TILL

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UNDER BLACK, the opening doo-wop MELODY of The Moonglows' song, "Sincerely", is heard through the RADIO...

FADE IN:

1 INT. MAMIE'S CAR - DAY (TRAVELING) 1

The face of 33-year-old MAMIE TILL BRADLEY fills the SCREEN, smiling and lip-syncing to the song while driving.

MAMIE
(lip syncing)
Sincerely, oh yes, sincerely...
'Cause I love you so dearly, please say you'll be mine...I'll do anything for you, please say you'll be mine...

In the passenger seat, 14-year-old EMMETT TILL, is playfully lip syncing too.

EMMETT
(lip syncing)
Oh Lord, won't you tell me why I love that girlie so...She doesn't want me...But I'll never, never, never, never let her go!

The two are having a ball.

Soon, Emmett performs solo while Mamie laughs and continues to drive. As she glances at her son, full of so much joy, her face quietly falls with serious contemplation...

CUT TO:

2 EXT. DOWNTOWN CHICAGO - DAY 2

Mamie parks amidst a bustling metropolis filled with various shops and upscale restaurants.

CHYRON: AUGUST, 1955. CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

Emmett haphazardly j-walks between gridlocked taxi cabs, and weaves between PEDESTRIANS on crowded sidewalks. Mamie trails behind. They both head towards --

3 INT. MARSHALL FIELDS DEPARTMENT STORE - DAY 3

Mamie confidently walks past aisles of mostly white, affluent CUSTOMERS. She has a shoe box under her arm and heads towards Emmett looking at wallets several yards away.

A white male SECURITY GUARD intercepts Mamie's path.

SECURITY GUARD
Are you looking for something?

MAMIE
(surprised)
No.

Mamie senses he is not trying to be helpful. She glances at the sea of white Customers who will not face the same interrogation.

MAMIE (CONT'D)
I'm just doing a little shopping.

He looks down at Mamie's box of shoes.

SECURITY GUARD
We also have shoes in the basement.

Mamie's jaw tightens.

MAMIE
Do your other customers know that too --

EMMETT
(calls out)
Mama! Which one do you like b-b-better?

He often stutters on his Bs and Ps.

Mamie gives the Security Guard a final look and speaks with masked contempt:

MAMIE
Pardon me.

She walks to Emmett with her head held high.

Emmett holds out a wallet to Mamie.

EMMETT
I think I like this one.

She flips it open to reveal a STOCK PHOTOGRAPH of the white movie star, HEDY LAMARR. Mamie notices the Security Guard scowling at them from afar. She subtly obstructs Emmett's line of sight so he wouldn't notice the policing.

MAMIE
Will you really need a wallet while you're down there?

EMMETT
Pleeeeease?

Emmett pleads with a goofy, adorable smile. Mamie knows she's wrapped around his finger.

4 EXT. MAMIE'S HOUSE - DUSK 4

Mamie parks in front of her home. She lives in a middle-class, all-Black neighborhood.

5 INT. MAMIE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT 5

The TV SCREEN flickers on Emmett's face, as he mimics the gestures of LINN BURTON on a COMMERCIAL:

EMMETT
...If you have your doubts about American quality ... then you haven't been in a Buick lately...
(punctuates with fist)
Own a brand new 1955 Century, with soft top for no money down. You'll be the envy of every eye in town.

LINN BURTON (V.O.)
...If you have your doubts about American quality ... then you haven't been in a Buick lately...
Own a brand new 1955 Century, with soft top for no money down. You'll be the envy of every eye in town.

Emmett bows to applause by his audience on the couch: ALMA (50s) and GENE (30s), who has his arm wrapped around Mamie.

ALMA
And you didn't stutter, not one time!

Emmett jumps on the couch next to Mamie and stuffs a handful of popcorn from the bowl into his mouth.

ALMA (CONT'D)
(turning off TV)
Bo, it's time for you to go to bed -

EMMETT
Aww... --

ALMA
I don’t want to hear it. You have a full day of traveling tomorrow. Now, give me a hug --

He does.

ALMA (CONT'D)
(to Emmett)
I’ll see you when you get back.

He turns to Gene.

EMMETT
G’night, Mr. G!

Emmett gives Gene and Mamie a big hug at the same time, like a happy family.

EMMETT (CONT'D)
(smiling)
You two don’t get married before I get back!

GENE
I can’t get married without my best man!

They share a special handshake. Gene smiles and notices Mamie’s silence, something’s wrong.

ALMA
Go on to bed, Bo.

Emmett runs upstairs to his room. Alma gets up with her purse, ready to leave.

ALMA (CONT'D)
You should get some rest too, Mamie.

Gene and Mamie get up too.

MAMIE
(to Gene)
I’ll call you after Bo gets on the train.

Gene looks at Mamie one more time before kissing her on the cheek.

GENE
Goodnight.
(to Alma)
Mrs. Spearman!

He gives her a hug.

ALMA
Goodnight, Gene.

Gene realizes Alma is waiting for him to leave. He takes a hint and leaves the house.

Now alone with her daughter:

ALMA (CONT'D)
What's wrong?

Mamie doesn't answer at first, but then says what's been on her mind:

MAMIE
We've never been apart this long.

ALMA
He wants to see his cousins. And there's nothing wrong with him knowing where he comes from --

MAMIE
Chicago is all he needs to know. I don't want him seeing himself the way those people are seen down there.

ALMA
Those people like me?

MAMIE
Even you left Mississippi, Mama.

Beat.

ALMA
He's becoming a young man. You have to let him go.

Mamie doesn't want to hear it.

MAMIE
I'll call you tomorrow.

Alma begrudgingly concedes.

On Mamie, watching Alma leave...

6 INT. EMMETT'S BEDROOM - NIGHT 6

Mamie looks on at a sleeping Emmett in his bed. She walks over and caresses his face - his fluttering eyelids, plump cheeks, fuzzy mustache...

As Mamie takes in his features, a protective angst washes over her.

CUT TO:

7 INT. MAMIE'S BEDROOM - MORNING 7

BEEEP!...BEEEP!...BEEEP!

Mamie jumps up from bed at the sound of the alarm, as if she suddenly awoke from a bad dream. She takes a beat to gather her bearings.

8 OMIT 8

9 INT. EMMETT'S BEDROOM - DAY 9

Dizzy Gillespie's "He Beeped When He Should Have Bopped" plays on his record player.

Emmett SINGS to the music at the top of his lungs as he:

Puts on his socks.

Adjusts his blazer.

Places his porkpie hat atop his head.

Emmett looks at his reflection in the mirror with approval and continues singing:

EMMETT
(singing)
"This same ol' cat jumped right up on the stand, b-but he couldn't seem to dig the b-band..."

He shoves his new wallet into his pant pocket.

KNOCK! KNOCK!

Emmett opens the door to Mamie with a tie loosened around her neck. She has knotted a perfect Windsor for Emmett to wear.

MAMIE
I got this ready for you --

Emmett takes Mamie's hand and twirls her into his room for a dance.

EMMETT
(singing)
"He thought he was the cream of the crop, but he b-b-beeped when he shoulda b-bopped!"

Mamie laughs and lets her son lead.

EMMETT (CONT'D)
(singing)
"At last the leader turned around, and said: Listen P-pops, you had better stop. Oh there you go, you did it again --"

MAMIE
(singing)
"You just beeped when you shoulda bopped!"

EMMETT (CONT'D)
(singing)
"You just b-b-beeped when you shoulda bopped!"

They laugh and dance and twirl.

MAMIE (CONT'D)
Alright, now. You're gonna miss your train.

She removes the tie from her neck and tightens it around Emmett's shirt collar. She then turns serious:

MAMIE (CONT'D)
Bo, when you're down there --

EMMETT
Not again, Mama. I've already been to Mississippi.

MAMIE
Only one time before. And you started a fight with another little boy.

EMMETT
He was p-picking on me.

MAMIE
You’re in the right to stand up for yourself. But that’s not what I’m talking about. They have a different set of rules for Negroes down there. Are you listening?

EMMETT
Yes...

MAMIE
You’ve got to be extra careful around white people. You can’t risk looking at them the wrong way --

EMMETT
I know.

She looks him directly in his eyes.

MAMIE
Emmett. Be small down there.

EMMETT
Like this?

Emmett becomes stilted like Buster Keaton and shuffles around. Mamie shakes her head and giggles half-heartedly.

10 INT. MAMIE’S BEDROOM - DAY 10

Mamie removes a yellowed envelope from a jewelry box.

She explores the details of the envelope -- US ARMY SEAL AND ITEM NUMBER -- then dumps the contents into her palm: a SILVER RING with the inscription “MAY 25, 1943 LT.” Her expression shows deep reminisce.

She turns around to Emmett.

MAMIE
Instead of your father’s ring, how about you wear the cufflinks I got you for Christmas? They’ll look so handsome on you.

EMMETT
No, Mama. I wanna wear the ring.

He looks at her with pleading eyes. She gives in and carefully hands the ring to Emmett.

He smiles widely and slides the ring onto his finger.

MAMIE
Go on downstairs. I need to finish getting ready myself.

11 EXT. ENGLEWOOD TRAIN STATION - DAY 11

Emmett and Mamie rush through the station to MOSES WRIGHT (64) and WHEELER PARKER (16), who are waiting at the bottom steps of the platform.

EMMETT
Uncle Mose! Wheeler!

MOSES
Morning, Mamie!

MAMIE
Morning, Preacher! Good morning, Wheeler.

WHEELER
Hi, Miss Mamie. Hi, Bo!

MAMIE
(to Moses)
You're leaving Chicago too soon! You were only here a few days!

MOSES
I didn't need no more days than that. I got to see some family, a few friends. Maybe we'll get you to come down and see us -- *

CONDUCTOR (O.S.)
All aboard!

MAMIE
(smiling)
I like it just fine out here, Preacher.

She places a hand on Wheeler's shoulder.

MAMIE (CONT'D)
(to Emmett)
Bo, stay close to your cousins.
(to Moses)
Preacher, you and Aunty Lizzie make sure Bo writes and calls me every chance he gets. I need to know he's okay.

MOSES
Don’t worry. Me and Lizzie will have a stern eye on him. G’bye, Mamie! *

Moses, Wheeler and Emmett walk up the steps to the train.

MAMIE
Bo! You didn’t kiss me goodbye!

Emmett slogs back down the stairs.

EMMETT
Aw, Mama. I gotta go!

He begrudgingly gives his mother a kiss on her cheek.

MAMIE
Listen to Preacher. Stay with your cousins at all times. Be extra careful.

EMMETT
You told me already.

She gives him a kiss on the cheek.

EMMETT (CONT'D)
You know what?

He removes his watch.

EMMETT (CONT'D)
I won’t need to keep time on vacation. Wind it everyday --

CONDUCTOR (O.C.)
All aboard!

Emmett throws his arms around Mamie and gives her a sincere hug.

Mamie’s eyes hold onto Emmett as he runs up the stairs and down the platform to meet Moses waving him on. Moses tips his hat to Mamie. The train lets out a loud WHISTLE.

Mamie watches the train move out of sight <u>IN SLOW MOTION</u>.

And then --

A sudden *pang* hits her body. She lets out a silent gasp.

She teeters against the railing, then collapses to the ground.

PORTERS and TRAVELERS swarm to Mamie's aid, as she remains on the ground, motionless.

TITLE: T I L L

12 OMIT 12

13 INT. TRAIN - DAY 13

The train car zips through a rural **KENTUCKY LANDSCAPE**, crossing the MASON-DIXON LINE.

As Emmett looks out his window at the VIEW, a WHITE PORTER taps him on the shoulder and indicates for him to stand up.

CUT TO:

Moses leads Emmett and Wheeler to the back of the train, passing empty seats and sleeping cars of WHITE PASSENGERS.

Emmett sits cramped and shoulder-to-shoulder amongst BLACK PASSENGERS. They have entered the Jim Crow South.

Soon, the train car goes DARK, as it enters a tunnel.

14 EXT. FRONT CAR LANDING - DAY (CONTINUOUS) 14

The VIEW is BLACK as the train speeds through a TUNNEL descending further into Mississippi.

When the train exits the TUNNEL, sunlight floods the CAMERA VIEW.

MATCH CUT TO:

MISSISSIPPI

15 EXT. GROVER FREDERICK'S COTTON FIELDS - DAY 15

A new day.

Brilliant sun rays shine over the massive field. Dozens of FIELD HANDS are at work, picking cotton blossoms and putting them inside their pick sacks, including Emmett and his cousins - Wheeler; SIMMY (12); and MAURICE (16).

Sweat beads down Emmett's face. His mouth hangs open as he breathes laboriously.

Maurice is trying to teach him how to pull a cotton blossom.

MAURICE
Pinch it here so your finger tip doesn't touch the bract...

He pinches a cotton blossom for Emmett to see. Emmett slaps a horse-fly and crushes it dead in his palm.

MAURICE (CONT'D)
You listening?

EMMETT
(shows bloody palm)
Look at the size of that b-bird --

Simmy is nearby and takes a look.

SIMMY
Whoah! Where'd you get that ring?

EMMETT
Was my daddy's. He died a hero in the war.

SIMMY
Lemme try it on?

Emmett pulls his hand back protectively.

EMMETT
Maybe later.

He turns away and fumbles with some cotton blossoms. He's had enough. Wanting some fun, he looks around, then falls to the earth with his eyes closed.

WHEELER
Bo?

Wheeler and Simmy rush over to Emmett and lean over him.

SIMMY
Bobo!

After some dramatic silence, Emmett opens one eye.

EMMETT
"From the depths of an ancient tomb, echoes a sound that shakes the world." MMM. ARRG. MMM. ARRG.

He stretches cotton across his face and tucks it behind his ears. He rises stiff with rigor mortis and pretends to choke Simmy.

EMMETT (CONT'D)
Meet the mummy, Simmy!

Simmy pushes Emmett away, laughing.

MAURICE
You're gonna get us in trouble!

EMMETT
Or better yet, fired. I'm done pickin' these fields. What do you do with all this cotton anyway?

MOSES (O.S.)
We sell it.

Moses walks over to them with a full pick sack freshly picked cotton.

MOSES (CONT'D)
Mr. Frederick, who owns the land, takes his share and I go to market with our haul.

EMMETT
Sounds p-p-pretty square.

MAURICE
Pappa, you let him sass you that way?

MOSES
What way? The boy doesn't know where his clothes come from! Bobo, after today's work, you gonna sleep like a babe, mark my words. How much you pick? *

Emmett looks down at his mostly empty pick sack.

MOSES (CONT'D)
Simmy, what'd you pick?

Simmy looks down at his halfway filled pick sack. *

SIMMY
'bout fifty pounds.

MOSES
Maurice?

Maurice's pick sack is full.

