uniform, heading toward the bus stop.

MINNY

You cooking white food, you taste it with a different spoon. They see you put the tastin' spoon back in the pot, might as well throw it all out. Spoon, too.

(MORE)

MINNY (CONT'D)

And you use the same cup, same fork,
same plate every day. And you put
it up in the cabinet. You tell that
white woman that's where you gone
keep it from now on out. Don't do it
and see what happens.

(to women going to work)
Mornin', ladies.

EXT. MINNY'S NEIGHBORHOOD - BUS STOP - DAY

Mিনny and Sugar approach two waiting buses.

MINNY

And when you're servin' white folks
coffee, you set it down in front of
'em. Don't hand it to them, because
your hands can't touch. And don't
hit on their children. White folks
like to do they own spanking.

Mিনny stops Sugar.

MINNY

And, last thing. Come here.

Sugar turns her head away. Minny grabs her face and forces
her to look at her.

MINNY

Look at me. No sass-mouthin'! No
sass-mouthin'. I mean it.

Minnie smooths Sugar's clothes.

MINNY

Give your momma a kiss.

Mিনny kisses Sugar on the cheek and watches as she boards the
first bus with other domestics.

AIBILEEN (V.O.)

Leroy made Sugar quit school to help
him with the bills. And every day
Mিনny went without a job might have
been a day Leroy took her from our
world.

Mিনny wipes a tear from her eye and boards the second bus.

EXT. FOOTE ESTATE - LATER

Minnie approaches the Foote estate, examines it apprehensively.

AIBILEEN (V.O.)
 But I knew... I knew the only white
 lady Miss Hilly hadn't gotten to
 with her lies.

EXT. FOOTE ESTATE - FRONT PORCH - MOMENTS LATER

In the distance, Celia Foote emerges barefoot from the front door. She waves excitedly at Minny.

CELIA
 Hi! Hey! Come on!

Minnie waves back as she resumes walking toward the house.

MINNY
 (under her breath)
 No sass-mouthin', Minny Jackson, no
 sass mouthin'...

INT. FOOTE ESTATE - FOYER - MOMENTS LATER

Celia Foote brings Minny inside. Celia is covered in tight pink clothes.

Celia sits down on a chair and begins to put on her shoes. There's a smudge of flour on her cheek.

CELIA
 Aibileen said you'd be on time. I'm
 Celia Rae Foote.

MINNY
 I'm Minny Jackson.
 (indicating flour)
 You cookin' somethin'?

Celia wipes flour from her cheek.

CELIA
 One of those upside-down cakes from
 the magazine. It ain't workin' out
 too good.

Celia jumps up and grabs Minny's arm.

CELIA
Come on. Let's get you a cold Coca-Cola.

Minnie follows her to the kitchen.

INT. FOOTE ESTATE - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Minnie enters behind Celia gawking at an upside down cake massacre. Flour eggs and batter cover a kitchen table and spill onto the floor.

CELIA
This here's the kitchen!

MINNIE
What in the hell-

Celia returns from the fridge with two Coca-Cola bottles.

CELIA
(embarrassed)
I guess I got some learnin' to do.

MINNIE
You sure do.

INT. FOOTE ESTATE - DINING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

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

CELIA
Johnny's grandmomma left him this house when she died and then Johnny's momma wouldn't let me change a thing. But if I had my way, this place would have wall to wall white carpet with gold trim. None of this old stuff.

EXT. FOOTE ESTATE - LIBRARY - DAY

Celia and Minnie exit a detached library and head back toward the main house.

CELIA
We got five bedrooms and bathrooms back in the main house. Then the pool house has two more beds and baths.

MINNY

When y'all gone have some chillin',
start fillin' up all those beds?

Celia swallows hard and turns to Minny. She places her hand on her stomach.

CELIA

I'm pregnant now.

Minny steps back and surveys Celia.

MINNY

Gone be eatin' for two. Double the
cookin'.

CELIA

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

Minny stops and puts her hand on her hip.

MINNY

Now, uh, when you hear me say I
don't wanna clean this house?

CELIA

What? So...You'll do it?!

Celia jumps up and down with joy, splashing Coke out of the bottle she holds. She hugs Minny.

MINNY

Oh. No huggin', now. No huggin'.

CELIA

Oh. Sorry. This is the first time
I've hired a maid.

Celia laughs, puts a hand on Minny's back and pushes her toward the house.

CELIA

Come on.

INT. FOOTE ESTATE - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Celia and Minny enter the living room. Celia crosses the room toward the kitchen.

CELIA
You hungry?

MINNY
No, ma'am. Now hold on a minute.
We gots to talk about some things
first.

CELIA
Oh.

MINNY
I work Sunday through Friday.

CELIA
No, you can't work at all on
weekends.

MINNY
Okay. Well, what time you want me
here?

CELIA
After nine, and you gotta leave
before four.

MINNY
Okay. Now what your husband say you
can pay?

Celia looks away.

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

MINNY
And what's Mr. Johnny gone do when
he come home and finds a colored
woman in his house?

CELIA
It's not like I'd be fibbing. I just
want him to think I can do this on
my own... I really need a maid.

Minny lets out a big breath.

MINNY
I'll be here tomorrow mornin' 'bout
nine-fifteen.

CELIA
Great.

Minnie begins sniffing the air.

MINNIE

Miss Celia, I think you done burnt
up yo' cake.

Celia rises from her chair and sniffs the air.

CELIA

Doggone it!

Celia runs to the kitchen.

EXT. JUNIOR LEAGUE HEADQUARTERS - MORNING

Two black men cut the lawn of the Junior League headquarters.

HILLY (O.C.)

Okay, let's see. What's first up on
the agenda?

INT. JUNIOR LEAGUE HEADQUARTERS - MORNING

Hilly stands at a podium as the members of the Junior League
take their seats. Half the girls are pregnant. Most of them
drink TAB and smoke cigarettes.

HILLY

We're running behind on our "coat
drive," girls. Hurry up and clean
out those closets. Our Christmas
Benefit, however, is right on
schedule.

Hilly scans the crowd.

HILLY (CONT'D)

Mary Beth?

Hilly finds Mary Beth Caldwell and nods for her to stand.
Mary Beth stands.

MARY BETH

Well, thanks to y'all, I can
announce that we've already filled
every raffle slot for baked goods.

The girls applaud, turning to each other with praise.

HILLY
 (to the room)
 Think we can put a dent in African
 Children's hunger this year?!

MARY BETH
 A big dent!

More applause. Hilly signals for Mary Beth to sit down. She does.

HILLY
 Now, I just found out the Surgeon
 General has reviewed *The Home Health
 Sanitation Initiative* that I
 drafted.

Some members nod in approval.

HILLY
 And he just passed it along to
 Governor Barnett!

Even more applause.

ON SKEETER, who remains stone-faced.

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

Everyone turns to Skeeter. Elizabeth turns to Skeeter in a panic.

ELIZABETH
 I gave that to you myself!

Skeeter glances at the initiative tucked in her satchel.

HILLY
 Would you please stand, Skeeter?

As Skeeter rises, several women shake their heads.

SKEETER
 I'll have it in there real soon.

Hilly raises a disdainful eyebrow as Skeeter sits back into her seat.

HILLY
 Great!

INT. BRENT'S PHARMACY AND SODA FOUNTAIN - LATER THAT DAY

Skeeter races into Brent's busy soda fountain area. She passes a separate counter where several BLACK DOMESTICS, in uniform, are picking up to-go orders.

Hilly and Elizabeth await Skeeter's arrival in a booth. Skeeter sits next to Elizabeth and across from Hilly.

SKEETER

Sorry I'm late.

Hilly shakes her head with little emotion. Elizabeth slides a coke float in front of Skeeter.

SKEETER

Thanks.

Skeeter slowly looks to Hilly.

SKEETER

Hilly, I really am sorry about the newsletter. It's just with Momma being sick and all.

HILLY

Oh, it's fine.

A waiter, HENRY, black, early 30s, approaches the table.

HENRY

I made you an egg and olive on rye, Miss Skeeter.

Skeeter smiles.

SKEETER

Oh, thank you, Henry. You remembered.

HENRY

You're welcome.

Henry walks away. Hilly and Elizabeth smile at Skeeter devilishly.

ELIZABETH

Oh, Hilly, tell her! I can hardly stand it!

Hilly erupts with excitement.

HILLY

He's coming! Oh, Skeeter, Stuart's definitely coming this time. Next Saturday week.

SKEETER

Well, he's cancelled twice before. So don't you think maybe that's a sign?

ELIZABETH

Don't you dare say that!

SKEETER

You know I'm not gonna be his type.

Hilly grabs Skeeter by the shoulders.

HILLY

Damnit, Skeeter, I'm not going to let you miss out on this just because your mother convinced you you're not good enough for somebody like him.

Elizabeth pokes Skeeter in her side.

ELIZABETH

Saturday night!

EXT. HOLBROOK HOUSE - DAY

A YARD MAN, black, mows the Holbrook lawn.

INT. HOLBROOK HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

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

Noticing something on the floor, Yule May leans over. She slowly rises, holding a SMALL RUBY RING. Years of dust and hair blanket the pitiful gem set in ten karat gold.

Yule May breathes heavily. She shoves the ring into her uniform pocket.

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

Aibileen puts Mae Mobley down on a changing table.

AIBILEEN

Good morning. Good morning, Baby Girl.

As Aibileen removes the diaper she grows sorrowful at the sight of Mae Mobley's bottom, inflamed with diaper rash.

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

Skeeter writes in her note pad. Aibileen is more casually dressed than before.

AIBILEEN

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

Skeeter nods.

AIBILEEN

Baby girl still gotta wear a diaper when she sleep at night. And, it don't get changed 'til I get there in the morning. That's 'bout ten hours she gotta sleep in her mess. Now Missus Leefolt pregnant with her second baby. And, Lord, I pray this child turn out good. It a lonely road if a momma don't think they child is pretty.

SKEETER

That's very true.

AIBILEEN

Miss Leefolt should not be having babies.

Skeeter lifts her head from her pad in response to Aibileen's bold statement.

AIBILEEN

Write that down.

Skeeter nods and writes down what Aibileen has said. The faint sound of sirens is heard in the distance.

AIBILEEN

Treelore would like me doing this. He always said we gonna have a writer in the family one day. Always thought it was gonna be him. Maybe it gonna be me.

Just then, Minny is heard approaching Aibileen's house outside.

MINNY (O.C.)
Aibileen! Aibileen!

Minny barges through the kitchen door.

MINNY
They done set off a bomb in Medgar
Evers' carport.

Minny stops cold in her tracks at the sight of Skeeter. Her face hardens. She turns to Aibileen.

MINNY (V.O.)
Yule May told me what y'all was up
to. I didn't wanna believe it.

Aibileen looks to the floor. Minny scowls at Skeeter.

MINNY
And just what makes you think
colored people need your help? Why
do you care?

AIBILEEN
Minny.

MINNY
(to Skeeter)
Maybe you just want to get Aibileen
in trouble.

More sirens are heard coming from other directions. Skeeter is petrified. Her face reddens.

SKEETER
No. I want to show her
perspective...so people might
understand what it's like from your
side.

MINNY
Well it's a real Fourth of July
picnic. It's what we dream a doing
all weekend long, get back in they
house to polish the silver. And we
just love not makin' minimum wage or
gettin' Social Security.

Minny makes a point to make eye contact with Aibileen.

MINNY

And how we love they children when they little and then they turn out just like they mommas.

SKEETER

I know. So maybe things can change.

MINNY

What law's gonna say you gotta be nice to your maid?

AIBILEEN

You don't have to do this, Minny.

MINNY

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

Minny storms out the back door. Aibileen turns to Skeeter.

AIBILEEN

And that's a good mood.

