

My Music Teacher

By

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FADE IN:

EXT. 5TH AVENUE - EVENING - ESTABLISHING

PUSH IN:

African-American children PLAY next to the COLORED ORPHAN ASYLUM.

The back of a little girl's head becomes CLEARER. A SMALL BUTTERFLY HAIRPIN holds her hair bound behind. It's 10-year-old JANICE.

Alone, she sits on the stairway before the Asylum building, watching the other children play around on the street. SURREYS AND BUCKBOARDS plow hastily through the street. HANDS from behind cover her eyes. The hands retreat as she turns for a glance. It's TIMOTHY MORGAN, slender and tall, in his mid twenties. She jumps on him in a hug.

TIMOTHY

(hugging)

How're you doing?

She wags her face as he drops her.

TIMOTHY

Okay, come on.

Holding her by the hand, he escorts her into the building.

EXT. HARPER HOUSE - NIGHT

CARRIAGES arrive at the front of the entrance to an OPULENT MANSION. WEALTHY-LOOKING GUESTS alight from them and enter the mansion.

INT. HARPER HOUSE

Guests make their way into the mansion, through a corridor, and into a hall in the depths of the mansion.

HALL

The well-lit TEMPLE of 19-year-old MELISSA HARPER becomes obvious in the radiant and exquisite hall. Her beauty radiates as she gracefully bows a cello. It is A GALA. Melissa and a few others are in a corner of the hall playing a variety of VIOLIN INSTRUMENTS to entertain the guests. Some couples dance in the middle of the hall, some watch in smiles as they sip from their goblets, others cluster around in groups chatting and chattering. At the head of the hall, a STAIRWAY ascends from one side of the hall- by the entrance into the hall -and descends at the other, forming an arc.

LAWRENCE HARPER, a round middle-aged man and host of the gala, takes center stage atop the arc-shaped stairway. Silence prevails.

LAWRENCE

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you all for honoring my invitation today. Our brothers down South have decided to pull out of the Union. This is a situation I'm most certain will last for just a while. Nevertheless, today we mark the eighty-sixth year since our fathers and grandfathers secured our Freedom and Independence.

Loud applause reverberate through the hall. Just as suddenly, it dies out.

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)

I would like to seize this rare opportunity to announce a Union between two great families. These two families can trace their lineage to the English Crown, and thus are, even by descent, royalty. I, being the head of one of the two families, and my counterpart in the other family -

He casts a glance at GEORGE HARDY, another round man his age.

George smiles at him.

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)

feel very strongly that this union would result in a greater good for both families, in the long run and in the time being. Before I go any further, I'd like to introduce you all to a bright young man making waves on the battlefield. Most of you have probably heard of him. He has gained much accolades from his superiors, comrades, and even his subordinates. Ladies and gentlemen, join me in welcoming, in flesh, Captain Patrick Hardy.

Again, the hall comes to life in loud applause. PATRICK HARDY, an athletic dark-haired man in his mid twenties, reveals himself from the doorway behind Lawrence. He smiles to Lawrence as he takes his hand in a warm handshake. Applause fades.

LAWRENCE

(turning to the crowd)

With great joy and pride in my heart, I announce to all the engagement between Captain Patrick Hardy, son of Senator George Earl Hardy, a very close friend of mine, and my one and only daughter, Melissa.

The hall breaks into loud applause. Melissa rises off her seat amongst the musicians at the foot of the stairway, surprise boldly spelt across her face. Her maid, PALM, escorts her up the stairway.

In an embrace, Patrick stretches a peck to her temple as she arrives. The crowd continues clapping.

TIME CUT:

Patrick and his friends, TOBIAS, ROWLAND and FRANCIS, chat in a corner of the hall. They watch Melissa play the cello.

FRANCIS

(to Patrick)

A girl blind from birth? You scoundrel!

TOBIAS

(to Patrick)

Why her? I mean, besides the fact that she looks ravishing.

PATRICK

Like her father said, it is a union between two mighty families, and she is royalty fit for royalty. Besides, I'd be the very first she's ever had, not to mention the fact that I don't have to be bothered that my very beautiful wife may have her eyes on other men.

ROWLAND

(chuckling)

Or that she'd catch her husband's eyes on other women.

PATRICK

(raising his goblet for a sip)

That as well, naturally.

He sips from his goblet.

INT. MELISSA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Melissa sits on a stool in front of her dressing mirror. Palm gently brushes her hair backwards using a hairbrush.

MELISSA

Palm, is it important to love someone before you get married to him?

PALM

No my lady, you'll learn to.

MELISSA

What if you don't want to? What if you can't?

PALM

Come now my lady, I'm sure Captain Hardy's a good man. We've known him for years and he's always been every bit of a gentleman. I'm sure it won't take you long to fall in love with him.

The CREAK of the opening door interrupts. Melissa's mother, GLORIA HARPER, walks into the room. Clearing her throat, she stretches her hand to Palm. Palm hands her the hairbrush and takes her leave.

PALM

Goodnight Miss Harper! Goodnight Mrs. Harper!

Yielding the brush, Gloria strokes gently Melissa's hair backwards - a frozen gaze stationed at the mirror.

GLORIA

I know you have questions, and I know no one told you about this, but trust me Lisa - this is for your own good.

MELISSA

How mother? All I heard when father spoke was how the union would be good for both families.

GLORIA

You must understand Lisa - you're very delicate, fragile and delicate. The Hardys are practically relatives. We know they'd appreciate your uniqueness. Try and understand Lisa.

Melissa gasps.

MELISSA

I assume the wedding date's been fixed as well.

GLORIA

Patrick will be returning to the battlefield in a few days. Upon his return a date will be fixed.

MELISSA

It's quite pleasant to know that the presence of my husband to-be must be sought before a date for our wedding is fixed, but my presence is absolutely irrelevant to such a decision.

GLORIA

Please Lisa, understand, we need you to understand.

She stops brushing her hair and gives her a PECK on the top of her head.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Timothy walks home after work. A distant TUNE from a cello catches his attention. He stops and looks around. There is a window with the drapes apart across the street. He sees Melissa practicing with a cello. He stares for a while. She misses a note each time and starts all over. A maid notices him and walks across the room from opposite the window. She pulls together the drapes. In a gasp, he continues on his way.

EXT. BUILDING CONSTRUCTION SITE - AFTERNOON

Timothy and other Laborers work on a building construction site. He dusts himself off.

TIMOTHY

(walking out of the site)

I'm off for lunch!

EXT. SIDEWALK - AFTERNOON

Timothy has a sandwich while sitting on the edge of a BENCH on the sidewalk just outside the construction site. Ahead of him lies a large JUNCTION. Across the road, he spots Melissa and Palm walking toward the CROSSROADS from the opposite direction. He stares at Melissa in reverie. A COMMOTION to his far left cuts short his musings. Some police officers chase a bandit down the street. The bandit tries all he can to obstruct those in hot pursuit. Palm, oblivious of the happenings on the street cutting through theirs, prepares to turn right into the commotion. At that moment, a carriage drawn by two horses reaches the junction. At the same time, the bandit reaches the junction. Tossing his sandwich into the air, Timothy swiftly races across the junction to the pair. The bandit tosses something into the path of the horses and they frantically jump around in reaction. They stamp their hoofs uncontrollably.

A horse approaches Palm and Melissa, and just as it is about to crush Melissa, Timothy jumps in and pushes her away. Some of the uniformed men and the rider bring the horses under control. Timothy rubs his right fist in pain. Palm pulls Melissa off the ground.

PALM

(to Timothy)

Thank you so much. It was very kind of you.

TIMOTHY

No Problem.

Melissa moves her hands through the air as she tries to locate Timothy. She feels his head, then a smack on his cheek follows.

MELISSA

You worthless scoundrel! Have you no regard for a lady? Pushing me to the ground.

PALM

(covering Melissa with her coat)

If he hadn't done that the horses would certainly have crushed you my lady.

Timothy rubs his cheek as he stares at her in bewilderment.

MELISSA

Oh! So he saved my life then.

PALM

Yes my lady.

Melissa stretches her hand out to him.

MELISSA

I beg your pardon sir, it was an honest mistake.

Timothy stretches his hand out to receive hers but SHRIEKS in pain.

PALM

You're hurt?

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - MORNING

Timothy receives treatment for his broken wrist. Palm and Melissa are there as well.

MELISSA

We haven't been properly introduced. I'm Melissa Harper, but people close to me call me Lisa. This is Palm.

TIMOTHY

I'm Timothy Morgan, but people close to me call me Tim.

A moment of silence ensues.

TIMOTHY

I hear you play every night. Your fingers aren't relaxed, they're too tight on the strings.

MELISSA

Do you hear everything?

TIMOTHY

I hear enough.

MELISSA

Well, before you make any more comments, why don't you come and listen while I practice this night? I'll leave a message to let you in.

The SQUEAK from the door interrupts them. Lawrence walks in and straight to them, in company of another man.

LAWRENCE

(approaching them)

I came the moment I heard. I'm so happy you're okay.

He hugs Melissa, giving her a peck on the cheek. Timothy stares in surprise. He turns to Timothy and reaches his hand out.

LAWRENCE

Thank you so much for saving my daughter's life, something Palm was supposed to be doing.

Palm bows her face as Timothy receives his hand.

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)

(glancing at the man by his side)

Mr. Dorsey here will reward you handsomely for your kind gesture, and take care of your bill as well.

Turning around, he heads toward the exit. Palm and Melissa follow.

INT. RESTAURANT - AFTERNOON

DRESSED AS A WAITER, Timothy carries a tray containing some DISHES into the dining area of the restaurant. He walks to a table and places a dish before a lady on the table.

He places another before the man sitting opposite the lady. Just as he drops his tray behind, Patrick, in the company of BEATRICE and VICTORIA, occupy the table behind him. Patrick LAUGHS in amusement, the women CHATTER uncontrollably. Timothy turns and attends to them.

TIMOTHY

Good day ladies, gentleman. What would you like to have?

Patrick picks up the menu and hums as he goes through it. The ladies go through the menu before them as well.

PATRICK

You know what? I'll have a mixture of whatever the girls are having.

VICTORIA

(dropping the menu on the table)

I'm fed up of going through this. Get me Bacon.

PATRICK

Oh thank God! I'm sick and tired of having buckwheat cereal and pretending I enjoy it.

VICTORIA

So remind me, why are you getting married to that bat by the way? You could've just taken one of us as a wife.

PATRICK

My father swore to cut me off if I didn't.

He holds her nose.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

(shaking her nose)

But don't worry my little pumpkin,
you're still my favorite.

BEATRICE

(dropping the menu on the table)

I don't understand a word on this. You
know what? I'll have bacon as well.

