

THANK YOU, AMELIA EARHART

Written by

Al Mertens

Post Office Box 14455  
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73113  
almertens@yahoo.com  
(405) 312-2074

FADE IN:

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

The town DEPUTY navigates a belching vintage pick-up truck on a meandering country road as OPENING CREDITS roll. Smoke billows from the end of his hand-rolled cigarette held by fat fingers at the of hairy forearms.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

The Deputy kills his lights as he pulls to a Depression-era farmhouse. He idles, observes faint movement in the faintly-lit inside. He lights another smoke, then pulls something from his side, holds it up in the moonlight. A *shotgun*.

CROSSFADE

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Same house, no truck.

INT. HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

All is quiet in the living room on the sparse first floor. Cardboard boxes are scattered amidst the merely adequate furnishings: a sofa, coffee table, chair, an ancient tv.

The room has three entrances: the front door to the porch and two interior doors. A sturdy staircase oversees all.

The vague femininity of it all makes obvious that an old lady lives here. One who likes to read, given the bookshelves on the walls, the books in ideal order.

A KNOCK on the front door. Then another. The door opens.

SEASON, a girl in her late teens, enters. She looks around, distracted from her apparent usual disinterest.

SEASON

Hello?

No answer.

She ambles to the chair and sits, nervous. Hears NOISE from somewhere in the house. Cranes her neck. Was it through the door behind her? Or through the other one, maybe?

SEASON

Hello?

Whatever. She withdraws her phone to surf. Suddenly, from the door behind her--

MYRTLE (O.S.)

*Owww!*

Season cranes her neck in that direction--

MYRTLE (O.S.)

Now you're doing it intentionally!

NURSE PANACEK, a 50's-something in scrubs, erupts through the door, bee-lines for the kitchen, disheveled gauze in hand.

SEASON

Do you want me to--

PANACEK

Season, it is, right?

SEASON

Right.

PANACEK

Sit, Season. Enjoy your last moments prior to captivity.

Nurse Panacek disappears into the kitchen. A moment later she reemerges, a shot glass with clear liquid in hand. Heads back to her patient...

MYRTLE (O.S.)

Cotton pickin' blazes! My ears heard you say you'd make short work of it!

(inaudible mumbling)

... She's ready to meet me, is she? Alright, we'll do it out there!

The door opens and out comes Panacek pushing a wheelchair-bound MYRTLE, the old lady of the house. Sans the blanket over her legs, she could be headed to a formal slumber party: pressed pj's, handkerchief in pocket, coiffured hair.

Panacek brakes next to the sofa. Myrtle glances at Season, but is more concerned with the needle Panacek is readying.

PANACEK

You know this goes easier when you don't look.

MYRTLE

I *have* to look, so you do it right.

PANACEK

Do you know how many times I've drawn blood in my career?

MYRTLE

Half those foul-ups at this address.

Myrtle raises the shot glass toward Season as if in a toast.

MYRTLE

(to Season)

Pills mean a chaser.

SEASON

It *is* eight in the morning.

Myrtle hesitates on the snazzy remark from such a youngster--especially a girl. Like Annie Oakley in her favorite saloon, Myrtle raises the glass and toasts her.

MYRTLE

To Belle Starr and Amelia Earhart, outlaws and aviators!

She tosses back half the liquid.

MYRTLE

(to Panacek)

You gonna share my vitals with your hand-picked henchman?

PANACEK

Henchman? This is Season. You remember her, don't you?

MYRTLE

Of course I remember her.

Myrtle shoots Season a quick glance trying like hell to remember who she is. She nods at Season.

PANACEK  
Your blood, Myrtle. Your pill, too.

MYRTLE  
(to Season)  
C.H.F.  
(off Season's confusion)  
C.H.F., Congestive Heart Failure.  
That means constant dry mouth--

PANACEK  
(to Myrtle)  
Which we don't try to quench with  
Old Charter whiskey anymore, do we?

Myrtle can only think to stick out her tongue at Panacek. The two talk to Season as neither exists.

PANACEK  
Limited sodium and water  
restricted, too much is bad news.

MYRTLE  
Their aim is to bland me out.  
You're a guzzler, huh?

SEASON  
A what?

MYRTLE  
A guzzler. Doin' the utility  
company bidding, guzzlin' their  
water so they keep making their  
dime.

PANACEK  
I've left her liquids restrictions  
and daily in the kitchen.

MYRTLE  
Out of reach of my filthy mitts.

Panacek shakes her head as she draws blood. It's over quickly. But not quickly enough. For anyone.

MYRTLE

One of these days they'll print in the paper that I finally opened a can on Nurse I-Don't-Give-a-Heck.

PANACEK

Panacek. Home healthcare nurse.

MYRTLE

Nurse I Don't--

PANACEK

*Panacek.*

MYRTLE

Give-a-Heck.

Panacek hands the glaring Myrtle a pill. She raises the half-full shot glass again at Season.

MYRTLE

It ain't Old Charter, but here's lookin' at you...

(realizing the truism)

Kid...

Myrtle tosses back the pill, swallows big.

MYRTLE

You can look up phrases like "Here's lookin' at you, Kid."

(points at cell phone)

On that little computer of yours.

PANACEK

My work is done here.

MYRTLE

She dallies 'cause I'm her favorite.

SEASON

(to Panacek)

She's your favorite?

PANACEK

What do you think?

MYRTLE

(mumbles)

Jack ass.

Panacek weighs whether or not to let the remark go. The finish line's in sight, she disappears into the kitchen. Season and Myrtle stare at the kitchen door, then the floor, counting the seconds until she returns.

Panacek re-emerges, satchel over her shoulder, full-tilting for the front door. Like a relay racer, she hardly slows to hand off a pill vial to Myrtle.

PANACEK  
(over her shoulder)  
Use as directed. The words  
are there for a reason.

MYRTLE  
(mouthing at Season)  
Use as directed. The words  
are there for a reason.

Panacek turns to Myrtle, with final advice.

PANACEK  
And raise those arms now and again.

MYRTLE  
I think I *won't*.

PANACEK  
You will. That is, if you want to  
continue to be seen and not viewed.

MYRTLE  
(loud, mocking)  
*Ventricular dysfunction!*  
(off Panacek's detachment)  
*Pulmonary congestion!*

PANACEK  
And sitting around in a jogging  
suit doesn't constitute exercise.

MYRTLE  
I may be fat and unhappy, but I'll  
beat 'cha in a ten yard race!

PANACEK  
Well, I suppose getting in and out  
of your warm-up clothes counts for  
something. Do the arm movements and  
don't forget, I'm off for a week.  
(walks away, mumbles)  
Thank God.

MYRTLE  
Off a week? To do what?

PANACEK

Travel. See something new.  
 (to Season)  
 She's lived her entire life here.

MYRTLE

Not yet, I haven't.  
 (calling after Panacek)  
 Don't let the door hit'cha where  
 the Good Lord split'cha!

Nurse Panacek's exit leaves Season and Myrtle to themselves.

SEASON

(breaking awkward silence)  
 ... So, what can I help you with?  
 (off Myrtle's silence)  
 At least tell me what I call you.

MYRTLE

Come up with something.

SEASON

You're a grandma, aren't you?  
 (off Myrtles's suspicion)  
 ... A *great* grandma?

MYRTLE

Don't you ever call me that again.

SEASON

Then how about just *grandma*?

MYRTLE

*Just* a grandma... Like I wouldn't  
 have earned the *great*?

O...kay...

SEASON

So let's get on your stuff.

MYRTLE

Bunch'a useless claptrap, huh. Not  
 like it's been my *life* or anything.

Not knowing what to say that isn't wrong, Season's attention  
 drifts to the staircase.



MYRTLE  
Ye gods child, you look around like  
this is a museum.

SEASON  
It kinda is.

MYRTLE  
That's...no excuse.

SEASON  
(sad)  
... It seems...like you're lonely.

MYRTLE  
Who the hell are you?

SEASON  
I'm here to help.

Season meanders to a bookshelf.

MYRTLE  
Waste not, want not to me, hoarding  
to them. What we don't keep in the  
boxes goes to the estate sale. You  
do know what those are, don't you?  
(off Season's nod)  
Then you know it's a weekend of  
watching for storm clouds and  
interacting with riffraff that  
finally ends late Sunday with the  
clutching of small bills exchanged  
for things worth ten times more.  
(looks around, pensive)  
I always figured on dyin' here...

Season runs her finger on some dust--

MYRTLE  
Books don't much hold your  
interest, do they?

SEASON  
I have a Kindle.

MYRTLE  
I rest my case, Shoeshine.

SEASON

Season.

MYRTLE

So, Season, what was your favorite subject in secondary school?

SEASON

You mean high school?

MYRTLE

Secondary school to me, high school to you.

SEASON

Oh, I don't know.

MYRTLE

Of course you don't.

(off Season's surprise)

Don't give me that look. Secondary school was just prep for college, that testosterone-filled utopia where not much happens before noon, huh. Looks to me you ain't much more than a throw-down searchin' for a bonfire, or in this case, an M.R.S. degree.

(off Season's silence)

Well, you don't look too knocked up to me. I'll play nice so you can make a good report on me once you're back from enemy lines.

SEASON

I'm here to help.

(deliberate)

No matter *how* you act.

Silence.

MYRTLE

(contrite)

If there's somethin' here you take a shinin' to, you can hang onto it.

SEASON

It's your stuff.

MYRTLE

It *is* my stuff. My shit. To give you if I please.

SEASON

Nope.

MYRTLE

... So, gettin' back to your schoolin,' what was your G.P.A.?

SEASON

I'm, not sure.

MYRTLE

And there you have it. Four years of your life--likely *five* years in your case--on something, and you don't even know the results.

SEASON

I'm still waiting on my diploma.  
(off Myrtle's confusion)  
In the mail... They got me on attendance, too many MIAs. The principal let us clean lockers one Saturday so we could walk and get our diplomas mailed.

MYRTLE

They should'a put you people to scrubbing pans in the cafeteria. Learnt ya some real work.

Season stares down, hurt or ashamed, or...something. Myrtle reconsiders. She's obviously honest and trusts her enough to be truthful. And hasn't told her to go to hell. Yet.