MAURICE
A hundred pounds.

MOSES
Wheeler?

Wheeler's reluctant to share, knowing it's also a lot more than Emmett's. *

WHEELER
Fifty.

MOSES *
I take it back, Bobo. Stay off the * farm.
(to the others)
City boy won't even know how he found a whuppin'.

They all laugh, except for Emmett.

LATER:

16 EXT. FIELDS - DUSK 16

Acres of lush farmland separate one home from another. The slow-moving, antiquated scenery starkly contrasts the lively Chicago metropolis.

Maurice, Wheeler, Simmy and Emmett are in a FORD SEDAN, driving through the country landscape, passing a sign that reads: "**MONEY, MS: POP. 398**"

17 OMIT 17

18 INT/EXT. BRYANT'S COUNTRY STORE - DUSK 18

ELDERLY BLACK MEN play checkers on the stoop while a half-dozen BLACK PATRONS watch, including a Black man, named JOHNNY B. WASHINGTON (26).

Emmett and his cousins pull up, exit their car and gather on * the porch. Maurice takes a seat at the checkers game. Simmy stands by. Wheeler enters the store alone. Emmett looks around.

EMMETT
(sarcastic)
I'm about raised from the dead by this excitement.

He turns to the store and walks inside.

19 INT. BRYANT'S COUNTRY STORE - DUSK 19

As Emmett strolls the aisle, Wheeler walks out with newly bought soda pop.

Emmett picks up some bubble gum and approaches the woman behind the counter, CAROLYN BRYANT (21). She's a pale-white, former beauty queen, and wears her black hair pinned back. Emmett straightens up.

EMMETT
You look like a movie star.

Carolyn scowls.

CAROLYN
What?

20 EXT. BRYANT'S COUNTRY STORE - DUSK 20

Wheeler drinks his pop while watching Maurice contemplate his next checkers move.

MAURICE
Where's Bobo?

Wheeler nods his head towards the store.

MAURICE (CONT'D)
(to Simmy)
Simmy. See to Emmett while he's inside.

21 INT. BRYANT'S COUNTRY STORE - DUSK 21

Emmett is holding his wallet flopped open and on view for Carolyn to see the STOCK PHOTO of HEDY LAMAR. Carolyn bears a striking resemblance to the movie star.

EMMETT
See?

He takes a quarter from his wallet and places it on the countertop in front of Carolyn. She looks down at it with disdain.

Simmy grabs Emmett's wrist.

SIMMY
C'mon!

Emmett gazes back at Carolyn.

EMMETT
B-b-bye...

Simmy looks at Emmett, surprised by his audacity to speak to Carolyn. Just as they reach the door -- *

EMMETT (CONT'D)
B-bye!

Carolyn ransacks the counter drawers.

22 EXT. BRYANT'S COUNTRY STORE - DUSK 22

Simmy rushes towards their car.

SIMMY
C'mon. Let's go.

MAURICE
Yeah?

Carolyn follows in a noticeable huff, proceeding to her car.

Emmett looks after Carolyn. He blows a loud WOLF WHISTLE.

Everything stops.

Silence.

Carolyn looks back embarrassed, and then furious.

Everyone looks at Emmett, including Johnny B. Washington.

Emmett looks back at everyone; he's genuinely confused.

JOHNNY B.
She's gone to get a gun.

Everyone disperses, except for Emmett: he watches Carolyn close her car door and turn back, gun dangling at her side.

Simmy grabs Emmett, rushing him inside their car.

EMMETT
(smile fading)
What the hell's going on?

Simmy pushes Emmett into the backseat of the vehicle.

Maurice peels out, making a quick turn down a dirt road.

On Emmett looking out the back window...

CHICAGO

23 INT. MAMIE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY 23

The sun shines across Mamie's reflection in the mirror. She stares at herself with contemplation - hair perfectly coiffed, makeup applied, dressed in a skirt and heels.

CUT TO:

24 INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY 24

Alma nags behind Mamie down the stairs.

ALMA
Why're you doing this to me, Mamie?!

MAMIE
I'm not doing anything to you, I'm going to work!

ALMA
I thought you took some time off --

MAMIE
I need to go to work, Mama...

ALMA
Gene and I had to carry you up and down these stairs all week 'cause you were too weak to walk!

MAMIE
Now I don't have to be a burden to you anymore -- *

ALMA
You're not a burden, you're my child! I'll take on whatever's suffering you because that's my job! But Mamie, you scared me to death when your legs gave out at that station and I won't be put through that again, you hear me?

Mamie now has her hands on the front door handle. She has made up her mind.

MAMIE
I need to go to work.

She walks out of the house.

25 INT. AIR FORCE PROCUREMENT OFFICE - DAY 25

A mail cart moves down a line of desks populated by WHITE EMPLOYEES, until stopping at a cubicle with the inscribed name panel, "MAMIE BRADLEY." She is the only Black person in the room.

Three FRAMED PHOTOGRAPHS sit on her desk: 1) Emmett as an infant, 2) Emmett as a teen wearing a tie and leaning against a television set, 3) Emmett and Mamie posing together in their home.

The MAIL COURRIER drops envelopes marked "CONFIDENTIAL" and "EYES ONLY" onto Mamie's desk, but she doesn't acknowledge them at all. Her mind is elsewhere, completely detached from her surroundings.

26 EXT/INT. BARBERSHOP - DAY 26

Mamie walks down the sidewalk to arrive at a storefront with a large glass window. She stares inside, where she spots Gene finishing a CUSTOMER'S haircut.

Mamie pushes inside and the shop door goes DING!

Gene looks concerned as soon as he sees Mamie.

GENE
What're you doing out of bed? Is everything alright?

Mamie is now smiling. She waits for the Customer to leave his chair.

MAMIE
That trip we planned to take Bo on? Let's go now!

Confused, Gene takes Mamie's hand.

GENE
Shouldn't you be getting some rest? We don't know what happened to you last week --

MAMIE
(pulling hand away)
I was just missing Bo!

Beat.

She then admits the truth.

MAMIE (CONT'D)
I'm still missing Bo. We've never been apart this long, and he's going to be gone another week. I need to keep doing things to take my mind off of this...feeling.

Gene notices a trace of sadness in Mamie's face.

GENE
(obliges)
Okay. I can't go today, but let's try in a few days...

Mamie happily goes in to hug Gene, but then pulls back --

MAMIE
Promise me we'll go on the trip?

GENE
Of course.

They embrace, not seeing each other's worried expressions.

MISSISSIPPI

27 EXT. ROAD - DUSK 27

A Black male teenager - WILLIE HEMPHILL (14) - walks down the street with a bagful of groceries. A PICK-UP TRUCK skids to a stop off the road, next to him. A man's VOICE is heard from the truck:

ROY (O.S.)
Grab him!

In a flash, Hemphill is thrown onto the truck's flatbed, crashing into glass jars. A WHITE MAN'S FIST pummels his face with punches and kicks.

HEMPHILL
What'd I do?!

In a daze, Hemphill looks up and sees Johnny B. Washington - the Black onlooker from the store.

JOHNNY B.
Sir, I don't think that's him --

ROY BRYANT, a 24-year-old white man, stands over Hemphill.

ROY
You insult my wife?

HEMPHILL
No, sir.

28 INT. TRUCK - DUSK (CONTINUOUS) 28

Another white man, JW MILAM (36), sits in the driver's seat and is looking on from the rearview mirror.

Roy holds Hemphill's face up for Carolyn to see from the cab of the truck, where's she's been sitting this entire time.

CAROLYN
(to Roy)
That's not him, ya dummy! You got the wrong nigger!

29 EXT. ROAD - DUSK (CONTINUOUS) 29

ROY
(to Johnny B.)
Throw him out.

Johnny B. tosses Hemphill off the flatbed. He and Hemphill make eye contact as the truck drives away.

MATCH CUT TO:

A30 EXT. JOHNSON STREET - NIGHT A30

A CAR parks alongside a lively street that is filled with BLACK LOCALS and watering holes. LIVE BLUES MUSIC blares from a juke joint nearby.

PASSENGERS get out of the car and follow the music inside --

B30 INT. JUKE JOINT - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS) B30

The joint is packed with Black folks laughing, dancing and having a good time.

Near the back, sit Emmett, Maurice, Simmy, and Wheeler, drinking beers and whiskey. They get up and leave through the back, to --

30 EXT. JOHNSON STREET LOT - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS) 30

As they walk towards their cars, Emmett mimics the guitar and vocals of the BLUES SONG playing in the juke joint.

They pass two TEENAGE GIRLS also heading for their car. Emmett smiles at them and begins to swagger up to them. But just as he's about to land his pick-up line, two OLDER BOYS swoop in and successfully make their move. Emmett back pedals. Wheeler and Simmy laugh at him.

WHEELER
Nice try!

They lean against their parked car, laughing and drinking beers. But Maurice isn't smiling. He notices a few CARS driving by in the distance. *

MAURICE
You always think you're so damn funny, huh?

His firm tone takes everyone by surprise. Maurice lowers his tone, making sure no PEDESTRIANS are within listening distance.

MAURICE (CONT'D)
Why'd you whistle like that?

EMMETT
Come on. It's been three days and we haven't heard nothin' more 'bout what I did in Money --

MAURICE
That's 'cause no one knows your face 'round here. That don't mean they're not in one of those cars lookin' for us!

EMMETT
I said I was sorry --

MAURICE
We gotta tell Pappa.

EMMETT
We all agreed we wouldn't say nothin' --

SIMMY
He'll make Bobo go home!

MAURICE
So what?

Maurice gets in his face.

MAURICE (CONT'D)
Don't you see what's been goin' on down here? They killin' Negroes for doing a lot less than what you did in Money! You ain't no white man, Bobo, you one of us! --

Wheeler gets between them --

WHEELER
Leave him alone, Maurice! Mrs. Bryant must've kept it to herself. No one has to know.

Maurice eyes Emmett and then takes another swig of his beer. The boys share a silent consensus to keep their mouths shut.

As a conciliatory gesture, Simmy begins mimicking the BLUES SONG playing from the juke joint, just like Emmett did. Wheeler then joins in, and then Emmett. Maurice half-smiles while eyeing the cars passing by.

CHICAGO

31 INT. MAMIE'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT 31

JAZZ MUSIC plays from a record player in the background.

Mamie doles out a hand of cards to her friends, WILLIE MAE (30s) and OLLIE (30s). Cigarette butts burn in an ashtray and a few beer bottles are open on the table.

MAMIE
Willie Mae. Ollie. I swear, you two are losing on purpose!

WILLIE MAE
You must have all the luck tonight, Mamie.

Willie Mae and Ollie exchange glances as Mamie continues handing out the cards. Ollie gently places her hands atop Mamie's, stopping her from dealing.

OLLIE
We've been here all night, and you still haven't told us what happened to you.

Mamie is in no mood to discuss it.

MAMIE
I'm fine. I just got a letter from Aunty Lizzy today. She said Bo's really happy. That's all I needed to hear.

Ollie considers her words and removes her hand from Mamie's. They resume playing cards.

WILLIE MAE
My boy, Curtis, just made it down to Mississippi. I told my Uncle to make sure he sees Bo tomorrow.

MAMIE
Bo would like that. It'd be nice for him to have another friend from the city there with him. He just doesn't understand how different it is down there. Aunty Lizzy said Bo's been working the fields. I can't imagine Bo under that hot sun all day pulling some cotton! But Aunty Lizzy said I raised one nice, hard-working boy! That's my Bo...

Mamie drifts into her own world, speaking more to herself than to her friends.

MAMIE (CONT'D)
I can’t believe he’s been gone a week! Gene and I want to go on a trip soon, but I really want to go down to Mississippi and bring my son back home. If Bo could just get his feet back onto Chicago soil again, he’d be one happy kid --

Everything stops for a beat. Mamie catches what she just said.

MAMIE (CONT'D)
I don’t know why I said that.

Willie Mae breaks the silence placing her cards on the table.

WILLIE MAE
(smiling)
I think your winning streak is over. *

Mamie looks down at her cards.

MAMIE
Well, look at that.

OLLIE
Want to play one more hand?

MAMIE
(smiling)
Sure. But you deal this time.

Ollie deals, Willie Mae takes another swig of her beer and Mamie’s smile slowly fades away...

32 INT. MAMIE’S BEDROOM - NIGHT 32

Mamie is in her nightclothes and headscarf, kneeling down in PRAYER.

When she finishes, she takes off Emmett’s watch from her wrist and places it by the bedside lamp.

MISSISSIPPI

33 INT. MOSES WRIGHT'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT 33

RADIO BROADCASTER #1 (V.O.)
****BROADCAST ABOUT GROWING NEGRO VOTING RIGHTS IN DELTA COUNTIES AFTER BROWN VS BOARD OF EDUCATION RULING****

The RADIO fills the home. Moses and his wife, ELIZABETH (60s), sit in matching rocking chairs while holding hands, with a lit kerosine lamp by their side. They are listening intently when they hear a CAR PULL UP outside.

Emmett, Maurice, Wheeler and Simmy stumble into the house. They jump when they see Moses in his chair.

MAURICE
Pappa! You and mama ain't asleep?

ELIZABETH
How can we sleep when you're not home yet?

The boys try to mask their drunkenness.

MOSES
What'd you boys get into tonight?

SIMMY
Not much, daddy. Just takin' Bobo around.

Moses looks at Emmett, whose face is indecipherable.

MOSES
Bobo, remember we're leavin' early tomorrow to mail that letter out to your mama, you hear?

EMMETT
Okay.

Moses takes another look at the boys before letting them run into their bedrooms.

LATER:

34 INT. SIMMY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT 34

Emmett is writing a LETTER by kerosene light. He shares a bed with a sleeping Simmy.

Moses enters.

MOSES
You ain't sleepin' yet?

EMMETT
Not yet.

Moses looks down at Emmett's unfinished letter.

MOSES
Your mama's gonna be happy to hear from you. I know she misses you and can't wait for you to come home. But I'm glad you came down to see us, Bobo. *

EMMETT
Me too, Uncle Mose. *

He sets the letter down on the nightstand.

EMMETT (CONT'D)
G'night.

MOSES
G'night.

He exits.

As Emmett blows out the kerosene lamp, the flame illuminates part of his letter:

ON LETTER

Hi Mama,

How are you? I miss you. Uncle Mose got us working hard.

Wisps of smoke then disappear into the night...

LATER:

35 INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT 35

It's the middle of the night. The house is still and quiet, except for a few faint SNORES from the bedrooms.

And then --

CRUNCH! CRUNCH!

Tires CRUNCH gravel from right outside the house.

Someone POUNDS on the front door.

ROY (O.S.)
Preacher! Preacher!

Moses runs to the door.

MOSES
Who is it?!

