

**FRIED GREEN TOMATOES
AT THE WHISTLE STOP CAFE**

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**BASED ON THE NOVEL BY
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March 28, 1991**

1 EXT. WHISTLE STOP CAFE - PRESENT

An open sheet of yellowed newspaper blows down a deserted street. An old grey goat is grazing loose beside old boarded up wood buildings alongside abandoned railroad tracks. Across the front of one building, very faded, a sign - The Whistle Stop Cafe. It is covered with advertising signs, some cardboard, some tin, advertising everything possible to be bought or seen from the 1930s to the 1960s. A rusted awning hangs off Opal's Beauty Shop next door.

Distantly, the whistle of an approaching train.

2 BEGIN MAIN TITLES

Flowering weeds grow profusely between the ties. The rails are rusted, the ties rotten, askew. The clatter of a train approaching. The whistle, closer, the clatter of wheels, louder.

3 TIGHT ON TRACKS

As the ghost train flies by, the wind sweeps aside, the steam from the engine billows down the right-of-way, the clatter is deafening. Alarmed by the sound, the goat bolts, a flock of birds flies out of the trees near the station.

But, there is no train, just a brown Ford LTD driving across the barren tracks.

4 INT. CAR - DAY

TIGHT ON: EVELYN COUCH. She is a woman in her early 40's, nervous and slightly overweight. She holds a bouquet of flowers. Hearing a train whistle, she turns around and looks over her right shoulder at the tracks. ED COUCH, her husband, has heard nothing.

EVELYN

Did you hear that?

ED

What?

EVELYN

(not sure she's heard anything)
Nothing, I guess.

The wind blows, but nothing is in sight. Evelyn looks at a map.

ED

(looks out at a sign that says
Whistle Stop)
Where is Whistle Stop on the map?

EVELYN

I can't find it.

ED
Why'd you tell me to go right ten miles
back?

She smiles politely. He reaches for the map.

ED
You've got a negative sense of
direction.

Ed gets out of the car with the map and tries to orient
himself. Evelyn muses to herself.

EVELYN
You're right Ed. That must be how I
found you.

5 EXT. ROSE HILLS NURSING HOME - DAY

A sterile one story cement block building in a semi-commercial
area of Birmingham. A handful of cars in the parking lot. The
brown LTD pulls in. Ed and Evelyn get out and head for the
front door in silence. Evelyn carries the flowers. He walks
in the door, and Evelyn follows.

6 INT. FRONT HALL - DAY

Evelyn and Ed move through the lobby. We hear the sounds of
old people as they go down the hall. Coming toward them is
JANEEN, a nurse. She is pushing an old man, MR. DUNAWAY, down
the hall. He is laughing and grabbing at women as he passes by
and wears thick glasses.

JANEEN
(grabbing his hand like a child)
Stop that, Mr. Dunaway!

MR. DUNAWAY
You have such soft skin.

She smiles and gently removes his hand when she notices Evelyn
and Ed.

JANEEN
Your aunt is all dressed and waiting
for you, Mr. Couch. Be careful, she's
a little cranky this morning. She bit
my arm.

EVELYN
(under her breath)
Oh, Lord.

Evelyn and Ed enter a room. There is some racket from within,
and Evelyn hurries out of the room just as an object resembling
a hairbrush flies past her head. She ducks, then sighs and
prepares for a second attempt, when:

ED

Why don't you wait outside?

EVELYN

If you think it's best....Have a nice day, Aunt Vesta.

END TITLES

7 INT. SUNROOM - DAY

Evelyn walks into a back visitor's lounge that is empty except for one OLD LADY in a faded sweater with a Christmas corsage who is at a card table working a "Last Supper" jigsaw puzzle.

Evelyn, unhappy, sits down and takes a candy bar out of her purse. Just as she is about to take the first bite the old woman speaks.

NINNY

Did you know they took my gallbladder out?

EVELYN

(startled)

Uh, no, I didn't.

NINNY

Yep, it's still over at the hospital, sitting in a jar. I guess that's where they keep 'em.

EVELYN

(still trying to eat)

I guess.

NINNY

When I was in the hospital, the nurse had just given me one of those Fleet enemas they're so fond of, when I noticed this medical chart next to my bed that said Ninny Threadgoode, eighty-two years old.

(shaking her head)

An eighty two year old widow, imagine that. Have you ever had one of those enemas?

EVELYN

Well, no.

NINNY

You'd remember it. My friend, Mrs. Otis and I are from Whistle Stop. She's lived down the street from me for the past thirty years or so.

NINNY (CONT'D)

After her son died, her daughter-in-law had a fit for her to come and live at the nursing home, and they asked me to come with her and be her roommate. Mrs. Otis doesn't know it, but I'm going back home just as soon as she gets settled in good and then I reckon I'll visit her every day. Does the name Idgie Threadgoode ring a bell?

EVELYN

No, I don't think so.

Evelyn smiles politely and stands up.

NINNY

You'd remember her. You see, I was practically adopted by the Threadgoode family--I married Cleo, her brother. She and her friend Ruth ran the Whistle Stop Cafe. Idgie was a character all right, but how anybody could have thought she murdered that man is beyond me.

EVELYN

I beg your pardon?

NINNY

Sit down and relax a spell, sugar. I'll tell you all about it...Let's see, I remember the day they pulled that truck up out of the river.

DISSOLVE INTO THE PAST.

8 EXT. RIVERBANK - WHISTLE STOP - 1938

A crowd of people have gathered around the riverbank. A DEPUTY from the sheriff's department gives a command. A black truck is pulled out of the river. It is rusted and worn. Tilted on a Georgia license plate. A Sheriff's car rolls to a halt and out walks GRADY KILGORE, a large ruddy faced man. He stares at the license plate and confers with his deputy. He is not happy.

9 INT. WHISTLE STOP CAFE - DAY

Music is playing on a radio. The cafe is full of people laughing and having a good time. Over the cash register is a ratty deer head decorated with a railroad calendar hanging from its neck reading October 1938. IDGIE THREADGOODE--a slender, good-looking woman in her 20's with sparkling eyes and short blonde hair is busy playing poker. RUTH, a beautiful young woman with her long dark hair tied back with a ribbon is watching Idgie carefully. Idgie deals to all but herself.

IDGIE

(smiles)

Any bets?

(no takers)

Why don't you come hunting with us this weekend, Ruth?

RUTH

What and have your hangover on Monday morning? No thanks.

IDGIE

Looks like mine again.

RUTH

One second. You say a full house beats a flush? And a flush beats a straight? And a straight beats a three of a kind?

IDGIE

Yep. Now you in or out? Remember Ruth, I didn't take any cards.

RUTH

Look at me Idgie Threadgoode. Let me see your face. You're bluffing again.

Grady walks in.

IDGIE

Pay to see.

Ruth antes up.

GRADY

Idgie, I've got to talk to you...In private.

IDGIE

Ah Grady, why don't you sit in and I'll deal you a new hand. Gladys won't mind.

Before Idgie can undo the current hand, Ruth turns over Idgie's hand revealing nothing, not even deuces. Ruth reveals a pair of aces and then smiles contentedly.

IDGIE

I'm just trying to teach you not to fall for any tricks.

RUTH

You're doing a great job.

Idgie smiles and leaves with Grady who tips his hat to Ruth.

10 EXT. CAFE - DAY

A small green and white building with a white awning and a sign saying "The Whistle Stop Cafe". Idgie and Grady walk out together and move away from the cafe in silence.

The only sound is a large Black Man in his forties, BIG GEORGE, chopping wood. Idgie senses that this is serious.

BIG GEORGE

Good morning, Grady.

GRADY

Good morning, Big George.

In the background is the town of Whistle Stop, eight buildings and the railroad tracks. It's bustling. Grady stops at a secluded area by the tracks.

IDGIE

What's up?

GRADY

(with great difficulty)

Aw...Somebody found Frank Bennett's truck in the river and that goddamn stupid deputy of mine sent it over the wire before I even got out there. Goddamn it!!

IDGIE

What's gonna happen now?...

GRADY

(sitting)

Well, officially you and Big George are under arrest for murder...You're in my custody until tomorrow. I told them I'd bring you over to Georgia first thing in the morning...I figured that ought to give you enough time...

IDGIE

(puzzled)

For what?

GRADY

(looking off into the distance)

Well, some people have been known to pack up and sneak right out of town in the middle of the night.

IDGIE

What about Big George?

GRADY

The way I figure it, if they got Big George, they'd be satisfied. This is serious, we're talking murder of a white man and somebody's gonna have to pay, but nobody wants to hang a woman.

IDGIE

But it suit them fine to stretch some rope around Big George's neck. I can't let em do that, Grady.

GRADY

Now I know how you feel about Big George--hell, we all do, but that's just the facts of life.

IDGIE

(after a while)

...I can't do that.

Idgie watches Big George working in the distance. Grady nods as Idgie walks over and whispers to Big George and then looks over at Ruth who is watching from the cafe window.

11 INT. SUNROOM - SAME DAY - PRESENT

NINNY

So Idgie Threadgoode and Big George went to jail for the murder of Frank Bennett, but that's a long story.

EVELYN

It sounds that way.

Evelyn goes into her purse and brings out two more candy bars and offers Ninny one.

EVELYN

Would you like one?

NINNY

Oh, thank you honey. Did they take your gallbladder out too?

EVELYN

No.

Evelyn stands to leave, her purse falls and she makes a gallant gesture to catch it, but succeeds only in knocking the jigsaw puzzle down to the floor.

EVELYN

I'm so sorry.

She starts to pick up the pieces.

NINNY

Oh, don't worry about that, honey. I enjoy a visit more than a puzzle.

(reaches in her pocket and pulls out a deck of cards)

Wanna play some five card draw, some stud?

EVELYN
I don't play.

Evelyn is kneeling, holding the pieces of the puzzle and trying to put it back together.

NINNY
I hate solitaire and that's all they play around here... Idgie, you see, had a mind of her own. I guess in order to understand her, you'd have to start way back with her brother Buddy. Idgie was Buddy's pet from the day she was born.

12 EXT. THREADGOODE HOUSE - DAY - 1917

A big white house with a porch. A handsome teenager, BUDDY THREADGOODE, runs into the house, sporting formal wedding attire, but carrying his coat, with his shirt tails hanging out.

JULIAN (O.S.)
Come on, Buddy. Mama wants you inside.

13 INT. THREADGOODE HOUSE - DAY

NINNY (V.O.)
I remember the day we were all getting ready for the wedding. The war had just ended. The Great One, you know.

MAMA THREADGOODE a sweet-looking woman, examines PAPA THREADGOODE's suit. He sports a large handlebar mustache. SIPSEY, the black housekeeper, starts adjusting Papa's sleeve. Sipsey's son, Big George, is on a ladder hanging wedding decorations. LEONA, the beautiful bride to be of 18, is being attended to by her sisters. JULIAN, who is wearing a highly starched suit, is leading his brothers in roughhousing. Mama looks over her brood and sees Leona waiting to speak her piece.

MAMA
What is it Leona?

LEONA
Idgie's upstairs in her room and she says she won't come out as long as she lives.

(wails)
Oh...she's gonna ruin my wedding, Mama.

MAMA
No she's not, precious.

PAPA
(proudly)
Why Leona, you're going to be the most beautiful bride in the entire state of Alabama -- just wait and see.

Mama goes to the bottom of the stairs. Buddy shows up, winded.

MAMA

Imogene Louise Threadgoode. This is your mother. You come down here right this minute. Do you hear me? Buddy, you go fetch her, she'll listen to you.

All of a sudden, Idgie appears at the top of the stairs, where she stands as regally as she can. All eyes focus on her. A huge bow is wrapped around her head and tied very badly. Her dress is starched painfully stiff. The short skirt flares out over many petticoats revealing Idgie's thin legs and skinned knees. She has on white anklets and shiny black baby doll shoes which are new and too tight.

MAMA

(sweetly)

Come on down, honey. Let's see you.

Idgie looks at Buddy who nods encouragingly. She starts down the stairs, holding her skirt down delicately as she surveys her family. A snicker escapes Julian as he hums, "I see London, I see France etc." Buddy shoots him a look and Idgie freezes.

MAMA

Julian.. Hush now.

(to Idgie)

Come ahead, sweetheart.

Idgie reaches the bottom of the stairs. We see her elbows and legs are skinned. Leona is horrified at the sight.

LEONA

Mama!!!

BUDDY

You look just fine, Idgie.

JULIAN

She looks like a monkey.

Idgie runs at the mocking Julian and jumps him, ripping her dress in the process. Buddy pulls her off and she runs out of the house stripping as she goes.

BUDDY

(to Julian)

I'll get you back, boy.

14 EXT. THREADGOODE YARD

Idgie is up the tree in her underwear, sulking. Buddy climbs up the tree with the comfort and confidence of a cat. He sits next to her. Idgie is clearly upset. There's a long beat as Buddy contemplates his sister's predicament.

BUDDY

Looks like you got yourself up a tree,
Little Bit.

IDGIE

They ever make you wear a bow in your
hair, Buddy?

BUDDY

Not yet.

IDGIE

You're supposed to wrap it around till
it hurts and stick pins into your brain.

BUDDY

Ouch.

IDGIE

I'm sick of people making fun of me.

BUDDY

So you're gonna stay put in this tree.

IDGIE

Yep. The hell with them. Who wants to
wear that stupid old dress anyway?

After a moment, we see she is not as tough as she pretends.

BUDDY

You wanna be like Leona?

IDGIE

Nope.

BUDDY

You wanna be like Essie Rue?

IDGIE

Nope.

BUDDY

Besides, you couldn't if you tried.
You're special. Did I ever tell you
about the oysters?

IDGIE

The oysters? No. . .

BUDDY

Well, think about all the millions of
oysters just lying around on the bottom
of the ocean, doing nothing. Just
laying there. Then one day, God looks
around and he sees one and he says "I
think I'm gonna make that one
different." And you know what he does--

BUDDY (CONT'D)
he puts a little piece of sand in it.
Now guess what it can do the others
can't?

IDGIE
What?

BUDDY
It can make a beautiful pearl! So you
should never feel bad about being
different, because you are one of the
lucky ones that got picked.

IDGIE
Do you think God makes mistakes?

BUDDY
The way I figure it, he never makes
mistakes. He made sure we got
together. He made sure that you got
the best looking most charming brother
in the world...who's gonna beat you to
the chocolate cake.

Buddy jumps down from the tree laughing and Idgie follows.

IDGIE
You will not.

BUDDY
I got you out of the tree, now didn't
I?

IDGIE
Did not.

She jumps on Buddy, who growls at her with monster noises.
Idgie shrieks with delight and runs off to the house. Buddy
smiles, picks up her shoes, slaps the soles together and lopes
after his sister.

15 INT. CHURCH - DAY

The CAMERA tracks slowly past the assembled family, revealing
one by one the Threadgoodes dressed in their finest, including
Julian who has a black eye. Finally, the camera finds empty
space and slowly drops down revealing Idgie dressed in a green
velvet pants suit, with a green velvet tie, a smile plastered
on her face.

REV. SCROGGINS
(at the altar)
Do you, Charles Osgoode Justice, take
Leona Chapman Threadgoode to be your
lawful wedded wife?

As the ceremony continues, Mama dabs at her eyes while Idgie takes a small broken mirror and flashes a brilliant reflection on Reverend Scroggin's face. Then Idgie turns the mirror which flashes on the cheek of a young and beautiful Ruth Jameson. Ruth feels the light and turns in its direction and she sees Buddy Threadgoode who eyes her with love and admiration. Mama, without taking her eyes off the altar, takes hold of Idgie's arm and tries to keep her from further mischief.

16 EXT. THREADGOODE YARD

The whole town is there and everyone is congratulating Papa. Mama is busy supervising the party. Sipsey and Big George are loading the tables which have been set up with food and iced tea.

Buddy with Idgie riding on his shoulders comes through the crowd. All the young girls look at him and smile and giggle.

BUDDY

Now don't you look beautiful today,
Lily.

IDGIE

Yes Lily, you look beautiful today.

Lily just blushes wildly.

NINNY (V.O.)

I don't think there was ever a sweeter
boy than Buddy Threadgoode.

(clearing her throat)

He was a terrible flirt, but his heart
belonged to Ruth Jameson. She was a
distant cousin of Mama's and had come
all the way from Valdosta, Georgia that
summer to teach at the Church School.
I remember how pretty she looked that
day.

Idgie climbs down off of Buddy's back and points out RUTH JAMESON, early twenties, striking, with long brown hair. She is serving some punch.

BUDDY

Ruth Jameson, you are just the one I've
been looking for.

He takes her hand and begins to pull her away gently.

RUTH

(pulls her hand away)
Not in public.

Scroggins gives Buddy a dirty look. Idgie looks at Scroggins like he's nuts. Buddy just smiles at the Reverend and slips his arm around Ruth's waist and starts to lead her away.

BUDDY

Let's find some place else to visit.

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RUTH
Buddy, I can't leave, I'm serving.

BUDDY
Oh it's much too loud. Come on.
Rev. Scroggins is talking to a group of women when Idgie walks
by him and

IDGIE
Whatever you do, don't think about them
with no clothes on.

Idgie smiles at the women and the Reverend looks at her with
disdain.

17 EXT. RAILROAD TRACKS - LATE AFTERNOON

The sound of a train in distance. Idgie is following Ruth who
is following Buddy, who is walking backwards on the tracks
talking. Idgie finishes every second sentence for her brother
and he smiles, unruffled by her enthusiasm.

BUDDY
(pointing at field)
See that? Years ago that used to be a
nice little lake. We'd swim in it and
fish. I sure do miss it, I sure do.

