

The Street
By
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Based on:
The Street
The novel by Ann Petry

Prologue:

INT. LIVING ROOM - EVENING

It's Christmas Eve at the home of MR. AND MRS.

CHANDLER. Mrs. Chandler, her slight form having already absorbed the content of her champagne, leans sloppily against her brother-in-law, DAVID. Her husband, JONATHAN, watches the two through a haze of eggnog and cigarette smoke while he leans against the elaborate mantelpiece.

Their son, HENRY, plays in front of the fireplace with a young, African-American woman named LUTIE JOHNSON. She tickles the small boy and he laughs giddily, scrambling out of her reach and then throwing himself into her wide arms.

Mrs. Chandler drunkenly presses her mouth against David's cheek and he reaches an arm around her slim waist. Lutie glances quickly at Jonathan Chandler but, meeting his eye, turns again to Henry who has now crawled to the other end of the room, toward the kitchen.

As Lutie playfully chases after the boy, Jonathan Chandler calmly walks across the room to A WARDROBE where he removes a box from the top shelf.

Several things happen at once:

Mrs. Chandler, giggling loudly, turns to her husband.

MRS. CHANDLER

Darling, would you mind opening
another bottle? I'm fresh out

David, his back to Jonathan, whispers something to Mrs. Chandler and leaves to the kitchen, patting Henry on the head as he passes.

Jonathan Chandler says nothing but removes something from the box before turning around to face his wife.

Mrs. Chandler sees THE GUN in her husband's hand but does not have the presence of mind to understand what is happening.

MRS. CHANDLER

Darling...what, whatever are you
doing?

Lutie hears the change in Mrs. Chandler's tone and turns to see Jonathan with a gun pointed at his wife. David returns from the kitchen with AN UNOPENED BOTTLE OF CHAMPAGNE.

(CONTINUED)

DAVID CHANDLER

Jon, where have you put the...

As his eyes fall on his brother and the gun, Jonathan cocks the trigger. David makes a move toward Mrs. Chandler but Jonathan turns the gun on himself and fires.

David runs to catch Mrs. Chandler as she screams and falls to her knees; Lutie impulsively grabs Henry to her and covers his eyes:

LUTIE

(to Henry)

Everything's ok honey, I got you,
don't you worry, everything's gonna
be ok baby Henry...

David, leaving Mrs. Chandler's side, takes Henry (who immediately begins crying) from Lutie.

DAVID CHANDLER

(harshly)

You get that cleaned up, Lutie.

While Mrs. Chandler continues to sob from the floor of the room, Lutie begins to mop up Jonathan's face and head with the first thing she thinks to reach for, a fine embroidered handkerchief with the initials J.J.C.

Offscreen, we hear David's voice speaking to the police.

As we watch Lutie holding Jonathan Chandler's head in her arms, handkerchief gently patting his once-handsome face, the scene slows and pans out, taking in David with a policeman as well as the outside of the house with an ambulance and police car in the drive.

FADE TO:

OPENING CREDITS

Extreme close-up:

Over the opening credits, we see Lutie sobbing while rinsing out the embroidered handkerchief. We can see the rivulets of blood washing into the sink as Lutie continues to scrub and wring the delicate fabric.

We then see her bleaching the handkerchief, raw hands bleaching and re-bleaching the fabric until it is spotless again, then gently folding and placing it into a plain black clutch.

(CONTINUED)

FADE TO:

EXT. CONNECTICUT HOME - MORNING

LUTIE JOHNSON walks swiftly up a path cutting across a neatly kept swath of perfectly manicured lawn. She adjusts her hat before ringing the doorbell of a large home with an imposing oak front door.

Lutie is in her mid-twenties and strikingly beautiful, possessing the kind of features that make strangers look twice before walking past her on the street. Her skin is dark and unblemished, radiating youth and vitality while her lips--full and rich--are most often tightly drawn, as they are on this occasion. She is not an altogether warm person, usually giving off an aura of self-possessed stand-offishness.

Mrs. Chandler opens the door and, smoothing her black dress, waves Lutie inside her home with a gesture more like an afterthought. She is Lutie's age but fragile, her features paper-thin and temporary to the point of fleeting.

Her appearance is an immediate contrast to Lutie's--everything from her perfectly coiffed hair to her delicate mourner's frock is at odds with Lutie's aged and darned stockings and skirt.

Mrs. Chandler speaks quickly, bouncing across thoughts haphazardly and gesturing irrelevantly at odd points:

MRS. CHANDLER

Good morning Lutie. You'll have to excuse the mess. We're in a bit of a state, what with the wake this afternoon. It's been...difficult since you left us

BEAT

MRS. CHANDLER

Oh dear, I apologize...Would you like some tea?

LUTIE

Not at all ma'am. The house is beautiful as ever. I'm sure you're getting along just fine without me.

(CONTINUED)

BEAT

LUTIE CONTD

Please accept my condolences; Mr.
Chandler was...

MRS. CHANDLER

(interrupting)

Do you take sugar?

Mrs. Chandler busies herself with THE TEA TRAY ATOP A GRACEFUL ANTIQUE TABLE in the corner of the living room.

LUTIE

(hesitant, clearly
uncomfortable at being served)

Oh...yes ma'am. Thank you. You
really don't have...

MRS. CHANDLER

(Interrupting again)

Nonsense, it's really the least I
can do. Please, have a seat.

Lutie smiles uncomfortably and sits.

A small child's wailing punctures the tension in the room, clearing coming from an unseen room upstairs.

Lutie's face appears stricken by the sound and she makes an abrupt movement, as if to rise from her seat, at the first sound of the cries.

MRS. CHANDLER

(with a small smile)

Please excuse me. I ought to attend
to Henry.

Lutie nods her head and Mrs. Chandler departs the room. Lutie sits, NERVOUSLY CROSSING AND UNCROSSING HER LEGS. The room makes her feel small and she fights the feeling with nervous movements.

As the minutes stretch on and Henry continues wailing, she stands to look at the framed pictures on the ornate mantelpiece.

The room is extravagantly elegant and pristine but for A FADED STAIN on the wall, to the left of the mantelpiece. Lutie reaches out to the stain with a gloved hand; the area had clearly been recently scrubbed and now awaited a fresh coat of paint. She brushes the discoloration lightly, holding her breath as she does so.

(CONTINUED)

Mrs. Chandler sweeps into the room with HENRY CHANDLER on her hip and a white envelope in her left hand. Her eyes take in Lutie and the stain instantly AS LUTIE LEAPS AWAY FROM THE TREE.

LUTIE

I'm so sorry, ma'am. I just...I was just looking at

MRS. CHANDLER

(her voice cold and her hand outstretched toward Lutie)
Here is your pay for your last month with us. Thank you again for your hard work. I must see to it that the drawing room is finished before our guests arrive. I trust you can show yourself out?

LUTIE

(grasping the envelope from Mrs. Chandler)
Yes ma'am. Thank you. I'll be off then.
(hesitating)
Bye-bye, baby Henry.

She gives a small wave and Henry responds by opening and closing his left hand slowly, his eyes still red from crying.

Lutie walks toward the door, opens it, and looks back at Mrs. Chandler's slight form in the living room as she stares in the direction of the stain. Henry reaches for Lutie from his mother's arms and then begins to cry as she shuts the door behind her.

CUT TO:

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - EVENING

Lutie approaches a forlorn-looking apartment building on 116th St. in Harlem. Nothing about the building sets it apart from the rest of the block, or the rest of the street for that matter.

MRS. HEDGES, a massive African-American woman, leans out one of the ground floor windows of the building, scrutinizing every passerby on the street.

(CONTINUED)

MRS. HEDGES
(to Lutie)
You find anythin honey?

Lutie shakes her head, avoiding Mrs. Hedges' eyes as she begins up the front steps.

MRS. HEDGES CONT'D
Don't you worry yo' pretty, little head, honey. And you remember what I told you, I got you a payin job right here...

Mrs. Hedges laughs a booming, barking laugh and turns her attention to A SLENDER YOUNG MAN walking the opposite direction from Lutie.

MRS. HEDGES CONT'D
Donald Jackson, yo mamma know you owe one of ma girls fo' two weeks now? You gon' pay up 'fore I let you see her again. You understand me?

At this point, JONES, a tall, middle-aged man, opens the front door and waves at the pair, as though he has been lurking in the shadows to the right of the entryway.

JONES
(to Lutie)
Good evenin' Miss Johnson.

His voice is low and like sandpaper, possessing a rough quality established after years of living in basements and rarely speaking to any of his tenants.

Lutie eyes him suspiciously, her mouth tightening at the corners.

LUTIE
Good evening, Mr. Jones.

JONES
Say, I was wonderin' if you need some mo' help movin' yo' stuff around...

JONES CONT'D
...Y'know, seein' as how that bed's pretty heavy and all, and that nice dresser you got...

At this point MIN, a small African-American woman, approaches Jones and Lutie, coming up the front steps. She is an older woman, clearly undernourished and underloved, a walking ghost with nothing significant enough to haunt. She is wearing a tattered overcoat that bulges oddly in places and is carrying a bag with what looks to be THE TOP OF A CRUCIFIX poking out.

As Jones turns his attention from Lutie to her, Min shoves the crucifix deeper into the bag so that it is no longer visible. Jones fixes her with a look of pure loathing.

Without a word to him, Min shoves one of her bags into his arms and enters the building. Jones clenches his jaw and looks murderous.

LUTIE

(tightly)

Thank you, Mr. Jones, but no. I think Bub and I can handle the rest.

Something flashes behind Jones' eyes when she mentions the boy, a moment of resentment or worse at the boy's presence.

Lutie steers herself into the building, skirting around Jones fluidly, as if afraid her skirt might brush him.

Min is unlocking Jones' apartment door. She looks around at Lutie as she sweeps up the stairs, her eyes narrowing. She catches Jones' eye and struggles with the lock, her motions more urgent. Jones approaches, throws the bag at her feet with force, then stalks around the base of the staircase and disappears.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Lutie rummages through the dresses and blouses hanging in her closet, pausing on a WHITE FROCK for a moment before choosing a simple black dress instead. She smooths the dress before exiting her room and presenting herself to Bub.

LUTIE

What you think, son? Your momma clean up ok?

BUB

(grinning)

Aw, I guess so...

(CONTINUED)

Lutie grabs the boy in mock-anger, tickling his sides until they both fall to the couch.

LUTIE

You guess so mister? Hmm? You guess so!

BUB

(laughing wildly)

Mom, you're prettier than any lady I ever saw!

Lutie releases him, kissing his forehead before standing and smoothing her dress once more.

LUTIE

(laughing)

Now that's what I thought!

She walks to the door before pausing and turning back to her son.

LUTIE CONT'D

You get to bed right on time mister. You best be asleep when I come home.

Bub, his laughter spent, nods seriously at his mother. As the door shuts behind her and the apartment is plunged into darkness, Bub stares at the space where she last stood, a terrified expression on his face.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Lutie walks down the steps of the apartment building, drawing her long, black coat around her and quickening her steps as she walks past Jones' windows. After she has passed, Jones peers around his curtains at her retreating figure.

FADE TO:

EXT. JUNTO'S BAR - SAME NIGHT

Couples, leaning into each other for warmth, walk briskly into the glow of Junto's, laughing and teasing one another at the anticipation of a night on the town.

Lutie watches them go and then follows them into the bar, pulling at her overcoat again.

CUT TO:

INT. JUNTO'S BAR - SAME NIGHT

A PORTER greets her.

PORTER
May I take your coat, miss?

Lutie takes off her coat and hands it to him, holding herself for a moment before continuing on to the bar. The BARTENDER looks up from the glass he is polishing when Lutie approaches.

BARTENDER
What can I get you, Miss?

LUTIE
Could you direct me to the offices
of the man who owns this
establishment?

The bartender points toward a staircase behind Lutie, half-hidden in darkness.

CUT TO:

INT. JUNTO'S OFFICES - SAME NIGHT

A woman sits just outside the office door, arms folded across her chest and legs crossed. She glances at Lutie and then looks away, unconcerned and defiant.

Lutie approaches the door of the office. Inside, two men are conversing. One is a TALL, AFRICAN-AMERICAN MAN; He stands before a desk where a short, MIDDLE-AGED WHITE MAN sits, legs crossed on the surface of the desk. He stares at Lutie as she stands in the door frame, causing the tall man to spin around.

JUNTO
Could you leave us?

The young man nods, still eyeing Lutie, and brushes past her. Lutie again seems to hold her breath, pulling herself in as he maneuvers around her. He gestures at the young woman waiting in the hall and she follows him toward the stairs.

JUNTO CONT'D
How can I help you, Ms...?