ROY (O.S.)
It's Mr. Bryant! I want to talk to you about that boy!

MOSES
Sir?

ROY (O.S.)
I want that boy who did the talking down in Money!

MOSES
Talking, sir? What talking?

ROY (O.S.)
Open up this door, Preacher!

Simmy has been listening to this exchange from outside his bedroom. He runs back inside --

36 INT. SIMMY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT 36

-- and wakes Emmett up.

SIMMY
Bobo. Wake up!

Emmett swipes him away.

EMMETT
Leave me alone.

SIMMY
Get up. Someone's come!

EMMETT
So what?

SIMMY
They've come for *you*!

Emmett wakes up.

EMMETT
Who's come?

37 INT. FRONT DOOR - NIGHT 37

Moses stands inside the front door, ajar. A blinding flashlight beams into his eyes.

MOSES
I'm not sure what you mean, Mr. Bryant --

JW shines his flashlight into Moses' face.

JW
You got that boy from Chicago?! *

JW pushes inside, knocking Moses out of the way. Roy follows.

Both men barrel down the hallway, looking around, until they enter --

38 INT. SIMMY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT 38

Roy shines his flashlight into Emmett's face.

ROY
You that big-mouth nigger?

EMMETT
Who are you?

Roy and JW's eyes go wide at Emmett's audacity.

JW
Get your clothes on!

Emmett glances at Simmy, then reluctantly throws on his pants and shirt. *

JW (CONT'D)
(to Simmy)
Better shut them eyes!

Simmy does. Emmett begins putting on a pair of socks.

ROY
You don't need no goddam socks!

EMMETT
I don't wear shoes without socks.

JW grabs a handful of Emmett's shirt. He and Roy pull him into --

39 INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT 39

-- and drag him from under the armpits. *
*

ELIZABETH
(rushing in)
Please don't take him!

JW
Move! *

ELIZABETH
We'll whip him if he's done
something wrong!

Moses glances at the SHOTGUN leaning in the dark corner of the LIVING ROOM, then turns to Emmett. *
*

MOSES *
(to Emmett) *
Don't talk back. *

ROY
We just gonna teach him a lesson.

ELIZABETH
We'll give you money!

Roy hesitates... JW doesn't.

Simmy, Maurice and Wheeler have now rushed out to witness what's going on.

MOSES
(softer)
Please, the boy doesn't have good
sense.

JW
He's gonna learn.

JW and Roy drag Emmett out of the house and onto --

40 EXT. MOSES WRIGHT'S HOME - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS) 40

-- the dirt, where they meet a third man, Johnny B. Washington.

Moses and Elizabeth run out to them:

MOSES
But Mr. Bryant!

JW returns to face Moses on his stoop and raises his gun.

JW
What'd you say?

Moses sidesteps in front of Lizzie.

JW backs away, firearm still raised.

Roy and Johnny B, heave Emmett onto the flatbed of their truck, where he is held down by HENRY LOGGINS (Black, 32) and TOO TIGHT (Black, 20).

Roy floods Emmett's face with light.

ROY
This the right nigger?

Emmett's EYES GO WIDE when he sees Carolyn.

CAROLYN
(from Cab)
That's the one.

Emmett gets flipped over and pressed flat. As the truck pulls off, he looks up at the Black men above him and they all look at each other. Flashes of embarrassment and pity cross Too Tight's face. Emmett holds his gaze on Too Tight's eyes.

LATER:

41 OMIT 41

A42 EXT. BRYANT'S COUNTRY STORE - NIGHT A42

The truck skids to a stop. Emmett lurches back. He hears a cab door open.

He tilts his head to watch Carolyn walking with Roy up to the store.

EMMETT
(whispering to Too Tight)
Mister...

LOGGINS
Shut up!

EMMETT
Cut me loose. They aren't looking.

Too Tight can't take his eyes off of Emmett's face.

LOGGINS
But we’re lookin’!

Emmett continues looking into Too Tight’s eyes and speaks directly to him.

EMMETT
Why’re you doing this? You’re one of us.

Too Tight looks like he’s about to break.

TOO TIGHT
They’re the boss and they gettin’ somebody tonight! If we don’t get ya, they gettin’ us!

His face hardens again.

TOO TIGHT (CONT'D)
Just take this beating. It’s yours.

Too Tight looks away. In a moment of opportunity, Emmett throws an elbow to his jaw.

He crawls over the wall of the flatbed and falls to the dirt. He gets up and runs.

He sprints down the road, full of terror, and turns into --

B42 EXT. THICKET - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS) B42

Total blackness.

Behind him, there is AUDIBLE COMMOTION and the headlights of JW’s truck spin a u-turn and speeds towards Emmett’s direction.

Emmett stops for a moment, trying to get his bearings.

He looks around, but there’s nothing to see but blackness.

JW, Roy, Johnny B., Loggins and Too Tight stand by the truck, holding out flashlights. A small MOB OF WHITE MEN are now among them, also looking for Emmett.

Loggins stares into the thicket and listens. He can sense Emmett’s nearby.

LOGGINS
I know you’re in there, son. I can hear you thinking... You can’t move now because I’m listening.
(MORE)

LOGGINS (CONT'D)
You can't get back to Preacher's because we'll rip that place and everyone you love apart. You're stuck and you don't know the trouble you caused. I get that. It's bad. Don't make it worse.
(beat)
What I offer is this: keep your mouth shut. Don't run. And I'll see to it you get home.
(beat)
Say 'okay.'

Loggins hears a faint rustle in the thicket. Emmett emerges. Loggins shines the flashlight in Emmett's face. Emmett's eyes blink 'okay.'

LATER:

42 OMIT 42

43 OMIT 43

44 EXT. ROAD - NIGHT 44

JW Milam's truck drives through the night, with another truck of WHITE MEN tailing behind.

45 EXT. SHERIDAN PLANTATION BARN - NIGHT (LATER) 45

Emmett's SCREAMS are heard amidst the nighttime silence.

46 INT. SHERIDAN PLANTATION BARN - NIGHT 46

Emmett is slumped over, his face swollen and eyes barely open. He eyes the line of men in front of him: JW, Roy and SEVERAL WHITE MEN - LESLIE MILAM (30) amongst them.

ROY
Set him loose fellas, before the sun comes up.

JW looks at Emmett.

JW
Yeah, alright.

But then --

JW (CONT'D)
What the hell’s this?

He notices Emmett’s wallet on the ground and opens it, discovering the glamour shot of Hedy Lamarr in the photo slide.

LESLIE
Aw, man...look at her. She looks like Carolyn!

JW
What the hell?

JW shows Roy the wallet and picture. Roy stiffens.

ROY
Where’d you get this?!

Emmett is too afraid to say anything.

ROY (CONT'D)
Tell me!

Emmett glances at Too Tight and Loggins, who look on expressionless.

ROY (CONT'D)
You fucking tell me who she is!

Roy swipes JW’s .45 and slings it across Emmett’s face. On contact --

CUT TO:

47 EXT. SHERIDAN PLANTATION BARN - DAWN 47

SCREAMS and CRIES are heard from inside the barn.

Several yards away, the hand of a Black boy shakes on a well’s water pail. This is WILLIE REED (16). He listens to the screams. Then there’s a long SILENCE.

FROM WILLIE REED’S POINT OF VIEW:

JW exits the barn and lights up a cigar.

Roy is in the driver’s seat of their truck, as Too Tight and Loggins drag Emmett onto the truck’s flatbed. They throw a blue tarpaulin over Emmett’s body.

BACK TO SCENE:

Willie trips when moving from the well. He causes a RUSTLE and JW notices. *

JW walks up to Willie.

JW
You see something?

WILLIE REED
No, sir.

He waits for Willie to run off, leaving his water behind.

48 EXT. BLACK BAYOU BRIDGE - EARLY MORNING 48

ALL FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF EMMETT'S VISION:

Emmett's eye opens and the tarpaulin flies away. His sight can't adjust to sunlight.

The blurry figures of men lifting a GIN FAN wipe past his field of vision. The men throw his body to the ground with a THUD.

JW *
Take off his clothes.

When pairs of Black hands tear at Emmett's body and clothes, Emmett releases a guttural MOAN.

ROY *
Look at that... He's trying to stand up!

Emmett WHEEZES, struggling for each breath. A blurry, white hand raises a GUN...

EMMETT (O.S.)
Mama...

And then his eyes flutter shut.

MATCH CUT TO:

CHICAGO

49 INT. MAMIE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - MORNING 49

Mamie wakes up in a panic.

RRRING! RRRING!

She stares at the ringing phone, reluctant to answer it. *

MAMIE
Hello?

CUT TO:

50 INT. MAMIE'S CAR - MORNING 50

Mamie slams her car door shut.

She jams the keys into the ignition, hands trembling.

Before Mamie can back out of the driveway, Gene pulls up behind her. She HONKS her car horn to get him to move, but he gets out of his car instead. She then gets out of her own car.

MAMIE
Get outta the way, Gene! I need to get to Money! I need to get to Money!

GENE
Money? Mamie, what's going --

MAMIE
They took Bo!

GENE
Who took him?

MAMIE
Preacher told me two men came and got Bo last night! I-I couldn't hear anything else after that! I need to go find Bo!

Gene gently holds Mamie by her shoulders.

GENE
(steady)
Mamie. Let's go inside. Call your mama. And then try to get in touch with Preacher or your Aunty Lizzy for more information. Okay?

Mamie barely nods her head.

LATER:

51 EXT/INT. MAMIE'S HOUSE - DAY 51

FAMILY and FRIENDS gather inside Mamie's home, offering support and homemade food.

52 INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY (CONTINUOUS) 52

Willie Mae and Ollie CHAT amongst a group of WOMEN shaking their heads in sympathy.

53 INT. MAMIE'S HOUSE - ACROSS THE ROOM - DAY (CONTINUOUS) 53

Gene greets and shakes hands with GUESTS. He glances back at Alma sitting on the sofa in tears. She's barely listening to the line of people taking turns to share words of encouragement.

54 INT. MAMIE'S HOUSE - SOFA (CONTINUOUS) 54

One man gets out of the line and sits next to Alma - JOHN CARTHAN (50s).

JOHN
Alma.

She doesn't look at him.

JOHN (CONT'D)
You weren't going to tell me?

Alma doesn't have the energy for John's questioning. She turns to him:

ALMA
I sent word to your wife. Now, why don't you go check on your daughter and figure out a way to help her?

John stiffens, holding back a retort. He signals to a man in line wearing a suit and holding a file folder.

JOHN
Rayfield!

RAYFIELD MOOTY (Black, 40s) steps out of the line and awkwardly stands over Alma and John. His demeanor is clinical and matter-of-fact.

RAYFIELD
Ma'am.

Alma looks up at him.

CUT TO:

55 INT. KITCHEN - DAY 55

A small group of ELDERLY WOMEN have been praying over Mamie. As one ELDER leads the prayer, Mamie and the other Women respond with “ALLELUIA!”, “PRAISE HIM!”, “YES, JESUS!”

ELDER
Father Lord, we know you are in control, Lord Jesus! You will bring Emmett back to Mamie, Father God! You will bring Emmett back, Father God! You’re our King! You’re our Master! God, here we are! We’re your people! And we’re calling on you tonight, Jesus! We give you all the Glory! Glory to God! Glory to God! Glory to God! *

They clap and rejoice; Mamie does so half-heartedly.

ELDER (CONT'D)
He’s going to bring him back to you, baby.

MAMIE
Thank you.

Mamie notices John standing by the entryway.

ELDER
Whatever you need, you call, you hear me?

MAMIE
Yes, ma’am.

ELDER
And keep saying your prayers.

MAMIE
Yes, ma’am.

The Elder nods and squeezes Mamie’s hand. She and the other Women walk out, acknowledging John on the way.

Mamie and John are left alone. There’s a noticeable distance between the two.

JOHN
No matter the differences between me and your mama, I still have the right to be here for you.

The emotional weight of the day comes down on Mamie and she begins to cry.

John walks over and hugs his daughter.

JOHN (CONT'D)
We’re gonna find Bo, you hear me?

Mamie nods her head.

JOHN (CONT'D)
I brought your cousin to help us. You remember Rayfield Mooty? He came by the house a lot when you were a kid? Mamie, he works with some powerful Negro people who can help us find Bo!

Rayfield has entered the kitchen and is now standing by, expressionless. John steps aside to let Rayfield speak. Mamie tries wiping away her tears, but they keep coming back.

MAMIE
I’m sorry...

Rayfield stands there, stoic, waiting for Mamie to finish.

MAMIE (CONT'D)
(composes herself)
Thank you for coming, Mr. Mooty.

He pulls out a piece of paper from his folder and hands it to * Mamie.

RAYFIELD
I’ve been in touch with Mr. William Huff, counsel for the NAACP chapter, here in Chicago. He wants to meet with you first thing tomorrow morning. I’ve included the address to his office here.

Mamie looks at Rayfield, confused and skeptical at the same time.

RAYFIELD (CONT'D)
He has political contacts throughout the state of Mississippi, and he's in regular contact with Mayor Daley, Congressman Dawson, and Governor Stratton.

She reluctantly takes the paper.

MAMIE
I do know about the NAACP, and it sounds like he knows the right people who can help me find Bo...

RAYFIELD
I'll meet you at Mr. Huff's office at 9am.

Mamie glances at her father for assurance. John nods.

Rayfield begins to walk out, but then turns to Mamie --

RAYFIELD (CONT'D)
Mamie... I do regret seeing you under these circumstances.

The first trace of emotion flashes across his face. Mamie watches him leave.

56 INT. NAACP CHICAGO HEADQUARTERS - LOBBY - NEXT DAY 56

PARALEGALS populate the rooms.

POSTERS, PAMPHLETS and VARIOUS NAACP INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS line the walls: "JOIN NOW, NAACP"; "PROTECTING THE NEGRO VOTE"; "FIGHTING THE CITIZENS' COUNCIL."

Rayfield leads Mamie and Gene through a bullpen of desks. Mamie observes her surroundings. She picks up a few pamphlets.

57 INT. WILLIAM HENRY HUFF'S OFFICE - DAY 57

Mamie and Gene shake the hand of WILLIAM HENRY HUFF (50s). He's a conservative man, who speaks with assurance and experience.

RAYFIELD
Mr. Huff, this is Mrs. Bradley and Mr. Mobley.

MAMIE
Thank you for meeting with us, Mr. Huff.

GENE
Yes, thank you.

HUFF
(to Mamie)
I have great respect for your cousin. His work with the United Steelworkers has helped make it one of the strongest Negro unions.

MAMIE
(surprised)
I didn't know that.

They all take a seat.

HUFF
Are you employed?

MAMIE
I work for the Air Force. *

GENE
(proudly)
She's the only Negro woman in the office.