RUTH
What happened to it? Did it dry up?

BUDDY
Worse than that. Last fall a big flock
of ducks...oh about forty or fifty,
landed right smack in the middle of
that lake and while they were sitting
there, a fluke thing happened -- the
temperature dropped so fast the whole
lake froze, in three seconds -- just
like that.

Buddy, full of adolescent excitement, snaps his fingers.

RUTH
(sympathetically)
Oh no. Those poor little ducks. Did
it kill them?

BUDDY
Naw...They flew off, and took the lake
with them. Why to this very day --
that lake's somewhere over in Georgia.

Idgie is delighted with the story. She sits down to tie her
shoe. Ruth tries to hit Buddy for fooling her.

17A EXT. BUSHES - DAY

Buddy kisses Ruth passionately. She reciprocates. Her hat falls off. Idgie looks at them from a distance, shakes her head disparagingly and looks away.

17B EXT. TRAIN TRACKS - LATER-

Idgie swings over the tracks on a rope that dangles from a nearby branch. Ruth hesitates and then Buddy holds her and swings with her. She loves it. Her hat falls off again.

RUTH

Oh, no!

Buddy kisses her and swings off after the hat. The train appears behind him at the turn, approaching as the hat skims across the tracks, and slides under the rail, the ribbons tangling in the splintery ties. Buddy starts for the hat clowning as the girls watch him from the distance. He grabs it, but gets his foot caught between two converging steel rails. The train blows its warning whistle.

Idgie yells for Buddy as he grabs his foot and tries to un-pry it. To Idgie and Ruth it still looks as if he's clowning in the dusty windy distance. Buddy tugs and slips and he smiles at Ruth and Idgie as we hear the brakes being applied. The screech of metal on metal. Buddy just about has his shoe untied when he pulls free and stumbles on the gravel mound that holds the railroad ties. Idgie is jolted with fear and runs to Buddy yelling for him to get up.

18 EXT. THREADGOODE YARD

Shot of Mama as we hear a frantic train whistle, and a train screech to a halt, and a scream.

TIGHT ON Mama's eyes with terror in them. She clutches Sipseys's arm.

MAMA

Oh God...not one of my babies...please
God!

WIDE ANGLE of everyone in yard dropping everything and running toward the accident.

19 EXT. RAILROAD TRACKS

A group has gathered around Buddy's broken body. On the outskirts of the crowd, Julian is desperately trying to pull a hysterical Idgie away. Ruth is crying by the side of the tracks but she tries to hug Idgie, who pushes her brusquely away.

IDGIE

(struggling)

Let me go! Let me go!

RUTH

Idgie...

IDGIE

You...You...Nooooo!!!

Idgie starts blindly to hit Ruth as if to beat away the truth. Ruth tries to hold Idgie but she breaks away and runs calling:

IDGIE

Buddy, Buddy!!

LONG SHOT as she pushes her way through the crowd. We hear her heartbreaking scream of pain as she reaches Buddy. She screams his name as if trying to bring him back to life...

IDGIE

BUDDY!!!!

20 EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

The Threadgoode family is assembled. Ruth is in black and clearly distraught. Rev. Scroggins is speaking at the funeral service.

NINNY (V.O.)

Oh, it like to have killed us all but the one who took it the hardest was Idgie. We thought she'd die right along with him.

Ruth looks over at Idgie who stares at her with naked contempt. Idgie bolts from the funeral group and runs off across the countryside. The Reverend pauses as Mama and Papa exchange looks. Sipsev takes her hand from Big George's arm. He nods and heads after Idgie's diminishing figure.

21 EXT. WOODS - DAY

Idgie running through the woods, the twigs and brush lashing her tender skin.

22 EXT. RIVER - NIGHT

Darkness, virtual silence. The river the only constant sound except for the occasional lonely hoot of an owl. Silhouettes are the only visible shapes as THE CAMERA searches for life and finds first a fire and then the hunched shape of Big George nearby. He gets up carrying a blanket and heads toward the diminutive figure of Idgie shivering by the river. He drapes the blanket over her shoulders. She nods a thanks to him and he goes to sit by the fire. The blanket falls off of Idgie's shoulders, and she does not notice. Big George gets up to repeat the gesture as the distant wail of a train echoes through the night.

NINNY (V.O.)

Night after night, she stayed by the river. Big George was the only soul she'd let near her and he watched over her night and day. You know a heart can be broken, but it still keeps on beating just the same.

23 INT. SUNROOM - DAY - PRESENT

TIGHT ON Evelyn, who is caught up in the story in spite of herself. The jigsaw pieces are now piled neatly on the table.

EVELYN

That's so sad.

ED

Evelyn! Evelyn!

Evelyn looks up and sees Ed standing in the doorway. She tries to hide her candy wrappers.

ED

Let's go. The Braves game is going to start soon and you'll miss your thing.

EVELYN

Excuse me, that's my husband, Ed. He's ready to leave. (beat) I can't believe Buddy died.

NINNY

Neither could I. . . Oh...well, I've enjoyed talking to you, sugar. What's your name?

EVELYN

Evelyn. Evelyn Couch. I've got to go.

NINNY

Well, Evelyn you come back and see me, y'hear?

Evelyn, scurrying after Ed, calls back.

EVELYN

Okay.

24 EXT. ROSE HILLS NURSING HOME - DAY

Evelyn and Ed exit the nursing home. Evelyn is reflecting on Ninny's story.

25 INT. CHURCH CLASSROOM - NIGHT

On the blackboard "Romance! Magic! Nurturing!" There are ten women in the class, middle-aged to older, each with a notebook or a tape recorder, including Evelyn. A young woman TEACHER, nicely dressed, is pacing across the front of the class, intensely committed.

TEACHER

It is up to you to put romance back into your relationship. Dedicate yourself to finding ways to find magic in marriage. When you think about romance, what's the first thought that enters your mind?

A woman in her late thirties, MISSY, leans over to Evelyn as the Teacher drones on.

MISSY

Divorce. Remember when marriage counselors used to tell you to wrap yourself in Saran Wrap to put a little charge into your marriage? Do we really pay for these lectures?

Missy looks heavenward. Evelyn has a faraway look in her eyes. She smiles.

26 INT. COUCH HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

Candles are lit on the dinner table. Fresh flowers are in a vase. And five empty boxes of Saran Wrap are resting on a chair as a sixth box joins its ilk. A doorbell rings. Evelyn opens the door ever so slightly, with anticipation written all over her face. Ed sees her and his jaw drops. She is wearing only Saran Wrap. Ed looks around to see if any of his neighbors are watching and shoves her quickly back into the house.

ED

Good God, Evelyn, have you gone insane? People're going to see you. What if I'd been the paper boy?

27 INT. CHURCH CLASSROOM SAME NIGHT

Evelyn is daydreaming away as the class starts emptying out. The lecture is finished.

MISSY

Evelyn, Evelyn.
(Evelyn comes out of her reverie)
What we really need instead of this baloney is an assertiveness training class for southern women, but that's a contradiction in terms, isn't it?
(Evelyn smiles and nods)
Especially you, sweetheart.

28 EXT. COUCH HOUSE - LATER THAT DAY

An undistinguished tract house. The brown LTD pulls into the driveway, Ed gets out with his briefcase, heads for the door. There are children in yards, women with groceries talking to each other, men with hedge clippers. Ed opens the door.

29 INT. COUCH HOME-DAY

Evelyn has set the table nicely, with fresh flowers, lit candles and has a multi-course meal on the table waiting, only she's not dressed in Saran Wrap, but in a nice outfit. She has made a real effort. Ed drops his briefcase, grabs his plate and heads to the television set and turns on the ball game. Evelyn is deflated.

EVELYN

Why don't you sit at the table and have dinner with me?

ED

Sorry honey, the game's almost over. Why are you so dressed up?

EVELYN

Ed...If I answered the door wearing only Saran Wrap, would you still be watching the baseball game?

ED

No, I'd be checking you into a looney bin.

Evelyn reflects on his response and then begins to eat.

30 EXT. ROSE HILLS NURSING HOME - DAY

Close on a box of donuts. A hand pulls them out of a car and we reveal Evelyn carrying flowers to go with her snacks. She and Ed head in silence towards the cement structure.

31 INT. NURSING HOME - DAY

Ed enters his aunt's room. Evelyn takes a deep breath and plasters a smile on her face and enters--and exits with two objects barely missing her head.

EVELYN

(exiting)

I'm glad you're feeling better, Aunt Vesta.

(to whoever's listening)

Good thing her eyesight's failing.

32 INT. SUNROOM - DAY

Evelyn is sitting alone in the sunroom with a blank look on her face eating out of a huge box of donuts. Ninny spots her.

NINNY

Hello!

Evelyn jumps she is so startled and nearly dumps her donuts. Evelyn tries to regain her composure.

EVELYN

Hi.

NINNY

I was hoping you would come. My roommate, Mrs. Otis, said I could visit with her and her family, but I said "thank you kindly, but I think I might have my own visitor" and here you are!

EVELYN

(offering her one)
Hope you like donuts, Mrs. Threadgoode.

NINNY

Visitor and donuts to boot! Now, you can't beat that. You can call me Ninny. Everyone else does. It makes me feel modern.

EVELYN

(long pause)
How's your friend doing?

NINNY

Mrs. Otis? Oh, not so good. It looks like I won't be getting back home for a while, and I sure miss it. It's funny what you'll miss when you're away from home. I miss the smell of coffee and bacon frying. You can't smell a thing they got cooking here. Oh, what I wouldn't give for a plate of fried green tomatoes like the ones we used to have at the cafe. After Buddy died, Idgie just tempted the Good Lord to take her away.

CUT TO THE PAST

33 EXT. WHISTLE STOP TRAIN TRACKS - DAWN - 1926

Idgie is jumping from freight car to freight car. She is in her late teens, but looks younger. She is agile, and graceful - a wild look in her eyes. The more dangerous the stunt, the more laughter it provokes from her. She climbs down into a freight car and starts dumping something overboard.

NINNY (V.O.)

She hardly ever came home. Only Big George knew how to find her. Then one summer day, Mama sent for her. Like they say, God never shuts one door without opening another.

34 EXT. THREADGOODE YARD - DAY 1926

Idgie, dressed in ratty overalls and barefoot, is walking up to the house with a string of fish over her back and a fruit-jar of honey. It's a beautiful spring day.

IDGIE

Mama!!

Mama and Sipsev are watering the ferns. Mama's eyes light up when she hears Idgie's voice.

IDGIE

Mama.

MAMA

Out here!

Idgie comes out and Mama gives her a kiss.

MAMA

Well, it's about time.
(running her fingers through Idgie's hair)

Well, if you don't look like the wild man of Borneo. Guess who's here?

IDGIE

Who?

MAMA

Ruth Jameson, she's come all the way over from Valdosta, Georgia. She's staying with us this summer and will be in charge of all the young people's activities over at the church.

IDGIE

(she goes pale)

Is that why you wanted to see me?

MAMA

Well, we've got so many nice things planned.

Ruth Jameson comes to the screen door. She's older now, but very beautiful, in a white dress.

MAMA

Ruth, you remember my youngest child?

RUTH
(she smiles)
Of course I do. Hi Idgie.

IDGIE
(trying to control her displeasure)
What are you doing here?

MAMA
Idgie, I just told you, Ruth's staying
here, helping out at the church...

Idgie runs off.

RUTH
Maybe, this isn't such a good idea.

MAMA
She'll get used to you.

SIPSEY
Lord, honey. Pay attention now.

Mama Threadgoode closes her eyes in horror as we hear in the distance the sound of yelling and horn blowing as the truck drives away.

35 INT. CHURCH

Mama, Papa, Ruth, and the entire Threadgoode clan, minus Idgie of course, are present. Rev. Scroggins is speaking.

SCROGGINS
Snakes and serpents take many
disguises. Why, just ten miles away,
down by the river, there lurks a den of
the devil filled with the maggots of
evil where liquor and sin abide. Run
by a painted lady, Eva Bates, a sister
of Satan, where unspeakable acts of
lust and degradation are performed
every night...

35A EXT. WHISTLE STOP BAPTIST CHURCH - SUNDAY SERVICE

A sign says Reverend Scroggins Preaching on "Why did Noah let two snakes on the boat, when he had a chance to get rid of them once and for all." We see Idgie, now early 20's, and some bummy looking friends hanging out the window of a pickup truck as it drives by.

IDGIE (V.O.)
Hey Scroggins! Ya finally preaching
about something your kin to--snakes!

35B INT. WHISTLE STOP BAPTIST CHURCH - SUNDAY SERVICE

Mama, Papa, and Ruth exchange looks of concern. Mama whispers something to Ruth.

36,37,38 OMIT

36,37,38 C

39 EXT. WINDING DIRT ROAD - NIGHT

Big George is driving through the woods with Ruth.

40 INT. RIVER CLUB

Idgie sits smoking her cigarettes, looking like the cat that just swallowed the canary.

IDGIE

I'll see you and raise you twenty.

Grady eyes her suspiciously.

GRADY

You ain't fooling nobody, Idgie. You're just bluffing again as usual--you don't have nothing.

IDGIE

Well, maybe I do, and maybe I don't. But now it's gonna cost you thirty cents to find out.

TIGHT ON Idgie's hand. She has three aces--and a pair of tens. Ruth enters the screen door and shades her eyes.

RUTH

Excuse me, is Idgie Threadgoode here by any chance?

EVA

(calling out)

Come on in, honey. She's right here.

As she walks over to the table everyone is startled to see such a fine lady dressed in white in this place. The men make a feeble attempt at standing and tipping their hats.

IDGIE

What the hell are you doing here?

RUTH

I came to talk to you.

IDGIE

Well, you'll have to wait. I'm busy.

EVA

Pull up a chair and have a seat, honey. Can I get you a beer?

RUTH

Oh, no thank you. I'll just stand here and wait if you don't mind.

IDGIE

Come on, Grady. Here's your big chance. Are you in or out?

Everyone at the table is very uncomfortable at having Ruth there, and one by one the men throw their cards on the table, waiting for something to happen. Ruth goes over and starts picking up Idgie's money.

RUTH

I'm afraid you will have to excuse Idgie. She's going home for dinner.

IDGIE

What the hell are you doing??

RUTH

(to others)
Nice meeting you. Say goodbye, Idgie.

All nod and mumble something as Ruth heads out the door with a dumbfounded Idgie right behind her.

IDGIE

Where are you going with my money?

RUTH

We are going home.

IDGIE

Who the hell are you to boss me around?

RUTH

I'm the one who's taking you home, that's who.

41 EXT. RIVER CLUB - NIGHT

They head to the truck and Idgie sees Big George.

IDGIE

Thanks a lot, pal.

(To Ruth)

Give me my money back.

RUTH

Now get in the car.

Idgie opens the door and gets in the car and slides through to the other side. She opens the passenger door and gets out as Ruth is getting in. Idgie slams the door and walks off.

IDGIE

I'll leave here when I good and well want to. Have a nice trip home!

Big George shakes his head.

BIG GEORGE

Oh Lord. . .

Ruth gets out and starts after Idgie again.

RUTH

I just don't know how you can break your mother's heart like you do.

IDGIE

I'm not doing anything to my mother.

RUTH

Oh no? Why do you think I'm over here for the summer? Your mother was so worried about you she thought because I was a teacher I might be able to talk some sense into you, but I can't even find you mostly. You're too busy feeling sorry for yourself.

IDGIE

What are you talking about?

RUTH

Idgie, you are not the only one who lost Buddy.

Idgie freezes at the mention of his name for a moment, then turns and walks away while Ruth stands her ground.

RUTH

Buddy is dead. We all miss him, but turning your back on your family is not going to bring him back.

Idgie gives Ruth a deadly stare.

IDGIE

Who the hell are you to talk about my brother? If it hadn't been for you in the first place--You... Just mind your own goddamn business and give me my money back.

Ruth drops the money and heads back to the truck.

42 INT. THREADGOODE HOUSE - DAY

Ruth walks in the dining room and shakes her head no.

PAPA

(sighs)

Father, we thank You for this bountiful table and this family. Keep us safe and close to Thy bosom. Amen.

43 INT. KITCHEN - LATER THE SAME NIGHT

Mama is bringing the remains of dessert back into the kitchen, when she spies Idgie walking in the back way. Mama smiles.

44 INT. DINING AREA

The meal is just about over, but Mama comes in carrying enough food for one more plate, which Sipsey sets right next to Ruth.

ESSIE RUE

Can we be excused?

MAMA

No.

ESSIE RUE

But Mama. . .

MAMA

(interrupting)

No, young lady.

No one understands Mama's reaction until Idgie makes her appearance. Her hair is slicked down and she sits down as if it's no big deal. Everyone is staring at her. There is silence as Mama starts to serve Idgie.

RUTH

Could you please pass me the tomatoes. They look awfully good.

Idgie looks up and sees the tomatoes right in front of her and quickly picks them up and passes them, but the plate tips and one goes flying in the air. Idgie puts the plate down with one hand and catches the errant tomato with the other, as if perfectly planned. Ruth smiles at her.

RUTH

Thank you.

Idgie goes about her business as the rest of the family just stare in amazement. Julian starts to laugh.

IDGIE

What are you laughing at?

JULIAN

You.

Idgie's eyes narrow at Julian and then she swings AT CAMERA.

45 EXT. CHURCH - DUSK

Julian walks out of the building with a serious bruise on his cheek and glares at Idgie. Ruth walks outside and Idgie comes up to her.

IDGIE

I was thinking about some of the things you were saying and I'd like to show you something.