EXT. AIBILEEN'S HOUSE - BACK YARD - CONTINUOUS

Minny gestures and mumbles to herself. She stops suddenly, spins around, and heads back in the house.

INT. AIBILEEN'S HOME - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Minny storms back in the kitchen. She stands above Aibileen.

MINNY

All right...I'm gone do it. I just want to make sure she understand this ain't no game we playin' here.

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

MINNY

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

Still trembling, Skeeter slides her chair from the table. She sits speechless, staring at Minny.

MINNY

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

SKEETER

Oh! Uh, let's begin with, uh, with where you were born.

Minnie picks up a piece of fried chicken and takes a bite.

MINNY

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

INT. AIBILEEN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - HOURS LATER

Skeeter and Minny now stand together at the stove as Minny gives a cooking lesson. Aibileen takes notes.

MINNY

I put the green beans in first, then I get on the pork chops so I can get started on the corn bread.

AIBILEEN (V.O.)

Once Minny got to talking 'bout food, she liked to never stop. And when she got to talking about the white ladies, it took all night.

EXT. AIBILEEN'S HOUSE - MORNING

The first signs of morning sunshine on Aibileen's house.

INT. AIBILEEN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - SUNRISE

Aibileen stands over her stove, frying bacon and eggs. Skeeter and Minny are now seated at the table, wearing the same clothes as the night before. Minny is still going strong.

MINNY

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

Minnie and Aibileen laugh.

MINNY

Ain't that right, Aibileen?

Aibileen nods and laughs harder. Minny has a sudden realization.

MINNY

We gots to get more maids!

Minny stands. Skeeter's eyes widen with hope.

AIBILEEN

It hard. You go try and see.

MINNY

Okay, I will.

Mind racing, Minny flies out the door without a word. Aibileen turns to Skeeter.

AIBILEEN

We gone and done it now.

EXT. PHELAN HOME - BACK STAIRS - LATER THAT MORNING

Charlotte pokes her head out of the kitchen's screened door. She shouts up the exterior porch stairs.

CHARLOTTE

Skeeter. Get down here. Something just arrived from New York for you!

Skeeter quickly emerges at the top of the stairs and runs down the stairs into the kitchen.

INT. PHELAN HOME - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Skeeter finds her mother standing above a big opened box resting on the kitchen table.

Charlotte, now in an auburn wig, takes a drag from a cigarette, then lifts up a silver machine complete with power cord and rubber hose.

SKEETER

What is that?!

CHARLOTTE

The Shinolator! All the way from New York City. I'm a good mother. Come on. Sit down.

INT. PHELAN HOME - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Skeeter sits with a towel draped across her shoulders as Charlotte puts large curlers and the Shinolator solution in Skeeter's hair.

Pascagoula cooks behind them.

CHARLOTTE

The whole system cost eleven
dollars! It even smells expensive.
You're going to look beautiful on
your date tonight.

SKEETER

I can feel the hope in your fingers.

INT. PHELAN HOME - SKEETER'S BEDROOM - LATER

The Shinolator was a success. Skeeter's hair is straight, silky and beautiful. Skeeter gazes into the mirror.

SKEETER

Holy shit.

CHARLOTTE

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

SKEETER

Oh my God.

Charlotte looks down to the huarache shoes on Skeeter's feet and begins forcibly removing them.

CHARLOTTE

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

SKEETER

Can I take the Cadillac?

CHARLOTTE

We promised the Cadillac to Carlton
and Rebecca tonight. So William's
cousin will just have to come pick
you up himself.

SKEETER

I'll take the truck.

CHARLOTTE

It's hooked to the motor grader.

SKEETER
I'll drive slow.

EXT. PHELAN HOME - FIELD - LATER THAT AFTERNOON

Skeeter pulls away in a rusted 1941 Chevy farm truck with a huge road grader attached. Charlotte runs next to the truck.

CHARLOTTE
Skeeter! Skeeter! Now remember, no gentleman wants to spend the evening with a sourpuss. Don't mope! Smile!

Skeeter floors it. Charlotte runs faster.

CHARLOTTE
And for heaven's sake, don't sit like some squaw Indian. Cross your ankles!

Skeeter pulls away from her mother.

CHARLOTTE
I love you!

Skeeter's truck disappears within a cloud of dust

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - AERIAL SHOT - MOMENTS LATER

Skeeter speeds across a bridge pulling the grader behind her.

INT. HOLBROOK HOUSE - PARLOR - LATER THAT NIGHT - DUSK

Hilly, her husband William, and Skeeter's date, STUART WHITWORTH, 25, drink highballs as Yule May hovers.

Hilly checks her watch.

HILLY
Stuart, she'll be here any minute.

The front door flies open. Skeeter enters completely out of breath and sweaty. Her HAIR HAS TRIPLED IN SIZE.

SKEETER
Hey.

Hilly gasps and rushes to her.

HILLY

Skeeter!

William and Stuart stand. Hilly escorts Skeeter past the men.

HILLY

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

YULE MAY

Yes, ma'am.

Yule May runs off. Hilly pulls Skeeter down the hall. William and Stuart drain their drinks.

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

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

The room buzzes with Jackson's elite, all trying to be noticed. A Frankie Avalon tune plays in the background.

Stuart finishes the drink he's holding and motions to a waiter for another.

STUART

(to Skeeter)

You want a drink?

SKEETER

Just water, please.

Stuart grows annoyed with Skeeter's answer.

STUART

(to waiter)

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

SKEETER

You sure you don't want to just make it the whole bottle and a straw?

Hilly spots someone at the front of the restaurant. She jumps up and grabs William's arm.

HILLY

Honey, there's the Lieutenant Governor. Let's go say "hi".

Hilly pulls William away and they approach the Lieutenant Governor and his party.

Stuart finally turns to Skeeter.

STUART
(flatly)
So... What do you do with your time?
Do you work?

The waiter returns with Stuart's drink and the water backs.

SKEETER
I write... But right now I am
writing a domestic maintenance
column for the Jackson Journal.

Stuart smirks, taking a huge sip of his drink.

STUART
You mean housekeepin'?

Skeeter nods and grabs her water.

STUART
Jesus, I can't think of anything
worse than reading a cleanin'
column. Except for maybe writin'
one.

SKEETER
Well, I can. Working with a bunch
of greasy, stinky men in the middle
of the ocean.

Stuart laughs, somewhat impressed. He leans in to Skeeter.

STUART
It sounds to me like a ploy to find
a husband? You becoming an expert
on keeping house?

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

Skeeter fumes.

STUART
Isn't that what all you girls from
Ole Miss major in? Professional
husband hunting?

Hilly and William return to the table and sit.

HILLY
Who is hungry?

SKEETER
(To Stuart)
I'm sorry, but were you dropped on
your head as an infant? Or were you
just born stupid?

Hilly's smile disappears. Skeeter drops her napkin on the table, stands, and stalks out of the restaurant.

Stuart laughs and points at William, trying to lure him in on the fun. William shakes his head sheepishly and turns away before Hilly can see.

EXT. FOOTE ESTATE - BACKYARD - CHICKEN COOP - DAY

Minnie watches from the window as Celia carries a chicken upside down by its feet towards an axe resting on a stump.

Minnie grimaces as Celia positions the bird and grabs the axe.

INT. FOOTE ESTATE - KITCHEN - LATER THAT DAY

Celia and Minny stand at a fried chicken assembly line.

MINNY
What can you cook?

Minnie dips pieces of chicken in an egg wash, then drops them in a paper bag. A puff of flour rises out of the bag. Celia searches her brain for the right answer.

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

Minnie bursts out laughing.

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

Minnie holds up a can of Crisco.

MINNY
It's this. The most important
invention since they put mayonnaise
in a jar.

Mিনny scoops out a mound of Crisco with a spoon.

MINNYY

Got gum in your hair? Got a squeaky door hinge? Crisco.

Mিনny drops the Crisco into a hot skillet.

CELIA

How pretty. Looks like frosting.

MINNYY (V.O.)

Got bags under your eyes? Wanna soften your husband's scaly feet? Crisco. But it's best for fryin' chicken. And fryin' chicken makes you feel better about life. At least me, anyway. Mmm. I love me some fried chicken.

Mিনny hands the bag to Celia.

MINNYY

Shake that.

Celia starts shaking the bag wildly. She laughs.

CELIA

This is so much fun!

Mিনnie takes the bag away from Celia.

MINNYY

All right, all right. The chicken already dead, Miss Celia.

Mিনny peeks into the bag.

MINNYY

Yep. He dead.

INT. FOOTE ESTATE - KITCHEN - LATER THAT DAY

Mিনny sits alone at a table for two by a window. She unfolds her napkin and places it over her lap. Just as she's about to bite into a crispy chicken wing, Celia enters from the dining room with her plate.

CELIA

There you are.

She sits at Minny's table.

CELIA
I'm starved. It looks so good!

MINNY
We done been over this, Miss Celia.
You supposed to eat in the dinin'
room. That how it work.

Mিনny grabs Celia's plate.

MINNY
Here, let me take your plate back--

CELIA
No! I'm fine right here, Minny.

Mিনny sits back down with a sigh. Celia sits, sinks her teeth into one of the tastiest chicken legs she's ever had. She gasps.

MINNY
What?

CELIA
I just want you to know...I'm real grateful you're here.

MINNY
You gots plenty more to be grateful for than me. And look, now I ain't messin' around no more. Mister Johnny gone catch me here and shoot me dead right here on this no-wax floor! You gots to tell him. Ain't he wondering how the cookin's so good?

CELIA FOOTE
You're right. Maybe we ought to burn the chicken a little.

Mিনny lowers her piece of chicken and looks directly into Celia's eyes.

MINNY
Mিনny don't burn chicken.

INT. MISS STEIN'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NEW YORK - NIGHT

Miss Stein sits alone in bed. Work papers are scattered all around her. She discusses Aibileen and Minny's stories with Skeeter on the phone.

MISS STEIN
I like this "Sarah Ross." She
testifies without complaining too
much.

INT- AIBILEEN'S HOME (INTERCUT) - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Skeeter nods rapidly. Aibileen and Minny sit at the kitchen
table listening in.

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

SKEETER
So...you liked it?

MISS STEIN
Eugenia, Martin Luther King just
invited the country to march with
him in D.C. in August. This many
Negroes and whites haven't worked
together since *Gone with the Wind*.
How many stories have you recorded
thus far?

SKEETER
The ones you've read.

MISS STEIN
Two domestics?! That all?

SKEETER
I'm real close to getting more
interviews.

MISS STEIN
(big sigh)
Don't send me *anything* more until
you do have more maids.

SKEETER
Yes, Ma'am. How, how many more?

MISS STEIN
I don't know. At least a dozen.
And my advice is to write it and
write it fast before this whole
civil rights thing blows over. Now
good night to you, Miss Phelan.

INT. AIBILEEN'S KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Skeeter hangs up the phone and sits down at the kitchen table with Minny and Aibileen.

SKEETER

We need a dozen more.

MINNY

Me and Aibileen done asked everbody we know. Thirty-one maids. They all too scared, think we crazy...

SKEETER

Well if we don't get more, we're not getting published.

MINNY

I gots plenty a stories, Miss Skeeter. Just write 'em down and invent the maid that said it. You're already making up names. Just make up the maids, too.

SKEETER

We're not gonna do that. That would be wrong.

AIBILEEN

Don't give up on this, Miss Skeeter.

Aibileen's breath becomes heavy.

SKEETER

It wouldn't be real.

AIBILEEN

They killed my son.

Skeeter looks up in shock. Minny tries to console Aibileen.

AIBILEEN

He fell carrying two by fours at the mill. Truck run over him, crushed his lungs.

MINNY

Aibileen...

AIBILEEN

That white foreman threw his body on the back of a truck. Drove to the colored hospital and dumped him there and honked the horn.