(CONTINUED)

LUTIE
(hesitantly)
Johnson. Lutie Johnson, sir.

Junto eyes her as if visually tasting her. Lutie notices this and shifts her weight uncomfortably.

JUNTO
Well Ms...Johnson, I'm sure I'd be glad to help you in whatever way I can.

LUTIE
(stronger)
I'm looking for work, Mr. Junto. I wonder if you have any positions available on your waitstaff?

BEAT

JUNTO
(chuckling softly)
No, no. I'm afraid there is no place for you among my waitstaff.

Lutie looks stricken at his laughter, confused at his tone.

LUTIE
(hesitantly again)
I...I have written recommendation from my previous employer if...

Junto interrupts her, leaning forward at his desk and still smiling widely.

JUNTO
A recommendation will not be necessary Ms. Johnson.

BEAT

LUTIE
I...perhaps you have an opening for cleaning or coat check or...

JUNTO
(waving away the end of her question)
No, no, no, Ms. Johnson. I'm afraid I have no staff openings available for a woman of your...caliber.

(CONTINUED)

He draws out this final word, 'caliber,' tasting each syllable in the same way he has devoured Lutie throughout their exchange.

Lutie begins backing toward the door of the office, a look of comprehension upon her face.

LUTIE

I...Thank you for your time, sir.

JUNTO

(still smiling)

Oh it has been *my* pleasure, Ms. Johnson.

As Lutie turns out the door, the young man slips back in, nodding at her. She leaves without a second glance and he shuts the door behind him.

CUT TO:

INT. JUNTO'S BAR - SAME NIGHT

LUTIE

I'll have a gin and tonic please.

She lounges against the bar, casually taking in the young people dancing and laughing with one another.

BARTENDER

Here you are miss.

Lutie nods her thanks and sips her drink gratefully. The house band strikes up a popular love song and Lutie sings it to herself, lost in her drink and the music and the carelessness all around her.

BARTENDER

(eyeing her empty glass)

Can I get you another, Miss?

Lutie hesitates before answering, trying to discreetly feel the quantity of bills in her clutch before ordering. She shakes her head and turns away again.

The YOUNG MAN watches Lutie from a corner table where Junto is muttering in his ear and gesturing toward Lutie. The young man casually walks up to the bar and orders a drink while Lutie watches the band play, singing along quietly and oblivious to his presence.

He sidles up to Lutie, leaning against the bar and watching her watch the band.

(CONTINUED)

YOUNG MAN
You come here often?

LUTIE
(startled)
No, not often.

Her mouth tightens and she seems to bodily contract, pulling her into herself at the young man's question.

YOUNG MAN
Yeah, I seen you once or
twice. Not enough though.

He smiles at her, an easy smile but one that somehow emphasizes the scar across the left side of his face, all the way to his ear.

YOUNG MAN CONT'D
Boots Smith.

BOOTS SMITH extends his hand to Lutie but she makes no movement to return the gesture.

BOOTS CONT'D
You a little wound up baby. Can I
get you a drink?

LUTIE
No. Thank you.

Boots turns to the bartender:

BOOTS
Mix another for the lady. On me.

Boots turns toward Lutie again, grinning smoothly as her jaw clenches.

BOOTS
Must'a missed your name baby. What
was it again?

LUTIE
Lutie Johnson.

She finally looks away from the band and turns to face him.

LUTIE CONTD
And I hope you have another lady on
your arm tonight who'll be having
that gin and tonic.

Boots laughs and grins again at Lutie.

(CONTINUED)

BOOTS
 (whistling softly)
 I knew you had a voice but I sho'
 didn't know you had that mouth!

LUTIE
 (looking confused)
 How do you know what kind of voice
 I have or don't?

BOOTS
 (looking serious)
 Baby I been *listenin'*. You come in
 here last week, singin' to yo'self
 at the bar. You think no one been
 listenin'?

Lutie says nothing to this and instead peers into her empty glass. Junto is watching the two with interest from his corner table.

LUTIE
 Maybe I'll be taking you up on that
 drink after all.

BOOTS
 That's what I was hopin' you'd say.

Lutie takes the glass and takes a long sip. Boots studies her, his eyes momentarily flickering to Junto's table.

BOOTS
 Listen, baby. I got a band,
 see? And we been lookin' for a
 singer awhile now. What you say?

BEAT

LUTIE
 What do I say to what, Mr. Smith?

BOOTS
 (laughing)
 What you say to tryin us out?

LUTIE
 You mean, your band trying *me* out?

BOOTS
 Yeah, yeah, that's what I
 mean. You swing by here next
 weekend, before the joint opens,
 and we'll play a couple songs
 together.

(CONTINUED)

Lutie considers this carefully, savoring every sip of the gin and tonic and looking past Boots at the band again.

LUTIE

Thank you but no thank you Mr. Smith. I think I'll keep my...*singing*...to myself for now.

BOOTS

(winking)

Whatever you say, baby.

Lutie thanks the bartender and leaves. Boots stares after her; when she has gone, his smile fades as he looks at Junto and their eyes meet. Boots nods at him, as if in affirmation, and snaps his fingers at the bartender to order another drink.

CUT TO:

INT. LUTIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Lutie opens the door to her apartment and is surprised to see THE LIGHT STILL ON. She walks quietly toward the sofa where she finds Bub asleep. She walks toward the lamp to turn off the light but her eyes rest on A BRAND-NEW PACK OF CIGARETTES SITTING ON THE KITCHEN COUNTER. Her gaze is almost fearful and she studies the rest of the room as if to be sure they are alone. She goes to wake Bub, thinks better of it, and walks into her bedroom.

FADE TO:

INT. LUTIE'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Bub sits at the small table and eats his cereal, shoveling large spoonfuls into his mouth while Lutie watches from over the kitchen counter.

She pauses, giving Bub a chance to swallow before tapping the pack of cigarettes against her open palm. Bub looks at the pack questioningly.

LUTIE

Mind telling me where these came from?

BUB

The Sup came over last night to play cards. He had me go 'round the block to get a pack but when I come back he was gone.

(CONTINUED)

Lutie's eyes widen with concern, and again, a flicker of fear.

LUTIE

The Super was here while I was out?

BUB

(earnestly)

Yes ma'am. We played cards. Mom, you gotta see the tricks he taught me!

LUTIE

Later Bub. Listen, I don't want anyone here with you when I'm not, understand? No one. Not even the Super.

BUB

(looking confused)

Sure mom but...we was just playin' cards. Promise.

LUTIE

I know that honey but just do as I say, ok?

Bub nods and walks off to get ready for school.

LUTIE

Hold on mister.

Bub turns around sullenly.

LUTIE CONT'D

Don't you fall asleep with the light on again. You trying to run up the bill or something?

Bub shakes his head.

LUTIE

Alright, well. You hurry up and get ready for school.

Bub continues to the bathroom, head down and sulky.

Lutie holds the pack of cigarettes in her hand a moment before throwing them in the trash with disgust.

CUT TO:

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - MORNING

Lutie stands outside a non-descript office building, smoothing her blouse and straightening her hat. She collects herself before entering.

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE - MORNING

Lutie sits across from a white man in a suit, smoking a cigarette and eyeing Lutie greedily.

LUTIE

If you'd like to see my recommendation from my previous employer

MAN

(grinning)

That's alright honey. I don't think I need to see anything along the lines of a recommendation.

LUTIE

Well, sir, that's all I have beyond my resume so if you...

MAN

Now, say you had a little extra something to show me today, I think we could arrange for a new position to...open up.

LUTIE

(mouth tightening)

I'm sorry. You must have misunderstood me. I'm looking for a job--a paid position in this office.

The man's grin disappears suddenly as he leans forward across his desk, his hands clasped tightly and his eyes narrowing at Lutie.

MAN

No I believe you've misunderstood me honey. I'm offering you a paid position right here, right now.

CUT TO:

(CONTINUED)

QUICK CUTS OF LUTIE ENTERING AND EXITING BUILDINGS, SPEAKING WITH VARIOUS WHITE EMPLOYERS. THE TIME FRAME COULD BE A DAY OR SEVERAL DAYS.

INT. OFFICE - MORNING/AFTERNOON/EVENING

Conversation is heard over the top of these scenes, the same conversation playing out over the same scenarios, over and over.

LUTIE

Would you have any openings for a secretary or office assistant? I've come prepared with my resume and a recommendation from my previous employer...

MAN

I'm sorry, we don't have anything available right now. I'll keep your information and notify you should anything come up.

JUMP CUT

LUTIE

I'm looking for work as a secretary or office assistant. I have my...

MAN

Sorry, doll. Things are hard all over. I got a friend uptown lookin to hire a pretty young thing like yourself though, if you know what I mean...

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Lutie is sitting in a space no different from all of the other offices she has visited that week. She sits across from a WOMAN much like herself, typing rapidly on a typewriter without glancing at Lutie.

WOMAN

I have it here that you'll be starting with us straight away at, let's see, [insert min. 1940s pay].

(CONTINUED)

LUTIE

Is there any way to get that first payment in advance?

WOMAN

No. That's strictly against company policy.

Lutie plays with the handkerchief in her purse, rubbing her finger against the embroidered initials over and over, like a talisman.

LUTIE

My son and I...

WOMAN

I'm sorry. 8 am sharp. Good evening.

CUT TO:

LENOX AVENUE - EVENING

Lutie walks up 116th St. toward the apartment building, looking down at her feet, apparently lost in thought. She walks with slow, tired movements, completely drained in body and mind. She is so exhausted and distracted, she unwittingly joins A SWELLING CROWD GATHERED AROUND A STOREFRONT, strangely silent but for the sound of multiple cameras clicking at the forefront.

Lutie makes her way to the front of the crowd and sees the body of an emaciated young man sprawled on the pavement. A somber silence reigns over the gathered onlookers and LUTIE STARES AT THE MAN'S SHOES, unable to look away.

The soles were worn out completely, so that they were merely flaps of material attached to the uppers. Lutie's eyes follow from his shoes to his threadbare pants to the curious pool of blood spreading from somewhere under his midsection.

Policemen and reporters encircle the clearing around the body. THE OFFICERS' POLISHED, GLOSSY SHOES should serve as a stark visual contrast to the young man's nearly-bare feet.

Behind her, the tight grouping of onlookers begins to move and mutter as a young woman is guided by a policeman to the clearing around the body. They are in quiet conversation and move directly in front of Lutie.

(CONTINUED)

POLICE OFFICER
Look like his clothes?

YOUNG WOMAN
Yes.

Another officer rolls back the the canvas, revealing the young man's face.

Lutie does not look at the young man anymore but instead stares at the young woman's expression.

YOUNG WOMAN
(in a flat voice)
I always knew it'd happen.

Lutie finally looks down at the face of the young man and turns away sharply, suddenly fighting her way to the back of the crowd where she stands apart, trying to check her breathing. Beside Lutie, a man smoking a cigarette speaks to his friend about the victim.

MAN WITH CIGARETTE
White man in the baker shop killed him with a bread knife.

ONLOOKER #2
Kid made it to the corner with the bread knife still in him. Cops brought him back here and he died where he's lyin' now.

ONLOOKER #3
White man says he tried to hold him up.

MAN WITH CIGARETTE
If that bastard puts one foot out here, we'll kill him. Cops or no cops.

Lutie, finally collecting herself, pushes her way past the crowd and continues walking home.

CUT TO:

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - EVENING

Lutie walks past the shoeshine boys on the street, calling out to passerby in the hours after school and before their parents come home from work. A LITTLE BOY shakes his money box at her as she continues in her own world.

(CONTINUED)

LITTLE BOY
Shine miss? Need a shine?

When Lutie has passed the boy, he pops up behind her and follows her for a few steps before calling out:

LITTLE BOY
MOM! HEY MOM!

Lutie turns around, confused, and sees Bub standing with a shoeshine box in one hand and a polisher in the other.

BUB
(laughing)
Mom you didn't even know me!

She's so startled at Bub calling that she has to look twice to recognize her son.

BEAT

She slaps him sharply across the face. His look of complete astonishment makes her strike him again, more violently.

BUB
But, Mom...

LUTIE
You get in the house.

Bub makes a motion to retrieve the rest of his shoe-shining tools but Lutie makes to slap him again.

LUTIE CONT'D
(voice thick with anger)
Leave those things there.

BEAT

Here I am, working to look after
you and you out here in the street
shining shoes just like the rest of
these little niggers!

She takes the embroidered handkerchief from her purse and wipes at the shoe polish stains on his face and hands. Bub is obviously holding back tears.

LUTIE
(gesturing at the makeshift
box)
Where you get this stuff,
huh? Where you find this?