Patrick raises his face to Timothy.

PATRICK

Okay, it's Bacon for us all.

Timothy jots something down on the notepad before leaving
for the kitchen.

INT. MELISSA'S PRACTICE STUDIO - NIGHT

Melissa plays a cello in the middle of the OPULENTLY-
DECORATED HALL. MANDY interrupts her.

MANDY

Miss Harper, there's a negro at the
door. He was let in and says you asked
for his presence.

MELISSA

A negro? Well, if that's what he says
then perhaps you should let him in.

She shows Timothy in. He walks in.

MELISSA

Timothy!

TIMOTHY

(walking)

I'm surprised you still remember my name.

MELISSA

Oh! Okay Mandy, leave us.

Mandy reluctantly leaves.

MELISSA

So you're a negro. I didn't know that.

He stands staring at her.

TIMOTHY

Are you blind?

MELISSA

Haven't you noticed?

TIMOTHY

That explains a lot. What happened?

MELISSA

Nothing. I was born this way.

She continues playing.

TIMOTHY

Now I understand.

She abruptly stops, raising her face towards him.

MELISSA

Understand what?

TIMOTHY

You don't know what notes are, do you?

MELISSA

Notes? What notes?

He exhales.

TIMOTHY

I guess you'll just have to learn as I did.

MELISSA

Learn as you did? What on earth would make you believe that you've learned?

Slowly, he walks to her front. Her face follows every CLICKING sound of his footsteps.

TIMOTHY

(halting to a stop)

Would you like me to show you?

She stretches her bow to him.

MELISSA

Pull a chair close. Go right ahead.

He takes the bow from her, takes the cello from between her knees, then pulls a chair close. He sits and begins to play. She soon sinks into the music, gradually shutting her eyes. He stops abruptly. She opens her eyes. He drops the bow to his side.

TIMOTHY

Are you satisfied?

MELISSA

Why did you stop?

TIMOTHY

I'll charge if this is for
entertainment.

MELISSA

Not bad.

He walks to her and hands her the bow, then the cello.

MELISSA

You ever been to the Philharmonic?

TIMOTHY

New York Philharmonic? Do you really
mean that, or you mean have I ever
cleaned there?

Melissa chuckles softly. He smiles.

TIMOTHY

Yes, I have cleaned there. Why do you
ask?

MELISSA

You sound like one of them.

TIMOTHY

So you watch them a lot then?

MELISSA

Yes. Such command they possess. I'll do
anything to be one of them.

TIMOTHY

Well you certainly won't, not as long as you play as you do.

MELISSA

What's wrong with the way I play? In case you don't understand what it means to be unable to see, I can't use notes.

TIMOTHY

It's not just about notes, you lack any form of imagination. Music is art - the use of your imagination. You don't play like you have any.

MELISSA

Imagination. What's that?

He waves his face through the air.

TIMOTHY

Anyway, you asked me to come and watch you play. I've come, I watched, and now I must return to my pen.

He turns around to leave.

MELISSA

Wait, wait! Perhaps you can help me get into the Philharmonic. Perhaps you can teach me to play the way you do.

He turns to her and laughs.

TIMOTHY

Your father can get you in without even batting a lid.

MELISSA

I prefer keeping my father as far away from my affairs as I can manage. Even if he can and decides to, I'd make a disgraceful precedent if I can't match their standards.

He tosses her a laudatory stare.

TIMOTHY

You know, I did a little research on you. You're daddy's little girl that wants a life of hers. That's very rare in your world.

MELISSA

Research? You asked people about me? That was rude. What else did you find out?

TIMOTHY

That Miss Harper recently got engaged to a Union Army General.

MELISSA

He's a Captain, not a General, and I hardly even know him. My parents feel that, considering my condition, he and his family are best for me.

TIMOTHY

And what do you feel?

Silence prevails for a while.

MELISSA

So, will you teach me to play? My father will pay you well.

TIMOTHY

Okay!

Turning around, he makes for the exit.

MELISSA

How do I reach you?

He stops at the entrance and turns to her.

TIMOTHY

You can reach me at the Colored Orphan Asylum. Just ask for Tim.

MELISSA

You work there?

TIMOTHY

Not for pay at least. I was raised there. I hang out with childhood friends there.

Patrick shows up at the entrance to the studio. Timothy steps aside. He recognizes him from the restaurant. Patrick walks to where Melissa sits. He bows to her face.

PATRICK

(kissing her lips)

Hello Darling!

Timothy stares. Melissa raises her face towards the exit.

MELISSA

And Tim, thank you, for not saying I won't get in because I'm a girl or because I'm blind.

He nods, then walks out. Patrick glances quizzically.

PATRICK

Who was that?

MELISSA

He saved my life.

PATRICK

Oh, I heard of that! Are you okay? I should've said thank you to him.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HARPER'S DINING ROOM - EVENING

The Harper family have dinner. Platters and Silverware whisper in somber discourse.

MELISSA

Father!

LAWRENCE

Yes dear.

MELISSA

Remember Timothy?

LAWRENCE

Who dear?

MELISSA

Timothy, the man who broke his arm saving me from getting trampled to death.

LAWRENCE

Oh yes, now I do.

MELISSA

Well father, he was a day laborer before the incident, now he can't hold down a job as a result.

LAWRENCE

I see. You'd like me to get him a softer job, hey? That can be arranged.

MELISSA

Actually, father, he's quite talented with a cello. I ask that he be given the job of helping me perfect my craft.

LAWRENCE

How on earth could a negro have learnt to play an instrument better than you dear? Nevertheless, if that's what you want, that's what you'll get. I'll have that arranged.

GLORIA

What is your reason for seeking to perfect this craft you so speak of?

MELISSA

Ah, mother, don't start again!

GLORIA

Oh yes, you'd like to get into a man's world.

MELISSA

(retorting)

I don't see anything wrong with wanting to reach my full potential in what I love doing merely because I'm a woman or because I can't see.

GLORIA

(retorting)

But that still can't change the fact that you are a woman, and you can't see.

LAWRENCE

Enough!

SILENCE resonates.

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)

(turning to Gloria)

If she's convinced she can get into the Philharmonic let her try Gloria, and if she's convinced lessons from a negro can help her try then let her get her lessons. Now, can I eat in peace?

EXT. COLORED ORPHAN ASYLUM - EVENING

Palm leads Melissa up the sidewalk as they approach the Asylum. YOLANDA stands atop the short stairway leading to the entrance, watching the children play. The pair walk to her.

PALM

Excuse me, we came looking for a Timothy Morgan.

YOLANDA

Tim? He'll be here any moment.

She looks up in the direction they came from.

YOLANDA

Oh, there he is.

Palm turns in time to sight Timothy crossing the road.

INT. DINING ROOM IN ASYLUM - EVENING

Timothy sits directly opposite Melissa on the dining table. Palm sits next to Melissa. MICHAEL and THEODORE are also sitting around the table. In a small room just behind Timothy, children YELL and play. Yolanda comes in through the doorway behind Timothy bearing a dish in her hands. She sets the dish before Melissa and takes the empty seat between Michael and Timothy.

TIMOTHY

So Lisa, I'd like you to meet my friends here. To your left is Michael, but we call him Mike.

MICHAEL

Hi!

MELISSA

Hi!

TIMOTHY

To his left is Yolanda, whom you already met.

YOLANDA

Hi!

MELISSA

Hi!

TIMOTHY

To her left is I. To my left is
Theodore.

THEODORE

Hi!

MELISSA

Hi! Nice to meet you all!

She stands her fork and knife on the table holding them,
then pulls her face around the table as though glancing at
the faces around the table.

MELISSA

So, what's for supper?

They burst into laughter.

YOLANDA

(laughing)

Potatoes and cheese.

MELISSA

Okay, sounds good.

They laugh again.

TIME CUT:

They laugh as Theodore narrates a story from their
childhood. Some children play in the dining room.

THEODORE

When he finally noticed his pants were on fire, he ran and jumped into the river.

Everyone laughs.

YOLANDA

(to Melissa)

You ever been to this part of New York?

MELISSA

I?

YOLANDA

Yes!

MELISSA

I really wouldn't know.

YOLANDA

I mean- before you became-

MELISSA

Oh, I was born this way.

YOLANDA

Oh, I'm sorry.

MELISSA

Why should you be?

JANICE, a little girl, walks into the room and tugs on the left side of Timothy's shirt. He turns to her.

TIMOTHY

And she's awake!

He picks her up and sits her on his lap.

TIMOTHY

Lisa, I'd like you to meet my
girlfriend. Her name's Janice.

MELISSA

Nice to meet you Janice!

No reply comes forth.

MELISSA

Nice to meet you Janice!

The little girl glares at her for a while, then waves to
her. The others burst into laughter.

MELISSA

What's going on?

YOLANDA

She's mute.

MELISSA

Oh!

MICHAEL

She says hi though.

Timothy whispers something into Janice's ear. She gets off
his body, walks to Melissa's left side, and taps her arm.
Melissa touches her head.

MELISSA

Hi there! Are you Janice?

She feels her nod and stretches her hand for a handshake.
Janice shakes her hand.

TIME CUT:

Yolanda picks the empty dishes. She gets to Melissa's seat.

MELISSA

Thanks for the food. I've never enjoyed
dinner as I did here today.

YOLANDA

You're welcome!

Timothy, Melissa and Palm walk to the next room. They hear
TUNES from a piano.

ROOM

MELISSA

There's a piano here?

TIMOTHY

Yes, there is.

Janice plays a piano in a corner. Palm leads Melissa to a
sofa by a wall. Timothy stands on the doorway, leaning on
the frame.

MELISSA

(sitting)

Who's playing it, Yolanda?

TIMOTHY

Janice.

MELISSA

I've never heard that tune before, and
she plays quite well. Does she take
lessons?

TIMOTHY

We composed that. I give her lessons.

MELISSA

Really? I play the piano too, but not this good. I'm sure I can't come up with a tune of my own. Can you give me lessons too?

TIMOTHY

I don't mind.

MELISSA

What else do you play, besides cellos and pianos?

TIMOTHY

I play the fiddle, and I have a few Irish friends who taught me to play a flute. Come to think of it, Janice and I have been working on something. You wanna hear it?

MELISSA

Sure!

He walks to Janice and pulls a little STOOL next to her to himself. Sitting, he pulls a flute from somewhere behind the piano. He turns his face to Janice.

TIMOTHY

Let's show Lisa what we've been working on. Ready? One, two, three -

She plays, he blows. A soft, pleasant and melodious TUNE emerges. Melissa sinks into the music.

TIME CUT:

Timothy escorts Palm and Melissa to the entrance. He stands atop the short stairway and watches them descend onto the sidewalk. Melissa turns to him.