(MORE)

AIBILEEN (CONT'D)

There was nothin' they could do...so I brought my baby home. Laid him down on that sofa right there. He died right in front of me. Just twenty-four years old, Miss Skeeter. Best part of a person's life. Anniversary of his death come every year and I can't breathe. But to y'all it's just another day of bridge.

Skeeter reaches out to Aibileen.

AIBILEEN

You stop this, everything I wrote, he wrote... everything he was...gone die with him.

Aibileen rises and quickly leaves the room.

EXT. HOLBROOK HOUSE - BACK YARD - LATER THAT DAY

A BOY slides down a water slide into the Holbrook pool.

HILLY (O.C.)

I'm just honored to be hosting Elizabeth's shower.

Hilly, the bridge girls and other attendees eat lunch at three separate tables in close proximity.

HILLY

And just, doesn't she look glowing, everybody? Yes, she does!

Each table seats six and is covered in white linens and Hilly's best silver.

HILLY

Honey, you hold on to it to the bitter end, you hear, now?

ELIZABETH

I'll try.

HILLY

Well, congratulations.

Aibileen has come along to aid Yule May with Elizabeth's baby shower. Aibileen serves Hilly's table while Yule May makes iced tea.

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

MAE MOBLEY

I'm hungry, Momma.

Elizabeth turns to Mae Mobley but never gets up.

ELIZABETH

She's always hungry.

All the women laugh except for Skeeter. Skeeter scowls.

SKEETER

You know she can hear you,
Elizabeth?

Elizabeth lowers her iced tea and looks away. Aibileen kneels down to Mae Mobley.

AIBILEEN

I'll cut you a piece of cake, Baby.

Hilly looks quizzically to Skeeter's satchel. She sees the pamphlet of Mississippi laws sticking out of the side of the satchel.

HILLY

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

Aibileen and Skeeter instinctively lock eyes for a moment. Hilly immediately sees this.

HILLY

Nice to have your own, isn't it,
Aibileen?

AIBILEEN

Yes, Ma'am. And I thank you.

HILLY

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

SKEETER

Well, certainly not in Mississippi.
Birthplace of modern day government.

INT. HOLBROOK HOUSE - KITCHEN - LATER THAT DAY

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

YULE MAY

Oh hey, Miss Skeeter. Can I get you something?

SKEETER

No, thanks. Yule May, I wanted to talk to you about something.

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

YULE MAY

I already know what you're gonna ask, Miss Skeeter. Minny and Aibileen already did. I'm trying to get my boys off to college. It's worthwhile what y'all doin', but my boys are worth more.

Hilly enters the kitchen carrying Billy. She stops behind Skeeter, suspicious.

SKEETER

I understand.

HILLY

What do you "understand", Skeeter?

SKEETER

Ah...Yule May was just saying how excited she was that her boys are gonna go off to college.

HILLY

(to Yule May)

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

SKEETER

Of course not!

Yule May drops her dish towel in the sink and approaches Hilly.

YULE MAY

I'm gonna put Billy down for his nap. Excuse me.

Hilly kisses Billy. Yule May takes Billy from Hilly and exits. Hilly turns to Skeeter.

HILLY

Skeeter, are you intentionally not putting my initiative in the newsletter?

SKEETER

No, no, not at all. I've just been really busy with Momma.

HILLY

I know. I know, you must be so worried about your mother, but, um...

Hilly reveals that she's been holding the pamphlet of Mississippi race laws that were in Skeeter's satchel.

HILLY

...I'm worried about you. Readin' *this* stuff? Believe it or not, there are real racists in this town! If the wrong person caught you with anything like that you'd be in serious trouble.

Skeeter snatches the booklet from Hilly.

SKEETER

Well, I'll be on the lookout.

HILLY

Put my initiative in the newsletter. 'Kay?

INT. PHELAN HOME - SKEETER'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Skeeter types feverishly while smoking a cigarette. Keys type out: CHARITY DRIVE - Come by the Holbrooks' and drop off your old coats.

Skeeter stops typing and looks to a framed picture of her and Hilly in college during happier times. She is lost in thought for a moment...she then grabs the picture and puts it in her desk drawer.

Then she smiles devilishly as she backs up several spaces and reaches for LIQUID PAPER. With two strokes she paints over the word "coats".

INT. PHELAN HOME - SKEETER'S BEDROOM - NEXT MORNING

Having pulled an "all-nighter," Skeeter naps in her room. Charlotte suddenly bursts into the room, stuck somewhere between panic and joy.

CHARLOTTE
Skeeter! Get up!

SKEETER
What?!

CHARLOTTE
We got to get dressed.

SKEETER
What's wrong?

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

Charlotte rushes to Skeeter's closet and pulls out a dress.

SKEETER
Oh, God. Oh, mother, you would not
like him. Trust me. He's a drunken
asshole.

CHARLOTTE
Love and hate are two horns on the
same goat, Eugenia. And you need a
goat! Put that on. Hurry!

EXT. PHELAN HOME - DAY

Charlotte stands on her balcony watering plants, but her attention is focused on Skeeter and Stuart. The stream of water misses the plants and spills everywhere.

EXT. PHELAN HOME - BACK YARD - WILLOW TREE - MOMENTS LATER

Skeeter and Stuart sit on the bench beneath the willow tree.

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

SKEETER
Who sent you? William or Hilly?

STUART

Neither.

Skeeter shoots Stuart a look.

STUART

Okay, Hilly. But, I wanted to come. I was rude, and I've been thinking about it a lot.

SKEETER

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

STUART

Goddammit!

He stands and fixes his tie.

STUART

I told Hilly I wasn't ready to go out on any date, all right? Wasn't even close to ready.

Stuart shoves his hands in his pockets like a boy. Skeeter turns to the balcony and sees her mother pretending to prune a plant.

STUART

I was engaged last year. She ended it.

SKEETER

I'm sure she did.

STUART

It's not like that. I'm not always a jerk. Anyway, we'd been dating since we were fifteen. You know how it is.

SKEETER

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

STUART

Ever?

SKEETER

Ever.

Stuart chuckles.

STUART

Well, that must be it then.

SKEETER

What?!

STUART

Skeeter, I've never met a woman that says exactly what she's thinking.

SKEETER

Well, I've got plenty to say.

STUART

Yeah, I'll bet you do. You make me laugh...and smile. Would you a...would you like to come have dinner with me? We could talk. I could actually listen to you this time.

SKEETER

I can't think of anything worse.

Stuart looks down.

STUART

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

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

Skeeter looks up to the Charlotte-free balcony and shouts out to Stuart.

SKEETER

Just give me a minute!

Stuart turns.

SKEETER

Let me get my sweater.

INT. MAYFLOWER CAFE - LATER THAT NIGHT

Skeeter and Stuart sit in a booth of a cafe in front of a plate of raw oysters.

Skeeter dips a cracker in ketchup.

STUART
Not a big fan of oysters, huh?

SKEETER
Oysters are a vehicle for crackers
and ketchup.

Stuart picks up an oyster and extends it for a toast.

STUART
Well, here's to new beginnings.

Skeeter takes a beat and taps the oyster shell Stuart is holding with her cracker.

Stuart sucks down the oyster with a big slurping noise.

SKEETER
You're disgusting.

STUART
You've already made that pretty
clear.

Skeeter smiles and take a sip of her beer.

STUART (CONT'D)
Just so you know, the boys caught me
reading your Miss Myrna column on
the rig the other day.

SKEETER
Really? You read 'em?

STUART
All of 'em. Very informative, too. I
never knew ground egg shells got
grease out of clothes.

SKEETER
Well, I do my homework.

Stuart reaches over and touches Skeeter's hand. Skeeter stiffens but doesn't protest.

STUART
You're a good writer, Skeeter.

SKEETER
Thank you. I want to be a
journalist. Maybe a novelist.
Maybe both.

STUART
Well, I like that. You're really
smart. And pretty.

Skeeter blushes.

EXT. MAYFLOWER CAFE - LATER THAT NIGHT

Stuart follows Skeeter out of the restaurant. He suddenly
stops her and spins her around.

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

Stuart and Skeeter kiss under the cafe's flashing neon sign.

INT. LEEFOLT HOME - LIVING ROOM - NEXT MORNING

Aibileen sits on the couch reading a book with Mae Mobley who
eats a cookie.

The phone rings. Elizabeth answers in the next room.

ELIZABETH (O.S.)
Hello? What?? I'm coming!

Elizabeth runs into the room.

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

EXT. HOLBROOK HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Hilly flies out of her house, crying, as a REPORTER snaps a
picture. Hilly charges the reporter.

HILLY
You're trespassing!

Hilly pushes the reporter into the bushes and runs to
Elizabeth, who stands with Aibileen and Mae Mobley on the
lawn.

HILLY
Skeeter! She put it in the
newsletter.

A crowd of people look on, laughing.

ELIZABETH

Oh, my God.

HILLY

I specifically said old coats are to be dropped at my house. Not commodes!

Pull back to reveal FIFTY OLD TOILETS, in every shape and color imaginable, littering Hilly's lawn.

HILLY

Why would she do this to me?

ELIZABETH

I don't know. I don't know, Hilly.

Hilly walks to her "Yard of the Month" sign and grabs it.

HILLY

(sobbing)

It's so... embarrassing.

Onlookers laugh, take photos and point at Mae Mobley. -

Aibileen turns to see Mae Mobley sitting on one of the toilets with her underwear around her ankles, smiling proudly.

AIBILEEN

(sotto)

Oh, Lord.

MAE MOBLEY

I go potty, Mommy.

Elizabeth turns and sees her daughter. Horrified, she runs over to Mae Mobley, picks her up off the toilet and spansks her HARD.

ELIZABETH

No! Mae Mobley! Get off of that toilet!

A PHOTOGRAPHER captures the moment. Mae Mobley begins to cry.

ELIZABETH

You will catch diseases, do you hear me? You will catch diseases on those toilets.

EXT. HOLBROOK HOUSE - YARD - MOMENTS LATER

Aibileen carries Mae Mobley away from the toilets and then kneels in front of her in a corner of the lawn.

Tears stream down Mae Mobley's face.

AIBILEEN
 (to Mae Mobley)
 You is kind, you is smart, you is
 important.

Aibileen gives Mae Mobley a motherly hug. Elizabeth watches the exchange from Hilly's front door.

Upset, Elizabeth marches into Hilly's house and shuts the door.

INT. PHELAN HOME - LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON

Skeeter, Pascagoula and Jameso watch television as Medgar Evers speaks at a news conference on the local news.

Stock footage plays of this actual news conference.

MEDGAR EVERS
 Don't shop for anything on Capital
 Street. Let's let the merchants
 down on Capital Street feel the
 economic pinch. Let me say to you.

Charlotte walks past the living room and stops to see what they are all watching.

MEDGAR EVERS
 I had one merchant to call me and he
 said "I want you to know that I
 talked to my national office today
 and they want me to tell you we
 don't need nigger business." These
 are the stores that help support the
 White Citizen's Council. A council
 that is dedicated to keeping you and
 I second class citizens.

Charlotte storms into the room and turns off the television.

SKEETER
 Momma!

Charlotte glares at Pascagoula and Jameso as they instinctively walk briskly away and out the front door.

Charlotte grabs Skeeter by the arm.

CHARLOTTE
Don't encourage them like that.

SKEETER
This is national news!

CHARLOTTE
I won't have it! Do you understand?

Skeeter jerks her arm away and leaves the room.

INT. BUS - LATER THAT NIGHT

Aibileen rides in the back of a bus across the aisle from Henry, the waiter from Brent's. The white passengers ride up front.

HENRY
How you doin', Miss Clark?

AIBILEEN
All right, Henry. Thank you. How you doing?

HENRY
If God is willing, Miss Clark. If God is willing.

AIBILEEN
That's good.

HENRY
Yeah.

AIBILEEN
It's good.