Bub is silent, shrugging and still fighting tears.

(CONTINUED)

LUTIE CONT'D
Go on. Get inside.

Bub runs into the building, now openly crying, leaving Lutie on the steps, holding the handkerchief tightly in her hand and caressing the faded embroidered initials with her thumb. She catches herself and shoves the fabric furiously back into her clutch.

The camera pans to a ground floor apartment window. From his window, Jones watches the scene below, his face a mask of anger.

Min calls offscreen:

MIN
Where my polish, Jones?

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - EVENING

LUTIE
I'm sorry Bub. I'm sorry.

She is sitting with him on the couch, rubbing her hand across his back as he wipes his eyes.

BUB
I was only trying to earn some money. You say we gotta have money.

BEAT

BUB
(tearing up again)
What's wrong with that?

Lutie is silent for awhile, thinking carefully before speaking.

LUTIE
Honey, it was the way you were trying to earn money.

BEAT

LUTIE
(sighing)
We been shining shoes and washing clothes and scrubbing floors for
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

LUTIE (cont'd)
years. They think that's the only
work we're fit to do. The hard
work. The dirty work.

BEAT

LUTIE CONT'D
I don't want you doing at eight
what white folks expect you to be
doing at eight and still doing at
eighty. I'm not going to have it.

Bub thinks over these things, that furrowed look on his face
once more. His expression is serious, almost solemn.

BUB
Why do white people want us shining
shoes?

Lutie turns to him, completely at a loss as to what to
say. She looks down at her hands. She shakes her head at
Bub.

LUTIE
I don't know son.

BEAT

LUTIE CONT'D
But it's for the same reason we
can't live anywhere else but a
place like this.

She rises to take off her coat and Bub rises and helps her,
holding the coat carefully in his hands, tracing its
seams. Lutie takes his face in her hands and kisses him
softly on the forehead.

LUTIE
Don't you worry. I'll worry for
both of us.

BEAT

BUB
(pressing his face close to
hers)
You're pretty. The Sup says you're
pretty--and he's right.

Lutie pulls away, peering into Bub's eyes, her brows knit
together.

(CONTINUED)

She straightens up and shakes herself, gesturing for Bub to follow her to the kitchen.

LUTIE
Let's eat.

CUT TO:

INT. SUBWAY - EVENING

Lutie stares at an advertisement overhead. In the advertisement, a slender, blond-haired woman leans against a dark-haired man in a navy uniform. They are standing in front of a gleaming kitchen sink in a pristine kitchen, practically sparkling through the print. The happy couple is a near duplicate of the Chandlers.

Lutie gently removes the embroidered handkerchief from her purse, removing the glove of her right hand in order to rub her bare thumb against the faded embroidery.

A homeless man, asleep next to Lutie, falls against her roughly with a jolt of the train. She carefully folds the handkerchief back into her purse and away from the rags of the homeless man.

She stares across the interior of the train to THE COVER OF A PASSENGER'S NEWSPAPER. The headline, in bold, reads:

BURLY NEGRO STABBED IN FAILED ROBBERY ATTEMPT

Lutie stares straight ahead and the camera pans away, she is sitting stiffly, propping the homeless man up with her shoulder.

CUT TO:

LENOX AVENUE - EVENING

Lutie approached the storefront where the murder had taken place the day before.

The bakery shop's windows had been smashed and the front door had been broken in and subsequently boarded up. Messages were scrawled across the remnants of the door and the sidewalk in front of the store:

WHITE MAN DON'T COME BACK

FADE TO:

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - EVENING

Min is coming out of the building as Lutie enters. She is hurrying out, carrying a large bag of laundry. The two women nearly collide, startling Lutie out of her thoughts.

MIN
(looking frightened)
So sorry.

Lutie says nothing but stares at Min's dress, A SLENDER WHITE FROCK that hangs limply on the woman's frail body.

Min flushes, looks away from Lutie, and hurries down the stairs and onto the street.

Lutie remains on the stairs for a moment, shell-shocked, before throwing the door open and bolting up to her apartment.

Mrs. Hedges sits in her window, watching with a grim expression, and says nothing.

CUT TO:

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - EVENING

As Lutie disappears inside, the camera pans out to Jones and Bub coming up the street, toward the apartment building.

Jones sees Min walking toward them and his face contorts with anger. He grabs Min roughly by the arm and she drops the bag of laundry she had been holding. Bub stands uncertainly on the steps.

JONES
(voice thick with rage)
Where did you find that?

MIN
(sobbing)
You never get me nice things!

Jones slaps her across the face sharply.

JONES
(shouting)
WHERE DID YOU FIND THAT

Min says nothing, sobbing uncontrollably, pathetically, and struggling against Jones' grip.

(CONTINUED)

JONES CONT'D
YOU STAY OUT OF MY THINGS

MIN
(haltingly, choking the words
out)
You never talk...you never...not
since HER

Jones raises his hand to strike her again but Mrs. Hedges interrupts and Jones flinches in surprise.

MRS. HEDGES
JONES

Jones looks around Min at Mrs. Hedges and then at Bub, looking scared. He slowly lowers his hand and releases Min.

MRS. HEDGES
I think you better get a move on,
Min.

Min, still sobbing, reaches for her laundry and hurries past Jones as if to get out of his reach before he changes his mind.

Jones says nothing but stalks inside the building. Mrs. Hedges and Bub hear his apartment door slam shut.

MRS. HEDGES
(kindly)
Get on inside Bub. Your momma's
home and she'll be waitin fo' you.

Bub stares out at Min's retreating figure.

MRS. HEDGES
C'mon Bub. Don't you worry 'bout
nothin.

Bub turns and runs inside and up the stairs.

CUT TO:

INT. LUTIE'S APARTMENT BEDROOM - EVENING

Lutie is frantically rummaging through her closet and dresser drawers, searching for a dress that isn't there. She falls back onto her bed, rapidly breathing in and out, almost hyperventilating, before breaking down into sobs.

(CONTINUED)

She jumps up at the sound of the door slamming as Bub rushes into the apartment. She straightens herself, takes several breaths, and walks toward her bedroom door.

BUB
(looking up from a pack of
cards)
Mom! Look what Sup showed me:

He shuffles the cards quickly and expertly, then makes a bridge out of the cards. He looks up at Lutie expectantly.

Lutie stares down at him, her expression inscrutable.

LUTIE
We gotta get outta here Bub.

Her eyes are misted for a moment; she seems ready to cry.

BUB
(uncertainly)
Mom...?

Lutie shut her eyes tightly and opens them again, sitting down across from Bub.

LUTIE
(quietly)
Sorry, honey.

BEAT

LUTIE CONT'D
Show me that again.

Bub's face remains concerned. He studies his mother before deftly performing the trick again.

LUTIE
(smiling softly)
That's great Bub. You gonna be a
card ace in no time.

BUB
(hesitantly)
You wanna play a game?

BEAT

LUTIE
(gently)
I'd love to honey.

BEAT

LUTIE CONT'D

(laughing)

You gonna have to teach me
though--I haven't played cards in
years.

BUB

Oh don't worry Mom. I'll show you.

He begins happily dealing cards between the two of them.

Lutie's smile fades a bit and she looks across the room, out
the aged, grimy window, at the row of identical buildings
outside.

BUB

(softly)

Don't worry Mom.

He pauses in his dealing to cover his mother's hand with his
own.

FADE TO:

EXT. JUNTO'S BAR - NIGHT

Lutie is standing outside the entrance of the bar, arms
folded, speaking with Boots--who is leaning against a sleek
car.

BOOTS

What you say? You wanna ride?

Lutie hesitates, then unwillingly smiles, shaking her head
as she does so and walking toward the car.

BOOTS

Baby, I think that's the first time
I seen those pearly whites.

Lutie says nothing and Boots, grinning, walks around the car
to open her door.

BOOTS

You like my ride?

Lutie is still silent, closed off to Boots as she nearly
always is.

BOOTS CONT'D

This gonna be a long ride, baby, if
you not gonna gimme somethin' to
work with.

(CONTINUED)

LUTIE
It's only got to be long enough for
you to tell me about your band.

BOOTS
(laughing)
Look, baby. I ain't interested in
that just yet. Only thing I'm
interested in right now is you.

They are both silent for a moment. Boots is a sure driver,
pushing the car faster along the curves of the Hudson,
occasionally glancing at Lutie.

BOOTS
Lived in New York long, baby?

LUTIE
Long enough.

BEAT

LUTIE CONT'D
I was born here.

BEAT

LUTIE CONT'D
What about you?

BOOTS
Aw, you know. I been around. Used
to be a Pullman boy...Pickin' up
after white folks...

BOOTS CONT'D
(laughing)
You got luggage baby--I got you.

His laugh isn't full, like before. It's a bitter laugh and
Lutie shifts in her seat, uncomfortably.

BOOTS
You married?

LUTIE
(hesitating)
We're separated.

BOOTS
Thought you musta been
married. Never saw a good-lookin
chick yet who didn't belong to
somebody.

(CONTINUED)

LUTIE

I don't belong to anyone.

Boots smiles at this, glancing at Lutie and pressing harder on the gas, accelerating them through the the hills outside of Poughkeepsie.

LUTIE

I don't like mountains.

Boots looks at her questioningly.

LUTIE CONT'D

Get the feeling they're closing in on me.

BEAT

LUTIE CONT'D

Crazy notion.

BOOTS

That's why you sing so well. You got that *feeling*. You feel it all stronger than other folks.

BEAT

BOOTS CONT'D

What songs you know?

LUTIE

The usual ones. Same ones you hear every Friday night.

BOOTS

Any trouble learnin' 'em?

LUTIE

No. Just pick them up from the radio.

Boots nods at this, seemingly in approval. He pulls the car to the side of the road and parks it in a spot overlooking the river.

BOOTS

You gotta learn some new ones.

He says this as he leans forward, slowly closing in on her, his hands removed from the steering wheel and one now groping its way toward her leg while the other snakes its way around the back of her seat.

(CONTINUED)

Lutie remains very still, not giving an inch, not moving any closer but not moving any further away.

He bends forward and kisses her, one hand perched on her upper thigh. He kisses her almost brutally, insistently. After a moment, Lutie twists out of his arms and looks away.

LUTIE

You're going to be late.

Boots looks at his wristwatch:

BOOTS

Damn.

He puts the key in the ignition and spins the car around.

CUT TO:

INT. BOOTS' CAR - NIGHT

As the car roars into the Bronx, Boots adjusts his speed but not quickly enough. A WHITE COP rides up alongside them, on a motorcycle. He waves them to the side of the road and Boots curses under his breath.

COP

Is there a fire?

The cop peers into Boots' window which has been rolled down. He stiffens when he sees that they are black. Lutie unconsciously holds her breath.

The cop's face becomes distorted:

COP

Why you black son of...

BOOTS

(interrupting)

I'm sorry Officer. My band's playing at the Casino tonight. I'm late and I was steppin on it, you know. Shoulda been there half 'n hour ago.

Boots pulls out his wallet and hands the officer his license along with a wad of bills. Lutie sees the exchange out of the corner of her eye.

The cop very nearly smiles as he examines Boots' license and pockets the cash.

(CONTINUED)

COP
(nodding suggestively at
Lutie)
Can't say I blame you for being
late, son.

He winks at Boots and walks away. Boots starts the car again and looks over at Lutie, grinning. Lutie doesn't return his smile; instead, her mouth tightens and she looks away from him and out the window.

EXT. JUNTO'S BAR - SAME NIGHT

Boots parks the car outside the entrance of Junto's and reaches across to open Lutie's door but she has already stepped halfway out.

BOOTS
(grinning)
Thanks for keepin' me company,
baby. I appreciate it.

Lutie nods, meeting his eyes firmly.

LUTIE
Tomorrow night?

BOOTS
That's right.

Lutie begins walking away. A man comes out of Junto's, half-running up to Boots.

MAN
You up 10 minutes ago, Mack.

Boots waves him off, looking after Lutie.

BOOTS
(calling after her)
Glad you changed yo' mind baby

The camera pans to Lutie and we see her smiling a small smile as she crosses her arms, pulling her coat more tightly around her.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Lutie unlocks the apartment door and walks in, only to find the light on again. She stands still in the doorway for a moment before going to the couch where Bub sleeps. He has curled himself into a tiny ball on the couch, pulling himself away from the emptiness. She kneels beside the couch and strokes Bub's head softly, listening to his heavy breathing. At her touch, he stiffens for an instant before relaxing and turning toward her, still fast asleep.

The camera pans away as Lutie remains kneeling by Bub's side.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - LATE AFTERNOON

Bub is sitting at the window of their cramped living room while Lutie irons her black dress for that evening's audition.