MELISSA

So, we begin tomorrow evening, right?

TIMOTHY

Yes, we do.

She turns to the road. They make their way up the moonlit sidewalk.

INT. GOLDING DUCKLING RESTAURANT KITCHEN - MORNING

Timothy walks into the kitchen of the restaurant wearing an apron and holding a notepad and a pen. He drops the notepad on a flat surface before a man wearing an apron different from his.

MAN

We have steak for table seven!

A fat man calls out to Timothy.

FAT MAN

Hey Tim, you've got visitors out back!

He walks toward the backdoor and SEES Palm and Melissa. He pauses, taking off his apron. He turns to JERRY, the man closest to him, and hands him the apron.

TIMOTHY

I'll be right back.

EXT. STREET - MORNING

Melissa holds Timothy's arm as they walk through the street.

MELISSA

Tell me Tim, how did you become so skillful?

TIMOTHY

My father's former owner taught me a lot. She didn't have kids, and after her husband died she set my father free. Then, he met and married my mother. She died at childbirth, and Mrs. Richardson was the closest I had to a mother. After my father died, she didn't last long either, but before she died she willed all she had to the Asylum.

They halt to a stop.

TIMOTHY

City Hall. My father took me there a lot. You ever been there before?

MELISSA

Not to the best of my knowledge.

TIMOTHY

Would you like to go there?

MELISSA

Sure!

INT. DOMED TOWER OF THE CITY HALL - MORNING

Timothy and Melissa stand side by side by the open window.

TIMOTHY

When I was a boy, my father worked at a construction site not too far from here. We'd pass this route on our way home, sometimes. He'd bring me up here. He'd stand right there, where you're standing, then he'd stick his face out in the air.

He sticks his face out in the air.

TIMOTHY (CONT'D)

Then he'd go -

He takes a DEEP BREATH pushing his chin up.

TIMOTHY (CONT'D)

(exhaling)

Freedom!

He turns to her.

TIMOTHY

Go on, feel it - this cold, easy air
that makes you feel everything's all
right.

She too takes a DEEP BREATH and exhales, shutting her eyes.
SILENCE grips the calm and cold wind. She opens her eyes
turning to him.

MELISSA

Can I ask you something Tim?

TIMOTHY

Sure, what about?

MELISSA

Do you and Janice have your own special
language?

TIMOTHY

Yeah, I guess so. She speaks with her
hands, most times. I listen with my
eyes. She doesn't relate with many.
She's had a really tough life you know.
The others pick on her a lot.

TIMOTHY (CONT'D)

She's tried suicide a number of times, now she just keeps to herself. I'm teaching her other ways of expressing herself, like through music and writing.

MELISSA

Writing? About what?

TIMOTHY

Anything, anything at all. Feelings, emotions, imaginations - anything. You'd be amazed at how vivid her imaginations are.

MELISSA

Poor thing!

(turning her face ahead)

I think she sees me as a threat.

TIMOTHY

(laughing)

I think so too.

MELISSA

I'd like her to be my friend too. How can I build my own language with her?

TIMOTHY

You can start from the one thing you both have in common.

MELISSA

(smiling)

Sound!

TIMOTHY

But you'll have to earn her trust. She has a way of knowing when a person's lying.

SILENCE reigns. A while glides by. He turns to her.

TIMOTHY

This captain you're engaged to, was he the man I met the other day?

She bows her face in silence. He looks ahead.

TIMOTHY

Oh!

MELISSA

(raising her face)

I hear things about him. The way people say things around me and expect me not to hear, or maybe my hearing is better than they expect. I know what type of man he is, and I know I can't change him. I have a good idea of why a man so driven by power and ego would want someone like me.

(exhaling)

But what am I to do? I am blind after all.

TIMOTHY

(turning to her)

Stop saying that.

MELISSA

Stop saying what?

TIMOTHY

Making excuses. Don't let what people say get too deep into your head. You don't know our world. Why would you think that because you don't have what you don't know you're helpless? If you'll achieve your dreams, you need to focus on what you know, and have.

SILENCE lingers a short while. He turns his face ahead.

MELISSA

I know what I don't have, but what do I have?

TIMOTHY

What you have, Lisa, is an ability to create another world - your own world. You're not familiar with this world, so your thoughts aren't limited by its rules. In this world, a rose is a red flower. In your world, a rose can be a beautiful insect with four legs and a brightly colored pair of wings. Freedom Lisa - that's what you have.

MELISSA

(turning her face to him)

What rules limit your thoughts Timothy?

He remains silent. She turns her face ahead.

MELISSA

You know, you're a lot like me. No one places much value on you, no one places much value on a woman. So, we're in the same place, the same empty well.

TIMOTHY

(in low tone)

The same empty well.

She turns to him stretching her hand out.

MELISSA

You help me out of the well and I'll pull you out when I get out. Deal?

He stares at her for a moment. Smiling, he shakes her hand.

TIMOTHY

Deal!

INT. MELISSA'S STUDIO - EVENING

Melissa sits on a STOOL in front of the PIANO in the corner. Timothy paces back and forth next to her. He stops in front of her.

TIMOTHY

Play me something, Lisa!

MELISSA

What would you like to hear?

TIMOTHY

Music you made.

MELISSA

I don't understand.

He stands akimbo with his face in the air.

TIMOTHY

Okay, we have to start from somewhere.

Stooping low, he moves to her back.

TIMOTHY

I want you to close your eyes and play. Don't think, just play. When you're deep in play, then you start thinking, but for now, let your hands do the thinking.

MELISSA

I still don't understand.

TIMOTHY

If you'll master music, you must be able to create it. Music isn't consciously created, it begins in the unconscious, and then it works its way up to the conscious.

(taking his lips close to her ear)

Don't dictate the melody, Lisa, let the melody dictate to you.

(whispering)

Trust me Lisa, just close your eyes and play.

She shuts her eyes, then plays. She plays randomly. He listens. He shuts his eyes and HUMS A RHYTHMIC TUNE based on a common occurring tune from her random play. She catches on and plays the TUNE as he HUMS. As she plays, she BREATHES in short intervals. He makes her RESPIRATION PATTERN a part of his HUMMING SOUND. She includes the alteration in her play.

His HUMS become more and more complex. Her play becomes more and more intense. He suddenly stops and slowly opens his eyes. She continues playing, this time, with confidence. She slowly opens her eyes as the music comes to a gradual stop.

MELISSA

(in low tone)

How do I remember?

TIMOTHY

Janice and I add words. We sing. After a while, we sing in our heads, and then I write out the notes.

MELISSA

Notes?

TIMOTHY

(raising his face into the air)

Let me see- we'll come up with our own notes. We'll invent them, using broomsticks on paper. We'll invent our notes by gluing broomsticks to paper.

(beat)

Don't worry about it, I have it all figured out.

MELISSA

Do I have to learn to create music to get into the Philharmonic?

TIMOTHY

No, but you'll be playing music of the city's finest. You can't really be the best playing music composed by someone else unless you can create it yourself.

MELISSA

Do you remember what we just played?

He smiles, then he begins hitting keys on the Piano.

THE MUSIC PLAYS ON.

MONTAGE

- 1) Timothy strolls around the room as Melissa plays the piano.
- 2) Timothy stoops low next to Melissa as she plays the piano.
- 3) Melissa plays a cello sitting on a stool as Timothy plays the piano. THE MUSIC NOW INCLUDES TUNES FROM A CELLO.
- 4) Timothy interrupts the cello-playing Melissa, placing her palm on a piece of paper across a lectern in front of her.
- 5) Timothy holds Melissa's hand as they walk down the sunny street in the company of Janice.
- 6) Timothy claps standing next to Melissa as she plays a cello.

END OF MONTAGE

THE MUSIC FADES OUT.

Melissa raises her face to him.

MELISSA

You think I'm ready?

TIMOTHY

I think you're ready!

INT. LARGE HALLWAY - AFTERNOON

Palm, Melissa and Timothy walk through the hallway.

TIMOTHY

You get in by a majority vote, and they're all men, so you'll have to be really good before you can get in.

They stop in front of a LARGE DOOR.

MELISSA

Okay, wish me luck!

TIMOTHY

Good luck Lisa!

Palm escorts her through the door.

INT. THEATRE AUDITORIUM - AFTERNOON

Melissa sits on a stool on the stage holding a cello between her legs. Palm stands backstage watching her. She SEES Timothy on the other side of the stage wearing an apron and carrying a broomstick. Some well-dressed men sit in front of the stage. A man stands facing Melissa in front of them.

MAN

(glancing through a small note)

Miss Harper, play us 'Amazing Grace.'

She plays the cello. Palm and Timothy watch. She rounds up. The men give a halfhearted round of APPLAUSE. Palm steps on to the stage.

MAN

Miss Harper, you may now excuse us.

Palm escorts her off the stage.

BACKSTAGE

Palm and Melissa wait.

MELISSA

Did my mother come?

PALM

No my lady.

MELISSA

Did my father come?

PALM

No my lady.

Melissa bows her face.

MELISSA

Did anyone I know come?

PALM

Mr. Morgan is here.

MELISSA

(raising her face)

In here?

PALM

Yes my lady. He came in as a cleaner.

Melissa smiles. A teardrop rolls down her face. The man approaches them.

MAN

Miss Harper, you may return.

Palm escorts Melissa to the stage.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Timothy walks up the SNOW-COVERED street.

MAN (O.C)

Miss Harper, we've reached a consensus
that you require further improvement.
We ask that you return after you have
achieved this. Have a nice day Miss.

He walks to a door and KNOCKS on it.

INT. MELISSA'S STUDIO

Timothy walks in to find Melissa sitting behind the piano.

TIMOTHY

You ready?

MELISSA

(turning her face to him)

Tim? What're you doing here? Ready for
what?

TIMOTHY

Don't you still wanna get in?

MELISSA

Weren't you there? Didn't you hear?
It's over, I'm a failure.

He walks to where she sits.

TIMOTHY

You're not there now doesn't mean you'll never be there. You can't quit, not now. Besides, you aint living if you aint dreaming!

(crouching next to her)

Look, if you fail, I've failed. If you fall, I let you fall. If you remain on the ground, then that's where I left you.

Slowly, he stands erect.

TIMOTHY (CONT'D)

I'm no failure Lisa, so you can't be.

EXT. COLORED ORPHAN ASYLUM - NIGHT

Palm and Melissa stand in front of the Asylum clinching their SNOW-STAINED JACKETS. Timothy walks to them, and then he escorts them into the Asylum.

TIMOTHY

Don't arouse much attention. She doesn't like celebrating her birthday.

INT. ASYLUM ATTIC - NIGHT

Janice stares at the lit candles on the cake before her, then blows them out. The adults kiss her head.

