

Scene 10

Setting: Inside a dilapidated mansion. There is a table.

Cast: Lizzie and Aunt Jenny

(Sounds of rain. Lightning and thunder.)

(Lizzie sits up. She is afraid of all the noise and light play. Almost in a panic.)

(Footsteps are heard.)

Lizzie

Who's that?

(Something touches her)

Ahhhhhhh!

No! Git away!

(Kicking at the something. Lizzie jumps off the table and starts running toward exit.)

(Aunt Jenny comes out into the light. Grabs and holds Lizzie)

Aunt Jenny

Here, now. What got you all a fluster', chile? Ain't nothin' gon hurt you, baby.

(Dabs Lizzie's brow)

You sweatin' sump'n fierce, all wrapped up in 'em curtains, kickin' an a swingin'. Must o' been some dream.

You all right now, but we bes' be goin'. Ain't too partial to this place.

(Aunt Jenny wraps her shawl over her shoulder, hangs her lamp on a notch in her walking stick, and they start to exit. A bolt of lightning comes through the ceiling and hits the table where Lizzie was sleeping.)

Aunt Jenny

(Unperturbed)

Jus' stay wit' Aunt Jenny, baby. We gon' make our way 'long the creek to my place. Got sump'n there fix you up jus' fine.

(Lights down)

Scene 11

Setting: Aunt Jenny's cabin interior

Cast: Lizzie and Aunt Jenny

(Lights up)

(Aunt Jenny seated)

(Lizzie notices Elderberry branches in a corner. Walks over to them.)

Lizzie

Aunt Jenny, I been lookin' fo' uh Elderberry bush. Ma say I fin' one next to the Oak where I cross the creek. I was huntin' it when them 'Rollers grab me.

Aunt Jenny

Chile, I snatch that fella up las' full moon. Bes' time to get 'em. Ripe Elde'berry on a full moon make a pow'ful strong potion. Ten' to put people at ease when I need to do some pokin' or cuttin'. Don't get too close to them leaves honey, give you uh 'tolerable bad itch. I gen'ly rub on some goose oil when ah mess' wit' 'em.

(Lizzie sits down with Aunt Jenny)

Lizzie

Aunt Jenny, how you come to find me at that mansion?

Aunt Jenny

(Lights her pipe)

Wellsir. I was yonder pluckin' greens when I see a storm rollin' in. Cures got mo' bite when I plucks the fixin's in a storm.

So, soon as Sis fall off to sleep, I make my way 'long the creek, lookin' fo' Seneca root. After a spell, wind gittin' a might strong, so I takes cover in the big house. Spent many a day in that kitchen, cookin' fo' massa Felshem n' his clan.

Lay another stick on the fire chile, n' heat up that pot o' tea.

(Lizzie gets up and puts wood on fire then sits.)

Aunt Jenny

After we come up river wit' Ma from the Bayou, Ma got sold off, so me 'n Sis all we got. In the quarters, we stay in a shack on the end o' the row.

Ol' massa Felsham got a boss name Winken. Wink – tha's what we call 'em; when he get the notion, he come to the cabin 'n have his way wit' me. Nut'in I can do, jus' how things be. In due time I has a chile. One day, my boy come down with the fever. I tell massa Wink my baby need some tendin', but he say ain't no time for that, get on out to the field, let yo' sista look after yo' chile.

Sis, she a little slow upstairs. She not ready to work the fields, so she watch the baby 'til I get back. But, the fever git worse, an' when I git's home, my boy not breathin'. I try 'n bring 'em 'round but it too late.

Sis done what she can, but, it too much fo' her. Po' soul ain't been right since.

(Lizzie fights back tears. A few beats. Aunt Jenny smokes.)

Was'n long after that, boss Wink walkin' home one night drunk on rot gut whiskey; 'n fall into the hog pen. They find him nex' mo'nin' – what was lef'. Hog eat anythin' when they hungry.

They never did figur' how them hogs latch that gate behin' him though.

(Aunt Jenny gives a wicked knowing smile.)

(Aunt Jenny rises and pours some tea. Hands a cup to Lizzie.)

Here baby, drink some o' this, he'p you sleep.

(Aunt Jenny sits)

We planted my boy 'side the hill by the quarters. I go visit when I can.

Lizzie

What was his name?

Aunt Jenny

Antoine, Antoine Duvalier.