LUTIE

(addressing Bub)

I was thinking you ought to have yourself a movie today, just a little treat. What do you think?

BUB

Bub's face visibly lights up at his mother's suggestion, then falls with a sudden frowning of his brow:

BUB

You mean it Mom?

BEAT

BUB CONT'D

But you s'pose we got the money?

Lutie pauses at the ironing board and studies her son's sincere face, an identical crease now stretching across her forehead as well.

LUTIE

(gently)

Yeah honey. I think we can afford a treat this once.

Her tone changes, becomes firmer as she wills her words into Bub.

(CONTINUED)

LUTIE CONTD

Don't you be worrying all the time
about that, you hear? That's for
me. You understand me?

BUB CONTD

Yes ma'am.

His face lights up with another idea:

BUB

You wanna come, Mom?

She pauses, considering.

BUB CONT'D

(clasping his hands together
in mock prayer)

C'mon Mom!

LUTIE CONTD

(smiling)

You gonna be my date son?

Bub, beaming, jumps off the couch, playacting the part of a
gentleman with his arm bent for an invisible lady to take.

BUB

(in a deep voice)

I never seen a lady look as lovely
as you tonight, Ms. Johnson. May I
have this dance?

He collapses onto the couch again, laughing wildly at his
own joke and obviously pleased at his mother's response.

LUTIE

(still laughing)

You go get on a clean shirt--you're
not takin me anywhere lookin like
you do.

Bub races to change clothes, still giggling madly.

Lutie smiles to herself, holding her dress up to the
light. Satisfied, she takes the dress to her room, closing
the door to change.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - EVENING

As the apartment door opens, Bub sprints inside, cocking his hand like a pistol and shooting at everything in sight. Lutie follows her son into the apartment, laughing at her son's energy and the pistol noises he's emitting at intervals.

BUB
(shouting)
MOM! Quick I see two of em comin
outta the bathroom! Get down!

Lutie, laughing, obliges Bub and ducks behind the kitchen counter as Bub rushes the bandits emerging from the bathroom.

LUTIE
(peeking out over the counter)
You take care of 'em son?

Bub springs up on the other side of the counter with a shout and Lutie falls backwards in surprise, laughing and holding her hand over her heart. Bub, still laughing, crawls toward his mom and sprawls next to her, his head resting against her shoulder.

FADE TO:

INT. JUNTO'S BAR - SAME NIGHT

Lutie walks across the empty dance floor to the bandstand, where Boots stands with his back toward her, speaking with fellow musician. The man points at Lutie and Boots spins around before bounding toward her with a grin on his face.

BOOTS
I was worried you wasn't comin.

LUTIE
Don't know why.

BOOTS
(grinning widely)
You sure look good, baby

Boots offers his arm to Lutie, as Bub had earlier that night. He walks her to the band whistles for their full attention.

(CONTINUED)

BOOTS

Boys! Meet Ms. Lutie
Johnson. She's gonna sing with us
tonight.

He faces Lutie again.

BOOTS

(quietly)

What you want to start with? You
got a song in mind?

Lutie faces the band and steps toward them, nervously speaking. She avoids their eyes, greedily devouring her and her black dress and she avoids the pointed whispers, clearly making Lutie out as another one of Boots' girls.

LUTIE

hesitating

"I guess...Darlin."

BEAT

LUTIE CONT'D

(firmly)

"Darlin" would be best.

Lutie steps up to the microphone, again ignoring the stares of the men and making a point to avoid eye contact with Boots as well. She sings and thinks of the Street; she thinks of the boy with the worn shoes and she thinks of Bub. She sings, quite literally, for her life and the life of her son.

When she finishes, the men in the band bow to her in an exaggerated fashion but Lutie nervous grins anyway, finally comfortable. Boots approaches her with a smile, hollering at his boys to cut it out.

BOOTS

Job's yours baby. Wrapped up and
tied up for as long as you want it.

Lutie says nothing but turns back to the microphone and the music swells behind her once more. She smiles this time as she sings another song and another. Couples begin to pour into the bar, taking to the dance floor.

At intermission, Boots approaches her again.

BOOTS

(smoothly)

How 'bout a drink baby? You been
singin too long.

(CONTINUED)

BEAT

LUTIE

Yes. I'd love a drink, thank you.

They sit at a table this time, instead of the bar. A waiter appears from nowhere with drinks and, after he leaves, Boots leans across the table to Lutie.

BOOTS

You know, I could fall in love with you easy.

He leans back in the booth, lounging comfortably and never taking his eyes off Lutie. She takes a few sips of her drink before answering.

LUTIE

I was in love once.

BEAT

Once you've put all you've got into it, there's not much left for anyone else.

BOOTS

Your husband?

Lutie takes another drink and stares out at the dancing couples before continuing.

LUTIE

It wasn't his fault. Wasn't mine either. We were poor.

BEAT

LUTIE CONT'D

We were too young to stand being so poor.

Boots leans in again, moving his glass back and forth across the table.

BOOTS

You not gonna be poor anymore baby. Not after tonight.

BEAT

BOOTS CONT'D

(quietly)

All you gotta do is just be nice to me, baby.

(CONTINUED)

Lutie pauses, staring at him, before standing up and leaving the table for the bandstand.

BOOTS
(disconcerted)
You ain't finished your drink!

LUTIE
(waving at the band)
Boys are ready

The band and Lutie continue for another few hours, until the bar has finally emptied. Lutie retrieves her coat from the hat-check girl and she is exhausted but pleased. Boots catches her arm before she exits.

BOOTS
I can give you a ride home?

LUTIE
That would be swell, thank you.

CUT TO:

EXT. JUNTO'S BAR - SAME NIGHT

As they step outside, a bouncer pulls Boots to him. Lutie waits, looking questioningly as the bouncer mutters something to Boots.

BOUNCER
(barely moving his lips)
Stop by Junto's. His request.

BOOTS
(looking annoyed)
When?

BOUNCER
Called 'bout an hour ago.

Boots nods his head in affirmation and takes Lutie's arm once more, no longer grinning.

CUT TO:

INT. BOOTS' CAR - NIGHT

BOOTS
(distracted)
Where to?

LUTIE
Corner of 116th St. and 7th

They drive in complete silence until Boots pulls up to Lutie's building.

BOOTS
Same time tomorrow night?

LUTIE
Yes. Thank you.

Boots nods and reaches across her and she holds her breath but he only opens her door. She steps out and he immediately drives away.

CUT TO:

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Lutie stands in front of the building, staring after Boots' car as it speeds away from her. Her face is a mixture of satisfaction with the night and confusion at its end. As she fidgets with the embroidered handkerchief, the silhouette of Jones watches from his apartment window.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

As Lutie enters the building, Jones steps out from his apartment, shutting the door behind him with a CLICK that echoes around the empty entryway. Lutie, startled, jumps at the sudden noise and looks around at Jones' lanky figure. She looks at him uneasily and steps toward the base of the stairs but Jones blocks her. He puts his hand on her arm and she recoils at the touch.

JONES
(muttering to himself)
So sweet. You little thing. You
sweet little thing. You young,
sweet, little thing.

(CONTINUED)

LUTIE
(sharply)
Don't.

Lutie steps backwards, hoping to break for the door to the street but Jones instantly winds his arm around her, pulling her body into his, turning her to face him. He begins to pull her around the base of the staircase, toward the cellar door.

Lutie grabs at the balustrade, clinging to it with all of her strength until Jones has pried her away. She tears at Jones shirt, at his shoulders, at his face, writhing in terror as they near the cellar door. She kicks at him and stumbles over her skirt. She opens and closes her mouth, trying to scream but finding she has no voice and no air, only pure, undiluted terror.

The sound of a door opening is heard and a dog, Jones' dog, bounds out of the apartment and toward the cellar. The dog leaps onto Lutie, latching onto her, but Jones continues panting and straining as he drags her toward the door.

As the dog barks, Lutie too finds her voice and screams until she can hear her own screams echoing up the stairs. While Jones attempts to stifle her, a pair of hands pulls at Lutie's shoulders, prying her from Jones' grip. The hands fling Lutie against the base of the staircase and lunge for Jones, pushing him against the door of the cellar while Lutie continues to scream.

MRS. HEDGES
(to Lutie)
Shut up! You wanna wake up the
whole place?

Lutie is instantly silent, awed by the sight of the massive Mrs. Hedges towering over the thin frame of Jones.

Mrs. Hedges speaks to Jones now, still pinning him against the cellar door.

MRS. HEDGES
(in a quiet growl)
You lived in basements so long you
ain't human. You got mold growin'
on you.

Lutie, trying to walk around the stairs and up to her apartment, instead collapses on the bottom step.

(CONTINUED)

MRS. HEDGES CONT'D

You even so much as look at that girl again and I'll have you locked up.

BEAT

MRS. HEDGES CONT'D

(quietly)

It's Mr. Junto who's interested in Ms. Johnson. You hear me? I ain't gonna tell you again to keep your hands off.

Mrs. Hedges gives Jones a final shove before releasing him and turning to Lutie.

MRS. HEDGES CONT'D

(sweetly)

You come sit in my apartment for awhile 'til you get yo'self together again dear.

CUT TO:

INT. MRS. HEDGES' APT - NIGHT

Mrs. Hedges guides Lutie into a chair in the kitchen.

MRS. HEDGES

You just set here while I make you a cup of tea.

Lutie watches her as she puts a kettle to boil, walking barefoot across the linoleum. She accepts the cup of tea gratefully, visibly relaxing as she takes small sips.

MRS. HEDGES CONT'D

Another cup dear?

LUTIE

Yes, thank you.

As Lutie drinks, Mrs. Hedges stares at her intently. She stares at Lutie's curled hair, at the gentle dip above her delicate neckline, at the long legs peering out from under the modest hemline of her simple black dress. Lutie is oblivious to this scrutiny.

MRS. HEDGES

You out dancin tonight dear?

(CONTINUED)

LUTIE

Yes. The Casino, just a few blocks down.

MRS. HEDGES

(smiling coldly)

Young folks has to dance.

Lutie shifts uncomfortably in her seat, aware now of Mrs. Hedges eyes.

MRS. HEDGES CONT'D

(gesturing to the door)

You ain't gonna have to worry 'bout Jones botherin' you again. He won't even look at you no more.

LUTIE

(apprehensively)

Why's that?

MRS. HEDGES

'Cause I scared him so bad he's gonna jump from his own shadow.

BEAT

MRS. HEDGES

It ain't really his fault. He's lived in cellars so long he cellar crazy.

LUTIE

Lots of people live in cellars. They're not all crazy.

MRS. HEDGES

Folks differs dear. Some can stand things others can't. There's never knowin how much a person can stand.

Lutie stands, testing the strength of her legs.

LUTIE

Thank you for the tea.

BEAT

LUTIE

And thank you...I don't know what I would have done if you hadn't...

(CONTINUED)

MRS. HEDGES

It's alright dear. And don't forget what I told you, 'bout the white gentleman, anytime you need some extra money.

LUTIE

(turning away)

Good night.

CUT TO:

INT. JUNTO'S OFFICES - SAME NIGHT

JUNTO

Like a drink?

BOOTS

Sure

JUNTO walks around his desk to a table with various tumblers and a variety of liquor. He takes his time pouring a glass of bourbon for Boots and ice water for himself. Boots watches him apprehensively, tapping his foot in nervous anticipation. Junto hands him his glass.

BOOTS

(hesitating)

Some kinda trouble with the draft board?

JUNTO CONT'D

No, no. Nothing out of order there.

Junto is leaning against the liquor table, sipping his water slowly and deliberately and not meeting Boots' gaze.

JUNTO

You're to keep your hands off that girl.

BOOTS

(taken aback)

Yeah?

JUNTO

I've got another idea for her.

Junto circles back to his chair, now staring at Boots from across his desk. Boots remains silent, deep in thought and staring at a spot on the desk and holding his glass without drinking.

(CONTINUED)

JUNTO
You understand me?

BOOTS
(quietly)
Suppose I want to lay her?

Junto leans forward, setting his glass aside and clasping his hands together. Boots meets his eyes once more.

JUNTO
Then I'd tell you to keep in mind
that whoever makes a man can just
as easily break him.

BEAT

JUNTO
Well?

BOOTS
Still thinkin on it.

Boots falls silent again, looking away from Junto. Several moments pass in silence as Boots contemplates the cost of Lutie and the benefit of being Junto's right-hand man.

BOOTS
All right.

BEAT

BOOTS CONT'D
Don't make much difference to me.

Junto looks relieved at this reponse and leans back in his chair again.

JUNTO
Don't pay her for
singing. Just...give her *gifts*
from time to time.

