

DAUPHIN ISLAND

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FADE IN:

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET -- DAY

SUPER: "DAUPHIN ISLAND, ALABAMA, 12 SEPTEMBER 1979"

Dark clouds swirl over the ocean in the distance. Trees strain in the wind. Sand spins up into the already dust-filled air.

A stream of cars, laden with luggage, all move in the same direction.

A school bus drives in the opposite direction, stops at the bus stop.

TEENAGERS pile out. Three boys, BRUCE (17), seemingly the leader, MALCOLM (17) and RYAN (17) run and tackle one another, throw a ball among themselves.

HALLIE (15), an angelic beauty, is draped in an ankle length dress, which lifts in the breeze. She stands with her hands on her hips, watches them and shakes her head, giggling.

MALCOLM

Best match ever, Bruce. They didn't know what hit them.

The boys high-five.

Bruce throws his arm around Hallie's shoulder, kisses her.

BRUCE

It's all because my good luck charm here came to support me.

The wind intensifies. Hallie struggles to hold down her dress. Her hair flits across her beautiful face.

Bruce takes her hand, pulls her along.

BRUCE (CONT'D)

Better get you home. Everyone's already leaving town before the storm.

Bruce and Hallie dart across the road. They rush along the pavement.

HALLIE

My dad reckons this town can withstand anything.

BRUCE

I'd swop with you any time. My mom's all hysterical about the storms.

Bruce looks at the blackened sky. He picks up Hallie, swirls her around.

BRUCE (CONT'D)

I'll just have to pay someone to kidnap you, and take you with us.

HALLIE

You wouldn't come for me yourself?

BRUCE

And face your dad's anger? Not a chance.

Hallie laughs, slips out of Bruce's clutches.

EXT. BRUCE'S HOME -- DAY

A large home with manicured lawns. A luxury vehicle is parked in front, filled with suitcases and bags.

Bruce and Hallie pause, linger on the sidewalk.

Bruce's mother, GERALDINE (40s), walks out, struggling to lug an over-filled bag to the car.

GERALDINE

No time to waste, Bruce.

BRUCE

Gotta go.

HALLIE

Take me with?

Bruce pecks Hallie on the lips, backs up toward the driveway, leaving Hallie standing alone to battle the gusts of wind.

She puts her head down, fights against the forces of Mother Nature as she continues on.

EXT. WALTERS' HOME -- DAY

A two story, upper-class house.

RICHARD WALTERS (42) dressed in branded jeans and running shoes, knocks planks across the windows of the house.

Hallie, struggling against wind, stumbles up the garden path.

RICHARD

Looks like it's going to be a hell  
of a night.

HALLIE

Daddy, shouldn't we--

Richard's hammering drowns out the rest of Hallie's words.

She looks up at the stormy skies, one last time, before heading inside.

INT. WALTERS' HOME - KITCHEN -- DAY

The counters are immaculately clean. A portable radio plays in the background.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

(filtered)

Hurricane Frederic is approaching  
the coast...

SELMA WALTERS (38), an elegant, attractive woman, leans with her back against the counter, smoking nervously as she listens.

Hallie bursts into the kitchen from outside. The wind slams the door behind her.

Selma turns the radio off, grabs a cloth from the counter, pretends to clean.

HALLIE

Mamma, can't you convince Dad to  
let us go to Mobile for the night?

SELMA

We've seen bad storms before,  
Hallie.

HALLIE

Have you seen the clouds moving in?

SELMA

Your father knows best.

Hallie rolls her eyes.

INT. WALTERS' HOME - LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

The wind howls against the house. The boards creak, and a thumping is heard from outside O.S.

Selma and Hallie sit wide-eyed on a couch. Richard paces the room.

Hallie chews on her nails. Selma slaps Hallie's hand lightly from her mouth.

Richard picks up a phone. He holds it to his ear, places it back on the receiver.

RICHARD  
Lines are dead.

The lights flicker on and off, then stay off.

Richard lights a candle.

Something crashes against the outside of the house O.S. The windows and doors rattle against the weight of the howling winds.

Hallie screams.

RICHARD (CONT'D)  
Stop that!

Selma places a reassuring hand on Hallie's knee.

SELMA  
It's okay, sweetie. Richard, maybe we should go hunker down in the--

RICHARD  
We're fine. I'll decide if we are in trouble.

The house creaks and groans.

The sound of something crashing upstairs, then glass shattering O.S. Hallie startles, huddles closer to Selma.

Selma gives Richard a pleading look.

RICHARD (CONT'D)  
Yeah, okay. Let's go to the basement!

Selma pulls Hallie up.

INT. WALTERS' HOME - BASEMENT -- LATER

A large storage area. Crates and boxes stacked to the roof.

A tiny window high on the wall.

Through the glass, trees bend in the wind. Debris blows past.

Richard lights a lantern. Selma slides batteries inside a portable radio.

Hallie sits on a crate in the corner, watches the basement's ceiling which sounds like it's being ripped.

Wind blasts against the house. Rattling and racket sounds from upstairs O.S.

Hallie shivers.

Selma tunes in the radio to a weather station.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

(filtered)

The eye of Hurricane Frederic is moving over Dauphin Island. Now a category three with wind gusts up to one hundred and forty miles per hour. Stay safe and stay tuned in for emergency updates...

RICHARD

Turn it off.

Selma flips the switch to off.

SELMA

Land's sake, I hope we have a house left by morning.

Richard ignores her and searches the room for supplies. He pulls a pile of blankets out of a trunk and hands one to Hallie. She wraps it tightly around herself.

The wind rips at the house loudly. Hallie holds her ears and squishes up her face.

HALLIE

I don't want to die!

RICHARD

I've lived on the coast all my life. It's just another storm, and it too will pass.

Selma gives Richard a glare.

SELMA

Still don't know why we couldn't  
just leave for a night like  
everyone else.

RICHARD

Ain't leaving my home for the likes  
of any looters.

A loud rumble outside, then a crash O.S. Dust falls from the  
basement ceiling.

Selma holds Hallie who is now in tears, guides her over to a  
corner. Hallie huddles against Selma's chest.

Selma pulls the blanket tighter around Hallie's shoulders,  
wraps her arm around her daughter.

Richard traipses up and down across the small room, trying  
not to jolt with each crashing sound.

INT. WALTERS' HOME - BASEMENT -- DAY

All is quiet. A ray of sunlight filters through the small,  
now muddied, window.

Richard heads up the stairway. He turns the knob and pushes  
against the door. It's jammed.

RICHARD

Give me a hand, huh?

Selma reaches the top step and pushes against the door with  
Richard.

After a few attempts, he slumps down, sits on a step.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

My house.

SELMA

Let's just all be thankful we're  
alive.

Hallie stands at the bottom of the steps and watches them.

Richard points to the small window.

RICHARD

Think you can squeeze through it,  
Hal?

She gives the small window a nervous look.

HALLIE  
I can try if you want.

Richard pulls up a crate. He pushes open the window. He gives Hallie a boost, holding her foot in his cupped hands.

She struggles to pull herself through the tiny opening. Her body becomes stuck halfway.

Richard pushes and pulls on her legs, maneuvering her body to fit.

EXT. WALTERS' HOME -- DAY

Hallie squirms through, tumbles onto the muddy ground outside.

The sun shines brightly.

A large tree lies fallen directly through the middle of their house.

Branches, mud, furniture and items are twisted and strewn across the front yard and out in the street.

The family car lies sideways pushed against the house. A wall of mud holds it in place.

SELMA (O.S.)  
Well, what do you see?

Hallie gasps in the humid air. Bugs swarm around her head. She swats them away.

She stands in awe of the shambles the hurricane has left in its wake.

SELMA (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Open the door, girl, so we can get out!

Hallie rummages through the rubble. She tries to lift some of it to no avail.

The porch has fallen, blocking the front door.

Most of the roof is missing from the remainder of the house.

Hallie yanks at a side door. It refuses to budge. She searches for another way to get in.

Boards and part of the roof suddenly drop, the house collapses on itself even more. Hallie jumps back.

She runs back to the window, peers in.

HALLIE

I can't get to the door. I'm gonna have to find help.

Sirens sound off in the distance O.S.

SELMA (O.S.)

What's going on out there? Are you safe?

HALLIE

It's a mess, Mamma. I'll get you out of there.

RICHARD (O.S.)

Stop all the chatting and hurry up.

Hallie races down the driveway.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET -- MOMENTS LATER

Hallie runs through a river of mud past the destruction of neighbors' houses.

She sees MR. TORRANCE (70s), a balding man, dressed in pajamas. Blood trickles from a cut above his eyebrow.

He gazes from his front yard at his destroyed home, stunned.

HALLIE

You gotta help, Mr. Torrance. My family is stuck in our house!

Mr. Torrance gives her a blank stare.

MR. TORRANCE

I need to go find my Emily. She was just standing here.

HALLIE

Mr. Torrance, please--

MR. TORRANCE

No. No. I need to find her.

Mr. Torrance wanders down the street in a state of shock.

HALLIE

She's been dead for over a year.

Mr. Torrance keeps going.

EXT. BEACH -- DAY

The wild surf crashes against the shore. Battered boats rock in the waves. Debris from the ocean lies scattered over the beach.

The bridge connecting the island to the mainland has been partially destroyed.

Waves toss more pieces of wood and junk up on the shore.

Hallie struggles to run on the wet beach. She clambers over a dune, and heads for the street.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET - POOR SIDE OF TOWN -- DAY

Other than a few uprooted trees, the storm damage is far less here.

Tiny, dilapidated houses line the streets.

RUSTY, a medium sized mutt, runs from one of the yards, barking. Seeing Hallie, he wags his tail.

DUSTIN (O.S.)

Rusty!

The dog runs back to the small house. Hallie follows.

EXT. DUSTIN'S HOUSE -- DAY

A shabby, worn down shack. Windows are busted out and some the roof is missing.

Hallie approaches up the overgrown walkway.

HALLIE

Hello!

DUSTIN (16), his unusually good looks be easily overlooked by the threadbare T-shirt and faded jeans he wears, peers through the ripped screen door.

He steps out, watches as she nears, pulls a nervous hand through his hair. His hand-me-down clothes are too small, and cling to his gaunt yet muscular frame.

DUSTIN

You okay?

HALLIE

I need help. My family's trapped  
inside our house.

Dustin looks back inside. He nods at Hallie.

DUSTIN

Let me get my brother and sister.

Hallie follows him, but he stops her.

DUSTIN (CONT'D)

Wait here.

Hallie glances at the unkempt house while he's gone.

ROSE (13), in a tattered dress, with tangled hair, wanders  
out, leans against the wall. The door jams open, so that  
Hallie can see inside.

HALLIE

I guess the storm got the best of  
your home, too.

Rose looks up at the house.

ROSE

Yeah. Sure.

Rose watches her with suspicion.

ROSE (CONT'D)

What do you want?

Hallie's view of the inside of the house is their FATHER, a  
large man, dressed in a vest and shorts, collapsed on the  
floor. An empty bottle lies next to him.

Dustin heaves him onto the couch.

HALLIE

Is your brother coming? I really  
need help.

Rose turns back, obscures Hallie's view.

ROSE

I s'pose he'll be here in a minute.

Dustin exits the house, followed by JD (15), dressed in old  
dirty overalls. His dirty blond hair falls in his eyes.

Dustin pushes the front door closed.

JD brushes up against her. She backs away.

DUSTIN  
I'm Dustin by the way. This is Rose  
and JD.

HALLIE  
Hallie.

JD gives a nod.

JD  
Hallie.

Rose jumps off the porch and smirks.

Dustin grabs some old tools around the side of the house. He hands JD a pick to carry.

Hallie leads the way. Rose lags behind them.

JD (CONT'D)  
Yer type should be able to pick up  
the phone and jus' call someone.

Dustin glares at JD.

DUSTIN  
You shut your mouth, JD?

JD nods.

JD  
'Course. Wouldn't wanta upset the  
less fortunate.

EXT. WALTERS' HOME -- DAY

One side of the house has collapsed totally. Selma screams from the basement O.S.

Hallie runs to the window.