The bus slows to a stop in the middle of the road. A siren is heard. In the distance, blue lights flash in front of a road block. A few people gather.

The DRIVER stands and faces the passengers.

HENRY
What's going on out there, mister?

DRIVER
Colored people off. The rest of you, lemme know where you're going. I'll get you as close as I can.

Henry helps Aibileen down the aisle. A white passenger taps the driver on the shoulder.

WHITE PASSENGER
What happened?

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

Aibileen and Henry exit. The bus door shuts.

EXT. JACKSON STREET - MINUTES LATER

Aibileen and Henry walk along a dark street. The sound of cicadas and sirens fill the air. Over a megaphone, a POLICEMAN orders people to clear the street; there's a curfew in effect.

HENRY
You gone be all right, Miss Clark?

AIBILEEN
I be all right. You go on now,
Henry.

HENRY
You want me to walk ya?

AIBILEEN
No, thank you. I'll be all right.

HENRY
Well, you have a good night.

Henry peels off and runs in the opposite direction. Aibileen suddenly grows nervous.

AIBILEEN
Which way you goin'?

Aibileen turns to discover Henry's already gone. Another round of sirens sounds in the distance. As the sirens intensify, Aibileen grows scared and starts to run.

We hear the O.S. voice of activist Roy Wilkins on a radio.

ROY WILKINS (O.S.)
...We view this as a cold, brutal
deliberate killing in a savage,
uncivilized state.

EXT. AIBILEEN'S NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

Aibileen, still running, has now reached the edge of her neighborhood. A police car whizzes past her.

ROY WILKINS (O.S.)

There is not a state with a record that approaches that of Mississippi in inhumanity, murder, brutality, and racial hatred.

Suddenly a rush of black residents run panicked past Aibileen. Aibileen trips and falls hard to her knees.

Terrified, she rises and continues on her way.

ROY WILKINS (O.S.)

It is absolutely at the bottom of the list.

Aibileen runs through hanging laundry outside Minny's house. We now hear the voice of a local radio announcer's account of the evening's events.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Fifteen minutes past midnight, Evers got out of his car beside his home in a Negro residential area.

INT. MINNY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN

Minny sits with all five of her children listening anxiously to a radio on the table.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

In a vacant lot about forty yards away, a sniper fired a single shot from a high-powered rifle at Evers' silhouette...

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

AIBILEEN

Minny, you all right?

MINNY

You all right? I'm all right. Sit down. You all right?

Aibileen nods, sits, trying to compose herself.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
 The bullet hit him in the back,
 crashed through his body, through a
 window, into the house. He died
 within an hour at a Jackson
 hospital...

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

Mিনny kneels before Aibileen and wipes her leg with a cloth.
 Aibileen wipes away tears with a tissue.

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

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

The MAYOR begins giving a statement over the radio. Minny
 suddenly turns to her children.

MINNY
 Sugar, take your brothers and
 sisters and y'all go on to bed.

Sugar leads the kids to the back of the house. Minny says
 "good night" to each child. When they are gone, Minny turns
 to Aibileen.

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

AIBILEEN
 We gone be careful.

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

AIBILEEN
 We ain't doing civil rights. We
 just tellin' stories like they
 really happen.

Mিনny and Aibileen grab hands and squeeze hard.

MINNY
 You a fool, old woman. A fool!

Aibileen hugs Minny. They laugh a little through the tears.

INT. JACKSON JOURNAL - MORGUE - DAY

Skeeter works at a table sheltered behind a tall basket of Miss Myrna letters. In reality, she's working on her and Aibileen's book of stories.

Skeeter scans past articles she has pulled dealing with racial injustices. (Inserts of various real headlines and photos).

A copy of Life magazine is next to her notebook.

CLOSE ON:

On the cover, Myrlie Evers comforts her crying son at Medgar Evers' funeral.

Mr. Blackly sticks his head in the room. Skeeter quickly covers her research with her notebook and looks up.

MR. BLACKLY

Miss Phelan! Presses are heating up!
I needed "Miss Myrna" thirty minutes
ago.

SKEETER

Yes, sir.

MR. BLACKLY

Chop-chop.
(sighs)
Good Lord.

Mr. Blackly slams the door.

INT. FOOTE ESTATE - TROPHY ROOM - MORNING

Minny vacuums a huge stuffed bear that stands on its hind legs. She hears a loud THUMP from upstairs. She gets down from a footstool and turns off the vacuum.

MINNY

Miss Celia?

INT. FOOTE HOME - BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Minny walks into Celia's bedroom and hears water running joined with muffled crying behind the bathroom door. She leans in, pressing her ear to the door.

MINNYY
Miss Celia?

CELIA (O.S.)
Minnyy, go home. I'll see you
tomorrow.

Minnyy twists the knob. It's locked.

MINNYY
You mess up your hair coloring
again? I helped you fix it last
time. We got it back to butter
batch. It was real pretty,
remember? Miss Celia.

Minnyy twists the knob again.

CELIA (O.S.)
I told you, go home!

Minnyy steps a few feet back and pauses. She takes a deep
breath of courage and charges the door with all her might.

INT. FOOTE HOME - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

The bathroom door flies open along with splinters of wood.
Minnyy sees Celia sitting against the wall next to the toilet
in a bloody nightgown, sobbing.

CELIA
I said get out!

MINNYY
Oh. Oh, Lord.

Minnyy kneels by Celia. Celia looks up to Minnyy shamefully.

CELIA
Why is there so much blood?

INT. FOOTE HOME - BEDROOM - LATER THAT DAY

Celia lies in bed as Minnyy drapes a rag across her forehead.

MINNYY
Next one gonna catch, Miss Celia.
You just wait and see.

Celia stares outside of her bedroom window.

CELIA

We got married because I got pregnant, but then I lost it a month later. Johnny wants kids now. What's he gonna do with me?

MINNY

Well, Mister Johnny gone just have to get over it.

CELIA

He doesn't know about this baby...or the two before.

This news hits Minny hard. Realization crosses her face.

EXT. FOOTE ESTATE - YARD - THE NEXT DAY

Celia finishes digging a hole next to two existing rosebushes. A shoebox sits on the ground beside the hole as well as new rosebush waiting to be planted.

Celia lowers the shoebox into the hole and covers it with dirt and then plants the new rosebush on top to complete the burial of her third miscarried child.

EXT. BUS STOP - WHITE NEIGHBORHOOD - NEXT MORNING

Aibileen, Yule May and several other maids exit the bus to begin the day's work.

TWO POLICE OFFICERS stand by a police cruiser. As Yule May hits the pavement, the officers approach her.

COP

Yule May Davis?

Before Yule May can answer, the officers grab her forcefully.

COP

You're under arrest.

Aibileen takes Yule May's purse as Yule May is carried away by the police.

AIBILEEN

What do you want me to do?

YULE MAY

Call my husband.

A third police officer pushes Aibileen away from Yule May.

Aibileen watches helplessly as the officers drag Yule May to a squad car.

YULE MAY

Wait a minute. I want my purse.

POLICE OFFICER

No. You're under arrest, ma'am.

Yule May begins to resist.

YULE MAY

I want to get my purse! I want to get my purse! Aibee!

Aibileen struggles to break free from the police officer who restrains her.

AIBILEEN

Don't fight, Yule May!

Hilly sits in her station wagon, watching the arrest.

YULE MAY

Aibee! I want my purse! I want my purse! Just let me get...

The two police officers slam Yule May down hard on the back of the trunk of the police cruiser.

AIBILEEN

Yule May, don't fight...

One of officers pulls out a billy club and strikes Yule May on the head.

Yule May goes limp. A group of white women with their children all look away.

Hilly continues to watch with little emotion as Yule May is placed in the back of the cruiser.

HILLY (O.S.)

I knew she was a thief the day she started.

INT. BRENT'S DRUGS - NEXT AFTERNOON

Skeeter sits at the soda fountain counter eating alone. Behind her, Hilly, a visibly pregnant Elizabeth, Jolene and Mary Beth enter and meander down the shopping aisles. Hilly holds her son, Billy.

Skeeter looks back to the trio as Hilly recalls her morning.

HILLY

... A nigra walks into a pawn shop
with a ring of such size and color?
It took them all of ten minutes to
find out where she worked.

The women find an empty booth and sit.

HILLY

I am desperate for a grilled cheese
sandwich.

BACK AT THE COUNTER

Henry, the fry cook, walks over to Skeeter's place at the counter. He intimates that he has something to tell her. Careful not to look at her, he busies himself with work as he mumbles.

HENRY

Miss Skeeter, you best get over to
Miss Aibileen's house. Now.

INT. AIBILEEN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN/LIVING ROOM - LATER THAT
AFTERNOON

Skeeter enters quickly through Aibileen's kitchen door and is surprised to see twenty other black women in uniform standing solemnly around in the living room.

Aibileen motions for Skeeter to move closer. Skeeter approaches nervously.

PEARLY/CHURCH WOMAN

I'm gone help with your stories.

Another WOMAN walks over.

BLACK WOMAN

I'm gone help, too.

Another woman speaks from the living room.

BLACK WOMAN 2

We all are.

Women of all ages nod their heads. Skeeter looks around in awe.

INT. AIBILEEN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Skeeter is taking notes. CALLIE, 60, takes off her glasses and wipes her eyes.

CALLIE

I used to take a shortcut ever day to work at Doctor Dixon's house. Cut through this farmer's lower forty to get there. One day, that farmer was waitin' on me with a gun, said he'd shoot me dead if I walk on his land again. Doctor Dixon went and paid that farmer double for two a those acres. Told him he 'bout to start farmin', too. But he bought it just for me. So I could get to work easy. He did.

LATER

CORA

I worked for Miss Jolene's mother 'til the day she died. Then her daughter, Miss Nancy, asked me to come and work for her. Miss Nancy's a real sweet lady. But Miss Jolene's ma done put it in her will I got to work for Miss Jolene. Miss Jolene's a mean woman. Mean for sport. Lord, I tried to find another job. But in everybody's mind the French family and Miss Jolene owned me. Owned me.

Skeeter and Aibileen catch eyes for a moment. Then Skeeter resumes taking notes.

INT. NEW YORK RESTAURANT - DAY

A phone has been brought to Miss Stein's table. She's having a working lunch with two other publishing types.

She sips a Martini while talking to Skeeter.

MISS STEIN

I leave early this week for Thanksgiving and then our last editor's meeting is December 17th. If you want a prayer of this getting read, I need it by then.

INT. PHELAN HOME - PANTRY (INTERCUT) - DAY

Skeeter talks to Miss Stein on the phone.

SKEETER

But that's in three weeks, Miss Stein!

MISS STEIN

Otherwise it goes in *The Pile*.

Miss Stein smirks knowingly to her co-workers.

MISS STEIN

You don't want it in *The Pile*.

The co-workers snicker at Miss Stein's remark.

SKEETER

Yes, Ma'am.

MISS STEIN

And put something personal in there. Write about the maid who raised you.

SKEETER

I understand.

EXT. LEEFOLT HOME - DAY

Celia drives a bright red car up the driveway to Elizabeth's house where other bridge girls' cars are parked.

INT. LEEFOLT HOME - DEN - MOMENTS LATER

A room full of bridge girls sit at card tables eating lunch.

ELIZABETH

Well, we have a lot of work to do before the benefit, don't we?

HILLY

I know, but I think we're on track. I think we're doing quite well.

EXT. LEEFOLT HOME - (INTERCUT) - SAME TIME

Celia carries a pie to the front door and rings the bell.

HILLY

Who's there?

ELIZABETH
I don't know. Aibileen?

Aibileen takes a step down into the room.

CELIA
Hey, Elizabeth! It's me, Celia
Foote! I was in the neighborhood,
thought I'd drop by.

Hilly signals to everyone to hide.

ELIZABETH
Oh.

HILLY
Everybody hide. Everybody get down,
get down.

