



The Other Women
Nicci Kadilak

Deleted Scene: Prologue 1 – A Baby Is Born

For a moment, there is silence. A woman with caramel skin and long, dark-brown dreadlocks squat-stands in the center of a dimly-lit room, heavily pregnant and completely naked.

She is flanked by two other women, called to her side when the sun was still high in the sky and the sounds of children playing outside floated on the air. As the day came to a close, gradually the children went into their respective homes for eating and sleeping, and the silence snuck in. Now, with the moon nearly halfway through its journey across the sky, even most adults are in bed. It's just as well because the laboring woman (*Tali*, her companions are calling her, and *Sister* as well, in the language they share) is more able to shift her focus inward, connecting to the life inside of her and attempting to coax it out.

It is apparent at a glance that they are not related by blood, these women. Rather, they resemble a gradation of skin tones and hair colors from left to right: A fair-skinned woman with a long blonde braid and an ample figure complements a tall, lean woman whose skin and short hair are both midnight black in the dim light surrounding them. Yet during this day and into the night, they have existed as one - each companion intuitively understanding Tali's needs as her labor has progressed, and each understanding that it's nearing a close.

The blonde woman, kneeling, interlocks fingers with Tali and crosses her other hand over to support her by the elbow. The dark-skinned woman whispers reassurance, encouragement, in her companion's ear while mopping the sweat from her brow. Tali nods urgently, breathing deeply, her face twisting up into a grimace. The room is filled once again with a low moan. This one lasts longer than all the ones that came before it, ending with a grunt as her two companions help her keep her balance. Tali feels a fullness between her legs and reaches down, feeling the baby's head protruding. The women chatter with excitement. She takes a moment to catch her breath before emitting another animal groan and pushing out the rest of the baby. *A little girl*, they all realize at once.

Tali lifts her daughter to her chest, crying with a mix of joy, relief, pain, and untold other emotions. She sits back with the help of the other two women, and the baby immediately begins rooting for her breast. The pain of the first latch subsides after a moment, and Tali sits in awe of what she has just accomplished. Her companions congratulate her, ogling this beautiful new life she's created and they've helped bring into the world. The room is again silent except for the tiny suckling sounds the newborn makes at her mother's breast.