HALLIE  
We're back, Mamma. We'll get you  
out.

RICHARD (O.S.)  
Just hurry. It's like an oven in  
here.

Dustin uses an axe to hash an opening in a side door.  
The bits of the house still standing are very unstable.  
Dustin beckons to JD who follows him inside.

INT. WALTERS' HOME - LIVING ROOM -- DAY

Dust obscures the vision. Dustin and JD push their way through the rubble.

Dustin points to the remains of the staircase. They pull chunks of plaster board and wooden planks away, exposing the door.

Dustin uses all his strength to pull at it. The door is forced open. Dust whirls up around them.

As it clears, Dustin sees Selma at the top of the stairs, helps her out.

SELMA

God bless you boys for helping.

She climbs over rubble, sees Hallie and rushes to give her a huge hug.

As Richard exits from the basement, a board falls from the ceiling.

Dustin dives against Richard to knock him out the way, causing both to tumble to the ground. Richard bumps his head against the wall.

The heavy plank whacks down on Dustin's leg and he lands on top of Richard. Dustin screams out in pain.

Richard scurries out from under Dustin, who rolls in agony.

RICHARD

Are you trying to kill me?

JD

Ungrateful jackass.

Dustin tries to lift his leg, screams out in pain.

JD goes down on his haunches at Dustin's side.

JD (CONT'D)

How bad is it?

DUSTIN  
I can't move my leg.

The remains of the house shudder.

Richard coughs in the dust, heads for the exit.

JD leaps in front of Richard.

JD  
He just saved yer ass. Help me get  
him out of here.

JD lifts Dustin's arm over his shoulder. Richard supports him on the other side.

Dustin cringes from pain.

EXT. WALTERS' HOME -- DAY

The threesome escape as far as they can from the house. They place Dustin on the ground.

The remainder of the house collapses behind them.

Selma covers her mouth with her hands. Richard watches in disbelief.

Dustin groans and takes deep breaths trying to overcome the torment.

Selma kneels next to him, rolls his pant leg up, frowns.

SELMA  
Oh, child. It looks like a clean  
break. We need to get you to a  
hospital.

Dustin tries to put on a brave face.

DUSTIN  
Nah, Ma'am. I'll be all right.

Selma points to pile of debris.

SELMA  
Hallie, get me somethin' to splint  
his leg.

Hallie looks around the yard for a makeshift splint.

Richard, in a daze, dismantles his home board by board and stacks them neatly.

SELMA (CONT'D)

Richard! This boy needs a doctor.

Richard drops the next board on the pile.

RICHARD

I got bigger problems here, Selma.  
I need to salvage my house.

Richard stares at the destruction around him. He falls to one knee and holds his face.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

I need to go to the office, assess  
the damage.

Richard starts wandering off in shock. Selma grabs his arm, stopping him.

SELMA

Richard! You're in no state to go  
anywhere.

Hallie runs up to Selma with a strand of twine, board and a stripped tree branch.

Selma takes the supplies from Hallie, kneels down to work on Dustin's leg.

DUSTIN

There's a place for rent near our  
house. Don't know how it fared the  
storm, but I'm sure you could stay  
there until--

RICHARD

My family won't be staying in some  
shack.

JD glares at Richard's back as he stomps away.

JD

Ah, you're just wastin' your  
breath, Dustin.

Selma pushes up Dustin's pants. He flinches.

SELMA

Mighty kind of you. We'll check in  
on that, son. Dick is just upset.  
He's the town planner, seeing the  
place in this state... well, it's  
just soul-destroying.

Selma secures the splint as best she can.

SELMA (CONT'D)  
You will see a doctor. But this'll  
have to do until then.

Selma lifts his leg. Dustin hollers in pain, holds back tears.

DUSTIN  
Can't afford doctors, Ma'am. Dad  
says if we get hurt, we better  
learn to fix it ourselves.

SELMA  
Don't you be worryin' about that  
now.

Hallie sits next to Dustin.

HALLIE  
I really appreciate you helping us.  
I'm sorry you got hurt like this.

Dustin gives her a feeble grin.

DUSTIN  
It's okay. Least you're all safe.

Bruce, out of breath, runs up to Hallie. Rusty charges out of the bushes and barks at him.

BRUCE  
Oh thank God, you're okay.

Bruce pulls Hallie up. She goes to give him a hug, but he backs away a bit.

BRUCE (CONT'D)  
You're quite the mess.

Hallie nods, a tear in her eye.

HALLIE  
Sure is good to see you.

Selma wanders down to the street, sees someone down the road, waves.

MARTIN (40s), part of the rescue crew, stops in front of Selma.

MARTIN  
Howdy. You folks doing okay?

SELMA

Martin, oh lordie, am I glad to see you. We need to get this boy to the doctor. Busted his leg pretty bad.

Martin checks the muddy street behind him.

MAN

I can get a truck about a mile or so in. We'd have to carry him to that point.

Bruce glares at Dustin.

BRUCE

What the hell's he doing here any way?

HALLIE

His came to help.

BRUCE

Well, I'm here now. He can go.

SELMA

Bruce! We need to get him to a hospital.

Hallie attempts to divert Bruce away from Dustin.

HALLIE

Hush now. He was nice enough to assist us.

BRUCE

Probably gonna want a free hand out now.

Bruce talks loud enough for Dustin to hear him.

BRUCE (CONT'D)

Isn't that right, beggar boy?

Dustin beckons to JD and Rose.

DUSTIN

Help me up. I think it's time we leave.

BRUCE

Hey, Hallie, you know my new motorcycle. Damn storm wrecked it. Can you believe that?

Hallie gapes at him, looks at her destroyed home.

Selma moves a bit further into the street to wait for the rescue crew.

Dustin cries out in anguish as Rose and JD try to lift him.

BRUCE (CONT'D)  
You looking for some sympathy,  
Stinky boy?

Hallie pulls at Bruce's arm.

HALLIE  
Leave him alone.

BRUCE  
What's the matter? You afraid I  
might be telling the truth? Life  
sucks when you're stuck with a  
couple of losers as--

HALLIE  
Bruce. You stop it!

JD tries his best to support Dustin, but his face turns red with anger.

As soon as Dustin puts pressure on the leg, he screams in pain, collapses to the ground again.

HALLIE (CONT'D)  
You're not going anywhere, Dustin.

Bruce rolls his eyes.

BRUCE  
That's exactly what he wants.

JD reaches his limit, bashes into Bruce's side. Bruce hits the ground hard.

JD rolls on top of him and slugs his face. Blood spurts from Bruce's nose.

Rusty barks and growls at the fighting pair.

Hallie attempts to break it up but gets tossed aside.

DUSTIN  
JD, enough! Get off him now! You  
okay, Hallie?

She nods.

JD pulls back his fist. Bruce rolls out and gets him in a neck hold.

JD  
Take it back. Or I'll make you eat  
them words, sonofabitch.

BRUCE  
Eat this, possum breath.

Bruce takes a hand full of dirt and stuffs it into JD's mouth, then tosses him aside on the ground.

JD gags and spits, then comes at Bruce full force again.

DUSTIN  
Let it go, JD.

JD stops in his track, panting.

Richard storm over to the boys, glares at JD.

RICHARD  
This is what happens when your kind  
get involved. Always trouble.

JD scuffs at the dirt beneath his feet.

Rose spits in Bruce's direction.

BRUCE  
Low life sack of--

HALLIE  
Get out of here, Bruce.

Richard nods at Bruce.

RICHARD  
Maybe it's best, Bruce, til they're  
all gone.

Bruce wipes blood off his lip and puts his arm around Hallie, pulls her along with him.

BRUCE  
You're coming with me.

Hallie pushes Bruce away.

HALLIE  
I'm not going anywhere with you.

Selma watches from a distance down the street. She shakes her head.

Bruce slumps, smiles sheepishly at Hallie.

BRUCE  
I'm sorry, baby. I'm just acting  
like an idiot cos I was worried  
crazy 'bout you.

He opens his arms.

BRUCE (CONT'D)  
Come give me that hug.

HALLIE  
But you said--

He pulls Hallie into his arms, sneers at Dustin over her shoulder.

He waves and wanders back down the road, blowing kisses at Hallie.

EXT. WALTERS' HOME -- LATER

JD and Rose sit on the ground beside Dustin.

Selma leads Martin and two of his CREW to where Dustin sits.

SELMA  
These men are going to take you to  
the hospital.

Dustin's jaw drops.

DUSTIN  
But, Ma'am, we can't afford no  
doctorin'. My father's going to  
freak.

SELMA  
Don't you worry yourself, I'll take  
care of it. Understand?

Selma whisper to Martin.

SELMA (CONT'D)  
Tell the hospital to bill me for  
the boy's medical expenses.

MARTIN  
Yes, ma'am.

Richard stands watching, his arms folded.

Hallie accompanies them a bit of the way.

RICHARD

You could've just given him some money. Now it's still our problem.

Selma puts her finger to her lips.

SELMA

We should focus on what we're going to do now.

Richard scowls.

RICHARD

We got the vacation house until we rebuild.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET -- DAY

Richard, Selma and Hallie stroll along the hurricane damaged streets. They gape at the mess around them.

A group of PEOPLE gather around something in the road. As they get closer, we see that it's Mr. Torrance lying on the ground.

Selma pushes her way through the crowd, kneels beside him.

SELMA

What's happened?

A MAN shakes his head.

MAN

We found him lying here, dead.

Hallie gasps, covers her mouth with her hand.

HALLIE

But I saw him this morning.

Selma shakes her head in sorrow.

EXT. BEACH HOUSE -- NIGHT

A small luxury villa overlooking the ocean. The garden leads onto the beach.

INT. BEACH HOUSE - LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

Hallie sits on the couch, a blanket over her legs. Selma hands her a mug of coffee.

SELMA

It was his time, Hallie.

Hallie turns tear-filled eyes at Selma.

HALLIE

Maybe I shouldn't have let him go off on his own.

Selma shakes her head.

SELMA

He's been ill for a while now.

Hallie sips from the cup.

HALLIE

He said he'd seen his wife, Mamma.

SELMA

Well, there you have it. He's with her now, exactly where he wanted to be.

HALLIE

Do you truly believe that?

Selma nods.

INT. SELMA'S CAR - GAS STATION -- DAY

Selma's car pulls into the station. Selma digs in her purse, gives some bills to Hallie.

SELMA

Go get some milk.

Hallie climbs out of the car.

INT. GAS STATION - MINI MART -- MOMENTS LATER

Hallie make her way down one of the aisles. She reaches the end, nearly bumps into Dustin who hobbles around the corner. His leg is in a cast.

Hallie almost loses her balance. Dustin reaches out to steady her.

She blushes.

DUSTIN  
How're you doin'?

HALLIE  
Good. You?

Hallie shifts from one leg to the other, glances over her shoulder.

DUSTIN  
Great.

Dustin's eyes remain glued to Hallie's face.

DUSTIN (CONT'D)  
Can I help you with anything? I'm  
just temporary and all, but...

HALLIE  
I gotta get going.

Dustin's shoulders sag. He looks down at his feet.

DUSTIN  
Yeah, okay.

Hallie watches him leave, then takes a few steps after him.

HALLIE  
You know, we didn't really get a  
chance to thank you for all your  
help. Don't know what I would've  
done.

Dustin puffs out his chest.

DUSTIN  
T'was nothing really.

Hallie waves, backs away a few steps, then turns around.

Dustin does a silent whoop of delight.

Hallie blushes.

EXT. WALTERS' NEW HOUSE -- DAY

Construction WORKERS nail in the house's wooden frame.

Hallie carries a bag of lunch.

HALLIE  
You seen my dad?

The construction worker glances around the work site.

WORKER  
Ain't seen him for a while. Think  
he's gone to town to order more  
supplies.

Hallie nods. She strolls off toward the beach.

EXT. BEACH -- DAY

Hallie strolls along the edge of the water, staring out to sea.

Boys' laughter and a dog's barking is heard O.S.

Bruce, Malcolm and Ryan surround Dustin.

Dustin's jacket is too long for him, and tattered at the seams.

He faces the three bullies, his head held high.

