

Annabelle

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FADE IN:

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INT. THE SHED- RAINY NIGHT (1830)

1

We see an open window: rain SPLATTERS, lightning cuts the skies, followed by a Thunder STRIKE! We drop down, cruise over crumbs of hay on the floor to little ANNABELLE (8, African American), wrapped around her mother's arms, CAROL (40).

Another lighting. Annabelle's eyes flutter. Breaths panting. Waiting for what follows next...Thunder STRIKES again! She shuts her eyes. Frightened.

CUT TO-

PRESENT DAY:

INT. COTTAGE (BEDROOM)-NIGHT (1865)

A candle on the dressing table burns dream-like. In front of it, resides a tray of hair-clips. A WOMAN'S hand picks a clip, and we rise with it, spotting,

ANNABELLE (43, aristocratic with a scrutinizing gaze) in the mirror, seated as her hair is being plaited. She look up, at the mirror:

We see WOMAN/JOY's reflection (25), sweaty as she works on Annabelle's hair.

ANNABELLE

(Enviously)

You are beautiful. Have you been told before?

JOY

(Fixated on her work)

Thank you.

ANNABELLE

I asked a question.

JOY

Yes.

ANNABELLE

I did not clear the question, I meant, have you been told by men?

JOY

The men in the shed make passes, yes.

ANNABELLE

You must be twenty?

(CONTINUED)

JOY
Twenty-five.

ANNABELLE
Have you been touched?

Joy looks up, embarrassed as she finds her words.

ANNABELLE
(Sternly)
Well?

JOY
No. My--my mother see it that I
be celibate.

ANNABELLE
Where is she now?

JOY
She passed away last season. Kind
woman.

ANNABELLE
That is not what I asked.

JOY
Apologies.

ANNABELLE
"My mother saw it." "Saw it."

JOY
Yes, of course.

Joy finishes, moves aback dutifully. Annabelle stands to inspect herself in the mirror. She spots a fading scar on her cheek, her eyes lost in it....

JOY
You look wonderful.

We move in Annabelle's eyes as it transfixes on Joy, studying her youthful looks.

JOY
Is there anything else?

Annabelle SLAPS Joy.

ANNABELLE
Make it again tomorrow, my
appearance is key...
(eyes on Joy's reflection)
Understood?

JOY
(nursing her cheek)
Yes. Apologies.

ANNABELLE
Apologies don't satisfy anyone,
girl. I need my smoke, so you
best hurry with it. Go on!

Joy picks up the tray, exits quickly. Annabelle sits on the dresser, looking at herself in the mirror. She pulls open the drawer, grabs a pipe: ash still inside.

ANNABELLE
JOY!

Joy runs in, diligently digs out a match from a matchbox. Notices the ash in the pipe...

JOY
I was gon' clean it.

Annabelle drills her eyes on Joy's reflection. Fuming. She empties the ash on the tray, removes a small nylon bag of tobacco, stuffs it in the pipe. Royally, she waits as her pipe dangles between her lips. Joy lights the match, leans in and with a gentle burn, the wisps of smoke trails over Annabelle's eyes.

JOY
That be all?

Studying herself in the mirror, Annabelle waves her off. Joy heads for the door.

ANNABELLE
Girl.

Joy pauses with her hand on the knob.

ANNABELLE
You must despise me.

Beat. Nothing from Joy.

ANNABELLE
The knob isn't going to make
answers for you, child. You keep
on that and folks will throw you
out, doesn't matter if they're
men of God, they'll leave you out
the dirt to trample on.

JOY
(softly)
You are cruel some days, yes.

ANNABELLE

Cruel?

(scoffs)

Life is cruel, child. Your mother, is she born here?

JOY

(facing Annabelle)

No.

ANNABELLE

Nevertheless she must have taught you enough.

JOY

She did what she could.

ANNABELLE

I learnt my fair share.

Beat. She takes few puffs...

ANNABELLE

(eyeing her in the mirror)

Go on, sit.

Annabelle's eyes never leaves the mirror, as she watches Joy, who pulls out a mahogany chair that was tucked in a table of books.

ANNABELLE

My mother taught me to never blame the world for my misfortunes. Accepting that your incompetence was the source that encouraged the nightmare of your fate is a heroine's call. "Never, Anna, never you be a coward and hid behind people. You be strong. You get up and face'em, with everything you got. Everything."

She drops the pipe, puts it out with spit. Begins to remove the clips in her hair.

ANNABELLE

She was a wise woman, but never wise enough to take up her own counsel. Poor woman.

Taking a comb from the dressing table, Annabelle HUMS as she works on her hair in the mirror. Eyes adrift to:

FLASHBACK:

INT. THE SHED- RAINY NIGHT (1830)

(CONTINUED)

Thunder STRIKES! it's a loud one. Annabelle trembles. Carol pats her hair, as she HUMS. Calming her down. We move in on little Annabelle's eyes. It's working. She's relaxing....

ANNABELLE (V.O)

My mother's love never wavered in
the times we were in. And the
times we were in, weren't farther
from the sun.

Carol is abruptly dragged from behind by two MEN in ratchet clothes.

CAROL

PLEASE!

They drag her all the way to a pile of hay...

ANNABELLE

Mother! Mother!

CAROL

Annabelle!

The man standing, FICK (35, timid), paces involuntarily,

And the other kneeling, BISON (40), holds down Carol as he undresses his pants

CAROL

No, please, please, not here. Not
in front of her. No!

Carol forces to get up. Bison slaps her! Pins her down.

FICK

(pleadingly)
Don't fight Carol.

CAROL

No please. Please. Please, Fick.
She my daughter. Please.

We close in on little Annabelle, her hands wrapped around her knees as the thunder persists... eyes fluttering to the THRUSTING horror.

2

PRESENT DAY:

2

INT. COTTAGE (BEDROOM)-NIGHT (1865)

Old Annabelle's eyes fixates at Joy's reflection. Joy isn't comfortable with the silence:

JOY

That a horrible thing for any child to see.

ANNABELLE

Is that all?

JOY

Forgive me.

ANNABELLE

You are daft.

JOY

What you fancy me say?

ANNABELLE

Did your mother give you a soul?

JOY

That's enough!

Joy realises she's out of line. Annabelle stares sternly. An ugly pause ensues.

ANNABELLE

(impressed)

So you did learn something, after all.

Beat.

ANNABELLE

She'd tell me that God made the earth fertile for men to feast on. That the corn and cotton were all from Him.

FLASHBACK:**EXT. PLANTATION FIELDS- SUNNY (1830)**

We see the rows of cotton trees stretch, and slaves picking as white men on horses inspect. At the background, stands the castle mansion, Victorian fashion, with well trimmed shrubs conjuring a driveway all the way to its front door.

(CONTINUED)

ANNABELLE (V.O)

Funny. Man made man get cotton.
And man made man get the corn
too.

We see the fingers of a child picking a cotton, and throws it in a basket. Something or someone blocks the sun from behind, a shadow. Little Annabelle turns...

CAROL

(scolding)

You gon' have to work faster than
that, darling. Master Castle
don't fancy wormers.

Little Annabelle places the basket on the ground.

ANNABELLE

I'm tired.

Carol looks around warily as she picks Annabelle's basket.

CAROL

Muster up. What I tell you? Hm?
Hm?

ANNABELLE

...Til the sun falls on our back.

CAROL

(shoves the basket in
Annabelle's hands)

That's right. You keep workin'.
And don't let your tongue slip
like that in the whip-man's face.
Y'hear?

Annabelle nods, looking too tired to protest.

MALE VOICE

What's goin' on here?

The WHIPMAN (30s, ugly) in his usual straw sunhat, his hand firmly gripping the whip as the sweat stream on his face.

CAROL

(eyeing the whip)

Just giving her counsel about
cotton picking.

THE WHIPMAN

I hope ya listenin' to ya mother.
She one o'them fine things around
here that knows her work. Go on
now, get back to work!

CAROL
Yes, master.

Carol bends to get her basket on the ground. The Whipman feasts his eyes onto Carol as he massages his crotch...

THE WHIPMAN
Leave the basket.

Carol pauses, waiting...

THE WHIPMAN
(scanning around)
Come on now, Carol, I ain't got all day.

CAROL
Yes. Of course, master.

Carol stands to her feet, making her way to the Whipman..

CAROL
(instructively)
You keep working.

ANNABELLE
Mama, where you goin'?

Annabelle's **POV**: The Whipman grabs Carol, leading her away. They vanish behind thick corn plantation.

EXT. LAKE-NIGHT (1830)

A SINGING mob is heard. Meanwhile, we cruise past ripples travelling far in as we trace its source all the way to little Annabelle, fetching water in a bucket.

It's full. She runs into the woods.

EXT. WOODS- NIGHT

She trudges past tall bamboo sticks, and willow trees. The SINGING becomes louder. She's closer. She TRIPS over a rock, falls flat face on the ground. The water SPLASHES over.

CUT TO--

EXT. BONFIRE- NIGHT

A bonfire dances in the middle, as slaves sing around it.

VIVIAN (30), short and curvy with a motherly voice, gently spreads a wet cloth on Carol's forehead. Carol is shivering on her lap.

(CONTINUED)

CAROL

Look after her. She yours now.

VIVIAN

God don't want you just yet. You gon' be around here longer, no teeth and all. You ain't goin' nowhere.

(instructively)

I ain't allowin' it.

From the tall bamboo sticks, Annabelle emerges with wet clothes as she limps in with a bucket of water.

Vivian looks up, spots her...

VIVIAN

Where you been? Your mother's cookin' up here, and you worming in them woods?

Annabelle empties the water in two clay jars.

CAROL

(softly)

Anna?

VIVIAN

Come on now, your mother wants you.

Annabelle drops the bucket, crouches towards her mother.

CAROL

(extending her hand)

How full was your basket today?

ANNABELLE

(holding Carol's hand)

A quarter.

CAROL

You be better than that. Today is a quarter, tomorrow a basket full. Y'hear me?

Annabelle nods.

CAROL

Don't be voiceless, woman. That's right. You gon' be a woman tonight. And tomorrow you fill up that basket of cotton.

ANNABELLE

Yes, mama.

(CONTINUED)

CAROL
Survive, my darling. You survive.

ANNABELLE
Yes, mama.

CAROL
You work on that field, mindless
of dawn or dusk, you keep
working. You be strong and know
your place. Ain't nothin' more
that angers them than misplacing
yourself. You keep God at hair's
length from your heart.

ANNABELLE
(crying)
Yes, mama.

CAROL
Tears get you nowhere, believe
me. You be strong. Stronger if
you must.

Annabelle nods but she can't help the tears. The singing
around the bonfire takes over the background. Carol's eyes
drift into the flames, dancing and sparkling...

PRIEST (V.O)
Lord, her fight is over now.

EXT. SLAVE CEMETERY- DAWN (1830)

Slaves are gathered, mournfully listening. Standing beside
Vivian is Little Annabelle.

Fick, Bison and another MALE slave are standing over
Carol's wrapped corpse, waiting.

An enslaved PRIEST is eulogizing...

PRIEST
Please watch over her. Lord, we
beg you to wipe her tears, will
salvation for her pains, and let
her nestle in your arms.
(gesturing the trinity)
In the name of the father, the
son and the holy spirit. Amen.

The three men drop Carol's corpse in the hole. Fick
glances over at Annabelle. Their eyes meet, he looks away
apologetically.

Annabelle peers at the mud piling over her mother's
corpse.

INT. THE CASTLE'S MANSION (DINNING) - EVENING (1830)

(CONTINUED)

Annabelle stands still with a tray of food in hand, meanwhile MR CALIBAN (40, butler) serves the seated CASTLES and the ADAMS.

GEORGE ADAMS (45), a large man with a bushy ash blonde mustache, chews loudly....

GEORGE

I tell yer, won't sell Charles.
They gon' need more than that to
go with.

CHARLES SENIOR CASTLE (55), a tall figure with a lorgnette on his face. His commanding voice fills the room...

CHARLES

It will sell. Sugar and all the
other crops are vulnerable to
rough handling of transport. Now
you come, ten years from now, all
Southerns will seek out cotton.
And you know why?

CHARLES JUNIOR (14), curious and innocent eyes squint around the room...

CHARLES JUNIOR

Because it's king.

CHARLES

(eyeing his son, proudly)
That's right.

ANNE ADAMS (40), in her typical oversize blond wig, admiringly gazes at Charles Jr. With her usual sheepish demeanor, she adds:

ANNE

My, my... already a politician.

CHARLOTTE CASTLE (40, kind eyes), strokes young Charles' hair, proudly.

GEORGE

Spice crops are profit.

CHARLES

The spice crops are weak, George.
There is too much of them out
there. The British are sensible
enough to know its value. We are
barely scrubbing the barrels of
the commodity trade here.

GEORGE

The commodity trade flourishes
'cause wage is, well, next to
nothing.

George eyes Annabelle.

GEORGE
(disgustingly)
And there's been unrest about
certain talks of 'freedom' in the
yonder.

CHARLES
Bloody traitors! What do we say
to that Mr Caliban?

Mr Caliban is pouring a glass full of wine for George.

MR CALIBAN
(dutifully)
Frightened wormers, sir.

CHARLES
That's right. Wormers too damn
scared to inherit their god-given
rights of their own property.
Slaves are our property George,
it's been so even before the
world sunk into the dark age and
so it shall it be in ages to
come. I don't have the zeal to
quake over political leeches
whose sole intentions are to
profit from false benevolence. I
want to discuss tangible profits
in the years to come.

George snickers, grunts and discourteously blows in a
handkerchief. Anne smiles, clearly embarrassed. She looks
over to her first born, BONNIE ADAMS (9), playing with her
blonde curls.

ANNE
(to Charlotte)
Bonnie started speaking after two
months. A family doctor says she
could be gifted.

GEORGE
Ah, enough with that woman.

George puts the handkerchief back in his pocket...

GEORGE
(to Charles)
I apologize for my lack of sight
in the promises of the future but
until then, I respectfully
decline the offer. Now, Charles,
I can feel the steak getting
colder in my mouth and won't want

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

GEORGE (cont'd)
nothing more than to praise the
meal provided under your
household.

Anne giggles sheepishly. Charlotte smiles, it doesn't take a genius to see it's forced.

GEORGE
Besides, I see our wives losing
sanity over the intricacies of
our debate.

CHARLES
Very well. Charlotte? Anne?
Apologies.

ANNE
You men, have a lot to worry
about. It troubles us not that
you wonder about our well being.

Suddenly, Charles Junior coughs. Seems to be having a slight choke.

CHARLOTTE
(to Annabelle)
Water.

Annabelle pours in a cup. Most of it spills onto Charles Jr.

The life in the room halts.

Fearing for her life, little Annabelle puts in the work to dry him with her bare hands.

ANNABELLE
Apologies, Master.

CHARLOTTE
No need to bother with that,
Anna.

ANNABELLE
Forgive me.

CHARLOTTE
It's alright child.

Mr Caliban walks over, places a hand on Annabelle...

MR CALIBAN
Come now.

GEORGE

Well...is that how slaves are treated in this house? Charles, forgive me for saying this but discipline is desperately needed in this household.

CHARLES

(to Charles Jr.)

Son, we are Castles. Go on.

CHARLES JUNIOR

What do you mean, father?

CHARLES

You've got to learn.

CHARLOTTE

She's just a child.