Junto reaches into his desk, removing an envelope full of bills and handing a thick wad to Boots.

JUNTO
Women love presents. This should
soften her, make it easier to
arrange a meeting with me. And
please remember, leave her to
me. I want her myself.

(CONTINUED)

BOOTS
'Course. Don't worry, she'll be
sittin pretty for you.

JUNTO
Do you suppose it will take very
long?

BOOTS
(shrugging)
Hard to say. Some women...

He pauses here, scrutinizing Junto.

BOOTS
Some women have a hang-up when it
come to white men. Not all women.
Just some of 'em.

JUNTO
Money can fix most things like
that.

BOOTS
Sometimes, sure.

BEAT

JUNTO
How was the crowd tonight?

BOOTS
Packed house. Kids hangin from the
ceiling.

Junto nods agreeably.

BOOTS CONT'D
Girl sings well.

JUNTO
Yes, I heard her. I dropped in for
a few minutes tonight.

Boots makes to leave but turns again to face Junto.

BOOTS
How's Mrs. Hedges?

Junto's face lightens and he smiles, really smiles,
obviously pleased at the thought of her.

JUNTO

Oh just fine. She's a wonderful woman. Wonderful.

BOOTS

(smirking slightly)

Sure is.

BEAT

BOOTS CONT'D

Don't you worry 'bout the girl boss. I gotta go. I'll be seein you.

CUT TO:

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - AFTERNOON

Jones is leaning against a shovel, scowling and avoiding the ever-present glare of Mrs. Hedges who is, as usual, sitting at her window and observing the street while drinking a cup of coffee.

The postman appears around the corner, fiddling with the keys for the post boxes and nodding at Jones who, with a quick glance at Mrs. Hedges, smiles and sets down his shovel.

JONES

Kinda late this morning

POSTMAN

(grinning)

Busy night. Overslept

JONES

Sure glad it wasn't a heavy snow last night

POSTMAN

Tough enough deliverin in it; can't imagine shovelin it

The postman heads up the stairs and into the entryway, with Jones at his heels.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - AFTERNOON

The postman uses a single key to open all the mailboxes at once, grabbing letters from his leather bag and shoving the envelopes into the small squares. Jones watches this process, his face struck by some unknowable thought.

POSTMAN

I can just hand you yours, save you
the trouble

JONES

(shaking himself)
Nah. Not expectin nothin.

POSTMAN

(sifting through the remaining
envelopes)
Nope. Doesn't look like
it. Tomorrow maybe.

Jones nods distractedly at the postman's smile. He watches as the man closes the boxes and locks them with his single key and watches as the key travels back to the man's pocket.

POSTMAN

Nice day then

Jones nods again, giving a slight wave. Once the postman has disappeared down the steps, Jones moves toward the mailboxes, running his hands over the master lock. He pulls from his pocket the master keys he has in his possession and studies them, running his thumb over the ridges of each key in turn and staring back at the lock.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - AFTERNOON

Jones is in another entryway, the entry of the building adjacent to his own. He is speaking with teh Super of that building, a friend of his.

JONES

Hey man, damn woman in my house has
lost two keys in two days. I
thought one of yours might work, if
you could lemme borrow it 'til I
get another copy. She's havin a
fit about wantin to get her mail

(CONTINUED)

SUPER

Aw sure. Come on and I'll get one
fo' you.

JONES

Thanks man, sorry to be botherin
you like this.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - AFTERNOON

Jones tries the other super's key in one of the mailbox locks. After some finesse, the key turns in the lock and Jones pockets it, smiling to himself. He crosses the hall and enters his apartment.

CUT TO:

INT. JONES' APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

Jones sits at his desk with the keys spread before him and blanks sheet of paper. Slowly, carefully, he traces one key at a time, one sketch on top of the drawing before it. After he has finished, he traces a final key--a master key that embodies the curves of each previous key. He works slowly, his head bent so close to the paper that his nose nearly smudges his work.

When he has finished, he holds the paper up to the light and smiles before setting it down with a satisfactory laugh.

JONES

(to himself)

I shoul'da taken up drawing.

At that moment, Min enters the apartment and Jones hastily shoves the mailbox keys into his pocket, attempting a strained smile. Min looks disconcerted

JONES

Nice day?

MIN

(confused)

Nice enough

Jones stands up, crosses the room, and grabs one of Min's many bags. She stands at the door awkwardly, unsure whether to follow him into the kitchen or not.

(CONTINUED)

JONES
(offscreen)
Mind doin' me a favor?

CUT TO:

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - AFTERNOON

Jones stands on the front stoop of the apartment building, glancing impatiently down the block. Mrs. Hedges sits in her familiar perch, surveying the street.

MRS. HEDGES
What you so worked up over, Jones?

JONES
(scowling)
Nothin. Just waitin on Min.

MRS. HEDGES
First time I ever seen you care
'bout that girl

JONES
Aww leave it. I mind mine.

MRS. HEDGES
I mind yours when you mindin'
what's Junto's. I'm still watchin
you Jones. You up to somethin',
the right folks gonna know.

At this, Jones turns toward Mrs. Hedges, furious. However, she nods her head at the figure of Min over Jones' shoulder. He turns, bounds down the steps, and pulls Min by the arm and up to the front door. A terrified Min glances at Mrs. Hedges but Jones pulls her quickly inside, with a final look of fury at Mrs. Hedges.

CUT TO:

INT. JONES' APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

MIN
Jones! What you--

JONES
(roughly)
You got it?

(CONTINUED)

MIN

Yeah, I got it. It's...

Min rummages through her coat pockets until she pulls out the master key Jones had her pick up from the locksmith. He takes the key from her and turns away, rubbing it between his thumb and forefinger while Min rambles in the background, mistaking his silence for intimacy.

CUT TO:

INT. LUTIE'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Bub is sitting over his dinner, pushing his food around the plate with his fork, apparently deep in thought. Lutie stands in the living room, ironing a pair of slacks with a slight smile on her face.

BUB

You singin tonight?

LUTIE

Yes I am. You got a song I should sing for you?

BUB

(excitedly)

Can I come?

LUTIE

(laughing)

Absolutely not. You got school in the morning mister! But I can dedicate a song to you--you got one in mind?

BUB

(crestfallen)

Nah. I don't think so. I like all of 'em.

Lutie smiles back at Bub and begins to hum to herself as she starts ironing a crimson blouse.

BUB CONT'D

Mom, are you gonna keep singin?

LUTIE

Sure am. For as long as they want me.

(CONTINUED)

Lutie puts down the iron and moves toward Bub, wrapping her arms around him and setting her chin on the top of his head.

LUTIE CONT'D

You want to get out of here, Bub?

BUB

I guess so. I don't know.

LUTIE

(smiling)

You like it here with me?

BUB

I like anywhere with you.

LUTIE

Well...if I keep singing, you can go to as many pictures as you want and I can go with you. Would you like that?

BUB

(smiling slightly)

Can I go to pictures with you instead of school?

LUTIE

(tickling him)

Mhmmm you keep dreamin, boy!

Lutie squeezes Bub and takes his plate to the sink.

LUTIE CONT'D

Now go on and get washed up! I want you in bed when I'm locking that door.

Bub races to the bathroom, still giggling, and closes the door.

CUT TO:

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - AFTERNOON

Bub is running up the walk, completely focused on his feet and hardly noticing the various pedestrians he narrowly avoids. As he approaches the steps to the building, Mrs. Hedges calls to him.

(CONTINUED)

MRS. HEDGES
You best slow down there Bub! What
you in a rush fo'?

BUB
(slowing and laughing)
Afternoon, Mrs. Hedges!

MRS. HEDGES
(smiling)
Afternoon son. Save summa that
energy for the road, huh?

BUB
(revving up again)
Yes'm!

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - AFTERNOON

As Bub slams the front door and bolts for the stairs, Jones
steps out of his apartment, startling Bub.

BUB
Oh hey Sup!

Jones signals for Bub to come over, beckoning him with a
gesture and a nod.

BUB
What's up Sup?

CUT TO:

INT. JONES' APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

Bub is all potential energy, practically buzzing in the
entranceway of Jones' drab apartment. Jones is somewhat
withdrawn, with an excited look in his eyes which Bub misses
entirely as he plays with Jones' dog.

JONES
You wanna job kid?

BUB
Sure Sup! Want me to run down to
the store again?

(CONTINUED)

JONES

Nah, somethin bigger than that. I mean a real job, an important one.

Bub sits on the couch, giving Jones his full attention now and shooing the dog away from his knees.

BUB

(nodding excitedly)

'Course! What is it? Can I start now?

Jones pulls out the master key and begins to speak slowly and carefully, his eyes never leaving Bub's eager face.

JONES

(grinning)

Now you gotta calm down. This is different--detective work. Catchin crooks.

Bub is on the edge of the couch now, practically vibrating with excitement while Jones pauses to savor this impending victory.

JONES CONT'D

Alright, you listen careful. These crooks, the police needs help catchin 'em. They're usin the mail and they're smart--it ain't easy to catch 'em.

BUB

What do I gotta do, Sup? Tell me and I'll get 'em

Bub gets up from the couch and begins to mimick the cowboys and gunslingers he's seen at the movies, using his thumb and index finger to shoot at invisible crooks and robbers.

JONES

What you gotta do is open mail boxes and bring me the letters, see. Some of 'em will be the right ones and some won't. But you gotta bring 'em all. You understand?

Bub nods, hesitantly.

JONES CONT'D

But you gotta be careful nobody ever sees you, nobody, you hear?

BEAT

(CONTINUED)

BUB

Cuz if they see you collectin the mail they'll know you're with the police. So you gotta bring the mail to me in the basement--I'll be waitin every afternoon.

Bub is silent now, nodding at Jones and clearly thinking over everything he's just been told.

JONES

(holding the key up)
C'mon. I'll show you how it works.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - AFTERNOON

Jones and Bub are standing in the entryway of the apartment building, in front of the row of mailboxes.

Jones inserts the key in the lock. It's stiff at first but, with finesse, he turns the lock. Jones has Bub try it and he struggles at first but Jones has him repeat the motion over and over until his motions are fluid. Bub looks pleased with himself, but his forehead is creased with worry.

Jones looks down at the boy sternly.

JONES

Don't you go usin that key in this building. The crooks ain't workin from here.

Bub remains silent, staring at the floor. Jones is disconcerted by his silence and holds the key out to him.

JONES CONT'D

Here. You got this whole street so...

BUB

I don't think I wanna...

JONES

(angrily)
Well why not?

BUB

(backing away)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

BUB (cont'd)
I dunno Sup. I thought you wanted
somethin' different. This ain't
even exciting.

Jones tries to calm himself, pausing a moment before
responding.

JONES
You can earn a lot of money. Maybe
three or four dollars a week,
easy.

BEAT

JONES CONT'D
Maybe 5--

BUB
I don't think my Mom--

JONES
(nearly exploding with rage)
You're mom ain't gonna know nothin
about it! You're not gonna tell
her anyhow!

BEAT

JONES CONT'D
Cuz of the police. This is a
secret between you and me and the
police.

BUB
Nah. I don't wanna do it. Thanks
just the same Sup.

Bub waves at Jones and runs up the stairs with the same
speed and energy as before. Jones is left standing in front
of the mailboxes, holding the key out. Dumbfounded and
furious, he slams the door of his apartment. A thump is
heard and then the howling of his dog.

The camera pans out and away, to the outside of the building
where the dog's howling can still be heard. Mrs. Hedges is
perched in her window, muttering to herself

MRS. HEDGES
Cellar crazy. No doubt...Cellar
crazy.

CUT TO:

INT. THE CASINO - EVENING

Boots and Lutie sit at the same table together, talking over drinks. Boots is lively, telling Lutie a story while obviously enjoying himself--laughing a booming laugh and using his hands to help the story along. Lutie is leaning back in her chair, laughing freely.

PIANIST

(to Boots)

Hey Mack! We're live in 5 man.

Boots, still grinning, nods at the man and turns back to his drink. Lutie has fallen silent, smiling to herself. She takes a breath before speaking, trying to check her eagerness instead of letting her thoughts out in a rush.

BOOTS

Somethin on your mind baby?

BEAT

LUTIE

When will my salary start? And how much will it be?

Boots takes a long sip of his drink, not meeting Lutie's eyes.

BOOTS

Salary?

LUTIE

For singing. With your band.

The band starts playing slowly, quietly, and Lutie is distracted by the sound of the music--looking away from Boots and fighting to keep her breathing measured.

BOOTS

(leaning forward)

This is just experience, baby. Be months before you can earn money at it.