Rusty is tied to a pole with a worn piece of rope. The dog yaps incessantly, and yanks to free himself.

Bruce shoves Dustin into the sand. Malcolm pins him down, while Bruce snatches Dustin's jacket off.

Dustin hobbles onto his feet as quickly as he can, despite the cast. The dog growls deep in its throat.

Bruce stands at the edge of the sea. He holds the jacket up, taunting.

BRUCE  
You can just come and get it,  
Redneck.

Dustin glares at Bruce.

Bruce shakes the jacket, sneers. He tosses it into the water. The jacket bobs in the waves.

BRUCE (CONT'D)  
Oops. Sorry, dropped it.

Bruce stomps back to Dustin. He punches him in the stomach, knocking Dustin off balance.

Dustin regains his footing, glares at Bruce again.

Hallie runs along the beach to the boys.

HALLIE

What do you think you're doing?

BRUCE

Teaching Dustbin boy the rules of Dauphin Island. He needs to know his place.

Hallie rushes to the water, fishes Dustin's jacket out of the waves. She hands the jacket back to him.

Dustin gawks at her, pulls the soaked jacket on. Water drips to the ground.

DUSTIN

I musta died and went to heaven.

Hallie looks down, thrown off guard.

Bruce, enraged, steps between them, prods Dustin in the chest.

BRUCE

You have no business talking to my girl like that.

DUSTIN

Just tellin' it like I see it.

Bruce grabs Hallie's hand, pulls her up the dunes with him.

Hallie resists, runs back to the dog. She unties the rope. Rusty bolts up the sand, growls and snaps at Bruce's ankles.

Bruce kicks at the dog.

Rusty leaps from side to side, avoiding Bruce's foot. He manages to grab hold of a pants leg, and tugs at it, tearing the material.

DUSTIN (CONT'D)

Rusty, come 'ere, boy.

Rusty dashes back to Dustin, tail swishing from side to side.

BRUCE

Your stupid mutt tore my pants. You'll have to pay for that.

Dustin scratches Rusty. The dog licks his face, rolls in the sand, wagging his tail.

HALLIE  
Ain't his fault the dog doesn't  
like you.

Bruce wags his finger at Dustin.

BRUCE  
I'll get you still!

HALLIE  
Just don't forget your buddies when  
you go after him, Bruce. I'd hate  
him to have an unfair advantage  
over you.

BRUCE  
What the hell's that supposed to  
mean?

HALLIE  
Three of you ganging' up on one  
boy?

Bruce turns his back on Hallie, and huffs away. Malcolm and Rusty scramble after him.

Hallie faces Dustin. He stands, admiring her.

DUSTIN  
You're like my own guardian angel  
now.

Hallie chuckles.

HALLIE  
Far from it. I'm the reason he's  
beating on you.

Dustin shrugs.

DUSTIN  
Still think you're my angel.

He wrings the water out of his jacket.

EXT. BEACH - ROCKS -- DAY

Hallie and Dustin sit on the rocks. The two stare off in silence. Hallie looks down at the lunch sack.

HALLIE

You hungry? Brought this for my dad, but he ain't nowhere around.

DUSTIN

Nah. Thanks anyway.

HALLIE

You sure? I'll just be tossing it to the gulls. Not my favorite birds so you'd kinda be doing me a favor.

Hallie places the bag next to Dustin. He doesn't object.

HALLIE (CONT'D)

Where's your Daddy working?

DUSTIN

He's been out of work for the past year.

HALLIE

Your mamma?

Dustin's head drops.

DUSTIN

I should be going.

Dustin picks up the lunch bag, hobbles down off the rock. He whistles for Rusty to follow.

HALLIE

Will I be seeing you around?

DUSTIN

I sure hope so.

INT. BEACH HOUSE - KITCHEN -- DAY

Hallie opens a cupboard, fills a bag with canned goods.

Richard walks in.

RICHARD

What you think you're doing with that?

HALLIE

Taking it to Dustin's family.

Richard grabs the box away from Hallie. He puts the cans back in the cupboards.

RICHARD

If that family wants to starve to death. It's their own doing.

Hallie's jaw drops.

HALLIE

I thought we were supposed to take care of the poor? You always said--

RICHARD

There's a difference between being poor and just plain drunk.

Hallie glares at Richard.

HALLIE

That ain't the kids' fault.

RICHARD

You better listen to me, Hallie. I know what's best and--

She grabs the bag and puts more cans in.

HALLIE

You can take it from my pocket money.

RICHARD

God dammit, Hallie!

He grabs her, spins her around and raises his hand. His face reddens, nostrils flair. Hallie cringes.

Richard lowers his hand and backs away. Hallie trembles in shock, watches him exit. The front door slams O.S.

Hallie grabs a few more items, throws them in the bag, and leaves out the kitchen door.

EXT. BEACH -- DAY

Hallie takes her time across the sand, the bag slung over her shoulder, carrying her sandals in her hand. The water flows over her feet and back.

As she nears the dune, she sees Dustin and JD at the water's edge, fishing. Dustin has a plastic bag tied around his cast to keep it dry. Rose lies on the sand, staring up at the sky.

Rusty lies against Rose. He sees Hallie and his tale wags, thumping against Rose. He gets up and runs to Hallie, barking for joy, jumping around her.

Hallie scratches him, and he bounces around.

Rose sits up and watches Hallie.

Dustin and JD notice her and Dustin becomes awkward. Hallie joins him. He reels in as fast as he can.

HALLIE

Hey.

JD watches her with suspicion.

HALLIE (CONT'D)

You guys caught anything?

Dustin nods toward two fish lying near Rose. She holds them up for Hallie to see.

ROSE

Supper.

Hallie sits next to Rose.

ROSE (CONT'D)

You get lost or something? This ain't really your kind of beach.

Dustin places his old fishing rod down, takes a seat on the other side of Hallie.

Hallie holds out the bag.

HALLIE

I brought some food. It's not much but--

Dustin looks away, embarrassed.

DUSTIN

No offense, we don't need no hand-outs.

Rose grabs the bag, opens it, checks through the items. Her face lights up.

Hallie touches Dustin's arm.

HALLIE

Didn't mean nothing by it. I just wanted to do something nice.

(MORE)

HALLIE (CONT'D)

I mean, it's not like you didn't  
save my family.

Dustin plays with the sand.

Rose holds up a tin.

ROSE

Dustin, this is going to go great  
with the fish.

Dustin can't help but be amused at Rose's excitement.

He looks at Hallie and their eyes lock.

DUSTIN

Was real nice of you.

Rose discovers something else in the bag.

ROSE

Yeah, we gonna eat like kings.

DUSTIN

You wanna see something?

Hallie nods.

They get up. Rose's face drops.

ROSE

Can I come?

DUSTIN

Not this time, Rosie. JD's gonna  
need some help getting all the  
stuff home.

Rose pouts.

Hallie follows Dustin over the dune. His foot slides with the  
packet still over it and he falls.

Hallie chuckles at him. He pulls the packet off, a bit  
embarrassed.

EXT. ABANDONED HOUSE -- DAY

The ruins of an old house. At the back is a garage with a  
closed door.

Dustin pulls a string from around his neck that has a key on.

He unlocks the garage door, slides it open.

INT. ABANDONED HOUSE - GARAGE -- CONTINUOUS

A small wooden boat is in the otherwise empty and clean space.

The boat is far from perfect, but it's clear that someone has put a lot of time and effort into building it.

Pieces of sand paper lie on the floor, some old tools in a corner.

Dustin runs his hand along the wood, proud.

HALLIE  
You built this?

DUSTIN  
Yeah.

She looks at the small pile of tools.

DUSTIN (CONT'D)  
Some day I'm going to just sail  
away from Dauphin Island.

Hallie gives him a questioning look.

HALLIE  
Oh, okay.

Dustin's pride in his project shows in the way he looks at the boat, feels each notch in the wood.

DUSTIN  
Actually just thought it'd be nice  
to get out in the boat sometimes  
for some fishing. Just drift away  
from life for a bit.

Hallie watches him with admiration.

HALLIE  
You should join in the fund raising  
fishing contest?

DUSTIN  
Nah. It's not really for people  
like me.

HALLIE  
I'd like it if you came.

She and Dustin stare at each other for a beat.

The intensity makes her uncomfortable and she looks down.

DUSTIN

I'd like to spend time with you,  
Hallie, but I don't know if it's  
the right thing to do.

Hallie looks away, disappointed. She glances at her watch.

HALLIE

Yeah, maybe you're right. I best be  
going any way.

DUSTIN

I didn't mean to...

She waves, flees from the garage too fast for Dustin to follow her.

EXT. BEACH - CLUB HOUSE -- DAY

Selma, Geraldine and Hallie set out coffee and breakfast rolls on a table.

MEN, all kitted out for fishing, gather around, checking their fancy equipment.

Dustin, hobbles up the beach, his old fishing rod in hand, and a bag over his shoulder. Rusty follows close behind.

Geraldine nudges Selma.

GERALDINE

Surely he don't think he can come  
fish here with these men.

Selma shrugs.

SELMA

If he's got a rod, and entry money,  
he's as entitled as anyone else. I  
don't know of any rule that would  
stop him.

Geraldine gawks as Selma welcomes Dustin.

DUSTIN

Ma'am. I never got a chance to  
thank you.

SELMA

I think it's quite the opposite really. Richard and I owe you thanks. How long you still in the cast for?

DUSTIN

Comes off next week.

Hallie tries not to make it obvious that she's pleased he's there. She shuffles the cups around, keeps looking in his direction.

Dustin gives a small wave. He approaches her.

Bruce stomps in, steps in front of him.

BRUCE

What you think you're doing here, Dustbin?

DUSTIN

Come to fish.

Bruce bursts into laughter, points at Dustin's fishing rod.

BRUCE

With that old' piece of shit.

Selma glares at Bruce, guides Dustin to an entry table.

Bruce strides over to Hallie, stands with his arms crossed.

BRUCE (CONT'D)

He's got a damn cheek showing up here like that.

HALLIE

I invited him.

Dustin peers in their direction.

Bruce puts his arm around Hallie, showing off. He whispers coarsely to her.

BRUCE

You're looking for trouble in all the wrong places, Hallie.

He places a kiss on Hallie's lips.

Selma notices the show. She hands Dustin a form.

SELMA  
Just fill this in.  
(whispers)  
You got enough money, boy?

Dustin digs into his pockets, pulls out a handful of coins, places them on the table.

DUSTIN  
Yes, Ma'am. Been workin' at the gas station all week.

Selma takes some of the money, pushes the rest back.

SELMA  
Since you're a junior, it's less.

Dustin puts the money back in his pocket.

He writes slowly.

SELMA (CONT'D)  
You don't need to fill in everything. Just your name and sign down at the bottom. Which school do you go to, Dustin?

DUSTIN  
Uh, I don't go any more. Daddy needed someone to help around the house.

All the competitors starts to gather in the room. Richard stands up front.

Hallie sneaks her way through the crowd to where Dustin stands.

HALLIE  
Hey.

Dustin nods her way.

Richard addresses the group.

RICHARD  
It's eight o'clock. The contest has now officially started.

Dustin struggles with determination through the sand down the beach towards the water.

Selma digs in her wallet discreetly, puts some bills into the money box.

She turns around as Richard storms to her.

RICHARD (CONT'D)  
That kid doesn't belong here. You  
know what they say, like father,  
like son.

Selma lights a cigarette, exhales slowly.

SELMA  
Is there something I should know  
about, Dick?

RICHARD  
What the hell you talking about,  
woman?

Selma smirks at him.

SELMA  
Well, seeing how your father was  
back in the day.

Richard glares at her, grits his teeth.

He storms off. Selma smirks.

EXT. BEACH -- SAME

Dustin finds a spot, puts down his bag.

Bruce and his two side-kicks setup on either side him. They  
cast their lines in. Dustin is wedged between them.

Dustin calmly picks up his bag, trudges a bit further away,  
casts into the water.

Ryan moves closer to Dustin, throws his line over Dustin's.

RYAN  
Oops.

Hallie runs down the beach to Bruce.

HALLIE  
Why are you doing this?