MELISSA

Guess what present I got you.

Melissa gives Janice a package wrapped in paper. She snatches it and tears away the paper wrappings to reveal a diary. She hugs Melissa.

MELISSA

You like it?

She THUMPS her foot on the floor a few times, then hugs her again.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Timothy and Melissa walk up the sidewalk from the Asylum.

MELISSA

Do you live here at the Asylum?

TIMOTHY

No.

MELISSA

Take me to where you live?

TIMOTHY

You really don't want to go there. It's very dangerous.

MELISSA

"Dangerous"? Can I know that with my ears?

He stares at her a while.

TIMOTHY

Danger can harm you Lisa, whether or not you perceive it.

MELISSA

I trust you Tim. You won't let it.

He stares at her again.

TIMOTHY

I live on the five points. Is that the kind of Place you wanna go?

She turns to him.

MELISSA

I'd like to go to your neighborhood. If it's the five points, so be it.

EXT. FIVE POINTS - NIGHT

Timothy, Palm and Melissa walk up the sidewalk full of rough-looking men and women. Some of them stare at the unusual duo.

TIMOTHY

Lisa, you wanna hear music you've never heard before?

INT. ALMACK'S - NIGHT

Timothy leads Melissa and Palm through the crowded hall. The crowd in the hall dance to IRISH MUSIC by a mixed-race band. A mixed-race woman SINGS. He walks to JIM sitting by a table next to a corner of the hall. He pulls out chairs for Palm and Melissa.

TIMOTHY

Hey Jim, I'd like you to meet friends of mine. This is Melissa, and this is Palm.

JIM

How do you do?

MELISSA

Good. And you?

JIM

Great!

They sit around the table.

MELISSA

What kind of music is this?

JIM

Tap, I guess.

MELISSA

Tap? What sort of music is that?

TIMOTHY

The type you dance to tapping and clicking your heels.

JIM

You want a drink?

TIMOTHY

No Jim, they don't.

MELISSA

What drink?

TIMOTHY

Definitely aint tea.

JIM

A beer!

MELISSA

What's a beer?

TIMOTHY

It's a foul-tasting drink that accounts for most of the insanity prevalent in this part of the city.

MELISSA

Well then I wouldn't mind a cup.

TIMOTHY

What?

JIM

(looking toward the bar across)

Hey Bernie!

He turns to Palm.

JIM

What about you my lady?

PALM

Whatever she's having.

JIM

Okay.

He raises three fingers to the man across the counter. A little boy brings three beer mugs to their table in a tray, then sets each before each of the trio. Timothy whispers to him. The boy runs off holding the tray. He goes to the woman singing in the band and whispers to her. She looks up to Timothy and smiles. Timothy turns to Melissa just in time to watch her gulp down the entire content of her mug at a go. Jim and Timothy stare at her with their mouths wide open.

MELISSA

Am I insane yet?

The musicians round up. Drums suddenly ROLL in fast pace. Other instruments join in a buildup. The music peaks - the woman begins SINGING "Amazing Grace."

MELISSA

What? I've never heard it that way.

TIMOTHY

You wanna dance?

MELISSA

Dance? What's that?

TIMOTHY

You play music but have no idea what a dance is?

(glancing at Jim)

A dance is when you hold someone and move around.

MELISSA

Like what Palm and I do?

TIMOTHY

No, no! You know, I can't really tell you what a dance is. Let's just dance.

He walks to her.

TIMOTHY

(halting before her)

Come on!

He takes her hand and leads her to the middle of the hall where a few couples tap-dance.

MELISSA

(yelling to audibility)

How do they do this?

TIMOTHY

(yelling)

Any way how! Just loose yourself and move yourself.

She jumps around, wearing a bold grin on her face. He dances, laughingly watching her dance.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. STAIRWAY - NIGHT

Timothy stumbles into the hallway full of questionable characters in company of Palm and Melissa. He leads them up the stairway to the front of his apartment. People stare as they pass. He pulls out his keys and opens his door.

TIMOTHY

Come on in!

INT. TIMOTHY'S APARTMENT

Palm warily escorts Melissa in. Timothy shuts the door. Palm stares around the room. She sees a little bed and table by one corner, a piano and stool by the opposite corner, a small closet by another corner, and a wash hand sink by the other. A door to the bathroom goes through the wall to her right side.

MELISSA

Is there a piano here?

PALM

Yes my lady.

MELISSA

And a cello?

TIMOTHY

Actually, there's one in the closet.

MELISSA

Is there a window here?

PALM

Yes my lady.

MELISSA

The piano is by the window, right?

PALM

Yes, my lady.

She takes off her coat. Palm collects it from her.

MELISSA

Wait outside Palm.

Palm walks out, closing the door behind her.

EXT. HALLWAY

She stands close to the door nervously holding Melissa's jacket.

INT. TIMOTHY'S APARTMENT

Melissa stumbles on her way to the piano. Timothy catches her, setting her on the stool behind it. He opens the window. She taps keys on the piano, smiling to herself. He comes close and hits keys to compliment hers.

Sitting behind her on the same stool, they play the same piano. He whispers.

TIMOTHY

(whispering)

There was something about their look while you played. It was as though they expected more passion. You have imagination, but not passion.

He HUMS to the TUNE. She turns her face to him. He KISSES her on the lips. She hugs him, still kissing. He alone continues playing.

MONTAGE

- 1) Melissa sits on Timothy's laps in his steamy bathroom covered in nothing but foam. Timothy sits on a stool, also covered in only foam. They bow the same cello separately, their fingers moving sensually over the foam-covered strings.
- 2) Timothy and Melissa chat in laughter while standing by the window of the domed tower of the City Hall.
- 3) Timothy gives Palm a chair before he shuts the door of his apartment.
- 4) In nudity, Melissa slowly bumps on Timothy's groin while they play the piano in Timothy's apartment.

END OF MONTAGE

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. RESTAURANT - AFTERNOON

Francis, Rowland, Patrick, Beatrice and Victoria eat sitting around a table.

FRANCIS

Do you expect me to believe you're just returning from the battlefield?

PATRICK

(dropping his teacup)

Not just, I arrived this morning. I'd like to surprise the Harpers this evening when I show up for dinner at their place.

ROWLAND

Why did you return?

Patrick takes another sip of tea.

PATRICK

You all know about the Enrolment Act to take effect in a few weeks -

(beat)

Not that I expect you to, you'd obviously not be affected by it. Most people in this city will be. My exploits at the warfront have earned me a reassignment. I'm now to participate in overseeing the draft, and for that reason, I -

Beatrice interrupts him.

BEATRICE

(staring through the glass)

Wait a minute! Isn't that your precious bat virgin?

Everyone on the table looks in the direction of her gaze. They see Timothy and Melissa chatting laughingly with arms around each other as they walk down the other side of the road in the company of Janice.

VICTORIA

So much for her being a virgin.

Patrick turns to Victoria.

PATRICK

What do you mean by that Victoria?

VICTORIA

Isn't it obvious?

PATRICK

(glancing through the glass)

Isn't what obvious?

She LAUGHS loudly, staring at him.

BEATRICE

(chuckling)

Patrick, the Nigger's had a taste of her.

VICTORIA

(laughing loudly)

Probably more than a taste. More likely to his satisfaction.

He stares at them.

PATRICK

That's simply preposterous. At least not with a negro.

BEATRICE

How on earth will she know that?

PATRICK

His stench alone.

VICTORIA

Some of them value hygiene too, especially the house ones. I wonder if he's a house nigger.

Patrick stares at them as they evaporate down the road.

BEATRICE

I've always been against this whole nigger liberation thing. They take advantage too quickly.

He lowers his face to the table.

PATRICK

(whispering)

It can't be.

VICTORIA (O.C.)

You're so naïve.

BEATRICE (O.C.)

We've been stripped of it. We know when we see a girl who's been recently stripped of it.

INT. HARPER HOUSE - EVENING

Melissa and Palm walk into the hall of the mansion. LILLIAN, a maid, interrupts them as they ascend the stairway.

LILLIAN

Miss Harper, your father would like to speak with you in the study.

INT. LAWRENCE HARPER'S STUDY

Palm and Melissa walk into the study. Lawrence sits on his chair behind the table facing the entrance. Patrick and Gloria stand by his sides. Gloria stands in fuming mien.

MELISSA

Father, I heard you wanted to speak to me.

LAWRENCE

Yes dear. Melissa, Patrick is here. He's returned for a special assignment.

MELISSA

Welcome back Mr. Hardy.

PATRICK

Thank you.

LAWRENCE

Melissa, it has come to my knowledge that your interactions with the negro you claim to be your music teacher has gotten to a point that most observers would regard as unbecoming of a member of this household. I have therefore terminated the contract between he and I, and henceforth, he is not to show up at the studio. A message has been left at the studio to that effect, and had his place of residence been known, a letter would've been sent to him to that effect as well.

A tear streams down Melissa's cheek.

MELISSA

Why would you do that father?

LAWRENCE (O.C.)

You leave me no choice, Melissa.

INT. MELISSA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Melissa sits in front of the dresser. Palm brushes her hair backwards. A knock interrupts her. Patrick walks in. Palm drops the brush on the dresser and walks out, shutting the door behind her.

PATRICK

I'd just like to know - did he have
you?

She stretches her hand in search of the brush. She grabs it and brushes her hair backwards.

MELISSA

What I do with my body is my business.

He seizes her by the arms, raising her face to his. He hits her on the cheek before pushing her to the floor. She cries out, burying her face in her palms. He grabs her face and raises it so she faces him.

PATRICK

(yelling)

We aren't yet married, but I own you,
and just like a private who's yet to
understand the meaning of
subordination, I'll teach you.

He releases her face, slowly rising.

PATRICK

(pacing around)

Tomorrow, you'll find that nigger,
wherever he is, and end whatever it is
you have with him.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

From now on, I'll have someone watching your every move. If you ever go close to that nigger again -

He turns and begins walking out.

MELISSA

(shivering)

You'll what?

He opens the door and pauses.

PATRICK

Never shall it be spoken of that Patrick Hardy lost a fair maiden to a nigger. Instead, this city will lose a nigger because of a fair maiden.

He walks out leaving the door ajar. Palm rushes in to Melissa.

PALM

My lady, are you alright?

EXT. RESTAURANT - MORNING

Palm and Melissa wait by the back exit. Timothy takes off his apron and wraps it around his arm as he walks out of the restaurant.

EXT. ALLEY BEHIND RESTAURANT

Timothy, Palm and Melissa walk into an alley. Palm leaves. Timothy turns to Melissa.

TIMOTHY

What's going on? You don't look happy.

MELISSA

Tim, we can't continue doing this.