CHARLES

(sternly to Charlotte)

I believe as a father, this is my area of expertise.

(to Annabelle)

Go on now, forward!

Annabelle steps forward reluctantly towards Charles Junior, eyes in fright.

Out of the blue, Bonnie SLAPS Annabelle. Her ring cuts Annabelle's cheek, so deep blood oozes.

BONNIE

(fighting the ring off her finger)

That's how it's done.

Anne smiles at Charlotte, who dutifully returns one back.

CHARLES

(admiringly)

That's quite a young lady you're raising there.

GEORGE

(slightly disappointed)

She's a lady. A few years now, and she'll be tamed to the teeth. Curses of having one.

George looks at his first born, MASON ADAMS (10), a young brunette boy who seems displeased to be in that place. He doesn't even touch the food on his plate.

(CONTINUED)

GEORGE

I'm riled up over him instead.

CHARLES

(smiling at Mason)

Mason Adams, price of George.

Mason looks over to her younger sister, Bonnie, who keeps smiling around the room. It makes him sick to watch her.

CHARLOTTE

(whispering in Mr Caliban's ears)

Take her back to the shed. Get her something for that.

Mr. Caliban escorts Annabelle out, as she nurses her cheek.

EXT. PLANTATION FIELDS -SUNSET (1830)

We follow the footsteps of Annabelle with a bucket across the plantation. She stops, revealing the scar on her cheek, places the bucket on the ground, and gazes at the the sun setting behind the rows of cotton.

CHARLES JUNIOR(O.S)

It is something, isn't it?

Startled, she picks her bucket and hurries off...

CHARLES JUNIOR(O.S)

Wait!

Annabelle stops. Frightened.

Charles Junior climbs down an oak tree. Approaches...

CHARLES JUNIOR

What is your name?

ANNABELLE

Annabelle.

CHARLES JUNIOR

Do you like the sunset?

She nods

CHARLES JUNIOR

I like it too. It's beautiful. Do you know that the sun burns the fields to grow cotton?

She shakes her head.

CHARLES JUNIOR

It's a process called photosynthesis. I like the sciences you see. I read a lot. Would you like to read?

She doesn't have an answer.

CHARLES JUNIOR

Go on, say something.

ANNABELLE

Would master Castle fancy me read?

CHARLES JUNIOR

I cannot make you read. My piano teacher has been teaching me for a year now. I still don't know how to play. Learning is in the heart. I like to read, that is why it comes easy to me. Would you like me to teach you to read?

Nothing from Annabelle, just pondering what to say... Charles Jr takes out a little book from his pocket. Opens it.

CHARLES JUNIOR

Look, it has all the letters in it. And pictures too. Do you know what that is?

Annabelle puts down the bucket.

ANNABELLE

Apple.

CHARLES JUNIOR

That's right. A scientist, Isaac Newton had an apple fall on his head. It knocked him so hard, he began to wonder why things fall back to earth. Thus, he discovered that it wasn't just the way of the world for things to fall. But that an unseen force makes it so.

ANNABELLE

What is...

Annabelle refrains from asking.

CHARLES JUNIOR

What? What is it? Go on.

ANNABELLE

What is for..force?

CHARLES JUNIOR

It's the behavior of objects.
It's what's responsible for the
motion of all things. Why the sun
sets behind the cotton fields.
Learning is a gift, you see. It's
good to understand everything
around you. When I was little, I
was seduced by the sun. I saw it
everywhere I went as it returned
the same obsession I had over it.
So I always thought I was the
only one in the whole world it
followed around.

She giggles beneath her breath. Charles Jr retracts his eyes, wishing he didn't share any of that.

ANNABELLE

(without looking up)

I imagine that been a beautiful thing.

CHARLES JUNIOR

Yes. But now I know better. What did you think about the sun?

Annabelle falls silent as usual...

CHARLES JUNIOR

(instructively)

Go on, tell me. I have shared an embarrassing part of me. I demand one from you.

ANNABELLE

(looking up)

I think...I think the sun was cruel to our backs on the cotton field. Makes it hard to see when all the sweat soak the eyes.

CHARLES JUNIOR

I'm sorry to hear that. Well, that force I told you about is the reason why the bucket is heavy in your hand. What about that, what did you think was the reason? That it was the way things were?

ANNABELLE

(observing her little fingers)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ANNABELLE (cont'd)
I thought...I thought it was it
was 'cause I got child hands.
(searching her words)
Where...where it came from Master
Castle? This force?

Charles Junior smiles pridefully.

CHARLES JUNIOR
Where does it come from? That's
the right tense to use.

Annabelle picks the bucket as quick as possible.

Charles Jr turns to spot Mr Caliban waiting at a distance.
His eyes linger onto Annabelle for a little moment.

CHARLES JUNIOR
I have to go.

He walks past her. Stops...

CHARLES JUNIOR
Forgive me, Ms Annabelle. For
what happened at dinner. And for
not having the answer to that
question.

He heads off to Mr Caliban...

INT. CASTLE MANSION (DINING ROOM)-MORNING (1830)

Charles and Charlotte have breakfast at the diner.
Annabelle walks in with a plate of bread and biscuits
which she places on the table for the Castles.

CHARLES
Where's he?

CHARLOTTE
He should be here any minute.

Annabelle is about to take her leave...

CHARLES
(to ANNABELLE)
Tell my son to come down here
before I lose my appetite. Go on
now.

We follow Annabelle as she leaves...

INT. KITCHEN--

Annabelle walks past two other slaves, busy cutting
vegetables while a pot broils.

(CONTINUED)

INT. STAIRCASE--

She steps up the staircase, walks past closed bedroom doors. KNOCKS but to her surprise, the door slides open. Anxiously, she steps in...

INT. CHARLES JUNIOR'S ROOM--

Taking careful steps, as she look around the room: there is a portrait of Charles Jr above a luxurious little bed, and a small book shelf stands at the adjacent corner.

ANNABELLE
(whispering)
Master Charles?... Master
Charles?

She leans in at the book shelf, studies the tittles curiously. Suddenly, she hears the RUSTLE of a page. Hesitantly, she walks to the other side of the bed only to discover Charles Jr on the floor, his face buried in a book. She whispers:

ANNABELLE
Master Charles? Master?

CHARLES JUNIOR
WHAT?

He looks up...

CHARLES JUNIOR
(excited)
Annabelle! Are you here for some
reading lessons?

Charles Jr stands on his feet with his book...

ANNABELLE
Your father demand you come for
breakfast.

CHARLES JUNIOR
(bored)
Of course.

CUT TO--

DINNING TABLE--

Meanwhile at the dinning table. Mr Caliban is setting the plates at an empty seat, implied to be for Charles Jr.

CHARLES
(beaming at the empty seat)
What's taking so long?

(CONTINUED)

CHARLOTTE

Mr Caliban, please call my son,
will you?

MR CALIBAN

Of course, Madam.

CUT TO--

CHARLES JUNIOR'S ROOM--

CHARLES JUNIOR

(shows the book's title)

Look, it's called *The Tempest* by
William Shakespeare. Comical name
for a genius, "Shakespeare."

(surfing the pages)

It's a story about a lady trapped
in an island with her father,
foreign to the outside world. Her
innocence makes her naive and
gullible.

(shuts the book)

Would you like to read it? I can
teach you, how to read, of
course.

ANNABELLE

I must get back.

Annabelle attempts to take her leave...

CHARLES JUNIOR

Wait.

Annabelle stops.

CUT TO--

EXT. CHARLES JUNIOR'S ROOM--

Mr Caliban reaches the door, about to enter but curiosity
overwhelms so he slides enough to eavesdrop...

INT. CHARLES JUNIOR'S ROOM--

Charles Jr. digs into his pocket and brings out comes a
little book, titled *THE ALPHABETS*.

CHARLES JUNIOR

We'll begin with this. That's A,
B and C. Say it.

Annabelle is silently nervous

(CONTINUED)

CHARLES JUNIOR
Go on. Say it. A, B and that's C.

ANNABELLE
A...B...C

CHARLES JUNIOR
Excellent. Now, we'll continue
with it tomorrow and the day
after that until you know your
alphabets. Ultimately, how to
read. Here.
(placing the book in her
hand)
Keep it. Hide it. Yes?

Still anxious, Annabelle nods.

MR CALIBAN
Master Castle?

Annabelle jumps in fright. Hides the book.

MR CALIBAN
Your father wants you at the
table.

CHARLES JUNIOR
Okay.

MR CALIBAN
He demands you go now, Master.

Charles Jr. takes his leave.

Annabelle is next but Mr Caliban stands at her path, his
eyes accusingly drilling her.

MR CALIBAN
Don't be staying in the Master's
chamber too long. Understood?

Annabelle nods, and ambles past Mr Caliban.

INT. THE SHED-MIDNIGHT (1830)

Crickets CHIRP in the silent night. Lying with her eyes
open, Annabelle scans the shed: Few female slaves asleep
on the floor, Vivian especially. She tiptoes over them,
plunges her hand in a pile of hay...

VIVIAN
(softly)
Master, no.

Annabelle pauses, looks over to Vivian: she's still
asleep...

(CONTINUED)

VIVIAN
 (sobbing)
 Please, master. Please, don't.
 Please. No. No.

Quickly, Annabelle makes her way to a window where the moonlight penetrates....

ANNABELLE (V.O)
 When the Whipman held on to the whip, his hands never slipped from the grip. His fingers wrapped around it, every lash his hand squeezed tighter as if the world was in his palm.

PRESENT DAY:

INT. COTTAGE (BEDROOM)-NIGHT-1865

And we are back to Old Annabelle, as she sits on the dresser stool, but her eyes lingering in the past...

ANNABELLE
 I felt it that night, for the first time. That cancerous rage. I felt I had to hold on to it. So my brows will be thicker and my back stronger.

FLASHBACK:

INT. THE SHED- 1830

Little Annabelle is immersed into the pages of the book under the moonlight....

ANNABELLE (V.O)
 I would not have sweat pour in my eyes or feel the whip on my back. I held on to it and never looked back.

ONSCREEN: we see "ELEVEN YEARS LATER"

INT. CASTLE MANSION (hallway) - midday (1841)

We follow a WOMAN holding a tray of beverages as she walks to a door. KNOCKS.

INT. CASTLE MANSION (LIVING ROOM)--

We follow the back of a MAN in a suit, walking to the door. He opens it.

MAN'S POV: ANNABELLE (19, attractive), with eyes that yell curiosity and a spray of innocence, smiles warmly.

(CONTINUED)

HENRY(O.S)

Finally!

Anabelle's POV: CHARLES JUNIOR (25) with an intellectual flare, and still innocence in his eyes, winks at her.

HENRY(O.S)

What's a man got a do to get a drink in this household?

Charles Jr. stares a little longer...

HENRY(O.S)

Charles!

Charles snaps out of it...lets the door for Annabelle as he walks back to his seat...

CHARLES JUNIOR

Manners, Henry. Did your mother ever teach you any?

Annabelle steps in.

HENRY (24), athletic with pompous eyes, ogles at her as she walks over to lay the tray.

Charles Jr catches him, and so does MICHAEL (21), a frail tall figure with a lisp.

CHARLES JUNIOR

Watch your eyes Henry.

HENRY

I am just dazzled by the sight of it. Even animals and things tend to exhibit some sense of attraction.

Annabelle places the tray on the stool closest to Charles Jr. She's filling the glasses with scotch.

MICHAEL

Henry will never ssstop. Nothing is beneass him as much as he thinks they are.

HENRY

(seductively scanning Annabelle)

You say that now, but when you've dived the waters that I have, then you will understand.

MICHAEL

He sssleeps with hisss property.

HENRY

(mockingly)

"He sssleeps with hisss property." When are you ever gonna learn to shut your mouth?! It is my property. A man does what he pleases with what is his.

MICHAEL

A scientiss such as yourself should heed the worss of Darwin. Natural selection is now their cursss and our species' blessing. We are the survivors. Mingling with them brinss ours to god knows what.

HENRY

What shall it bring, Charles?

The two men steer their attention to Charles Jr. Silence ensues as Charles glances over to Annabelle, wary about his next words...

CHARLES JUNIOR

(to the men)

An abomination?

Shocked, Annabelle spills some scotch on the tray.

Henry and Michael stare at Charles Jr, awaiting his verdict...

CHARLES JUNIOR

Are you daft?! Get to my room and wait for me there! Stupid girl!

Annabelle walks out of the living room

HENRY

(excited)

Are you going to have fun with her?

Charles Jr. drinks his scotch, and smirks.

INT. CHARLES JUNIOR'S CHAMBER- DAY (1841)

Charles Jr. steps in his room: larger bed, same portrait of himself, taller book shelves, and a wood desk. Annabelle is standing next to the bed.

ANNABELLE(O.S)

"An abomination?"

(CONTINUED)

CHARLES JUNIOR

Deepest apologies, Annabelle. You understand why I had to do any of that.

ANNABELLE

I assume you have something for me?

Charles walks over to his desk and picks a book.

CHARLES JUNIOR

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn. You will love it.

ANNABELLE

(disappointed)

Art.

CHARLES JUNIOR

You aren't ready.

ANNABELLE

(taking the book)

And you determine that, of course.

CHARLES JUNIOR

Listen, art is a gift. You are better off digging in it than the sciences.

ANNABELLE

You promised me, the sciences, remember? In the white fields and yellow sun? You came to me and you teased me with the mysteries of the universe. And ever since, I have fallen deeply drawn in by those questions.

CHARLES JUNIOR

Hearing you speak like this invites less desire to draw you away from the arts. You sound beautiful. I reckon you offer some regard for the arts, it is quite hopeful you know.

Annabelle moves away from him and looks out the window, eyes travelling...

ANNABELLE

I want understanding... of everything. Not the way I wish to see the world, but how it is, it's absolute form. I want to see

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ANNABELLE (cont'd)
behind the veils and the
curtains.

CHARLES JUNIOR
And you don't think the arts do
that?

Nothing from Annabelle, eyes lost out the window.

CHARLES JUNIOR
(walking over to the window)
Very well. Finish this and I
shall see to it.

Their POV out the window: A carriage cruises in and parks.

CHARLES JUNIOR
That must be mother. Let's hope
she brought new books from her
travels. I just might let you
borrow one.

EXT. CASTLE MANSION --

CHARLOTTE CASTLE (51, eyes still kind), steps out of the
carriage in her usual bourgeois corset. Graceful. Charles
Jr walks out hastily. Extends his hands to his mother...

CHARLES JUNIOR
How was your trip, mother?

CHARLOTTE
(taking his hand)
Oh, it was splendid.

CHARLES
Watch your step.

Annabelle stands behind. Dutiful.

CHARLOTTE
New York is quite a scene.

Charles Jr escorts her to the mansion: Arms locked in one
another.

CHARLOTTE
Nobody ever listens to anybody.
Someone is always trying to sell
something. It's madness.

CHARLES
So you never left here.

(CONTINUED)

CHARLOTTE
Your humor outgrows you.
(notices Annabelle)
Annabelle?

ANNABELLE
(without looking up)
Madam.

Charlotte pauses, scans Annabelle admiringly...

CHARLOTTE
You are beautiful, just like your
mother.

ANNABELLE
Thank you.

CHARLES JUNIOR
Enough flattery, come. I want to
hear all about it.

Annabelle adjusts the book protruding behind her clothes.
She looks over to Charlotte and Charles Jr, who are both
about to enter the Mansion.

