

A BAYOU MYSTIC FILMS PRODUCTION

BOUDREAUX

THE 13TH SACRIFICE

Written & Directed by Antonio R. Ward Jr. • New Orleans, 1938

CASTING SIDES — SELF-TAPE

MADAME ODETTE

SUPPORTING — THE COOK • AGE: 48-65

THE CHARACTER

The commander of the Boudreaux kitchen — wide as a doorway and twice as hard to get past, a wooden spoon held like a field marshal's baton. She runs the warmest room in the house without ever raising her voice, because she has never once needed to. Forty years in this family's kitchen; she can read the whole man off what he leaves on his plate.

Odette is warmth with a secret. She has a dream — a little café of her own down in the Marigny, her own name over the door — and a small, human way of funding it that she has never once, in her own heart, called stealing. The role needs a performer who can carry maternal comedy and quiet dignity in the same breath, with real Creole-inflected warmth.

ABOUT THE SCENE

A quiet character scene: the morning summons. Watch what the scene asks for — the easy warmth with Scarlet, the reading of an unreadable father, and the small, practiced motion the audience is not meant to notice. The reader plays SCARLET.

SELF-TAPE INSTRUCTIONS

- Slate: name, height, location, representation (if any), and the role you are reading for.
- Frame from the chest up, in good light, with a neutral background. Reader off-camera.
- Period voice welcome, but truth first — do not let the accent drive the scene.
- Two takes maximum. Label your file: LASTNAME_FIRSTNAME_MADAME.

INT. BOUDREAUX MANSION - UPSTAIRS HALL & SCARLET'S ROOM - MORNING

MADAME ODETTE climbs the grand staircase with a small silver tray -- chicory coffee, a single magnolia in a bud vase -- the morning summons. She is warm, unhurried, at home in a house that is not hers.

She passes a console table in the upstairs hall. On it, a crystal dish of odds and ends -- calling cards, a stray cufflink, loose coins the master empties from his pockets and never counts.

Odette's hand drifts across it as she passes. Barely a pause. Two coins vanish into her apron, smooth as breathing, the practiced motion of a woman who has done this a thousand quiet mornings.

We are not meant to notice. The scene does not stop for it. She is already at Scarlet's door.

She knocks softly and lets herself in. Scarlet is a shape under the covers, seventeen and dead asleep and, for once, unguarded -- no posture, no composure, just a girl.

On the shelf above the headboard, between a music box and a christening cup, sits a doll. Old burlap gone soft as skin. Button eyes that do not match. A little stitched mouth some great-great-grandmother sewed shut before this house had gaslight. It has been in the family longer than the family can say who made it -- handed down bed to bed, girl to girl. Scarlet slept with it every night until she was ten, and would deny that under oath.

Nobody in this house has ever called it anything but the doll. Nobody in this house has ever thrown anything away.

MADAME ODETTE

(soft, drawing the
curtains)

Up, up, mon coeur. Sun's been
workin' longer than you have.

SCARLET

(muffled, into the pillow)

Five minutes.

MADAME ODETTE

That's what you said yesterday,
and the yesterday before that, and
Gabriel's gonna blow the last
trumpet one mornin' and you gonna
ask him for five minutes too.

(setting down the tray;
gentler)

Your daddy's at the table. He

don't say it, but he sits down
there every mornin' hopin' you'll
come while the coffee's still hot.
Man's got a whole language, cher,
and "come eat" is the only love
word in it.

Scarlet surfaces, blinking. Looks at the old cook with
real affection.

SCARLET

How do you always know what he
means when he never says it?

MADAME ODETTE

(a small smile, already
bustling out)

Forty years in a person's kitchen,
baby. You learn to read the whole
man off what he leaves on his
plate.

On her way out, without looking, Odette sets the doll
upright where it has slumped. The same absent hand that
emptied the crystal dish. Some things in this house get
taken. The doll gets tended.

She goes. And the two stolen coins ride out in her apron
pocket, unremarked, unremembered -- a small, warm,
forgettable morning.

We will remember it later. When it is far too late to
forget.