RUTH

What is it?

IDGIE

Lemme show you. You gotta hurry though.

They start walking briskly towards the railroad tracks.

46 EXT. RAILROAD TRACKS - DUSK

They approach a train and Idgie sneaks up to a boxcar. She pulls out a large pry bar and wedges open the door and hops up.

IDGIE

Hop in.

RUTH

Hop?

IDGIE

Oh, give me your hand.

Idgie pulls Ruth up into the car.

IDGIE

Well, look at all this.

We see cans and produce of the day stacked inside the car.

RUTH

It's all very nice, but I don't understand why you brought me here.

We hear the train whistle blow and then the train starts to move. Ruth is surprised.

IDGIE

Well, you said I was selfish and I'm gonna show you that you're wrong.

RUTH

Don't you think we should get off the train?

IDGIE

This is something Buddy and I used to do.

Ruth looks out the train and she looks a little queasy.

IDGIE

You all right?

RUTH

Well, sometimes I get a little dizzy looking down.

IDGIE

Don't look down.

Ruth smiles politely as Idgie lifts up a handful of cans and foodstuffs and walks to the open area of the car. She starts tossing them out the door.

RUTH

What are you doing?

IDGIE

Come look.

Ruth does not relish the idea of going so close to the edge, but she steels herself and looks out and sees the hungry faces of poor black families and migrant workers who are waiting anxiously for Idgie's gifts.

IDGIE

You talk about give unto others.

RUTH

Yes, but this food isn't yours to give.

IDGIE

That's Church talk. Well, I've seen those same people who are on their knees at church on Sunday over at Eva's on Monday, on their knees again, but praying to a different God.

Idgie throws out an armful of food as the children scurry for it and some of the men shout "Thanks Railroad Bill."

IDGIE

Come on. Help!

Ruth is in a quandary, but one more look at those hungry faces outside and Ruth begins to help too.

IDGIE

All right, time to get off.

Ruth again is puzzled. The train comes out of the tunnel.

IDGIE

All right, jump.

RUTH
I have to get you to the doctor. Which way is it?

IDGIE
'Bout two miles if you follow the tracks.

RUTH
Well, let's go.

Ruth tries to pick Idgie up, but it's very difficult and painful.

IDGIE
You'll never be able to carry me that far.

(Ruth gives her a look)
I know, never ever say never.

RUTH
I'm not carrying you. You're walking.

With great effort, Ruth lifts Idgie up, places her arm around her and Idgie hops as Ruth walks slowly.

IDGIE
I can't tell you. Damn. . . I'm really sorry about this.

Ruth approaches the tracks and slowly starts to trudge home.

47 INT. CHURCH SCHOOL

Ruth is reading from Thoreau and THE CAMERA pulls back from her, revealing a full house and then IT TILTS down and tracks past the shoes of the students, polished, in nice order, one by one until it goes outside the classroom and comes to rest on a bandaged leg. CAMERA cranes up to reveal Idgie who listens to Ruth read about the sounds of nature, isolation and beauty.

48 INT. JULIAN AND CLEO'S ROOM

Both boys are asleep. Sound of morning birds chirping. Idgie goes through the pockets of a pair of pants, finds nothing, then eases the top drawer of the dresser open enough to slip her hand in, smiles as her hand finds a set of car keys.

49 EXT. ROOF

Idgie crawls along a gutter connection that nearly gives way under her weight. It is rather difficult with her leg bandaged. She scrambles to a more secure area, drops to another section of roof, taps on a closed window of Buddy's old room. Nothing. Taps again. Idgie opens the window. She whispers.

IDGIE
Aren't you ready yet?

RUTH

I'm ready.

Ruth tries to get out of bed, gets tangled and crashes to the floor. Idgie has to suppress a laugh.

RUTH

This doesn't have anything to do with trains, does it?

IDGIE

No. I told you that I wanted to show you something before you go. It's a surprise. Julian even loaned me the keys to his car. Sipsy made us a picnic.

50 TO 57 OMIT

50 TO 57 OMIT

58 EXT. BACKWOODS

Idgie is driving Julian's old Model T along the dusty narrow roads.

59 EXT. MEADOW - DAY

They exit the car.

RUTH

You don't have a license, do you? Julian didn't loan you this car. You stole the keys.

Idgie glances at Ruth to see how mad she is.

IDGIE

I want to show you something, something that guy Thoreau, you were talking about, would like. You gotta swear you'll never tell another living soul about it.

Exasperated Ruth walks out of the woods into a lovely sunlit meadow. Ruth carries the picnic basket, Idgie hobbles along and carries a blanket. There is a fallen tree at the far end of the meadow. Idgie drops the blanket under an old shade tree, takes an empty jelly jar out of the picnic basket.

IDGIE

Stay here. No matter what happens, don't move. And be quiet. Don't make any noise, whatever you do.

RUTH

What are you going to do?

Idgie heads for the fallen tree, halfway there she glances back to see if Ruth is watching. She is. Idgie approaches the tree, humming softly, and eases her jar into the hollow in the tree --

60 EXT. BEE TREE

A swarm of angry bees burst out of the tree and completely cover Idgie. Ruth is scared out of her wits. Idgie, humming, pulls the jar full of honey and honeycomb out of the tree and very quietly starts walking back toward Ruth, completely covered with bees.

As she walks softly away from the tree, the bees begin to peel off and return to their hives. When she gets back to Ruth, there are only a half-dozen bees left in her hair.

IDGIE

(grinning like a fool)

Here, madam, this is for you.

She hands the jar to Ruth. Ruth looks down and doesn't take the jar.

RUTH

Why did you do that?

IDGIE

Shh. Quiet. You'll frighten the bees.

RUTH

You could've been killed!

IDGIE

I do it all the time. I never get stung. I'm sorry. Don't you want the honey? Don't be mad at me, Ruth. I just wanted to give you a going away present.

RUTH

Mad?

IDGIE

Please don't be mad at me. The bees won't sting unless you stir 'em up. They'll give you their honey. You're the only person that...

Idgie is now very upset. Ruth puts her arms around Idgie.

RUTH

Oh, Idgie, I'm not mad at you.

IDGIE

(Idgie stares at her for a long beat)

Buddy loved you, didn't he?

(Ruth nods)

Do you still think about him?

RUTH

All the time.

IDGIE

So do I... He brought me here. He taught me how to listen to the bees, how to get the honey. (beat) Is it bad what I did?

RUTH

No.

IDGIE

I thought it might be crazy or something.

RUTH

No, no, no. I heard there were people who could charm bees, but I've never seen it before today.

Idgie starts to smile.

IDGIE

(Long Beat)... You like me don't you?

RUTH

(smiles at her forwardness)

Yes.

IDGIE

That's good. I like you too, a lot. Are you really going home right away? The summer's hardly begun.

RUTH

Are you going to promise to be real sweet to your Mama from now on?

IDGIE

(Idgie nods affirmatively)
(beat) You know, Ruth, I would kill for you, if anybody ever hurt you.

RUTH

That's a terrible thing to say.

IDGIE

No, it isn't. I'd rather kill for love than hate, wouldn't you?

Ruth laughs. How else do you respond to this one?

RUTH

You're just a bee charmer, Idgie Threadgoode, that's what you are, a bee charmer.

Idgie puts her finger in the fresh honey, tastes it and smiles.

 IDGIE
You wanna taste it?

Ruth nods and Idgie scoops some more on her finger and offers it to Ruth who tastes the honey.

LATER SAME LOCATION

A sole bee buzzes around an empty honey jar. THE CAMERA glides over to Ruth who is sleeping peacefully and then reveals Idgie also resting. The women are like two mirror images. Idgie's eyes open.

 IDGIE
You up?

 RUTH
 (stretching)
Sort of.

 IDGIE
You have the most beautiful scent.

 RUTH
 (laughs)
It's perfume. It's imported, from Paris France.

 IDGIE
It smells like lilac and wild berries.
(beat) What did you and Buddy talk about mostly?

 RUTH
You.
 (Idgie smiles proudly)
And the future. Having a family and starting a business, one where people could get together and have a good time.

 IDGIE
You know what disturbs me? I can't remember his smell.
 (Ruth takes Idgie's hand)
Tell me everything you know about Buddy.

61 INT. RIVER CLUB - NIGHT

Idgie and Ruth walk into a darkened building when the lights come on and:

 VOICES
Surprise!!

All the guys from the Camp start singing "Happy Birthday" to Ruth who is overwhelmed.

RUTH
Idgie Threadgoode?

IDGIE
Now tonight we're going to have a real party. Drink this and then we'll play some poker.

RUTH
I'm sorry, but I don't know how to play poker and never drink.

62 EXT. RIVER CLUB - NIGHT

CAMERA tracks past an unfinished card game, past empty liquor bottles towards two old pickups that have their lights turned on and we are watching one of the first night baseball games ever played in the South. Idgie is pitching and Ruth is the umpire. Grady is at bat. Idgie throws a pitch.

RUTH
Sttttrrrriiike two.

GRADY
Are you crazy? That pitch was outside by three feet.

RUTH
Don't argue with the referee.

GRADY
It's umpire.

RUTH
Don't argue with him either.

Grady shakes his head as Ruth takes a swig out of a Coke bottle and swallows with difficulty. Idgie is grinning something fierce, smiles, winds up and delivers. The ball hits the dirt and bounces straight over the plate.

RUTH
Sttttrrrriike three. You're out.

GRADY
The ball bounced in front of the plate.

RUTH
It did?

GRADY
Oh look what you created, Idgie.

Grady drops the bat and heads behind the plate.

IDGIE

You're up now, Ruth.

RUTH

I don't know how to bat.

IDGIE

And you never drink either. Just hold the bat and swing. I'll pitch it easy to you.

Grady helps her hold the bat and she stands wobbly at the plate and Idgie lathers up the ball and prepares to pitch.

RUTH

What is she doing to the ball?

GRADY

It's a spitter.

Idgie pitches and Ruth swings--or the ball hits the bat, but it goes, way into the night.

RUTH

Yeah!!!

IDGIE

End of game, that ball's lost. You ever skinny dipped in a river by moonlight?

63 LATER THAT NIGHT-BY THE RIVER

Idgie smiles as Ruth, in near tears, plays poker. They're both in wet clothing.

RUTH

I've never had so much fun in my whole life. And I even got a home run.

IDGIE

A clean one at that.

RUTH

A straight beats three of a kind?
 (Idgie nods affirmatively)
 You know, poker isn't half bad. Oh Idgie, what's your mother gonna say if she sees us both drunk?

IDGIE

It's about time you crossed the line. You've always done the right thing. You took care of your daddy, the preacher, when he took sick. You take care of all the kids at the church school. And you're gonna take care of your mother.

RUTH

That's right and I'm gonna marry the man I'm supposed to... but I've never really had this much fun.

Ruth reaches for her Coke bottle and Idgie takes it away from her.

IDGIE

That's enough fun for one night. You're gonna get married?

RUTH

As soon as the summer's over.

IDGIE

Why spoil the fun? Do you love him?

Ruth starts to laugh.

RUTH

Everybody in Valdosta loves him and he's done so much for Mama. He's the one who gave me the french perfume you liked so much.

IDGIE

Well you've gotta do what you've gotta do, I guess... We better get you home.

RUTH

Oh, am I going to miss you. This is the best birthday I've ever had.

She kisses Idgie on the cheek.

64 EXT. THREADGOODE HOUSE - DAY

Mama is by the car which is packed with Ruth's possessions. She looks worried. A handsome man with slicked back black hair waits impatiently. He is FRANK BENNETT.

65 INT. IDGIE'S ROOM - DAY

Idgie is sitting on the side of her bed, staring out the window at this man. Ruth knocks.

IDGIE

Come in.

RUTH

Time to go.

IDGIE

I know.

RUTH
It's hard to believe the summer's over,
isn't it?

IDGIE
Yeah.

RUTH
Well, it's always difficult to say
goodbye.

IDGIE
(interrupting)
You don't have to. I know why you're
leaving. I understand that your Mother
needs you to take care of her and that
your fiance, what's his name. . .

RUTH
Frank Bennett.

IDGIE
. . .Is waiting for you. I understand.
Thanks for everything.

RUTH
Well, I want to thank you also. You're
very special Idgie Threadgoode. (beat)
Are you sure you're okay?

IDGIE
Yes, I'm fine.
(she smiles)
Can't you see I'm smiling? You better
go, or you'll be late.

RUTH
Bye.

IDGIE
So long.

Ruth exits the room and Idgie remains motionless and then throws
a glass item against the wall and it breaks. Ruth re-enters.

RUTH
Idgie.

IDGIE
You're really going to marry that weasel
out there, aren't you?

RUTH
Don't talk like that.

IDGIE
Why are you marrying him?

RUTH

Because I want to, that's why.

Idgie chucks another object against the wall.

IDGIE

You don't love him. You don't. You know you don't. You really want to stay here with us. I know you do. We love you.

RUTH

Oh, Idgie, you're not being practical.

IDGIE

Then tell me you love him.

RUTH

I've got to go.

IDGIE

(Idgie is crazed)

See. You're the liar, not me and I hate you and I hope you die! I don't ever want to see you again as long as I live! I hate you! Liar!

Ruth grabs her by the shoulders and shakes her.

RUTH

Stop it!

IDGIE

I hope you rot in hell!

Ruth slaps her hard across the face. Idgie looks at her speechless, stunned. Ruth nearly takes her in her arms, but at the last minute, without touching her, turns and walks out, closing the door softly.

66 EXT. HIGHWAY

A series of shots of Idgie driving Julian's Model T at night and at dawn.

67 EXT. VALDOSTA, GEORGIA - DAY

A small town, much prettier than Whistle Stop, with a general store, a drugstore, a barbershop, and a post office on a square with a beautiful church on one side. The Threadgoode Model T chugs into town, parks at the store with the church in view.

68 EXT. VALDOSTA BAPTIST CHURCH

A beautiful summer day, fruit trees blossoming, birds singing. The church is overflowing with well-dressed people. Across the yard, Julian's Model T, parked in among the trees nearly invisible.

3

Idgie is curled up in the front seat drinking whiskey. She is very drunk and very miserable.

We hear muffled strains of the organ coming from the church. The door flies open and people burst out the door. A beautiful Ruth and good-looking FRANK come down the stairs followed by Ruth's MOTHER. People gather around them, throwing rice. Much noise.

Frank takes Ruth's Mom by the hand and gives her a big hug and kiss. She blushes as Frank whispers something to her which makes her smile and wave him off with her hand. Frank jumps into the car with Ruth and heads off. Idgie sits up and in her drunken stupor murmurs goodbye to Ruth just as their car disappears around the corner.

69 OMIT

70 MISSY'S HOME - NIGHT

69 (

The children's furniture is pushed to the side, eight youngish women are sitting on exercise mats on the floor and are all in slacks. And Evelyn, looking younger and with a different hairstyle, in stockings, high heels and a dress. The TEACHER is young and serious and is handing out mirrors.

TEACHER

So, during these next weeks we will be learning to reclaim our own power, as women. Tonight we are going to begin to explore our femaleness by examining the source of our strength and our separateness -- our vaginas.

Evelyn draws in a breath of alarm, peeks at Missy who like the others, isn't the least bit shocked.

TEACHER

So, if you'll all slip off your panties and straddle your mirrors--

Missy and the other women are doing just as they are told. Evelyn struggles to her feet, deeply embarrassed.

TEACHER

Mrs. Couch --

EVELYN

I need to be excused for a moment. Missy, won't you come to the ladies room with me?

Missy stares at her sympathetically, but unsure of what to do.

TEACHER

Do you find this threatening?

EVELYN
No...I...well...I didn't realize--

TEACHER
(gently)
Do you have a problem with your
sexuality?

EVELYN
No, ma'am, but I do have a problem with
my girdle.

Evelyn walks out of the house

71 INT. COUCH HOUSE - NIGHT - PRESENT

71

Ed walks in and startles Evelyn who immediately starts to tidy up the immaculate dinner table. As is his custom, he takes his food and heads to the television. Evelyn scrambles after him bringing his drink.

EVELYN
Ed those classes I've been going to forever aren't helping us one bit. Let's drive to Florida, like when we got married. Kyle's gone and busy with his own life. It'd be just the two of us.

ED
It's just the two of us here. This chicken is great.

EVELYN
Why thank you. We could rent a boat and drift around in the hot sun. What do you think about it?

ED
I'm just getting used to it being quiet in here and don't go to those classes if they aren't helping you. Damn, the game's rained out.

72 INT. ROSE HILLS NURSING HOME ENTRY - DAY

Evelyn enters and is joined by Janeen. The two of them walk down the hallway.

JANEEN
Hey, Mrs. Couch. How are you?

EVELYN
Fine, how are you?

JANEEN

Dead on my feet. We lost two of them last night. Not within five minutes of each other.

(whispering)

'Course the worst part is trying to get them down the hall so it won't upset the others. We try and pile laundry on top of 'em, but they know. You can't disguise a dead body, no matter what you do.

Evelyn, who is carrying a bag of treats for the aunt, stops at her door and very carefully places it inside the doorway. Evelyn and Janeen both quickly dart past the door and to their surprise nothing comes flying out.

EVELYN

Maybe she's feeling better.

They exchange a look when they see Mr. Dunaway, dressed to kill, wheeling himself slowly into the aunt's room--only to come rolling out at high speed and nearly toppling with the contents of Evelyn's bag of treats following soon after him. Evelyn and Janeen smile.

EVELYN

Maybe she's not.

JANEEN

Wait till you see Mrs. Threadgoode.