JOLENE
Turn off the music.

The girls giggle as they kneel down behind furniture.

Aibileen backs up the stairs and hides against the wall.

Celia steps into the flower bed near the window and knocks on
the glass. She spies the girls kneeling in the room but
doesn't get what's happening.

CELIA
Hey! I...brought a chocolate
pie...My maid, Minny, made it.

Hilly's face hardens. The other girls laugh and giggle.

EXT. LEEFOLT HOME - DAY

Celia finally realizes the cruel reality of the situation and
that these women aren't going to let her inside.

She turns to leave. Dejected, she carries the pie back to
the car.

INT. FOOTE ESTATE - KITCHEN - SAME TIME

Celia sits at the kitchen table halfway through the pie she
tried to give to the bridge girls.

Minny fumes over a bowl of peas she's shelling.

MINNY

Don't be taking those women any more pies, you understand?

Minny turns to reveal a deep cut and bruise above her eye.

CELIA

They made me stand there like I was the vacuum salesman. Why, Minny?

MINNY

'Cause they know about you getting knocked up by Mr. Johnny. Mad you married one a they mens. Especially since Miss Hilly and Mister Johnny had just broke up, too.

CELIA

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

MINNY

Mm-hmmm. And Missus Walters always said Miss Hilly still sweet on Mister Johnny, too.

Celia suddenly slaps her thigh with excitement.

CELIA

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

MINNY

They hate you 'cause they think you white trash!

Minny's words bounce off of Celia's ears.

CELIA

Well, I'm just going to have to let Hilly know I ain't no boyfriend stealer. In fact, I'll tell her Friday night at the benefit.

Celia rises and smiles like she just cured cancer.

MINNY

You don't need to be going to that benefit, Miss Celia.

Celia wets a wash cloth at the sink.

MINNY

Did you hear me? Now you just stay home.

Celia approaches Minny. She looks at the cut over her eye.

CELIA

That looks bad. Let me take a look.

MINNY

I got to get these peas on.

CELIA

I know you didn't fall in no tub, Minny.

Minny starts to protest but is tired of excuses. She reluctantly sits down. Celia dabs at the wound.

CELIA

You know what I'd do if I were you? I'd give it right back to him. I'd hit him over the head with a skillet and I'd tell him to go straight to hell.

EXT. STREETS - DOWNTOWN JACKSON - DAY

It's eerily quiet, not a soul on the street.

We hear archival footage of Walter Cronkite addressing the nation. Cronkite tells the nation that John F. Kennedy is dead.

INT. PHELAN HOME - LIVING ROOM - SAME DAY

Skeeter and Stuart sit with the Phelan family watching Kennedy's funeral. Charlotte and Robert watch with little emotion.

Jameso and Pascagoula watch from the stairs.

Stuart checks the time and leans into Skeeter's ear.

STUART

Sweetheart, I've got to get down to the coast.

Skeeter nods as Stuart kisses her.

STUART

I'll be back in time for the benefit.

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

A framed picture of JFK has now joined the pictures of Treelore and Jesus.

Mিনny, Skeeter and Aibileen sit quietly compiling stories. Aibileen grows anxious.

She suddenly jumps out of her chair and paces around the room.

AIBILEEN

The world done gone crazy, Miss Skeeter! And I'm scared! What if people find out what we writing? Figure out "Niceville" really Jackson, and figure out who who?

Mিনny lets out a sigh. She knows it's time.

MINNYY

Maybe we need us some insurance.

Skeeter and Aibileen look to Minny.

MINNYY

I told God I'd never speak of it again, but we ain't got no choice. It's time to tell you both "the terrible awful" I did to Miss Hilly. It may be the only thing that keep us safe.

INT. HOLBROOK HOUSE (FLASHBACK) - DINING ROOM - 6 MONTHS EARLIER

We continue with the earlier flashback. Hilly is sitting at the table, finishing off her first slice of Minny's chocolate pie.

Mিনny stands silent as Hilly reaches for another slice.

HILLY

So. Nobody wanted to hire a sass-mouthin', thievin' nigra, did they?

Hilly licks her fingers. Minny can barely contain a smile as Hilly swallows another mouthful.

HILLY
Pie's as good as always, Minny.

MINNY
I'm glad you like it.

Missus Walters comes into the room and heads for the bar to prepare a drink.

HILLY
*If...*I take you back, I'll have to cut your pay five dollars a week.

Not expecting this, Minny leans away from Hilly.

MINNY
Take me back?

HILLY
What do you put in here that makes it taste so good?

MINNY
That good vanilla from Mexico...

Minny's eyes narrow over a forced smile.

MINNY
And...something else real special.

Missus Walters grabs a plate and reaches for the pie.

MINNY
No, no no, Missus Walters. That Miss Hilly's special pie.

HILLY
Momma can have a piece.

Hilly slides the pie a little too fast down the table toward Minny. Minny stops it before it falls to the floor.

HILLY
Cut her one! Go get a plate!

Minny fumes, quickly losing control.

MINNY
(suddenly)
Eat my shit.

Shock and silence fill the room. Missus Walters' mouth falls open.

HILLY
What did you say?

MINNY
I said eat... my... shit!

Hilly slowly stands.

HILLY
Have you lost your mind?

MINNY
No, Ma'am. But you're about to,
'cause you just did.

HILLY
Did what?

Mিনny nods smugly as she looks down at Hilly's pie with two slices missing.

Missus Walters looks to the pie and immediately gets it. She puts a hand over her mouth to contain her laughter.

Hilly starts to hyperventilate as everything sinks in. She runs to the kitchen, gagging.

Missus Walters shouts after her.

MISSUS WALTERS
And you didn't just have one. You
ate two slices!

The gravity of the situation sinks in for Minny. She grows uneasy and begins backing out of the dining room.

Missus Walters, drink in hand, sits down on a dining room chair laughing even louder now.

Mিনny runs out of the Holbrook house.

MISSUS WALTERS
Run, Minny, run!

END FLASHBACK

INT. AIBILEEN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Aibileen and Skeeter are speechless.

AIBILEEN
You try' to get yourself killed?!

MINNY

No! I wasn't plannin' on tellin' her, Aibileen! I just wanted to see her take a bite and then I was gonna leave. Be done with her forever.

Minny's eyes narrow.

MINNY

Before I knew it, I had done told that woman what was in that pie.

Aibileen looks to Skeeter, shaking her head.

MINNY

I've done asked God to forgive me. But more for what happened to poor Missus Walters. Miss Hilly threw her in that nursing home just for laughing.

AIBILEEN

(gravely)

We *can't* put that story in the book.

MINNY

We ain't got no choice! Hilly Holbrook can't let nobody know that pie story is about her.

AIBILEEN

Exactly! If people find out "The Terrible Awful" was you and Miss Hilly, we're in trouble there ain't words for!

MINNY

Right! But don't you see? She going to her grave convincing folks this book *ain't* about Jackson. Now that keeps us safe. Insured.

SKEETER

No, no. That's too dangerous.

Minny stands up quickly.

MINNY

All right, y'all two brought me into this, but I'm gonna finish it! Either put it in or pull my parts out all together. Y'all pick!

Minny storms out of Aibileen's back door.

EXT. AIBILEEN'S HOUSE - BACK DOOR - CONTINUOUS

Mিনny rushes away from Aibileen's house.

EXT. ROBERT E. LEE HOTEL - NIGHT

The African Children's Benefit Ball is about to begin. A long line of Jacksonians pull cars up to a valet stand.

Missus Walters gets out of a cab, giving the DRIVER money.

MISSUS WALTERS

Thank you, Tommy. I should be out by ten. See you then.

TOMMY

Yes, ma'am.

Missus Walters merges with the elegant crowd walking toward the entrance.

Hilly stands at the top of the stairs. She wears swathes of green-colored taffeta. She stands next to Jolene French and a WLBT CAMERAMAN.

Jolene raises a microphone and looks into the camera.

JOLENE

This is Jolene French reporting from the African Children's Benefit Ball, and I'm here with League President, Miss Hilly Holbrook.

HILLY

Thanks, Jolene. And I am so excited about the auction tonight, aren't you?

JOLENE

I'm absolutely thrilled.

INT. ROBERT E. LEE HOTEL - BALLROOM

Three dozen servers stand in a line as if on display as the guests enter. Minny and Aibileen are among them.

Tables are covered with items donated for the auction. On the baked goods table, Minny's famed chocolate pie promises to again be a big money maker.

Celia and Johnny enter the ballroom. Celia wears a tight, sequined, sleeveless hot pink dress.

Mিনny pokes Aibileen signaling her to look at Celia. Aibileen's eyes widen at the sight of Celia's dress and ample cleavage.

Celia sees a waitress with a tray of champagne glasses and nervously takes one. As Celia downs the glass of champagne, a group of female attendees looks at her with disgust.

Hilly sits at a table with Jolene and Elizabeth and their husbands. William waves at Celia, and watches her long after she has moved on.

Hilly reaches out and turns William's face away from Celia.

INT. ROBERT E. LEE HOTEL - KITCHEN

Mিনny, Aibileen and Sugar enter the kitchen to prepare trays of hors d'oeuvres.

MINNYY

Did you see what Miss Celia got on?

AIBILEEN

Lord have mercy. Women better hold onto they husbands tonight.

Minnie chuckles.

AIBILEEN

Miss Leefolt been working on that dress for four weeks and that's what she came up with?

INT. ROBERT E. LEE HOTEL - BALLROOM

Charlotte and Robert slow dance; she looks beautiful despite her health.

Skeeter dances with Stuart. She wears a black velvet dress and her hair is being somewhat cooperative, thanks to the Shinolater.

STUART

Kiss me.

He and Skeeter kiss as other husbands and wives dance around them.

Celia looks at the baked goods in the silent auction. She writes a bid on Minny's pie. She's a little drunk now.

The crowd has formed a circle around a tuxedo-clad Mr. Blackly, who dances energetically. He does a cartwheel.

MR. BLACKLY
Ho! Who-hoo!

The crowd cheers.

INT. ROBERT E. LEE HOTEL - LADIES LOUNGE - LATER THAT NIGHT

Elizabeth, Jolene and Mary Beth apply make up and chat it up in the ladies lounge. They notice Celia entering, cocktail in hand.

Celia staggers slightly, intoxicated, leans against a wall and applies her lipstick. Jolene scoffs.

INT. ROBERT E. LEE HOTEL - BALLROOM

Just as the band concludes its song, Hilly makes her way to the podium.

HILLY
Everybody enjoying the evening?

The room claps enthusiastically.

HILLY
(flatly)
Let's give a nice round of applause for the help. For all the men and women that have helped make tonight possible.

Hilly mechanically gestures toward the uniformed servers in the room.

HILLY
A cause I'm sure is dear to their hearts, as well.

Skeeter shakes her head as the less inspired applause dies down.

A waiter brings Celia another drink.

WAITER
Your cocktail.

CELIA
Thank you.

The waiter moves off. Johnny turns to his wife.

JOHNNY

Honey, don't you think you've had enough to drink? I wish you'd try and eat something.

CELIA

I'm not havin' my stomach poke out!

She leans over and kisses him.

INT. ROBERT E. LEE HOTEL - BALLROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Jolene rushes up to the stage and takes the microphone.

JOLENE

Okay everybody, quiet down. I've got the list of winners! Okay, the winner of the beautiful mink car-coat is...Charlotte Phelan!

Charlotte beams. She slaps Robert playfully, knowing he bid on the coat for her. Skeeter reaches over and touches her mom's arm.

JOLENE

Congrats, Miss Phelan. Ladies, I hope your husbands take note of that.

The rooms laughs.

JOLENE

Now, it's time for the baked goods.

Jolene flips a page.

JOLENE

Oh, yummy, yummy! The highest bid in baked goods goes to Minny Jackson's chocolate pie. Congratulations, Hilly Holbrook!