MYRTLE

You know, my Wesley gave his teachers such a hard time, they kicked him out of school, which was in his church. Even the military wasn't gonna tell him what to do.

(impatient)

... I'm sayin' pay no mind to what people tell ya. So, what are ya gonna do for wages? Be a nurse like my best friend Panacek?

SEASON  
Or maybe the doctor she reports to.

MYRTLE  
... How about a woman preacher?

SEASON  
I'm atheist.

MYRTLE  
... This ole world... Guess my  
Bible ends up with someone else.

SEASON  
Sometimes I think about being a  
lawyer. You know, help people from  
getting screwed over. I can argue.

MYRTLE  
(mumbles)  
Show me a girl your age who can't.  
(off Season's look)  
We can be more than where we're  
from. Look at me, capable as ever.

As proof, Myrtle tries to stand, screws up and pitches forward. Season rushes over, straightens a humbled Myrtle.

MYRTLE  
... Sometimes I try more than I  
should. Say more than I should.

SEASON  
Me too.

MYRTLE  
God help you, you somewhat remind  
me of *me*.

SEASON  
I do?

MYRTLE  
I said *somewhat*.

Satisfied, Season grabs a box.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

A bright-eyed Season opens the door, oblivious to Myrtle in her wheelchair next to the front window. Eye covers on, apparently asleep.

SEASON  
 Sorry I'm late. Where ya at?  
 (spies her)  
 There you are, rise and shine.  
 (off no reply or movement)  
 ... Grandma?  
 (in Myrtle's space)

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

The pick-up truck from earlier. Headlights off, it pulls to Myrtle's porch. The driver kills the engine, lights a smoke.

INT. HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

SEASON  
 ...no...  
 (grazes Myrtle's cheek--)

MYRTLE  
 Boo!  
 (concurrent **SHOTGUN  
 BLASTS**)

Season SCREAMS, nearly falls backward. A pill vial falls from Myrtle, PINGS on the floor.

SEASON  
 That wasn't very nice.

Myrtle wears a huge smile, the first we've seen.

SEASON  
 I thought something happened to you. I thought... That wasn't nice.

MYRTLE  
 I'm sorry. Truly.

Season picks up the vial, mad.

SEASON  
What are these?

MYRTLE  
Pills.  
(off Season's irritation)  
Panacek allows me one sedative per  
visit. I'm legal.

SEASON  
What is this, six months worth?

MYRTLE  
About ten lifetime supplies in my  
case. They work, though.

SEASON  
But you're not taking them.

MYRTLE  
But they *work*. Panacek gives the--  
(air quotation marks)  
*prescribed dosage* most visits.

SEASON  
She doesn't see you palming pills?

MYRTLE  
People see what they want to see.

SEASON  
So what are you saving them for?

MYRTLE  
Do you know how expensive they are?

SEASON  
But if you're not gonna use them...

MYRTLE  
You, Dear, have a lot to learn.

INT. HOUSE - DAY - FLASHBACK

Myrtle is in her wheelchair next to the front window. Her  
head drifts down, heavy, so heavy.

MYRTLE (V.O.)

Her cue to skedaddle is my poor little head in my chest, worn from the rigors of staring at God's creations. I'm done dealing with her, she's done dealing with me, everybody wins, no long good-byes.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

MYRTLE

So, while at the window taking in my shot to hell roses this morning, I saw you pull up. And what caught my eye was your driver.

(off Season's sudden fear)

Who's the boy? 'Course to you he's a *man*. The pair of you young like me and my Wesley were, when we were doin' what y'all are surely doin' if he's givin' you a ride so early.

SEASON

...What do you mean?

MYRTLE

...Don't act like you don't know what I mean.

MYRTLE

He ever throw a pass 'atcha in that fancy truck?

SEASON

(seizing the unforced error)

Throw a pass... I don't know what you're talking about.

MYRTLE

(gleeful)

Amorous congress, that's what I mean, miss locker cleaner! Having sex! Servicing Venus!

(miming pumping a pedal)

Chitty chitty *bang bang*?

Season's mouth drops open.

SEASON

I'm not comfortable with this.

MYRTLE

But you're pleased as punch to  
pack my scant possessions in their  
own little coffins.

SEASON

Okay, yes, we live together.

MYRTLE

And his name? You owe me a name,  
now that you got me all riled up.

SEASON

... Harper.

MYRTLE

Harper. Your lil joy boy.

SEASON

Umm...

MYRTLE

Out with it.

SEASON

Harper's a *she*.

MYRTLE

(resigned)  
... This ole' world...  
(struggling)  
Why didn't you--

SEASON

You didn't ask...  
(on the offense)  
So, you were having sex at my age.

MYRTLE

... You have nothing on me, my  
Dear. I was a brazen strumpet. A  
Mary Magdalene-ish figure like in  
the Bible. Does your Mr. Kindle  
offer that one?

SEASON

... Harper loves me, end of story.

MYRTLE

If only love could be enough...



SEASON

I've got a question.

MYRTLE

Amorous congress means fucking.  
That should be clear to a girl  
watchin' the mailbox for a diploma.

SEASON

My question is about you and your  
Wesley.

MYRTLE

Yes?

SEASON

Did you love him?  
(off Myrtle's silence)  
I mean, *really* love him?

MYRTLE

... He was leaving. We got--  
(her voice catches)  
We got telegrams on boys not coming  
home. Boys we'd grown up with. I  
wanted a piece of him if he didn't.

SEASON

... Lame, huh. Me givin' it up to  
someone who's not going away. And  
not even in the military.

MYRTLE

Now you listen to me. There's no  
*giving it up* like you have no say.

SEASON

... Harper could be *the one*.

MYRTLE

Aside from opposing pieces of  
equipment, that makes no sense.

SEASON

What?

MYRTLE

Makes no sense, the first one you  
fall for, enough to *give it up* to,  
is *the one*.

SEASON

You knew Wesley was *your* one.

Myrtle deflects by turning to the closest box.

MYRTLE

Chop chop. You never know when Panacek's minions'll pop by, which is whenever the hell they've a mind to. No need to risk them opening the door to a couple malingerers.

Following suit, Season surveys a nearby pile. Snags on a framed picture. Scrutinizes it up close.

SEASON

This looks really old.

MYRTLE

*This looks really old.* You sure know how to sweet talk a girl. Both it and I are from a time when things were made to last.

SEASON

Harper buys clothes cheap so she can get rid of 'em and get more. Me, I never throw anything away.

MYRTLE

Good girl.

SEASON

So this is Wesley...

EXT. PORCH - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

We're behind teenage buck WESLEY at Myrtle's door. He KNOCKS.

MYRTLE (V.O.)

(nostalgic)

One evening after supper. Daddy upstairs tuckered from the wheat planting. Indian summer before the cold set in. Wesley came for my sister, but he and I...

INT. HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

MYRTLE

(grinning)

...we grew up together, but that night everything changed.

SEASON

Oooh, scandalous. Stealing your sister's man.

MYRTLE

He was perfectly willing, lemme tell ya.

SEASON

You were so into him it was easy to have sex with him before he left.

MYRTLE

You ever heard the term, "It takes two to tango?"

SEASON

Yeah, this one, too, "There's no giving it up like you have no say."

MYRTLE

Okay, stealing sis's man may be a reasonable sum up of what happened.

SEASON

Of what happened.

MYRTLE

What I *did*, okay? Why is this so important to you?

SEASON

(to picture)

It's so...sweet.

(off Myrtle's glare)

It *is* sweet. How it was, you know, back in The Day. You were with someone, you know...*with* someone, with them only, you got married, and that was it from then on.

MYRTLE

Oh, Wesley and I never got married.

Season sets down the picture.

SEASON

And you rip me for the same thing.

MYRTLE

It wasn't the same thing. We weren't...living together.

SEASON

Whatever. So if Wesley wasn't your husband... What the hell?

MYRTLE

Watch your fucking language.

SEASON

You were just gonna let me think you had a happy life with a military husband. Why didn't you--

MYRTLE

You didn't ask.

A rapt Myrtle eyeballs a frustrated Season pull a hatbox from a box, the most ornate thing seen so far. Season opens it, pulls out a leather AVIATOR'S HAT. Myrtle motions for Season to hands it over, which she does.

MYRTLE

... To think I could go any length of time with this buried in some box...

(mumbles)

To outlaws and aviators...

SEASON

Are you kidding? You drop a bombshell like that, then just act like, nothing.

(off Myrtle's silence)

You have stories to tell, so how about telling them instead of making people jump through hoops.

MYRTLE

What do you want me to tell?

SEASON

Holy shit, anything!

MYRTLE

I warned you on the language.

SEASON

Right, Miss F-bomb.

MYRTLE

Sometimes things need to stay in boxes, tucked away in the attic.

SEASON

They have to come out eventually.

MYRTLE

Not if you tuck them well enough. Some things you don't need to know... And some things you don't want to know.

SEASON

I want to know, 'cause what if you--  
(catches herself)

MYRTLE

What if what?

SEASON

What if you *die* and no one knows?

MYRTLE

... When you're my age, you've taken in a pearl or two. One is that no one has time for anything but themselves. So these days I don't waste my precious time, the little the doctors say is left.

SEASON

... So what are you spending your precious time on?

Long silence. Season returns to the stacks.

SEASON

(softly)  
You're right. Lots to do here.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

Myrtle and Season work amidst organized chaos. The Aviator's Hat now rests in a special place on the coffee table. Season pulls items from a box, plops into the corner of the sofa.

SEASON  
 (jumping up)  
*Owww!*  
 (concurrent **SHOTGUN  
 BLASTS**)

MYRTLE  
 (clutching chest)  
 Do that again and you'll use one of these boxes to haul me outta here!

Season pulls forth a large plastic container of pepper.

SEASON  
 God, who left this here?

MYRTLE  
 Now you believe in God. Return it.

SEASON  
 Put it back? Why?

MYRTLE  
 Quit lookin' like you lost your ball in the tall weeds. That's where it goes.  
 (off Season's look)  
 Since you *must* know, it's safe from Panacek there, since she'll *never* sit on the sofa to chat.

SEASON  
 I still don't get it.

MYRTLE  
 Pepper for those occasional days when she says a sedative won't go with whatever else she gave me. A pinch up the nostrils, my nose is off and runnin,' and my favorite nurse beats a retreat from Typhoid Mary even quicker than usual.