CHARLOTTE
As I was saying before you
interrupted, it's madness, but
with a harmonious temperament.

INT. CASTLE MANSION (KITCHEN)- AFTERNOON (1841)

The pot on the stove broils, blowing steam in the air.
VIVIAN (41) is slicing meat on the counter.

VIVIAN
Hope, be quick with 'em. We got
other chores.

JOAN (20, Short and curvy), cuts the onions on the
counter, as slow as a snail.

JOAN
I'll get the white man to shout,
"Hallelujah" with a taste.

HOPE (25, tall and skinny) serve shrimp and grits on a
tray.

HOPE
You don't got the men at the shed
to whisper how you gon' make a
white man shout?

(CONTINUED)

JOAN

When I get my hands on 'em, I ain't gon' be here, I'll be in bed, warm and served like Ms. Castle.

HOPE

(disbelief)

You want a white man?

JOAN

Well, yes. Look around Joan, they holding all the keys.

VIVIAN

Don't let those silly talks wander out of this place and find itself in the corridors or the only bed you be lying in is four feet beneath the fields.

HOPE

That's if her fanny fits four feet. I want me a strong man. A good man. The kind that says prayer before a meal and the kind that will take care of me and my lovely children. Most importantly, a darkie.

VIVIAN

Children?

Annabelle walks in. Trailing behind her, is ANTWONE (12) running with a glass in his hand.

VIVIAN

Antwone! No running in here.

(to JOAN)

Don't pray for children in a place like this. There ain't been no good here. And you sure don't want them out there.

Annabelle organizes the food and beverages on the trays.

HOPE

Ain't so bad.

VIVIAN

Antwone help Annabelle with the trays. Go on.

ANTWONE

Yes, mother.

Antwone picks a stack of trays, lays them on the counter for Annabelle.

(CONTINUED)

ANNABELLE

(to Antwone)

Thank you.

HOPE

You old. Times be better. We gon' have someone to wipe our tears. Annabelle, ain't that right?

ANNABELLE

My hands work just fine. No need for a man to do it.

HOPE

(Scoffs)

How can you? You already warming his bed?

ANNABELLE

Hope, that's gone far! And those are grave accusations.

HOPE

Oh, he teach all them fancy words too?

JOAN

Mhmmm!

VIVIAN

(to Annabelle)

Forget them. They thoughts are thick as hay and just as light.

HOPE

You ain't sleeping with the master's son?

ANNABELLE

What I do with the master's son should not trouble you.

HOPE

It troubles us all. Vivian tell her.

Annabelle turns to Vivian. Waiting...

VIVIAN

(cautiously)

It does. Hope is right, child. If rumors go around that someone been sleeping with the master's son, Master Castle will shake the shed and the barn until he finds out who. And he make'em pay with blood.

(CONTINUED)

ANNABELLE

I swear upon my mother's grave
that my friendship with Charles
is innocent.

JOAN

Done belivin' a word.

ANNABELLE

(annoyed)
Why's that?

VIVIAN

You just called him by name,
darling...

They all pause, judgmentally staring at Annabelle. She takes the tray and treads lightly past them.

INT. THE SHED- AFTERNOON (1841)

Sun dapples on Annabelle's cheeks as she sleeps. She opens her eyes slowly but, jumps quickly to her feet. Adjusting her skirt to cover her knees.

Her **POV**: BISON (51)- the years haven't been kind. He's staring.

ANNABELLE

What do you want here?

BISON

I wan'know what you been serving
Master Castle Junior that he ask
fo' you at the party.

ANNABELLE

Party? What are you on about?

BISON

I'm on about Master Castle Junior
wantin' you with him at the Adams
party. None received invitation
like that. Just you, his prize.

ANNABELLE

I better hurry then.

As she walks past, Bison jumps her. Pulls her close, wrapping his hands around her waist.

Annabelle struggles...but he has a strong grip...

BISON

Now, you listen to me girl. Your
mother was a wise woman. I reckon
you take after her and stay away

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

BISON (cont'd)
from master. Whatever's you
serving in his bed, I'm gon' get.

ANNABELLE
(struggling)
Get your hands off me!

BISON
Or what? What you gon' do?

ANNABELLE
I'll tell Master that you've been
mean. And you know how the master
likes his prize.

BISON
You mark my words, when them
masters are done with you,
they'll cast your leper'd soul
out to them dogs. And them dogs
like me will feed upon it.

He throws her to the floor. Exits the shed.

Annabelle gasps for few seconds, rises to her feet to find
her stance. Instantly, she falls back to the floor, tears
well up in her eyes.

EXT. THE ADAM'S MANSION (BACKYARD)- AFTERNOON (1841)

We follow a BOY (10), chasing behind his dog on the
grass. He runs past MEN and WOMEN seated at round tables,
who instantly look up the moment he passes. At the
background is the ADAM'S garden with a set of stairs that
joins to the grand white mansion.

BOY
(at the dog)
Wait! Stop!

The boy dodges the incoming slave WAITRESSES and WAITERS
with trays of food/beverage.

BOY
Stop whiskey, stop!

EXT. GARDEN--

Annabelle walks courteously with a tray of beverage. She
smiles at other slaves walking past her but none
reciprocates. Instead they stare in distraught so she
wipes off the smile. She makes her way down the set of
stairs...

EXT. BACKYARD--

(CONTINUED)

...and to her left, incoming the boy, she dodges quick. The boy trips on the grass. Few whites whisper as they stare...

Annabelle lays the tray on a nearby table, and helps him to his feet.

FEMALE VOICE
(approaching from behind)
Get your filthy hands off my son!

Annabelle quickly lets go but she's shoved to the side by the boy's MOTHER.

ANNABELLE
(apprehensively)
I'm sorry Madam.

MOTHER
Get going!

Frantically, Annabelle picks the tray.

MOTHER
(to her kid)
Oh Peter, are you alright?

Annabelle walks over to a table to serve a HUSBAND and WIFE. As she pours for the husband, she notices his eyes feasting on her. Meanwhile, the wife shoots a look of disgust at Annabelle. Aware of the looks, Annabelle quickly leaves.

CUT TO--

NEAR A YEW TREE:

Charles Castle (61), and George Adams (56), are drenched in a conclave with another man,

EDGAR SMITH (50), short with a pouched mustache.

GEORGE
I have yer to thank, Charles. If yer not done so I'd been wiped away from fortune.

CHARLES
You're too humble a friend. You heeded counsel when it seemed fit. Credit for your wits is due.

George's eyes squint, troubled...

CHARLES
(Observing)
What is it?

(CONTINUED)

EDGAR

(Whispering)

It's the Amistad case. He's been sleepless since the case was lost.

CHARLES

Amistad?

GEORGE

Amistad, Charles. Bloody old fool can't resist the temptation to disappoint the system once again. The love the people had for him, I never could comprehend how he earned it.

EDGAR

Quincy is an old fool alright but you have to admit, it was a mighty blow to the system. A surprising one for that matter. I hate surprises, what's next, the votes?

CHARLES

(in disbelief)

For slaves?

Charles looks around: even George still seems worried.

CHARLES

It's absurd.

GEORGE

Look what happened in Pennsylvania.

Annabelle walks past with her tray. George pauses until she's out of sight...

GEORGE

(distracted)

Slaves and women uniting, looting and burning halls. This nation needs a new birth.

CHARLES

I'm not so shaken by the women.

GEORGE

It's not just the women but the fact that they connive with the slaves stirs chaos- United, Charles.

(CONTINUED)

EDGAR

Some speak of it as the United
America.

CHARLES

Now that's enough. I can worry
about my property ripped away
from my yard alright. But be rest
assured that "in the image of
God, He created him." And from
his rib, God created women as
said in scripture. No man shall
ever wear apron or give birth.
It's a baseless cause they
pursue.

AT A ROUND TABLE:

BONNIE (20), grown into an attractive curly blonde haired
damsel, pouches her lips as she applies rouge. She is
sitting next to MS Boyle (30), timid and awkward lady who
is comically mimicking Bonnie's expressions.

Meanwhile, with a kettle in hand, Annabelle pours a cup of
tea for Charlotte.

CHARLOTTE

Thank you, Annabelle.

ANNABELLE

Yes, Madam.

She moves over to ANNE (51), filling her cup...

ANNE

(coily to Charlotte)
You really treat them well. Look
at this one, she's getting fat.
(looking around)
They get so fat.

Bonnie snickers, so does Ms Boyle too.

CHARLOTTE

How was your visit to France?

Annabelle is filling Ms Boyle's cup...

ANNE

George and I were just passing
through.

CHARLOTTE

Passing through? Did you at least
buy some garments? I hear they
have magnificent tailors.

MS BOYLE
(frantically)
I hear the beggars in the streets
took over government.

BONNIE
You hear an awful lot for a
widow.

ANNE
Bonnie don't be callous. Ms Boyle
here, was unfortunate about her
husband.
(squeezing Ms Boyle's hand
reassuringly)
And she's a dear friend.

MS BOYLE
It's fine, really.

BONNIE
Apologies. But a woman married to
a British is a traitorous
endeavor. At least he bares great
wealth.

ANNE
Bonnie?!

WOMAN'S VOICE
And a woman married for financial
stability is a traitor to her own
soul. Period.

All three women look up:

MS CARLYLE (35), beautiful with an elegant way of
speaking, sternly gazes back with those daring eyes.

BONNIE
It's no wonder you'll die a
lonely woman, Ms Carlyle.

MS CARLYLE
Better to die alone than losing
my teeth on a man's cock.

BONNIE
(angrily to Annabelle)
I know you. You're that worm from
the Castle household.

MS CARLYLE
Leave the poor girl alone.

BONNIE

What do you care?

Annabelle pours for Ms Carlyle...

MS CARLYLE

(to Annabelle)

Thank you dear.

(to Bonnie)

I care when your insecurities
consume the better of you so much
so that you want to skin it out
of the poor girl.

Annabelle takes her leave...

BONNIE

Wait, worm!

Annabelle stops, turns. Bonnie cups her tea in her hand,
looking in Ms Carlyle's eyes...

BONNIE

(deciphering, to Ms Carlyle)

You have a soft spot for them.

MS CARLYLE

I don't have a soft spot for
anyone. I believe her fight will
become ours one day. It's why I
must go to New York.

MS BOYLE

What's in New York?

MS CARLYLE

A cry of enough, Ms Boyle. A cry.

BONNIE

You're gonna march with them?

MS CARLYLE

If I must, so be it.

MS BOYLE

It does sounds exciting.

BONNIE

Shut your mouth, Ms Boyle.

ANNE

Why do you have to fight
everyone? It's not lady-like.

MS CARLYLE

I shall toast to that.

BONNIE

You hear that worm, Ms Carlyle here is gonna march and wave for your freedom. You'd fancy that, won't you? To sit in a table while I serve you.

MS CARLYLE

(leans in, hope in her voice)

No, to sit in a table together. And discuss business and politics as your men do and drink to our heart's full as they would.

(picks her glass for a toast)

For freedom and more.

Nobody joins in the toast, but she still drinks to it. Meanwhile, Bonnie is clearly angered so she turns to Annabelle, about to say something...

CHARLOTTE

Annabelle, dear, you may take your leave.

Annabelle bows and smiles, then walks away...Bonnie eyes glow in rage.

MS BOYLE

(whimsically, to Bonnie)

I like your hair, it's so nice. You're just so pretty.

Bonnie furiously sips her tea.

UNDER A BIRCH TREE:

We follow Annabelle as she walks past Charles Jr, who smiles at her. She doesn't notice him at all. Behind him, Michael and Henry are immersed in a debate.

MICHAEL

It's jusss there isss a better way to ass.

HENRY

(mockingly)

"there isss a better way to ass." Listen to yourself, women need to hear it as it is. Just say your father is the mayor and she'll run off with you to Babylon.

Both men glance over to a group of damsels, chatting whimsically in a circle. One of the LADIES, red haired with freckles glances back. Quickly Michael's eyes dodge

(CONTINUED)

to the floor. But, Henry drinks up his wine, and winks at her. She's amused so she whispers to the group, who are now looking back at them. Michael can't hold it together. Without looking up...

MICHAEL
(whispering)
My father's not a mayor.

HENRY
Of course not.

MICHAEL
(whispering)
But that's a lie.

HENRY
And you think that's new? Make no mistake, the fancy dress wives, the lousy fathers, the children, it's all facade, a role. You have to be better at it than everyone else to survive.

MICHAEL
(whispering)
I can't lie. No I won't do it.

HENRY
Oh forget it.

Henry places his empty glass on a passing waiter's tray as he makes his way to Charles...

HENRY
What do you think about her?

Charles Jr's eyes still linger, presumably on Annabelle...

CHARLES JUNIOR
Don't be absurd, she's a slave.

HENRY
What are you talking about? I meant Bonnie.

Charles Jr. coughs up. Henry puts his arm over him...

HENRY
See now that'll be a slave in bed.

Charles Jr watches: We see Ms Boyle reaching for the rouge on the table. Bonnie slaps her hand off.

CHARLES JUNIOR

Manners Henry, that's a reputable man's daughter.

HENRY

Oh, you're a bore Charles. Don't be a bore. This place is swarming with those. Don't talk like them, I beg of you.

Charles Jr. steals another glance: Bonnie laughs at Ms Boyle, whose gaze drops in defeat.

He hesitates...

CHARLES JUNIOR

I wonder if she prefers the unorthodox ways.

The thought sinks in. Gradually, the two men crack into laughter. Michael joins in, eyes rolling around, lost...

MICHAEL

Whass the unorthodos wayss?

Henry squeezes his arm around Charles Jr...

HENRY

(heartily)

But you'll find out soon enough, right?

CHARLES JUNIOR

What?

HENRY

Charles Junior Castle, a surgeon and scientist, yet your wits fail you.

Henry studies Charles Jr, eyes still clueless...

HENRY

Dear God, he still can't deduce what's been in front of him his whole life. Go on Michael, do the honors, tell him.

MICHAEL

Whass the unorthodoss wayss?

HENRY

(frowning)

He meant to say wedlock.

(CONTINUED)

CHARLES JUNIOR

Marriage?

HENRY

Yes, why do you think your father is heavily invested in the Adam's affairs? Marriage into the family and the wealth is yours.

Charles Jr's eyes melt. Henry snatches Michael's glass. Takes a sip.

HENRY

(patting Michael's head)

I can't believe Michael caught that before you.

Michael fights him off...

MICHAEL

You've got no mannass Henry. No mannass.

HENRY

Oh don't be a wimp!

MICHAEL

I'm not a wims. Stop callin' me thass.

Instantly, the conversation between Henry and Michael fades...

Charles Jr POV: Bonnie is laughing at Ms Boyle, who walks away from the table, obviously hurt.

Henry takes another sip and looks up...

HENRY

(to Charles Jr)

So have you?

CHARLES JUNIOR

Have I what?

HENRY

Oh you know, enjoyed the loins of another?

CHARLES JUNIOR

I-uh...I have. Yes.

HENRY

How come you never told us?

(CONTINUED)

MICHAEL

Lord forgive your dasness.
Privacy Henry, thasss why.

Charles Jr grabs another drink from one of the passing waiters, then chugs down another glass.

INT. CASTLE MANSION (DINNING)- EVENING (1841)

It's dinner. Charles and Charlotte are eating whereas, Charles Jr is drinking a glass of wine. His eyes wander.