Minnie's eyes go wide. The room erupts in applause.

MISSUS WALTERS

Oh! Hilly!

HILLY

That's funny. I didn't bid on anything.

Jolene continues announcing the winners.

Celia beams with pride and rushes up behind Hilly, hugging her at the neck, startling her.

CELIA

Yay! Congratulations, Hilly! I didn't know you were a fan of Minny's pies.

Hilly remains calm. Celia sits down beside her.

CELIA

I've been wanting to talk to you all night. Minny said why you won't be my friend. It's 'cause you think me and Johnny went behind your back.

Hilly stands up to leave. Celia reaches out to stop her and tears the sleeves on Hilly's dress. Hilly gasps.

CELIA

I'm so sorry!

Hilly stands dumbstruck for a moment, her mouth agape. She composes herself and steps closer to Celia.

HILLY

Come here, sweetheart, let me bring you back to your table.

CELIA

Okay. I'm really sorry.

HILLY

It's all right. Don't worry about it.

Hilly begins to lead her away; then she suddenly stops and spins Celia around to face her.

HILLY

What are you trying to do to me?
What are you and that nigra up to?

CELIA

I don't know what you're talkin' about.

HILLY

You liar! Who did you tell?!

People nearby grow quiet.

CELIA
 Hilly, I got pregnant after you and
 Johnny broke up!

Missus Walters perks up.

MISSUS WALTERS
 (laughing)
 Oh, shit!

HILLY
 Shut up, Mother!

CELIA
 Johnny never cheated on you... At
 least, not with me.

Celia starts to breathe heavily. Her eyes start to water.

HILLY
 Oh! Johnny would never cheat on me.

Johnny hears this and gets up quickly.

CELIA
 I'm so sorry! I thought you'd be
 tickled you won that pie.

HILLY
 You tell that nigra if she tells
 anybody, I will make her suffer!

Johnny walks up to Hilly.

JOHNNY
 Hey, that is enough. Celia?

CELIA
 Uh-oh.

Feeling sick, Celia puts her hand over her mouth and runs for
 the bathroom. She stumbles behind Hilly's table. She leans
 behind Missus Walters' chair and vomits on the floor.

MISSUS WALTERS
 Oh, shit.

Celia retches behind her.

MISSUS WALTERS
 What a mess. Napkins.

Elizabeth holds her hand over her mouth and holds out her
 napkin out for Missus Walters, as does Raleigh.

Celia runs out of the ballroom. Johnny chases after her.

JOHNNY

Celia!

JOLENE (O.C.)

Why don't we get back to the
 auction. Next up, Debbie's
 peppermint bark.

EXT. ROBERT E. LEE HOTEL - STAIRS - LATER THAT NIGHT

Hilly and William say goodbye to guests as they amble to
 their cars.

Missus Walters emerges from the hotel holding Minny's pie.

HILLY

Just come on home with us tonight,
 Mother.

MISSUS WALTERS

No thanks, I got a pie to eat.

Hilly spins around and sees the pie.

HILLY

You throw that pie away right now!

MISSUS WALTERS

I spent good money on this pie. I
 won it just for you.

HILLY

You signed me up?

Missus Walters steps up to Hilly.

MISSUS WALTERS

I may have trouble remembering my
 own name or what country I live in.
 But there's two things I can't seem
 to forget: That my own daughter
 threw me into a nursing home...and
 that she ate Minny's shit. Good
 night.

Missus Walters stops to speak to a MALE BANQUET ATTENDEE.

MISSUS WALTERS

Hey, how about a nightcap?

MALE BANQUET ATTENDEE

Let's go.

The man escorts Missus Walters to the valet stand.

INT. FOOTE ESTATE - BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Minnie stands in the doorway of Celia's bedroom. Distraught, Celia is packing a suitcase.

CELIA

I'm not right for this kind of life, Minny. I don't need a dining room table for twelve people. I couldn't get two people over here if I begged. I can't do this to Johnny anymore. That's why I gotta go back to Sugar Ditch.

Celia starts to cry.

MINNIE

You can't move back to Sugar Ditch, Miss Celia.

Minnie leads Celia to a bench at the foot of the bed.

MINNIE

Lord, I reckon it's time you knew.

Minnie lowers Celia to the bench.

MINNIE

Sit down.

Minnie crosses to the bedroom door and closes it.

INT. FOOTE ESTATE - BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Celia sits wide-eyed, but calm, on the bench beside Minnie.

MINNIE

So Miss Hilly thought you knew 'bout "The Terrible Awful"--that you were making fun of her. It's my fault she pounced on you. If you leave Mister Johnny, then Miss Hilly done won the whole ball game. Then she done beaten me, and she done beat you...

CELIA

Thank you for telling me that.

Celia turns her head toward Minny, not sure of what to make of this unique revelation.

INT. AIBILEEN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NEXT MORNING

The finished manuscript sits on the kitchen table before Aibileen, Minny and Skeeter. Aibileen reaches down and drags her fingers across the stack of paper.

AIBILEEN

Lord, look at all these pages. Two-hundred and sixty-six of 'em.

MINNY

Mm. So we just send it off? Just wait and see? Hope Miss Stein gonna publish it?

Skeeter nods as she looks solemnly at the manuscript.

SKEETER

Well, I have one more story to type before I put it in the mail. But other than that, we're done.

MINNY

Which one you got left?

SKEETER

Uh, mine.

INT. PHELAN HOME - BEDROOM - DAY

Skeeter enters Charlotte's room.

Charlotte is sitting up in bed working a needle point pattern with her hands. She's wig free and terribly thin.

Her collarbone protrudes long and narrow, but her eyes are as sharp as ever.

SKEETER

I need to talk to you about Constantine.

Charlotte looks up to Skeeter for a moment.

CHARLOTTE

Oh, Eugenia. That was so long ago.

Charlotte resumes her sewing. Skeeter sits next to her and takes the needle point out of her hands.

SKEETER
What happened?!

Charlotte looks down, knowing she's trapped.

CHARLOTTE
She didn't give me a choice!
The Daughters of America had just
appointed me state regent...

INT. PHELAN HOME (FLASHBACK) LIVING ROOM - DAY

Charlotte, much healthier, stands in her living room surrounded by DAR members.

GRACE HIGGINBOTHAM, 65, regal, attaches a blue ribbon with a medallion to Charlotte's lapel.

CHARLOTTE (V.O.)
Grace Higginbotham, our esteemed
president, had come all the way
down from Washington, D.C. to our
house for the ceremony.

Grace hugs Charlotte as all the women applaud. A photographer snaps a picture of the moment.

Constantine lingers in a corner watching proudly.

CHARLOTTE
(re: ribbon)
Oh, it's beautiful! Just look at
that!

Charlotte catches eyes with Constantine and winks. They smile at each other for a moment before Charlotte is sucked back into the ceremony.

INT. PHELAN HOME (FLASHBACK) - DINING ROOM - DAY

Charlotte sits with Grace and six other women at the dining table as Constantine begins serving lunch *very slowly* and awkwardly from a bowl. Charlotte looks embarrassed.

CHARLOTTE (V.O.)
She'd gotten so old and slow,
Skeeter.

Charlotte hears knocking at a door leading into the dining room from the porch. She goes to answer it.

She opens it to find Constantine's daughter RACHEL, 35, standing on the other side of the screened door.

CHARLOTTE (V.O.)
Now, Constantine had told me Rachel
would be coming for a visit.

RACHEL
Hello, Miss Charlotte.

Rachel is groomed and well dressed. Charlotte forms a tight smile.

CHARLOTTE
Rachel. We were expecting you next
week.

RACHEL
I decided to come early and surprise
Momma.

Rachel starts to open the screen door to enter. Charlotte pulls it shut.

CHARLOTTE
I'm entertaining. Why don't you go
around back and wait in the kitchen.

The DAR women's body language conveys their shock at a black woman bold enough to enter uninvited. Constantine grows worried.

CHARLOTTE
Go on now!

Charlotte closes the door on the stunned Rachel and goes back to her seat.

CHARLOTTE
(to the ladies)
I am sorry.

Rachel opens the door and walks into the dining room. All eyes are on her.

CHARLOTTE
Rachel, what are you doing?

RACHEL

I'm just doing as I was told, Miss Charlotte. Goin' to the kitchen. But I'm gonna see Momma first.

Rachel walks up to Constantine.

RACHEL

Hello, Momma.

Constantine tries to walk Rachel to the kitchen.

CONSTANTINE

Go on to the kitchen, baby. I'll be there directly. Go on, go, go. Go, go.

Grace stands and turns to Charlotte.

GRACE

You may put up with this kind of nonsense, but I do not.

Charlotte is forced to make an unpleasant call.

CHARLOTTE

Get out of this house, Rachel.

GRACE

You heard her. Go on, girl.

Constantine grabs Rachel's hand.

CONSTANTINE

Miss Charlotte, let me just take her to the kitchen.

Constantine pulls Rachel toward the kitchen.

CONSTANTINE

Come on, baby, let's go.

Grace turns to Charlotte with judgment.

GRACE

Charlotte?

Charlotte moves to the other side of the dining room, blocking the path to the front door.

CHARLOTTE

Both of you. Leave now.

Charlotte points to the back door. Constantine stares at Charlotte for a moment.

RACHEL
Come on, Momma.

Rachel leads her sad, frail mother out the door. The screen door slams shut behind them.

Constantine turns and, placing her hand on the screen door, looks at Charlotte for a final time.

RACHEL
Come on now, Momma.

Charlotte looks torn as she walks to the door and closes it on them.

END FLASHBACK

INT. PHELAN HOME - BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Skeeter trembles. Charlotte won't look at her.

SKEETER
Constantine didn't do anything wrong. And you love Rachel. I know you do.

CHARLOTTE
She was our president, Eugenia. What was I supposed to do?

SKEETER
She did you the biggest favor of your life. She taught me everything.

Charlotte gets defensive.

CHARLOTTE
Well, you idolized her too much! You always have!

SKEETER
I needed someone to look up to.

This stings Charlotte to the core.

CHARLOTTE
I went to her house the next day, but she'd already gone.

INT. CONSTANTINE'S HOUSE (FLASHBACK) - BEDROOM - DAY

Constantine packs a suitcase on her bed. She walks to a door frame, her shaky hand moving her fingers up over various height markers penciled into the wall. Markers, through the years, for both Rachel and Skeeter.

END FLASHBACK

PHELAN HOME - BEDROOM - DAY

SKEETER

How could you not tell me all this?

CHARLOTTE

Because I didn't want you upset during your final exams. And, and, I knew you'd blame me and it wasn't my fault.

Skeeter rises.

SKEETER

I have to go find her. She needs me.

Skeeter walks toward the door.

CHARLOTTE

Eugenia.

Skeeter stops and turns. Charlotte stares, unable to get the words out.

SKEETER

What?!

CHARLOTTE

Honey, we sent your brother up to Chicago to bring Constantine home.

Skeeter nods and walks back to her mother.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

When he got there...she had died...

Skeeter shakes her head and cries. Charlotte covers her mouth with her hand.

SKEETER

You broke her heart.

Skeeter starts to exit. Charlotte lowers her hand from her mouth.

CHARLOTTE
 (breaking down)
 I'm sorry. I'm so sorry. I'm
 sorry...

EXT. DIRT ROAD BY CONSTANTINE'S HOUSE - DAY

Skeeter drives the Cadillac around a bend and pulls into the yard of Constantine's house, an old shack with a rusted-out tin roof.

She puts the lever in park and stares off to Constantine's porch steps.

EXT. CONSTANTINE'S HOUSE (FLASHBACK) - DAY

A bottle tree is glistening in the afternoon sun. It casts a kaleidoscope of colors across the side of the house.

A LITTLE BLONDE GIRL, 6, who is young Skeeter, sits in the lap of a younger Constantine who wears a white work dress.