BRUCE  
Cos I can.

HALLIE  
Are you scared of a little  
competition?

Bruce glares at her.

BRUCE  
I'm scared of nothing. You hear me?

Hallie nods.

HALLIE  
Then call off your side-kicks.

Dustin reels in, sees Hallie with Bruce.

BRUCE  
Give me a kiss.

HALLIE  
What? Now? No.

BRUCE  
Do it, and we'll leave him alone.

Hallie sighs, leans in and puts a quick kiss on Bruce's lips. He pulls her in close, gives her a deep kiss. She jumps back.

Dustin is about to grab his bag to leave, when Bruce shouts at Ryan.

BRUCE (CONT'D)  
Let him be, Ryan! He probably can't catch anything to save his life any way.

Ryan backs away.

Hallie huffs, stomps back to the club house. She wipes her mouth.

EXT. BEACH - CLUB HOUSE -- LATER

An excited atmosphere as the men gather with their catches. They line up at the scale to weigh in their fish.

Geraldine reads the weights, while Selma fills in the contest forms.

Bruce steps up to the scale, weighs in his fish.

GERALDINE  
Two pounds, one ounce.

Malcolm and Ryan cheer, high-five Bruce and slap him on the back.

Rusty barks, runs across the sand. Dustin follows, carries a fish.

Everyone stares as Dustin approaches. He places the fish on the scale.

GERALDINE (CONT'D)

Two pounds, six ounces.

Bruce's face drops.

Selma grabs a camera out her bag.

SELMA

Let's take a photo, Dustin.

Dustin grins, raises his fish. Selma snaps a pic.

BRUCE

He's too late for the weigh-in.

Hallie glances at her watch.

HALLIE

No, he's made it with a minute to spare.

Dustin's face lights up. He glances at Hallie with admiration in his eyes.

HALLIE (CONT'D)

You done good, Dustin.

SELMA

You sure did, boy.

Bruce grabs Hallie by the hand. Hallie withdraws it. Bruce glares at her, sneers.

BRUCE

You shouldn't be treating me bad, Hallie. You may regret it.

Bruce bumps against Dustin as he passes him.

Dustin, unable to keep his balance, falls backwards into the sand.

BRUCE (CONT'D)

I warned you before. Watch your back.

The hair on Rusty's back rises. He growls at Bruce.

Dustin gathers his belongings, limps up the beach. Hallie goes after him.

HALLIE  
Stay a while. There's gonna be  
snacks.

Dustin steps close to Hallie, he stares into her eyes.

DUSTIN  
Is that really what you want,  
Hallie?

Hallie stares over her shoulder at Bruce.

Bruce and Richard huddle together, obviously talking about Dustin.

HALLIE  
Yeah, it is.

Hallie takes Dustin by the hand, leads him back toward the club house.

EXT. BEACH - CLUB HOUSE -- LATER

Hallie sits on the beach, watches the sun set. Dustin joins her.

DUSTIN  
Your ma sure knows how to feed a  
man.

Hallie laughs.

They sit in silence for a while.

DUSTIN (CONT'D)  
I'm causin' trouble between you and  
your boyfriend.

HALLIE  
If not you, he'd be picking on  
someone else.

DUSTIN  
Can't say I blame him. If you were  
my girl I'd be the same way.

Hallie glances at Dustin with a look of amusement on her face.

HALLIE  
Nah, you wouldn't.

DUSTIN  
You're right. I'd be worse.

Hallie laughs.

HALLIE  
You flatter me. And anyway, Bruce  
doesn't own me.

They look at each other, engrossed.

Dustin touches Hallie's cheek, leans in close to her, their foreheads touching.

Hallie closes her eye, waits. Dustin leans back again, watches Hallie. In the moment, she looks calm and content.

He kisses her softly on the lips then on the forehead, cupping her chin with his hand.

She opens her eyes, and they stay focused on each other for a beat.

Then Dustin picks up his bag, stands to leave. He wanders up the beach to the club house. Hallie watches him, looking totally satisfied.

Dustin whistles. Rusty bounds over the dunes toward him.

Selma joins him outside of the club house.

SELMA  
Hallie and I should leave soon.  
Richard is staying for a drink with  
the men. We'll give you a ride  
home.

DUSTIN  
Thanks, Ma'am, but I'm fine to  
walk.

SELMA  
Don't argue. Not with that leg.

Selma beckons to Hallie to come. She jumps up, a happiness in her step that wasn't there before.

INT. SELMA'S CAR - DUSTIN'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

Selma and Dustin sit up front. Hallie and Rusty sit in the back seat.

They pull up in front of the house.

DUSTIN  
Thank you, Ma'am.

Selma opens her door.

SELMA  
I'll come meet your parents?

DUSTIN  
That's not a good idea.

SELMA  
Oh, nonsense.

Selma climbs out, heads for the house before Dustin can stop her.

EXT. DUSTIN'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

JD sits on the porch step, tinkering with some wires. He stands as Selma approaches.

He glances over her shoulder at Dustin making his way up the path.

Hallie climbs out the car, follows Dustin.

JD  
What's she doin' here?

SELMA  
Nice to see you, too, JD.

ROSE (O.S.)  
Food's ready.

Rose opens the porch door, stares wide-eyed at Selma.

SELMA  
Hey, Rose. Is your mamma here?

Rose blocks the doorway.

ROSE  
You can't come in here.

Selma raises her eyebrows, turns to Dustin.

SELMA

Is there something going on here?

ROSE

Why'd you bring them here, Dustin?  
It's Saturday night. You should  
know better.

Selma, now suspicious, heads for the door. Rose side-steps to stop Selma from entering the house.

Selma puts her hands on Rose's shoulders.

SELMA

It'll be okay.

Rose moves aside, embarrassed, allows Selma to enter.

INT. DUSTIN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

A tiny room with paint peeling off the walls. One couch against a wall.

A table, with five unmatched chairs around it.

In one corner, a few rotten cupboards hang skew on hinges, serving as a kitchen.

Their mother, MAY (40s), lies passed out on the couch. Empty bottles lie on the floor, and on the table.

May's tank top, which is too small, crawls up revealing her stomach. Her clothes are stained with holes in them.

Selma pulls up her nose in disgust at the state of the room. She checks a pot perched on the counter. It holds a gruel of some kind.

May snores, shifts position.

Selma takes a deep breath, places a hand on the counter to steady herself.

She shakes May in an attempt to wake her up. May grumbles, rolls over, and continues to sleep.

EXT. DUSTIN'S HOUSE -- MOMENTS LATER

The kids all stand outside, waiting in anticipation.

Dustin stares at the ground.

Selma steps out of the house, puts on a brave face.

SELMA

I never did get to thank you for  
your help. Let me take you all out  
for dinner tonight.

Rose whoops with delight.

DUSTIN

Ma'am, you--

Selma holds up a hand to silence him.

SELMA

I want to.

JD sits back down on the step.

JD

I ain't goin' anywhere with the  
likes of you.

Selma shrugs.

SELMA

That's your choice. Not gonna force  
you.

Selma glances around, she turns to JD.

SELMA (CONT'D)

Where can I find a bucket of water?

JD

Bucket and tap's round the corner.  
Why?

Selma wanders around the side of the house. The kids all  
strain to see what she's doing.

Selma returns with a half-filled bucket of water. She carries  
it into the house.

INT. DUSTIN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

The kids peer through the screen door as Selma carries the  
bucket over to the couch.

Selma dumps the water over May who jolts up, wide awake.

She snorts to avoid water getting in her nose.

MAY  
What the...?

Selma puts her hands on her hips.

SELMA  
In case you wake up later, and  
wonder where the kids are, I'm  
taking them out for dinner.

Selma spins around on her heel.

EXT. DUSTIN'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

The kids scurry as she swings open the door.

SELMA  
Well, come along. Let's go.  
(to JD)  
You sure you're not coming?

MAY (O.S.)  
Hey! Dustin, JD!

JD drops what he's doing, strolls to the car.

JD  
I reckon I ain't got nothin' better  
to do.

INT. RESTAURANT -- NIGHT

Selma leads the group inside and finds a table. PEOPLE gawk  
in their direction.

Everyone takes seats, Hallie and Dustin sit next to each  
other.

A WAITRESS hands out menus.

SELMA  
Y 'all can order anything you like.

Rose's eyes widen.

ROSE  
Anything?

JD smacks her arm. Dustin glares at him.

Bruce, Malcolm and Ryan push open the door. They sit at a corner table.

Dustin sinks in the seat. Hallie finds his hand under the table, intertwines her fingers with his and holds his hand tight. He regains some confidence and straightens up.

JD and Rose wolf down soda crackers left at the table.

Malcolm notices their table, points them out to Bruce.

Bruce pushes himself out of his seat, makes his way to them.

BRUCE

Well, isn't this nice and cozy?

SELMA

Would you like to join us, Bruce?

Bruce gapes at her in disbelief.

BRUCE

Share a table with them? I don't think so, Mrs. Walters. I just want to talk to Hallie.

Hallie shifts uncomfortably, holds onto Dustin's hand.

SELMA

Maybe some other time, Bruce. As you can see we have guests with us tonight. You go join your friends, Bruce.

Bruce storms back to Ryan and Malcolm. They talk, then all three leave the restaurant.

SELMA (CONT'D)

What you gonna have, Dustin?

Dustin's head drops.

DUSTIN

Just water, Ma'am. Thanks.

Hallie jabs his side.

HALLIE

He's having a Cheeseburger and French fries. Like me.

SELMA

Excellent choice. I'll be having the same.

EXT. DUSTIN'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

Selma's car pulls up. The three siblings climb out and Rose waves, grinning from ear to ear.

Selma backs out of the driveway.

Jim hollers from inside the house O.S.

The kids stop in their tracks. Rose gets behind Dustin.

Jim crashes through the screen door, stumbles down the step and staggers toward them.

JIM  
Where you been?

DUSTIN  
That was Mrs. Walters. She took us out, thanking us for helping them in the storm last month.

Jim grabs Dustin's shirt and pulls his ear.

JIM  
You don't wanna listen. I warned you when you got your leg fixed. People like that don't do nothin' unless they want somethin' in return.

ROSE  
They're nice, Daddy.

Dustin's father looks down the road after Selma's car. He spits, then turns and stumbles back inside the house.

INT. DUSTIN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

May lies on her stomach, passed out on the couch.

Dustin's father breaks what little is left in the house, by slamming it against the wall.

Rose huddles in the corner.

DUSTIN  
Please, Pa, you don't understand.

Dustin's father takes a swig from a nearly empty whiskey bottle.

JIM

I understand just fine.

He throws the bottle against the wall.

JIM (CONT'D)

Rose, find me another goddamn  
bottle.

Rose sits frozen in the spot.

JIM (CONT'D)

Did you hear me?

Jim grabs her by the hair and yanks her up. Tears dribble  
down her cheeks.

Dustin grabs Jim's shoulder.

DUSTIN

Leave her be. I'll get your damn  
bottle.

Jim backhands Dustin across the face.

JIM

Don't you interfere when I'm  
talkin' to your sister.

He turns, slaps Rose with an open hand. She cries out,  
clutching the side of her face.

Rusty licks Rose's face and whimpers.

JIM (CONT'D)

Now do as I told you!

Dustin, in a moment of fury, flies after Jim. The two tumble  
to the ground, roll on the floor, throwing punches.

JD tries to pull his dad away, giving Dustin time to get the  
upper hand. He sits straddled over his father.

Dustin lifts up Jim's head and slams it against the floor.

Jim scrambles up, knocking Dustin backwards.

JD rushes into the kitchen area, searching.

Jim pushes Dustin against the wall, squeezes his hands tight  
around Dustin's throat. His face turns blue.

Rose screams and sobs at the same time.

DUSTIN'S FATHER  
Challenging your ol' man? You  
useless piece of rubbish--

CRACK!

Jim's eyes grow wide. His hands falls limp to his side. He spins, falls to the ground, face down. A deep gash in the back of his head bleeds out.

JD stands shaken, a broken bottle still clutched in his hand.

Blood pools around their father's head.

Dustin rolls his father to his back and feels his chest.