Charlotte notices...

CHARLOTTE

Charlie, what's the matter?

Charles Jr chugs the whole wine...

CHARLES JUNIOR

Oh, it's nothing mother.

CHARLOTTE

You haven't touched your food.

Charles Jr is pouring himself another cup...

CHARLES JUNIOR

Work. Gets hard some days, feels repetitive. Very routine.

CHARLES

(Without looking up)
You're a Castle and a man. "Hard" should not be slipping your tongue.

CHARLES JUNIOR

Of course.

Charlotte studies Charles Jr...

CHARLOTTE

That's not what bothers you, is it?

CHARLES JUNIOR

(forcefully)
That is all.

CHARLES

Very well. I have decided to join the confederate politics.

CHARLOTTE

You're a businessman.

CHARLES

And?

CHARLOTTE

(cautiously)

Well you've always distant
yourself from the politics.

CHARLES

Those days are done for.

(returns to eating)

About time, we show we are not
hypocrites to our cause.

CHARLES JUNIOR

And what cause is that?

CHARLES

Cursed the man who stands
moderate in times like these.

CHARLES JUNIOR

It seems you've made a decision
all by yourself.

CHARLOTTE

(faintly reassuring)

It's lovely dear.

CHARLES

Of course it is "lovely."

CHARLES

What are you inferring boy?

An ugly pause ensues: Charles Jr is looking at his mother,
his eyes screaming for help, but she glances over to his
husband...

CHARLOTTE

(forcefully smiling)

It's a slip of tongue, dear.

CHARLES

Slip of tongue? No such thing.

(to his son)

Go on spit it out!

CHARLES JUNIOR

I am to--I am to marry without my
knowledge. Is this true?

CHARLES

And what would you say if that
were true?

(CONTINUED)

CHARLES JUNIOR

When were you ever going to tell me?

CHARLOTTE

Bonnie would make a fine wife, dear.

CHARLES

Hear that?

CHARLES JUNIOR

Didn't it occur to both of you that I should have been informed?

CHARLES

It's what's best for you and your mother agrees.

CHARLES JUNIOR

No father, she obeys it.

CHARLOTTE

Charles?

CHARLES

Apologize to your mother, now!

Charles Jr hesitates, everybody waits...

CHARLES JUNIOR

Apologies.

CHARLES

Bonnie will make a good wife. Her father is my dearest friend and you cannot deny that this a most clever decision. Or I swear boy, you won't see a dime in your name.

Charles Jr's eyes are enraged. Charlotte notices. Quickly she raises a glass...

CHARLOTTE

To a wonderful union.

She waits for her son, with pleading eyes. Charles Jr swallows the thought, finds courage within, looks at his glass, grabs it and raises it.

They drink to it.

EXT. PLANTATION FIELDS- NIGHT (1841)

Annabelle and Charles Jr sit the plank of the oak tree. Their legs dangle as their bodies create silhouettes in the moonlight.

(CONTINUED)

CHARLES JUNIOR

I am doomed. Of all the people in the world, it's her I have to marry.

ANNABELLE

You'll make a great husband, I'm sure of it.

CHARLES JUNIOR

You always say the nicest thing.

ANNABELLE

You have a gentle heart.

CHARLES JUNIOR

Father wants us here.

ANNABELLE

Is that what you desire?

CHARLES JUNIOR

I desire the silence in the plains, absent of noisy scorns and vigilant eyes. Annabelle...I'm troubled.

ANNABELLE

What is it?

CHARLES JUNIOR

It's of sensitive nature.

ANNABELLE

Tell me.

CHARLES JUNIOR

I have never--I have never been with a woman.

ANNABELLE

I know.

CHARLES JUNIOR

I have never said anything to you. How could you--

ANNABELLE

There's a certain look a man has when they haven't been with a woman. It's like none other...

Charles Jr looks down, ashamed...

ANNABELLE

(reassuringly)

It's kinder. Warmer.

(CONTINUED)

CHARLES JUNIOR

I--uh--I'd prefer to know what's
it like before becoming intimate
with Bonnie.

ANNABELLE

She'd prefer your innocence.

CHARLES JUNIOR

Will she? It's frown upon by men
when women speak about these
things. It's a dagger to our ego.
And that's everything to us, to
me.

ANNABELLE

I see more in you than that.

CHARLES JUNIOR

I was thinking you
might...Annabelle could you this
for me?

Beat. Awkward silence ensues...

ANNABELLE

You're a descent man, decent
enough for me to have affections
for you. I would like to be in
Bonnie's place more than
anything, well there- there it
is, my confession. But-but this
is my prize, my only prize, my
womanhood and I cannot give it
away as a favor.

CHARLES JUNIOR

Yes, I... forgive me.

ANNABELLE

The stars are out. I must go, so
should you, or master would turn
our shed upside down to find you.
Sleep warm under the stars.

Annabelle climbs down the tree.

However, Charles Jr eyes travel to the starry night.

EXT. PLANTATION FIELDS - SUNSET (1841)

The slaves are walking in columns with baskets of cotton.
Two white men on horses lead the march. Meanwhile, we
follow Antwone running barefoot with a small basket,
passing other slaves, plodding home after a day's labor.

(CONTINUED)

VIVIAN
(whispering)
Antwone, child, get here!

Antwone joins his mother, who is walking alongside Joan, Hope and Annabelle.

ANNABELLE
I wonder how you do it in a place like this.

VIVIAN
We ain't got a say in our pains or blessings, child. Only He knows.

Anwtone holds Annabelle's hands. She caresses his head. He loves it. Hope is watching the occasion...

HOPE
I never knew how you got trust in Him when this all we know and get from Him.

VIVIAN
God put us here to--

HOPE
NO, THE WHITE MAN--

A horse rider GALLOPS past, Hope pauses. Makes sure he's out of sight...

HOPE
(whispering)
They put us here. God ain't got cruel plans for any soul. If I had the Lord's power--

VIVIAN
Hope?!

HOPE
I'm saying He ain't being cruel and good altogether. Don't make no sense.

ANNABELLE
It doesn't make any sense, neither does the white man putting us here. But we can't live like that Hope, can we? Accepting none of it makes sense at all? It's a brutal thing to wake up to.

Annabelle glances over: Charles and Charlotte step out of the mansion, as a carriage awaits.

(CONTINUED)

EXT. CASTLE MANSION--

Charlotte enters the carriage. Charles is about to enter when-

MR CALIBAN(O.S)

SIR?

He stops, and to his POV: Mr Caliban runs with a letter in his hand...

EXT. FIELDS--

Annabelle's POV: Indistinct chatter between Charles and Mr Caliban.

Hope notices Annabelle's attention not with them. Thus, she investigates... **Her POV:** Charles looks up, looking directly at them. He points to her direction.

Hope adjusts her basket as she quickens her pace. Joan and Vivian follow after her.

Mr Caliban is fast approaching.

Hope stops to discover Annabelle, slowly drifting away, right towards Mr Caliban...

HOPE

(whispering)

Annabelle?!

VIVIAN

(whispering)

What you doing child?!

Annabelle stops, takes a step backwards but it's too late, Mr Caliban is right there...

MR CALIBAN

We have to get you cleaned up.

ANNABELLE

What for?

MR CALIBAN

Follow me.

She hesitates as she searches for comfort from her friends but they've vanished in the column.

INT. HORSE BATHHOUSE--

A horse rider escorts his wet horse down a corridor of rail-shut stations. He trudges past Annabelle, who is staring at the horse feces splattered around the floor. The place is unsanitary nightmare. Mr Caliban covers his nose with a handkerchief.

(CONTINUED)

MR CALIBAN
Your clothes. Go on.

Annabelle strips. Extends her clothes to Mr Caliban.

MR CALIBAN
What do you think I am?

Annabelle drops the clothes on the floor.

MR CALIBAN
I will get you something else to wear.
(walking away quickly)
I shall be outside. Be quick about it!

Annabelle swings open the rail and steps in a station. A bucket of water with a cup, floating on the surface, sits on the floor. She cups it full, about to bathe in it, but runs off to a corner, and PUKES.

EXT. BATH HOUSE--

Mr Caliban is speaking to a COACHMAN (25), who suddenly looks up, staring past him. Awestruck!

Mr Caliban investigates: Annabelle approaches. Despite her wet uncombed hair, she looks radiant in a corset.

COACHMAN
(studdering)
She one of them? One of the niggers from the fields?

MR CALIBAN
Indeed, she is.

Annabelle approaches.

MR CALIBAN
(handing her a letter)
Now here. He'll escort you to your carriage.

ANNABELLE
Where am I headed?

Mr Caliban walks away.

COACHMAN
Come now.

Annabelle trails anxiously behind the Coachman to the carriage. As soon as she places herself inside, the horses race off, jolting her forward. Terrified. Gradually, she eases into it, as her eyes drift for the first time to the open white fields and the setting sun, seemingly harmless altogether.

EXT. A STRANGER'S HOME (DRIVEWAY)- EVENING (1841)

The carriage makes it way down a long driveway, with a vast corn field on either sides. To the end of the trail is a cottage.

Annabelle slides the window curtain for a peek: Half tilled land stretch, abandoned tools laying around, american plows, plow beams, drag hoes and pitch forks. It's a derelict showdown.

EXT. A STRANGER'S HOME (ENTRANCE)--

The carriage halts. The horses NEIGH and STOMP around, edgily.

Annabelle steps out. Reluctantly, she makes her to the door. KNOCKS. No answer. She turns to the coachman, who is busy calming the horses. So she turns the knob....

INT. A STRANGER'S HOME--

Annabelle lets the door swing shut behind her. It's dark, the only light is coming from an archway to her right.

ANNABELLE
(frantically)
Anybody home?

She steps in the archway, following the light, which dances and shimmers in the shadows.

INT. LIVING ROOM-

Annabelle spills out the archway. Spots two chairs and a stool in the middle, placed by the burning embers of a fireplace. One chair is empty and the other, sits a WOMAN with glasses, reading a book. Like Annabelle, we get to see just the woman's back.

WOMAN
(calm)
Who's there?

Cautiously, Annabelle retraces her steps backward.

WOMAN
Can I help you?

Annabelle remains silent, standing still.

ANNABELLE

I..I-I was sent to deliver here
by Master Castle.

WOMAN

And how do you intend to deliver
from there?

Annabelle walks towards her, gradually revealing it's Ms
Carlyle.

MS CARLYLE

(inspecting Annabelle)
Strange but expected.

Annabelle's eyes falls to the floor.

MS CARLYLE

Sit.

ANNABELLE

Madam?

MS CARLYLE

I said join me. You've come a
long way to deliver it. You must
be exhausted.

Annabelle politely makes her way to the opposite chair,
but she stands.

Mrs Carlyle looks up: Annabelle's face drops to the letter
in her hand.

MS CARLYLE

I don't see you sitting.

Ms Carlyle folds the page and shuts the book. She catches
Annabelle glancing at the title, *Lelia* by George Sand.

MS CARLYLE

Well look at that.

Quickly, Annabelle looks away, and sits.

MS CARLYLE

A curious woman, and a curiosity
for good things...I know you. At
the party, it was you.

ANNABELLE

Annabelle.

MS CARLYLE

Ms. Annabelle, do you read?

Annabelle shakes her head.

MS CARLYLE
(looking at the cover)
That's a shame.

Ms Carlyle catches Annabelle, staring at the book.

MS CARLYLE
So they sent you?

Annabelle nods

MS CARLYLE
Poor girl. As long as you're here
be rest assured, you're in no
trouble at all. The Castles and
others in this place find my
beliefs too controversial for
their admiration. He thinks it
will offend me that you deliver
that invitation in person.

ANNABELLE
Apologies Madam.

MS CARLYLE
Please, it's Ms Carlyle. And
don't mind that, it's consolation
for me that you deliver it. I
find it comforting.

Silence ensues for a second...

MS CARLYLE
The letter. Give me the letter.

Annabelle hands it over.

MS CARLYLE
Tell Charles that I was
glad--No--that I was 'most glad'
by your company. And I will
attend because of it.

A smile breaks between the two women.

Ms Carlyle opens the book and continues to read.

Annabelle stands up, and walks away. Halfway to the
archway, she stops, and steals a glance at Ms Carlyle
reading...

JOAN (V.O)
She does look beautiful.

EXT. PLANTATION FIELDS- MORNING (1841)

The slaves are plowing and picking cotton at the
plantation fields.

(CONTINUED)

Annabelle's rises up, and her POV: Bonnie walks hastily to the entrance of the mansion with a smile. The mansion door closes behind her.

HOPE

Don't you want to be like her? In her place?

ANNABELLE

She's a cotton picker too.

JOAN

What you mean?

ANNABELLE

Lord knows her mama didn't give her that.

CHUCKLES break between Annabelle and Hope.

JOAN

(clueless)

Give her what?

HOPE

God, her fanny, Joan. Her fanny.
(turning to Annabelle)
So you don't pray to to be in her shoes?

ANNABELLE

She's a cotton picker, not like us, not here, but in closed doors she is. Truth be told, I sure would love being away from here. But who doesn't?

HOPE

Well there you have it. She got the nice things that all women want- A wealthy man who is gon' give her a family.

JOAN

It ain't fair. The Lord ain't fair.

HOPE

Well, hallelujah. Like Aunt Vivian says, he got plans for us, don't he?

JOAN

It just ain't right.

HOPE

What you gon' do, huh? Tell me,
what you gon' do if you were
free?

JOAN

A family, a home, my home. All
the beautiful things a woman
deserves. You tell me, what you
gon' do?

HOPE

Well maybe the same as yours but
I'll go east, where the other
black men are learned. He read to
me all the nice stories.

JOAN

There ain't no learned black men
in the east.

HOPE

That ain't true. Annabelle, tell
her.

ANNABELLE

You remember, Clara, the lady who
was sold away after three days
here?

JOAN

Yes, what about her?

HOPE

She met a learned slave. Tell her
his name, Annabelle.

ANNABELLE

Solomon but the white man gave
him another name, Platt, if my
memory serves right. He was
talented and smart, a fiddle
player.

JOAN

I will go east too.

HOPE

That ain't your path. It's mine.
Annabelle, what you gon' do?

ANNABELLE

I don't know.

HOPE

You don't know, what you gon' do
if you got free?

(CONTINUED)

ANNABELLE

I ought to live by the ocean with books, I guess. A lot of books. I'd sit in a swinger. A kettle on the fire, wrapped in a shawl that I'd knit the night before, yes, I will learn knitting. I will read and read until the words tire my eyes to sleep.

JOAN

No husband?

ANNABELLE

Well I'd make sure the door is never locked so he can come inside after a day's work to carry me to his bed.

HOPE

And what about the kettle?

ANNABELLE

What about it?

HOPE

You just gon' leave it there?

HOPE

Ooh, you gon' be a bad wife.

EXT. CASTLE MANSION--

Charles Jr steps out. Pacing to and fro.

EXT. PLANTATION FIELDS--

Hope's POV: Charles Jr is pacing. He stops and looks directly at Annabelle.

HOPE

Seems you be getting that soon enough.

Annabelle looks up, spots Charles Junior's eyes on her.

ANNABELLE

(whispering)

Don't be childish.

HOPE

He fancies you.

ANNABELLE

Don't say such things. If he did fancy me, I'd not be here. Besides, I don't fancy him that way either.