LUTIE

(sharply)

That's not what you--

BEAT

Lutie looks away at the band again, finding words, better words.

(CONTINUED)

LUTIE
(calmer)
What happened?

BOOTS
Baby. Listen. Nothing
happened. What makes you think
that?

LUTIE
You said I could earn my living
singing. You said that to
me. Just last week you said the
job was mine for as long as I
wanted it. And I've been here,
singing, for you and for that band
and for *money*.

BOOTS
(shaking his head)
Sure baby, and I meant what I
said. But you think I got the
final say-so? The guy who owns
this joint, Junto, he says you
ain't ready yet. What you expect
me to say to that, baby?

LUTIE
What does he have to do with
anything?

BOOTS
I just told you. He owns the joint
for chrissakes. I don't have a
band without Junto, you know?

There is a long silence. The band keeps playing quietly,
the pianist giving meaningful looks to Boots but he waves
his glances away. Lutie is watching the couples dance with
an exhausted, pained expression on her face.

LUTIE
(quietly, to herself)
No.

BOOTS
Hmm? What's the matter baby?

BEAT

BOOTS
Did it mean so much to you?

(CONTINUED)

Lutie looks at him but through him at the same time, as if she's been asked the most absurd thing imaginable, and Boots leans backward and looks away.

LUTIE
I suppose it did.

Lutie rises from the table and turns to leave but Boots stops her.

BOOTS
Now wait a minute baby, where you goin?

LUTIE
Well thanks for the chance but I'm going home. What did you expect?

BOOTS
Listen, you ain't gonna stop singing with the band, are you?

LUTIE
I work all day. I come home and care for my boy. I leave him every night to be here...for what? i'm not going to sing half the night just for the fun of it.

BOOTS
Baby, think of the experience--

LUTIE
I'm not interested in experience Mr. Smith. I think you'll find I have plenty of that.

BOOTS
(standing)
Wait. Let me drive you home. I want to talk to you baby. You can't walk out on me like this.

LUTIE
I'm not walking out on you. I'm tired. I'm going home.

Boots pulls out a small white box and hands it to Lutie.

BOOTS
Here, Junto wanted you to have these.

Lutie opens the box and finds a pair of rhinestone earrings inside. She shuts the box quickly, her eyes flashing with anger.

LUTIE

Thanks. I just can't imagine
anything I needed more than these.

Lutie walks away quickly, without looking back. As she checks her coat at the door, she pauses, then leaves the box with the earrings for the coatcheck girl who stares after Lutie's retreating form.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE STREET - EVENING

Lutie walks along the street briskly, her heels echoing on the uneven pavement. She is looking straight ahead with a cold intensity, her entire body leaning forward with the effort of fleeing the Casino and Boots and this man named Junto.

THE SCENE DISSOLVES INTO MEMORY, INCOHERENT SNAPSHOTS

Lutie is looking down at Jonathan's collapsed body, trying to discern the reason for the pooling blood at his head. She is cradling the screaming Henry, covering his eyes with her hand.

THE SCENE DISSOLVES AGAIN

Lutie and Bub are on the couch; Bub has clearly been woken from sleep. She is holding Bub in the darkness of the apartment, pressing him to her chest and humming softly while a male voice shouts obscenities from the floor above them. A woman is screaming out in pain and both mother and son flinch when they hear a thump echo from the ceiling of the cramped space. Lutie hums louder and Bub begins to hum softly as well, trying to keep up with the tune. **{WHAT TUNE?}**

THE SCENE DISSOLVES ONCE MORE

Lutie is consoling a crying child, Henry Chandler, while the voices of Mr. and Mrs. Chandler rise to a shout. She is humming the same tune to baby Henry, rocking him in her arms and pacing around an ornate nursery, littered with toys and decorated with pictures of a happy family. The camera lingers on one of those photos and fades out.

FADE TO:

INT. SUBWAY - EVENING

THE ADVERTISEMENT WITH THE HAPPY WHITE FAMILY, POSING IN FRONT OF A GLEAMING MODERN KITCHEN

Lutie is staring at the photo, her expression inscrutable. She is absentmindedly fidgeting with the embroidered handkerchief, running her thumb over the faded initials over and over again.

CUT TO:

INT. LUTIE'S APARTMENT - SAME EVENING

Lutie takes her time locking the door behind her, exhaling slowly and closing her eyes tightly for a moment as Bub bounds up to her and squeezes her around the middle.

Lutie turns to face him and returns his hug, albeit less enthusiastically.

BUB

Mom! You gotta c'mere. I gotta show you this game I made up.

LUTIE

Oh yeah? What kind of game?

Bub grabs her hand and leads her to the single, grim window in the living room.

BUB

(pointing)

Ok. So. You see the dogs down there? I call him Mother Dog and her Father Dog. They got children dogs over there, see?

Lutie nods but the camera follows her as she takes in the depressing lay of the neighborhood--the discarded trash and rusting cars and the buildings that looked to Lutie like prisons. All the while, Bub's voice is going on about the rules of his game, the intricate relationships between each dog.

Bub, noticing that his mother is no longer listening, stops speaking and turns toward her. He wraps his arms around her again.

LUTIE

You wanna help me with dinner?

(CONTINUED)

BUB

Sure! What are we eating?

LUTIE

Something special. I got us some hamburger and greens.

BUB

(crinkling his nose)

Mom that's what we had last night. What's so special about it?

BEAT

LUTIE

You didn't help me make it last night, that's what.

Lutie is in the kitchen, pulling out pans and turning on the stove while Bub looks on eagerly.

BUB

What can I do?

LUTIE

You start washing the greens for me.

Bub goes to the sink and starts the water as Lutie begins cooking the meat.

LUTIE

Bub, you've got to stop sleeping with the light on. We've talked about this.

BUB

I fell asleep and forgot it.

LUTIE

(sharply)

Now that's not true. I turned it out when I left last night and when I got home it was on.

BEAT

LUTIE CONT'D

If you're scared of the dark, you'll just have to go to sleep while I'm still here. You keep the light on and the bill will be so big I'll never be able to pay it.

(CONTINUED)

BEAT

LUTIE CONT'D
And I don't like lies. I've told
you that again and again.

Bub stands on the sink with his head hanging down, biting
his lower lip and trying not to cry.

BUB
Yes Mom.

CUT TO:

EXT. 42ND STREET - AFTERNOON

Lutie is standing outside a building labeled CROSSE SCHOOL FOR
SINGERS. In her hand, she is clutching a flyer that reads:

SINGERS NEEDED NOW FOR BROADWAY SHOWS. NIGHTCLUB
ENGAGEMENTS. LET US TRAIN YOU FOR HIGH-PAYING JOBS.

Lutie stares at the building and the camera follows her eyes
upwards.

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - SAME AFTERNOON

A blonde woman sits at a desk in a small waiting room. She
does not look up when Lutie enters. Lutie pauses
uncertainly and then walks up to the woman's desk
uncertainly.

LUTIE
I came for an audition.

BLONDE WOMAN
Take a seat. Mr. Crosse will see
you shortly.

Lutie sits in one of the uncomfortable chairs, shifting
nervously. Her eyes glance over the magazines and handouts
with pretty white women in elaborate costumes singing before
huge audiences.

A BUZZER SOUNDS

BLONDE WOMAN
Mr. Crosse will see you now.

The woman gestures at a door to her left.

(CONTINUED)

Lutie stands, straightens her skirt, and walks toward the door.

CUT TO:

INT. MR. CROSSE'S OFFICE

The walls of the office are covered with glossy photographs of the same kinds of women covering the magazines outside in the waiting room. These photographs are all autographed with DEAR MR. CROSSE.

Mr. Crosse sits with his feet propped on his large desk. The desk is covered with clippings, photographs, magazines, and an overflowing ash tray. Mr. Crosse is a fat man, seemingly bursting out of his fashionably tailored clothes. He is chewing the unlit end of a cigar and he glances at Lutie with only the merest interest.

MR. CROSSE

What can I do for you?

LUTIE

I--I came for an audition.

MR. CROSSE

(shifting in his chair)

Sure, sure. What kind of singing you do?

LUTIE

Nightclub. With a backing band.

MR. CROSSE

Nighclub, sure. We'll try you out. Come on over here.

Mr. Crosse stands up and tosses the soggy cigar on his desk. He leads her into a larger room where a man sits at a piano.

The man smokes while he plays and seems bored by the music, by Lutie, and by life in general. Mr. Crosse sits in a chair facing the piano and listens with his eyes closed. He could very well be asleep. After one song, Mr. Crosse snaps his fingers as a cue for Lutie to stop.

MR. CROSSE

Okay. Good voice. Very good voice. I can practically guarantee you a job. 'Bout 75 dollars a week.

(CONTINUED)

Lutie's expression remains the same.

LUTIE

What's the catch?

MR. CROSSE

No catch. Been in this business for 20 years. I don't usually listen to the singers myself. But I could tell just from looking at you, "this girl is good."

LUTIE

(sarcastically)

When do I start this 75 dollar-a-week job?

MR. CROSSE

'Bout 6 weeks. You need some training. Stuff like timing, how to put a song over. Showmanship. We can teach you that. Then we find you a job, act as your agent. We get ten percent of what you make. Regular fee.

LUTIE

And what does this training cost?

MR. CROSSE

Hundred and twenty-five dollars.

Lutie laughs a short laugh before stopping herself.

LUTIE

I'm sorry to have taken your time. That's out of the question.

MR. CROSSE

Listen, they all say that. Sounds out of the question because most people don't really have what it takes. They don't want it bad enough.

LUTIE

In my case, it's impossible.

MR. CROSSE

You see somebody earning hundreds a week and you never stop to think that person made a lot of sacrifices to get there.

(CONTINUED)

LUTIE

I know all that. It's still impossible.

Mr. Crosse stands and walks back to his office, gesturing at Lutie to follow him. He sits at his desk again, brushing ash off a magazine absentmindedly.

MR. CROSSE

You don't have to pay it all at once. We arrange down payments for special cases. Makes it easier that way.

LUTIE

You don't understand Mr. Crosse. I just don't have the money.

Lutie turns to leave, quietly thanking the pianist on her way out.

Mr. Crosse stands and catches her arm before she leaves.

MR. CROSSE

Wait a minute.

Lutie looks down at the hand on her arm and a shudder of revulsion passes through her body.

MR. CROSSE CONT'D

You know, a good-looking girl like you shouldn't have to worry about money.

BEAT

MR. CROSSE CONT'D

If you and me can get together a couple nights a week in Harlem, those lessons won't cost you a cent. Not a cent.

Lutie reaches behind Mr. Crosse and grabs an INKWELL from his desk. She throws the inkwell at his face with all the strength she can muster. She promptly turns on her heel and leaves the office, slamming the door behind her.

CUT TO:

INT. WAITING ROOM - SAME AFTERNOON

The blonde receptionist looks up, startled at the sound of the door slamming.

BLONDE WOMAN
Through so quick?

LUTIE
(rushing across the room)
Yes thank you.

BLONDE WOMAN
Didya fill out an application?

LUTIE
(calling over her shoulder)
I won't be needing one.

CUT TO:

EXT. 116TH STREET SUBWAY PLATFORM - LATE EVENING

It's late. Bub is hovering on the platform, perring through the crowd of tired commuters for his mother's face. His face is anxious and frightened until he finally sees Lutie.

BUB
Mom! Hey mom!

Lutie walks quickly over to him and Bub breaks into a run, catch his mother around the waist and squeezing hard.

LUTIE
Honey what's the matter?

BUB
Nothing. I--I just didn't know where you were.

LUTIE
Well I'm sorry hon. I just got tied up at work.

Bub nods and Lutie puts one arm around his shoulders as they start for the street.

LUTIE
Let's get home.

(CONTINUED)

They walk along in silence. The street is filled with its usual characters, all of the worn faces and shouted, obscenity-laced arguments on full display. Lutie walks slowly, a departure from her typically rushed pace.

BUB

Mom, are you mad at me?

LUTIE

(startled)

Of course not. What makes you think that?

BUB

I dunno. You sort of acted like it.

LUTIE

No, I'm not mad at you honey. I couldn't be.

Bub is quiet, hesitating.

BUB

What's the matter Mom?

LUTIE

(sighing heavily)

I've been worried about us. We seem to spend so much money. I can't save very much of it. And we've got to save, Bub, so that we can get out of here.

They are both silent now. Lutie keeps looking at Bub, biting her lip in concern. When they reach their block, she stops and puts her hands on his small shoulders, turning him to face her.

LUTIE

I'm not mad at you at all honey. I couldn't be.

BEAT

LUTIE CONT'D

I guess I've been mad at myself.

BUB

(confused)

But why have you been mad at yourself?