Season scrutinizes the pepper box.

MYRTLE

Always buy in quantity. It's cheaper that way and some's on hand when the stores shut down.

SEASON

When the stores shut down...

Myrtle doesn't feel like explaining. Season re-stashes the pepper, returns to the stuff. Picks up a picture. Mesmerized, shifts her attention to Myrtle, then back to the picture.

MYRTLE

Quit eyeballin' me.

SEASON

Your hair. Look at your hair, your curls are so strong, like mine... Did you get it done a lot?

MYRTLE

You're not gonna believe me when I tell you something.

SEASON

What?

MYRTLE

Never been to the parlor even once.

SEASON

No kidding.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

YOUNG MYRTLE sits on the divan, inspecting her curly locks in a hand-held mirror.

MYRTLE (V.O.)

I never gave in to the temptation to straighten like the other curly girls did. Of course the ones with straight hair paid plenty of good money to get what I have--

INT. HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

MYRTLE  
 (voice catches)  
 What I *had*... Seems like what we're  
 born with is never good enough.

Season flips through some of the other pictures. Glances at the hat, then back to the pictures.

SEASON  
 So many of you with that hat. You  
 must've loved that hat, even though  
 it covered up your gorgeous hair.

Myrtle considers how to disagree, gives up.

MYRTLE  
 I *did* love that hat.

SEASON  
 Tell me about it.

Long silence.

MYRTLE  
 Amelia Earhart.

SEASON  
 Is that a friend of yours.

MYRTLE  
 (repressing a smirk)  
 You might say that.

SEASON  
 I think I've heard the name.

MYRTLE  
 Oh, good. At least you listened the  
 one day you attended history class.  
 (off Season's hurt look)  
 She was a pilot. Back in *The Day*.

SEASON  
 You knew her?



MYRTLE

I wish. Amelia was the biggest of celebrities, we girls all looked up to her. Boys too, Wesley did, not that he ever copped to it...

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

YOUNG MYRTLE lies face-down, listening to the radio.

MYRTLE (V.O.)

She disappeared when I was twelve, and I was on that radio like flypaper prayin' for good news. But she was gone. They said she lost control, but I know better. She was tired of everyone hounding her, so she left on her terms.

SEASON (V.O.)

... And you have her hat.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

A beaming YOUNG MYRTLE pulls her Amelia Earhart hat from the fancy hatbox. Puts it on, admiring herself, so proud.

MYRTLE (V.O.)

That *hat*...was hot as a pistol for years. People readin' all sorts a stuff into what she pulled off, what she meant by the things she said. That hat wasn't cheap, lemme tell ya. Daddy scalded both sides 'a me for usin' credit terms for one. Even after I made that last payment, he didn't give me permission to wear it in front of him. But I did.

INT. HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

SEASON

You had to get permission?

MYRTLE

For everything. But this one thing  
I bucked him on.

SEASON

Why this one thing?

MYRTLE

Some things you have to do 'cause  
it's what you have to do, even when  
no one else understands it. That  
hat stood for something.

SEASON

What?

MYRTLE

Doing what I wanted to do and not  
needing a man to do it. It's all  
about freedom. You were old enough  
to vote this last time, weren'tcha?  
(off Season's nod)  
Did you?

SEASON

(standing up, proud)  
Nope. You want a water? You're  
probably thirsty, huh?

MYRTLE

Not anymore.

On her way past Myrtle, Season pats her on the head--and her  
hair *moves*! Myrtle recoils. To both their horror, it's a wig.

MYRTLE

Don't touch me!

SEASON

I didn't mean to--

MYRTLE

You people never mean anything!

SEASON

I'm sorry, Grandma!

MYRTLE

I know you're sorry, doesn't take a genius to see you're sorry. One sorry girl, that is!

Myrtle straightens her wig.

MYRTLE

There, I fixed it.  
 (off Season's devastation)  
 ... Aw, come on, ya lose a little hair and all of a sudden people handle ya with kid gloves. Besides, now you know without this wig, I'd need to find a house to haunt.  
 (receiving no response)  
 Now that you've seen me, I guess we'll dispense with the formality. It's hot, anyway.  
 (points to television)  
 How 'bout startin' the boob tube? Or better yet, my radio? I haven't tuned in for ages.

SEASON

... What do you like to listen to?

Myrtle considers it. A smile breaks.

MYRTLE

You're too young to know a song about a 'ticket to ride.'

SEASON

... But you *should* care.

MYRTLE

(impressed)  
 You remind me of 'em. Those mophead boys who sang that song, you're familiar. All hip-gyratin' about good days and sunshine. And love.  
 (points to radio)  
 I listened to every one of their new songs on that radio right there. Then they started scrappin' like us, and that was it.

SEASON  
They're my fave. I want to go to  
England to learn more about them.

MYRTLE  
(scoffs)  
England.

SEASON  
(defensive)  
What?

MYRTLE  
You people, always traversing  
hell's half-acre and ignoring  
what's right under your noses.  
Seems you'd save a bunch of time  
and money if you paid attention.  
(off Season's recoil)  
... Sorry.

SEASON  
(smiles)  
The small ones are easy to wipe. So  
your tv works?

MYRTLE  
The prison guards make sure of it.  
They tape record their ball games,  
watch 'em here, then bill me for  
the pleasure.

SEASON  
I missed last night's game, we were  
grocery shopping.

MYRTLE  
That remote doesn't operate on its  
own, so get it and watch your game.  
Don't mind me if I snooze, I didn't  
quite get in my twenty hours today.

Season walks to the tv, picks up the remote.

MYRTLE  
Well, turn it on.

SEASON  
Do you watch football?

VINTAGE FOOTAGE of a 1930s football game. For a moment, Myrtle's lost.

MYRTLE  
 (snapping back)  
 Football? Buncha violence  
 punctuated by committee meetings.  
 Broad-shouldered heathens.

SEASON  
 How about golf?

MYRTLE  
 That's a sport?

SEASON  
 Horse racing?

MYRTLE  
 Horses are good...with ketchup.

SEASON  
 So no sports, why not?

MYRTLE  
 You don't want my answer.

SEASON  
 Tell me.  
 (off Myrtle's silence)  
 It's okay--

MYRTLE  
 They should be outlawed.

SEASON  
 What's that?

INT. HOUSE - DAY - FLASHBACK

YOUNG MYRTLE stands facing a young black field hand, HECTOR.

YOUNG MYRTLE  
 You get the hell off my doorstep!

INT. HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

MYRTLE  
All the black men.

SEASON  
... *What?*

MYRTLE  
Most of them, anyway.

SEASON  
You don't believe in diversity?

MYRTLE  
What do you mean?

SEASON  
You know, like how colleges take people from different backgrounds, different skin colors? You don't think that's a good thing?

MYRTLE  
I see what you're saying. Too much of one thing in one place is bad. Especially people.

SEASON  
Exactly.

MYRTLE  
So we shouldn't have so damn many black men in sports. We're saying the same thing, child.  
(off Season's silence)  
Olympians can't fix their blood, so why all the bred-for-sports blacks? Mostly locker cleaners like you, I gather. No offense.

Season returns the remote, heads for the door...

MYRTLE  
What are you doing?

SEASON  
Leaving.

MYRTLE

Why?

SEASON

You know why.

MYRTLE

Honestly, I have nothing against  
black men, if that's what it is.

(as Season opens the door)

You people don't know reality!

SEASON

Thanks for the pro bono psych eval.

MYRTLE

You have no skills. No *real* skills.

I can butcher chickens, pigs, too.

I can cut hair, chop wood--

(looks down at legs)

I *used* to chop wood. You're about  
to be the Greatest Generation and  
don't even see it coming. But go  
ahead and keep hounding me to watch  
the swarms of black men on tv!

SEASON

I feel sorry for you.

...and walks out.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

KNOCKING on the door and a muffled yell--

HECTOR (O.S.)

I know you home, Miss Myrtle!

A younger-but-still-adult Myrtle, MIDDLE-AGE MYRTLE, bursts  
from the kitchen, whips open the door.

MIDDLE-AGE MYRTLE

I told you, *never* come here.

HECTOR

You ain't bossin' me after work's  
through.

MIDDLE-AGE MYRTLE

You want me callin' my Deputy? *Boy?*

His face breaks into a toothy smile. He chuckles.

HECTOR

I ain' scared 'a him or you.

Awkward silence...until she grins, beaten.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

Myrtle's in her spot next to the sofa. Pondering. A soft KNOCK on the door. It opens. It's Season. She walks in, sits. Begins to work a box. Hands a picture to Myrtle.

SEASON

You were wrong.

MYRTLE

About which part?

SEASON

I made it *twice* to history class.

Crickets.

MYRTLE

You turned into my sister, us fightin' and carryin' on like we were. When ya disagree with your kin, you tend to go all out. No holds are barred, like your sports people might say. You know, child...I'd feel sorry for me, too.

SEASON

I know that's what I said, but--

MYRTLE

Some things can't be wiped away. But small things like that, those are easy to wipe.

SEASON

... I'm still sorry I said it.



MYRTLE

Just because we don't *want*  
something to be true doesn't mean  
it's not. Look at me.

Season's afraid to.

MYRTLE

*Look at me.*

Season does.

MYRTLE

You *don't* want to be me. About to  
come off the rolls. Countin' on  
strangers like you.

SEASON

But you can take medicine, and do  
what they tell you.

MYRTLE

(chuckles)

Listen, Honey, this is as good as  
I'll be from here on.

MYRTLE

We've got work, child. Tell me more  
about that non-husband of yours.

SEASON

Tell me more about that non-husband  
of *yours*.

MYRTLE

I asked you first.

SEASON

You're gonna kick the bucket first.

MYRTLE

Your smart mouth's gonna getcha in  
trouble one of these days, I oughta  
know... But I s'pose that'll stand  
you in good stead for courtroom  
work. Keep movin,' ain't nothin' to  
talk about with me and my Wesley.

SEASON

What happened when he came over?

Long pause...

EXT. PORCH - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Again, WESLEY's at Myrtle's door. He KNOCKS.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

YOUNG MYRTLE, a teen waif in a threadbare sundress, crouches beneath the sill of an open window.

She rises, throws something small at Wesley--a pebble?--squats back down quickly.