(CONTINUED)

HOPE

Those are no child eyes he looks with. Ooh, not innocent either.

EXT. CASTLE MANSION--

Charles Jr stares, eyes unrest. Bonnie walks up behind him...

BONNIE

It was anything but subtle in there. Not unexpected of course.

CHARLES JUNIOR

(angry)

You knew about it?

BONNIE

Don't be silly. The way our parents made us play together? Place us in the same room all the time? Well, Yes.

Charles Junior is silent

BONNIE

What's wrong?

CHARLES JUNIOR

Nothing. Just ashamed I suppose.

BONNIE

Nonsense. I did expect to hear the news from you instead of your folks. I believe you were waiting for courage and the opportune moment to tell me. Father says it is one of the most prideful moment for a man.

CHARLES JUNIOR

Apologies.

Bonnie walks up close to him, kisses him on the cheek. Then she takes his arm. Together they stroll around...

BONNIE

We must plan the wedding in the proper manner. I imagine your mother and mine have ideas about it. I always did like to be married in a carriage. What do you think?

CHARLES JUNIOR

I...Well--

Nothing so he forces a smile.

(CONTINUED)

BONNIE
(studying him)
Just like father. Men.

Bonnie walks side by side with him as she wraps her hands around his.

INT. CHARLES JUNIOR'S CHAMBERS-AFTERNOON (1841)

Annabelle removes the sheets and pillow cases, dumps them in a basket whilst Charles Jr sits at his desk. He has a book, half opened with his glasses on.

ANNABELLE
A carriage sounds nice.

CHARLES JUNIOR
It sounds ridiculous. Childish.
She thinks herself a what, a princess?

ANNABELLE
Every woman thinks they're a princess. Well don't you?

CHARLES JUNIOR
A princess?

ANNABELLE
No, a prince.

CHARLES JUNIOR
She expects so much from me. Who knew union could bring about such madness. Do you dream about it?

ANNABELLE
Marriage?

CHARLES JUNIOR
Yes.

ANNABELLE
I can't, Charles and you know that.

CHARLES JUNIOR
Dreams, Annabelle, dreams.
Surely, chains cannot stop you from having them.

ANNABELLE
I have dreamed of it. To walk in union with another. My life become his and his, mine. It's a warming thought until...

CHARLES JUNIOR

Until what?

ANNABELLE

Don't mind me.

Annabelle pauses. She spreads the sheets onto the bed. Then begins to tuck the sides...

CHARLES JUNIOR

Well, what is it? Go on, tell me.

She stops and looks up...

ANNABELLE

It's just that when I think of a life like that, I don't see myself anymore. It's as if I fade, the only life there is, is the one I share. I suspect I am afraid that I can't help but feel that I will be giving up the very essence of who I am.

CHARLES JUNIOR

I never thought of intimacy like that. It's quite cynical.

ANNABELLE

Intimacy comes as a blessing to you.

CHARLES JUNIOR

Why's that so?

ANNABELLE

You are a man, Charles.

CHARLES JUNIOR

Oh God, I hope you are not transforming into those shameful women who have hate against all men, are you?

ANNABELLE

You think it shameless to ask for dignity?

CHARLES JUNIOR

It is not dignity, more like hate, for all men. Like my father says, some women would rather see us wearing aprons and lady-garments.

ANNABELLE

Now, that just might be a man I'd
wed in my dreams.

CHARLES JUNIOR

Don't be silly.

ANNABELLE

Ms Carlyle does not take it
silly.

CHARLES JUNIOR

Any doctor knows Ms Carlyle to be
suffering from depression. No man
would marry her because of her
ways. And that is not the sort of
person you should be listening
to.

ANNABELLE

She sounded kind and harmless.

CHARLES JUNIOR

She will torch men on pitchforks
to get her ways.

Annabelle is done making the bed, so she picks her basket.

Mr Caliban walks in with a letter...

MR CALIBAN

(handing it over to
Annabelle)

The carriage awaits.

ANNABELLE

Yes.

Mr Caliban takes his leave.

CHARLES JUNIOR

(without looking up)

Be cautious with that lady.

ANNABELLE

She does frighten you, doesn't
she?

Nothing from Charles Jr as his attention is strictly on
the book, so Annabelle takes her leave.

INT. MS CARLYLE'S HOME (FIELDS)- SUNNY (1841)

The carriage hurdles over the dirt down the driveway.
Annabelle peeks through the window: Ms Carlyle is plowing
on the corn fields.

(CONTINUED)

The carriage stops. Annabelle steps out, plods up the fields, approaching Ms Carlyle.

MS CARLYLE

(looks up)

What is it this time? Another hateful invitation?

ANNABELLE

I don't know, Madam.

MS CARLYLE

Ms Carlyle.

ANNABELLE

(handing her a letter)

Here.

Ms Carlyle opens the letter, and reads it...

MS CARLYLE

(reading the letter)

Bloody bastards made me an offer of my property, a rip off if you ask me.

ANNABELLE

Apologies, Ms Carlyle.

MS CARLYLE

(looks up)

Ms Annabelle, if you and I are to be acquainted, you must follow two rules: you address me by first name, and you stop apologizing for every damn thing. Understood?

ANNABELLE

Forgive me, Madam...Ms Carlyle.

MS CARLYLE

Better. Now, let's go inside, the sun is cooking up good.

The two women walk side by side on the fields, heading to the cottage. Annabelle looks around the abandoned fields.

MS CARLYLE

You're wondering where they all went.

Beat. Nothing from Annabelle.

MS CARLYLE

My father owned the place. He died a month ago, so I freed

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MS CARLYLE (cont'd)
them, all of them, which was
against his wishes. Sooner or
later someone's bound to claim
it. You see when the time comes,
and you can walk down the streets
a free woman, you'll realize that
you and I, we can't own
properties like these all by
ourselves.

ANNABELLE
Maybe what's wrong is owning
anything in the first place.

MS CARLYLE
Spiteful.

ANNABELLE
I didn't mean to...please
apolog...just don't mind me.

MS CARLYLE
A spiteful woman shows character.
And nothing wrong with wantin' to
own anything. But I understand
your concerns.

ANNABELLE
Why you must march?

MS CARLYLE
(heartily)
That's right. Why I must
march...Have you ever had cider?

Annabelle shakes her head...

MS CARLYLE
Of course not.

CUT TO--

INT. MS CARLYLE'S HOME (LIVING ROOM)--

Ms Carlyle pours cider in two glasses, serves one to
Annabelle, who is seated by the fireplace. Then she takes
the opposite seat. Annabelle sips, but coughs up.

MS CARLYLE
It gets better, I promise.

ANNABELLE
(envious)
We aren't allowed such things.

(CONTINUED)

MS CARLYLE

In here, everyone is allowed.

Annabelle dances her finger around the rim of her glass, troubled. She takes another sip, looks over to Ms Carlyle, then drops her eyes back to the cider...

MS CARLYLE

Your tongue is free slip whenever you feel like it. Yes, that's allowed in here, too.

ANNABELLE

Why are you so kind to me?

MS CARLYLE

It's difficult to be what you are in the times we live. I wonder if ever we will be. Sometimes it feels like a lie we sell to ourselves: Freedom and liberty. Nobody escapes the chains.

ANNABELLE

What chains...what chains could possibly bind you, Ms Carlyle?

MS CARLYLE

You have known suffering your whole life. And chains, ah yes. But, Ms. Annabelle...

(leans out the chair,
whispering)

Not all chains are irons collars and fetters.

ANNABELLE

Those are mine, they are all I know.

MS CARLYLE

I march because I must. Because we are too divided. Too distinct. Too aware of what defines us and ignorant to others. We yearn to instill ours and reject others because that brings us comfort.

Beat. She sips...

MS CARLYLE

Mark my words, Ms Annabelle, that the chains shall come for us all. It will plague our households. Today it's yours, tomorrow it will be ours. We must rid the plague before it consumes us all into that abyss.

(CONTINUED)

Ms Carlyle takes another sip. Silence ensues as she gazes at the embers...

MS CARLYLE

Something soothing about watching the embers burn out. I can never quite grasp my reasons for it.

ANNABELLE

It's because we wish to sparkle like it... Unleash in the flames.

MS CARLYLE

Yes.

(looking at Annabelle's empty glass)

It does get better with time, doesn't it?

ANNABELLE

(placing her glass on the stool)

I must go.

ANNABELLE

Farewell, Ms Carlyle.

Annabelle walks away.

Ms Carlyle's eyes loosen into the flames....

MS CARLYLE

Ms Annabelle, wait.

She gets up to meet her.

MS CARLYLE

(taking Annabelle's hand)

Will I see you soon?

Annabelle looks into her eyes....Something in Ms Carlyle's eyes makes us feel that loneliness isn't an option she prefers.

ANNABELLE

I do not know.

Ms Carlyle nods, and lets go of her hand. Annabelle saunters off.

INT. CASTLE MANSION (LIVING ROOM) -MORNING (1841)

We see the back of A MAN, standing as his gaze tilts to a hung painting:

(CONTINUED)

It is a painting of a man bleeding through his hand to feed a pregnant woman. She lies beneath the man as the blood drips in her mouth. The baby is coming out of her as its hands are opened wide.

Anne is inspecting a vase on a nearby stool in complete admiration. She touches it...

ANNE

Such fine design. It's lovely. So lovely.

Charlotte is knitting a hand towel, she's skillful with her craft.

CHARLOTTE

I bought it from New York.

ANNE

Charles gives you money?

CHARLOTTE

Yes.

ANNE

To hold as yours?

CHARLOTTE

Well, if I'm being honest, to buy what he values.

ANNE

Still. You're blessed. George won't allow me any money to hold. Not for him or for me. He says I'll just wander off into a store and buy every ribbon, lace and button.

(sheepishly laughing)

I guess he's sorta right. I do love ribbons.

Bonnie sits on the couch, staring at the painting:

-bleeding man

-the pregnant lady

-the baby

Seated next to her is Charles Jr, drinking a glass of wine, uninterested in whatever's happening around him.

BONNIE

He's fond of such silly things. He thinks himself a painter. He could stay in it the whole day if

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

BONNIE (cont'd)
we don't pull him out of it. Lost
in such silly things.

CHARLOTTE
Just a hiccup, dear. Charles did
have his peculiar moods.

CHARLES JUNIOR
(bored)
Mother, please.

CHARLOTTE
He got quite fond of birds. He'd
catch 'em, cage 'em, care for
'em. When they fell ill or died,
he'd cry. Til his father...

Though Charlotte tries to paint her next words in a great
light, we still see through the facade. Clearly, she
doesn't believe in what she's about to say...

CHARLOTTE
He remedied his peculiar moods by
taking him to hunt. We could have
lost him to God knows what.

BONNIE
(tucks her hand in Charles
arm)
Well, I see the man in him.
(to Charles Jr)
Do you think it normal that he
pry in such matters?

Charles Jr tries to drink but Bonnie's eagerly waits for
an answer as she squeezes tight to him. He puts down the
glass, and dutifully replies:

CHARLES JUNIOR
One can escape to other worlds in
it I suppose.

BONNIE
Nonsense. It makes him soft. What
sort of man is eager to escape
his own world?

CHARLOTTE
Thank you for the painting,
Mason. Come, join us.

The MAN/MASON (21) staring at the painting, finally turns
and walks around the room, prying on every piece of
furniture and china...

MASON

A man in my time. Indeed a man in mine would, oh and Charles, it's just a mirror.

CHARLES JUNIOR

Pardon me?

Mason bends down for a look at the marine life in the small aquarium above a table: no sign of life in there...

MASON

Painting aren't transparent media harboring another world, they are simply reflections of this one here.

CHARLES JUNIOR

Of course.

MASON

(walking back to the painting)

What do you see, mother?

Anne is looking at another vase, a standing one, lengthy and more beautiful.

ANNE

(uninterested)

Stop embarrassing yourself dear.

Mason drills his mother with his eyes but she is unaware of them, due to the circumstances of busily admiring the vase. He drops the wine glass from his hand, SMASHING to bits on the floor.

ANNE

(finally looks up)

MASON? WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?

MASON

Alas.

ANNE

Oh, Charlotte, apologies.

CHARLOTTE

It's alright. Just a hiccup.

Charlotte TINKLES a tiny English bell. Annabelle walks in. She glances at the floor, aware of her duties, she exits.

Mason bends down, picks a shattered glass, inspecting it...

(CONTINUED)

MASON

And you, Bonnie, the *Adams*
princess? What does your feeble
mind tell you?

BONNIE

Stop being petty. Doesn't suit a
man to be petty.

MASON

You know all about men.

BONNIE

How dare you!

Annabelle walks in with a broom. She starts to sweep off
the shattered glass on the floor, but Mason abruptly
shoves past her as he makes his way to a window, and
stares out...

ANNE

You gonna have to quit being a
child. You embarrass us all.

Mason looks at Annabelle: she's busy sweeping...

MASON

(to Annabelle)

You.

Charles Jr pauses, he doesn't take the sip. Warily, he
puts down his glass.

Annabelle looks up...

MASON

Yes, you. Tell me, what your
nigger eyes see when you look at
that?

Charles Jr sternly stares at Annabelle, waiting.

BONNIE

You insult us.

CHARLES JUNIOR

(wary)

Annabelle, would you care to
bring more wine?

BONNIE

(mockingly)

No, darling, I want to hear her
thoughts, that's if she has any.

CHARLES JUNIOR
No need for further humiliation.
Annabelle, go on now.

ANNABELLE
(dropping the broom)
As you wish, master.

Bonnie eyes Annabelle as she walks to the door.

BONNIE
(sneering)
Get going. Shoo!

Annabelle stops at the door, turns the knob, opens the door, and looks out of it. She doesn't move, her eyes finding courage.

MASON
(watching Annabelle)
Well?

ANNABELLE
(whispering)
It's a reflection of the
parameters of familial life.

CHARLES JUNIOR
Where's my wine, Annabelle?

MASON
Hard to hear, dear.

ANNABELLE
(softly)
It's a reflection of the
parameters of familial life. The
man bleeds for the woman to feed
like how a man provides. So that
the child and the woman can live.

Charles Jr stands to his feet, walking towards Annabelle, his eyes begging her be quiet...

CHARLES JUNIOR
Get the wine.

ANNABELLE
But it is cynical. The blood
projects the grim future of the
man: He shall die eventually if
the baby is to live.

CHARLES JUNIOR
Be quiet!

ANNABELLE

(turning to face them)

However, death is his blessing from nature as the mother shall suffer alone with a helpless child, who shall grow without the proper nurture. The mother, without the father around to feed her more blood, she will lose the only purpose she ever had, to conceive: A fate worse than death for any woman.

The room drops to a momentary silence.

Anne looks at the painting, her eyes spiraling down something close to melancholy.

MASON

That is a well learned nigger. I wonder how that happened.

CHARLES JUNIOR

Get out of here, now!

Annabelle walks out, leaving the door open.

CHARLOTTE

(to her son)

Your father would be ashamed.

CHARLES JUNIOR

All these years and you never knew?

Bonnie gets up and grabs Charles Jr's arm.

MASON

Mirrors, indeed.

BONNIE

You close that retched mouth of yours!

(to Charles Jr)

Never knew what?

Charlotte is restlessly looking around, but not at anyone.

CHARLOTTE

How could you? Oh your father. You shame all of us.

CHARLES JUNIOR

How come you never knew, mother?