Huff nods his head. Mamie can feel Huff looking at her and Gene up and down.

HUFF
Mrs. *Bradley*. You two aren't married.

Mamie and Gene look at each other.

MAMIE
Um, no.

GENE
Not yet, anyway.

HUFF
Where's Emmett's father?

MAMIE
Louis Till died overseas, about 10 years ago. During the war.

HUFF
And Mr. Bradley?

Mamie pauses. She doesn't know where this is going, but she responds anyway.

MAMIE
We divorced a few years ago.

Huff nods his head again.

MAMIE (CONT'D)
(firmly)
You have a lot of questions for me, Mr. Huff, and none of them seem to have anything to do with my son.

Huff takes a beat.

HUFF
I've been briefed about your case --

MAMIE
Bo's not a case.

Huff takes another beat and tries again.

HUFF
I drafted two telegrams to send to Governor White in Mississippi and Governor Stratton, here in Illinois. It's important they know about Emmett.

He pulls out two pieces of paper from a folder.

HUFF (CONT'D)
In light of what happened to Reverend Lee and Mr. Smith, the Negro press in Mississippi is starting to write about Emmett's kidnapping, but it's not creating enough pressure needed to force a state-wide search. As your counsel, I'd want to utilize all the press here, in Chicago; it'll be more likely to get picked up in other cities that way. You would have to talk to the reporters and speak in front of cameras... So we like to make sure that the person who is telling the story will be in public favor.
(MORE)

HUFF (CONT'D)
It's better I ask questions now, than a reporter discovering something later.

Huff spins the pieces of paper around for Mamie to read, but she is quiet.

MAMIE
The Reverend and Mr. Lee...I heard they were killed right before Bo got down there...

GENE
Mamie...

He takes Mamie's hand, not wanting her to go there. Mamie holds out the pamphlet about the citizen's council.

MAMIE
I know these citizens' councils are everywhere down there. You think they had a part in any of it? *

Huff doesn't want to answer, but must:

HUFF
When your message to white people is to stop Negroes from voting or advancing by any means short of violence, it's only a matter of time before someone doesn't stop short of it.

GENE
Let's just focus on finding Bo.

Gene picks up the telegrams and signals for Mamie to read them with him.

As she and Gene look through the telegrams, Huff's face softens.

HUFF
Why do you call him Bo?

Mamie looks up and takes a beat.

MAMIE
When I was carrying him, my Mama's friend would bring him gifts all the time and say 'Here's another one for little Bobo!' After he was born, it just...stuck.

Huff nods.

MAMIE (CONT'D)
He was a perfect baby. Born breech, and had his share of problems, but...he was a perfect baby.

Huff remains quiet.

58 OMIT 58

59 OMIT 59

60 INT. MAMIE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT 60

Mamie lies in bed, listening to DIZZY GILLESPIE playing on the record player. When the last song finishes, a brief silence fills the room.

Mamie moves the needle to the first song and the music begins again. She closes her eyes to sleep.

61 EXT. CHICAGO NEIGHBORHOODS - EARLY MORNING (NEXT DAY) 61

NEWSPAPERS are thrown in front of VARIOUS HOMES.

As each newspaper lands on the ground, bits of headlines are revealed: "CHICAGO TRIBUNE" "KIDNAPPERS ARRESTED" "CHICAGO BOY GONE MISSING."

62 INT. MAMIE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY 62

RRRING! RRRING!

Phones ring as the house buzzes with activity:

Willie Mae passes out food to FRIENDS and FAMILY with newspapers in hand.

Alma sits silently on the couch.

Gene is on the phone, talking to the press.

GENE
(into phone)
If those two men that got arrested are telling the truth and let Bo go, then maybe he's alone scared somewhere or maybe...a colored family picked him up and are trying to get him home. Maybe they'll read this paper and know Bo is ours --

Mamie is on the second line, doing the same.

MAMIE
(into phone)
I don't care what anyone thinks Bo did or didn't do at that store! They took my child! And I need him back!

KNOCK! KNOCK!

63 EXT. MAMIE'S HOUSE - FRONT DOOR - DAY (CONTINUOUS) 63

Willie Mae answers the door to two Black NEIGHBORS with newspapers in hand.

NEIGHBOR
Hello. We live across the street and read what happened to Emmett. Everyone in the neighborhood knows that sweet boy. If there's anyway we can help...

Willie Mae looks back at Mamie, who's busy on the phone.

64 INT. MAMIE'S HOUSE - BY THE PHONES - DAY (CONTINUOUS) 64

After hanging up, Mamie looks at Alma, not knowing what to make of her silence.

RRRING!

Gene answers.

GENE
Hello?
(beat)
Mr. Huff! I'll get Mamie.

Gene hands her his phone.

GENE (CONT'D)
It sounds like he has good news.

Mamie eagerly takes the phone from him.

MAMIE
(into phone)
Mr. Huff?
(beat)
He wrote back?
(to Gene)
The Governor wants to talk to Mr. Huff about what happened to Bo.
(into phone)
Thank you for the update, Mr. Huff.

Another KNOCK at the door.

MAMIE (CONT'D)
(into phone)
Okay, I'll be in touch.

She hangs up and looks at Gene, looking hopeful for the first time.

And then she turns to see a tear-stained Ollie in the doorway. Everyone in the house has stopped what they're doing.

For a long time, Mamie just looks at Ollie, already knowing what she's about to share.

Ollie walks over to Mamie.

OLLIE
A reporter called me. He didn't want to tell you himself.

Mamie can't speak.

OLLIE (CONT'D)
Bo's body was found in a river. Preacher just identified him to the Sheriff. He recognized the ring Bo was wearing. I'm so sorry, Mamie. He's...he's dead.

Alma WAILS.

Mamie goes into shock.

<u>CAMERA STAYS ON MAMIE AS SHE DISCONNECTS FROM EVERYONE AROUND HER.</u>

She stumbles to the floor. Gene and John catch her and take her to the couch.

The phones continue to RING.

SERIES OF SHOTS:

65 INT. COUPLES LIVING ROOM - NIGHT 65

"I LOVE LUCY" plays on a TELEVISION SCREEN. The jovial antics of Lucy and Ricky are suddenly interrupted by a NEWS BROADCAST:

REPORTER
We interrupt this broadcast to report a breaking news story. The body of Emmett Louis Till has been found dead in the Tallahatchie River, near Money, Mississippi. Till, a Negro boy from Chicago, was kidnapped while visiting relatives in Money, Mississippi.

66 INT. A COUPLE'S HOME - NIGHT 66

A RADIO BROADCAST fills the home of a BLACK FAMILY.

RADIO BROADCASTER #2(O.S.)
Two men - Roy Bryant and JW Milam - were already in police custody after admitting to the kidnapping. They now face a possible indictment for the murder of Till.

67 OMIT 67

68 INT. MAMIE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY 68

ON TELEVISION: Roy Wilkins is interviewed by a white NEWS HOST. A chyron - "ROY WILKINS, EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF NAACP" - sits on the bottom of the screen.

ROY WILKINS (O.S.)
It would appear from this lynching that the State of Mississippi has decided to maintain white supremacy by murdering children. It was because it was a boy that they went there. They had to prove that they were superior.
(MORE)

ROY WILKINS (O.S.) (CONT'D)
They had to prove it by taking away a 14-year-old boy. The killers of the boy felt free to lynch him because there is, in the entire state, no restraining influence of decency. Hate! It’s like a virus in the blood of the Mississippian. He can’t help it.

Mamie watches Wilkins’ intently. She is a shell of herself.

Willie Mae and Ollie clean up around the house.

Gene sits next to her.

KNOCK! KNOCK!

GENE
Mamie, you need to eat something.

He goes to answer the door. Mamie ignores him and continues watching the television.

RAYFIELD (O.S.)
Mamie?

Mamie finally acknowledges the world around her and looks up at Gene standing with Rayfield.

CUT TO:

69 EXT. MAMIE’S HOUSE - DAY 69

Mamie closes the door behind her and Rayfield.

RAYFIELD
My...sincere condolences --

MAMIE
Stop. I can’t.
(beat)
I need Bo’s body sent back here. I can’t have him buried in Mississippi.

RAYFIELD
Mississippi won’t make that deal with you --

MAMIE
Then make them! I’m sure Mr. Huff can get...Mayor Daley or the Governor to talk to somebody.
(MORE)

MAMIE (CONT'D)
Those people in Mississippi are trying to dump Bo in the ground like he's just another body! He's my baby. I need to see him.

Rayfield takes in her passionate words.

RAYFIELD
I'll speak with Mr. Huff.

MAMIE
Thank you.

Mamie takes in the outside air. She hasn't taken a deep breath in a while.

Rayfield has something on his mind...

RAYFIELD
You have the public's attention right now and it would be in a politician's best interest to help you during an election year. There's an opportunity in that.

Mamie barely nods her head.

RAYFIELD (CONT'D)
Some organizers and executive members from the NAACP have been speaking with the justice department about creating legislation to make lynching a federal crime. What happened to Reverend Lee was a lynching. Lamar Smith, a lynching. Emmett... We have an opportunity to use this moment to help us pass this legislation.
(pause)
It might also help you get an indictment, and maybe even a conviction.

Mamie listens, but the information is overwhelming.

MAMIE
I..can't think about this right now. I just need Bo back here.

RAYFIELD
People are paying attention right now. This doesn't have to be just about Emmett --

MAMIE
Mr. Mooty, my son is dead!

Rayfield retreats.

MAMIE (CONT'D)
Make sure Mr. Huff handles this today.

RAYFIELD
Yes, ma'am.

After a beat, Rayfield nods and heads for his car.

Off Mamie watching him walk away...

70 INT. EMMETT'S BEDROOM - NEW DAY 70

The sun shines through the window, illuminating Emmett's empty room.

Mamie stands alone, staring at Emmett's empty bed. She wears a sleeveless black dress.

Gene enters, wearing a suit, and stands behind Mamie.

GENE
Your father and Rayfield are here. I brought you a wheelchair, just in case...I don't want you falling down...

Mamie continues staring at the bed.

GENE (CONT'D)
Preacher called again. He keeps trying to apologize to you, Mamie. Aunty Lizzie is coming up here, but he has to stay back to finish working the fields and talking to the Prosecutor.

Silence. Her gaze from the bed does not waver.

MAMIE
I've been asking myself... Why is this happening? Why did He take my child from me?
(pause)
What am I supposed to do now?

Gene starts to wrap his arms around Mamie's waist, but she pulls away before getting emotional.

MAMIE (CONT'D)
I need to get mama...

She walks out.

CUT TO:

71 INT. MAMIE'S BEDROOM - DAY 71

KNOCK! KNOCK!

Alma has been sitting on the edge of the bed, staring at nothing in particular. She's likely been in this same spot for a while.

Mamie enters.

MAMIE
Mama? They're waiting for us downstairs.

Alma doesn't respond.

MAMIE (CONT'D)
Mama?

ALMA
I wanted Bo to go to Mississippi. I told you to let him go. I told you to let him go. *I* told you to let him go. *I* told you --

MAMIE
Mama! This isn't your fault. Now, we have to be strong for Bo!

Alma can't control her tears. Mamie has never seen her mother break down like this. She doesn't know what to do at first, but then she slowly takes Alma in her arms and cradles her.

72 OMIT 72

73 OMIT 73

74 EXT. CHICAGO 12TH STREET STATION - DAY 74

Masses of REPORTERS, CLERGY and SPECTATORS flank the station.

Amidst the center of the frenzied crowd is Mamie in a wheelchair, surrounded by Rayfield, John and Gene. She waits with baited breath.

And then the TRAIN WHISTLES.

The train approaches and then comes to a stop in front of Mamie.

A BLACK SOLDIER emerges from inside the train, unloading a WOODEN CRATE. Mamie's eyes lock on the crate.

THE OUTSIDE NOISE FADES AND MAMIE'S BREATHING IS ALL WE HEAR.

And then --

Mamie SCREAMS.

MAMIE
Oh God, my only child! My only child!

She slowly gets on her feet and claws at the crate, which is branded with the MISSISSIPPI STATE SEAL embossed on wood. The CROWD surrounds her. FLASH BULBS ignite.

MAMIE (CONT'D)
Get him out of that box! He can't breathe! He can't breathe! Oh, Lord, take my soul!

Two BISHOPS cling to her arms to keep her from falling over. Mamie shakes them off and gets down to her knees. Her breathing slows while clutching the crate. For a while she says nothing and tries to ground herself in prayer.

MAMIE (CONT'D)
Lord...show me what you want me to do. Show me what you want me to do...

75 OMIT 75

76 OMIT 76

77 OMIT 77

78 INT. FUNERAL HOME PREP ROOM - DAY 78

White linen drapes over a body on a metal slab. Gene and John covertly cover their mouths and nose from a foul odor. Mamie doesn't take her eyes off the linen.

The funeral director - A. A. RAYNER (62) - steps to Mamie's side.

RAYNER
I need to prepare you...

MAMIE
Remove the sheet.

Rayner slowly pulls away the white linen covering...

What Mamie sees steals her breath away.

MAMIE (CONT'D)
Oh God...

Gene tries to steady Mamie's shoulders, but she pushes him away --

MAMIE (CONT'D)
EVERYONE LEAVE US!

The men immediately file out of the room.

Silence.

Mamie looks down and examines Emmett's body.

She gently touches a deteriorated --

Foot...

Knee...

Torso...

Hand...

Shoulder...

And then she pauses. Her face contorts into anguish at what she sees next --

A partially detached tongue rests on his chin...

An eyeball hangs down on his cheek...

The other eyeball is missing...

All but two teeth are missing in his mouth... *

The right ear is cut in half...

A bullet wound runs through his temple...

Mamie rests her head on Emmett's chest and releases all her pain and anger in a gut-wrenching sob.

She then quiets and stills herself.

She lifts her head and tenderly grazes Emmett's face.

And then, she pauses.

She has made a decision.

79 INT. FUNERAL HOME LOBBY - DAY 79

The men stand and MURMUR to each other. They all fall silent when Mamie appears with a newfound conviction.

MAMIE
Gene. Go back to my place and bring back Emmett's black suit, the one he wore last Christmas. Mama can tell you exactly where it is.

Mamie removes a key from her purse and hands it to Gene.

MAMIE (CONT'D)
And make sure you bring the matching tie. Emmett loved this suit. It's how he'd like to be seen.

The men pause. John steps up to Mamie.

JOHN
Seen? Mamie, he's in no shape --

MAMIE
He's in just the right shape! The whole world will have to see what happened to my son!

RAYNER
Mrs. Bradley, can I, at least, fix him up a bit, make him more presentable --

MAMIE
No! No one's going to understand or believe what I just saw. They have to see it for themselves. I want the world to see what I just saw!