73 INT. SUN ROOM - DAY

Janeen leaves and Evelyn enters and spots Ninny. Someone has dyed her hair bright purple.

NINNY

Do you like it? I wanted to look my best for Easter.

EVELYN

(trying not to appear shocked)
Ahh. Who did it for you, darlin'?

NINNY

Well, believe it or not, it was a student, a little bitty person, almost a midget, from the beauty college. Sometimes they come out and do our hair for free, just to get a little practice. Is Ed with you?

Evelyn hands Ninny a chocolate bunny.

EVELYN

Just me alone. His aunt told him she didn't want any visitors, especially us. It's a shame. I think he feels bad, but Lord if he'll talk to me about it. Since our son Kyle grew up and left home, he hardly talks to me at all, even during dinner.

NINNY

Maybe you should spice up his food. That'll get his attention.

Evelyn takes bites out her chocolate bunny and Ninny decapitates hers.

EVELYN

You never finished telling me about Idgie.

NINNY

Well, let's see, where were we? Ruth had just gotten married to Frank Bennett.

EVELYN

Wasn't that the name of the man that Idgie was arrested for murdering?

NINNY

That's right. Of course after Ruth left, Idgie just went back to her old ways. It took her a few years, but she finally decided to bury the hatchet--to go see Ruth.

CUT TO THE PAST:

74 75 OMIT

75,74 OM

75A EXT. BIG GEORGE'S HOUSE - DAY

75

Big George enters with a large package.

75B INT. BIG GEORGE'S HOUSE - DAY

75

Big George goes into a back room where Idgie is sleeping on an old couch with a tilted empty bottle near her head. He drops the package off and starts to leave the room, when Idgie opens one eye.

BIG GEORGE

I didn't want to wake you, Miz Idgie, but it's a full days drive to Valdosta and your Mama says if you going all the way to Valdosta, then she wants you to give this pie to Ruth.

IDGIE

How'd she know where I was going?

Sipsey walks in.

SIPSEY

She knows. Now don't go stirrin' up no trouble with Miz Ruth, you hear?

76 EXT. VALDOSTA - DAY

Idgie in a Model T driving up a dusty road leading to a large farmhouse.

Idgie gets out of car. She is slender and has grown quite attractive. Three hound dogs are jumping up on her, barking, trying to be petted. She knocks on the door. A frail OLD LADY comes and opens the door.

IDGIE

(nervously)

Is Ruth at home?

OLD WOMAN

Who's calling?

IDGIE

(very nervous)

Just tell her it's the bee charmer from Alabama.

OLD WOMAN

Ruth, it's some bee person here to see you.

Idgie nervously waits and looks around the front porch and at the land in the distance. Through the screen door we see Ruth coming to the door, opening it. When she sees Idgie, she's startled.

RUTH

Idgie?

Ruth stands silhouetted by the door, her face in shadow. Something's not right.

IDGIE

(awkwardly handing her the package)

Hi Mama said to give this pie...look uh, what I said about rotting in hell, I...I don't hate you. I think you're probably the finest person I've ever met. So I'm sorry. We all miss you and Mama and Papa'll welcome you back for a visit anytime.

RUTH

You drove how many hours to apologize?
Idgie Threadgoode, how are you? You
look so, so grown up. Tell me, do you
have a fellow yet?

IDGIE

A couple, but I can't decide on any.
Grady's the most persistent, but. . .

RUTH

Grady Kilgore.

IDGIE

Don't say it so loud. How come you
don't write at all, even to Mama?

Ruth hears a noise from inside the house. As she turns, the
light strikes her face and reveals a black eye. There is no
activity inside the house.

IDGIE

Are you all right?

RUTH

...Yes, I'm fine.

IDGIE

You don't look fine. Where'd you get
the shiner?

FRANK (O.S)

(from upstairs)

Who's down there?

RUTH

(glancing up, back down front
stairs)

Well, thanks for the pie. Well, I
guess you...uh...You better go.

IDGIE

He didn't hit you, did he?

RUTH

You better be going, now.

IDGIE

He did. He beat you. Well I'm going
to beat him to a pulp.

RUTH

(Idgie tries to enter the house and
Ruth grabs her)

You're not going to do anything, you
hear? Now please Idgie, just leave.
If you care about me, if you really do,
you'll turn around and leave this
minute.

Ruth releases Idgie who looks at Ruth unable to comprehend why she is stopping her and finally gives in and heads back to her car. Frank's houseboy walks around the corner of the house and watches as Idgie turns around and yells to Frank Bennett.

IDGIE

You touch her again, you bastard, and I'll tear your eyes out and kill you quicker than you can say Custer.

Frank arrives at the door, towelling his wet head. He sees the pie in Ruth's hands.

FRANK

What'd she say about custard?

RUTH

Nothing.

79 INT. RIVER CLUB - NIGHT

A juke box is playing sad music. Laughter can be heard as Eva Bates is playing poker with the boys. Grady comes over, real friendly.

GRADY

Idgie?

IDGIE

Grady.

GRADY

You been duckin' me. What do you say?

IDGIE

I say hey. This is a bad time to be bugging me...

(Grady folds his arms and waits)

Oh, you don't want to marry me, Grady Kilgore. Have you lost your mind? Go marry Gladys Moats, she just adores you.

GRADY

I'm not askin' her, I'm askin' you to be my wife.

IDGIE

What're you gonna be thinkin' when I'm out fishin' and drinkin' with someone other than you? You're gonna be thinkin' you own me and you want me and you're gonna be madder than a wet hen.

A cute guy, named Kirby, walks by and winks at Idgie and Grady notices.

GRADY

Who's that? He's not from around these parts.

IDGIE

Just someone who's real good with a rifle...See, Grady. We're not even married and you're already jealous.

GRADY

I'm not jealous. You're just a goofy girl, Idgie Threadgoode.

Idgie jumps Grady and knocks him to the floor.

IDGIE

Who you callin' a goof?

GRADY

You.

GRADY

Now stop it Idgie before I get mad and hurt you.

IDGIE

Just try it.

They wrestle some more, rolling around until Grady gets on top of her and pins her with his considerable weight to the ground, but Idgie just refuses to stop struggling.

GRADY

Give up.

IDGIE

Never.

GRADY

Stop it, Idgie.

IDGIE

...Okay, okay. Just let me up.

Grady lets go and Idgie just jumps him again and once more Grady pins her on the ground, his face reddened and close to hers.

GRADY

Don't pull that again.

IDGIE

Then you better keep me down for the rest of your life cause I'll never give in to you.

NINNY (V.O.)

Grady finally got exhausted and gave up. Try as they might, none of these fellows at Eva's place could tame Idgie for any length of time. About a year later a letter came from Ruth.

RUTH
And I'm pregnant.

Ruth breaks into tears and Idgie puts her arms around her and cradles her.

EXT. BENNETT HOUSE - LATER

Frank Bennett drives up and notices the truck at his front door.

INT. BENNETT HOUSE

Idgie is quickly packing up one of Ruth's last remaining boxes. Idgie hollers to Big George and Julian.

IDGIE
The rest of her stuff's upstairs.

Big George and Julian head upstairs.

RUTH
Are you sure we're doing the right thing?

IDGIE
Do you want to raise your child with Frank?

RUTH
I couldn't. But you haven't even talked this over with Mama and Papa.

IDGIE
(breaking out in a huge grin)
Mama loves babies and Papa loves Mama...why hell, the way I figure...we're getting two for the price of one.

Julian and Cleo are coming downstairs with the trunk and head out the front door when Frank comes in the back door with his hired hand.

FRANK
What the hell's going on here?!

IDGIE
Looks like your wife's leaving you, mister...

Frank looks at Idgie.

FRANK
Who the hell are you?

IDGIE

I'm the one she's leaving with, pea
brain!!

Frank grabs Ruth by the shoulders to pull her away, but Ruth resists. Frank slaps her across the face, knocking her backwards. Idgie immediately jumps Frank, riding him like he's some wild horse she'll tame. Frank spins Idgie around until he flings her off, sending her crashing into the wall.

FRANK

(to Ruth)
Come here.

IDGIE

You touch her again and I'll kill you.

She doesn't move. Idgie is breathing like a wild cat and is preparing to pounce on Frank as he slowly approaches Ruth. He reaches out for Ruth and Idgie again jumps him and he backs her into the wall crushing her like a grape. Ruth runs at him.

RUTH

Don't hurt her!

Ruth tries to push Frank away, but he grabs her and slings her over his shoulder and starts heading up the stairs when Julian and Big George enter.

JULIAN

(to Frank)
I wouldn't go up those stairs, mister...
It might upset Big George.

Big George picks up a large knife and in one swift movement, he cores an apple, never looking at Frank, who stares at him motionless.

JULIAN

He's crazy...no telling what he's liable
to do...

Frank hesitates for a second and slowly lets Ruth down.

IDGIE

Let's go.

FRANK

I'll get you for this. You'll see.

They exit the house.

84 EXT. HOUSE - DAY

They scurry to the car. Idgie starts the car and starts to drive off...

85 INT. CAR

IDGIE

Well, I sure as hell scared him, didn't I? Towanda the Amazing Amazon Woman! Alone in the jungle, afraid of nothing that prowls this earth. Woman beyond compare.

Ruth joins her in nervous laughter as they head toward Whistle Stop.

86,87,88 OMIT

86,87,88 ON

89 INT. SUPERMARKET - DAY - PRESENT

CLOSE ON Evelyn staring at an issue of the NATIONAL ENQUIRER. Headline: "Wife Kills Husband and Sells His Body Parts to Aliens."

WOMAN'S VOICE

Evelyn. . . Evelyn. . .

Reveal: Evelyn is at the checkout counter talking to Missy, her acquaintance from the Women's Seminars.

EVELYN

(Caught red handed, embarrassed)
Oh, I'm sorry. I was just looking at the pictures, Missy.

MISSY

They have the greatest stories in that magazine, don't they? Will I see you in group tonight? We'll be talking about masturbation.

EVELYN

(turns bright red)
Thank you, but I've had enough learning for the time being.

Evelyn takes her package and heads for the door. As she starts out the Exit Only, a teenaged BOY with a scraggly beard and mean eyes shoulders in, bumping into Evelyn, knocking her back against the dog food.

EVELYN

(a little laugh)
Well, excuse me.

BOY

(whips around)
Fuck you.

Evelyn is stunned as the boy strides over to the liquor counter. Evelyn gets herself together as the boy comes back toward her.

EVELYN

There was no reason for you to be so rude back there. You were coming in the wrong door.

BOY

Get the hell away from me, you fat cow!

He heads for the Exit with a six pack.

EVELYN

(breathless)

What did you call me?

The boy exits, fast. Evelyn pursues.

90 EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

The boy climbs into a battered pickup with fat tires and a tough girl in the passenger seat. Evelyn is on his heels, her groceries in her arms.

EVELYN

Why did you call me that? What have I ever done to you? Why are you being so mean to me?

BOY

Beat it, you old bitch.

The boy jams the truck into gear, backs out fast, tires squealing, girl laughing. Evelyn tries to follow him. As she runs, her bag breaks -- groceries spilling all over the pavement.

91 INT. ROSE HILLS NURSING HOME HALL - DAY

Ninny walks through the visiting wing. An old man is sitting in a wheelchair. Ninny stops.

NINNY

(yelling in his ear)

How are you today Mr. Dunaway?

MR. DUNAWAY

(grinning at her)

You have the most beautiful eyes.

Ninny continues around to the side corridor that is deserted except for a few rows of walkers and wheelchairs. She finds Evelyn sitting all by herself in a wheelchair with big tears running down her face, eating a Baby Ruth.

NINNY

Oh, honey, what in the world is the matter?

EVELYN
(glancing up)
I don't know.

She continues to cry and eat her candy.

NINNY
Come on. I need some exercise.
(wheeling her in the chair)
Tell me what's bothering you, sugar.

EVELYN
I just feel so useless... so powerless.

NINNY
Everybody goes through that...

EVELYN
And I can't stop eating. Everyday I
try and try, and everyday I go off. I
hide candy bars all over the house.

NINNY
A candy bar's not going to hurt you.

EVELYN
(breaking down)
One no, but not ten or eleven and I
can't even look at my own vagina...

NINNY
Now, honey, I can't help you on that
one.

They go outside and continue rolling around. Evelyn gives
Ninny a box of Crackerjacks.

EVELYN
I wish I had the courage to get it over
with and get really fat... Oh, Mrs.
Threadgoode, I'm too old to be young,
and too young to be old. Maybe I'm
just crazy.

NINNY
You getting hot flashes?

EVELYN
Well, sometimes.

NINNY
Do you get the sweats and your heart
starts pounding?

EVELYN
How did you know?

NINNY

Simple honey, you're just going through the change. I used to burst into tears for no reason at all. You need some hormones and maybe some Stresstabs number ten for good measure.

EVELYN

Really? Is that all?

NINNY

Yes, honey. You just get yourself some hormones. Then you get out of the house and get yourself a job. With your pretty complexion I'll bet you'll be great with Mary Kay Cosmetics. I know how you feel, I was about your age when I had my child and then I went through change of life.

EVELYN

I didn't know you had a child.

NINNY

Yes, I did. His name was Albert. He was a birth-injured child, so I had him with me until he was thirty, then he just went to sleep and never woke up.

She puts the picture back on the dresser.

NINNY

The doctor said that it would be best if I didn't even see him at all. He said because of an injury, his mind would never develop past the age of five and that I should put him in an institution because the burden of raising a child like that would be too great. I thought about Ruth. She called children "little gifts from above." I just smiled and asked for the baby. Oh, how could that sweet precious baby ever be a burden? Why, from the minute he was born, Albert was the joy of my life, the Lord's greatest gift. There wasn't a purer soul that ever lived on this earth.

(she smiles)

Sometimes I just can't wait to get to heaven and see him.

Ninny digs in her Crackerjack box and pulls out a small prize as Evelyn looks at her lovingly.

NINNY
 (delighted as a child)
 Oh, Evelyn, look! A little chicken,
 just what I like!

92 INT. THREADGOODE KITCHEN - DAY - 1932.

IDGIE
 Oh shit!!!!!! It's here...!!!

Everyone jumps for joy. Everyone includes Eva, Rev. Scroggins, Julian, Grady, Pete. A baby's wail is heard in the distance.

EVA
 (slapping the Rev. on the back)
 Hot damn!!

As they all slap each other, the Reverend tries in vain to retain his dignity. Julian pours whiskey into their teacups.

SCROGGINS
 I think a little prayer of thanksgiving
 would be...

IDGIE
 (holding up teacup)
 Goddamn it to hell...son of a
 bitch...she did it!! Here's to Ruth...

Everybody picks up a teacup.

ALL
 To Ruth!!!

They all drink.

EVA
 (looking at a stunned Reverend)
 Best goddamn tea in the state!!

93 INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Ruth is sitting up in bed with a blue ribbon tied around her head, looking beautiful. Mama, Papa, and Idgie are gathered around the bassinet looking at the baby.

MAMA
 Here he is...just look at that precious
 boy...look at that, Papa...

Papa looks.

IDGIE
 (to Ruth)
 Can I pick him up?

RUTH

Of course...

She does so gently.

PAPA

Careful...

IDGIE

(picks up baby)

Hi little fellow. What's his name?

RUTH

Well...I discussed it with Mama and Papa...and I'd like to call him Buddy Junior...if it's all right with you...

Idgie stops rocking the baby and is clearly moved, trying not to cry.

IDGIE

(looking at Ruth)

Yeah, that's just fine with me.

(to baby)

Hey there, little Buddy...Buddy Threadgoode...Yeah, that's just fine...

She looks back at Ruth and smiles. Mama tugs at Papa's sleeve.

MAMA

With little Buddy well, here now, Papa, go on...

PAPA

(embarrassed)

Well, now that you girls have this responsibility and Idgie's been wanting to open up a cafe... Well, we thought--

MAMA

(blurting it out)

Papa's giving you money to help you get a head start.

IDGIE

Thanks, Papa!!

94 EXT. WHISTLE STOP - DAY

Idgie is painting "Whistle Stop Cafe" on a sign. Julian and Big George are carrying a stove in while Sipsey and Ruth watch, directing. Sipsey is sweeping, Ruth is planting rose bushes.

95 INT. CAFE - DAY

FIBBER MCGEE AND MOLLY is on the radio. The place is full of railroad men. Idgie is serving a big table full of men, including Grady, Pete, Wilbur, and Julian.

A STRANGER comes in the door and nervously walks up to Idgie. He is wearing a worn-out dirty jacket, frayed brown shirt and cracked leather laceless shoes. His name is SMOKEY LONESOME.

SMOKEY

Miss, you wouldn't happen to know where you could buy a pint in this town?

IDGIE

You mean liquor? We can't sell that stuff here, but you go straight up that street to that green house that says Scroggins-- he'll sell you some. And don't let him tell you he's really a preacher -- that's just his cover.

JULIAN

Yes, sir, he's got the best stuff in the state of Alabama.

SMOKEY

(heading out the door)

Thanks!!

He heads across the street to Reverend Scroggins' place. Everyone in the Cafe watches as Scroggins reacts with fury. The cafe boys laugh and smile.

JULIAN

(howling)

That's the tenth time you've done that. It works every time. Can I have another plate of those tomatoes?

RUTH

(giving him a plate, then to Idgie)

I don't know why you torture that poor Reverend so.

(to Idgie)

Just keep in mind that I have to go to church there.

95A EXT. WHISTLE STOP CAFE - DAY

95

Smokey walks away from the Reverend disappointed with the results. He walks right past a pickup truck in which sits one Frank Bennett. Frank watches Smokey head back to the cafe. He sees Big George chopping wood and then Idgie come out to the door to greet the Smokey. Frank shakes his head. She's the one. A train passes by obscuring his view.