(CONTINUED)

BONNIE

Are you...are you having affairs
with her?

CHARLES JUNIOR

How can you not be aware of what
happens around here?

CHARLOTTE

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Charles Jr escapes Bonnie's arms, which pushes her off, as he leaves the room. Bonnie stands there, shocked.

INT. CASTLE MANSION (KITCHEN)- AFTERNOON (1841)

Steam and smoke spiral out of a wood stove. Black waiters/waitresses move in and out, carrying trays and cutlery. It's a busy day. Hope brings a bowl of shrimps to Vivian, who dumps them in a pot. Meanwhile, Annabelle and Joan cut the vegetables on the counter. Hope runs the faucet, cleaning the bowl. She glances over to Joan...

HOPE

That don't look right.

JOAN

You know all about it.

HOPE

How you expect to get a good man
when you ain't cutting eggplants
right?

JOAN

I ain't ever cookin' eggplants.

VIVIAN

Quit idling and get done with it.

HOPE

She ain't a cook. How she gon' be
ever married if she can't cook
right?

VIVIAN

Shut your mouth. Now, get on with
it. I wan' be out there sleeping
when the party starts. It's
harvest season, we gon' be waking
early from henceforth.

HOPE

If I had a husband, I'd make him
buy me the most expensive dress
with pearls and red shoes.

(CONTINUED)

JOAN
(grabbing Hope's hair)
And something for that hair.

HOPE
(inspecting her hair)
What's wrong with my
hair? Annabelle what's wrong with
my hair?

ANNABELLE
Nothing wrong with it.

JOAN
Don't you see how Ms Charlotte
keeps her hair?

ANNABELLE
(to Hope)
You just need to pick the lice
out first, that's all.

Annabelle and Hope break a laugh, mockingly.

HOPE
Well I'm gon do just that. Then
I'm gon' walk side by side with
my husband. Dance until my shoes
break.

ANNABELLE
Sounds lovely.

HOPE
I must have pearls like Ms
Bonnie.

Annabelle and Joan pause, looking...Their **POV**: Bonnie is
right there, standing with scornful eyes.

Without much attention to any of it, Hope goes on...

HOPE
She got them pretty ones. Oooh
that lady knows how to care for
herself.
(looking at Annabelle)
Such a shame she got such evil
eyes. I bet she ain't...

Hope realizes Annabelle is staring right past her, so
reluctantly she investigates: Bonnie's eyes flood with
fury.

BONNIE
Everyone out the door, now.

(CONTINUED)

Frantically they abandon their chores to exit the kitchen. As Annabelle walks by, Bonnie puts a hand on her, implying for her stay.

BONNIE

Don't lie to me or I swear I'll
rip off that tongue of yours.
Does he...does he bed you?

ANNABELLE

(pleadingly)
With young Master Castle? It's
not my place.

Bonnie picks a knife at the counter. She walks up close to Annabelle, creepily inspecting the sharp edges of the knife.

BONNIE

To confess, I don't know how on
earth you ever desire to wake up
the next morning, being a slave.
Men strip you off your womanly
pride. You're nothing. You're
just a slave.

Bonnie places the knife on the counter then exits the kitchen. Annabelle lets out a long sigh of relief, her legs waver, so she holds onto the counter to stand.

EXT. LAKE- SUNNY (1841)

Hope is scrubbing clothes on a washboard, dipping it in a tub of water. Meanwhile, Annabelle pounds the clothes in another tub with washing dollies. It's a laundry day. Others slave women are lined up the shore, scrubbing and pounding clothes. Hope removes few ready washed clothes, and dumps them in an empty bucket. She throws a few dirty ones in the tub. Annabelle glances at the dirty clothes, blue, white, and red clothes in a basket...

ANNABELLE

You've got to stop mixing them.

HOPE

Who we tryna woo? We negros,
color don't matter to 'em.

VIVIAN

(approaching from behind)
Not for 'em fool, it's for you.
Ain't no sense tryna wear clothes
that look like your sheets.

Hope makes a face, as she watches Vivian grab the basket of clean clothes and heads into the woods.

(CONTINUED)

HOPE

She an ol' gal. Hell the lord'll
curse me for callin' her a gal.
She two heartbeats to the grave.

ANNABELLE

Not old at all. You're just too
thick to grasp her wisdom.

HOPE

There goes the mouth with all 'em
fancy talk. Between you and me,
what you do for that young sport,
huh?

ANNABELLE

(playfully)

I ain't doin' nothin'.

HOPE

(surprised)

Speakin' like one of us, for
once.

(playfully splashing some
soap water on Annabelle)

But you still gon' tell me. Go
on, tell me. Tell me!

Annabelle skips around, avoiding the splash...

ANNABELLE

Stop it!

Hope persists, now splashing more onto Annabelle.

ANNABELLE

(skipping around)

Oh lord, it's COLD.

Annabelle retaliates by shooting a bucket of water back. Hope is wet from head to toe, so she grabs Annabelle, and tickles her, landing both of them down on the mud. They are both wet and soaked in mud. Gradually, they break into laughter- it doesn't seem like much but this little ounce of joy seems just enough for them.

Hope looks at the washed clothes with mud stains floating on the water...

HOPE

(dipping her hand in the
lake to clean off the mud)

I ain't gon' make any good for
myself. I know it. I'm just gon'
be here, toilin' for the rest of
my life.

(CONTINUED)

ANNABELLE

Hush now, what about that husband
of yours?

HOPE

I got you, Joan and Vivian. Hell,
that's mo' I can bargain for.

EXT. BACKYARD- AFTERNOON (1841)

We follow Annabelle walking with Joan.

JOAN

(whispering)

They callin' him Freddy. Handsome
fella.

ANNABELLE

How do news like this always
reach your ear?

JOAN

Overhead the master talking. Said
he spoke at a church. He one of
them learned Negros, the kind
Hope was babbling on about. He
learned. He know all them fancy
words. He speaks for us too.

ANNABELLE

'Course he does, he's a negro.

JOAN

(whispering)

No, not that. Word is he speaks
for us...women. Makes you wonder.

ANNABELLE

Wonder why a man in the same boat
would paddle with us?

JOAN

Sometimes I wonder if you
learning anything in them books
the young master givin' you.

ANNABELLE

Then what are you on about?

JOAN

(whispering)

We negro women, where are we in
all this?

Joan looks up, but Annabelle's eyes are staring at
something in horror.

(CONTINUED)

JOAN

Annabelle?

We follow Annabelle bolting, holding her head in horror. We see Hope on the floor, gagging blood. Bison is holding a knife, while him and the Whipman stands over Hope.

WHIPMAN

Let's hear ya utter a word of
from 'em books, ya?

ANNABELLE

(running in)

Hope? Hope?

Annabelle falls to her knees, watching Hope gasp blood...

ANNABELLE

(looking at the whipman)

What did you do to her?

WHIPMAN

Are ya one of 'em educated
Niggers too?

The whipman LAUGHS wickedly. Annabelle looks at Bison, holding a tongue in his hand.

ANNABELLE

(crying)

You're a vile man.

The Whipman nods, and smiles in conetempt...

Fick and Joan walk in slowly towards Hope.

WHIPMAN

Ya shoulda been like yo' mother.
She knew better.

(looking at Fick)

Get her up.

Fick stands still, eyes defiantly looking back at the whipman.

WHIPMAN

Don't make me repeat myself. Go
on, get 'er up.

Though his voice wavers, he replies:

FICK

I ain't doin' nothin'. I ain't
sinning on that child anymo'.

(CONTINUED)

WHIPMAN
Ya gon' get what's coming to ya.
(to Bison)
Bring the basket.

Bison leaves quickly. Annabelle sits on the ground, crying. Joan helps put Hope on Fick's back.

FICK
(to Annabelle)
Forgive me child, forgive me what
I done.

Fick takes Hope on his back and out of there.

Meanwhile, Bison returns, and places a basket of stones next to Annabelle.

WHIPMAN
Go on. lift it!

He whips her shoulder, she groans. No screams. This angers the whipman. He throws another one, she bites through it, refusing to scream, holding back. Another LASH....

WHIPMAN
PICK IT UP! UP YA GO!

Annabelle lies on the ground, grinding her teeth as lashes fall on her back.

WHIPMAN
I said up! All the way up!
Fucking filth.

JOAN
(whispering softly)
Annabelle?

Annabelle's POV: Joan sits next to her on the ground, placing the basket in her hand.

JOAN
(whispering softly)
Go on. We ain't lettin' 'em have
it. Go on.

Finally Annabelle grabs it, slowly stands to her feet...

WHIPMAN
(snickering)
That's right...get up, you bitch!

Annabelle is up on her feet, she looks up:

Atop the castle mansion, a window's curtain is slightly pulled by Charles Jr, as he spies through it, watching. He drops the curtains.

Annabelle flutters her eyes as the whipman throws another lash on her.

INT. ANNABELLE'S HOME- NIGHT (1865)

Joy lights another candle on the dressing table.

We see Old Annabelle, looking out the window, gazing at the plantation fields, it's silence is only disturbed by the WAILING of crickets. Joy takes Annabelle by the arm, escorting her to the dressing table. She eases Annabelle on the stool while she stands behind. Gently, she begins to comb Annabelle's hair, as she hums.

ANNABELLE
 (eyes lingering in the
 mirror)
 I wanted to believe the curtains
 just fell, all by itself.

They stay that way, drawing us into the abyss of silence...

CUT TO--

INT. MS CARLYLE'S HOME (BACKYARD)- SUNSET (1841)

Ms Carlyle is chopping wood. The place is as abandoned as the fields: tools lay around. She looks up...Annabelle limps towards her, holding a letter sized envelope.

MS CARLYLE
 (smiling)
 You came back.

The closer Annabelle gets, Ms Carlyle's smiles fades as spots the scars and bruises on her face...

MS CARLYLE
 What did they do to you?

ANNABELLE
 (holding out a letter)
 Master Castle wants this
 delivered to you.

MS CARLYLE
 What happened?

ANNABELLE
 (still holding out the
 letter)
 I must take my leave, Ms Carlyle.

Ms Carlyle takes the letter. Annabelle turns to leave...

(CONTINUED)

MS CARLYLE
(trails after her)
Wait. Annabelle?

Annabelle stops.

Ms Carlyle's **POV**: the back of Annabelle's dress is stained with blood.

MS CARLYLE
Please, come inside. Let me take
a look.

Annabelle shuts her eyes.

MS CARLYLE
Please?

CUT TO--

INT. MS CARLYLE'S HOME (BEDROOM)--

Ms Carlyle approaches with an iodine solution, places her hand on Annabelle's back, about to remove her clothes...Annabelle grunts, grabs Ms Carlyle hand off.

MS CARLYLE
(whispering softly)
It's okay.

Annabelle looks away, as she gradually lets go. Gently Ms Carlyle lifts off her clothes, revealing the deep lashing scars on Annabelle's bareback. She dips a cloth in the solution then cleans the injury. Annabelle grunts again as Mr Carlyle works on her...

CUT TO--

Ms Carlyle is on her knees as she nurses Annabelle's facial scars. Annabelle is naked from head down. They stare at each other's eyes. She runs the cloth down to Annabelle's neck, and then to her breast. Neither of them take their eyes off each other.

Annabelle holds her hand to stop her.

ANNABELLE (V.O)
Pleasure takes us places...

Ms Carlyle's gaze falls to the floor, as if caught.

ANNABELLE (V.O)
Hard to tell where...

Annabelle places Ms Carlyle's hand onto her lips.

(CONTINUED)

ANNABELLE (V.O)
In mine, it was simple...

Ms Carlyle looks up, staring deep into Annabelle as she comes close...

ANNABELLE (V.O)
Death.

They kiss passionately.

ANNABELLE (V.O)
I'd be lashed to death as so
would she.

Ms Carlyle kisses her neck to her breast to her stomach and down all the way...but we watch Annabelle's face as her drowns in pleasure.

ANNABELLE (V.O)
I rolled my eyes in and went
along. Till today, I puzzle over
the choices I made...

DISSOLVE TO--

3

PRESENT DAY:

3

INT. ANNABELLE'S HOME- NIGHT (1865)

Joy pauses with the comb in her hand as she looks in the mirror: Annabelle is staring back.

ANNABELLE
(thoughtfully)
Was I in love or was I driven by
the perversity of knowing that
we'd share the same fate if
caught? Or perhaps, it might have
been both.

Joy continues to comb Annabelle's hair...

JOY
Did you see her again?

ANNABELLE
Yes, we went on and on, burning,
unleashing ourselves in the
flames.

CUT TO--

FLASHBACK:**EXT. CASTLE MANSION (DRIVEWAY) -AFTERNOON (1841)**

Mr Caliban stands by the window of the carriage, and hands Annabelle an envelope.

MR CALIBAN
Make sure it reaches without the
slightest distress.

The carriage takes off...

INT. CARRIAGE--

Annabelle glances at the envelope in her hands. She opens it, take peep: stacks of money in there. Her eyes drop somberly. She knows what it means.

CUT TO--

EXT. MS CARLYLE'S HOME- SUNSET

The carriage stops. Annabelle steps out, hurries to the door. KNOCKS. Nothing, no answer. She looks out the fields, not a soul there too. She walks around, hurrying to the BACKYARD, when she bumps into SOMEONE, knocking off an envelope from their hand.

(CONTINUED)

ANNABELLE
(picking up the envelope)
Apologies, Sir.

FEMALE VOICE
Annabelle.

Annabelle looks up: It's Ms Carlyle in a newsboy hat,
pants and a long sleeve shirt..

MS CARLYLE
(exhibiting herself)
What do you think? I can't travel
alone, not as a woman at least.

ANNABELLE
(standing up)
You're leaving?

MS CARLYLE
Well, yes.

ANNABELLE
When?

MS CARLYLE
Soon. As soon as I get the
payment for this place.
(looking at the envelope)
I leave...today.

Annabelle hands her the envelope...

ANNABELLE
(without looking up)
Safe travels.

Ms Carlyle takes it. Instantly, Annabelle leaves...

MS CARLYLE
(trailing after her)
Annabelle, wait, please, wait.

Annabelle stops to face her...

ANNABELLE
(angrily)
What more do you want?

MS CARLYLE
Come with me.

ANNABELLE
What? You can't comprehend the
limitations I have, can you? You
can't see that...
(gesturing at Ms Carlyle
appearance)

I can't be THIS, A BOY, BECAUSE
OF WHO I AM. I CAN'T EVER JUST
WALK AWAY.

Annabelle hurries back towards the carriage. Ms Carlyle trails behind her...

MS CARLYLE
Come with me. As long as you're
with me, you'll be safe. I
promise.

Ms Carlyle stops...

MS CARLYLE
(pleading)
Come with me.

Annabelle stops.

Ms Carlyle hurries and takes her hands...

MS CARLYLE
You'll be safe, I promise.

She kisses Annabelle...

MS CARLYLE
I'll be out there, waiting until
midnight.

Annabelle walks back to the carriage. The coachman quickly glances front. Annabelle slows her pace, as she anxiously makes her way to carriage. We wonder along with her whether he saw the kiss...

EXT. SHED- NIGHT (1841)

There are slaves snoring on the floor. Annabelle is lying on her, she inspects around the place. Assured that every soul is asleep, she gets on her feet, tip toes over the sleeping few. Then she opens the door gently...

EXT. FIELDS--

Annabelle walks down the fields, looking at the distant, as if at something or someone...