A80 EXT. FUNERAL HOME STOOP - DAY A80

Mamie walks before a SEA OF REPORTERS and a few PHOTOGRAPHERS with newfound resolve. The Reporters and Photographers flinch at the smell of Emmett's body wafting out the door.

FUNERAL HOME REPORTER
What's that smell?

Mamie takes a beat then addresses the crowd: *

MAMIE
(matter-of-fact)
That smell is my son's body. He came home to me reeking of racial hatred. His face was bludgeoned. His teeth are gone. He was shot in the head. And now I want America to bear witness!

She scans the crowd and then makes eye contact with a BLACK MALE PHOTOGRAPHER. She instructs him decisively:

MAMIE (CONT'D)
Come with me.

The Photographer looks surprised, but does what he is told.

80 INT. FUNERAL HOME PREP ROOM - DAY 80

The Black Male Photographer sets a tripod with a camera near Emmett's feet. His body now wears a fine black suit and tie.

Mamie buttons his shirt jacket, removes lint from his sleeve, then puts on a pair of CUFFLINKS - the finishing touch.

MAMIE
Gene? Please come be with me?

Mamie takes a stance near Emmett's head and poses with her hands clasped across her stomach. Her eyes angle down at Emmett's face. Gene takes a stance behind Mamie, clutching her shoulders and looking into the lens. The flash bulb IGNITES.

81 OMIT 81

A82 EXT. NONDESCRIPT C.O.G.I.C. CHURCH - DAY A82 *

As church service ends, dozens of BLACK CHURCHGOERS pick up * LEAFLETS advertising Emmett's casket viewing. *

82 EXT. VARIOUS HOMES - DAY 82

CAMERA TRACKS a PAPER BOY tossing NEWSPAPERS onto driveways and front lawns.

RADIO HOST (O.S.)
In a shocking update to the tragic story of the Chicago Negro boy slain in Mississippi, his mother has decided to allow the public to view his deceased body. The open casket viewing begins today. And all are welcome. We are certainly curious about what they're going to see.

CUT TO:

83 INT. BARBERSHOP - DAY 83

The interview is played through a RADIO.

CAMERA TRACKS a line of BLACK MEN getting their hair cut. Some read a NEWSPAPER advertising the open casket viewing, all listen to Mamie on the radio.

MAMIE (O.S.)
The guilt begins with Mrs. Bryant. And she should be punished along with those men. The pressure should start from the President of the United States and channel all the way down to Money, Mississippi. I will do whatever I have to do to ensure justice is served, even if I have to go to Mississippi myself!

Gene works on a Customer at the end of the line, listening intently.

CUT TO:

84 OMIT 84

85 OMIT 85

A86 EXT. ROBERTS TEMPLE CHURCH OF GOD IN CHRIST - DAY A86

THOUSANDS OF MOURNERS line the street. CHICAGO POLICE OFFICERS are attempting to corral people.

86 INT. ROBERTS TEMPLE CHURCH OF GOD IN CHRIST - DAY 86

Absolute SILENCE.

Mamie pins THREE PHOTOS OF EMMETT on the underside of the open casket lid. Then she looks down, pressing the glass pane.

MAMIE
(softly)
You're not just my Bo anymore.

As Mamie steps away, the design of Emmett's coffin becomes clear: a glass pane covers his body so that everyone can see into his coffin.

Mamie steps away from the coffin and her eyes grant permission to the next MOURNER in line, a line that fills the whole church.

Mamie moves among the Mourners, shoulder to shoulder, touching hands and consoling the tearful.

ELIZABETH (O.C.)
Mamie.

Mamie turns to Elizabeth Wright and Wheeler. Wheeler can't look at Mamie.

MAMIE
Aunty Lizzie...

Elizabeth hugs her; Mamie half-heartedly reciprocates.

ELIZABETH
Simmy and Maurice wanted to stay with their daddy. This is probably too much for them...
(pause)
I'm so sorry... When those men came...I tried. We all tried.

Mamie's face is firm. She notices Wheeler crying.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
I'm never going back, Mamie. I've packed up and I'm up here for good. Preacher and the boys will join me.

Mamie's face now softens. She squeezes Elizabeth's hands.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
I can't look, Mamie.

MAMIE
We have to.

Mamie leads Elizabeth to the front of the line. What Elizabeth sees causes her to collapse against Mamie.

EMMETT'S CASKET P.O.V.

Looking up through glass pane, INDIVIDUAL MOURNERS pass, gasping at what they see beneath them.

Some Mourners collapse - USHERS AND MEDICAL STAFF assist those overcome by the sight.

87 OMIT 87

88 OMIT 88

89 OMIT 89

90 EXT. BURR OAK CEMETERY - DAY 90

Mamie sobs, surrounded by a MASS OF PEOPLE, including: Alma, John, Gene, Rayfield, and Elizabeth.

As Emmett's casket descends, Mamie places her hand on it. Mamie drops to her knees, still touching the casket as long as she can, then lets go, watching him all the way down.

FADE TO:

TABLEAUX of various people throughout the country looking at the PHOTOGRAPH OF EMMETT'S BODY in JET MAGAZINE and VARIOUS NEWSPAPERS follow: *

SERIES OF SHOTS:

A91 A) PEOPLE waiting at a BUS STOP A91

B91 B) BLACK CHILDREN on NYC STOOP B91

C91 C) EXECUTIVE MEMBERS in NAACP NEW YORK HEADQUARTERS C91

D91 D) WHITE POLITICAL OFFICIALS in U.S. SENATE OFFICE D91

The final tableau is of Mamie in -- *

91 INT. KITCHEN - DAY 91

She looks down at the NEWSPAPER in her hand, enraged. The front page headline reads: “2 MEN CHARGED FOR MURDER OF CHICAGO BOY.”

MAMIE *
My child is dead because of her and she’s going to be fine. Carolyn Bryant is going to be fine.

RAYFIELD
Getting a murder indictment for two white men in Mississippi is not easy.

Rayfield doesn’t know what else to say in response. He continues on with business: *

RAYFIELD (CONT'D)
Their defense will try to create doubt about the body being Emmett’s. If there’s no body, there’s no murder conviction and Bryant and Milam will only face kidnapping charges. *
(pause)
You know your child more than anyone. You saw his body soon after... There’s no testimony like a mother’s.

Mamie contemplates his words, still seething.

92 EXT. NAACP CHICAGO HEADQUARTERS - DAY 92

Mamie stands between Huff, Rayfield AND SEVERAL MALE NAACP MEMBERS. Opposite them stand PHOTO-JOURNALISTS, CAMERAMEN and REPORTERS with microphones.

HUFF
I received a letter from the special prosecutor appointed by Mississippi Governor White, officially confirming the indictment of Mr. Bryant and Mr. Milam for the lynching of Emmett Louis Till. Mrs. Bradley has been invited to testify as to the identity of her son's remains in a court of law.

PRESS CONFERENCE REPORTER 1
Governor White maintains the boy's death was not a lynching, but 'straight murder' --

HUFF
A lynching is not just murder, but it is mob violence. To define what happened to Emmett Till as a lynching could mean federal intervention and Mississippi doesn't want that.

PRESS CONFERENCE REPORTER 2
Do you have a comment about the claims from Tallahatchie County Sheriff, Strider, that - and I'm quoting - "The body we took from the river looked more like that of a grown man." *

RAYFIELD
They're trying to cover-up what they did.

PRESS CONFERENCE REPORTER 2
Mrs. Bradley?

MAMIE
I know I buried Emmett Till.

PRESS CONFERENCE REPORTER 3
Mrs. Bradley, will you be attending the trial?

MAMIE
Yes, I will.

PRESS CONFERENCE REPORTER 3
Will you be going alone?

Beat.

MAMIE
I will have the continued support of the NAACP and Mr. Mooty.

PRESS CONFERENCE REPORTER 4
Do you have any fear entering Mississippi right now?

Pause.

MAMIE
I will go anywhere. Talk to anyone. Mississippi has to pay!

93 OMIT 93

94 INT. BARBERSHOP - DAY 94

DING!

Mamie walks in to Gene sweeping an empty shop. They pause when they see each other, a silent tension between the two.

Mamie notices a framed PICTURE OF HERSELF, EMMETT AND GENE at his workstation. As a conciliatory gesture, she comments:

MAMIE
I’ve always loved that picture.

Gene isn’t smiling.

GENE
I should be going to Mississippi with you, Mamie. You need someone to protect you, it’s not safe to go alone --

MAMIE
I told you, Mr. Mooty is going with me.

She pulls out several NEWSPAPERS from her purse and holds them out to Gene.

MAMIE (CONT'D)
This is what they’re writing about me down there! They’re making me out to be some kind of jezebel! Two reporters called to ask me about my ex-husbands...and about you. I’m on trial like the people who killed Bo! Mr. Huff was right.
(MORE)

MAMIE (CONT'D)
Jurors will read these stories. I have to protect my image, if it can help get justice for Bo.

Beat.

Gene softens. He knows Mamie is right.

GENE
I'm scared to death you won't come back to me.

MAMIE
I know.

GENE
We still have so much living to do together.

MAMIE
I'm coming back to you. I promise.

They both look at each other, feelings of uncertainty linger between them.

95 INT. NAACP CHICAGO HEADQUARTERS - OFFICE - NIGHT 95

Mamie, Huff and Rayfield sit around a table, strategizing.

RAYFIELD
We've organized a plan to get you safely into a town in Mississippi that's about an hour away from Sumner, where the trial is taking place. You'll fly to Memphis first. Then, NAACP delegates will drive you to Clarksdale. From there, the field secretary from the Jackson chapter will pick you up and drive you to Mound Bayou. Dr. Howard will be waiting for you at his estate.

HUFF
And we'll continue organizing speaking events to fundraise for the trip. People around the country want to meet you and hear you speak.

MAMIE
All this just to get into Mississippi?

RAYFIELD
(matter-of-fact)
Negroes driving down these roads is a hazard. Sheriffs throughout the Delta are passing along Negro license plate numbers to Klan members. And once people know that you're coming, you'll have a target on your back. Going into Mississippi right now is a life threatening situation --

Huff interrupts Rayfield's lack of assurance and comfort.

HUFF
But we'll make sure you're as protected as possible.

Mamie takes in all of the information with concern. She glances at the door, where two SECURITY MEN stand.

96 OMIT 96

97 OMIT 97

98 INT. MAMIE'S HOME - DINING ROOM - DAY 98

Mamie stares at stacks of opened mail that include: Pictures of hand-drawn phalluses on newspaper articles; Notes that read "ANOTHER NIGGER GONE" and "YOU'RE DEAD IF YOU COME TO TRIAL."

She crumples the mail together to throw away in the trash --

KNOCK! KNOCK!

Mamie jumps.

She walks to the door and looks through the peephole, relaxing when she sees who it is. She opens the door to her father.

CUT TO:

99 INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY 99

JOHN
Your mama wanted me to come here and talk some sense into you about going to Mississippi.

Mamie braces herself for another argument.

JOHN (CONT'D)
But I got her to change her mind.
(pause)
Because I'm going with you.

Mamie is surprised and confused. She asks plainly:

MAMIE
Why?

John's face drops for a second.

JOHN
Because I'm your father, and I told you I'll be there for you.

Mamie doesn't know how to respond. Sensing her resistance, John lets himself be a little more vulnerable:

JOHN (CONT'D)
I never knew how to be there for you growing up. You were always so strong, like your mama. But these few weeks have given me another chance...

Mamie takes his words in, but keeps her distance.

MAMIE
I don't only need you when I'm broken.

John swallows the truth of her words. He hangs his head and barely nods. Mamie looks at her father and softens, remembering the love she has for him.

100 OMIT 100 *

101 INT. AUDITORIUM - DAY 101 *

HANDS place cash and checks in BUCKETS, as they pass it down rows of AUDIENCE MEMBERS enraptured by Mamie's words. She speaks to an audience of hundreds. *

Rayfield, Roy Wilkins, John, Alma and several NAACP EXECUTIVE MEMBERS surround Mamie on stage. *

MAMIE
It was my heart beneath that glass. I wondered, would people feel it too? I have no more doubts. All of America is mourning with us.

Audience CLAPS.

MAMIE (CONT'D)
While I'm happy that Mr. Milam and Mr. Bryant will be facing trial, I still want to see Mrs. Bryant punished, and any other person who was in on this thing. My son's death will not be in vain!

The Audience ROARS.

MAMIE (CONT'D)
So we are going down there. And we will bring a fight, because they're killing our children now! We will have our justice in Mississippi!

The Audience gets on their feet and CLAPS wildly.

Alma quietly takes Mamie's hand from behind and squeezes it. She whispers to her:

ALMA
(whispering)
I wish I could've been stronger for you.

Mamie is moved by her mother's words.

As the two remain looking forward at the Audience, the thunderous APPLAUSE slowly fades into an ominous ECHO...

MISSISSIPPI

102 EXT. MISSISSIPPI ROADS - DAY 102

A SHERIFF VEHICLE rides past open, dusty roads. It then passes a sign: "**TALLAHATCHIE COUNTY, MISSISSIPPI**"

CUT TO:

103 EXT. CIVIC CENTER - DAY 103

The Sheriff Vehicle parks in a spot near dozens of WHITE PEOPLE getting out of their cars.

A gruff, sweaty man gets out of the Sheriff Vehicle and follows the mass of White People inside the Civic Center. This is SHERIFF STRIDER.

104 INT. CIVIC CENTER - DAY 104 *

A “TALLAHATCHIE COUNTY CITIZENS’ COUNCIL” banner hangs overhead.

The room is exclusively filled with hundreds of WHITE MEN, WOMEN AND CHILDREN. They are mostly the upper eschelon of white society - politicians, sheriffs and such. DONATION JARS are passed amongst the rows of people.

Tables full of SNACKS and copies of “CITIZEN: MAGAZINE” line the walls. The COVER of the magazine features cartoonish Black men chasing demure white women.

Strider is seated amongst the captivated crowd, listening to a balding white man speak, SENATOR JAMES EASTLAND.

EASTLAND
We cannot permit division among our people. When we do, we lay the groundwork for the NAACP to integrate our schools.

APPLAUSE.

EASTLAND (CONT'D)
Our whole civilization is because of the creative genius of the white race. And this system which we have built must continue to remain. We will not surrender!

APPLAUSE!

EASTLAND (CONT'D)
And if the niggers want to take us to court, what will happen?

People in the crowd LAUGH.

EASTLAND (CONT'D)
That’s right, my friends. We do not convict our own. All we have to do is remain white!

Strider gets on his feet with the rest of the Crowd and claps loudly.

The CITIZENS' COUNCIL PRESIDENT walks up to the front of the room, clapping for Eastland.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT
Thank you, Senator Eastland! As County President, I can say it's been an honor to have you speak to our membership!