95B INT. WHISTLE STOP CAFE - DAY

95

Smokey returns to the door of the cafe.

SMOKEY

Excuse me, ma'am, I was wondering if you had an odd job, or something I might do. I've had a run of some bad luck, lately.

IDGIE

...Come on in, fella. I think we can find something for you. What's your name?

SMOKEY

Smokey, ma'am, my friends call me Smokey Lonesome.

IDGIE

Well Ruth, this here's Smokey and he's gonna be doing some work for us.

RUTH

That's fine. Nice to meet you. Why don't you go in there and freshen up and then come have a bite to eat.

SMOKEY

Thank you ma'am.

95C INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Smokey grabs a big bar of brown Oxydol soap, stares at it quizzically for a moment. He hasn't exactly been acquainted with soap for quite a while now. He turns on the water and slowly starts to clean himself.

95D INT. CAFE -DAY

Sipsey comes to the door drying her hands on apron.

SIPSEY

Miz Ruth, there's a colored boy that's asking to speak with you.

Ruth picks up a tray of Cokes and goes out the backdoor.

96 EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

The yard is full of black men at a table enjoying barbecue. Ruth is serving them Cokes.

97 INT CAFE - DAY

Sheriff Grady Kilgore is at the window watching Ruth outside. Grady walks over to Idgie and speaks intently.

GRADY

Now Idgie, I'm trying to warn you as a friend. I'm not saying who, but there's some people in town that don't like you selling to colored folk.

IDGIE

Well, Grady, tell you what. The next time those "some people" come in here, I'll ask 'em if they don't want anybody to know who they are under those sheets, when they go marching around in one of those stupid parades you boys have, why don't they have enough sense to change their shoes?

GRADY

(upset)

Now wait a minute, Idgie.

IDGIE

Oh hell, Grady, y'all ain't fooling anybody. Why, I'd recognize those size fourteen clodhoppers you got anywhere.

Grady looks down at his feet. Ruth re-enters and joins them, giving Grady a disarming smile.

RUTH

Would you like some more pie, Grady?

GRADY

No thanks, Ruth. . .

(to Idgie)

I'll talk to the boys. But, you make sure you keep them at the back door, you hear?

Grady gets up to leave.

GRADY

Bye, Ruth.

She waves goodbye to Grady. Sipsey comes in bringing clean silverware as Grady exits the cafe. Smokey walks out of the bathroom cleaned up considerably, with numerous bloody nicks from shaving. He sits down and Ruth serves him a feast consisting of fried chicken, black-eyed peas, turnip greens, fried green tomatoes, cornbread and iced tea. Smokey is overwhelmed. He looks at Ruth likes she's the (real) Madonna.

BIG GEORGE

You gonna get yourself in a whole bunch of trouble.

IDGIE

He's harmless. When his own daddy died, he didn't shed one tear, but when he found out the old colored man who raised him had passed away, he got drunk and sat down at the river for three days crying like a baby. Remember, Sipsey?

SIPSEY

Yes'm, but he wasn't jokin' now.

IDGIE

He won't sit in the same room and have a meal today...

SIPSEY

It sure don't make sense. Big ol' man like Sheriff Grady scared of sitting next to a colored child. But he eats eggs, come right out of a chicken's ass.

Ruth and Idgie laugh until they notice Smokey struggling with his food. His hands shake so badly that finally he spills a mouthful on his lap. Idgie puts her hand out to Ruth.

IDGIE

Smokey, come on, let's take a walk.

97A EXT. CAFE - DAY

Idgie and Smokey.

SMOKEY

I'm sorry about spilling my food in there, ma'am...I'll just head on.

Idgie reaches in her apron and hands him a half-pint of Old Joe Whiskey.

SMOKEY

God bless you for a saint, ma'am. I've been on the rails for a long time and I've seen a lot of most everything 'cept kindness.

97B INT. CAFE - DAY

Ruth watches as Smokey and Idgie sit down on a log and talk.

98 INT. BACK OF CAFE - NIGHT

Ruth is adjusting covers on the baby's bed. She has a baby bottle in hand. She takes a blanket off of her bed and heads outside.

98A INT. SHACK OUT BACK

Ruth sees Smokey sleeping and gently puts a blanket over his body. He turns and looks at her. She is illuminated only by the amber glow of a kerosene light.

SMOKEY

God bless you ma'am.

99 INT. CAFE - NIGHT

The place is empty except for Sipsey who is sweeping and Grady, the lone straggler, who is sitting at a table chomping on a toothpick, stacking up poker chips...

Idgie is trying to diaper the baby...AMOS AND ANDY is heard on the radio...

IDGIE

Funny how those boys always have to run home to their wives...especially when they're losing... Sipsey, these diapers are always slipping off his leg.

SIPSEY

Didn't they learn you nothin' at home?

100 P.O.V. THROUGH WINDOW

We see a black pickup truck with about six men in Klu Klux Klan white hoods and sheets riding on the sideboard as they pull up and stop across from the cafe. They get out, and one by one, light torches and line up across from the cafe as three more trucks with more men drive up. They carry a sign that says "Beware of the Invisible Empire. The torch and the rope are hungry".

101 INT. CAFE - NIGHT

As the light from the torches flare in the black night, Sipsey looks up and sees them first...

SIPSEY

Oh...Lord...here they are...I knew it...I just knew it...

IDGIE

(at the counter)

What is it?

Idgie walks over and looks out.

IDGIE

Aw shit!

102 EXT. NIGHT

A group of men stand there.

Grady gets up and goes over to the window and looks out, still picking his teeth. We see two more trucks pull up as the sound of car doors slamming and men shouting gets louder and louder.

IDGIE

(angrily to Grady)

Goddamn you, Grady...I ought to kick your butt...

Grady is still picking his teeth and looking at the men calmly.

GRADY
Those aren't our boys...

IDGIE
Then who the hell are they?

GRADY
(getting hat off rack)
I don't know, but that's what I'm gonna
damn well find out.

They gather around Big George menacingly. Idgie sees this and she's out of there like a shot.

103 EXT. CAFE - NIGHT

Grady heads over to the robed group of men with Idgie in close pursuit. Big George has a shotgun in his mouth and two men are wrapping a rope around his body.

IDGIE
Let go of him.

GRADY
Idgie, let me handle this.

IDGIE
Let go of him you hear? He's my hired
man and he ain't done nothin' to nobody.

Grady has to physically restrain Idgie from getting into an altercation.

HOODED MAN
We see how you treat your niggers here
and we don't like it.

GRADY
Well I'm the law in these parts. Now
let that man go.

Pete Tidwell and Charlie Weems and about three or four more men from the town come around the corner and just quietly stand on the corner watching. The hooded men glance over at them.

HOODED MAN
Let him go for now.

Idgie goes to him undoes the rope and escorts him out of there as Grady continues his conversation.

GRADY
It seems I don't recognize any of you.
You all ain't from Whistle Stop are you?

104 INT. BACK OF CAFE, SITTING ROOM

Ruth has just finished closing the door to the cafe behind her. Sipsey is rolling down the shades.

SIPSEY

I told Miz Idgie this was gonna happen,
but she didn't listen to me...

Ruth heads for the back room. As she enters the room, she stops dead in her tracks terrified. Standing in the back room is a hooded figure who has come in the back door. He just stands there...his eyes burning a hole through her. Sipsey comes through the door and stops...dead.

SIPSEY

(gasping)
Oh, Lord...

RUTH

(regaining her voice)
Who are you? What do you want?

The hooded figure's eyes dart around the room as if he were looking for something.

HOODED FIGURE

Where's the baby?

Ruth hears his voice, looks down at his black shiny boots.

RUTH

(realizing who he is)
Frank!

He spots the baby in bed and takes a step forward toward him. Ruth runs over and gets the baby as Sipsey pokes the broom she still has with her in Frank's direction.

SIPSEY

(like he was a cat)
Scat you...I ain't afraid of no white
robed men...no sir...scat...

RUTH

Get out of here! Leave us alone...

FRANK

(sarcastically)
Oh, come on now, Ruth...You wouldn't
deny a father the right to see his own
son now, would you?

He takes another step forward.

SIPSEY
(poking broom again)
Stay back.

FRANK
It's my boy, isn't it?

Smokey Lonesome appears at the door.

SMOKEY
Everything all right, ma'am?

RUTH
Our guest is just leaving.

Another hooded man with a torch bangs on the window and motions for Frank to come on. We hear the sound of trucks starting up and driving around the cafe...blowing horns.

MAN AT WINDOW
(in a muffled voice)
Come on...We're headin out.!!!

Frank stands there looking at the baby...the man at the window is frantic this time -- bangs again...motions for Frank to come. Frank looks at Ruth.

FRANK
I'll be back...and then, you and the
baby'll be back.

He leaves. Smokey stares at Ruth shaking in his boots and he starts to go too.

RUTH
Thank you, Smokey. You don't have to
go.

SMOKEY
You're welcome ma'am, but I have to
change my breeches.

105 INT. CAFE

Big George is catching his breath as Idgie puts a dressing on his wounds. He leaves.

BIG GEORGE
I've got to thank you, Idgie.

IDGIE
Oh forget it. You'd a done the same
for me.
(Grady enters as Big George exits)
Who the hell were those assholes?

GRADY

(nonchalantly)

They was just a bunch of ol' Georgia boys out to throw a little scare in you. One of them was over here the other day for something or other and saw you was selling food to the coloreds, and thought he'd try to shake you up a little bit, that's all.

IDGIE

How'd you get them to leave?

GRADY

I just told them that we sure as hell don't need anybody from Georgia coming over here telling us what we can or cannot do... They won't be back I can guaran-goddamn-tee you that... See you in the morning.

106 INT. BACK OF CAFE

Idgie walks to back room. She sees Ruth's face.

IDGIE

What's wrong?

RUTH

(clutching the baby to her)
It was Frank. He saw the baby.

IDGIE

Are you sure it was him?

RUTH

(frantic)
Yes, I'm sure.

IDGIE

Don't you worry. If he's dumb enough to come back here, Grady and the Alabama boys will take care of him. And if they don't, I will.

RUTH

Idgie... I don't want you taking any chances. Promise me you won't do anything crazy...no matter what.

IDGIE

Me? Not me...

107 INT. SCHOOL AUDITORIUM, WHISTLE STOP - NIGHT

STAGE BANNER: 1932 ANNUAL CHRISTMAS FOLLIES

The whole town is jammed in. Idgie and Grady are on stage. Grady is in a dress, Idgie in tails and a top hat. Essie Rue is on the piano.

GRADY

One thing a woman expects when she marries is sympathy.

IDGIE

Well, haven't you got it since you married me?

GRADY

Yes, I sure have. From the whole town.

Laughter and applause. They come off the stage.

107A,B,C EXT. WHISTLE STOP CAFE BACK - NIGHT

107A,

POV of a truck driving up near cafe. POV of someone heading to the back of the cafe. POV of a dog coming at camera getting walloped on the head by a club. POV hand reaching out for the doorknob.

108 INT. BACKSTAGE

We see Big George coming through the backstage crowd, sweating. He goes up to Idgie and whispers something then turns and Idgie follows him.

Idgie and Big George running, various shots.

POV inside cafe as CAMERA finds the baby and lifts him out of frame.

TIGHT ON Idgie and Big George running as the sounds of an approaching train get louder.

POV of CAMERA heading back to pick-up truck.

109 EXT. BACK OF CAFE -- COLD BLEAK DAY

Tight shot of an axe going through a rib. Repeat. The axe slashes through another then another until we reveal it's Big George slicing for a barbecue. He drops the ribs in a big black pot that dangles over an open flame. His little daughter, NAUGHTY BIRD, 5, is standing with him as Grady Kilgore and a STRANGER walk up.

110 OMIT

110 OI

111 EXT. BACK OF CAFE

Grady takes a photo out of his vest pocket.

GRADY

You see this man around here in the
last couple of days?

Big George looks at it.

112 TIGHT -- PHOTO OF FRANK BENNETT

BIG GEORGE

No sir, I sure ain't.

GRADY

Hmmm... You sure?

BIG GEORGE

Yes sir.

GRADY

(putting picture back in pocket)
Well, when we gonna get us some of that
barbecue?

BIG GEORGE

In a few minutes, sir -- yes sir.

112A INT. KITCHEN - DAY

11

Sipsey walks in and sees Idgie and Ruth in separate corners
laughing their heads off and covered with water and food.

SIPSEY

What is goin' on here?

IDGIE

She tried to teach me how to cook.

Idgie laughs as if it's the funniest thing in the world as does
Ruth. Sipsey just stares at these two.

RUTH

Taste these fried green tomatoes.

SIPSEY

(she tastes them)

These don't taste like your cookin'
Miss Ruth.

IDGIE

I can't cook...at all. Too much
pepper, the crust falls off. Because
Ruth gave me the wrong recipe.

She cackles even louder as she tries to stand up and can't.
Idgie throws an egg at Ruth who miraculously catches it.

RUTH

You're a-- Truce...

SIPSEY

Mr. Grady is in the cafe with some strange lookin' mens.

IDGIE

Nothing new about that.

Ruth stands and throws a green tomato at Idgie who juggles it with two salt shakers. Idgie goes to see Grady.

113 INT. CAFE

Grady walks over to Idgie. Ruth joins them.

IDGIE

Hi there. What can I do for you boys?

GRADY

Idgie, this here's Officer Curtis Smoote. He's over here from Georgia looking for a fella.

(shows her the picture)

Do you recognize him?

Idgie looks at Ruth, then.

IDGIE

Naw.

RUTH

That's my husband, but I haven't seen him in some time.

IDGIE

I heard he got run over by a Brinks Armored truck. What's he done?

Curtis Smoote is a weasel-looking man with a tight high voice.

CURTIS

Nothing we know of. We're trying to find out what's been did to him. He told his hired man he was coming over to see his wife and baby and he ain't never showed up back home.

GRADY

Hell, I keep telling 'em if he showed up in this town, we'd all known.

(looking at the photo)

He looks kind of sissified if you ask me? From what I hear, most of you boys from Georgia are a little light on your feet. That's the way I heard it.

RUTH

I don't suppose I could interest you in some pie?

SMOOTE

No, but that barbecue smelled mighty fine.

GRADY

Best damn barbecue in the state.

114 INT. CAFE - LATE AFTERNOON

Curtis is sitting alone by the window. Music is on the radio. Smokey Lonesome is doing the dishes.

IDGIE

(walking over to the table with a sandwich)

Here you go. That's the fourth one today. I swear you're about to eat up all my barbecue.

CURTIS

(indicating chair)

Sit down.

Idgie does so. Curtis leans across the table menacingly.

CURTIS

You're not fooling me, girlie girl. I know who you are. I heard from Bennett's hired man that you threatened to kill Frank Bennett.

(he takes a sip of his drink, his eyes never leave Idgie)

Now, he ain't showed up dead, yet, but if he does, you gonna be in a whole mess of trouble. You understand? What we're talkin' about here is murder, running afoul of the law. Nobody gets away with that. Not even you bunch of Alabama smart alecks...

Idgie is listening.

CURTIS (CONT'D)

And if I find so much as a hair of his, I'll arrest you faster than you can slap a tick... 'cause I'm the law and you can't beat the law.

115 INT. BACK ROOM - DAY

Idgie is holding the baby over her head playing with it. The baby is laughing.

RUTH

(upset)
Tell me what he said.

IDGIE

I told you. He said that was the best damn barbecue he ever had.

RUTH

That's all?

IDGIE

No.

RUTH

What else?

IDGIE

Said the pie was pretty good, too.

116 EXT. BIG GEORGE'S HOUSE - TROUTVILLE - DAY

Curtis Smoote is parked outside Big George's house leaning against his car. His wife ONZELL is on the porch watching. Naughty Bird is hanging on Big George, who is at the car looking at a picture.

SMOOTE

You're sure you never seen this man, boy?

BIG GEORGE

(sighing)
No sir. I done told you over and over I ain't never seen this man.

SMOOTE

You'd do anything for Miz Idgie, wouldn't you?

BIG GEORGE

Yes sir.

SMOOTE

Would you kill for her? Did you kill for her?

BIG GEORGE

No sir.

SMOOTE

Uh huh. Well, maybe one of these days you tell the truth.

(he gets in car and starts it)
Just remember--we hang lying niggers just as fast in Georgia as they do here.

BIG GEORGE

Yes sir. I remember.

Idgie watches from the distance.

117 INT. WHISTLE STOP CAFE - NIGHT

Ruth is sitting by the table. One light is on. She is reading. There is a loud cry from the back of the cafe. She gets up and hurries to the back. Buddy is crying. She picks him up and brings him into cafe and fixes him a bottle.

118 EXT. BIG GEORGES HOUSE - LATER THAT NIGHT

Idgie is talking to Big George then waves goodbye and walks away into the windy night.

119 INT. WHISTLE STOP CAFE - NIGHT

Ruth still rocks Buddy in her arms, but now he is sleeping. A shutter slams against the wall, startling Ruth. She walks over and latches it shut. She stares another window and watches the trees swaying in the breeze. She goes to the front door and locks it. She sits back down with Buddy as the sound of an approaching train fills the air.

IDGIE

What are you doing up?

Ruth nearly hits the ceiling. Idgie is covered with mud.

IDGIE

Are you okay?

RUTH

No... You scared me out of my wits.
What in God's name is going on. . .

IDGIE

Beats me?

RUTH

...Are you staying here to protect
Buddy and me?