Constantine is putting young Skeeter's unruly hair into braids. Young Skeeter looks up and smiles.

(END FLASHBACK)

EXT. DIRT ROAD BY CONSTANTINE'S HOUSE - DAY

Skeeter smiles at Constantine's abandoned house.

EXT. BOOKSTORE - DOWNTOWN JACKSON - SIX MONTHS LATER

The display window of a bookstore. A clerk sets down a stack of light blue books beside an identical stack.

She then takes one and sets it vertically atop the stack for display: *The Help*, by Anonymous.

AIBILEEN (V.O.)
 They printed a few thousand copies
 with the worst advance Miss Stein
 had ever seen.

INT. MINNY'S HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Mিনny stands over the stove frying chicken as Sugar enters with the day's mail. Two of her children are at the table doing homework.

Mিনny snatches the mail from Sugar and sees an envelope from Skeeter.

MINNYY

(to Benny)

What you doin' with Kindra's book?
You can't read.

AIBILEEN (V.O.)

They sent Miss Skeeter six hundred dollars. She broke the money up and gave it to each of us.

Mিনny tears it open to find cash inside and a note from Skeeter saying "More to come." Mিনny's eyes go wide.

AIBILEEN (V.O.)

Divided thirteen ways that came to bout forty-six dollars each.

Mিনny quickly closes the letter, stuffs it in her bra as she runs for the door.

MINNYY

(to the kids)

Y'all finish your homework.

Mিনny runs out the screen door as the chicken begins to burn.

EXT. AIBILEEN'S YARD - GARDEN - MOMENTS LATER

Aibileen works in her garden as Mিনny runs up with her cash. Aibileen rises.

MINNYY

Aibileen! Aibileen! We just got this from Miss Skeeter. Look at it. Look at all the money!

Aibileen sees the money and throws her arms around Mিনny. They jump up and down in excitement.

EXT. NURSING HOME - DAY

Missus Walters reads *The Help* aloud to a group of women in the backyard of the nursing home where she now lives.

MISSUS WALTERS

"She fired me for using the inside toilet. Put me out in a storm and told me never to come back. But I did come back.

(MORE)

MISSUS WALTERS (CONT'D)
 I came back with a pie I had baked
 to say I'm sorry. I watched her
 eat..."

She turns a page and suddenly freezes. Reading to herself
 now, a satisfied smile begins to form.

INT. NURSING HOME - MISSUS WALTERS' ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Missus Walters sits on the bed and talks on the phone with
 Hilly as she inspects her fingernails with a magnifying
 glass.

MISSUS WALTERS
 Well, it's a wonderful book, Hilly.
 Filled with grippin' testimonials
 from Mississippi's housekeepers.

INT. HOLBROOK'S HOUSE (INTERCUT) - LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME

HILLY
 Okay, Momma! I need to run.

MISSUS WALTERS
 You should read the book, Hilly.
 It's quite scandalous. It sounds
 like Jackson, if you ask me.

Hilly's sudden silence fills Missus Walters with delight.

MISSUS WALTERS
 Quite scandalous.

HILLY
 What book?

Missus Walters raises the magnifying glass to the book.

MISSUS WALTERS
 Uh, *The Help*. H-E-L-P.

INT. WHITE GROCERY STORE - LATER THAT MORNING

Minnie and Aibileen, in uniform, push carts side by side in
 the grocery store. The white shoppers are dressed casually.
 Other maids in the store keep quietly to themselves.

White women smile and chat with one another as they meander
 down the aisles as if the black maids aren't even there.

As Aibileen reaches the end of an aisle, she suddenly freezes.

An older white woman stands by the butcher counter. Her face is pressed into a copy of *The Help*. Minny now reaches the end of the aisle and sees this, too.

AIBILEEN

There it is.

The older woman is completely engrossed in the book.

EXT. PHELAN HOME - VERANDA - DAY

Skeeter follows Stuart around the corner of the house. Fuming mad, he's just arrived from the rig, still wearing his work clothes.

SKEETER

You told me to write something good.
Something I believed in.

STUART

Well, it's not what I believe in!

Skeeter grabs Stuart's arm. He pulls away.

STUART

That joke you pulled on Hilly with
the toilets, that's funny. But why
would you do this to us? I don't
even know why you care.

SKEETER

What?

STUART

Things are fine around here. Why go
stir up trouble?!

SKEETER

Trouble's already here, Stuart. I
had to tell you this. You needed to
know.

STUART

You're goddamn right I needed to
know! You should have told me this
from the start. You're a selfish
woman, Skeeter.

SKEETER

Stuart!

STUART

I think you're better off being alone.

Stuart walks away, gets into his car and drives off.

INT. BOOKSTORE - LATER THAT DAY

Elizabeth, pushing her new baby in a carriage, sneaks into the store like a teen buying a Playboy and discreetly takes a copy of the book.

INT. PHELAN HOME - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Charlotte lies in bed reading *The Help* as Robert sleeps.

As she turns a page, her face reveals a dawning realization. She removes her glasses in shock and glances at Robert.

INT. LEEFOLT HOME - BABY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Elizabeth sits in her rocking chair and feeds her baby from a bottle as she chats on the phone with *The Help* in her hand.

ELIZABETH

Yeah. Well, did you get to that part yet that I was telling you about? Okay, no, don't read ahead, whatever you do.

INT. PRISON - CELL - NIGHT

Yule May lies on the bottom bunk reading the book aloud to a dozen female cellmates. Captivated, everyone leans in closely as Yule May turns a page.

YULE MAY

"'What you done put up in this?'. She said, 'my shit'."

The room suddenly erupts in laughter.

INT. HOLBROOK HOUSE - BEDROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Hilly reads the book in bed. William is fast asleep.

Suddenly, her eyes widen, her breath becomes heavy. She slowly turns a page and freezes. Her face turns white. She SCREAMS. Robert bolts upright.

ROBERT

Wh- What's the matter, Hilly?

He tries to console her.

EXT. HOLBROOK HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

A light comes from the bedroom window. We hear Hilly slapping Robert.

HILLY (O.S.)

Get off me!!!

ROBERT (O.S.)

Stop hitting me!

Another shrill scream from Hilly...

INT. LEEFOLT HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Bridge is underway at the Leefolt house. Hilly's eyes are red and puffy, her hair lies flat. A horrible fever blister burns hot on Hilly's upper lip.

The usual suspects surround Hilly--except for Skeeter. Mary Beth Caldwell has taken her place.

JOLENE FRENCH

I heard that Betty character might be Mary Elizabeth.

A nervous Aibileen pours tea.

HILLY

It's not Jackson, and that book is garbage. I bet the whole thing's made up by some nigra.

Hilly raises her eyes to Aibileen.

MARY BETH CALDWELL

And, Jolene, didn't *your* *momma* leave Cora to you in her will?

JOLENE

Well, yes...But that's not odd, is it? Happens all the time, right?

Hilly quickly interrupts.

HILLY

The book is NOT ABOUT JACKSON!

INT. HOLBROOK HOUSE - FOYER - DAY

Hilly sifts through the day's mail. Her fever blister has gotten worse.

She comes across an envelope from Celia Foote, addressed to *The Starving Children of Africa Fund*. A smug smile forms.

She opens the envelope to find a check for \$200.00 made out to *TWO-SLICE HILLY!*

Hilly's eyes narrow as she rips the check into pieces.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD/HILLY'S CAR - MOMENTS LATER

A furious Hilly drinks a beer while driving; her station wagon flies down the country road leading to the Phelan farm.

Hilly makes a left turn too fast. She loses control and fishtails momentarily. She speeds on, tossing the empty beer bottle and puffing on a cigarette.

EXT. PHELAN HOME - MOMENTS LATER

Skeeter sits on the porch reading a Harper and Row job offer for the hundredth time.

Behind her, a huge plume of dust trails Hilly's car, which speeds along a distant road.

EXT. PHELAN HOME - DRIVEWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Tires crunch gravel down the drive. Skeeter sees a car moving toward her and soon recognizes the car as Hilly's.

Hilly gets out of her car smoking a cigarette and storms toward the front door.

SKEETER

What the hell..?

Hilly stops and turns toward the approaching Skeeter.

SKEETER

What are you doing here?

Hilly throws her cigarette at Skeeter.

HILLY

I've contacted my lawyer, Hibbie Goodman.

(MORE)

HILLY (CONT'D)

He's the best libel attorney in the state. Oh Missy, you're going to jail!

SKEETER

You can't prove anything.

HILLY

Oh, I one-hundred-percent know you wrote it 'cause nobody else in town is as tacky as you.

SKEETER

You don't know anything, Hilly.

HILLY

I don't, do I? You tell Aibileen, the next time she wants to write about my dear friend Elizabeth...uh-huh. Remember her? Had you in her wedding? Let's just say, Aibileen ought to've been a little bit smarter before puttin' in about that L-shaped scratch in poor Elizabeth's dining table. And that nigger, Minny? Do I have plans for her.

SKEETER

Careful, Hilly. Now that's chapter twelve. Don't give yourself away now.

HILLY

That was not me!

Hilly storms up the porch steps. Skeeter follows.

HILLY

I've come to tell your mother what a hippie you've become. She's gonna be disgusted by you.

Charlotte suddenly appears at the door and steps out onto the porch.

CHARLOTTE

Why, Hilly. Everything okay, you two?

Although frail, Charlotte looks beautiful. Well made up, wearing an elegant turban.

HILLY

Oh, Missus Phelan, I'm...I'm here to-

CHARLOTTE

Hilly, you're a sweaty mess. Are you ill?

HILLY

No, ma'am.

Charlotte points to Hilly's fever blister.

CHARLOTTE

Darling, no husband wants to come home and see that.

Hilly self-consciously licks her fever blister.

HILLY

Well, I...I didn't have time to get fixed up--

CHARLOTTE

You know, Hilly. If I didn't know any better, I'd say you've been eating too much pie.

Hilly's face turns purple with embarrassment.

HILLY

Missus Phelan, I came here--

Charlotte moves in for the kill.

CHARLOTTE

In fact, I'm sure of it. Now go on! Get your raggedy ass off my porch. Go on. Get off my property. Now! Before we all get one of those disgustin' things on our lips.

As Hilly backs away from the house, she looks back and forth between Skeeter & Charlotte. She climbs back into her car.

Hilly's tires spray gravel as she speeds away.

CHARLOTTE

Eugenia.

She reaches for Skeeter's hand.

CHARLOTTE

Take me inside, please.

SKEETER

Yes, ma'am.

She leads her mother inside.

INT. PHELAN HOME - RECEIVING ROOM

Skeeter and Charlotte cross the living room together.

CHARLOTTE
Skeeter, do you have plans tomorrow?

SKEETER
No, Ma'am.

CHARLOTTE
Good.

Skeeter leads her mother to a sofa, helps her sit.

CHARLOTTE
Because we are going shopping.
No single daughter of mine is going
to New York City, representing the
great state of Mississippi, without
a proper *cosmopolitan* wardrobe.

SKEETER
How do you know about New York?

CHARLOTTE
Oh, well, Miss Stein called last
night.

Skeeter looks away nervously.

CHARLOTTE
Courage sometimes skips a
generation.

Skeeter turns back to her mother.

CHARLOTTE
Thank you for bringing it back to
our family.

Skeeter nods, relieved. But also concerned.

SKEETER
I can't leave you like this.

CHARLOTTE
Eugenia, I've made a decision. Now
my health's been on the uptick these
past few weeks.
(MORE)

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

And I know the doctor says it's some kind of last strength nonsense. But--
-I have decided not to die.

SKEETER

Oh, Momma.

CHARLOTTE

It's too late. I tried calling Fanny Mae's so I could make your hair appointments for the next twenty years, but they wouldn't allow it.

Skeeter laughs.