(CONTINUED)

LUTIE

I've got to do better for us, you understand? We're not supposed to be here. (gesturing at the street) We can't stay here.

BEAT

BUB

(Looking Lutie full in the face)

I think you're perfect.

Lutie presses Bub to her, hard, holding her tears back without success.

CUT TO:

INT. LUTIE'S APARTMENT - EVENING

The apartment is silent but the life of the apartments above and below them invade the small space. The BATHROOM LIGHT FLICKERS, lending the apartment an even shabbier feeling than usual.

Bub is sitting quietly at the window while Lutie is in the kitchen, preparing the same things, hamburger meat and collard greens. She is rushing through the preparation, trying to get dinner on the table as quickly as possible. As she tries to light the gas stove, a burst of flame catches at her fingers.

LUTIE

Goddammit!

She bends over double, pressing a towel against the burn and again fighting back tears. Bub stands up and steps away from the window, looking at his mother with concern.

LUTIE

(loudly)

Goddamn being poor. Goddamn it!

Bub hesitates in the center of the room as Lutie begins setting the table. She is banging the knives and forks onto the surface, slamming the plates down and creating a noisome confusion completely unlike the earlier silence.

Bub watches the scene without a word and the camera lingers on his worried face.

CUT TO:

INT. CLASSROOM - AFTERNOON

The scene opens on Bub, hand raised, sitting at a worn desk in a crowded classroom. He is twisting in his seat and raising his arm so that it's as extended as far as it can go without him actually standing.

A white woman stands at the front of the class. Her face is taut and her voice terse.

TEACHER

Well?

BUB

I gotta go to the bathroom.

TEACHER

You can wait until you get out of school.

Bub stands up, jiggling in the aisle and standing on one foot, then the other.

The teacher sighs and rolls her eyes with exasperation.

TEACHER

Go ahead. Take your books and
coa--

Bub had already started for the door before she could finish the sentence, leaving his books on his desk.

CUT TO:

INT. STORE - AFTERNOON

Bub is perusing the cases of candy and assorted treats while a shopkeeper keeps a beady eye on him. He pauses in front of a jewelry case with cheap earrings lined up in a row.

SHOPKEEPER

You want something or what?

Bub nods and points to the case.

SHOPKEEPER CONT'D

Which ones?

Bub points to a pair of shiny, gold hoop earrings. The shopkeeper counts out some coins and hands him the change and earrings.

(CONTINUED)

A group of boys older than Bub observe this exchange from the front of the store.

OLDER BOY
(pointing at Bub)
That kid's got money!

Bub edges out of the store and then bolts up the street. The boys follow, hollering at him. Bub nearly knocks over several people as he sprints up the block until the largest boy is stopped by a middle-aged woman, allowing Bub to get away.

He keeps running for another block before coming to a stop and looking all around him for his pursuers. When he realizes he's out-run them, he smiles to himself and pulls out the earrings, admiring their color against his palm.

He pockets the earrings again and begins looking around at the apartment buildings on this block. He chooses a building and begins walking up the steps where a group of men stand, engrossed in their conversation. Bub slips by them and enters the building.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - AFTERNOON

The hall is empty and quiet. Bub pauses and listens for the sound of anyone approaching down the hall. When he hears nothing, he approaches the row of mailboxes. He peers inside the mailboxes, checking for contents, but THE SOUND OF FOOTSTEPS can be heard coming down the stairs.

Bub looks around and, seeing nowhere to hide, crouches down as if tying his shoe. He fumbles with the laces and the ELDERLY WOMAN pauses to help him.

ELDERLY WOMAN
You need some help with those laces son?

BUB
No ma'am.

Bub finishes the knot and stands up. The woman looks at him curiously.

ELDERLY WOMAN
You live in this house son?

(CONTINUED)

BUB

Yes'm

ELDERLY WOMAN

(smiling)

You're a nice boy. What's your name?

BUB

(grinning widely)

Bub Johnson

ELDERLY WOMAN

Johnson...Johnson...Which floor you live on?

BUB

(without hesitation)

The top one

ELDERLY WOMAN

Oh you must be Ms. Johnson's grandson! Mhmmm, you stayin' here with her, such a nice boy.

The elderly woman continues murmuring and smiling to herself as she walks out the door. Bub watches her, his smile fading and replaced with a concerned look.

He shakes himself and starts for the mailboxes again. He opens three mailboxes quickly, deftly working the master key in the locks. He took the contents of the mailboxes and stuffed them in the large pockets of his shabby wool jacket.

CUT TO:

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - AFTERNOON

Bub slips out the front door and hops down the front steps, quickly by-passing the group of men still arguing on the stoop.

Bub shoves his hands deep in his pockets, looks up and down the street, and strolls away from the building, humming to himself. A small smile plays at his lips once more as he makes his way down the street.

Bub passes men huddled on front stoops. throwing dice and alternating between shouted profanities and elated hollering. He passes young men and old men working corners, working dice, whistling at harried women rushing down the street. He takes it all in with a smile, with an assured

(CONTINUED)

expression of relentless curiosity about this world he's just becoming part of.

CUT TO:

EXT. BUB'S APT BUILDING - AFTERNOON

The same group of boys from the shop is now standing in front of Bub's building, underneath Mrs. Hedges' window. They are arguing about something and the largest boy shoves a smaller boy, hard, into the side of the building.

Bub is walking toward the group in a world of his own making, completely unaware of the trouble ahead. One of the boys notices him and nudges the largest boy, smirking. They spread out so as to encircle Bub when he gets closer.

As he continues his slow march toward them, three boys move slowly so that they are now behind him and the leader winks at his friends. He finally springs on Bub, stepping up to him aggressively.

OLDER BOY

Hi kid

Bub, surprised, attempts to brush right past the boy but he grabs Bub's collar roughly.

BUB

(frightened)

Take your hands off me

OLDER BOY

(pulling Bub closer)

Who's gonna make me? Huh? Who's gonna make me?

BEAT

OLDER BOY CONT'D

(sneering)

Your mother's a whore.

BUB

(confused)

What's that?

The boy begins laughing raucously and the rest of the group chimes in.

(CONTINUED)

OLDER BOY
You hear that? He don't know what
his mother is.

 BUB
 (angry now)
She is not!

 OLDER BOY
 (still laughing)
What you mean she ain't? You just
said you don't even know. Look at
him. He don't even know.

BEAT

 OLDER BOY CONT'D
 (looking around)
His mother's a whore. She does
nasty things with men. With white
men.

The boys continue laughing and Bub tries to get out of the
boy's grip.

 BUB
She is not! Stop talking about
her!

 OLDER BOY
Who gonna make me? You? Your
mother's a whore!

Bub punches the boy squarely in the face with his entire
force. The boy releases Bub, holding his face. He makes to
grab Bub again but he slips past. Another boy on the outer
ring of the circle pushes Bub backwards, tripping him, so
that he falls hard on his back.

Bub scrambles back up and the leader grabs the front of his
jacket and punches him in the face. Bub's nose begins to
bleed. The boys tighten their circle around him and begin
to feel through his pockets.

The leader of the group, grinning, looks around and up at
Mrs. Hedges who is watching the events unfold from her usual
perch.

 OLDER BOY
You're a whore too!

(CONTINUED)

MRS. HEDGES
(leaning out the window)
Charlie Moore, you leave that boy
alone.

Charlie makes no move but glares back at Mrs. Hedges defiantly.

MRS. HEDGES
(pleasantly)
You heard me you little
bastards. You leave that boy alone
or I'll come out there and make
you.

The other boys begin to back away from Bub slowly but Charlie is the last to go.

CHARLIE
(muttering)
Ol' bitch

He turns to Bub who is clutching his nose and crying.

CHARLIE
I'll fix you. I'll catch you comin
home from school and I'll fix you
so good--

MRS. HEDGES
You won't neither Charlie
Moore. That boy come home all
messed up and I'll know you did
it. Don't you fool with me boy.

CHARLIE
(backing away)
Aw his mother's a whore and so are
you!

The boys walk away slowly, including Charlie.

MRS. HEDGES
You get on outta this block Charlie
Moore. Don't you come walkin
through here any more'n you gotta.

Mrs. Hedges looks down at Bub and Bub looks up at her silently. The look at each other for a long moment. Bub's face is a mixture of blood and tears, humiliation and pain. Mrs. Hedges, her scars move visible than ever, reflects Bub's expression without a word.

CUT TO:

INT. LUTIE'S APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

The water is running in the bathroom sink. The camera follows the hallway and narrows in on Bub's small figure, dripping blood and tears into the sink. He stares at himself in the mirror and wipes blood from his nose but it keeps running.

CUT TO:

INT. THE CELLAR - AFTERNOON

Bub waits in the cellar, leaning against one of the tiny windows looking up and out into the street. He is humming to himself again and he plays with the envelopes in his hands, folding them and unfolding them, taking comfort in the repetition.

Jones enters and walks down the short cellar steps. His face is as impassive as ever and his entire person seems to belong in the small dark of the cellar.

BUB
(saluting)
Here you go Cap'n!

JONES
(taking the envelopes)
I'll turn 'em over to the
'thorities tomorrow.

BEAT

JONES CONT'D
You been in a fight kid?

BUB
(standing straighter)
Sure. But I won. Other guy was
all messed up. Black eye and he
lost a tooth. I knocked it right
out, right in front too.

JONES
(studying him)
Good.

BUB
You want me to put the letters that
ain't the right ones back in the
boxes?

(CONTINUED)

JONES
Nah, the police put 'em back.

BUB
(clearly relieved)
Oh ok.

BEAT

BUB CONT'D
They caught 'em yet?

JONES
No, not yet. They will. Takes
time. Don't you worry none 'bout
it--they'll get 'em in the end.

BUB
(nodding enthusiastically)
Alright Sup. I'm gonna do some
more work before my mom gets home.

JONES
That's good--you're doin a good job
kid.

Bub grins back at Jones and bounds up the cellar stairs and
out the door.

CUT TO:

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - AFTERNOON

Jones is on the stoop, watching the people passing by the
building and talking to himself, gesturing. He doesn't
notice the approach of two white gentlemen in long
overcoats. The first man walks up the steps to Jones and
presents a badge to the startled Jones.

OFFICER #1
You the Super in this building?

JONES
Yea--What's it to you?

OFFICER #2
(coming up the steps)
Post office investigators

BEAT

(CONTINUED)

JONES

Yeah. Yeah I'm the Super. How can I help you gentlemen?

OFFICER #2

Any of the tenants complain to you about stolen letters?

JONES

(carefully)

No sir. I'm around too much for anybody to be stealin.

The officer eyes him with obvious mistrust.

OFFICER #2

Funny, we've heard complaints from every house on this block but this one.

OFFICER #1

That seem off to you?

JONES

Listen...there's a kid lives in this house. He's always runnin' in and out of the places up and down this steet. I seen him every afternoon. Could be him.

The officers don't look convinced at this suggestion but they shrug anyway.

OFFICER #1

We'll stick around. You see this kid comin, you call him over and put your hand on his shoulder.

JONES

Yes sir.

THE NEXT SCENES ARE INTER-CUT--SHOTS OF LUTIE ON HER COMMUTE HOME AND SHOTS OF THE INVESTIGATORS TAKING BUB AWAY.

Through Jones, the camera sees Bub round the corner, bouncing along the sidewalk with his unending energy.

JONES

(calling to him)

Hey Bub!

Bub comes to a stop near Jones and Jones puts his arm on his shoulder warmly.

(CONTINUED)

BUB
Hey Sup! Hope I got some good
stuff today.

JONES
Yeah me too kid. Me too.

CUT TO:

INT. SUBWAY - EVENING

Lutie is sitting on the subway, staring down at the frayed handkerchief and repeatedly running her thumb over the once-rich embroidery. Her face is set, closed, hardened.

CUT TO:

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - EVENING

The men are watching from across the street, paying careful attention to Bub and Jones' interactions.

OFFICER #1
(to his partner)
We've got to make this
quick. These streets aren't safe.

The other officer nods in agreement and the two head toward the apartment building.

CUT TO:

INT. SUBWAY - EVENING

Lutie glances up at the advertisements, tracing with her tired eyes the pictures of sterile kitchens and living rooms and smiling white folks cooking or eating or listening to brand new radio sets. Her expression does not change.

CUT TO:

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - EVENING

One officer nods at Jones and grabs the shoulder of a bewildered Bub. The other officer begins to rummage through Bub's coat pockets. He pulls out a white envelope, then two more, holding them up to his partner.

CUT TO:

EXT. SUBWAY PLATFORM - EVENING

Lutie exits the subway and her movements are heavy, weighted. She tucks the handkerchief back into her purse and fights through the crowd until she reaches the stairs, making herself smaller to keep from rubbing against the mass of people making for the street.