IDGIE

No...

RUTH

Then, why haven't you gotten married?

IDGIE

What's gotten into you?

RUTH

Is it because of me? Am I being
selfish and keeping you from starting
your own family?

IDGIE

No. . . it's not your fault.

(this is hard for Idgie)

I've just never met a guy who made me feel comfortable like you do, most of the time anyway. Why the questions? You trying to get rid of me?

RUTH

I had this dream the other night. I dreamt that Buddy was gone. I woke up, ran to his crib and there he was, sleeping like an angel. I prayed and thanked God for Buddy. I remembered having the same reaction after Frank would beat me, thanking the Lord for giving me the strength to take it. And I remembered thanking the Lord for each day my mother lived even when she was spitting up blood and crying for me to kill her... I looked at my mother's eyes pleading with me to help her and all I could do was pray.

(to Idgie)

When you were gone, as I was holding Buddy I thought, if that bastard Frank Bennett ever tries to take my child away, I won't pray, I'll kill him.

IDGIE

Ruth you don't have to worry about Frank Bennett anymore.

RUTH

How can you say that? It's his child too. He won't give up on his blood... I should take Buddy and get far away from here...

IDGIE

I'm only going to tell you this one time. Frank Bennett won't be bothering you no more. That's it. You understand?

RUTH

...Did you kill him?

IDGIE

No. . .

(sees Ruth doesn't believe her)

You don't believe me, do you?

RUTH

Right now, I don't know what to believe.

IDGIE

Believe me when I tell you that I don't
want you to move out.

Ruth looks at Idgie trying to comprehend this woman.

119A INT. ROSE HILLS NURSING HOME - DAY

Evelyn is munching on Ninny's Crackerjacks, entranced.

NINNY

And Ruth never did leave.

120 EXT. FIGGLY WIGGLY PARKING LOT - DAY - PRESENT

It is Saturday and it is jammed. Evelyn drives up and down,
looking without luck for a parking space. Then, she stops
behind an ELDERLY MAN who is very slowly unloading his
groceries into the trunk of his car. She pulls over and turns
on her indicator, clearly waiting and out of the way. The old
man takes forever to finish.

121 INT. CAR

Evelyn taps her nails on the steering wheel.

EVELYN

Come on. I don't have forever. Let's
go.

122 EXT. PARKING LOT

The elderly man finds his keys in his left pants pocket and finally gets into his car. Evelyn puts her car into gear.

EVELYN

Finally.

The old man backs out carefully, toward Evelyn. Once the nose of his car is out of the parking place, a faded red VW Rabbit convertible zips in the wrong way and parks in the place.

Two skinny, gum-chewing, teenage GIRLS hop out of the of the VW which flaunts a bumper sticker that says, I BRAKE FOR REDNECKS and head past Evelyn toward the store. She leans out her window.

EVELYN

Excuse me, but I was waiting for that space.

GIRL I

(grins)
Yeah? Tough.

GIRL II

(laughs)
Face it lady, we're younger and faster.

The other Girl laughs and they walk on, full of the joyous arrogance of youth. Evelyn sits there for a moment on the verge of tears. Then, her jaw tightens, her knuckles on the steering wheel tighten and her eyes harden with the resolve of...

EVELYN

(horse whisper)
TOWANDA!

Evelyn guns her car and swings the wheel and smashes into the back of the surprised VW. A fender crumples. Evelyn backs up and then smashes into the car again. The bumper drops off, two hubcaps fly. The girls look back, stunned as Evelyn plows into the VW again, harder. The whole back end is crumbled now. The back window splinters. One of the girls runs towards the market yelling.

GIRL I

Help! Someone...

The other Girl grabs her arm and yanks her toward the cars. Evelyn's arms are rigid, eyes narrowed, she stomps on the gas. Her car leaps forward. On impact, there is a trace of a smile on her face. The Girls arrive, frantic, banging on the top of Evelyn's car, furious.

GIRL II

What're you doing? Are you crazy?
Stop!

Evelyn smiles her Clint Eastwood smile.

EVELYN

Face it honey, I'm older and I have more insurance.

123 INT. ROSE HILLS NURSING HOME - DAY

Evelyn is coming down the hall carrying a large bag of carrots. Janeen is pushing a gurney piled full of laundry. Evelyn sees it, panics, and throws herself back up against the wall, terrified. As Janeen goes by, she glances up at Evelyn and says:

JANEEN

It's okay honey. It's just laundry.

EVELYN

(smiles)

Thank God, you scared me to death.

They walk down the hall together.

124 INT. ROSE HILLS LOBBY

Evelyn is plowing through her bag of carrots. She is highly agitated. Ninny is worried.

EVELYN

I never get mad, Mrs. Threadgoode. Never. The way I was raised, it was bad manners. Well, I got mad and it felt terrific! I felt like I could beat the shit out of those punks, excuse my language, beat them to a pulp, beat them till they begged for mercy...

With a wild laugh, Evelyn thrusts a fist into the air.

EVELYN

TOWANDA, THE AVENGER! After I wipe out the punks of this world, I'll take on the wife beaters, and machine gun their genitals. Put little bombs in PENTHOUSE and PLAYBOY so they explode when you open them.

(Laughs)

Towanda will go on the rampage!

(getting more excited)

Then, I'll ban all fashion models weighing less than one hundred thirty pounds, give half the military budget to people over sixty-five, and decree wrinkles sexually desirable.

She thrusts her fist into the air.

EVELYN
TOWANDA, RIGHTER OF WRONGS, QUEEN
WITHOUT COMPARE!

Ninny looks bewildered.

NINNY
How many of them hormones are you
taking, honey?

125 INT. COUCH HOUSE - DAY

Dinner is on the table, but Evelyn isn't sitting. Her place is already gone and Ed's meal waits for him. Evelyn is running in place in her sweats on a little trampoline. Ed walks to the table.

ED
What I can't understand is how you
could hit someone six times by
accident.

EVELYN
Oh, Ed, don't make a big deal about it.
He tastes his supper and almost spits it out.

ED
What is this?

EVELYN
It's a low cholesterol meal.

ED
Are you trying to kill me?

EVELYN
If I was going to kill you, I'd use my
hands.

Ed stares at her in total disbelief as she continues jogging and a Baby Ruth falls out of the pouch of her sweatshirt.

126 INT. ROSE HILLS NURSING HOME - DAY

Ninny is seated by a window, a light rain is falling outside as Evelyn walks down a long corridor towards her.

NINNY
I'm worried about my little friend,
Evelyn. She said her husband, Ed, will
just be sitting around watching his
sports on TV and she has an urge to
just hit him in the head with a
baseball bat.

JANEEN
Hell, that seems normal to me.

Evelyn jogs into the room and Ninny gets up. Evelyn hands her a package of hard candies.

NINNY

Why thank you, Evelyn.

EVELYN

You're welcome, Mrs. Threadgoode. But, you have to tell me something. Did Idgie murder Frank Bennett or not?

NINNY

Well, hold your horses, sweetheart. Where were we?

(whispering to her)

You didn't kill Ed, now, did you?

EVELYN

No.

NINNY

Good. Anyway, six years had passed since Bennett disappeared, and Curtis Smoote was still hunting and pecking.

127 EXT. WHISTLE STOP RAILROAD TRACKS - DAY - 1938

The kids are swinging from a rope that crosses the railroad tracks and jumping off when they get to the other side, just as Buddy and Idgie did many years before. Naughty Bird, Big George's daughter, says something to the boys and they stop playing their game. Curtis Smoote walks by, sees Big George working on a car nearby.

128 INT. WHISTLE STOP CAFE - DAY

Idgie, Smokey Lonesome and Grady are all sitting around the table having a good time, while Sipsy is dusting off a painting of the Last Supper while Ruth looks on.

SIPSEY

Who's that sitting up there with Mr. Jesus?

RUTH

Why Sipsy, they're the brethren.

SIPSEY

I thought Miz Mary just had one boy.

Idgie tries to suppress a laugh as Ruth realizes Sipsy's teasing. Curtis Smoote enters the cafe and glares ominously over at Idgie.

IDGIE

Sipsey tell the story how you got Big George off of the train cause his mother was heading back to see her husband who'd been in jail for the past three years and she didn't think he cotton to kindly to her being with child.

SIPSEY

That's the whole story, but I tells you the one about the woman who was having trouble giving birth so I gave her a teaspoon of snuff and she sneezed so hard that she shot the baby clear across the end of the bed into the other room.

GRADY

Sipsey you are a founding member of the Liar's Club.

IDGIE

You ought to change your name from Kilgore to killjoy. Smokey, tell us one of yours.

A train whistle is heard and then brakes squealing.

SIPSEY

Oh Lord, no.

RUTH

Naughty Bird's with the boys?

They all run out of the cafe

129 OMIT

129 OM

130 EXT. TRAIN TRACKS - DAY

1

From this distance, we see a crowd is gathering. The train has stopped. The rope is swinging aimlessly above the tracks. Naughty Bird's is on her knees, hysterically crying. Ruth approaches the crowd and they part. She lets out a scream when she sees Buddy covered with blood. A car drives up to the accident site. Idgie picks up Buddy, his arm has been mauled. She carries a moaning Buddy Jr. to the car with the help of Smokey Lonesome.

IDGIE

You gotta stop the bleeding, Ruth.

She puts her skirt tightly against his arm.

BUDDY JR.

Am I gonna die?

IDGIE

Not today.

Big George opens the car door and they place Buddy Jr. inside and then speed off towards the hospital.

131 EXT. HOSPITAL

The car careens to a halt and Big George carries Buddy Jr. from the car until a gurney is wheeled outside to meet them. Buddy Jr. is placed on the gurney and hustled into the hospital. Ruth and Idgie run into the building while Big George follows, but an ORDERLY stops Big George at the door.

ORDERLY

I'm sorry. You'll have to wait outside. No coloreds allowed.

Big George watches Buddy, Ruth and Idgie vanish into the hospital. He walks around to a low wall and sits, his hands still covered with blood.

131A LATER SAME LOCATION

Big George still waits. Idgie exits the hospital and sits beside him.

IDGIE

(mutters)

Make it okay....make it okay. You can do whatever you want with me, but just make it okay, and make Ruth okay too, please.

BIG GEORGE

Amen.

132 EXT. BACK OF CAFE - TIGHT ON TOMBSTONE THAT READS:

Here lies Buddy Jr.'s arm
1932-1937
So long old pal.

Idgie, a bunch of kids, black and white, and a goat are gathered around, an Eagle Scout is playing "Taps." Buddy Jr. and Idgie, in old Army hats, are standing at attention. Buddy Jr. is saluting with his right arm. We see that the left one is missing above the elbow. Ruth is praying and stops.

RUTH

I can understand having a funeral for an arm, but I don't know why she insists on calling him Stump.

SIPSEY

She says that everyone's gonna call him that anyway, we might as well be the first.

IDGIE

Ice cream and cakes for everyone, in the cafe.

Idgie walks up to Ruth, puts her arm around her and watches as Buddy and the rest of the town's kids head to the cafe for dessert.

RUTH

My daddy used to say there's a separate God for children.

Idgie squeezes Ruth's shoulder.

NINNY (V.O.)

The Good Lord was watching over Stump that day, but then Grady found Frank Bennett's truck. Idgie and Big George went on trial and I just knew Idgie'd never get out of this mess.

133 EXT. RIVERBANK - WHISTLE STOP - 1938 AGAIN

A black truck is pulled out of the river. It is rusted and worn. Tilted on a Georgia plate. A sheriff's car rolls to a halt and out walks Grady Kilgore. He stares at the license plate and confers with his deputy. He is not happy.

134 EXT. COURTHOUSE, VALDOSTA, GEORGIA - DAY - DECEMBER 1938

A small Southern Courthouse sits proudly on Main Street.

135 INT. VALDOSTA COURTHOUSE - DAY - DECEMBER 1938

High panelled ceilings and varnished oak grace the room. Ruth and Grady are seated in the first row. Idgie is on the stand being questioned by the PROSECUTOR, a heavy-set, profusely sweating man with wavy hair, a gold watch chain across his vest and an unctuous manner.

PROSECUTOR

Did you know Frank Bennett?

IDGIE

No, sir.

Murmurings from the crowd. The prosecutor looks at her severely.

PROSECUTOR

You mean to tell me you never met the man whose wife, Ruth, is your business partner?

IDGIE

That's right.

Scattered laughter. The JUDGE glares around and bangs his gavel.

PROSECUTOR

You never threatened to kill Frank Bennett at his home in front of his hired man in August of nineteen twenty eight? The same Frank Bennett you did not know?

IDGIE

Oh that was me all right. I thought you wanted to know if we had ever met, the answer is no. I threatened to kill him, but we were never, what you might say, properly introduced.

PROSECUTOR

Is it not true that you came to Valdosta in September of nineteen twenty eight and took Frank Bennett's wife and child back to Alabama with you?

IDGIE

Just the wife. The child came later.

PROSECUTOR

How much later?

IDGIE

The usual. Nine months.

More laughter. The prosecutor is red faced. Ruth shakes her head and looks at Grady who is smiling. In deference to Ruth, he stops. The Judge bangs his gavel.

PROSECUTOR

Is it true you spoke against Frank Bennett to his wife and made her believe he was not fit as a husband?

IDGIE

No, sir. She already knew that for a fact.

Laughter. The prosecutor glares at the Judge who shrugs. Ruth looks down, embarrassed by all this talk.

PROSECUTOR

I suggest that you bribed this poor weak woman with promises of money and liquor, and that she lost control of her senses momentarily, and when her husband came back to get her and take her home, you and your colored man murdered him in cold blood.

IDGIE

No, sir.

PROSECUTOR

(screaming)

Where were you on the night of December thirteenth, nineteen twenty nine?!!!

Sweat has curled Idgie's hair. She takes out a handkerchief and wipes her face.

IDGIE

At the town hall, doing a show.

PROSECUTOR

And after?

IDGIE

Over at my mother's house.

PROSECUTOR

Oh yes? Who was with you?

IDGIE

Um... Just Big George and myself.

PROSECUTOR

What about your mother? Can she confirm that?

IDGIE

No, sir. She died a year ago.

PROSECUTOR

(twirls his watch chain and tilts up on his toes, addressing the jury)
So, Miss Threadgoode, you expect twelve intelligent men to believe you, although one witness is dead and the other is a colored man who is known to be a worthless, no-good, lying nigger? You are asking these men to take your word for it, just because you say so?

IDGIE

THAT'S RIGHT, YOU GUMP-FACED, BLOWN-UP, BABOON-ASSED BASTARD!!

The room explodes. The Judge bangs his gavel.

JUDGE

One more outburst like that and I'll hold you in contempt of court. You understand?

Idgie nods. Big George covers his face with his hands. Ruth and Grady exchange worried looks as Ruth comforts Stump.

TIGHT ON Sipsey in the balcony who shakes her head.

SIPSEY

Oh Lord, she done it this time.

136 INT. COURTROOM - DAY

Ruth is on the witness stand.

PROSECUTOR

Did you know you were pregnant at the time you left Valdosta?

RUTH

Yes.

PROSECUTOR

And yet, you tell us over and over that you went with this woman willingly?

RUTH

Yes. I wouldn't raise my child with Frank Bennett.

PROSECUTOR

But why? Did this woman promise you money?

RUTH

No... No.

PROSECUTOR

(sarcastic)

A bigger home?

RUTH

(with a smile)

No...

PROSECUTOR

Then tell us Mrs. Bennett, why would a respectable Christian woman go anywhere with this Idgie Threadgoode?

He points to Idgie. The defender jumps up.

DEFENDER

I object! Objection!!!

PROSECUTOR

(overriding)

Whose reputation was known far and wide as a notorious liar and drunkard?

DEFENDER

Objection!! Objection!!!

JUDGE

Sustained...

PROSECUTOR

Why did you leave with Idgie Threadgoode
that day???????

Ruth sits looking at the Prosecutor, but does not answer....
Silence... there is a hush in the courtroom.

JUDGE

Answer the question, Mrs. Bennett.

Ruth looks at the Judge and then at Idgie, whose eyes are fixed
on Ruth.

RUTH

Because she's the best friend I ever
had, and I love her.

Ruth smiles at Idgie weakly. Idgie looks around kind of proud.

PROSECUTOR

That'll be all, Mrs. Bennett...

The defense lawyer gets up as Ruth takes a seat behind Idgie.

DEFENSE LAWYER

The defense calls, as its last witness,
the Reverend Herbert Scroggins.

Idgie is surprised and turns around. Reverend Scroggins sweeps
up the aisle pompously and takes the stand. There is a lot of
mumbling in the crowd. Idgie leans over and whispers to Ruth.

IDGIE

I'm going to miss you. Thanks for all
the good times.

BAILIFF

Place your right hand on the Bible
please, Reverend.

Scroggins pulls out a Bible.

SCROGGINS

I brought my own, if you don't mind.

BAILIFF

Do you swear to tell the whole truth and
nothing but the truth?

SCROGGINS

I do.

The defense lawyer paces back and forth.

DEFENSE LAWYER

You have information about the whereabouts of Idgie Threadgoode and her colored man, known as Big George, on the night of December thirteenth, nineteen twenty nine?

SCROGGINS

Yes sir, I do.

DEFENSE LAWYER

It's been suggested here that she and her colored man were over at her mother's house. Can you confirm that?

SCROGGINS

No sir. That is a lie.

IDGIE

(under her breath)

Oh shit.

Scroggins opens his personal Bible to the back.