TIMOTHY

(getting closer)

What do you mean?

MELISSA

(sobbing)

Us! Everybody now knows. Surely you would've known it'll get to this sooner or later.

He holds her palm, raising it close to his lips. He looks into her eyes.

TIMOTHY

I'm not stupid, I know this is impossible. I'll never forget these months we've been together -

(panting)

but I'm tired of just being alive. I need you to live. All I've ever lived for is to share what I have with the world. But I couldn't before I met you. Now I can, through you. You said it yourself - no one values a negro.

MELISSA

I also said no one values a woman.

TIMOTHY

That's why we're in the same well. I help you out, you pull me out, that was our deal, remember?

THE MUSIC THEY COMPOSED PLAYS.

She gently pulls her hand from his grip.

MELISSA

(panting)

Deal's off. Have a nice life. I have to
leave now.

She turns around.

MELISSA

Palm!

Palm emerges. They leave.

MONTAGE

- 1) Melissa practices alone in the studio.
- 2) Timothy waits tables in restaurants.
- 3) Timothy watches Melissa practice from outside the window.
- 4) Timothy looks out at the city through the window of the domed tower of the City Hall.
- 5) A man watches from across the busy street as Palm escorts Melissa on the side of the street. Palm glares at him.

MUSIC FADES OUT.

END OF MONTAGE

EXT. STREET - MORNING

Palm escorts Melissa up the side of a street. Melissa suddenly vomits on the sidewalk.

PALM

Are you alright my lady?

She nods. A male passerby stops to assist.

MAN

Are you alright Miss?

MELISSA

I'm fine!

MAN

Do you need a doctor?

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - MORNING

The doctor approaches Palm and Melissa.

DOCTOR

Miss Harper, I have news for you.
You're a few weeks pregnant.

Palm places her palms over her mouth. Lawrence walks in yelling "Doctor Willis!" from a distance. Melissa pushes herself toward the doctor.

MELISSA

(whispering)

Please doctor, tell no one else.

DOCTOR

They'll know, now or later.

MELISSA

(whispering)

Then I shall be the revealer.

DOCTOR

As you wish.

Lawrence gets close enough to be audible without yelling.

LAWRENCE

What happened to her Palm?

He holds Melissa's face up in examination.

PALM

(stuttering)

She vomited on the street.

LAWRENCE

Doctor Willis, what's wrong with her?

The doctor slowly pulls his eyes away from Melissa.

DOCTOR

It's a minor problem, probably indigestion. Not to worry, I've given her something to help out.

LAWRENCE

Thank you so much doctor!

INT. THEATRE AUDITORIUM - AFTERNOON

Melissa sits on a stool on the stage before members of the Philharmonic Society holding a cello. A man stands facing her.

MAN

Miss Harper, impress us!

She plays 'Amazing Grace,' slowly shutting her eyes. Freely and softly, she moves her fingers.

FLASHBACK

INT. TIMOTHY'S BATHROOM

Covered in nothing but foam, Melissa and Timothy share the same cello on the same stool in his bathroom.

INT. STAGE OF THEATRE AUDITORIUM - BACK TO SCENE

She continues playing. Her fingers caress the strings passionately.

FLASHBACK

INT. TIMOTHY'S BATHROOM

Covered in nothing but foam, Melissa slowly bumps on Timothy's groin as she plays. Timothy sucks on her shoulder. She holds her mouth wide open. She stops bumping.

INT. STAGE OF THEATRE AUDITORIUM - BACK TO SCENE

As she rounds up, a THUNDEROUS ROUND OF APPLAUSE goes off in the auditorium. Palm walks on stage and escorts Melissa backstage.

BACKSTAGE

They wait.

MELISSA

Did they like it?

PALM

(smiling)

They loved it my lady.

MELISSA

Did Tim Like it?

PALM

He isn't here my lady, he wasn't told.

She drops her eyes.

TIME CUT:

The man walks to them. He stops midway.

MAN

Miss Harper, you may return.

Palm escorts Melissa onto the stage.

STAGE

She stands before them.

MAN

Miss Harper, I dare speak on behalf of my fellow members when I say you were impressive. We have unanimously agreed to admit you into the New York Philharmonic Society. Please accept our congratulations.

He walks to Melissa and shakes her hand. All the men walk up the stage and shake Melissa's hand one after another.

INT. MELISSA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Melissa vomits in her bathroom. Palm washes her mouth from a bowl of water.

PALM

You okay my lady?

She nods. Palm takes her to her room and sits her on the edge of her bed.

MELISSA

Palm!

PALM

Yes my lady.

MELISSA

Take me to Timothy.

PALM

(whispering)

I can't do that my lady. I'm under strict orders by your parents not to.

MELISSA

Palm, take me to Timothy, or I shall starve myself of breath till I suffocate to death.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE HARPER HOUSE - NIGHT

Palm sneaks Melissa through the bushes. From the shadows, PATRICK'S SPY observes, then follows.

INT. TIMOTHY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Timothy opens the door and sees Melissa and Palm.

TIMOTHY

Lisa!

MELISSA

Tim!

He steps aside. Melissa walks in. Palm drags her eyes from him as she walks to the side of the door outside the apartment. He closes the door.

MELISSA

I got accepted yesterday.

TIMOTHY

I'm happy for you. I'd have loved to be there.

MELISSA

(sobbing)

I know.

He gets close, then wipes the tears from her eyes lightly stroking the side of her face. She hugs him, BURSTING INTO TEARS.

MELISSA

(crying)

I'm sorry Tim! I need you to live as well.

EXT. SIDEWALK OPPOSITE TIMOTHY'S APARTMENT WINDOW

Through the window, PATRICK'S SPY watches as Timothy and Melissa share a hug.

INT. TIMOTHY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Melissa and Timothy lie on the bare floor chatting.

MELISSA

You know, after that night of dancing my whole life changed. All my life I wanted to be part of the Philharmonic Society, but as I stood before those men, all I could think of was that night.

He smiles. He HUMS a melodic tune. She rests her temple on his shoulder.

MELISSA

Tim, I have something to tell you.

TIMOTHY

What is it Lisa?

MELISSA

I'm pregnant!

He turns to her and stares for a while, then he strokes her temple and kisses it. He continues HUMMING.

LAP DISSOLVE:

INT. THE HARPER DINING ROOM - MORNING

Hardy furiously barges into the dining room as Gloria and Melissa have breakfast. He walks to Melissa.

GLORIA

What is it Patrick?

In a spiteful glare, he hits her on her cheek. Gloria races to him.

PATRICK

She paid a visit to that nigger again.
I had someone follow them. He saw them
cuddling through his window, and only
God knows what he didn't see.

Gloria turns to Melissa.

GLORIA

Is that true Lisa?

MELISSA

I'd rather be caught cuddling him than
have it be heard that you and I ever
held hands.

Patrick raises his fist for another smack, but holds it in the air. Gloria places her palms over her ears, frantically yelling -

GLORIA

Palm! Palm!

Palm rushes in, behind her, Lawrence walks in holding a teacup and saucer.

PALM

Yes ma'am!

LAWRENCE

What's all the racket about?

GLORIA

Palm, is it true? Did you take Lisa to meet that negro despite all our warnings?

Palm bows her face.

PALM

Yes ma'am, but I did it only because she swore to take her own life.

LAWRENCE

She met with the negro? When was this?

PALM

At about midnight last night sir.

GLORIA

Did he do anything to her?

PALM

I cannot -

MELISSA

(interrupting)

I told her to leave us.

All eyes turn to Melissa.

GLORIA

(turning to Palm)

Surely you didn't leave my daughter
alone with a negro, did you?

The air is STILL for a while. Melissa begins to laugh.

GLORIA

(turning to Melissa)

Oh God! Child, are you possessed?

LAWRENCE

I cannot understand what can possibly
be amusing here Melissa!

She stops laughing.

MELISSA

If you're all so interested in knowing
if he touched me, wait till you know
what I know.

GLORIA

I don't want to know the details,
Melissa.

MELISSA

I'm pregnant mother!

Lawrence drops his teacup and saucer. They SHATTER to
pieces as they hit the floor.

Patrick steps back in shock. Gloria turns to him wearing the same look.

GLORIA

Please Patrick, tell me it's your child she's carrying.

Patrick turns and runs out. Gloria goes after him. Lawrence stands and stares at his daughter in numbness.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HALLWAY IN FRONT OF TIMOTHY'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Palm KNOCKS on Timothy's door. Timothy opens.

TIMOTHY

Palm! Where's Lisa?

PALM

I'm here alone. She sent me to warn you. You must flee the city, quickly. Mr. Hardy's coming for you bearing malicious intentions.

TIMOTHY

Where is she?

PALM

At home, perhaps.

TIMOTHY

'Perhaps'?

PALM

I've been relieved of my duties to the Harper household. Miss Harper now has the services of another. I do this from my fondness of her.

TIMOTHY

How do I meet her?

PALM

You seem not to understand a word I've just said. Everyone now knows she carries your child. Mr. Hardy plans to have you lynched, and he knows where you live. Even if you could get close to her, you'd surely be lynched.

TIMOTHY

Then perhaps it's best I don't get close to her. Perhaps you can arrange a meeting for us.

PALM

Have you been paying attention? I'm no longer in service to her, how do you expect me to do such?

TIMOTHY

She trusts you, as she trusts me.

She stares at him for a while, then exhales.

PALM

Very well, where might the venue be?

TIMOTHY

A place we've both been to but they haven't.

PALM

The Asylum it is then?

He nods.

PALM

I'll see what I can do.

She turns and leaves. Timothy stands gazing into the air.

EXT. TIMOTHY'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Timothy walks out of the building and onto the sidewalk. People gather around him yelling racial slurs as he walks. SHAWCROSS, a brawny man, signals BONE and HALIFAX, two other brawny men. They move into the crowd. Bone and Halifax seize Timothy by the arms and pull him away. Timothy screams and fights. Shawcross knocks him unconscious with a hard object from behind.

EXT. COLORED ORPHAN ASYLUM - NIGHT

Melissa and SHIRLEY, her new maid, walk to where Palm stands in front of the Asylum.

PALM

Miss Harper, over here!

Palm walks to them.

MELISSA

Palm, is that you?

PALM

Yes my lady.

Melissa turns to Shirley.

MELISSA

You can wait here.

Palm helps Melissa up the stairs to the porch.

MELISSA

Is he here?

PALM

I've seen no sign of such my lady. I've been here a while now, but I haven't seen him.

Palm KNOCKS on the door. Yolanda opens it.

YOLANDA

Melissa! Palm! Come on in.

They walk in.

INT. ASYLUM

MELISSA

Is Tim here?

YOLANDA

No. We're expecting him soon though.