DUSTIN  
He ain't breathing.

JD shudders. He drops the remains of the bottle. It shatters on the ground.

Rose rushes over to May. She pulls May's arm around her and lays her head against her chest, cries hysterically.

ROSE  
Mamma, please wake up. Please!

May pushes Rose away, grumbles in her drunken slumber.

INT. SELMA'S CAR - BEACH HOUSE -- NIGHT

Selma parks the car, turns to Hallie.

SELMA  
Your daddy's going to be mad as  
hell at us.

HALLIE  
I know.

SELMA  
You know he just wants what's best  
for you?

Hallie sighs, stares down at her hands.

SELMA (CONT'D)  
Your dad and Bruce, they're carved  
from the same stone. But Dustin...  
He's different.

Hallie nods.

HALLIE

I'm not trying to make Daddy angry.  
I'm just tired of him and Bruce  
always telling me what to do.

SELMA

I know the feeling, my girl.

Selma opens the car door.

HALLIE

Do you love Daddy?

Selma holds the door open, stares out.

SELMA

I don't know if I've ever asked  
myself that. I made a choice to  
marry him. I'm his wife.

She climbs out of the car.

EXT. BEACH HOUSE -- NIGHT

Selma and Hallie climb up to the front porch. Richard opens  
the door, leans against the door frame.

RICHARD

So I've had a few phone calls.  
Seems the whole town's talkin'  
about you taking those good-for-  
nothings to the restaurant.

Selma kisses Richard on the cheek.

SELMA

Good. That spares me having to give  
you the details.

Richard clenches his jaw.

RICHARD

Told you already, Selma, don't want  
you hanging around those folks.  
They're bad news.

Richard steps aside as Hallie and Selma enter.

INT. BEACH HOUSE - LIVING ROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

Selma sits on the couch. Hallie takes a seat next to her.

Richard paces, agitated.

SELMA

I don't see the big deal, Richard.

RICHARD

I work hard for what we have. I don't have sympathy for those--

Selma pats Hallie's leg.

SELMA

Hallie, make your mamma some coffee, will you?

Selma whispers when Hallie is gone.

SELMA (CONT'D)

I'm calling the authorities tomorrow. I can't see any child deserves to live like that. You should see the conditions.

RICHARD

And I think you should mind your own business, woman. I won't be the laughing stock of this town.

Richard opens the door and slams it behind him.

INT. POLICE STATION -- DAY

Selma sits across from a stern looking POLICE OFFICER.

Hallie sits on a bench against the wall, just out of ear shot.

SELMA

I couldn't believe what I was seeing. No children should have to live like that.

POLICE OFFICER

Ma'am--

SELMA

And the mother! Why she was just passed on out the couch, while those poor kids had to--

POLICE OFFICER

Mrs. Walters--

Selma taps her fingers, irritated.

SELMA  
Yes, what is it?

POLICE OFFICER  
A case was reported regarding that  
address this morning.

SELMA  
Well, thank the Lord. What's going  
to happen with those kids now?

The Police Officer looks grim.

POLICE OFFICER  
All I know is that the father was  
killed.

Selma pushes back her chair as she stands. She beckons to  
Hallie to follow.

INT. SELMA'S CAR - DUSTIN'S HOUSE -- DAY

Hallie sits sideways facing Selma. She has a look of concern  
on her face.

HALLIE  
What's happened, Mamma?

SELMA  
I don't know yet. You stay here,  
baby.

HALLIE  
Nah. I'm coming.

Selma climbs out the car. Hallie does the same.

EXT. DUSTIN'S HOUSE -- DAY

JD and Rose sit on the stairs. A bag rests on the ground at  
JD's feet.

Rose sobs into JD's shoulder.

Selma kneels down in front of the kids. She squeezes Rose's  
hand.

SELMA  
What happened?

JD  
Had no choice.

Rose bawls louder.

ROSE  
Daddy was gonna kill Dustin.

SELMA  
Is your mother here?

JD  
She's gone off with some people.  
She can't stand to look at me after  
what I done.

Selma throws her arms around JD. He flinches, shows no other reaction.

SELMA  
You poor child.

Rose wipes her face with her sleeve.

ROSE  
They're sending him away.

SELMA  
I'll see what I can do.

JD jumps up.

JD  
No! We're in this mess cos of your  
interfering.

He marches into the house. The door swings shut behind him with a bang.

ROSE  
He don't mean that. He's just  
upset.

Hallie edges closer.

HALLIE  
Where's Dustin?

ROSE  
He took off this morning.

Rose gives Selma a pleading look.

ROSE (CONT'D)  
My family's all broken, Ma'am.

Selma sits down next to Rose, gathers her in her arms, and holds her tight as Rose sobs.

Hallie bites her nails, stares down at the ground as a tear escapes from her eye.

EXT. BEACH - ROCKS -- DAY

Hallie sits on the rocks.

A flash of lightning off in the distance. Thunder rumbles.

Dark clouds roll across the sky.

Rusty yips, bounds up the rocks to her.

Dustin, carrying a backpack, makes his way to Hallie. He sits down next to her.

HALLIE  
Nasty storm's brewing.

DUSTIN  
I'm going away, Hallie.

HALLIE  
Why?

DUSTIN  
Looking at my mom and Rose  
everyday, would be like staring  
death in the face every day.

HALLIE  
You afraid of death?

DUSTIN  
Not death, but what comes after.

Hallie stares at Dustin, then looks away.

HALLIE  
What about Rose?

DUSTIN  
She'll be better off without me.  
It's cos of me that JD's being  
taken and Daddy's dead.

Dustin shrugs.

DUSTIN (CONT'D)  
Don't really matter any more.

HALLIE  
I don't understand...

A tear rolls down Dustin's cheek. Hallie touches his face. He pulls Hallie close. Their lips touch softly.

HALLIE (CONT'D)  
Don't go.

Dustin stares out at the sea.

DUSTIN  
Trouble follows me. You and I can't really ever be together. It just makes everyone mad.

HALLIE  
Where you going to go?

DUSTIN  
Mainland, then try and find a job somewhere.

A sob catches in Hallie's throat.

DUSTIN (CONT'D)  
Need to ask you a huge favor. Will you look after Rusty for me?

HALLIE  
Oh, I can't...

Hallie looks at the dog. Rusty whimpers, lies with his head on his paws.

Dustin rubs Rusty's head.

DUSTIN  
He ain't hardly any trouble.

HALLIE  
Only if you'll promise to come back.

Dustin pushes a strand of hair behind Hallie's ear.

DUSTIN  
You are so beautiful.

Dustin gets up. Rusty props himself up into a sitting position.

DUSTIN (CONT'D)

You stay, boy. You gotta take care  
of Hallie now.

Rusty whimpers as Dustin leaves, then places his head in Hallie's lap. Hallie watches him go down to where his little boat is at the edge of the water.

He slides the small rowboat into the surf, climbs in. He glances back one last time, then rows away.

Hallie jumps up, runs into the sea up to her knees.

HALLIE

Dustin! Come back!

Her voice is drowned by the cracks of thunder in the distance. Rain begins to pour down in torrents so that Dustin's boat can't be seen any more.

Hallie, drenched, runs toward the beach house with Rusty bounding behind her.

INT. BEACH HOUSE - LIVING ROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

Hallie runs inside with Rusty, dripping water all over the floor.

HALLIE

Mamma!

Selma hurries from the kitchen, wiping her hands on a dish towel.

SELMA

What is it?

HALLIE

He took a boat and went. He's  
headed for the mainland. With the  
storm comin' he'll drown for sure.

SELMA

Who?

HALLIE

Dustin!

Selma frowns, grabs a wind breaker.

EXT. BEACH HOUSE - PORCH -- LATER

Selma and Hallie stand on the porch, looking onto the beach. Selma puts the wind breaker around Hallie's shoulders.

SELMA

I'll call the Coast Guard.

Selma runs back inside the house.

Hallie paces under the cover of the eaves. Rusty sits by her and whines. The storm intensifies.

Richard drives up and runs to the front porch.

RICHARD

Get inside before you catch cold.

He glares at Rusty.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

Why's that mangy mutt here?

Hallie's teeth chatter together.

HALLIE

Dustin took a boat and now he's out there.... and with the storm and all, he--

RICHARD

If he wants to do something that stupid, he needs to deal with the consequences.

Hallie sobs.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

Can't expect us to come running every time. He's disrupted our lives enough already.

Richard slams the front door.

A whack of thunder. Hallie jumps. Rusty barks, spins in circles.

INT. BEACH HOUSE - HALLIE'S BEDROOM -- DAY

Hallie lies in the bed, her face red from fever. Selma wipes her forehead with a damp cloth.

Hallie's eyes open, she takes Selma's hand.

HALLIE  
Did they find him?

SELMA  
There's no point worrying yourself  
about it. You need to get well.

Rusty pushes his snout into Hallie's hand.

SELMA (CONT'D)  
Dog refuses to leave this room. I'm  
getting tired of having to drag him  
out there myself all the time.

Hallie scratches his head.

EXT. BEACH -- DAY

SUPER: "EIGHT YEARS LATER"

Hallie (23), now a beautiful woman, shuffles in bare feet  
along the shore. She stops and stares out to sea every few  
paces.

Rusty, gray streaks in his coat, limps behind Hallie,  
struggles to keep up with her pace.

Rose, an young adult form of her shabby youth, sits on the  
rocks and watches her from a distance.

She pulls out a flask and guzzles from it, slips it back into  
her bag.

Hallie strolls closer to Rose. She stops every few feet to  
wait for Rusty.

ROSE  
Hey, that my brother's ol' dog?

HALLIE  
Rose?

ROSE  
I'm Rose all right.

HALLIE  
Yeah.

ROSE  
Know what you're going to ask. And  
the answers always the same.  
Haven't heard from him.

Hallie stares out at the ocean again.

HALLIE

And JD?

ROSE

Haven't seen him for a while. Last I heard he was tryin' to join the service.

Hallie looks at Rose with concern.

HALLIE

And you?

Rose turns her eyes out toward the sea, sniggers.

ROSE

Doin' all right. You?

HALLIE

Oh well, I'm doing just fine.

Rose shrugs, grabs the flask out of the bag.

ROSE

Don't look it.

Hallie lifts Rusty's collar and leads him away.

HALLIE

Take care of yourself, Rose. If you ever do hear from Dustin--

Rose tips the flask again and wipes her lips.

ROSE

Yeah, yeah, you'll be the first to know.

EXT. WALTERS' NEW HOUSE -- LATER

Hallie leads Rusty up on the porch to a basket. He collapses. His sad eyes watch her, pleading for help.

HALLIE

What's the matter, boy?

Hallie pats him, then enters the house.

INT. WALTERS' NEW HOUSE - KITCHEN -- NIGHT

Hallie helps Selma prepare supper. She peers out the window.

HALLIE

Daddy and Bruce get together, no  
telling how long they'll be.

SELMA

That's men for you. But if they  
want steak they'd better get home,  
or they'll be catching hell for  
supper.

Selma sets the table.

HALLIE

Got anything we can give Rusty?

Selma reaches in the cupboard and pulls out a bottle of  
pills.

SELMA

Seems his hips are just plum giving  
out. Maybe it's time you start  
thinking about putting him to  
sleep.

HALLIE

I promised I'd take care of him.

Selma returns to the counter and grabs a pot.

SELMA

Dog's old now.

INT. WALTERS' NEW HOUSE - LIVING ROOM -- LATER

Bruce and Richard watch a game on the television. They chomp  
on chips and cheer over each score of the game.

Hallie and Selma sit on the floor away from the men, go  
through an old trunk of pictures.

Selma lifts out an album. She flips through, pulls out a  
loose photograph.

She glances at Hallie.

SELMA

Look what I found between the pages  
of your old year book.

Hallie takes the picture from Selma.

INSERT

The picture of Dustin with his prize fish.

END INSERT

HALLIE

You know, this is the only time I  
saw him happy. Maybe the only time  
he ever was. He haunts me, Mamma.

Selma reaches to take the picture back.

SELMA

I'm sorry. I'll just put it away.

Hallie pulls it away from her.