ANNABELLE (V.O)
So she she never stayed long
enough to attend the ceremony.

EXT. SOMEWHERE NOT FAR FROM THE CASTLE MANSION--

Ms Carlyle, still dressed as a man, looks at the moon. She glances one more time at the plantation fields in the distance...nothing. Nobody comes through it...

ANNABELLE (V.O)

That was the last time I ever
felt her.

Ms Carlyle turns around, and makes her way to the streets,
vanishing in the night...

ANNABELLE (V.O)

I imagined she reached wherever
she was going. That she marched
till her shoes were in pieces and
her feet sore. And she sat on a
chair, reading and watching the
sunset, thankful that it was all
for something bigger- "freedom
and more"

EXT. CASTLE MANSION - EVENING (1841)

The entrance doors are wide open, as black servants stand
outside to welcome incoming carriages, lined up on the
driveway. White men and women dress in high status attires
step out of their carriages, entering the mansion. We can
hear the soothing sound of fiddle strings, coming from
inside, and it's lively.

INT. CASTLE MANSION--

Charles Jr, looking sharp in a suit, observes from the top
of the staircase railing with a glass of wine in his hand.
His POV: men and women dance while black servants play.
It's a lovely party. However, his eyes don't agree. He
turns: Henry is walking up the staircase as Michael follow
behind him. Ms Boyle is heading down the stairway. As soon
as she's near, Henry cups her ass. She's surprised but
undeniably likes it.

CHARLES JUNIOR

(hissing)

Christ, Henry! Control yourself!
Last thing I need is my father
breathing down my neck about the
friendships I make.

Joining Charles Jr at the railing...

HENRY

Your father adores me.

CHARLES JUNIOR

Nothing is certainly beneath you.

HENRY

(eyes down the crowd)

Oh, look 'ere.

Charles Jr POV: A group of damsels speaking in a circle.

(CONTINUED)

The red haired with freckles is watching Michael, who is awkwardly smelling and tasting the wine...

GEORGE (V.O)

Don't yer dare embarrass me in there.

CUT TO--

INT. CARRIAGE--

The carriage is moving. George sits with a cane between his legs, as his eyes scrutinize Mason, who is seated next to his sister. Bonnie is glad about her brother's reprimanding.

GEORGE

Or Lord help me, I'll break those brittle bones. Yer keep shut, nothin' about paintings, or queer poems. Y'hear?

Mason is staring, his eyes are daring.

GEORGE

Y'hear boy?

MASON

Yes.

The carriage stops.

EXT. CASTLE MANSION (ENTRANCE)--

George steps out, so does Bonnie and then Mason. George inspects Mason one last time, and seemingly spots something on him. Instantly, George pins his son against the carriage. The entering guests pry, George quickly releases Mason, wary of the eyes around...

GEORGE

(reprimanding)

Yer'a disgrace. Not my son.

BONNIE

Clearly.

Mason grinds his teeth angrily.

GEORGE

(at the coachman)

Get him out of here! Take him home!

(at Mason)

I will find a remedy for this illness. Aye, I shall!

(CONTINUED)

George races off, abruptly grabs Bonnie by the arm, as he makes his way to the mansion...

BONNIE

I don't understand why you favor him, despite everything he is.

GEORGE

Everything he is? What's that suppose to mean?

George pauses, sternly staring at Bonnie. Obviously, she's hiding something as her eyes flutter away. but she says nothing. The guests keep prying as they walk past so they continue onward...

GEORGE

(whispering while he smiles at the guests)

The next time yer speak without being spoken to, it'll be the whorehouse you'll be tamed in, instead of the castle household.

INT. CASTLE MANSION--

Henry notices the lady looking at Michael, who is still smelling the wine. Abruptly, Henry steals the wine glass off Michael, and grabs his arm...

HENRY

Come with me.

MICHAEL

Where?

Hauling Michael down the stairs...

HENRY

Just follow me!

Charles Jr sips, finally some amusement as he watches his friends walk down the stairway. But that all ends as soon as he spots Bonnie step in with George.

ON THE FLOOR:

Bonnie gazes at Charles Jr, who dutifully returns a smile but shoves his back at her real quick, leaning against the rail. She's slightly hurt but musters through greetings and smiles from other guests.

FROM A CORNER:

Meanwhile, Henry stands alone, drinking a glass as he stares at Michael with the red haired lady dancing on the floor. He spots another group of ladies, tries his luck

(CONTINUED)

with a smile, but to his disappointment, they mockingly laugh back at him. He frowns, takes a step back and escapes through the arriving guests.

UPPER FLOOR:

With his back against the rail, Charles Jr chugs down the wine as his face floods in misery. A waiter with a tray walks by, he helps himself for a glass, but the waiter unaware, hurries off...

MALE VOICE

Why aren't yer with your bride?

Charles tuns to investigate: George is approaching him.

CHARLES JUNIOR

Bride-to-be.

GEORGE

I see. Be honored that I allowed for my daughter's hand.

CHARLES JUNIOR

It was given to me since before I learnt to speak. Wasn't it?

GEORGE

I have great respect for yer father, admirable man. I see why he worries. Yer truly a disappointment.

CHARLES JUNIOR

How dare you.

GEORGE

Only real men dare, young Charles. Yer don't deserve her. Never have. Yer'a nigger lover.

CHARLES JUNIOR

What?

GEORGE

Apologies for not clearing the insult. Yer'a swine who beds with niggers.

(spits on the floor)

Such filth! Now, I know about your affections for this learned nigger. The only reason why yer still here is because I haven't told your father... yet. And we both know how that will sit with him.

(CONTINUED)

CHARLES JUNIOR
A swine for your daughter, how
fatherly.

Before George could speak...

MALE VOICE
(heartily)
GEORGE!

George turns: it's Edgar.

GEORGE
Edgar.

Both men exchange a handshake. Edgar spots Charles Jr...

EDGAR
Charles Junior.

CHARLES JUNIOR
(courteously smiling)
Sir.

Edgar and George are still held on to each other's hand as they speak...

EDGAR
I've got word that the old fool
won Amistad.

George's eyes don't take the news well as they stagger...

CUT TO--

EXT. MANSION CASTLE (ENTRANCE)--

Henry stands at the entrance by himself, no servants are there and no guests arrive anymore. The door is shut. In the background, the party goes on, lively as ever from a window. He listens, it's a quiet night. He isn't the silent type so he paces back and forth, relentlessly. Stops. Looks up: The driveway is darker than usual, just the moonlight cascades on the shrubs, and onto a well dressed LADY with a wig, whose back we only see.

Henry walks to her...reaches, stands right beside her. It's difficult to see her face but one thing is for sure, she is well dressed. Here, Henry is gentle, even romantic when he speaks...

HENRY
I would ask you for a dance but
there is no music out here.

Nothing from her...

(CONTINUED)

HENRY

Don't ignore me tonight. Not you too. Every soul hates to admit it in this place, but we're all alone...

(whispering)

I am alone.

She still says nothing, but something is clear: she's listening.

HENRY

No one ever listens down here.

Henry gently touches her hand. She's reluctant to touch.

HENRY

We're always playing on assumptions and expectations.

CUT TO--

INT. CASTLE MANSION (UPPER FLOOR)--

Edgar takes his leave. George steps closer to Charles Jr, his hands on the rails, whispering:

GEORGE

Y'll walk over there and ask my daughter for a dance. Y'll wed soon. Very soon. Y'll become a good husband to her. Not here, but some place else, name is already tainted.

CHARLES JUNIOR

You will not threaten me old man.

GEORGE

With yer fortune at the tip of my tongue, yer do as I say. And I'll see to it that this rumor dies before it gains any feet. Go now.

Charles Jr contemplates for a second, looking for a way out. It's hopeless. He leaves.

UPPER FLOOR:

George watches Charles Junior pass through guests down the staircase, and makes his to his daughter. He whispers in Bonnie's ears. She smiles. Kisses him on the cheek. He takes her hand and leads her to the dance floor.

CUT TO--

EXT. CASTLE MANSION (DRIVEWAY)--

(CONTINUED)

Still maintaining his gentle demeanor, Henry pulls her in, closer, until she is wrapped in his arms.

HENRY
(looking in her eyes)
I don't expect you to speak, and
I won't assume your affection.
So, I ask... may I kiss those
lips?

Still hard to see her face, but we can see she's beautiful behind the heavy makeup. She nods as if she longed for it...Henry kisses her: it's long and passionate. He leans out to see her in tears.

HENRY
Why do you cry?

Suddenly, she struggles to get out of his grip.

HENRY
At least tell me your name before
you leave, please?

She fights him off but Henry holds on tighter...so tight that the wig falls off...

HENRY
Mason?

Henry watches as Mason races down the driveway. He doesn't pursue. Instead, he picks the wig, sniffs it like a lover.

INT. CHARLES JUNIOR'S ROOM-NIGHT (1841)

Charles Jr is at his desk, drinking a bottle. His hair is unkempt as his shirt is half-buttoned: He is drunk. The curtains are dropped, the room is poorly lit with a candle burning out on the bed-head stool.

Annabelle walks in...

ANNABELLE
You called for me, Charles.

CHARLES JUNIOR
Charles? When my father passes, I
govern the house. My mother is to
obey me. About time I exercise my
duties.

ANNABELLE
Of course.

CHARLES JUNIOR
You couldn't just be silent when
Mason asked.

ANNABELLE

Apologies. I wasn't in the right mind.

CHARLES JUNIOR

You were. You wanted them to know about what I do for you. You couldn't just--

ANNABELLE

I apologize but that wasn't my intention.

He rises to his feet to gaze at her...

CHARLES JUNIOR

How could you?

ANNABELLE

Now, they all know Niggers have a mind just as the next white man.

CHARLES JUNIOR

(eyes feasting on her)
Off with your clothes!

ANNABELLE

(shocked)
Please, Charles. Please, don't do this.

He rips her dress, and cups her breast.

CHARLES JUNIOR

(kissing her neck)
You've been whoring before. You and Ms Carlyle, is it? I know all about that.

ANNABELLE

Charles, please.

He pushes her on the bed and takes off his clothes.

CHARLES JUNIOR

It's Master Charles.

He falls on her. We only see Annabelle's face, crying as he thrusts in her...

CHARLES JUNIOR

I am your master. I am your master. I am your master!

Charles Jr is CLIMAXING. We watch Annabelle's eyes gradually stoic to the violence.

(CONTINUED)

CUT TO--

EXT. LAKE-DAWN

Annabelle stands in bloody clothes. Slowly, she undresses, and walks in the water until half her body is immersed. Her eyes wander off to unspoken woes...

4

PRESENT DAY:

4

INT. COTTAGE (BEDROOM)-NIGHT (1865)

Joy is still working on Annabelle's hair.

ANNABELLE

Some men have hearts drier than dust and cold as corpse. They are cruel- find pleasure in another's tear. And there is another man, the pain he caused tore him. He, unlike the cruel kind, was cut open by those he held dearest, tearing every flesh and feeding it back to him.

JOY

You don't think he cruel?

ANNABELLE

How old was your mother?

JOY

After everything he done, you don't think he cruel?

Joy realizes Annabelle is sternly looking at her.

JOY

She died old. Two decades ago. She found a good man before she got sold here. Why you think he ain't cruel?

ANNABELLE

Men have fought battles against each other but the grandest of them all is the battle within. Inside, the soul. That is the one they know they can't ever win. So they fight each other for false feelings of security. What happens to us, good or evil, are echoes of our own soul, the one we ignored, the demons inside.

JOY

It seems you fought yours just right, here you are, a woman of status, of respect.

ANNABELLE

Why? You think of me as role to aspire to?

(CONTINUED)

JOY
 You doing just fine now, well,
 yes.

ANNABELLE
 Leave now. Go on.

Joy stops working on Annabelle's hair, takes a step
 back...

ANNABELLE
 Leave.

JOY
 Apologies--

ANNABELLE
 Save it!

Joy drops the comb and exits the room... Annabelle looks
 around, filled with rage, fuming, panting then she trashes
 all the objects on the dresser. She takes a breath,
 relaxing herself as she eases into the mirror, unwinding
 to the past..

FLASHBACK:

INT. PARISH- DAY (1841)

Charles Jr is sliding the ring on Bonnie. Meanwhile a
 MINISTER stands between them...Amid the silent group of
 seated guests, Charlotte is COUGHING.

MINISTER
 I pronounce you husband and wife.
 You may kiss your bride.

Charles Jr kisses Bonnie.

Suddenly:

Charlotte falls on the floor as blood oozes out of her
 mouth. The crowd gets riled up around her.

CUT TO--

INT. CASTLE MANSION FIELDS-MIDDAY (1841)

Charles Jr's stares down at us, his gaze lingers on... At
 the background is a parked carriage. We see Bonnie step
 out of the carriage, approaching towards us, to Charles
 Jr. She wraps her hand around his.

CHARLES JUNIOR
 She'd want me to stay here.

(CONTINUED)

BONNIE

We can stay here. Why can't we?

CHARLES JUNIOR

I want nothing here. And don't question me.

Charles Jr breaks away from Bonnie's hold.

CHARLES JUNIOR

We're leaving this place.

She takes a moment, and then trails after him.

We are left at the gravestone: CHARLOTTE, WIFE AND MOTHER;
DIED IN 1841

INT. CASTLE MANSION (CHARLES'S CHAMBERS)- NIGHT (1841)

Behind a curtain, we watch Charles, as he sits at his study, drinking. We sneak closer towards him...

CHARLES

Who is there?

Without looking up, Charles lifts the bottle...

CHARLES

Get me more!

We see Annabelle, in a night gown behind him, eyes fuming with rage.

CHARLES

(turning around)

Who is...

Charles puts down the bottle...

CHARLES

Charlotte? Why did you go?

Charles stands on his feet, and walks up close to her, going in for a kiss. But she moves back her face to earn some distance as he desperately follows it. He pauses, eyes surrendering to her gaze, realizing that she wants it at her own pace. It's clear Annabelle is in charge here. She pulls his face forward and kisses him. He loses desperately in it....

INT. CASTLE MANSION- AFTERNOON (1841)

Annabelle is sweeping the living room, while Joan and Hope move the chairs.

(CONTINUED)

JOAN

I hear it. I do. I hear 'em talk.

ANNABELLE

Who did you hear it from?

JOAN

It don't matter. It is happening
and they will skin us if they
know we know.

ANNABELLE

You didn't hear such talks.

JOAN

Ask Hope. I swear.

Hope nods at Annabelle.

ANNABELLE

Don't matter, we're here. Forget
such talks.

JOAN

Master Castle not seen around the
fields since his wife's passing.

ANNABELLE

But that won't stop him from
hearing things in his household
now, would it?

JOAN

Fick and the other men speak of
it. They know slaves getting
freed far out there.

Joan pauses as a white male servant walks in. He looks
around while they stay silent.

WHITE SERVANT

(pointing at Annabelle)

You. Mr Castle would like to see
you in his chambers.

Surprised, Hope and Joan stare at Annabelle as she leaves
without hesitation. Taking note of the servant's lingering
gaze, the ladies quickly get back to work.

INT. SHED- EVENING (1841)

Annabelle tiptoes over the women lying asleep. Joan is
awake, as she lays on the floor. Annabelle finds a spot,
about to sit...

(CONTINUED)

JOAN

Whore.

Annabelle doesn't settle in. Instead she turns back and hurries out of the shed.