CUT TO:

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - EVENING

Bub is crying and struggling to break the officer's hold while passerby begin to stop and stare at the scene. The men leaning against the adjacent buildings stop laughing and arguing to stare at the scene with defiant glares at the officers.

The officers quickly pull Bub into their waiting vehicle as the growing crowd presses in, whispering and calling to one another. Bub presses his face against the car window, still sobbing and crying out soundlessly.

FADE TO:

EXT. THE STREET - EVENING

Lutie is walking up the street toward the apartment building. Her face is still set and her pace is constant--everything about her is hardened, from her expression to the sound of her heels on the sidewalk.

She takes the steps of the apartment building quickly, immersed in her own thoughts.

MRS. HEDGES

Dearie

Lutie looks up, startled.

MRS. HEDGES CONT'D

Dearlie, they're waiting for you.

LUTIE

(confused)

Who?

MRS. HEDGES

Detectives. Two of 'em are upstairs.

(CONTINUED)

LUTIE
What do they want?

MRS. HEDGES
It's about Bub dear.

LUTIE
(sharply)
What about him? What about him?

MRS. HEDGES
Seems he's been stealing from
mailboxes. They caught him at it
this afternoon. I'm sure they'll
explain everything.

LUTIE
Oh my god

Lutie races up the rest of the stairs and flings the front
door open.

CUT TO:

INT. STAIRCASE - EVENING

The camera follows Lutie as she is racing up the stairs, two
at a time, muttering to herself.

LUTIE
Oh my god, oh my god

She reaches her apartment door and finds two white officers
standing outside, talking to each other in loud voices.

OFFICER #1
I can't believe people live in
dumps like this. Not fit for pigs.

OFFICER #2
Wonder what the mother looks like.

OFFICER #1
Probably some drunken bitch.

Lutie approaches them, completely out of breath.

LUTIE
Where is he? Where is my son?
Where is he?

(CONTINUED)

OFFICER #2
Take it easy lady

OFFICER #1
Don't get overexcited. he's down
at the Children's shelter. You can
see him tomorrow.

The officer hands her a document and then the two men leave. Lutie leans against the apartment door and tries to make out the text but her eyes are blurring the words and the CAMERA DISTORTS THE TEXT.

She finally takes the document and flattens it against the door, repeating certain words: CHILDREN'S COURT. COURT.

She presses her forehead against the door, against the stark white document. She pauses there, sobbing against the door until she is pounding on it with her fists, the document forgotten on the floor.

LUTIE
(shouting)
Dammit! GODDAMMIT! GODDAMMIT!

She continues shouting and repeating the same word over and over as other tenants begin to peer out of their apartments. She is beating the wall with her fists, kicking the door with her heels and making the walls vibrate with her shouts until she sinks to the floor, sobbing.

CUT TO:

INT. LAW OFFICE - EVENING

Lutie sits in front of a small man dressed neatly and looking at her with feigned concern. He is taking notes as Lutie finishes speaking.

LUTIE
Can you help him? Can you do
anything?

LAWYER
Of course. It's simple. You're a
hard-working mother, raising the
kid alone. He's just eight, too
young to be any real trouble. And
then the street, you know.

(CONTINUED)

LUTIE
The street? What street?

LAWYER
Any! Take your pick--the slums and
crime. If the judge agrees--kid
goes free, simple. Maybe a
suspended sentence and he gets
paroled in your care.

LUTIE
Thank you. Thank you so much.

BEAT

LAWYER
My fee is 200 dollars. Standard.

Lutie's face falls at this number and she doesn't respond
immediately.

LAWYER
Listen, I can pretty much guarantee
getting him off.

BEAT

LUTIE
When do you need the money?

LAWYER
Three days, latest.

CUT TO:

INT. THE CASINO - EVENING

Lutie steps into the dance area, searching the stage for
someone. Boots Smith is speaking with a white gentleman in
the corner. He notices Lutie standing at the bar and walks
toward her.

BOOTS
(calling to Lutie)
Hey baby! Where you been?

BEAT

BOOTS
(walking up to her)
Hey now, what's the matter?

(CONTINUED)

LUTIE

Hello. I don't need much of your time.

BOOTS

Nah baby, you know you got as much of my time--

LUTIE

It's about Bub. My son.

BOOTS

You got a kid?

LUTIE

Yes. He's eight years old.

BOOTS

Alright baby what's goin on?

LUTIE

He's in trouble. He's been caught stealing mail. I know someone put him up to it, I know it's that but they've got him going to Children's Court and I've got to come up with the money for a lawyer.

BOOTS

What kind of fee we talkin' about?

LUTIE

I need 200 dollars.

BEAT

LUTIE CONT'D

Can I have it? I'll pay you back, as soon as I can, I'll pay you back--

BOOTS

Course you can have it baby. I don't got it on me right now but you come by my place tomorrow night, this time, and I'll have it.

LUTIE

I can't...I can't begin to...Thank you. Thank you. It'll take me some time but I will pay you back.

(CONTINUED)

BOOTS
(waving his hand)
Listen baby, it's no big thing.

Lutie nods at him and begins to leave.

BOOTS CONT'D
You ain't leavin so soon?

LUTIE
I can't stay but thank you again

BOOTS
Not even one drink baby?

LUTIE
No. Thank you. I have to go.

BOOTS
Alright. I'll see you tomorrow
night then baby.

CUT TO:

INT. LUTIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Lutie lies in bed, in the darkness, wide awake. She sits up and moves to the side of the bed, staring straight ahead. After a moment, she stands up, crosses the bed, and flips on the light in her bedroom. She steps out into the living room flips on the light and looks at the couch where Bub sleeps. She leans against the doorframe of her bedroom for a moment before turning off her bedroom light and crawling back into bed.

She leaves the living room light on and curls into a tight ball on her bed, squeezing her eyes shut.

CUT TO:

INT. CHILDREN'S SHELTER - MORNING

Lutie sits in a kind of waiting room filled with other black women sitting in absolute silence. A few white women are in the room as well and no one speaks or makes eye contact.

RECEPTIONIST
Lutie Johnson?

Lutie walks up to the desk.

(CONTINUED)

RECEPTIONIST
(pointing to her right)
Right through there please.

Lutie walks toward a door where a guard meets her. They walk down a long corridor to a small, windowless room where she waits.

The door opens and Lutie sees Bub. He rushes toward her and she lifts him in her arms, pressing his small body against hers.

BUB
(crying)
I didn't think you'd ever come

LUTIE
(stroking his head)
Oh honey I'm here. I'm here
honey. You didn't really think
that did you?

Bub shakes his head miserably and Lutie wipes the tears from his face and kisses his forehead.

BUB
Can we go home now?

LUTIE
Not yet baby, not yet. You have to
stay here until Friday.

Bub begins to cry again and attaches himself to Lutie's waist again, sobbing into her.

LUTIE CONT'D
(crying with Bub)
I'll be back tomorrow and the next
day and the next day and then it'll
be Friday and then we're gonna go
home honey, I promise you.

The guard re-enters the room and takes a wailing Bub from Lutie. Another guard escorts Lutie out of the room and back down the corridor and back into the dismal room with the blank-faced mothers.

CUT TO:

EXT. BOOTS' APARTMENT - NIGHT

Lutie removes her white gloves with difficulty and rings the bell of Boots' apartment. Boots answers almost immediately.

BOOTS
(smiling)
Come on in baby. Got somebody I
want you to meet.

CUT TO:

INT. BOOTS' APARTMENT - NIGHT

Lutie stands in the entryway of Boots' apartment. The room is dimly lit but the figure of a sagging white gentleman is clearly visible in a chair near the fireplace. At the sight of Lutie, he stands and walks to greet her. Lutie stares at the man, her face inscrutable.

BOOTS
Mr. Junto, I'd like to introduce
Ms. Lutie Johnson.

Lutie nods her head automatically. As Junto steps toward her, Lutie unconsciously steps back, toward the door.

BOOTS CONT'D
C'mon baby, I'd like to talk to you
a minute.

Boots leads Lutie into his bedroom and shuts the door. He sits on the edge of the bed and looks up at Lutie.

LUTIE
If you give me the money, I can
have it to the lawyer's office by
the time he closes tonight.

BOOTS
Take your coat off and stay awhile
baby.

LUTIE
I came here to get the
money. That's all.

BOOTS
And I'm gonna help you get it.

BEAT

(CONTINUED)

BOOTS CONT'D

You gotta be nice to Mr. Junto for as long as he wants and you got yourself 200 dollars baby. He'll give it to you simple as that...

Lutie begins backing away from Boots and shaking her head at the sound of his voice.

LUTIE

You get him out of here. You hear me? You get him out of here right now.

BOOTS

Baby you be surprised at how you take to him

LUTIE

(shouting)

YOU GET HIM OUT OF HERE

BOOTS

Alright baby! Alright--don't get overexcited.

Boots leaves the room to speak to Junto.

Lutie sits on the edge of the bed, taking Boots' place. She looks around at the sparse but elegant bedroom. She pulls the handkerchief out of her purse and her thumb automatically begins tracing the embroidery.

Boots re-enters the room with a tray of whiskey and tumblers. He smiles at Lutie and places the tray on the table next to the bed.

BOOTS

Here baby, have a drink. Calm yourself down a little.

Lutie takes the drink and takes a hesitant sip.

LUTIE

Thank you.

The two sit in silence until Lutie stands and approaches the door.

BOOTS

Where you goin baby? C'mere and sit down awhile.

(CONTINUED)

LUTIE

I have to go. Thank you for the drink.

BEAT

Boots stands up abruptly, setting his drink down on the adjacent table. His demeanor has shifted to a kind of cruelty, an animal anger directed at Lutie.

BOOTS

You wanna get the little bastard out of jail or not? What you bein so damn fussy for?

Lutie sets her glass down roughly, spilling its contents onto the table. Her demeanor has also changed. She is no longer closed and withdrawn but reckless and livid.

LUTIE

Just skip it. I don't need to hear it.

BOOTS

Junto's a rich man baby. Rich as hell. Any chick would be crazy as hell to pass him up, you understand me?

Lutie says nothing but exits the bedroom. Boots follows her and pulls her toward the chairs by the fireplace.

BOOTS

Aww hell, c'mon baby. Sit down and let's talk awhile. Maybe we can work somethin' out, you and me.

Lutie hesitates but allows him to direct her toward the fireplace.

BOOTS CONT'D

Just ten minutes baby. We can get this straight in ten minutes.

Boots doesn't let go of her arm. Instead, he pulls her in closer to him, taking a moment to breathe her in.

BOOTS

We can still be friends baby, you and me. Ain't no reason to be mad at me

(CONTINUED)

Boots pulls her in with more force, firmly gripping her arms and pressing himself against her. Lutie struggles in his grip, trying to twist away from him.

BOOTS

(under his breath)

Aw I can get mine first, Junto can wait.

Lutie finally manages to twist away from Boots with surprising force. She steps away from him and begins shouting

LUTIE

Listen you son of a bitch, you tell Junto he can get his whores from Mrs. hedges. And you too--you hear me? You bastard, you--

Boots steps forward and slaps Lutie across the face. She staggers backward, holding her face.

BOOTS

I don't let a bitch talk to me taht way, you understand *me*?

Boots hits her again and then once more. Lutie grasps the [iron candlestick] and brings it down on Boot's head. He staggers sideways into the fireplace and Lutie brings it down again and again. Boots is bleeding heavily but Lutie continues striking him, over and over with greater and greater force, even as he lies motionless.

When she finally stops to catch her breath, Boots is clearly dead, his face smashed in and blood pooling onto the floor.

Lutie backs away from his body slowly and drops the candlestick to the floor. She backs all the way to the front door and tries the door but it's locked.

She hesitates and then walks to Boots' body and rummages through his pockets until she finds his keys. She pulls out his wallet and, upon opening, finds a A WAD OF HUNDRED DOLLAR BILLS. She laughs to herself, flipping through the bills, almost crying. While flipping through the wallet, she notices her blood-covered hands. She finds the handkerchief in her purse and frantically wipes away the blood from her hands. She stands up, walks toward a mirror, and begins violently wiping blood from her face with the handkerchief.

CUT TO:

INT. PENN STATION - NIGHT

TICKETMASTER

One way?

LUTIE

One way.

Lutie steps onto the platform where the train is already waiting on the tracks. Masses of people are coming and going, swarming all around Lutie and swallowing her up. Lutie is lost in the crowd.

The camera pans out and shows the train pulling away and the crowds pushing and shoving toward and away from the platform.

END