SCROGGINS

It's been my habit to write down all the dates of the activities of the Church in my Bible and I show that the night of December thirteenth, nineteen twenty nine was the start of our annual revival down at the Baptist campground. Sister Threadgoode was there along with her hired man, George Pullman, who was in charge of the barbecue just as he has been every year for the last ten years.

PROSECUTOR

Objection! This doesn't mean anything. The murder could've taken place anytime in the next couple of days.

SCROGGINS

Have you ever been to one of our revivals?

PROSECUTOR

Well, no.

SCROGGINS

(to lawyer)

Well, you should attend one then.

(to judge)

Our revival lasts three days and three nights, your Honor.

DEFENSE LAWYER

Are you sure Miss Threadgoode was there?

SCROGGINS

(offended)

Of course, I'm sure. We think so much of Sister Threadgoode that several members of our congregation have come over in a bus to testify on her behalf.

Eva Bates with a purse and a flowered hat and three or four other derelicts from the River Club stand up and wave. The audience goes wild. The Judge gives up banging his gavel. There is noise. He puts his fingers to his lips and lets out an ear-splitting whistle. Both lawyers look over at him, startled. He beckons them to the bench.

The Judge addresses his remarks to the prosecutor.

JUDGE

Percy, it don't look like you got a case at all. First of all, there's no body. Second, we got a preacher nobody's gonna dispute.

PROSECUTOR

But, your honor...

JUDGE

I'm telling you, what you've got is a whole lot of nothing. I say Frank Bennett got himself drunk, drove into the river, and was long ago eaten up and I don't give a goddamn... What we got us here is a case of accidental death. Case dismissed!

He bangs his gavel, the crowd goes wild. Sipsy, Naughty Bird's and Naughty Bird dancing in the balcony. As Reverend Scroggins leaves the stand and passes Idgie, he tips his hat to her.

SCROGGINS

See you in church, Sister.

IDGIE

I can't believe it. He actually swore on the Bible...

RUTH

Well... not really. If that judge had looked close enough, he would have seen it was a copy of Moby Dick...

IDGIE

But... why did he do it?

RUTH

For the sheer joy of seeing you in church again, which I suggested to him would be your penance.

IDGIE

You didn't promise him did you?

RUTH

I did and I never break my word.

IDGIE

If I live a thousand years, I'll never forgive you for this. I don't know what's worse, church or jail.

137 INT. NINNY'S ROOM/NURSING HOME - DAY - PRESENT

TIGHT ON MARY KAY MAKEUP KIT

Evelyn has Ninny in a chair and is making her up.

EVELYN

(handing Ninny a mirror)
There, don't you look pretty?

NINNY

(delighted)

Oh yes, honey. You're gonna have me looking like Ginger Rogers before you're done. Don't let Mister Dunaway see me--he's liable to go wild.

(Evelyn laughs)

I'm so glad to see you in a better mood and you've slimmed down quite a bit in the last few weeks.

EVELYN

I'm just so happy Idgie and Big George got off... I would've killed Frank Bennett, if I could've.

(calming herself down)

Did anybody think she really did it?

NINNY

Some said yes. Some said no. Of course nobody knows for sure except for Frank Bennett - and you know what they say, "Dead men tell no tales."

138 INT. COUCH HOME - DAY

Evelyn is in the process of demolishing a wall. She is holding a crow bar in one hand and a small sledge in the other. She is enjoying the process immensely, aided by Beethoven's Ninth, which gives her some real rhythm to her wrecking. Ed walks in and sees Evelyn bashing through some sheet rock. Ed is dumbfounded.

ED

What on Earth are you doing?

EVELYN

I need some light and air.

ED

Why don't you step outside? Now stop this, right now.

Evelyn takes her sledge and smashes a two by four and it splinters to the ground. That's her answer. Ed just shakes his head and turns toward the dinner table.

ED

No dinner either?

Evelyn just smiles. Ed turns and walks right out of the house.

EVELYN

Ed, do you ever wonder why I've been going to so many classes for all these years. I've been trying to save our marriage.

(Ed stops and stares at her)

What's the point of my trying, if you just sit on your butt drinking beer and watching baseball? I've been making a mistake, all right. Instead of going to the Complete Woman Classes, I should have been going to Karate.

Evelyn pauses for a moment and launches into another barrage of punishing hammer blows, accompanied by Ludwig Von B.

139 EXT. ROSE HILLS NURSING HOME

A car with "Mary Kay" written on the side pulls into the parking lot. Evelyn, dressed in a bright pink dress with a forest green scarf flowing behind her, gets out carrying a huge shopping bag and heads for the door. Everything about her is different, her stride, her figure--she's become quite attractive.

140 INT. ROSE HILLS NURSING HOME - DAY

Evelyn is walking down the hallway towards Ninny's room. As she approaches the Aunt's room, she hesitates as usual, but this time walks with dignity past the room. No projectiles are hurled. As she gets down the hall however, Mr. Dunaway again comes rolling out of her room and has a non-fatal high speed collision with the wall. Evelyn stops and stares at him in awe. He's fine and smiling.

EVELYN

Why do you go back in there time after time?

MR. DUNAWAY

She's so lively.

He smiles at Evelyn and she continues her journey.

WOMAN

Mrs. Couch...

Evelyn turns and sees a middle aged Black Woman heading towards her.

WOMAN

(catching up with her)

I'm Sue. Mrs. Otis's daughter-in-law. She's waiting in my car but I wanted to introduce myself to you.

EVELYN

(smiles)

Well, hello. How are you? I've heard so much about you from Mrs. Threadgoode.

SUE

She's so sweet. She's been looking after my mother-in-law for years now. Mrs. Threadgoode told me you're doing great with your new job... She's so proud of you...

EVELYN

(pleased)

Well, it was her idea you know. How is Mrs. Otis doing, by the way?

SUE

(concerned)

Oh much better, thank you. I guess it just takes some time getting used to a strange place...

EVELYN

Well, I'm glad to hear it. I know Mrs. Threadgoode has been anxious to get home for some time now...

SUE

Did she tell you that?

EVELYN

Yes. I think she's mostly worried about her house.

SUE

(stopping Evelyn)

Mrs. Couch, Mrs. Threadgoode doesn't have a house anymore. They tore that down.

EVELYN

What?

SUE

They had to, it was falling apart and
it was condemned...

EVELYN

(devastated)

Oh no. Does she know that?

SUE

No. We didn't see any point in telling
her. It would just break her
heart...poor old thing...

141 INT. NINNY'S ROOM

Ninny is asleep in her room, her dress inside out, the sun
washing out what little color she has. She looks transparent.
Evelyn is holding a gift and stops in the doorway, realizing
suddenly how old her friend is. Evelyn enters the room and
studies the wall by Ninny's bed. It's full of pictures of
sweetheart roses that have been cut out of magazines. Ninny
opens her eyes, smiling, pats her hair, gathers herself
together.

NINNY

Oh, Evelyn, hello, do you like my
roses? Since I can't get home to see
my own roses, I made myself a paper
garden. Got everything but the bugs.

EVELYN

They're lovely.

NINNY

(suppressing a yawn)

I can't hardly get to sleep early like
everyone else here. I wait till I hear
the ten-twenty train whistle heading to
Atlanta, or maybe I just think I hear
it. It doesn't matter. I still don't
go off until I do. Have you been here
long?

EVELYN

I just got here. I shouldn't've woken
you up.

NINNY

Of course you should've. Don't you
ever let me sleep through a visitor's
day, honey. I look forward to them all
week.

EVELYN

So do I, to tell you the truth, Mrs.
Threadgoode, so do I. You know, it's
funny, the people in Whistle Stop seem
more real to me than my own life. I
brought you something for your
birthday.

Ninny opens a box with a birthday cake in it and some fried green tomatoes that Evelyn made wrapped in a tin container. Evelyn starts to hang party decorations all over the room.

NINNY

I can't believe you remembered and you made me fried green tomatoes.

(she tastes one)

They're delicious.

EVELYN

It's your recipe. Are they cold?

NINNY

No, they're just the way we used to eat them at the cafe. You couldn't be sweeter to me if you were my own daughter. You know, I don't feel eighty-three. It just sorta slipped up on me. One day it seemed I was a young woman running around and the next day I was just full of liver spots and walking like molasses going up hill in winter.

(looks at hands)

I just never thought I would live this long. Of course, the Lord takes us home when he wants us. They say the good die young.

Ninny looks off and we see she is tearing up.

EVELYN

Are you all right?

NINNY

I was just thinking about Ruth.

142 EXT. WHISTLE STOP CAFE - DAY - 1939

1

The cafe is closed. A sign out front says "Closed due to Illness". The paint is beginning to peel and the building is echoing the sentiment of the sign.

NINNY (V.O.)

After the trial was over, everything went back to normal until that Spring when Ruth lost her appetite and when Doc Hadley looked at her, he said the cancer was so bad she only had a couple of weeks. We took her to the Threadgoode house so she would be more comfortable and Sipsy moved in with her and never left her side.

EXT. THREADGOODE HOUSE - DAY

Out around the back, the boys are in the midst of a raging baseball game. Buddy Jr., now aged 7, is the littlest one on his team. He is batting and he keeps missing the pitch, swinging awkwardly with one arm.

TIM

You're steppin' in the bucket. Stand in there.

Tim pitches to him and Buddy, Jr. steps in the bucket and misses the pitch. PEGGY HADLEY, age 6, is watching, concerned.

PEGGY

Stop picking on Stump, he's only got one arm. I'm gonna tell your mamas.

She means well, but Buddy is completely humiliated by having a girl stick up for him and he strikes out.

143 INT. THREADGOODE HOUSE - RUTH'S ROOM - DAY

Ruth is in bed, quite obviously ill and in pain. Sipsey walks over and sits with her when the dog runs in and puts his head on the bed. Ruth pats it.

RUTH

There's my old pal. . . Lay down now.

The dog does so by the side of the bed. Sipsey just stares at Ruth. Ruth takes a deep breath and looks at Sipsey.

SIPSEY

I think it's time I get Idgie.

RUTH

No. Not right now.

SIPSEY

(Sipsey gives her a long look)
Nonsense. I'll go get her.

RUTH

I don't want her to see me like this.

SIPSEY

And you been a teacher all these years?
(shakes her head)
I'll be back in a second.

RUTH

Will you fix my hair please?

SIPSEY

Now you're making sense.

INT. ANOTHER ROOM - DAY

Idgie is standing by the window watching Stump. Sipsey walks up to her.

SIPSEY

Miss Ruth wants you. ...Why you lookin' at me like that, child?

IDGIE

I don't know if I can do it.

SIPSEY

Do what? You've been with her for years. What's a matter with you children?

IDGIE

What if I just start to cry?

SIPSEY

You won't. You'll be strong, girl. You'll go in there and make her feel warm.

IDGIE

(nodding, then to herself)
Can't I just have her pain?

Idgie walks out of the room and Sipsey slowly follows.

INT RUTH'S ROOM - DAY

Idgie walks in and sits next to Ruth.

RUTH

Idgie...

IDGIE

I know. I'll make sure he graduates no matter what and I won't let him out of my sight.

RUTH

Yes, yes. But teach him to run like you do and ask questions and above all be free. And, Idgie, don't let him come to the funeral. I don't want him going through that.

IDGIE

Oh, for God's sake. What funeral? Will you stop talking like that? You gonna be back on your feet feeling just fine in a few days. You wait and see.

RUTH

Oh, Idgie I'm scared.

IDGIE

(trying to control herself)
Just hold my hand. Do you want me to read to you? I brought some of that poetry you like, Wordsworth.

RUTH

(smiles weakly)
Now you want to read. Oh Idgie, just hold my hand.

IDGIE

Ruth, I want to apologize for being so difficult...

RUTH

That's a lot of what I like about you. You're so...so...unique.

(she moans)

I don't know how much longer I can take this. I remember reading Job when I was a little girl and not understanding what the purpose of his suffering was.

IDGIE

Maybe God would have told us if he wanted us to know.

RUTH

Idgie Threadgoode, did I hear you correctly? Did you say that God has his reasons?

IDGIE

(defensively)

Maybe he does.

Ruth starts to laugh. Idgie looks at her quizzically for a second and then she starts to laugh to, until they're both at it pretty good, when Sipsy peaks in the door and stares incredulously. Then Buddy walks in, his head is down. He goes and sits in the corner. It looks like he might have been crying and there's blood all down his shirt and under his nose.

RUTH

Honey, what's the matter...?

BUDDY

Nothing.

Clearly something is wrong. Ruth looks at Idgie for help.

IDGIE

Your mother asked you a question, now answer her.

Buddy can't say anything. He's on the verge of tears.

BUDDY

I can't bat worth a dime. I can't catch.

Idgie exchanges a look with Ruth. Idgie gets her coat and goes and puts her arm around him.

IDGIE

Let's go. You're coming with me, mister. Let's get your coat.

Ruth waves as Idgie and Buddy leave the room.

144 EXT. RIVER CLUB - DAY

Idgie takes Stump out of her truck and they knock on the door. Eva shows up.

EVA

What can I do for you?

IDGIE

Two beers, right away.

LATER SAME LOCATION

Idgie is drinking both beers. Stump is watching her drink. She is holding a baseball on her lap.

IDGIE

Did you get into a fight?

STUMP

I got punched in the nose. I can't play like everyone else.

IDGIE

Did I ever tell you the story about the oysters, all the millions of them just lying around?

STUMP

And God puts sand in one and then it makes a pearl?

IDGIE

Oh... Did I ever tell you about Eva's three legged dog?

STUMP

How it never felt sorry for itself and how I ought to be smarter than a dumb dog and not feel sorry for myself?

IDGIE

You listen to everything I say, don't you?

STUMP

You get real mad when I don't.

IDGIE

Well you know about Mama?

STUMP

She's sick.

IDGIE

Well now's a time for courage, like the time Big George. Did I ever tell you...

STUMP

When he saved you from the wild hogs?

IDGIE

They weren't wild, but they were hogs and he was brave. (beat) Then you probably know that there are angels masquerading as people and walking this planet and your mom is the bravest one of those.

Stump chokes up a little then nods and then puts his arm around Idgie's neck, nestling her and trying not to cry.

IDGIE

So what do you say that you and I practice some hitting?

STUMP

I'd like that.

145 INT. RUTH'S ROOM - DAY

Buddy runs into the room. Ruth opens her eyes and smiles weakly.

BUDDY

Mama, I can hit. You should see me. And Aunt Idgie hit me in the back with a curve ball but I didn't duck and I hardly cried.

RUTH

She hit you?

(gives Idgie a look)

Well she did that to me once, too, but I think I did cry.

BUDDY

Mama, I'm sorry if you're sad.

RUTH

Give me a big kiss and I'll never be sad again.

Buddy kisses her. A pause.

RUTH
...And don't you be sad either, promise?

BUDDY
Promise.

He runs out of the room. She winces in pain.

RUTH
Sipsey. . .

SIPSEY
Hold on, honey. I'm here. Don't you worry.

Sipsey holds up the needle in the sunlight, filling it full.

SIPSEY
No ma'am, my Jesus is a sweet Jesus. He never meant for one of his babies to suffer so. No ma'am.

Idgie can't watch. She goes to the window and sees a group of black men and women standing on the front lawn.

Idgie sits on Ruth's bed. Ruth opens her eyes. There is a long silence. Seeing the heartbreak in Idgie's eyes, Ruth tries to make it easier.

IDGIE
Are you sure you don't want me to read you anything?

RUTH
Yes. Will you do one thing for me?

IDGIE
What?

RUTH
Be good to yourself, even settle down if you find someone who can beat you in poker.

Idgie can't take it and has to walk away from Ruth.

IDGIE
Ruth, there are so many things I should to tell you.

RUTH
The past is past.(beat) I love your stories. ...Tell me a story Idgie...

Idgie tries to speak, but for the first time since anyone's known her, nothing comes out. Ruth can't help but notice and loses her composure a little as she sees tears forming in Idgie's eyes.

RUTH

Come on you old bee charmer, tell me a good tall tale.

Idgie tries again, but can't pull herself together.

RUTH

Tell me about the lake.

IDGIE

What lake?

RUTH

The one that used to be here.

IDGIE

Oh...that was nothing but a lie.

RUTH

(smiles)

I know, but tell me anyway.

Ruth closes her eyes. Idgie stares at her for a moment.

RUTH

Tell me the story.

IDGIE

(with great difficulty)

Well..one time there was this great big ol' lake right outside of town.

(pause)

Oh, we used to swim and fish and go canoeing in it and then one day in November, this big flock of ducks, oh about forty or more landed right smack in the middle of that lake and while they were sitting there the temperature dropped so fast the whole lake froze.

There is singing from outside.

IDGIE

...And the next thing we knew, they'd flown off, and to this day that lake is somewhere over in Georgia.

Idgie sobs and puts her head down on the side of the bed still holding Ruth's hand. Sipsy walks in and looks at Idgie and Ruth. She quietly stops the clock and covers the mirror with a shawl. She goes over to Idgie, who is still sobbing like her heart will break.

SIPSEY

It's all right, honey. Let her go. Miz Ruth was a lady, and a lady always knows when it's time to leave.

146 EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Ruth is being buried. A large crowd is present. Scroggins is preaching. Idgie and Stump aren't present. Camera pans and pans and pans until we find them in a neighboring field, tossing a baseball back and forth, Ruth's request satisfied.

147 EXT. ROSE HILLS NURSING HOME - FALL DAY - PRESENT

Evelyn and Ninny are sitting on the porch; tears are streaming down Evelyn's face.

A flock of birds fly by in the fall sky. Ninny shades her eyes and looks up and watches them fade into the horizon.

NINNY V.O.