HALLIE

No. I'll treasure it always.

Hallie slides it into her pocket. Selma closes up the trunk.

SELMA

Well, I'll go get dessert.

Hallie takes a seat next to Bruce.

BRUCE

Half time. I'm going out on the  
porch for a smoke. You coming,  
Hallie?

Hallie attempts to hide her tears behind her hair.

Bruce heads out the front door. He pokes his head back in.

BRUCE (CONT'D)

Hey, Hal. That ol' mutt stink boy  
left you, just croaked on the front  
porch. Want me to drag him off for  
fish bait?

Hallie pushes past Bruce, out the door.

HALLIE

Don't you dare touch him.

EXT. BEACH - ROCKS -- DAY

Hallie, bare-foot, Rusty's body cradled in her arms, stumbles toward the rocks. Tears stream down her face.

She places Rusty at the foot of the rocks, sits down with her back against them.

HALLIE

I'm gonna bury you here, boy. This is where we met, this is where we part.

Hallie gets on her knees, pulls a small shovel from her pocket. She begins digging.

HALLIE (CONT'D)

I'm gonna come back every day and sit with you like always.

Hallie scoops up the sand, piles it up behind her.

DUSTIN (O.S.)

Hallie...

Hallie crawls around, sees Dustin, dressed in a black trench coat, standing a few feet behind her. Not the scruffy kid that she remembers, but a neat, well dressed young man.

Hallie gapes at him, open-mouthed.

HALLIE

I heard that when something dies, the spirits come down to fetch it. But I never imagined it was real.

Dustin kneels where Rusty lies. He runs his fingers over the dog's body.

DUSTIN

He have a good life?

Hallie nods, clearly shocked.

Dustin uses his hands to shovel sand from the hole Hallie started.

She watches, then joins in.

EXT. BEACH -- LATER

Dustin and Hallie stroll up the beach.

HALLIE

Where have you been all this time?

Dustin stops, stares out at sea.

DUSTIN

Did a stupid thing, taking that boat.

HALLIE

We searched the coast for you for a couple of days.

DUSTIN

Really?

She nods.

DUSTIN (CONT'D)

I got picked up. God saved me that day, Hallie. I've promised myself to him now.

Hallie clenches her fists.

HALLIE

That's it? That's your eight year story!

Dustin gives Hallie a confused look.

DUSTIN

You're angry?

HALLIE

I have spent eight years of my life believing you were dead. Recalling the memory of you drifting off in that little row boat. Why'd you bother coming back?

DUSTIN

I heard Rose wasn't doin' too good.

Hallie shake her head in disbelief.

HALLIE

I tried to stop you.

Dustin places his hands on both of Hallie's shoulders, looks into her eyes.

DUSTIN

When I saw you walking across the beach, ol' Rusty in your arms, my heart just broke. I knew you needed me, too.

Hallie's face lights up.

DUSTIN (CONT'D)

But I ain't here to mess up other people's lives no more.

HALLIE

How long you staying for?

She looks at him with hope in her eyes.

DUSTIN

I don't know. I can't commit to anything.

Hallie kicks sand up in frustration.

HALLIE

I'm engaged to marry Bruce.

DUSTIN

You really gonna do a stupid thing like that, Hallie?

Hallie folds her hands over her stomach, looks down at the sand.

HALLIE

I'm going to have a baby. My child deserves to have a father who's always around.

DUSTIN

Oh, Hallie, I wish--

HALLIE

Wedding's on Saturday.

She turns, marches up the beach.

INT. CHURCH -- DAY

The rows of benches are packed with GUESTS. Huge flower arrangements brighten up the pews.

Hallie's veil has been lifted back off her face. She makes a striking bride.

Richard, Selma, Geraldine and Bruce's FATHER sit in the front rows.

Bruce and Hallie stand facing each other, in front of the MINISTER.

MINISTER

Do you, Bruce Lowell, take Hallie Walters do be your wedded wife, to love and to cherish from this day forward?

A noise in the back of the church. Hallie jerks around to look.

A WOMAN bustles into one of the back rows.

BRUCE

I do.

MINISTER

And do you, Hallie Walters, take Bruce Lowell to be your husband, to love and to cherish from this day forward?

An awkward silence as Hallie looks to the back of the church, the empty doorway.

Her eyes drift over the guests. She looks at Selma. A tear runs down Selma's cheek.

Richard puffs out his chest proudly.

Bruce tugs at Hallie's hand. She takes a deep breath, looks him in the eye.

HALLIE

I do.

EXT. RECEPTION HALL -- NIGHT

Bruce, Malcolm and Ryan stand outside, with beers in their hands. They clink the glasses together, down their drinks.

Hallie joins them. Bruce throws an arm over her shoulder, pulls her toward himself. He kisses her.

Hallie struggles to pull away from his grip.

EXT. PARK -- SAME

From across the street, Dustin stands under a tree, watching the celebrations.

Selma walks up, leans against the tree, watches Hallie.

She lights up a cigarette, takes a deep puff.

SELMA

Please let her have a good life.  
She's endured so much heartache  
already.

Dustin sighs heavily.

SELMA (CONT'D)

God help him if he ever hurts her.

DUSTIN

I'll be here if she ever needs me.

Selma steps on her cigarette, crosses the street back to the wedding party.

EXT. RECEPTION HALL - PARKING LOT -- LATER

Malcolm and Ryan, their arms around each other, singing at the top of their voice, sway to their cars.

Bruce stumbles out after them, bellowing with laughter. Hallie runs after him, grabs hold of Bruce's arm.

HALLIE

Shouldn't you take their keys?

BRUCE

Ah, they'll be fine, Hallie.

Bruce pushes Hallie away, she falls backward.

Ryan stumbles between the cars, throws up his arms in defeat. He beckons to Bruce.

RYAN

Hey, Buddy, help me find my car.

Bruce collapses with laughter.

BRUCE

It's right there behind you.

Bruce assists Ryan toward his car.

Malcolm finds his car. He struggles to get it started, then squeals out of the parking lot.

He sticks his head out the window, howling like a wolf.

Bruce waves at him. Hallie watches.

Malcolm approaches the stop street, realizes too late, and slam on brakes.

The car skids, then spins out of control, across the intersection. It smashes into a wall on the opposite side of the street.

Bruce stumbles toward Malcolm's car, tumbles over his own drunken feet.

Hallie lifts her dress and kicks off her shoes. She runs for the car.

She reaches the driver's side, looks in.

She backs away from the horror of what she sees in the vehicle.

Bruce reaches the accident scene. Hallie gets in front of him.

HALLIE  
Don't look at him.

Bruce pushes her aside, but she gets in front of him again.

HALLIE (CONT'D)  
Please, Bruce, don't.

He maneuvers around her, looks in through the window.

BRUCE  
Oh my god! Oh...

He doubles over, throws up next to the car.

Hallie tries to comfort him, but he forces her away.

FADE TO BLACK:

INT. LOWELL HOUSE - LIVING ROOM -- DAY

A luxury home with modern furniture.

Hallie, sporting a belly from the pregnancy, picks up clutter, beer cans, ashtrays. Bruce sleeps on the couch. The television blares.

Hallie switches it off. Bruce wakes.

BRUCE  
I was watching that!

HALLIE  
Were not.

Bruce turns the television back on and flips it to a ball game.

HALLIE (CONT'D)  
Is that all you're gonna do on your day off?

BRUCE  
Shut up!

Hallie gasps, turns on her heel and storms out.

INT. LOWELL HOUSE - KITCHEN -- MOMENTS LATER

Hallie slams dishes in the sink.

Bruce come in and grabs a beer from the refrigerator.

HALLIE  
A little early to be starting that.

Bruce swings her around and backhands her.

Hallie holds her face. Too angry to cry, her jaw drops and her face reddens. She clenches her fist.

HALLIE (CONT'D)  
If you ever hit me again, I'm going to--

Bruce grabs her arms tight and pins her against the sink's counter so that she can't move.

BRUCE  
You're gonna what?

Bruce slams her back hard, grabs his beer and exits.

Hallie places a protective hand over her belly. A tear runs down her cheek, she swipes it away.

INT. LOWELL HOUSE - BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Bruce lies in bed with his arms behind his head.

Hallie enters in a nightgown. She slips under the covers and switches off the light.

She rolls to her side, back to Bruce.

He runs his hands over her body. Hallie grabs his hand and shoves it back over to his side of the bed.

Bruce turns on the light and leans in her face.

BRUCE

You disrespecting me again?

Hallie jerks away.

BRUCE (CONT'D)

Answer me!

HALLIE

I'm not feeling well, Bruce.

BRUCE

That's the lamest excuse.

Hallie curls into a ball. Bruce yanks her up by the hair.

BRUCE (CONT'D)

You're my wife. You will do what I say.

HALLIE

Respect needs to be earned.

Bruce forces her head down under the blankets. Hallie resists and cries out.

HALLIE (CONT'D)

Let me go, you piece of...

Bruce jumps out of the bed, yanks back the covers and slugs Hallie.

He pins her down, lies on top of her, and pulls down her panties.

She wriggles to get out under him but she's not strong enough to move him.

He pushes himself into her. She grimaces.

Hallie lies still as Bruce moves rhythmically over her. She stares at the ceiling, emotionless.

His body shudders as he orgasms and rolls off of her.

They lie in silence for a beat.

Bruce bashes his fist into the mattress.

BRUCE

Dammit, Hallie, why you always making me do this shit.

No response.

BRUCE (CONT'D)

I just want you to love me. I swear you loved that dog more than you've ever loved me.

Hallie rolls onto her side. A tear runs from her eye, across the bridge of her nose, drops onto the pillow.

Bruce pulls on his clothes and rushes out the door.

The front door slams shut O.S. She flinches.

INT. LOWELL HOUSE - BEDROOM -- DAY

Hallie lies curled up on the bed, her face various shades of blue. She rubs her forehead, grimaces in pain.

Bruce walks in, sits on the bed beside her. He puts a bunch of flowers down on the night stand.

Hallie peers through a swollen eyelid at Bruce. He runs his hand through her hair.

BRUCE

Baby, I'm so sorry--

HALLIE

You want to know what I'm going to do the next time, Bruce? I'm going to fucking kill you.

Hallie rolls to her side, pulls the covers over her head.

EXT. LOWELL HOUSE - PORCH -- DAY

Bruce, Hallie, bruised eye, and Ryan sit on the porch together. Bruce guzzles down a beer, gets up from his seat.

BRUCE  
Can I get you a beer?

RYAN  
I ain't drinking no more.

BRUCE  
That's the stupidest thing I ever  
heard.

Bruce shrugs, pulls open the door and heads inside. Ryan  
leans in close to Hallie.

RYAN  
Hallie, you got to get him to stop  
drinking. What happened to  
Malcolm... That was some crazy  
shit.

Hallie frowns, points to her eye.

HALLIE  
You think I don't try, Ryan. He's  
no picnic when he's drunk.

RYAN  
I'm worried if he doesn't stop,  
he's gonna end up the same way.

Hallie stares into the garden.

HALLIE  
Yeah, that'd be a tragedy.

Bruce storms out of the house, grabs Ryan by the shirt,  
shoves him off the porch.

He pulls back his fist, and clobbers Ryan in the face.

Hallie jumps up.

BRUCE  
What right you got discussing me  
with my wife?

Bruce swings around, glares at Hallie.

BRUCE (CONT'D)  
And you better start acting like a  
wife, Hal, cos I'm getting sick of  
living with your bullshit.

Ryan wipes the blood off his face. He snarls at Bruce.

RYAN  
She doesn't deserve that.

BRUCE  
Get off my property! Get!

RYAN  
It's gonna get you, too. Mark my words, you stupid fuck.

Ryan backs away, then shouts to Hallie.

RYAN (CONT'D)  
You need to get out, Hallie. Before it's too late.

Ryan climbs in his car.

INT. WALTERS' NEW HOUSE - KITCHEN -- DAY

Hallie sits at the table drinking coffee.

Selma watches Hallie out of the corner of her eye, blows smoke from her lips.

SELMA  
Want to tell me what's going on?

HALLIE  
I'm handling it, Mamma.