CHARLOTTE

I have never been more proud of you.

SKEETER

Thank you.

Charlotte leans over and kisses her daughter on the forehead.

SKEETER

Oh, Momma.

They hug.

EXT. FOOTE ESTATE - SIDE WALK - DAY

Mিনny walks up the long front walk of the Foote Estate, holding a bag of groceries in one arm, a fan in the other hand, and her purse slung over her arm at the elbow.

Mিনny slows as she hears a car approaching behind her. She turns to see Johnny Foote behind the wheel of his car.

Mিনny freezes as Johnny stops his car.

JOHNNY

Need some help with those?

Johnny gets out of the car. His approach is a little too quick for Minny's comfort. She takes off toward the house with her best gallop.

MINNY

Miss Celia!

Johnny chases after her.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)
 Minny, hey, stop!

Minny drops the groceries, the purse and the fan.

MINNYY
 Miss Celia!

JOHNNY
 Minny!

MINNYY
 Stay back! Stay back!

Minny picks up a fallen branch from the ground and rears it back like a weapon.

JOHNNY
 Hey, I'm not here to hurt you, girl!
 You wanna put the stick down?

MINNYY
 (shaking her head no)
 Um-um.

Minny breathes heavily.

JOHNNY
 Listen, Celia finally told me about the babies. All of 'em. But I also know that the minute you started working here, she started getting better. So you saved her life.

MINNYY
 You...knew I was here the whole time?

JOHNNY
 Fried chicken and okra on the first night? Y'all should have at least put corn pone on the table.

Minny tosses the stick down, shakes her head.

MINNYY
 No... I couldn't let you eat no more corn pone, Mister Johnny.

JOHNNY
 Well, thanks to you, now I've had to let out every pair of pants I own.

Minny starts to collect the groceries.

JOHNNY

Oh, no. You just leave that.

Johnny picks up Minny's purse, bag and fan.

JOHNNY

Here you go. Let's head on up to the house.

Johnny escorts Minny across the lawn toward the house.

INT. FOOTE ESTATE - DINING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Johnny leads Minny into the dining room. The table, set beautifully in silver and crystal, is covered with delicious-looking casseroles, baked goods and fried chicken.

Celia steps forward proudly.

MINNY

What's all this?

CELIA

I cooked it all by myself.

JOHNNY

Yes, she did. She was up all night.

CELIA

I wanted to do something special. I wanted to say "thank you."

Completely surprised and moved, Minny becomes emotional.

MINNY

So...I ain't losing my job?

JOHNNY

No, you've got a job with us for the rest of your life, if you want it.

MINNY

(eyeing a pie)

That's a mile-high meringue, Miss Celia.

Johnny pulls out a chair for her. Minny sits as Celia prepares a plate of food.

Celia stabs a piece of fried chicken and puts it on Minny's plate.

MINNY

Thank you. Ooh! You remember to check the thighs?

CELIA

Mm-hmm. Cooked clean through.

MINNY

Ain't pink in the middle?

CELIA

Mm-mm. Just the way you taught me.

MINNY

Look a here...

AIBILEEN (V.O.)

That table of food gave Minny the strength she needed. She took her babies out from under Leroy and never went back.

EXT. MOUNT ZION CHURCH - DAY

Aibileen and Minny walk toward the church through the parking lot. Cars are stacked up in all directions.

AIBILEEN

What are all these cars doing out here? We late?

MINNY

No, we ain't late.

AIBILEEN

Why ain't you singin'?

MINNY

We got to worry about getting in there and get our seats. Come on now, we late!

INT. MOUNT ZION BAPTIST CHURCH - MOMENTS LATER

As Minny and Aibileen enter the church, two hundred members stand at once. The congregation begins to clap.

Minny begins to clap with a knowing smile.

Aibileen looks around, trying to figure out the object of adulation. She starts clapping, too.

Aibileen steps up to a woman in the last pew.

AIBILEEN
Who we clappin' for?

The woman laughs.

PEARLY/CHURCH WOMAN
Honey, we clappin' for you.

Aibileen looks to Minny, realizing she's in on it.

PREACHER GREEN
Come on down, Sister Clark! Come
on!

Aibileen begins to walk down the center aisle. Preacher Green extends his hand toward her. She joins him on the pulpit.

PREACHER GREEN
All right. All right. Now, this is
an important time in our community.
And we have to thank you for what
you have done.

He lifts a book off of the lectern.

PREACHER GREEN
Now, we know you couldn't put your
name in here, so we all signed our
own.

He gives the book to Aibileen.

AIBILEEN
Thank you.

She hesitates.

PREACHER GREEN
Come on now, come on.

The entire congregation, all holding copies of the book, applaud and "amen". Minny beams.

Aibileen extends a hand toward Minny, who joins her on the pulpit. Aibileen puts her arm around her shoulder.

EXT. PREACHER GREEN'S HOUSE - DAY

Skeeter thumbs through her signed book. Hundreds of signatures cover the pages. She stands with Aibileen and Minny outside Preacher Green's house.

The preacher can be seen in the background, sitting on his porch.

AIBILEEN

Churches over two counties signed our books. All for you and me.

SKEETER

It's beautiful.

Skeeter closes the book regretfully.

AIBILEEN

What's wrong?

SKEETER

I got a job offer from Harper and Row...in New York.

AIBILEEN

Congratulations!

SKEETER

I'm not taking it.

AIBILEEN

What you mean, you not takin' it?

SKEETER

I can't just leave you two here when things are getting bad from a mess I created.

AIBILEEN

If bad things happen, they ain't nothing you can do about it. And now it's for a reason we can be proud of.

Skeeter nods with little relief.

AIBILEEN

I don't mean to rub salt in your wound, but...you ain't got a good life here in Jackson. Plus, your momma's getting better-

Minnie chimes in.

MINNY

You ain't got nothing left here but enemies in the Junior League. You done burned ever bridge there is. And you ain't never gone get another man in this town, and everybody know it. So don't walk your white butt to New York, RUN IT!

Minny places her hand on Aibileen's shoulder.

MINNY

And look a here, Miss Skeeter. I'm gone take care a Aibileen, and she gone take care a me.

Skeeter nods. Aibileen extends her hand to Skeeter, who takes it. Aibileen presses her thumb into Skeeter's palm.

AIBILEEN

Go find your life, Miss Skeeter.

INT. LEEFOLT HOME - KITCHEN - LATER THAT MORNING

Aibileen enters with two bags of groceries. Elizabeth calls out from the den.

ELIZABETH (O.C.)

Aibileen, can you come here, please?

INT. LEEFOLT HOME - DEN - CONTINUOUS

Aibileen enters to find Elizabeth and Hilly staring at her. Elizabeth holds her six month old baby boy.

AIBILEEN

Good morning.

HILLY

Aibileen, the silver I lent Elizabeth last week.

AIBILEEN

It not polished good? Humidity been fighting me on polishing day.

HILLY

When you returned it, three pieces were missing from the felt wrapper. A fork and two spoons.

AIBILEEN

Lemme...lemme go check in the kitchen. Maybe I left some behind.

HILLY

You know as well as I do that silver's not in the kitchen.

Aibileen turns to Elizabeth.

AIBILEEN

You check in Mae Mobley's bed? Since Lil' Man was born, she been putting things-

HILLY

Do you hear her, Elizabeth? She's trying to blame it on a toddler.

Elizabeth won't look at Aibileen.

AIBILEEN

I ain't got no silver.

Elizabeth whispers to Hilly.

ELIZABETH

She says she doesn't have them.

Mae Mobley runs into the room, heads straight for Aibileen.

HILLY

Then it behooves me to inform you that you are fired, Aibileen. And I'll be calling the police.

Mae Mobley grabs Aibileen's skirt.

MAE MOBLEY

Aibee, my froat hurts.

AIBILEEN

I'll go get her some syrup, Miss Leefolt.

HILLY

Elizabeth can take care of her own children.

Elizabeth looks to Hilly somewhat upset with this suggestion.

ELIZABETH

I'll go get the cough syrup.

Aibileen reaches for the baby boy in Elizabeth's arms.

AIBILEEN
Come here, Lil' Man.

Hilly steps between Aibileen and Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH
I'm okay.

Elizabeth takes Lil' Man and leaves the room. Aibileen stands firm in front of Hilly.

AIBILEEN
I didn't steal no silver.

HILLY
Maybe I can't send you to jail for what you wrote, but I can send you for being a thief.

AIBILEEN
(quickly)
I know something about you. Don't you forget that.

Hilly narrows her eyes.

AIBILEEN
And from what Yule May says, they's a lot a time to write letters from jail. Plenty a time to write the truth about you, and the paper is free.

HILLY
Nobody would believe what you wrote.

AIBILEEN
I don't know. I been told I'm a pretty good writer! Already sold a lot a books!

Elizabeth returns with the syrup, Mae Mobley following behind. Aibileen approaches Hilly and leans into her face.

HILLY
Call the police, Elizabeth.

Elizabeth doesn't move.

AIBILEEN
All you do is scare and lie to get what you want.

ELIZABETH
Aibileen, stop!

AIBILEEN
(to Hilly)
You a godless woman. Ain't you
tired, Miss Hilly? Ain't you tired?

Tears of shame and defeat stream down Hilly's face. Finally,
she storms off into the living room

ELIZABETH
Aibileen, you have to go now.

Aibileen kneels down to Mae Mobley. Aibileen begins to cry.

MAE MOBLEY
Don't go, Aibiee!

AIBILEEN
Baby, you need to get back to bed.

MAE MOBLEY
Please don't leave.

AIBILEEN
I gots to, Baby. I am so sorry.

MAE MOBLEY
Are you going to take care of
another little girl?

AIBILEEN
No, that's not the reason. I don't
want to leave you, but...it's time
for me to retire. You my last
little girl.

MAE MOBLEY
Nooooo!

AIBILEEN
Baby, baby, I need you to remember
ever thing I told you. Okay? Do
you remember what I told you?

Mae Mobley nods.

MAE MOBLEY
You is kind. You is smart. You is
important.

AIBILEEN
That's right, Baby Girl.

Aibileen squeezes Mae Mobley for the last time.

Aibileen rises up from Mae Mobley.

MAE MOBLEY
Don't go, Aibee.

AIBILEEN
I gots to, baby.

Aibileen takes her purse from an armchair and turns to Elizabeth.

AIBILEEN
You give my sweet girl a chance.

Elizabeth can't look Aibileen in the eye. Aibileen walks away.

EXT. LEEFOLT HOME - MOMENTS LATER

Aibileen steps out of the house with her purse and walks stoically down the driveway. Tears stream down her face.

AIBILEEN (V.O.)
Mae Mobley was my last baby. In just
ten minutes, the only life I knew
was done.

Mae Mobley runs to the living room window crying. She beats on the glass from inside. Aibileen never turns.

MAE MOBLEY
Aibeeeee! Don't go!

AIBILEEN (V.O.)
God says we need to love our
enemies.

Aibileen stops walking, unable to continue, bending over to cry for a moment.

AIBILEEN (V.O.)
It hard to do.

Mae Mobley continues pounding on the glass, calling for Aibee.

INT. LEEFOLT HOME - DEN - CONTINUOUS

Elizabeth stands there, visibly upset.

AIBILEEN (V.O.)
But it can start by telling the
truth.

EXT. LEEFOLT HOME - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Aibileen attempts to regain her composure.

AIBILEEN (V.O.)
No one had ever asked me what it
felt like to be me. Once I told the
truth about that I felt free.

Mae Mobley is still watching from the window as Aibileen
straightens up and continues walking away from the house, up
the street.

AIBILEEN (V.O.)
And I got to thinking about all the
people I know, and the things I seen
and done... My boy, Treelore,
always said we gonna have a writer
in the family one day. I guess it's
gonna be me...

Her tears give way to a smile.

We pull up and away as she walks into the distance.