EXT. PORCH - CONTINUOUS

It hits him in the head. He looks up, rubs the spot, KNOCKS again.

INT. HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

She rises, throws again--

EXT. PORCH - CONTINUOUS

It hits him again, but he saw her. He slips to the window.

INT. HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

She rises up again, and he surprises her, making her yelp. He leans into the window, their chemistry oozing.

WESLEY

Now why's my little church girl  
Myrtle always so on'ry to me?

YOUNG MYRTLE

Ah'm a'doin' what the Bible says.

WESLEY

And what would that be?

YOUNG MYRTLE

Openin' the windows of heaven and  
pourin' down blessings upon you. So  
says the Book of Malachi today.

WESLEY

Makes sense that an angel lives in  
heaven.

She beams at the compliment.

EXT. PORCH - CONTINUOUS

He picks up one of the beans on the ground.

INT. HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

WESLEY

I suppose beans're a blessing...  
You sure you're not so heavenly  
minded you're no earthly good?

YOUNG MYRTLE

I'm plenty earthly good. I read my  
Bible every day.

WESLEY

When I first looked over at you I  
thought sure you were your sister.  
'Cause 'a your dress... Doesn't she  
have one just like it?

YOUNG MYRTLE

This is hers. *Was* hers, today's the  
first day 'a it bein' mine. Daddy  
gets her the fancy new dresses and  
me all her old ones. You got some  
smart put-downs for me for it,  
along with mah shoes like your  
fellas always do?

(awkward silence)

Daddy says a young lady shouldn't  
dress beautiful anyway.

WESLEY

Why?

YOUNG MYRTLE  
 So fellas don't get wrong ideas.  
 Like about the whores in the Bible.

He shifts, looks toward the door.

WESLEY  
 You tryin' to make your house hard  
 to get into, like the eye 'a that  
 needle?

YOUNG MYRTLE  
 ...No.

She lets him in, takes her place on the sofa, goes back to  
 reading her Bible as he remains standing.

WESLEY  
 Where is she? We made an  
 appointment.

YOUNG MYRTLE  
 (not looking up)  
 She's here.

WESLEY  
 ... You're shy, ain'tcha.

YOUNG MYRTLE  
 I ain't.

WESLEY  
 They say only the shy girls keep  
 readin' their Bibles when a  
 gentleman comes a-callin'.

She closes her Bible, sets it down.

YOUNG MYRTLE  
 I don't know where you heard that.  
 I'll get her.

She starts for the back room. He stops her--

WESLEY  
 Wait.

YOUNG MYRTLE  
 Why?

WESLEY

'Cause I ain't done talkin' to you.

YOUNG MYRTLE

(confused, until--)

Now you're makin' sense! You want me to teach you Bible verses. Or we can take in a gospel show on the radio. I usually have it on.

He cackles in surprise and she sits back down.

WESLEY

No... You either act like you're that big cat sphinx in Egypt or the Spanish Inquisition... They're all heathens, right?

YOUNG MYRTLE

Whores too, I'd reckon.

WESLEY

(motioning her to stand)

Stand up.

YOUNG MYRTLE

I'm right fine on the divan.

WESLEY

I want you to stand up.

YOUNG MYRTLE

Why?

WESLEY

'Cause I want to dance with you, that's why.

YOUNG MYRTLE

Dance?

WESLEY

Yep. David's a-dancin' himself silly all the time in your Bible. If it's good enough for Saint David, you oughta be fine with it. Betcha never expected me to know that, didja?

YOUNG MYRTLE  
David was no saint. I don't think.

WESLEY  
Damn right, sorry, I knew that.

YOUNG MYRTLE  
No bad words in Daddy's house!

Awkward.

WESLEY  
You're still good on that dance,  
right?  
(off her folding her arms)  
I want you to dance with me.

YOUNG MYRTLE  
(deliberate)  
If you want to dance with me,  
you'll have to ask me.

WESLEY  
Will you dance with me?

YOUNG MYRTLE  
I won't.

His brashness leaves him. He looks toward the other room.

WESLEY  
You said your sister's home--

YOUNG MYRTLE  
Since dancing's in the Bible, we  
should do it for the Lord our God.

She stands. He reaches to her, she instinctively backs away.  
He moves closer, gently--

YOUNG MYRTLE  
Don't look at me below my knees.  
And leave plenty of room for Jesus.

They move close. As they rotate slowly, he puts his arm  
around her waist. She resists. He tries again. She  
tentatively accepts it.

WESLEY  
Your Daddy's wrong.

YOUNG MYRTLE  
Daddy's never wrong.

WESLEY  
... Your dress isn't the thing  
giving me wrong ideas...

She looks at him, eyes like saucers. Throwing caution to the wind, she puts her arms around his shoulders...

INT. HOUSE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

MYRTLE  
(transfixed)  
That day I learned why David in the Bible was punch-drunk about dancing.

SEASON  
What about your sister?

EXT. PORCH - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

MYRTLE (V.O.)  
My sister darn near broke Wesley's arm after I was his girl. Wouldn't talk to me for a month.

Again, WESLEY's at Myrtle's door. KNOCKS. The door flies open, and out runs YOUNG MYRTLE'S SISTER, frying pan in hand, gunning for Wesley.

FREEZE FRAME

INT. HOUSE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

SEASON  
Harsh.

MYRTLE  
I reckon I deserved it. He asked me to marry him a week later.

SEASON  
What?! And you were how old?

MYRTLE

... Sixteen.

SEASON

Sixteen?!

MYRTLE

It was a different time. At that age surely you'd done lots more with boys.

SEASON

Guess again... So, engaged. What did your parents think?

Long pause.

MYRTLE

I was born in this house. Right about where I'm sittin,' Daddy delivered me. That was when you didn't whine about what you didn't have, namely morphine for Momma. You took stock and did what you did to survive. Anyway, I started comin' out and Momma was delirious in her pain and Daddy was yellin,' "Is it a boy? Is it your boy?"

VINTAGE FOOTAGE, 1930s football game.

MYRTLE (V.O.)

"Look at the shoulders, it is! He's gonna be a player!" Well, he's pullin' and she's squeezin' and my head comes, then he sees my shoulders and they're broad. Don't know what happened to 'em since then, but at birth I could've been Daddy's player on the gridiron. So Daddy, all excited, hoops and hollers happy as can be, "Here's my boy, ain't no girl..." Anyway, I kept comin'...and then he sees I'm a girl and... ..



INT. HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

MYRTLE

(traumatized)

... Momma said he... he...pretty well stopped pullin.' ... You know, since I wasn't his boy... So sixteen years later me movin' away was fine and dandy with Daddy.

Silence.

SEASON

But you came back here.

MYRTLE

... I never left... How about you give it up on info for a change?

SEASON

What do you want to know?

MYRTLE

How about that...Barker?

SEASON

... Harper.

MYRTLE

You gonna get married?

SEASON

... I don't know.

MYRTLE

What don't you know? Out with it.

SEASON

... I can't go all fast like that, like you guys did back in The Day. It's not like that anymore.

MYRTLE

Fast on those little computers in your pockets, fast in your expensive Kraut and Jap cars, slow with each other when it comes to love, or whatever you call it now. Lemme tell ya, you may as well go fast so if he's the right one--

(MORE)

MYRTLE (CONT'D)

(catches herself)

...*they're* the right one, you start in on your life, and if they're wrong, you've time to find another.

(off Season's skepticism)

I know, I know, you settle down with this one and just think of all the others you're giving up.

SEASON

... You *do* understand...

MYRTLE

(deadpan)

All those others aren't options, Honey, stop foolin' yourself.

SEASON

Oh, *really*...

Myrtle's gone again as soft big band music FADES IN...

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Wesley holds a reflective Young Myrtle as they lean back on the sofa. Both are somewhat disheveled.

YOUNG MYRTLE

(to Wesley)

Daddy kept tryin' for a little boy. Instead he got a dead wife.

(as he holds her tighter)

You know why he named me Myrtle?

WESLEY

Why?

YOUNG MYRTLE

Daddy said closest thing to Michael. The boy archangel.

WESLEY

I have to tell you something.

She looks at him with frightened eyes.

YOUNG MYRTLE

Out with it.

He struggles to his feet.

WESLEY  
We always talk good dancing.

She stands into his embrace. They sway back and forth.

WESLEY  
After what the Japs did, I ain't  
waitin' around for the G Men to  
come for me. I'm 'a goin. Now.  
(off a frozen Myrtle)  
Some things a man's gotta do--

YOUNG MYRTLE  
You're not a man.  
(off Wesley's bowed head)  
That's not what I mean.

WESLEY  
Gee whiz, I'm goin' easy on ya.

YOUNG MYRTLE  
God help me for what I'm about to  
say. But damn you.  
(off Wesley's silence)  
I said, *damn you!*

Wesley breaks free, retreats a few steps.

YOUNG MYRTLE  
You can't go.

WESLEY  
I have to.

YOUNG MYRTLE  
You love me. You have the best of  
times here with me, you said so.

WESLEY  
Someone has to keep you safe.

She walks to him, puts his hands on her face.

YOUNG MYRTLE  
Feel. I'm safe.

WESLEY  
... You feel safe in church?

YOUNG MYRTLE  
I *am* safe in church.

WESLEY  
You know why they bombed our boys  
on a Sunday morning?  
(off her head shake)  
'Cause our side was in church,  
worshippin' God.

Something shifts.

YOUNG MYRTLE  
So what will they have you doing?

WESLEY  
Fly and drop bombs right back on  
them. It's only right.

She plods to her Bible. Picks it up, presses it to her face.

YOUNG MYRTLE  
If it's supposed to be, God will  
tell us. Read to me.

WESLEY  
Of course, my dearest.

They return to the sofa. She puts her Bible in his hands. He  
pulls his glasses from his shirt pocket--she *grabs* them,  
tosses them to the floor, *stomps* them.

YOUNG MYRTLE  
Now you *can't fly!*

He bends down, picks up the pieces.

WESLEY  
... I already took the doctor  
inspection and they want me. It's  
alright, I won't get hurt.

She gives in fully to despair.

WESLEY  
You're gonna teach church stuff,  
I'm gonna drop plenty of bombs,  
then come home and we're gonna live  
happy. In our *own* house.

She peeks at him through tears, wanting to believe.