The Crowd starts to settle down, in anticipation for the next order of business.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT (CONT'D)
(to Crowd)
If the NAACP thinks we have the slightest idea of surrendering our heritage to a mulatto race, the NAACP had better think again!

APPLAUSE!

COUNCIL PRESIDENT (CONT'D)
Now, this trial about that dead nigger boy is coming up in a few days, and it won't be just about Roy and JW, it's about all of us. As Senator Eastland said - we have to protect our own.

APPLAUSE.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT (CONT'D)
Last week, I approached Mrs. Bryant and asked her how the Citizens' Council can help. She told me she could use help paying some of her legal fees - that's why you see these baskets going around. But instead of me asking you to donate, I thought it'd be more impactful to hear from Mrs. Bryant, herself. She's been through immeasurable pain lately, but was kind enough to accept my invitation to tonight's meeting. Let's all give her a round of applause!

Everyone CLAPS loudly, many stand.

Carolyn Bryant has been sitting off to the side with a TODDLER on her lap. When she's called up to speak, she hands her child to the OLDER WHITE WOMAN next to her and walks up to the front of the room. Her candor is deceptively reserved.

CAROLYN
I don’t have too much to say, other than...thank you. Roy thanks you too. It’s been hard on our boys. All they want is their daddy to come home.

Perfectly timed tears stream down her face.

CAROLYN (CONT'D)
Thank you.

The Crowd CLAPS again, feeling sorry and enraged for her at the same time.

As Carolyn walks back to her seat, her tears dry up and her eyes harden. She is expressionless.

105 EXT. MOUND BAYOU, MISSISSIPPI - DAY 105

Not too far away, the sun RISES on another part of Mississippi:

The CAMERA FOLLOWS CARS driving through an all-Black utopic town, where its working and middle-class RESIDENTS walk with a sense of pride and community. All businesses are Black-owned - BANKS, TRAIN STATION, and CARNEGIE LIBRARY.

In one of the cars...

106 INT. SEDAN - DAY (CONTINUOUS) 106

MEDGAR EVERS (30) drives Mamie and John. Medgar is a take-charge kind of young man, who has a deep passion for the activism work he does.

MEDGAR
Mound Bayou’s been here for about seventy years. This is where all the Negroes attending the trial will be staying. It’s the safest place for them.

As they pass the TABORIAN HOSPITAL --

MEDGAR (CONT'D)
Dr. Howard’s the chief surgeon at Taborian Hospital. He also owns a really successful life insurance company. That’s how I met him, he gave me a job there. *

Mamie's eyes widen with shock and pleasant surprise at the sight of Mound Bayou.

107 EXT. DR. HOWARD'S HOME - DAY (CONTINUOUS) 107

They approach a lavish ranch house that's lined with several BLACK SECURITY GUARDS. They each have guns at their hips.

As they pull up to the gate, Medgar confers with one of the Guards before they're allowed to enter.

As soon as he parks in front of Dr. Howard's house, a SECURITY GUARD begins assisting Mamie and John out of the car.

108 INT. SEDAN - DAY (CONTINUOUS) 108

Mamie turns to Medgar.

MAMIE
Thank you for driving us, Mr. Evers.

MEDGAR
Please, ma'am, call me Medgar.

Just before Mamie exits the car -- *

MEDGAR (CONT'D)
Mrs. Bradley?
(pause)
Those pictures of your son in the magazine? It changed people's lives. My wife is here with our son. We're both helping with the investigation work for the trial. We want to do everything we can to bring some sort of justice for Emmett Till.

She is moved and heartened by his words.

109 INT. DR. HOWARD'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY 109

A dozen BLACK REPORTERS and several NAACP EXECUTIVE MEMBERS move through an ornately decorated home. They are all on the phone, writing notes down or discussing strategy with one another.

Mamie notices some walls near Reporters' desks covered with NEWS ARTICLES about the case from newspapers all over the country: BALTIMORE AFRO-AMERICAN. CHICAGO DEFENDER. EBONY. JET.

Some Reporters pause when they notice Mamie.

MEDGAR
Our nickname for this place is "the Black command center." Reporters from all the colored press will work out of here during the trial. They're also helping me with some of our investigation work for the trial. *

A reporter, JAMES HICKS (40), walks by and nods his head in reverence.

MEDGAR (CONT'D)
That's James Hicks, from the Baltimore Afro-American.

He points to other Reporters:

MEDGAR (CONT'D)
Ms. Murdock. Ms. Turner. Mr. Booker...

Medgar points to a woman - RUBY HURLEY (46) - who's been watching them from afar --

MEDGAR (CONT'D)
That's Ruby Hurley, an administrator for the NAACP. She's also part of the investigation team.

JOHN
What kinds of things are you investigating?

A BABY TOY rolls in from the hallway. Mamie spots the toy, and then a 2-year-old BLACK BOY walking in with his mother, MYRLIE EVERS (22). Her eyes don't leave the Boy.

MEDGAR
Witnesses, who are brave enough to come to trial.

Medgar notices Mamie's gaze and walks over to Myrlie and their child.

MEDGAR (CONT'D)
This is my wife, Myrlie. And our son, Darryl.

He picks up his son.

MYRLIE
It’s an honor to meet you, Mrs. Bradley.
(to John)
Mr. Carthan.

Mamie tries to maintain her smile as she watches Medgar hold his son.

Medgar points to a man - AMZIE MOORE (44) - who is working near Ruby.

MEDGAR
That’s Amzie Moore, a member of the Regional Council for Negro Leadership --

DR. HOWARD (O.S.)
And I’m Dr. Theodore Howard.

They turn to see a middle-aged Black man in a crisp, white suit and alligator shoes. He speaks with an unapologetic self-assuredness.

DR. HOWARD (CONT'D)
What an honor it is to have you in my home, Mrs. Bradley.

110 EXT. DR. HOWARD’S HOME - BACKYARD - DAY 110

SPLASH!

Several BLACK CHILDREN jump and swim in a large, gorgeous pool.

Dr. Howard’s backyard is a recreational oasis for Black people in the community.

He walks and talks with Mamie, who is observing the surroundings.

DR. HOWARD
We’re demanding a chance to help shape our destiny in Mound Bayou! We have our own banks, hospitals, school.
(MORE)

DR. HOWARD (CONT'D)
I built this pool for colored children who've never been allowed to breathe ocean air.

MAMIE
Not a lot of people would use their money the way you do.

DR. HOWARD
Money is important to the freedom work we're doing. Keeping Negroes safe while we try to vote...or speak at a trial. It all takes money.

Mamie stares at the children playing and swimming, being *free*.

MAMIE
I had a really good life in Chicago, before they took Bo from me. I never thought much about the world outside of just me and Bo, my job, my family, my friends. And then I let the world into my life. For the first time, I feel some kind of purpose now, much bigger than the life I had in Chicago.

Dr. Howard has been listening.

DR. HOWARD
Have you thought about what you'll do after the trial?

MAMIE
(confused)
After the trial?

DR. HOWARD
I'm sure you thought about continuing your work with the NAACP. Or you can join the work we're doing here through my Regional Council. You have a story that speaks to the urgency of Negro rights in a way this country has never heard before.

MAMIE
I've been sharing my story because I want those two men to pay for what they did.

Dr. Howard pauses and gets frank with Mamie.

DR. HOWARD
Mrs. Bradley, when you put your son's body out, all of us felt something. No words are more powerful than when they come from a mother who's just lost her child. But it'll take a lot more than righteousness when putting white sovereignty on trial.

MAMIE
(pause)
I'm not as cynical as you, Dr. Howard. I do believe in justice.

DR. HOWARD
I do too. And I believe justice can't only come from twelve jurors who will look like the men on trial.

Mamie hardens.

DR. HOWARD (CONT'D)
Our fight, your story, doesn't end with a verdict, Mrs. Bradley.

Dr. Howard watches the kids jump in the pool while Mamie considers his words.

111 EXT. MISSISSIPPI ROAD - DAY 111

BLACK SEDANS zip past a sign that reads:

"SUMNER, MS: A GOOD PLACE TO RAISE A BOY."

112 OMIT 112

113 EXT. COURTHOUSE - DAY 113

WHITE CHILDREN playfully run across the courthouse lawn.

WHITE ONLOOKERS stand around, chatting and drinking sodas, while BLACK ONLOOKERS stand segregated by a CONFEDERATE STATUE.

Television, radio and newspaper REPORTERS swarm the building.

Reporters rush a line of an arriving SEDAN --

Medgar opens Mamie's door.

Every detail of Mamie's attire is like a suit of armor: nylon stockings, the fringe of her dress, Emmett's watch on her wrist -- the hand of which clutches a classy handbag, a gem-inlaid necklace, gold earrings and aviator glasses.

White Onlookers stare at Mamie, dumbstruck by how well-dressed she is.

COURTHOUSE REPORTER 1
That's the mother!

John walks protectively by Mamie's side. Medgar divides swarms of Reporters, making way for Mamie to walk up the courthouse steps.

MEDGAR
Get out of the way!

COURTHOUSE REPORTER 1
Mrs. Bradley...uh, why are you here?

COURTHOUSE REPORTER 2
C'mon, say something!

JOHN
Mamie --

MAMIE
It's alright, daddy.

John and Medgar look at Mamie as if what she's about to do is a bad idea. Mamie finds a microphone.

MAMIE (CONT'D)
I'm here to confirm that I saw my son's body, Emmett Louis Till, and to answer any questions the attorneys might have --

BANG! BANG! BANG!

Mamie jumps. Medgar and John instinctively shield her. She looks up to discover two WHITE BOYS leaning from the courthouse window, pointing smoking CAP GUNS back at her. They LAUGH at Mamie.

Mamie removes her sunglasses and looks directly at the two boys.

114 INT. COURTHOUSE - DAY 114

Medgar leads Mamie through a crowded hallway and up a staircase, landing on the --

115 INT. COURTHOUSE FOYER - DAY 115

WHITES pass into the courtroom freely, but “COLOREDS” are corralled into a separate line to be frisked.

Mamie waits with Medgar and John. *

A TALLAHATCHIE DEPUTY throws up John’s arms and pushes him against a wall.

MAMIE
How dare you?!

JOHN
It’s okay, Mamie.

The Tallahatchie Deputy laughs at ANOTHER DEPUTY.

The Other Deputy moves toward Mamie and frisks her. She winces when he begins to search her body.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Mamie?

She looks at her father.

JOHN (CONT'D)
It’s okay.

She and her father hold each other’s gazes as the Deputies pat down their entire bodies.

116 INT. COURTROOM - DAY 116

Hazy cigarette smoke fills the air.

The room is mostly packed with WHITE SPECTATORS.

Two WHITE TEENS sell soda pop and beer.

WHITE CHILDREN play a game of tag, running around and around the courtroom.

Most BLACK SPECTACTORS stand near the back.

Mamie enters with Medgar and John, observing her surroundings. Sheriff Strider pushes past them without any regard.

STRIDER
Hello, niggahs!

Mamie bristles.

STRIDER (CONT'D)
I got about eight seats off the side in there for you nigger reporters, everyone else can stand.

BLACK REPORTERS and a Black photographer - ERNEST WITHERS - make their way to the rear of the courtroom.

MEDGAR
(to Mamie and John)
There's Mr. Hicks. We can sit with him and the other reporters.

As Mamie heads towards Hicks, Strider steps in front of her.

STRIDER
You Mamie?

She takes him in. Strider pushes a document against Mamie.

MAMIE
What's this?

STRIDER
It's a damn summons. I thought you uppity niggers could read.

He walks away. Mamie turns to John in disbelief.

JOHN *
Don't let them get to you. Let's sit down.

They make their way towards a few seats. Medgar spots two white men at a table - prosecutors GERALD CHATHAM and ROB SMITH.

MEDGAR
(to Mamie)
Have you spoken to the prosecution team?

MAMIE
Only once, on the phone. It was brief.

He guides Mamie over to the table.

MEDGAR
District Attorney Smith... Mrs. Bradley.

Mamie holds out her hand for a greeting, but Smith looks at her dumbfounded and does not raise his hand.

BAILIFF (O.C.)
All rise! The Honorable Judge Curtis Swango presiding.

Medgar escorts Mamie back to her seat with the Black Press.

JUDGE CURTIS SWANGO (60s, white), walks into the courtroom and takes his seat. He looks at PHOTOGRAPHERS taking photos.

JUDGE SWANGO
There will be no pictures taken during court proceedings. Bailiff, have the jurors come in and take a seat. Also, get me a coke.

The Bailiff opens the door and signals for the 12 JURORS to enter.

Mamie watches the Jurors file into the courtroom - every single one of them is white and male. Mamie clenches her jaw.

Her eyes follow them taking a seat at the front of the room and then she spots the backs of ROY BRYANT, JW MILAM and CAROLYN BRYANT. Mamie's breathing hastens. She watches Carolyn and Roy's CHILDREN run down the aisle, laughing...

CHATHAM
Your Honor, the State has just learned of the existence of another witness to the murder of Emmett Till.

Spectators MURMUR. Mamie watches Roy and JW sit up straight, their smiles fading at the news of surprise witnesses.

CHATHAM (CONT'D)
The State requests a recess in order to gather the witnesses.

Judge Swango sips a soda.

Defense Attorney J.J. BRELAND stands up:

BRELAND
Objection, your Honor! J.J. Breland for the defense. This will only delay proceedings.

JUDGE SWANGO
Objection overruled. It seems like a reasonable request. Court will resume at nine am tomorrow morning.

As everyone in the courtroom rises and starts to walk out of the courtroom, Mamie's eyes remain on Roy, JW, Carolyn and their children.

MEDGAR
Mrs. Bradley?

MAMIE
Medgar...take me to Money.

117 INT. MEDGAR'S CAR - DAY (TRAVELING) 117

Mamie stares at the desolate COUNTRY ROADS.

118 EXT. BRYANT'S COUNTRY STORE - DAY 118

Medgar pulls off the road across from the store.

MAMIE
That's where it happened? That empty stoop?

MEDGAR
Yes, Ma'am. It's been closed since the arrest.

Mamie gets out of the car. Medgar hustles to catch up with her across the street.

MAMIE
These people are church mouse poor.

MEDGAR
And most of all their patrons were Negroes.

Mamie walks up the stoop and looks into the store window.

MAMIE'S P.O.V.

Lights are off. Shelves are mostly bare. The store is a ghost of itself.

MAMIE IMAGINES EMMETT LAUGHING DOWN THE AISLE. AND THEN BUYING A PIECE OF BUBBLE GUM FROM CAROLYN BRYANT.

BACK TO SCENE

She turns away from the window.