Theodore appears.

THEODORE

If he isn't already dead, that is.

YOLANDA

How could you say such?

THEODORE

You should take a trip into the city. They're blaming the drafts on us and killing us.

YOLANDA

(turning to Melissa)

Tim isn't dead, don't listen to Theodore.

She walks into the living room by the entrance.

YOLANDA (CONT'D)

Come this way. Let me make you some tea.

A frantic KNOCK ON THE DOOR interrupts. She returns and opens it. JAMIE falls in badly bleeding. She YELLS. Theodore rushes to him.

THEODORE

Jamie, what's going on?

Yolanda shuts the door and rushes into the house. Theodore kneels by Jamie placing his head on his thigh.

JAMIE

(crying)

They got Mike! I ran as fast as I could. This is the safest place for us now.

Yolanda returns with three other women.

YOLANDA

You need help, right now.

Theodore rises to his feet. The women help Jamie in.

THEODORE

We have to leave the city, quickly. This city's about to burn and our blood shall be fuel.

TIME CUT:

INT. LIVING ROOM

Melissa sleeps reclined on a sofa.

PALM

(tapping Melissa)

My lady, it's late. If you don't leave now, your parents will send out a search party.

Melissa YAWNS.

MELISSA

Is he here?

PALM

No my lady. The man who came in earlier said they're killing negroes all over the city.

MELISSA

You're saying he's dead?

Palm stares at her silently.

EXT. COLORED ORPHAN ASYLUM

Palm escorts Melissa down the stairs.

YOLANDA

Goodnight Palm, Lisa.

MELISSA

Goodnight Yol!

PALM

Goodnight!

Yolanda shuts the door.

MELISSA

Palm.

PALM

My lady!

MELISSA

I want to know for sure.

PALM

Would you like us to pay a visit to the morgue tomorrow?

MELISSA

I would appreciate that.

They step onto the sidewalk. Palm wakes Shirley sleeping at the foot of the stairs. She jumps to her feet.

MELISSA

Thank you Palm, for everything.

PALM

Pleasure's all mine my lady.

Shirley escorts Melissa. Palm stares at them.

INT. DARK ROOM - MORNING

Timothy is bound to a chair and his head is covered with a black piece of cloth. A lit touch a man in the corner holds forms the only source of light. A man pulls the cloth from over his face to reveal his bleeding face. Patrick paces around him holding a baton.

PATRICK

Did you get her drunk before you had her?

TIMOTHY

(shivering)

No, I didn't. She took herself.

PATRICK

Under your watch, because you wanted to take advantage of her further impaired senses.

TIMOTHY

(shivering)

That was not the way of it.

Resting his palms on the arms of the chair, he shoves his face right in front of Timothy's.

PATRICK

You got her drunk so you can have your way with her and better your filthy lineage with white blood. You know what people do to a nigger who does such? They lynch them. That's exactly what I'll do to you.

He walks around him.

PATRICK

Lisa will have the baby, but it'll mysteriously vanish after birth. This city's best kept secret that'll be.

He signals the men in the room. Two of them walk to Timothy. They take him from the chair to a corner of the room where they hang him on a hook fastened to the ceiling. They strip him naked and whip him on the back with a large whip bearing a metal blade on its tips.

INT. CITY MORGUE - MORNING

Palm, Melissa and a man stand over a man's corpse on a table.

MELISSA

Is that him?

PALM

No my lady.

MAN

Well ma'am, that's the last of them coloreds brought in here.

They exit the hall. Palm holds Melissa close.

MELISSA

If he isn't here, either his body hasn't been found or he's not dead.

PALM

If he was lynched his body would've been found.

MELISSA

I have a gut feeling Patrick's keeping him somewhere. But where?

PALM

I can ask around, perhaps I'll find people willing to help us.

INT. GOLDING DUCKLING RESTAURANT - MORNING

Palm meets with Jerry in the restaurant kitchen. She gives him gold jewels.

JERRY

I'll search for him because he was a good person, not because of this. This'll just make it easier.

He puts the jewels in his pocket. She gives him a piece of paper.

PALM

If you get anything contact me at this address. I'll relay your findings.

INT. HARPER DINNING ROOM - MORNING

The Harper household has breakfast around the dining table. Lillian walks in.

GLORIA

What is it Lillian?

LILLIAN

Palm just dropped a note for Miss Harper. She said it's important she gets it.

Gloria suspiciously stares at Lillian.

GLORIA

Read it!

LILLIAN

The rooster roasts to meet the Master's Roast at 12 noon, on Wall Street.

GLORIA

Is that all?

LILLIAN

Yes madam!

LAWRENCE

What sort of a message is that?

Gloria stares suspiciously at Melissa.

GLORIA

(turning to Lillian)

You've delivered the message.

Lillian leaves, Melissa interrupts her -

MELISSA

What time is it Lillian?

LILLIAN

It's half past eight Miss.

MELISSA

Thank you!

Lillian leaves. Gloria stares at Melissa.

EXT. MASTER'S ROAST RESTAURANT - NOON

THE RUSTY SIGNBOARD bearing the words 'Master's Roast Restaurant,' dances in the air over the restaurant.

Palm walks in wearing a scarf partially covering her face.

INT. MASTER'S ROAST RESTAURANT - CONTINUOUS

Palm walks to Melissa who sits by a table for two.

PALM

(sitting)

My lady!

MELISSA

Palm?

PALM

I've received word from Jerry. Mr. Morgan's been kidnapped. They know one of his captors. He goes by the name Shawcross. He says Mr. Hardy plans on torturing him before lynching him. He's agreed to help us get him out, for a fair sum, obviously. Where should he be taken to?

EXT. DARK ALLEY OPPOSITE RESTAURANT

Gloria hides watching Palm and Melissa through the glass.

MELISSA (O.C)

The Asylum, as was originally planned.
I'll meet him there.

A CELLO RENDERS 'AMAZING GRACE.'

INT. MELISSA'S ROOM - MORNING

Melissa sits bowing the song.

EXT. STREET

People stare at the CORPSE of a black man hanging from a rope attached to the signboard over a bar.

EXT. STREET

People stare at the CORPSE of a black teenage boy hanging from a rope attached to a line above the street.

INT. DARK CELL

Timothy lies bleeding and exhausted in a cell utterly devoid of light. Shawcross walks in, another man follows. They carry Timothy to the corridor outside the room.

CORRIDOR

As they carry him to the door at the end of the corridor, they cover his head with a piece of cloth.

INT. MELISSA'S ROOM

She CONCLUDES PLAYING, slowly opening her eyes.

EXT. COLORED ORPHAN ASULUM - NIGHT

A carriage races down the road. Timothy is hurled out onto the road in front of the Asylum, wrapped in cloth. The carriage races on. People in the Asylum rush out.

INT. MELISSA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Gloria rushes in to meet Lillian and Shirley.

GLORIA

What's going on?

LILIAN

It's Miss Harper madam! She's gone!

SHIRLEY

She left a note!

Gloria picks the note and reads it.

GLORIA

Only one person's ever snuck Melissa out of this house before, and this is her writing.

She stands silently a while, then rushes out of the room.

INT. CELL - NIGHT

Patrick stands on the doorway of the empty cell. Sighing, he walks out.

EXT. OUTSIDE CELL BUILDING

Patrick walks toward his horse. Gloria chases after him.

GLORIA

Aren't you gonna hang him?

PATRICK

He's gone Gloria.

GLORIA

I knew it, I just knew it. Palm's behind this. I can feel it.

They reach where Patrick's horse is tied. He unties his horse.

PATRICK

Why'd you say that?

He climbs onto his horse.

GLORIA

Melissa's gone! She left the house. There's only one person who's ever snuck her out before. The other day Palm left a cryptic message for her. I was suspicious, so I followed Melissa myself. It was a secret meeting between herself and Palm. This was just a few days ago, now these.

He SIGHS.

PATRICK

Your daughter's probably with the nigger. If we find him, we find your daughter.

He looks up to a tree by the building.

PATRICK

He was supposed to hang from that tree
by dawn. It be not late yet.

He rides off into the night.

INT. ASYLUM ATTIC - NIGHT

Timothy is slumped backwards on a stool in a corner. Janice
cleans his face with a rag and bowl of water. A woman
interrupts, walking in.

WOMAN

People are here to see you.

She stands aside to reveal Palm and Melissa. Janice runs
and hugs Melissa. She takes her to Timothy. Melissa hugs
him.

INT. THE HARDY RESIDENCE - NIGHT

Patrick stands by the window of the hall between the
flights of stairs, staring into the dark street. Francis
walks to him.

FRANCIS

You sent for me?

PATRICK

(glancing at him)

You recommended a maid to the Harper
household.

FRANCIS

Yes, I did. What's wrong?

PATRICK

Nothing, I'd just prefer your presence
while I make some inquiries.

FRANKLIN, the butler, walks into the hall.

FRANKLIN

Master Hardy, a Shirley is here to see you.

PATRICK

Send her up.

Franklin leaves. A while later, he returns leading Shirley.

PATRICK

It's okay Franklin, you may leave now.

Franklin takes a bow, then leaves.

SHIRLEY

(curtseying)

Good evening, Master Hardy. Good evening, Master Miller.

Patrick turns to her.

PATRICK

Shirley, I called you here today because I'd like to ask you a few questions as to the whereabouts of Lisa. Do you know of a certain Palm?

SHIRLEY

Yes sir, I do.

PATRICK

Are you aware that she was her maid before you?

SHIRLEY

I knew that recently sir. I initially thought she was a friend of Miss Harper.

PATRICK

What places did these friends meet, or go together?

SHIRLEY

Restaurants most times sir. Other than that, they once met at the morgue, and once at the Colored Orphan Asylum.

He sighs donning a smirk.

PATRICK

How long did they stay at each of these places?

SHIRLEY

In the restaurants, they spent about one half of an hour each time. Same as in the morgue. In the Asylum, they spent hours.

He sighs again, then turns his eyes to the window.

PATRICK

That'll be all Shirley.

She takes her leave. Patrick interrupts her -

PATRICK

One more thing - this conversation we just had must be kept secret. Am I clear?

SHIRLEY

Yes sir!

She leaves.

FRANCIS

Patrick, what're you thinking?

Patrick glances at him.

PATRICK

Melissa eloped with the negro. Could they be hiding in a restaurant? I find that very unlikely. Could they be hiding in a morgue? I don't think so.

He turns to Francis.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

Would you spend hours in a place you're neither comfortable nor welcome in? I would.

He returns his face to the glass.

FRANCIS

What will you do if you find out they're hiding in an Orphanage filled with children?

PATRICK

I have no right to barge into an orphanage packed with children.

He turns to Francis and stares at him for a while, then smiles.