Selma grabs her chin and looks at her bruised face.

SELMA  
You can fool other people but you can't fool your mamma ever.

Hallie gets up and looks out the window.

SELMA (CONT'D)  
They don't change, you know. It'll only get worse.

HALLIE  
He opened the door and I walked into it. You know how distracted I always am.

Richard arrives home from work. He kisses Selma hello, then gives Hallie a hug.

Hallie turns her face so that he can't see the bruises.

HALLIE (CONT'D)  
I'm going for a stroll down on the beach.

SELMA  
You coming back?

HALLIE  
I'll just stop to say bye. Gotta go home and cook dinner for Bruce.

Richard pulls out his wallet and slips cash into Hallie's hand.

RICHARD  
Make him something special.

Richard grabs the newspaper, sits down at the table, and spreads it in front of him.

Selma stands and watches from the window as Hallie leaves to the beach.

EXT. BEACH - ROCKS -- LATER

Hallie sits on the rocks and watches the ocean. She talks to Rusty's grave.

HALLIE  
What am I to do, Rusty? Daddy would never understand.

Tears stream down her face.

HALLIE (CONT'D)  
Dustin didn't come to the wedding, old friend. He didn't come.

Hallie wipes the tears from her face.

HALLIE (CONT'D)  
My days of waiting for him are over. I gotta fix this life I'm living now.

Rose staggers over and sits next to her.

HALLIE (CONT'D)  
Rose.

Rose pulls out a flask, takes a sip. She offers the flask to Hallie.

Hallie stares at it for a moment, then relents, just smells it and hands it back.

HALLIE (CONT'D)  
Good Lord, Rose, that stuff'll kill  
you.

Rose raises her eyebrows at the state of Hallie's face.

ROSE  
Your husband's been lovin' on you  
good, I see.

Hallie touches her cheek self-consciously.

HALLIE  
Was an accident.

ROSE  
I might be poor but I ain't stupid.

Rose watches her out the corner of her eye.

ROSE (CONT'D)  
How come you haven't asked about  
Dustin today?

Hallie shrugs.

HALLIE  
It's time to move forward. I got  
this baby coming.

INT. WALTERS' NEW HOUSE - LIVING ROOM -- LATER

Selma hands Richard a cup of coffee. Richard plops down in his chair, opens the newspaper.

SELMA  
Something's goin' on with Hallie.

RICHARD  
Something's always going on with  
her. What now?

Selma sits on the couch next to him, lowers the newspaper so that she can look at him.

SELMA  
I think Bruce is beating on her.

Richard snaps the paper and furrows his brow.

RICHARD

Stay out of it, woman. She's an adult now. Bruce is a good kid. He's just been through a rough time. She'll want for nothing. They'll do well in life.

Selma rolls her eyes.

Hallie enters the room.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

Have a good walk?

HALLIE

Yeah thanks, Daddy.

Hallie plants a kiss on his cheek. Richard continues reading the paper.

HALLIE (CONT'D)

I'm going home.

SELMA

You call me if you need anything.

Hallie hugs her.

HALLIE

Don't worry, Mamma. I will.

INT. LOWELL HOUSE - KITCHEN -- DAY

Hallie scrapes eggs into a plate. Bruce staggers in. She slaps the plate down on the table.

HALLIE

Eat. You'll be late for work again.

BRUCE

Lost my job.

Bruce pulls a beer from the refrigerator.

HALLIE

What are you gonna do?

Bruce glances down at the beer in his hand.

BRUCE

What's it look like I'm doing?

HALLIE  
I mean about a job.

BRUCE  
Don't you be worrying about it.

Hallie grabs her purse, cursing under her breath.

BRUCE (CONT'D)  
Where you think you're running off  
to?

HALLIE  
Told Momma I'd stop by.

Bruce's eyes follow her out of the room as he snaps open the can.

EXT. BEACH - ROCKS -- DAY

Hallie collects shells along the shoreline.

From a distance, she notices a lump lying next to the rocks.

As she closes in, it becomes apparent that it is a person lying on the ground.

Hallie approaches cautiously at first, then begins to run.

Rose lies face down in the sand. Her hair is matted, and her clothes filthy. Her flask lies flung to one side.

Hallie kneels beside her, checks for a pulse. She shakes Rose to wake her.

HALLIE  
C'mon now, Rose, you've got to  
wake up.

Rose's body is limp.

Hallie rolls Rose onto her back, tries persistently to revive her.

EXT. WALTERS' NEW HOUSE -- LATER

Hallie half carries, half drags Rose up the porch.

HALLIE  
Mamma!

The door opens, Bruce steps out with a beer can in his hand.

He stares at Hallie in amazement.

BRUCE

What the hell you doing dragging  
that up with you?

Hallie lays Rose down on the porch, gasps for breath.

HALLIE

What you doing here? Where's Ma?

BRUCE

She's gone to the store.

HALLIE

You've got to help me get Rose into  
the house.

Bruce sniggers.

BRUCE

I ain't touching that piece of  
shit.

Hallie loses her temper, grits her teeth together, clenches  
her fists.

HALLIE

You know what, Bruce Lowell, you're  
a true hypocrite.

BRUCE

They're low class trash, Hal.  
Drunkards.

Hallie takes the can of beer from Bruce's hand, tosses it  
onto the grass.

HALLIE

You've got a lot of room to talk.

Bruce grabs Hallie by the arm, yanks her toward himself. He  
leans in close to her face.

BRUCE

Why, you...

SELMA (O.S.)

You touch so much as a hair on her  
body, and I swear I'll teach you a  
lesson you won't forget, you  
worthless coward.

Bruce lets go of Hallie, steps back from her.

Selma bends over Rose, checks her eyes.

SELMA (CONT'D)  
Hallie, phone an ambulance real  
fast.

Selma turns on Bruce.

SELMA (CONT'D)  
And you...

BRUCE  
Now just a minute, Ma, you know I  
wouldn't harm her. I was just  
trying to--

SELMA  
Shut up! Just shut up! You must be  
thinking you're taking me for some  
kind of fool, but I've known you  
for a long time, and you disgust  
me.

Hallie bursts out the door just in time to hear the rest of  
Selma's conversation.

SELMA (CONT'D)  
Get the hell out of here, Bruce!

Bruce strides arrogantly down the porch, turns back to  
Hallie.

BRUCE  
I'll be waiting' at home for you.

He disappears around the back of the house.

HALLIE  
They're coming. Is she gonna be  
okay?

SELMA  
You ain't going back to that man,  
you hear me?

Hallie sits down, places Rose's head in her lap.

HALLIE  
He's my husband, Mamma. I made  
that choice.

An ambulance pulls up, two PARAMEDICS jump out and run to  
where they wait.

INT. HOSPITAL - ROSE'S ROOM -- NIGHT

Hallie sits in a chair next to Rose's bed. Rose rests peacefully against the pillows.

Dustin stands bedside, holds Rose's hand. He looks over at Hallie.

HALLIE

They say she's gonna be okay. I don't know about that though.

Hallie reaches out to push a hair out of Rose's face.

Dustin sees a bruise on her arm. Pretending not to notice, he returns his attention to Rose.

DUSTIN

She thinks the world of you, you know. Always talkin' about how beautiful and kind you are.

Hallie gets up from her chair.

HALLIE

I need to go. My husband will be waiting for me.

Dustin takes Hallie's hand, pushes up her sleeve slightly to see the bruise.

Hallie pulls away and rolls down her sleeve to hide her arm.

DUSTIN

I wish you didn't have to live like this.

HALLIE

You know what I wished, Dustin, that you didn't just leave. That you stayed and fought for us, you and me, and Rose... JD.

Dustin gently touches her face.

Hallie covers his hand with her own, then pulls his hand away from her face.

HALLIE (CONT'D)

Don't do that. I just makes it harder.

DUSTIN

I wish I had a choice, Hallie.

Hallie turns and leaves the room.

INT. LOWELL HOUSE - LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

The room is in darkness. A curtain is open, allowing a small bit of moonlight to filter in.

Bruce sits waiting in a chair, a beer in hand. He crumples up the can, throws it on the floor.

He grabs a full can from the six pack on the side table, opens it and gulps some down.

Hallie slips in the door, closing it carefully behind her.

She tiptoes across the room.

BRUCE

Well, well, my delightful wife has decided to return home.

Hallie flinches at the sound of his voice. She switches on a light.

HALLIE

I didn't see you sitting there.

Hallie fidgets nervously.

HALLIE (CONT'D)

Have you eaten yet?

BRUCE

And what was I supposed to eat, woman? There's no food prepared.

HALLIE

I'll go make something now.

Bruce grabs Hallie's arm, yanks her back into the seat.

BRUCE

Not till I tell you to.

Hallie's lip tremors.

BRUCE (CONT'D)

Where've you been all night?

HALLIE

At the hospital.

Bruce's jaw flexes.

BRUCE  
Anywhere and with anyone, as long  
as it's not me, right?

HALLIE  
(barely audible)  
I'm sorry.

Bruce grabs her by the chin.

BRUCE  
What you say? I didn't hear you.

HALLIE  
I said I'm sorry.

Bruce slaps her hard across the face. Her head lashes  
backward.

BRUCE  
I still didn't hear you?

HALLIE  
Sorry! Goddammit! Why do you think  
I stay away?

Bruce strikes Hallie hard.

She wipes blood from her lip. Her face becomes enraged. She  
leaps at Bruce.

HALLIE (CONT'D)  
I'm leaving before this child gets  
to see what kind of man his father  
is.

Hallie comes at him, scratching and fighting with all her  
might.

HALLIE (CONT'D)  
Your stupid drinking killed your  
best friend, cost you your job, and  
now me and your baby! I want you  
the hell out of my life! I hate  
you.

Bruce belts Hallie again. She flies backwards hitting her  
head on the table.

FADE TO BLACK:

INT. LOWELL HOUSE - LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

Hallie lies sprawled out on the floor. Her face is swollen and covered in different shades of blue and purple.

She groans, attempts to sit up. She struggles to her feet.

She catches a glimpse of herself in a mirror on the wall, recoils from the image.

Bruce sits in a chair, a solemn look on his face.

BRUCE

I'm sorry, Hal. Please forgive me,  
baby.

HALLIE

Not this time, Bruce.

Bruce storms out, slams the bedroom door O.S. Hallie flinches.

INT. LOWELL HOUSE - KITCHEN -- LATER

Hallie holds a packet of ice to her bruised face. She searches through a drawer.

A gunshot cracks from the bedroom O.S. Hallie jerks.

INT. LOWELL HOUSE - HALLWAY -- MOMENTS LATER

Hallie rushes to their bedroom and stops in front of it.

HALLIE

Bruce!

No response.

HALLIE (CONT'D)

I'm coming in.

She hesitates before turning the knob, then slowly opens it.

She cups her hand over her mouth and screams. She slumps against the opposite wall, horrified by the scene in the room.

She stumbles down the hallway toward the living room.

INT. LOWELL HOUSE - LIVING ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

She picks up the phone receiver, punches buttons.

DUSTIN (O.S.)

Hallie.

She spins around to see Dustin standing in the front doorway. She drops the receiver.

He steps into the room, toward her. She grabs onto his coat, buries her face in his chest and just cries, getting rid of all her pent-up emotions.

Dustin enfolds his arms around her, while her body shakes from shock.

Eventually she pushes back from him.

HALLIE

We need to call for an ambulance.

Dustin takes Hallie's shoulders and looks into her eyes.

DUSTIN

You're hurt bad.

She pulls away, points down the hallway.

HALLIE

It's not for me. It's Bruce, he's---

DUSTIN

I know. There's nothing more you can do for him any more.

HALLIE

It's all my fault. I should have never said those things... I should have forgiven him.

Dustin strokes her hair and holds her tight. He closes his eyes.

DUSTIN

I wish I could take all your pain away.

Hallie pulls away. She picks up the phone receiver again, dials.

HALLIE

(into phone)

I need help. My husband's...

Hallie turns around. Dustin is gone.

INT. WALTER'S NEW HOUSE - KITCHEN -- DAY

Selma watches from the table as Hallie paces.