EXT. SHED--

We sneak up behind Annabelle as she stares at the evening fields.

BOY'S VOICE

Why are you awake?

She turns around: it's ANTWONE.

ANNABELLE

I find it hard to sleep in nights like these.

ANTWONE

What kind?

ANNABELLE

You wouldn't understand.

ANTWONE

They call you names. They say you become Master's new plaything.

ANNABELLE

What do you believe?

ANTWONE

It don't matter what I believe as long as it is right by you.

ANNABELLE

What kind of man is Vivian raising? You should have been born later. You'd make a fine free man.

ANTWONE

Mother tells me a lot of things. She teach me how to obey and be good. But none of it ever matter if I don't feel like doing any of it.

ANNABELLE

Well, my mother taught me that the worst thing to be is a wormer.

(CONTINUED)

ANTWONE

And you doin' that?

ANNABELLE

In a way.

Annabelle eyes wander away...

5

PRESENT DAY:

5

INT. ANNABELLE'S HOME-dawn (1865)

The candle on the dresser had brunt out. Old Annabelle seals a letter on the table. She stands, pulls another candle from the drawer, lights it.

INT. CORRIDOR--

Old Annabelle walks with the candle, stop at a door, opens it and watches Joy on the bed. We see Joy's awake...

ANNABELLE

You head east. As fear east as you can. You hear me? You keep going.

Nothing from Joy as she lays in that silence. Annabelle leaves.

FLASHBACK:**INT. THE CASTLE CHAMBERS- EVENING (1851)**

A kerosene lamp burns on the bed stool. Annabelle is putting on her clothes. CHARLES CASTLE (72), lays on the other side, watching her as she dresses.

CHARLES

You should stay tonight.

Nothing from Annabelle.

CHARLES

Why must you leave?

Charles turns to the bedhead and grabs something. He drags himself closer to her, then drops a small box on her lap.

Annabelle pauses.

CHARLES

Go ahead. Take a look.

She is observing the box...

CHARLES

I bought it at a jewel store in my youth. I was quite the romantic once upon a time. It belonged to a countess. Her husband, despite his status couldn't bare the thought of his men dying on the battlefield. Alone and cold.

She opens the box: A golden necklace is inside.

(CONTINUED)

CHARLES

He took arms and left this for her. Told her to wait for him and shine its pearls at the towers.

ANNABELLE

Did he come back?

CHARLES

Yes. In a six feet box with his armor decorated on it. She kept it anyway. Some said she kept it at the towers for as long as she lived. Waiting. So the story goes, or as told by the man who sold it to me.

Annabelle picks the necklace, stares at its pearls. Then she puts it back into the box and hands it to Charles.

CHARLES

What's wrong? You don't like it?

ANNABELLE

I must go.

CHARLES

All these years...

He moves away from her and places the box back on the bedhead. He gets up and sits on the other side. Both their backs are opposite one another as they sit on the sides.

CHARLES

I can have you whenever I want. I can have you stay tonight if I want. I can make you wear that pearl for as long as it pleases me. What stops me from doing all that, hm?

Annabelle rises to her feet and heads for the door...Charles sits there, drowning in melancholy.

EXT. CASTLE MANSION (DRIVEWAY)- MIDDAY(1851)

Charles is shaking hands with GEORGE ADAMS, much older and frail. At the background, slaves toil on the plantation. Suddenly, Bison, older now and slouched, is dragged in by TWO white men.

BISON

Master, please. I served well.
Master!

(CONTINUED)

GEORGE

I appreciate the hand, Charles.

CHARLES

Of course.

The other slaves stop to watch.

BISON

Master, please? I served right. I served right.

They throw him in a wagon.

GEORGE

Lacking manners does he? He'll learn it at the rails. Thanks again, old friend.

Charles coughs hard in a handkerchief...

CHARLES

Pleasure is mine. My sincerest sympathy about Mason.

GEORGE

I tried as any father to get him in proper manners. He is his mother.

Charles pats George's shoulders as a sympathetic gesture.

GEORGE

What gives a woman the right to walk away from her vows? No one has seen her since.

Both men walk towards a carriage.

CHARLES

My son never visits. I haven't seen him for so long. He hates me George.

GEORGE

Last I saw him, he resembled a lot of you. You ought to be proud.

CHARLES

Failing to visit is his way to torture me.

GEORGE

For what?

CHARLES

For everything, I suppose. Trying as a father, in the best way I knew.

GEORGE

You merely tried to teach what our fathers passed on to us. It's tradition. A man should be honored.

CHARLES

So much fighting. I am tired of fighting.

Beat.

CHARLES

Years of attempt to be better than the British, yet they lead on cotton. And now, we are at war with ourselves. You think it will end?

GEORGE

Too much lost. Too much death. All for what? But aye, all wars end. Peace comes thence. But the dead stay dead, and death shall go on.

CHARLES

And the spoils will restore men back to sanity, if there is any in this one.

Charles looks ahead, spots Annabelle hanging clothes on a line.

EXT. FIELD--

ANWTONE, now older and well built in his mid 30s, plows heftily.

EXT. DRIVEWAY--

George notices Charles staring at Annabelle.

GEORGE

Very well. I shall be off now.

Nothing from Charles as his eyes linger onto Annabelle...

EXT. FIELD--

Antwone looks up...his **POV**: Annabelle is done, she picks up the empty basket, walking past the field. And then to Charles is staring at Annabelle.

(CONTINUED)

EXT. DRIVEWAY--

George signals the coachman. The horses races off the driveway...meanwhile Charles is watching Annabelle, walk past...then he suddenly looks up...His **POV**: Antwone is staring at him from the field with bits of disapproval.

Charles looks around, not searching for anything in particular as he frowns. He treads in the mansion.

EXT. FIELD--

Antwone is still staring, his eyes fuming hate, and his hands clutching on the plow.

EXT. LAKE- NIGHT (1851)

We sneak up behind Annabelle, as she is gazing at her distorted reflection in the water. Suddenly, leaves rustle behind her, she listens intently then returns back to her reflection.

ANNABELLE

Are you going to stalk from there
or be man enough to approach?

Without turning to investigate, she waits.

MALE VOICE

You ain't frightened to be here,
all alone?

Antwone approaches, then sits close to her, eyes momentarily adrift in the horizon.

ANTWONE

Gators stroll around this side of
the bank. Bite mighty awful.

ANNABELLE

I've been in these waters since I
was child. Nothing more to be
fright about here, is there?

ANTWONE

Somethin' you find here that you
can't get?

ANNABELLE

There is nothing here. A woman
must find a place where nothing
can be ask of her.

ANTWONE

You a strange woman, always been.

(CONTINUED)

ANNABELLE

If your mother was alive, she'd
be ashamed of me. She'd tell you
I am an ungodly woman infected by
the devil's touch.

Antwone grabs a rock and hurls it in the water. It bounces
off the surface, drifting in the distance. Together, they
sit there, looking onward in that silence.

PRESENT DAY:**INT. THE CASTLE CHAMBERS- DAWN (1865)**

Old Annabelle stands by the window, writing on a piece of
paper, eyes adrift. She folds it in half and places it on
the ledge. Then she walks away from it.

CUT TO--

6

FLASHBACK:

6

INT. THE CASTLE CHAMBERS-NIGHT (1851)

Charles is in bed. He looks ill as he coughs. Annabelle stands at a table, stirring a cup.

CHARLES

I have an image to keep.

ANNABELLE

I thought you loved me.

CHARLES

I do. Aye, I do. Imagine the rumors.

She walks over with the cup and sits on the bed beside him.

ANNABELLE

It would make me happy.

CHARLES

My image, they'll speak--

ANNABELLE

Shh. Sit up now.

Charles struggles to drink, gulping stressfully.

EXT. CASTLE MANSION (DRIVEWAY)- MORNING (1851)

Joan, Hope (older women now) and Antwone are standing beside one another. A white LAWYER, in a suit approaches.

LAWYER

I'm a state lawyer. These are your papers claiming your freedom. Here.

He hands the papers to each one of them. They're all utterly confused...Joan looks at the papers, then looks up...

JOAN

We ain't learned.

The man walks away without a word...Joan's stare lingers on until Hope holds her hand. Together they trail after the lawyer... suddenly, Joan turns to discover Antwone standing.

JOAN

Come on.

(CONTINUED)

ANTWONE

I ain't going.

JOAN

No. No, get over here. She did this for us. She want you to go. Come with us. Your mother would have wanted this.

Antwone hugs them.

ANTWONE

Take care of yourselves.

Joan and Hope enter the carriage. Antwone watches as it races off the driveway.

INT. COTTAGE-NIGHT (1851)

We spy at Annabelle from the door, seated, smoking as her gaze fixes out the window. We follow someone sneaking up behind her, closer, and closer, until we see out the window: A field of slaves working....

ANNABELLE

You are mad for staying.

Antwone stands behind Annabelle. Places both his hands on her shoulder. Their eyes travel out the fields.

ANNABELLE

I thought time healed all plaques but it is not so, Antwone.

ANTWONE

Perhaps, this is what living is, to wrap into the times and warm with the ways that fit your fate.

ANNABELLE

Perhaps, there is another.

ANTWONE

We are all cogs and wheels, summing to the clocks of our past.

ANNABELLE

What kind of man did Vivian raise?

ANTWONE

I was born too late.

(beat)

Your wheels damaged and you repaired it with the way it seemed fit. No sin in that.

(CONTINUED)

ANNABELLE

Vivian would've said otherwise.

ANTWONE

Don't send me away.

ANNABELLE

You're young. You'll have a life
out of there.

We linger on, watching them in that silence, as Annabelle
smokes.

EXT. CASTLE MANSION (DRIVEWAY)- AFTERNOON (1851)

Charles stands with another man in a suit, next to a
carriage. Antwone approaches.

INT. COTTAGE--

Annabelle spies through her window: The man in a suit
hands Antwone an envelope. Reluctantly, he enters the
carriage. The horses cruises down the driveway...

7

PRESENT DAY:

7

EXT. THE FIELDS- DAWN (1865)

We are back to the present from here on and out.

Old Annabelle gazes at the fields, in her nighties and an unlit candle in her hand. Her eyes are stuck in the past... suddenly, the first light of dawn beams on her face, reinserting her in the present. She walks up the plantation field...

CUT TO--

EXT. OAK TREE---

Annabelle sits at the top like she used to back in the days. She sits there watching the sunrise. At the background we see a carriage pulling down the driveway.

EXT. CASTLE MANSION (ENTRANCE)--

The carriage stops. CHARLES JR (49/50), steps out with a cane and a frown which seems he's been wearing over the years.

Out comes BONNIE ADAMS (44/45) after him, old but still preserved her beauty.

Charles Jr looks around the compound, sizing up everything, examining the details he has missed over the years. It's more apprehensive than nostalgic. His eyes linger on the fields, spotting Annabelle on the Oak tree.

A WHITE BUTLER (20) comes out of the mansion...

YOUNG BUTLER
Welcome back Master Castle.

CHARLES JUNIOR
Where's Mr Caliban?

YOUNG BUTLER
He passed, sir. It's been five years.

CHARLES JUNIOR
Hm.
(turning to the fields)
Tell my father I have received his letter and I will join him shortly.

YOUNG BUTLER
Of course.

The young butler attends the luggage. Bonnie is walking towards Charles Jr...

(CONTINUED)

CHARLES JUNIOR
(instructively)
Go inside.

Bonnie stops, and her POV: Charles trudges up the fields.
She turns and somberly makes her way into the mansion.

CUT TO--

EXT. OAK TREE--

Annabelle's eyes glitter as the soft morning sunrise
shimmers in. She smiles...

ANNABELLE
How long has it been? You never
came home. You said you'd be the
master around here.

Standing below, Charles Jr frowns...

CHARLES JUNIOR
It is surprising to find that you
are still here. I wagered you
would have been sold by now. Get
down from there.

ANNABELLE
Fancy a climb, like when we were
young?
(sizing him up)
You never were a bright one. With
all the books you read, you never
were. I hope marriage was worth
the trouble.

CHARLES JUNIOR
How stupid of you to ever think
we were equals.

ANNABELLE
Your mother, you miss her? I miss
mine everyday. She won't be too
happy of what I turned into but
all the same, I would want her
here. Your mother, she was kind.
In her own way, she was.

CHARLES JUNIOR
Don't you dare speak her name!
Get down from there!

CUT TO--

EXT. THE CASTLE CHAMBER--

Bonnie stands at the door.

(CONTINUED)

BONNIE
(softly)
Mr Castle?

Nothing, no answer so she KNOCKS, but the door creaks open...

ANNABELLE (V.O)
Poison is a woman's weapon, is it?

Carefully, she steps in...

INT. THE CASTLE CHAMBER--

Bonnie's POV: Windows are shut, no light escape through. The bed is covered around with a curtain. Hard to see through the curtains.

BONNIE
Mr Castle, we heard you were ill.

Nothing. She looks to the window, and spots a sheet of paper, folded in half, sitting on the ledge. She makes her way to it...

ANNABELLE (V.O)
She was kinder, your mother. She was more obedient and knew her place, accepted it with grace.

Bonnie picks it up, and reads "**Freedom and more.**" Her eyes remembering the words but as she does, she notices the bloodstain on her gloves- it came with the note. Fear rushes in as she becomes more cautious about her every move...she walks towards the bed, tracing smudges of blood on the floor. More blood on her path, the nearer she gets...

ANNABELLE (V.O)
Your father once said to me that we were all whoring ourselves for something. He might have had a beastly touch, but, nonetheless he was right indeed.

...until finally Bonnie pulls over the curtain, and Her POV: Charles lays in a pool of blood with a knife in his chest.

CUT TO--

EXT. OAK TREE--

CHARLES JUNIOR
You'll pay for what you've done.

(CONTINUED)

ANNABELLE

Maybe someday, we'll sit on oak trees, look beyond the horizon and wish for blissful things. That is when the world has a softer touch, and we stop selling freedom to ourselves. Instead we'll be it, yes, and not just from shackles and chains, no, no, but from the eyes of the world.

Annabelle lights the candle.

Charles Jr looks down, notices the oil spilled all over the ground.

We follow the candle dropping on the ground and just like that, the whole place lights up. We get closer into Annabelle, her eyes adrift to:

INT. COTTAGE- NIGHT

Annabelle's eyes are on a book. Reading intently by the burning ember of the fireplace. She's younger, just as when she was in her 30s. Wrapped in a shawl.

Someone approaches from behind, we lean into Annabelle as this person gets closer. The person places a hand on her, black male hands. Annabelle smiles, familiar with that touch. He bends in for a kiss on her cheek. It's Antwone. Same age as her. Wearing an apron. Suddenly, the kettle WHISTLES. Annabelle shuts the book. Her cue to attend it.

ANTWONE

I'll get that.

Antwone smothers her with one last kiss. Leaves. The embers CRACKLE. Annabelle looks up, flames shimmering in her eyes. It's dreamlike....

EXT. OAK TREE--

Annabelle's eyes are consumed with flames. And she leaves us with a smile.

EXT. CASTLE MANSION--

White men, some on horses and others on foot, race with buckets of water to the burning field.

INT. CARRIAGE--

Bonnie stares at the note in her hand. Looks out at the burning oak tree. Eases back, faces us, stares at us, something in her eyes screams rebel.

EXT. SHED--

(CONTINUED)