PATRICK

Go home Francis!

Francis stares at him wearing intense curiosity. Patrick turns his face to the window. Francis turns and heads downstairs. A while passes. Franklin walks in.

FRANKLIN

Sir, shall I let the gentleman up now?

Patrick turns to him and nods. Franklin walks down. A while later, he returns leading the spy.

FRANKLIN

Will that be all sir?

PATRICK

Yes Franklin.

Franklin leaves.

PATRICK

Keep an eye on the Colored Orphan Asylum. Bring me report if you see her, her former maid, or that nigger.

INT. ASYLUM ATTIC - NIGHT

Timothy, Melissa and Palm discuss-

PALM

Do you have any plans on how you'll leave the city?

TIMOTHY

Paddy's coach. He works in the 42nd line. Theodore made arrangements with him on my behalf. He'll be here tomorrow.

MELISSA

You're not leaving without me Tim.

TIMOTHY

Yes I am Lisa.

MELISSA

Will you leave me here with them, and him?

Bringing his face close, he strokes the hair on her temple backwards.

TIMOTHY

Melissa, I know nowhere else or what survival may require wherever. I can't drag you into this.

MELISSA

I'm not asking you to drag me in, I'm putting myself in. Silver and gold I know not, but to be held in high value by another -

TIMOTHY

(interrupting)

I'd give all to have you come, but I have to live in horrible places with horrible people - men who wouldn't hesitate to kill me and use you like a whore. Who'll be there to protect you? Who'll be there to force the police to intervene just by the mention of a name?

He gives her a peck and places the side of his jaw against her temple.

TIMOTHY (CONT'D)

(whispering)

I wish everyone in the world would see you as I do, I truly do, but not everyone does.

EXT. COLORED ORPHAN ASYLUM - NIGHT

Palm and Melissa walk out of the Asylum, then up the sidewalk. PATRICK'S SPY sees them from the bushes.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Palm and Melissa walk down the street. They approach a crowded bright alley. People in the crowd jostle for a view of something happening in the alley. Drenched in the YELLING VOICES of the crowd, the PLEADING VOICE of a young man can be heard.

MELISSA

Palm, What's going on?

They stop in front of the alley and Palm peers through the crowd. She sees the charred corpse of a naked black man hanging down a rope over flames. Next to him, another is about to be hanged.

PALM

My lady, it's a lynching.

Bleeding profusely, the man stands on a wooden crate surrounded by sticks. A small crowd surrounds him, kicking and punching him. Others throw things at him from a distance. Two men around him put a noose around his neck.

BLACK MAN

(crying)

For what crime do I be punished this day?

MAN IN CROWD 1 (O.S)

Shut up monkey!

MAN IN CROWD 2 (O.S)

Die, you fucking Lincolnite!

The black man sets his eyes on a particular area of the crowd.

BLACK MAN

(crying)

Was not I he who returned your purse
when you forgot it on my coach, Mrs.
Gibbons?

WOMAN IN CROWD (O.S)

With half the money missing!

BLACK MAN

(crying)

In my coach you sat seasons longer,
never did you bring this to my
attention before this day.

MAN IN CROWD 3 (O.S)

Kill the bloody Lincolnite!

MAN IN CROWD 1 (O.S)

Shut up and go back to your jungle in
Africa!

A man ensures the noose is properly fastened, another kicks the crate from beneath his feet. He hangs, twitching and making CHOKING sounds. The crowd bursts into thunderous applause, yelling and whistling. Melissa buries her face in Palm's chest. A man empties a bottle of liquor on the sticks beneath the corpse before lighting a match.

The sticks burn fiercely. Some men cut down the charred corpse of the other man. People swarm the corpse to cut parts out as souvenirs. Palm holds Melissa's face closer to her chest.

EXT. ALLEY - MORNING

Some Union Army Soldiers barge into an alley crawling with dubious-looking men. They scamper out of the alley. The soldiers go after DONALD, a middle-aged man. They apprehend him before he leaves. Patrick emerges from behind the soldiers, walking to him.

DONALD

What brings you to this part of the city?

PATRICK

You, Donald.

DONALD

What for?

PATRICK

I'd like you to take care of an issue.

DONALD

(laughing)

The Union needs more Irish blood? What makes you think I'll give you my help?

Patrick smiles.

PATRICK

What will your nephews think when they discover that their father never returned from war because his brother's choices led to his deployment to where the battle was hottest?

Donald stares at him like a dog shouted down by its owner.

PATRICK

Are you now ready to listen?

INT. ATTIC IN THE ASYLUM - MORNING

The door opens. Janice walks in holding Melissa by the hand. Timothy rushes to them.

TIMOTHY

Lisa, what're you doing here?

She hugs him resting her temple on his shoulder.

MELISSA

I heard an innocent man beg for his life from people he knew well. They lynched him, then they burned his remains in ridicule.

She raises her face to his.

MELISSA

This man you're leaving with, is he one of you?

TIMOTHY

He's an Irishman.

She rests her temple on his shoulder.

MELISSA

Can I stay until you leave?

TIMOTHY

Does anyone know you're here?

MELISSA

Palm snuck me in with the help of Janice. No one else knows I'm here, not even Theodore or Yolanda.

EXT. STREET - AFTERNOON

Donald stands on a platform addressing a large crowd gathered around him -

DONALD

We fight for them so they and their kids can take our jobs. I say no, anyone who stays dies, that's the only way we can keep them off, and they better leave with their kids. For the children with no parents, we burn down whatever shelter holds them so they scamper for their lives, lest we leave for our children and grandchildren troubles we could've ourselves handled.

The crowd roars in excitement. Loud applause follow.

INT. ASYLUM ATTIC - AFTERNOON

Melissa, Timothy and Janice lie on their backs on the floor. The top of their heads meet like an intersection.

DONALD (O.C)

We shall begin with the Colored Orphan Asylum. This city's wealthiest see more value in them than they see in us. If we don't take care of them now, the rulers of this city shall one day place them above us. Mark my words, this day! Mark my words!

MELISSA

Tim, can I ask you a question?

TIMOTHY

Anything Lisa! Anything at all!

MELISSA

What's the difference between whites
and negroes?

He stares on silently for a while.

TIMOTHY

We have darker skin than you do. White
people have very light skin, like the
sun.

MELISSA

What does the sun look like?

TIMOTHY

Really bright.

MELISSA

What does 'bright' look like?

TIMOTHY

(squinting)

Like- um-

He SIGHS relaxing his eyes. A moment of SILENCE passes.

MELISSA

Tim!

TIMOTHY

Yes Lisa!

MELISSA

What's the difference between whites
and negroes?

TIMOTHY

(sighing)

I don't know Lisa, I don't know.

The distant voices of a mob become audible. Janice runs to the window and spots a large crowd walking towards the Asylum. Timothy turns to her.

TIMOTHY

What is it Janice?

He walks to her and sees the crowd, yielding clubs axes and other weapons, getting closer.

TIMOTHY

(racing out the attic)

Wait here you two!

EXT. FRONT OF ASYLUM BUILDING

The mob surrounds the Asylum throwing stones at the door and windows and yelling racial slurs. Some men kick the entrance door to break it down.

INT. HALLWAY TO ENTRANCE IN ASYLUM

Theodore and Timothy finish barricading the entrance door with heavy furniture.

THEODORE

We have to get them out now. We don't
have much time.

TIMOTHY

And go where?

THEODORE

Right now, anywhere's better than here.

TIMOTHY

What time did Paddy say he'll be coming around?

THEODORE

Anytime from now.

TIMOTHY

He can help get them out.

INT. HALLWAY BENEATH STAIRS

Timothy and Theodore walk in. A large crowd of children are scattered everywhere, some crying. Yolanda reveals herself in company of some women.

THEODORE

(walking to Yolanda)

Is this everyone?

YOLANDA

Almost. I can't find Janice.

TIMOTHY

I'll go get her.

Theodore interrupts him as he leaves.

THEODORE

Tim, I have to stay to make sure everyone leaves, but I need a man with Paddy when he's with these kids, at least the first time. I need you to go with Paddy the first time and stay with them wherever they are.

THEODORE (CONT'D)

Yolanda will come take over from you.
Then you can leave.

He nods, then runs up the stairway.

INT. ATTIC

Timothy enters the attic.

TIMOTHY

Lisa, I'll need you to wait here while
I take Janice downstairs and put her in
Paddy's coach.

Melissa nods. He leads her to the stool and sits her. He
picks up Janice looking out the window. He locks eyes with
Shawcross. He runs out carrying Janice.

EXT. FRONT OF ASYLUM

The crowd is larger. They try to break down the door.
Firefighters fight through to the entrance. Donald stands
by the entrance.

DONALD

If we can't get in, then let's smoke
them out.

Two men light a liquor bottle with a wet piece of cloth
dangling from its mouth before throwing it through a window
on the ground floor. A curtain catches fire. The Chief
Engineer, JOHN DECKER, leads the firefighters as they
arrive at the entrance with their pumper.

DECKER

What harm have these children with no
one to cater for them brought to you?
Why such an act of wickedness?

The firefighters begin putting out the fire.

EXT. BEHIND ASYLUM - EVENING

Everyone of the Asylum is outside. Timothy and PADDY, an Irishman, load the children around the stagecoach into it. Theodore and the other adults form a circle wall around the rest of the children as they watch the coach from a distance. Timothy puts Janice in the coach.

PADDY

That's it Tim. The space left is for you. Theo said you'd be coming.

VIOLINS RENDER 'AMAZING GRACE.'

Timothy glances at him as he turns to the Asylum. Yolanda turns to look at him. Theodore stares at him. Timothy stares at the Asylum numbly.

FLASHBACK

INT. ALMACK'S

Melissa laughs as they dance.

INT. CITY HALL DOMED TOWER

Melissa smiles as she stands.

INT. ASYLUM ATTIC

Melissa hugs Janice.

EXT. BEHIND ASYLUM - BACK TO SCENE

Timothy slowly closes his eyes. A tear rolls down his face.

EXT. FRONT OF ASYLUM

The firefighters shield John Decker from the mob.

DONALD

Decker, you've put the fire out for the last time. If you do that again you'll suffer no different a fate from that which awaits them.

INT. ROOM IN ASYLUM

A burning bottle SHATTERS the window as it lands in the room. A curtain catches fire.

INT. ANOTHER ROOM IN ASYLUM

A burning bottle lands on the bed.

EXT. BEHIND ASYLUM

Timothy opens his eyes, turns and steps into the coach. Theodore sighs returning his eyes to the children. Yolanda smiles turning to the children.

INT. COACH

Timothy sits Janice on his lap as he sits. He whispers to her -

TIMOTHY

I can't leave without Lisa.