119 EXT. MOSES WRIGHT'S HOME - DAY 119

Maurice and Simmy are playing in front of their home. They freeze when they see Mamie and Medgar pull up in their car.

CUT TO:

120 INT. MOSES WRIGHT'S HOME - SIMMY'S BEDROOM - DAY 120

Simmy hands Mamie Emmett's HAT, one of his COMIC BOOKS and his UNFINISHED LETTER.

MAMIE
Your mama tells me you're all moving up north after the trial.

SIMMY
Daddy says it's not gonna be safe.

Mamie scans the letter and her eyes turn glassy. Simmy puts his head down. Maurice's eyes fill with tears.

MAURICE
We're sorry, ma'am....

MAMIE
You didn't know this was going to happen.

She holds them tightly. Mamie re-composes herself.

MAMIE (CONT'D)
Where's your daddy? *

SIMMY
(pause)
The riverbank. He goes there a lot lately.

As she walks out of the room and into --

A121 INT. MOSES WRIGHT'S HOME - HALLWAY - DAY A121

She clocks a SHOTGUN hanging over the mantle in the **LIVING ROOM.**

CUT TO:

121 OMIT 121

122 OMIT 122

123 OMIT 123

124 EXT. TALLAHATCHIE RIVERBANK - DAY 124

Mamie swats tall reeds and grasses descending the bank. She finds Moses sitting on a log by the riverbank. He turns to look at her.

MOSES
You gon' sit?

She doesn't.

MAMIE
I saw your boys.

MOSES
Was probably hard for them to see you. Simmy hasn't been able to sleep.

He asks again:

MOSES (CONT'D)
You gon' sit?

She doesn't.

MAMIE
Did you have a shotgun in your house the night they took Bo?

Moses pauses.

MOSES
I've been wanting to explain to you what happened --

MAMIE
You told me what happened!

MOSES
White men came knockin' on my door, Mamie --

MAMIE
I know that part --

MOSES
They had a gun --

MAMIE
You have a gun! How long did you stand there, doing nothing while they took my child?!

MOSES
If I'd shot them, they would've killed all of mine! It'd be huntin' season for every Negro in Money!
(beat)
We have to live here, Mamie. Emmett was with my boys when he went to talk to some white woman! You understand what that means down here?

MAMIE
Don't you dare blame my boy for what happened to him!

MOSES
I don't blame him, I... I had to make a choice that night. In a moment, I had to choose.

MAMIE
And you chose yours over mine.

MOSES
It wasn't just two white men with a gun that night. It was every white man who'd rather see a Negro dead than breathin' the same air as him! Every sheriff, every judge in this town was at my door that night! I was facin' a lot more than two men with a gun.

Mamie begins to understand, but it still hurts.

MAMIE
He was my only child.

MOSES
I know.

Beat.

MAMIE
That's why you're moving after the trial, because you're going to testify?

Beat.

MOSES
No Negro in Money has ever spoken against a white man.

Silence.

125 EXT. SHERIDAN PLANTATION COTTON FIELDS - NIGHT 125

Medgar, Ruby and Amzie keep a low profile running through cotton fields.

They slow to a crouch at a berm, looking down on a row of SHARECROPPER'S HOMES and the BIG HOUSE beyond. When the lights go off in the Big House, the three of them rise and look ahead.

CUT TO:

126 EXT. SHERIDAN PLANTATION SHARECROPPERS' HOMES - NIGHT 126

Ruby and Amzie creep up to the home. Ruby knocks.

AMZIE
Not so loud.

Ruby knocks again, this time, creating a STIRRING inside.

Medgar stands by on the dirt.

ADD (O.S.)
(whispering)
What y'all want?

RUBY
Let's have a conversation inside.

An elderly Black man, ADD REED (60s), barely opens the door.

ADD
(closing door)
We've been hassled already.
(louder)
Get your foot outta my door.

Dogs BARK. Medgar looks back at the Big House door.

RUBY
Come out or we're coming in.

ADD
You gonna get us killed!

Front porch lights turn ON at the Big House.

Medgar lifts his hand to his waist belt, when...

He catches sight of a young, Black man - WILLIE REED (18) - escaping from a side window of the sharecropper home. Medgar takes off.

127 EXT. SHERIDAN PLANTATION WOODS - NIGHT 127

Medgar pursues Willie through woods.

Willie breaks through thick brush onto --

128 EXT. MISSISSIPPI ROAD - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS) 128

He sprints down the road until an on-coming VEHICLE cuts him off, forcing him to stop. The headlights are blinding.

Willie looks like a deer caught in the headlights.

Medgar has now caught up with Willie.

MEDGAR
Willie Reed. You're pretty fast.

HICKS exits the vehicle.

Medgar gives Hicks a look, as if to say "we've found our man."

129 OMIT 129

130 INT. HALLWAY/DR. HOWARD'S FORMAL STUDY - NIGHT 130

Mamie creeps towards the study door, overhearing conversation. The door is partially open:

RUBY (O.S.)
We need to keep him here, in case he runs again!

WILLIE REED (O.S.)
I'm not gonna run! I'll tell 'em what I saw that night!

RUBY (O.S.)
What about your grandparents? You said they heard some sounds from the barn too?

WILLIE REED (O.S.)
I promised I'll keep 'em out of it!

DR. HOWARD (O.S.)
I'll pay whatever it costs to protect your family after testifying --

MAMIE'S P.O.V. -

Willie freezes at the sight of Mamie. Everyone else turns around and faces Mamie.

LATER:

131 INT. DR. HOWARD'S FORMAL STUDY - NIGHT 131

Willie Reed is standing, being fitted for a suit. He's wearing borrowed pants and a loose-fitted button down shirt. Ruby holds out a jacket.

RUBY
This suit should fit you fine, but it's burning up in that courtroom.

WILLIE REED
I'll be fine, ma'am. Thank you.

Medgar looks down at Willie's feet. *

MEDGAR *
I have some shoes that are about your size.

He walks out.

Mamie and Hicks are to the side, observing the scene and talking privately:

HICKS
He's a field hand for JW's brother and lives on the farm not too far from where he saw JW, Roy Bryant and several other men take Emmett. Willie's family also works for the Milams and heard some noise that night.

MAMIE
There were other men?

It pains Hicks to confirm, but he nods his head.

HICKS
Colored men.

MAMIE
Colored men did this to my boy?

HICKS
They all worked for Milam and Bryant. I found out Bryant paid for them to skip town.

Mamie feels the emotion bubbling up inside her. She abruptly walks away from Hicks and towards Willie --

MAMIE
Let me put that on right for you.

Willie's been struggling to put on his tie. Mamie begins to tie a Windsor knot over Willie's shirt collar. She doesn't look him in the eyes.

MAMIE (CONT'D)
It means a lot what you're doing. Thank you.

WILLIE REED
It's the right thing to do.

She finishes the knot and catches Willie's gaze. Medgar comes back with the shoes. Mamie steps back and looks at Willie's entire outfit. *

132 INT. DR. HOWARD'S KITCHEN - NIGHT 132

A tea kettle WHISTLES.

Myrlie Evers pours herself and Mamie a cup of tea.

MYRLIE
It’s difficult for me to fall asleep before Medgar gets home.

They’re both sitting down.

MYRLIE (CONT'D)
I’ve wanted to meet you. What you did with those photographs, what you’re doing now...

MAMIE
It’s nothing a mother wouldn’t do for her child.

Beat.

MYRLIE
How do you do it?

Mamie thinks about it.

MAMIE
I realized...Emmett wasn’t just mine anymore. The world was going to change because of him.

Her words resonate with Myrlie.

MAMIE (CONT'D)
How old’s your son?

MYRLIE
Two. We almost didn’t take him with us from Jackson, but...I’m trying to keep the family together as much as possible these days.
(pause)
I’m sure you’ve heard about what happened to our friends, Lamar Smith and Reverend Lee?

MAMIE
(nodding)
Yes, I have.

MYRLIE
Medgar and I worked closely with them. We did good work. We got a lot of Negroes registered to vote for the first time in Mississippi.
(beat)
(MORE)

MYRLIE (CONT'D)
And that created the biggest targets on our backs.

Myrlie chokes up. She takes a sip of her tea to help hold back emotion. Silence.

MYRLIE (CONT'D)
I believe in the fight we're in for our people, but I don't want my son to have to live in fear. I have enough fear for the both of us, every time I wait for Medgar to come home.

Beat.

MAMIE
Emmett just wanted to go on vacation and have fun with his cousins. He never thought anything would happen to him. He knew how different things were down here, but I didn't raise him to have any fear growing up. I wanted him to be a boy and not have his childhood taken away from him.
(beat)
But it happened anyway.

She takes a sip of her tea.

MAMIE (CONT'D)
We do the best we can.

Both women look at each other, connected.

133 INT. COURTROOM - DAY 133

Moses walks into the courtroom like a gang-plank. With each step, the witness stand seems even further from him.

He walks past Simmy and Maurice, who sit near the back of the courtroom. The boys look terrified for their father, but Moses gives them a reassuring nod.

He walks past Mamie and glances at her. They share a moment of shared strength.

CUT TO:

134 INT. COURTROOM - DAY 134

MOSES
Someone was at the front door yelling, “Preacher...Preacher...I want to talk to you and that boy!”

District Attorney Chatham examines Moses Wright.

CHATHAM
Do you know Mr. Bryant?

MOSES
Couldn’t see him all that well, but he owns the meat market.

CHATHAM
And you know Mr. Milam, do you?

MOSES
Not by name. But I know him.

CHATHAM
And how do you know him?

MOSES
He showed up at my door, standing there with a flashlight in one hand and a pistol in the other.

CHATHAM
And what happened next?

Moses softens his gaze. He glances at Simmy and Maurice.

MOSES
He held my family at gun point... Then dragged my nephew from my home and drove off.

VOICE (O.C.)
(hushed)
Sambo.

Mamie catches one of the Jurors laugh at the “Sambo” remark.

CHATHAM
And would you recognize Mr. Milam, were you to see him again?

MOSES
Yes, sir. I would.

The room goes silent, except for the soft WHIRRING of a ceiling fan.

Moses glances across the courtroom at Simmy and Maurice, then stands tall. With an outstretched finger at J.W. Milam --

MOSES (CONT'D)
There. He. Is.

The courtroom erupts into outrage. Moses still stands.

A PHOTOGRAPHER (Ernest Withers) leans forward with his inconspicuous camera and snaps a photo.

Judge Swango bangs the gavel and brings some order.

CHATHAM
(louder)
Was there anyone else?

MOSES
(speaking fast)
When those men dragged Emmett to the truck, I heard one ask a person in the cab, “Is this the right boy?” The answer was “yes.”

CHATHAM
Who did that man’s voice belong to?

MOSES
It was a voice lighter than a man’s.

Every White Man gets to his feet SHOUTING FURIOUSLY.

WHITE MAN 1
Get that nigger outta here!

WHITE MAN 2
You’re dead, niggah!

JUDGE SWANGO
Order! Order in this courtroom!

Mamie looks around at the chaos.

Amzie immediately gets up from his seat and moves to the back of the door.

JUDGE SWANGO (CONT'D)
Get outta here, Mose.

He slams his gavel.

JUDGE SWANGO (CONT'D)
I'm calling a brief recess!

Dodging hits and RACIAL SLURS, Moses signals for Simmy and Maurice to leave with him. They quickly follow Amzie out of the courtroom into -- *

A135 INT. COURTHOUSE FOYER - DAY (CONTINUOUS) A135 *

As the doors close behind Moses, he and Mamie share a final glance. *

135 OMIT 135

136 INT. COURTROOM - DAY 136

Willie and two of his relatives - ADD and MANDY - stand before defense attorney BRELAND, shaking with nerves. Willie has completely sweated through his suit.

ADD
My grandson, Willie, came to me about some noise in the barn. I went over. I saw Leslie Milam and a man I didn't know. He had a gun --

MANDY
(jumps in)
He was a tall man with a bald head.

Roy stares daggers into Mandy.

WHITE VOICE (O.C.)
You're dead, nigger!

BRELAND
(to Willie)
What'd you think you heard?

WILLIE REED
I heard loud hollering and licks comin' from that shed. It sounded like a boy.
(pause)
I saw JW Milam. I saw a green truck with a white top. As they drove off, there was four white men in the cab and three colored men in the back.
(MORE)

WILLIE REED (CONT'D)
One was sitting on the bottom and two others sat beside a body.

BRELAND
Are you sure that's what you heard?

WILLIE REED
Yes, sir.

BRELAND
If that's what you heard, why didn't you do anything about it? Why not, yell out or call for help?

Willie is at a loss for words. Breland *knows* why he couldn't do anything about it.

WILLIE REED
I...I...couldn't...

BRELAND
No further questions.

Willie is dumbstruck. He looks up at Mamie (sitting to the side) with shame. Mamie nods back with understanding.

JUDGE SWANGO
(to Witnesses)
You can leave now.

Willie, Add and Mandy slowly walk out of the courtroom, passing by JW's glare and Roy's smirk.

137 INT. BATHROOM - DAY 137

Mamie stands in a bathroom stall, spinning Emmett's watch on her wrist while her eyes are closed. She prays silently.

She gets out of the stall and looks at herself in the mirror - less makeup and jewelry this time. She adjusts her simple black dress and prepares herself for --

138 INT. COURTROOM - DAY 138

All twelve Jurors eye Mamie with indifference or contempt. Mamie looks back at them from the stand, with disdain.

BAILIFF
You swear to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth so help you God?

MAMIE
Yes sir, I do.

District Attorney, SMITH, questions Mamie:

SMITH
Mamie, did you have a son, who in his lifetime was known as Emmett Till?

MAMIE
Yes, sir.

SMITH
How old was he?

MAMIE
Fourteen years of age.

SMITH
Is his father living today?

MAMIE
No Sir. He died in Service.

SMITH
When your husband, the father of Emmett Till, was killed overseas, were his belongings sent to you?

MAMIE
Yes, Sir.

SMITH
I now hand you a ring that has engraved on it “May 25, 1943, with the large initials L T.”’ Was it among the belongings that were sent to you?

Mamie pauses to look at the ring.

MAMIE
Yes, Sir.

SMITH
And that was the ring Emmett had came down here to Mississippi with?

MAMIE
Yes, Sir.

SMITH
Mamie, I wish you would state to the court and jury whether you could identify the body you saw there at the funeral home as that of your son, Emmett Till?

MAMIE
I could.

Mamie takes her time, speaking to the whole room.

MAMIE (CONT'D)
It’s hard to describe what a mother knows...

SMITH
Please.

MAMIE
The first thing I noticed when I became a mother was that my hands were busy, all the time. Rocking, carrying, swaying. Always full, one hand for him, and one hand for what he needed. When time came to place him down, so he could make his own way around, I’d touched every inch of him, every bend. My hands knew him with my eyes closed. Just like I would know his laughter in a crowded room. It’s the same thing, when you know all of someone.