MYRTLE

You'll go to church with me?

WESLEY

I'll make it safe for us.

YOUNG MYRTLE

(inspired)

The end of Babel, this world a  
clean temple. Free of Japs.

WESLEY

And Chinamen.

YOUNG MYRTLE

Daddy says the Chinamen are our  
friends.

WESLEY

(skeptical)

I have something for you... Ya  
ain't gonna toss beans at me if I  
step to the porch for it, are ya?

She shakes her head. He stands, grabs a bag from just outside  
the door. He returns, hands her the bag. She stares at it.

WESLEY

Open it.

She does. Pulls out an Aviator's Hat.

WESLEY

My Ms. Amelia Earhart, I presume.

YOUNG MYRTLE

How did you?--

WESLEY

LaSalle said I could send money  
'til it's paid.

(off her confusion)

It's all worked out, put it on.

She does. It's too good to be true.

WESLEY

I'll earn mine right off, listen to the radio for me. When I'm home for good, you wear yours and I wear mine when I fly you in my plane.

YOUNG MYRTLE

The real Lady Lindy flew 'round the world.

(defeated)

I can't even drive a motor car.

WESLEY

When I'm gone, just close your eyes and drive, then when I'm back I'll teach you. Flyin' too, heck, you'll be a real Amelia Earhart.

(off her pride)

Quick as I can, I'll send you a swell photograph of me in flyin' school. It's heaven, all of it dress right dress and smart as ya please. They give you spiffy clothes to wear like you never saw, 'cept in the newspaper, and your fancy shoes have the spittinest shine on 'em. Cripes, you should see my brother's police outfit he struts in ever' day! He says if he comes back before me, he'll be Deputy and keep you safe 'til I arrive!

(against her darkness)

... Ah'll buy new shoes for you with my pay, no holes in 'em. I'll buy you shiny white dresses, no stains--

YOUNG MYRTLE

When are you leaving me?

(off his silence)

I know you're not thick on it, when are you leaving me?

WESLEY

... Tomorrow...

YOUNG MYRTLE  
 (reeling)  
 ...So, a last bit of sinnin'  
 today...

WESLEY  
 (softly)  
 ... I'm scared.

YOUNG MYRTLE  
 The Lord my God said to Joshua, 'Be  
 strong, be brave, be fearless, for  
 you are never alone.'

He nods. A low-level electrical current is running through  
 her. Finally, it grounds--

YOUNG MYRTLE  
 You're not coming back for me.

WESLEY  
 Don't say that. It's not right.

YOUNG MYRTLE  
 It *is* right... But it's no matter.  
 (off his shock)  
 I'll make someone else teach me to  
 work Daddy's motor car. I'll make  
 him lemonade and we'll set on the  
 porch and smoke. And live right  
 here in this house surrounded by  
 rose bushes he's gonna buy me. And  
 he'll be happy comin' home to me to  
 dance at night. Every night... And  
 maybe...maybe he's even a field  
 hand nigra.  
 (off Wesley's devastation)  
 Thank you for teaching me how to  
 dance with him.

He slogs to the door. Turns to Myrtle.

WESLEY  
 Ah'm gonna shoot every Kraut in  
 sight! Maybe even Heil Hitler  
 himself!  
 (off her indifference)  
 Pray for me...

She shucks the hat onto the coffee table, turns her back. When he's gone it calls to her. She dons it. Pulls it off, buries it in her chest. Throws back her head.

MYRTLE (V.O.)

I let other boys in here. Sis and me, tradin' on our looks and all, you know how that works. Daddy didn't notice, dead Momma took his whole mind 'til the day he died. Right here. My carin' for him didn't buy him even one more day.

BLACK SCREEN

MYRTLE (V.O.)

That was when we didn't ship people off so we didn't have to see 'em.

INT. HOUSE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Myrtle clutches the hat, head thrown back.

MYRTLE

I went to work makin' the kids lunches at the school. And at night sat here and read every book they ever had, instead of my correspondence courses. Guess neither of us like classes much.

SEASON

Did Wesley drop bombs?  
(off Myrtle's silence)  
Huh?

MYRTLE

... I don't want to talk about it.

SEASON

Did you pray for him like he asked?  
For him to be safe?

MYRTLE

... I loved him. But nope. Not sittin' here and not sittin' in the church waitin' to be bombed... Bunch'a hypocrites, those people.



SEASON  
 (shaking her head)  
 You'da been right at home.

MYRTLE  
 And what do you mean by that?

SEASON  
 Exactly what I said.

MYRTLE  
 (instantly warmed up)  
 You snot-noses wouldn't have made  
 it a week back in my time, just  
 like I said, you hear me? What we  
 went through so you have it so easy  
 now. So easy you don't even vote.

SEASON  
 That stuff doesn't mean anything.

MYRTLE  
 Picking the men who send our boys  
 to get killed doesn't mean  
 anything? Out of my house, now!

Season rises, heads for the door.

SEASON  
 I think I will.

MYRTLE  
 Get out there, learn how the world  
 works.

Season turns, hard.

SEASON  
 You mean learnin' it from sittin'  
 up in here a whole lifetime? The  
 only thing I want to learn is how  
 to not end up like you, a mean old  
 lady. I meant it when I said I felt  
 sorry for you!

MYRTLE  
 Be a dirty pool-playing prosecutor,  
 makes no difference to me. You call  
 it mean, I call it truthful.

SEASON

You think you're not *mean*? Are you *kidding* me?!

MYRTLE

That's enough!

SEASON

That's *not* enough!  
 (breaking down)  
 What you say isn't the truth. Or  
 maybe it is for you. Even if it is,  
 you don't have to say it.

MYRTLE

All you young people know how to do  
 is run away, so go! You don't know  
 anything! About life! About me!

SEASON

Then explain it to me!

MYRTLE

*I...can't!*

INT. HOUSE - DAY - FLASHBACK

YOUNG MYRTLE lies on the sofa. She ignores a KNOCK on the door. Shortly thereafter, another KNOCK. She makes it to her feet, staggers to the window, looks out. Panicked, she opens the door. A hyperventilating HECTOR falls to his knees.

YOUNG MYRTLE

We'll talk hay tomorrow, I'm sick.

HECTOR

(breathless)  
 Was fishin' on six mile bridge. Ah  
 ran--

YOUNG MYRTLE

I can see that. I'm sure they smell  
 your fishin' hole on ya all the way  
 to New Zion.

HECTOR

Stopped me on bridge...directions.

YOUNG MYRTLE  
 (catching on)  
 Things're wrong or you wouldn't be  
 here. Out with it, what you know.

Hector searches for words.

YOUNG MYRTLE  
 I said *out with it!*

HECTOR  
 They're coming. A telegram...

YOUNG MYRTLE  
 A telegram? The only time they...  
 You get the hell off my doorstep!

He moves to console her. She recoils, a caged animal.

YOUNG MYRTLE  
 How dare your black ass bring them  
 here!

Her legs give way and she collapses. Buries her face in her  
 hands and wails. He drops down to be with her.

HECTOR  
 You know me.

YOUNG MYRTLE  
 I don't know you.

HECTOR  
 (softly sings)  
 ... Hold on... Hold on to Jesus...

She clutches him for support. For a moment, is she...*dancing*  
 with him? She's powerless. His eyes are kind. She kisses him.

YOUNG MYRTLE  
 (softly, not meaning it)  
 Don't.

He pulls her close and kisses her back. Long, lingering.  
 She's on a roller coaster, picking up speed--

She pulls back in terror, staggers to her feet, her mouth  
 open, eyes never leaving him. He rises too, moves in again--

YOUNG MYRTLE

*Don't!*

A lioness, she points to the door as a truck engine belches.

YOUNG MYRTLE

*They're here!*

She slams the door on Hector, the truck, the world.

She sleepwalks to the sofa, safe. Opens her Bible again. Unable to focus, she bolts up, dances with her unseen suitor. Then collapses again, sobbing. Crawls to her aviator's hat on the table. Fingers the seams as if reading Braille.

She returns to her Bible. No good, she crumples the page she's on. Tears out the next one. Gripping the book's spine, she *rips it in half...*

INT. HOUSE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Season walks from the door to a near-comatose Myrtle.

SEASON

I'm sorry.

MYRTLE

For me losing my Wesley? Or for makin' me tell what I didn't want to tell?

SEASON

... Both.

MYRTLE

He wasn't even killed fighting Krauts. Died stateside when they told him boys with glasses don't fly, but can do other stuff. He jumped up and grabbed electrical wires. Fried himself... That was Wesley. Dying so colorfully. Not like everyone else, being blown to bits by a tank. Or even a common grenade.

(off Season's solemn nod)

What would happen if I got up and pretty as you please, stuck my fork in a power socket?

(MORE)

MYRTLE (CONT'D)

Daddy warned about fryin' ourselves  
when he put 'em in, one for the  
upstairs, one down here.

(warming to the topic)

How much metal's in a bullet?

(off Season's sympathy)

Sometimes I look at my fork, or my  
soup spoon, and wonder how many  
bullets I could make with them. To  
kill the enemy Japs.

SEASON

(half-hearted)

The names you use are offensive.

MYRTLE

(eyes closed, lost)

Sometimes you're walkin' down a  
road the wrong way, and you know  
it. The rain's startin' and your  
insides are screamin' at you to  
turn around. But you'd rather let  
it ruin you. So you can feel it.

SEASON

Let's go down a good road.

(off Myrtle's silence)

... Want me to get you out of here?

MYRTLE

I want sprung more than anything.  
But I can't go anywhere. I'm worn.

SEASON

I think me and Harper could get you  
into her truck.

MYRTLE

Wait...

Myrtle's head bobs as if dreaming.

SEASON

What do you see?

**SHOTGUN BLASTS** pop Myrtle's eyes open.

MYRTLE  
(staring forward)  
A patch hiding bullet holes in the  
drywall.

SEASON  
*Bullet holes?*

No answer. Season grabs the eye covers. Puts them onto Myrtle. She looks like a pilot in flight goggles. Settles...

SEASON  
Look for the good. Now what do you  
see?

MYRTLE  
The same thing I'll be seeing soon  
enough.

SEASON  
You're sprung...