It's funny how strong Ruth affected everyone. Even Smokey Lonesome. When he died a few years back, he had one possession on him, a picture of Ruth. I think it was the only thing Smokey ever stole. He was in love with her from the first time he saw her. Oh look at the birds... I shouldn't have told you this.

EVELYN

I hate death. It scares me so.

NINNY

(holding her hand)

I wouldn't be so frightened of death if I were you, I'd be more scared driving in rush hour traffic.

148 EXT. U. OF ALABAMA - GRADUATION EXERCISES - 1953

THE CAMERA TRACKS slowly past very polished and highly fashionable dress shoes. A pair of black wing tips, then white pumps, black dress shoes, then white pumps, and so forth as we hear off screen the names of the graduates being announced. THE CAMERA arrives at stockinged bare feet with shoes nearby leaning on one another. THE CAMERA TRACKS up the leg revealing a run in the stocking until a white dress comes in view and finally Idgie in a large hat, seated, trying not to fidget.

THE CAMERA PULLS BACK revealing Grady next to her with Cleo and Sipsey and Big George, Dr. Hadley and his daughter Peggy, and last but not least, Eva Bates and Rev. Scroggins. Our group is somewhat incongruous with the suits that surround them.

DEAN (O.S.)
 (announcing)
 Buddy Threadgoode, Junior.

Idgie whistles and claps with pride.

149 EXT. CAMPUS - DAY - LATER

Two shoes are being carried in one hand and a small package is in Idgie's other hand.

IDGIE
 This is for you.

Stump opens the box and takes out a beautiful gold watch.

BUDDY
 Thanks, Aunt Idgie.

IDGIE
 It's not from me, Buddy. Look on the back.

He turns it over. The inscription reads simply: "I love you, Mother." Tears spring into his eyes as he looks at Idgie and hugs her.

IDGIE
 Your mom would have been very proud.

BUDDY
 I wish she could have been here.

IDGIE
 She is.
 (trying to lighten the mood)
 Run on, son. You and Peggy go be with your friends.

Idgie watches him leave, hand in hand with Peggy. She starts to walk down the grass to a secluded spot, when Grady comes over.

GRADY
 Hard to believe he's a grown man now, ready to get married.

IDGIE
 Yeah.

Idgie starts to take off her stockings while she is walking, hopping on one foot with a grace that only Idgie possesses.

GRADY
 With the railroads shutting down one by one, how much longer can you keep the cafe open?
 (Idgie doesn't respond)
 You figured out what you're going to do?

NINNY (V.O.)

Of course, when the railroads shut down and they put in all those new super highways nothing was ever the same. Whistle Stop was just left sitting there by the tracks to fall apart. Time just passed it by.

Ed enters the house. He has flowers, too. Ed walks up to her and gives her a kiss and the flowers.

ED

For you, honey.

EVELYN

Oh Ed, how sweet. Lilies, my favorite.

ED

I know, sometimes I even amaze myself.

EVELYN

What is the occasion?

ED

...I'm just sorry for the last few months. I'm not exactly sure what is going on with you and I guess I haven't been very helpful with your job and all... Why are you putting a wall up where you were just tearing one down?

EVELYN

...well, I made a mistake.

ED

(walking on eggshells)

I don't mean to seem dense or anything, but what changed?

EVELYN

The air and the light. Ed, you know how you used to tell me how you'd always dreamed of having two women in your house?

(Ed smiles slightly)

What if I were the younger of the two?

ED

I don't believe I get your drift?

EVELYN

I want something more than I've ever wanted anything before. I want to bring Mrs. Threadgoode to our house. I want her to live here. I want to give her the home and the love she's given to me.

ED

(broad smile)
You're kidding?

EVELYN

I'm absolutely serious. That's why I'm putting the wall to Kyle's room back up.

ED

Evelyn, this is not something you just do. She's an old woman. Who's going take care of her if she get's sick?

EVELYN

I will. I can't leave her in that home.

ED

This is not a stray cat or something. She's not even family.

EVELYN

She's family to me. Please Ed, do this for me?

ED

This is absolutely out of the question. Have you told her about this harebrained idea of yours?

EVELYN

Not yet.

ED

Good, now let's just pretend this never even came up.

EVELYN

I'm earning money now. I'll pay for everything and you won't have to do a thing.

ED

It's never going to happen so just forget it.

EVELYN

(losing it)
Don't ever say never to me. Don't talk to me like I'm some kind of pet that goes wherever you point. Ed Couch, just because you're stuck in a rut doesn't mean I'm going to live there with you forever.

EVELYN (CONT'D)

(calmly but deadly)

Someone helped me put a mirror in front of my face and I didn't like what I saw one bit and you know what I did, I changed. And you better too, cause that someone was Mrs. Threadgoode, and she needs my love and care now and I'm going to give it to her, with you or without you.

Evelyn walks to the kitchen and picks up a covered plate and slowly out the door. And then pops back in smiling.

EVELYN

And if you won't listen to reason, there's always Towanda.

She tosses a baseball bat across the room and it rolls right up to Ed's feet. She leaves. Ed picks up the bat and starts to swing it at some phantom baseball and then he takes a piece of food on the table and eats it. He nods. It's good.

150A EXT. COUCH HOUSE - DAY

Evelyn gets in the car, madder than hell, starts the engine and thinks about going back in the house, until she hears a banging sound. She realizes it's hammering and Ed is the man behind the hammer. She smiles.

151 INT. ROSE HILLS NURSING HOME - DAY

Evelyn comes down the hall carrying a picnic basket. As she passes by Ninny's room and notices the door is open...she pops her head in, thinking she might be there...

EVELYN

Hello...

She stops cold as she sees Ninny's bed STRIPPED AND BARE! A YOUNG NURSE she has never seen before is ripping down all of Ninny's pictures off the wall...throwing them in a waste paper basket..

EVELYN

What are you doing? Stop that!! Those are Mrs. Threadgoode's things....

Evelyn goes over to her and picks up the waste basket and takes things out.

EVELYN

(continuing)

What are you doing in here? Where is Mrs. Threadgoode?

NURSE

Who?

Evelyn furious...is trying to put things back on the wall...

EVELYN

Mrs. Threadgoode...the woman who lives here. Are you deaf?!

NURSE

(defensive)

I'm sorry Miss. All they told me is that the woman who lived here died this morning.

Evelyn sits down on the other bed, stunned.

EVELYN

Oh God, when did it happen?

NURSE

Early this morning...they told me to take all this stuff down. That's all I know.

The nurse continues to rip down pictures.

Evelyn looks up and sees the rest of the pictures being ripped down. She jumps up and pushes the nurse aside screaming...

EVELYN

Stop that, goddammit...what's the matter with you people? Can't you wait a goddamn day for Chrissakes? Don't you have any respect? Those are her things.

She clutches the torn pieces of paper to her and sobs.

NURSE

I'm sorry, Miss. They told me to get this room ready for another patient.

EVELYN

Well, she may be just another patient to you, but she was my friend and I loved her.

NURSE

Sorry, but I'm just following orders.

The girl continues to remove pictures from the wall.

EVELYN

Don't you touch them. Get out!! Just get out!!

Janeen comes in the door alarmed at the noise.

JANEEN

What in the world is going on?

EVELYN
Oh shut up. What did you do, throw her
out with the laundry?

JANEEN
Calm down.

EVELYN
Why didn't you call me? You could have
at least called before you sent this
idiot in here...

Janeen sees how upset Evelyn is and motions for the nurse to
leave..

JANEEN
I'm sorry, Mrs. Couch. It just never
occurred to me that you would take it
this hard.

EVELYN
I didn't even get to tell her goodbye
and thank her for helping me.

JANEEN
I know these things are hard, but she
died peacefully in her sleep. To tell
you the truth, I thought you'd be happy
for Mrs. Threadgoode.

EVELYN
Happy?

JANEEN
Yes, this is what she wanted.

EVELYN
To be dead?

JANEEN
No, to go home. You just missed her.
She left in a yellow cab not more than
half an hour ago.

EVELYN
I don't understand. A cab?

JANEEN
Yes, she said there wasn't any reason
for her to stay here now that Mrs. Otis
is dead.

EVELYN
Mrs. Otis died?

Janeen looks at her confused.

JANEEN

Yes...

EVELYN

(jumps up thrilled)
Mrs. Otis died!!!

She grabs Janeen and gives her a big kiss.

EVELYN

Not that I'm glad Mrs. Otis died. It's just that. . .

Suddenly her joy changes to alarm as she realizes that Ninny is headed home...

EVELYN

Oh my God, I've got to stop her...

Evelyn runs out of the room. The young nurse comes back in and looks at Janeen.

JANEEN

(continuing to clean the room)
She's a nice woman, but I think she has some serious emotional problems.

152 EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

Evelyn runs out and jumps into her car and squeals out of the parking lot. She goes about a half a block and slams on the brakes.

153 INT. CAR

Evelyn is desperately searching for a map in the glove compartment...

EVELYN

(distressed, looking at map)
Where the hell is Whistle Stop....?
That's right, it's not on the map.

154 EXT. FILLING STATION

GAS ATTENDANT

There's nothing out there anymore, just a few houses....

EVELYN

(impatient)
I know. Just tell me how I get there.

GAS ATTENDANT

Well, you go about a half a mile and when you see the tracks, turn left and keep going straight.

155 EXT. WHISTLE STOP - DAY

Evelyn arrives in Whistle Stop, which is virtually a ghost town. She spots Ninny in front of an empty lot. She approaches Ninny, who is crying and holding a small shoe box and tending to the few remaining roses in her garden. Evelyn puts her arms around Ninny and hugs her.

NINNY

Hi Evelyn. Somebody stole my house. It was right here when I left. Unless-
(she grabs Evelyn's hand)
Oh, Evelyn, you don't reckon I'm crazy, do you? This is the place it used to be.

Evelyn hugs her again.

EVELYN

No, honey. You're not crazy. This is the place.

NINNY

Who would want to steal an old lady's house? It wasn't worth anything.

EVELYN

Nobody stole it, honey. They had to tear it down--it was condemned. I'm sorry, I should have told you before. I was going to. . .

Ninny turns and looks at the empty lot.

NINNY

Cleo built that house for me when we were just married--and now it's gone. Eighty three years worth of living and all that's left of me is just what's in this box, a bunch of old cards and pictures.

EVELYN

But that's not true. You're here. You're what's important. Come on, let's go home.

NINNY

This is my home. And it's gone. And so is Mrs. Otis. You know, I don't quite know what to do. It's the first time that I can remember that I don't have anyone to look after.

EVELYN

You can look after me and Ed.

NINNY

You're sweet, but I think you're doing just fine on your own.

EVELYN

Don't you know you'd be like a gift for us? You're the reason that I get up every morning and that Mary Kay is having such a good year, and that I don't look like a blob from some horror movie. Well, maybe with a little help from Idgie and Ruth. Come on. Let's go to my place. I've got a room all prepared.

NINNY

And what does Ed say about all this?

EVELYN

He'll grow to love it.

Ninny starts to smile and she heads slowly toward town.

NINNY

Did I ever tell you that Mrs. Otis was Sipseys baby sister?

EVELYN

No, you didn't.

NINNY

Yes, she was. Mrs. Otis was with Sipseys and me the night Sipseys died. They'd always sing gospel songs about trains. And that night before Sipseys died, she told me this dream that Jesus came to her, all dressed in white. He was the conductor of a ghost train and was coming to take her to heaven.

156 EXT. WHISTLE STOP CAFE - 1932 - NIGHT

A black pickup truck slowly drives up behind the cafe, turns off lights. Nothing but the sound of the leaves as he gets closer.

157 INT. BACK OF CAFE

Sipseys is eating biscuits and honey and listening to the radio playing the gospel "I'm Going Home on the Morning Train" while Naughty Bird and Buddy Jr. both sleep peacefully.

The back door is kicked open. Frank Bennett crashes into the room with a rifle and looks around. He heads for the crib.

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Startled, Sipsey runs at him and he grabs her by her dress and throws her across the room like a rag doll. He goes over and is standing over the crib.

SIPSEY

(jumping up)

You leave that baby alone. That's Miss Ruth's baby!

FRANK

Get away from me, nigger, before I kill you.

He slams her with the butt of the gun across the wide of her face. She crashes against the wall, slides to the floor, out cold, blood coming from her ear. Naughty Bird wakes up, screams and runs to her. Bennett picks up the baby, wraps him in a blanket, and carries him out the back door.

NAUGHTY BIRD

Wake up, Grandma, wake up.

Sipsey doesn't respond.

158 EXT. CAFE

Frank comes out the back door, opens the door to his truck, slips the sleeping baby onto the seat.

As he backs out of the truck, Sipsey appears behind him, with blood on her face, and clobbers him over the head with an iron skillet. We hear a thunk. He falls heavy and silent as a tree. Sipsey steps over the body and gathers the baby out of the truck into her arms.

SIPSEY

Ain't nobody gonna get this baby, no sir, not while I'm alive.

She heads for the cafe with him. Naughty Bird is frozen in the doorway, watching her, terrified. Sipsey carries the baby past her.

SIPSEY

(continuing)

Go fetch Big George, honey. I done killed me a white man.

159 INT. SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - WHISTLE STOP - NIGHT

STAGE BANNER: 1932 CHRISTMAS FOLLIES

The whole town is jammed in. Idgie and Grady are on stage. Grady is in a dress, Idgie in tails and top hat. Essie Rue is on the piano.

GRADY

One thing a woman expects when she marries is sympathy.

IDGIE

Well, haven't you got it since you married me?

GRADY

Yes, I sure have. From the whole town.

Laughter. Idgie comes off the stage. Big George shows up and whispers to her.

160 EXT. GARDEN SHED

Idgie walks out shaken and looks at Big George. Sipsey joins them.

IDGIE

It was self-defense.

SIPSEY

He'd a taken Buddy, over my dead body, but, I can't see a jury of white people caring why I did it. Lord, looks like I'll be visiting you sooner than I expected.

IDGIE

Wait a minute. I'm not gonna sit on my butt and watch justice be butchered again.

(Idgie starts to smile)

No... I guess it is hog boiling time...

BIG GEORGE

No ma'am. It's too cold.

IDGIE

I think you're wrong George.

161 EXT. BACK OF CAFE - DAY

Big George is splitting some ribs and then dropping them in the barbecue pot out behind the cafe. Grady and Curtis Smoote are standing there talking to him. Naughty Bird stands behind her father, her eyes as wide as saucers.

GRADY

When is this barbecue gonna be ready?

BIG GEORGE

(sweat running down his face)

In a few minutes, yes suh...it's gonna be ready in a few minutes.

EVELYN

Did Idgie really barbecue Frank Bennett, or are you pulling my leg?

NINNY

(Ninny smiles devilishly)
The secret's in the sauce or so I'm told... And now you know why Idgie had to go to trial. She knew the law would never have believed Sipsy. Nope, Sipsy, Big George or anybody else of color would've been hangin' from the nearest tree. To this day, I'm still not sure whether Ruth ever believed that Idgie didn't kill Frank Bennett. The truth's a funny thing, sometimes.

A beat of reflection and silence.

EVELYN

Ninny, you've got to come to my home and live with me. You've got to.

NINNY

Evelyn, would Ed's aunt be coming home with you too?

EVELYN

No. She told Ed she didn't want to leave Mr. Dunaway--thank God!!

NINNY

Good.

EVELYN

Don't you like her either?

NINNY

It's not that. It's that I always wanted to be an only child.

EVELYN

Come on, let's walk back to the car.

NINNY

Oh, Evelyn, you've given me back my hope, reminded me what's most important in life. You know what I think that is?

EVELYN

What?

NINNY

Friends, best friends.
(Evelyn hugs Ninny.)
Look.

Ninny points at a tombstone which reads. "Ruth Jameson, Born 1903--Died 1939. Gone but not Forgotten." There's some wildflowers and a note resting in the shade below the stone. Evelyn picks up the note revealing a small jar of honey. She opens the note and reads it: "I'll always love you, the beecharmer." Evelyn smiles to herself and then notices Ninny walking out of the cemetery towards the town of Whistle Stop. Evelyn impulsively cries out:

EVELYN

Idgie?

Ninny instinctively turns her head and smiles at Evelyn, who shakes her head for a second and then scurries after her. From the distance we can see Evelyn approach Ninny.

EVELYN

Idgie's still alive?

NINNY

Yes.

EVELYN

Why didn't you tell me?

NINNY

You didn't ask. She's out there somewhere running free, charming bees and selling honey. Every once in awhile, I'll catch a hint of her. Maybe we'll see her one day soon.

EVELYN

Oh. . . You've been holding out on me, haven't you? Let's go home and then you'll have to tell me everything.

Arm in arm they walk through the dilapidated remains of the town of Whistle Stop. Evelyn starts asking Ninny all the questions that now come to her mind about Idgie's life. THE CAMERA RISES UP AND FOLLOWS them into the town as we hear the voices from the past echo through this repository of memories until we again hear the ghost train's whistle and the clatter of its wheels as it approaches the town. The red leaves of fall start blowing in the wind as the train noise crescendoes. And again no train actually appears.

NINNY (V.O.)

After Ruth died and the railroads stopped running, and the cafe shut down, everybody just scattered to the winds. It was never more than just a little knockabout place, but now that I look back on it, when that cafe closed, the heart of the town just stopped beating. It is funny how a little place like this brought so many people together.

THE CAMERA CRANES DOWN past Ninny and Evelyn as they walk through the town. THE CAMERA CONTINUES over the vines of the kudzu until it comes to rest on a faded sign that says "Fried Green Tomatoes, served at the Whistle Stop Cafe."

THE END.