Mamie breathes in strength then closes her eyes. She reaches out, her hands gripping the memory.

MAMIE (CONT'D)
I started by laying my hands on a foot, then I found his knees. I remembered him as my fingers traced his hair line, and bumped over the crease of his eye lids. He was spoiled and puffed, but these were the same parts of a boy I nurtured and loved. Nothing and no one could hide him from me.
(beat)
A mother knows.
(beat)
Your mother would know.

Smith’s expression softens.

Mamie’s gaze finds and remains fixed on the Jury.

MAMIE (CONT'D)
And I knew. I knew he was my boy, Emmett Till, beyond any doubt.

Jury members search for comfort, adjusting in their chairs.

The eyes of every Black Person in the room stream tears.

Smith looks at Mamie with the utmost respect: her words have penetrated him.

SMITH
Thank you. Ahh. Thank you, Ms. Bradley.
(beat)
I believe that’s all any of us would need to hear.

The courtroom is silent, but for the clearing of throats and occasional sniffle, then Defense Attorney Breland makes noise with some papers.

BRELAND
Mamie. Do you happen to remember the date Emmett Till’s father died?

MAMIE
Yes, sir. July the second, 1945.

BRELAND
Where was he when he died?

MAMIE
In Europe.

BRELAND
Did you have any insurance on Emmett Till?

MAMIE
Um, yes sir.

BRELAND
How much did you have?

MAMIE
I had a ten cent and fifteen cent policy, two weekly policies, and they equalled four hundred dollars.

BRELAND
To whom are those policies payable?

Mamie looks at John and Medgar, confused by the question.

SMITH
We object to that Your Honor!

JUDGE SWANGO
Objection overruled. Witness answer the question.

MAMIE
I was the beneficiary on one and my mother was on the other.

BRELAND
He ever cause, or get into trouble in Chicago?

MAMIE
No more than any other boy.

BRELAND
Did he attend a reform school?

MAMIE
What for? No.

BRELAND
You have been quoted in the colored press, “I told him several times before he left Mississippi that he should kneel in the street and beg for forgiveness, should he insult a white person.”

Mamie’s jaw clenches.

MAMIE
Not those exact words.

BRELAND
Did you caution him not to insult white women?

MAMIE
I referred to white people in general.

BRELAND
Did you caution your son how to conduct himself and behave himself while he was down here in Mississippi?

Mamie’s eyes narrow.

MAMIE
Several times.

BRELAND
Several times. Do tell us how.

MAMIE
I will give you a literal description of what I told him... How coming down here, he would have to adapt himself to a different way of life.
(caustic)
Be very careful about how he spoke and to whom he spoke, and to always remember to say “Yes, Sir” and “No, Ma’am”. I told him that if ever an incident should arise where there would be any trouble of any kind with white people, that if it got to the point where he even had to go down on his knees before them, well, I told him not to hesitate to do so.
(angry)
Like, if he bumped into somebody on the street, and then they might get belligerent or something. Well I told him to go ahead and humble himself, so as not to get into any trouble. But you know...

BRELAND
No, I don’t. Please continue, Mamie.

MAMIE
(almost holds back but...)
Well, I raised him with love for fourteen years. My sudden warnings about hate weren’t going to get through.

Breland looks pleased by Mamie losing control of her emotions.

BRELAND
Now, I hand you what purports to be a photograph of your son.

He hands her the PHOTOGRAPH of Emmett leaning against a television.

MAMIE
This was taken in my home two days after Christmas.

Breland then hands Mamie a PHOTOGRAPH of Emmett's corpse.

BRELAND
Now, tell the court and jury what this is?

MAMIE
This picture is of my son after Mississippi sent him back to Chicago, dead.

The Jury's expressions hardens, feeling accused by Mamie's words.

BRELAND
No further questions.

Mamie looks about the room, feeling the eyes of White Spectators like daggers.

JUDGE SWANGO (O.C.)
And for the prosecution.

CHATHAM
The State rests.

Mamie's face falls.

JUDGE SWANGO (O.C.)
The court will have a recess.

Gavel STRIKES.

Mamie is off balance.

MAMIE
(to herself)
They killed my son again.

Her face hardens.

139 OMIT 139

140 EXT. DR. HOWARD'S HOME - BACKYARD - DUSK 140

BLACK GIRLS AND BOYS glide in the pool water, the pure blue water glistening over their beautiful skin.

Mamie looks on at the freedom and joy in their movements.

DR. HOWARD (V.O.)
To be a black body, is perilous, wearing this dark skin while our nation resists turning what once was property back into human beings.

141 INT. DR. HOWARD'S STUDY - NIGHT 141

DR. HOWARD
What you're feeling right now is discouraged. You're ready to throw up your hands at the situation. But our struggle isn't new, although you're new to it. We can't only consider this moment we're in when it's tied to a larger fight for complete freedom for every Negro in America. In your son's death, the world has changed and you now have the opportunity to make sure this change lasts a lot longer than a single moment.

Mamie sits across from Dr. Howard in his ornately decorated study. She listens intently.

142 INT. MAMIE'S GUEST ROOM - NIGHT 142

Mamie crumples and throws away all of her collected NEWSPAPERS on the trial.

She stands at the center of the room and contemplates.

143 INT. COURTROOM - DAY 143

Breland examines DR. OTKEN (60s, white).

BRELAND
In your opinion, do you think a mother would have been able to identify that body?

DR. OTKEN
No way someone could tell who it is. I would estimate the body must have been there eight to ten days. Max two weeks.

Mamie tightens her jaw, holding in her rage.

CUT TO:

144 OMIT 144

145 INT. COURTROOM - DAY 145

Smith cross-examines Sheriff Strider.

SMITH
Did you certify that the body found was Emmett Till?

STRIDER
No, I didn't. I just said it was a dead body. You couldn't even tell if the body was white or black.

SMITH
Thank you, Sheriff Strider. You are excused.

Sheriff Strider rises and speaks while staring Mamie down.

STRIDER
If you want my honest opinion, I think the boy's mammy and the NAACP plotted this whole thing. That boy is still alive somewhere.

Mamie stares right back.

CUT TO:

146 INT. COURTROOM - DAY 146

JUDGE SWANGO
Will the jury please retire to the jury room.

The entire JURY gets up and exits into the jury room. Mamie and several ONLOOKERS watch incredulously.

JUDGE SWANGO (CONT'D)
The testimony that is being offered here of a prior incident at the store in Money is irrelevant, and should not be admissible.

S. CARLTON
May we still continue the testimony for the sake of the record? --

SMITH
(with objection)
Your honor --

JUDGE SWANGO
(to Smith)
Sit down!

Swango thinks about it. He looks at all the Reporters, waiting at the edge of their seats.

JUDGE SWANGO (CONT'D)
I see no harm in letting Mrs. Bryant share her side of things if she wants to. Everybody else has. It’s only fair.

He turns to Carolyn, who sits at the witness stand.

JUDGE SWANGO (CONT'D)
(tenderly)
You think you can handle that, dear?

Carolyn nods her head, performing a demureness Mamies sees right through.

JUDGE SWANGO (CONT'D)
(to S. Carlton)
You may proceed.

Mamie clenches her jaw.

Defense Attorney, S. CARLTON, approaches the stand:

S. CARLTON
Mrs. Bryant, was anyone in the store with you on Wednesday night, the 24th day of August, 1955?

CAROLYN
I was alone. But my children were in the back. The living quarters.

S. CARLTON
And what time of day was it?

CAROLYN
After dark.

S. CARLTON
Alone. At night time with your children. Just tell the court what happened next.

CAROLYN
This nigger man came in the store and stood by the candy case.

Mamie glares at Carolyn, who shows no regard for her.

S. CARLTON
And you?

CAROLYN
I was back behind the counter. I asked the man what he wanted.

S. CARLTON
And then did you get him the merchandise?

CAROLYN
Yes.

S. CARLTON
And what did you do then?

CAROLYN
I held out my hand for the money.

S. CARLTON
Will you show the Court how you held your hand out?

CAROLYN
I held out my hand like this --

Carolyn holds out her hand.

S. CARLTON
And did he give you the money?

CAROLYN
No...He caught my hand.

S. CARLTON
Will you show the Court just how he grasped your hand?

CAROLYN
Like this --

She demonstrates with her hand.

S. CARLTON
And was that a strong grip or a light grip that he had when he held your hand?

CAROLYN
A strong grip.

S. CARLTON
And will you show the Court what you did? How did you get loose?

CAROLYN
Well, I just jerked it loose, like this --

Carolyn wrestles her hand free.

Mamie shakes her head in disbelief at Carolyn's performance.

S. CARLTON
Just what did he say when he grabbed your hand?

CAROLYN
(looking helpless)
"How about a date, baby?"

S. CARLTON
When you freed yourself, what happened then?

CAROLYN
I turned to the back of the store.

S. CARLTON
And he went on his way?

CAROLYN
No. He came after me. Caught me down by the cash register.

Mamie resigns to the lies and theatrics on display.

S. CARLTON
Mrs. Bryant, can you demonstrate for the court?

She steps off the witness stand, meeting S. Carlton on the floor. She moves his hand.

S. CARLTON (CONT'D)
He grabbed you with his left hand around your back?

CAROLYN
Yes.

S. CARLTON
His right hand on your right hip?

CAROLYN
Here.

S. CARLTON
What did he say?

CAROLYN
He said: “you needn’t be afraid of me, I’ve been with white women before --

CUT TO:

147 EXT. COURTROOM - DAY 147

Mamie stands in the hall with John and Medgar, as people file out of the courtroom. She is resolved.

MAMIE
I’m ready to go.

MEDGAR
Should I get you when they read the verdict?

MAMIE
No. I’m ready to leave Mississippi. Now.

JOHN
But what about the verdict?

Beat.

MAMIE
I know what the verdict is.
(pause)
This isn’t the only battle to fight.

She heads out of the courthouse.

148 EXT/INT. COUNTRYSIDE - DAY 148

Medgar drives Mamie and John back down country roads. They pass an array of beautiful, southern BLACK PEOPLE, some of whom recognize Mamie. She eyes them too. And then --

RADIO HOST (O.S.)
The jurors have reached a verdict in the trial against JW Milam and Roy Bryant...not guilty. *

Medgar and John's faces sadden, but Mamie's remains expressionless. They continue driving down the roads. *

FADE TO:

149 EXT. PROTEST RALLIES - DAY 149

SERIES OF SHOTS:

A sea of MASSIVE PROTESTS in **Oakland**, **Montgomery**, **Chicago**, **Saint Louis** and **New York City.**

All kinds of SIGNS are held up by the thousands: "MURDERERS GONE FREE!" "NEGROES ARE AMERICAN TOO!" "WE DEMAND THE FREEDOM TO LIVE!"

150 EXT. HARLEM RALLY - DAY 150

Mamie climbs a metal staircase to a platform perched atop a sound truck, where Roy Wilkins greets her. She takes in the THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE in the audience, holding SIGNS.

MAMIE
(into microphone)
I would like to give honor to God, who is the source of my strength and the reason for my being. I thank you, Mr. Wilkins, and the NAACP for inviting me to speak before this beautiful crowd here in Harlem, New York City.

Crowd CHEERS with AUDIBLE AFFIRMATIONS.

MAMIE (CONT'D)
(into microphone)
My son's brutalized body meant nothing to Mississippi's criminal justice system... And while they blamed the victim as usual, the federal government stood idly by.
(MORE)

MAMIE (CONT'D)
If this country fails to protect the black body from hate, America has yet to meet her promise: either freedom for everyone, or freedom fails!

CHEERS.

MAMIE (CONT'D)
(into microphone)
One month ago, I had a nice apartment in Chicago. I had a good job. I had a son. When something happened to the Negroes in the South, I said 'That's their business, not mine.' Now I know how wrong I was. The lynching of my son has shown me that what happens to any of us, anywhere in the world, had better be the business of us all!

The CROWD erupts in even louder CHEER and PRAISE.

SMASH CUT TO:

CHICAGO

151 INT. MAMIE'S HOUSE - NIGHT 151

Mamie shuts her front door, after a long day. She's returning home, suitcase in hand. She takes in the quiet of her home.

CUT TO:

152 INT. MAMIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT 152

She --

Unpacks her suitcase...

Removes her high heels and jewelry (including Emmett's watch)...

Wraps her hair in a headscarf and lays down on her bed.

She sits in silence for a beat and then turns to her record player.

She gets up to play a DIZZY GILLESPIE record and takes in the music with reminisce.

She then has a thought...

153 INT. EMMETT'S BEDROOM - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS) 153

With the music filling the house, Mamie enters Emmett's room and turns on the light. The room has been completely untouched.

Mamie takes a few steps inside and looks around at the very place she and Emmett had danced the day he left for Mississippi.

And then she stares ahead...

WE ENTER MAMIE'S IMAGINATION:

The CAMERA PANS AROUND to reveal Emmett standing by the doorway, dressed in vacation clothes and the hat he wore to Mississippi. He is all smiles.

Mamie turns to Emmett and smiles back. *

CUT TO:

****THE FOLLOWING IS A CACOPHONY OF SHOTS THAT BLUR TOGETHER LIKE A DREAM****

154 EXT. ROAD - DAY 154

Mamie, Emmett and Gene drive down a sunny road, all in vacation attire. Emmett is playing around in the backseat. Mamie and Gene are laughing hysterically.

155 EXT. BEACH - DAY 155

Mamie jumps into the water with Emmett and Gene. Mamie and Emmett's faces are full of joy as they float in the perfectly blue water.

156 INT. CHURCH - DAY 156

It's Mamie's wedding day. John and Emmett walk her down the aisle to Gene. She passes Alma, Ollie and Willie Mae on her way to the altar. Emmett looks up at her with a smile; Mamie smiles back.

When she reaches the altar, Mamie gives Emmett a hug.

She and Gene kiss.

157 INT. RECEPTION HALL - DAY 157

Mamie, her family and friends all dance together, having a ball. *

Mamie takes Emmett's hand and the two of them dance together. *

As they dance, the crowd fades and the world becomes just the two of them.

They laugh and dance and twirl. *

They look into each other's eyes, filled with so much joy! *

Until Mamie's face begins to fall... *

Emmett slowly lets go of Mamie's hand... *

And reality sets in... *

The music stops. *

FADE OUT.

158 OMIT 158

THE END

****NOTE: There will be a CODA after the film concludes that shows real-life images of all the major characters in the film. The CODA will also include images and brief sentences describing the immediate effects of Mamie's story on the Civil Rights Movement - from Rosa Parks refusing to give up her seat on the bus to the 1963 March on Washington.**