BLACK SCREEN

MYRTLE (V.O.)  
... I'm driving. Just like Wesley  
was gonna teach me. Driving down  
the right road... Flying.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

Young Myrtle the aviator drives Season down a dirt road.

SEASON (V.O.)  
I hate your beautiful hair under  
that hat... What do you see?

Long pause.

YOUNG MYRTLE (V.O.)  
Trees.

SEASON (V.O.)  
Feel the sunshine?

INT. HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

MYRTLE  
 ... I can feel it.  
 (warming)  
 Nice in my hair.

SEASON  
 I smell your perfume. What kind?

MYRTLE  
 (suddenly delighted)  
 Evening in Paris, of course. The  
 little blue bottle stays on my hand-  
 hewn dresser where I can keep my  
 eyes on it. I put some on before we  
 left, just a dab so it lasts.

SEASON  
 Where are you taking us?

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - CONTINUOUS

MYRTLE (V.O.)  
 A ways outside 'a town.

They idle at a crumbling structure set back in the trees.

SEASON (V.O.)  
 You know the place?

MYRTLE (V.O.)  
 Daddy's old sawmill. Worked there  
 as a boy, then cut timber for 'em  
 as a man. When they shuttered it,  
 he could never drive past it, he  
 was so ashamed. But I knew he went  
 back there a lot. In his mind.  
 (off Season's silence)  
 We're almost there.

EXT. COUNTRY FARMHOUSE - DAY

At a battered farmhouse, Young Myrtle kills the engine.

INT. HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

SEASON  
(softly)  
You can walk...

EXT. COUNTRY FARMHOUSE - DAY - FLASHBACK

Alone now, Young Myrtle gets out of the car.

INT. COUNTRY FARMHOUSE - CONTINUOUS - FLASHBACK

Young Myrtle enters the run-down house of a black family.  
Standing before her are MRS. WINFIELD and two little GIRLS.

YOUNG MYRTLE  
(smiling, to Girls)  
Hi, girls.

One hides behind the folds of her mother's dress.

YOUNG MYRTLE  
(to Girls)  
Your dresses are sure pretty.

MRS. WINFIELD  
(scared)  
We didn' do nothin.' Mr. Deputy  
knows it.

YOUNG MYRTLE  
I know. Hector's been workin' in  
place of your husband right fine.  
Daddy's real pleased.

Standing in the doorway--

HECTOR  
(to Young Myrtle)  
Somethin's wrong, why ya here?  
Where they can see you.

They linger on each other. She visibly shrinks.

YOUNG MYRTLE  
Nothing's wrong.



HECTOR

Ya need me back there today?

YOUNG MYRTLE

Well, yes--or rather, *no*. I mean, you put in a good day, and I just wanted to see you, I mean, your Daddy, see him. Your sisters, too. See how they're makin' out with that book I gave you for them.

MRS. WINFIELD

Mah husband lahks to read on it. Read 'bout them horses. Even after he took his bad spill.

YOUNG MYRTLE

Mr. Winfield reads?

HECTOR

(politely insubordinate)  
Forgot to say, Daddy read swell.

MRS. WINFIELD

(to Young Myrtle)  
Wanna see him? He talk real good about you.

YOUNG MYRTLE

I'd like that. I'd like to see him.  
(to Girls)  
And I'll get more books for you important ladies.

MRS. WINFIELD

(to Young Hector)  
Toothpick, show her yer Daddy.

YOUNG MYRTLE

(to Hector, teasing)  
Toothpick...

He brushes it off. One of the Girls smirks. Young Myrtle reaches for her hand, but it's too much, she doesn't take it.

She follows Hector through the door of the other room. Inside, MR. WINFIELD lies on a disheveled mattress amidst clutter. He holds a book with a horse on the cover. He looks up with a toothy grin.

MR. WINFIELD

Mighty tidy book, this is, Miss Myrtle. Ah thank ya fer it. Best thing next to gettin' back up in that saddle lak you's supposed to after gettin' throwed.

YOUNG MYRTLE

I'm glad you like it. Now that I know you read, I'll bring better ones for you while you're laid up... You've a Bible, don't you?

MR. WINFIELD

'Course. I read to the chillen and Toothpick ever' night.

Young Myrtle beams at Hector.

YOUNG MYRTLE

I'll bring more for you to read. Or give 'em to Hector for you.

MR. WINFIELD

Ah thank ya.

*What else to say?*

YOUNG MYRTLE

Well, I'll quit aggravatin' ya so God'll keep healin' that infection. It was nice to meet you.

She turns.

MR. WINFIELD

Miss Myrtle?

She stops.

MR. WINFIELD

Ah know ya say your Daddy paid that doctor money for mah peh... pih...

YOUNG MYRTLE

Pen'sillin.

MR. WINFIELD

Yes.  
(eyes welling up)  
(MORE)

MR. WINFIELD (CONT'D)

... But ah know it was *you*, Miss Myrtle... Ah thank ya.

In moments that stretch forever, Myrtle fully realizes her surroundings. The dirt. Notices Hector's overalls, too big on his skinny body. Realizes they were his Daddy's. She feels like crying. She needs out. *Now*.

YOUNG MYRTLE

I'll bring more books.

She rushes out. Mr. Winfield nods at Hector. We see the pages in his hand. Line drawings of horses. A child's picture book.

INT. HOUSE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Silence.

MYRTLE

(softly)

One more place.

SEASON

We don't have to.

Myrtle turns to Season...

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

The car in the distance, Myrtle and Season step amid gravestones in an expanse of tall grass. Crows and blue jays voice their displeasure.

MYRTLE

Don't dally. His people don't want me anywhere near him.

(she stops, points)

I know he's over there.

They plod that direction, halting at a meager wooden headstone. Myrtle's legs shake violently, then buckle--

INT. HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

--Myrtle throws off the eye covers and blanket, grabs her knees.

MYRTLE

(wailing)

The sand burrs are stabbing me,  
flames burnin' me for my sins!

(rocking back and forth)

Blood's all over me!

(grinding palms into face)

It's on my hands. And all the water  
in the world can't wipe it away.

Her head falls back in psychic agony.

SEASON

(near-whisper)

Talk to him.

MYRTLE

I told you they don't want me here!

A long pause.

EXT. CEMETERY - CONTINUOUS

A shattered Myrtle grips the headstone.

MYRTLE

I didn't mean for my words to kill  
you. I would've gone with you... A  
bunch of carvings to remember  
people. My fancy one's been paid so  
long, so I'm no burden... I'm not  
mad anymore, I'm just so...sad. How  
much sadness lies underneath the  
stones? Does any of it match  
mine?... What did you save me to  
do, Wesley? You and all the boys?  
Was I worth saving?

FADE TO BLACK

INT. HOUSE - DAY

An upbeat Panacek wheels Myrtle from the bedroom. Myrtle's in  
her wig, as when we first saw her.

PANACEK

Three-hundred and sixty-four more days like this and I'm nominating you for Patient of the Year.

(off Myrtle's smirk)

Did she almost smile? I'm taking vacation more often. Not for me, for you.

MYRTLE

(sweet)

I need you to do something for me.

PANACEK

When you act like this, your wish is my command, Dear.

MYRTLE

(with usual harshness)

I need your word that you'll do it.

(off Panacek's chagrin)

Bring me Momma's cookie jar.

Panacek considers it, disappears into the kitchen, returns with the COOKIE JAR. Safe in hand, Myrtle unscrews the top.

PANACEK

If that's money, I can't accept it.

MYRTLE

Best place for valuables is the icebox. In tin foil under your ice milk. If there's a real bad fire the ice milk melts on top of it.

PANACEK

(mumbles)

That's good to know.

Myrtle withdraws a brick of tin foil. Unwraps it, pulls out a bundle of neatly folded cash. A lot of cash.

PANACEK

I thought you said to keep cash in the icebox in case of fire.

MYRTLE

Do I look like I'm in any condition to open the icebox every day to check on this?

PANACEK  
Okay, so what's up?

MYRTLE  
When I'm gone I need you to give  
this to the girl. My child.

Myrtle reluctantly offers it.

PANACEK  
I can't.

MYRTLE  
Try this on for size: I'll be just  
like today from here on.  
(off Panacek weighing it)  
Think how easy things'd be with a  
docile Myrtle who's such a pleasure  
to do business with. You made your  
(air quotations)  
*memory compromised* client aware of  
the importance of securing her  
valuables. Think of what you're  
doing for the old lady invalid.

PANACEK  
It's none of my business, but I'm  
making you aware of something else.  
Because I do care about you.  
(off Myrtle's nod)  
You've told me many times you're  
paying out-of-pocket for your pills  
and for me. Don't help that girl at  
your own expense.

MYRTLE  
It's not much, but law school takes  
money. Or a trade in medicine, like  
you have. Or riveting planes, who  
knows? I'm not worried, so don't  
you be.

PANACEK  
I'm sorry, I can't.

A KNOCK on the door.

MYRTLE  
Stow that cash!

Panacek stuffs the bills back in the jar, hurries for the kitchen as Season walks in under two bulging grocery bags.

MYRTLE  
(to Season, good-natured)  
You're late.

Season sets the bags on the coffee table. Unpacks the contents as Myrtle looks on: sealed plastic containers, unused bowls, chopsticks, etc.

MYRTLE  
You're gonna eat in front of me?

SEASON  
Yep. And *you're* gonna eat in front of *me*.

MYRTLE  
(wrinkling her nose)  
My snoot, what is it?

SEASON  
A Japanese breakfast. My first try.  
You like rice, don't you?

MYRTLE  
I. Don't think so.

SEASON  
Harper says I can cook anything,  
and today I believed it. Girl  
Power!

Panacek returns, moves in to inspect the spread.

SEASON  
(to Myrtle)  
And if this doesn't work, I have  
more eggs in the car to make us a  
good old American omelette.

PANACEK  
(to Season)  
No eggs with her meds, so omelettes  
don't *work*, good old American ones  
or otherwise.  
(MORE)

PANACEK (CONT'D)

And since I don't know what's in most of the rest of this, I'll have to say none of it *works* either. My notes for you specifically addressed this.

MYRTLE

(to Panacek)

She's not big on studyin.'

(to Season)

So this has eggs?

SEASON

A couple.

MYRTLE

How I've missed my eggs. Especially those from the poultry shop, what Sis called our chicken coop. No eggs will ever be as good as those. Certainly not these...

