

A BAYOU MYSTIC FILMS PRODUCTION

BOUDREAUX

THE 13TH SACRIFICE

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

CASTING SIDES — SELF-TAPE

MAMA VIVIENNE

PRINCIPAL — THE HEALER • AGE: 55–75

THE CHARACTER

The oldest soul in the Boudreaux house. Healer, protector, keeper of marks on doorframes and of secrets older than the city. She is simply, suddenly, present the way weather is present — always exactly where the hurt is a half-second before anyone else notices it. Nobody in the house calls what she does magic. It is only care, practiced so long and so deep it has come out the far side looking like certainty.

Vivienne carries the film's deepest wound and its hardest wisdom. She has paid the old road's toll once already and has spent seventeen years keeping a promise about it. The role moves between dry kitchen wit, fierce warning, and a grief held so long it has become part of her posture. Louisiana Creole (Kouri-Vini) flavors her speech; authentic regional voice a major plus.

ABOUT THE SCENE

In this scene, Scarlet finally asks the question no one in the house will answer — what happened the night her mother died — and Vivienne gives her the truth. This is the confession she has carried for seventeen years. Let it cost her. The reader plays SCARLET (and one line of LUCILLE).

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_MAMA.

INT. BOUDREAUX KITCHEN - EVENING

Home. The one warm room. Rain on the windows. Mama Vivienne at the stove, Lucille the young maid shelling peas, and Scarlet -- home from the convent, grief still on her like a coat she can't take off -- sitting at the worktable where the help sits, not where the family sits.

Here, among these women, the talk runs easy and Creole-warm, French and English braided together the way the whole city braids them.

LUCILLE
(nudging a bowl toward
Scarlet)
Ecoute, cher, you gon' sit at my
table, you gon' work at my table.
Shell.

Scarlet almost smiles. Takes a handful. Her hands don't know how. Lucille fixes them without a word, the way you'd teach a little sister.

MAMA VIVIENNE
(not turning from the
stove)
Leave the girl be, Lucille. She
just buried somebody she loved.
Grief don't shell peas good.

SCARLET
(quiet)
...I keep waiting to stop seeing
it. The tree. Sister Francis in
the--
(she can't)

MAMA VIVIENNE
(gently, stirring)
You don't stop seein' it, baby.
You just make room for it. Carry
it in a smaller pocket, after a
while.

Scarlet watches the old woman's back a moment. Then, carefully, asks the thing she has wanted to ask her whole life and never dared.

SCARLET
Mama. You were there. When my
mother died. Weren't you.

Vivienne's spoon slows. Lucille goes very still, sensing the air change. For a long moment only the rain.

MAMA VIVIENNE
(quiet, not turning)
...I was there.

SCARLET
Nobody ever tells me anything
about that night. Papa won't say
her name at the table. Seventeen
years, and I don't know one true
thing about how I came into this
house.

Vivienne sets down the spoon. Turns. And she gives the
girl, at last, a piece of the truth.

MAMA VIVIENNE
Your mama labored two days,
Scarlet. Two days, and you would
not come, and she was fadin', and
the doctor -- the fine white
doctor your daddy paid for -- he
shook his head and went to wash
his hands and told Charles to
choose which of you to save.
(a breath, the memory
heavy)
And I could not stand it. So I did
a thing. An old thing. My
grandmother's thing. Right there
in that birthing room, over your
mama's bed, I called on -- on help
that a Christian woman got no
business callin' on. To trade. To
buy her back.

SCARLET
(barely)
...and?

MAMA VIVIENNE
(and here is the wound
she's carried seventeen
years)
And you lived. And she didn't.
(quiet)
The old road don't fill an order
the way you write it, child. It
gives you what it wants to give,
and it keeps the change. I asked
for a mother, and it handed me a
daughter, and it took the woman I
loved like my own for the trouble.
(she looks at Scarlet,
fierce and tender)
So don't you ever let me hear you

say your mama died for nothin'.
She died for YOU. That's not
nothin'. That's the biggest
somethin' there is.

Scarlet is crying now, quiet. Lucille has stopped
pretending to shell. Vivienne crosses and takes the girl's
face in her flour-dusted hands.

MAMA VIVIENNE
(low, and this plants
everything)
And that's why I keep my marks on
the doors of this house. And
that's why, when I tell you some
things you leave WELL alone -- you
leave 'em alone. 'Cause I already
paid that toll once. I know
exactly what it costs.

She kisses Scarlet's forehead and goes back to her stove,
and the kitchen settles, and the rain keeps on, and none

of them know that "well alone" is exactly what will not be
left, before the season turns.