He pecks her on the temple shutting his eyes.

THE MUSIC FADES.

Paddy gets on the driver's seat.

TIMOTHY

(opening his eyes)

I'll be there before you.

Timothy gets off the coach.

EXT. BEHIND ASYLUM

He walks to Paddy.

TIMOTHY

(whispering)

Paddy, I'm not coming with you, but I need you to do me a favor.

Paddy stares at him curiously.

TIMOTHY (CONT'D)

(whispering)

Take them to the police station. Don't let anyone know I didn't go with you. If anyone asks, say I left with you but went my way when I was certain they'd be safe. Swear to me you'll do what I just asked of you.

Paddy stares at him a while, then gasps.

PADDY

(whispering)

I swear. So how will you get out of the city?

TIMOTHY

I'll figure out a way. I always do.

PADDY

Good luck then.

A FLUTE AND PIANO GLOOMILY RENDER THE MUSIC COMPOSED BY TIMOTHY AND JANICE.

The coach begins moving. Timothy stands still.

INT. COACH

Janice keeps her eyes fixed outside the coach. Timothy's face passes by. She takes her head out of the coach to look at Timothy. He gradually shrinks into distance.

EXT. BEHIND ASYLUM

Timothy stares at the coach for a while, then he turns to the other children.

The other adults fend off people trying to get at the children. He runs into the Asylum.

INT. COACH

Janice pulls her head back into the coach. She reaches into her coat and pulls out the book Melissa gave her as a birthday present. She stares at it a while, then gazes at the bushes as they pass by. She turns at Paddy.

THE MUSIC ENDS. FAST-PACED DRUMMING BEGINS.

She jumps out of the coach. The other children scream.

EXT. OUTSIDE COACH

She lands on the ground, rolls on it, gets off it, picks up her book, and runs as fast as she can. Paddy turns his face and sees her running.

PADDY

(stopping the coach)

Hey!

He jumps out of the coach and chases after her.

PADDY

Where're you going? Come back!

He stops after a short distance, glancing back at the coach. He watches Janice run to the Asylum.

THE DRUMMING STOPS.

EXT. FRONT OF ASYLUM

Fire ROARS out of the Asylum's windows. Some men ram the entrance door with a large log of wood until enough space to fit a person is created. Some men scramble in.

INT. ASYLUM

Once in, they throw aside the furniture behind the doors and fling them open. Everyone rushes in.

DONALD

(walking in)

Take all you can, while you can!

Bone and Halifax walk into the Asylum. They look around.

HALIFAX

(to bone)

No corpses.

Bone nods.

INT. ATTIC

Timothy runs in. Melissa jumps to her feet.

MELISSA

Tim?

He runs to the window and looks out. He sees Shawcross standing on the other side of the road.

TIMOTHY

(looking through window)

Yes Lisa.

He rushes to Melissa.

TIMOTHY

Okay Lisa, we gotta go!

Wrapping his arm around her waist, they attempt to exit the attic. Halifax walks into the attic brandishing A PISTOL. Timothy stops.

MELISSA

Who's that?

Bone enters, also brandishing A PISTOL. They surround them.

MELISSA

(turning her face to Timothy)

Who is it?

TIMOTHY

(turning to her and stroking her face)

The building's on fire, so you'll have to go. I can't go with you Lisa.

MELISSA

They're here to take you, aren't they?

Bone puts away his gun and snatches her. She kicks and YELLS as he carries her backwards towards the dark stairway beyond the door. As they approach the top of the stairway, Bone drops her as he falls backwards down the flight of stairs. His pistol drops. He races up the stairs and picks her up again. He struggles with her, attempting to carry her down the stairway. A GUNSHOT goes off. He drops Melissa and places a finger on his chest staring at Halifax. He raises the finger to the front of his face and SEES BLOOD. He falls on his face. Halifax points a gun cautiously approaching the dark stairway. Timothy breaks a log of wood off on his head. He slumps to the ground.

DRUMS ROLL IN FAST PACE. OTHER INSTRUMENTS FOLLOW.

INT. BALCONY

Carrying Melissa across his arms, Timothy runs into the thick smoke of the balcony joined to the stairway spirally descending by the wall. Janice follows. He runs to the rails and looks down from the top floor where he stands into the ground floor. The ground floor and some parts of the first floor are in flames. They COUGH.

TIMOTHY

We have to get down now!

He runs down the stairway. Janice follows him.

THE MUSIC ABRUPTLY STOPS.

EXT. BEHIND ASYLUM - NIGHT

Paddy and four other Irishmen carry children into their coaches. A number of police officers are scattered around the area. Theodore interrupts Paddy.

THEODORE

Where's Tim?

PADDY

He left after we dropped the kids at the 36th precinct.

Theodore turns to the burning Asylum.

INT. ROOM

Timothy kicks in a door and rushes in carrying Melissa. Janice runs in and shuts the door. Their faces are blackened by soot. Timothy and Janice COUGH briefly, Melissa COUGHS PROFUSELY. He puts Melissa on a badly-worn-out mattress and picks a worn out piece of cloth. Kneeling next to her, he strokes her hair backwards.

TIMOTHY

I'll have to cover your nose and mouth with this, so you'll breathe in less smoke.

He ties the cloth around her face.

TIMOTHY

We can't get to the entrance, so we'll have to make for the basement. I'm sure we'll get out through the basement before the fire reaches us, but we'd have to pass through the small stairway first.

He glances at Janice.

TIMOTHY

(to Melissa)

You'd have to stay here with Janice.
I'll go clear the way. I'll be back
soon, I promise.

He leaves.

EXT. BEHIND ASYLUM - NIGHT

Theodore inspects the coaches. He reaches Paddy's.

THEODORE

That's it, they're all that's left.

PADDY

What about the mute one?

THEODORE

Janice? She left with you the first
time.

PADDY

She jumped out and ran in the building.
I couldn't go after her and leave the
others. I thought she forgot something.

Theodore turns and runs to the Asylum. He tries to run in
but some firefighters hold him back. He runs to Decker.

THEODORE

(approaching Decker)

Please, there's a girl still in there.

DECKER

(turning to the building)

Oh my God!

INT. TOP OF STAIRCASE

Timothy COUGHS through the dense smoke. He pushes a large wooden drum containing water on its side. Water pours down the stairway, reducing the flames.

INT. ROOM

Janice turns her face to the door as Timothy rushes in.

TIMOTHY

I bought us some time, but we'll have to move quickly.

He runs to a corner of the room, picks up a worn-out bedspread, then runs to Melissa. He helps Melissa to her feet and lifts her unto his back.

TIMOTHY

We'll be faster if I carry you. Put your arms around my neck and your legs around my waist.

She wraps her arms around his neck, then wraps her legs around his waist. He throws the bedspread over her back, letting the breadth drop from her shoulder to beneath her bottom. He pulls both ends of the bedspread past his sides and ties them tightly together in front of his torso.

TIMOTHY

(turning to Janice)

Come on!

They walk out of the room.

INT. HALLWAY

Timothy runs through the burning hallway thick with smoke and soot carrying Melissa on his back. Janice runs closely. They COUGH profusely as they try to find their way as quick as they can through poor visibility. They weave as much falling debris as they can.

STAIRWAY

They arrive at the stairway. Most of it is cinder. They step down paths of the stairway good enough to walk on. He places a foot on a step that snaps and breaks in. He falls in, but is held hanging beneath the stairway by the bedspread bond with Melissa, who stretches herself from the step before the hole to the one after it to keep him from falling. Janice goes to the step after the hole to help Melissa hold on. Despite his struggles to return to the stairway, he can't get through the hole, not with the bedspread still around him. The heat below burns his shirt as he roasts alive. Melissa feels a sudden relief from the burden of his weight.

MELISSA

(coughing)

No!

COUGHING and covering her mouth, she raises herself to sit upright on the step before the hole. Timothy's hand emerges from the hole grabbing an edge of it. He pulls himself out. Janice rushes to help him. COUGHING, he sits facing Melissa on the edge of the hole.

MELISSA

(coughing)

Tim?

He hugs her.

TIMOTHY

Lisa!

He pulls back his face.

TIMOTHY

We have to keep moving.

INT. BASEMENT

Carrying Melissa silently slouched behind, Timothy staggers into the basement COUGHING profusely. Janice follows, also COUGHING. Timothy unties the bedspread, gently setting Melissa on the floor in a corner. He gets on his feet and walks to a corner with windows just beneath the ceiling. The windows are large enough to fit Janice, and through it, he sees the street. He turns to Janice, then kneels before her on a foot, holding her palm and raising it to his face.

TIMOTHY

Janice, the window can only fit you. I need you to go out and get us help, okay?

She nods. He strokes her face gently.

TIMOTHY

Janice, live to the fullest. Promise me that Janice.

She stares at him. He places her palm on his cheek.

TIMOTHY

You promise?

She nods. He picks her up and carefully fits her through the window. Her FOOTSTEPS fade out.

THE MUSIC TIMOTHY AND MELISSA COMPOSED PLAYS DESPONDENTLY.

EXT. BEHIND ASYLUM

Janice runs out of an alley to Yolanda. Yolanda runs to her. She picks Janice and runs towards the waiting coaches.

INT. BASEMENT

Timothy drops to his knees by Melissa. He slowly places the bedspread over her, covering her entire body, including her face.

INTERCUT BETWEEN TIMOTHY AND JANICE

Janice kicks and fights. She points to the Asylum. She does all she can to draw attention towards the Asylum. Nothing she does appears to be working.

Timothy lies next to Melissa's corpse on the floor of the basement. He places her arm on his torso.

THE MUSIC ENDS.

FADE TO: WHITE

FADE IN:

EXT. ASYLUM - DAWN

The fire is out. What little coal or ash left of the Asylum stands like a ghoulish skeleton. Patrick and Shawcross stand and discuss.

PATRICK

Have all the bodies been taken out?

SHAWCROSS

Yes sir!

PATRICK

How many?

SHAWCROSS

Three sir! Miss Harper, the nigger and Bone.

PATRICK

Did anyone get to them before you?

SHAWCROSS

No sir!

PATRICK

That'll be all.

Shawcross walks pass Patrick's side. Patrick stands staring at what is left of the Asylum - smoke still rising from the fallen bricks and walls.

VIOLINS RENDER 'AMAZING GRACE' IN MELANCHOLY.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. 5TH AVENUE, NEW YORK CITY - MORNING

Her middle-aged grandson, JAMES PARKER, pushes OLD JANICE in her wheelchair up the sidewalk. They stop before a tall building on the former site of the Asylum. She smiles, slowly shutting her eyes. On her lap lies the book Melissa gave her as a birthday present.

FADE TO: BLACK