(to Panacek)

But we're gonna see how many my gullet'll hold!

(to Season)

Get down in the hole and shovel some coal! The good silverware's in the bottom drawer of the sideboard.

Season holds up chopsticks.

SEASON

Nope.

MYRTLE

... I don't think I can.

PANACEK

(mumbles)

This is not a good idea.

MYRTLE

(to Panacek)

Now's when I get to try things other than the *good ideas*.

A vanquished Panacek picks up her bag.

PANACEK

It's your life.



MYRTLE

That it is.

Panacek starts for the front door. Season returns to see Myrtle, quick as a flash, pinch a grain of rice, and lob it at the back of Panacek's head. For a moment, Myrtle's a girl again, silently guffawing with Season, her best friend.

Panacek rubs her head, turns back, not noticing Myrtle's and Season's instant morph back to sobriety.

PANACEK

I'm only trying to help you, you know that, don't you?

MYRTLE

Of course, my dear. Thank you.

As soon as Panacek closes the door, Myrtle and Season erupt into giggles. Eventually Season heaps food onto their plates.

MYRTLE

(objecting)

That's a stout first helping.

SEASON

The more of what's not a good idea, the more you know you can't resist.

Myrtle loves this sassy girl who *gets* her. Season holds up a fork in one hand, chopsticks in the other. Decision time. Myrtle grabs the chopsticks. Scrutinizes them. Season takes a bite with her chopsticks, as Myrtle observes.

SEASON

You gonna eat your food or just sit there *eyeballin'* me?

MYRTLE

Alright, child!

Under Season's watchful eye, a hesitant Myrtle tries the chopsticks. Her first attempt barely lifts the food off the plate before it falls. Same for the second. The third almost makes it to her mouth, but not quite. Season giggles.

On Myrtle's fun stink eye, Season hands over a fork. Myrtle takes a bite, likes it. Takes another. Snickers.

SEASON

What?

Myrtle hangs her head to quell the tittering.

SEASON

(amused)

Out with it!

Now Myrtle's the one overtaken with the giggles. Season throws up her arms, asking for an answer.

MYRTLE

It's rude to leave your wig on  
while you eat!

As Myrtle laughs uncontrollably, a smile bubbles onto Season's lips. She laughs, too. Myrtle pulls off her wig, tosses it in the air, shoots it with an imaginary rifle. Both laugh until they're practically crying.

MYRTLE

(trying to sober up)

Good day, Sunshine, let's eat this.  
I don't imagine the Japanese take  
it cold, so I won't either.

SEASON

(smitten)

...No, I'm sure they don't.

Myrtle takes a bite, then another almost before she's swallowed the first.

MYRTLE

I thought *I* was the one who could  
make anything taste decent.

SEASON

*Really?*

MYRTLE

It's much more than decent, it's  
very good. Not bland. Compliments  
to the cook, or chef, or whatever  
doesn't offend you people these  
days. Thanks for giving this death  
row inmate her last meal.

Season snags on the comment.

MYRTLE  
(backtracking)  
Her last *good* meal.

SEASON  
I can try other foods, too--

MYRTLE  
As soon as we're done eating,  
you're leaving. For good.

SEASON  
... But, what about our work?

MYRTLE  
It's over.

SEASON  
... You sure?

MYRTLE  
We did it, you and me. Your job now  
is to go out and enjoy your summer.

SEASON  
... I can enjoy my summer here.  
With you.

MYRTLE  
I'm comin' upon the iceberg, you  
know that.

SEASON  
Then I'll come see you wherever you  
are. An assisted living place, or  
whatever.

MYRTLE  
When they say 'assisted living,'  
they're really saying they'll  
assist your dying.

SEASON  
'Independent living' then.

MYRTLE  
Same difference. Beulah Scopel  
didn't find independence there  
because her husband moved with her.  
(off Season's silence)  
(MORE)

MYRTLE (CONT'D)

No more loiterin' watchin' me  
circle the drain. Now's your time  
to work on ending up more than  
where you came from.

(off Season's hurt)

My biggest pearl, honey. Someday  
you'll go from doing what you  
wanted, to finding yourself staring  
out your window. Realizing you'd  
give anything to have just one day,  
or even just one *hour* to run in the  
damp air. Feel the sun.

SEASON

... I'm sorry.

MYRTLE

No. You gave that to me again. Now  
the worst thing I can do in return  
is keep you from even *one* of your  
moments... Do you understand?

(off Season's nod)

Thank you for not just listening to  
what I've been saying. But for  
*hearing*. What I've *meant*.

(off Season's silence)

Eye covers, please.

As if in slow motion, Season puts them onto her.

MYRTLE

If Daddy could see his gridiron  
girl now... Wesley's Momma and his  
brother came calling once. Back  
from war, they made him our town  
Deputy. Even though things were  
so...*wrong* with him. He wanted me  
like Wesley did, but after that, I  
never again opened my door to him.  
I stopped opening doors. No more.

Myrtle dons her eye covers, leans back. Season braces herself  
as the roller coaster crests...

SEASON

What do you see?

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

MIDDLE-AGE MYRTLE bursts from the kitchen and to the window at her visitor. She opens the door to...

MIDDLE-AGE MYRTLE  
Don't dally!

...Hector. He steps forward and she steps into him. He kisses her on the cheek. She scans the outside, closes the door.

HECTOR  
Always worry, even in nighttime.

MIDDLE-AGE MYRTLE  
I thought you left.

HECTOR  
Ah spent the past day fishin.'  
Waitin' out the day, catchin' 'em,  
tossin' 'em. All the while tellin'  
myself ah wouldn't come here... But  
knowin' ah would.

MIDDLE-AGE MYRTLE  
No is still my answer no matter how  
many times you ask.

HECTOR  
Ah got a new question.

MIDDLE-AGE MYRTLE  
Is it still about marrying me?

He points to the sofa. Obedient, she sits. He joins her.

HECTOR  
Ah'm still a'willin' to walk in the  
night to see you, to be in your bed  
a while...but you have to be mah  
wife.

MIDDLE-AGE MYRTLE  
Blast your usual intense notions!

HECTOR  
Ah can live walkin' in the dark. I  
can live with no chillen.' I can't  
live no more no wife.

MIDDLE-AGE MYRTLE

... I can't... You know my reasons.

HECTOR

I know your *reason*.

(pats his knee)

Leg crushed by mah horse. Ah'm part'a a man, ain't that right. Mah sisters love you, ah love you. You need me to live, ah need you to live.

MIDDLE-AGE MYRTLE

We talk this 'round and 'round, like a spinnin' ferris wheel.

HECTOR

We'll go away.

(off her intrigue)

To a big town preacher or justice uh the peace. Ah'll get there, you ride a train. After the weddin,' we in the smartest hotel room. Ah'll buy good cigarettes that will be your favorite. Your honeymoon.

MIDDLE-AGE MYRTLE

(softly)

... *Our* honeymoon... You jack-ass.

(off his smile, nostalgic)

With real feather pillows and sweet-smelling powder in the bathroom. I've been to the city once. My sister and me. We were girls...

HECTOR

Ah saved money for two new dresses for you and for a perfume store. Biggest Evenin' in Paris bottle for you. Ah'll trade the hotel clerk somethin' for one 'a the soft pillows and some soap.

MIDDLE-AGE MYRTLE

You'll buy me one dress and we'll buy you a suit. And top hat.

HECTOR

Ah'm fine in mah clothes. Don't want nothin' else. Besides you.

He stands. She rises into him. They rock back and forth.

MIDDLE-AGE MYRTLE

I learned to dance, right in this spot. The first place we danced, too. Just like all those school kids I chaperoned for so long. And told you about after I came home. All the romance in full bloom.

HECTOR

More like everyone ruttin' all over the place. We suc-cumbed.

MIDDLE-AGE MYRTLE

Better than anyone in all my books.

He pulls her tighter, buries her head in his shoulder.

MIDDLE-AGE MYRTLE

Venus needs you in her bed, Toothpick. It's the only time Venus isn't nerve-wracked.

HECTOR

(teasing)

What do you say?

MIDDLE-AGE MYRTLE

You and Daddy are the only ones ever bossed me. Let's go upstairs, lay down, take in a radio preacher.

She presses herself against him fully.

HECTOR

"Leave room fah some Jesus," like you tell mah sistahs.

MIDDLE-AGE MYRTLE

Jesus has plenty of room, *Wesley*.

He goes rigid. Backs away as she realizes.

HECTOR

Painted shut in this big ole house, a lady who lost her love.

MIDDLE-AGE MYRTLE

Don't you ever bring up my *Wesley*.

HECTOR

You did it--

MIDDLE-AGE MYRTLE

*I didn't mean to!* You're the only other one I danced with. He's never coming back, can't that suit you?!

HECTOR

You and me suits me--*come with me!*

She shakes her head at the floor.

MIDDLE-AGE MYRTLE

I can't.

(after long silence)

You said goodbye to your sisters?

(off his nod)

And your Momma? Did your Momma say goodbye to her Toothpick?

HECTOR

Ah told her. Whispered it to mah dead Daddy, too, at the river.

MIDDLE-AGE MYRTLE

You remember my Daddy died upstairs. Momma in the study givin' birth. The boneyard has 'em now. ...And I aim to join 'em.

HECTOR

No!

MIDDLE-AGE MYRTLE

You don't understand! Your whole life knowin' the plot of ground where the bones and skin of your earthly body'll feed worms and where you'll finally get some rest. Like my sister succumbin' to the lockjaw.

(despairing)

My only friend...

(barely collected)

I can't just run off from where I belong. Wonderin' if the mice started up again. If the roof patches held. If I put up preserves to last for enough suppers.



HECTOR  
 (finally seeing her)  
 You can't love.

MIDDLE-AGE MYRTLE  
 (terrified he knows)  
 You're wrong about that.

HECTOR  
 ... You always been in the  
 boneyard.

Her mind teeters--then *smack!* She points a determined finger at the door.

MIDDLE-AGE MYRTLE  
 Sun up is no time for a nigra in  
 this house. Or family plot. Daddy  
 wouldn't stand for that, neither  
 will I. We'll keep on like this.

He turns to leave. She grabs him, workhorse strong.

HECTOR  
 No.