SELMA

I think you need some counselling,  
my baby. You've been through a lot  
of suffering.

Selma guides Hallie back to the table, pats her arm, then  
returns to the sink.

SELMA (CONT'D)

I'll get you something to eat.

HALLIE

Don't want it.

Hallie shoves herself away from the table.

HALLIE (CONT'D)

Maybe if I tried harder...

Selma raises her brow, questioning.

SELMA

Hallie, Bruce was his own undoing.

Hallie stops pacing suddenly, clutches the counter.

She looks at Selma with fear in her eyes.

HALLIE

Mamma, help me.

She doubles over, groans in pain.

Selma jumps up to help her, notices a pool of blood puddling  
around Hallie's feet.

INT. HOSPITAL - HALLIE'S ROOM -- DAY

Hallie lies in a bed, stares blankly out a window. Selma sits  
by her side and strokes her hair.

Richard knocks on the door and enters. Hallie ignores him.

RICHARD

Can I bring you anything? I'll run  
out and buy it for you.

Hallie's eyes show rage.

HALLIE  
Yeah, buy my baby's life back?

Richard lowers his head. Selma covers her face in her hands.

HALLIE (CONT'D)  
Didn't think so.

Hallie returns her gaze to the window.

Richard shuffles out the door, a broken man.

EXT. BEACH -- DAY

Hallie stumbles along the beach. Her face is drawn, tired.

She glances up to see Dustin standing in the distance, waiting for her.

She rushes toward him, pounds on his chest.

HALLIE  
Bastard! I thought you were different.

Dustin takes Hallie's hands, holds her back. Hallie drops onto her knees in the sand.

Dustin kneels beside her.

DUSTIN  
I am different.

Hallie's lip begins to quiver.

DUSTIN (CONT'D)  
I need you to believe that I love you, that I wish I had been here with you, that I could be with you... Forever.

Dustin helps Hallie to her feet.

The wind begins to blow. Dustin looks up at the clear sky.

DUSTIN (CONT'D)  
There's a storm coming.

Dustin turns her to face him.

DUSTIN (CONT'D)  
I can't stay here forever.

Hallie covers her mouth with her hand, let's out a sob.

Dustin wipes away a tear from Hallie's eye.

DUSTIN (CONT'D)  
I need you to do something for me.

HALLIE  
When you gonna do something for me?

DUSTIN  
Soon.

Hallie looks up at the skies, notices some clouds gathering.

HALLIE  
What's it gonna be this time?

DUSTIN  
Rose?

Hallie bites her lip.

HALLIE  
I don't know. That's a big  
responsibility.

Dustin keeps his eyes on Hallie.

HALLIE (CONT'D)  
Are you ever coming back?

Thunder rumbles in the distance.

DUSTIN  
Please. There's something I need to  
do.

HALLIE  
I'll do what I can.

Dustin raises Hallie's hand to his lips. He lifts her face with his hand under her chin.

She stares deep into his eyes. She gasps, covers her mouth with her hand, shakes her head in disbelief.

Dustin returns in the direction he came from. He disappears behind a dune.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE -- DAY

DOCTOR TED sits behind his desk.

DOCTOR TED  
Thank you for coming in.

HALLIE  
It's can't be good news.

He shuffles through an open file, pulls out a sheet of paper.

He hands the page to Hallie, who sits across from him. Hallie glances down at the sheet, places it on the desk.

DOCTOR TED  
You don't look surprised.

HALLIE  
I'm not. I've had a feeling for a while now.

Doctor Ted gives her an apologetic smile.

DOCTOR TED  
Because of the miscarriage, we've caught it early.

Hallie takes a deep breath.

HALLIE  
How long?

DOCTOR TED  
I can't say for sure. We can treat the symptoms, keep you comfortable. But there's no cure, Hallie.

EXT. DUSTIN'S HOUSE -- DAY

The house's condition has deteriorated even further over the years.

Rose, her hair neat, dressed in a faded floral frock, sits alone on the stairs.

Hallie sits down beside Rose.

HALLIE  
You're looking good, Rose.

Rose pats Hallie's hand.

ROSE  
Honey, I ain't never looked good.

HALLIE  
How are you holding up?

ROSE  
I want a drink real bad. You got no idea. I never got to thank you.

Hallie stands up, looks at the house.

HALLIE  
Well, I'm here to collect. I need a favor.

ROSE  
My Pa always warned us this day would come.

HALLIE  
I'm ill and shouldn't be staying alone. I gonna be needing a housemate, and I was thinking there isn't anyone I'd rather share the house with.

Rose stares at Hallie, then breaks out into laughter.

ROSE  
And leave this palace behind? You gotta be kidding me?

HALLIE  
So it's a deal.

ROSE  
On condition you let me help you. You always been one of the strongest people I know. And you and your ma always been good to me.

Hallie holds out her hand for Rose to shake, but Rose just pulls her in for a big hug. Hallie leans into it, as if she's needed this for a very long time.

INT. LOWELL HOUSE - BEDROOM -- DAY

Hallie, looking frail and worn, lies in the bed. Rose brings in a glass and some tablets.

Rose sets them down on the night stand.

Hallie looks at the pills.

HALLIE

No more. I'm not taking any more of those pills.

ROSE

You just gonna give up?

Hallie looks away from Rose.

HALLIE

I'm tired, Rose. And the pills make me feel sick.

ROSE

Well, I'm tired too, dammit.

Rose leaves. A lot of banging is heard O.S. Hallie pulls herself up. She struggles out of bed, pulls on a bathrobe.

INT. LOWELL HOUSE - LIVING ROOM -- DAY

Rose pulls cooking Sherry out of a cabinet. She unscrews the lid as Hallie walks in.

Hallie yanks the bottle out of Rose's hand.

HALLIE

What the hell do you think you're doing?

Rose stares at her in amazement. Grabs the bottle back.

ROSE

What's good for you, is good me. If you can just give up on life like that, then so can I.

HALLIE

It's not the same.

Rose lifts the bottle to her lips.

HALLIE (CONT'D)

Fine! I'll take the damn tablets.

Rose screws the lid back on the bottle.

Hallie starts to sway, then collapses to the ground.

Rose rushes to her side.

INT. LOWELL HOUSE - KITCHEN -- LATER

Two paramedics push a gurney into the house. One of them is Ryan.

He checks Hallie for a pulse. He looks at his partner.

RYAN  
It's weak but it's there.

Rose stands back, biting her nails.

Hallie's eyes flutter open a bit. She sees Ryan, gives him a weak smile.

HALLIE  
Hey.

RYAN  
You could've just asked if you  
wanted me to come see you.

Hallie gives a throaty chuckle.

RYAN (CONT'D)  
You're gonna be okay now?

HALLIE  
Where's Rose.

Rose steps into Hallie's line of sight.

ROSE  
I'm right here, hon.

Ryan and the other Paramedic load Hallie onto the gurney.

ROSE (CONT'D)  
I'll see you at the hospital.

Ryan nods at Rose, respectfully.

RYAN  
I remember you. Rosie?

ROSE  
Just Rose. You take good care of  
her.

RYAN  
Will do. She's been through enough.

They wheel Hallie out.

INT. HOSPITAL - WAITING AREA -- DAY

Rose sits alone on a chair. Selma and Richard approach her. Selma sits next to her, holds her hand.

ROSE  
She's not doing great.

Richard drops into a chair. He holds his face in his hands.

Rose pats his arm.

ROSE (CONT'D)  
She's a strong one, Hallie is.

INT. HOSPITAL - HALLIE'S ROOM -- DAY

Hallie sits propped up in the bed. Her skin is pale.

Richard and Selma approach the side of the bed.

SELMA  
How're you doing, baby?

HALLIE  
I'm thirsty. Keep asking the nurses  
to bring water.

SELMA  
I'll go sort it out for you.

Selma rushes out of the room.

Richard slumps into the chair next to the bed, picks up Hallie's hand and kisses the inside of her palm.

RICHARD  
I need to ask you to forgive me.  
I've done and said terrible things  
in my life. I see you lying here,  
my beautiful baby girl, and I'm  
just at a total loss.

Hallie squeezes his hand.

HALLIE  
Of course I forgive you. You're my  
dad.

RICHARD  
Haven't been the best one.

Selma returns to the room with a jug of water and a glass.

SELMA

If you want something done, you got  
to do it yourself.

She pours some in a glass and hands it to Hallie.

INT. LOWELL HOUSE - LIVING ROOM -- DAY

Hallie, pale, her skin almost translucent, watches out of the  
window.

HALLIE

He's here!

ROSE (O.S.)

I ain't dressed proper yet.

Hallie laughs, moves to the door. She opens and let's Ryan  
in. He is smartly dressed, holds a bouquet of flowers.

RYAN

Hey, Hal. How are you doing?

HALLIE

I'm good.

She leans close to Ryan, whispers.

HALLIE (CONT'D)

You be a gentleman, okay. She's a  
special woman.

RYAN

I'm not the same person any more.

Hallie chuckles

HALLIE

None of us are any more. And thank  
goodness for that.

Rose appears, wearing a flattering dress. Her hair is neatly  
cut.

Ryan gives Rose an approving look. He hands her the flowers.  
Both blush as they make their way out the door.

Hallie closes the door behind them.

Her face contorts with pain. Hallie fumbles her way to the  
phone, picks it up and dials.

HALLIE (CONT'D)  
(into phone)  
Mamma, I want to come home for a  
bit. If that's okay?

INT. WALTERS' NEW HOUSE - BEDROOM -- DAY

Hallie, her face drawn, sleeps in the bed.

Selma, looking aged, pokes her head in through the doorway  
and enters with a breakfast tray.

SELMA  
Hallie?

Hallie doesn't move.

Selma places the tray on a night table next to the bed. She  
rubs Hallie's arms. Still no response.

Tears well up in Selma's eyes as she shakes Hallie harder.

SELMA (CONT'D)  
Hallie!

Hallie groans then opens her eyes a slit. Selma lets out a  
sigh of relief.

SELMA (CONT'D)  
You hungry, baby?

Hallie shakes her head weakly.

SELMA (CONT'D)  
But you need to drink, or I'll have  
to call the nurse back with the IV.

Hallie cringes.

Selma helps her into a upright position, lifts the glass to  
Hallie's lips. She sips a bit, but pushes it away.

Selma sits on the bed next to her.

SELMA (CONT'D)  
You gotta fight.

HALLIE  
No more, Mamma. I'm tired of  
fighting.

SELMA  
It's not supposed to work this way.

Hallie clutches Selma's hand in her own.

HALLIE

I'm gonna be there for you, always.

Selma leans in and hugs her, kisses her cheek.

She rushes out of the room, holding back hysterics.

INT. WALTER'S NEW HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Hallie dressed in a sleek black dress, bare feet, grabs furniture to steady herself.

She slips out the front door.

EXT. BEACH - ROCK -- DAY

Hallie, stands on the rocks, staring out to sea. Her skin is pale, eyes sunken, giving her a haunted beauty.

Dustin, in a dark suit, one hand in his pants pocket, glides across the sand toward Hallie. His sculpted face, upright posture, make for an eye-catching sight.

Hallie's eyes follow his path. Dustin climbs the rocks, stands beside her.

HALLIE

I've been waiting for you.

Dustin looks deep into her eyes.

DUSTIN

No, I've been waiting for you.

Dustin tucks a strand of hair behind her ear.

DUSTIN (CONT'D)

You are so beautiful to me.

Hallie takes Dustin's hand, kisses the inside of his hand.

The wind whips her hair into her face.

Dustin takes Hallie's hand, leads her to where Rusty's grave is.

They sit down together with their backs against the rock.

Dustin puts his arm around Hallie, she leans her head against his shoulder.

EXT. BEACH - ROCKS -- LATER

Dustin and a healthy looking Hallie stroll hand in hand along the beach.

Rusty bounds over the dunes, runs between them.

They continue a distance then vanish.

Thunder cracks, rain pelts, wind rips across the ocean as waves crash upon the shores of Dauphin Island.

CUT TO:

Hallie's body lies lifeless in the sand, in the spot where Rusty was buried.

FADE OUT.