He struggles, works loose. Turning, she grabs him again.

MIDDLE-AGE MYRTLE  
*Don't!* I'll do anything you want!

Trying not to hurt her, he works free again.

MIDDLE-AGE MYRTLE  
*Anything* you want!

He has no choice and shoves her--harder than he thought. She hits the floor. He reaches the door, and, risking it--Lot's wife--turns to see if she's alright.

MIDDLE-AGE MYRTLE  
 Don't you leave me, too!

HECTOR  
*Let me go!*

He *throws open* the door, *bolts* onto the porch--

EXT. PORCH - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

--Intense pick-up truck headlights *flip on, searing* Hector--

**SHOTGUN BLASTS**

Hector limps another step or two...stops on feet suddenly hundred-pound bales. His knees smash each other, his legs twitching like live bait on an electric-charged fishing line. Grounded, he twists skyward for life--

HECTOR

...let me go...

--and collapses like a discarded rag doll, his last sensation his formerly taut insides sobbing, fiery air ruined, precious bottom land now miserable soil furrowed by filthy metal.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Behind the blinding light of the truck's headlights--the pick-up truck we've seen before--

DEPUTY (O.S.)

That's for mah brother, God rest  
'im! Your nigra-lovin' Daddy, too!

**Screech** of tires as the truck belches, peels out.

BLACK SCREEN

MYRTLE (V.O.)

If I said anything, my white skin  
wouldn't matter. I'd be next. I  
wish I would'a been.

CUT TO:

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

*Roaring Silence.*

We're above a placid Myrtle. Alone on her back in the weeds.

*A whippoorwill calls, interrupted by--*

**SHOTGUN BLASTS.** That echo as we pull back to see her resplendent white dress spattered in blood amidst the misty gravestones.

INT. HOUSE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Season raises the eye covers as Myrtle's breath rages. When Season reaches for a reassuring touch on Myrtle's arm, she yanks it away as if from a stove.

MYRTLE

My one time in the city, us girls. Daddy put us on a spinnin' ferris wheel. Stood watchin.' Once around...then 'round again. Surely I could get off the next time, but it kept spinnin'. If I died jumpin' off, well, I was ready. I got sick, and I could see Daddy spittin' mad, people all 'a pointin.'

SEASON

You were a girl--

MYRTLE

You sit there, strapped in by the rules--

(breaks)

-- For people who are all dead!

(eerily calm)

... The cemetery. The colored cemetery. Wesley's brother, the Deputy, lyin' in wait on the porch that night. And I yelled... Hector knew what was coming. If I could do it over, I'd go with him. That'd be heaven, not that stuff in the Bible. Instead, I wrecked myself for Daddy and his house.

(long silence)

Ever tended roses?

(more silence)

Bring me my Bible. Please.

Season spies Myrtle's Bible, places it in her hands.

MYRTLE

And a shot of good well water.

Season hands over the nearby half-full shot glass.

MYRTLE  
Bring sis her cookie jar.

As Myrtle points toward the kitchen, Season freezes at what's in her palm. The contraband pill vial.

MYRTLE  
Actually, just bring what's in the jar.

SEASON  
(softly)  
Don't you want *fresh* water? Gimme your cup.

MYRTLE  
This is fine, child.

The stare at each other.

MYRTLE  
The cookie jar, child.

SEASON  
I...

MYRTLE  
It's alright.

Season can't find words.

MYRTLE  
Time for you to get off the tracks. I'll be alright.

SEASON  
I'll make us some lunch. Then dinner...  
(softly, tearful)  
... I know what you're gonna do. Please... Your God. Your church.

MYRTLE  
Pharisees and hypocrites. I told you we're done here. You have your own life to go out there and live--

SEASON

Don't blame *me* for this!

MYRTLE

I'm not blamin' you, and don't you ever think it... My time's passed. But what I do have is knowin' I helped years worth of kids. Made their food to nourish their bodies. Watched over 'em at their dances. Gave 'em books. Nourished their minds. You're my last...

(hopeful)

...But you're right, Honey.

(off Season's faint hope)

And I'm right, too, and tie goes to the runner. You didn't ask about baseball.

(off Season's flat-lining)

Six months they said the treatments would extend me. I told 'em I wanted 'em then, on the start, when I could still tend my roses, drink lemonade on the porch. But here I still am.

(off Season's tears)

Some things you have to do 'cause it's what you have to do. Even if that means giving your heart to another woman... Or a black man... You still have time for sense.

The women gaze at each other. *Into* each other. Season moves close, her eyes searing Myrtle's. Season angles in for a hug. Then kisses Myrtle near the mouth.

Myrtle resists, but Season's utter compassion forces her to allow it. After long moments, Season withdraws. They gaze at each other without shame.

MYRTLE

Do this last kind thing. For me.

An eternity passes before Season nods. Struggles to her feet.

MYRTLE

Child.

Season freezes.

MYRTLE

You couldn't watch me every second.

Season heads to the kitchen as if on the way to the guillotine. The moment the door closes, Myrtle raises the vial, hurries the pills into her palm.

MYRTLE

(murmurs)

No long good-byes.

She leans back, shuts her eyes. Knocks back the pills...

MYRTLE

To outlaws and aviators. Finally sprung.

...and downs the water. Muffled **SHOTGUN BLASTS** echo.

She feels her insides loosen. Her head is heavy, so heavy. She lays it down. Rest. Finally rest...

Season emerges from the kitchen. Kneels down to Myrtle. Whispers in her ear...

SEASON

I'll take care of your roses.

She kisses Myrtle a final time, strokes her hand...

CROSSFADE

INT. ROOM IN NURSING HOME - NIGHT

...stroking Myrtle's hand is a scrubs-clad NURSING ASSISTANT, the same actress who played SEASON.

On the night stand: the framed picture of Wesley, pill vials, the aviator hat, a cookie jar, a Bible with a taped spine. On the shelf against the wall sits the radio.

A NURSE enters, the same actress who played PANACEK.

NURSE

(to Assistant)

I posted shift instructions...

(realizing)

Sorry.

The Assistant lets go as the Nurse checks for a pulse.

NURSING ASSISTANT  
 (barely holding on)  
 I felt her die. She seemed at  
 peace.

NURSE  
 Sometimes they are.

NURSING ASSISTANT  
 (attempting flippancy)  
 I know.

NURSE  
 Death is our one shared experience,  
 and none of us want to--

NURSING ASSISTANT  
 I *know!* I thought this is what I  
 wanted to do. ...I called her  
 grandma. She called me her sister  
 and even her child. She cooked at a  
 school. Watched the kids dance.

NURSE  
 Where the dementia ends and the  
 crotchiness begins, no one knows  
 and they ain't tellin.'

NURSING ASSISTANT  
 I... I just...

NURSING ASSISTANT  
 She helped people in her life.  
 (catching herself)  
 She *said* she did... But when her  
 time came, when her body and mind  
 gave up on her, so did everyone  
 else. She had no one.

The Nurse moves to her Assistant's face, forces eye contact.

NURSE  
 ... She had *you*.  
 (handing over the picture)  
 And she had a long life with her  
 dashing husband. Marriages from  
 those days lasted forever, ya know?

The Assistant studies the picture. Notices something, something stuck behind it. Another picture. She pulls it out. Amelia Earhart in all her glory. She runs her fingers over her smiling visage.

Something behind *it*.

NURSING ASSISTANT  
No husband, no kids. I checked.

A sad photo of a black man.

NURSE  
Maybe she couldn't have kids.

Hector.

NURSING ASSISTANT  
(defensive)  
Maybe that dashing husband left her when he found out. And she was so heartbroken she never remarried... She was alone her whole life, her money about gone. I checked--I know we're not supposed to.

She picks up the aviator's hat. Fondles it.

NURSE  
Lots of our folks don't have families. Or basically don't once the family puts 'em here. You helped her through a bit of her fog so she wasn't totally lost.  
(taking back the pictures)  
Like Amelia...  
(to Hector's picture)  
Or this gentleman, whoever he was, poor soul... She was an organ donor. I'll make the call.

They stand.

NURSING ASSISTANT  
I'll do it.

NURSE  
No, clean up. Throw out that old radio she insisted worked.  
(MORE)



NURSE (CONT'D)

Today's the last day for everything  
in the closet, too.

(nods to the Aviator Hat)

Listen, maybe she *was* a pilot. Keep  
the hat and whatever else you want.

(turns at the door)

Our whole lives we tell people who  
we want to be. When we're gone,  
we're who we really were.

The Nurse closes the door behind her, leaving the Assistant to ponder. She steps to the radio. Hates what she's about to do, but does it anyway. She grabs it, wraps its cord around it on the way to the trash in the corner, gently sets it in.

She moves into Myrtle's face. So many questions now only one.

NURSING ASSISTANT

Who were you?...

(pulls back)

I'm sorry I couldn't bring you more  
water or

(faint smirk)

the Old Charter whiskey like you  
wanted...

(breaks down)

But now you can drink all the water  
you want, 'cause your heart can't  
break anymore.

*An idea.*

She picks up the hat, places it next to Myrtle. Steps back.

NURSING ASSISTANT

It's yours for good now.

She turns, forces her legs to the door. They're so heavy, or asleep-- She *freezes*...

... *Something* hit the back of her head. She rubs the spot, turns for a final look at Myrtle. Looks up. The ordeal over, she takes a deep breath. As she closes the door behind her, from the bathroom door...

... In a luminous white dress, YOUNG MYRTLE enters.

She strolls to MYRTLE'S prone body. A curious thing, looking for the living among the dead. Or is it the other way around?

YOUNG MYRTLE  
(mumbles, fascinated)  
I really *am* asleep. For good.

A KNOCK from the hallway door.

Young Myrtle bends down, goes to the side of the door--wait, no window there.

Hesitant, she approaches the door.

Soft big band music FADES IN from the suddenly-working radio in the trash.

She opens the door to white light flooding the room.

And a voice. That oh-so-longed-for voice.

HECTOR (O.S.)  
Daddy gotcha a new dress. And me a  
top hat.

We look straight into Young Myrtle's face, the face of infinite bliss.

YOUNG MYRTLE  
There was never anyone but you.

She steps through the doorway. We float back to Myrtle, the faintest of smiles on her lips as all

FADES TO WHITE.